

NEWS IN *brief*

Thai Food Festival in Uttara Club

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People whetted their appetite with authentic and mouth-watering Thai victuals in the Thai Food Festival in the capital's Uttara Club on Thursday night.

The club invited chefs and their associates from Thailand aiming to offer a mega food festival to the members. The chefs brought required spices along with them. The club's members along with their families, guests and friends had the unique taste of various types of exclusive Thai dishes, says a press release.

Most popular Thai Menu like Tom Yum Koong, Miang Kana, Morning Glory, Padthai, Lobster, Snapper Steamed Soy, Chicken Green Curry, Crab Fried with Black Pepper, B-B-Q Prawn with Shrimp Pest, B-B-Q Beef and many more were included in the festival.

President of the Club Md Abul Kalam and executive committee members, among others, enjoyed the

5 'muggers' handed over to police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local people handed over five alleged muggers to police after giving them a good beating at Keraniganj last night.

Keraniganj Police Station Assistant Sub-Inspector Rafiqul Islam said six snatchers, including a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver, gathered along with the vehicle at an abandoned place near Anwar City area at around 9:00pm.

Local people suspected that they were preparing to commit mugging and caught them.

The locals recovered five knives after beating them, Rafiqul said, adding that the police rescued the snatchers and took them to Mitford Hospital for

Two crushed under trains

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Two people, including a beggar, were crushed under trains in separate incidents in the sadar upazila of the district yesterday morning.

The identities of the victims could not be known immediately.

Dinajpur police said a passenger died instantly as he went under Dinajpur-bound running train, Kanchan Express, while he was getting down from it at Dinajpur Satellite Town in the upazila.

In another accident, a Parbatipur-bound train ran over a beggar in Kawgaon area at around 10:00am while he was crossing the railway track, killing him on

CU celebrates Nazrul's birthday

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Nazrul Research Centre at Chittagong University yesterday celebrated the 113th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam through a daylong programme.

The programme, which was held at a gallery of the arts and humanities building, started with a discussion on the life and works of the rebel poet.

CU Vice Chancellor Prof Anwarul Azim Arif was present as chief guest, while Dr Souren Biswas, director of CU Nazrul Research Centre, presided over the meeting. Also present were Dr Rafuquillah Khan, Dr Shirin Akter and Dr Mohammed Anwar Syed.

Later the chief guest distributed prizes among the winners of an essay competition on the theme, "Non-

Villager shot dead by robbers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A villager was shot dead by a gang of armed robbers at village Noagaon under Jalalabad Police Station here early hours of yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Bashir Uddin, 65, son of Abul Hashim.

Locals and police said the robbers numbering 10 to 12 attacked the house of expatriate Abdul Kahir Chowdhury at about 3:30am yesterday. The miscreants tied inmates up of the house with ropes and looted valuables worth about Tk 10 lakh in cash and gold ornaments.

Bashir was bullet hit in his chest while the robbers were fleeing firing shots at the villagers, leaving him dead on the spot, police said.

Officer-in-Charge Gausul Alam said the body was handed over to the family of Bashir after autopsy at the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon. Police picked up one person for



Eleven organisations, including Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba), bring out a coffin procession from Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University yesterday demanding safe roads for pedestrians.

PHOTO: STAR

Journos' sit-in for 8th Wage Board May 31

UNB, Dhaka

Sangbadik-Sramik-Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) yesterday deferred its information ministry sit-in programme until May 31.

The programme, which was scheduled to be held today (Sunday), has been deferred as the ministry in a letter on May 26 announced taking effective steps by the government for formation of the new wage board for the media people.

The decision to defer the programme was taken at an emergency meeting of the parishad at the National Press Club.

The parishad, however, will hold the programme at 11:00am on May 31 if an official gazette notification regarding formation of the 8th Wage Board is not published by May 30.

A five-hour work abstention from 10:00am will also be observed in all newspapers and news agencies on the day, said a press release.

Surface plants to meet 70pc water demand

Says Dhaka Wasa MD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) will be able to collect 70 percent water from surface water treatment plants within 2021, significantly reducing the dependency on the fast depleting underground water reserves, Managing Director Taqsem A Khan said yesterday.

"We have already taken a decision to increase the number of surface water treatment plants, considering the falling underground water level. We have taken four projects for this plan, while one was implemented and the rest will be executed gradually", he said.

Dhaka Wasa is now collecting 87 percent water from the underground sources and only 13 percent from the surface water treatment plants, Taqsem told The Daily Star when asked.

Earlier, he told a seminar yesterday that Wasa shifted its focus from underground water treatment plants

to surface water plants to protect the environmental balance.

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Dhaka Wasa jointly organised the seminar, "Dhaka Wasa: activities, challenge and citizens' expectations", at the capital's Cirdap auditorium.

Former chairman of Wasa and urban specialist Prof Nazrul Islam said Wasa must ensure proper supply of water before the people were forced into besieging its office.

He also suggested Wasa activities should be discontinued in Narayanganj, Tongi, and Gazipur, as these areas were now under city corporations. The services should not be extended also to Savar and Ashulia so that the city dwellers get more benefits, he added.

Speaking as a special guest, Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, founder of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra, said the Wasa authorities should divide its activities into at least six or seven zones for improved services.

Although it seemed that Wasa activities have been making progress, Dhaka City Corporation and Rajuk's performances are perhaps worsening gradually, he said.

Given that the underground water level has been going down two to three metres each year, it will be tough to live in Dhaka city in the near future due to a lack of water, said Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, lawmaker of Dhaka-11.

Addressing as chief guest, he urged the city dwellers to be more considerate in using water and requested not to make any waste.

Firoz Ahmed, a water resources expert, said that due to inefficient water distribution system of Wasa, there was a continued system loss, which eventually deprived people of water.

Bapa president ASM Shahjahan chaired the seminar, while representatives from some development organisations and Wasa also spoke.

Ferry fare hike to push up commodity prices

Say businesspeople as BIWTC starts charging increased fares

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) started charging a 10 percent increase in ferry fares from yesterday, while businesspeople and road transport owners say the rise will eventually push up the prices of commodities and fares of passenger vehicles.

On March 31, the state-run BIWTC announced that it would increase 25 percent fare for ferrying vehicles and 35 percent for passengers from April 10 on different river routes.

The announcement drew strong opposition from owners of road transports, who denied giving 25 percent increased fare at a time, ultimately forcing the corporation to agree to a ten percent increase. The 35 percent increase in passenger fares however was duly implemented.

"After negotiations between the

shipping ministry and road transport owners, it was decided that BIWTC would charge a ten percent increased fare from May 26 for ferrying vehicles", BIWTC spokesperson Nazrul Islam Misha told The Daily Star.

The fares for transporting vehicles on BIWTC ferry vessels were increased to Tk 1,452 from Tk 1,320 on Paturia-Dauladia route, to Tk 1,848 from Tk 1,680 on Mawa-Charjanajat, and to Tk 1,425 from Tk 1,285 on Laharhut-Veduria route for each single trip, sources said.

Gopal Krishna Majumdar, assistant general manager of BIWTC Barisal station, confirmed that the passengers of BIWTC vessels on 169km long Dhaka-Barisal route had been paying Tk 750 instead of Tk 565 for one first class cabin seat, Tk 450 instead of Tk 355 for one second class cabin seat, and Tk 120 instead of Tk 95 for each deck seat from April 10.

He claimed that fares had been increased after four years since 2008, and the fares were still lower than that of the private launches, which charge Tk 850 for per first class cabin seat, Tk 400-450 per sofa seat, and Tk 150-180 per deck seat on the same route.

The BIWTC claimed losses in passenger vessels, blaming increasing prices of fuel and costs of operating, repairing, management and maintenance of the old vessels. Requesting anonymity, a BIWTC source however alleged gross corruption in this sector.

The BIWTC has been earning profit in the ferry sector since 2001, and earned Tk 210 core in last fiscal year, including Tk 33 core as net profit, said Gopal Krishna.

However, considering the fuel price hikes and implementation of a new pay-scale, the BIWTC has decided to increase fares as the operating cost has

increased to Tk 40 core from Tk 20 core within a year, he added.

The BIWTC transports fewer passengers than private transport organisations on Barisal-Dhaka-Barisal route, but ferrying of vehicles and cargo transporting are totally under its control.

So increase in ferry fares will certainly raise fares of passenger buses and cargo trucks and prices of goods, said Saidur Rahman Rintu, president of Barisal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, talking to this correspondent on Friday.

Barisal Nagarik Samaj member secretary Mizanur Rahman feared that the 10-35 percent rise of ferry and passenger fares at one time might not ensure better passenger services on the route, as the authorities concerned were just considering profit rather than services.

CU student jumps off building to escape BCL men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong University (CU) student yesterday jumped from a dormitory building and was injured allegedly while escaping from the captivity of some Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists.

The injured, Abul Hasnat, hailed from Mirsarai upazila in Chittagong and residing at Nayabazar in the port city, was a student of international relations department of CU and the former general secretary of CU Mirsarai Students' Association.

Hasnat said he went to the Faculty of Social Science to take part in his fourth-year final exam around 10:30am when some BCL activists forced him onto a rickshaw and took him to the fourth floor of Shahjalal Hall of the university," said Hasnat.

"The activists led by BCL leader Rakib started to beat me and tried to lock me in a room. Getting a chance, I fled from the room. When I reached the second floor, I jumped from the building as the activists

were chasing me," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

He was rushed to the university medical centre and, later, shifted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital for better treatment.

Hasnat said the BCL activists were forcing him to give them Tk 40,000 of the CU Mirsarai Students' Association that he held in his possession.

The association President Salim Uddin Rimani, however, denied Hasnat's claim, saying that "Hasnat had intention to embezzle Tk 70,000 of the association's money and we tried to convince him several times to return the money."

He also said Hasnat was injured after falling from the dormitory stairs.

Hathazari police said there is disagreement between the current body of the association and Hasnat.

Some members of the association, who had tried to realise the money from Hasnat a few days ago, made another attempt yesterday with the help of some BCL activists, police added.

Nephew beats uncle to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was beaten to death by his nephew and accomplices at Purba Nakhlapara in the capital early Saturday.

Dulal Miah, sub-inspector of Tejgaon Industrial Police Station, said Suruj Miah, 35, and his nephew Asadul Islam, 30, locked into an altercation in front of their residences over a family matter at around 1:00 am.

At one point, Asadul and his accomplices beat Suruj indiscriminately, resulting in Suruj Miah's death a few hours later.

On information, police recovered the body and picked up three people--Asadul, Ashrafur Islam, 25, and Taslima Begum, 26--for interrogation.

Suruj Miah's brother-in-law Ariful Islam told The Daily Star that Asadul beat his father Chan Miah - Suruj Miah's elder brother - on Friday night during a family altercation.

When Suruj Miah returned from work at a garments factory, neighbours informed him of the incident. He then rushed to the spot and slapped Asadul. Asadul returned an hour later with six to seven accomplices and they beat up Suruj.

After Asadul and his group left, wounded Suruj went home and complained of severe pain in his chest and body. He died at around 1.30 am.

The body has been sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Another nephew of the victim, Rakib Hossain, filed a case in this connection.

Make streets safer for pedestrians

Speakers demand at coffin rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion said yesterday that on an average, one pedestrian died in road accidents in the capital every day while several others were injured and left with disabled limbs.

The accidents stem from a lack of usable pavements and sufficient pedestrian zones which reflect the authority's indifference to making Dhaka safe for walking, they added.

The discussion and a coffin rally were held before the Fine Arts Faculty of Dhaka University demanding safe streets for pedestrians.

Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba), Families United Against Road Accident, Nagorik Odhakar Sangrakkhan, Pratyasha Madak Birodhi Sangathan, Dhaka Cycling Club, Orunodoyer Torun Dal, Initiative For Peace (IFP), Bangladesh Centre for Human Rights and Development (BCHRD), Green Mind Society, Jagori and WBB Trust jointly organised the programme.

While around 37 percent people walk to their destinations, commuters who use public transports also had to begin and end their commutes on foot which means that 95 percent of the city's commuters were pedestrians, the speakers said.

Nothing was being done to make the streets safer for these pedestrians while huge money was being invested to make the city better for motorists, they added.

President of Nagorik Odhakar Sangrakkhan Hafizur Rahman Mayna chaired the programme. Chairman of Environmental Science Department of North South University Dr ATM Nurul Amin, Bidhan Chandra Pal of Jagori and Pratyasha General Secretary Helal Ahmed among others, spoke.

Next polls must under non-party govt: Tariqul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP top-ranking leader Tariqul Islam yesterday said the next general election would definitely be held under a non-party government.

Addressing a demonstration, BNP standing committee member Tariqul said the country's 16 crore people wanted elections under a non-party and neutral government. "Only ruling Awami League does not want it."

Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal, the associate labour wing of the main opposition, organised the demonstration in front of BNP's Naya Paltan central office in the afternoon demanding trace of 'missing' party leader M Ilias Ali and release of the top detained leaders of the BNP and its allies.

Tariqul also reacted to the remarks of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday when she hinted that the next general elections would be held under the partisan government. She also said the Election Commission would be empowered claiming that 5,175 elections, including the by-polls and the local government ones, held so far under her government were fair.

He questioned whether the by-elections in Bhola and Brahmanbaria were neutral and fair.

Blaming the government for its failure to meet the people's expectation, and misdeeds and anarchy, the former state minister urged the government to announce election immediately.

"As early as the government announces the election, a democratic situation will be created in the country. Otherwise, its injustice and anarchy will be washed away through movement," he warned.

Presided over by Sramik Dal President Abul Kashem, the protest rally was also addressed by senior party leaders including Nazrul Islam Khan, Abdullah Al Noman, M Shahjahan and Jafrul Hasan.

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Mild to moderate heat wave is sweeping over Dhaka, Khulna and Barisal divisions and the regions of Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Pabna, Noakhali and Chandpur and it may continue, Met Office said.

Day and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. The sunsets in the capital at 6:40pm today and rises at 5:12am tomorrow. Country's highest temperature 38.8 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 23.8 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

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	28.8	74	61
Chittagong	33.6	27.8	81	76
Rajshahi	38.0	23.8	81	64
Rangpur	35.0	26.2	75	62
Khulna	38.2	29.0	78	70
Barisal	36.0	28.0	76	70
Sylhet	35.8	25.5	72	67