

# 'Welfare' extortion at Salimullah Medical College

NAIMUL HAQ

The newly elected students' union of the Sir Salimullah Medical College (SSMC) raised illegal tolls of around Tk 1.5 lakh from admission seekers who have already appeared in written exams.

This took place without approval of the college authorities. Many students who went to the SSMC to submit their admission forms alleged that they were forced to pay money in the name of welfare of the students. College student leaders threatened them that their admission forms will be 'disqualified' unless they pay.

Around 5,000 students purchased admission test forms, but eventually 3,192 forms were submitted for which each candidate had to pay Tk 350 as examination centre fee as per the government's order. Finally, 1100 candidates survived the written test.

However, each candidate also had to pay Tk 50 for the welfare of the union for which receipts were issued.

"Our executive committee had taken the decision to raise fund for the welfare of the students. Out of 3,192 candidates, we collected fees from about 3000," said Md Mainul Islam Moin, vice-president of the SSMC Students Union.

Moin added, "Our predecessors also collected money in similar manners. We are just following in their footsteps. The money would be spent for buying furniture and refurbishing library, reading and common

rooms."

Each student was handed over a small brochure that contained history of the college, course and curricula details, guidelines on admission and names of the teaching staff.

Ershad Ahsan Sohel, general secretary of the union, said, "We had verbal approval from the college authorities to raise funds and the principal was aware of our decision."

Many students alleged that they were forced to pay the money under threat from the union leaders.

"I was asked to pay Tk 50. When I refused, one of the student union leaders warned that they would not let me sit in the exam. They noted down my form number and threatened to disqualify me," said a student who did not want to be named.

Moin however denied the allegations and said the students were requested to pay the fees voluntarily.

Asked why applicants who are not sure of their seats in the college should contribute to the union's welfare fund, Moin, who is also president of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal of the SSMC chapter, said, "We did not force anyone to contribute. It was a voluntary affair."

Professor ASM Habibur Rahman, principal of the SSMC, said, "Students' union leaders asked me for approval, but I refused to entertain their request and categorically told them not to raise fund inside the college premises."

## Council soon to ensure welfare of freedom fighters

UNB, Dhaka

The government will form a high-powered National Freedom Fighters Council to oversee all activities related to the liberation war and ensure welfare of freedom fighters and their families.

As per provision of a law, the cabinet yesterday approved on principle the formation of the council with two tiers- Advisory Committee and Central Executive Committee- each consisting of 12 to 13 members.

"But the exact number has not yet been finalised," a source told the news agency after the cabinet

approved the draft of the National Freedom Fighters Council Act 2002.

The advisory body of the council will be headed by the prime minister, while the central executive committee will be led by the minister or the state minister in charge of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, sources close to the cabinet meeting said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia presided over the meeting, which also took two other decisions.

"The freedom fighters council will regulate all matters related to the liberation war apart from supervision on welfare of freedom fighters," one official said.

He said all organisations on the liberation war, like clubs and associations, must be registered with the council, which will also scrutinise and update the list of the freedom fighters.

Held at the Prime Minister's Office, the meeting of the Council of Ministers also approved a national action plan formulated to control child repression and trafficking.

It endorsed the recommendations to coordinate the activities of Employment Bank and government's micro-credit programmes on poverty alleviation and employment.

## Two jailed for throwing acid on college girl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two youngmen have been sentenced to 14 years rigorous imprisonment and fined taka 25,000 each, in default to suffer one year more for throwing acid on a college girl in Paikgacha upazilla.

The judgement was delivered on Saturday by Md Shahinur Islam, Judge of the Tribunal trying cases against repression on women and children.

The accused are Abdur Razzak Biswas, 25, son of Rafiqul Islam of Jatpur village of Sathkira and Ekramul Islam of Amirpur village of Paikgacha upazilla.

The prosecution story in brief is that the accused threw acid on Lutfunnesa, 20, at about 8 pm on December 31 in 1996 while she was studying at their house.

Lutfunnesa, a student of Paikgacha college was admitted to upazilla Health Complex with severe burn injuries and later shifted to KMCH as her condition deteriorated.

A case in this connection was recorded with Paikgacha thana on January 1, 1997. Both the accused have been tried in absentia.

## Hearing on contempt petition against Hasina adjourned till March 9

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday adjourned till March 9 the hearing on a contempt petition against opposition leader Sheikh Hasina.

A High Court division bench comprising Justice Syed Amirul Islam and Justice Sikdar Mokbul Huq, which is dealing with the case, deferred the hearing following an application by Hasina's lawyer, Barrister Amriul Islam.

Yesterday, the petition came for hearing on the question of issuance of rule upon the opposition leader

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## Shipu murder Accused Sagar granted interim bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, yesterday granted ad-interim bail to Kazi Arif Ahmed Sagar, an accused in the Shipu Murder Case.

Judge Mollah Mostafa Kamal passed the order upon a bond of Tk 30,000 with two guarantors.

Advocate Syed Shamim Ahsan Habib submitted a petition seeking bail.

He stated that Sagar got bail from the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka on April 16, last year. But his bail was later cancelled as the bail bond was not furnished. Moreover, the complainant of the case did not mention the name and presence of Sagar during the cross-examination, the lawyer argued.

The prosecution side opposed the bail petition for bail.

After hearing both sides, the court granted the petition.

Joy Hasib, another accused in the case, was granted bail by the High Court on November 5, last year.

The court also adjourned the

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PHOTO: STAR

Camels create attraction in cattle markets in the city on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha. Five camels parading down the city roads were sold at Tk 1.6 lakh yesterday.

## Dhaka-Delhi discuss bilateral cooperation

BSS, New Delhi

Bangladesh and Indian officials at talks here yesterday reviewed the existing state of bilateral cooperation and reaffirmed the two country's commitment to further strengthen the ties for mutual benefit.

Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury and his Indian counterpart Chokila Iyer led the two sides.

The two foreign secretaries also expressed the hope that a meeting for renewal of the protocol for Inland Water Trade and Transit would be scheduled soon.

The two sides also reviewed the bilateral trade and agreed that a meeting of commerce secretaries of the two countries would be held at an early date. The Bangladesh side referred to the country's trade imbalance with India and reiterated the need for early initiative for duty-free access to 25 categories of items to the Indian market, as agreed between prime ministers of the two countries in Kathmandu on the sidelines of the 11th SAARC Summit.

The two sides agreed to schedule the date for holding the sixth meeting of

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## DCC leases cattle markets ignoring police request

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has leased three city spots on roads as cattle markers ignoring a request from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) not to do so this year in the interest of smooth traffic.

The three spots are Nayabazar, Chankharpool and Karwanbazar.

The cattle markets at Nayabazar and Chankharpool obstructed movement of traffic on a number of major city roads, resulting in serious jam almost throughout the day yesterday.

Traders started selling sacrificial animals at Nayabazar and Chankharpool markets yesterday although those were scheduled to be operational from today.

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PHOTO: STAR

Women at a mehendi festival organised by Dhakabasi yesterday in front of Shishu Academy as part of celebration of Eid-ul-Azha.

