

OIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE BEGINS TOMORROW
Dhaka to press for reducing economic disparity
Iftekhar tells journos

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will press for reducing the rich-poor economic disparity in the Muslim world at the Islamabad conference of the foreign ministers of the OIC countries, beginning tomorrow.

Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, who leaves for Pakistan today to attend the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), yesterday said Bangladesh would press for reducing the economic disparity between the rich and poor member-states of the Organisation of Islamic Conferences (OIC), apart from important political issues.

Talking to reporters at the Foreign Ministry, he said although

OIC usually discusses political issues, it should also focus on economic development of the member-states.

"A group of eminent personalities could be formed to make recommendation for cooperation to increase trade and economic development of the poor member-states."

The advisor spoke of Dhaka's proposition that development projects in poverty alleviation, health and education could be undertaken in poor countries with the assistance of the Islamic Development Bank, which is now showing interest in such activities.

Dhaka will also renew support to the establishment of Islamic

Common Market to increase trade among the forum's member-countries.

The adviser said issues of Palestine and Iraq would be discussed at the three-day conference in the Pakistan capital.

In reply to a question, he said the longstanding Palestine problem could be resolved with establishment of an independent state of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. If the core issue of Palestine is resolved, the other issues in the Middle East could be settled as well, he observed.

On Iraq, Chowdhury, who had long served as Bangladesh's permanent representative to the United Nations, said the Iraqi people should be allowed to find

on their own the solution of their problems. He avoided a reply whether Dhaka wants pullout of the multinational forces from the war-ravaged Iraq.

On the sidelines of the ICFM, the foreign adviser will meet his counterparts from OIC countries, including the host Pakistan.

The adviser of the caretaker government said he would discuss with his Pakistani counterpart how to reactivate the Foreign Office Consultation to discuss bilateral issues between Dhaka and Islamabad.

There had not been any such consultation since 2005.

The adviser will return home on May 20.



PHOTO: PDB
Newly appointed Public Service Commission (PSC) Chairman Dr Sa'dat Hossain makes a courtesy call on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

Select eligible candidates for public admin
President tells PSC chairman

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed asked the PSC to perform its duties more sincerely to select eligible, meritorious and brilliant candidates for government jobs so that country's public administration can face the challenges of the new millennium.

"It should be ensured that country's public administration would be able to face the challenge of the 21st century," Iajuddin said

when the newly appointed chairman of the Public Service Commission (PSC) of Bangladesh Dr Sa'dat Hossain made a courtesy call on him at Bangabhaban yesterday.

The PSC chairman assured the president that his commission would work with honesty, sincerity and neutrality to appoint meritorious, skilled and promising officials, keeping the vital organisation "above all controversies".

Iajuddin heard him attentively and assured him all-out cooperation in doing his new assignment.

Dr Sa'dat Hossain, the immediate-past cabinet secretary, was assigned to the onerous job by the caretaker government in the process of reconstituting the service commission in the wake of allegations of massive malpractice in recruiting government officers through the BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) exams.



PHOTO: AL
Former lawmaker Zahid Hasan Russel greets Awami League President Sheikh Hasina with a bouquet at her Dhanmondi office in the city yesterday on the occasion of the International Mother's Day.

Clampdown on recruiting agencies to have negative impact

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A delegation of overseas manpower recruiting agencies yesterday expressed grave concern over the 'unnecessary clampdown' on the manpower agencies, saying it will have negative impact on the manpower business.

The issues came up when the delegation met Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, adviser to the ministries of foreign affairs and expatriates' welfare and overseas employment, at his foreign ministry office in the city.

The delegation also urged the government to make the passport

offices free of hassle and corruption and speed up the passport issuance process.

The recruiting agents include former Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) leaders Mosharraf Hossain, Minhaz Uddin Ahmed, Mohammad Faruk, Sobhan Bhuiyan, Ali Haider Chowdhury, Mohammad Abul Bashar, Reazul Islam, Abdul Alim, Mohammad Jahangir and Dr JH Gazi.

"We asked the adviser to take legal actions if there are proven allegations against any agency, but not to harass the innocent agencies," said a manpower agent who was in the delegation.

He said a trend has been observed among the law enforcing agencies that whatever the manpower businesses do is illegal. "They must change this apathetic attitude."

The authorities introduced E-ticketing, but many members of the law enforcing agencies do not understand it, which is why they do not allow entry of the travellers to the airport, he said.

The member of the delegation said police clearance for the passport takes too long and the hassle people face at the passport office is unbearable.

He said the delegation proposed to the government if Baira, as an institution, can have the authority to renew passports and change the professions in the passports of the overseas job seekers to reduce the hassle of the workers, as they need to do it very often.

The representatives of the recruiting agencies also demanded amendment to the emigration ordinance, saying that in the present regulations there is no provision allowing the recruiting agencies to preserve passports of others.

"But for genuine purposes, the agencies have to keep passports of the overseas job seekers," he said quoting the discussions at the meeting.

The delegation also urged the adviser to reduce unnecessary regulations in the ministries regarding issuing clearances to the job demand letters.

In response to the delegation's concerns, Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury assured that the government would not harass genuine businessmen.

"We shall consider the matters, but everything must be done under a framework," said another member of the delegation quoting the adviser as saying.

Cops confine journo for 4 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A reporter of an English daily was allegedly kept confined to Jatrahari Police Station in the city for about four hours yesterday over the assault of the driver of a CNG-run three-wheeler by a traffic police.

Esaraf Hossain Esa, crime reporter of The News Today, said he was kept confined to police station from 10:00am to 2:00pm following an argument with Police Sergeant Emdad Hossain over the incident.

The driver was held by a traffic constable for parking his vehicle illegally near Maniknagar intersection at 9:30am.

He was assaulted as he delayed in giving the papers as demanded by the constable.

At this a crowd gathered there and Esa requested the constable to let the driver go.

Soon three sergeants reached the spot resulting a heated argument between Esa and Emdad.

Upon this Esa was taken to police station.

He also alleged that Jasimuddin Ahmed, joint commissioner of traffic police, threatened him using abusive words over land phone during his confinement.

Jasimuddin however denied the allegation and said, "Esa was taken to police station on charge of beating and misbehaving with a traffic constable."

Meanwhile, a press release of the Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh (CRAB) demanded punishment to law enforcers including Jasimuddin for their involvement in the incident.

TORTURE OF STUDENT
Removal of principal demanded

RU CORRESPONDENT

Parents of a schoolboy yesterday demanded immediate removal of the principal of Rajshahi Adventists International Mission School as he physically tortured their son.

Hundreds of guardians, human rights activists and NGO workers at a press conference at a city restaurant also demanded exemplary punishment to the responsible school principal.

Student's mother Advocate Asfia Zebin Rinku alleged that school principal physically tortured her son Shardin Shalin for a little excuse and threatened him that if he tells his parents about this, he will be further beaten.

Due to torture, the student was seriously injured.

After the incident, the guardian submitted a written complaint against the principal to the president of Adventists Union Mission.

She also alleged that the principal violated child rights act and showed inhuman behaviour, adding that after the complaint the principal sent police to harass father of the student.

At the press conference, the guardians and human rights activists vowed to launch a social movement against the principal if he is not withdrawn from the school within seven days.

They also decided that they would submit separate memorandums to education adviser and Rajshahi police commissioner mentioning the misrule and dictatorial behaviour of the principal.

Human rights organisation ACD director Salima Sarwar and other guardians were also present at the press conference.

When contacted, School Principal Stiffen Gomej told reporters that the student was punished for his fault.

Expedite overhauling of closed power generation units
Adviser asks PDB officials

UNB, Dhaka

As the country is passing through electricity crisis, Power and Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury in a meeting with the power plant managers yesterday directed them to expedite the overhauling and maintenance works of a host of electricity-generation units.

According to a Power Development Board (PDB) report, at present, a total of 16 generation units at different power stations across the country, having about 900MW capacity, are now laid under maintenance, rehabilitation and overhauling programmes.

The closed units include Ghorasal two 55 MW units, Ashuganj Unit-1 and 5, Shikabaha Steam turbine, Haripur Unit-1, 2

and 3, 20 MW Sylhet, Shahjibazar Unit-4, 8 and 9, Khulna 60 MW and 110 MW units, Khulna 110 MW KPCL and Baghabari Westmont 90 MW.

The power adviser's directive came at a time when the country has been experiencing a severe power crisis as the generation shortages crossed 1,500 megawatts against a demand for more than 5,000 megawatts.

The meeting was also attended by Power Secretary AKM Zafullah Khan, Commandant of the Military Institute for Science and Technology Major General Abdul Wadud and PDB Chairman Khijir Khan.

Tapan Chowdhury asked the officials of power ministry and the power stations to give top priority on expediting the ongoing maintenance and overhauling of the power plants.

The works have to be completed as per schedule. "No negligence or unnecessary delay will be tolerated," he warned the concerned officials.

He hoped that the power-supply situation would significantly improve if the closed generation units came back into generation after the maintenance exercise.

Meeting sources said the adviser directed the officials of the private-sector Baghabari Westmont power plant to take measures for immediate commissioning of their under-implementation 45MW unit.

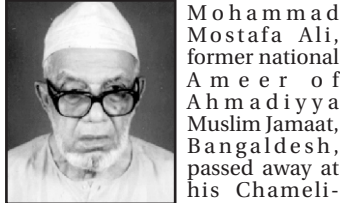
He also asked the Power Ministry and PDB officials to extend cooperation in expediting the installation job of the 45MW unit.

He left behind his five daughters, two sons and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Mostafa was also chief editor of agriculture-based magazine "Krishikatha."

He was laid to rest at his family graveyard at Tarua village of Brahmanbaria after second janaza yesterday.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh at Bakshibazar in the capital in the morning.



M o h a m m a d Mostafa Ali, former national A m e e r o f A h m a d i y y a Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh, passed away at his Chameli-bagh residence in the city on May 12, says a press release.

Include provision for maternity allowance in coming budget
Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should include the provision for maternity allowance in the forthcoming budget, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

"If a poor country like Bangladesh can successfully run the safety net project for helping the elderly people and widows, maternity allowance is not beyond our reach," said renowned economist and Unnoyon Somonnoy Chairman Dr Atiur Rahman.

He said although this time the budget is not in the hands of any elected government, people still want their demands to be reflected in it.

The seminar titled 'Maternity allowance to implement the PRSP' was organised by the Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP) at the Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs auditorium.

Dr Abu Jamil Faisal, country representative of Engender Health, presented the keynote speech at the seminar.

He laid emphasis on including the maternity allowance scheme in the budget as per the study report of a pilot project.

The study, done at seven upazilas in six divisions across the country, showed 20 hard-core poor women received the allowance and of them 89.47 per cent mothers had access to anti-natal care (ANC) and 80 per cent took the post-natal care (PNC).

Besides, 80 per cent women, who gave birth at home, were attended by skilled birth attendants.

The study also revealed that about 40 per cent women have access to ANC, 15 per cent to PNC while 11.5 per cent got skilled birth attendant across the country.

Besides, 66 per cent children of these mothers attained standard weight completing EPI course that would save them from child hood diseases, it added.

Speaking as chief guest at the seminar M Hafizuddin Khan, former adviser to caretaker government, said since Bangladesh is now moving towards one-child family, the allowance should be given only for the first baby.

ASM Shahjahan, another former adviser to caretaker government, said since the study proved that maternity allowance can empower women and can play a significant role in reducing maternal mortality, the government should include the provision in this budget.

Former secretary Dr Kazi Mesbahuddin, Dr Umme Salma, and researcher Dr Khorsed Alam also spoke on the occasion.

Meanwhile, DORP has already submitted memorandum to Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed and Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam in this regard.

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Arrest-panic grips RU Shibir, JCD leaders

RU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and activists of Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) of 11 halls of Rajshahi University (RU) are passing days amid arrest-panic.

The panic gripped them as the joint forces raided different dormitories two times in the last week to hunt down 'listed' activists of ICS and JCD, who violated state of emergency by taking part in processions and distributing leaflets on the campus criticising the caretaker government.

Meanwhile, many resident students of different dormitories have left the campus fearing further raids by the joint forces.

Some students of Bangabandhu hall alleged that police also interrogated general students during the raids.

Students also alleged that police in their latest raid on May 9 on two dormitories arrested at least nine general students who do not have any political involvement. However, they were freed on bail next day, Motihar Police Stations said.

University authorities have approved raids by the joint forces on any dormitory to maintain law and order at the university.

Admitting general students' harassment due to hall raids by police members, RU Proctor Enamul Haque told The Daily Star that we had a discussion with the police on the issue. We requested them to be more careful so that general students are not harassed when the raids are conducted, he added.

Police and intelligence branches recently prepared a list of leaders and activists of ICS and JCD who violated the state of emergency and who have criminal records, sources said.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Chittagong, Barisal and Sylhet divisions and one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Khulna divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

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

Highest temperature 36.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sitakunda and lowest 21.1 degree Celsius at Chuadanga.

The sun sets in the capital at 6.33pm today and rises at 5:16am 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	35.7	23.3	62	44
Chittagong	34.5	26.3	63	66
Rajshahi	35.3	21.8	76	68
Khulna	36.0	22.8	73	49
Barisal	35.0	25.0	68	67
Sylhet	35.0	25.6	73	58
Cox's Bazar	24.5	26.1	69	82



PHOTO: STAR
President of Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Selima Ahmed speaks at a seminar on 'Budget aspiration of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh' at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On her right is Selina Kader while on her left is Sangeeta Ahmed. (Story on Page 8)

Ceiling fan fall injures 2 girls at HSC exam hall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two examinees were injured when a ceiling fan fell on them while they were appearing at the English 2nd paper exam of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination at Doniya University College Centre at Jatrabari in the city yesterday.

The examinees were identified as Irin Akhter, 18, and Fayzun Nahar, 18, students of Konapara Rokeya Hasan College.

Officials at the exam centre rushed the girls to Al Baraka Hospital where the injured received first aid.

DAG Adil resigns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Adilur Rahman Khan has resigned from his post.

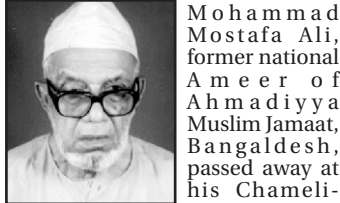
When contacted last evening, Advocate Adil admitted that he submitted his resignation letter to the attorney general on Thursday. However he or any one from the Attorney General (AG) Office did not disclose reasons behind his resignation.

Previous BNP-Jamaat led four-party alliance government appointed Adil as one of the DAGs.

AG Office sources said more than 110 DAGs and Assistant AGs have now been working and all of them were appointed during the alliance government regime under political consideration.

There is an allegation that many of them are not even competent enough to serve as law officers of the government.

Obituary



M o h a m m a d Mostafa Ali, former national A m e e r o f A h m a d i y y a Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh, passed away at his Chameli-bagh residence in the city on May 12, says a press release.

Abdul Baten Bir Pratik

BSS, Rangpur

Abdul Baten Bir Pratik, a valiant freedom fighter, died of old age complications at Rangpur Medical College Hospital on Saturday morning at the age of 62.

He was survived by his wife, three sons, two daughters and a host of relatives and admirers.

He was buried with a state honour at his family graveyard at Chit Laksmanpur village in Badarganj upazila following a namaj-e-janaza yesterday afternoon.

Local and political leaders, socio-cultural activists, teachers and local Muktojiddha Sangsad leaders expressed deep shock at the death of Abdul Baten.

They prayed for salvation of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Fakrul Islam Khan

BSS, Barisal

Renowned journalist Fakrul Islam Khan died of old age complications at Lalmatia in Dhaka on Saturday at the age of 86.

He was the youngest son of former minister M Hasem Ali Khan.

Fakrul Islam was founder editor of the 'Daily Niketon'. He also founded 'Natyia Niketon', a cultural organisation.

He left behind his wife, one son and two daughters.

He was buried at Muslim Graveyard after a namaj-e-janaza in front of Aswini Kumar Town Hall last night.

Barisal City Corporation Mayor Mujibur Rahman Sanwar prayed for salvation of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

M Shahabuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

M Shahabuddin, the headmaster of Champaful Acharya Profullo Chandra Bidyapith, passed away due to old age complications yesterday at the age of 83.

He left behind his eight sons and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He will be buried at his family graveyard at Champaful village at Kaliganj in Satkhira after namaz-e-janaza at 10:00am today.