

DU CONVOCATION
Yunus to receive honorary Doctor of Laws degree
Says vice-chancellor

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) Vice-chancellor (VC) Prof SMA Faiz put an end to recent "convocation speaker controversy" by saying that Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus will attend the 43rd convocation ceremony of DU to receive his honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

The 43rd convocation ceremony of DU is scheduled to be held on February 28.

"He will certainly deliver a speech on the occasion of receiving his Doctor of Laws degree, but that will not be a convocation speech," Prof Faiz told The Daily Star categorically denying that Yunus would be the convocation speaker.

The VC said DU authorities in a letter on February 15 invited him to receive the honorary degree and to be the convocation speaker. Reading out Yunus's reply letter to DU authorities' invitation, the VC said he gave consent to receiving the Doctor of Laws degree, but Yunus did not say whether he would be the convocation speaker.

"Earlier, Pakistani's Nobel laureate Prof Abdus Salam and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina also delivered speeches on the occasion of receiving their degrees. Prof Yunus's will deliver a speech like they did but it will not be as the convocation speaker," Prof Faiz said.

However, the VC did not disclose this to the Academic Council meeting held February 18 despite a number of teachers opposed Yunus on the campus as convocation speaker for his present position. Even the VC remained silent in this regard until yesterday afternoon.

Asked why it was not disclosed earlier, the VC said, "There were only five teachers at the council meeting who opposed Yunus and their protest was not strong, so I did not feel it was worth disclosing this earlier. But newspapers ran biased news items on this."

Yunus's possibility of becoming the convocation speaker sparked protest from a large section of DU teachers and different student organisations. They said a politician was never invited to the convocation as convocation speaker and Yunus became a politician by announcing his political party.

At a press conference yesterday, pro-Awami League Blue Panel teachers demanded that Yunus not be made convocation speaker.

Former Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) president Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said if the convocation was held on its previous schedule of December 24, teachers would allow Yunus there as convocation speaker since he had no political leanings then. But by announcing a political party, he has become a politician, the professor added.

At the press conference Prof Nazma Shaheen said the Nobel laureate has formed a political party and the formation of a political party means Yunus has a political opponent. So, he is a controversial person now, she added.

If a party chief attends the convocation as convocation speaker then the long tradition and sanctity of the DU convocation would be tarnished, as no politically affiliated person has been made convocation speaker in the 86 years of history of the university, Shaheen said.

AIUB CONVOCATION
UGC asked to strictly monitor appointment of teachers

BSS, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday asked the universities to take the key role for developing human resources in the country to face the challenges of globalisation.

"The country now needs more efficient human resources to face the challenge and the universities will have to take the key role to develop the human resources," he told the seventh convocation ceremony of American International University of Bangladesh (AIUB) at Bangladesh-China Friendship Convention Centre.

Iajuddin, also chancellor of the university, said the highest learning centres of the country must ensure "quality education" appointing competent teachers.

"What the universities need most is competent teachers who should be appointed through appropriate selection committee under a proper screening process," he said.

The president urged the University Grants Commission (UGC) to strictly monitor the issue of teachers' appointment.

He also urged the private universities to find ways to overcome their constraints regarding their own campuses, libraries, research facilities and congenial atmosphere.

The president reminded the graduates of their social responsibilities and duties towards the country.

AIUB Vice Chancellor Dr Carmen Z Lamagna chaired the ceremony. Former chief adviser to a caretaker government Justice Latifur Rahman, UGC Chairman Prof Dr Asaduzzaman and AIUB Trustee Board Chairman Dr Anwarul Abedin also spoke at the function.

'Declare time frame to hold free, fair election'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the caretaker government (CG) to declare a time frame for holding a free and fair election in the country.

They said a non-elected government should not stay in a democratic country like Bangladesh for an indefinite period.

The discussion on 'Our expectation from the caretaker government and political parties' was organised by Ekatoro Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, a forum for secular Bangladesh, at the CIRDAP Auditorium.

National Professor Kabir Chowdhury, president of the Nirmul Committee, said it is possible for CG to hold next general election within six months.

"The CG should also take action against the syndicate to control the price spiral of essentials," said Kabir Chowdhury who presided over the discussion.

Air Vice Marshal (Retd) AK Khandaker Bir Uttam said a vast number of Jamaat leaders are engaged in corruption but the CG is yet to take any measures against them.

"People do not believe that Jamaat leaders were not involved in corruption

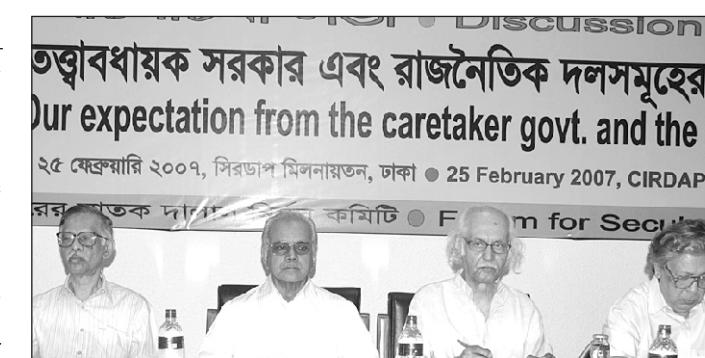


PHOTO: STAR

Speakers at a discussion on 'Our expectation from the caretaker government and political parties' organised by Ekatoro Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, at CIRDAP Auditorium in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Justice Golam Rabbani, Air Vice Marshal (Retd) AK Khandaker Bir Uttam, Prof Kabir Chowdhury and Prof Ajoy Roy.

or militancy during the last five years," he said while addressing as chief guest at the discussion.

Columnist Shahrier Kabir said questions have emerged against the CG because BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman

who plundered huge amount of money and Jamaat Ameer Motiur

Rahman Nizami who pioneered the militancy, are yet to be arrested.

Justice Golam Rabbani, Journalist Kamal Lohani, Prof Ajoy Roy, Shyamoli Nasreen Chowdhury and Prof Muntasir Mamun also spoke at the meeting.

More relief found at Jamaat, BNP leaders' houses

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enforcing strikes.

In Tarash upazila, they recovered 63 CI sheets from the house of union parishad member Shatullah in Shakoa Dighi village, and 27 other sheets from the house of BNP leader Reaz Uddin in Gurma village.

In Netrokona, the forces recovered 149 CI sheets for relief from Madan, Kendua and Mohonganj upazilas on Saturday night.

Of the sheets, 26 were recovered from Ratnapur village house of former general secretary of Madan poura BNP Haresur Rahman and 16 from Madan municipality Commissioner Abdus Salam's house on College Road.

Fifty CI sheets were recovered from Kendua upazila BNP leader Mir Kasim's house at Maska village while 57 others from Mohonganj upazila BNP leader Maniruddin's house at Magan village.

In Khagrachhari, the forces arrested Dighinali Upazila Jubo Dal GS Mohammad Abdur Rahman yesterday from Merung area for misappropriating government fund and land grabbing. He was sent to Khagrachhari jail.

In Gazipur, the joint forces recovered two bundles of CI sheets from the house of Kaliganj upazila Jubo Dal leader Mohammad Shahidullah.

Although he was awarded 14 years' imprisonment for the killing of Awami League leader Moyeruddin in 1984, former president HM Ershad pardoned him, and he later joined the BNP.

The forces also recovered two pistols with two bullets from listed criminal Abdul Hye's house at Kaliganj in Gazipur.

In Manikganj, police recovered 32 CI sheets used in the BNP office at Galabazar.

They also seized 16 CI sheets from the houses of Ansar Ali and Abdul Munnafe of Brahmanbaria village.

In Pabna, police recovered 34 CI sheets that were dumped in a pond of Mokam Ali in Batipara village in Chatmohor upazila on Saturday night.

In Chandpur, joint forces recovered 18 CI sheets from the house of alleged criminal Boro Jamaila, who is known to be a cadre of a BNP leader and former state minister, at Meghdair village on Saturday night.

The forces arrested Mymensingh Chamber of Commerce President AKM Shamsuddin, who is widely known for patronising criminals, extortionists and land grabbers, from his Shyamoli residence in Dhaka City, reports UNB.

In Kushtia, the joint forces arrested Khoksha upazila AL President Sadaruddin Khan and recovered a .22 bore rifle and five bullets from his house at Samaspur village in the upazila early Sunday, reports UNB.

He was wanted in 12 cases including one for murder.

In Comilla, Rapid Action Battalion yesterday recovered a Chinese .22 bore revolver, two shot guns, one LG, eight knives and nine

bullets from former BNP MP Manirul Haq's abandoned farming tools manufacturing factory at Noya village, reports UNB.

In Sylhet, joint forces arrested city corporation Ward Commissioner Farhad Chowdhury Shamim, also a BNP leader who is facing four criminal cases, from Choukdekhia area on Saturday night, reports UNB. He was later sent to jail.

In Satkhira, police yesterday seized 24 and 18 CI sheets from the houses of Jamaat-e-Islami activists Yunus Ali and Rajab Ali in Shyamnagar and 24 others from a kindergarten school run by another Jamaat activist Abdul Latif in Kolarupazila, reports UNB.

They also recovered 79 CI sheets from four houses and a traders' association office in Sadar, Shyamnagar and Kaliganj upazilas.

In Gopalganj, the joint forces arrested Gopalganj municipality Chairman Hasmat Ali Shikder Chunnu yesterday on charge of corruption, abuse of power and grabbing public land, UNB reports.

They seized four cheque books and arrested 'personal accountant' Jubayer from Chunnu's house and also seized Tk 70,000, a cover of pistol and a bullet belt from the house of his son-in-law Chhoton Shikder.

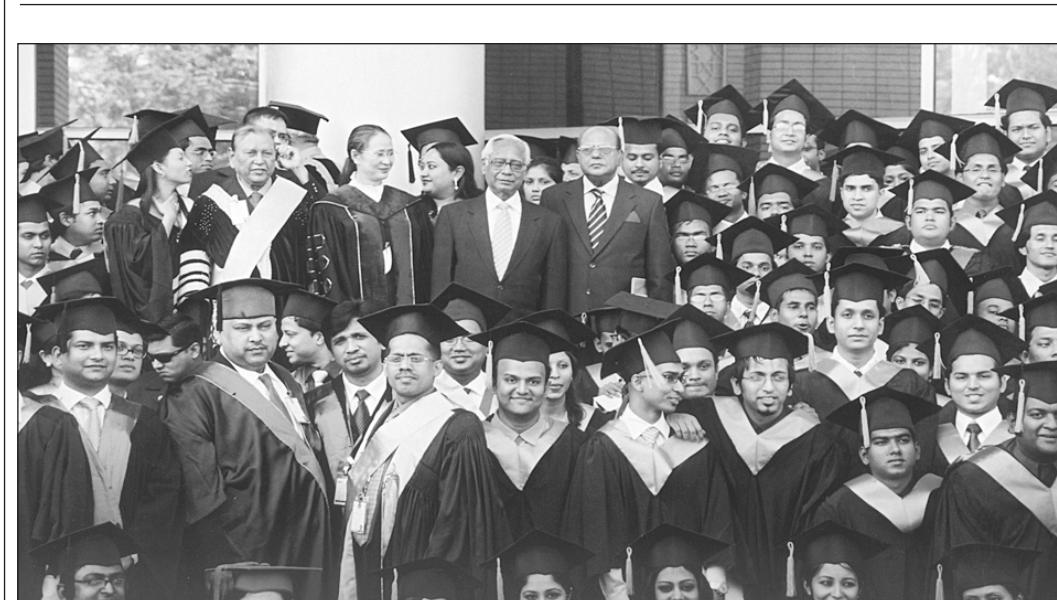


PHOTO: PID

Graduates pose for photograph with President Iajuddin Ahmed at the 7th Convocation Ceremony of American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB) at Bangladesh-China Friendship Convention Centre in the city yesterday.

Contractors capitalise on power crisis in talks

FROM PAGE 1

The government is also accepting the same deviation for the 50 MW Fenuganj power plant to be installed by Ornate Services Ltd, which is owned by a close relative of a very powerful minister of the past alliance government.

A barge-mount plant is movable, while an immobile land-based plant demands land allocation and land lease agreement (LLA). This means the small power plant is going to block precious power plant site and prevent installation of bigger projects.

"But they gave the argument that implementation time for Feni and Kumargaon power projects was 150 days, and they should also be allowed the same," the official added.

The government therefore is now considering fixing the project implementation time to 150 days, giving them 60 days' additional time.

The PDB Board on February 19 held a meeting and discussed the deviations.

On the issue of allowing land-based plants instead of barge-mount ones, the board admitted that this was a deviation. "But it will take about a year if this is tendered. Considering the severe power crisis of present times, the

government may take a decision on this matter," the board said.

The government in December last aimed at completing all the agreements by the middle of last month to add 260 MW power by June-July this year. But this bid went slow due to problems related to low gas pressure at the power project sites.

Headed by Power Adviser Tapan Chowdhury, the power ministry on February 19 held a meeting and decided to ask Petrobangla to ensure appropriate high pressure gas supplies to the power projects.

"This 260 MW venture is nothing when you consider that the country is facing about 2,200 MW load shedding and there is no viable large power project in the pipeline. The alliance government did the blunder and this government should not just brood over some bad ideas like power rental," said an expert.

"It is time the government scrap these half-baked and largely politically favoured deals and move on to real power projects," he added. "We have implemented large projects ahead of time in the late nineties and it is possible to do so if the policymakers have that kind of commitment."

The authorities are also giving Hosaf and GBB huge additional time to commission Barabkundu and Bogra projects after signing of the GSA with them. Both have sought 60 days in addition to their original 90 days for project implementation.

Moreover, the United Group that is setting up an 80 MW plant in Shahjibazar sought 30 days' additional time after signing of the GSA. "This should have been enough to cancel their contracts," said a PDB official.

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Robbers kill Gazipur poultry farm owner

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A group of Robbers slayed a poultry farm owner and looted Tk 80,000 in cash, gold ornaments and other valuables from the residence of his father-in-law at Borteck village in Kapasia, Gazipur on Saturday night.

The victim, identified as Joinal Abedin, 37, was staying at his father-in-law Anwar Hossain's residence during the robbery. Police arrested a suspect of the robbery, identified as Delwar Hossain, 26, yesterday morning.

Sources said armed robbers entered a poultry farm owned by Abedin at about 1:30am, woke up Khokon, an employee of the farm and forced him to go to the residence of Anwar Hossain.

They made Khokon wake Abedin up and once Abedin opened the door, the robbers tied him with rope and slayed in a room at Halishahar.

Later they made his mother-in-law hand them the key of the almirahs and looted cash, gold ornaments and other valuables before leaving the spot.

During the robbery, Abedin's wife and two children were staying at his rented house at Uttara while his father-in-law Anwar Hossain was staying at his village Sonmania in Kapasia with his second wife.

The two drivers confessed that they have long been pilfering fuel being allocated for CCC transports in connivance with the two officials and the petrol pump owner.

"We were forced to pay Tk 300 each to the two officials against

PILFERING TRANSPORT FUEL

2 CCC staffs, pump owner held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Joint forces yesterday unearthed a syndicate at Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) that was involved in pilfering transport fuel and arrested two CCC officials, two drivers and one refuelling station owner in this connection.

The arrestees were identified as CCC Superintendent Engineer (mechanical) Abul Hasnat, Transport Pool Officer Joyseen Barua, CCC drivers Abdur Razzak, Shah Alam and owner of Sagarika Petrol Pump Jalal Ahmed.

A team of the joint forces arrested Razzak and Alam from their houses and Jalal from his petrol pump at Olonkar Intersection area in the early hours of yesterday. On their confessions, the team later arrested Hasnat and Joyseen from CCC office at around 3:00pm and took all of them to the army camp at Sagarika Road in Halishahar.

The two drivers confessed that they have long been pilfering fuel being allocated for CCC transports in connivance with the two officials and the petrol pump owner.

"We were forced to pay Tk 300 each to the two officials against

each vehicle of the CCC to get allocation of 80 litre fuel every day," revealed Alam and Razzak.

They said, "Generally we used to use around 20 to 30 litre of the allocated 80 litre fuel against each vehicle and the remaining fuel was sold to the petrol pump owner."

Through this system, a huge quantity of fuel has been pilfered everyday from the CCC, they admitted.

Of the around 550 vehicles of the CCC, around 175 still run on fuel while the rest were converted as CNG-run transports, sources said.

The two CCC officials held the allegations, they said.

The joint forces in the afternoon summoned CCC Chief Engineer Mokhtar Ahmad to their camp at Sagarika Road and detained him in connection with the fuel pilferage from the CCC Transport Pool.

The joint forces were interrogating all the six till writing of this report in the evening.