

NEWS IN *brief*

Biman's direct flight on Sylhet-London-Sylhet route demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet Kalyan Sangstha, a non political forum, staged a two-hour sit in and held a rally in Sylhet city yesterday demanding immediate resumption of Bangladesh Biman's direct flight on Sylhet-London-Sylhet route.

The programmes at Subidbazar point were also joined by several other local social organisations.

The direct flight was suspended in December last year due to dense fog.

Their other demands include a stop to passenger harassment by the immigration police and others at MAG Osmani International Airport in Sylhet and Hajrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital and allowing flight operations by other airlines on Sylhet-London route.

If their demands were not met immediately, more agitation programmes would be launched soon, they

Sofa memorial lecture today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ahmed Sofa Rastroshobha along with Centre for Asian Art and Culture (CAAC) will organise the 10th Ahmed Sofa Memorial Lecture today in Business Studies Faculty Conference Hall at Dhaka University.

Prof Monsur Musa, director of Institute of Modern Language, will deliver a lecture titled "Linguist Munier Choudhury".

In memory of deceased Ahmed Sofa, litterateur and critic, Ahmed Sofa Rastroshobha has been organising the memorial lecture every year since 2002.

Veteran litterateurs, poets and admirers of Sofa will also deliver commemorative speeches in honour

Shadat Ullah new VC of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Mohammad Shadat Ullah has been appointed as vice-chancellor of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University.

A teacher of agriculture extension and information system department, Shadat got the appointment for four years as per an order of the president, said an education ministry circular yesterday.

Dr Shahidur Rashid Bhuiyan, professor of genetics and plant breeding department, and Dr Mohammad Hazrat Ali, professor of agronomy department, were appointed as pro vice-chancellor

Home ministry official suspended for drug possession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An administrative officer of home ministry was suspended yesterday a week after he was arrested with drug items at a house in capital's Mohammadpur area.

The ministry's Joint Secretary Muzakker Ali said they suspended Sarwar Hossain as he was convicted in DMP ordinance and a criminal case.

According sources at the ministry, Rapid Action Battalion arrested Sarwar and five others with several yaba tablets and a young woman from the house



Fire fighters in hectic efforts to douse a fire which broke out at Nilkhet book market in the capital last night, burning out at least seven book and a photo copier shops. Inset, People gather around the scene.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Next polls through democratic means

PM tells British lawmakers

UNB, London

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asserted that the next election would be held as per the parliamentary democratic system as in other countries of the world and Awami League would not accept anything harmful for democracy.

"We won't accept anything that might interrupt the hard-earned democracy of the country," PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad quoted Hasina as saying when a five-member team of All Party British Parliamentary Group for Bangladesh met her at her hotel suite.

Sheikh Hasina told the delegation that she had fought for democracy.

The delegation comprised members of the British House of Commons Lord Ahmed Sheikh, Baroness Tonge, Rt Keith Vaz, Jim Fitzpatrick and Rushanara Ali.

The British parliamentary group discussed with Hasina the issue of democratic progress in Bangladesh. The prime minister laid emphasis on parliamentary system and free and fair electoral process for sustainable democracy.

About the continuous parliament boycott by the opposition members, she said their abstention was totally illogical. "The Leader of the Opposition was present only eight days in the ninth parliament in the last three and a half years."

Earlier, Lord Ahmed of Wimbledon met the prime minister at her hotel suite and expressed his keen interest to invest in Bangladesh. He also praised the role of Sheikh Hasina in the global forum to address climate change issue.

NO RETREAT FROM PADMA PROJECT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has made it clear that the government did not step back from its move to construct the much talked-about Padma bridge with its own funds, says another UNB report from London.

The prime minister exerted her position while replying to questions from reporters of local Bangla media during an Iftar party at St Pancras Renaissance hotel on Wednesday evening.

"Surely, the bridge will be constructed with our own funds, and we stick to our position. We're not begging of anyone, we're taking loan and we'll have to pay interest for that."

She added that the decision lay with the World Bank if they would fund the project. "It'll be their own consideration whether they'll come up or not...we'll construct the bridge, we've our own preparations."

KAMALESH SHARMA MEETS HASINA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the Commonwealth Secretary General Kamalesh Sharma to emphasise migration and development issues and include those in the commonwealth's strategic plan, reports BSS from London.

"Bangladesh wants to see progress on the issue of migration and development placed in the agenda of the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting," she told Sharma when he called on her at the hotel suite.

Hasina arrived on a five-day visit to the UK Wednesday.

20 injured in garment workers' clash in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least 20 people, including 10 women, were injured as workers of two adjoining garment factories clashed for two hours and a half over a boundary wall dispute in Mansurabad area of Chittagong city yesterday.

All of the injured are workers of Four H Group, police said. They were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

The Four H Group authorities claimed that the adjoining Farzana Garment intentionally erected a boundary wall to cause trouble to the movement of their vehicles by narrowing their access road.

Yesterday, Four H group workers shouted

against Farzana Garment when one of their heavy vehicles could not manage to move on the narrow road. Soon after that, the workers of Farzana Garment fell on them with sticks and iron rods, leaving 20 of them injured, police and witnesses said.

The Farzana Garment workers also vandalised three vehicles of Four H Group, said Motiul Islam, officer-in-charge of Double Mooring Police Station. About 30 policemen were deployed at the scene, he added.

GS Jamil, managing director of Four H Group, said production activities at their factory remained suspended after the clash. He said he would sue Farzana Group.

Owner of Farzana Garment, Mohammad Selim, could not be contacted.

Milk Vita now den of graft

Says JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Milk Producers' Co-operative Union Limited (BMPFUL), manufacturer of Milk Vita dairy products, has been turned into a den of corruption, a parliamentary body observed yesterday.

From production and distribution of milk to appointment of employees - corrupt practices are everywhere, said members of the parliamentary standing committee on LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry at a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

They also blamed the ministry's inefficiency for the unbridled corruption in the company.

"Three syndicates of officials and employees are controlling the organisation. There is no discipline in it," Rahmat Ali, chief of the JS body, told newsmen after the meeting.

The ministry has formed a three-member committee to break the syndicates. A sub-committee will also be formed to investigate the corruption allegations, he noted.

The BPMFUL authorities, said Rahmat, have appointed a huge number of employees. "We have asked them to sack the unnecessary workforce from the organisation."

The parliamentary body expressed its dissatisfaction at the prevailing situation at the BPMFUL. They also castigated the company for hiking the prices of Milk Vita liquid milk ahead of Ramadan.

"Under the patronisation of the government, some syndicates are active there," committee member and BNP lawmaker Abul Khaiyer Bhuiyan told reporters.

Officials of BPMFUL, however, defended their decision to raise the prices of liquid milk. They assured the committee of supplying adequate milk during Ramadan.



Secretary General of the Commonwealth Kamalesh Sharma calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in London yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable
Association for the Study of the Liver, Dhaka, Bangladesh will arrange a roundtable; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 3:00pm.

Seminar
Samajik Paribesh O Manabdhikar Bastabayan Sangstha will organise a seminar; Time: 10:30am.

Condolence meeting
Swadesh Mancha will organise a condolence meeting on popular novelist Humayun Ahmed; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 11:00am.

Food distribution
Dhaka Mahanagori Samity (Dhaka Samity) will arrange a food distribution programme; Venue: Nawab

WEATHER TODAY

Rain or thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi, Rangpur and Dhaka divisions in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also likely at places, Met Office said.

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

The sun sets in the capital today at 6:44pm and rises tomorrow at 5:26am.

Country's highest temperature 35.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 24.7 degrees at Rangamati.

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	31.6	27.4	75	76
Chittagong	30.0	25.5	95	85
Rajshahi	34.0	26.8	92	74
Rangpur	33.0	27.0	75	65
Khulna	33.4	26.6	80	80
Barisal	30.7	26.8	88	86

VESTED PROPERTY
More time for appeal sought

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights activists and civil society members yesterday demanded extension of the deadline till December 31 for lodging appeal with courts claiming ownership of any vested property.

Although the government has issued gazette notification in different upazilas, people are neither aware of the gazette nor the procedure for lodging appeal due to unavailability of the gazette copies, they told a press conference.

In addition, the government-set 120-day timeframe after gazette notification is also too short to collect necessary documents and file appeals, they said.

Eight different non-government organisations, including Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, Association for Land Reform and Development, Nijera Kori and Ain o Salish Kendra, jointly organised the event at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

DISASTER-HIT JAPAN
Microfinance could help: Prof Yunus

AFP

Nobel prize winner Muhammad Yunus yesterday said microfinance could help disaster-struck Japan rebuild, even though the concept he pioneered is usually associated with poor and developing nations.

Yunus, seen as one of the world's leading anti-poverty activists, said extending small loans could help people in regions devastated by last year's quake-tsunami disaster, despite Japan being one of Asia's richest countries.

"It's needed everywhere--it doesn't matter where you are," the Bangladeshi Nobel laureate told the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan.

"When you come to a disaster area like Tohoku (in north-east Japan), it's all the more important... You have to rebuild everything all over again. There's no house, there's nothing."

About 19,000 people died or remain missing after a 9.0-magnitude earthquake off Japan's northeastern coast triggered a giant tsunami on March 11 last year.

Many had to evacuate communities near the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant, leaving thousands without jobs or homes.

"You used to have a job. Now you have no job because of the disaster. Can I create my own job? Self-employment," Yunus said, citing the benefits of small microfinance loans.

Yunus was the founder of Grameen Bank, which has been credited with lifting millions of people out of poverty by offering rural families loans to start small business ventures.

'Stop Gulshan Lake grabbing'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists yesterday demanded stopping construction of infrastructures by filling up the Gulshan Lake in the capital.

During a visit, a team of environmentalists led by Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba) Chairman Abu Naser Khan found a number of structures are being constructed disrupting recharge of rain water in the lake, said a press release.

The lake is becoming narrower for constructing the infrastructures in the name of lake development, said Poba Chairman Abu Naser Khan.

Different business companies including real estate companies and jewellery houses are providing funds for developing the lake. But one of the fund providers has built a residence in the middle of lake.

HC acquits five convicts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday acquitted five convicts in BNP leader Abdul Hamid Moru murder case in Rajshahi.

Earlier in 2006, Rajshahi Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal sentenced three of the convicts to death, and two were given life term imprisonment.

The HC delivered the verdict after granting appeals filed by the convicts, now in custody, against the judgment of the divisional trial tribunal.

The HC, however, did not give any decision about two other fugitive convicts, who were given life term imprisonment by the tribunal, as they did not appeal against their conviction, said Deputy Attorney General Md Salim.

On November 9, 2003, a group of masked miscreants assassinated Rajshahi district BNP vice-president Abdul Hamid by slitting his throat in Ghospara area in Rajshahi city.

Abdul Wasek, a relative of the BNP leader, filed a case against 17 people with Boalia Police Station on that day.

October 18, 2006, Rajshahi Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal sentenced Rajshahi district Workers Party leader Ali Khwaja M Abdul Mazid, Jahangir Alam and Shukur Ali to death, and awarded life term imprisonment to Nawshad, Zaidul Islam, Asadul and Abdur Razzak Sarkar alias Art Babu.

The tribunal also acquitted the 10 accused in the case. Mazid, Jahangir, Shukur, Nawshad, and Razzak filed separate appeals with the HC challenging their conviction in 2006. But Zaidul and Asadul are absconding.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Md Emdadul Haque Azad delivered the verdict after hearing on the appeals yesterday.