



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hands over certificates to doctors at the eighth convocation of Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

MBBS doctors at union levels soon, says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said her government would take an initiative to appoint MBBS doctors at union level to provide more effective healthcare to the rural people.

"This time also, we, according to our election commitment, are activating the union health centres to reach health services more efficiently to the doorsteps of villagers. Medical supplies will also be increased in phases also for upazila health complexes," she told physicians at a convocation ceremony.

Addressing the Eighth Convocation of Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons at the Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre Khaleda further said more specialist physicians in different disciplines would be appointed to district hospitals.

Some 700 physicians got fellowship at the convocation. Of them, 20 specialists from home and abroad were given honorary fellowships.

Urging the medical doctors to serve people, particularly the poorer section of society, with sincerity and dedication, she asked them to think carefully as to what extent could primary healthcare be made easily accessible to those who live below the poverty line.

"You will also have to think about how the specialist physicians could come forward for the treatment of the poor for complex diseases," the PM told the health specialists and surgeons.

She also suggested to them to work out how they could at individual or collective level help the destitute people apart from the government effort.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Plea for Hasina's extra security unheeded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has rejected an Awami League request for deployment of Ansar at the residence of the party chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina.

"We paid the government Tk 82,728 for deployment of one section of Ansar at the opposition leader's Dhanmondi house called Sudha Sadan as advised by the office of the Adjutant of Ansar, said AL's Publicity Secretary Abdul Mannan.

But he regretted that the office of the District Ansar Adjutant in a letter yesterday refused to make the deployment claiming that additional security force was not needed for the opposition leader's house, which was now being guarded by a group of policeman.

Mannan told The Daily Star last night that his party sought for the deployment of Ansar in the wake of the rising threat on the life of Hasina and paid the required money only as the authorities had accepted their demand.

Trial of Shipu murder begins Deposition of witness Ishtiaque recorded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of the Itekar Ahmed Shipu Murder Case began at the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday.

Judge Mollah Mostafa Kamal recorded deposition of Mohammad Ishtiaque Ahmed, the first prosecution witness as well as the complainant of the case.

The court adjourned the proceedings of the case till February 3. Ishtiaque Ahmed will be cross-examined by the defence lawyers on that day.

Ishtiaque in his statement said that three people -- Ziauddin Ahmed Jewel, Naimuzzaman Zobayer and Shafiqul Alam -- went to his brother Shipu's mobile phone shop on the 2nd floor of UAE Moitree Market in the city's Banani area at about 7.15 pm on May 24, 2000 and asked the manager of the shop Abul Kalam

Azad about Shipu and his whereabouts. The witness told the court, the three people claimed that a few days ago, they bought a Nokia mobile set from that shop but it was out of order and they ordered the manager to show another set.

The manager showed another set worth about Tk 18,000 and they then tried to leave the shop without paying its price but the manager intercepted them and requested to pay the price, the witness added.

At this, they became angry and at one stage Shafiqul Alam shot the manager in the left leg with his (Alam) pistol. Hearing the sound of calling bell (emergency), Shipu, victim of the case, made an attempt to go to the spot but Shafiqul Alam shot him (Shipu) and then the three people fled the scene, the witness

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Writ against ETV: Lawyers take time

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday re-fixed the date of hearing on writ filed against licensing agreement between the government and ETV upon a prayer of the counsel of ETV.

The counsel of ETV prayed for time. Accepting the prayer the court re-fixed February 3 for hearing.

Dr Chowdhury Mohammad Hossain and Dr Mohammad Abdur Rab, two teachers of Dhaka University and president of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalist Gias Kamal Chowdhury jointly filed the writ petition.

A Division Bench of the High Court issued the rule on September 19, 2001 asking the government and ETV to show cause to why their licensing agreement should not be declared illegal.

The High Court later banned the territorial broadcast of ETV by using towers of ETV.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court stayed the High Court order and directed the concerned lawyers to take necessary measures for disposing the matter within four months.

Yesterday the matter came up in the list for hearing.

Accident kills Barisal BNP chief, his wife

UNB, Barisal

Agailjhara BNP president and his wife were killed, and five other family members injured in a fatal road mishap on Dhaka-Barisal Highway at Gournadi upazila in Barisal yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred as the driver of the microbus on which they were travelling lost control at Mahilara point at about 5:30 pm and hit a roadside tree. Abdul Kader Akon, 60, and his wife Jahanara, 50, died on the spot.

Five injured in the accident were identified as Khairul, Papi Akhter, Zafar, Sujan and Ruma. They were admitted to Ashokathi Hospital.

In Manikganj, all the nine passengers of a three-wheeler (Nasiman) were seriously injured when the vehicle overturned and fell into roadside ditch at Tepra.

One of the injured, Asaduzzaman, 11, died soon after admission to Sadar Hospital while Khorshed, 35, Majed, 35, Ziar Rahman, 25, Berek, 20, Maksudur Rahman, 42, Jasim are being treated at the hospital.

Huge arms dump explosion kills over 580 in Lagos



AFP, Lagos

More than 580 bodies were pulled from a Lagos canal early yesterday after a massive crowd stampeded as it fled a huge arms dump explosion in the city, a distraught witness said.

"I have counted more than 580 (bodies), I am looking for my children. I have been here since the morning," said Shola Odun, a printer.

"One man here lost six of his children. He found them. He is dying," Odun added.

Black Africa's most densely inhabited city -- home to more than 10 million people -- was shaken repeatedly late Sunday by the massive explosions, set off by a fire at a military armoury.

An AFP photographer at the scene said he had witnessed more than 140 bodies being pulled from the water in the canal in the Isolo district during the time he was at the site, close to the area where the arms explosion happened.

AP adds: Rescue workers pulled more than 200 bodies from a canal yesterday after a series of large explosions at a munitions depot shook Nigeria's commercial capital, destroying homes and businesses over a wide area.

Police and other rescue workers removed the bodies from Oke Afa canal in Lagos' northern Isolo neighbourhood, a short distance

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Speaker won't woo AL to JS unless formally requested

NAZRUL ISLAM

While the Awami League insists on a 'congenial atmosphere' for its joining the parliament session, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar terms the main opposition party's plea 'absolutely vague'.

"I will not initiate any unsolicited move to bring the main opposition party to the House unless the treasury bench or the opposition formally requests me for this," the Speaker said when asked about the AL decision not to attend parliament session till a congenial atmosphere is created.

The decision was taken at a meeting of AL lawmakers only three days ahead of second session of the eighth parliament due to begin on Thursday.

The Speaker was talking to The Daily Star, BBC, ETV and Bhorer Kagoj at his Sangsad Bhaban office shortly after the AL Parliamentary Party's meeting yesterday.

He hoped the opposition would start coming to the parliament from the coming session.

Asked whether he would invite AL to attend the coming session, he referred to his winding up speech in the parliament's maiden session, calling upon the main opposition party to play its due role in the House. AL boycotted the session that was prorogued last month.

The Speaker said it was not clear to him what the opposition meant by 'a lack of atmosphere'. "They must spell it out in clear terms and let me know what actually is lacking. Only then I can discuss the matter with the Leader of the House," he said.

Sircar advised the opposition party to explain to him if it was being subjected to repression and its activists were being arrested. "They must inform me their problems in writing. How can I interfere without being informed about their problems?" It is the home Ministry which is to deal with such an issue, he noted.

Referring to his talks with some opposition leaders, he said many of the opposition lawmakers showed

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Hearing of Kazi Aref murder case shifted to Feb 16

JHENIDAH CORRESPONDENT, back from Kushtia

Hearing of witness in Kazi Aref murder case has been shifted to February 16.

The hearing was scheduled on Monday in the court of Additional Sessions Judge-3 of Kushtia Mohammad Anwar Hossain.

According to court sources, one of the main accused in the murder case Hablu Mollah was arrested in Dhaka recently. But he could not be brought to the court on Monday due to 'unavoidable circumstances'.

Hablu is said to be grand son of State Minister for Post and Telecommunications Ahsanul Haque alias Pancha Mollah. Of the 29 accused, 24 were present in the court.

Senior political leader Kazi Aref was shot dead on February 16, 1999 when he was addressing a public meeting at Kaldaspur High School ground in Daulatpur upazila of Kushtia district.

Pancha Mollah's son Bachchu Mollah and three others were granted bail in the case earlier.

Launch mishap Four bodies recovered from Passur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Divers of Bangladesh Navy yesterday recovered four bodies out of ten people missing in the Saturday night's launch capsized in the river Passur.

The victims were identified as Delwar Matbar, Yunus, Sattar Sikdar and Shahidul Boyati.

All the four bodies were found but the launch could not be salvaged till filing of this report last night.

The rescue operation was hampered due to the inclement weather, strong current and severe cold.

The motor launch capsized in the Passur Saturday night following collision with a coaster, police said.



PHOTO: STAR

Divers recovering a body from Passur river yesterday.

Attack on US office in Kolkata

Pak national confesses his involvement before death?

AP, Patna

The Indian government claimed that a Pakistani man, shot by police, confessed before dying yesterday that he participated in the attack on a US cultural center in Kolkata last week.

Home Secretary Kamal Pandey told a news conference that police in the small eastern state of Jharkhand had shot two Pakistani men after raiding a "terrorist hide-out" in the town of Hazaribag at dawn yesterday.

One of the men, identified by police as Mohammed Salim, was killed in the shootout, said Hazaribag Police Chief Deepak Kumar, speaking by telephone from the town 290 kilometres south of Patna, capital of Bihar state.

The other man, identified as Mohammed Idris, alias Mohammed Zahid, died in the government hospital after confessing to police that he was a Pakistani citizen and had fired on policemen guarding the American Center in Kolkata on Jan. 21, Kumar told The Associated Press.

He said both men had lived as shoe merchants for four months in a rented house that was surrounded by police at 2:30 am after receiving a tip. Kumar said the men were told to surrender, but did not respond and

were shot when they tried to escape at 6:30 am by opening fire.

He said an AK-47 assault rifle, which police believe may have been used in the Kolkata attack, was recovered in the house, along with 22,000 rupees in cash.

Kumar said that Zahid confessed he was the passenger aboard the motorcycle that drove past the American Center during a police shift change and that he had done the firing. Four policemen were killed and 18 other people, mostly police, were wounded. Kumar said the driver of the motorcycle, whom he identified as "Sadaquat" was still at large.

Police have arrested six people, including three Bangladeshis, in connection with the Kolkata attack, but had not said any of them were the gunman or the motorcycle driver.

In New Delhi, Home Secretary Kamal Pandey, confirmed the police account at a news conference, saying that "admitted he was a resident of Khanewal, in Multan district, Pakistan and had opened fire at the policemen guarding the American Center."

Pandey claimed that "a terrorist module" hiding out

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Fazal M Kamal new PIO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed veteran journalist Fazal M Kamal principal information officer of the Press Information Department on a one-year contract, according to an official notification yesterday.

A career journalist, Fazal served as editors of The Bangladesh Times and weekly Holiday.

He was also minister (press) at the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi.

Meanwhile, the government has withdrawn Brigadier General Abdul Malek from the Power Development Board as its chairman and his service has been returned to Bangladesh Army.

Director of the Bureau of Anti-corruption Abdul Latif has been transferred to the Appointment, Posting and Deputation section of the Ministry of Establishment as joint secretary.

AL, BNP clash in Natore: 6 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

At least six persons, including general secretary of the district Awami League, were injured in clashes between the BNP and the AL in the town yesterday.

The injured are Advocate Hanif Ali Sheikh, the general secretary, Nasir Uddin Rana, ex-organising secretary of Jubo League, Jubo League workers -- Gopal and Ranju,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2