

Universities should produce enlightened citizens: President

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said university education should aim at producing enlightened human beings by imparting skill and training needed for a modern and dynamic society. For a developing country like Bangladesh, higher education is key to appropriate use of natural resources, increasing productivity and providing leadership to the country to face the global competition. Universities must instill in students the qualities of head and heart needed to take the leadership. He was speaking as chief guest at the first convocation of the East West University (EWU), held at the Osmani Memorial Hall in the city.

The colourful ceremony was attended by guardians of students and guests. The graduates numbering 100 were introduced at the ceremony through pronouncement of their names.

The function was also addressed by Education Minister Dr. Osman Faruk, Vice Chancellor of EMW M Monwarul Islam, President of its Board of Directors Syed Mamzur Elahi, Registrar Mrs. Firdous Ali and SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

4 terrorists held from Adamjee area

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Siddirganj police arrested three terrorists allegedly loyal to BNP and one loyal to Awami League from Kadamtoli of Adamjee area in the early hours of yesterday morning.

Police said they arrested Dhakaya Jalal, 40, Golakata Kashem alias Abul Kashem, 52, Bara Abdur Rashid, 55, of BNP and Mujibur Rahman Mondal, 45, senior vice-president of Shimulpara Union of Awami League.

Police also said Dhakaya Jalal is an accused in 10 cases and awarded seven years in prison in a case. Mujibur Mondal is an accused in three cases. The other arrested are also facing various charges.

Meanwhile, supporters of BNP put up a barricade on Demra-Narayanganj highway for four hours protesting the arrest of their partymen. Later, police removed the barricade at 11.00 am.

Forced retirement of 14 officials: HC issues rule on govt

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government why the compulsory retirement of 14 government officials should not be declared illegal.

A division bench comprising Justice M A Matin and Justice Mohammad Marzi UI Haque passed the order upon several writ petitions filed with the court challenging the government order.

Nine former Joint Secretaries, three Deputy Secretaries and two former police officers filed the writ petitions.

Barrister M Amirul Islam, Advocate Abdul Baset Mujumdar, Advocate M K Rahman and Manjil Morshed moved the petitions on behalf of the petitioners.

Police yet to know how Jitu got the shotgun

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police are yet to ascertain how Sakhawat Hossain Jitu, son of Colonel (rt) Delwar Hossain, got the shotgun, which was seized, from his possession along with a stolen car.

Jitu was stopped by police on Tuesday as he tried to speed away in the car towards Banani from Mohakhali rail crossing.

Police recovered the shotgun from the car and filed a case under the Arms Act against him with Gulshan thana.

Afterwards, he was taken to the Gulshan police station and interrogated by detectives. Jitu said he had bought the car despite knowing that it was stolen. Police however could not find out anything about the shotgun.

He was produced before the CMM's court on Tuesday with a prayer for a seven-day police remand but the court rejected the prayer and sent him to the Dhaka Central Jail.

Persecution of victims

Top lawyers form body to extend legal aid

REAZ AHMAD

Frontline lawyers have recently formed a committee to extend legal aid to the victims of persecution.

The move by the lawyers came amid recent incidents of alleged human rights violation across the country.

The 151-member committee named "Supreme Court Legal Aid Committee" was formed recently with Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan as its chairman and Barrister Amir-ul Islam, Barrister Shafiq Ahmed and Supreme Court Bar Association President Abdul Baset Majumdar as co-chairmen.

However, one member of the committee told The Daily Star yesterday that the move was not directly linked with the Awami League's initiative to provide legal assistance to its leaders and workers.

Of relevance, the Awami League took a resolution at its Central Working Committee meeting on October 23 about formation of legal aid committees at central, district and thana levels.

The move was aimed at providing legal assistance to AL leaders and workers against whom the alliance government was filing 'false' cases.

Talking to The Daily Star, AL presidium member Abdul Jalil welcomed the lawyers' move. He hoped that AL leaders and workers who were being subjected to harassment and repression would largely be benefited.

He, however, said that in line with the October 23 decision, the AL has already instructed the party-

profiling lawyers' unit to render lawful support to its party men who have been persecuted across the country.

Barrister Amir-ul Islam explained that victims of persecution and violence would get free legal consultation from this committee.

When asked whether the move correlates with the AL initiative in any way, Barrister Islam said, "Our committee will render legal support to the persecuted political workers irrespective of their party affiliations. Naturally, if the AL workers are harassed, they will also get the support. The same way, the victims belonging to the Communist Party or Gano Forum or any other party, and journalists, intellectuals and human rights activists are equally entitled to the legal aid."

"Since July, the incidents of persecution and violence have climbed and we woke up to the cause," he replied to another question.

After the formation of the legal aid committee at central level, they would form such committees in every district, he continued.

About the longevity of the committee, Barrister Islam said, "We're contemplating to give it a permanent shape and would not limit its scope of service to any definite duration."

Meanwhile, sources in the lawyers' community informed that since the October 1 polls lawyers have received a flurry of letters from victims of persecution SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Verdict in Khulna triple murder case Jan 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Judgement in the triple murder case will be pronounced here on January 15, according to a source in the special court.

Cross-examinations of prosecution witnesses concluded on Tuesday. A total of 26 witnesses were cross-examined.

Kamal Ahmed, Insaf Ali and Abdul Khaleque of Sonadanga residential area were murdered by the armed cadres of Ershad Shikder at Skid Ghat in July, 1997.

Their bodies were later dumped into the Bhairab river.

The three were killed for protesting drug trafficking at the Skid Ghat, said Noor-e-Alam, the bodyguard of Shikder. Noor-e-Alam, one of the accused in the case gave his confessional statement before the court.

The accused in the triple murder case are Ershad Shikder, Jamai Faruque, Liaquat Lashkar, Iddris Jamai, Yusuf Mannan, Nasir Khan, Noor Islam, Basir Hossain Babu, Noor-e-Alam, Jinal, Moktar, Berek Commander, Noor Mohammad and Shajahan. Four out of 14 accused are being tried in absentia.

Ershad Shikder has so far been awarded death sentences in seven out of 13 murder cases.



Army personnel check the room at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, using metal detectors where British Prime Minister Tony Blair will stay during his visit to Bangladesh from today.

Govt starts fresh probe into 1996 share scam

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN

The government has formed two separate committees this week to probe anew the 1996 capital market scam. Member of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Iftikhar Ahmed has been made convenor of the probe bodies to complete the task within 10 days. However, the committees feel that the time period is too short to launch such a massive investigation and ought one year for a full-length probe that would require scrutinising piles of old records.

According to the terms of reference of the probe body, the first committee comprising four members will conclude the 'unfinished task' of identifying the 'real scamsters'.

The second three-member committee will look into the alleged involvement of SEC officials in the scam.

Thousands of small investors lost their life's savings as the stock market nose-dived to an unexpected low after skyrocketing to

unreasonable heights in 1996. After widespread allegations of manipulation, the capital market watchdog formed an inquiry committee and following its report, the SEC filed 15 cases accusing 42 directors of different listed companies and securities firms with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka.

In its report, the 1996 probe committee said it could not complete investigation against a number of companies and brokerage houses due to time constraint and suggested SEC launch further investigation to find if others were involved in the scam.

In its opening remarks, the probe report also raised questions about the role of the SEC during the scam. The committee however did not elaborate as investigation into the commission was not included in its terms of reference.

With the assumption of the new government, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in her first nation-wide SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Hasina arrives in London January 5

UNB, London

After spending four weeks in the United States, Awami League president Sheikh Hasina arrived here on Saturday (January 5) on her way back home.

During a 4-day stay in the British capital, Hasina will meet her party leaders and professionals to exchange views on the October 1 general election and the post-polls political situation in Bangladesh. She will also meet her sister, Sheikh Rehana, here.

According to her tentative schedule, the Awami League president will address a public meeting at the York Hall in East London at 2pm on January 5. She will spend a day with her sister on January 6.

On the next day, January 7, she will attend a workers' meeting of the UK Awami League and front organisations at Carten Theatre Hall in East London.

On the same day, Hasina will meet representatives of different professional groups, including a group of Bangladeshi Barristers. She will have separate meeting with journalists in London.

Hasina will leave London for Dhaka on January 8.



The Ws in the forefront... Pakistan captain Waqar Younis (R) and legendary fast bowler Wasim Akram (L) wait at the entrance of the VIP Lounge of the Zia International Airport for the bus to arrive on way to Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Pak cricketers arrive: First Test from Jan 9

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan cricketers arrived in the city yesterday with a mission possible against hosts Bangladesh.

Upon their arrival, Pakistan coach Mudassar Nazar declared that anything less than a clean sweep against Bangladesh would be a failure for his team.

Fast bowler Waqar Younis will lead a 15-member team in their first ever series -- two Tests and three one-day internationals -- against the international cricket's new-borns.

Waqar was confident of winning all the matches here as, he said, his team would not take Bangladesh lightly. "I know they are still in a learning process. But once you have entered the top cricket your opponents will always take you seriously."

The visitors reached the Hotel SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Poliovirus transmission

Bangladesh at risk due to porous border

NAIMUL HAQ

Bangladesh still remains at risk of wild poliovirus transmission though it has a modern mechanism to check its spread, official sources said.

According to officials of the Extended Programme of Immunisation (EPI), wild poliovirus transmission threat prevails because of the country's proximity to areas in India with high prevalence of the disease that permanently paralyses children under 15 years of age.

Movement of population across the border at the 'danger zones' also heightens the risk.

"Most of the tea pluckers in Sylhet gardens come from the other

side of the border in India and there is every chance that the virus transmission may take place through such 'migration'," said a senior epidemiologist of the EPI.

According to a report of the World Health Organisation (WHO) regional office in New Delhi, 197 cases of wild polio were detected and clinically confirmed in India in 2001. The majority of the cases were detected within 50 km of the northeastern Bangladesh border.

Three consecutive years of polio-free status is required before Bangladesh can be declared free from it, WHO said. But the latest threat of wild polio attack and possible failure in detecting it in time may stand in the way of the country's achieving the status.

"We had 121 suspected cases of wild polio last year. But this could not be confirmed as excreta specimen of the patients were not collected in time (within 14 days of onset of paralysis). But the existence of wild polio across the border poses a big threat to our achievement," said Dr Md Mahabubur Rahman, line director of Child Health and Limited Curative Care.

The last case of clinically-confirmed wild polio was detected in the city's Mirpur area on August 22 last year in a victim named Dolly. Since then, no wild polio cases have been detected, EPI sources said.

Meantime, the 121 potentially SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Indian troops build-up along Pak border 'complete'

REUTERS, New Delhi

India said yesterday it had completed its troop build-up along the Pakistan border, but still hoped diplomacy and international pressure could avert a showdown with its nuclear rival.

Defence Minister George Fernandes told Reuters in an interview the situation along the frontier, where both sides are daily exchanging fire in some places, remained tense.

"But at other levels efforts are being made to defuse the situation through diplomatic intervention," he said, adding foreign governments had weighed in to press New Delhi's demands that Pakistan close down anti-Indian militants on its soil.

U.S. President George Bush has personally phoned Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf to urge talks and to ask Pakistan to act.

And British Prime Minister Tony Blair is due to visit India and Pakistan from tomorrow in a bid to ease tensions.

Fernandes said the two leaders may talk on the

sidelines of a regional leaders summit due to begin in Nepal this week.

"Anything is possible," he said. Asked how seriously India was considering military action if diplomacy failed, Fernandes said: "That will be the ultimate option."

And asked when India would know diplomacy had failed, he added: "When all those who are trying to persuade Pakistan tell us that there is nothing more they can do, that they have exhausted their patience also -- that will be the time."

India began its most powerful military build-up ever after a December 13 suicide attack on its parliament that New Delhi blamed on two Pakistan-based Islamic groups fighting its rule in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.

As fears of war weigh down financial markets, the two sides also scaled down diplomatic ties and severed air, rail and bus links across the border.

Pakistan denies any involvement in the parliament SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Bus dacoity at Sanir Akhra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed robbers looted money and other valuables from bus passengers at Sanir Akhra in the city's Demra area yesterday afternoon.

A gang of seven robbers boarded the bus of Shohagh Paribahan (Transport) at Sanir Akhra at about 1 pm yesterday. The gang looted valuables from the passengers at gunpoint and left the bus when it reached in front of Dhonia College. They looted valuables worth over Tk. 1 lakh, police said quoting the FIR.

Police and passengers suspected that the driver and his staff were behind the dacoity. They said that the bus was not supposed to stop at Sanir Akhra.

Demra police picked up the driver and its supervisor for their alleged involvement in the dacoity. The duty officer told The Daily Star that they were investigating the matter to find out the culprits.

Shimul Baruya, one of the passengers, filed a case with Demra police station in this regard.

Kurt Waldheim hospitalised

AP, Innsbruck (Austria)

Former Austrian president and UN chief Kurt Waldheim has been hospitalised after a fall at an Austrian resort, a hospital spokesman said yesterday.

Austrian state radio said Waldheim, 83, fell and suffered a facial injury Tuesday at Going, a ski resort in the western province of Tyrol.

A doctor ordered his transfer by helicopter to Innsbruck's University Clinic, where spokesman Johannes Schweighofer confirmed that Waldheim was being treated.

Schweighofer said Waldheim was in "good" condition but refused to provide details.