



The champion and runner-up teams of the Third Holy Cross-Coca-Cola-The Daily Star Debate Festival 2005 pose for photograph with the guests at the Russian Cultural Centre in the city yesterday.

HOLY CROSS-COCA-COLA-DAILY STAR DEBATE ENDS Group of Debaters become champions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Group of Debaters emerged as the champions in the Third Holy Cross-Coca-Cola-The Daily Star Debate Festival 2005 yesterday. The Group defeated the Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS) in the final round of the festival held at the Russian Cultural Centre in the city. Biplab Kumar of the winning team was adjudged the best debater. Abir Kusum Pal of the Group of Debaters became the first, Asif Newaz of North South University the second and Tusher Dutta of Notre Dame College became third in an open debate that took place at Holy Cross College on July 30. Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, and Sister Marian Teresa, principal of Holy Cross College, gave away the prizes at the closing ceremony. The motion of the parliamentary debate in the final round was 'The key reason for trade imbalance in the South Asian region is the monopolistic attitude of India.'

A debater posing as famous painter Leonardo da Vinci while another posing as Mona Lisa took part in the new format of debate that gained much appreciation from the audience. 'I am very impressed by the format of the intellectually challenging debate that requires historical knowledge and analytical capability. There is enough scope of showing creativity in this form of debate,' said Mahfuz Anam. The inner significance of the debate is the exercise of logic that helps students improve their skills of thinking independently and creatively, he said. 'One of the reasons that we are slow in developing ourselves is that we are not logical in our thinking,' Anam added. Sister Marian Teresa said her college makes the utmost effort to build character of the students and organising the debate is one of its important activities. 'We hope that the students through these activities will develop their creativity and will be able to lead the country in future,' she said. Holy Cross Debating Club Moderator Tahmina Rahman also spoke. On the occasion, 'Krit Kathan' a publication of the Holy Cross Debating Club, was also launched. The club also awarded its members for their best efforts to make the festival a success.

Pak author gets life term for blasphemy

AFP, Karachi

A Pakistani anti-terrorism court sentenced a man to life imprisonment for writing an allegedly blasphemous book about the Quran and the Islamic justice system, a lawyer said yesterday. Police in the Islamic republic arrested 40-year-old writer Younus Shaik early this year in Karachi after he brought out the book called 'Shaitan Maulvi' or Satanic Cleric. Blasphemy in Pakistan carries a maximum sentence of the death penalty. Although no-one has ever been executed, the country's harsh laws for the crime have been heavily criticised by rights groups. 'The court has sent him into jail for life as he described the four Imams as Jews in his book,' public prosecutor Naimat Ali Randhawa told AFP after the court in Karachi sentenced the man on Thursday. The four Imams were the third generation interpreters of the religion after the Prophet Mohammed (SM), and their views on law are widely respected by the world's Muslims, he said. The writer also committed blasphemy by saying that stoning to death for adultery was not mentioned in the Quran, he added. Local newspapers said Shaik was a hotel manager with little academic background and no religious education. The author had 5,000 copies of the book published and was caught by police while handing them out, they reported.

Pakistan denies link with London blasts

AFP, Hong Kong

Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz repeated denials yesterday that his country had any links to the recent terrorist bombings in London and Egypt, saying that Pakistanis were unfairly blamed. Aziz told a luncheon meeting of Hong Kong businessmen that Pakistanis took no part in the coordinated four-bomb attack on the British capital's transport network, which killed 52 people plus four suicide bombers on July 7. '(In) recent events in the UK people started wondering if people from Pakistan were linked,' he said. 'The truth is, they were second-generation people who were really local people. 'But as the facts now come out the problems on 7/7 were all related to the situation in Britain.' Pakistani immigrants were initially suspected for the attacks on three subway trains and a double-decker bus. British police have since fingered suspects of various other Middle Eastern nationalities. Aziz said Pakistanis were also blameless in the massive blast that killed 63 people in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh on July 23. 'These people that were from Pakistan (who were suspected) hadn't even been to Sharm el-Sheikh,' Aziz said. The prime minister said the world's media was to blame for his country's poor image overseas and called for nations to change their view of the Islamic republic. 'We are like any other people in

the world,' he said. 'Our people are trying to do what other people are trying to do.' Aziz is in Hong Kong as part of a brief East Asian tour that also took him to Japan. As well as business leaders the prime minister held talks with the Chinese territory's political chief Donald Tsang. He returns to Islamabad on Sunday.

10-year plan for development

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Plan Bangladesh, an international NGO, has taken a 10-year plan for the development of socio-economic condition of the marginal and vulnerable people, in particular the children of Bangladesh. Edward Thomas Espey, country director of Plan Bangladesh, announced the 'Country Strategy Plan (CSP)' in the city on Thursday. The Plan will be implemented under four major areas, including enabling environment programme, community learning programme, community managed health programme and family economic security programme, says a press release. LGRD and Cooperatives Secretary AHM Abul Quasem inaugurated the 10-year plan as the chief guest while Michael Diamond, regional director of Plan Asia, was present as special guest.

Pollution exposure linked to childhood cancer

REUTERS, New York

Exposure soon after birth, or even before, to combustion gases and particularly engine exhaust, is strongly linked to the development of childhood cancers like leukemia, according to a report from the UK. 'These results confirm the relative proximities of child cancer births to substance-specific hotspots from oil-based emissions, and to industrial sites known to discharge such materials,' Dr. E. G. Knox, from the University of Birmingham, reports in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health. In the study, Dr. Knox linked emission hotspots for specific chemicals, from maps available on the Internet maps, to the birth addresses of children who later died from leukemia or other cancers before their 16th birthday.

An excess risk of childhood cancer was noted in hotspots for a variety of chemicals, including carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and 1,3-butadiene. Although many of the associations seemed to be artificial, an independent link with 1,3-butadiene and carbon monoxide remained. Knox notes that these chemicals, which are largely produced by engine exhausts, were powerful predictors of childhood cancer. For example, joint exposure to a nearby bus station and 1,3-butadiene raised the risk of cancer 12.6-fold. In terms of policy implications, the findings suggest that current atmospheric standards for 1,3-butadiene in workplaces may not be low enough to protect from childhood cancer, Knox points out.



Jubo Nagorik Odhikar Jote and Nagorik Udyog form a human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding first aid box in all vehicles to ensure safe journey of the passengers.

6 killed, 36 hurt in road mishaps

STAR REPORT

At least six people, including three women, were killed and 36 others injured in separate road accidents in Manikganj, Chittagong and Sirajganj yesterday. Our correspondent from Manikganj reports, three women were killed and 30 others injured, ten of them seriously, in a road accident on the Dhaka-Aricha highway at Joypura in Dhamrai upazila yesterday. The accident took place at around 12:15pm when a Gheor-bound passenger bus from Gabtali skidded off the road when it tried to save a motor cyclist and hit a roadside tree, killing three women on the spot and injuring 30 others. Of the dead, one was identified as Kulsum, 50, of Gheor in

Manikganj. Identities of the others could not be known immediately. The injured were admitted to Savar Enam Clinic, Rabeya Clinic, Dharmra Health Complex and Manikganj Sadar Hospital. CU Correspondent adds, two people, including a minor boy, were killed and another boy was injured in two separate road mishaps in the Chittagong city yesterday afternoon. The dead were identified as Mohammed Hossain, 7, son of Mohammed Solaiman of South Kattail and Zafar Ahmed, son of Aftab Gazi of Shershah Bangla Bazar. Police and witnesses said, the first accident occurred when a CNG-run auto-rickshaw knocked the two boys, Mohammad Hossain

and Zahid Hossain, from behind on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at the City Gate area under Pahartoli thana at around 1:00pm. The auto-rickshaw hit them when they were going to mosque to offer Juma prayers. They were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where Mohammed Hossain succumbed to his injuries at about 1:40pm. Police seized the auto-rickshaw while the driver managed to flee. A General Diary was lodged in this connection. In another accident one pedestrian, identified as Zafar Ahmed, was crushed between a truck and a bus at Bayezid Bostami Road near Sher Shah Colony under Bayezid Bostami thana at around 10:30am. Both the vehicles managed to flee. UNB from Sirajganj reports, a police constable was killed and five others were injured in a collision between a police van and a truck at the west end of the Jamuna Bridge early yesterday. Police said the van, carrying a police patrol team, collided with the truck at about 4:00am, killing constable Rezaul Huq, 40, on the spot. Of the injured, two were policemen and three others were passengers of the truck. All have been given first aid. The body was sent to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. Police seized the truck, but its driver and helper managed to escape.



Nuruiddin Mahmud Kamal, former chairman of Power Development Board (PDB), speaks at a roundtable on 'Energy security of Bangladesh' at the Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury and Prof Ahmed Kamal and on his left is Prof Badrul Imam. Samaj Rupantar Adhyayan Kendra, a civil society think tank, organised the roundtable.

Afghan refugees refuse to leave Pak camps

AFP, Peshawar

Thousands of Afghan refugees are defying orders to leave camps in Pakistan's tribal border region which are being closed because of security concerns, representatives said Thursday. Refugee leaders protested that they need at least two years to move out of the camps bordering Afghanistan's restive Kunar province which have provided shelter for more than 20 years to Afghans fleeing their war-torn homeland. 'We have set up businesses and purchased property during our stay since the early 1980s,' refugee leader Sher Muhammad said. 'To wind up the businesses and sell our properties we need at least two years to stay,' he said, calling on the government to review its decision.

Election fever grips Sri Lanka, but vote in the offing?

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka has all the symptoms of election fever: Billboards are pasted with party slogans and pictures of presidential hopefuls, political squabbling and rhetoric are reaching crescendo and ballots have been printed. But there's one small problem. No one will know for sure until later this month whether the next presidential race will be this year or in 2006. A bitter feud between President Chandrika Kumaratunga and her political foes has landed the issue in the Supreme Court, which must now decide when a vote should be held or leave it up to the elections commissioner, who normally determines the date. First elected president in 1994,

Kumaratunga argues her second and final six-year term should end in late 2006. But she went for re-election a year early, and the main opposition United National Party - a main challenger for the presidency -- says that means her second term ends this year. 'The election campaign is very much on,' said Prof. Emeritus Gerard Peiris of the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka's central hills. 'I can't think of any precedents of controversies like this being taken to the Supreme Court in Sri Lanka.' 'It's a very pathetic situation,' he added. Kumaratunga, whose father founded her ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party in the 1950s, says she took a secret oath in 2000 to reaffirm an official swearing in the previous year that her aides now

dismiss as ornamental. They maintain that under the constitution, the fact that she went for re-election early is irrelevant and that she is entitled to serve two full terms, a total of 12 years, from the time she was first elected. Sri Lanka's headline all-Buddhist monk party Jathika Hela Urumaya, which also plans to field a presidential candidate, has filed a fundamental rights petition with the Supreme Court arguing the poll should be this year. Kumaratunga's camp has nominated Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa as its candidate, and he will go head to head with United National Party leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, who was formerly Prime Minister, for the presidency. Election Mode

'We've already seen a couple of suspicious VAT reductions with populist design to bring down the cost of living, it seems with one eye on the elections rather than the economic good,' said Channa Amarantunga, an economist with Asia Securities. The raging political uncertainty is also deterring real investment in assets and projects in the 20 billion dollar economy, whose growth has already been straitjacketed by a two-decade civil war now in limbo thanks to a truce. But the Colombo bourse is unphased, up nearly 40 percent so far this year led by conglomerates, manufacturers, banks and telecom shares to become Asia's best-performing stock market as high local inflation relative to interest rates discourages invest-

ment in fixed-term assets. 'The equity market to some degree tends to ignore the political situation as long as it doesn't do too much immediate harm to the economy,' Amarantunga said. Diplomats and analysts say an election is the last thing that Sri Lanka needs at a time when tens of thousands of tsunami survivors are living on food handouts in cramped wooden shacks and concrete shelters. Their plight has already been compounded by a separate squabble over government plans to share 3 billion dollar worth of tsunami aid with Tamil Tiger rebels, and that issue is in the hands of the Supreme Court, too. The only consensus is that the timing and outcome of the next presidential race will be a close call and could go either way.

'2005 will favour Mahinda. I think he's got some momentum going,' said Rohan Edrisinha, a political analyst with the Centre for Policy Alternatives in Colombo. 'I think the UNP was banking on a bitter succession struggle.' '2006 might be advantageous for Ranil, because it gives more time for cracks to emerge in the group behind Mahinda,' he added. Elections Commissioner Dayananda Dissanayake blames his five heart attacks on pressures of the job and is keeping a low profile pending the Supreme Court decision. But his assistants say they have already printed postal ballots, suggesting he might call a poll this year if it falls to him.

WEATHER TODAY Rise in day temperature likely UNB, Dhaka Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over the country till 6:00pm today. Moderately heavy falls are also expected at places during the period, Met Office said. It said day temperature is likely to rise slightly over the country. Highest temperature 34.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Mongla and lowest 23.5 degree Celsius at Cox's Bazar. The sun sets in the capital at 6:34pm today and rises at 5:33am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.2	24.3	87	86
Chittagong	30.4	24.5	88	82
Rajshahi	32.3	27.2	91	84
Khulna	33.6	27.4	89	87
Barisal	32.2	26.4	92	93
Sylhet	31.5	27.3	93	90
Cox's Bazar	30.6	23.5	93	83

DHAKA TODAY Publication ceremony The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Textile Traditions of Bangladesh' published by National Crafts Council of Bangladesh will be held. Venue: Brac Centre. Time: 11:00am. View exchange meeting The City University and Neeti Gobeshona Kendra will hold a view exchange meeting on 'Role of MPs in local development: Some alternative proposals'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 10:00am. Seminar Lab-MS Khan Foundation will hold a seminar on 'Library Movement in Bangladesh: Past, present and future'. Venue: Central Public Library seminar hall. Time: 3:30pm. Training programme The Labour and Employment Ministry and Save the Children, Sweden-Denmark, organises a training programme on child rights project. Venue: Biam auditorium. Rotary Dhaka Karwan Bazar The regular weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka Karwan Bazar will be held. Venue: La Vinci Hotel, Karwan Bazar. Time: 6:00pm. Roundtable The Centre for Development Innovation and Practices organises a roundtable on 'Role of people in resisting food adulteration and protecting environment'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:30pm. Discussion The Bangabandhu Society will hold a discussion on 'Why Bangabandhu was assassinated?' to mark the 30th death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Venue: Institution of Engineers auditorium. Time: 4:00pm. Drama Kajana, a recitation organisation, will present two dramas based on 'Tota Kahini' and 'Dakghar' by poet Rabindranath Tagore. Venue: Natmandal, Dhaka University. Time: 7:00pm. BNWLA workshop Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) organises a dissemination workshop on the yearly study report titled 'Violence against women in Bangladesh-2004'. Venue: Bilia auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 4:00pm. PKSF seminar Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) organises a national seminar on 'Microfinance for hardcore poor: Opportunities and challenges'. Venue: IDB Bhaban auditorium. Seminar The Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) and Katalyst will hold a seminar on 'Impact of national budget on SMEs'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am. Painting exhibition 'Romance with nature', a 10-day painting exhibition by renowned painter KMA Quayyum, will begin. Venue: Saju Art Gallery, North Super Market, Gulshan. Time: 5:30pm.

Qulkhwani Qulkhwani of Mosammat Zohra Akhter Khatun, wife of late Golam Sattar Chowdhury of Barisal, will be held at the Sobhanbagh Masjid in the city at 5:00pm tomorrow (Sunday), says a press release. Relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the qulkhwani. Zohra, also mother of Prof Dr Khalil Chowdhury of the department of Geology of Jahangirnagar University, passed away due to cardiac arrest at the Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in the city on August 11 at the age of 83. She was laid to rest at the Mirpur Intellectuals Graveyard the same day. Death anniversary Today is the 6th death anniversary of late Nurunnahar Bhuiyan Nilu, wife of Mohammad Hossain Bhuiyan, Superintendent Engineer of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), says a press release. On the occasion, Qurankhwani and alms giving to the destitute will be held at the family residence at Mirpur, Paikpara in the city today. ASM Quamrul Huque Today is the eleventh death anniversary of ASM Quamrul Huque, former officer of the Bangladesh Railway, says a press release. On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at the Nikunja (North)- 2 Jam-e-Mosque in the city. Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the doa mahfil and pray for salvation of the departed soul. Tanvir Mahmud Rupak Today is the 6th death anniversary of Tanvir Mahmud Rupak, a student of class seven of Dhaka Residential Model School and College, says a press release. Rupak drowned in the pond of Qudrat-E-Khuda House of the college on this day in 1999. On the occasion, milad mahfils and memorial meetings will be held at Dhaka Residential Model School and College and at his village home at village Ranipur in Barguna district.