

Bangla Academy elections Friday

Forty-one candidates are contesting the first ever direct election of Bangla Academy. The election will be held tomorrow, reports BSS.

The candidates will be contesting for seven seats of the executive committee of the 44 year academy. The election is taking place after a gap of eight years. The last election was held in 1991.

A source at the Academy said this is for the first time that all the voters with identity cards will have to be present at the Academy premises in person to cast votes. The casting of votes will begin at 10 am and will be continued till 5 pm without any interruption, the source said adding none would be allowed to cast vote without ID cards.

The number of voters in the election is 1873.

Police action condemned

Gano Forum yesterday protested the police atrocities against a woman and journalists during the hartal hours in the city Tuesday, reports UNB.

In a statement, Gano Forum acting president Adv Zahirul Islam and general secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik also demanded exemplary punishment to the policemen responsible.

The Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights in a separate statement also condemned the police action on journalists during the half-day hartal and demanded punishment for those responsible.

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) yesterday protested and condemned the police attack on journalists during Tuesday's hartal and demanded punishment to responsible policemen for the incidents.

The demand came from a meeting of the CPJ held at the National Press Club with CPJ convenor Ataus Samad in the chair. It also demanded compensation from the government for the injured journalists.

The CPJ members said the police attack and their threat to open gunshots have made it difficult and risky to perform the professional duties of the journalists, said a press release.

"Police atrocities perpetrated years after years have been endangering the lives of the people, pushing the country towards shameful situation and the government into trouble," said the CPJ meeting.

The CPJ congratulated the photojournalists and reporters for collecting picture and covering the "assaulting of a woman in the street by policemen during the hartal" ignoring difficulty and physical torture.

Hasan Syeed, Saeed Kamaluddin, Golam Tahbar, Fajalul Mulkamal, Murtuza Rahman Chowdhury, Joyntu, Abdur Farid Hossain, Jaynal Abedin, Chinmoy Mutsuddi, Salim Samad, Golam Mohiuddin Khan and CPJ member secretary Sawkat Mahmud were present.

Student body for 8pc allocation of GDP for edn sector in nat'l budget

By DU Correspondent
Jatiya Chhatra Dal, a left-leaning student organisation, yesterday brought out a procession on the Dhaka University campus demanding allocation of eight per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for education sector in the forthcoming National Budget.

To press home their demand, the Jatiya Chhatra Dal also held a rally at the main gate of Arts Building at noon.

WDB

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minds of the public.

The para four and five of the news item narrates: "Some sources in WDB office, however, claimed that the WDB officials themselves created the opportunity for the 'terrorists' to press for awarding contracts for renovation of Rajshahi Town Protection Embankment.

"They (officials) cancelled the lottery system of judging tenders and introduced the previous system of lowest rate with five per cent below or above. Some contractors took the new system as an opportunity to press the WDB officials for giving them work," one source said.

These remarks are absolutely baseless and untrue. The proposed renovation work on Rajshahi Town Protection scheme is being financed by the World Bank. They do not allow their works to be done by lottery system and the work order must be given to the lowest evaluated bidder as per bank guidelines.

Therefore, the question of Water Development Board officials' involvement in creating the opportunity for the terrorists to press for awarding contracts does not arise.

The allegations made in para-3 that BWDB officials were not Rajshahi on May 11 is also incorrect. The Chief Engineer and the Superintending Engineer did their office works in their offices in Rajshahi on 11.05.1999. They were attending the honourable Minister's programme at Gaibandha on 8th and 9th May. The Chief Engineer had to come to Dhaka on official duty on 10th May and returned to Rajshahi the same day. The Executive Engineer was officially on leave up to 11.05.99 and has resumed his duties on completion of his leave.

In para 1 and 2, it was alleged that the terrorists again attacked and ransacked the Divisional Office of BWDB on 11.05.99 and took away the keys of office rooms. This is also not true.

Gulf War victims

UN pays compensation to 14,977 Bangladeshis

The United Nations Commission on Compensation paid another tranche of reparation money to 14,977 Bangladeshis repatriated from Iraq and Kuwait during the Gulf War, reports UNB.

Each of 13,536 returnees in 'A' category and 1,441 in 'C' got cheque for 2500 US dollars in the fifth phase.

Labour and Employment Minister Abdul Mannan handed over cheques to them at the auditorium of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training in the city yesterday.

The UN Commission has given compensation to 4,551 Bangladeshis in the first phase, 13,269 in second and 13,543 in the fourth phase. No Bangladeshis got the money in the third phase.

Speaking on the occasion

the Labour and Employment Minister asked government officials to be transparent and accountable in their function as a present government believes in accountability.

He, however, praised bureau officials for their sincerity to get the compensation money from the United Nations.

At the same time, the minister cautioned officials about any "corruption."

Presided over by Labour Secretary Mohammad Ahsan Ali Sarker, the function was also addressed, among others, by Joint Secretary M A M Reza-e-Elahi, Dalil Uddin Mondal, Bureau Director Mahbubur Rahman and president of Iraqi-Kuwait Returnees Welfare Association Mohammad Ali Ashraf.

Ensuring status of refugees in SAARC countries

Need for establishing regional convention stressed

Speakers at a workshop in the city yesterday underscored the need for establishing a regional convention to ensure the status and protect the rights of refugees in the SAARC countries, reports BSS.

They said there were regional conventions in Africa, Europe and in USA for ensuring dignity of the refugees in exile. But it is still absent in the SAARC region due to lack of sincere initiatives, they observed.

Political advisor to the Prime Minister Dr SA Malek attended the concluding session of the workshop as the chief guest while vice president of Bar Council and Chairman of the SAARC law Barrister Amirul Islam presided.

He, however, acknowledged that the formulation work of the regional convention on refugee law for South Asia was going on under the supervision of Chief Judges of SAARC countries and concerned lawyers. He requested Barrister Islam to fi-

nalise the regional convention to play an important role in solving refugee problems in the region.

Hovell lauded Bangladesh and the present government for providing supports and hospitality to UNHCR to repatriate a major part of Rohingya refugees migrated in the country from neighbouring Myanmar. He expressed the hope that Bangladesh would start further talks to Myanmar for repatriation of the rest of the refugees.

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nalise the regional convention to play an important role in solving refugee problems in the region.

Barrister Islam underlined the need for the convention for the refugees of the region.

Mobile phone Probe body to investigate irregularities

A sub-committee to probe the alleged irregularities in the services of the privately owned mobile telephone companies was formed yesterday at a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, reports BSS.

A Jatiya Sangsads Secretariat press release said the sub-committee headed by Whip Mianur Rahman Manu, will also investigate the service standard and activities of the mobile phone companies.

The sub-committee will look into the possibilities if employment opportunities for youths can be created by setting up PABX telephone lines in different areas.

Whip Mianur Rahman Manu, Mohammad Shahabuddin, Sharif Khasruzzaman, Advocate Fazle Rabbi, Lutfur Rahman Khan (Azad), Advocate Mohd. Nadim Mostafa and Barkat Ullah Bulu were present in the meeting presided over by the committee chairman Kamal Ahmed Mojumdar.

Acid survivors foundation launched

By Staff Correspondent

A foundation for the acid-burn victims was launched at a simple ceremony at the National Press Club yesterday.

The Acid Survivors Foundation has been established to tackle the problems of increasing acid-throwing incidents against women and to coordinate support activities for the survivors across the country.

A document of the Foundation was signed by the board of trustees members including its chairman Kazi F Rahman, Dr S L Sen, Plastic Surgeon Consultant at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Stephen Turner, Deputy High Commissioner, British High Commission, and Begum Ivy Rahman of Jatiya Mahila Sangstha.

In his opening remark, Dr John Morrison, a Unicef consultant who put a lot of effort in the formation of the Foundation said, "The idea of the foundation is to eliminate the dreadful tragedies suffered by many victims who need help."

Unicef Country Representative Ms Shahida Afzal told the function: "In addition to many of the responsibilities taken up by Unicef to address the problem, we hope to support awareness activities. This is one area we are very concerned about."

The consequences of acid attacks are traumatic — physically, psychologically and socially. The impact of acid burn is catastrophic, it causes skin tissue to melt, often leaving the adjacent bones exposed. The victims lose one or both eyes in many cases.

The Acid Survivors Foundation will work with local NGOs, the government and the international community to provide assistance in the treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration into the society of survivors by identifying and improving existing services.

The Foundation will provide survivors with better access to quality medical care, legal aid, and counselling.

The Foundation, which has a board of 15 members, would also arrange safe shelters, training, employment and education for the victims.

Dental Society urges govt to withdraw VAT

Bangladesh Dental Society (BDS) yesterday urged the government to withdraw Value Added Tax (VAT) from private practice by dental surgeons imposed in this fiscal, reports BSS.

"If the VAT is not withdrawn, dental treatment will be more expensive and it will be impossible for the government to implement 'health for all' programme by the year 2000," they said at a press conference at the National Press Club.

They said dental treatment is very expensive as surgeons have to pay huge amounts of taxes to import equipment from abroad.

They said that VAT was not imposed on any medical practice, except for dental surgery.

President of the society Prof Dr Anwarul Alam, Secretary General Dr Abdul Malek Bhuiyan and other office-bearers Prof Ashraf Hussain, Mirza Ali Haider and Mostaq Haasan Sattar addressed the press conference.

He commits suicide for failing to marry fifth time

BARGUNA, May 12: Failing to marry for the fifth time, a day labourer has allegedly committed suicide at Amtali in the district, reports BSS.

Amtali thana sources said Mosharaf Hossain, the day labourer, earlier married four women of whom two divorced him knowing his penchant for polygamy.

His third wife, Shahinur, also stayed away for a long time living with her parents.

Mosharaf used to live with his fourth wife, Rahima, at her parent's house at the Amtali slum.

On Tuesday, he went to his village home and expressed his wish for a fifth wife. But getting no sympathy from the villagers, his parents and other relatives, Mosharaf took poison.

He was rushed to Amtali Hospital Complex, but died there at noon today.

UNDP to help establish HR institute

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has agreed in principle to provide financial support to the government for setting up an independent Human Rights Institute in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

UNDP Resident Representative David Lockwood disclosed this in a meeting with Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru yesterday.

The main objective of the proposed institute is to impart training to police and other law enforcers on human rights and make them conscious about the issue, the Law Minister said.

He said the institute would play an important role in the backdrop of establishing a strong and neutral National Human Rights Commission.

Breast clinic to have mammography machine

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) is going to install a mammography machine at its newly established breast clinic soon to accurately diagnose breast cancer, reports BSS.

The university sources said the machine would enhance its facilities of the clinic. Set up a year ago, it is currently treating 15 to 20 patients a week, with the number is increasing fast.

The university has been running the clinic since August last year at its outdoor, university sources said.

The clinic was launched after the Institute of Postgraduate Medical Research (IPGMR) was turned into Medical University.

A pool of surgery specialists, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists and other specialists are treating patients at the clinic.

The clinic remains open on Wednesdays from 2:30 pm to 4 pm, the university sources said, adding that the poor are treated free.

Some changes in administration

The government has made a number of important changes in the administration, said an official handout yesterday, reports BSS.

Retired Secretary M Sayed has been appointed Chairman of the Securities and Exchanges Commission on contract basis for three years.

The one-year contract service of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) News Editor Hossain-uz-Zaman Chowdhury as the agency's Managing Director and Chief Editor has been cancelled.

The LPR of Bangladesh Shilpkar Academy Director Hamida Haq has been cancelled and she was appointed to the same post for one year on contract.

Colonel A H M Shahidullah has been appointed the Surveyor General under the Defence Ministry on deputation while the services of incumbent Surveyor General Brig Mohammad Shahedul Islam Mondol has been placed at the Armed Forces Headquarters.

The contract service of Project Director and Professor of the Child and Mother Health Institute Dr M Q Talukder has been extended for two more years under the same terms and conditions from the date of joining.

N W Khanda, a former officer of Bangladesh Shipping Corporation and former Chief Controller of Imports and Exports, has been appointed the Managing Director of Jibon Bima Corporation.

The services of Debdatta Khisha, Deputy Secretary of the Housing and Public Works Ministry, have been placed at the CHT Affairs Ministry for appointment as the Executive Officer of the CHT Regional Council on deputation.

The services of Salla Thana Nirbhab Officer Sukriti Ranjan Chakma have been placed at the CHT Affairs Ministry for appointment on deputation as the Private Secretary to the chairman of the CHT Regional Council.

Govt urged to deploy BDR at HSC exam centres

BCS General Education Association yesterday urged the government to deploy BDR forces along with police at all HSC examination centres to stem cheating and ensure smooth holding of the examination, reports BSS.

A meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Association, a platform of teachers of government colleges, expressed concern over the widespread unfair means a press release said.

The meeting also condemned the reported incidents of assault on teachers on examination duties.

Congratulating the teachers who performed their duties with courage in an adverse situation, the meeting demanded exemplary punishment to those responsible for the attacks.

Obituary

Armeena Khatun, wife of Mir Habibur Rahman, retired chief engineer of Water Development Board, died at Suhrawardy Hospital yesterday after prolonged illness. She was 68, reports BSS.

She is survived by her husband, five sons, six daughters and a host of grand children.

The body has been kept at the mortuary of ICDR to facilitate the children, who are abroad, to have a last glimpse of her, family sources said.

FENA welcomes decision to reopen Dhaka-NY flight

By Special Correspondent

Flight Engineers and Navigators Association (FENA) welcomed the decision to reopen the Dhaka-New York flight of Bangladesh Biman as announced by the Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism.

In a statement, the FENA president, Flt Engr Abdullah Mohibuddin renewed the organisation's suggestions for hiring a Boeing 747-300 aircraft to operate the route on purchase or on dry lease to ferry more passengers and make it profitable at low seat-mile cost.

It suggested that the wide-bodied aircraft could also be used on flights to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The government has declared software export a thrust sector and allowed duty-free import of computers, commerce ministry officials said. Import of computer in Bangladesh is also collateral-free.

DU debating society polls tomorrow

By DU Correspondent

Electon to the Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS) will be held at its TSC office tomorrow.

A total of 51 members will cast their votes to elect new president and general secretary of the 17-member executive DUDS.

Four candidates are contesting for the two key posts.

Contestants for the president post are Tariqul Islam