

NEWS IN *brief*

AL-led 14-party meets today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League (AL)-led 14-party combine sits today to discuss the country's latest socio-economic and political situation.

Main opposition BNP's scheduled March 12 grand rally in the capital and chalking out 14-party's programmes in March will be discussed at the meeting, sources said.

The meeting will be held at 11:00am at AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's polit-

Court orders probe against ASP

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered police to submit a probe report by April 12 in a case filed against an assistant superintendent of police (ASP) for concealing his religious identity during marriage to a Muslim woman.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Erfan Ullah passed the order directing an additional inspector general of police (administration) to investigate the matter and submit a report on the allegation.

Shilpi Akhter, a resident of South Goran in the city's Khilgaon area, filed the case against ASP Sudarsan Kumar Roy with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on February 16.

The accused is currently posted at Dinajpur district.

Minor domestic help kills herself

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A minor domestic help allegedly committed suicide at Monir Hossain Road, Gandaria in the old part of the city yesterday.

Rekha Akhter, 12, daughter of Jabbar Bepari used to work as domestic help at the residence of the vice principal of a government girls college in the city.

Rekha's employer Nasimunnessa told this correspondent that the girl committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling fan with a scarf at around 4.30pm. Rekha was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors

Country not safe under AL

Says Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Urging professionals to be united against the government to protect the country, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said the ruling Awami League has taken up different strategies to stay in power by any means.

"Country is not safe all under Awami League. Students and professionals including teachers and businessmen are in a miserable condition. In this situation, all have to be united to force this autocratic government to quit power," she said at a view exchange meeting at her Gulshan office in the city.


Members of two pro-BNP bodies - Association of Engineers, Bangladesh (AEB) and Agriculturist Association of Bangladesh - attended the meeting ahead of BNP's March 12 rally following its 'March towards Dhaka' programme.

The BNP chairperson will sit with the leaders and allies and like minded parties tomorrow to discuss on the preparation for the upcoming programme from where Khaleda will expectedly declare tougher agitation programme aimed to mount pressure on the government to realise her demand.

Khaleda said, "The non-party caretaker system must be restored. Otherwise, they (government) won't be able to stay in power by facing mass struggle."

BNP acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and AEB Convener and former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman, also acting editor of the daily Amar Desh, was present in the meeting.

Earlier, Mahmudur Rahman handed over two books written by him to Khaleda, leader of the opposition in parliament.



WEATHER TODAY

Light to moderate fog likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met Office said.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged and day temperature may rise slightly over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:56pm today and rises at 6:28am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 32.3 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 09.6 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

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	27.9	14.4	37	33
Chittagong	30.5	18.4	62	37
Rajshahi	28.0	10.5	67	37
Rangpur	27.3	12.5	66	40
Khulna	28.5	15.8	73	58
Barisal	30.0	14.2	80	60



The 13 Bangladeshi workers, abandoned by their employers in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, view photos, inset, they snapped of their fellows and put on display at an exhibition, "Inside Sajja, A Labour Of Light", in Al Quoz of Dubai recently.

PHOTO: COURTESY

WORKERS UNEMPLOYED OVERSEAS

Non-Bangladeshi Samaritans offer new lease to life

PORIMOL PALMA

Just when sheer hopelessness was taking hold of 13 Bangladeshi workers abandoned by their employers in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, a ray of hope shone upon them in the form of two female non-Bangladeshi Samaritans.

With no food, water and electricity, these workers were left in a labour camp of Sajja in Sharjah in early 2009 amid an economic downturn.

But the two noble women came forward to help them in their fight for survival, tending to their basic needs. The efforts culminated in the form of a photography exhibition of the workers themselves.

Saher Shaikh, a Canadian citizen of Pakistani origin, a banker by profession and founder of a charity, Adopt A Camp, first discovered the 13. Initially there were 20 Bangladeshi labourers working for Emirates Quality, a construction company, said one 25-year-old labourer, Farid Mia.

One of the two owners left for India and another was jailed amid the debt crisis in 2009. Then seven of the workers managed to return home.

"We had not been paid wages for over a year. Without electricity, water

or food, we were totally at a loss," Farid told The Daily Star over phone from the labour camp on February 6.

All they could do then was file a complaint with the labour department of Sharjah.

This is when Shaikh came forward to relieve them of their plight. A news report was published in a local newspaper on Shaikh's efforts. Then emerged the second Samaritan, Karen Dias, an Indian documentary photographer.

Karen offered to share her photography skills with the workers and donated a few cameras. Soon the workers were taking pictures of their fellows in the abandoned labour camp.

With Karen's inspiration and follow-ups, the photos captured by the workers progressed from posed snapshots to compelling storytelling images.

Karen aimed to share these images with the public which would both generate income and raise social awareness in a creative manner.

Thus, Gulf Photo Plus, a Dubai-based photography organisation, took the initiative to organise the exhibition, "Inside Sajja, A Labour Of Light", at its gallery in Al Quoz.

The exhibition began on January 18 and is scheduled to continue till February 29.

A visitor to the exhibition, Prachee Kapoor, wrote on her blog, "This meant a lot to the workers. I saw them enjoying getting photographs clicked, giving interviews and being the center of attraction...Everybody had a picture clicked with them, even me.

"It is these laborers who built our cities so convenient and beautiful for us to stay comfortably. This was such a heart warming, inspiring and brilliant act put together that I could not stop myself from sharing it."

The images taken by the labourers are quite compelling and visitors were moved by those, said Miranda McKee, art projects manager of Gulf Photos Plus, in response to an email query by The Daily Star.

She said it is particularly important that the images are from the workers' own perspectives, rather than of merely an outsider looking in. "This is what makes the work very personal and powerful."

Prints and postcards featuring

the photographs are available for sale. Each 57x38 centimeter print costs 400 UAE Dirham while postcard-sized prints are available for 20 Dirham.

"All proceeds from the print sales will be distributed directly to the workers involved in the project," said Miranda McKee.

Talking to the Daily Star yesterday, she said they raised over 13,000 Dirham till date.

Expressing his gratitude to Shaikh and Karen, Farid said, "We pray for both of them. We cannot imagine where we would have been if they were not there to help us."

However, these workers are still passing jobless days in the camp. Some of them got 3,000 to 5,000 Dirham as compensation from the labour department but their passports were still held by their employer.

"It was a matter of great joy as photography was a unique experience for us. But life here is painful, especially when we cannot help our families back home," said one of the workers, Sayeed Ali.

'Home minister should resign'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Shahara Khatun should resign for her failure to unveil the mystery behind the journalist couple murder though more than a week has passed into the killings, demanded BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday.

"Having failed to reveal the murder mystery, the home minister tactfully put the responsibility on the prime minister's shoulder," he added.

He said this while addressing a discussion meeting organised by Doctors Association of Bangladesh, a pro-BNP doctors' organisation, at National Press Club in the city to mark the International Mother Language Day.

BOI MELA

A re-creation of history

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

"Who is this man, mother?" chimes a six-year-old Samiha pointing her index finger at a black and white picture of a man wearing a dhuti with his arms crossed.

"This man is Barkat," replies her mother, Rina Sultana, "and the ones next to him are Salam, Rafiquddin, Shafiur and Jabbar. They sacrificed their lives so that you could speak in Bangla today."

The mother and daughter were standing inside a stall yesterday erected by the Liberation War Museum at the Bangla Academy premises marking Amar Ekushey Boi Mela.

The walls of the stall bore pictures, newspaper clippings and pages from personal diaries of the period ranging from the Language Movement of 1952 to the Liberation War in 1971.

"Many people sacrificed their lives during the Liberation War and inde-

pendence was eventually achieved after a long struggle," explained Rina, a lecturer of Birampur Degree College in Dinajpur, to Samiha.

"It is necessary to make the new generation aware about the history of our Language Movement and Liberation War," said Samiha's father Sarwar Rashed, a lecturer of Dudpur Degree College in Dinajpur.

Rina said, "She (Samiha) did not see the Liberation War. This display will help her understand and get to know our history better and encourage the next generation to love the country."

The couple opined that a bigger display could have accommodated more details and caught more attention.

The in-charge of the stall, Fakhru Islam, said posters depicting the Liberation War, documentaries on CDs on the Liberation War and a diary on some pictures taken during the

Liberation War were on sale at the stall.

Thoughts are being given to merging another stall with the current one to present the exhibits on a larger scale, he added.

The fair has witnessed the arrival of 63 new books on the Language Movement and Liberation War till date, according to Bangla Academy.

The fair has a bookstall dedicated to the Liberation War. Titled "Shudhue Muktiyuddher Boi", the stall was set up by Centre for Bangladesh Liberation War Studies.

Chairman and Chief Researcher of the centre, Major (ret'd) Qamrul Hassan Bhuiyan, said their main aim was to disseminate the Liberation War's history, not in making profits.

A total 95 new books hit the fair yesterday, five of which are on the Liberation War. A discussion and cultural programme were also held in the evening.

Edn UK exhibition begins March 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14th annual education UK exhibition 2012 will begin in the city on March 1 and in Chittagong on March 4.

Representatives from 48 renowned higher educational institutions of UK will participate in the exhibition organised by British Council.

The two-day long exhibition will be held at the Winter Garden of Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the city and a daylong exhibition at Peninsula Hotel in the port city.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will inaugurate the exhibition in Dhaka, says a press release.

The exhibition will provide an opportunity for prospective students, their parents, teachers, and human resource professionals to know more about undergraduate, postgraduate courses, scholarship opportunities, living and studying in the UK, said the organiser sources.

There will also be a UK Border Agency representative at the British Council stall who will answer visa related queries.

In Dhaka, the exhibition will be open for all from 12 noon to 7:00pm while it will remain open from 11:00am to 7:00pm in Chittagong.

The entry fee has been fixed at Tk 50 each person.

Hope of unity in Ctg AL

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Chittagong

Rival faction leaders of Awami League (AL) Chittagong city unit yesterday shared the same stage, for the second time in the last four days, creating hope among the party men who want an end to the long existing factional rivalry in the unit.

Though there is still absence of any initiative either from the unit or from the central committee, party insiders regard such joint participation as a good gesture.

The port city unit of AL has long remained divided between two factions, one led by its President Mohiuddin Chowdhury and the other by its Vice-President and lawmaker Nurul Islam BSc.

Mass Education Minister Afsarul Amin, who was in good terms with Mohiuddin before, joined hands with Nurul two years back, leading the faction ever since.

Rival leaders of both factions

including Mohiuddin, Nurul and Amin joined a reception ceremony accorded to AL lawmaker Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu on being made as the party's Presidium Member last Thursday.

The top leaders, except

Top rival faction leaders of AL Chittagong city unit join a view exchange programme together

Mohiuddin and Amin, also participated a view-exchange meeting organised by Babu at a port city hotel yesterday, where they underscored the need for establishing unity in the unit.

They also urged Babu for taking

Call to ensure fundamental rights of Dalit community

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A political consensus is necessary for the Dalit community while everyone should come forward to ensure their fundamental rights, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

The Dalit community is being deprived of fundamental rights like habitation and healthcare facilities that need to be ensured, they said.

The roundtable on "Condition of women cleaners and their position" was jointly organised by Dharitri and Oxfam at Cirdap auditorium in the capital.

The organisers also carried out a survey on 100 women cleaners of Gabtoli sweeper colony.

Presenting the survey report, Dharitri Executive Director Adan Islam said none of the women surveyed got any free healthcare facility before and after giving birth to their child.

Also, none of the women got one month paid leave during their pregnancy while 36 percent of their children do not go to school due to their poor income, he said.

Deputy Speaker of the parliament Col (rtd) Showkat Ali, while addressing as the chief guest, said the government's initiative to ensure education for all came to a halt at many places because general people could not provide land for setting up schools there.

The government itself should provide the land to set up the schools, he added.

Eminent economist Dr Quazi Kholikuzzaman Ahmed chaired the roundtable while former Wasa managing director Khandokar Azharul Haque and researcher Polas Kanti Das spoke among others.

'EU to ease visa process'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Speakers at a press conference yesterday said the European Union (EU) recently unveiled a lot of tactics regarding getting visa and visiting European countries.

Immigration Advisors' Forum organised the press conference at Chittagong Press Club.

They said the EU is going to provide easier ways to go there with simple conditions. In forthcoming days, these countries will need a huge number of workers as well as employees in different sectors, due to current recessions.

Barrister Mirza Zillur Rahman of the forum said within two to three years at least two million vacancies will be created in health sector in the region while a few countries will be in need of engineers and IT experts.

Representatives of Bradfordshire College of the UK and Shahjalal Islami Bank also spoke on the occasion.

The speakers urged the government for taking initiatives on this issue.