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BAU convocation 'Keep campus arms-free'

MYMENSINGH, Dec 20: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called for developing an agriculture system suitable for Bangladesh and building the foundation for research in light of the challenges and requirements of the 21st century, reports UNB.

Addressing the fourth convocation ceremony of the Bangladesh Agricultural University at Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin auditorium here today, she said proper application of modern agricultural knowledge in the country's agri system has become more important nowadays.

Urging the university to take a lead in the field of agriculture research, technology innovation and application, she assured all cooperation and support from her government.

About the student politics, the Prime Minister said the student should do constructive politics being imbued with patriotism. "The atmosphere in the campus should be very congenial, free from the influence of arms."

Former chief of the caretaker government Justice Habibur Rahman addressed the ceremony as the convocation speaker. Education Minister A S H Q Sadique and BAU Vice-Chancellor Prof Muhammad Hossain also spoke on the occasion.

In the fourth convocation of the university, 2,091 students were conferred with degrees, including 33 PhDs. Students of different faculties for the year 1990, 1991 and 1992 received the degrees at the function today.

Colour of BJP

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election, the party shunned the hard-line stance on sensitive issues that in the past drove minorities and political groups away.

For the first time in a key election document, the Hindu nationalists dropped all reference to building of a temple in a disputed area that led to communal riots in 1992.

Instead the political resolution stressed reviving the "spirit of optimism, opportunity and oneness in this 50th year of our independence."

A minority BJP government was voted out after 12 days in power last year because no political party offered support. Since then, the BJP have wooed regional parties and splinter groups of all hues in the search for power.

Every election has issues, this (temple building) is not an issue now. The issue is stability," party spokeswoman Sushma Swaraj said.

But she indicated that the long-term ideals of the party would stay intact. "The basic philosophy of hindutva (nationalism) cannot be diluted."

Hasina tells public meeting BNP out to hamper development efforts

MYMENSINGH, Dec 20: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said the government is taking every possible step for the economic development of the nation, but that is being hampered by the opposition repeatedly, reports UNB.

"They (opposition BNP) don't want development of the nation, they don't want economic emancipation of the people," she said addressing a huge public meeting at the local circuit house maidan in the afternoon.

The BNP is opposing the CHT peace agreement to create unrest in the country, she said.

Mentioning the signing of CHT peace accord, Hasina said, "We've taken the step to restore peace in the troubled region which was wrecked by unrest for the last 20 years. We've taken steps for improving the life of the tribal people."

She said the government has created a congenial atmosphere for investment, but the BNP is trying to create unrest at a time when the foreign entrepreneurs are coming to invest in the country.

The government is working Dacoity at night coach in Pabna

PABNA, Dec 20: Twenty passengers of a night coach bound for Chapainawabganj from Dhaka sustained injuries in the early hours of today following the attack by a group of dacoits.

The dacoits, who were travelling in the bus in guise of passengers, indiscriminately stabbed some of the passengers after taking over the control of the bus at gunpoint when the coach reached Gachpara near the town.

BGMEA

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off could be avoided.

He voiced concern over a news item published in a section of newspaper on Friday about the "threat to create 'cargo-jam' and to introduce surcharge again" at the port.

Quddus said cargo operation has come down to 30 per cent as the port workers resorted to 'go slow' policy.

It created serious congestion keeping 55 cargo vessels waiting at the outer anchorage.

BGMEA president said the situation is so bad that the foreign shipping lines are showing their reluctance in booking cargo and has threatened to introduce surcharge on goods sent through this port.

He said repeated disruption of normal activities at the port created uncertainty particularly for the export-based garment sector.

with the plan to remove illiteracy from the country by the year 2006, she said, adding that during the 17 months' rule of the government, literacy rate has increased by four per cent to reach 51 per cent.

Hasina said the government has a plan to establish 12 more science and technology universities in 12 district headquarters for the expansion of education.

The Prime Minister said the union parishad elections are going on and the people are casting their votes in a free and fair atmosphere as the government is very much sincere for ensuring free and impartial elections.

Mentioning her government's decision to give pension to the elderly people of the country, the Prime Minister said that the scheme will be started after the union parishad elections.

Polls violence

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the supporters of two chairman candidates at Shahapur centre of Majidpur union. The dead could not be identified.

The trouble also spread in the villages of Shahapur and Lalpur.

Yesterday, elections were held in 200 unions under 31 thanas of 31 districts. The number of polling centres was 1847.

Clashes between supporters of rival candidates led to the cancellation of polling in the six centres. Of them, three centres are located in Jagatpur North and South unions under Daudkandi thana of Comilla district, one centre each in Pathoir and Peerpara unions under Kachua thana of Chandpur district, and the other centre in Chouhali thana of Sirajganj district.

JU buses

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sociation Atiqur Rahman and Chairman of Aminbazar Union Parishad Mohammad Kafiluddin, among others, were present at the discussion.

JU Pro-VC Prof Alauddin Ahmed also told this correspondent that the university authorities had discussions with transport workers' leaders.

Meanwhile, in a joint statement yesterday, 10 student organisations protested and condemned police action on JU teachers and students and attack by workers of Awami League-backed Chhatra League on the leaders and activists of various student bodies including Chhatra Union, Chhatra Front and Chhatra Federation in the university.



Visitors at a science and technology exhibition that began on the BCSIR premises in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Trafficking on border

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Brightly decorated grocery shops do brisk business. Rickshaw vans ferry passengers on the kutcha village road carrying small and tightly packed luggage. The passengers — men, women and children — wear a tell-tale look of being dhurs.

In villages around Jessore, a kind of 'travel agents' operate openly. Once the deal is made through some contacts, the procedure is simple and easy. The agents guide the clients to a house near one of the numerous ghats of the area. Then two to three agents turn up at a convenient time, collect the fees and then lead them across the border.

These days less people are using this particular border because the BDR has set up a special team to crack down on the trade," said Maksud Ahmed, a local businessman, adding, "Only a few days back you would find it difficult to walk on the roads due to the rush."

"There are two types of dhurs," said a senior police official in Jessore. "One is a poor person who cannot afford to obtain a passport and the other is a victim of the woman and child trafficking syndicate."

He said that traditionally poor peasants and groups of devotees have been travelling to and from India without papers and the matter used to be ignored. "After visiting their relatives and shrines as far as in Ameer, these people would return home in Bangladesh," he said.

"But during the last puja festival, as usual, thousands were crossing without papers and at one point we realised that the organised gangs of child and women traffickers were using the loophole at random," he said.

The SP of Jessore, Ali Imam Chowdhury, expressed his concern over child and woman trafficking. But, he said, for the villagers along the border the trade is so lucrative that unless their economic condition improves, it is very difficult to stop the trafficking.

"We are nonetheless holding regular meetings with the villagers along the border to create public opinion against child and woman trafficking," said the SP.

At the BDR Company headquarters in Benapole, Lt Col Zahurul Islam said that since September this year, a special BDR strike force has been operating to stop human trafficking and dhur business. By introducing this 10-man mobile squad, we have greatly reduced dhur business in the area," he said.

Funds to be sought from donors for dev of CHT

Star Report

Finance Minister S A M S Kibria has said he will meet representatives of donors this month and seek funds for development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The Economic Relations Division (ERD) is preparing long and short-term plans for development of the CHT, the minister told the BBC, monitored here last night.

The BBC quoted an unnamed senior official of the ERD as said that Tk 2500 crore would be needed for the overall programme.

Another Tk 200 crore would be required urgently for rehabilitation of the refugees and displaced people, farm loans, creation of jobs and grants to members of the Parbatyia Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS), it said quoting

another official of the Special Affairs Division.

Talking to BBC's Dhaka correspondent, the Finance Minister hoped that at the meeting, the donor countries would also finalise the amount of this year's aid disbursement.

He said, following the CHT peace accord, he held meetings with representatives of the donors including the US regarding development of the CHT. They promised help. They also wanted to know the quantum of financial assistance and specific areas for which it was needed, Kibria said.

The minister said the government has also identified the sectors in CHT where financial assistance, short and long term would be needed. The sectors are, development of administrative infrastructure, roads, agriculture, health, education, power and telecommunication; rehabilitation of tribal and non-tribal people and setting up of small and cottage industries.

Kibria hoped that the donor countries would also participate in the emergency projects for implementation of the peace treaty.

FM's talks

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route due to absence of facilities. However a cargo of fertiliser is expected to move to Nepal through Bangladesh using the old rail route. The route is time consuming and involves transshipment.

The progress of the first phase of South Asian Growth Quadrangle is expected to be reviewed during the Bangladesh foreign minister's visit. Nepal is the co-ordinator of the 4-nation growth concept that involves Bangladesh, India and Bhutan.

Court rooms

From page 1

Ten new High Court judges are likely to be appointed soon. The LC and the JATI have been allotted a building at the Sher-e-Bangala Nagar, cancelling all allotments for the Film and Archive Department of the information ministry, the Public Administration Reforms Commission and the Voters Identity Card Project the sources added. The LC and JATI have been asked to take possession of the building immediately. The building in Indugonj renovation new.

The LC and the JATI were given accommodation in the HC building for three years by the former caretaker government of Justice Habibur Rahman. An amount of Tk 50 lakh was then spent for renovation.

An attempt for setting up some new court rooms was made during the BNP government but was later abandoned due to opposition from lawyers. The lawyers had then argued that it would be difficult for them to shuttle between the two buildings. The government is now planning to construct a 'gang way' to link it with the Supreme Court building, the sources added.

Exhibition on architecture opens in city

By Staff Correspondent

An exhibition titled "Pundranagar to Sherebanglanagar: Architecture in Bangladesh" opened in the city yesterday.

Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Abul Kalam Azad Chowdhury inaugurated the exhibition at the National Museum auditorium.

Photographs and drawings of major architectural works in Bangladesh from 320 BC till the present day are on display.

The 11-day exhibition organised by Chetana Sthapatya Unnayan Society also includes images and documents of some rare buildings.

Presided over by architect Mazharul Islam, president of the organisation, the inaugural function was also addressed by veteran litterateur Swakat Osman, Saiful Haque and Khaled Ashraf.

The exhibition is the product of four years of research and documentation by Chetana Sthapatya Society. The research project was sponsored by the Ford Foundation.

BNP: President

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President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and submit a memorandum.

The memorandum may contain the BNP's demand for scrapping the CHT agreement, which it is calling unconstitutional.

During the meeting, the party is also learnt to have planned to seek a presidential intervention for stopping implementation of the accord and facilitate a negotiated settlement of the CHT crisis by involving all concerned.

In the statement, Opposition Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain, requested all party MPs to be present at Khaleda's Minto Road residence by 9.30 and participate in the programme.

UNB says, BNP Secretary General has rejected the call for return to the winter session of parliament.

"We want to go back to the House, but the situation further aggravated with the surfacing of new issues like the CHT accord blocking the way of our return to parliament," he told the agency over phone yesterday.

BNP lawmakers


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been saying in recent days.

"These are all spoken matters. It is the feeling of the MPs and a joint effort, and I've just reiterated it once again," said Mahabubur Rahman.

When his attention was drawn to the fact that many of the signatories knew nothing about the statement, Rahman said, "the persons assigned for the task could not contact them on time."


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