

Earthquake preparedness body formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has formed a 39-member 'Earthquake Preparedness and Awareness Committee' for taking necessary steps in case of any earthquake disaster in the country.

The committee will review the government's preparation in facing any earthquake disaster and will make necessary recommendations in this regard.

It will also examine the lists of existing rescue equipment to be used in any earthquake disaster and also recommend the government to purchase necessary equipments to tackle the earthquake risks.

Advocate Manzill Murshid, a lawyer, and president of the Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) told reporters at a briefing at the Supreme Court Bar Association chamber yesterday.

He said the ministry of food and disaster management on December 30 last year formed the committee with its minister as president in the light of a High Court verdict.

The higher court on July 29 last year in its directive asked the government to procure necessary rescue equipment in case of any earthquake disaster in the country.

The HC also directed the committee to form a committee to prepare a list of necessary equipment within two months upon a public interest writ petition filed by HRPB.

The government on January 5 sent a letter to Manzill Murshid informing him about the committee titled 'Earthquake Preparedness and Awareness Committee'.

Director general of the Disaster Management Bureau has been made member secretary to the committee.

Fourth Int'l Festival of Docufilms begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fourth International Festival of Docufilms on Liberation and Human Rights organised by the Liberation War Museum began in the city yesterday with a slogan 'Documentary for a Better Future'.

A total of 28 documentary films from 13 countries, including renowned works by Oliver Stone of the USA, Supriyo Sen of India, Ken Loach of the UK and Nikolas Geyhatten of Germany will be displayed at the seven-day festival on the Liberation War Museum premises.

Addressing reporters at a press conference yesterday, director of the festival Manjare Hasin said the films would portray the aspirations of people seeking independence from oppression, their struggle and atrocities against humanity.

The festival is dedicated to Noazesh Ahmed and Naib Uddin Ahmed, the two brothers who played important role in the cultural movement of Bangladesh, headed.

He said the festival has been divided into three segments -- international, Bangladesh panorama and retrospective section.

Three shows will be held everyday from 3:00pm. Entrance fee to the festival is Tk.20.

Open discussion will also be held after each show participated by members of different university film clubs and society.

Mofidul Haq, member secretary and trustee of the Liberation War Museum, said the festival would especially focus on genocide committed around the world and trial of the war criminals.

The other objective of the festival is to create a platform for young filmmakers of the country and give them a scope to exhibit their works, he added.

He said the Liberation War Museum has also plans to establish an archive of films on people's struggle around the world and a competition for young filmmakers of the country.

Colleagues, relatives and admirers are requested to attend the chehlum and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

WEB PORTALS OF 64 DISTRICTS LAUNCHED

Students happy over getting textbooks timely, thank PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday launched web portals titled 'Tatthya Batayan' of all 64 districts of the country.

The web portals will help the people get all information about their respective districts as well as education, health, agriculture, administration, history and other areas.

The web portals have been made at the initiative of Access to Information (A2I) Project in collaboration with the cabinet division and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Addressing the launching ceremony at the Prime Minister's Office, Hasina said making web portals is a significant step towards turning the country into a modern digital Bangladesh.

She said the government has already started the process of bringing all ministries and departments under e-governance system to curb corruption and make the government services faster and better.

She also said the government is working towards removing technological disparity among people of all classes and regions.

Later, the prime minister talked with the people in Panchagarh, Rajshahi



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina opens web portals titled 'Tatthya Batayan' of all 64 districts at her office in the city yesterday.

and Rangamati. STUDENTS HAPPY

Meem didn't expect so early in her life that she would have direct interaction with the prime minister from her hometown Panchagarh, some 344 kilometres away from the capital.

Such a memorable moment came to her yesterday. The girl of 6-year-old, a student of class 1, was overwhelmed when Hasina talked to her through videoconferencing.

"Dear prime minister, how are you?" the girl asked Hasina with her sweet voice.

She thanked the prime minister for providing them with free textbooks on the very first days of the new year -- a

tangible change that emanates from the 'Charter of Change'.

"I am very glad to have new books," an elated Meem said.

In reply, the prime minister greeted her and told her to be attentive to her studies. "When I was of your age, I also would become very happy to get new books," she said.

Hasina also talked to another girl student, Hironmoy Barman, of Class ten of the District Girls School, Barman, on behalf of all her fellows and schoolchildren, expressed gratitude to the prime minister for timely distribution of textbooks.

In the yesteryears, students used to

suffer much for want of books for a long time at the beginning of an academic session, sometimes due to artificial crisis created by 'book syndicates'.

"It is almost unprecedented in my student life. Unlike previous years, I would not have to waste time for want of books this year," she said.

Hasina said the government had been strongly committed to ensuring timely distribution of textbooks as many students of poor families in the past suffered much due want of textbooks.

Hasina also talked to a cross-section of people of Rajshahi district.

Later, she talked to the people of Rangamati. Public representatives, government officials and civil society members of the hill district talked with the prime minister.

Replying to questions, Hasina expressed her government's strong commitment to ensure all necessary development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

She mentioned the government plan to set up a full-fledged university in Rangamati to ensure higher education of all the people living in the hilly region.

"The university is being planned as a unique one in Bangladesh," the prime minister told her audience.

Prepare list of dedicated leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has asked a joint secretary general of the party to prepare a list of the leaders who were active during the emergency period of the immediate past caretaker government regime, but were not considered for the newly formed central executive committee.

Party sources said the chairperson may accommodate few more leaders in the committee considering their sacrifice for the party during the emergency.

They said some known faces who were beside Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain during the caretaker government regime were surprisingly dropped from the

committee which was announced on January 1.

Sources said a number of senior leaders, including standing committee member Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, have already expressed their resentment as many unknown faces got different posts while many active leaders have been dropped without any reason.

Some leaders who were deprived of posts in the committee recently met Khaleda and other senior leaders, added party insiders.

Besides, a group of city leaders on Tuesday met party Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain and requested him to evaluate them during the formation of the Dhaka city committee.

DHAKA NURSING COLLEGE Students confine teachers to principal's room

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitating students of Dhaka Nursing College on the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) compound yesterday confined their 20 teachers, including the principal, to the latter's room to press home their four-point demand.

Principal Tahatun Nahar told The Daily Star that around 150 students confined the teachers to her room at about 10:30am while she was having a meeting with other teachers regarding the demands of the students.

The demands of the students include reducing the exam fees, increasing facilities at the dormitories, setting up canteens and another hostel for male students.

Ershad wants JP to contest next JS polls alone

Asks party men to strengthen organisation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday called on the leaders and activists of his party to strengthen the party's organisational capacity with a view to contesting the next parliamentary elections alone.

The former president, however, clarified that building capacity to contest the election alone does not mean that his party is quitting the ruling Awami League-led grand alliance.

Jatiya Party has now become stronger and will be strengthened further in the coming days, Ershad told a huge rally at Paltan Maidan in the city.

Jatiya Party, a major component of the ruling alliance, organised the rally to mark the 24th founding anniversary of the party.

Wearing colourful headbands, carrying banners, festoons and placards and beating drums, supporters of Jatiya Party thronged the venue of the rally.

Traffic movement around the meeting venue was disrupted severely, as the crowd spilled over on to the streets. Procession of the party activists coming to the meeting venue also contributed to a massive traffic congestion at Paltan, Dainik Bangla and GPO and Gulistan

intersections. Referring to the issue of restoration of the constitution of 1972, Ershad said, "We do not have any objections to it if 'Bismillah' is not dropped from the constitution and Islam remains as the state religion."

"Otherwise, it would be difficult for us to accept it," said the former military ruler who made Islam the state religion during his regime.

Referring to his ouster as president in 1990, Ershad said Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed betrayed him by sending him to jail and for this he (Shahabuddin) would face trial.

On the much talked about issue of Tipaimukh Dam, he said, "I hope our government will not allow anyone to do anything harmful to our people and the country."

Ershad also urged the government to divide the country into eight provinces, which he said would ensure good governance and help the country manage the load of huge population.

About the issue of extortion and violence, he said, "The home minister is working hard to curb them and I hope we will get rid of them soon."

Party leaders Ruhul Amin Hawladar, Roushan Ershad, GM Quader, Anisul Ialsh Mahmud and Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu also spoke.

26 cops killed in 2009

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 26 police members were killed in different incidents in 2009 and one member was killed in 2008.

Police Headquarters sources said 19 policemen killed in road accidents, four others by criminals, one by one of his fellow policeman, two in lightning and another due to cardiac arrest.

The deceased police personnel include 16 constables, two inspectors, four sub-inspectors, two assistant sub-inspector, two sergeants and one nayek, police HQ sources said.

Commemorating the sacrifices of the deceased policemen, Police Inspector General Nur Mohammad yesterday handed over awards and gifts to their family members at a function at Rajarbagh Police Lines in the city.

Huji man arrested

Claims Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) claimed to have arrested a member of banned Islamist outfit Harkat-ul Jihad al Islami, Bangladesh (Huji) from Adabor area in the city on Tuesday night.

Without disclosing details about the arrestee, AB Zahid Hossain alias Babu, 33, a Rab press release only said the Rab members also seized 10 books on jihad from the arrestee.

Son of Advocate Abul Hossain, Zahid hails from Barisal.



PHOTO: STAR

A 20-member delegation from the Southern Illinois University Carbondale, USA visited The Daily Star office in the city yesterday. The academic delegation members are seen with The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, Managing Editor Syed Fahim Munaim and Associate Editor Shah Husain Imam.

Patronise research instts: President

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Zillur Rahman yesterday underscored the need for patronising the research institutions to facilitate researches and the practise of art and literature.

To this end, he urged the rich to come forward alongside the government.

The president said this while speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of the biennial general meeting of Asiatic Society of Bangladesh at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city.

"Research is as important as education to take the society forward," Zillur Rahman said.

Terming the Asiatic

Society of Bangladesh a prestigious research institution, Zillur said since its inception, the Society has been playing a pioneering role in preserving rare documents and publishing journals and scholarly books.

Zillur inaugurated the Society's celebration of 400 years of Dhaka city.

He also handed over the Presidential Award of the Society to Professor AM Harun-Ar-Rashid and archaeologist AKM Zakaria.

Prof Sirajul Islam and Prof Mahfuza Khanam will continue to act as the president and the general secretary of the society for 2010-11.

The Society also awarded fellowships to 12 scholars.

Nat'l Primary Education Week begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Primary Education Week kicks off today with the view to upholding the importance of primary education, says an official handout.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the week at Osmani Memorial Hall in the city at 10:00am.

Primary and Mass Education Ministry has chalked out elaborate programmes across the country to celebrate the week.

The programmes include procession, view exchange meeting, seminar, cultural event, drawing competition for children, education fair, workshop, reception to brilliant students and film show at district primary education offices and upazila education offices.



PHOTO: STAR

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad addresses a huge rally at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Prevailing mild cold wave over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Comilla, Srimongal, Jessore, Kushtia and Barisal may continue, met office said.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the country during the midnight till morning.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, it said.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:27pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 26.5 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 6.9 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 5 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening)

DCC renames 2 city roads

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday renamed two city roads after the name of two freedom fighters recognising their contribution during the Liberation War.

The road 14/A Dhanmondi was renamed as Bir Pratik Abdul Matin Sarak after the name of Bir Pratik Abdul Matin, while KM Shafiqullah Sarak (inner road from Priya Prangan) was renamed as Shaheed Lt Commander Moazzem Hossain Sarak after the name of Shaheed Lt Commander Moazzem Hossain.

DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said the next generation will be able to know about the Liberation War.

Family members of Abdul Matin and Moazzem, local ward commissioner, and high officials of DCC were present at the programme.

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