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Heads high among all achievers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-four Bangladeshi students secured the highest marks worldwide in thirteen subjects in the GCSE O-level examinations last year while another 19 have obtained the highest marks worldwide in six subjects of the A-level exams during the same period.

Two students also obtained A grade in 11 subjects in the 2008 O-level examinations.

These outstanding achievers were among the 953 O-level and A-level students who were awarded and honoured by The Daily Star at a formal ceremony held at the Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium in the capital yesterday morning.

The ceremony awarded O and A level examinees who achieved good results under both the Edexcel International and Cambridge International Examinations boards.

Rumana Fouzia Choudhury from Sunbeams School obtained 11 As in a single sitting of the O-level exams held during May-June 2008 while Arifa Sayyidah Ahsan from Dhanmondi Tutorial obtained 11 As in two consecutive sittings -- 6 As in May-June 2007 exams and 5 As in January 2008.

Students are permitted to take the O and A level exams in multiple sittings.

Two students acquired the highest number of A grade in A-level examinations in 2008.

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

The highest grade achievers of O and A level examinations pose for a group photo at the 10th annual award giving ceremony organised by The Daily Star at the Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium yesterday morning.

JS session resumes today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The inaugural session of parliament resumes today after a nine-day recess to transact some important business, including passage of a bill for continuation of separation of judiciary.

Officials in the parliament secretariat said the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry is likely to place its report in parliament today on scrutiny of the bill proposing some amendments to it.

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BCL factions clash at Dhaka Polytechnic

At least 20 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 20 students were injured in a clash between two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) last night at Latif hostel of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute over control of the dormitory.

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BAGERHAT-1 BY-POLLS Sheikh Helal to be elected unopposed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Convicted ex-lawmaker of Awami League Sheikh Helal Uddin is going to be elected MP uncontested from Bagerhat-1 constituency as none of the two contenders has appealed against rejection of their candidature during scrutiny.

The Election Commission (EC) can declare Sheikh Helal, cousin of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, elected unopposed after the deadline for withdrawal of candidatures expires on March 17.

"No one filed appeal against rejection of their nomination papers in Bagerhat-1 by-election until 5:00pm Saturday, the last time for filing appeal," an official in the EC Secretariat said.

According to the

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Amazing achievers honoured

Urged to build Bangladesh as best nation; 653 O level, 300 A level students receive Star awards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium was resounding with loud cheers and jubilation for the "nation builders of tomorrow" as The Daily Star yesterday honoured 953 O and A level students for outstanding achievements, including 53 who ranked among the world's top scorers, in the June 2007-June 2008 academic session.

Presence of teachers, friends and families marked the colourful function where the outstanding achievers were awarded medals and certificates of excellence. The audience burst into applause with the announcement of the name of each student. Awardees from 56 English medium schools gathered at the venue.

The four-hour-long event at the indoor stadium in Mirpur was sponsored by Brac Bank, Grameenphone and Edexcel International.

A musical presentation by a choir formed with students during intervals

COUNTRY'S HIGHEST A ACHIEVERS IN A AND O LEVELS	
O Level	A Level
1. Rumana Fouzia Choudhury (Sunbeams) 11 A's in one sitting.	1. Marjuk Sultan (Sunshine Grammar school and college) 5 A's in one sitting.
2. Arifa Sayyidah Ahsan (Dhanmondi Tutorial) 11 A's in two consecutive sittings.	2. Mosharrat Barkatullah (Scholastica) 6 A's in two consecutive sittings.

made the award giving ceremony lively.

Since 1999 The Daily Star has been awarding students who secure at least six A's in two consecutive sittings in the O level and three A's in the A level exams.

This year 653 O level students and 300 A level students received the awards.

Among the 53 students who scored highest in their subjects in the world, 34 completed O level dominating a diverse set of disciplines from economics to English language and 19 completed A level, many of them

clinching the honour in accounting alone.

Eminent educationist and writer Prof Muhammed Zafar Iqbal presented the certificates and medals to the future nation builders. All the students were also presented the "History of the Liberation War", a book by Zafar Iqbal.

Speaking as the chief guest, Prof Iqbal called on the achievers to build the nation as the best nation in the world using their knowledge and merit. "Our generation gave you the country through a bloody liberation war and you have to make this country

the best one in the world," he said.

He also said the English medium schools should take special initiative to focus on the country's history and rich cultural heritage.

Addressing as the special guest, British High Commissioner Stephen Evans said the best asset of Bangladesh is its people and the country would not only benefit economically but also move forward socially if the people are given the best education and proper training.

"Ask not what your country would do for you, but ask what you would do for the country," Evans said quoting late American president John F Kennedy.

David Davies, relationship manager of Edexcel International, Syed Mahbubur Rahman, deputy managing director of Brac Bank, and Oddvar Hesjedal, chief executive officer of Grameenphone, also spoke at the function.

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SEE MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 12

4 PLCs, local govt bodies run without legal cover

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four public limited companies (PLCs) and all the local government institutions have been functioning for more than half a month without any legal authority, said legal experts.

The unusual situation has arisen as the ordinances promulgated by the immediate past caretaker government on them were not ratified in time, and fresh bills for continuation of their activities are yet to be passed by parliament.

The ordinances amending the existing laws turned Biman Bangladesh Airlines and Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) into two PLCs.

And two other PLCs -- Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited (BTCL) and Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Limited (BSCCL) -- were set up by dividing Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB).

Moreover, the interim government promulgated ordinances on all the four tiers of local governments -- upazila parishad, city corporation, municipality and union parishad -- by repealing the existing laws on them.

But all the ordinances ceased to have effect on February 25 creating a legal vacuum as they were not ratified by parliament in time.

On expiry of effectiveness of the ordinances, the present

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PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Children on the Finley Bharawara tea garden in Srimongol dress up in colourful attires to celebrate the Lal Puja or Holi. The photo was taken on March 13.

Pak govt urges talks to ease political crisis

Information minister resigns due to discord over media handling, Zardari announces concessions

AP, PTI, INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Islamabad

Pakistan's president urged opposition parties yesterday to negotiate an end to the country's political crisis while vowing to maintain law and order "at all cost" in the face of anti-government protests.

Even as he grapples with a serious political crisis, Pakistan's beleaguered President Asif Ali Zardari suffered a major blow yesterday with one of his close aides, Information Minister Sherry Rehman, resigning due to differences over government's handling of the media.

The rift with opponents led by former premier Nawaz Sharif has added to doubts about the stability of the year-old government and its ability to help the West counter the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Sharif has thrown his weight behind mass demonstrations that plan to converge on the capital, Islamabad, on Monday. The government has banned the rallies, raising fears of violence.

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Diarrhoea cases on rise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Every hour an average of 40 to 45 diarrhoea patients are seeking admission at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) this season. The rate is alarmingly three times more than that of last March.

Over 600 new patients show up every day and the ICDDR,B authorities are struggling to accommodate them. Temporary tents have been set up on the hospital premises.

The hospital has accommodation for 350 patients and

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Prayer Timing		
March 15		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-35
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-14	6-18
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation