

## Opposition parties conspiring to grab power: BCL

By DU Correspondent  
Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of the ruling Awami League, yesterday accused the opposition parties of hatching conspiracy to grab power.

In a statement, BCL president Bahadur Bepari and general secretary Ajay Kar Khokan also alleged that the opposition parties were calling hartal with a view to create anarchy in the country.

They are enforcing such anti-people programmes when the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was trying to build and exploitation-free Bangladesh," the BCL leaders said.

They termed the hartal "illogical and undemocratic" and said that the countrymen would reject today's hartal.

The BCL leaders also condemned the opposition to establish the country's democracy and peaceful atmosphere through such undemocratic activities.



Anti-hartal activists are busy writing slogans on a banner at city's Mohammadpur area yesterday ahead of today's opposition-called hartal. — Star photo

## Diarrhoea claims 12 in Noakhali

NOAKHALI, Jan 25: Diarrhoea has broken out in greater Noakhali in an alarming proportion, claiming 12 lives and affecting 2100 people in last one week, reports UNB.

Hospital sources said more than 100 people were affected by the disease in Feni district in 24 hours ending at 3 pm Sunday.

The sources said Latu Mia, 14, of Joylaskora in Dhagonbhuiyan, Feni died of diarrhoea on Saturday, while Dhanoria, a woman from Barahigobindapur, had undergone abortion in a local clinic as she was seriously affected by the water-borne disease.

Diarrhoea claimed another man from Barahigobindapur several days back.

When contacted the Civil Surgeon of Noakhali said 40 medical teams were working round-the-clock in the affected areas of the district to combat the disease.

Sources at the Civil Surgeon office also confirmed the death from the disease of four other people — Rozina, 2, Nazma, 4, Ramzan Ali, 60, and Nur Box, 65.

The worst affected thanas of the district are Begumganj, Compyanganj and Hatia.

But sources at PDB, a non-government organisation, said the disease has also broken out in an epidemic form in Noakhali sadar.

They said four people died in Noakhali sadar, three in Begumganj, two in Compyanganj and one in Hatia thanas in the last three days.

## Obituary

By Staff Correspondent

Shamsun Nalar (Hun), daughter of late Alauddin Ahmad, former leader of the opposition in the erstwhile East Pakistan Assembly in 1962-64, died of prolonged illness on Sunday at BIRDEM Hospital in the city. She was 63.

She was the wife of late Ghiasuddin Ahmed, a renowned social worker of Arambagh. She is survived by her son Shaheen Ahmed, daughter Salma Ahmed Dipu, a singer, two grandchildren, and a host of relatives and admirers. Her younger brother is Rajuddin Ahmed Raju MP.

Her kulkhwani will be held tomorrow after Maghreb prayers at her Arambagh residence.

## Death anniversary

The first death anniversary of Shohrab Hossain, a former minister and one of the key organisers of the Liberation War, will be observed today, reports BSS.

On the occasion, Quraikhwani and a milad mahfil will be held at his Magura residence.

Shohrab Hossain, who was the president of Awami League unit of greater Jessore district, played an active role in different democratic movements.

He was elected member of parliament from Magura constituency in 1973.

## Raisuddin buried

Principal Raisuddin Ahmed, a former Member of Pakistan National Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary, was buried at Banani graveyard after Jhor prayers yesterday, reports BSS.

Namaz-e-janaza of Principal Ahmed, who died at a city clinic Sunday evening due to old-age complications, was held at Banani Bazar mosque.

An M. A. in English from Dhaka University Principal Ahmed devoted all his life to the promotion of education. He founded over half a dozen colleges across the country.

In recognition of his contribution to education sector, he was honoured with international "Russel Award" by the World Teachers Congress.

A widely travelled man, Ahmed was also associated with the profession of journalism.

He was Assistant Editor of then "Pakistan Observer" during 1954-55.

Born at village Junail in Madarganj thana of Jamalpur district, Principal Ahmed was actively involved in many social welfare activities.

Doa mahfil and kulkhwani of the deceased will be held at House number-50, Road number-1, and Sector-6 of Uttara Model Town after Asr prayers tomorrow.

Relatives and admirers have been requested to attend.

## China rejects Russian proposal for 'strategic triangle'

BONN, Jan 25: China rejects a Russian proposal for a "strategic triangle" among Russia, India and China, Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan said in an interview to appear here today, reports AFP.

Tang told the German economic daily Handelsblatt that "China has always adhered independently to a foreign policy oriented toward peace," and, "we will not be deterred from this path."

He said China has a very good strategic partnership with Russia, which is full of vitality and regularly produces new elements.

But he added that Beijing's partnership with Moscow, "includes neither alliances nor confrontations with third countries, such as the United States."

Last month, on a visit to India, Russian Prime Minister Yegheny Primakov had floated the idea of a strategic triangle among the three countries.

Tang also took a swipe at Japan for criticism during a visit to Tokyo in December by Chinese President Jiang Zemin, saying, "The Germans have more or less come to terms with their nazi past, but the Japanese are having trouble with their militarist past."

To mark his trip, the first by a Chinese President Jiang had been pushing hard for a full written apology from Japan over its brutal occupation of China before and during World War II.

## Indian artist's painting show begins

By Staff Correspondent

A solo painting exhibition by eminent Indian artist Dipali Bhattacharya began in the city yesterday.

India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh Deb Mukherjee inaugurated the 15-day show at Gallery 21.

Speaking on the occasion, Deb Mukherjee reminded the visitors that the artist's earlier exhibit four years ago at La Galerie had been a tremendous success.

Artist Mohammed Kibria was also present at the function as special guest.

Dipali explained that her 25 mixed media pieces depicted men and women busy in their daily routine within the typical urban setting of Calcutta, her city. The smaller works are more intimate views of women in contemplation, handling their innermost feelings and also having to confront the complexities of their relationship with men she added.

The artist also stressed that women play a very vital role in her paintings: they are depicted as deep and introspective, thoughtful and different, but never unconcerned.

The exhibition will remain open from 10 am to 8 pm every day till February 8.

Born in 1952, Dipali graduated from the Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta in '74, and won a national scholarship from '76 to '78. At present she is an assistant professor at the Govt. College of Art and Craft, Calcutta.

The artist has exhibited her work in London, New York, San Francisco, Berlin, Stuttgart, New Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta.

## House adopts obituary motion

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday condoned the death of ten former ministers, MPs, members of provincial council and constituent assembly, reports UNB.

They are: former minister and MP Prof Yusuf Ali, former minister and provincial council member Mahfuzul Haq, former national council and constituent assembly member Sayed Fazlul Haq BSC, former MP and constituent assembly member Abdul Awal, former MP and constituent assembly member AKM Nurul Karim, former MP Kudrutt Ullah Mandal, former MP and constituent assembly member Mozaffar Ali, former MP Dil Mohamad, former provincial council member BD Habibullah and former provincial council member Devendra Nath Gosh.

The House adopted a unanimous obituary motion when the Speaker proposed for the motion citing the names of the deceased distinguished persons of the country.

The House offered *fateha* for the salvation of the departed souls.

Mayor meets poet Shamsur Rahman

Mayor Mohammed Hanif yesterday visited the Shyamoli residence of poet Shamsur Rahman, reports BSS.

The Mayor stayed with the elderly poet for some time and enquired about his health. Poet Shamsur Rahman described the incident elaborately.

Mayor Hanif asked the concerned authorities to take stern action against those involved in the attack.

## President, PM greet Narayanan, Vajpayee

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed has felicitated Indian President KR Narayanan on the occasion of the National Day of India to be observed today, reports UNB.

In a message sent yesterday the President expressed his confidence that the existing friendship and cordial relations between the two neighbouring countries would be further strengthened in the years ahead.

He wished for good health and happiness of the Indian President and continued peace, progress and prosperity of the friendly people of India.

Meanwhile, in another message Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has greeted Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on the occasion of the National Day of India.

In her message to her Indian counterpart, the Prime Minister yesterday expressed her belief that the existing bonds of friendship, understanding and cooperation between the two friendly countries would be further strengthened and consolidated in the days to come.

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## Clinton lacks respect for presidency: Bush

RENO, Nevada Jan 25: Former President George Bush thinks Bill Clinton lacks respect for the presidency, but believes the country will bounce back after Clinton's impeachment trial ends, reports AP.

"I have tried to stay out of all the Washington mess," Bush said Saturday at the end of a keynote address to the Safari Club International's 27th annual hunters' convention. "But I must confess I have been deeply concerned by what appears to be a lack of respect for the office I was so very proud to hold."

Speaking to an audience of international big-game hunters and conservationists, Bush was confident any national embarrassment caused by Clinton's sex scandal would be short-lived.

"Our country is strong and it is resilient. And the presidency, the office of the presidency, is strong and it is resilient," Bush said. "The trials of the present will soon pass away and once again our country will be respected and strong around the world."

Impeached by Congress on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice in the Monica Lewinsky sex case, Clinton is being tried in the Senate.

## 147 days in underground coffin

LONDON, Jan 24: A 37-year-old British man has set a world record after willingly spending 147 days buried alive in an underground coffin, the British press said today, reports AFP.

Geoff Smith was "earthed" Saturday morning and saw daylight for the first time since August 29. He was thrilled about beating the previous record set by an American in 1981, but vowed he would never try the feat again — not as long as he lives.

"I am proud I made it and happy that the record is back in the family, but I'll not be buried again until I'm carried away in my real coffin," he said.

The attraction to coffins has been in the family since Geoff's mum, Emma, set the European record in 1968 with 101 days underground.

Geoff Smith was greeted by a doctor as he stepped out of his coffin, but he was quickly able to stand up without assistance.

Underground, he had electricity, a cellular telephone and a radio. He was also able to speak to the outside world through an air hole, which also allowed him to receive supplies.

During his feat, the father-of-three even managed to develop a love affair with a young woman he had never seen, going so far as to ask her hand in marriage. But she dropped him after six weeks.

## VGF programme in Chuadanga

CHUADANGA, Jan 25: Distribution of wheat under the VGF programme in all the four thanas of Chuadanga district has been going on satisfactorily, reports BSS.

According to an official source, a total of 247 tonnes of wheat has been distributed among 1373 destitute families of 30 unions during the last six months.

Government has sanctioned 494 tonnes of wheat under the VGF programme for Chuadanga district in the current financial years.

TK 23 lakh in loans for flood victims of 2 Barisal thanas

BARISAL, Jan 25: Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah distributed about Taka 23 lakh in house building loans among the flood victims of Agailhara and Gournadi thanas of the district recently.

Taka 12.50 lakh for 2,500 families in Agailhara and Tk 10.44 lakh for 2,088 families in Gournadi were sanctioned from the relief fund of the Prime Minister official sources said.

The Chief Whip also distributed 30 sewing machines and interest-free loans of Tk 2 lakh among 65 people of the thanas.

BKSAL founding anniversary observed

By Staff Correspondent

The 24th founding anniversary of the Bangladesh Krishak Samik Awami League (BKSAL) was observed with a renewed pledge to establish the golden Bangladesh dream by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The day's programmes began with placing of wreaths at the portrait of the Father of the Nation at Bangabandhu Museum.

A colourful horse cart rally was brought out in the city from Ramna Bataunul which paraded city thoroughfares.

Meanwhile, speakers at a rally said people of the country were still willing to complete the second revolution programme of BKSAL.

They were addressing a rally organised at the city's Palton Maidan with Sharif M Ameeruzzaman, Chairman of the organisation, in the chair.

The rally was addressed among others by advocate Shamsul Alam Dudu, Vice-Chairman, Zainal Abedin, Secretary General, Prof Shahidul Islam Sahid, Organising Secretary, Hossain Sharif and Rafiqul Islam, Secretary of Executive Committee, Shamsuddin Ahmed Hasu, member of the central committee and Rafiqul Islam.

## Poura polls 84 collect nomination papers in Satkhira

SATKHIRA, Jan 25: A total of seven chairman candidates for Satkhira Paurasabha collected nomination papers from the district election office till this morning, reports BSS.

Besides, 77 persons including sixteen women collected nomination papers to contest for the post of Poura Commissioners.

Election office source told BSS that the intending chairman candidates who collected nomination papers included district BNP Joint Convener and present Poura Chairman Al-haj Abdul Jalil, district Amir of Jamaat Principal Md Ijtatullah, district Jatiya Party leader Advocate Abdur Rouf, Awami League leaders Advocate Robiul Islam and Sheikh Asraful Haque, Jamaat leader Advocate Abdul Aziz and district NAP Secretary Kazi Sayed.

According to the returning officer, the polls will be held on February 24.

## Biswas

From Page 1

"However, finally the entire speech of the President used to be seen and cleared by the Prime Minister and her office," said Biswas, who was president from 1991-96 and was elected as a BNP nominee.

The former president said he found nothing wrong in the cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, endorsing the draft speech.

Biswas, however, said that any additions or omissions from the draft speech were done on the basis of understanding between the head of state and the head of government.

Biswas declined to make any comment on the opposition boycott of his successor's speech, delivered in Parliament yesterday, on objection that it was endorsed by the cabinet endorsing the government's programmes and performances.

Praising President Shahabuddin Ahmed as a neutral and respected man, Biswas said Shahabuddin was accepted by all. "Even BNP gladly accepted him although he was nominated by Awami League."

Asked to comment on whether a president could make his personal comments aside the scripted address to the Parliament, Biswas said as a matter of fact the President has nothing to say in addition to the prepared speech cleared by the Prime Minister and the cabinet.

As per the present Constitution, the President is to act on advice of the Prime Minister, excepting inviting the leader of the majority party in forming government and giving appointment to the Chief Justice and to other constitutional posts.

Biswas, however, recalled that while addressing the first session of the 6th Parliament, elected through a controversial election on February 15, 1996, as President he made certain comments which were little critical of BNP. And those comments earned protests from the BNP government as well.

"BNP had raised objection to certain parts of that speech, but I insisted that those points should be there," said the former President.

About the opposition boycott of municipal elections, Biswas refrained from making comment since he is no longer in active politics.

"It is difficult on my part to comment since I was associated with a political party," Biswas said on the opposition boycott of President Shahabuddin Ahmed's speech in the first Parliament session of this year.

He, however, suggested that both the ruling and opposition parties should close the gap and settle all differences through discussion. "Otherwise, parliamentary democracy would fail," he forewarned.

"I love to call a spade a spade. Had I been in active politics, I would have suggested that both the government and opposition should thrash out the differences because democracy means discussion and settling all differences."

The former President added: "It would not be good to push the country towards a stalemate."

## President's appeal

From Page 1  
he urged all to work with a renewed zeal to materialise "Bangabandhu's cherished dream of Sonar Bangla" (Golden Bengal) — a prosperous, stable and poverty-free society."

In his nearly 90-minute speech, President Shahabuddin highlighted important achievements of the government in the last two and a half years in different vital sectors as well as its efficient tackling of flood and the post-flood rehabilitation schemes.

He described the CHT peace accord, the Ganges water sharing treaty with India, land agreement with Myanmar, commissioning of the Bangabandhu Bridge, and economic reforms as milestones in the country's history.

As the President listed the achievements of the government, treasury bench members thumped their desks.

Foreign diplomats, dignitaries, chiefs of the three services and high officials were seen in the VVIP and VIP galleries of Parliament.

The President referred to the trial of the killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and said the most heinous crime in contemporary history put the whole nation into utter disgrace for long.

Though the trial was held after a pretty long time, the murderers were tried under the existing laws of the country," he told the House.

Shahabuddin said the trial has relieved the nation of disgrace. "This justice has been restored, injustice defeated and all the citizens assured of justice."

The President praised the introduction of the Prime Minister's question hours in Parliament and the formation of Parliamentary Standing Committee headed by an MP extending the accountability to parliament and widening the transparency of government activities.

About the four-tier local government administration, he said relevant laws were amended to institutionalise the village, union, thana and district councils with elected representatives and more women participation.

President Shahabuddin said by-elections in Barisal-5 and Pabna-2 seats and vacant seats of union parishes and pourasavas were held last year in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere.

He said the Election Commission undertook an elaborate programme to correct mistakes.

President Shahabuddin said the government's steps to strengthen the police force to ensure security and safety of every citizen.

To expedite the investigation process of the cases, he said, 36 new investigation camps have been set up in the crime-prone remote areas in addition to the existing 47 such camps.

The President said steps have also been taken to enhance the efficiency and professional standard of the armed forces through proper training.

For this purpose, works of the establishment of the National Defence College, the Armed Forces Medical College, and the Military Institute of Science and Technology are progressing fast.

For expansion of female education in the country, the government has already nationalised 18 non-government women's colleges and has taken up a plan to establish three polytechnic institutes for women, the President said.

Also the reconstruction work of about 10,000 educational institutions damaged by flood is going on in full swing, he said.

Shahabuddin said that to make health and family welfare services available to the people, the existing project-based system has been replaced with a sector-based approach. "Estimated cost of this five-year programme is Tk 15,314 crore."

He mentioned that the country's energy sector was improving due to the various steps taken in this regard.

The President said the government has taken up an extensive programme for the improvement of road communication in the country.

Works are also in progress for the improvement of road networks of Dhaka-Comilla-Chittagong-Cox's Bazar, along with the rehabilitation, expansion and periodic repair works of the national highways in north-west and south-west regions with the assistance of the development partners.

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