

## UNIFORM ADMISSION TESTS UGC chair slams public universities opposing the move

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah yesterday criticised the authorities of public universities that are not interested in holding uniform admission test to enroll students.

"Expectations of the whole nation cannot remain unfulfilled due to the indecision of some universities regarding holding uniform admission tests," Shahidullah said at a meeting with vice chancellors of engineering and technological universities on uniform admission test.

"We should be alert that ego of some does not affect others," he told the meeting held at UGC office in the capital.

He said the universities that will not hold uniform admission tests will face strong criticism, as uniform tests will ease sufferings of students and their guardians.

On January 23, UGC said uniform admission tests will be held from 2020-2021 academic year. The decision came from a meeting between vice chancellors and UGC, the statutory apex body for higher education, at the latter's office.

Students from humanities, business studies, and science groups would be eligible to take the admission tests, which will be held based on HSC syllabus.

Last year, seven public agricultural universities introduced the uniform admission test, known as "the cluster system". The other 38 public universities held separate entry tests.

Besides the agricultural universities, medical colleges currently have a uniform entrance test.

UGC officials said several universities including Dhaka University and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology are showing no interest to hold uniform admission test.

Every year, admission seekers face a huge amount of pressure when they prepare for separate tests for separate universities.

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## OF GROWING PAINS AND BAD HABITS

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The road to Bangla Academy from TSC remains pedestrian-only during Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela every year, but that is failing to ease fair-goers' commute this year. Metro rail construction has taken up much of the road and flower shops are occupying footpaths along Shahbagh and Doel Chattar, forcing people to walk on the road. Meanwhile, vehicles have to move in a single file from Shahbagh to TSC due to narrowed roads, and haphazard parking of rickshaws at the entrance of the fair has created a traffic mess in the entire area. The photos were taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



## Next Kolkata book fair to be dedicated to Bangabandhu

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The next edition of Kolkata book fair, scheduled to be held in the last week of January 2021, will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The event will be dedicated to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The announcement came yesterday after the conclusion of this year's fair.

Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the 45th International Kolkata Book Fair, said Cultural Affairs Minister KM Khalid there.

West Bengal Publishers and Booksellers Guild President Tridib Chatterjee said the 2021 edition of the fair wants to honour the "Father of Bangladesh" on the occasion of his birth centenary, while commemorating the deep-rooted ties between Bangladesh and India.

This year, more than 25 lakh people visited the 12-day fair that saw the sale of books worth around Rs 23 crore from over 600 stalls till Sunday, Chatterjee said, claiming it to be a "world record".

## BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE LOANS

# Bangladesh not at risk of debt trap: Dr Shamsul

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has no risk of falling into the debt trap of Chinese loans -- as cautioned by many economists, said Dr Shamsul Alam, a leading economic policymaker of the government.

He said this while addressing a workshop titled "Implications of BRI for Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh" as chief guest. The workshop was jointly organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) at the BIISS auditorium in the capital yesterday.

Though Chinese loans under its flagship scheme Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are large in size -- sometimes bigger than the GDP of smaller economies, Bangladesh is safe from its risks, Dr Shamsul said.

For example, the China-Kazakhstan

deal under BRI is roughly US\$ 37 billion, which is over 50 percent of Kazakhstan's GDP, while its external loan is more than 80 percent of its GDP, said Shamsul Alam, member of the General Economics Division of the Planning Commission.

"There are high risks for developing economies because of their less-effective debt management," he said, adding that the case of Bangladesh is very different.

He said Bangladesh has never failed to pay back its debt in the past. The country's debt-GDP ratio has been 34 percent in the past -- 20 percent of which came from domestic sources while the other 14 percent came from foreign sources. This is far below the average of developing countries, Shamsul Alam said.

"Our GDP is fast growing. Our budget deficit is below 5 percent. It is less than that

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## NARCOTICS CASES

# Charges against GK Shamim, Khalid accepted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday took cognizance of charges against SM Golam Kibria Shamim, a top government-listed contractor, and Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan, an expelled leader of Jubo League, in two separate cases filed under the Narcotics Control Act.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order in presence of the two accused in the courtroom.

The court will start hearing on charge-framing against Khaled Mahmud on February 26 and against GK Shamim on March 25.

On November 6 last year, Rab SI Shekhor Chandra Mallick submitted a charge sheet against Shamim for possessing five bottles of foreign liquor at his Gulshan residence.

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## 'Bear study costs of U-19 cricketers'

### Sultan Mansur urges govt at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoforum MP Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed yesterday in parliament demanded that the government ensures all educational expenses for under-19 cricket team players from the national exchequer.

The lawmaker from Moulvibazar-2 came up with the demand while speaking on a point of order.

"As long as they [U-19 team] continue their studies, the state under the supervision of education ministry and the prime minister should pay all their educational expenses from the state fund," he said.

Bangladesh on Sunday beat India at the ICC U-19 World Cup final to clinch their maiden global championship.

"There are players in the U-19 cricket team whose families are not well-off. The government should allot plots for these boys who brought glory for the nation," he said.

Jatiya Party MP Mujibul Huq initiated the discussion and demanded to give U-19 players a gala reception upon returning to Bangladesh. "All have come to a consensus that a civic reception should be given to them (U-19 players) for their outstanding performance," he said.

The JP MP also demanded to give them appropriate honorarium from the national exchequer for their victory.

## PHOTO OF THE DAY

ANISUR RAHMAN



If you're near Doel Chattar, you might see smoke coming out of street vendors' stands at random intervals. While the usual suspects are pitha and kebab stalls, this time it's a vendor frying chana chur, and billowing smoke to attract customers. They call it "gudam gorom chana chur." The photo was taken on Sunday.

## Steps taken to improve services of national emergency helpline

### Home minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken various measures including installing Internet of Things (IoT) and bringing total area of the country under a Geographic Information System (GIS) software to make the National Emergency Service-999 more effective, and spread the service all over the country.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday told this in parliament in reply to a query from Jatiya Party MP Fakhru Imam.

About upcoming features to make the 999 service more effective, the minister in a scripted answer said under the supervision of Bangladesh Police, the total map of the country will be brought under a modern Geographic Information System (GIS) software.

"Through this, it would be possible to identify emergency service-providing site quickly and accurately," he said.

Besides, the home minister said, the entire policing system will be modernised, as a special feature of crime map will be included in this GIS.

Through the system, police will be able to take preparations to eliminate crimes in line with trends and types of crime in any area, he added.

Asaduzzaman also said it would be possible to provide service quickly through identifying location of the person in danger, and location of response teams, when all vehicles of police and fire service comes under the GIS.

About IoT technology, the home minister said this technology will inform any emergency situation or accident to the National Emergency Service-999 automatically, without human assistance.

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## Five 'Ansar al-Islam operatives' arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Counter-terrorism officials claimed to have arrested five alleged members of the banned militant group Ansar al-Islam from the city's Sabujbagh area.

The arrestees are Nijam Uddin (21), Rayhan Bhuiyan (20), Hanif Uddin Suman (19), Sheikh Iftekharul Islam alias Arif (25) and Mufi Muslim (27).

The arrestees were planning to attack religious establishments in the city, said Ilias Sharif, joint commissioner of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of CTTC conducted a raid at Sabujbag's Balur Math area and arrested them on Sunday afternoon and recovered three machetes from their possession, the official said at a press briefing at DMP media centre.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted that they came from different parts of the country to Dhaka in order to receive training and carry out subversive activities.

According to CTTC officials, Nijam was an employee of a watch repairing shop, Rayhan Bhuiyan was a Bangladeshi expat in Malaysia who returned home recently while Hanif used to work in a ship breaking workshop. Iftekharul graduated from a university, while Muslim was a madrasa teacher.

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