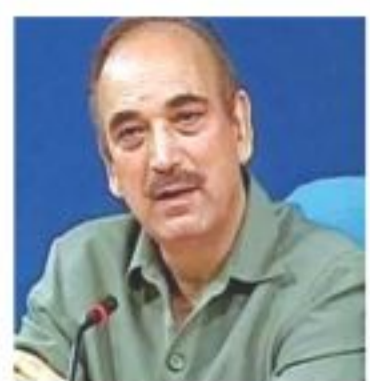


NEWS IN *brief*

Indian health minister due today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT



Indian Health and Family Welfare Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad will arrive in Dhaka today on a five-day visit to attend the 17th annual meeting of Partners in Population and Development (PPD).

During the visit, Azad is scheduled to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said a press release of the Indian High Commission in Dhaka yesterday.

He will also hold discussions with his Bangladesh counterpart AFM Ruhul Haque, it said.

Fix paddy price at Tk 850 per maund: Krishak Samity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Krishak Samity, an organisation of farmers, yesterday demanded that the government fixes the minimum price of paddy at Tk 850 per maund this year.

They also urged the government to introduce state-run crop purchase centres in the country's union parishad level to buy paddy directly from farmers.

They were addressing a protest rally in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

The organisation's President Morshed Ali and General Secretary Sajjad Jahir Chandan, among

Govt to reform cadre service

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will move to reform the cadre service within a month, said Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday.

The finance minister was speaking at a review meeting on sixth five-year plan, said planning ministry officials.

To make administration more dynamic, the existing 28 cadre services will be accommodated into four or five clusters.

Muhith also said administration and additional secretaries may be recruited on competitive selection basis by inviting applications. If competent persons are unavailable, positions may be filled by

BNP lawmaker gets bail in vandalism case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail for two months to BNP lawmaker Abul Khayer Bhuiyan and 13 other local BNP leaders of Laxmipur in a vandalism case.

Local BNP leader Zahir Hossain filed the case on November 2 on charge of clash and vandalising vehicles the same day after Didar Hossain, a Jubo Dal leader, was killed in the clash between two factions of BNP on October 31.

An HC bench passed the bail order after hearing

Koica arranges rapport building workshop in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Korea International Cooperation Agency (Koica) yesterday organised a rapport building workshop at Lake Shore Hotel in the capital to collect ideas for improving Korea Overseas Volunteer Programme in Bangladesh, said a press release.

Korean Ambassador in Dhaka Lee Yun-Young attended the programme as chief guest while the Koica Bangladesh Office Resident Representative

Hay Festival Dhaka on Nov 15-17

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hay Festival Dhaka will be held for the second time in the capital's Bangla Academy from November 15 to 17, providing a number of renowned foreign and local authors and artists the opportunity to hold dialogues.

Everyday three simultaneous sessions will be held. Moreover, a concert on Baul and traditional Bangla music will be held at Rabindra Sarobar's Mukta Mancha in Dhanmondi on November 16.

The star attraction of the literary feast will be Vikram Seth whose novel, *A Suitable Boy*, is widely acclaimed.

Philip Hensher, Syed Shamsul Haq, Nandita Das, Kamila Shamsie, Basharat Peer, Zafar Iqbal, Gillian Clarke, Kaiser Haq, Mohammad Hanif, Farah Ghuznavi, Shehan Karunatilaka, Selina Hossain, Mahmud Rahman, Anisul Hoque and Tahmima Anam will take part in various sessions.

Routed in the Welsh town of Hay-on-Wye, Hay Festival is one of the best known and most loved literary events held worldwide where writers, poets, critics and artists from different continents come together for free exchange of ideas and expressions.

The Daily Star is the title sponsor of the event. For online registration, visit <http://www.hayfestival.com>. Tickets are available at the venue.

Destiny director Didarul's bail denied

Hall-Mark chairperson on remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected a bail petition of Destiny Group Director Didarul Alam in connection with one of two cases filed for laundering Tk 1,100 crore from the Destiny Tree Plantation project.

The court passed the order after Didarul's lawyer filed a bail petition challenging a lower court order that had denied bail to him.

On July 31, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the two cases against 22 top Destiny officials.

Meanwhile, another Dhaka court sent Hall-Mark Group Chairperson Jasmine Islam, also wife of the company's managing director Tanvir Mahmud, on an eight-day remand in connection with two loan scam cases.

The court passed the order after ACC deputy director SMM Akhter Hamid Bhuiyan produced Jasmine before it with a 14-day remand prayer in two cases filed by ACC.



Bangladesh Krishak Samity brings out a procession in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday demanding price hike of paddy, introduction of state-run crop purchase centres, and decrease in pesticide and fertiliser prices. PHOTO: STAR

Remove unauthorised vehicles from highways

Obaidul Quader tells authorities

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday gave a two-month ultimatum to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Bangladesh Police and the country's district administrations to stop plying of unauthorised vehicles on highways.

He expressed disappointment over failure of the three in stopping battery-run electric rickshaws and shallow machine-run improvised passenger vehicles, commonly known as "Nasimon", "Karimon" and "Votvoti", from plying on highways despite repeated directives.

Obaidul gave the ultimatum during a surprise visit to BRTA's Narayanganj office where Narayanganj Superintendent of Police Sheikh Nazmul Alam, Additional Deputy Commission of Narayanganj Mehedi Hasan and senior BRTA officials were present.

"Hundreds of easy-bikes (battery-run electric rickshaws) are running in Narayanganj. It is as if there are factories here producing the vehicles," he said,

suggesting on running mobile courts, if necessary, to stop the practice.

The minister came down heavily on a section of BRTA officials for their involvement in corruption.

"BRTA has become a den for corruption and irregularities," said Quader, claiming that corruption in BRTA came down by 50 percent through his surprise visits to its offices and his punitive steps against the corrupt.

He became angry on seeing an inspector of BRTA, Abul Bashar, who was recently transferred to the Narayanganj office from the Ekuria office over corruption charges.

"Have you engaged in corruption here too?" he asked.

Calling the BRTA chairman on his cellphone, Obaidul wanted to know why Bashar was posted to an important office like that of Narayanganj and asked for Bashar's transfer to a less important place.

Obaidul also directed Roads and Highways Department officials to recover its land illegally occupied by grabbers.

10 more govt offices handed over to CHT district councils

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authority of ten more government offices and departments in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) under different ministries were handed over yesterday to each of the CHT District Councils in line with the 1997 peace accord.

With this, the total number of such offices rises to 21 in Bandarban, 22 in Khagrachhari and 23 in Rangamati -- out of total 33 offices.

The programme took place at the Jatiya Sangsad in presence of Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, convener of the CHT peace accord implementation committee.

The offices are: health engineering directorate under health and family welfare ministry in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari; Bangladesh Agriculture Extension Department in the three districts; Cotton Development Board in Khagrachhari zone; Ramgarh Hatchery Farm under fisheries and livestock ministry; and Government Child Home under social welfare ministry in Bandarban and Khagrachhari.

The peace treaty was signed on December 2, 1997 by the then Awami League government and Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity. It says the authority of 33 government departments and offices will have to be handed over to the CHT District Councils.

Briefing reporters at the media centre, CHT Affairs Minister Dipankar Talukder claimed that 48 sections out of total 72 in the treaty had completely been materialised till January this year. He hoped that the others could be executed within a year.

Repression on minorities rises under AL govt

Says Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday alleged that attacks and repression on the country's minorities increased whenever the Awami League came to power.

She made the remark when a delegation of Hindu leaders led by Nitai Roy Chowdhury called on her at the latter's Gulshan office last night.

Khaleda said this government did not understand anything except repression. The attack on Buddhists also took place under the sponsorship of the ruling party men, she said. "But the BNP, friend of all religious people, will try the perpetrators involved in the heinous attack."

KHALEDA VISITS RAMU TODAY

The opposition leader will visit Ramu upazila in Cox's Bazar today to see the ravaged Buddhist houses and temples and to console the victims.

Religious fanatics on September 29-30 vandalised many houses, temples of Buddhist people and set them ablaze, triggering huge criticism across the country.



Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Archbishop Emeritus of Westminster and special envoy of Pope Benedict XVI, calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday. PHOTO: PID

INSTITUTE OF LEATHER ENGINEERING 12 injured in BCL attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 12 people including a teacher and an employee of the Institute of Leather Engineering and Technology in the capital's Hazaribagh were injured yesterday after one BCL faction of the institute unit attacked another over establishing supremacy.

Assistant Prof Sabur Ahmed, 40, of the leather department was treated in a local hospital for stab wounds on his right hand.

One of the injured, Shefayet Rahman Shibli, former treasurer of ILE unit Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), claimed that a junior faction carried out the attack.

"They chased us with sharp weapons and attacked anyone who tried to stop them," he said.

Lecturer Noor Mohammad said a probe committee will investigate into the incident.

It's 'Adivasi' not 'Upajati'

Speakers tell govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ethnic communities across the country should be recognised as "Adivasi" people and their equal rights and entitlements of should be ensured as any other Bangladeshi citizen, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

An ethnic group should have the right to define itself, and the state should not impose a hegemonic Bangalee identity on the people or dismiss their demand by calling them "Upajati", they said.

Bangladesh Adivasi Forum organised the discussion titled "Unity in Diversity" in the RC Majumder Auditorium of Dhaka University.

The forum's general secretary Sanjeev

Drong, DU law department associate professor Md Rahmat Ullah, linguistics department professor Sourav Shikdar, and mass communication and journalism department associate professor Robaet Ferdous, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Sanjeev Drong emphasised the importance of fostering pluralism in a democratic state.

Even the country's first constitution and all consecutive amendments have failed to give recognition to the Adivasis, he said.

DU students highlighted relevant questions about rights, culture, and languages of the people.

JP to join polls independently

Says Ershad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said his party would take part in the next parliamentary election independently and under any system.

Jatiya Party is still with the Awami League-led grand alliance, he said, but time would say when the party would move out of the alliance.

He told journalists after visiting the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) in



WEATHER
TODAY

Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light rain is likely to occur at one or two places over Barisal and Chittagong divisions in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

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

The lowest minimum temperature is likely to be 16-17 degree Celsius and highest maximum temperature may be 31-32 degree Celsius.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5:15pm and rises tomorrow at 6:10am.

Country's highest temperature 31.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 16.0 degrees at Dinajpur.

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	29.0	21.7	76	73
Chittagong	28.2	22.8	87	80
Rajshahi	29.4	18.4	91	82
Rangpur	28.6	17.2	79	62
Khulna	29.5	22.8	91	86
Barisal	28.4	22.3	85	88
Sylhet	29.6	21.5	89	79