

Future nation-builders

FROM PAGE 16
Service to your country, your region, and the globe," said Nazrul adding, it is up to the students to confront the challenges of their time.

"The quality of Bangla being taught in English medium schools and the quality of English in Bangla medium schools should be equal," Nazrul said, who also distributed the awards among the top achievers.

He said the widening disparity between the rich and the poor is a daily reality for Bangladeshis and the young students should fight against the injustices in society.

"Poverty is something that must be addressed now," Nazrul said adding this generation of students must stand up for the future of Bangladesh and address the political, economic, and social problems of the country.

David Davies, global relationship manager of Edexcel UK, one of the sponsors of the programme, asked the young outstanding achievers to seize the day by taking the opportunities now to have successful futures.

He said Edexcel is in the process of revising their A level exams to make them more demanding, but he expressed confidence in the abilities of Bangladesh students to overcome any challenge thrown their way in the future.

Kaiser Tamir Amin, acting managing director and CEO of Brac Bank, and Rubaba Dowla, director of Grameen Phone's marketing division, also spoke.

Calling upon the students to contribute to the process of nation building, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said their talent and commitment can surely overcome the challenges Bangladesh will face in the 21st century.

Anam said personal achievements of the students will not be truly realised, if broader national achievements are not attained.

Urging the students to be tolerant towards the views and ideologies of others, Mahfuz Anam said, "Different people will have different opinions, but those must be based on knowledge, not on prejudices."

He said many of the awardees will go abroad while others will study at home, but those who do not go abroad should not feel deprived, because, "I know many men and women who excelled globally, but had studied in Bangladesh."

The time has come for the English medium schools to make significant contributions to the growth of the country, despite the

misconception that those schools are disconnected from the mainstream of education, Anam added.

Tanjim Efaz, from Sunnysdale, who received 8 As in his 'O' levels, and Mushfequr Rahman, who attained 9As in his 'O' level exams, spoke on behalf of their batch of students.

Sarah Fouzia Chowdhury from Mastermind, who ranked among the top scorers of the world in physics and mathematics while bagging 6 As in her 'A' levels, spoke on behalf of the 'A' level students.

A LEVEL	
ACCOUNTING	Navid Kasem
	Akshita Zaman
	Khusboob Kabra
	Nusrat Tamanna Prianka
	Rezaul Karim
CHEMISTRY	
FURTHER MATHEMATICS	Maruf Amin Bhuiyan
PHYSICS (jan '07)	M Rasim Bhuiyan
MATHEMATICS	
PURE MATHEMATICS PHYSICS	(may/June 07)
	Sarah Fouzia Chowdhury
CHEMISTRY	(May/June 07)
	Fahad Ibn Azam

O LEVEL	
ECONOMICS	AHM Golam Sarwar
	Rehnuma Jahan Islam
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	Yusuff Relfaie
	Deeni Fatima
MATHEMATICS B	Jonathan Dhruvo Rozario
	Refaya Rashmin
	Tanjim Efaz
	Tashfia Mosharrar Mohona
	Tazkia Laeeba Karim
PHYSICS	Samir Muhammad Korban
	Tanjim Efaz
	Mushfequr Rahman
BANGLADESH STUDIES	(May/June '07)
	Anika Tabassum
	Sanjida Sultana
COMMERCE	Bushra Sameeha Anwar
MATHEMATICS A	Pratik Al Islam
PURE MATHEMATICS	Tanjim Efaz
	Sreedev Das

BNP unification

FROM PAGE 16
they have cancelled the meeting," a former lawmaker who is also a top leader of a front organisation of BNP told The Daily Star yesterday.

When asked about the proposed meeting, Mohammad Shahjahan, the organising secretary of the party who is now a close aide of Hannan Shah, told this correspondent yesterday evening that they would not organise any such meeting.

Replying a question, he claimed that there is no conflict between Delwar and Hannan as both the leaders are working for the party under the leadership of the detained chairperson.

While speaking with journalists, Hannan, an adviser to the chairperson, also said that there was no misunderstanding between them. "After my release from jail, I had a long discussion with him [Delwar]," he said adding that no one has the right to drop Delwar's name from the post of secretary general of the party.

Hannan alleged that certain quarters are trying to create confusion in the party by taking advantage of the secretary general's illness.

Party leaders said a group of leaders backed by Hannan were planning to hold a joint meeting of the executive committee members and the front organisation leaders of the party to plan out a programme for observing the Independence Day.

Leaders loyal to Delwar anticipated further division in the party if the pro-Hannan leaders organised the meeting at a time when Delwar was out of the country.

As Delwar came to know of the proposed meeting, he asked his aides to send a representative to Hannan.

Meanwhile, leaders of BNP's front organisations have decided not to side with any faction within the pro-Khaleda faction of BNP. They also decided to discuss party affairs with Delwar once he returns home.

"We will discuss with both the leaders [Delwar and Hannan] and request them to clear up sorts of misunderstandings among senior leaders of the party," a front organisation leader told The Daily Star.

Real income

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Rickshaw-puller Manik, a resident of Gorhanga in Rajshahi city, said he earns about Tk 90-110 daily while he used to get Tk 70-80 a year back. But it didn't have any positive impact on his living standard as the prices of essentials have gone sky-high.

"It's true that I earn more now, but I have to spend bulk of the money buying essential commodities including rice," he said.

Nazrul, a construction worker in New Market area, said the number of day labourers in the city has increased significantly due to lack of work in rural areas.

"Since the number of day labourers has increased, now it's very difficult to find work. It's becoming really hard for me to maintain my family as the prices of essentials are always on the rise," said Nazrul, the lone breadwinner of a five-member family.

Arman, a salesman of a grocery shop, said buying capacity of general people has decreased due to price hike of essentials.

"I have some regular customers. I observed that many of them are buying less than what they used to about few months back," he said.

"Learn Tk 125 to 150 a day now. But it's impossible for me to run my family with the spiked prices of rice and other food items," said Mohammad Montu, an elderly rickshaw-puller of Dapunia village in Pabna.

Middle-class people are also affected badly due to price spiral of food items. A government employee of Pabna, requesting anonymity said he gets a monthly salary of Tk 9,000 and spends Tk 4,000 on house rent.

It has become very difficult for him to maintain his six-member family with the money left.

Hossain Ali, a day labourer of Kurigram, said it was possible for him to save Tk 5-8 per day a year back. But now he can't save anything although his income has increased.

[Our correspondents Abu Kalam Ratan from Rajshahi, Ahmed Hunayun Kabir from Pabna and Abdul Wahed from Kurigram contributed for this news item.]

Fertiliser

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Shykh Seraj, director of Channel 1, moderated the event. The BBC Bangla Service in conjunction with the BBC World Service Trust organised the event.

Zillur said fertiliser distribution will be better in the next season. Mentioning that production of IRRI was badly hampered by the gas crisis, the adviser said the government is expecting higher boro production.

BEA President Kholiqzaman said the fertiliser crisis deteriorated since the government did not take proper measures to resolve the problem.

Maj Gen (ret'd) Amzad suggested the government give the private sector a free hand in distributing fertiliser and brings in large companies in the process.

Responding to a query, the adviser said the government is also trying to formulate specific policy on organic fertiliser to make its use large-scale.

Mentioning that undeveloped market system is the main obstacle to progress of rural economy, Zillur stressed the need for improving it.

Farida Akhtar said high interest rate of microcredit has been destroying the rural economy.

Amzad Khan demanded that the interest rate be lowered while Kholiqzaman said microcredit schemes must be brought under a proper system.

The adviser, however, said microcredit has been contributing a lot to the rural economy.

The government wants the talks

Nam apartments

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rent of Tk 400 for a 1,250 square feet flat and Tk 500 for a 1,800 sqft one and no electricity bill.

Many former lawmakers vacated the flats by June last year.

On June 19, the caretaker government handed over the total responsibility of the flats to the housing ministry for renting them to government officials on a temporary basis and the ministry asked the Parliament Secretariat to ensure that the flats are vacated.

However, 160 flats are still occupied by former lawmakers and their families, said sources.

As there was little possibility that the ninth parliamentary elections would be held soon, the Parliament Secretariat formed a committee last year headed by its additional secretary to determine what to do with the flats.

"The committee recommended giving back the occupied flats to the government and renting those for a period until the next parliamentary elections. To implement the recommendations, we asked the Parliament Secretariat in December to cancel the allotments so that we could make fresh allotments. The ex-lawmakers also rent those from the Directorate of Government Accommodation [DGA]," a top official of the housing ministry said.

In December, the government increased the rent for a 1,250 sqft flat to Tk 20,000 a month and 1,800 sqft flat to Tk 25,000 for the lawmakers with retrospective effect.

Following the request of Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, the government later decided to put the new rents in effect from January.

Getting no response to the

ministry's December 5 letter, officials started sending the same letter to the Parliament Secretariat every 15 days.

"But no one has responded yet," DGA Director Shawkat Nabi told The Daily Star yesterday.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar said the new rent is applicable to those who are getting fresh allocation from the government, not the former lawmakers.

Many former lawmakers who have been convicted or have other houses have left the flats, he told The Daily Star, adding that there are others who left the flats fearing arrest.

"As soon as the flats fall vacant, we are handing over those to the Special Security Forces, Anti-Corruption Commission and the special courts on condition that they will leave the flats within a month of the publication of the next parliamentary election results," Sircar said.

Of the vacant flats, about 40 have been recently allotted to government officials at Tk 12,000 a month for a 1,200 sqft flat and Tk 15,000 for a 1,800 sqft flat, said officials.

The government is supervising the vacant houses as the Parliament Secretariat does not have the necessary manpower and fund, the speaker said, adding, "The flats belong to parliament."

The deputy speaker also said cancellation of the former lawmakers' allotments requires parliament's approval as the allocations were made on the decision of the House Committee.

On the letters from the housing ministry, Sircar said, "If they want to execute their decision, let them first take away the apartments from parliament."

and decided to launch a solidarity drive among other sections of the Ummah on account of the huge economic resources and potentials to address such livelihood difficulties.

It said the leaders of the OIC member states have given utmost importance to the need to urgently implement the provisions of the Ten-Year Programme of Action on development assistance and the fight against poverty in Africa.

The declaration said the summit leaders pledged that their governments would do whatever it takes to make contributions amounting to \$10 billion, as soon as possible, to the Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development, established within the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

The summit leaders stressed the need for mobilising Zakat funds in the OIC geographical area and allocate them rationally and efficiently for the need so that such a pillar of Islam is made a vital aspect of Islamic solidarity.

The declaration called for a speedy human resource development process of high quality in the OIC member states by giving special importance to science and technology, among other educational disciplines, outlined as priorities under the Ten-Year Programme of Action.

It urged the OIC member states to strive for high-level training, good quality education designed to promote creativity, research, innovation and development as outlined under the Ten-Year Programme of Action, particularly with the IDB's support under its scholarship programme.

"Within the same drive of Islamic renewal, we call on the member states and their scholars to seek to unify the Islamic calendar and thus boost Islam's image in the world," the declaration said.

Relaxing emergency

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commission of meeting whatever it requires for the elections to be held. Since then, the council of advisers met on several occasions, but nothing came out.

Contacted by The Daily Star recently, a number of advisers said they had no discussion on the EC's demands.

Highly placed sources in the administration said possibility of decisions coming on the issues before the chief adviser's return from Senegal is slim. Fakhruddin Ahmed is scheduled to return on March 22.

"We have not received any directives from the government to relax or lift the restrictions on indoor politics countrywide. We also don't know if the state of emergency would go or be relaxed for the city corporation polls," a senior official of the home ministry told The Daily Star.

"There might be some developments after the chief adviser's return," he added.

On lifting of checks on indoor politics throughout the country, an election commissioner said he thinks the government might decide on it after dialogue with the political parties.

If it is so, the possibility of any immediate resolution of the issues as far-off as the caretaker government's plan for talks with the parties.

The government wants the talks

Square Hospitals

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Square Hospitals authorities. But Prof Sanawar said she was committed to the hospital through certain authorities, who are directing the treatment of Hasina.

On Hasina's ear treatment not possible at Square Hospitals, Brig Gen Zakir said the hospital authorities did not make such a statement. He also described Hasina's personal physician's recommendation for her treatment as his "personal".

Prof Sanawar, also head of the medical team which had earlier said it is not possible to re-adjust function of her hearing aid here, said he could not say anything about the treatment. After examining her ear we could say whether the treatment is possible or not, he added.

The IG said as Hasina is undergoing treatment at the Square Hospitals, doctors of the hospital would take care of her. If necessary, her personal doctors would visit her again, he added.

But the hospital director said no-one has been barred from coming to their hospital. "We didn't ask anyone not to come to the hospital."

Although the AL chief was supposed to undergo ultra-sonogram test yesterday, the hospital authorities did not arrange the test.

"There is no ultra-sonogram machine on the floor where Sheikh Hasina is receiving treatment. That's why we need to make preparations for conducting the test," said Prof Sanawar.

CEC

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UNDP Administrator Kemal Dervis. UNDP Resident Coordinator Reneta Dessalieu accompanied the delegation.

Emerging from the meeting, the visiting UNDP administrator, whose agency is assisting poll-preparatory works, observed that there is no reason for elections not going to be held as per the Election Commission-announced roadmap.

"It shouldn't be, and elections should be done removing obstacle, if any," Kemal Dervis told the journalists when asked if he thinks election would be held as per the roadmap.

Asked about the UNDP-supported ongoing project on voter listing, the UN agency administrator said a correct voter list is a precondition for an acceptable election and the current voter list, which is the one being prepared, is comparatively more flawless than the past one.

He pointed out that there are some specific and common problems with voter lists in different countries in the world, and he shared his experiences of other countries with the EC.

Asked if discussion took place on national and local elections between them, Dervis said they discussed the issues of national elections.

He said the EC told them that preparation is going on regarding the national elections, such as holding dialogue with the political parties, and there are some technical problems that are commonly seen in other countries also.

Election Commissioner M Sohul Hussain was present at the meeting.

Pakistan

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television channel, the decision was made at a meeting of prosecutors from the Special Operations Division, which deals exclusively with these cases. The NAB prosecutor general chaired the meeting.

Citing unidentified sources, Dawn News said it had been decided that NAB prosecutors would travel to Geneva and London by Sunday. They will submit written applications in the courts by Monday or Tuesday seeking withdrawal of all the cases against Zardari.

The prosecutors will take the plea that these cases fall under the ambit of the National Reconciliation Ordinance, the channel said. The cases in Switzerland and Britain were initiated in 1998.

A Pakistani court on Friday quashed the last remaining graft case against Zardari, removing the final possible hurdle to him standing for prime minister.

Asif Ali Zardari was acquitted by the anti-corruption court in Rawalpindi, in the last of seven cases that has been haunting his political future.

The cases have been withdrawn as part of an amnesty given by President Pervez Musharraf last October, which allowed Bhutto to return from exile in an apparent prelude to a power-sharing deal between the two.

Meanwhile, PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari may nominate his sister, Dr Azra Fazal Pechoo, as the interim premier, according to a BBC Radio report on Friday.

Quoting close aides of Zardari, the BBC said as he had not been elected to the National Assembly, Zardari could not become premier himself. They said he might nominate his sister as temporary prime minister instead.

Workers Party

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development policy amid emergency power rules Friday thanks to the government's supportive role.

It said the way the administration dealt with the situation in fact bordered on encouraging fundamentalism and militancy.

The workers party leaders said though many demands of the women have been left unmet in the national women policy, it is still a significant development towards women rights.

They added that the changes brought to the national women policy in 1997 under the influence of Jamaat-e-Islami and other religion-based outfits have been more or less retained in the one declared by this caretaker government.

"By not allowing the sector commanders to hold a national convention seeking trial of the war criminals the government has in fact unmasked itself," they observed.

Held at the party's central office on Tophkhana Road, the meeting was addressed among others by Mosaddeq Hossein Labu, Hazi Bashirul Alam and Nazrul Islam.

one of many Western celebrities who have been vocal in their support for the Tibetan cause, called for a boycott of the Olympics if the Chinese leadership mishandled the situation.

"It would be unconscionable if we continued as if things are hunky dory and everyone's happy," he told BBC radio.

Chinese censors blacked out Western media reports about the developments in Tibet on Chinese television on Friday, and independent verification of the news from the region has been difficult.

30 dead in Tibet unrest

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"Right now we are hearing that there are many Chinese troops in Lhasa. There are pockets of people out in the streets right now, but there is great fear among the population."

The state-run Xinhua news agency earlier said 10 people died in the unrest, citing government officials from Tibet who blamed 'mobs' for the violence.

"The victims are all innocent civilians, and they have been burnt to death," Xinhua said. It said no foreigners had been killed.

While authorities appeared in control in Lhasa Saturday, monks led a second day of rallies in Xiahe, Gansu province, the site of one of Tibetan Buddhism's most important monasteries, two activist groups and a local resident said.

China's top official in Tibet, a vast region formally annexed by the country in 1951, said the protests were part of a "separatist" movement led by exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama that authorities would not allow to succeed.

"The plot of the separatists will fail. We will challenge them firmly, according to law," the chairman of the Tibet government, Qingba Puncog, told reporters in Beijing on the sidelines of China's annual parliamentary session.

"This is very clear: This is a separatist Dalai Lama clique, inside and outside the country."

Authorities warned that those involved in the riots should turn themselves in by midnight on Monday.

"Violators who do not comply with the deadline will be severely punished under the law," said a joint notice issued by the Tibetan police and judicial authorities.

The Dalai Lama called on China to 'stop using force' and rejected allegations that he and his government-in-exile were behind the uprising.

"These protests are a manifestation of the deep-rooted resentment of the Tibetan people," he said. "Unity and stability under brute force is at best a temporary solution."

Earlier, Xinhua said many police officers had been badly injured in clashes and that rioters had wielded "backpacks filled with stones and bottles of inflammable liquids, some holding iron bars, wooden sticks and long knives."

A Chinese tour operator and other people in Lhasa contacted by AFP said tanks and armoured personnel carriers patrolled the city yesterday, and remained in place as darkness fell.

"There are tanks and armed soldiers on the streets. We have been told to stay in our rooms... the city is shut down," Wu Yongzhe, the tour organiser, said by phone.

Wu, other tour operators and travellers said Tibet had been closed to foreign tourists.

Tibet, a mountainous region that includes Mount Everest and is more than twice the size of France, has been a flashpoint issue for China's Communist leadership ever since it came to power in 1949.

Communist forces were sent into Tibet in 1950 to 'liberate' the region, with China's official rule beginning a year later.

Tibet has taken on greater importance in the run-up to the Olympics in August, which the country's leaders hope will be a chance to show off China's rapid transformation into a modern economic power to the rest of the world.

Tibetan rights groups have vowed to pile intense pressure on Beijing over its rule of the region ahead of the Games, and any perceived rights abuses now would prove unwelcome news for the Chinese leadership.

The protests are the biggest since 1989, when Chinese President Hu Jintao -- who was given a second five-year term yesterday -- was the Communist Party chief of Tibet.

Hollywood star Richard Gere,

Price hike

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Australian pulses at Tk 96 a kg while other varieties at Tk 70 to Tk 90 per kg, adding that traders were mostly buying medium-quality pulses against the backdrop of a rise of Tk 12 to Tk 15 in just three weeks.

At Kaptanbar wholesale market, battery-chicken prices jumped to Tk 75 per kg from Tk 68 a day before. But in the retail market the price ranged from Tk 80 to Tk 85. The price of free-range chickens rose by Tk 10 to Tk 15 per bird yesterday. Traders blamed the rise on poor supply.

They, however, said chicken sales became normal in the capital and elsewhere in the country in last few days.

Egg prices spiked by Tk 1 per 'hali' (four eggs) in the retail market last week. Battery eggs were selling at Tk 350 to Tk 360 per hundred yesterday which sold for Tk 330 to Tk 340 three days back.

Fish prices also hiked in both retail and wholesale markets. One trader at Karwan Bazar attributed the rise to shortage of supply due to the end of fishing season.

After a sharp rise last week, edible oil, sugar and mutton prices dropped a bit in both retail and wholesale markets.

But the slight drop could not satisfy people on low incomes.

Hamid Ali, a worker at Tejgaon industrial area, said prices of essentials have almost doubled on last year. "Living costs have also increased but our income has got stuck in the same place," he said.

"It's been difficult for me to run a four-member family with my present salary. I have to buy on credit in the second half of the month," he said.

Voices of the achievers

FROM PAGE 16
Sarah Fouzia Chowdhury of Mastermind School, who secured the world's highest A level marks in mathematics and physics, said the collective dream of developing the country will surely become a reality after a few generations of them.

Expressing her deep commitment to the nation building process, she said small steps have already been taken in the right direction for making Bangladesh a prosperous country, generating hopes among all. Fouzia also got a special award for her performance in the school.

Stating that The Daily Star's recognition of the students inspired him tremendously, Towfiq Hossain of Adroit International School said he wants to study electronics engineering, preferably in Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), and wants to contribute to the development of the discipline in the country.

Towfiq, who achieved 6 As in 'O' level exams, said many bright students go abroad for studies, but do not return. They should come back and help build a prosperous Bangladesh, he added.

He thinks a lack of unity among leaders of the country and corruption are two major problems of Bangladesh. "At our levels we should be determined that we shall not get involved in corruption," he asserted.