



Cherie Blair joins AUW as patron

Congratulates Hasina

METRO DESK

Cherie Booth Blair, QC, a prominent international human rights advocate, lawyer and wife of former British prime minister Tony Blair, has written to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to congratulate her on her recent landslide victory in the parliamentary elections, says a press release.

"Your election as prime minister has stirred great hopes of a renewal of democracy and people's empowerment in your country. I sincerely hope that it will also fuel a new era in progressive economic and social development," she wrote.

Cherie Blair, who recently founded the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, has joined the Council of Patrons for the Asian University for Women (AUW).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina serves as the university's Chief Patron.

In the message to Hasina, Cherie Blair said: "I understand that the initiative to establish the Asian University for Women began during your earlier tenure as prime minister. I am delighted by the enormous support that successive governments in Bangladesh have extended to this most worthwhile project. I passionately believe that women's empowerment through education and expanded economic and civic opportunities are the key to the transformation of our societies. The Asian University for Women is clearly a much needed effort in this direction. It will be my pleasure to join you as a Patron of this university and help in every way I can."

She also indicated to the prime minister her plans to visit the university later this year.

In the meantime, Cherie Blair has become actively involved in rallying international support for the Asian University for Women.

On April 17, she will join the Asian University for Women Chairman Jack Meyer and AUW Patron Madame Ansar Chah, former Administrator of Hong Kong, in Hong Kong to urge philanthropists to support the creation of AUW in an expression of Pan-Asian solidarity.

Hong Kong's philanthropists have been among AUW's most generous benefactors, including generous support of AUW's permanent campus in Chittagong, now under development.

HC asks govt to allow Jamaat leader Razzaq to go abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to allow Jamaat-e-Islami Assistant Secretary General Barrister Abdur Razzaq to go to Malaysia to visit his daughter there and to return home.

An HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui also issued a rule on the government to show cause as to why its action of preventing the Jamaat leader from leaving the country should not be declared unconstitutional and without lawful authority.

The home secretary, the inspector general of the police, the director general of immigration and passport office and the officer-in-charge (OC) of the Airport Police Station have been asked to reply within two weeks.

The order came following a writ petition filed by Abdur Razzaq challenging the legality of the immigration authorities' action of preventing him from leaving the country on March 7.

In his petition, Razzaq stated that the immigration authorities intercepted him at the airport at 11:00pm on March 7 and did not allow him to go to Malaysia without showing any reason. His daughter is studying in Malaysia.

Barrister Ajmalul Hossain argued for the petitioner, saying that the petitioner is not wanted in any criminal case.

Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Razik Al Jalil appeared for the state.

INT'L WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATED

Vow to work together to build violence-free society

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Not only women, but also men in large number joined the International Women's Day celebrations across the country yesterday to express solidarity with women and vowed to work together to build a society free from violence and repression.

The global theme of the day this year is 'Women and men united to end violence against women and girls.'

Various socio-cultural organisations held rallies, discussions, human chain and cultural function to mark the day.

In a statement yesterday, Unicef Executive Director Ann M Veneman said men and boys have a significant role to play in ending violence against women.

"One important way to make this happen is to institute programmes and activities that educate men and boys to take responsibility and to abandon the attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence," Ann added.

At a discussion at the Ramna Park, State Minister for Labour and Employment Monnujan Sufian said that women have advanced much in our society, but they still need

to go a long way to build a strong position for them.

The National Girl Child Advocacy Forum organised the discussion where the speakers urged all to change their mindset so that violence against women is no longer be considered a normal incident.

They also demanded equal wage for men and women, equal rights to property, restoration of the Women's Development Policy of 1997, political empowerment of women and evaluation of women's contribution to the national economy through their domestic work.

Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP) in collaboration with Manusher Jono Foundation organised a discussion at IDB Bhaban auditorium in the city.

The speakers at the discussion emphasised the need for mutual understanding between men and women in order to establish women's rights in the country.

Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, president of Bangladesh Economic Association, said women have advanced much in society, but the number of incidents of repression on them has not declined.

He called for changes in the mindset to build a participatory society based on equality, which can address the women's issues.

Wahida Banu, chairperson of Shishu Adhikar Forum, called for launching community-based safety net programme by elected public representatives.

Advocate Sanjida Khanam and M Hafizuddin Khan, chairman of DORP, also spoke.

At another programme, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) demanded immediate distribution of Tk 20 crore allocated for working mothers of poor households.

Bangladesh Human Rights Commission and its 600 branches marked the day with different programmes across the country.

Under the banner of Samajik Protirodh Committee, a total of 52 human rights and development organisations took part in a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar celebrating the day.

At the rally, the leaders said women should be appointed at the higher level of the administration, in embassies and United Nations agencies.

They also called for steps to ensure that 33 percent of the

posts in political parties are held by women.

Around 1500 students of 60 educational institutions took part in a programme, organised by the Steps Towards Development at Ramna Park, and made a commitment to put an end to eve teasing and boycott the teasers.

Nari Unnayan Shakti (Women's Power for Development) observed the day with discussions and cultural programmes in 22 places, including Dhaka, Barisal, Chittagong and Noakhali.

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) in a discussion stressed the need to implement the policy to check sexual harassment in the educational institutions and workplaces.

Leaders of the Karmojibi Nari demanded women-friendly environment in workplaces and implementation of CEDAW and the National Women Development Policy.

Project for Rural Area Development and Improvement of Poor formed a human chain in front of the National Museum in the city and placed a nine-point demand, including ensuring women's social security.

Samajtantrik Mahila Forum, Gonosanghati Andolon, Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, National Garment Workers Federation, Garments Sramik Kendra, Bangladesh Garments Worker Unity Council, Banchte Shekho Nari, Jatiya Gonotantrik League, Bangladesh Nari Mukti Andolon, Bangladesh Kissan Shava, Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh and Participatory Development Action Programm also held discussions and rallies.

Bangladesh Sanjukt Workers Women Commission, Shramajibi Kalyan Samity, Garment Workers Unity Forum, Biplobi Nari Sanghati, Concerned Women for Family Development and abc radio also organised various programmes.

Department of Women and Gender Studies of Dhaka University also took out a procession on the campus, led by Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddiqui.



PHOTO: STAR

Samajik Protirodh Committee takes out a procession from the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday to mark the International Women's Day.

Van puller stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of a rickshaw-van puller from the city's Agargaon area early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Mohammad Soheli, 22, who used to carry vegetable to Karwan Bazar by his van.

Police said they found the body with several stab marks in his chest and neck nearby a road in Agargaon Battala area at around 3:00am and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Acting on a tip-off, the policemen also arrested a youth named Liton from the area yesterday afternoon, they added.

Quoting Liton, Officer-in-Charge of Tejgaon Police Station Litfur Rahman said a group of five people, including Soheli and Liton, went to Agargaon area.

But, they locked into a brawl there. At one stage, the arrestee stabbed Soheli, he added.

Separate CID team to check call records of BDR suspects

Two mutiny suspects on remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has formed a separate team to check up the call records of suspected BDR members in connection with the carnage at BDR headquarters on February 25-26.

The CID team led by an inspector was also assigned to monitor some of the phones of the suspects, a CID official seeking anonymity said, adding that like the CID, all the intelligence agencies are also checking the call lists and monitoring the records individually.

The CID team started its activities yesterday, sources said.

CID investigators are also verifying whether the outsiders took part in the massacre. So, they have been checking the call records of some of the suspected BDR personnel keeping in mind the involvement of outsiders.

In this regard, the CID has assigned one of its teams led by

an inspector to verify and monitor call records of the suspected BDR personnel.

When asked, Senior Assistant Police Super (ASP) of CID Abdul Kahar Akond, who is leading the investigation declined to make any comment, saying: "Until our investigation reaches a certain stage, we cannot make any comment on the involvement of outsiders."

Meanwhile, two more mutiny suspects were taken on a five-day remand yesterday for CID interrogation.

Metropolitan Magistrate Abdur Rahim passed the remand order after arrested BDR Nayek-Subedar Wali Ullah, 23, and Sepoy Al Masum, 33, were produced before the court for a 10-day remand.

Besides, 92 BDR men of different ranks and status were also shown arrested yesterday in the BDR mutiny case filed by Officer-in-Charge of Lalbagh Police Station Naboyoti Khisha on February 28.

In the forwarding report, ASP Akond mentioned that the two in connivance with others killed a large number of BDR officials, including its DG Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed during the two-day mutiny.

So, they need to be remanded to find out their accomplices involved in the killings and looting valuables from the headquarters, he added.

The other 92 suspected mutineers shown arrested in the case were arrested from Ashulia and Darussalam areas on February 27 after they went into hiding.

Later, they were shown arrested under section 54 of the criminal procedure code (CrPC) and sent to jail after being produced before the CMM Court of Dhaka.

Earlier, six others, including prime accused DAD Syed Taubidul Alam, were placed on remand for questioning.

Talking to The Daily Star, the ASP said, "Our investigation is going on fruitfully."

Replying to another question, he said the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) members are yet to meet them.

Bid to attack Nurul Kabir's car condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty eminent citizens yesterday expressed grave concern over the attempt of attack on the car of the New Age Editor Nurul Kabir by unknown armed motorbike riders on Thursday.

Nurul Kabir, however, was not in the car at that time.

In a statement, they said some vested quarter is behind the incident.

"Threat to the life of Nurul Kabir is a threat to the freedom of entire media and democracy," read the statement.

Signatories to the statement include Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Ghulam Rabbani, Kamal Lohani, Badruddin Umar, Hasan Azizul Haque, Syed Abdul Maksud, Engineer Sheikh Muhammad Shahidullah, Anu Muhammad and Rehnuma Ahmed, says a press release.

Meanwhile, Odhikar, a non-government organisation, in a statement called on the government to ensure the safety of Nurul Kabir, also an adviser to the NGO, and members of his family.

Kabir's driver Mohammad Mehedi Hasan Al Mamun Nazib filed a general diary with Khilkhet Police Station in this regard on Friday.

In the diary, Nazib said he was headed for Nurul Kabir's house at Uttara on the Airport Road at around 10:00pm. As he passed the Bishwa Road crossing at Khilkhet, three young men, wearing helmets, on a motorcycle, chased the car and waved at the driver to pull over. Nazib, however, could manage to dodge the motorcycles after taking several turns at Uttara and entering a house.

Gana Sanghati Andolon in a statement also condemned the incident.

"Attack on Nurul Kabir is an attack on the freedom of expression," it read.



PHOTO: BNP

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia speaks at a press conference at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

REVIEW OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

Meet ends without decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Strategy and Action Plan Committee on Climate Change held a meeting yesterday to review the 'Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2008' but could not decide whether it needs any changes.

"We are going to sit again this month. The committee could not take any decision as some members were not present at the meeting," said Environment Secretary ASM Rezaul Kabir, a member of the committee.

The meeting was held at the ministry of environment and forest in the city. Planning Minister AK Khandakar heads the committee.

The action plan is the country's major policy document outlining necessary tasks to be accomplished in the next one decade to offset the impacts of climate change.

As per the action plan, 10 billion dollars will be spent on development, awareness and research projects during the 2009-2018 period with a view to minimising the adverse impacts of climate change.

The present government has decided to review the action plan before its implementation as there has been criticism of it.

Experts said the action plan was prepared in a hurry without

proper needs assessments and without consulting the communities affected by the climate change.

The document should be reviewed properly at the national level and recommendations of experts be included in it, they added.

"The document was prepared virtually by a single consultant hired by a donor agency. The people were not consulted and suggestions of non-government organisations working on the issue were ignored during the preparation of the action plan," said a climate change expert, seeking anonymity.

He pointed out that the Action Plan-2008 has not said anything about the migration of climate refugees. Besides, it has no directions on what should be the country's stance on the issue at regional level, he added.

Correction

The headline of a story on a seminar titled 'Gender sensitive ad making: Our expectations and responsibilities' published on Page 2 in The Daily Star yesterday, should read 'Presentation of gender insensitive commercial ads criticised.' We apologise for the inadvertent mistake.

Army captain's death in hotel still shrouded in mystery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mystery behind the death of army captain SM Rajibul Huq Himel, whose body was recovered from the city's Razmoli Isa Khan Hotel on Saturday, is yet to be unearthed.

Police said they could not ascertain whether it was a suicide or a killing.

Sub-Inspector (SI) of Ramna police station Imtiaz Kabir told The Daily Star that they are waiting for the autopsy report from Dhaka Medical College (DMC) morgue to know the reason behind the death.

Police are trying to find out the reason why captain Himel hid his name and address while checking in the hotel, he said.

DMC morgue sources said there were stab injuries to both his wrists and his heels, knees and face bones were found broken.

SI Imtiaz said captain Himel checked in the hotel in disguise of a trader identifying himself Istiak Ahmed of Halishahar of Chittagong hiding his city's Shantinagar address.

While contacted Himel's cousin Khurshid Nur Alam Tamal said Himel was sched-

uled to go to Bogra by bus from Rajarbagh bus counter at 12:00 noon on Saturday.

"Himel asked the driver of his private car, carrying him for Rajarbagh bus counter from his Shantinagar residence about 11:30 am on the day, to go back leaving him at Rajmoni Isa Khan Hotel instead of the counter," Tamal said.

Police recovered the body of the captain from the garage of the hotel in the evening though he checked in room No. 903 on its ninth floor.

Himel had been participating in a training programme at Bogra cantonment since last January after he was posted at Khulahati in Rangpur cantonment. He came to Dhaka to visit his ailing mother at his weekend, family sources said.

Meanwhile, Ramna police detained a young woman from Shantinagar in the city yesterday afternoon for interrogation in connection with the death of the army officer.

The police said she had a relationship with Captain Himel. She works with a mobile phone company.

BDR mutiny plot to unseat govt: Matia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury yesterday said the BDR mutiny on February 25 was plotted in a bid to unseat the Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance government.

She was addressing a discussion at the city's Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh.

AL's youth front Jubo League organised the discussion marking Bangabandhu's historic speech on March 7, 1971 with Jubo League Chairman and State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak in the chair.

Matia also alleged that the audiotape of the recent talks between prime minister and the army officers has been edited to spread propaganda.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam urged all to stop mud sliding at this crucial juncture and sought cooperation from all political parties in bringing the culprits responsible for the BDR mutiny to justice.

Journalist and columnist Gaffer Chowdhury observed that there are enemies of Sheikh Hasina both in and outside her party. He urged her to find out those "enemies" immediately and take actions against them.

President of Dhaka University Teachers' Association Dr Bazul Haque, Bangabandhu's press secretary Aminul Haque Badsha and Jubo League General Secretary and Whip of the Treasury Bench in Parliament Mirza Azam also spoke.

Gender and development book fair begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gender and development book fair began at Shilpakala Academy in the city yesterday on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid inaugurated the three-day book fair showcasing books on gender issues to raise awareness about gender equality.

The US government has sponsored the fair.

Different NGOs working for women, embassies and publishing houses are taking part in the fair with books on various issues concerning women.

At the programme, US Ambassador James F Moriarty honoured former adviser to the caretaker government Rasheda K Chowdhury for her selection as the US Embassy's nominee for the Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award.

The ambassador presented Rasheda with a certificate from the US Department of State that recognises her as an 'International Woman of Courage.'

Speaking on the occasion, the ambassador said continued social and professional progress requires the active participation of women in all aspects of life.

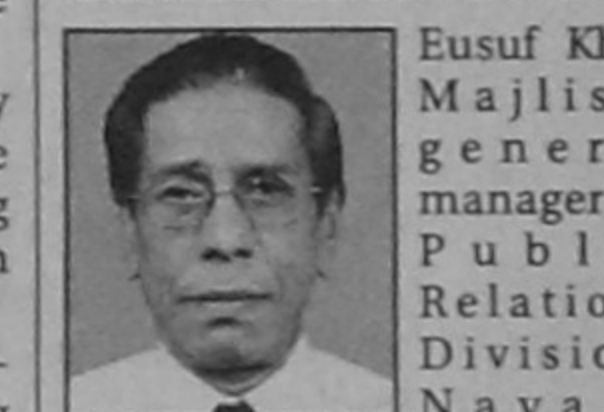
Statistics show when women are educated and involved in important family decisions, their children are better educated, he said.

The ambassador also expressed deep condolence to those who lost their loved ones in the mutiny at BDR Headquarters last week.

The book fair will end tomorrow.

Obituary

METRO DESK



Group, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at United Hospital in the city on Friday at the age of 63, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, three sons and host of relatives to mourn his death.

He was buried at Shahjahanpur graveyard after namaz-e-janaza.

His kulkhwan will be held after Asr prayers tomorrow at 421, North Shahjahanpur in the city. Relatives and admirers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

DHAKA TODAY

Discussion

International Organisation for Migration organises a discussion on women's political empowerment to celebrate the International Women's Day. Venue: Shilpakala Academy auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

Lecture

Prof Ramakanta Chakrabarty, general secretary of the Asiatic Society, West Bengal, India will deliver AKM Azizul Haq and Husniara Huq Trust Fund Lecture 2009 on 'Chaitanya's Bhakti Movement: Its nature and socio-cultural consequences'. Venue: Asiatic Society auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Discussion

A discussion will be held marking the 60th birth anniversary of Bir Shrestha Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir. Venue: Liberation War auditorium. Time: 3:30pm.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

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

The sun sets in the capital at 6:05pm today and rises at 6:12am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 36.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Ishwardi and lowest 15.0 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

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	35.0	20.8	80	37
Chittagong	31.8	20.1	75	71
Rajshahi	35.8	15.0	53	41
Khulna	34.2	22.0	83	57
Barisal	33.6	23.4	90	68
Sylhet	32.6	19.3	79	43
Cox's Bazar	32.0	20.5	76	--