

NEWS IN *brief*

Hasina meets her grassroots leaders today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina will exchange view with grassroots level leaders and activists of Rangamati district at Gano Bhaban today.

All the officials and members of different executive bodies of Awami League will take part in the meeting.

All the participants are requested to attend the programme on time, says a press release.

HC rejects Khoka's status quo petition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday rejected a petition submitted by former Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka seeking a status quo, allowing him and DCC representatives to continue holding offices.

The court ruled that the petition became ineffective after two administrators were appointed for the two DCC administrations.

The HC bench of Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed the order after hearing arguments from petitioner's counsel and the attorney general.

Parliament on November 29 last year passed a bill to split DCC, ignoring widespread criticism and protest.

Following Khoka's writ petition on November 30, an HC bench of Justice Farid Ahmed and Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif issued a rule upon the government and Election Commission to explain why the bill should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

Though Justice Farid, senior member of the bench, issued the status quo order, allowing Khoka and the councillors to continue holding office for two more months, Justice Sheikh did not.

The chief justice then sent the matter to the

90 tolas of gold robbed in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of robbers allegedly took away around 90 tolas of gold ornaments and other valuables from a residence in the city's Bijoynagar area early yesterday.

Dr Abul Kalam Azad, the house owner, who is a physician of Narayanganj Government Hospital, filed a case with Paltan Police Station in this regard.

He said a group of four robbers entered his house cutting through a balcony grill on the first floor and robbed the valuables after confining the family members to a room around 4:00am.

People in a nearby local mosque chased the robbers when they tried to flee the scene after around two hours, he said. However, none was caught.

He also said most of the gold ornaments belonged to his three sisters who were on a visit to his house on the day.

Paltan police said they picked up two persons

DHAKA TODAY

Discussion

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote will hold a discussion. Venue: Public library auditorium, Time: 10:30am.

Memorial meeting

Bangladesh Peace Council will hold a memorial meeting. Venue: Engineers Institution auditorium, Time: 3:00pm.

Dialogue

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security and Yunnan Development Research Centre will jointly organise a dialogue. Venue: Lakeshore hotel, Gulshan-2, Time: 4:30pm.

Rally

Bangladesh Youth Forum will hold a

Jatiya Sramik League will hold a rally. Venue: Before Awami League office, Bangabandhu avenue, Time: 11:00am.

Meeting

International Business Forum of Bangladesh will hold a stakeholders meeting. Venue: IBFB office, Banani, Time: 11:00am.

Human chain

Swadhinata Forum will form a human chain. Venue: Before Jatiya Press Club, Time: 10:15am.

Discussion

Bangladesh Youth Forum will hold a

WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

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

Light to moderate fog may occur over the country during mid night till morning, Met office said.

Day and Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:25pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 30.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 11.0 degrees Celsius at Sayedpur.

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

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity	
	in Celsius	percentage	Max:	Min:
Dhaka	24.5	15.8	72	61
Chittagong	26.0	17.0	80	64
Rajshahi	24.5	13.4	94	70
Rangpur	21.8	11.5	95	73
Khulna	25.0	17.6	90	79
Barisal	25.2	15.8	90	86



School and college students take a risky ride on the back of this pick-up van to Bangladesh Chhatra League's 64th anniversary celebration in Chittagong city yesterday, a chilling reminder that only on July 11 last year 44 school students died as the truck they were travelling on crashed and flipped over into a ditch in Mirsarai upazila in Chittagong. The photo was taken on Jubilee road.

PHOTO: STAR

Work together for peace, security

Speakers urge South Asian govts

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The South Asian governments must work together to permanently establish peace and security in the region as these two issues will continue to be the major global challenges, said speakers at an international conference yesterday.

South Asia was home to peaceful coexistence for centuries but now is one of the world's violent and conflict-prone regions, they added.

The two-day conference, "Prospects for Peace and Security through Regional Cooperation in 21st Century South Asia: The Role of Japan", was organised by Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies (BISS) at its auditorium in the city.

He said major powers like the US are looking for stabil-

ity and prosperity in Arab and other regions.

"Peace and security will continue to be the challenges in the days to come," he said.

Describing Japan as the "champion of peace" since World War II and important to the region, he said, "We need to be in search of peace regionally and Japan should continue to play a major role."

Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Shiro Sadoshima, speaking as the special guest, said the world should think about issues like reducing the gap between the rich and poor and counter-terrorist strategies.

He said major powers like the US are looking for stabil-

ity and prosperity in Arab and other regions.

"But what kind of condition should we provide and what kind of role should Japan play? Japan is seriously thinking about it," he added.

The ambassador said Bangladesh and Japan would like to think together for South Asia's peace and security.

Presiding over the conference, BISS Director General Muhammad Imrul Quayes said Saarc, unlike European Union or Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean), did not achieve much success in attaining its goal.

Asean has the Asean

Regional Forum, which focuses on security issues, but Saarc has no such body.

As a result, it has not succeeded in addressing and resolving issues of bilateral conflicts, he said.

The inaugural session was followed by two separate working sessions where four keynote papers were presented.

Former ambassador M Afsarul Qader chaired the first session where research fellow of University of Malaysia Lt Gen (retd) Aminul Karim presented the paper, "Regionalism in South Asia: A Conceptual Analysis", and Prof Toshiya Hoshino of Osaka University, Japan presented

another, "Japan's Foreign Policy toward Asia in the 21st Century".

Foreign Service Academy Principal Touhid Hossain chaired the second session where Neila Husain, country representative of Safeworld, Bangladesh, presented a paper, "The Role of Japan in Promoting Regional Cooperation in South Asia", and Prof Rabindra Khanal of Tribhuvan University, Nepal presented another, "Japanese Relations".

Each presentation was followed by open discussions by diplomats, academia, media, government officials, business circles, representatives from civil society and professionals.



Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Shiro Sadoshima addressing a two-day international conference organised by Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies (BISS) at its auditorium in the city. On his right are Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Lt Col (retd) Faruk Khan and BISS Director General Muhammad Imrul Quayes.

PHOTO: STAR

WAR CRIMES TRIAL

PWs' illness halts proceedings till Sunday

Ninth PW cross-examined

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdul Latif Hawlader, the tenth prosecution witness, could not testify before the International Crimes Tribunal yesterday in a case against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee as he was ill.

As the next prosecution witness Mokhles Poshari was also not feeling well, the tribunal decided to adjourn the proceedings till Sunday next week within minutes of resuming after the lunch recess.

As a result, the day's proceedings ended at 2:35pm, around one-and-a-half hours earlier than the usual time.

Earlier, Sayedee's defence counsels had finished cross-examining Altaf Hossain Hawlader just before lunch break at 1:00pm.

David Re, a judge of the special tribunal for Lebanon situated at The Hague, was present at the tribunal yesterday to observe the proceedings.

Kafil Uddin Chowdhury and Manjur Ahmed Ansari, counsels of Sayedee, cross-examined the 58-year-old Altaf, who had testified against the Jamaat leader on

Tuesday in the case filed in connection with crimes against humanity committed during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971.

Sayedee, Nayeb-e-Ameer of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, is among five Jamaat and two BNP leaders facing war crimes charges at the tribunal.

Kafil Uddin began the examination at 11:01am by asking the witness about his profession. Altaf replied that he was a farmer.

Altaf was later asked about the present and past price of Urea fertiliser. He said the present price of 50kg fertiliser is Tk 1,000 while it was Tk 700 some six months back.

The counsel then claimed that none of the two prices are true, and Altaf is not a farmer as he had told the court.

The witness denied the claim.

Answering other questions, Altaf later said he did not take part in the liberation war and he did not know the commander of the collaborators' force in Parerhaat during the war.

At one point, Kafil Uddin tried to tell witness Altaf that he [Altaf] could not write his name neatly and properly with correct letters.

The tribunal intervened saying the court

cannot accept such a "harassment question," adding that a "question has to be dignified".

Counsel Kafil Uddin told the tribunal that Altaf had never studied in a school, contrary to what he told the court on Tuesday.

Altaf said it was not true.

The counsel then read out a list of 15 people from Pirojpur and asked the witness whether he could identify any of them.

The list included several journalists, writers, lawyers, a social worker and a teacher from Pirojpur.

Altaf said he recognised some of the names but did not know about them.

Counsel Kafil Uddin told the witness that these people had interviewed witnesses of the liberation war in Pirojpur and wrote a book titled "Pirojpur Itihas" (the history of Pirojpur) with the accounts they had collected.

He asked the witness whether any of those people or anyone else on behalf of them had interviewed him between 2003 and June 2007.

Altaf said he could not remember.

The counsel then claimed that Altaf knew that the book lists the names of the collaborators of Pirojpur, and he was keeping it to

himself as the book does not mention the name of Delawar Hossain Sayedee.

The witness said it was not true.

At 11:59am, Majur Ahmed Ansari, another counsel of Sayedee, took over and claimed that the allegations he brought against Delawar Hossain Sayedee were "false."

He suggested that Bisha Bali, who according to Altaf, was killed following instruction from Sayedee, was actually killed in Baleshwar river ghat by the Pakistani soldiers on a different day and time.

He also said Sayedee was not in Pirojpur from before the liberation war to mid July of 1971.

The witness rejected the suggestions.

Ansari then concluded the cross-examination at 12:59pm by saying that Altaf does not have a profession.

He suggested that Altaf made a "false statement" in a "false case" to publicly humiliate Delawar Hossain Sayedee under the directives and advice of local Awami League leaders of Pirojpur, to receive benefits from the government.

Altaf Hossain Hawlader said the suggestions were not true.