



PHOTO: STAR

A proud mother embraces her son Nolak Babu after he emerges as the Close Up 1 at Hotel Sonargaon in the city last night while Beauty, second runner-up, looks on. Razib became first runner-up. The final round of 'Close Up 1 -- Tomakei Khujchhe Bangladesh', a star search programme, organised by the NTV ended on the night of Victory Day.

Nolak becomes Close Up 1

BDNEWS, Dhaka

From nowhere, he has come a long way to become the Close Up 1 - 2005 for the first time.

He is Nolak Babu -- the newest star in the music world. From the narrow roads of Jamalpur district to the stage in Dhaka, he stood straight.

Nolak was crowned Close Up 1 last night after his long struggle of seven months and checking and cross-checking by three judges as well as votes by people.

Finally, the best judges were mass people who sent SMS and voted for Nolak online awarding him 7,85,391 votes to become the best in the competition titled 'Close up one -- Tomakei Khujchhe Bangladesh'. He secured a total of 91 marks.

He never received any formal training or had any knowledge about the grammar of music. Music is in his heart.

At a colourful award giving ceremony held at Sonargaon Hotel in the city, Nolak received Tk 10 lakh and a Nissan Sunny car, apart from other prizes.

Of the two other finalists, Razib became the first runner-up although he was believed to be the most competent candidate who got the highest mark from the panel of three judges. He bagged 3,13,946 votes from the SMS messages and online voters.

Beauty, the 'Lalan Kannya' (Daughter of Lalan), became the second-runner-up. She got 3,20,328 votes.

The competition, a highly acclaimed star search programme, was organised by the NTV, a private TV channel. Its final round took place on the Victory Day.

The judges -- Ahmed Imtiaz Bulbul, Kumar Biswajit and Samina Chowdhury -- requested the new stars to continue their practice to enrich the Bangla music.

NTV Chairman Mosaddek Ali Falu MP, Country Director of Unilever Sanjeev Mehta, Asiatic Marketing Communications CEO Aly Zaker and Deputy Managing Director Asaduzzaman Noor MP gave away the prizes.

PM's MOTORCADE Station master, deputy blamed in probe into Ctg incident

BDNEWS, Chittagong

A railway stationmaster and his assistant have been accused of negligence of duty yesterday for holding up the prime minister's motorcade for four minutes on Tuesday.

A three-member committee of Bangladesh Railway which was formed to probe the halt of prime minister's motorcade in the port city's Sholoshahar level crossing submitted its report yesterday accusing the two.

The committee in its report accused Stationmaster of Sholoshahar Railway Station Abul Hossain and Assistant Stationmaster Anwar Karim Sikder of their negligence of duty.

The railway authority initially had put Abul Hossain and Gate-man Abul Kashem on suspension but the committee report revived the gate-man of the charge, a committee member said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia along with her entourage was going to the inaugural ceremony of a newly installed 83,300 digital line exchange at Nandankanon from Chittagong cantonment. Locals near Sholoshahar level crossing stopped her motorcade around 3:15pm seeing a Chittagong University shuttle train on its way.

The inquiry report stated though the railway authority informed Abul Hossain about the prime minister's visit but he was found neglecting his duty.

The two railway officials have been charged for failing to ensure adequate support to the uninterrupted journey of the 'VIPs,' the committee report said.

PM's SPEECH AT BNP GRAND RALLY No plan of action to curb militancy : B Chy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) President Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said the prime minister's speech on Wednesday's grand rally in the city has increased people's frustration as she failed to give any action plans before the nation to curb militancy.

"Although the grand rally of the ruling BNP was organised in protest against the bomb blasts by the militants, the PM uttered not a single word against them. She didn't tell whether the government would bring any sedition charge against the militants," said Prof Chowdhury while speaking as chief guest at a discussion organised by Bikalpa Chhatra Dhara, student wing of BDB, at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium.

Shafiu Alam Pradhan was the main speaker at the discussion where BDB Secretary General Major (Retd) Abdul Mannan and

Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury MP also spoke.

Prof Chowdhury said the PM cannot threat to bring sedition charge for criticising the role of the government in the context of its passive stand against militants.

"She has to understand that everyone has the rights to criticise the activities of the government. If she cannot understand the difference between criticism against the government and the state, how would she run the state?" asked the BDB president.

Referring to the statement of JMB commander Ataur Rahman Sunny about the involvement of an MP of the ruling coalition, Prof Chowdhury said, "The countrymen want to see what action the PM takes in next 24 hours against that MP to curb the militant activities."

Bikalpa Chhatra Dhara Convenor M Monwar Ali Pasha presided.

Make ACC effective Conscious citizens' confce urges govt

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The two-day annual conference of Conscious Citizens' Committees was held at Koltta in Manikganj on December 21 and 22.

The committees are formed in line with the ideals of the Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB).

The conference urged the government to sign the Anti-Corruption International Charter immediately and make the independent Anti-Corruption Commission effective.

They also expressed concern over the unbridled corruption in the country and its negative impact on socio-economic life of the general people. The issue of taking multifarious steps to resist corruption was also emphasised at the conference.

The participants called upon the

political leaders to create an atmosphere so that the parliament, law enforcing agencies, the judiciary and the administration can function neutrally, independently and effectively.

About one hundred representatives of 30 citizens' committees from six divisions participated in the conference.

TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman moderated the conference.

TIB Trustee Board Chairman Samson H Chowdhury, Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid, Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, M Hafiz Uddin Khan and Sultana Kam al took part in the conference.

'Only motivation can help stop militancy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lt General (Retd) M Nooruddin Khan yesterday said only motivation can help bring back the misguided children who were engaged in militant activities with the false promise of heaven.

Speaking at a press conference, Nooruddin, a former army chief, said the government along with media people must convince the derailed youth that bomb blast is not the way to heaven.

Nooruddin under the banner of 'conscious citizen' organised the press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium to express his view on the current situation of the country.

He said mere arrest and punishment are not enough to stop militant activities.

"The country is not ruined till now but we have to take effective measures at this moment, otherwise the country will be destroyed totally," he warned.

"I myself have no experience about the latest technology of bomb making which the militants are using and I have no information about the existence of such technology in our country," Nooruddin said, adding that the government must find out from where the militants are importing these technologies.

He, however, hoped that the country's unstable situation will change when the caretaker government will be installed.

Industrialist A Naser Azam Khan, Md Abdullah and Journalist Syed Rahmat Ali were present at the press conference.

JMB leader Swapan on fresh remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) military commander Ataur Rahman Sunny's close associate Fariduzzaman Swapan was placed on a seven-day fresh remand yesterday.

Swapan is an accused in a case filed under the Explosive Substances Act. Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shamsul Alam granted the remand when Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) produced Swapan before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka at 3:30pm amid tight security yesterday. He was wearing helmet and bullet proof vest.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Afzar Uddin of Rab-3 produced Swapan before the court on completion of his seven-day remand and sought for a seven-day further remand.

Meanwhile, the IO took Ataur Rahman Sunny, younger brother of JMB chief Shaekh Abdul Rahman, in his custody for interrogation for seven days in an arms case.

The remand period of a case filed against him under the Explosive Substances Act ended yesterday.

Intelligence contradicts report

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A director of National Security Intelligence (NSI) yesterday summoned BDNEWS editors to his office and told them the news published by BDNEWS about surveillance on senior pro-Jamaat officials in the administration is baseless.

A senior superintendent of Special Branch (SB) visited the BDNEWS office on Wednesday and said the SB had not initiated any such surveillance on pro-Jamaat officials.

Quoting high-level sources of the administration, BDNEWS on Tuesday reported that intelligence agencies initiated surveillance on senior pro-Jamaat officials as panic gripping sectors of the administration following attacks by the banned outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

Architectural exhibition begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day architectural exhibition began in the city yesterday.

The Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB) has organised the exhibition with a view to introducing furniture and other interior materials to the city dwellers.

Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yousuf inaugurated the 10th annual exhibition of IAB at the Winter Garden of Hotel Sheraton.

Pioneer architect of Bangladesh Mazharul Islam, Vice-chancellor of Brac University Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, Country Representative of Oxfam Anil P Tambay and IAB President Khadem Ali were present on the occasion.

Speaking as chief guest Chowdhury Kamal said development largely depends on the quality and quantity of building and its related construction industries.

He said the exhibition also brings together the professionals like architects, engineers, developers, suppliers, manufacturers and importers on a common platform to bring harmony in the development activities.

About 30 manufacturers and suppliers from home and abroad are exhibiting their products in 40 stalls.

The exhibition will remain open today and tomorrow from 10:00am to 8:00pm.

Remain alert to ensure internal peace, security

PM asks Air Force members

UNB, Jessore

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said that as part of the national armed forces, every member of Bangladesh Air Force should always remain alert and active to ensure internal peace and security.

"We're a peace-loving nation. Our chief mission is to improve the lot of the poverty-stricken people by keeping the territorial and geographical border safe," she said.

Khaleda was speaking at the Winter Graduation Parade-2005 of

Bangladesh Air Force Academy marking the commissioning of 52nd Flight Cadet and Special Engineering Course of BAF.

She called upon the newly commissioned officers to place national interest above everything else.

"The role of an efficient, disciplined and well-trained armed forces is significant considering the national dignity and overall capacity along with protecting the independence and sovereignty of the country," she said.

"For this reason, we've always making all-out efforts

to form a modern and strong armed forces."

Flight Cadet Syed Munir Hossain was awarded the coveted 'Sword of Honour' for best all-round performance.

Flight Cadet Md Ehteshamul Huq was awarded Osmani Gold Medal for best performance in Academic Training. He also received the 'Commandant Trophy' for his outstanding performance in General Service Training.

Flight Cadet Md Ekram Hossain was awarded Chief of the Air Staff

Medal for all-round performance in Ground Branch Course.

In all, 46 Flight Cadets, including seven female cadets, and 15 GDP cadets were commissioned this time.

Earlier, on her arrival at the BAF Academy Parade Ground here, the Prime Minister was received by Air Chief Air Vice Marshal Fakrul Azam and Commandant of BAF Academy Air Commodore Sakeb Iqbal Khan.

EIGHTH UJJIBAK REUNION

'Political conflict sidelines dev activities'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was a reunion of distinguished personalities who achieved global acclaim and those working to end hunger and motivate the people of all strata to explore their unlimited potential.

People from various walks of life, including people's representatives, social workers, teachers, students and labourers from different parts of the country, gathered in their thousands at the Government Physical Training College in the city yesterday to share their stories of success, experiences and views.

Noted development experts and litterateurs joined their hands with the Ujjibaks (motivators) of the The Hunger Project. There are about 20,000 groups of Ujjibaks across that country with 60,000 members who hold regular meetings, exchange views, solve local problems and even initiate productive activities.

Speaking as the chief guest, Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said the prevailing conflict among the political parties has sidelined the development activities. "Even the professional groups are so sharply divided that none could be found with whom we can consult during the period of crises."

Education is a must to fight all forms of militancy and religious extremism, he said and called on the Ujjibaks to work together to combat the menace and bring about development.

Lauding the innovative method of motivating the people, Brac Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed said establishing links between the Ujjibaks and other voluntary organisations could make the country free from poverty and bring back its good name. He also assured them of all kinds of assistance from the Brac.

Novelist Selina Hossain said the recent destructive activities of the



PHOTO: STAR

Participants pose for photograph at the Eighth Ujjibak Reunion on the premises of the Government Physical Training College in the city yesterday. From left are (first row) Father Richard W Timm, Fazle Hasan Abed, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Selina Hossain and Ifat Ara Nargis and (second row) Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury, Abdullah Abu Sayeed and Badiul Alam Majumder. The Hunger Project organised the event.

militants has frustrated her, but this gathering has inspired her and rekindled her hope for a better future as there are so many people who want to work together and contribute to the peace and development process.

Bishwa Sahitya Kendra Chairman Abdullah Abu Sayeed said the nation has unlimited potential, but the sharp division and conflict among the political parties, administration and professional bodies are hindering the development activities.

Sharing his experiences, UP Chairman Abul Hossain Khan, also an Ujjibak of Islampur in Rajbari, said he always wanted to work for the welfare of the people, but after his winning in the UP election in 2003 he became confused about how to strategise development activities.

"Later, with the help of a relative,

I attended a Ujjibak training of The Hunger Project, which enlightened me. I got to know the dimensions of development and how to work with and for the people," he said.

Since then, he has formed 105 groups of Ujjibaks who mobilised a fund of over Tk 7 lakh and have been using the money in productive ventures such as poultry farm and fisheries, said the UP chairman.

"I also settle all the disputes in my union through arbitration," he added.

A number of Ujjibaks also shared similar experiences at the huge gathering, organised by The Hunger Project.

Explaining the concept of Ujjibak, Country Director of the project Badiul Alam Majumder said the system is not like the traditional NGOs who are funding and carrying out different development projects. The system works through mobilis-

ing people's power, organising them and changing their fate with their own and local resources, he added.

"The crises facing the nation today because of militancy and insecurity have resulted from disparity, deprivation of the poor and repression on them. Empowerment of people through decentralisation of the local government is the only solution, for which we are working," he said.

At the reunion, The Hunger Project also accorded a reception to Ramon Magsaysay Awardees of the country. Among the awardees, Brac Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed, Gonosasthya Kendra Chairman Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury, Caritas Advisor Father Richard W Timm and Bishwa Sahitya Kendra Chairman Abdullah Abu Sayeed attended the programme.

Cadet College Club executives

Maj (Retd) M Taneem Hasan and Maj (Retd) Imroz Ahmed have been elected president and secretary general of the Cadet College Club for 2006, says a press release.

The Third Annual General Meeting of the club held on club's land at Nikunja-1 with Zaglur Rahman Khan in the chair, followed by election of the office-bearers for 2006 recently.

Later, founder President Zaglur Rahman Khan laid the foundation stone of the Club Complex.

Badrul Hasan presented the annual report and Muhammad Farhad Hussain, treasurer, the audit report for 2005.

Other office-bearers are Vice-President: Shahadat Musharraf Khan, Joint Secretary General: Ashraf Hussain and Treasurer: AAM Salek UZZaman.

Members are Lt Col (Retd) Bazlur Rahman, Mohammad Masud Isa, Enayot Kabser, Mostafizur Rahman, Anik Moshed, Md Golam Rabbani Shaheen, Tamanna Shegupta, Dr Mohammad Zahurul Islam and Malik Abdullah Al-Amin.

50,000 more rickshaws to get licence

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The authorities will give licences to 50,000 more rickshaws to cut down the number of illegal rickshaws plying the Dhaka City roads.

"Only 89,000 rickshaws have licences and more than four lakh rickshaws are plying in Dhaka without licences. Rickshaws occupy a lot of space on the roads. They will have to ply in a disciplined way to remove traffic jams in Dhaka city," Communications Minister Nazmul Huda said yesterday.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a seminar on 'Rickshaw ban in Dhaka city: an overview of arguments for and against,' organised by Civil Engineering Division at Bangladesh Engineers' Institute.



Cadet College Club founder President Zaglur Rahman Khan laid the foundation stone of the Club Complex.

'Defeated forces of '71 behind bomb attacks'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Independence and sovereignty of the country is now at stake as the defeated forces of the Liberation War emerging as Islamist militants have been carrying out bomb attacks across the country, said speakers at the 'Blue for Peace' programme yesterday.

They also criticised the government, saying that its indifference to the growing fanaticism and militancy has encouraged the perpetrators of bombings to attack repeatedly.

Asma Kibria, widow of slain former finance minister Shah AM Kibria, initiated the 'Blue for Peace' programme to press the demand for trial of those involved in all bomb attacks.

Wearing blue clothes, family members of Kibria, Mohila Awami League leaders and civil society members formed a human chain at Dhanmondi Russell Square in the city yesterday demanding that all the killers of political leaders, including Kibria, be brought to book.

Asma Kibria said there is no secu-

rity of life in the country as religious militants have been carrying out suicide bomb attacks.

"What can we expect from this government? Nothing as the Jamaat-e-Islami, who is the father of all militant groups, is a partner of the ruling alliance," she said.

She also vowed to continue the protest programme until the real killers are arrested.

Among others, Bangabandhu Jubo Parishad Joint Secretary Prabir Sarkar, BCL Leader Sagar Halder, and civil society members Shyamoli Nasrin and Sibani Das took part in the human chain.

Representatives of Lalita Kala Academy, Sonar Bangla Jubo Parishad, and Bangladesh Muktiuddha Sangsad also joined the programme.

The next 'Blue for Peace' programme will be held at Shyamoli near Shishu Palli in the city on December 29.

MOUCHAK MURDER Investigators see link with Saidur killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Investigators believe the Wednesday's double murder at Mouchak took place as a sequel to the killing of Titumir College Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader Saidur Rahman on Tuesday night.

Saidur was gunned down in front of Mohakhali Wireless Gate Central Jame Mosque on Tuesday night when he was coming out after saying his Esha prayers, while the bodies of Wasim and his companion were found near Mouchak crossing on Wednesday night.

Examining the backgrounds of Wasim, police said Wasim had links with Saidur as the former committed most of his criminal activities in Mohakhali area, an investigator said, adding, "Wasim was either Saidur's aide or belonged to his rival group."

"It may be that the same group that killed JCD leader Saidur on Tuesday killed Wasim the following day, or Saidur's group might have killed him in vengeance," he said.

Wasim and his group might have gunned down Saidur, whose group retaliated by killing Wasim, said another investigator of the Detective Branch.

Denying Saidur's link with Wasim, Saidur's brother Mamun said, "We never heard the name of Wasim earlier."

Wasim's uncle Ibne Batuta, however, said that Wasim knew Saidur.

"Wasim grew up and used to spend most of his time around the Titumir College area in Mohakhali," he added.

As of 5:00pm yesterday, none came to identify the body of Wasim's companion that is kept at the morgue of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.