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First JU convocation today

By JU Correspondent

The first convocation of the Jahangirnagar University (JU) will be held today at the central playground on the university campus. President and Chancellor of the universities Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed is expected to preside over the ceremony. He will also confer 5463 degrees to 2290 former students who have registered their names to attend the convocation. The degrees comprise graduation, postgraduation, M Phil and Ph D degrees. A total of 2290 former students, of whom 1800 male and 490 female, have registered their names for the convocation.

University Grants Commission (UGC) has allocated Tk 10 lakh to supplement the 24 lakh budget of the convocation. A total of Tk 11.4 lakh has been collected from the former students while the rest of the total expenditure has been collected from the university's own sources.

By-election to Thakurgaon-1 JS seat Feb 18

By-election to Thakurgaon-1 seat of the Jatiya Sangsad will be held on February 18, said an Election Commission announcement yesterday, reports UNB.

The seat fell vacant after the death of M Khademul Islam who was elected from the constituency in the June 12 election with Awami League ticket.

According to the election schedule, the last date for submission of nomination papers to the returning officer is January 18.

On January 19, the returning officer will scrutinise the nomination papers while January 25 has been fixed as the last date for withdrawal of candidature.

In a notification, the EC has appointed the Deputy Commissioner of Thakurgaon Returning Officer and Thana Nirbahi Officer, Thakurgaon sadar, Assistant Returning Officer.

Major starts 3-nation trip Jan 8

LONDON, Jan 4: Prime Minister John Major starts a visit this week to Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan aimed at promoting trade between some of Britain's most important former colonies, officials said today, reports Reuters.

Major will be the first British premier to visit Bangladesh since Labour leader James Callaghan in 1978. Officials in Bangladesh say they hope the three-day visit will open a new horizon in bilateral relations.

A delegation of business and industry leaders will accompany Major on the January 8-14 trip, which coincides with India and Pakistan's 50th anniversary of independence from Britain.

Ilias dead

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Upheaval. Ilias got Ekushey Award, Bangla Academy Award and the Jinnah Award for his outstanding contribution in the field of contemporary Bangla literature. Some of his noted works are: 'Onno Ghore Onno Swar', 'Khawari', 'Dudh Bhat Utpat', 'Dojokher Om and Khwabnama'.

The noted litterateur, who had been undergoing treatment at Community Hospital for a long time, died at about 6:30 am. His right leg was amputated for bone cancer a year back.

The body of Ilias was first taken to Dhaka College in the morning. Teachers and students of the college paid rich tributes to the late professor.

Intellectuals, poets and writers placed floral wreaths on the coffin at Bangladesh Lekhok Shibir office at Paltan at noon. The body was then taken to Dhaka University in a mourning procession in the afternoon.

The namaj-e-janaza for Akhteruzzaman Ilias was held at the Dhaka University Central Mosque after Asr prayers.

Later in the evening the body was sent to his village home in Bogra for burial.

Bangladesh Lekhok Shibir will hold condolence meetings at different places of the country on January 6 and a citizens' rally at the Central Shaheed Minar on January 8.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday expressed his deep shock at the death of popular short story writer Akhteruzzaman Ilias.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited the residence of noted litterateur Prof Akhteruzzaman Ilias.

On hearing the death news while attending a function at Rajarbag Police Line in the morning, the Prime Minister went straight to the Azampur residence of Ilias to express her deep shock and sympathy.

She stayed with the bereaved family members of the late novelist for sometime.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the officers and jawans of the 46 Infantry Brigade while witnessing the winter exercise of the brigade at Narsingdi yesterday. —PID photo

PM witnesses winter exercise Army to be modernised

NARSINGDI, Jan 4: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said the government is willing to build a modern, well-equipped and disciplined army capable of facing present-day challenges, reports UNB.

"But, it is not possible to implement any plan without the concerted effort of all," she said while addressing the officers, GCOs and jawans of 46th Infantry Brigade at Dukundi school ground in Belabo thana of the district.

The Prime Minister went to Kamargaoon and Dukundi areas of Siripur and Belabo thanas of the district to witness the winter exercise of the 46th Brigade.

Expressing satisfaction over the exercise of the brigade, Hasina said, "We hope you will develop your skills utilising the limited resources of the government."

She said Bangladesh army is a glorious institution and from the day of its inception after the independence it is brightening its glory day by day.

During the Liberation War the members of the armed forces of the country proved their heroism in the battlefield

fighting shoulder to shoulder with the people and defeated a strong army through fighting, she said.

Hasina said during last 21 years the members of the armed forces had not been allowed to know the real history of the country and the history of their heroism. "We will certainly project the real history of the Liberation War to the nation," she added.

Earlier, the Brigade Commander, Brig Alaaddin Mohammad Abdul Wadud briefed the Prime Minister about the winter exercise.

The Prime Minister went to different spots covering the area of about 20 kilometres from Kamargaoon to Dukundi and saw the field manoeuvres.

Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Raziuddin Ahmed MP, Sheikh Helal Uddin MP, Meher Afroz MP, Defence Secretary Manzoor-e-Moula, Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Mahbubur Rahman, Maj Gen Haroon or Rashid, Maj Gen Abdul Halim and other high military officials accompanied the Prime Minister during the trip.

Gowda: Warm welcome

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Bangladesh airspace. His arrival will be heralded by a 21-gun salute.

Airport formalities over, Gowda, accompanied by Sheikh Hasina, will straight drive in a ceremonial motorcade to the Jamuna state guesthouse where he will stay.

Official sources in Dhaka said yesterday the leaders would make efforts for resolving the outstanding Chakma refugee problems for laying another landmark in the current move towards further strengthening the ties between the two countries as they did by signing the Ganges water-sharing treaty on December 12.

The two prime ministers will give emphasis on joint collaboration for development of the water resources of four countries — Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan — located along the Ganges and the Brahmaputra basins.

They are likely to deal with the proposal forwarded by Dhaka at the recent SAARC Council of Ministers meeting for developing a sub-regional cooperation grouping those four countries.

The two heads of government will also discuss matters relating to expansion of economic cooperation between the two countries, particularly through investment and joint

venture. They will also deal with measures to curb transborder crimes, smuggling and movement of illegal immigrants.

The open-ended Dhaka summit is expected to cover some sensitive issues in order to ease tension in the region, informed sources said. At the talks, the officials said, any side can raise any issue as there is no fixed agenda.

The sources said Indian side could take up the proposal of the much-talked-about transit and use of Chittagong port by them. The proposals were put to the previous government of Bangladesh.

Introducing direct bus route between Dhaka and Calcutta is also likely to come up in the discussion.

Tangail

From Page 1

Siddiqy became the president of the Transport Owners' Association and Azad Siddiqy was made an executive member. The AGM of the association was held four months ahead of schedule. There are 281 mini buses plying on the Dhaka-Tangail route. The vehicles belong to some 200 owners.

Meanwhile, a rally of Chhatra League was held in the afternoon. The rally paraded the city roads.

PM's address on Police Week '97

Ensure peace, discharge duty with neutrality

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the police to perform their duties with utmost sincerity to strictly maintain law and order and help create condition for increased investment in the country, reports UNB.

Foreign investors are taking more and more interest in Bangladesh, Hasina said, adding that maintenance of peace and order is imperative to keep up the economic rejuvenation.

Inaugurating the Police Week '97 at Razarbag Police Lines in the morning, the Prime Minister said: "If we want prosperity and development, there is no alternative to investment...continued peace and order is prerequisite to development."

"A developed economy will benefit you and your family and free and people from the curse of poverty," she told the police force.

The Prime Minister said the government had given topmost priority to the prevention of terrorism and improvement of law-and-order situation by curbing crime.

The police force by discharging their duties with honesty

and neutrality would definitely be able to free the country from terrorism and ensure safety for public life.

Referring to various government efforts for the welfare of policemen, Hasina said despite resource constraints, the government would take all possible steps to modernise the police force by providing them with modern training and logistics.

She said ration for the non-gazetted police employees had been raised to 40 per cent from 20 per cent.

She also lauded the glorious role of Bangladesh police contingent in UN peacekeeping missions abroad and said they had enhanced the country's prestige through their laborious performance there.

Earlier, the Prime Minister inspected the parade and took salute of the colourful police march-past.

Later, she distributed police and President medals among 45 policemen, five of them posthumously, for their outstanding contribution to maintenance of law and order.

The function was attended by ministers, MPs, top civil and military officials and diplomats.

'\$100 m taken away by foreign portfolio investors'

By Staff Correspondent

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, former finance advisor to the caretaker government of Justice Habibur Rahman yesterday said that the country faced 'constraints in macro-economic vulnerability' for the first time in last three years after liberation.

He was speaking at a public lecture on 'macro-economic vulnerability, international finance and aid,' organised by Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) at the auditorium of the Academy for Planning and Development in the city.

"Facing serious decline in foreign aid, the government took a number of steps to liberalise the economy for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) but it failed, drawing a small amount of FDI during the recent years."

Although the amount of FDI was very small, a big portion of that amount went out of the country. About 100 million dollars have been withdrawn by the foreign portfolio investors within just two months, Mahmud claimed.

Prof EVK FitzGerald, Director, Finance and Trade Policy Research Centre of University of Oxford presented the key note paper at the lecture. Prof Debapriya Bhattacharya, general secretary of the BEA also spoke.

He said 80 per cent of the FDI from developed countries is not going to only 10 developing countries which do not include Bangladesh.

Cancel absorption rules of '85, demands (Gen) Edn Assoc

The BCS (General) Education Association yesterday urged the government to cancel the absorption rules of 1985, what it said was harmful for the majority members of the education cadres, reports BSS.

The Association, at a meeting in the Dhaka College auditorium decided to give a memorandum to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on January 8 to press home their demand, a press release of the association said.

They will also sit for a token hunger strike in front of the 'Shikha Bhawan' on March 4, the release added.

Chaired by acting president of the Samity Prof A B M Zanab Ali, the meeting was also addressed by Prof Jahannara Begum, Abu Yusuf, Kudrot-Khuda, Dr Golam Rasul Mia, Subir and Bikash Dev.

BCL founding anniversary observed

By DU Correspondent

The Awami League-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and the pro-JSD Chhatra League (CL) brought out two colourful rallies in the city on the occasion of their 49th founding anniversary yesterday.

The supporters of the BCL (S-P) from different parts of the city gathered at the foot of the Aparajeo Bangla of Dhaka University. The rally started at around 1 pm.

Jubilant BCL workers joined the rally riding on horse carriages and bullock carts. A discussion meeting and a reunion programme will be held at the Ramna Batamul at 10 am today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address the meeting.

The BCL (K-C)'s rally started from the Aparajeo Bangla. The pro-JSD activists placed wreaths at the central Shaheed Minar.

JCD activist

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On December 30, Ruhul Amin and Mahid, students of Madan Mohan College and JCD activists sustained stab injuries as they, along with some others, were attacked allegedly by the activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (S-P).

They were admitted to the medical college hospital where Ruhul Amin, a 2nd year student died.

The Sylhet district JCD brought out a procession carrying the body of Ruhul Amin. Police resorted to lath-charge, lobbed 15 rounds of tear gas shell and opened fire to disperse the agitating JCD activists.

Six foreigners

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The six were arrested on December 22, 1995 when Indian Air Force jets forced their plane to land in Bombay. The aircraft had dropped the arms five days earlier and criss-crossed India without being detected.

At the time it was intercepted, the plane was on its way to the Pakistani city of Karachi following a stop in the Thai resort of Phuket.

A seventh member of the crew, identified as New Zealand national, was arrested after the plane landed in Bombay.

The arrested men have reportedly said they were financed by parties in the Caribbean, but to date have publicly refused to divulge who the arms were destined for.

Asian Highway to benefit country

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linked with India again, the seminar was told.

The Jessore-Benapole-Hatiraul route is of the length of 206 km and Sylhet-Tamabil route of 56 km. The other is Chittagong-Cox's Bazar route. The Chittagong route has been recognised by ESCAP as an extended regional route.

Gateway to Myanmar
The seminar witnessed a debate over using Tamabil point as the gateway to Myanmar, instead of using Chittagong.

"Traditionally Bangladesh had enjoyed trade link with Myanmar through Chittagong. The first Asian Highway route conceived in 1959 had shown Chittagong as the gateway point for Myanmar. But now it has been changed and Tamabil, which is a much lengthy route to go to Myanmar than the Chittagong route," argued Jamaluddin Ahmed.

Morshed Khan, who was special envoy of the former prime minister, said: "I am in favour of opening up the Asian Highway immediately. But it must be through the Chittagong route and not Tamabil route."

Some other speakers, however, maintained that the current gateways served the purpose of India more than Bangladesh's and that ESCAP was imposing the present route.

Dr Rahmatullah, explaining ESCAP's position said that it could not impose any decision

on a country since ESCAP decisions were taken by its Council which consists of high level representatives of its member countries.

He further said that the first Asian Highway route through Chittagong was conceived without official understanding with Myanmar. After Myanmar joined the Asian Highway officially in 1989, and China in 1988, the map of the route changed dramatically.

According to Dr Rahmatullah, Myanmar was not interested in making its transit point near Chittagong because it had no economic interest there.

"Instead, Myanmar approved a route in its north west region with India. This route will go through India to Bangladesh via Tamabil point and go out of Bangladesh through Benapole or Bangladesh (and vice versa) in this part of the region. On the south eastern Asia side, this route links China's business city of Kunming, Thailand and further on," he pointed out.

A route through Chittagong to Yangon would only be supplementary to the already existing shipping links. "Thus it has less economic implication or attraction for other countries," he added.

"The routes are not imposed by the ESCAP or any single country. So, if Myanmar and Bangladesh agree, it can have

more than one connecting points as part of the Asian Highway. One of the duty of ESCAP is to update these routes every five years. So it can add more new roads whenever two countries agree," Dr Rahmatullah pointed out.

Conventions
Bangladesh as well as most of the 25 countries involved in the ALTID project, requires to adopt some internationally recognised conventions of standardise common road signals, customs procedures, container rules and other related issues to facilitate the smooth operation of the Asian Highway, it was pointed out at the seminar.

For immediate launching of the Asian Highway, Bangladesh can start with bilateral agreements with India, Nepal and Myanmar. ESCAP will also hold national workshops on the different conventions, the seminar was told.

These conventions are: Road Traffic, Road Signs and Signals, Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets, Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles, Customs Convention on Containers, International Convention on the Harmonisation of Frontier Control of Goods and Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road.

Following a discussion on

whether any of the conventions allowed trafficking of arms container or army vehicle of one country in to another, Communications Secretary Waliul Islam said that no convention allowed so.

"The agreement we have with India for river transit for decades does not allow such trafficking. So adoption of these conventions would only ensure safe transportation of goods and people," he noted.

Trans-Asian Railway

Although the Trans Asian Railway (TAR) project of ESCAP was conceived separately, it is now part of ALTID. But building a Trans Asian rail link still has a lot of challenge. ESCAP railway expert Peter J Hodgkinson said.

"There were several missing links in the rail links of the 25 member countries while rail line gauges also differed in different countries. The cover up missing links building of the Jamuna Bridge would play an important role in this region," he added.

The expert noted that three studies were completed in 94-95 to identify the TAR routes. Another detailed study would be made by ESCAP later this year.

"The TAR has tremendous potential for the economic boost of the SAARC and ASEAN countries. It will open a new era of trade with China and the Central Asia and Europe," he said.

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PHILIPS



Bhorer Kagoj — a Bengali daily — organised a Roundtable in the city yesterday on 'Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad and Its Functions'. —Star photo

7 injured as BCL factions clash at Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 4: An intra-party clash foiled the 49th founding anniversary function of pro-Awami League Chhatra League and left seven activists injured here today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash ensued after Friday midnight at the district Awami League office over which of the two conflicting groups of the BCL district committee would conduct the programme.

Both the groups used fire arms and blasted home-made bombs during the 6-hour clash that continued till this morning when police intervened and brought the situation under control.

Havel weds actress Veskrnova

PRAGUE, Jan 4: President Vaclav Havel, recovering from recent lung surgery, married Czech actress Dagmar Veskrnova today in a civil ceremony closed to the public, reports AP. The couple was accompanied only by Veskrnova's 19-year-old daughter Nina and two witnesses when they married shortly before noon at a municipal hall in Prague's Zizkov district. Havel spokesman Ladislav Spacek said.

The 43-year-old actress, who is famous in the Czech Republic for her theater performances, adopted the name Havlova, he said.

Their marriage today was the second for both: Havel's first wife Olga died a year ago and Dagmar divorced her first husband in 1980 after a five-year marriage.

In 1964, Havel and Olga married at the same town hall, the news agency CTK said.

Havel, 60, had a malignant tumor and half of his right lung removed in surgery Dec 2. His recovery was complicated by pneumonia and bronchitis. He left the hospital Dec 27, and has not yet returned to work.

Spacek said Havel's condition is good and doctors expect proved today's ceremony.

Only a few close friends were invited to celebrate later in the day, Spacek said.

KSA may deport

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work contracts and deportation. Muslims caught eating in public are often jailed for no more than a week, lectured in prison about their conduct and encouraged to fast and pray with others jailed on similar charges.

Other Gulf states also punish those caught eating, drinking or smoking in public during the holiday.

In Bahrain, violators can be jailed until the end of the month and have their heads shaved. In the United Arab Emirates, violators face one month in jail or a fine of up to 1,500 dirhams (dhs 410). Anyone caught drinking alcohol in public during Ramadan in the UAE could be sentenced to 80 lashes.

Burglary

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The theft of the telephone set would have appeared as the handiwork of 'cat burglars' if someone would not have probed the gloves compartment and the boot of the car of an official of the SEC on the previous day, commented a police official.

Both actions, which came in the wake of steps to recast the SEC and launching of an independent probe, have added a number of questions.

What papers they were looking for in the car and the offices of SEC?

Was it an attempt to remove something from the SEC file cabinet, containing someone's secret, before the probe committee burrows deep into the alleged irregularities in the capital market?

The committee, headed by the Vice-Chancellor of the Jahangirnagar University began working Friday, holding its first meeting for two hours.

AL-BNP formal talks

From Page 1

sions in implementing the policies formulated by a political government.

Most of the speakers, however, expressed the view that despite various limitations, parliamentary democracy stands a fair chance to flourish in Bangladesh in future.

AL leader Suranjit Sengupta, who is also the Prime Minister's Advisor on Parliamentary Affairs, said that the developed democracies in the world these days have been attaching more and more importance to the committee system for effective functioning of parliaments.

"With the implementation of the proposed provision for heading of parliamentary standing committees by non-minister MPs, we are also going to have a very effective system where the government would be bound to be accountable to Parliament," Suranjit said adding, in the standing bodies, the MPs would not be exposed to any party whipping for expressing their view.

Referring to BNP's public criticism of the Speaker, the AL leader observed that for the sake of a healthy parliamentary democracy, BNP leaders should not make indecent statement against the Chair. He hoped that BNP would eventually respond to the Prime Minister's call to return to the Sangsad.

Prof Tahmeem Muniruzzaman said the problem of our democracy is that the politicians talk about good governance, developed political culture and so on, but they do not mean it. "There is a big gap between the statements and the performances of the politicians."

Prof Sayed Anwar Hossain observed that democratic culture was a matter that could not be achieved overnight, rather, it was a matter of process. He also posed a question: Are our legislators true representatives of the people when black money and muscle powers still have a big role in the electioneering process of the country?

Communications Minister and JP Secretary General Anwar Hossain Monju reacted to the question, while his colleague in the JP Rabeya Bhuiyan expressed partial agreement with Prof Hossain.

Rabeya Bhuiyan, however, said that the nation should think on how to control the use of black money and muscle power in the elections.

Matru Rahman Chowdhury, Editor of the Bangla Bazar, said that it was not understandable why the Prime Minister could not make a phone call to the Leader of the Opposition in JS.

Supporting the view, Dr Shamsul Huda Harun of Dhaka University said: The role of human touch in politics is very important for the growth of democracy in a country, and both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia should practise the idea.

Abed Khan, a senior journalist, said that for sound growth of democracy, the government should mean accountability to the press and people.

At the beginning, A M A Muhiut read out a paper for facilitating the dialogue. He put forward a set of suggestions for effective functioning of parliamentary democracy.

Others who spoke on the occasion included LGRD Minister, Deputy Leader of Parliament and AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman, Akhteruzzaman MP, Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam and Prof Nazma Chowdhury.

Mannan Bhuiyan

From Page 1

dek Hossain Khoka, MP, presided over the meeting which also discussed problems faced by the city dwellers.

Meanwhile, different units and front organisations of BNP continued holding street rallies in the city to drum up support for the January 7 public meeting at the Manik Mia Avenue.

The city BNP organised a rally at Mirpur while the Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal held a meeting at the party central office yesterday. It will also hold street rallies in different wards and bring out processions today and tomorrow in support of the public meeting.

Link road

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people would meet. Saber Hossain Chowdhury MP at 10 am today.

"We will apprise the MP about our problems and register our protest to him," he said.

A BR official told this correspondent that they were trying to resolve the crisis and resume the ICD expansion work after discussing the matter with local MP.

Cabinet

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three wells in the Jalalabad gas field in Sylhet. Occidental will complete development of these wells by the last quarter of this year and start pumping 100 mmcft gas to the national grid, the sources said.

The Cairn has already drilled two wells in Bay, 35-km off Chittagong. It will begin drilling four wells in the next few months and two more wells later in the year.

Cairn's drilling equipment including rig reached Chittagong port recently, the sources added.

The government and the foreign companies are very optimistic about finding more gas fields with sufficient reserves which would enable Bangladesh to export natural gas and Liquid