

BSMMU cancels existing 3-yr courses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Academic Council of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) has cancelled the existing three-year courses introduced during the Awami League rule.

The Council headed by Vice Chancellor Prof MA Hadi at a meeting on Thursday also decided to revive the previous courses set by the Faculty of Medicine of Dhaka University. However, the decision was opposed by some of those present at the meeting.

When contacted, Prof Hadi said, "The courses were introduced without the approval of Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC) and permission from the University Syndicate."

He went on, "To introduce any course at the university, prior approval of the BMDC and permission from the syndicate are a must. But it was done illegally without obtaining those."

One source said, "We had opposed it repeatedly but the then authorities concerned paid no attention. In fact, they did not want any discussion on the issue at the Academic Council meetings."

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Nine sued for misappropriating Tk 10 cr from govt funds

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A corruption case was filed with Motijheel thana Thursday against nine persons on charges of misappropriation of Tk about 10.41 crore from government funds.

The accused include the proprietor and the executive director of M/s Karnaphuli Oil and Shipping Company.

The nine accused are: Hasina Begum, proprietor for the company; Kazi Shahjahan, its executive director; Mohammad Humayun Kabir, Mosul Alam alias Maruf and Mozammel Haque Chowdhury — appraisers of customs directorate, Jalal Uddin Ahmed, former superintendent of customs, Shamsul Islam, former inspector of customs, Ansanul Haque, former assistant commissioner of customs and Abu Taher, former assistant director of customs.

Mohammad Amirul Islam, inspector of the Bureau of Anti-corruption, Dhaka, alleged that Hasina Begum and Kazi Shahjahan, in collusion with the other accused, submitting false documents, had taken the money against 18 cheques from different banks.

They had done this from September 7, 1999 to February 25 this year.

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Kandahar falls, Omar flees

Fierce fighting around Tora Bora cave hideout

AFP, AP, Kabul

The final curtain was being drawn yesterday on the Taliban regime as it laid down arms in its last bastion of Kandahar amid conflicting reports on the whereabouts of its leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) news agency quoted a local official as saying that the surrender of the city was complete and power was handed over to a tribal council, but that Mullah Omar had vanished.

The spokesman in Islamabad of the US-led anti-terror coalition, meanwhile, said Omar was close to capture despite the report.

"The Taliban rule is finished. As of today they are no longer a part of Afghanistan," Hamid Karzai said in a satellite telephone interview with The Associated Press.

A spokesman for the US-led coalition predicted Omar would be brought to justice for helping Osama bin Laden.

With the hunt on for bin Laden and Omar, Karzai also promised to try Omar capture foreign al-Qaida fighters and bring them to trial.

Witnesses said overjoyed residents poured into the streets carrying pictures of Afghan's deposed king. Others tore down the Taliban's white flag in favour of Afghanistan's old royal red, black and green ensign. Looting and gunfire were reported in some parts.

The Taliban began surrendering Kandahar and nearby Spinboldak earlier yesterday after two months of US airstrikes and advances by

opposition forces that drove them from most of the country. A day earlier, they had agreed to leave provided regular fighters received amnesty and Omar's safety was guaranteed.

Their hasty departure, similar to their abandonment of other Afghan cities in recent weeks, came despite earlier pledges to defend Kandahar to the death.

Elsewhere in Afghanistan's

mountainous east, fierce fighting and constant heavy US bombing raged around the Tora Bora cave hide-out occupied by mainly Arab al-Qaida fighters loyal to bin Laden.

Opposition commanders said tribal warriors captured two caves on Thursday, but retreated after finding that they had abandoned by al-Qaida fighters who had lived there with their wives and children.

Al-Qaida forces and their families were thought to be sheltering in other caves, said Haji Musa, the brother-in-law of provincial military chief Hazrat Ali.

"We don't have any confirmed information about Osama bin Laden, but his son is still in the caves," he said, adding that tribesmen were within 500 meters of al-Qaida units as warplanes roared overhead.

Anti-Taliban forces said they captured bin Laden's main base in the Tora Bora mountains but failed to find the Saudi-born militant.

"We have staged a mopping-up operation to clear remaining parts of Tora Bora," Mohammad Habel, a

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Anti-Taliban fighters and some journalists take cover as members of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida fire mortar rounds during fighting in Melawa mountains yesterday. Fierce fighting was going on near Tora Bora, believed to be the hideout of Laden.

Detection rate of contagious TB cases declines further

NAIMUL HAQ

The government has fallen way short of the target of detecting at least 70 per cent of the contagious tuberculosis (TB) cases ever since the launching of the revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (NTP) in 1993.

The TB (pulmonary) patient detection rate, the highest priority of the government in terms of public health concern, declined for two years in a row from 'already unsatisfactory' rate of 32 per cent in 1998 - 29 per cent in 1999 and 28.5 per cent last year.

Until October this year, the average case detection rate reached 31 per cent with 76 per cent cases detected in Netrokona, the only district where the target was achieved in the last quarter (April to June).

One person is infected with the airborne-disease (contagious) in every two minutes or an estimated 134,000 persons are infected annually in the country with about 70,000 deaths yearly or one death in every 10 minutes.

As per the World Health Organisation recommendation, Bangladesh adopted Direct Observed Treatment Short-course (DOTS), the most cost-effective strategy to achieve the goal of 70 per cent case detection of the

contagious TB cases and the cure of at least 85 per cent of the detected cases.

"Despite reaching over 95 per cent of the population for the TB programme and having smooth financial support, we have miserably failed to get even close to the detection target," said one expert.

According to an estimate, 107 people are infected with TB per every 100,000 population. TB claims the second highest number of lives among the infectious diseases in Bangladesh.

The mid-term Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP) review of the World Bank expressed deep concern at the declining trend of TB case detection.

When contacted, Dr Abdul Baki, Director of Primary Health Care and also line director of Essential Service Package (ESP) said, "Yes, it is a major failure of the government and we are very concerned at the (poor) rate of detection."

"The main problem is procurement of drugs for TB programme. There has been serious disruption in drug procurement largely due to shift from fourth health programme to the newly launched reform programme

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PM's directive to police force

Nab identified terrorists, ensure punishment

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday directed all members of the police force to clamp down on crimes to let people work without fear of violence and sleep in peace. "Find and arrest identified terrorists and ensure their punishment according to the law," she said at a police function, against the backdrop of numerous incidents of acts of terrorism.

The prime minister gave the instruction while addressing the policemen at an iftar mahfil at Rajarbagh Police Lines yesterday afternoon.

She called upon them to curb all criminal activities, including hijacking, extortion and kidnapping, so that common people could do their work and run businesses without any harassment.

"Let them sleep in peace at night. You will get all support from the government in this regard," she said reiterat-

ing her government's pledge for curbing terrorism and corruption in order to improve law-and-order situation of the country.

Khaleda Zia asked the police not to spare anyone involved in criminal activities even if one is a member of her party.

"People's respect for the police force reflects the standard of civilisation in a society," she observed.

"Be not feared, but become refuge for the people. Be a dread for the bad and friend of the good," the prime minister told the policemen announcing reward for their good work.

Citing various allegations against the police during the five-year rule of Awami League, the prime minister said, "These are not at all good for the force as well as the country."

She reminded that there were reports of the police

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Gangsters fight for 'supremacy', citizens fall victim to crossfire

7 killed in city in last one month

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM

With the recent change of government, gang fight has increased alarmingly in the city with new groups trying to establish their 'control' in different areas.

Once 'control' is established, the gangs get access to crores of taka in toll collection and illegal businesses with the blessings of their 'big brothers' having affiliation with the ruling party.

But such gang fights seldom claim life of the notorious ringleaders. It is the innocent people who are caught in crossfire and become victims while law enforcers in most cases play the role of silent spectators.

The highest number of seven killings in a month in such incidents

of crossfire in the last few years was recorded last month. Four of them were killed in Mohammadpur and three in Mirpur, Shyampur and Badda areas, according to newspaper reports.

The victims include an SSC examinee, Sumon Halder, who was killed when two gangs exchanged shots in Mirpur on November 23.

Another schoolboy was killed during a gunfight between two rival groups of ruling BNP at Fatullah in Narayanganj last month.

In most cases, law enforcers fail to trace the killers allegedly due to their insincerity and connection with the gangs. As days pass by, people forget the incidents and the terrorists remain at large.

"Police keep close ties with the criminals for their financial gains", a

victim's father alleged while talking to this correspondent yesterday. Victims' families prefer not to go to police and file cases fearing reprisal by the gang members and victimisation by police, he alleged.

When contacted, a top police official denied this and said most of the filed level policemen are burdened with huge number of cases. In many cases, policemen feel safer to carry out orders of ruling party men, he said.

"Our police force is the best compared to that in any other country. They perform well in foreign peacekeeping missions. Their performance can be better at home if proper steps are taken", another top police official who worked in a UN peacekeeping mission said.

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3 murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A textile worker was slaughtered, an alleged mugger was beaten to death and another mugger was killed when he exploded a cracker in a bid to escape mob beating in the city on Thursday.

Hamidul Islam Roni, 23, a textile employee and an HSC student, was

slaughtered by unidentified terrorists at Bangladesh Math in Old Dhaka about 11 pm.

The victim's family said Roni along with his mother had gone to the residence of his relative Jai Miah at Siddikbazar.

Just before iftar, Roni went out of the house telling his mother that he

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4 injured as armed gang clash at Jurain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One person was stabbed and three others were injured during a clash between two rival groups of armed gang at East Jurain in the city's Shyampur area yesterday morning.

They were identified as Salauddin, 25, Wasim, 22, Sohel and Sumon, 16. Salauddin was stabbed in his stomach while two others sustained bomb injuries.

The two gangs one - led by Masud and the other by Lalan locked in a clash. They exploded crackers, attacked each other with sharp weapons over establishing their supremacy in the area at 10:30am. The clash continued for about an hour creating panic among the local people.

Police later brought the situation under control.

The groups have long drawn rivalry among themselves over control of the area, sources said.

The injured were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.



City's marketplaces like Gausia (above) and shopping centres saw a huge rush during the weekly holiday yesterday as Eid nears.

RAFIQ HASAN

Eid shopping is gaining momentum day by day with the biggest religious festival of the Muslims nearing.

Most of the city markets are now witnessing heavy rush of shoppers.

Thousands of buyers, mainly from the middle class, are crowding New Market, New Elephant Road, Gauchhia, Chandni Chawk, Mouchack, Malibagh, Kakrail and Gulistan markets.

On the other hand, the well off section of the society is rushing to posh shopping centres in Gulshan, Banani, Uttara, Dhanmondi and Naya Pallan areas.

Stalls at the fair have almost all the items needed by Eid shoppers. People however face tremendous difficulties due to unusual traffic jam on their way to various markets.

In many cases, they have to waste hours to reach their destinations.

Traffic police were seen busy clearing the roads to ease movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

While visiting some markets yesterday, this correspondent was told by shopkeepers that the turnout

Heavy rush of Eid shoppers

of buyers was very low at the beginning of Ramadan but it increased fast in the last few days.

The trend would continue till the day before the Eid, they hoped.

Heavy rush was seen in front of Eastern Plaza market but sale at the Shipa Mela (industrial fair) at Panthapath, not far from it, is yet to pick up.

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"There are many local items, particularly saree, which are far better than Indian products, but many of the buyers seem to have undue interest in foreign goods," a shopkeeper regretted.

"If we tell the customers that these are local products, they usually offer lower price for those. But if we say these are foreign items, they offer much higher price. That is why we sell many local items as Indian goods, making extra profit," he said requesting anonymity.

Although heavy rush was seen at shops selling saree and garments items, jewellery shops had small number of customers. Market is very dull this year, salesmen said.

"Sales this year is about 25 per cent less than that last year," said the owner of a Jewellery at Chandni

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Hasina leaves for US this morning

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina leaves for the United States this morning.

She will spend most of her time in the USA with her only daughter, Sayma Hossain Putul, and also spend time with son Sajeb Wazed Joy.

On way to USA on the private tour, party sources said, Hasina will make a stopover at London to meet her sister, Sheikh Rehana.

British Deputy Under-Secretary Graham Fry will call on the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in the British capital.

Hasina will leave London straight for Miami Sunday morning.

During her stay in the USA and UK, Hasina is likely to address gatherings of Bangladeshi expatriates.

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BCL leader at Mymensingh Polytech Instt murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Assistant general secretary of Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute Students Union was murdered by unidentified assailants on the institute campus in early hours of yesterday.

On information, police recovered the body of Rajib Ahmed Konok, also a BCL leader, from the second floor stair of Shaheed Kairul Hostel at about 6 am.

Police suspected that Konok was strangled by the assailants.

A case was filed with Kotwali thana in this connection.

Young man strangled in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

A youth was strangled by unidentified assailants in Rupsa upazila on Thursday night.

The dead was identified as Enamul, 23, of Khazura area in Fakirhat upazila of Bagerhat district.

Police said Enamul was missing after he went out of his house on the night for offering 'tarabi' prayers. Later, his body was found floating in a beel at Jabusa in Rupsa upazila.

Enamul came home from Chittagong a week ago, family sources said.

Later, police recovered the body and sent it to Khulna General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Erratum

In our yesterday's report headlined 'More changes in admin,' it was inadvertently stated that an assistant press secretary to the prime minister reportedly played a key role in transfers and reshuffle in the administration. It should be read 'assistant private secretary' and not 'assistant press secretary.'

ACI Iftar

Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Dec	Sehri	Iftar
22	8		5-15
23	9	5-05	5-15
24	10	5-06	5-16