

Is poetry precursor?

From Page 12
 lectual elite, last week to release "The Otherness of the Self," his maiden anthology of poems numbering 48, speculations about Varun's jumping into politics are aired again, albeit in a shed tone.

Perhaps the fresh speculations were partly fuelled by the presence at the book release function of a galaxy of personalities drawn from both sides of the political divide in India. There were several key federal ministers belonging to BJP Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitley, Jagmohan and Arun Shourie.

From opposition ranks were senior Congress leaders Sitaram Kesri, predecessor of Sonia Gandhi as party chief, R K Dhawan, a close aide of Indira Gandhi, Kamal Nath, Vasant Sathe, and Samajwadi Party leader Anar Singh.

Despite the rush of politicians, one could not miss the presence also of noted journalist-cum-columnist Khushwant Singh and Pritish Nandy, artists Satish Gujral, brother of former Prime Minister I K Gujral, and Manjit Bawa at the function.

Mother Maneka, like a true host, stood at the gate ushering in and seeing off the guests. Maneka is a Federal Minister.

Please see page 8 for What's on today, Tomorrow, Weather and Here & There.

Understandably, Maneka Gandhi did not like to talk much about her son's book. "I don't think it would be right to comment on the poems," said she. She did, however, say that Varun was encouraged to go for reading from an early age.

For his part, Varun said he was inspired by such greats as Pablo Neruda, the Latin American poet, and well-known Hindi writers Mahadevi Verma and Harivanshrai Bachchan.

An attraction of "The Otherness of the Self" are the paintings by leading artists Maqbool Fida Husain, Manu Parekh, Anjolie Ela Menon and Manjit Bawa.

BCL activist

From Page 1
 ensured at about 11 on the night over establishing supremacy in the area.

"During a four-hour clash, both the sides exploded bombs and fired shots," a witness said.

Later police rushed to the scene and brought the situation under control.

The injured were identified as Zakir Hossain, Chhunu Fakir and Ershad Howlader. Of them, Zakir and Chhunu were rushed to Barisal Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Meanwhile, police recovered over one hundred bombs and a large number bomb-making devices from the spot.



Students of Willes Little Flower pose with Agriculture Minister Motia Chowdhury yesterday. The minister attended the annual prize distribution ceremony of the school as chief guest. --Star photo

WFP official calls on Zillur

The representative of the World Food Program (WFP) in Bangladesh, Pieter Dijkhuizen yesterday called on Local Government Minister Zillur Rahman at his secretariat office, said a press release, reports BSS.

They discussed and exchanged views on different bilateral issues and matters of mutual interests including the post flood food assistance programme taken by the government among the flood victims of the worst affected south western districts.

WFP Deputy Director Joan Fleuren was present on the occasion.

Garments fire

From Page 12
 According to press reports, electric short circuit, fire from store and boiler burst appear as prime sources of the fire hazards. Locking of the collapsible gates at the time of work, lack of adequate fire combating training, non-compliance with the Factory Act 1965, i.e. use of residential buildings as factories add to the horrors.

Ershad

From Page 1
 October 21.
 A High Court Division bench comprising Justice Mohammad Golam Rabbani and Mohammad Latifur Rahman sentenced Ershad to five years imprisonment and a fine of nearly Tk 5.5 crore and two more years of imprisonment, in default.

The trial court in 1993 had awarded Ershad a seven-year imprisonment in the Janata Tower Corruption Case. Later, Ershad challenged the lower court judgement in the higher court.

Defence seeks

From Page 12
 Aziz Pasha, Major Reid Shariful Hossain alias Sharful Hossain, sacked Captain Khishmat Hashem, Captains (Retd) Nazmul Hossain Ansar and Abdul Mazed and Risalder Moshleh Uddin.

UNB adds: Advocate Bari submitted that trial against his client was held by the Special Sessions Judge's court. But the CMM court took certain actions against the law.

Since the legal procedures were not followed in the trial, the verdict against his client should be declared infructuous, he added.

District and Sessions Judge Kazi Golam Rasool sentenced to death 15 former army officials for killing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his family members of August 15, 1975.

The death reference bench of the High Court comprising Justice Ruhul Amin and Justice ABM Khairul Haq will continue hearing today.

Chief prosecutor in the case advocate Sariful Haq who was present, clarified certain points raised by the court.

British American Tobacco donates vegetable seeds for flood victims

British American Tobacco Bangladesh has donated vegetable seeds of radish, tomato and lalsakul worth Tk two lakh to assist the government's rehabilitation programme for the flood-affected farmers, says a press release.

Ezaz Ahmed Chowdhury, Head of Leaf of British American Tobacco Bangladesh, handed over the seeds to Enamul Hoque, Director General, Directorate of Agricultural Extension at his office yesterday.

The vegetable seeds have been produced under the company's vegetable seed multiplication programme as part of the company's agricultural extension service.

British American Tobacco Bangladesh was one of the first organisations to be present at the flood-affected areas of Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenidah, Chuadanga, Alamdanga and Munshiganj where the company distributed dry food and medicines among the affected people. The company is still continuing with its rehabilitation programme by extending its support to the flood affected people.

New health show on ETV from tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

A fortnightly television programme on health, body and mind titled "Kemon Achhen" begins on Ekushey Television (ETV) from tomorrow.

The programme would focus on issues relating to health, especially mother and child health care, mental health, stress in urban life, diagnosis of different diseases and food and nutrition," producer of the programme Nima Rahman told reporters at a briefing yesterday.

The programme sponsored by Ovaltine, a drink for growing children marketed by Novartis, will be telecast on every alternate Thursday at 7:00 pm.

Nima Rahman, who has also

designed the programme, said the programme will try to discuss status of physical and mental health of the urban population.

We will try to give tips on exercise, meditation and reiki in the programme, she said.

We welcome question and queries from the viewers through telephone, post and e-mail and the address will be announced in the programme," she added.

Shariful Islam, Brand Manager of Ovaltine said "We hope that the programme will create awareness about health among viewers." The programme will also focus various case studies and health tips provided by web sites, he added.

There will be a quiz in every episode. The first phase of the series will be in 13 episodes.

Dr Mirza Faisal who will anchor the 25-minute programme will be assisted by Dr Jhumi Khan.

Flood hit

From Page 1
 import rice, confirmed sources at the ministries of agriculture and food.

Besides a strong food reserve the government is pinning its hopes on a good harvest in the upcoming boro season, officials said.

Thanks to consecutive bumper production over the last three years, the silos are still full to the brim and the government is planning to distribute food-grains under the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme in the flood-hit areas during the lean period up to the next harvest. Besides, farmers, who have borrowed from the banks, have been exempted from repaying this year's instalments.

However, sources said, such exemption wouldn't do. Farmers, especially the ones who have lost their aman crops in the sudden flood, are in dire need of fresh loans, they added.

Book on Jalaluddin Rumi launched

From Staff Correspondent
 CHITTAGONG, Oct 17: The publication ceremony of the book "Tales from Masnavi by Jalaluddin Rumi & their inner thoughts" written by a noted researcher Syed Ahmadul Huq, was held at hotel Agrabad recently.

The function organised by Allama Rumi Society, was presided over by its president Prof. Dr. Abdul Karim, former vice-chancellor of Chittagong University.

The function was addressed by Prof. Dr. Alamgir Mohammad Sirajuddin, former VC of Chittagong University, Prof. Dr. D. Chowdhury, also a former VC of Chittagong University, Prof. Mohammad Khaled, editor of The Daily Azadi, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, MP, president of Chittagong Stock Exchange, Syed Mahmudul Huq, director of Chittagong Stock Exchange, Mizanur Rahman, an industrialist, Prof. Dr. Sabir Ahmed, Runa Siddiqua, Syed Ahmadul Huq, the writer of the book and advocate Nur Mohammad.

The speakers lauded the efforts of Syed Ahmadul Huq for his research on the Iranian spiritual poet and researcher of sufism Jalaluddin Rumi.

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Ezaz Ahmed Chowdhury, Head of Leaf of British American Tobacco Bangladesh handing over vegetable seeds to Enamul Hoque, DG, Directorate of Agricultural Extension for assisting the government's rehabilitation programme for flood affected farmers. Other senior managers of the company were also present on the occasion.

Arafat, Barak agree

From page 1
 expects an immediate ceasefire as a result of the agreement.

"A cease-fire should be happening within hours, immediately," she told CNN. And within two weeks, the two sides were to meet with American mediators to explore the possibility of resuming talks, Albright said.

It was clear from Clinton's announcement that both sides made major compromises.

Arafat backed away from his demand for an international fact-finding commission into the causes of the turmoil in Israel. Barak yielded to demands that he pull back Israeli troops that have killed scores of Palestinians.

In a concession, a US official said, Arafat agreed to reassert the Islamic militants who were released from jail last week one of Israel's demands.

Clinton did not use the term "cease-fire". Instead, he said both sides agreed on "immediate concrete measures" to end the violence.

"I believe we have made real progress today," Clinton said. "Repairing the damage will take time."

Barak, speaking later, told an Israeli television station, "The coming days will tell whether we still have a partner (in peace talks). Reality has to change in a significant way. The events of the last few weeks left their mark on us... we will examine, as will the Americans, whether it is possible to renew the negotiations."

But in the immediate aftermath of the summit announcement, Palestinian militiamen shot at homes in a Jewish neighbourhood of Jerusalem and Israel responded with tank-mounted machine gun fire.

Word of the truce was greeted by skepticism from both Israelis and Palestinians.

Palestinian farmer Farid Nasrara, 28, was killed by Jewish settlers near the West Bank town of Nablus with a shot in the abdomen, according to hospital doctors. Three other Palestinian villagers were injured.

In the Gaza Strip, hundreds of Palestinians threw rocks and several firebombs at an Israeli military checkpoint. Palestinian media said 10 demonstrators were hurt, including one who was in serious condition. The Israeli army said a sniper shot and injured a firebomb thrower, but that there were no additional casualties.

The Palestinian delegation went from the summit hall directly to the airport and flew back to Gaza. They made no comment to reporters in Egypt.

Clinton said these were the three elements of the agreement:

* Both sides agreed to publicly call for an end to violence, eliminate points of friction, maintain calm and the recurrence of the recent uprisings. He said the United States will help with security issues, if needed.

* The United States will develop with both sides and the UN a fact-

finding committee to investigate the events of the past several weeks.

"The leaders agreed that the United States will consult with the parties within the next two weeks about how to move forward."

"We should have no illusions about the difficulties ahead," Clinton said. "If we are going to rebuild confidence and trust we must all do our part, avoiding recrimination and moving forward. I'm counting on each of us to do everything we possibly can in the critical period ahead."

Later, aboard Air Force One, a senior administration official, told reporters: "They've agreed to all the steps we had hoped they would agree to. There were a lot of uncertainties here. Implementation is not going to be easy. This remains a very tense and dangerous area. It only takes one person to shoot a gun or throw a rock."

"Their desire to come back together and discuss the resumption of the negotiation process suggests to me that they both want to see negotiations resume," he added.

The official said Clinton would select members of the fact-finding commission in consultation with both sides. Its task will be to investigate the sudden outbreak of violence.

N-tests threat to security

From page 12
 The nuclearization, the PM said, has also seriously undermined regional cooperation within the SAARC as this came at a time when South Asia was set to achieve its economic objectives for improving the living standards of its peoples. She, however, stressed the need for revival of SAARC.

Later replying to questions from the audience about sale of gas, the Prime Minister said her government is in favour of using the natural resources and energy for development of South Asia only after meeting domestic needs.

"First the country, then the region," she told a questioner. "The needs of the country are top priority. After meeting local demand, we'll consider the use of energy for regional development."

In her address to the function Hasina referred to Bangladesh's commitment to an effective United Nations and its peace-keeping efforts. She said Bangladesh became a leading contributor of troops, police, equipment,

advisors, and civil administrators to different UN peacekeeping missions.

Replying to a question about the possibility of an electric grid connecting the SAARC countries, she said a study is being conducted about the feasibility of a SAARC grid.

About investment in the country, she said only the US investment in Bangladesh had increased from 20 million to USD 800 million in last four years and investments from other countries were also increasing.

About the peace process in the troubled Middle East, Hasina said any dispute could be solved through peaceful discussion. "We want a solution of the Israel-Palestine conflict," she said and thanked President Clinton for her initiative in restoring peace in Palestine.

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh would be proud if it could make any contribution to the Middle East peace process.

Focusing on the political scenario at home, she mentioned her struggle for restoring democracy

in the country. The Prime Minister said her party restored democracy and the opposition parties should have patience for the sake of democracy.

Hasina told the Americans that for consolidating the democratic process her government would step down on completion of its tenure handing over power to a caretaker government for holding elections in a free and fair atmosphere.

"Without democracy economic development of the people will not be possible," she observed and mentioned her effort for holding dialogue with the opposition leader for the sake of democracy.

The Prime Minister said the government had offered talks to the opposition leader. Even she offered the post of deputy speaker and some minister while forming government but the leader of the opposition did not make any response.

The Prime Minister also mentioned her government's steps for empowerment and development of womenfolk in the country.

Opposition

From Page 12
 her party Awami League would come to power again through election.

Held on Bangladesh Embassy premises the gathering was also addressed by Foreign Minister Abul Samad Azad and state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury.

The prime minister said the opposition parties are conspiring to oust the government because they want to save the self-confessed killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She said terrorism could be eliminated from the society if the opposition parties had lent her support. Rather she said they claimed terrorists as their party workers and managed their release through bail from courts.

Earlier, the Prime Minister addressed a seminar at the auditorium of the World Bank headquarters, she called upon the expatriate Bangladeshis to take part in the country's activities through investment.

She said that expatriate Bangladeshis can play a vital role in developing vast human resources of the country through investment in different areas particularly in IT sector.

Replying to a question, Sheikh Hasina reiterated her commitment that Bangladesh would go for gas export only after proper assessment of its reserve and meeting domestic needs.

Foreigner

From Page 1
 declared him dead. Alam said he tried to contact the Singapore embassy but it was closed.

Alam said that he had met Rozario on a recent trip to Singapore. Rozario came to Bangladesh on September 2 on a tourist visa.

Alam's statement in the GD contradicted facts written in the DMCH registrar.

Alam's sister and his relative Md Abdus Sattar told The Daily Star that when Rozario fell sick they called a local doctor who declared him dead.

When asked who abandoned the body at DMCH, Alam's sister and Sattar said it was not abandoned. There was "someone" with the body, they said.

Alam is a waiter at Zing Ling Chinese restaurant at Zigatola. He and his sister's family live in a tin-shed house at Zigatola.

Rozario's body has been preserved in a refrigerator at the DMCH morgue. He wore a lungi and a shirt. There were two identical black marks of tattoo on both his elbows.

A Singapore embassy official said they would first confirm that Rozario was a Singapore national and then make arrangement to send his body. Meanwhile autopsy of the body was done at the DMCH.

JS move to trim

From page 1
 Mosharraf suggested intermediate arrangement to cut excessive manpower from the ministry. He also expressed dissatisfaction over the activities of the ministry.

The ministry wrote back to the committee on August 24 with a reference from the PARC report. "The PARC suggested for reducing the number of ministries, downsizing government staff and reorganisation of the terms of reference and activities following a long study," said the ministry in its reply. "Implementation of the suggestions are now under the government's consideration."

The committee observed that the distribution of works and terms of references, which were adapted on the basis of suggestions from the Enam Commission in 1983, should be reviewed as the volume of work of the Industries Ministry has meantime been reduced.

The Privatisation Board and Board of Investment are now

operating individually while three other commercial/industrial units are working as autonomous bodies," it said. Moreover, there are some other directorates that are also operating independently.

Ruling party member Hafiz Ahmed Majumder suggested that the size of the ministry be brought to a logical shape so that the departments and other organisations under the ministry could run efficiently.

He however viewed that the autonomous character of the three corporations under the ministry could not be maintained because of their huge size.

PM: Quota

From page 1
 Expressing concern over the steadily shrinking flow of Official Development Assistance (ODA), she said Bangladesh is falling to make quick investment because of reduced medium and long-term foreign aid.

The Prime Minister hoped that the UN-sponsored Third Conference to be held in 2001 would take effective steps to ensure medium and long-term ODA for Bangladesh and other developing nations.

Describing poverty alleviation as the focal point of her government's economic policy, the Prime Minister said a new strategy had been evolved to reach the dividend of development to the poor and deprived masses for their economic empowerment.

Despite multifaceted poverty alleviation programme, Hasina regretted, a vast multitude of population is still reeling under poverty line.

"We believe that a balanced and sustainable development could be achieved by an elected government," said Hasina.

But, she said undemocratic forces were out there to disrupt democracy by unleashing terrorism.

On the economy, she said that Bangladesh for the first time attained has maintained a self-sufficiency in food following consecutive bumper crops and has maintained a GDP of over five per cent over the past few years despite severe floods in 1998.

Besides, the government has undertaken reforms in social, economic and administrative sectors. Discipline has been restored in the banking system and an investment-friendly atmosphere created for encouraging overseas investment, she said.

Welcoming investment from Bangladeshis expatriates, Hasina said the government always encourages investment from non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) and assured all possible help in this respect.

Nov 7 rally

From Page 1
 It will be followed by a meeting of the Central Liaison Committee of the alliance.

Last year, the government cancelled the public holiday on National Revolution and Solidarity Day on November 7. The alliance called a 42-hour country-wide hartal protesting the cancellation.

In 1998, a BNP programme in the city to mark the day was also foiled by police.

This year, the alliance may call a hartal if the government does not give permission for the public meeting at Paltan Maidan on November 7, a top BNP leader said.

The opposition may go for tougher action if the government gives permission and then foils it as in the past, the leader added.