

NEWS IN *brief*

BCL men confine JU provost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A hall provost of Jahangirnagar University (JU) was confined for hours on Wednesday night by Chhatra League activists when he ordered two students to leave Maulana Bhashani Hall.

Some activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) led by Ajgar Ali, a former student and joint secretary of the dissolved BCL JU committee, confined Provost Prof Khabir Uddin in the provost office when he ordered BCL activists Ferdous and Arnob to leave the hall.

Hall sources said, the provost with some other resident teachers was checking different rooms of the hall and caught the duo, students of different halls of the same university, smoking hemp at a room.

At this BCL activists led by Ajgar Ali and Shamim Samrat confined the provost from 10:30pm to 12:00 midnight and misbehaved with him.

Later, the proctorial body of the university reached the hall and brought the situation under control, said Proctor Prof Tapon Kumar Saha.

However, Ajgar Ali denied the allegations.

Meanwhile, Nationalist Teachers Forum of the university demanded that the administration punish the alleged BCL activists.

Fake Zarda factory unearthed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Personnel of Detective Branch (DB) of Police unearthed a factory of fake Hakimpuri Zorda at Meer Hajirbagh in the city's Jatrabari on February 1 and seized 52,000 containers with fake labels of Hakimpuri Zorda and six machines for processing the item.

In a special drive, led by Senior Assistant Commissioner Abdul Ahad of DB, the DB men arrested Zakir Hossain, 21, in this connection.

Abdul Ahad said a gang had been processing the zorda and selling them using the name -Hakimpuri Zorda.

Zakir Hossain is one of the members of the gang. Wazed Mollah, 45, Lutfor Rahman alias Dudu Miah, 51, Faruk Miazzi, 42, and Mahbubul Alam alias Badsha are the other members of the gang.

'BNP rejects EC to create chaos'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition BNP rejected the new Election Commission to create a volatile situation in the country's political arena, said Environment and Forests Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday.

"BNP introduced the politics of denial and confrontation in Bangladesh. Its present stance on the EC is nothing but a reiteration.

"(BNP Chairperson) Khaleda Zia would like the Election Commission only if she herself proposed the names," he said.

The minister was addressing a press conference at the ministry yesterday on his participation in a recent climate change expedition to Antarctica.

BNP does not actually believe in consultation but in power at gunpoint and that is the way the party was formed, he said, adding, "I hope BNP will refrain from confrontation and change its mind."



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors browse through the books on Rabindranth Tagore, which arrived in the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela yesterday.

Ekushey Boi Mela delight overwhelms first-timers

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Towfiqur Rahman, a student of Hamdard Public College, had never visited the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela before. In his first-ever visit yesterday, he could hardly hold back his excitement.

"I've always heard about the fair. It was a dream to come here. I feel delighted today", said Towfiq.

He was one of about 100 students from the college who visited the fair yesterday.

"I love detective stories", Towfiq said, flashing a detective novel he had just bought. "This is exciting".

It was not just Towfiq. For many of his fellows, it was the first visit to the annual book fair.

"There are no words to express what I'm feeling", said Tamanna Chowdhury Diba with a wide smile. "This is my first visit to the book fair. I collected two books of my favourite writer Humayun Ahmed", she said.

"It is a rare feeling to buy books of your favourite writer from the book fair".

Golam Sarwar, lecturer at the English department of the college located in the city's Panthapath, said a visit to the book fair is part of the regular activities of the institution.

"We used to take our students to different historical and traditional spots so that they could be made aware of the history and heritage of the country", Sarwar said.

"Bangla Academy is an institution to preserve and promote Bangla culture and heritage. We have taken our students to the fair so that they can be encouraged, inter-

ested in book reading and be aware about Bangla literature".

To the delight of Rabindra lovers, 10 books from a total of 151 books on the great Bangla poet hit the Boi Mela yesterday.

The rest of the books will arrive in phases. Former chief justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman unveiled the 10 books at Nazrul Mancha on Bangla Academy premises on the occasion of the 90th birth anniversary of late National Professor Kabir Chowdhury.

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Kabir Chowdhury was the president of the five-member advisory council responsible for publishing the Rabindra Smarak Granthamala, an initiative that marks the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore.

Murdhono Publication published the books edited by Munzur-i-Mowla.

Termining the publication of 151 books on Rabindranath as a rare initiative, Sanjoy Majumdar, the publisher, said his firm had taken it up to introduce Rabindranath to common people.

Meanwhile, a total of 129 new books arrived at the fair yesterday, with visitors' presence being low as on other working days.

Ferry introduced to save Meghna bridge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After over 20 years the government reintroduced ferry service on the Meghna River yesterday to carry overloaded vehicles and stop those from using the Meghna Bridge, the condition of which was termed risky.

A weighbridge (machine to weigh vehicles) before the bridge will detect overloaded vehicles plying the Dhaka-Chittagong route and direct them towards the ferry ghats while the others would be directed towards the bridge, said communications ministry officials.

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader, who earlier termed the bridge very risky, inaugurated the service, stopped in 1991 after the bridge opened to public, by crossing the river in a ferry around 12:30pm.

Six ferries, four of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) and two of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), will operate using six ghats. Two more will be introduced soon, said the officials.

However, RHD fixed a fare of Tk 400 for each vehicle while the rate is Tk 1,400 for BIWTA ferries. A goods-laden vehicle using the bridge now pays Tk 400.

RHD officials expressed concern as BIWTA's higher rate may create disorder. They said the government must increase ferry services to cope with the influx of vehicles while the bridge is being repaired.

Another weighbridge is present before Daudkandi Bridge. RHD sources said the weighbridges can help protect the bridge, but overloaded vehicles are hardly fined or unloaded.

The government reintroduced the ferry service on an urgent basis as overloaded vehicles pay bribes to cross the risky bridges, they said.

Yesterday, Obaidul Quader also inaugurated a weighbridge at Padua bazar, Comilla. "A tender was floated to select a firm to immediately start repairs on Meghna Bridge," he said.

PROMOTION IN ADMIN

'Govt to review mistake, if any'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will re-evaluate if any officers are left out in the Wednesday's promotion despite having genuine ground, the public administration secretary said yesterday.

"We will review again to see whether there are any mistakes in our evaluation or calculation," Abdus Sobhan Sikder told reporters at his secretariat office.

In the biggest promotion spree in civil administration since the Awami League-led grand alliance assumed office in 2009, the government on Wednesday promoted 649 officers to the ranks of additional secretary, joint secretary and deputy secretary against no vacant posts.

About 430 deputy secretaries, joint secretaries and additional secretaries who were also eligible for promotion, have been ignored. Many of them expressed serious frustration of they were left out of promotion twice or thrice in the past.

Sikder, however, claimed that the promotion was given based on performance and merit. It will bring dynamism in the administration.

This kind of assurances was also given after the promotions made in 2009 and 2010 when a good number of deprived officers filed applications to reconsider their issue. But eventually, none of them was considered.

With the wholesale promotion, the civil administration now turns severely top-heavy as the number of officers already holding the three ranks are nearly double.

Currently, there are about 1,500 deputy secretaries against 830 approved posts, 500 joint secretaries against 250 posts and 148 additional secretaries against 108 approved posts.

Of the newly promoted officials, 127 joint secretaries have been elevated to the rank of additional secretary, 264 deputy secretaries to the post of joint secretary and 258 senior assistant secretaries to the post of deputy secretary. The promoted deputy secretaries are mostly from the 13th and 15th batches, joint secretaries are from the '82, '84 and '85 batches and additional secretaries are from the '82 and '84 batches of Bangladesh Civil Service.

Saarc experts discuss anti-terror mechanism

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

A two-day meeting of the experts from Saarc countries began here yesterday to discuss ways of strengthening the anti-terror mechanism.

However, Bangladesh and Pakistan did not attend the meeting despite getting invitations, according to official sources.

Representatives of Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan participated in the meeting where India was represented by Intelligence Bureau Chief Nehchal Sandhu.

During the meeting, issues of improving the functioning of the Colombo-based Saarc Terrorist Offences Monitoring Desk (STOMD) and Saarc Drug Offences Monitoring Desk (SDOMD) were discussed, an official statement said.

The participants also reviewed enabling legislation enacted by the member countries on Saarc Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and its Additional Protocol as well as the Saarc Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

The meeting considered the Saarc convention on mutual assistance in criminal affairs as well.

Exchange of information among member countries for better coordination to counter terrorism and drug-related activities, developing cooperation, capacity and relationship building among Saarc police authorities were identified, among other matters, as possible methods of strengthening the Saarc anti-terrorism mechanism, the statement said.

ASK concerned over deaths at CU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ain O Salish Kendra yesterday expressed grave concern over the death of two Chittagong University students and injuring of 40 others in Wednesday's clash between Bangladesh Chhatra League and Islami Chhatra Shibir activists.

Such violent attitude by members of student bodies is disrupting the congenial atmosphere at different universities, said the rights body in a press release.

They hoped that stern action will be taken against the troublemakers and security would return on the campuses.

Khaleda demands wage board for journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday asked the government to declare a new wage board for journalists without further delay considering the price hike of dailies essentials.

"I am demanding the announcement of a new wage board and its implementation without any delay.

"Dearness allowance should be declared quickly till the implementation of the wage board," she said while addressing the annual council of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalist at Jatiya Press Club in the city.

It is really becoming tough for journalists to cope with the rising prices of essentials. A new wage board would inspire them to continue their hard work smoothly, she said.

"The country will witness good times if journalists can pass good times. I know they are currently facing problems but I have nothing to do right now as we are not in power," she said.

She also added that they will take all necessary steps for the betterment of journalists if voted to power.

In January, Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, at a meeting with BFUJ leaders, said the government would announce a new wage board for journalist on the first week of February.

Healthcare fair for farmers on Feb 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Farmers will get opportunity of healthcare free of cost at a healthcare fair at Hathkola of Daudkandi in Comilla on February 18.

Eminent persons from home and abroad will take part in the fair that will continue from 8:00am to 2:00pm on the day.

Japan Bangladesh Friendship Hospital (JBFH) and private television channel, Channel i, are jointly organising the fair, said a press release.

In the fair, farmers will get opportunity of various health tests, medicines and advise free of cost from experts. School and college students will be imparted training on first aid, Mahbubul Alam Babu, director operation of JBFH, told The Daily Star.

Experts will also provide farmers with healthcare through televideo conference. A seminar will also be held to raise awareness among the farmers in the fair.

Channel i Head of News Shykh Seraj, JBFH Chairman Prof Junaid Shafiq and its Managing Director Prof Sardar A Nayeem, among others, will present on the occasion.

Fertilisers, biogas from JU garbage


STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Grameen Shakti, in collaboration with Japan International Cooperative Agency (Jica), will produce fertilisers and biogas with the garbage collected from Jahangirnagar University (JU) area.

In this regard, Jica and Grameen Shakti signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the JU authorities yesterday.

Following the MoU, garbage from residential buildings, dormitories and other places of the campus will be piled in the university's Bishmail area with financing by Jica. Fertilisers and biogas will then be produced from the garbage.

JU treasurer Prof Nasir Uddin and Kashimuri Mashanoubu from Jica and Absar Kamal from Grameen Shakti signed the MoU.



DHAKA TODAY

Meeting
Bangabandhu O Jatiya Char Neta Parishad will hold a meeting; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:30am.


Discussion
Nagorik Sanghati will arrange a discussion; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 3:00pm.

Meeting
Green Voice will organise a meeting;

Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:00am.

Discussion
Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon will hold a discussion; Dhaka Reporters Unity; Time: 10:30am.

Road trip
Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) will launch a road trip; Venue: Gulshan Park (formerly Gulshan Ladies Park); Time: 7:00am.



WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

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 Offices said.

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

The sun sets in the capital at 5:50pm today and rises at 6:35am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 32.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangamati and lowest 12.4 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

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

City/Town	Temperature Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	27.7	20.0	80	67
Chittagong	29.0	16.4	74	79
Rajshahi	25.8	16.8	83	56
Rangpur	24.3	15.4	96	70
Khulna	28.2	19.0	80	75
Barisal	29.3	16.7	90	79
Sylhet	30.0	16.5	67	61
Cox's Bazar	30.5	18.0	67	74