

NEWS IN *brief*

8 shops gutted in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
Two houses and eight shops were gutted in a fire at Barmapara in the port city yesterday.
The fire originated from an oven in one of the houses around 2:00pm and spread to an adjoining house and shops, said fire service sources.
Valuables worth Tk 7 lakh were gutted in the fire, the sources added.
Four fire-fighting units from Bandar and CEPZ fire stations rushed to the spot and doused the blaze after an hour and half.

SP in Rajshahi stand released

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi
Superintendent of Police (SP) in Rajshahi SM Rokon Uddin was stand released yesterday following his alleged attempts to protect a subordinate from charges of abusing a female police member.
In a letter from the police headquarters, the SP was asked to report to the headquarters in Dhaka today morning.
While talking to The Daily Star, SP Rokon confirmed receiving the letter and denied the allegation against him.
SP Rokon allegedly let Sub-Inspector Shafiur Rahman Mridha of the district Detective Branch (DB) to go to Dhaka on false medical ground after he was called to be present before a probe team, headed by the additional deputy inspector general, Rajshahi Range, over an incident of abusing a female constable.

Bela notice to save Bostami turtles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (Bela) yesterday served a legal notice on the authorities concerned to stop any construction work threatening the habitat and movement of critically endangered Bostami turtles at the shrine of Hazrat Baizid Bostami (R) in Chittagong.
The Bostami shrine pond is the only place in the world where the rare Bostami turtles are available, said the notice.
Bela has served the notice as a real estate company called JMG Holding has begun construction of an unapproved multi-storey market threatening the mazar pond along with its environment and biodiversity, said a press release.
The Bela notice also asked the authorities to declare the shrine area as a heritage and environmentally vulnerable location.
The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has announced the Bostami turtles (*Aspideretes nigricans*) as critically endangered in its "Red Book of Threatened Amphibious and Reptiles of Bangladesh," it added.
This species of turtle requires open space with sufficient sunlight and air for survival, which would be threatened with the construction of the building.
The legal notice was served to the shrine committee, the real estate company and also to the government offices concerned.
A similar legal notice served on March 13, 2008 had halted the filling of the pond and construction of the building.

City Swechchhasebak League leader shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Armed extortionists shot and injured a local Awami Swechchhasebak League leader at Sutrapur in the capital yesterday morning after he refused to pay the money they have been demanding for the last three months.
Locals rushed Sharifur Rahman Sharif, 47, president of ward no-82 of Awami Swechchhasebak League, to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) following the incident.
His condition is critical as he sustained bullet injuries on several places including, his chest, back, arm and ear, hospital sources said.
Police said four criminals waylaid Sharif's rickshaw around 8:00am at Patla Khan Lane while he was returning to his home on KB Road at Gandaria after dropping his daughter at school.
The criminals fired shots at him haphazardly and left the place in a hurry.
Three months ago, some local goons barged into Family Maath, a Chinese restaurant owned by Sharif and fired blank shots to create panic, Sharif's sister Sitara Islam told The Daily Star.



Sangbadik Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) stages a rally before Jatiya Press Club yesterday as part of its ongoing demonstration programme demanding the declaration of the overdue 8th wage board. PHOTO: STAR

Indefinite strike if wage board not formed

Journalist leaders tell sit-in

BSS, Dhaka
Journalists and newspaper employees yesterday demanded the declaration of the eighth wage board by April 21. Otherwise they would stage a mass hunger strike the next day.
The announcement came at a six-hour sit-in in front of Jatiya Press Club.
The mass hunger strike will be staged from 10:00am to 4:00pm before Jatiya Press Club on April 22, said Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury.
At yesterday's rally, journalist leaders also warned that the newspaper industry would witness an indefinite strike if the demand was not fulfilled.
The BFUJ leader also urged the information ministry to take proper steps in line with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's earlier directives and threatened the ministry with tough consequences.

Saarc needs to involve China, Myanmar

Analysts tell conference

BSS, Dhaka
The eight-nation Saarc needs to involve China and Myanmar, either as new "full members" or in "other ways", to make the 27-year-old regional organisation vibrant and effective, foreign affairs analysts said at a conference yesterday.
"The concept of South Asia and the Saarc needs to be redesigned and re-imagined (with a greater periphery)", said Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, a professor of international relations at Dhaka University.
He said bureaucracy of the influential member states and their "conservative mindset" appeared to be a major barrier to the expansion and redesigning of Saarc.
A Sri Lankan diplomat, who was unwilling to be identified, told the news agency on the sidelines that China should be involved in the Saarc network, and the matter should be settled with an "open mind" from India. It might not be possible to give China full membership right now, but ways should be

designed to involve China in a big way, he said.
Just-retired election commissioner Sakhawat Hossain came up with the proposal to involve Myanmar as a full member of Saarc, which grouped Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
"I do subscribe to the idea of involving China as a Saarc member, but I also would like to propose Myanmar to be given full membership of it", he said.
The comments from China, which has now an "observer" status to Saarc along with Japan, were not available immediately, but a couple of participants at the conference opined that Saarc could get a new lease of life with the roles of India and China in it.
More than 10 researchers from Saarc and beyond are scheduled to present their papers in the two-day conference titled "Challenges and Opportunities of the 21st Century Saarc" hosted by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) in the city.

Rab frightens people: Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Expressing deep concern over the killings in Narisingdi on Monday, BNP Acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said extra-judicial killing by Rab has made people frightened.
"People's lives and property are not safe as law and order in the country has deteriorated severely due to killings and incidents of forced disappearances. At least 30 people fell victim to extra-judicial killing by Rab in the last three months," he said at a discussion.
Jatiyatabadi Swechchasebok Dal, a front body of the BNP organised the programme at Diploma Engineers Institute in the city's Kakrail on the occasion of Independence Day.
Mirza Alamgir said killers of journalist couple Sagar and Runi were still untouched and the government also could not trace the killers of the Saudi Embassy official. Six more people were killed in crossfire in Narisingdi, he added.
Referring to a statement of the Jatiya Party chairman, Mirza Alamgir urged him to leave Awami League-led grand alliance and join the people.
"Ershad said he is observing darkness everywhere. Don't stay in the dark. Please join the people," he said to the former military ruler.
Criticising the prime minister's statements, Alamgir said the prime minister was talking like a little girl and that is why people do not believe her at all. "Her [PM] speeches reflect only revenge and jealousy."
The BNP leader said Bangladesh was branded an emerging tiger across the world during the regime of Khaleda Zia while the country is now sinking due to the subservient foreign policy of this government.

HSC AND EQUIVALENT EXAMS 8,086 absent on 2nd day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The number of students expelled for resorting to unfair means during the examination rose to 50 on the second day of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and its equivalent examinations yesterday.
The first day was marked by 33 expelled examinees.
Meanwhile, 8,086 students were absent in the Bangla Second Paper examination yesterday.
Among the expelled examinees, 40 were from Technical Board while five from Madrasa Board, three from Dhaka Board and one each from Comilla and Sylhet boards, according to Dhaka Education Board.
The highest number of absentees yesterday was from the Dhaka Board with 1,975 students missing the examination. Rajshahi board also face a rise in this figure with 1,359 absentees.
Barisal Board had the lowest number with 324 absentees.
The students will sit for English First Paper examination tomorrow. The written examinations will end on May 20.



Tagore song exponent Mita Haque and her brother Tahmid Reza Rajon, an autistic person, perform songs at an entertainment evening marking World Autism Day 2012 yesterday. Centre for Neurodevelopment and Autism in Children organised the event at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. PHOTO: STAR

Dr Fahima Aziz made AUW VC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
Dr Fahima Aziz has been appointed the vice-chancellor (VC) of Asian University for Women (AUW).
The university's Board of Trustees unanimously took the decision, said a press release of AUW yesterday.
Dr Aziz, a US citizen of Bangladeshi origin, is an economics professor and currently holds the Endowed Alkire Chair in International Business at Hamline University in Minnesota, USA.
She is expected to arrive in Chittagong next month.
Dr Aziz obtained a Bachelor's degree from Mount Holyoke College, a Master's degree from University of Massachusetts and a PhD from University of Minnesota.
She chaired the Departments of Management and Economics at Hamline University for ten years and concurrently led the environmental studies programme there for seven years.

Timber trader murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
A timber trader was killed early yesterday when a truck driver hit him in the head with an iron rod during a fight over fare in the capital's Merul Badda.
The deceased, Nazrul Islam, 33, was a resident of Purbo Badda. He used to supply logs to different sawmills in the city and its outskirts.
Around 2:00am yesterday, he brought a truckload of logs to Sundarban Sawmill in Merul Badda. While he was paying the fare, truck driver Rabiul demanded an additional Tk 700, claiming the amount had been spent to pay for some unforeseen expenses on the way -- from Fatullah to Merul Badda.
As Nazrul refused to pay the extra sum, a heated argument ensued. At one stage, he hit the lumberman in the head and fled the scene in his truck. A helper and two labourers were with him.
Nazrul was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died around 5:00pm.
His relative Abdus Sobhan told The Daily Star that Rabiul had agreed on a Tk 7,000 charge for transporting the logs.
Nazrul's brother has filed a murder case with Badda Police Station, accusing four people -- Rabiul, the helper and the two labourers of the truck -- said Officer-in-Charge Mahbubur Rahman.

Rail ticket scalping reduces in Ctg

TAREK MAHMUD, Ctg
Ticket scalping in Chittagong Railway Station is gradually reducing due to setting up of closed-circuit (CC) cameras and regular monitoring in the station.
As a result, commuters are getting tickets from the counters more easily than the previous time. But ticket scalping exists at other places in the city, alleged some tickets seekers.
Sources at the Chittagong railway station said 16 CC cameras and one video camera have been set up to check ticket scalping.
A six-member vigilance team is checking ticket counters and the station premises to stop the fraudulence.
Sources said a total of 47 A/C tickets and eight Shovon Chair tickets of Dhaka-bound "Mahanagar Godhuli" are kept at the station counter at 10:30am yesterday. Tickets for other trains from Chittagong city are also found at the counters.
As the e-ticketing system has been re-scheduled, commuters easily get tickets at the counters, said a railway official.
Ticket scalping is reducing day by day due to the regular monitoring, said Mohammed Rokonuzzaman, divisional commercial officer (DCO) of the railway in Chittagong.
Sources said though ticket scalping is reducing at the station, it is happening outside, including New Market, Reaz Uddin Bazar, BRTC Bus Terminal and other places near the station.
Babul Ahmed, a banker, yesterday bought a Dhaka-bound ticket for April 5 from a scalper at Reaz Uddin Bazar, paying Tk 400 though its price is Tk 150.
DCO of the railway Rokonuzzaman said, "Checking ticket scalping at the station is our duty, but how can we stop scalping at other places in the city?"

'War crimes trial necessary to establish justice'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The trial of war criminals should be held for the sake of establishing justice in the country, not for taking revenge, noted historians said at a discussion yesterday.
"It's a shame that we could not try them after so many years of liberation. It's our collective failure", said Professor Emeritus of Dhaka University Dr Serajul Islam Chowdhury.
"How could we establish justice in the country--by trying 'criminals for petty offences' and 'setting war criminals free'?" he asked.
At the discussion, "Spirit of Liberation War, trial of war criminals and future Bangladesh", speakers blamed selfish manners of politicians for the depletion of Liberation War spirit.
Prof Serajul Islam said personal, class, and party interests led to the failure in establishing the spirit of independence. "The country's political parties compete with each other to give in to imperialism, not to solve the problems of the people".
National Professor Dr Salahuddin Ahmed said the military governments, who ruled the country about 20 years, wanted to militarise and transform Bangladesh in line with Pakistani and Islamic spirit. "Ziaur Rahman introduced such practice in the country".
Noted educationist Prof Dr Ajoy Roy, convener of Samprodayekata-Jangibad Birodhi Mancha (anti-communalism and anti-militancy platform), organiser of the discussion at Liberation War Museum, doubted if the incumbent government could complete of the trial within its tenure.
Member secretary of the platform, Nur Mohammad, urged the prime minister and the home minister to identify some agents in local administration, who were cooperating religious fundamentalists in their attempt to foil the trial by creating anarchy in the country.

WEATHER TODAY

Rain likely
UNB, Dhaka

Rain and thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty and squally wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Sylhet, Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions and the regions mainly remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.
Mild heat wave is sweeping over Dhaka, Sylhet and Rajshahi divisions and the regions of Chandpur, Syedpur, Khulna, Mongla, Kushtia and Patuakhali and it may continue, Met office said.
The sun sets in the capital at 6:16pm today and rises at 5:47am tomorrow.
Country's highest temperature 38.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 20.1 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	36.2	25.0	50	41
Chittagong	31.2	25.5	80	79
Rajshahi	38.4	22.6	71	53
Rangpur	34.6	21.4	58	51
Khulna	36.5	23.6	82	52
Barisal	36.1	22.5	83	64
Sylhet	36.8	22.1	49	53
Cox's Bazar	32.5	25.0	72	78