



Economist Prof Anisur Rahman admires a wall magazine after inaugurating a three-day wall magazine festival and competition at the Bangla Academy yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Weavers to get special benefits, says minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque yesterday said the government would take an initiative to offer special benefits for weavers working in handloom industry.

"The weavers contribute a lot to the country's economy. But they are deprived of their due wages. We will offer them special benefits with an aim to encourage them to manufacture better quality products," he said.

The minister said this as the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of a 10-day photo and painting exhibition titled 'Rangdhanu' organised by Rang, a fashion house, marking its 15th anniversary at the National Museum in the city.

Managing Director of Rang Biplob Saha, noted artist Hashem Khan and lawmaker Sarah Begum Kabori were present.

A total of 27 photographs and paintings were displayed at the event which will continue until January 25.

Three colour painters -- Raj Chandra Chakma of Rangamati, Mantu Chandra Das of Chapainawabganj and Shahidul Islam of Tangail -- were awarded a crest and Tk 10,000 each at the programme.

Deadlock continues at Ctg veterinary varsity Frustration mounts among students

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Chittagong

Frustration is mounting among the students of the country's lone veterinary university in Chittagong, as the deadlock over the demand for removal of its vice chancellor continues for the last one month.

The Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Science University (CVASU) has been closed sine die since December 14 last year as Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and General Students Forum jointly enforced an indefinite strike demanding removal of VC Dr Nitish Chandra Debnath on charges of corruption.

On Thursday, the 12th syndicate meeting of the university was held at the bungalow of the vice chancellor, but no decision regarding the opening of the institution was taken.

During the announcement of closure of the university, the VC also asked the students to vacate the hall, but some 50 to 60 students loyal to Bangladesh Chhatra League are still staying at the hall, violating the order, sources said.

The university authorities blamed the present impasse on the agitating students who are now staying at the hall.

At the syndicate meeting, the authorities again asked the students to vacate the hall immediately.

VC Dr Nitish told The Daily Star that the university cannot be reopened unless the students vacate the hall and the law and

order improves on the campus.

He also said, "We sought help from the law enforcement agencies several times to make the students vacate the hall, but they took no steps."

CVASU BCL convener Kamol Kanti Mazumder said they will continue to stay at the hall unless the VC resigns.

The VC closed the varsity and ordered to vacate the hall only to foil the movement of the students, he said.

Sources said the agitating students withdrew their agitation programme temporarily on December 23 following interference of some central leaders of BCL, but a few BCL activists are still staying at the hall.

At Thursday's syndicate meeting, the university authorities took some decisions, including changing the name of its hall, which was earlier named after former BNP minister Abdullah Al Noman.

Renaming the hall after Masterda Surya Sen was also a demand of the agitating students.

Sources said the four-hour long syndicate meeting also approved the academic calendar, recruitment of four lecturers, upgradation of pay scales of the staffs.

Meanwhile, a three-member probe body of the University Grants Commission (UGC) visited the university on January 3 to investigate the allegations of corruption against the VC, sources said.

Wall magazine festival begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day wall magazine festival and competition began on Bangla Academy premises yesterday with a view to exploring the hidden talents of the secondary level students.

Economist Prof Anisur Rahman inaugurated the competition while Bangla Academy Director General Prof Shamsuzzaman, noted litterateur Selina Hossain and World University Vice Chancellor Dr Abdul Mannan Chowdhury were also present.

Talking to newsmen, Bangladesh Deyal Patrika Parishad General Secretary Motahar Akand said the event aims at connecting the school children with the intellectuals and establishing wall magazine as a form of recreational education for the children.

Around 300 students of 104 schools across the country are participating in the event, which ends tomorrow.

Elephants kill 2 in Cox's Bazar

UNB, Cox's Bazar

Two people were killed in an attack by a herd of wild elephants at Dariardighi village in Ramu upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified Mujibullah, 35, son of Abdus Shukur, and Gulbahar, 45, wife of Ali Ahmed, of the same village.

Police said the elephants, numbering eight to 10, swooped on a group of people while they went to a nearby jungle to collect firewood around 1:30pm, killing the victims on the spot.

The villagers recovered the bodies in the afternoon.

BBC Sanglap in Rangamati today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

An episode of BBC Bangla Sanglap on contemporary CHT issues will be held at the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) Complex at 2:30pm in Rangamati today.

Dipankar Talukder, state minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) affairs, and Chakma Circle Chief Raja Devasish Roy are expected to attend the programme as panellists.

SM Hall reunion Feb 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A reunion of the former students of Salimullah Hall at Dhaka University (DU) will be held at the DU playground on February 6, says a press release.

Convener of the reunion preparatory committee Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury and Secretary General of Salimullah Muslim Hall Former Students' Association Sahab Ullah have requested the former students of the hall to register their names by January 25.

Interested people can dial 01713292951, 01819145007, 01713084185, 01713403585, 01715697135 or 01713003343.

BNP should return to parliament

Speakers tell book launching ceremony

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a book launching ceremony yesterday said the main opposition BNP should return to parliament right now, as there is no reason to boycott it.

But the BNP leaders said they are refraining from attending the parliament sessions, not boycotting it, due to 'some specific reasons'.

However, all the participants criticised the government decision to withdraw the appeal against the High Court verdict regarding the fifth amendment to the constitution, saying that social and political reality was not considered in the verdict.

The party leaders said the fifth amendment is a political issue; it would be resolved politically and nothing will go unchallenged.

Two books titled 'Parliament and I' and 'Laws, Unlaws, Above-laws, Outlaws

and In-laws' by Abdul Mannan, treasurer of BNP and a former state minister, were launched at the programme at a city hotel. BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleida Zia attended the ceremony.

Former chief justice Syed JR Mudassir Hossain unveiled the covers of the books.

Abdul Mannan made introductory remarks on his books while Mehnaz Mannan conducted the programme. Nasir Uddin Ashim gave a vote of thanks.

Referring to the fifth amendment, former law minister Moudud Ahmed said the opposition leader will announce programme to protect the national interests and the people have to be united. "Nothing will go unchallenged in Bangladesh."

Former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar said, "We will go to the House after our demands are fulfilled. We will

walk out of parliament on specific issues and will be back again to make parliament effective."

Prof Emajuddin said parliament could not be effective till now, but it has to be effective.

Senior lawyer Justice T Khan said the Jatiya Sangsad with two-third majority passed the fifth amendment to the constitution.

Journalist Mahfuzullah said BNP should join the parliament, as there is no reason to boycott the House. "Parliamentary democracy is the only way for BNP. The party should move forward by joining parliament as well as carrying out movement."

If necessary, BNP can walk out of the parliament, but the party must go to the House, he added.

Senior lawyer Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmad and Editor of The New Age Nurul Kabir also spoke.

Fresh water crisis in Sundarbans

16 forest stations to get desalinisation plants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Sixteen desalinisation plants will be distributed among the same number of forest stations in the Sundarbans to ensure sweet water in the area.

State Minister for Forests and Environment Hasan Mahmud yesterday assured forest officials of distributing the plants.

He said this during his visit to the world's largest mangrove forest in the afternoon.

Once the plants are installed at the ponds of the forest stations in the Sundarbans, supply of drinking water can be ensured for tourists, forest activists, fishermen and bowalis (woodcutters) deep in the forest.

Mihir Kumar Dey, divisional forest officer of Sundarbans (east), said there was an acute shortage of sweet water in the Sundarbans after the fresh water of 75 ponds was mixed with saline water in

cyclone Aila.

Hasan made the announcement after the matter was brought to his notice that water crisis will be aggravated further in future if the situation does not improve.

The government is expected to receive the plants from Japan for free.

He had visited different parts of the forest, including Wildlife Breeding Centre at Karamjal and Harbaria Tourism Centre, by a speedboat before he left for Khulna.

The state minister also released two saltwater crocodiles in Harbaria canal.

Joint Secretary Aparup Chowdhury, Chief Conservator of Forest Md Abdul Motaleb and Forest Conservator of Sundarbans Circle Akbar Ali were present during the visit.

Forest staffs sought assistance from the minister for risk allowance and building infrastructure facilities in the Sundarbans.

Protest against move to restore '72 constitution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several thousand people staged demonstrations in the city yesterday to protest the government's move to restore the constitution of 1972.

The protesters, under the banner of National Committee to Protect Islam- and religion-based politics, also held a rally at Bijaynagar Road where they demanded immediate removal of the law minister.

Witnesses said the demonstrators brought out a procession from the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Juma prayers and paraded through Palatan and National Press Club areas before gathering at Bijoyanagar Road for the rally.

They also chanted slogans against the government move to ensure women's equal rights to properties.

On January 4, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said religion-based politics would be banned if cancellation of the fifth amendment to the constitution was finalised by the Supreme Court.



Devotees leave the Bishwa Ijtema venue after saying Juma prayers at Tongi yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Indian team in Ctg for feasibility study on 1000-bed hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A two-member team from Narayana Hrudayalaya (NH) Group of India arrived in Chittagong yesterday to study technical aspects and economic feasibility of a proposed world-class health care institution here.

Noted cardiac surgeon Dr Devi Shetty of NH Group intends to set up a 1000-bed Cardiac and Multi Specialty Hospital spreading over five lakh square feet on the land of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) at an estimated cost of Rs 243 crore.

The two-member team

comprising Rajkumar Harish and Proteem Chatarjee would hold a meeting with CPA officials at Bandar Bhaban today.

During its visit, the team would visit the possible sites for the hospital, said CPA Deputy Manager (Estate) Jilur Rahman, also member secretary of the seven-member committee of CPA formed in this regard.

Three possible sites have been identified for the proposed hospital. The first one is on Dock Workers Management Board (DWMB) office building site, the second one is at Nazirchar beside

Kalorghat Heavy Industrial Area and the third one is at Nimtola.

On DWMB site, CPA has 34 acres of land handed over to it after DWMB was dissolved. It could offer 20 acres of land from the site, a thickly populated and slum area just behind Chittagong Export Processing Zone.

Jilur said easy access and all sorts of utilities are available on this site.

At Nazirchar, CPA has 354 acres of land which is mostly barren. But, all the roads are very narrow on the site which is yet to develop for access of vehicles. It might take three

years to four years to develop infrastructure, sanitary facilities and utilities like electricity, gas and water.

While CPA has seven acres of land on Nimtola site. But, with easy access and all sorts of utility services already existing, this site in the city centre is also a suitable one.

Following an invitation from NH Group, a CPA team visited two institutions of the group in Kolkata and Bangalore of India November last year to have a detailed outline of the proposed hospital project, CPA sources said.

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