

ELECTION OLYMPIAD 2008 BEGINS IN RAJSHAHI 'Ensure participation of honest candidates'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Election Olympiad 2008, a countrywide knowledge-based competition on election and politics, began at Rajshahi yesterday with a call for ensuring participation of honest candidates in the upcoming elections.

Shushashoner Jonney Nagorik (Shujan) organised the event with an aim to creating awareness among citizens on election and politics. Shujan Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumder was present on the occasion.

About 500 students from different colleges and universities in Rajshahi took part in the daylong competition while 20 winners were

awarded crests and medals.

The winners were selected after an hour-long question-answer session on elections, its rules, constitution, political parties and system of governance in the country.

The participants also exchanged their views in an open discussion and said they need a corruption-free nation where their rights would be protected.

Speakers at the discussion underscored the need for establishing a corruption-free administration and a truly responsible political culture.

They said holding of a free and fair election and ensuring participation of honest and competent candidates can help establish and

sustain good governance.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumder said there is no alternative to honest and competent candidates for establishing democracy.

He called upon all to vote for honest and competent candidates. Prof Nurul Alam, president, Rajshahi district unit of Shujan, chaired the discussion while Shujan officials Zaituna Khatun, Shamsuddin Ahmed, Mahbob Akhtar, Tanvir Rubel, Tripti Chowdhury, Subhe Sadik, Masudul Karim and Mahbobul Alam spoke.

The Election Olympiad will be held at Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet and Barisal metropolises and seven other municipalities in succession.

JCD activists beat journo at DU

DU CORRESPONDENT

Activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), beat a journalist on the Dhaka University (DU) campus yesterday over a trifling matter.

Jasim Uddin, DU correspondent of the Jugantor and also a resident of Kabi Jasim Uddin Hall, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with serious injuries in his head and hands.

Witnesses said JCD activists Zahid, Shaheed and Rizvi swooped on Jasim at Suryasen Hall cafeteria at noon. The incident was a sequel to an altercation between Jasim and Zahid over taking seats at the cafeteria in order to have launch, they added.

Dhaka University Journalists' Association (Dujas) submitted a memorandum to the DU Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz demanding punitive actions against those responsible for the incident.

JCD DU unit President Hasan Mamun said they would take organisational actions against the accused soon.



Army men collect water from a lake called 'Velur Dighi' in Chittagong yesterday. The water will be purified using the army's water purification unit and then supplied to the city dwellers in different parts of the port city. The army has taken this initiative to ease water crisis.

Christian assoc demands punishment to killer rapists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Christian Association (BCA) yesterday demanded the government to immediately arrest and punish those involved in the murder of a teenage girl, says a press release.

The association also urged the local administration to ensure security of the victim's family, saying that the family members left the house and living in the city in fear of the murderers.

The victim was identified as Bitney Ashru D Silva, 14, of South Bhadarti village in Kaliganj.

The assailants raped Bitney and her mother and killed Bitney on April 30. Mehedi, 24, Dulal, 28, Russel, 20 and Sohel were accused in the murder case.

The demand came after a visit of a 10-member delegation of the association to the village home of Bitney on Monday.

The delegation also met local UP Chairman Abu Bakar, Parish Priest of Tumilla Father Abel B Rozario and Kaliganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Khandker Mizanur Rahman separately.

"Discussion with the deceased's father James D Silva in Dhaka proves that the murder was pre-planned. The assailants had been instigating Bitney for long, but her parents failed to get any help from local administration. Such brutality surpasses the middle-aged barbarism," the release added.

The delegation included BCA Senior Vice President Hubert Gomes, Secretary General Nilon Rozario, Vice President Miron I Gomes and Adviser advocate John Gomes.

Obituary

Firoza Habib Shamael, a writer, died at a city hospital late on Monday night at the age of 63, says a press release.

She was suffering from breast cancer.

Firoza wrote under the pseudonym of Shamael. She was the author of *Strostar Shondhaney*, an open letter to the Pope and various other works of fiction and non-fiction.

She was an active member of the Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Lekhika Shongho, Nondini Shathitya or Pathchakra and various other literary organisations.

She was laid to rest at the Kalshi graveyard in Mirpur after namaj-e-janaza at the Dhanmondi Taqwa mosque yesterday.

Firoza is survived by her husband MA Habib and three daughters.

Her kulkhwan will be held at the Ullah Community Centre in Dhanmondi, opposite the women's sports complex, after Asr prayers on Friday, May 23.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the prayers.

JP opposes govt move to formulate nat'l charter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) at its presidium meeting yesterday opposed the initiative of the caretaker government to formulate the proposed national charter.

The JP, however, decided to participate in the formal dialogue with the government.

"The present government does not have any right to formulate any national charter as they are not elected government," Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, who chaired the meeting at JP Banani office, told reporters.

"We - the politicians - will formulate the national charter through discussions among us," added the former president.

Replying to a question, the JP chief said national consensus government before the election is not possible, adding that it is possible after the polls.

Ershad said holding a free and fair election is possible under the present government.

The former army chief observed that the country would have fallen in danger, if the emergency rules were not imposed on January 11.

He ruled out any possibility of assuming power by the armed forces.

Plan to start BTV edn channel

BSS, Dhaka

Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday said the government is planning to turn the second channel of Bangladesh Television (BTV) into a 24-hour educational channel with a view to boosting distance learning programme.

"We have already taken necessary steps by consulting with the information ministry to start the education channel as early as possible," he said as the chief guest at a seminar in the city.

The chief adviser's office under its 'Access to Information (A2I) Programme' and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly organised the workshop to consult the high officials of education ministry and its affiliated agency for setting e-governance vision titled 'E-shiksha vision 2025' at National Academy of Education Management (NAEM).

Education Secretary M Ashrafur Moqbul chaired the workshop, while UN Resident Coordinator Renata Lok Dessallien spoke as the special guest.

Policy Adviser of A2I Programme Anir Chowdhury made a presentation on 'E-shiksha vision 2025'.

The education adviser said the present government has taken

various steps to bring reforms in education system like changing the examination processes to an innovative system as it can produce more global standard human force.

"System of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination will be changed partially in 2010 and changed fully by 2011 and after that the system of other public examinations will also be changed in an innovative way," he said.

He also said changes will also be made in textbooks and steps to be taken to ensure distribution of textbooks timely as part of the reform process.

Mentioning the use of new technologies like ICT in the education sector a must for ensuring better quality, however, he said the new technology should be understood properly for ensuring its utmost benefit.

The education adviser urged the policy makers to take cost-effective solutions as well as utilise the maximum use of assets as the country faces resource constraints.

Additional Secretary of Education Mozammel Haque gave the welcome speech and National Project Director of A2I Programme Mahub Sarwar gave vote of thanks.

Tamim for digging new wells in gas fields

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser's Special Assistant for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Prof Dr M Tamim yesterday stressed the need for digging new wells in the country's existing five gas fields through 3D seismic survey.

He directed all concerned to complete 3D seismic survey quickly at Rashidpur, Titas, Kailashtila, Sylhet and Bakhrabad gas fields.

He gave the direction at a meeting on implementation progress of annual development projects of the Energy and Mineral Resources Division in 2007-08 fiscal year and reviewing revenue expenditure at the ministry yesterday.

The special assistant also said all would have to work through a coordinated way for the development of the energy sector.

The meeting was informed that the work of well-digging to explore hydrocarbon at Mobarakpur under Petrobanga is expected to be completed by next month.

Chemical godowns gutted in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Residents were evacuated from a 10-storey residential building at Armanitola in old Dhaka yesterday after a devastating fire broke out at chemical godowns housed in the basement of the building, meant for parking.

Fire fighters said they struggled for four hours and a half from 8:00am to douse the flame that originated at around 7:00am at MTC Tower.

Witnesses said police asked residents of all 36 flats of the building to leave at around 9:00am, as fire fighters could not control the blaze despite all-out efforts.

"We asked the residents to vacate the building with their emergency goods to avoid any unwarranted incident," Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police Station Abdul Hannan told The Daily Star.

A resident of the area Moktar Hossain said the ground floor of the building is a chemical market. Drums full of different acids and other chemicals in the market burst with big bangs creating scare among the people.

Fire Service and Civil Defence Deputy Director (Operation and Maintenance) Mizanur Rahman said the fire might have originated from an electric short circuit or from a chemical reaction.

He said the damages caused by the fire would be estimated after the water is removed from the basement.

TRAIN-BUS COLLISION Railway takes action against 4 employees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The committee formed to investigate the train-bus collision at Kalihati in Tangail on April 16 found the drivers of the bus and train and three other Bangladesh Railway employees responsible for it.

The accident left 17 people dead.

The railway authorities have already taken punitive measures against the four staffers, including the driver and assistant driver of Ekota Express, after the four-

member committee led by BR official Abdul Bhuiyan submitted its report recently, said a press release of the railway yesterday.

The reports said bus driver Abdus Samad was also responsible for the deadly accident.

According to the BR officials, level crossing gateman Habibur Rahman was dismissed and train driver Djendra Nath Chakrabarti and assistant driver Abdul Karim were suspended while departmental action was taken against sub-assistant engineer Abdul Latif.

Hafiz slates govt for 'failure'

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more attention in creating the necessary atmosphere for polls.

Criticising the caretaker government, he said, "It could not do anything for people's welfare even though it has done many things which were beyond its jurisdiction. It could not build food security in the country. It could not even generate one megawatt of power. The country is lagging behind including in poverty alleviation and export earnings."

"The government should hand over power to elected representatives without delay after holding elections as it has no success except curbing corruption," said Hafiz, acting secretary general of the pro-Saifur faction of BNP, during a press briefing at his Banani home.

Expressing doubt about the upcoming dialogues between the government and political parties, he said the dialogues would not be

meaningful without the participation of the two main parties - BNP and Awami League.

On his faction's participation in the dialogue, he said they will decide on it later consulting party leaders. He said it was unfortunate that the authorities did not mention his designation in the invitation letter for the dialogues.

"[The government] should not have arranged for the dialogues as no dialogues have been successful in the past and I think this will also be unsuccessful," he said hoping that a united BNP would participate in the dialogues.

Demanding release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, he said it would be tough for BNP to participate in the elections without her presence.

He asked the government to stop arresting political leaders. "Many arrests were made. This is enough. Now stop it and begin the work for holding a free and fair

Man gets death for killing wife over dowry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Bagerhat court yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his wife in 2005.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Md Rezaul Karim handed down the verdict to Shamim Kazi, a trader.

According to the prosecution, Shamim strangled his wife Kajol Begum during an altercation over dowry at their home at Khadda village in Bagerhat Sadar upazila on the midnight of September 28 in 2005.

Neighbours caught him red-handed while he tried to escape. He was later handed over to the police who filed a case the next day.

Eliminating graft, fraud vital for social progress

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"...Bangladesh is the first Muslim country in which we have laid a new academy foundation stone," he said, adding that the academy will provide "world class education for young men and women from all backgrounds, irrespective of ability to pay".

To be one in the global network of 18 such academies, the first of which was opened in Mombasa, Kenya in 2003, the academy would be built on a 20-acre land at Bashundhara Residential Area involving over \$50 million.

The Aga Khan, who succeeded his grandfather Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan to become the Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims on July 11, 1957 at the age of 20, arrived in Dhaka on Monday on a four-day visit.

Three principles worked behind

the setting up of the academy, the first one being centrality of quality education as an element in the Islamic tradition, the Aga Khan said.

"Our traditional teachings remind us of our individual obligation to seek knowledge unto the ends of the earth and of our social obligation to honour and nurture the full potential of every human life," he said.

The second principle is integrity of local and national cultures. The academy will connect its students to global perspectives but will also respect the central role of each person's particular heritage as a cornerstone of his identity, he said.

A sound education system should help nourish the roots people inherit from their history which are a great source of strength and joy and inspiration, he said,

adding that this is why the Aga Khan Academies will follow a dual language curriculum in the native tongue and English in order to connect to the global society.

On the "compelling importance of global partnership and universal understanding in the face of forces that would dangerously fragment the world", the Aga Khan said, "In the process of nurturing a healthy sense of identity, we must resist the temptation to normalise any particular culture, to demonise the other, and to turn healthy diversity into dangerous discord."

This is why the academy curricula will emphasise comparative political systems, global economics, and cultures, pluralism and a sound ethical foundation.

While educating for global citizenship, the academy will integrate each local school with

others in the network, sharing ideas and experiences, exchanging students and teachers and affirming that all graduates achieve a globally relevant credential in the form of the International Baccalaureate diploma.

Education Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, who laid the foundation stone and unveiled the plaque of the Aga Khan Academy jointly with Prince Karim, appreciated the Aga Khan Development Network's commitment and assistance to the field of education.

Salim Bhatia, director of the Aga Khan Academies, in his welcome speech said once fully built, the campus will comprise over 500,000 square feet of built space and playing fields to accommodate a wide range of sporting and athletic activities.

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AES pulls out of power project bidding

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competitors - Chevron (which operates the Bibiyana gas field) and Malaysian-South Korean joint venture Powertek-Keppo. The Sirajganj bid is left with just Powertek-Keppo.

"Apparently the power cell landed in this situation due to poor advice from the IFC which at first wanted Bangladesh to prioritise the new Bibiyana power project over all other old power project," said an official expressing unhappiness over the development.

He adds, "The IFC then arbitrarily advised the power cell to disqualify the lone Bangladeshi bidder Summit from the Bibiyana bid. The exit of Summit from the Bibiyana project automatically disqualified the company from the Sirajganj bid. Despite repeated appeals from Summit, the cell stuck to IFC's advice."

Industry insiders say AES withdrew from the bid due to a number of reasons. The first is the company's concerns that the government has no clue about the current world market price of power tariff - which would be much higher than 2.78 cents per kilowatt hour that was

offered in 1998 for the first Meghnaghat plant. AES believes that the government will not accept a realistic power tariff.

AES is also unhappy about the arbitrary handling of the tender process. "The past experience of AES in the Haripur and Meghnaghat projects was straight forward. As long as the 1998 tendering process was concerned, there was no allegation of arbitrary bid handling," sources said.

IFC and power cell's disqualification of Summit in January did raise a lot of question, since Summit qualified for the World Bank and Asian Development Bank's (ADB's) \$150 million loan for the Sirajganj power project when it won the bid in 2004. Summit did not get the contract ultimately due to political meanness of the BNP-led alliance government which thought Summit chief was a patron of the Awami League government.

After IFC pushed out Summit from the current bids - Summit felt that it was done unjustly. The IFC calculated the net value of Summit at only \$35 million, when the auditor's report submitted to the power

cell puts the figure at \$120 million. In the tender, IFC suggested that the qualified bidder must have a net asset value of over \$100 million.

In both these bids, Summit had world's leading turbine manufacturer General Electric (GE) as 20 percent stake holder. While talking to The Daily Star, President of GE Power Company Stephen R Bolze in late March expressed surprise about the power cell's rejection of Summit on grounds of Summit not having "enough" financial strength. He said, "Summit is surely a capable company," adding that while GE struck partnership, it did its due homework.

Chief of Summit Industrial and Merchantile Corporation Aziz Khan told The Daily Star from Singapore over the telephone, "I wish Bangladeshi people get electricity which is their basic right. However, the power cell has chosen to disqualify the only local company, thereby preventing local capacity development in such a crucial sector. I am certain we would have been able to deliver electricity on time."

Both the large power projects totalling 900MW capacity are still inadequate to meet the future power demands of the country. The

two projects have also become uncertain because of a volatile market for power generation equipment globally. Due to high demand, power plant equipment is in short supply now.

"However, it seems that Chevron wants to push the project ahead anyway because it wants a confirmed gas sales market for its Bibiyana plant," observed an industry insider.

A PDB official said the World Bank and the ADB are delaying the release of tenders for the peaking plants because of the unstable EPC (engineering, procurement and construction) market. These peaking projects are the 300MW Siddhigangj, 150MW Khulna and 150MW Sirajganj power plants. "Only one equipment supplier, Siemens, will be interested in the peaking plants. Therefore, there would not be any competition," quips the official.

Already bogged by 2,000MW plus load shedding, the country will be facing around 3,000MW load shedding by the time the two large-scale projects come into operation upon successful bidding.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 35.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Satkhira and lowest 21.0 degrees Celsius at Dinajpur and Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:37pm today and rises at 5:13am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.3	23.5	62	68
Chittagong	32.1	22.4	75	63
Rajshahi	34.2	23.8	67	57
Khulna	34.5	23.0	72	63
Barisal	32.2	22.8	75	79
Sylhet	31.8	22.0	85	69
Cox's Bazar	30.9	22.0	70	72

DHAKA TODAY

Discussion

Economic Reporters' Forum organises a discussion on 'Budget for 2008-09: Reality and expectations'. Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity. Time: 10:30am.

Roundtable

Bangladesh Heritage Foundation organises a roundtable on 'Prospect of national government in Bangladesh: Hard power or soft power approach'. Venue: Bilia auditorium. Time: 9:30am.

Workshop

FoShol-Coordination Project, IRR in collaboration with CARE, ActionAid and Practical Action will organise a workshop on 'Strengthening farmers' access to improve vegetable seeds for homestead vegetable production system'. Venue: Brac Centre Inn. Time: 9:30am.