### IS ELECTION Rehana in Dhaka to assist sister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sheikh Rehana arrived home yesterday after nearly two years to assist her sister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina as the parliamentary election is drawing nearer.

Talking to The Daily Star, Sheikh Hasina's deputy information secretary Mahbubul Haque Shakil said Rehana along with her two daughters arrived at the Zia International Airport by a flight of British Airways at 3:00am from London.

Rehana, younger daughter of slain president Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has been living in London for 10 years. She came to Dhaka within 16 hours after Hasina rolled out AL's election manifesto on Friday.

AL sources said Sajeeb Wazed Joy, only son of Hasina, may also arrive here soon to assist her mother in election campaign.

Rehana, who is implicated in Tk 3 crore extortion case along with Hasina and cousin Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, will stay here till the elections.

Businessman Azam Chowdhury who is the plaintiff of the case said earlier that he filed the case only against Selim while Hasina and Rehana were implicated in it later by the investigation officer of the case.

Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court framed charges against Rehana showing her as a fugitive in the case.

The High Court later halted the trial proceedings following a writ petition filed by the AL president challenging the legality of the case. The final verdict in the case is still pending.



### Death anniversary of Birsreshtha Jahangir today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'nawabganj Today is the 37th death anniversary of Birsreshtha Captain

Mohiuddin Jahangir. On this day in 1971, just two days before the victory, he embraced martyrdom in a battle with the Pakistani occupation forces at Rehaichar, near the river Mahananda in

Chapainawabganj. Our correspondent in Barisal adds: Birsreshtha Shahid Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir Smriti Parishad and Birsreshtha Mahiuddin Jahangir Library and Museum authorities will observe the day with different programmes at his memorial complex at Agorpur village at

### Babuganj upazila in the district. **Prof Ghyasuddin**

BSS, Dhaka

Today is the 37th death anniversary of Shaheed Prof Ghyasuddin Ahmed.

Prof Ghyasuddin was abducted from Mohsin Hall of Dhaka University and later killed at Mirpur along with Dr Mohammad Murtaza, Dr Santosh Bhattacharjee, Dr Abul Khair, Dr Serajul Haque, Dr Faizul Mahi, Prof Rashidul Hasan and Prof Anwar Pasha.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at the residence of Sajeda Banu, Shaheed Ghyasuddin's youngest sister, after Asr prayers on December 18.

## Boy's wit saves 300 train passengers

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A major train accident was averted thanks to the presence of mind of a minor boy on

Friday morning. According to witnesses and railway officials, a Laksam-

bound passenger train with at least 300 passengers on board left Chandpur station at around 7:30am. Before the train reached

Dherra village in Hajiganj, Siyam observed to his utter surprise that a section of the railway track was lying broken which could cause an accident.

He took off his jumper at once and fluttered it with his right hand standing on the track to attract the attention of the train driver (loco master) and the guard.

His efforts were successful as the guard and the loco master stopped the train apprehending that something

might be wrong on the track. They were stunned when they sawthe broken railway track



Students of Begum Rahima Ideal Girls' School perform a dance at a Victory Day programme at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday.

# 170 shanties gutted in city slum fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 170 shanties were gutted and 10 people, including a fire fighter, were injured in a devastating fire at a slum at Badda in the city last night.

Police and fire brigade sources said the fire broke out in a shanty at Nayanagar in the area and engulfed the entire slum immediately. Fire brigade sources said the fire was

originated from a hearth. Slum dwellers said the fire also gutted almost all belong-

ings of the shanties. Six units from four fire stations in the city rushed to the spot and after an effort of one and half hours they

doused the fire. Ten people, including a station officer of Tejgaon fire station, were injured while they were trying to put out the fire.

# End discrimination against Harijans'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A country cannot be considered democratic in real sense unless equal rights are ensured for each and every citizen irrespective of their religion, caste and creed, said the speakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday.

They said Harijans, a section of people traditionally regarded as untouchable or low caste, are exploited both socially and economically.

The view exchange meeting was organised by Bangladesh Harijan Oikya Parishad in association with the Manusher Jonno Foundation at the National Press Club in the city.

"It is the responsibility of the state to ensure human dignity for all. Until equal rights are ensured for every citizen, a country cannot be considered democratic," said Prof Mesbah Kamal.

"Our country does not ensure the rights of the minority people. It should be a punishable offence to call someone untouchable," he added.

Democracy means equal rights and dignity for every human being, said CPB

## Dhaka Int'l Book Fair begins

tomorrow STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 15th Dhaka International Book Fair begins at the central playground of the Dhaka University tomorrow.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed will inaugurate the book fair organised by Jatiya Granthakendra.

This year the theme of the 15-day long book fair is 'Book for a peaceful world' where a significant number of local and overseas publishing houses will take part.

To make the book fair more attractive, cultural programmes, subject-wise discussions, seminars, open discussion on the books on liberation war, women and children and meet-the-writer

sessions will be held. The fair will remain open from 11:00am to 8:00pm and on holidays it will remain open General Secretary Mujahidul

Islam Selim. "People of other religions were made second class citizens when Islam was made state religion of the country. But neither I nor my Muslim fellow-fighters had fought the war to make Islam the state religion," said Sector-4 Commander Maj Gen (retd)

CR Dutta. The meting placed a 20point demand before the political parties and civil society members to protect the Harijans from discrimina-

tion and exploitation. These included free education and scholarships for the children of Harijans, introducing quota system in higher education and employment, regularisation of jobs, and better housing and medical facilities.

Human rights activist Dr Hamida Hossain, Prof Dr Neem Chandra Bhoumik, Parishad Secretary General Nirmal Chandra Das and its President Krishna Lal were present at the meeting.



### Saarc Charter Day

Saarc Meteorological Research Centre (SMRC) organises programme to mark the Saarc Charter Day. Venue: SMRC Campus, Agargaon She-E-Bangla Nagar. Time: 9:30am.

## Street Drama

Opera, a drama circle, organises a street drama programme to mark the Martyred Intellectuals Day. Venue: Munir Chowdhury

Natyabhumi, Mirpur. Time: 4:00pm. Discussion

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy will hold a discussion to mark the Martyred Intellectuals Day. Venue: Academy auditorium. Time 4:00pm.

### Cultural programme

Banglar Sanskriti Andolon organises a cultural programme that includes drama, recitation, film screening, Rabindra Sangeet, etc to mark the Martyred Intellectuals Day. Venue: Bakultala, Fine Art Institute. Time: 3:00pm.



## Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderate fog may occur over northern, central and southwestern parts and the river basins of the country during late night.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said

Highest temperature 30.7 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 14.4 degrees at Srimangol. The sun sets in the capital at 5:14pm today and rises at

6:34am tomorrow. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were: Temperature in Humidity in

City/ Iowii	Celsius		percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	29.0	17.6	96	75
Chittagong	28.8	18.8	83	65
Rajshahi	26.8	16.0	100	91
Khulna	28.8	18.0	93	75
Barisal	29.7	18.0	95	90
Sylhet	25.8	17.3	83	86
Cox's Bazar	30.0	19.0	73	61

### NURUL ISLAM'S DEATH High-powered probe body formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A high-powered investigation committee has been formed to investigate the cause of the mysterious fire in which Gonotantri Party President Nurul Islam and his son Tamohar Islam Puchi were killed at their residence on December 3.

The committee, formed on on Thursday, has been asked to submit its report within five working days.

Additional Police Commissioner Abdus Salam of DMP will head the investigation committee comprising Special Superintendent Abdullah Hel Baki of CID, Major Montazur Rahman, an explosive expert of Rab, and Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mainul Hasan of Detective Branch (DB).

investigation committee formed by the fire brigade submitted a report on December 7 saying that an electrical short-circuit sparked off the fire.

But the family members of Nurul Islam and his party leaders rejected the report.

## War criminals

FROM PAGE 16 criminals and the people "who killed democracy in the country" in the next parliamentary elections to materialise the dreams of freedom fighters.

The Jote's General Secretary Golam Kuddus said they started Victory Day celebrations in 1990 to mark the victory in the Liberation War and the defeat of the then autocratic ruler. Now it has become the festival of all pro-liberation war forces in the country.

He called upon the people to resist fundamentalists, terrorists and war criminals in the next polls so that Bangladesh could be led by people who have the real sprit of the Liberation War.

The Jote's President Nasir Uddin Yusuf Bachchu criticised Jamaat-e-Islami for pledging, in their election manifesto, to enact "blasphemy act" if voted to power.

"Such act is against the constitution of the country and human rights," Bachchu observed, adding, "People who speak of formulating such acts have no right to participate in the election.'

He said Jamaat has unveiled its true character before the people once again through this. He also called upon the people to boycott war criminals in the next election to establish a

secular and democratic society. Mohammad Golam Mostafa, son of Birshreshtha Shaheed Nur Mohammad Sheikh, told reporters that it is not acceptable that the flag of Bangladesh should fly on the

cars of war criminals. Assistant General Secretary of Sammilito Sangskritik Jote Hasan Arif moderated the session. Poet Prof Muhammad Samad, media personnel M Hamid, theatre activist Mamunur Rashid and Mannan Hira also took part in the session among others.

# Anti-Islamic law

FROM PAGE 1 covering the parliamentary

electionslated for December 29. Matia said they strongly oppose the forces that use the name of Islam forpolitical purposes.

"The extremists have tarnished the image of Islam as a religion of peace. Awami League will do everything to restore the image of Islam," she said adding that they would also ensure the

rights to practise all religions. The AL leader said if voted to power, her party will ensure freedom of press and free flow of information.

"We are pledge-bound to ensure trial of torture and killing ofjournalists," Matia added.

AL President Sheikh Hasina was supposed to inaugurate the media centre at House No 33/B, Road No-4 but she could not be there for health reasons.

"All information about the grand alliance's election activities and its candidates will be available at the media centre," co-chairman of AL election conducting committee HT Imam told reporters.

The centre will be alert to any propaganda against the grand electoral alliance candidates and take necessary steps.

It will remain open from 10:00am to 11:00pm until December 25 and from 10:00am to 12:00 midnight from December 26 to 29. The contact numbers of the

almedia2008@gmail.com and info@albd.org. Election related news will also be available on the website www.albd.org.

# Economists sing praises

FROM PAGE 16

To achieve this the existing capacity has to be manipulated by using technological progress. For this emphasis has to be given on agriculture and industrial sectors, especially increasing agriculture production. And important issues that need to be addressed for that are seed, fertiliser and farming.

For all economic issues including power generation and creation of employment two things are very important: financing and policy framework. Zahid said it is a good sign that for the first time a political party has formulated specific short-term and longterm action programmes focusing on economic issues and global crisis.

Noted economist and Unnayan Samunnay Chairman Atiur Rahman said if political stability prevails and corruption and terrorism are checked, additional two not detailed out. The targets arguing that the prices have Earlier, a three-member percentage points GDP for poverty alleviation with the already started to drop. growth is possible. At present the average growth in the country is 6 percent.

agriculture and small and medium enterprise (SME), AL's target to achieve 8 percent growth is possible and it will not be impossible to bring down poverty rate to 25 percent in that case, he said.

If participatory budget system and e-governance are introduced and parliament is

financing can be solved. If good governance can be established, foreign funding would increase.

He also said if the local government system is strengthened, resource collection from local level would be possible.

Centre for Policy Dialogue Mustafizur Rahman said, "The positive side is that it has facing the economy both in tion. short and medium terms and has set medium-term and quantifiable terms."

would be to ensure adequate steps it takes it may be resources to achieve ambi- unpleasant for them." tious targets.

spective fiscal initiatives to develop deep-sea ports. mobilise domestic resources, potential GDP growth rates will require a major overhaul of the way growth is to be If emphasis is given on sustained and outputs to be distributed. This will need to be detailed out subsequently," he observed.

> "The issues of regional disparity and income inequality will make achievements of targets set in the manifesto all the more challenging," he

> > Prof MA Taslim, chief exec- supposed to be a widely

strengthened, the problem of utive of Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute, also found implementation of the promises made in the manifesto would be tough given the existing level of resources.

"The real weakness of the manifesto is that it has not given any costing on how to realise these goals. A lot can be Executive Director of done if sufficient resources are there," he said, referring to issues like power generation, which would require increase identified major challenges in gas output or coal produc-

coal mining that had brought five-year concrete goals in grief to the previous BNP-led four-party alliance govern-He said the challenges ment, he said, "Whatever

Citing the thorny issue of

Taslim however praised the "However, from this per- plan to open seaports and

He was reluctant to give the domestic borrowing and next government credit for foreign resources required are reducing commodity prices, "Prices have started to decline and it will go down further. Any government will enjoy its benefit," he said.

> Taslim said 8 percent growth or more is attainable depending on appropriate policy support and proper infrastructure.

Economist and Economic Research Group Executive Director Sajjad Zohir said bringing down prices was

claimed agenda but unfortunately not much thought is

put into it. "I will be happy to see political parties acknowledge the difficult times ahead for the global economy as well as the local economy; and the fact that prices are not generally in the control of the government," he said, adding, "Thus commitments are more credible if these are made in context of employment and on access to basic food to all at affordable prices or through safety nets.

Sajjad demanded a clearcut commitment on how political parties would establish democracy amongst their members and what mechanism would ensure that the party members remain accountable to the people at

He said land and its mismanagement are widely acknowledged to be at the centre of many corrupt practices and the source of black money. "We had hoped that the manifesto would make commitments to use ICT in updating land records and easing land registration procedures to provide people of all classes relief from the wrong-doings of a few touts, officials and legal practitioners. I hope that the political parties will pay due attention

# Mix of doable, pragmatic, lofty things

that the AL feels the urgency that the world events should be followed closely for taking effective measures. Mention of global warming as an issue for Bangladesh also reflects its better understanding of the

globalisation process. Its target for an 8 percent GDP growth by 2013 in medium term and 10 percent by 2017, reduction of poverty to 25 percent from the current 45 percent in five years, massive social safety network, village level rationing, employment schemes for the jobless - all sound good. But as said before, the problem lies with implementation and financing. Looking at the total manifesto, a part of it needs political will and a part -economic acumen. The AL showed its political will in the past by signing the Ganges deal and the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Treaty. It will need such wills again for realising the intentions of joining the Asian Highway and Railway,

and building the deep seaport. Bangladesh has been striving for an 8 percent growth for quite some time, but that dream figure is yet to be achieved. Besides corruption and lack of infrastructure, what has held Bangladesh back from arriving at the figure is the lack of investment. Investment in the past was at best around 24 percent of the GDP. To reach the 8 percent figure, it will need an investment of at least about 32 percent of GDP, a big jump and a daunting task. This will need a bigger Annual Development Programme (ADP), which should not be a big issue. The hurdle would be to improve implementation capability, which despite years of efforts remains dismal. A tumbling ADP would also mean a crumbling GDP growth. And in a time of deepening global economic crisis, 8 percent still

might look lofty.

a favourite buzzword for both development organisations and political parties, fighting it still remains an elusive game. In the 1990s, poverty dropped at a snail's pace of 1 percent while the economic growth rate averaged 4.8 percent. From 2000 to 2005, poverty dropped at a faster rate of 2 percent with an average growth rate of 5.4 percent. The AL's vision spells out, it wants to cut poverty by 20 percent in five years, an annual reduction of 4 percent. This by any measure is a huge challenge. The question is -- can an 8 percent growth do the miracle? The critics would take the promise with a rather large pinch of salt. The other interesting pro-

posal the manifesto makes, is the composition of GDP. The . System Master Plan (PSMP). AL envisions a rise in indus- PSMP aims at 7,000 mw power try's share in GDP from 25 generation in 2011 and percent to 45 percent, a fall in around 8,500 mw in 2013, in service sector's from 50 percent to 45 percent, and of agriculture's from 22 percent to 15 percent. This shift of gear is natural if an economy has to graduate to a better position. More industrial development means more employment, as the party sets specific employment goals as well. A lesser emphasis on the service sector means less stress on modernisation, but also less stress on growth without employment. But if agriculture slows down, that would throw a real challenge to employment and equality. Others might look at it from a different angle. As the economy becomes bigger and bigger, the agriculture even with a better growth as promised in the manifesto, might lose its share.

The manifesto makes a number of ambiguous and difficult policy choices such as an expanded safety net programme such as rationing and free education up to the

Although poverty has been these options call for mustering a huge public finance. The tax-GDP ratio has been almost stagnant around 11 percent for the past few years. There should be a strong framework to convince others that it would see a magical improvement. At a time of difficult global outlook, with foreign financing uncertain, ambitions and targets can easily get beaten down.

> Perhaps the most timebound target set in the manifesto is the power production included in the top five priority issues. The party categorically says by 2011 power production would be increased to 5,000 megawatt (mw) and by 2013 it would be further increased to 7,000 megawatt. Such a goal seems uninspiring in light of the Power

order to ensure power for all by 2020. But given the fact that the BNP-led four-party alliance government miserably failed to add new power generation between 2001 and 2006 other

than a piffling 350 megawatt, the AL's goal appears doable. By achieving this goal, the country will still not have a power surplus scenario -- but it will cover the main power

demand of the country. The present power demand is around 5,200 mw while the Power Development Board (PDB) is providing only 3,800 mw while its actual capacity is around 4,200 mw. The AL speaks of a three-

year crash programme that covers new large and small power generation, plus power import from neighbouring countries, and repair and overhauling of old power plants to increase power

production. This is perhaps the first power.

undergraduate level. First, time a political party is talking about power import -- most likely from India or Bhutan. India has plans for a large hydropower project in its eastern part.

The AL also promises implementation of Rooppur Nuclear Power Project, prioritising oil and gas exploration, increasing gas and LPG supply, and arranging gas supply to the north and western regions of the country. It also speaks of formulating a coal policy safeguarding national interest. Special initiatives are promised to ensure economic use of the coal available so far, and also to develop coal-based power plants. Priorities are set for exploration and exploitation of new coal fields and other mineral resources.

These are the burning issues for both oil and coal sector investors as well as for pressure and rights groups, who are all now waiting for a political government's decision. The manifesto seems to have taken this interest into

cognisance. The manifesto rightly identifies power and energy as one of the five priority sectors for the country and accordingly emphasises framing of a comprehensive long-term policy for electricity and energy -- binding renewables like solar power with traditional coal, gas and oil. If such a policy is framed, it will greatly improve efficiency in energy usage, trigger invest-

ment, and effectively contribute to economic growth. The manifesto makes a raft of promises of infrastructure development, all of which are very important for the economy's take off. Finance for many of them would not be a big deal with private investment sloshing around. But many others would need a great deal of government's role, and that would pose a real challenge if the AL comes to

# Martyred Intellectuals Day today

FROM PAGE 1

in the city.

nation. Their bodies were dumped at Rayerbazar, Mirpur and a few other places

Sensing the imminent defeat, the Pakistani occupying army and their local collaborators formed Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams and abducted the sons of the soil and killed them only two days before the nation's victory in intellectuals continue to be paytribute to them. the nine-month-long Liberation War.

The martyred intellectuals include Prof Muneir Chowdhury, Dr Alim Chowdhury, Prof Muniruzzaman, Dr Fazle Rabbi, Sirajuddin Hossain, Shahidullah Kaiser, Prof GC Dev, JC Guha Thakurta, Prof Santosh Bhattacharya, Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury, journalists Khandaker Abu Taleb, Nizamuddin Ahmed, SA Mannan (Ladu Bhai), ANM Golam Mustafa, Syed Nazmul Haq and Selina Parvin.

Thirty-seven years have passed with the families of the centre are 9669961, 9669962 martyred intellectuals still and 8651901 and fax numbers waiting to see the perpetrators are 8650457 and 8651493. The ebeing punished. mail addresses are The national flag will be

hoisted at half-mast along

with black flags today. The

president, the chief adviser

and leaders of different politi-

separate messages on the eve of the Martyred Intellectuals the conscience of the nation as they were priceless assets of

major political parties issued

morning.

the country. Ahmed said, "I hope we will not be derailed in implementing the anticipations of the martyred intellectuals to rebuild a liberal, democratic and justice-based society." Awami League President

expressed her gratitude towards all the sons of the country who sacrificed their lives for the liberation of the country. Zia in her statement urged all to work together to protect the country's hard-earned inde-

and preserve its cultural heri-

cal parties will place floral organisations have chalked wreaths at Mirpur Shaheed out elaborate programmes, including seminars, discus-Intellectuals' graveyard in the sions and wreath laying at Mirpur Shaheed Intellectuals' President Iajuddin Ahmed, graveyard and Intellectuals' Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Memorial at Rayerbazar. Ahmed and chiefs of the two

Sector Commanders Forum will stand in silence for two minutes in front of the Martyred Intellectuals special prayers after Zohr. President Iajuddin said the Mausoleum at Rayerbazar to Banglar Sangskritik

The forum also urged all to pay tribute to those who sacrificed their lives for the libera-Chief Adviser Fakhruddin tion of the country by standing in silence in front of martyrs' graveyards and killing fields and at places like offices, shops, shopping malls and educational institutions for two minutes at 4:00pm today.

Dhaka University has also prepared programmes to pay Sheikh Hasina in a statement respect to the martyred intellectuals, many of whom belonged to the university. Black flags will be hoisted at all dormitories, at the vice-BNP Chairperson Khaleda chancellor's residence and buildings of the university at

Teachers, students and officials of the university will pendence and sovereignty gather at Aparajeyo Bangla at 7:00am and place floral tage and fulfil the dream of the wreaths at the graves of mar-To mark the day, different tyred intellectuals by the socio-cultural and political university mosque and at

Jagannath Hall. They are also scheduled to pay tribute at the Mirpur Shaheed Intellectuals' gravevard.

There will be a discussion at TSC auditorium at 10:30am with Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz presiding. University Central Mosque and other mosques on campus will hold

Andolan, Dhaka Union of Journalists, United Citizen Movement, Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Liberation War Museum, National Front of Teachers and Employees, Dhaka Reporters Unity, Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigosthi, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Moitree Parishad, Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad and Sammilito Sangskritik Jote will place floral wreaths at the Mirpur Shaheed Intellectuals graveyard and will hold discussions.

Jatiya Party, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Communist Party of Bangladesh and National People's Party will place floral wreaths and hold discussions.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami will also hold a discussion and doa mahfil (special prayers) for the salvation of the departed intellectuals.