

## FIFTH SAARC PEOPLES' FORUM BEGINS Ensure security, protect food sovereignty

### Speakers tell S Asian leaders

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN, from Tangail

The Fifth Saarc Peoples' Forum began at Delduar in Tangail yesterday, calling on South Asian leaders to work together to ensure security of the region and protect food sovereignty.

The forum, organised ahead of the 14th Saarc Summit to be held in New Delhi next month, also stressed the need to combat trafficking in women and children and strengthen cooperation between the big and small countries in the region.

Some 100 delegates from the Saarc countries attended the forum organised by South Asia Network on Food, Ecology and Culture (SANFEC), PANAR, SANTI, Resistance Network, Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN) and FTN Asia. UBINIG and Odhakar are the hosts of the programme.

Speakers at different sessions said food sovereignty is important for long-term benefits and sustain-

able development.

They also stressed the need to promote local seeds and indigenous knowledge and skills in order to ensure improved livelihood of the people.

The forum is likely to adopt a declaration to draw the attention of the Saarc leaders so that they take steps to ensure security of the people as well as food sovereignty of the South Asian countries, said Farhad Mazhar of Nayakrishi Andolon of UBINIG.

It will also adopt recommendations regarding the fight against human trafficking, he added.

"We are also concerned about the security of small countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. We think that the security of such countries should figure in the agenda of Saarc summit," he said.

Earlier, the three-day forum was inaugurated with Lalson song and by lighting candles.

Shree Ram Shrestha of SANFEC, Benu Gurung of Resistance Network, Gurinder Kaur of FTN Asia, Shalini Bhutani of Grain,

Sheikh Altafur Rahman of Santi, ASM Nasiruddin Elan of Odhakar and Farhad Mazhar addressed the inaugural function moderated by Farida Akhter of UBINIG.

After the inaugural session, Farida Akhter and Bhaskar Goswami briefed the participants on Saarc Peoples' Forum and highlighted the outcomes of the last forum.

Later, Shalini Bhutani and Farhad Mazhar spoke on 'Saarc and concerns of the Peoples of South Asia: Setting the Theme of Fifth Saarc Peoples' Forum'. Ranjit de Silva of Sri Lanka moderated the session.

Gurinder Kaur, Shree Ram Shrestha, Ranjit de Silva, Dr Qamar Mahiuddin and Dr MA Sobhan presented papers on agriculture and food sovereignty.

In another session, Shalini Bhutani, Bhaskar Goswami and Md Iqbal presented papers on 'Privatisation and corporate control of natural resources'.

A book titled 'Food Sovereignty and Uncultivated Biodiversity in South Asia' will be launched today.

## FFs exempted from N'ganj municipal taxes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Narayanganj Pourashava in a unique move yesterday decided to exempt municipal taxes on the houses of all the freedom fighters of the district forever in a bid to show respect to them.

They have also exempted municipal tax on the houses of the wives or family members of martyr freedom fighters.

Dr Selina Hayat Ivy, chairperson of Narayanganj Pourashava, disclosed this decision of Poura Parishad to the reporters yesterday.

She said following the government gazette and list provided by the Zila Muktiyoddha Sangsad about 200 names of the freedom fighters have been listed to exempt municipal taxes forever.

She also said those who fought outside the district during the Liberation War period and now live in the district also get the same facility if they contact with the Pourashava.

The Pourashava has also organised a reception to the freedom fighters on March 31 where the certificates of municipal tax exemption will be handed over to the freedom fighters formally.

Ivy said the Pourashava has taken the decision in a bid to show respect to the golden sons of the soil on the occasion of Independence Day.

## Seven joint secretaries transferred

UNB, Dhaka

The caretaker government yesterday transferred and gave new postings to seven joint secretaries to various ministries and government bodies as part of its ongoing reshuffle in the interim administration.

OSD (joint secretary) of Establishment Ministry Aslam Iqbal has been appointed joint secretary of Economic Relations Division while OSD (joint secretary) Mohammad Abdul Wahab joint secretary of Commerce Ministry and OSD Amleendu Mukharjee joint secretary of Finance Division.

Finance Division Joint Secretary Molla Munir Ahmed has been made OSD at the Establishment Ministry while Health and Family Welfare Ministry Joint Secretary Syed Mustafizur Rahman transferred to Home Ministry. Bangladesh Land Port Authority member (joint secretary) Abdus Sobhan Sikdar has been transferred to Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) as Director General and OSD (joint secretary) Md Ashraf Hossain to Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC), Savar, as Member, Directing Staff (MDS).

In the shake-up, Ansar and VDP Director General (deputed) Major General M Akbar Akter has been taken back to the Armed Forces Division.

## Drug dealers arrested in city hotel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Itab 3 captured a group of drug dealers from Hasan International Hotel at Motijheel in the city yesterday.

Tipped-off, Rab 3 team raided the hotel in disguise at around 3:20pm and arrested three drug dealers with 20 yaba tablets.

The arrestees were identified as Md Shariar Hossain Robin, 37, Md Alamgir Hossain Bip, 32, and Md Humayun Kabir, 45, according to a press release.

Upon their confession, the Rab team also recovered a private car that the criminals used to use to conduct their business in the city.

## Reading materials donated

The Book Group, a welfare organisation, recently donated reading materials to the Save the Children (Sweden-Denmark) for using at the non-formal education centres and child clubs conducted by the partner organisations of Save the Children, says a press release.

Syed Nazmul Abdal, executive director of The Book Group, handed over the materials styled 'Many men from many countries' to Kristine Zeuthen Jeppesen, acting country representative of Save the Children, at the country office of Save the Children on March 27.

The reading materials, financed by cellphone operator Aktel, have been being used in the educational programmes of several NGOs for the last three years.

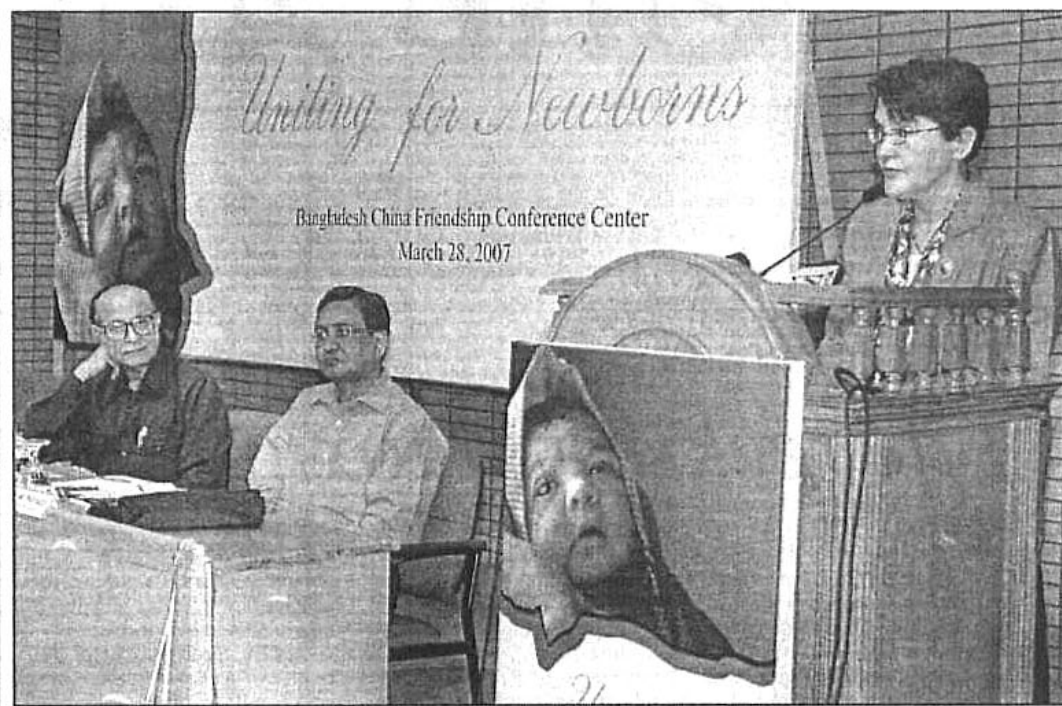


PHOTO: STAR

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis speaks at a conference on 'Uniting for Newborns' at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday. Save the Children USA organised the event.

## Bangladesh fifth among 10 highest newborn death-prone countries

### 1.53 lakh children die every year in country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a conference yesterday expressed concern over the huge number of child mortality in the country.

It is estimated that 1,53,000 children die every year that puts Bangladesh in the fifth position among the 10 highest newborn death-prone countries, according to 'State of the World's Mothers 2006' report by Save the Children (SC), USA that also shows that 50 per cent of the babies die within the first 24 hours of life.

In developing countries like Bangladesh 36 per cent children die due to infection, 27 per cent owing to complications from premature birth and 23 per cent for birth asphyxia and other complications.

Research shows that these numbers could be drastically reduced if 90 per cent of mothers and babies in Bangladesh had access to an essential package of health measures, including antibiotics to fight infections, immunisations for tetanus, skilled birth attendance, education on breastfeeding and essential care for newborns.

SC, USA organised the conference titled 'Uniting for newborns' at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city with a view to raising awareness about the state of neonatal health in Bangladesh.

On the occasion, SC, USA also launched a campaign of distribution of knit baby caps that represents a simple solution that the provision of warmth can significantly contribute to the survival of newborns in Bangladesh.

In the welcome speech, SC Deputy Country Director Anuradha Harinarayan said a baby cap which helps keep newborns warm symbolises one of the simple solutions in a package of health measures that can save many young lives.

Prof Md Shahidullah, general secretary of Bangladesh Perinatal Society, in his speech said the incidents of neonatal death are very high that accounts for 41 per cent in one thousand.

Fifty per cent of them die within the first 24 hours and nearly 80 per cent die within the first seven days after birth, he explained.

"Many of the deaths occur due to preventable causes that can be avoided with the intervention of low cost effective and simple newborn care," he added.

National Professor Dr MR Khan said saving life of newborn babies does not require interventions of resources and high technology, only cap keeps them warm protecting the lives from diseases like hypothermia.

Speaking as chief guest, Ehsanul-Fatah, secretary to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, said Bangladesh has made significant progress in improving the maternal and child health situation over the past 20 years through innovative programmes, including emergency obstetric care and EPI.

However, the secretary stressed the need for focusing on reducing newborn deaths by half by the year 2015 in order to achieve child mortality goal of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis and SC Country Director Kelly Stevenson also spoke on the occasion.

## Two zebras, 2 wildebeests released at Dulahazra Safari Park

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two Zebras and two wildebeests were released at Dulahazra Safari Park in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

They were released in the African Safari one of the four special enclosures inside the only Safari park in the country.

The new guests arrived here by a cargo flight from Africa with the help of Falcon Traders, sources said.

Safari Park Project Director Dr Tapan Kumar Dey, who released the animals in the park, said the zebras and wildebeests, also available at the Zoo in Dhaka, are mainly seen in Savannah and bare forests of the countries located in the eastern part of Africa.

These animals live on grass and move in herds in places near the water-bodies, said Dr Tapan.

They have an average lifespan of 25 to 30 years and give birth to a calf every year, he added.

So far a total of 119 animals and birds of different species, out of the 157 animals rescued by the Department of Forest with the help of joint forces from different areas of the country in the last two months, were released in Dulahazra Safari Park.

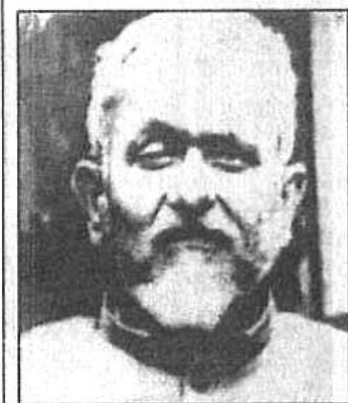
Meanwhile, sources said, the park authorities achieved some success in reproduction process of birds and animals of rare species they have in the park.

A good number of animals like crocodile, tortoise, shamber deer, hog-deer, garal, black bear, hippopotamus and rare species of birds gave birth to their offspring in the park.

The authorities also claimed to have continued the programme of releasing the reproduced animals and birds of the park to different forests in the country.

But, with the arrival of a huge number of new guests, particularly those rescued from different areas of the country, the park authorities now lack sufficient fund required to feed them, said the sources.

The park authorities already informed the ministry concerned for environment and forest of the matter through the Chief Conservator of Forest (CCF) and called for necessary steps in this regard, added the sources.



## Principal Ibrahim Khan's 29th death anniversary today

Today is the 29th death anniversary of Principal Ibrahim Khan, a renowned litterateur, educationist and a social reformer, says a press release.

On the occasion, recitation from the holy Quran, doa mahfil and destitute feeding will be held in Dhaka and Tangail today. Ibrahim Khan Foundation will also distribute scholarships among poor and meritorious students at Ibrahim Khan University College at Tangail.

Bangladesh Writers' Association will also hold a doa mahfil at 73, Dhanmondi, Road 8/A in the city at 4:00pm tomorrow.

Principal Ibrahim Khan actively participated in Khelafat Andolon, Asohojog Andolon and Rayet Mohajon Birodhol Andolon.

He was elected as the member of the Provincial Assembly in 1945 and Constituent Assembly in 1953 respectively. In 1962, he was elected as a member of the national assembly (MNA).

## Farah Amena Rashid

Today is the seventh death anniversary of Farah Amena Rashid, only daughter of Engineer Mamun Rashid, says a press release.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani and doa mahfil will be held at the Wapda orphanage at Motijheel in the city. Foods will also be distributed among the destitute.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of BAF Shaheen English Medium School perform at a cultural function of the school at Shaheen College auditorium in the city yesterday.

## Certificate award ceremony of BAF SEMS held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The annual cultural function and certificate award ceremony-2007 of BAF Shaheen English Medium School (SEMS) was held at the Shaheen College auditorium in the city yesterday.

The school also celebrated 15 years of academic excellence and quality education.

Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Fakhru Azam, who was present as the chief guest, gave away awards and crests among the students.

Principal of the school Syeda Nasrin Akhter was also present.

Eight meritorious students were awarded Chief of the Air Staff Crest for their outstanding results in 'O' level exams held in 2006-07 session.

Four teachers were also honoured for their contribution.

The prize giving ceremony was followed by a cultural programme where the students recited poems, rendered songs and performed dance numbers. They also staged a play titled 'Cinderella'.

## Five get life for murder in Sirajganj

UNB, Sirajganj

A court here yesterday sentenced five people to life term imprisonment in a murder case.

The lifers are Majid Mollah, Makhani, Azhar, Sattar and Abdus Sobhan.

They were also fined Tk 5,000 each, in default, to suffer one year RI more.

The convicts were present on the dock when Additional District and Sessions Judge Rafi Imam pronounced the verdict.

The court also acquitted four others as the charges brought against them were not proved. According to the prosecution, the convicts hacked Siraj Sardar to death at Gopinathpur village in Shahjadpur upazila on October 29, 1999.

After examining records and witnesses, the judge handed down the verdict.

# WEATHER TODAY

## Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 36.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chittagong and Jessore and lowest 15.5 degree Celsius at Simongal and Chuadanga.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:13pm today and rises at 5:53am 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	34.9	20.0	33	24
Chittagong	36.0	21.5	44	42
Rajshahi	34.7	17.0	77	30
Khulna	35.0	18.0	60	41
Barisal	35.2	18.5	70	54
Sylhet	35.7	19.4	44	36
Cox's Bazar	35.2	22.8	67	64

## Turkish envoy meets foreign affairs adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Turkish Ambassador Ferit Ergin met Foreign Affairs Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at his office in the city yesterday and appreciated the government for its steps.

During the meeting, the Turkish envoy handed over a letter of Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer for President Iajuddin Ahmed, and another letter of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan for Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed.

He also handed over a letter of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul to the foreign adviser.

## Time of book fair extended

Liberation War Museum authorities have extended the time of weeklong book fair till March 31, says a press release.

The book fair was organised to mark the 11th founding anniversary of Liberation War Museum and National Independence Day.

The fair will be open to all from 10:00am to 8:00pm.

# DHAKA TODAY

### Dialogue

Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) and Onneyshan will jointly organise a dialogue on Urban-poor in Bangladesh: Their contributions and gains. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

### Anniversary celebration

Somoy... organises a three-day 'Shadhinata o Sahitya Utsab' to celebrate its founding anniversary beginning today. Venue: Plaza AR. Time: 5:00pm.

### Seminar

Renaissance Consultants Limited in association with KATALYST and bdjobs.com will organise a seminar on 'Human resources development and management interventions required for supporting the growth of the ICT industry'. Venue: Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 3:00pm.

### Prize distribution ceremony

Transcom Electronics Limited will organise a prize distribution ceremony for its retailers. Venue: Hotel Imperial International. Time: 6:00pm.

### Memorial meeting

Bangla Academy organises a memorial meeting to pay tribute to its fellow Mohammad Saidur. Venue: Academy seminar room. Time: 11:00am.

### Seminar

Disaster Management Bureau and UNDP will jointly organise a seminar on 'Ensure fire safety at home and workplace'. Venue: Hotel Abakash. Time: 10:00am.

### Science Fair

Saint Jude's School will organise 'Annual Science Fair 2007'. Venue: School campus. Time: 9:00am.

### Annual sports

The annual sports and prize giving ceremony of Silverdale Preparatory and Girls' High School will be held. Venue: School premises. Time: 2:30pm.

### Int'l Theatre Day

Russian Centre of Science and Culture organises a programme marking the International Theatre Day. Venue: Centre auditorium. Time: 5:00pm.

### Seminar

North South University (NSU) organises a seminar on 'Emerging epidemic of bird flu in Bangladesh'. Venue: NSU campus. Time: 3:00pm.