

## DOWN TO EARTH

## A Research Institute with Unrealised Promise

By A S M Nurunnabi

A research institute is hardly a popular subject for a feature article. The lack-lustre nature of the theme may be improved to some degree with a less pedantic approach to it. With this belief which is not without a tinge of diffidence, a research institute which has not been much in public view lately, is here introduced on account of its potentialities for extending the frontiers of knowledge in the fields of law and international affairs.

The research institute in question is the Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs. It is a non-government body devoted mainly to functions as a sort of think tank for promotion, among other things, of studies and research in law and international spheres.

Housed in a building which belonged to Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, amidst a beautiful grove on Road No. 7, Dhanmondi Residential Area, it was established in June, 1972 under the initiative of Dr. F. K. M. A. Munim, former Chief Justice of Bangladesh Supreme Court who remained its Chairman for a long time. Among its objectives, it seeks to operate as a forum for providing scholars and experts to relate to one another and to facilitate the formulation of common policies in important areas of law and international studies in a growing interdependent world order. It was among its members and patrons, eminent personages, jurists and academics.

Till recently the mainstay of its finance rested on grants made by the Ministry of Law and Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Following a shake-up in its controlling authority recently, the grant from the Ministry of Law and Justice is no longer available. The curtailment of the grant has thrown the Institute into a tight financial position. Not that the Institute had previously enough funds to conduct its activities with. The suspension of a major source of funds is understood to be detrimental to its normal functioning.

## Strained AL-BNP ties

From Page 1 Col 7

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The GF lawmaker observed that the ruling party was insensitive to some important opposition demands like separation of the judiciary from the executive, accountability of the government to parliament and effective functioning of the Jatiya Sangsad.

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Siraj, while talking to this correspondent Tuesday, maintained that an effective dialogue could alone resolve the present crisis. "The time for such a dialogue is not yet over," Siraj observed and hoped the parties concerned would realise the need for reaching an understanding soon.

Suranjit Sengupta of the Gonoantri Party (GP), while evaluating the situation, said if the present state of relations between the BNP and the AL continued, the democratic system would be in danger.

Criticising the ruling party's alleged uncompromising attitude towards the opposition, Sengupta said there was no scope for obstinacy in a parliamentary system.

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because of fund constraints, these publications have become irregular.

The Institute also undertook certain important projects on areas noted below: (a) Project on delay in Court and Court administration funded by the Asia Foundation. (b) Project on documentation on SAARC also funded by the Asia Foundation. But regrettably this project could not make much headway. (c) Project on Bench Guide Book for use by trial judges on Civil Procedure. (d) Project on Gender differentials for Industrial Women Workers in Bangladesh. (e) Project on international relations subjects.

A very important part of the Institute's project activities related to Judicial Officers Training Programme initiated in 1985, with the co-operation of the Ministry of Law and Justice. Under this programme a good number of judicial officers of the ranks of Subordinate Judges and Assistant Judges have received training so far. The existing state of fund shortage has also had its adverse impact on this training programme which has resulted being irregular.

The story will be incomplete without recounting its contributions and achievements. The Institute has a rich library. Though, because of fund constraints, new accession of books and journals is much limited, organisations such as the American Centre, the British Council, and other foreign missions donate books, journals, periodicals, etc. which go a long way in enlarging its collection.

The Institute has a list of research publications which is undeniably impressive. These publications cover a broad spectrum of current burning issues. The Institute's other publications include (a) a biennial journal featuring articles on international law and international affairs, (b) Bangladesh Supreme Court Report which is a quarterly publication bringing out the decisions of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and (c) a monthly magazine focussing on areas of current international interest. It is deplorable that,

research organisations of a nation represent an aspect of intellectual heart-throb of its people, so say. To make the Institute cover a long mileage in its run, it behoves the government and the foreign agencies to evince active interest in the institution dedicated to the goal of extending the frontiers of knowledge in certain specific fields.

## Trade pact

From Page 1 Col 5

solve the country's present political and economic problems," the GP leader said. "In that case, Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina would be left with no option but to attend the dialogue."

Such a dialogue would definitely defuse tensions now existing in the country's political arena.

Sengupta, however, felt that the AL should concentrate more on mobilising the people in favour of the party's demands before going for all-out agitations against the government.

The GP leader also said the AL should talk to its allies in Parliament for their support.

Replying to a question Sengupta told The Daily Star that his party was yet to take a decision regarding the boycott of parliamentary standing committee meetings.

## BSF returns 2 abductees

## Bangladeshis

JESSORE, Apr 15: A flag meeting was held between Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at the Indian side of Higgi border of Chawgachha thana today. BDR sources said, it will be studied in the investigation, he said.

Asked what threat the helicopters might have posed that justified shooting them down, Keller replied, "I honestly don't know."

One F-15 fired a radar-seeking AMRAAM missile, the other a heat-seeking Sidewinder, the general said in a telephone briefing with reporters at the Pentagon.

Shalikashvili, the Joint Chiefs chairman, said the final order to shoot normally is given "on the scene" and not from military commanders at the jets' base in Incirlik, Turkey.

"Clearly, something went wrong, and an investigation will have to determine exactly what did go wrong," said the four-star Army general, who spearheaded the relief effort for the Kurds in 1991.

Meanwhile the United States on Friday suspended air patrols by combat planes over Northern Iraq for one day to reinforce safety procedures that failed shockingly in Thursday's shootdown of two US helicopters.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia went round different stalls after inaugurating the week-long Baishakhi mela organised by the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation at the Dhanmondi Club ground in the capital Thursday.

— PID photo

## Pahela Baishakh

From Page 1 Col 8

and the Sammilito Sangskritik Jote brought out a colourful procession where marchers in different masks sang and danced.

In Chittagong, the Sammilito Barsha Uddipan Parishad and the Pahela Baishakh Uddipan Parishad organised separate programmes to bid farewell to the old century and welcome the new.

The central focus of the festival in the port city was a Baishakhi mela at the local stadium.

Similar programmes were also organised in Khulna, Rajshahi.

## Saifur leads team to Paris aid club meet

Star Report

A seven-member delegation

led by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman left Dhaka for Paris Friday midnight to attend the Paris Club aid consortium meeting to be held in the French capital April 18-20.

The team members also include Finance Secretary Nasimuddin Ahmed and ERD Secretary Lutfullah Majid.

The team will seek 2100 million US dollars as foreign aid this year from the donors to continue the country's aid dependent development programme.

The team will highlight the country's 'improved economic situation' and a trend of 'increasing investment' as a result of the reforms in the economy.

The team will also reiterate the country's adherence to the reforms measures in the coming years and will also express the government's commitment to poverty alleviation.

The team will also call upon the government to look into sympathetically the demands of the officers and employees to help establish a people-oriented administrative set-up in the country.

Presided over by Sheikh Hasina, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 to resume again at 9:30 this morning.

## Reported banning of speech protested

\* By Staff Correspondent

Dr Ahmed Sharif yesterday protested banning of his proposed speech at a Bangla Academy function.

In a press statement, Dr Sharif said he had agreed to deliver a written speech at a Bangla Academy function on Pahela Baishakh at the invitation of the Director General of the Academy.

But on Wednesday, the Bangla Academy authorities reportedly informed Sharif that the minister concerned had banned his speech. The academy also did not print his speech submitted earlier for distribution among the audience.

ALCWC meets

From Page 1 Col 7

Parliament. Before taking a decision for boycotting the next session, the AL should consult its partners on the issue, the leaders argued.

Earlier, two five-member committees were formed to look into the internecine conflicts in the party's Narshingdi and Narayanganj district units.

The meeting also resolved to "continue the party's struggle" for repeal of the Vested Property Act.

The meeting also adopted an obituary resolution at the deaths of some political and academic dignitaries including the founder-editor of the daily Morning Sun Anwarul Islam Bobby, former party MP Abdul Quddus Makhani and Mahfuzur Rahman, chairman of the central command council of the freedom fighters.

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Postgola fire

From Page 1 Col 3

before the fire service vehicles reached the scene.

Severely burned Beauty was immediately taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared her dead.

The fire at Montu Slum at East Razabazar Thursday evening made some 300 people homeless, but no casualties were reported.



A mythical dragon forms part of the rally brought out in the city on Thursday in celebration of the Bengali New Year's Day.

— Star photo

## Launch mishap kills 9

From Page 1 Col 3

dead would be more than the official figure. Hakim also informed that Belal Ahmed and his daughter Rina, an SSC candidate, of Muddapara in Dhaka city, who were seated near him in the launch, were also missing. He further said he had seen a woman, Riyar Begum, crying on the spot at the loss of her son, Khokon.

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