

MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS' DAY IN PICTURE



Different political parties, social organisations and individuals place wreaths at the Mirpur Shaheed Intellectuals' memorial in the city yesterday. Clockwise from top left: A girl, Awami League, Supreme Court Bar Association, Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh and Jatiya Oikya Mancha.

MIG29 CASE  
SC stays graft case against Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday overturned the High Court (HC) order that vacated the stay on trial proceedings of the Mig29 graft case against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina. Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury of SC chamber passed the order upon a petition moved by Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud, counsellor for Hasina. On November 23, an HC division bench comprising Justice Sharif Uddin Chaklader and Justice AFM Ali Asgar delisted the petition for setting aside the graft case against Hasina and six others involving the Mig29 purchase deal and did not extend an earlier stay order on the trial process. The Bureau of Anti-Corruption, now defunct, filed the case with Teigaon Police Station, two months after the BNP-led alliance government came to power in October 2001. Hasina along with six others were accused of causing a loss of \$ 124 million, Tk 720 crore, in the purchase deal of the eight Russian-made Mig29 warplanes for Bangladesh, while she was in power.

2 UPDF men shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Two activists of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) were shot dead at Dighinala in Khagrachhari on Tuesday allegedly by the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) men. The dead were identified as Suresh Chakma alias Subodh, 28 and Tuksan Chakma alias Tarun, 24. District UPDF alleged that around 10-12 PCJSS men attacked the Zaruchhari village of Babuchhara in the upazila and abducted the two men on Tuesday midnight and shot them dead. Informed, police recovered the dead bodies after searching the whole area and took those to the police station. The hands and the legs of the dead bodies were tied with rope, police sources said. According to locals, the killing occurred in a bid to establish control over the area. UPDF leader Naton Mohan Chakma said they would hold a procession yesterday afternoon to protest the killing. Tension is prevailing in the area with the two groups' preparations for confrontation.

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2006  
Most of Bangladeshi children do not get social identity: Unicef

Only 2.60 lakh newborns out of 37 lakh are registered a year

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Most of the children in Bangladesh do not get their social identity as only 2.60 lakh newborns out of 37 lakh born every year are registered. Unicef's Representative in Bangladesh Louis Georges Arsenault revealed this at the launching ceremony of the Unicef's annual flagship publication 'The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. "About 50 million children could not fulfil their basic needs due to lack of birth registration," said the report published simultaneously across the globe. Unicef Executive Director Ann M Veneman, who presided over the

global launching in London, said: Meeting the Millennium Development Goals depends on reaching vulnerable children throughout the developing world. Launching report here, the Unicef's Representative urged national leaders to step up efforts for the children most in need the poorest and most vulnerable, the exploited and the abused. "This is a critical juncture. We have 10 years left and if we are truly to meet the MDGs, then we have to reach these invisible and excluded children," said Arsenault. "Bangladesh has made some great strides in the past 30 years but the next 10 years will be equally important." Arsenault said about 132,000 children work as domestic help in the capital city, Dhaka while 8.4

million children are working as child labour across the globe. "Almost two-third of adolescents aged between 10 and 19 years are getting married and devoid of different social opportunities, including education," he added. The Unicef representative said about three lakh indigenous children live in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and Sylhet regions do not get education. The Unicef has been working for these deprived children. "About 12 lakh children are being trafficked directly or indirectly to other countries and a significant portion of them are forced to work as sex workers, maids and child labour," he added. In the launching ceremony, three child labours Fatema, Fahima and Alam narrated their ordeals.

'Linkages between villages, local govt bodies a must for rural development'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Establishing linkages between villages and local government institutions such as union parishad and upazila is a must to ensure rural development and strengthen local government, speakers at a seminar observed yesterday. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) jointly organised the seminar on 'Bangladesh Models for Rural Development and Local Governance' in the city to mark the launch of 'Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP), Phase-2'. The PRDP, popularly known as Link Model, aimed at promoting rural development, has been working to improve the quality of life of the villagers by establishing linkages among union parishads, NGOs and villagers, said Mahbubur Rahman, project director of PRDP Phase-2. The linkages are maintained through village committee (VC) and Union Coordination Committee (UCC), he added. Speaking as the chief guest, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the government has given top priority to rural development and good governance at local level. "An efficient local government

would indeed be a major institutional framework in addressing the thrust areas and development goals where the Link Model may be the vehicle at the grassroots level from union parishad to villages," he said. Japanese Ambassador Matsushiro Horiguchi called for massive decentralisation of fiscal management as well as service delivery to ensure improvement of local governance, specially at the union parishad level. Akio Arai, resident representative of JICA, said the mechanism of PRDP is very simple. It is a framework to link villages with the local government institutions by developing a sense of cooperation and coordination among the stakeholders, including union parishad, government officials, community and local NGOs. "By using those instruments the needs of the villagers can be incorporated into the process of development," he added. "Capacity-building of local government is certainly important as without developing the capacity of the community, good governance cannot be ensured," he said. The second phase of PRDP (June 2005 - May 2010) involving Tk 18 crore is being implemented in 16 union parishads. The main components of the project are implementa-

tion of the Link Model, development of small infrastructures, strengthening management capacity and skill training, said Project Director Mahbubur Rahman. Abdus Samad Mullick, director general, BRDB, and Yoshihiro Kaida, chief advisor, PRDP-2, also spoke. Abu Soliaman Chowdhury, secretary, Rural Development and Cooperatives Division (RDCCD), chaired the inaugural session of the seminar. Obituary Sayeda Shamim Akbar, wife of Wing Commander (Retd) Kazi Munirul Islam, passed away due to kidney ailments at Rawalpindi in Pakistan on December 13, says a press release. Her body will be flown to Dhaka by a PIA flight today. Her first namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Krishi Laboratory Jame Mosque at Monipurpara and second one at BAF Mosque, Old Airport after Maghrib prayers. She will be buried at the Banani Army graveyard. She left behind her husband, one son and two daughters.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Civil society, NGO unity stressed to enact law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two-day conference on right to information ended in the city yesterday with a range of recommendations on the next course of actions to create pressure on the government to enact law about people's right to information. Terming the right to information a prerequisite to democracy, good governance and poverty alleviation, the dignitaries from home and abroad at the concluding ceremony called for making people at the grassroots level aware of their right to information for realisation of their demand. They asked the civil society members and the NGOs to forge a unity in this regard, which will ultimately create a pressure on the government to enact the law. Manusher Jonno (MJ), an initiative promoting human rights and good governance in the country, organised the conference titled "Right to Information: National and Regional Perspective" at the Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (Biam) as a part of its ongoing campaign to institute people's right to know. Noted economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud chaired the concluding session of the conference while Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui addressed the function as the Chief Guest. Maja Dhun Daruwala, director of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, India, and Kishali Pinto-Jayawardena, legal consultant to the World Bank from Sri Lanka, were the special guests. MJ Team Leader Shaheen Anam gave vote of thanks. Rina Roy and Shanjida Sobhan of MJ presented the recommendations drawn from the two brainstorming sessions where seven parallel workshops on various issues related to the conference theme and a roundtable on the role



PHOTO: STAR

Participants at the concluding session of a conference on 'Right to Information: National & Regional Perspectives' observe one minute's silence in memory of martyred intellectuals at the BIAM auditorium in the city yesterday. From right are Kishali Pinto Jayawardena, deputy director of Law and Society Trust, Sri Lanka, Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud and Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, principal secretary to the prime minister. The Manusher Jonno organised the two-day conference.

of media in promoting the right were followed by a plenary session. Stressing the need for enactment of the right to information laws, Prof Mahmud said these will work as strong deterrents to any sort of corruption by any government official. He said enactment of the Right to Information Act should be applicable for the government as well as the private sector as disclosure of information in the latter will protect the interest of the shareholders. He also said right to information in the private sector will help protect consumers' rights and bring accountability and transparency in the funds and expenditure of election campaigns of the political parties. Prof Mahmud said the right to information will be meaningful if remedial measures are taken as a

provision in the law. He said there should be provision of taking action against those who will violate the law. Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui promised to do his best for the enactment of the Right to Information Act. He said many good recommendations have been drawn from the conference and assured to do his job as a civil servant to include the suggestions to the draft Right to Information Act-2002. Siddiqui said the recommendations should be understandable to common people and stressed the need for a strong will and advocacy for the implementation of the right to information. Siddiqui also stressed the need for amending the outdated Official Secrets Act as it was formulated during colonial rule. MJ Team Leader Shaheen Anam

MUHURI MURDER  
HC orders four acquitted to furnish bail bond

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday ordered four acquitted accused of the sensational Gopal Krishna Muhuri murder case to furnish bail bond with the satisfaction of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Chittagong. After hearing an appeal petition filed by Uma Muhuri, wife of Principal Gopal Krishna Muhuri, a division bench of the High Court comprising Justice Abdul Quddus and Justice Abdul Hye passed the order. The four accused are - Prof Idris Miah Chowdhury, Prof Tofazzal Ahmed, Prof Zahirul Islam and Nasir alias Shibir Nasir.

V-day cultural programme begins in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sammilita Shankskritik Jote (SSJ) began a cultural programme on the Central Shaheed Minar premises yesterday as part of its three-day programme marking the Victory Day. Air Vice Marshal AK Khondokar (Retd) inaugurated the programme. After rendering the National Anthem by Udichi, a discussion session was presided over by Nasiruddin Yusuf, president of SSJ. Golam Kuddus, general secretary of SSJ, delivered the welcome speech while Hasan Arif, assistant general secretary of SSJ, announced the organisation's declaration. Other discussants of the programme were Ramendu Majumdar, Dr Anisuzzaman, Mahmud Selim and other central leaders of SSJ.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Peter Blood, son of American consul general to Dhaka in 1971 Archer K Blood, said that the Nixon-Kissinger administration was rather strategic and secretive on its policy towards the Liberation War of Bangladesh. During a lecture on 'US-Bangladesh Relations' at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) yesterday, Peter said the then West Pakistan instigated the war against the then East Pakistan unnecessarily violating the democratic norms. Archer K Blood was a senior signatory to a dissent cable written during the brutal military crackdown on Bangladesh. The famous 'Blood Telegram' alerted the then US President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to the selective genocide and urged them to pressure Pakistan to stop the killing. Peter, along with his mother Margaret and sister Shireen, came to Dhaka to attend a dedication ceremony where the American Center was named in honour of his father on Tuesday. He said the 6-point demand laid out by the Awami League (AL) worked like a bombshell on the Bengalees resulting in the consequent victory of the party in the 1970's general elections. So, the crackdown ignoring the people's mandate was a brutal attack on democracy, he added. "As my father said the line between right and wrong was just too clear-cut, and it was," Peter said emotionally recalling his father's decision to inform the world about the military crackdown and geno-

cide in Bangladesh. Referring to a write-up of Kissinger, the sociology graduate of the Delhi University said he (Kissinger) said Pakistan would regain control over both the wings, but "my father predicted that Bangladesh will be separated. He was right." "Kissinger was more a strategist while my father had vast knowledge on this part of the world," Peter said, pronouncing 'Joy Bangla' at the end of his lecture attended by academicians and local and foreign experts on international affairs. Responding to Peter's lecture, Musleh R Osmani, chairman of board of governors of BISS, said the relation between the people of Bangladesh and the US has always been good except some official policies. "American people were behind us. Their support helped us win the Liberation War. We have a very good people-to-people contact and the recent visits of Bill Gates and Ted Turner proved it again," he said adding that the Americans' preference of democracy, liberty and freedom is always impressive. He also presided over the programme. BISS Research Director Col ZRM Ashraf Uddin said the USA now helps Bangladesh in long-term development programmes, especially in food production, health, education and rural infrastructure development.

Vow to resist Islamist militants at any cost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The defeated forces of the 1971 Liberation War have now emerged as Islamist militants and carrying out bomb attacks across the country out of vengeance in a bid to turn the country into a failed state, said members of civil society and rights activists yesterday. The forces, namely Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams, who massacred the frontline Bangalee intellectuals and professionals at the fag end of the liberation war in 1971, are the masterminds behind the bomb terrorism, they said at a rally marking the Martyred Intellectuals' Day. Carrying national flags and banners, wearing black badges and singing national anthem, members of civil society and human rights activists converged on the Central

Shaheed Minar in the city under the banner of Bikkhubdha Nagarik Samaj and vowed to resist the fanatic forces and Islamist militants at any cost. Representatives of Ain o Salish Kendra, Step Towards Development, Nijera Kari, Karmojibi Nari, Law Review, Bandhu Sabha of the Prothom Alo, Udichi, Baushi, Nagarik Uddoyog, Jubo Nagarik Adhikar Jote, Tarun Nagarik Uddoyog and Joydhwani took part in the rally. Alleging that Jamaat-e-Islami, a partner of the ruling alliance, has been patronising the Islamist outfits, the speakers said it has a direct link with the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and its leaders are giving support to the Islamist militants with a view to establishing Talebani rule in the name of Islam.

Renowned human rights activist Hameeda Hossain said the national security is now at stake, but the government is not paying any heed. The indifferent attitude of the government has encouraged the repeated bomb blasts, she added. To safeguard independence and the nation, all pro-liberation forces should be united again like in 1971 against the defeated forces who are now in power, said Khushi Kabir, co-ordinator of Nijera Kari. The activists declared a three-month protest programme beginning on December 23. Later, they marched in a procession, which paraded through different streets and ended at Mukhtangon.

3 major bridges to see early construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The communications ministry has decided to start construction of three major bridges very soon to ease local political pressure before the next general elections. The bridges - Teesta, second Sitalakhyia and third Buriganga Bridge - would be constructed at a cost of Tk 265 crore, with financial help from the Kuwait government. The Bangladesh government will provide Tk 93 crore and the rest would come from Kuwait Development Fund, sources said. A high-powered meeting of the ministry yesterday observed that the government should start the construction immediately as the prime minister had promised those on several occasions. Communications Minister Nazmul Huda chaired the meeting also attended by Deputy Minister for Food and Disaster Management Asadul Habib Dulu, Communications Secretary Shafiqul Islam, Salahuddin Ahmed MP and high officials of the Roads and Highways Department. Teesta Bridge will be set up on the Teesta on Rangpur-Kurigram Highway, Sitalakhyia second in Demra and Buriganga third in Basila. Construction of the Teesta Bridge alone would require Tk 103 crore, meeting sources said. Lawmakers from these localities have long been insisting the government on launching the construction before the next parliamentary election, the sources added. The meeting was told that the ministry has already completed preliminary work and would start the construction very soon. The government has also appointed project directors for implementation of the bridges. The sources said it would take at least two years to construct each bridge if everything goes smoothly.

Death anniversary



Today is the 34th death anniversary of Dr Md Fazle Rabbee, says a press release. Pakistani occupation forces and Al-Badr and Al Shams picked him up from his 75, Siddheshwari, Jalpaiguri House on this day at about 4:00pm in 1971 and killed him brutally at Rayer Bazar at night. Dr Rabbee served as a professor of Medicine and Cardiology at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. On the occasion, wreaths will be placed and fateha will be offered at his grave at the New Azimpur graveyard in the morning and Quarkhwani and a doa mahfil will be held at the Saimullah orphanage.