

## Shikha Chirantan to be installed at Suhrawardy Udyan today

BSS, Dhaka

Hundreds of 1971 veterans yesterday reunited in Dhaka to join a grand freedom fighters rally as part of Independence Day celebrations coinciding the installation of "Shikha Chirantan" (eternal flame) at its permanent site at Suhrawardy Udyan today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is due to formally install the flame to mark the 30th anniversary of Independence, four years after its inauguration at its makeshift location near the current permanent site.

The freedom fighters, who earlier gathered at different cantonments under a six-day programme of the armed forces division, would first join the grand rally at the National Parade Ground at about 12-30 pm.

They will hold a street march to arrive at the Suhrawardy Udyan, where the Prime Minister is expected to install the flame at 4 pm.

The Shikha Chirantan was opened at its makeshift site in 1997 to mark the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Independence in a ceremony joined by South African leader Nelson Mandela, Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat and Turkish President Suleyman Demirel.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Television will telecast live the grand rally of freedom fighters and installation ceremony of Shikha Chirantan.

## JSD backed BCL goes on rampage on DU campus

UNB, Dhaka

JSD-backed Chhatra League activists yesterday went on rampage at the Dhaka University protesting the election of its new central general secretary Mirza Anwarul Huq.

The BCL workers at the end of a two-day council damaged chairs and glasses inside the TSC auditorium alleging that the newly elected GS is a non-student, married and businessman.

Earlier, the council elected a 61-member new committee with Karim Sikder and Mirza Anwarul Huq as president and general secretary respectively of the left-leaning student body.

The protesting councilors, mainly from BCL Dhaka University unit, later brought out a procession on the campus and held a rally at TSC crossing demanding with

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## 11-party grand rally at Paltan today

BSS, Dhaka

The left leaning 11-party alliance now on a foot-march to the capital city from six directions of the country will hold a grand rally at the historic Paltan Maidan in the city today.

The alliance leaders are expected to enter the capital city today by noon ending their 12-day continuous foot-march programme throughout the country. Six groups of the alliance have covered around 20,000 kms on foot from six different directions of the country, a party press release said here yesterday.

Addressing a public meetings and wayside rallies on their ways to Dhaka, the alliance leaders made a strong appeal to all concerned to keep polls free from the unholy game of money and muscle in the greater interest of democracy and peace in the country. They called for bringing an end to terrorism, corruption and plunder of public money to protect the national resources for development.

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## Imam stabbed to death in Jessore

UNB, Jessore

An imam of a mosque was stabbed to death in Monirampur upazila in Jessore on Thursday night.

He was identified as Golam Mostafa, 30, of Baro Palashi village of the upazila and an imam of Saranpur mosque.

Police and local people said a gang of terrorists swooped on the imam at 9.30 pm and stabbed him to death while he was returning home after offering Esha prayers in the mosque.

The cause behind the killing could not be known immediately. Later, police recovered the body from the spot and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with the police.



Hasan of Ark performing at the grand open-air musical concert, sponsored by 'Pepsi', at the Army Stadium in the city yesterday. Old Rajshahi Cadets Association (ORCA) organised the concert to raise funds for a voluntary blood donation programme. (Story on page 11)

## \$ 31m WB credit to make civil justice system more efficient

The World Bank has approved a \$30.6 million credit for Bangladesh to make its civil justice system 'more efficient, effective and accountable'.

The funds will finance an initial 6-year project aimed in particular at improving case management, reducing delays and case backlog, and improving access to justice, especially for the poor and women, according to a press release issued in Dhaka yesterday.

"Effective laws and judges are not sufficient to improve the system if excessive delays, high fees, undue interference and lack of awareness limit people's access to justice," said the World Bank team leader of the project.

"While reforms on all levels are needed, developing a system and institutions which are capable of meeting demand through both formal and informal dispute resolution is important. The focus of the new project is therefore on developing an efficient court system," he said.

The Legal and Judicial Capacity Building Project is designed to address the most pressing problems of timelines and accessibility while paving the way for subsequent reforms in other areas. It will cover the first

phase of the Government's long-term strategy to build a well-functioning system capable of improving the financial, commercial, industrial and social life of the nation.

The government's programme is outlined in its "Strategy for Legal and Judicial Reforms" which was developed following extensive consultations with civil society, legal professionals and concerned government officials throughout the country.

Main elements of the strategy are based on diagnostic studies completed by the country's own legal community, drawing, where necessary on international experts, many of whom came from within the South Asia region and whose countries have judicial systems similar to Bangladesh.

"The consultative process was of fundamental importance in development a truly home-grown reform program," said the joint team leader of the project.

"It not only provided invaluable input to the government's strategy, but was also a tremendous learning experience for the people of Bangladesh," he said.

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Rajuk demolished two illegal structures erected on a land at Kalabagan in the city yesterday.

## Daulatpur OC, ASI closed for arresting Khulna AL leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

OC Tozammel Hossain and ASI Akbar Ali of Daulatpur thana were 'closed' on Thursday for arresting and filing case against Md Shajahan Ali, 30, a Sramik League leader and vice president of CBA of Ajax Jute Mills.

The case against the CBA leader was filed on July 10, 1999 under PSA and SPA. He was arrested on March 2 from Maheshwarpasha under Daulatpur thana.

The case was filed for putting up barricades 'frequently' on Khulna-Jessore highway at Phullari gate area 'creating lawlessness and disrupting road transport services'.

The allegations by the ruling party against the OC is that he filed the case himself as complainant and refused to release Shajahan soon after his arrest. Charge against ASI Akbar is that he had

helped OC arrest the CBA leader.

Another allegation has been brought against the OC that he had arrested four Jubo League activists on the night of March 13 this year while going away with a microbus snatched earlier from Sonadanga. The OC also refused to release the arrested JL activists despite pressure from an MP.

The microbus was seized and a case filed under PSA with Daulatpur thana.

Requesting anonymity a top KMP official said the Acting Police Commissioner was forced to close OC and ASI to police lines. Because an MP complained against the two police officials to the highest authority of the Home Ministry branding them (OC and ASI) as BNP supporters.

OC Tozammel said that he had done the job rightly as the arrested

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## Rajuk demolishes illegal structures at Kalabagan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajuk yesterday demolished two illegal structures raised on three bighas of land at Kalabagan in the city.

The structures were demolished on orders from a magistrate in presence of Rajuk's Authorised Officer and three platoons of riot police. Rajuk said those were raised without its permission.

One Mia Mohammad Noor was the owner of the establishments. He had rented some 20 shops at the structure built on Holding No. 65 and coaching centres at those built on Holding No. 67.

The Authorised Officer, Asaduzzaman, told this correspondent on the spot that Rajuk had issued notices thrice, asking the owner to demolish the illegal structures.

"He (owner) sought 10 days' time when we went to demolish those on March 17. We demolished those today as the date has expired," he added.

The demolition drive started at 9

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A S M NURUNNABI

Landgrabbers in the city are active in encroaching government land in several city areas. Attempts to recover such lands have become difficult because of behind-the-scene exercise of influence by powerful quarters in most cases. It has lately been reported that in that manner about 100 acres of government land in Mohammadpur and Mirpur areas in the city have come under the illegal occupation of such people.

The ministry concerned of the government could not recover such land from the grab of the illegal occupants despite repeated directives and reminders from the relevant authority. The Parliamentary Standing Committee for the Ministry of Housing and Public Works looked into several cases of such encroachments and expressed dissatisfaction that such illegal occupants could not be evicted, particularly from 18 bighas of land at Mohammadpur F-block. The Works Ministry invited applica-

## DOWN TO EARTH

# Landgrabbers riding roughshod on government lands in city

tions from people of low income over two years back for allotment of plots in this area. A total of 28,000 people reportedly applied for such plots but, because of the continuing encroachment, no allotment could be made to anyone so far.

A reliable source in the ministry gave hints that the illegal encroachers on the said land could not be evicted due to pressure from an influential quarter. The said quarter was said to be trying to grab that property in the name of a dubious rehabilitation project.

Besides, another influential quarter was reportedly trying to grab 5.07 acres of public land filled

with dirt and slush in a canal of the Dhaka WASA in Ramchandrapur area in Mohammadpur. According to some people of the area, if the attempt to grab that portion of low land is successful, it would cause serious drainage problem as the powerful quarter has been filling the low land with earth and selling off bamboo huts at rates ranging from Tk. 50,000 to Tk. 60,000 per hut.

It has been alleged that another influential quarter has been similarly trying to grab 90 acres of public land in different areas of Mirpur. It was also alleged that the said quarter, in collusion with a section of officials at the RAJUK file fake

cases in court when the ministry concerned takes any initiative for eviction of the illegal occupants.

There are some more cases of encroachment on public land in the city. About 90 acres of public land have been illegally occupied in Mirpur Section 1, Section 10, Pallabi and the area adjoining the Martyred Intellectuals graveyard.

Out of the encroached area, some 28 acres have been reportedly occupied illegally by an influential quarter for the past five years during which residential and commercial buildings and shopping

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## Sumon finally gets divorce from Maria

SAKYASEN MITTRA, Kolkata

Noted singer Sumon Chattopadhyaya has finally managed to obtain divorce from his wife Maria.

Sumon, who had reportedly been planning to marry Bangladeshi singer Sabina Yasmin, has been involved in a bitter altercation with Maria.

Sumon's former wife had even gone to the police alleging that the singer had inflicted physical and mental torture on her. However, she has withdrawn all the allegations after the mutual settlement of divorce.

Maria's lawyer Tamalkanti Mukhopadhyaya said yesterday that mutual settlement came after the both the parties agreed to three conditions: (1) Maria would withdraw all cases she had filed complaining of torture; (2) Sumon would forego all claims on the adopted daughter of the couple, Virginia.

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Opposition BNP brought a procession at Sutrapur in the city yesterday to press its demands including an early general election.

## Eight Congress activists killed in Andhra clash

AP, Hyderabad

Supporters of two rival parties attacked each other with bombs and sickles in a southern Indian state yesterday, killing eight and injuring several, police said.

All the victims were from the Congress party, which is an opposition group in Andhra Pradesh state, ruled by the Telegu Desam Party.

The clashes began when 25 activists of the Congress attacked the home of Venkatappaiah Naidu, a Telegu Desam leader, with hand-made bombs early Friday in Kurnool, 210 kilometres south of Hyderabad, the state capital.

Naidu's security guard opened fire to ward off the attackers, who fled.

Naidu's supporters, however, chased them some distance and attacked them with bombs and sickles.

In the fighting that ensued, eight Congress activists died when their necks were slashed with sickles, police said. Several were injured.

The killings took place in the

Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh, notorious for violence and political killings. The clash occurred just three weeks after eight Congress activists were killed in a similar attack in Guntur, 310 kilometres east of Hyderabad.

The Telegu Desam is an ally of the Hindu nationalist-led federal government. The Congress party is in the opposition in national Parliament.

## 77 crackers recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered 77 crackers from the side of a canteen near Banglabazar in the city Thursday night.

A Special Branch team headed by sub-inspector Mazharul Islam raided western side of the Railway Canteen and seized 21 big and 56 small bombs. Police said the bombs were kept there for use during tomorrow's opposition called hartal.

## Foreign powers fuelling conflict in Afghanistan UN special rapporteur alleges

AFP, Geneva

UN special rapporteur for Afghanistan Kamal Hossain has accused foreign powers of responsibility for fuelling the conflict there.

"The international community, in particular acting through the Security Council, is expected to discharge its fundamental obligation to protect the people and territory of Afghanistan from external interference and from the destructive armed conflict," Hossain, from Bangladesh, said in his annual report to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

He hit out Thursday at "those who are ruling at the top with external assistance" that enable them to continue the war by providing, for example, fuel for planes that were bombing civilians. "All the warring parties have been guilty of grave breaches of international humanitarian law," Hossain said.

"Their war-making is supported

by the involvement of Afghanistan's neighbours and other states in providing weapons, ammunition, fuel and other logistical support.

"State and non-state actors across the region and beyond continue to provide new arms and other material, as well as training and advisory assistance."

The rapporteur, who went to Afghanistan in 1999, was not allowed to go there in 2000 and early 2001, but he interviewed refugees who had fled to Pakistan.

The United Nations, he said, had "a mandate, not only having got the Soviet troops out, but then to fill the vacuum with viable structures of governance."

Hossain recommended "initiating and sustaining a process in which all segments of the Afghan population inside and outside Afghanistan may be able to devise and establish participatory institutions ... so that institutions of gover

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