

NEWS IN *brief*

Housemaid found dead in army officer's residence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of a teenage housemaid hanging by the neck from a ceiling fan inside the cantonment residence of an army officer yesterday morning.

The deceased, 14-year-old Ramisha, was employed by Major Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman at his 559, Rajanigondha residence, said Sub-Inspector Jahannur Rahman of Kafur Police Station.

The SI, quoting Major Mahfuzur's family members, said, "There was no answer coming from the room she was in despite repeated calls and the family members broke in at around 8:00am and found the body."

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

PM to meet Bhola AL leaders

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will exchange views with grassroots level leaders and workers of Bhola district unit AL at Gono Bhaban on Thursday.

The meeting has been convened as part of the series of view exchange meetings with the grassroots leaders and workers.

Office bearers and members of the AL central working committee, advisory council, executive committee of Bhola district unit, national committee members, lawmakers of the party, administrator of Bhola District Council, presidents and general secretaries of upazila, thana, union and municipal units, upazila chairmen and vice-chairmen of the party, mayors and councillors of municipalities, chairmen of the union parishad and presidents and general secretaries of the associate and like-minded bodies of the AL district unit will attend the meeting.

BB cash officer viva now May 5

UNB, Dhaka

The viva voce for the post of cash officer of Bangladesh Bank (BB) has been deferred due to unavoidable circumstances.

The oral examination, which was scheduled to be held today, will now be held at 10:00am on May 5.

The oral test will be held at BB head office in Motijheel, BB general manager AFM Asaduzzaman said yesterday.

NPA launching postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The launching ceremony of National Plan of Action (NPA) 2012-14 for combating human trafficking has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstance.

The programme was scheduled to be organised today at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital by the Ministry of Home Affairs in support with USAID and Winrock International, an international development organisation.

Fresh date for the programme will be announced later, said a press release last night.

Mob beats 'thief' to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mob beat dead an alleged thief and injured another at Raazan upazila of Chittagong yesterday.

The dead is Md Sohel, 22, and the injured is Md Tuhin, 28.

Totan Majumder, sub-inspector of Raazan Police Station, said a gang of burglars attempted to enter the house of Iskander Alam at Noapara village of the upazila around 3:00am.

Sensing their presence, the family members chased the gang that initially managed to evade capture.

However, awakened on hearing the call for help, the villagers joined Alam's family members in hunting down the gang.

They managed to catch two of the group and beat them up.

The two were taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where doctors declared Sohel dead around 8:00am.

Critically injured Tuhin was undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Give women equal scope to meet millennium challenges

PM tells high-level Unctad conference session

BSS, Doha

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for giving equal opportunity and space to women to meet the looming challenges of the ensuing millennium as well as to ensure a peaceful world for future generation.

"In our fast-changing globalised world spurred by technology and information, the mindset of our women and girls are changing from the ways of the past. So, the sooner we give them equal opportunity and space, the better we will be prepared together to meet the looming challenges of the ensuing millennium," she said.

"It would also ensure for our future generations, a more just, equitable, and therefore, a peaceful world," said the prime minister while addressing a high-level session on "Macroeconomic Policy: Does Gender Matter?" at the Unctad XIII Conference held at Qatar International Convention Centre.

She, however, said indeed, the world has finally realised that real and sustained development of nations depends on equal partnership of women and men, and equal respect for their roles in family, community, society and the state.

Mentioning that macroeconomic policy and gender were closely interlinked, the prime minister said elimination of gender inequalities and ensuring empowerment of women, clearly results in higher economic growth and greater macroeconomic stability.

Moreover, Hasina said, poverty has now assumed a feminine face. Today, women and girls comprise 70 percent of the global poor and they lack access to decent work and face occupational hazards and gender wage gaps. "We have been seeking to respond to these inadequacies in our macro-economic policies," she said.

The prime minister said women face greater hardship and suffering in adverse situations like economic downturn and during austerity measures as well as disaster and climate change adjustments. "In every critical situation, women are the first to suffer."

"In the last few decades, our policies have focused on social development through trade liberalisation and deregulation. But, economic growth did not automatically translate into poverty alleviation and improve the



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at a high-level event on 'Women in development' on the occasion of Unctad XIII Conference at Qatar International Convention Centre in Doha yesterday.

situation of women," she added.

"In 2000, when we adopted the Millennium Declaration, our primary focus was to achieve equality and employment of women through eight internationally-agreed development goals. I am afraid that many of these goals remain unfulfilled," she said.

Hasina mentioned that in Bangladesh, the journey of women empowerment began with its independence in 1971, when Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who believed in gender equality, "guaranteed equal rights of women in all spheres of life with Articles 19 and 28 in our constitution".

His tenure as the first prime minister of Bangladesh saw initiation of policies and measures to empower women, she said.

As education is the most effective instrument to spur women's empowerment, Hasina said, women's education has been given high priority in the Education Policy of 2010 and "Prime Minister's Education Assistance Foundation" while it is free for girls up to grade twelve.

"We are giving stipends to girls too. Our plan is to provide free tuition for girls up to graduation level," she added.

To increase the enrolment and to ensure gender parity, she said, her government has increased the number of female educational institutions. "In the primary schools, 60 percent of the teachers are now female."

The prime minister said marginalisation of women also results from inadequate access to reproductive health care. "We are trying to rectify this through gender sensitive health programs like the Maternal Health Voucher Scheme and Breast Feeding Program. Healthcare services are being delivered through over 11,000 community clinics in rural areas, each serving 6,000 people, including those vulnerable women."

Hasina said maternal mortality rate has decreased significantly when the UN Millennium Award 2010 is a testament to that success. Bangladesh was awarded South-South Award for use of technology in delivering health service to poor rural women in remote areas.

Mentioning that political participation of women is significant in Bangladesh, Hasina said the prime minister, deputy leader of the House, leader of the opposition, five members in the cabinet, one whip, two standing committee chairmen in parliament are all women. "There are 19 female MPs who were directly elected, while reserved seats for women have been increased from 45 to 50," she said.

Hasina said apart from politics, women in Bangladesh are gradually becoming visible in all segments of our society -- in business, media, judiciary and government as well as in the non-government sectors.

Professor Stephanie Seguino of Department of Economics, University of Vermont, USA, Vice-Chairman of Qatari Businesswomen Association Qatar Aisha Alfardan and UN High Representative for Alliance of Civilization Jorge Sampaio also spoke on the occasion.

The prime minister is set to reach home this morning after winding up her four-day official visit to Qatar.



A milad mahfil marking the 14th death anniversary of Shazneen Tasnim Rahman in her residence in the capital's Gulshan yesterday. Shazneen, daughter of Transcom Group Chairman Latifur Rahman and Shahnaz Rahman, was a student of class nine of Scholastica School when she was murdered in 1998 at the age of 15.

152 MPs resigned since 1974

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Before Tanjim Ahmad Sohel Taj, some 152 lawmakers voluntarily resigned from parliament on different grounds since 1974.

All but two MP's, belonging to Awami League, Jatiya Party, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, resigned after restoration of the country's democracy in 1990.

Mainul Hosen, elected lawmaker in 1973 from Bhandaria as a member of Awami League, resigned in May, 1974.

It was in protest of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's initiative to form a "one-party system of government through the Fourth Amendment to the constitution," said sources at the parliament secretariat.

General MAG Osmani also resigned that month on the same grounds, added the source.

On December 28, 1994, some 147 opposition lawmakers of Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami resigned from parliament to press home their demand for the caretaker government system.

Next was Kader Siddiqui who resigned from the seventh parliament after being expelled from the then ruling Awami League in 1999. He later formed Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League.

The last two were BNP lawmakers Major (ret'd) Abdul Mannan and Mahi B Chowdhury who resigned from parliament and the then ruling BNP on March 10, 2004.

The duo then joined the alternative political party of former president Badruddoza Chowdhury protesting against, what they said, serious failures of the coalition government.

Currently secretary general of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, Abdul Mannan was elected from the then Dhaka-10 constituency (Ramna-Tejgaon) and Badruddoza's son Mahi B Chowdhury from Munshiganj-1 constituency (Srinagar).

Mannan, in his resignation letter, wrote, "Life has become very difficult. It does not seem that there is any government. I could not do anything for the people in such a situation.

"Parliament is ineffective. I do not find any reason to stay in. I resigned to join alternative politics."

Echoing his voice, Mahi had written, "I can not take the responsibility for corruption and crime of the BNP. There was no environment in the BNP where I can express my views."

HSC EXAMS POSTPONED AGAIN

Hartal frustrates examinees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All examinations of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and of its equivalence, which were scheduled for today, have been postponed due to BNP's dawn-to-dusk hartal for the third successive day.

The postponed examinations under eight general education boards have been rescheduled for May 23, said a handout of the education ministry.

However, the changed schedule of the examination under technical board will be informed later through print and electronic media, it said.

There is no examination under madrasa board.

Around 9.26 lakh examinees are appearing in the HSC and equivalent examinations that began on April 1.

Postponement of NU Exams

Meanwhile, the second year honours examinations of 2010 at National University slated for today have also been postponed. The delayed examinations will be held on May 5.

Examination on physics, geography

and environment, mathematics were scheduled for today, said a NU press release.

The opposition BNP continued its countrywide hartal for the third consecutive day in protest of the "disappearance" of Sylhet BNP leader M Ilias Ali.

The first term examinations at different schools are also being hampered due to the hartal, with the authorities rescheduling the examinations for the last three days over and over again.

Examinees, teachers, and guardians expressed their frustration over the continued hartal and urged the opposition party not to enforce hartal anymore for the sake of students.

"Consecutive hartals have already demoralised us. I prepared well for tomorrow's [today] examination but now I have to take the preparation once again," said Imtiaz Rahman, a HSC examinee.

Another HSC examinee, Mariam Sultana, from Lalmatia Mahila College, said it broke the concentration whenever any examination was delayed.

Nabidul Islam, a man whose daughter is sitting the HSC exam from Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, said, "We are gravely anxious if the examinations would complete. If it goes like this, we don't know when the exams will be over and when we will get the results".

The political parties should take the students' academic life into consideration before announcing any such programme, he said.

Manju Ara Begum, acting principal of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, said the ongoing hartal would definitely have a negative impact on students and examinees' preparation.

"We have failed to hold exams during the hartal. So it will not be possible to announce the results in due time", she told The Daily Star.

The first term examination is in progress and the authorities have already rescheduled two examinations, she said, urging the political parties to consider the future of thousands of students before going for such political programmes.

WEATHER TODAY

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Barisal, Chittagong, and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Dhaka, Tangail and Mymensingh in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country, Met office said.

Mild to moderate heat wave is sweeping over Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna divisions and region of Faridpur and it may continue.

Day temperature may rise slightly over Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna divisions and it may remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:24pm today and rises at 5:29am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 40.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Ishwardi and lowest 22.3 degrees Celsius at Sayedpur.

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	35.5	27.4	73	58
Chittagong	31.8	25.8	82	82
Rajshahi	39.3	26.2	49	38
Rangpur	36.2	23.4	45	31
Khulna	37.5	26.0	71	64
Barisal	34.9	27.0	86	68
Sylhet	32.0	22.8	76	62
Cox's Bazar	34.0	28.2	74	76

DHAKA TODAY

Discussion
Deshpremk Janogoner Mancha will hold an open discussion; Venue: Gono Sangskriti Kendra, Shahbagh; Time: 3:00pm.

Mass rally
Mawlana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani Parishad will organise a mass rally; Venue: National Museum; Time: 4:30pm.

Publication festival
Prajanna Academy will arrange a publication festival; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:30am.

Workshop
CDM Capacity Building and Baseline Development Project of the Department of Environment and the FBCCI will organise a workshop; Venue: FBCCI conference room; Time: 10:00am.