

Abdul Khaleque replaces Yusuf Ali as RU VC

From RU Correspondent
RAJSHAHI, Feb 17: Prof M Abdul Khaleque, Pro-Vice Chancellor, today took over as the Vice-Chancellor of Rajshahi University.

Earlier, the Chancellor of the university, President Shahabuddin Ahmed, relieved Prof Yusuf Ali of his duties as the VC and appointed Prof Khaleque. Prof Yusuf has been asked to join the Chemistry Department as Professor.

Prof Yusuf had taken charge of the office of VC in 1994 and his tenure was due to end on August 22 next year. But the Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (RUTA) has been demanding his removal.

Talking to The Daily Star tonight, the new VC said he would try to restore congenial atmosphere on the campus and sought cooperation from teachers, students and all concerned.

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By-election in Thakurgaon-1 today

By-election in Thakurgaon-1 constituency will be held today with only three candidates vying for the vacant seat of Jatiya Sangsad, reports UNB.

Main opposition the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Jamaat-e-Islami have boycotted the by-polls. The seat fell vacant following the death of a ruling party MP.

Voting will start at 8 am and continue till 4 pm. There are 2,35,754 voters in the constituency.

The day has been announced a general holiday for all government, semi-government, autonomous and non-government offices and other institutions and agencies in the area.

The Election Commission has directed officials for taking strict measures to hold a violence-free poll.

Some 103 magistrates have also been posted to oversee polling in the constituency's 111 centres.

In the race are Ramesh Chandra Sen of Awami League, MD Z H N Islam of Jatiya Party and Krishak Mohammad Sadeq of Bangladesh Krishak Samik Mukti Andolon.

Bangabandhu murder

Two accused in Canada deny involvement

TORONTO, Canada, Feb 17: Bangladesh police has issued arrest warrants for two men accused in the 1975 murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the CTV television network reported Sunday, says AFP.

The two men, Najmul Ansar and Kismat Hashim, are both natives of Bangladesh who were given Canadian citizenship years ago and now work in Montreal and Ottawa respectively, CTV reported.

Bangladesh founder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed along with 15 family members in the capital Dhaka in an August 15, 1975 sloop. One daughter, Sheikh Hasina, who was living in Germany at the time miraculously escaped and became the prime minister of Bangladesh in 1996.

In an interview on CTV, See Page 12 Col 3

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Cabinet okays formation of Nat'l Stock Exchange

By Special Correspondent

The cabinet yesterday approved, in principle, a proposal for setting up the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

Chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the meeting accepted the outlines of the proposed NSE which will be a joint-venture by the government and the private sector, according to official sources.

The NSE would have corporate membership. It will also have representatives from financial institutions, including nationalised commercial banks and private banks.

The management would be totally separated from the ownership and it would be run by professionals, the sources said.

It will have 'trading floors' in different parts of the country, linked to the mainframe computer at NSE, which will be

fully automated.

Thus, it would allow people from all over the country to participate in trading, the sources added.

However, the NSE is still in a conceptual stage. A detailed feasibility study will be commissioned soon.

A company will be floated and necessary funds will be mobilised for the NSE, the sources added.

The cabinet meeting, held in the Prime Minister's Office, also decided to impose a ban on the import of coloured granular SSP fertiliser while the restriction would not be applicable to the import of powdered SSP.

It also approved the draft of the Local Government (Union Parishad) Amendment Bill, 1997.

The meeting was attended,

among others, by ministers, state ministers in charge of different ministries, the cabinet secretary, the principal secretary to the Prime Minister and the secretaries of ministries concerned.

Meanwhile President of Bangladesh Investors Forum Prof Abu Ahmed welcomed the approval for setting up of the NSE and said that it satisfied a long felt demand of the investors.

He urged the government to take appropriate steps to give it an operational shape as early as possible.

The establishment of the NSE will not only provide required brokering facilities to the investors but also contribute towards transparency in the stock markets," Prof Abu Ahmed noted.

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BNP query on cost of PM's US visit raises hue & cry in JS

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad plunged into a near pandemonium situation for about half an hour during the question-answer session yesterday when Opposition lawmakers raised a hue and cry for what they called Foreign Minister Abdur Samad Azad's lengthy statements making no 'to the point' answer.

Some Opposition deputies drew the Chair's attention to the matter and at one stage Opposition Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain took the floor and demanded that the 'irrelevant parts' of the minister's answers be expunged from the proceedings. He sought help from the Chair so that the time during the question-answer session is not 'wasted'.

During the chaos, a number of lawmakers belonging to ruling Awami League and Opposition BNP and Jatiya Party (JP) were seen shouting at each other while Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid repeatedly called for calm.

The Chair sought cooperation from all the members in running the House smoothly and said none should make their questions or replies lengthy.

Later Abdus Samad Azad also admitted that his answer could have been precise.

Another BNP lawmaker, K M Obaidur Rahman, also drew the Chair's attention so that ministers make their replies 'to the point and precise'.

Advocate Fazle Rabbi of JP said, "I doubt whether the Speaker, the MPs, or even newsmen in the press gallery understood anything from the replies of the Foreign Minister. We want to the point answers".

Earlier, replying to a starred question from BNP lawmaker Nizamuddin Khan, the Foreign Minister told the House that the size of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's entourage during her US visit in October last year to attend the UNGA session was 50

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Bill on local govt polls to be placed in JS today

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last night expressed her government's determination to hold Local Government elections to ensure people's representation in every strata of public life, reports BSS.

Responding to an allegation brought by BNP member Shahidul Islam that government had violated the Constitution by not holding the Union Council elections on time, she told the House that elections in seven union councils would be held by February 28. The remaining elections will be held in March and April, she said.

The Prime Minister said a commission on Local Government was formed and its report would be available soon. She said the existing three wards have been expanded to nine wards for greater people's representation.

The Local Government elections would be held on time so that the coming SSC examination schedule was not hampered she said adding the SSC exam-

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CHT local govt council acts: HC issues rule

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday directed the government to show cause within two weeks as to why Section 16A of the three Chittagong Hill District Local Government Council (Amendment) Acts, 1997 shall not be declared to have been made in contravention of the Constitution and are without lawful authority and of no legal effect.

The division bench of the HC comprising Justice Mohammad Mozammel Hoque and Justice Md Hasan Amin acted upon the writ petition filed by Barrister Ziaur Rahman Khan, a BNP MP.

The three Acts namely, the Rangamati Hill District Local Government Council (Amendment) Act, 1997, the Khagrachhari Hill District Local Government Council (Amendment) Act, 1997 and the Bandarban Hill District Local Government Council (Amendment) Act, 1997 were passed by Parliament on January 29 to which the President gave his assent on February 2 and were gazetted on the same day.

Section 16A each of the three Acts introduces new provisions for formation of an interim council by the government in case the council is not elected within the prescribed period.

The interim councils will continue until the elected council is formed.

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Ekushey '97 Lectures, patriotic songs, theatres continue

By Staff Correspondent

The Language Movement is one of the most important episodes in the history of Bangladesh and our poets have naturally reflected in their poetry the spirit of the moment, said Dr Saikat Asgar yesterday.

He was presenting the keynote paper at a lecture session on "Panchish Bachharer Bangla Kabita." The Bangla Academy organised the discussion session as part of its Amar Ekushey programme.

Presided over by poet Abul Hossain, the discussion was participated by Dr Mahbub Sadik and Manjurur Rahman.

Meanwhile, today's Ekushey lecture will be delivered by Prof Sardar Fazlul Karim. It will be presided over by Shamsur Rahman.

On the fourth day of the six-day Ekushey programme of the Sammilito Sanskritik Jote at See Page 12 Col 1

Amar Ekushey Book Fair opens today

By Staff Correspondent

The Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela 1997, the biggest book fair of the country, begins in the city today.

The month-long fair, organised by Bangla Academy and the Book Publishers and Printers Association, will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at 10:30 am in the Bangla Academy premises.

The programme was announced by the acting DG of the Bangla Academy, Mainul Hossain, at a press conference yesterday evening.

There will be 550 stalls at the fair. Of these, 250 have been set up inside the Academy while the rest 290 will be along the road from the TSC to Doel Chatar.

Some 550 organisations are participating in this year's book fair which has now become a national festival. There will be 14 food shops. These will

be outside the Academy premises. Six stalls have been allotted free of cost to social welfare organisations.

The rent for a single unit inside the academy premises has been fixed at Tk 3000 while Tk 5000 will be charged for every double unit stall. Taka 2000 has been fixed as rentals for every single unit outside the academy premises.

Last year, some 450 organisations took part in the fair setting up 474 stalls.

The budget of the fair is Tk 15.3 lakh as against Tk 15 lakh of the previous year.

Special measures have been taken for maintaining security and preventing dust in the fair ground. Two fire service vehicles will be on duty to meet any emergency situation.

Meanwhile, a 11-point code of conduct was finalised at a See Page 12 Col 1

State Minister sacked for evicting slum dwellers without notice

The Minister of State for Housing and Public Works, Afzaruddin Ahmed Khan, has been sacked, official sources said last night, reports BSS.

The minister of state was sacked for evicting the inhabitants of the Bhasantake slum without giving them enough time, the sources said.

Works Secretary Moklesur Rahman has also been made officer on special duty (OSD).

They said that Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Abul Hasnat Abdullah accompanied by Rahmatullah, MP, Ahsanullah Master, MP, and Akhtaruzzaman, MP visited the spot on instructions from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and assured

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PM to reply to questions in JS every Tuesday

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will have 15 minutes every Tuesday from next week to give reply during the fixed one hour question-answer period, reports UNB.

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid informed parliament yesterday that 15 minutes time will be reserved for the Leader of the House every Tuesday from February 25 to reply to questions during the question hour.

This time has been allocated as per the decision of the Business Advisory Committee and the Parliament Secretariat will announce the details of the decision, the Deputy Speaker said.

Shima's death Special court to resume hearing Feb 24

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 17: The special court, set up to curb persecution of women and child, here today took into cognizance the case of alleged rape of Shima Chowdhury, court sources said.

The next date of the case was fixed on February 24.

Meanwhile, Chittagong Bar Association also formed an enquiry committee to unearth the mystery behind the death of

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Nasaka agrees to remove land mines, hand over 19 fishermen

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 17: Land mines planted by the Nasaka, border force of Myanmar, along Bangladesh border from pillar no 35 to 50 will be removed shortly.

This was agreed at a flag meeting between the BDR and the Nasaka at the Teknaf Roads and Highways rest house today, official sources said.

It was also agreed that 19 Bangladeshi fishermen arrested earlier and eight fishing trawlers seized by the Nasaka would be handed over to the BDR on February 22 at Mangdu.

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200 shanties gutted

By Staff Correspondent

At least 200 shanties were gutted in a fire at a slum near the Postagala railgate under Demra thana in the city yesterday afternoon.

The fire that broke out at about 1:30 pm soon engulfed a large portion of the slum, police and fire service sources said.

The cause of the blaze could not be known immediately.

No casualty was reported till last night. But some slum dwellers received minor injuries as they started running in panic after the fire broke out.

Most of the houses, were made of bamboo, wood and corrugated iron sheets. There were

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Train dacoity in Narsingdi

NARSINGDI, Feb 17: Armed dacoits swooped on the passengers of a Chittagong-bound mail near Tongi station early today and looted cash and goods worth about Tk two lakh, leaving eight people injured, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the robbers attacked the travellers as soon as the train left Tongi station at about 2:30 am and looted the valuables at gun point. They left the train when it reached the Ghorashal area.

Of the injured, Nurunnabi, 38, Golam Nabi, 35, Jamal, 28, Sharif, 32, Kamrul Hasan, 26, Hasan, 28, and Shahjahan, 22, were admitted to a local hospital.



Stalls are being decorated for the Ekushey Book Fair beginning at the Bangla Academy today. —Star photo

IPU conference concludes today 'Women at top didn't entice more women into politics'

NEW DELHI, Feb 17: Indira Gandhi, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Srimavo Bandaranaike, Sheikh Hasina and Benazir Bhutto all broke out of Asia's male-dominated societies to reach the most powerful positions in their countries, reports AP.

But having women at the top has not translated to greater empowerment for women or enticed more women into political life, delegates at an international conference on women in politics said today.

Gandhi in India, Kumaratunga and her mother, Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka, Hasina in Bangladesh and Benazir in Pakistan succeeded in changing the course of their country's politics, but few other women were able to follow them.

"The trickle down effect has been proved wrong in politics," said Margaret Alva, an Indian member of parliament.

"Mrs. Indira Gandhi, as prime minister had little time for women's issues. Her son, Rajiv, was, in fact, far more sensitive to gender issues," said the 1-woman who worked as a minister under both.

Our prime minister and the leader of the opposition are

both distinguished women. But that does not mean social attitudes have changed," said Rabeya Bhuiyan, a lawmaker of the Jatiya Party, one of the ruling coalition partners in Bangladesh.

Unless a woman is a wife or daughter of a powerful politician — as is the case for the current leaders of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka — it's impossible to rise in the party hierarchy and become a candidate to contest top posts, said Mrs. Bhuiyan.

A study released this month by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Geneva-based group that organised the New Delhi meeting of men and women members of parliament from 77 countries, said less than 12 per cent of lawmakers in parliaments worldwide are women.

In South Asia, the figures are even worse. India's 540-member lower house of Parliament is seven per cent female; Nepal's 215-member house of representatives is three per cent female; Sri Lanka's 215-member house is five per cent female.

Bangladesh reserves one-third of its seats for women, but has few women Cabinet ministers.

"In the largest, democracy of the world, there is just one woman in the Cabinet," said Alva referring to the Indian government of Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda. "There is a basic opposition to allowing women into decision-making."

The five-day New Delhi meeting, which ends tomorrow, was called to discuss ways of bringing more women into politics.

In Sri Lanka, Srimavo Bandaranaike became prime minister in 1960 after her husband, a party leader, was killed. Now See Page 12 Col 2

Sharif takes oath, promises to run a clean admn

ISLAMABAD, Feb 17: President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari swore in Nawaz Sharif as Pakistan's new prime minister today in a ceremony broadcast live on television, report agencies.

Earlier, New parliament overwhelmingly elected Nawaz Sharif as prime minister for a five-year term as he pledged to run a clean and honest administration.

Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) won a sweeping victory on February 3 after the previous administration of Benazir Bhutto was dismissed amid allegations of corruption and misrule.

The process of accountability will be across the board. It will not be tainted and people from treasury benches or the opposition group will be treated even-handedly, Sharif said.

Promising a clean administration, he said "my government will follow a transparent

policy in every field."

Sharif secured 177 votes to become Leader of the House while former defence minister Aftab Shahban, the candidate put forward by ousted premier Benazir, polled 16 votes.

It is the second time that Sharif has been elected for

premiership after serving a shortened term from 1990-93.

In a surprise move, Benazir told the House in her speech as Opposition leader that Pakistan would find a matching response to India's Prithvi nuclear-capable missile this year, without specifying if that meant Pakistan was developing its own missile.

Sharif will be the 13th prime minister of the 50-year-old Muslim nation.

The vote was a mere formality after Sharif's PML inflicted a crushing defeat on Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), bagging 135 seats to a mere 19 by his key political opponent.

Sharif together with his allies enjoys two-thirds majority. "This is an unprecedented mandate," Sharif said after securing the vote of confidence from the National Assembly, pledging he would use it to rid the nation of its problems.



President Farooq Leghari (L) swears in Pakistan Muslim League leader Nawaz Sharif as prime minister at the presidential palace in Islamabad yesterday. — Reuters/UNB photo