

## Obama strikes chord with Russian youth

AFP, Moscow

It seemed to be change they could believe in: Students at this Russian university burst into applause yesterday when the US presidential seal was hung on the podium before Barack Obama's speech.

Young, well-dressed and poised to join Russia's capital-ist elite, the graduating class of the New Economic School in Moscow also gave a standing ovation to President Obama.

Obama's speech and its message of US-Russian reconciliation was aimed at a nationwide audience, but for the lucky students receiving their diplomas, the visit by the US president was a special graduation present.

And few of them were happier than Oksana Sytnova, who was personally handed her summa cum laude diploma by Obama himself.

"This is a huge honour for me and I didn't expect that such a wonderful event would happen in my life," Sytnova gushed afterwards.

"I am very happy that President Obama came to our graduation and it was very pleasant for me when he congratulated me in Russian," she added.

When asked how Obama pronounced the challenging Russian word "pozdravlyayu" (congratulations), Sytnova said that he spoke "with a slight accent, but very clearly."

Sytnova, who plans to work for Russia's Economic Development Ministry after graduation, was nervous when she learned a week earlier that she would receive the honour from Obama.

"It was very unexpected for me and I got very worried," she said.

Obama's speech in the cavernous Gostiny Dvor convention centre in central Moscow, a stone's throw from Red Square, was part of a broader effort to improve strained relations with Russia.

US-Russian ties plunged to a post-Cold War low during the administration of Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, who was loathed around the world for his emphasis on unilateralism and military force in US foreign policy.

In contrast, Obama has called for a "reset" in relations with Moscow and has stressed interests shared by the United States and Russia -- a message warmly greeted by students on Tuesday.

"I think what President Obama said about our common interests was very important," said Yelena Neumoina, a first-year student at the New Economic School who

attended the graduation. "Many students, many of my friends, have been waiting for big changes compared to what there was before in the relations between our countries."

The students of the New Economic School are far from typical Russians, being more likely to work in big business or continue their studies at a prestigious Western university.

Founded in 1992, the school has trained a number of top businessmen and government officials, including some close to President Dmitry Medvedev.

But Sergei Guriev, the rector of the New Economic School, said he did not think Obama was seeking to reach out to one segment of Russian society or support one politician over another.

"He wants to send a signal to all of society, to show that he does not just want dialogue between politicians, but between people. That's why he spoke to simple students," Guriev said.

The graduates who clinked champagne glasses and posed for photos once their graduation was over did undergo some hardships to see a visiting US president address their class.

Tight security created long lines and forced the young men and women to rise early in the morning for what they still called a "graduation evening," using the usual Russian phrase.

And Obama's late arrival -- his speech began an hour late after talks with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin overran -- meant a lengthy period of suspense, prompting the excitement level was hung upon the podium.

## JMB offshoot

FROM PAGE 16  
forces and he sustained a bullet wound in his leg, said Rab sources. They also recovered a pistol, nine bullets, three bullet shells and two empty magazines from the scene and his possession.

Immediately after the arrest of Islam O Muslim chief Abdul Rahman alias Shahadat, Selim fled to India. An intelligence agency finding out that he was back in Bangladesh informed Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) that he was hiding at his father-in-law's in Belpara, Shibganj.

Rab and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) team surrounded the house of Selim's in-laws around 1:00pm. Selim fired three shots at the team in a bid to avoid arrest and the team retaliated with five shots.

In a press conference last night, Director of Rab-5 Lt Col Israt Hossain said, "Selim, expert in light weaponry, used to collect arms for JMB."

He said Rab tracked Selim down based on Boma Mizan's confidential statement.

Arrested Islam O Muslim chief Abdul Rahman alias Shahadat and two of his associates also confirmed Selim's position in the new offshoot, said Lt Col Israt.

While describing the arrest, Rab officials said Selim used to go to India frequently. He used to provide Rajshahi and Chapinawabganj JMB and its new offshoot with arms.

After the execution of JMB top leaders Shaekh Abdul Rahman and Siddique Islam Bangla Bhai, JMB leaders were divided over ideological, economical and different other issues.

The Rajshahi Rab chief said, "The divided leaders later formed new outfits and were engaged in recruiting fresh members across the country."

Shahadat and Selim were trying to reorganise the inactive JMB members across the country under the new banner of Islam O Muslim, sources said.

Meanwhile, police yesterday arrested Nazmul Haque Tuhin, a convicted JMB member as he came out of Rajshahi Central Jail on a High Court bail.

Tuhin, 34, of Harail in Joypurhat Sadar, was sent to jail after he surrendered before a court on October 12, 2005. He was later convicted in a case filed in connection with the August 17, 2005 serial blasts and sentenced to 30 years imprisonment by a Rajshahi court.

Talking to the press, Tuhin protested his innocence and said he was framed by a businessman who had strong ties with some rogue policemen.

## HR Commission

FROM PAGE 1

proceed. It will however recommend measures for the government to take on the matter if necessary. In that case, the government will have to turn in a follow-up report within six months.

The standing committee report placed in parliament yesterday afternoon cites article 152 (1) of the constitution that says the disciplined forces mean the armed forces and police and "any other force declared by law to be a disciplined force".

It recommends that the commission be comprised of not more than seven members including a chairman. The original bill proposes the rights body to be made up of a chairman and two members.

The committee proposed some changes in formation of the selection committee as well.

It wants a seven-member selection committee and the speaker to be at the helm. The law minister, home minister, Law Commission's chairman, cabinet secretary, and two lawmakers nominated by the speaker to represent the treasury and opposition benches will be the other five members.

The bill says the selection committee will have six members. It will be headed by an Appellate Division judge nominated by the chief justice.

The cabinet secretary, attorney general, comptroller and auditor general, chairman of the Public Service Commission and law secretary will be the other five members.

Suranjit Sengupta, chairman of the parliamentary body, said the committee members had visited five countries during scrutiny of the bill and made the recommendations in the light of nature and activities of the human rights commissions in those countries.

The last caretaker government had the National Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2007 promulgated during its tenure and accordingly formed a commission. But that ordinance ceased to be in effect on February 25 as it was not ratified in parliament.

Later, the government placed the bill modelled on the ordinance.

The bill proposes giving a legal coverage to the commission's activities under the new ineffective ordinance.

Suranjit said the standing committee tried to get rid of the bureaucratic tangles the ordinance had presented in formation of the commission.

## Sohel Taj

FROM PAGE 16

said when contacted yesterday. The state minister left for the US on June 9 to stay with his family.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Sahara Khatun is in Singapore for treatment since July 2. She suffered waist injuries as she fell in the washroom of her official residence.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is now looking after activities of the home ministry. Sources said she might give charge of the ministry to a minister for an interim period.

Prior to leaving for the US, Sohail Taj had reportedly resigned on June 1. The PM however did not accept his resignation, and asked him to go on leave.

## Gen Moeen

FROM PAGE 16

Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker, confirmed BOA chief executive officer and director col (retd) Waliullah yesterday. He also said the BOA has called an emergency executive committee meeting tomorrow following the resignation of general Moeen, who took over the presidency on July 7, 2005 and was re-elected unopposed on April 3, 2008.

General Md Abdul Mubin, who succeeded Moeen as the new Chief of Army Staff on July 15, is likely to take over the BOA helm, subject to the approval of the sport minister. Traditionally the BOA presidency has been reserved for the army chief.

Gen Moeen however held two important posts during the caretaker government as he was also the chairman of the National Sports Council (NSC) from July 8, 2007 to April 20, 2009 before stepping down from the sports regulatory body following the controversy over a sponsorship deal between Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) and Bashundhara Group.

Gen Moeen won the Olympic Council of Asia's (OCA) Order of Merit and received his laurel from OCA president Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in Dhaka on April 29 this year.

During his nearly two-year tenure at the NSC, he held elections to all major sports federations including the BFF and Bangladesh Cricket Board. He also lured 20 banks to support 19 cash-starved federations.

## Govt's Tipaimukh

FROM PAGE 1

a conspiracy. It knows that people in Bangladesh or India to be affected by the proposed dam will protest against the construction if they have got the actual information about the dam," said Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury at a dialogue.

Samaj Rupantor Oddhayan Kendro (study centre), a socio-political think tank, organised the dialogue titled "Tipaimukh Dam and our role to protect national interests" at the National Press Club.

Prof Choudhury said the dam, if constructed, will affect wetlands and agriculture in the country's northeastern part and hamper water flow of Meghna river.

"We cannot depend on our government because it serves the purpose of vested quarters instead of serving the interests of people. So our role is to wage movement against the construction of the dam at all levels," said the professor, also the president of the study centre.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of Communist Party of Bangladesh, said Tipaimukh Dam will seriously affect the lives and livelihoods of the country's northeastern region that depends on the water flows of Kushiara and Surma rivers.

He said any effort to construct dam or barrage in the upper stream must be resisted.

Regarding the visit of a parliamentary delegation to Tipaimukh, the leftist leader said mere visit would not work. "We need concrete information--how much water would be contained and how much would be released and how the dam will impact on us."

Engineer Sheikh Shahidullah termed maintaining secrecy by India about the dam a crime that cannot be forgiven. "We cannot believe India because of its past records."

Constructing Tipaimukh dam for hydroelectric power plant also brings huge threats of earthquake for the region, he said adding that historical evidences suggest Tipaimukh was the source of huge earthquakes.

Jahangirnagar University Professor Anu Muhammad said the damages that Tipaimukh dam will cause couldn't be compensated with the money equal to 10 times of the country's budget.

Criticising Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty's comment about the country's experts, he said he must clarify what he said in public.

Zunaid Saki, a board member of the study centre, in his keynote presentation said India is also constructing a barrage at Fulertala, up from Tipaimukh, to withdraw water flow, to link project.

"So Tipaimukh dam will not affect the water flow is a lie," he said, adding the dam project will cause drought during dry season and heavy flood during rainy season.

Engineer Enamul Haque, Workers' Party leader Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Prof Ahmed Kamal and Prof Pias Karim also spoke.

## JCD men

FROM PAGE 1

DU unit's general secretary Saiful Islam Firoz and senior vice president Mamun-or-Rashid

During yesterday's demonstration, JCD activists chanted slogans against the decision and vowed to continue their protest against the new leadership.

Both Firoz and Rashid condemned the expulsion, terming the move a conspiracy against JCD.

Firoz alleged that BNP leaders Fajlul Haq Milon, Shimul Biswas, Amanullah Aman and Maruf Kamal Khan had used the opportunity to form a central committee with "aged leaders", ignoring JCD activists' expectations.

The agitating activists alleged that a section of BNP high-ups keeping Khaleda in the dark.

Several hundred aggrieved JCD men had protested on the campus on July 1, when the names of the 101 members of the new central committee were announced.

Internal conflicts has dented JCD seriously as a large section of its activists rejected the newly formed committee, alleging that top JCD leaders have links with militancy and were involved in the conspiracy against BNP during its challenging period in the immediate past.

## RPO breached

FROM PAGE 1

The move however triggered protests among leaders, workers and supporters of JCD, which is still acting as a front organisation of BNP.

Talking to The Daily Star on Sunday, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said BNP has clearly violated the registration laws by announcing JCD central committee and approving the five office bearers.

"Besides, those who were made leaders of the committee are not students at all. None but students have the right to do student politics in an organised way," Malik said referring to newspaper reports.

Contacted by The Daily Star yesterday, BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain however said the formation of the committee did not violate RPO provisions.

He said the new committee has been formed as per BNP's present constitution that recognises JCD as its "student front".

"We have yet to change our constitution as per the provisions of the RPO. After changing the constitution, the JCD committee will be formed as per the changed constitution," Mosharraf added.

Officials at the EC Secretariat however said BNP in its provisional constitution de-links JCD as its front organisation and made provision for allowing JCD to run its activities as per its own constitution.

The BNP also officially pledged that it would ratify the provisional constitution and submit it to EC in six months since the inaugural sitting of the ninth parliament, which began on January 25.

The officials said one might challenge legality of JCD's new committee, particularly appointment of the five office bearers, who are not regular students.

When his attention was drawn to the issue, Election Commissioner Muhammad Sohail Hussain said yesterday the electoral reforms were done before the ninth parliamentary election to encourage democratic practice within the parties and to de-link front organisations from the parties.

"I don't want to make

further comments on the issue," Sohail, who is also acting as the chief election commissioner (CEC) in absence of CEC ATM Shamsul Huda, told The Daily Star.

Interestingly, EC has lost authority to take action if a political party forms any front or affiliated organisation comprising students and teachers or labourers of any financial institutions as the Awami League government passed a bill in February in parliament curtailing its authority.

The ordinance promulgated by the past caretaker government bringing reforms in the electoral laws empowered EC to cancel registration of a political party if it forms front or affiliated organisation comprising teachers, students and labourers.

But the bill passed in parliament ratifying the ordinance dropped the provision that empowered EC to take action.

At the end of February EC decided to ask the government to reinstate the provision empowering the commission to take action in case of violation of registration provisions. But EC did not send the proposals to the government till yesterday.

**BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JCD CHIEF**

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia approved five office bearers of the central committee of JCD, making Sultan Salauddin Tuku its chief.

Tuku, who was vice-president of JCD twice, obtained graduation from marketing department of Dhaka University in 1992, says the affidavit he submitted as a parliamentary candidate to Tangail-2 constituency for the December 29 general elections on BNP nomination.

As per the affidavit, Tuku is a businessman and his annual income is around Tk 4.57 lakh and expenditure around Tk 1.5 lakh.

He is also a taxpayer and his TIN number is 110-105-6411- contra-7.

In the parliamentary election, Tuku, also the younger brother of former BNP deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu, the prime accused in August 21, 2004 grenade attack on an Awami League rally case, was defeated to AL candidate Khandakar Asaduzzaman.

## Carjackers

FROM PAGE 16

from Rana's possession at Paltan. They [carjackers] killed the driver on their way back to Dhaka form Comilla and left the body at Titas (Gouripur) area beside the highway."

DB sources said Rabin and Ali on June 26 afternoon rented the microbus for Tk 3,500 at Shah Ali to go to Robin's father-in-law's house at Homna in Comilla and they took their accomplices Sajib, Mahfuz and Mahidul from Shyamoli Technical area in the capital.

They started for Dhaka around 8:00pm and on the way they asked the driver of the microbus to stop at a market in Homna. Mahidul and Rabin bought some rope from the market and got back into the car.

They asked the driver to stop the car again at Gouripur area in Homna and strangled him with the rope. They left the body beside the highway, DB sources said.

Ali Akbar said, "We took the car to Shamim who was waiting near Jonaki Cinema Hall at Kakrail intersection and Shamim was supposed to sell the vehicle."

"We killed the driver so that later police could not trace us," he said.

## Free banks

FROM PAGE 16

Kamal, chief of the parliamentary body, told reporters after the meeting.

On Sunday, Finance Minister AMA Muhit revealed a list of 2,196 organisations that defaulted on loans worth Tk 15,451 crore and told parliament that the government has initiated steps to recover the amount.

Mostafa Kamal yesterday said discussions can be held to find out ways for forming asset management companies and running them effectively if the government accepts the proposal.

Asked if forming such companies will improve the situation arising out of the bad culture of defaulting on loans, he said the initiative would be successful. "In many countries including Malaysia and Thailand, the system is very popular as an answer to bad loans."

The parliamentary standing committee also asked the finance ministry to appoint an ombudsman who will work to resolve banking related conflicts and problems and protect interests of clients.

"The ombudsman will work under the central bank," Kamal said.

The committee recommended that the finance ministry introduce cash incentive packages for exporters, under which an exporter will receive Tk 1 against each dollar of their net export. The incentive will be deposited in their bank accounts.

It was recommended that expatriate Bangladeshi workers also get the same amount of incentive against each dollar they send home in remittance, which the committee said will encourage labourers to send more remittance.

It recommended increasing salaries of Bangladesh Bank officials and employees to boost efficiency. It also discussed the central bank's monetary policy in case the global economic meltdown prolongs.

## Engr shot dead

FROM PAGE 16

He said the 'khadem' informed the matter to his wife Nadia Alo. She later phoned Yusuf and soon after receiving a reply from him, she heard a voice that someone was threatening him for putting the phone off. After five minutes, the criminals called back and said "Yusuf has been killed."

The body of Yusuf was found on the premises of a house at East Monipur, about half a kilometre away from his residence.

Sumi Begum, one of the tenants of the house, said she heard sounds of three gunshots and later saw the body lying on the premises.

On information, police rushed in and recovered the body along with Tk 4,000 and his cell phone set.

OC of Mirpur Police Station Najimuddin said the engineer might have been killed over a feud as the killers did not take away anything from victim's possession. Police were investigating the incident, he said.

Source at Dhaka Medical College Hospital said Yusuf received three bullets at his forehead and abdomen.

The victim's family members said they could not ascertain whether Yusuf had any enemies who might kill him.

## Adieu, King of Pop

FROM PAGE 1

with soul legend Smokey Robinson reading letters of condolence from stars and world leaders unable to attend, which included a tribute from former South African president Nelson Mandela.

"Michael was a giant and a legend in the music industry. And we mourn with the millions of fans worldwide," Mandela's tribute read.

Motown diva Diana Ross meanwhile -- named by Jackson in his will as an alternative guardian to his children -- said she had chosen to mourn privately.

"Michael was a personal love of mine, a treasured part of my world, part of the fabric of my life," Ross's tribute said. "Michael wanted me to be there for his children, and I will be there if they ever need me."

Mourners arriving at the venue were greeted with a glossy commemorative brochure which chronicled Jackson's life and times and carried heart-felt tributes to the star from his family.

"God has now called for you to come home, collect your wings and to fulfil your demands in heaven and continue your magic amongst the angels," sister La Toya Jackson wrote. "Keep the magic going!"

Exact details of the service have been kept under wraps but organisers have confirmed that Stevie Wonder, Mariah Carey and Oscar-winner Jennifer Hudson were among the stars due to participate.

Reports said the service would conclude with a rendition of "We Are the World", the single Jackson co-wrote in 1985 with Lionel Richie to help raise funds for famine-relief efforts in Africa.

Outside the Staples Center an additional 1,400 police officers were on duty to provide security, while several city blocks surrounding the venue were sealed off for hours beforehand.

Organisers had appealed to ticketless fans to watch the event on television, fearing chaos if hundreds of thousands take to the streets but huge crowds had failed to materialise early yesterday.

A live feed of the service was

being made available free to television networks, while the event was being streamed via social networking websites Facebook and MySpace, officials said.

Excitement was building around the world, as fans gathered to sing Jackson's greatest hits and watch his famous music videos ahead of the event.

In Tokyo, hundreds of fans flocked to Tower Records in the fashionable Shibuya shopping district for a series of free viewings of Jackson's videos.

In Australia, fans in Melbourne were expected to brave both the pre-dawn darkness and icy temperatures to watch the memorial on a giant television screen set up in the city's central plaza, Federation Square.

US President Barack Obama meanwhile told CNN in an interview from Russia said Jackson was "one of the greatest entertainers of our generation."

"I think like Elvis, like (Frank) Sinatra, like the Beatles, he became a core part of our culture," Obama said, acknowledging the "tragedy" that was a part of the singer's life.

"His extraordinary talent and his music was matched with a big dose of tragedy, and difficulty in his private life," Obama said. "I don't think we can ignore that, but it's important for us to affirm what was best in him."

Jackson, 50, sold more than 750 million albums during a four-decade career that was ultimately overshadowed by repeated allegations of child abuse, his startling physical transformation and eccentric behaviour.

While all eyes were on Jackson's memorial yesterday, both local and federal law enforcement agencies continued to probe the circumstances of his June 25 death.

An autopsy was carried out on Jackson's body the day after his death, but the Los Angeles County Coroner's office has said it will not issue a final cause of death for "several weeks" when the results of exhaustive toxicology tests are known.

## Armed Han Chinese

FROM PAGE 16

Police used loudspeakers to appeal to the Han Chinese crowd to stop, but a group of about 300 protesters were joined by two other columns of marchers on Jiefang Nan Road. They appeared to be heading for the Grand Bazaar, the predominantly Muslim area of the city, but were blocked by police.

The crowd, which took up several blocks of the five-lane road, chanted "Unite" and "Modern Society," and waved wooden sticks, lead pipes, shoes and hoes in the air. As they headed down a back street toward a mosque, several loud explosions rang out followed by rising white puffs of smoke followed by the smell of tear gas.

The Han Chinese march follows a protest by about 200 people, mostly women from the Uighur minority group, who protested against the security crackdown that has led to more than 1,000 arrests in Urumqi following Sunday's riot, the area's worst ethnic violence in decades.

The women said police came through their neighbourhood Monday night and strip-searched men to check for cuts and other signs of fighting before hauling them away.

"My husband was detained at gunpoint. They were stripping people naked. My husband was scared so he locked the door, but the police broke down the door and took him away," said a woman, who gave her name as Aynir. She said about 300 people were arrested in the market in the southern section of town.

The protesters briefly scuffled with paramilitary police, who pushed them back with long sticks before both sides retreated. The 90-minute protest played out in front of foreign reporters on a government-guided tour.

Outside the city's southern railway station around mid-day, groups of 10 or so Uighur men with bricks and knives attacked Han Chinese passersby and shop-owners until police ran them off, witnesses said.

"They were using everything for weapons, like bricks, sticks and clavers," said a Mr. Ma, an employee at a nearby fastfood restaurant. "Whenever the rioters saw someone on the street, they would ask 'are you a Uighur?' If they kept silent or couldn't answer in the Uighur language, they would get beaten or killed."

It was not immediately clear if any one was killed in those reported attacks.

The violence and protests expose the tensions between the minority Uighur people, largely Muslim, and the ethnic Han Chinese in Xinjiang, a strategically vital region three times the size of Texas that shares borders with Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries. The region has been one of China's fastest growing, buoyed by oil and gas industries, attracting Chinese migrants.

Yet many Uighurs (pronounced WEE-gurs) resent the