



Book fair yet to get wi-fi this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The promise of a digital Bangladesh seems missing in the Amar Ekushey Granthamela this year with wi-fi connection unavailable on the fair premises unlike the last seven to eight years when the whole of the fair ground enjoyed the wireless internet facility installed by different private organisations, thus providing an extra privilege to visitors.

Asked about the reason, SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Moudud quizzed over land grabbing charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday interrogated BNP leader Moudud Ahmed at Kashimpur Jail-1 gate in Gazipur yesterday in connection with a case for grabbing abandoned public land.

"I started the interrogation around 12:30pm and continued it till 2:00pm," Deputy Director Harun-ur Rashid of the ACC told The Daily Star. He declined to disclose the findings.

In response to a remand prayer of ACC, a Dhaka SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

RAMNA BLAST CASE Prosecution begins placing arguments

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution yesterday started placing arguments in the Ramna Batamul carnage case after recording statements of 61 witnesses.

During the three-hour long session, Additional Public Prosecutor SM Zahid Hossain cited statements of the witnesses who had earlier described the traumatic experience.

Zahid told the court that the prosecution has proved the charges brought against 14 top leaders of banned militant outfit SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Gang breaks into expatriate's house, injures three

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Three family members of an expatriate in Saudi Arabia were injured by a gang who broke into their house at Kapaleswar in Kapasia upazila of Gazipur early yesterday.

Around 12 miscreants stormed the house in search of Nazrul Islam, who has recently returned to the country on a vacation. As they did not find Nazrul at home, they hacked his father Safiz Uddin with a machete and beat his mother Nazma and brother Delwar Hossain with rods, said the victims who took first-aid from a local clinic. While making away with SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Errant hajj

FROM PAGE 3

The representatives from today till Thursday at the capital's Islamic Foundation.

The agencies face allegations of not renting houses in Saudi Arabia for pilgrims, not purchasing air tickets despite charging them for that, and not providing better food as per contacts.

"After the hearing, we will punish the agencies, charges against which would be proved," Bazlul Haque told The Daily Star last night.

If found guilty, each agency will be fined between Tk 50,000 and Tk 20 lakh, he added. The ministry can also suspend or cancel the licence of the agencies, he said.

In a reply, the official said roughly 176 people had not returned home after performing hajj last year.



It can be hard to imagine that sailing boats and trawlers used to travel along this canal in the capital's Nandipara area. Encroachment by influential locals and indiscriminate dumping of garbage have left it in this near dead condition. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Bloggers protest BCL, cops attack on RU students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 200 students and teachers under the banner "Jatiya Sharthe Blogger-Online Activist Forum" organised demonstrations in the capital yesterday protesting the police-backed attack of armed Bangladesh Chhatra League men on Rajshahi University (RU) students on Sunday.

During the demonstrations, a rally was organised in Shabbagh and a procession was brought out on the Dhaka University (DU) campus carrying flaming torches expressing solidarity with RU's general students who came under attack while protesting fee hikes and evening master's programmes.

Around 100 RU students and eight journalists were wounded in the attack. Education is a right of the people not an opportunity available for the middle class only, Bangladesh Students' Union Organising Secretary Lucky Akter said at the demonstrations.

Bangladesh Students' Federation Vice-President Tariqul Sujun said, "The ongoing protests at Rajshahi University were a symbolic challenge against the wholesale privatisation of education."

"It will systemically exclude students who come from lower income families."

Associate Prof Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan of DU's SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

BNP top brass gear up to revitalise grassroots

Stress put on Feb 19 upazila polls, upcoming party council

PRABIR BARIUA CHOWDHURY

With emphasis on revitalising the grassroots for the next phase of movement to oust the government and to choose single candidates in the February 19 upazila elections, the BNP high-ups will start visiting its 75 organisational districts across the country within three or four days.

The party has formed 44 teams comprising senior and mid-level leaders, including the acting secretary general, for the tours, said officials of the BNP headquarters at the capital's Nayapaltan. The number of teams will increase, if required, they said. The top leaders will talk to the grassroots leaders for backing single candidates in the upazila polls so that the contestants can secure victory smoothly.

Some team leaders said recently that

though their aim was to mobilise the grassroots for the anti-government protest, they deemed upazila polls an "acid test" for both ruling and opposition parties.

The party command has realised that the grassroots are now demoralised because of the January 5 national election boycott failing to generate any significant results, they told The Daily Star.

If the party-backed aspirants in this major local government election fail to achieve success, it will have negative impact on their mental strength, the senior leaders added.

Similar comments and concerns came from a number of other team leaders but none of them wished to be named, as the party cannot directly nominate anyone for the non-partisan elections.

It will be the party high-ups' second such

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

CTG ARMS HAUL CASE BNP rebuts Mohiuddin's claims about Khaleda, Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Different quarters are trying to destroy BNP and the Zia family and turn Bangladesh into a failed state by creating a connection between the party leaders, including Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman, and the 10-truck arms haul cases' verdict, stated BNP Vice-Chairman Abdullah Al Noman yesterday.

"BNP started the trial during its tenure that led to the verdict. But now, the Awami League (AL) leaders are trying to link the BNP leaders to it (the smuggling)," he said, adding that BNP would foil these attempts with people's help.

He was addressing a press conference BNP Chittagong city unit organised at its Kazir Dewri office protesting AL Chittagong city unit President ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury's statement at a press conference on Sunday.

Mohiuddin stated that, as the verdict had mentioned Khaleda, the then prime minister, had remained "silent" even after being informed of the haul by the then director general of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence.

This silence proved that Khaleda knew about the whole plan and gave clearance, he added.



Bangladesh Students' Federation brings out a procession on the Dhaka University campus yesterday demanding scrapping of the Rajshahi University authorities' decision to impose a fee hike and introduce evening master's programmes in the social science faculty.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

STRANDED IN IRAQ 14 Bangladeshis continue hunger strike for third day

Demand repatriation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Aggrieved by the government's sheer negligence in dealing with their case, 14 Bangladeshi workers stranded in Iraq for around a year continued their hunger strike for the third day yesterday demanding immediate repatriation.

"We had informed an embassy official, Rubel, that we would go for a hunger strike. But till now the embassy has not even inquired how we were doing," said one of the workers, Shafiqul Islam.

Talking to The Daily Star over phone from an accommodation facility in Najaf, situated 160 kilometers south of Baghdad, he said, "Some of us are already sick and others are becoming weak but we have no alternative."

He said one Haider of their employing company, M Kodia Co General Trading, showed them something that looked like tickets, saying they would all be sent home on February 9, but did not hand those over.

"Our embassy in Baghdad did not say anything about the tickets. So, we decided to

continue the hunger strike," he added.

Twenty seven construction workers went to Iraq between January and February 2013 through four Bangladeshi recruiting agencies -- Morning Sun Enterprise, Meghna Trade International, East Bengal Overseas and Idea International -- spending about Tk 4 lakh each for jobs with a monthly salary of \$350.

Their Iraqi employer, however, failed to start its construction project and kept them in the accommodation facility, restricting their movements and making life there seem almost like that inside jails.

Following repeated demonstrations of the workers' relatives in Dhaka, the employer repatriated 11 migrants in November 2013.

Afterwards, two of them fled the facility and their whereabouts are unknown while the trauma has been causing the remaining 14 physical and mental hardships.

Following another demonstration by the returnees and the relatives on January 22, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Man held for using forged govt cheques

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday arrested an alleged ringleader of a gang which, between February and April 2009, misappropriated over Tk 45.67 lakh by opening bank accounts using fake names and address and by forging government-issued land acquisition cheques.

ACC Deputy Assistant Director Nazmus Sadat said an ACC team arrested Khaza Mustafa Kamal near the ACC headquarters in the capital's Segunbagicha around 1:00pm.

Kamal, his nephew Al-Amin Ratan and brother Khalid Zibran Ranju first opened the two accounts, one with One Bank Ltd in the capital's Dilkusha and another with Al-Arafah Islami Bank Ltd in Motijheel, said Nazmus.

They then prepared the two cheques and withdrew the money from the banks claiming to be persons whose land the government had acquired, he added.

Apart from the three, the two cases ACC filed in this connection with Motijheel Police Station in August 2012 accuses four bank officials as they did not properly verify documents the gang produced.

The four are One Bank First Assistant Vice President ATM Shahidullah and Principal Officer AKM Zahirul Islam and Al-Arafah Bank Assistant Officer Moniruzzaman and ex-principal officer Ishaq Mia.

Death anniversary

CITY DESK

Today is the 17th death anniversary of Dr AR Mallick, an eminent educationist and the first technocrat finance minister of the country.

On the occasion, a discussion and a milad mahfil will be held on RKB Mallick School and College premises in Rajapur in Dhamrai and food will be distributed at an orphanage in the capital today.

He was the founding vice-chancellor of Chittagong University, president of the Liberation Council of Intelligentsia and represented Bangladesh to the UNO in 1971.

Bangla Academy has recently published "Dr AR Mallick Sharak Grontho".



Don't push back Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 3

other undocumented population from Myanmar over the decades. But she requested not to turn away those fleeing the sectarian violence, persecution in Rakhine, the source added.

The official said the US had apparently softened on its stance on the three said NGOs, as it did not insist on allowing their operation. "It may be USA's policy shift," Cefkin just requested to allow NGOs having global experience in providing humanitarian assistance, like health, education, to the Rohingya refugees, the official added.

Later, talking to a group of reporters at the American Centre, Cefkin said Washington was actively engaged in dialogue with the Myanmar government on restoring peace and stability in

Rakhaine state for ensuring safe return of Rohingyas from Bangladesh.

She said a congenial environment should be created by the Myanmar government so the Rohingyas could return to their homeland voluntarily and safely.

The official called it a complex issue requiring time to settle down with the improvement of the situation there, and said this was not the time to talk about their return.

Cefkin, who came here on Sunday and left for Myanmar yesterday, said the US was aiding the Bangladesh government through UNHCR and International Organization for Migration and other NGOs to support the Rohingya people.

In reply to a question about the secu-

Hasina prioritises river dredging

FROM PAGE 3

The Daily Star that they needed adequate and coordinated fund to implement the dredging projects.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said, "If we don't give rivers priority, there will be negative impact on people's livelihoods."

In the last cabinet meeting, the pre-

mier said she herself would oversee major projects of different ministries every week to speed up their implementation.

Her engagement is thought to be aimed at carrying out visible development work to win over the people in the wake of criticism over the one-sided January 5 polls.

Meanwhile, the cabinet asked the primary and mass education ministry to resubmit the draft "Non-formal Education Act 2014" following the law ministry's vetting, reported UNB. The proposed law aims to bring the existing non-formal education under a legal framework.

Three arrested for killing schoolboys in Narayanganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth with his two cohorts, who allegedly killed his step brother and his friend in January to take revenge on the families, was arrested in Meghnaghat and Kanchpur Narayanganj yesterday.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) said Parvez Hossain with the help of Shah Ali and Md Jahangir first abducted his brother Jahidul Islam, 13, and his SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Bangladesh embassy in Japan pays tribute to Prof Nara

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh embassy in Japan paid tribute to Prof Tsuyoshi Nara of Tokyo University for the contributions he made during Bangladesh's Liberation War.

The Bangladesh mission in Tokyo organised a condolence meeting on February 2 to commemorate Prof Nara, said a foreign ministry press SEE PAGE 4 COL 4