

# JS debates Speaker's taking over as acting President

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A constitutional debate on the Speaker's taking over as acting President in the absence of the President was raised in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

As provided by Article 54 of the Constitution, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar is now acting President since President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury left for Saudi Arabia Tuesday afternoon to perform Hajj.

Article 54 says, "If a vacancy occurs in the office of president or if the President is unable to discharge the functions of his office on account of absence, illness or any other cause, the Speaker shall discharge those functions until a President is elected or until President resumes the functions of his office, as the case may be."

Deputy Speaker Akhtar Siddiqui now chairs the current session of parliament.

On a point of order yesterday, KSJL legislator Abdul Quader Siddiqui asked the Deputy Speaker if he has become acting Speaker following the Speaker's taking over as acting President.

In reply, the Deputy Speaker referred to Article 74(3) of the Constitution that deals with the absence of the Speaker. But he told the House that he needed interpretation of the laws concerned before replying to the question raised by Siddiqui. However, he said he would inform the House of his decision today.

Article 74(3) states, "While the office of the Speaker is vacant or the Speaker is acting as President, or if it is determined by Parliament that

## BNP MP blasts Hasina in JS for remarks on Hawa Bhaban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A treasury bench MP yesterday castigated opposition leader Sheikh Hasina for her reported comment about the Hawa Bhaban, BNP's election-turned-a-power seat.

Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui allowed BNP lawmaker Moshirul Rahman to blast the immediate-past prime minister for 10 minutes without any interruption although Moshirul's statement was not covered by the parliamentary rule under which he spoke. In contrast to his usual practice, the Chair neither accepted nor rejected the ruling party lawmaker's statement as a point of order.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and some of her cabinet colleagues listed to the blistering words uttered by a ruling party backbencher.

Moshir accused Sheikh Hasina of making untrue statements frequently about the PM's elder son, Tarek Rahman, whom he portrayed as the country's future statesman, and asked the opposition leader to apologise for what he said telling fictitious stories about Tarek. "Otherwise, we will be compelled to move a resolution condemning your comment," he said prompting the treasury bench members to thump their desks in approval.

Encouraged by his colleagues in the ruling coalition, the BNP deputy had gone to the extent of accusing the former prime minister of taking kickbacks from all deals made during her tenure and stealing public money. "She had turned the Prime Minister's Office her business chamber and let her son, Joy, use the office of Bangladesh's embassy in the United States for business purpose," Moshir said, calling Hasina a liar and a cheat.

the Speaker is otherwise unable to perform the functions of his office, those functions shall be performed by the Deputy Speaker or..."

Quader Siddiqui also asked the Chair if the Speaker's performance in the House on Tuesday after his taking over as acting President was permitted by the Constitution. The Deputy Speaker said he would give a ruling on the issue today.

On this, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury quoted Article 74(3) to say that the Deputy Speaker would perform as the Speaker in the latter's absence. "Whoever sits in the Speaker's chair, it is the Deputy Speaker or a Panel Chairman, is deemed to be the Speaker," he said.

## Laser razzmatazz

FROM PAGE 1

the sky looked more like a war-zone skyline with tracer bullets filling it up. Only, it was all fun and joy of unspeakable nature that filled the spellbound audience.

As music boomed, the lights danced to the beats, sometimes in slow motion like a troupe of danseurs, and sometimes wildly, almost too fast to follow like gyrating tango dancers. And the night also danced to the rhythm of the show.

The show scheduled for a 7:00pm start began almost one and a half hours late as thousands of curious spectators thronged the security men-swept stadium. Police and para-militia personnel clamped a tight security. Each of the entrances witnessed people queuing almost half a kilometre. The presence of a large number of women of all ages and children was remarkable.

Before the start of the show, Microtel recalled the sacrifice of the martyrs of the Language Movement dating 50 years back to 1952 and requested the audience to observe a one-minute silence in their respect.

And then all lights in and around the gallery were switched off to create a natural screen of darkness. Beams co-ordinated by laser technology darted towards the sky above. Rays then cascaded down on the crowds below in synchronisation with the music.

The audience then had a feeling that they are all floating on rainbows, as laser rays danced on their faces. It seemed as if the rays had a feel of physical existence.

As the show came to an end, people came back on the streets still in a trance, but that fantastic feeling somehow subdued, as the spectators had to face the reality of finding a vehicle to go home.

## Spring

FROM PAGE 12

Jatiya Basanta Utsab Uddyan Parishad (JBUUP) brought out a colourful procession from the Institute of Fine Arts in the morning with a musical theme -- "Ore girohboi khol dor khol".

The JBUUP also arranged a daylong programme at Bakul Tala, which opened with instrumental tunes. At the programme, Kazi Ebadul Haq played the sitar, Uttam Chakravarti the flute and Nirmal Kumar Das the dhotra (stringed instrument).

Among others, journalist Oaihul Haq, Rabiu Hussain, Poet Shamsur Rahman, Shafiqul Ahmed, Kazi Arif and Hossain Boni took part in a discussion titled "Spring Talks".

Reading out the declaration of the day, Manjul Islam Sweet said the significance of the day is to bridge the gap between youths and the aged.

Besides, musical soiree, dance and poetry recitation marked the day.

The Ekushey Book Fair at Bangla Academy and the Teachers and Students Centre (TSC) drew hordes of visitors in the afternoon.

## 3 Channel 1 men assaulted allegedly by JCD at CMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Three journalists of private television 'Channel 1' were manhandled and later confined in a room at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) for sometime allegedly by JCD cadres in the morning yesterday (Wednesday).

The JCD cadres also took away their mobile phones, TV camera, note books and three videocassettes, although the items except the videocassettes were later returned.

The incident occurred when 'Channel 1' newscaster and reporter Rashed Kanchan, cameraman Fuad Hasan and Chittagong representative Chowdhury Fariduddin went to the CMCH on a professional assignment.

After filming a few shots of different wards at the hospital, they went down to the parking lot to get into their vehicle.

## Gunfight

FROM PAGE 12

Deputy Commissioner of Shariatpur Mushfeqa Iffaq told The Daily Star that the rivalry between the two families peaked over theft of date juice.

The gunfight that started at about 7:30am yesterday left Motiur Matbar and Tipu Matbar killed on the spot, she said.

Additional police forces were deployed in the village to avert further clashes.

The injured were first admitted to Shariatpur General Hospital. But with the condition of five of the injured deteriorating, they were shifted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in the evening.

But on-duty doctors at the hospital pronounced Alam dead. Admitted to the DMCH were Chunnu Matbar, 40, Abbas Matbar, 22, Didar Hossain, 35, and Md Mehedi Hasan, 18.

The injured claimed to be supporters of the ruling BNP and blamed the attack on the AL.

Superintendent of Police Towfig Uddin Ahmed visited the spot.

## Bill on portrait

FROM PAGE 1

tinued absence of the BNP-led opposition. The law also provides for punishment including imprisonment for undermining the Father of the Nation's portrait and making indecent remarks about him.

This time, ruling BNP lawmaker Shamsul Alam Pramanik has submitted a bill aimed at scrapping the law, terming it a confusing one.

The parliament secretariat readied Pramanik's bill for inclusion in the agenda of private member's day today. But it was later dropped from today's order of the day. It may come up on a Thursday, the day for private members' bills and resolutions, after the Eid holidays, sources said.

The proposed bill says the Father of the Nation's Portrait (exhibition and preservation) Act, 2001 had denied contributions of late president Ziaur Rahman and other national leaders to the nation's war of independence. "There is no instance of making law for display of someone's portrait. People have not accepted late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as father of the nation and his becoming so is still controversial," it said, calling display of Bangabandhu's portrait at government offices illogical.

It also referred to an executive order by the post-independence government making mandatory the display of portraits of the head of state and the head of government only. "The bill aims at freeing the nation from an unexpected compulsion," the treasury bench MP said in his statement on the reasons and objectives of the bill.

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## Patiya gunfight

FROM PAGE 1

As the meeting progressed, an understanding was reached and the madarassah authorities agreed to remove the demarcation they had made on the disputed land. But at the fag end of the meeting, another rumour spread that a local man was abducted by madarassah students, and the whole thing was spoiled.

Fierce clashes erupted again at about 4 pm. Shots were traded, killing Farid on the spot and injuring others. The clash continued for about three hours.

Some of the injured were admitted to the local thana health complex.

In the evening, the local people called a dawn to dusk hartal in Patiya today protesting the incident.

UNB adds: The situation worsened yesterday when the madrasha students and locals started blaring out abuses to each other over microphones at 3:00 pm in presence of police.

The two sides also pelted stones at each other. "At one stage, the

students hurled bombs provoking the villagers into setting fire to two madrasha hostels, where nearly 15,000 students reside," said a witness.

Police fired over 100 rounds of teargas shells to disperse the rioters.

Madrasha authorities claimed that property worth Tk 78 lakh was damaged as over 100 rooms were gutted in the fire.

The unruly people also attacked firefighters who tried to douse the blaze, injuring six of them and damaging one of their vehicles.

Police from Boalkhali, Chandanaish and Saktania were sent to the spot at 5:00 pm. Ten platoons of police also came from Chittagong. Villagers also tried to attack the local police station several times amid the violence, but police prevented the onslaughts.

Traffic on Cox's Bazar-Chittagong road halted following the violence. Vehicles were plying an alternative road through Anwara upazila.

A case was recorded with Kholna thana in this connection.

## Young man murdered in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A young man, identified as Saiful Islam, 24, was stabbed to death on Tuesday night near Abahani Club under Khulna thana.

According to witnesses, five unidentified armed men chased Saiful from Forest Ghat and caught him near Circuit House at around 9 pm. They stabbed Saiful indiscriminately and left the scene. He died on the spot.

Saiful was an armed cadre of Purbo Banglar Communist Party working as a carpenter in disguise in a furniture shop at Stadium market.

The murder is a sequel to intra-party rivalry, police said quoting some reliable sources. Saiful hailed from Joar-Badal, a PBCP-dominated union of Rupsha upazila, police said.

Observers attribute this rising incidence of mob beating to a significant rise in crime in recent days and the corresponding steady erosion of people's faith in police as well as on the legal system. As a result, people are taking the law into their hands rather than turning criminals over to the law enforcement.

The home minister recently urged the people to refrain from taking the law into their own hands. The minister tried to inject some confidence into the public saying that his government has put the right police officers in the right places and the people would soon be benefiting from the reshuffle in the administration.

The government in a bid to cleanse the police administration has sent several police officers into forced retirement while putting other officers on special duty.

Police rescued the victims -- Nur-e-Alam, 25, and Rahim Sharif, 28, after an hour and arrested five kidnappers.

According to sources, the BNP cadres abducted the two at gunpoint at around 11 am.

They snatched Tk 8 thousand from them and also demanded Tk. 50 thousand for their release.

The arrested persons are Akter alias Kana Akter, Mosharaf, Russel, Imdad Hossain and Rakib.

Kana Akter is accused in several cases including snatching.

## Ctg Port

FROM PAGE 12

entered the rooms of 12 port officials, including the room of the chairman, manager of Sonali Bank, and deputy engineers of Mechanical, Electrical and Civil engineering sections.

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They termed local dialects of Bangla as its main resources and stressed the need for compiling a comprehensive dictionary of the Bengali Language by incorporating all the regional dialects.

Later at a musical soiree, renowned singers of the country rendered songs reflecting spirit of the 1952 Language Movement, enthraling the audience.

Today programme include a discussion titled 'Fifty Years of Amar Ekushey: Children Literature of Bangladesh' at 4:00pm at the Book Fair premises.

Meanwhile, a large number of people also enjoyed cultural programmes at the Central Shaheed Minar premises yesterday evening organised by Sammilito Sangskritik Jote to mark the upcoming golden jubilee of the Language Movement.

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She told another questioner that two four-member committees comprising experts from the Air Force and the Navy are also looking into the alleged corruption. "The nation will be informed of the matter after proper investigation."

During the half-an-hour PM's weekly question time, Khaleda replied to four questions and 17 supplementary questions on education sector, women's education, earthquake and the building code, self-employment for the youth and their training.

She said the government plans to set up three more seismic observatories in Dhaka, Rangpur and Sylhet, identified as tremor-risk zone.

She recalled that the past BNP government had taken initiative to enact building code to free the capital city from earthquake risk. She said action would be taken against those who have constructed multi-storyed buildings in the city, ignoring the code during the Awami League rule.

In response to a supplementary question from Delwar Hossain Sayeedi of Jamaat-e-Islami, the prime minister said Biman flights in Dhaka-Barisal route would be reintroduced soon.

She alleged the AL government had suspended Biman's Dhaka-Barisal flights in the interest of a private flight operating company owned by the party men.

## Analysis: Judge, jury

FROM PAGE 12

muggers were beaten to death in the first nine days of December with five killed on December 9 alone. Eleven more people would be beaten to death by the end of the month, six of those during the few days of the Eid holidays.

In most cases, bodies of the victims were deformed beyond recognition. On January 28, three muggers were beaten and burnt to death in Motijheel after being released on bail following their arrest in connection with a case of looting Tk 20 lakh from employees of a private company.

Observers attribute