

# Next polls to be held under constitutional provision

## Khaleda tells banquet by Turkish PM

UNB, Ankara

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said next general election in Bangladesh is due in about eight months time when people will exercise their franchise under the constitutional provision.

"We've been able to put our democratic institutions on firm settings. We've a vibrant parliament, an independent judiciary, an accountable executive and a free press. The people remain at the centre of power," she said in her speech at a banquet hosted in her honour by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the PM's residence.

Khaleda said Bangladesh and Turkey are among the largest democracies in the world having majority Muslim populations. " Our common aspiration is to pursue a

path of moderation, tolerance and liberalism. Our common goals are peace, stability and development," she told the Turkish leaders and elite.

On terrorism, she said her government is opposed to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Recently, she said Bangladesh came under attack of a small group of misled militants who wanted to destabilise the country by abusing the good name of Islam. " My government has dealt with the issue in a firm and resolute manner."

Describing her visit to Turkey as truly historic, she said it commemorates 30 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between Dhaka and Ankara.

She said late president Ziaur Rahman's visit to Turkey in 1976 and '78 laid strong foundations of bilateral relations that have grown in

strength and dimension over the years.

Khaleda said the naming of an avenue in Ankara will remain as a milestone marking the solidarity and goodwill of the two fraternal peoples.

"Bangladesh's relationship with Turkey is special and unique," she said, adding that national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam was greatly inspired by the richness of Turkey's culture as many of his poems and songs are based on Turkish themes and tunes, including the immortal poem 'Kamal Pasha'.

Focusing on international arena, she said as members of the UN, OIC and D-8 Bangladesh and Turkey closely cooperate in all international forums to promote development, peace and stability worldwide.

OIC will gain momentum under the leadership of Turkey in safe-

guarding the interests of its members, she hoped.

About D-8 summit in Indonesia next month, she expressed her intention to attend the meet at Bali and hoped that the summit would be able to embark on a Plan of Action that will make the forum more focussed and action-oriented.

**SHAHEED ZIA AVENUE**

Earlier, Khaleda formally inaugurated Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Avenue in Ankara yesterday.

She, flanked by Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and Mayor in charge of Ankara City unveiled the plaque of the avenue named after late president Ziaur Rahman in the afternoon.

The Presidential Palace of Turkey is located on Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Avenue.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday demolishes all the makeshift bamboo structures on Dhanmondi playground which were illegally set up to hold a Baishakhhi fair.

## Structures at Dhanmondi playground demolished

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following reports published in The Daily Star yesterday, a demolition team of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) demolished all the makeshift bamboo structures on Dhanmondi playground which were illegally set-up to hold a Baishakhhi fair.

In the presence of about a dozen armed policemen, the DCC team, accompanied by Magistrate Nurul Alam and equipped with an excavator, demolished the structures. The structures were built after digging thousands of holes in the playground where children of Dhanmondi, Kathal Bagan and Kalabagan regularly play. Two officials of the DCC's Estate Department oversaw the demolition process.

The Dhanmondi club authorities defied a high court order and decided to hold the fair on the playground. The club authorities sold the right of use of the playground to a private firm for Tk 225,000. DCC's Estate Department is the custodian of the playground. The fair organisers had completed building nearly a hundred makeshift stalls and rented each for up to Tk 10,000 for the seven-day fair.

Chief Estate Officer Abu Taleb told The Daily Star Dhanmondi club itself is illegally occupying a part of the playground and the club officials built unauthorised structures.

Residents in the area yesterday expressed their relief at the DCC action but said the playground should be immediately repaired to avert accidents. Thousands of holes in the playground must be filled up with properly, they said. Nazma Akhtar, a resident of Road No 8, said throughout the city some unscrupulous people are occupying playgrounds to make some quick money at the cost of our children's mental and physical health.

"The authorities should send a message to these unscrupulous people that they would not be tolerated for such acts," she added.

# 'Allow women to take part in decision-making'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Empowerment of women will remain a far cry unless they are allowed to exercise their authority and actively participate in decision-making process, lawmakers and women leaders said at a dialogue yesterday.

Demanding an increase in the number of reserved seats for women in parliament and direct elections to those, they said women representatives both at national and local levels have little access to public welfare activities.

Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy (SPD), a project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organised the dialogue on 'Empowerment of women: Vision, policy and challenges' at a city hotel.

Criticising the amendment to the constitution with regard to reserved seats, Chief Whip of the Opposition Abdul Shahid said the way 45 women MPs were elected is nothing but an act of disregard for the political empowerment of women.

"They were given the political posts, but they cannot exercise their power," he said.

Consensus among political parties is needed to ensure women's empowerment, the Awami League lawmaker said, adding that no development would take place if gender discrimination continues to prevail in society.

Jatiya Party lawmaker Begum Raushan Ershad said true representation and empowerment of women depends on how much they can involve themselves in development activities.

If women MPs are not allowed to take part in development activities, there would not be any significant step towards women's empowerment even in 50 years, she said.

She also suggested creating 30 more constituencies from where women can be elected directly.

## Tribute paid to Syed Imtiaz

DU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers and students at a memorial meeting yesterday paid tribute to late Syed Imtiaz Ahmed, an assistant professor at the Department of International Relations, Dhaka University (DU).

Imtiaz was a very brilliant student, researcher and human rights activist, they said, adding that his untimely death is an irreparable loss to the university as well as the nation.

Social Science Faculty and the Department of International Relations jointly organised the meeting at DU.

Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof AFM Yusuf Haider, former DU Teachers' Association president Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Dean of social science faculty Prof Harun-or-Rashid, Dean of arts faculty Prof Sadrul Amin, Chairman of IR department Prof Amena Mohsin attended the meeting.

Prof Harun-or-Rashid said the social science faculty will publish a memorial book on Syed Imtiaz.

The IR department will also publish a book containing articles and other write-ups of Syed Imtiaz, which were published in national and international journals, said Prof Dr Imtiaz Ahmed.

## EWU seminar

East West University (EWU) holds a two-day international seminar on 'Passages: English Studies in the region' on its premises at Mohakhali in the city from April 15 to 16.

The seminar will focus on the exigencies of English studies pedagogy in South Asian region.

Professors of English from various universities of India, Pakistan, Malaysia and Bangladesh are expected to present papers at the seminar.



PHOTO: STAR

Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar speaks at the inaugural function of a dialogue titled 'Empowerment of Women: Vision, Policy and Challenges' at a hotel in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Prof ATM Obaidullah and Humaira Aziz.

Prof Dr Zarina Rahman Khan of Dhaka University said women Union Parishad members elected to the reserved seats have no specific role to play at the local level. So, they are no more interested in the UP elections.

If the political parties can stop the use of muscle power and black money in elections, women can play a greater role in the political arena, she said.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jono Foundation, said the country can achieve the Millennium Development Goals regarding primary and secondary education by 2015 through minimising the ratio of boys to girls.

She said development of women is not possible if implementation of women's empowerment issues in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is not monitored in consulta-

tive process.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar said Bangladesh has made significant progress in the field of women's empowerment compared to many other countries in South Asia.

"The number of reserved seats for women can be increased in future through consultations," he said.

Lawmakers Moazzem Hossain Alal, Mashur Rahman Ranga, Prof ATM Obaidullah of SPD Project, Humaira Aziz, member secretary of Parliamentary Caucus on Gender, and Nojibur Rahman, assistant resident representative of UNDP, also spoke at the session chaired by Begum Sarwari Rahman MP.

## Environmentalists demand release of Medha Patkar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists yesterday demanded immediate release of leading Indian environmentalist Medha Patkar, who has long been protesting against the construction of a dam on the Narmada river.

Expressing solidarity with 'Save Narmada Movement' leader Medha Patkar, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) formed a human chain in front of the National Museum in the city.

The Bapa leaders said she has been on hunger strike for the last 15 days in protest against the authorities' decision to raise the height of the dam from 110 to 121 metres and that her condition has been deteriorating alarmingly.

The move would displace 36,000 more families from nearby areas, they added.

The Indian government has arrested Medha Patkar and taken her to All India Institute of Medical Science in Delhi recently.

Medha Patkar also raised a strong voice against the construction of Tipaimukh dam, which would have negative impacts on Bangladesh, said Dr MA Matin, joint secretary of Bapa.

The speakers called on the Indian government to stop construction of Tipaimukh dam and cancel the river-linking project.

Most of the rivers in the country have already lost navigability as water flow from the upstream has declined, they said.

If the Tipaimukh dam is constructed on the Barak river, water level of Surma and Kushiara would go down to five feet even during the monsoon, they said.

Joint Secretary of Bapa Mihir Biswas, Dr Nuruddin of Sheba, Alamgir Kabir of Green Voice, Sharifuzzaman of Nagorik Sanghati, Mahidul Haque Khan of Bapa, Abdur Rashid Sabur of Angikar Bangladesh and Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan of Peshajibi Sangram Parishad also spoke.

## Cruise ship Sarina launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sarina, a luxurious cruise ship, has been launched to entertain local and foreign tourists.

At a press conference on the ship at Ashulia BIWTA landing station on Wednesday, Executive Director of Sarina Group Shahid Hamid said the ship is fully air-conditioned and equipped with modern facilities. It is capable of carrying 310 passengers.

"Bangladesh is known for its rivers and the ship has been put into service with a motto to sail for fun," he added.

Managing Director of the group Golam Sarwar said to ensure safety of the ship, seven watertight double bottom tanks have been added to its structural design.

Besides, radar and global positioning system (GPS) have been installed in the ship, he added.

Director of Sarina Group Neena Sarwar and General Manager of Sarina Cruise KS Alam were present at the press conference.

Initially the ship will sail on every Friday and Saturday on a seven-hour cruise from Ashulia landing station to river Padma and back.

The fare for adults and children under 12 has been fixed at Tk 2000 and Tk 1500 respectively. It is inclusive of morning and evening tea, coffee, cookies, buffet lunch and live cultural programme.

The ship will stay at BIWTA landing station every night to be used as floating restaurant for dinner.

Built at Western Marine Shipyard in Chittagong, the ship also sailed for two hours with guests on board to mark its launching ceremony.

## Govt not keen in reform talks: 14-party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of 14-party opposition combine led by Awami League (AL) yesterday said the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government is not interested in sitting for a dialogue over the proposed reforms in the caretaker government system and the Election Commission, and this is why they are dilly-dallying with the dialogue.

"Though we want to put an end to all sorts of problems through dialogue, the government is not interested in it," said AL acting general secretary Obaidul Quader at a meeting of the front organisations at AL central office on Bangabandhu Avenue.

The meeting was organised to discuss strategies for making the April 19 sit-in in front of the prime minister's office (PMO) a complete success.

Obaidul asked why the BNP's alliance could not give its Chairperson Khaleda Zia the mandate to nominate five of its members for dialogue when the 14-party combine could give mandate to AL President Sheikh Hasina to nominate five members from their side.

Presided over by Hasanul Haque Inu, the meeting was also addressed by Mukul Bose, Abdur Rahman, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Mofazzel Hossain Choudhury Maya, Habibur Rahman Siraj, Shirin Akter and Hazara Begum.

## One held with 7 lakh Indian rupees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The paramilitary BDR arrested a man for carrying foreign currency illegally here yesterday.

After Ali, 45, of village Rarai under the bordering Jakiganj upazila was on his way to Sylhet city in a passenger bus.

Acting on a tip-off, the BDR men of Amolshid Border out post searched the bus on Sylhet Jakiganj road and seized seven lakh Indian rupees and 97,000 Bangladesh Taka hidden in his body.

Later, the border guards handed over Aftar to the Jakiganj police.

Aftar is suspected to be a member of a money smuggling gang, the BDR said.

## 1st anniversary of Ananda Alo today

Ananda Alo, a fortnightly magazine published by Impress Telefilm Ltd., will celebrate its first anniversary today, says a press release.

The magazine, edited by Rezanur Rahman, was launched at Ramna Batamul on the Pahela Baishakh last year.

In the last one year, the magazine has published 25 issues. It covers every aspects of entertainment, including fashion, lifestyle, literature, travelling, cinema, television and sports.

A daylong programme marking the first anniversary of the magazine and welcoming the Bangla New Year will be held at its office today.

## Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Captain ML Rahman, a freedom fighter and mariner, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Chittagong Medical College Hospital on Monday at the age of 73.

While working as the chief of the then Commercial Naval Department in Chittagong, he actively took part in the liberation war.

After the liberation war, Captain ML Rahman also played an active role in rebuilding the war-ravaged country, says a press release.

# 'Govt bars journos to hide its link with militants'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is not allowing the journalists to talk with the arrested militant kingpins for fear of disclosing the links between the militants and its ministers and lawmakers, said the participants at 'Blue for Peace' programme in the city yesterday.

They said journalists were not given permission to meet with arrested militant kingpins Shaekh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai as Jamaat-e-Islami, a partner of four party alliance government, has

direct link with religious militants.

Under the programme, a human chain was formed in front of Abahani ground at Dhanmondi in the city demanding that the killers of all political leaders including former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria be brought to book.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association, said, " The arrest of Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai is not the success of the government. Rather, it is a victory of mass media that forced the government to nab the militants."

He said top militants were under the shelter of the government and it is clearly evident from the fact that the government leaders denied their existence saying they are the creation of media.

Arefin urged the opposition parties not to sit with the anti-liberation forces like Jamaat for the proposed reform talks.

Dr Reza Kibria, son of the slain former minister, demanded an international probe for finding out the masterminds of militants and killers of his father.

Wearing blue clothes, family members of Kibria, leaders of Awami League, Mahila Awami League, Bangladesh Chhatra League and civil society members took part in the programme.

Members of Aamra Muktioddhar Santan, Sonar Bangla Jubo Parisad and Bangabandhu Lalit Kala Academy were also present.

Kibria, also an AL lawmaker, was killed in a grenade attack at his hometown Habiganj on January 27, 2005.

## Leech found in vegetables dish at SCBA canteen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitation grew among lawyers of the Supreme Court after an advocate found a leech in a dish of vegetables at the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) canteen yesterday.

Advocate Rani Akhtar was shocked to find a leech in the dish of vegetables while having lunch at the canteen at noon.

The lawyers asked the association to take action against the leaseholder of the canteen.

The association leased out the canteen to a firm, Messers Doubles, for six months on an experimental basis, but it failed to provide quality service within the period.

The SCBA discussed the issue at an emergency meeting yesterday.



## 35th death anniversary of five martyrs tomorrow

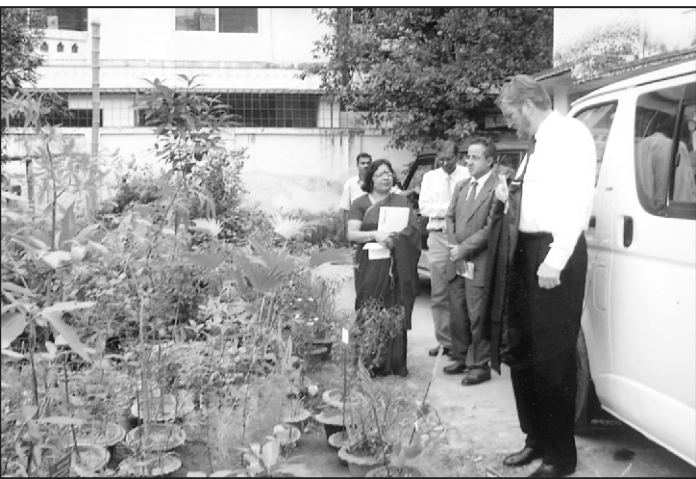
Tomorrow is the 35th death anniversary of five members of a family who were killed by the Pakistani occupation forces and their Bihari collaborators at Saidpur in Nilphamari, says a press release.

The martyred are Shaheed Engineer Fazlur Rahman, his wife Shaheed Hosne Akhter, an NGO trainer, sons Shaheed Mostafizur Rahman Moznu, a college student, Shaheed Hasinur Rahman Hiron, a school student, and Shaheed Azizur Rahman Babu, school student.

They were brutally killed at the Railway Government Residence in Saidpur on this day in 1971 for their involvement in the War of Liberation.

Hosne Akhter was buried alive after she was bayoneted, said her son Saidur Rahman in a press release. On the occasion, Qurankhwani will be held and foods will be distributed among the destitute.

All have been requested to pray for salvation of the departed souls.



A delegation of International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) led by Director General Dr J Gabriel Campbell and Deputy Director General Dr Madhav Karki visits Development of Biotechnology and Environment Conservation Centre (DEBTEC) in the city yesterday. DEBTEC Executive Director Dr Ferdousi Begum was present.

## BOAT CAPSIZE 6 more bodies found in Padma

A CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Six more bodies were recovered from the river Padma yesterday following the boat sinking on Tuesday.

The death toll has now risen to nine and two are still missing.

The dead recovered yesterday are identified as Bellal Hossain, Bacchu, Habib Pramanik, Yar Ali and Golap Malitha. A woman's body could not be identified.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Ishwardi Police Station Intezar Rahman, however, told this correspondent he has no information if anyone is still missing.

A boat sank in the Padma on Tuesday near Hardinge Bridge with 25 people on board as it was hit by a nor'wester. Bodies of three passengers were recovered on Wednesday.



## Anwara Syed wins Ananya Literary Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anwara Syed Haque, a noted novelist, has been awarded 'Ananya Literary Award 1413' for her outstanding contribution to Bangla literature.

The award will be handed over to the writer in October through a colourful function, says a press release of fortnightly Ananya.

The award includes cash worth Tk 50,000 and a crest.

Anwara, author of 14 novels and storybooks, is also a recipient of Agrani Bank Literary Award.

## Chehlum

Chehlum of Md Lal Mia, a retired police inspector, will be held at his village home at Unkut under Choudhagram Police Station in Comilla tomorrow, says a press release.

He passed away due to old age complications on March 16 at his residence at the age of 80.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the chehlum and pray for salvation of the departed soul.