

MERIL-PROTHOM ALO TAROKA JARIP

Winners of SMS voting receive prizes

The award giving ceremony of SMS voting for Meril-Prothom Alo Taroka Jarip 2005 was held at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city recently, says a press release. Matiur Rahman, editor of the Prothom Alo, and Tipu Munshi, president of BGMEA, gave away prizes among the winners. Masuda Rahman of Shahjahanpur received a car as the first prize winner while AU Amjad Hossain from Jessore received the air ticket for a tour of Disneyland (second prize). Mostafizur Rahman, the third prize winner, got a flat television set.



Winners of SMS voting for Meril-Prothom Alo Taroka Jarip 2005 pose with Matiur Rahman, editor of the Prothom Alo, and other guests at the prize giving ceremony in the city recently.

French Socialist wants Chirac's post, not palace

France's next president could live in a Paris apartment rather than the official Elysee Palace, walk to work every day and draw from his experience in organising music festivals when setting out policies. Socialist Jack Lang said he would remain a Frenchman like any other if he was elected next year, vowing to add a more modest touch to what had become a "sacrilegious" post under conservative President Jacques Chirac. "I will live like a normal citizen," said Lang, sitting in his large office by the Place des Vosges square, one of the most expensive neighbourhoods in Paris, where the former culture minister also has an apartment. "I will not live in the Elysee Palace. I will stay at my place ... The president must be accessible, available. He should lead a simple

life," he said. Lang earned himself a name in France for creating Paris's annual Fete de la Musique festival in 1982. In the 1980s, he was culture minister when the late Socialist President Francois Mitterrand undertook in his 'Grands Travaux' of major urban works, including the celebrated glass pyramids at the historic Louvre museum. The 66-year-old Lang is one of around half a dozen so-called Socialist "elephants" -- senior male presidential hopefuls who have defended their position in the party for decades, but who have recently been eclipsed by a female relative newcomer. Half of all Socialist voters want regional leader Segolene Royal to stand in next year's poll, a recent ifop survey showed, compared to 14 percent preferring former prime minister Lionel Jospin, and only 9 percent going for Lang.

But the tanned Lang, who was born into a well-off family from eastern France and developed an early passion for theatre, said opinion surveys should be read with caution. He noted pollsters had also been unable to predict the outcome of the last presidential election in 2002. "My chances aren't slim," he said. The Socialists are still struggling to overcome their humiliating defeat in the 2002 poll, when far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen forced their candidate Jospin out of the runoff against conservative Chirac. A WOMAN AMID ELEPHANTS In the Socialists' 2007 electoral programme, which Lang said included many of his proposals, the party has vowed to raise the minimum wage, halve the unemployment rate and allow gay couples to get married and adopt children.

Palestinians sidelined as war rages in Lebanon

REUTERS, Jerusalem Israel's war on Hizbollah has sidelined conflict with the Palestinians, but whatever emerges from the fighting with the Lebanese group could help decide what happens in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A perceived victory for Iranian and Syrian-backed Hizbollah could boost the Hamas Islamist group that heads the Palestinian government, struggling under Western sanctions as well as the Israeli offensive in Gaza. If Israel deals a heavy enough blow to the Lebanese Shi'ite group, however, it may further weaken Hamas and put the Jewish state in a better position to dictate a de facto border in the occupied West Bank. "We are only spectators now," said one senior Palestinian official. "Whether we like it or not, our fate will be decided by the outcome of Israel's war in Lebanon and the conflict between the regional and international powers." Hizbollah's popularity among Palestinians has soared since it captured two soldiers in a cross-

border raid and killed eight others a week ago, then rained rockets on northern Israel after Israel launched an air offensive. That has had a knock-on effect in terms of support for Hamas, whose armed wing helped seize an Israeli soldier on June 25, prompting an Israeli assault on Gaza that has killed at least 85 Palestinians, about half of them militants. Israeli air raids on Lebanon have killed 230 people, while Hizbollah rockets have killed 12 Israelis. "As a result of the developments in Lebanon, Hamas now has more leverage than it did before. Now it's Hamas and Hizbollah versus Israel," Jordan-based analyst Mouin Rabbani told Reuters. Both dedicated to destroying Israel, the groups want the release of prisoners for their captured soldiers. Rejecting the demands, Israel has launched a massive show of military force to cripple Hizbollah and Hamas and to send a message to their backers. OLMERT PLAN The fact that Israel was attacked from Gaza and south Lebanon, two occupied territories from which it had withdrawn troops, intensified the domestic pressure on Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's new government for tough action. "You have a new Israeli government that's making a judgment that they have to re-establish a deterrent," said former US Middle East peace co-ordinator Dennis Ross.

If Israel's offensive succeeds in battering Hizbollah badly and stopping it from returning to dominate Lebanon's southern border, it might also show the less well-armed Hamas that it could make little headway in the longer term. Although Israel says it is not its aim to topple the elected Hamas government, that outcome would certainly not trouble Olmert and his colleagues. Quieting Israel's northern and southern borders might also give Olmert space for his plan to reshape Israel's presence in the occupied West Bank by giving up isolated Jewish settlements to bolster the biggest if talks remain frozen. "Unless he changes the Palestinian political reality, he can't move ahead," said Israeli analyst Menachem Klein. Palestinians fear Olmert's plan would deny them the viable state sought by President Mahmoud Abbas and other moderates just on land captured by Israel in the 1967 war -- Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. If Israel emerges strengthened from the battle in Lebanon, then both Olmert and Washington would likely want to bolster Abbas at the expense of Hamas. But any such attempt could be doomed while Hamas's popular support remains strong, and could lead to the renewal of an internal Palestinian power struggle that has been growing increasingly bloody since the violence with Israel

erupted. "I don't see an Abbas-led government," said London-based Palestinian analyst Ahmed al-Khalidi. "I don't think Abbas wants or can be seen to become the supreme authority on the back of Israeli military force." Tribute paid to journo Mizan STAFF CORRESPONDENT Speakers at a discussion yesterday said the contributions of Mizanur Rahman in ensuring the rights of journalists and building the society and state will be remembered forever. Journalist Mizanur Rahman Smriti Sangsad organised the discussion at National Press Club in the city to mark his third death anniversary. They also said Mizanur, an eminent journalist and language veteran, is the perfect example of an honest and ideal journalist who had worked as an apt organiser in the language movement like many other movements in his life. Presided over by former lawmaker Qazi Moazzam Haque, the discussion was also addressed by Awami League presidium member Abdur Razzak, Editor of the Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, former managing directors of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) Mofakharul Anam and Harun Habib, former general secretary of National Press Club Swapan Kumar Saha, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalist (BFUJ) Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Dhaka Union of Journalist (DUJ) President Altaf Mahmud, Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) President Saiful Karim Sabu, DRU General Secretary Shahed Chowdhury and National Press Club executive committee member Kazi Rownok Hossen. Journalist Ataur Rahman conducted the discussion. An initiative to publish a commemorative book on the life of Mizanur Rahman was also taken at the discussion.

4 drug peddlers arrested in Chuadanga

Bss, Chuadanga Four drug peddlers, including three women, were arrested from Hoquepara and Farmpara in the town on Monday. The arrestees, identified as Khokon, 40, Jahanara, 35, Bhanu, 30, and Monwara, 40, were professional drug peddlers who had been peddling drugs like heroin and phensidyl in those areas for quite a long time.

Valuables worth Tk 2.26 lakh robbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT A group of criminals robbed valuables worth Tk 2.26 lakh from a house at Mirpur in the city yesterday. The miscreants, eight to ten in number, cut the balcony grills to enter the house at around 3:00pm. They took the key of the Almirah holding the residents at gunpoint and robbed 11 tola gold ornaments and Tk 76 thousands cash, police said.

Shibir attack on BCL rally condemned

RU CORRESPONDENT Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Rajshahi University unit yesterday staged a demonstration on the campus, protesting Islami Chhatra Shibir attack on a BCL rally at Government BL University College in Khulna that left 19 students injured. At a rally held in front of the central library, BCL leaders expressed grave concern over ICS attacks on BCL activists at BL University College and Jagannath University. BCL leaders condemned the ICS for their activities in educational institutions that create anarchy and terrorism. They also demanded of the government to immediately ban fundamentalist activities in educational institutions. The leaders also demanded exemplary punishment to the miscreants involved. BCL also demanded resignation of Vice Chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain for allowing Shibir leader Salehi to appear at the masters' examination. Mahub Alam Salehi, president of RU Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS), is a key suspect of RU teacher S Taher Ahmed murder case. BCL leaders also demanded immediate arrest and punishment of Salehi. BCL RU unit General Secretary Ayen Uddin, central committee members Zahid Ali and Rashidul Islam, BCL leader Prince, Reazul, Masud and Uzzal addressed the rally. Meanwhile, our Dhaka University Correspondent adds: Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) yesterday protested Shibir's attack on its leaders and activists at Khulna BL College on Monday that left seven leaders and activists injured. BCU brought out a procession and held a rally on Dhaka University (DU) campus demanding punishment to the responsible 'cadres' of Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami. The leaders demanded of the government to ban ICS at all the educational institutions across the country. Presided over by Vice President Selina Sultan Sumi, the rally was also addressed by Manabendra Dev, Tridiv Saha, Surovi Sayeed and other leaders.



Participants at a discussion marking the third death anniversary of journalist Mizanur Rahman held at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. Journalist Mizanur Rahman Smriti Sangsad organised the discussion.

Weeklong tree fair ends in Mymensingh

Bss, Mymensingh A weeklong tree fair jointly organised by Forest Department and Agriculture Extension Department at town hall ground ended here on Tuesday. Deputy Commissioner M Golam Mustafa was present as the chief guest while Additional Deputy Commissioner Abu Yusuf presided over the concluding function. The function was addressed, among others, by Divisional Forest Officer Akbar Hossain, Deputy Director (DAE) Dulal Chandra Sarker, journalist Ataul Karim Khokon, four party alliance leaders Kazi Rana, Asaduzzaman Shohel, Jahangir Ahamed, Prof Wasek Billah and Prof Pradij Kumar Dey.