

Business Awards 2001

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Anam read out the citations highlighting the achievements of the winners, but gave the onus on the award-winners of 2000 to declare the names.

Last year's winners in each category also took the stage and described how the awards inspired them to achieve even newer heights before announcing the names of the winners for 2001.

Business leaders, professionals, academics, high government officials and journalists cheered the winners as they received crests from the finance minister.

"... Whatever I tried to do in my life I did it very seriously and sincerely," was all an emotion-choked Anisur Rahman Sinha could say while receiving the award.

Rehana Kashem said, "The award will be an inspiration not only for me but also for future generations of women entrepreneurs."

A delighted Nitun Kundu, managing director of Otobi Ltd., which received the 'Enterprise of the Year' award, said, "In my last 50 years of work I never liked to be second and always worked to reach the peak."

The finance minister highlighted the achievements of the private sector. He said the major problem is the staggering losses of the public sector, which would have a negative impact on the growth of private sector.

"The public sector enterprises have become white elephants and we cannot allow the private sector to suffer due to the losses of the public sector," said Saifur.

It has been difficult to survive in an environment where entrepreneurs did not get proper infrastructure, he also observed.

The finance minister said the products enterprises of Nitun Kundu and Rehana Kashem are bringing out have very bright prospects in years to come. Saifur also dubbed Anisur Rahman Sinha as the Bill Gates of the country's readymade garment industry.

The Daily Star editor said the future of the country hinges on the healthy growth of the private sector. "We are convinced that Bangladesh has great prospects. Obviously, we have many problems, but we have to build on our strength and focus on the positive works of the people," he added.

He also said there was a whole range of women entrepreneurs who

deserve recognition and can make a lot of difference given the proper support.

Reiterating his company's commitment to facilitate trade and business in the country, Director of DHL for the Asia-Pacific region Malcom Rees said it was gratifying to honour the heroes of Bangladesh business.

Country Director of DHL Desmond Quiah said business people are the behind-the-scenes heroes of development. He added that his organisation in collaboration with The Daily Star is trying to bring them to the limelight to encourage them to contribute more towards the economic growth.

The Daily Star and the DHL sought nominations from members of the public to identify the deserving candidates for the prestigious awards. The Daily Star team toiled to prepare background paper on the nominees.

A panel of judges comprising top economists, businessmen, bankers, lawyers, chartered accountants and journalists finally analysed the contribution of the candidates and chose one winner from each category.

Last year, Samson H Chowdhury, chairman of Square Group, won the "Business Person of the Year" award. Salina Akther, proprietor of Aakor, a handicraft and boutique shop, was awarded "Outstanding Woman in Business". In "Enterprise of the Year" category, two enterprises -- Concord Engineers and Construction Ltd. and Rahimafrooz -- shared the award.

Jubo League demands resignation of Home Minister

UNB, Dhaka

The Jubo League yesterday demanded resignation of Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, accusing him of instigating violence instead of restoring law and order.

"A home minister cannot deliver speeches which may incite people to take the law into their own hands, but Altaf Hossain Chowdhury is doing so," Jubo League President Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim told newsmen at a press conference.

The Jubo League organised the news conference protesting what they called state-sponsored terrorism, police atrocities and arrest of its leaders and workers in connection with false cases across the country.

"The country is sliding into chaos because of lawlessness and the home minister should quit his office forthwith," Selim said in a written statement at the press conference at the Awami League central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the afternoon.

Shop owner shot dead in Kafrul

BSS, Dhaka

A young shop owner was shot dead by a group of miscreants at Ibrahimpur under Kafrul Thana in the city last night.

Police quoting family sources said a gang of miscreants called out Mohammad Masud, 20, of his grocery shop at about 8-15 pm and took him to a place near a mosque. The miscreants shot him a point blank and left the scene.

Local people took the victim, son of Amir Uddin of 897 Ibrahimpur area to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

No case was registered with police till filing of this report at 10 pm.

Gasping for air ...

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For immediate relief, doctors prescribe Vetolin, Saltolin and Asmasol, the most commonly used drugs which cost about Tk 200 each. But the hospital does not have any supply of those. "We also don't get nebuliser solutions, the most urgent drugs for saving the lives of critical asthma patients," a another doctor said.

Like many others at the hospital, acute asthma patient Firoza Begum from the city's Mirpur area has to arrange the required drugs on her own.

"My husband is a blacksmith. He cannot afford to buy the drugs prescribed here. Those are very expensive. But they (hospital staff) do not have those," Firoza said in utter frustration.

"Besides doctors and nurses and the infrastructure, the only thing now available here is oxygen cylinder. Patients have to buy drugs, prices of which range from Tk 200 to 1200," a senior doctor said.

Last year, 3306 patients were treated for acute asthma and COPD at the out-patient department of the hospital. Almost one third of them could be supplied with necessary drugs. But the rest, mostly poor, had to manage drugs on their own.

According to a study -- National Asthma Prevalence Study in

Bangladesh-- around seven million people in the country suffer from the chronic disease. Ninety per cent of them do not get any treatment, even reliever drugs.

The study also said that among the factors which aggravate the suffering, cold is the number one, followed by fumes and dust and specific foods.

Govt now plans

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the AL regime for publication of more white papers. Legal actions will follow the investigations.

On January 23, the coalition government released a white paper on some 40 cases of grafts, irregularities and abuse of power allegedly committed during the AL government.

A special cell at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is still looking into different contracts and appointment files.

Official sources said the Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) after inquiry into over half a dozen of allegations sent files to the PMO for approval of the prime minister to file graft cases against former ministers and others involved.

They said BAC is currently investigating into about 60 allegations of grafts and irregularities, many of them picked from the white paper.

Jute, textile workers call 48-hr strike from Feb 16

UNB, Dhaka

Jute, yarn and textile workers and employees have called a 48-hour strike from Feb 16 demanding implementation of their 15-point demand, including payment of their all arrears, before Eid-ul-Azha.

They will also hold workers' rallies in every industrial area on Feb 15, rallies and processions at all mill gates from Feb 12-15 and bring out a protest procession from city's Mukhtangon on Feb 13.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of Pat, Suta-Bastracal Sramik-Karmachari Sangram Parishad at Tophkhana Road yesterday morning with its convenor Abul Bashar in the chair.

Workers leaders Delwar Hossain, Ismail Hossain, Abdur Rouf, Haji Azimuddin Shah Alam, Golamur Rahman, Azizur Rahman, Shahidullah Chowdhury and Lutfar Rahman also addressed the meeting.

The meeting demanded of the government to meet their demands, including payment of their arrears before Feb 14, cancellation of privatisation policy of the Wage Commission.

Dipu Chowdhury

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three separate criminal appeals on January 23, seeking bail from the Sessions Judge's Court after the rejection order of the CMM's Court, Dhaka. Later, the Judge Court heard the appeals on Tuesday and gave the order yesterday.

The CMM's Court on December 31 last year rejected the bail petitions of Dipu.

It was alleged that three unknown people at gun-point abducted one Ms Subarna Rahman Mukta from in front of London Plaza under Uttara thana in the city on March 15 last year and took her to an unknown place in Gazipur district and later forced her to marry one Monir Hossain. They also forced her to put signature on two blank stamps worth Tk 50 and snatched away her mobile phone set.

Subarna filed a case with Uttara thana accusing three people on March 16 last year.

But Dipu Chowdhury was shown arrested in the case on December 27 last year although Dipu's name was not mentioned.

The court also rejected the petition for bail in a case, filed with Uttara thana against five people on July 17 last year on charges of assault and theft. The complainant of the case did not mention the name of Dipu in the FIR.

But Dipu was shown arrested in the case on December 1 last year. The same court further directed the Investigation Officer (IO) of a criminal case to submit a report regarding involvement of Dipu in the case by February 18.

The case was filed with Uttara thana on May 26 last year against three unknown people.

But Dipu was shown arrested in the case on December 27 the same year although his name was not mentioned in the FIR.

5 schoolgirls

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Nagar and recovered the girls. Four of them were found unconscious.

Police, however, could not arrest the woman and the other criminals involved in the abduction and trafficking bid. Details could not be known.

Forced retirement

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of the Public Servants Service (retirement) Rule, 1974 would not be declared invalid.

In the last week of January, the government gave forced retirement to 30 senior police officials. Of them, seven officials filed writ petitions with the High Court (HC) yesterday.

A division bench of the HC comprising Justice Hamidul Haq and Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana issued the rule.

On behalf of the petitioners, Barrister Rokon Uddin Mahmud conducted the case.

The petitioners were -- ex-IGPAT Ahmedul Haq Chowdhury, ex-DIGs Kutubur Rahman and Farukh Ahmed, and ex-SPs Froze Kabir, Mostak Hossain, Abdur Rahim and Abdul Mamud.

Polybags

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Polythene bags are one of the major causes of water logging and collapse of sewerage system in the capital Dhaka and other big cities.

Meanwhile, sources said polybag producers have started hectic lobbying to stop the government from enacting the law. They said many of the polybag factory owners affiliated with BNP are now lobbying lawmakers and senior party leaders for the government to change its decision.



A dance sequence as part of a spring festival organised by the Zonta Club at Dhanmondi yesterday.

PM: Political consensus

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Bhattacharya made a presentation on the macroeconomic scenario of the country. Dr Mozaffar Ahmed, Member, Board of Transparency International, Bangladesh, made a presentation on establishment of good governance, while Hossain Zillur Rahman, a sociologist, on poverty alleviation. FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun made a presentation on privatisation and Holiday Editor Enayetullah Khan on past and present political situation of Bangladesh.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Chairman of Holiday Publication Ltd Syed Manjur-e-Elahi and Sadeq Hossain Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion.

Ministers, policymakers, diplomats, academics, economists, journalists, business magnets and professionals were present at the meet.

The Prime Minister appealed to the journalists and intellectual community to remain uncompromising about objectivity of information and honesty of opinion.

"Distorted information and opinion devoid of honesty misled people and depleted society," she said.

The Prime Minister said since its inception BNP was engaged in struggle for multiparty democracy and did everything to ensure freedom of press and free flow of information. People have, however, seen misinterpretation, abuse of freedom of press and freedom of expression in the past and at present as well.

She said her party and coalition government is committed to extend all-out cooperation to those who are working as sentinels to prevent distortion and uphold the quality of information along with ensuring its free flow.

Kibria: Don't wail

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He noted that the current budget was framed at a time when the economy was in good health. But the prospect changed due to developments in global economy following the September 11 attacks on America, and it was essential for Saifur Rahman to take note of the basic changes and make appropriate adjustments in the budget to leapfrog the adversities, he felt.

"He did nothing of the kind and instead, he has been blaming me and the Awami League government," Kibria regretted, terming Saifur's statements about AL's economic management "baseless and irresponsible."

Prepared in April-May 2001, the current budget reflected the economic realities of a time when economy was growing at a healthy rate of 6.6 per cent, inflation was as low as 1.53 per cent, export growth

The Prime Minister encouraged journalists to focus on social ills such as terrorism, acid attacks, arsenic contamination and such other social problems. She said such community journalism brought new dimension in the developed world.

Referring to the government's oneday cleaning drive sometime in March, she said journalists can play vital role in making the programme a success. "There is no politics in it, it's a social work and for all."

In this regard, she thanked Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, founder of Biswa Shahitya Kendra, who took to the street in cleaning garbage during spread of Dengue fever caused by Aedes mosquitoes.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman speaking at the Holiday function lamented that there had been no structural reform during the five years of Awami League rule which he said had pulled back the country instead of taking it forward.

Accusing the past regime of leaving behind a ruined economy and piles of irregularities, Saifur said the present government is working to restore discipline in all the sectors.

He said despite all the problems, the efforts of the present four-party alliance government helped raise the foreign currency reserve from one billion dollars to 1.2 billion in just three months' time.

Termining the world scenario to be completely different following the September 11 incident, the Finance Minister said investment, both local and foreign, has declined in the country as elsewhere in the world.

Saifur Rahman stressed the need for practising good politics by all in order to ensure good governance.

Presenting a paper on "State of the Bangladesh Economy in FY 2001-02", eminent economist and

News Analysis

Sonia becomes a 'foreigner', whenever polls near

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Every time election fever catches up in a big way, the issue of India's top opposition leader Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin seems to come into focus.

It was witnessed in the run up to 1999 general elections, which brought BJP and its allies back to power, and the issue is in media limelight for the last two days now that crucial assembly polls are round the corner in four states, including key Uttar Pradesh.

This time, it was Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee who first referred to the issue of Sonia's foreign origin when he, addressing an election meeting in Punjab state, which also goes to assembly poll later this month, described the Congress party chief as a "videshi" (of foreign origin).

Vajpayee's remarks about Sonia set off a controversy with Congress and some other opposition parties mounting a blistering attack on the Prime Minister for his "intemperate" and "personal attack" on her.

Vajpayee, however, quickly clarified that by terming Sonia as a "videshi" he meant no disrespect to her and that his was not a personal but a political attack on her. The

Prime Minister, however, stuck to the essence of what he had said about Sonia at the election rally.

After the angry reaction a day after Vajpayee's remarks about its chief, Congress appeared to accept the clarification by the Prime Minister in the form of a statement and ready to treat as a closed chapter.

In fact, Congress spokesman Anand Sharma told reporters here on Friday that his party has noted the Prime Minister's clarification and Sonia has directed party leaders to treat the matter as closed.

But BJP seemed in no mood to call a truce in the war of words. Even after Vajpayee's clarification, party spokesman V K Malhotra yesterday chose to rake up Sonia's foreign origin issue when he said that the Congress leader had applied for Indian citizenship 16 years after her marriage with former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

"It took her 16 years to apply for Indian citizenship and she owes an explanation," Malhotra said.

Vajpayee indicated that Sonia was talking irresponsibly when she raised controversies about alleged irregularities in defence purchases in the campaign for coming assembly polls in the four states and that he had referred to her foreign origin.

Vajpayee said there was no substance in the allegations regarding purchase of caskets for carrying bodies of martyrs during the conflict with Pakistani forces in Kargil in 1999 and raising such controversies in election campaign would demoralize Indian troops deployed at the border.

Though Sonia's foreign origin was a major issue for BJP in 1999 parliamentary elections, the party seemed to put aside the subject after the Supreme Court declared her to be an Indian citizen and impressive performance of Congress in assembly elections in Kerala and Assam last year.

But the BJP appeared to have been provoked when Sonia had raised the issue of controversies over defence procurements during Vajpayee government's rule and sought to question the motives of BJP raising the issue of terrorism in recent months.

Besides, analysts point out, BJP has made national security as a major plank in the assembly poll in the four states to counter the anti-incumbency factor the party faces in three of the four states -- Uttar Pradesh, Punjab (where it shares power with Akali Dal) and Uttaranchal.

Key suspect in Kolkata raid held in Dubai

REUTERS, New Delhi

A Dubai-based man accused of masterminding an attack on a US office in India was detained in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and was being brought to India, India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said yesterday.

Farhan Malik was due to arrive in New Delhi at around 1300 GMT from Dubai, CBI spokesman SM Khan told Reuters. "He has been arrested and we're having a press conference at 8 pm (local time)".

Khan said Malik -- also known as Aftab Malik and Aftab Ansari -- would be taken to the CBI office in downtown New Delhi later in the day. He said an accomplice of Malik was also being held.

Five policemen were killed when attackers on motorcycles opened fire outside a US cultural centre in Kolkata on January 22. Police blamed Malik for the attack after they said he called from Dubai and claimed responsibility.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee earlier told an election rally in northern India that a suspect had been detained in connection with the Calcutta attacks and was being brought to India.

Attack on college principal: 14 BNP men sued at Pabna

UNB, Pabna

Fourteen leaders and workers of BNP's front organisations, including JCD, were sued yesterday for their alleged involvement in attack on the principal of a local college.

Abdul Mannan Khan, principal of the Shaheed M Munsur Ali College, filed the case against them, including VP of Edward College Abdullah Al Hasan Mithu. The principal was seriously injured in the attack on Thursday.

Meanwhile, JCD held a rally and took out a protest procession in the town last night demanding withdrawal of the case.

Coco: Probe report

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launches of irresponsibility and indifference to the rules of navigation and passenger safety.

The Department of Shipping formed the inquiry committee through an official order on November 30, 2001 to investigate five points of the accident.

The points are: cause of the accident, loss in the accident, persons or organisations responsible for the mishap, violation of the Inland Shipping Ordinance and recommendations for avoiding such incidents in future.

About compensation to the victims, the report mentioned that a provision for a minimum of Tk 50,000 to a maximum of Tk 2 lakh as compensation by the owner or master of the vehicle to a victim's family or the person who became disabled following the accident could be made.

However, the report said both masters showed utter irresponsibility and did not follow the article Nos. 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 26, and 27 of the collision rules for river transport.

Action could be taken against both masters under articles 42 and 70 of the Inland Shipping Ordinance, the report added.

Deputy Director of the Marine Transport Mohammad Toye Ali and the first class magistrate, Abdur Rahim Bhuiyan, were on the inquiry

"A criminal has been held in a Gulf country. The local government has helped us. We are now trying to bring him to Delhi. He had fled from Pakistan," Vajpayee told a public meeting in Meerut, broadcast by local television.

Indian officials had said Interpol issued an arrest warrant for Malik and they were also working with the UAE on the case.

They said Malik had links with Pakistan's main intelligence agency and with Pakistan-based anti-Indian militants.

A week after the attack, Indian police said they killed two Pakistani men who took part in the raid in a gun battle at their hideout in an eastern Indian state.

They said one of the men confessed in his dying declaration to have carried out the attack and said they were members of Pakistan-based Islamic rebel group Lashkar-e-Taiba.

PBCP leader

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He did not rule out Mostafa's involvement in snatching PBCP divisional leader Tapan from Judge's Court premises.

Meanwhile, Khulna district police have so far arrested only two members of outlawed PBCP while 16 armed cadres of the same party were arrested by Jessore police in combing operations launched after Tapan escaped. Only 12 arms were recovered during the same period.

Dr Iqbal

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Mailbag intersection on February 13, 2001. The clash claimed four lives and a murder case was filed with Motijheel Thana in this regard.

The police department recently gave a report accusing Dr Iqbal for his alleged involvement in the incident.

Barrister Rokan Uddin Mahmud moved the petition on behalf of the petitioner while Deputy Attorney General Golam Kibria stood for the state.



Garment workers and employees brought out a procession in the city yesterday in support of their six-point demand.