



Hasina's 61st birthday today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina steps into her 61st year today.

The party will celebrate the day in a low-key manner as Hasina has been detained since July 16 on charges of corruption.

Special prayers will be arranged on the occasion.

For the first time in her life, Hasina, the eldest daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib, will observe the day in the jail.

Some relatives of Hasina will meet her at the special jail on the Jatiya Sangshad Bhaban premises to wish her birthday.

"According to the rules, three to four relatives could meet her today," said DIG (Prison) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui. Responding to a query, he told The Daily Star that there is scope to celebrate birthday in the jail.

"Leaders and workers of her party might give flowers, but considering security threats we will take decision on whether we will give those to her or not," said the DIG (Prison).

AL will organise a milad mahfil at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Museum at Road No 32 at Dhanmondi in the city seeking Hasina's release and wishing her vibrant health and long life.

AL acting president Zillur Rahman and acting general secretary Mukul Bose urged all to pray for her release on the eve of her birthday.

Hasina who was born at Tungipara in Gopalganj on this day in 1947 was elected president of the AL at a council session of the party in February 1981 while she was in exile. She returned home on May 17, 1981.

Hasina led the AL to power and became the prime minister of Bangladesh in June 1996, two decades after Bangabandhu along with other family members and relatives was assassinated in August 1975.

In 1968, Hasina married eminent nuclear scientist M Wazed Miah. They have a son and a daughter.

The AL chief escaped an assassination attempt on August 21 in 2004 when a rally of her party came under grenade attacks in the capital that left 24 leaders and activists dead.

Different front organisations of the AL, including its student organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League will also organise milad mahfil on the occasion.

Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Prajanma League organised a milad and iftar mahfil at Zillur's Gulshan residence to mark the day.

Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Ainjibi Parishad will also hold a discussion and doa mahfil.

EC DIALOGUE

LDP, JSD discuss common stance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury-led Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) yesterday had a meeting with Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD). The meeting was the first of a sequence of meetings with different political parties aiming to form a political convention ahead of the next general elections and to have a unified stance during dialogues with the Election Commission (EC).

"We talked about different issues including political reforms and dialogue with the Election Commission and we also discussed about a common stance in this regard," JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu told reporters after meeting the LDP leaders.

"We sat to discuss whether we could have a unified strategy to stop the use of black money and religion in the elections," Inu said.

"We also discussed taking a common stance, demanding disqualification of war criminals and anti-liberation war forces in the election," the JSD president added.

"Prof Chowdhury urged different political parties to be united in bringing a new trend in politics and today's meeting is part of this effort," LDP Secretary General Maj (ret'd) MA Mannan told reporters yesterday.

About the LDP's ongoing dialogue with different political parties, Mannan said, "We will talk with all political parties but we are not thinking about Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP."

LDP will organise a meeting at the Sheraton Hotel in Dhaka on October 8. Leaders of different political leaders are expected to attend the meeting, LDP party sources said.

LDP Secretary General MA Mannan yesterday told reporters that the meeting is going to be organised as part of Badruddoza's call to political parties to form national unity.

Free flow of information can curb corruption

Says ACC chief

UNB, Dhaka

Free flow of information can be a strong weapon in curbing corruption, Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury said yesterday and hoped that the government would take measures to establish the right to information.

He, however, said that only the right to information could not check corruption in a society where the "root of corruption has reached the deepest level."

The ACC chairman was addressing a roundtable titled 'Good Governance and Right to Information' as chief guest at the LGED auditorium in the city. Former adviser to the caretaker government Advocate Sultana Kamal was the special guest at the function.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), Ain O Shalish Kendra, BNNRC, D-Net, Mass-line Media Centre (MMC) and Manusher Jonno Foundation jointly organised the discussion marking the 'International Right to Know Day'.

Hasan Mashhud expressed the hope that the government would take necessary measures to establish the people's right to information. "The people expect that they will have this right soon," he said.

About the much-talked issue of disclosing the defence budget, he said, "Nothing big will be found if it is made public. Around 90 percent of the budget are allocated for salary purpose... but I personally believe any budget should be made public."

Sultana Kamal said information is also a responsibility. "We can't expect responsibility from an unformed society... good governance, responsibility and accountability won't be there unless there is free flow of information," she said.

It's the government's responsibility to disclose the resources of the country and how these are being spent, the former adviser said, adding that the government is bound to publish the information.

Associate professor of Dhaka University Robayet Ferdous presented a keynote paper titled 'Role of right to information in ensuring

good governance: Challenge and opportunities'.

TIB Trustee Board Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad presided over the function moderated by TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman.

Speakers at the roundtable said the existing Official Secrets Acts and rules should be updated and misuse of these should be prevented.

They also observed that free flow of information should be ensured and people would have to come out from the culture of privacy and involve themselves in a large number in the movement for the right to information.

Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of The Bangladesh Observer, Prof Asif Nazrul and Dr Golam Rahman of Dhaka University, Governance coordinator of Manusher Jonno Foundation Sanjida Sobhan and Executive Director of Democracy Watch Taley Rahman also spoke.



TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman speaks at a roundtable at the LGED auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left are TIB Trustee M Hafizuddin Khan, ACC Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury and TIB Trustee Board Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad.

PHOTO: STAR

\$271m Brac commitment to education

\$221m to be spent in Bangladesh

Fazle Hasan Abed, founder and chairperson of Brac, yesterday announced \$271 million for providing education to 7.5 million children and youth in Asia and Africa over the next five years, says a press release.

The commitment was made on the first day of the three-day Clinton Global Initiative annual meeting in New York, which bring together global leaders from different fields to address the world's most pressing problems.

Brac has partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the NoVo Foundation and Brac USA to mobilise resources and provide a continuum of innovative educational opportunities for the poor children, especially girls, in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Tanzania, Uganda and Southern Sudan.

The programme is expected to reach 7.5 million beneficiaries through pre-primary, non-formal primary and secondary schooling as well as skills training and undergraduate and advanced degrees relevant to the needs of developing countries.

Brac will spend \$51.8 million in 2008 and build up to \$271 million by

2012, of which \$221m will be spent in Bangladesh, \$21 million in Afghanistan, \$12 million in Uganda, \$11 million in Southern Sudan and \$6 million in Tanzania.

"We feel that it is vitally important that children experience meaningful learning and enjoy education for their well-being and the future of their countries", Abed said.

"We need to focus on the next generation and invest in them to create sustainable foundations for growth, poverty alleviation and peace".

In Bangladesh, over 1.5 million children are currently enrolled in Brac's over 20,000 pre-primary and 32,000 primary schools, and nearly 4 million children have already graduated. Brac also runs over 8000 adolescent development centres and more than 1400 community libraries.

Abed will be presented with the first Clinton Global Citizen Award today, the second day of the annual meet, by former US president Bill Clinton.

US BNP protests cases against Tarique, his wife, mother-in-law

STAR REPORT

BNP front organisations in the USA yesterday protested the cases Anti-Corruption Commission filed against detained BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, his wife Dr Zubaida Rahman and mother-in-law Iqbalmand Banu.

The organisations include BNP-USA wing, Tarique Mukti Antorjatik Andolon, Khaleda Zia Mukti Antorjatik Andolon (international movements for releasing Khaleda and Tarique), reported News World from New York yesterday.

The leaders of the fronts in their statements said the present government is engaged in a conspiracy to make Bangladesh an ineffective state by destroying the traditional family of the late president Ziaur Rahman, Bangladeshi nationalism, multiparty democracy, Islamic values and by putting the patriotic army against people.

The statement issued by the front organisations said false and fabricated cases are being filed against the Zia family members to create a vacuum in the leadership of BNP and there is also a conspiracy of imposing wholesale blames on the politicians in the name of curbing corruption.

They also threatened the government of waging an international movement if the cases against Khaleda Zia, her son Tarique Rahman and other members of the family are not withdrawn.

Signatories to the statement include BNP USA wing's Senior Vice President Alhaj Sulaiman Bhuiyan, General Secretary Zillur Rahman Zillu, Khaleda Zia Mukti Antorjatik Andolon Coordinator Hashem Bulbul, member secretary Belal Mahmud, Tarique Mukti Antorjatik Parishad coordinators Sharafat Hossain Babu and Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury Dollar, Jubo Dal US President Zakir H Chowdhury, general secretary Abu Sayeed Ahmed, Chhatra Dal US wing's Convener Arif Hossain Mithun and member secretary Ataur Rahman Tota, News World reports.

DV 2009

Applications to be accepted Oct 3-Dec 2

Applications for the 2009 Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery will be accepted between noon Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) (GMT-4) (10:00pm Bangladesh Time) on October 3 and noon Eastern Standard Time (EST) (GMT-5) (11:00pm Bangladesh Time) on December 2, says a press release.

Applicants may access the electronic Diversity Visa entry form at www.dvlottery.state.gov during the registration period. Paper entries will not be accepted. Applicants are strongly encouraged not to wait until the last week of the registration period to enter. Heavy demand may result in website delays. No entries will be accepted after noon EST (11:00pm Bangladesh Time) on December 2.

The congressionally mandated Diversity Immigrant Visa Programme is administered on an annual basis by the Department of State and conducted under the terms of Section 203(c) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). Section 203(c) of the INA provides a maximum of up to 55,000 Diversity Visas (DV) each fiscal year to be made available to persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

The annual DV programme makes diversity immigrant visas available to persons meeting the simple, but strict, eligibility requirements. A computer-generated random lottery drawing chooses selectees for diversity visas.

The visas, however, are distributed among six geographic regions with a greater number of visas going to regions with lower rates of immigration, and with no visas going to nationals of countries sending more than 50,000 immigrants to the United States over the period of the past five years. Within each region, no one country may receive more than seven percent of the available Diversity Visas in any one year.

The Diversity Visa application instructions in Bangla are available on the Embassy's website at dhaka.usembassy.gov.

Committee to make suggestions to strengthen local govt bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has formed a seven-member committee to make realistic recommendations on strengthening the local government institutions and injecting dynamism into their activities, a government notification yesterday said.

The committee, to be headed by former secretary Dr AMM Shawkat Ali, will place its suggestions to the government within three months of its formation, the notice said.

The government pinpointed 18 areas for the committee to delve into and said the body may accept, if necessary, advice on any related issues from individuals and experts.

The notification said the committee has been formed in line with constitutional obligations and the wishes of the people.

The body will make recommendations, among other things, on the local government institutions' administrative structure, ensuring fund flow for them, their manpower structure and capacity building and formulation of election modalities.

It will also see how local bodies might plan for women empowerment and define their relationship with the central government.

Professor Syed Gias Uddin Ahmed of public administration department at Dhaka University, Prof Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Sujon, Professor Dilara Choudhury of government and politics department at Jahangirnagar University, president of Bangladesh Municipal Chairmen Association and president of Bangladesh Union Parishad Chairmen Association will be members of the committee.

Joint Secretary (Development) at Local Government Department, Mizanur Rahman, will act as the member secretary of the committee.

SUST admission tests Dec 12-13

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Admission tests for the first year honours classes of 2007-2008 academic year at all the departments of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) will be held on December 12 and 13, an official said.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the SUST academic council yesterday with Vice-Chancellor Prof M Aminul Islam in the chair.

Application forms will be available from November 4-29 and needs to be submitted within November 29.



PHOTO: PID

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed holds talks with Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmed Badawi on the sidelines of 62nd UN General Assembly session at the UN headquarters in New York on Wednesday. (Story on Page 1)

Call to provide equal opportunities for girls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday stressed the need to provide equal opportunities for girl children in order to ensure their rights.

Women start facing discriminations soon after their birth and continue to do so throughout their life, they said and called on the government and non-government organisations and civil society members to work together to establish their rights.

The National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Nari Moitree and Ministry of Women and Children Affairs jointly organised the press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium to mark the National Day for Girl Child.

The National Day for Girl Child will be observed on September 30 with the theme 'We want opportunities, not obstacles; we shall win the world'.

In his keynote paper, Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, president of the Girl Child Advocacy Forum, said girl children are still facing discriminations and various forms of violence in society, although every child has equal rights.

The girl children are deprived of proper education and the main reason behind the dropout of girls is early marriage, he said.

He called on all to work together to help girl children become self-reliant.

Speaking as the chief guest, Women and Children Affairs Adviser Geetiara Safiya Choudhury said women account for about 50 percent

of the total population and that no development of the country will take place unless they become self-reliant.

Girl children should be given equal opportunities to make them self-reliant, she said, adding that women can do many things if they are given equal opportunities.

She called on all to treat boys and girls equally for the overall development of the nation.

She also called on the media to highlight positive issues relating to the rights of women.

Mushfeqa Iqfat, chairman of Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Rokeya Sultana, secretary of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and Shahin Akter Doly, executive president of Nari Moitree, also spoke.

To mark the National Day for Girl Child, the Girl Child Advocacy Forum will hold an art competition at Bangladesh Shishu Academy at 11:00am today and bring out a rally from Public Library premises on September 30 at 8:30am.

The forum will also arrange a discussion on the same day at the Shishu Academy at 10:30am and will organise a debate competition on October 5 at the Shishu Academy at 10:30am.

Strengthen UP for sustainable dev

Speakers tell view exchange meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Strengthen union parishad (UP) for sustainable development at grassroots level, said the speakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday.

They said the UP will have to be made free from the influence of bureaucratic control so that it can function independently.

The meeting on 'The role of union parishad in providing service: People's expectation and present situation' was organised by Democracywatch at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

The speakers suggested that measures should be taken for depoliticisation of the union parishad.

They also stressed the need for increasing skill of UP chairman and members because people's expectation from them is increasing every-day.

Mahbubul Alam, former adviser to caretaker government and editor of The Independent, said the union parishad cannot be strengthened without being freed from bureaucratic control.

"The budget of the UP should be allocated from parliament and measurers should be taken to make the UP free from bureaucratic control.

Besides, the skill of the UP representatives will have to be increased," he said while addressing the meeting as chief guest.

Alam said the UP should be depoliticised so that honest and active people can be elected as UP chairman and members.

Dr Taibur Rahman, chairman of development studies at Dhaka University, said accountability of UP chairman and members is very important so that people can repose confidence in them.

"At the same time, the salary and other facilities of the UP representatives should be increased," he said while presenting the keynote paper.

Taleya Rehman, executive director of Democracywatch, said empowerment of the UP is urgently needed to ensure development at the grassroots level.

Journalist Ataus Samad, Dr Salahuddin Aminuzzaman, Dr Amirul Islam Chowdhury, Prof M Mohabbat, Tahrunnesa Abdullah and Dr Tofail Ahmed also spoke at the meeting.



No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

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

Highest temperature 34.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and Madaripur and lowest 24.4 degree Celsius at Srimongal and Majidee Court.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:49pm today and rises at 5:49am 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	
Dhaka	33.8	26.6	71
Chittagong	31.2	26.0	73
Rajshahi	32.5	25.5	89
Khulna	32.8	26.5	80
Barisal	33.0	26.0	74
Sylhet	34.0	25.4	81
Cox's Bazar	32.7	26.0	83

Bangladesh has chance of setting new trend of enduring democracy

Says British envoy

UNB, Dhaka

British High Commissioner in Dhaka Anwar Choudhury yesterday said Bangladesh has got a chance of setting a new trend of enduring democracy through a free and credible election.

"I see the country is at the transition, at a crossroad" that may take it to the road of fast growing Asian economies like Kuala Lumpur.

The envoy made the remarks at an iftar party at Dhaka Club hosted by the Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA), Bangladesh.

Choudhury said Bangladesh has great potential and the country could be taken to a new height in next 10 years with vision and determination of the people.

He said Britain feel proud of Bangladesh being a democracy, but there are challenges that could be overcome through concerted efforts by all.

Referring to common values among the Commonwealth countries, the envoy said language, tolerance, democracy, human rights and the freedom of expression bind the members of the commonwealth together.

He said members of the CJA could project those values in correct perspectives to attain common goals and common benefits.

The High Commissioner said Britain is going to launch a 100 million dollar English Learning Project for students from 2009 so they can have access to modern education and technology.

Earlier, CJA Global President Hassan Shahriar gave a brief resume on the activities of the CJA. Mizanur Rahman Shelly, chairman of Centre for Development Research Bangladesh, and CJA Bangladesh President Farid Hossain also spoke on the occasion.

Editors and senior journalists attended the iftar and exchanged views on present political developments in Bangladesh.

2 prisoners die at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two prisoners, including a woman, of the Central Jail died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

The jail police rushed Mamtaz Begum, 45, wife of late Jamal Uddin of Debidar in Comilla, to DMCH at 8:00am yesterday where the attending doctors declared her dead.

Meanwhile, jail police took Mohon Mondol, 47, hailing from Chaudanga, to DMCH on Wednesday due to illness, jail sources said.

He died at 12:30pm yesterday. Both the bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Two jailed for producing adulterated ghee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday sentenced two owners of a food products factory in the city to seven years' imprisonment for producing and selling adulterated ghee.

Haji Nazrul Islam and his brother Haji Abdul Jabbar, owners of Jamil Chemical and Foods Products Limited Industries, were also fined Tk 2.5 lakh each. If they fail to pay, they will have to serve three more years in jail.

The court also fined factory Manager Mohammad Jamshed Tk 2.5 lakh. If he fails to pay, he will have to serve three years in jail.

The mobile court led by Magistrate Rokon-ud-Doula found 15 maunds of adulterated ghee, 2,000 cartons of adulterated dalda and vegetable oil and around 2,000 cartons of adulterated mosquito coil and Neem tooth powder in the factory at North Rayherbagh in Jatrahari.



Discussion

Samajtantrik Mahila Forum will hold a discussion to mark the 75th anniversary of the self-sacrificing of Preetelata Waddadar. Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

Chittagong Journalists' Forum Dhaka (CJFD) organises a roundtable titled 'The importance of speedy rail communications between Dhaka and Chittagong'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:30pm.

Founding anniversary

Phulkuri Asar organises a daylong programme to celebrate its 33rd founding anniversary. Venue: Public Library auditorium. Time: 9:30am.

Roundtable

Campaign on Citizen's Right to Information organises a roundtable on development and investment agreements. Venue: National Press Club. Time:

10:00am.

Discussion

Ideal Thinks Association will hold a discussion titled 'Ways to develop democracy'. Venue: Hotel Sundarban. Time: 3:30pm.

Right to Information Day

A three-day International Right to Information Day Celebration will begin. Venue: LGED auditorium. Time: 9:30am.

Art competition

National Girl Child Advocacy Forum organises a children's art competition to mark the National Girl Child Day. Venue: Bangladesh Shishu Academy. Time: 11:00am.</