

Unified admission tests for public universities on the cards: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government is preparing a policy to introduce a single test system for admission to all public universities.

She said this while speaking at a session of the parliament.

In response to lawmakers' queries, the PM described government's various ongoing measures including formation of national education policy, which she claimed brought revolutionary changes in the country's education system.

Mentioning the government's various measures to reduce traffic congestion in the city, the PM said

BRTC would begin a bus service for schools on Mirpur-12 to Azimpur route from January 15 next year.

She said, "Fourteen school buses will run in this route at an interval of 10 minutes from 6:00am to 9:00am. Besides, buses will also run in the same route from 11:00am to 3:00pm from both ends for convenience of school going students."

The fare has been fixed from a minimum of Tk 5 to a maximum of Tk 18 at a rate of Tk 1.20 per kilometre, she added.

She told the House of plans to reduce traffic congestion in the city including construction of link roads on both sides of the rail crossing from city's Sonargaon to Mohakhali fly-

over and from Golapshah mazar to Babubazar.

There would also be a link road in Hatirjheel project area and construction of Kuril flyover and of Madani Avenue Road, 100 feet in width, from Pragati Sharani to Balu River.

AGRICULTURAL LAND

While speaking on country's agriculture sector, the PM said her government is working to buy land in different African countries to produce food grains.

"Price of land in many African countries is low. They have vast amounts of land, but not the adequate manpower to cultivate them.

"So, we are working to buy those lands and take our farmers there to cultivate crops. We will bring the crops after giving the host countries a portion of the produce.

"We have taken some measures to this end. I hope we will be able to give you good news in this regard in two or three months."

PRIVATE TELEVISION CHANNELS

In response to a query, the PM asked the finance minister to look into whether private television channels are paying their due amount of taxes regularly.

She also said private television channels earn a good amount of money through advertisements but

in some cases they violate government regulations.

Action will be taken against any private television channel if it is found involved in encouraging militancy through their programmes, she said.

STALKING

BSS adds: The PM said the present government had already undertaken steps to frame a strict law to check stalking.

"After reviewing the existing law on stalking, initiatives have been undertaken to enact new law by keeping provision for stern punishment for this social menace," she said in reply to a scripted question raised by treasury bench member Begum Faridunnahar Laily.

BORDER GUARD BILL PASSED Mutineers to face death penalty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed the Border Guard Bangladesh bill with the provision of death penalty for offences like mutiny, killing and arson within the paramilitary force.

The government has moved to enact the law repealing the existing one to restructure the Bangladesh Rifles in the wake of the heinous killings of army officers at the Pikhana headquarters in February last year.

The new law will take effect after the president consents to the bill, and the force will be renamed the Border Guard Bangladesh. Under the law, some stringent rules and provisions will be followed in the operation of the security force.

The existing law allows the BDR authorities to jail any soldier for a maximum of seven years for his involvement in mutiny. The force is currently trying the suspects of last year's BDR mutiny in the special courts while the trial of killing, looting, arson, and other grievous offences will be held in the civil courts.

The unprecedented mutiny broke out when army officers refused to fulfil the demands made by BDR jawans at their yearly Darbar (assembly). The mutiny left 74 people including 57 army officers killed.

Amid absence of the BNP-led opposition lawmakers, Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday proposed the passage of the bill with provisions for the reformation of the border force, its control, administration and discipline.

The provision dealing with mutiny says if two or more members jointly disobey a legal order of the authorities of the border force, armed forces or auxiliary forces, or challenge and resist them, the members will be charged with mutiny.

Besides, expressing anger to the authorities or making attempts to do so is considered mutiny in the provision, and the maximum punishment for such action would be death penalty.

The bill also kept the post of director general of the border force for the army and other posts will be given to army officers' commissioned officers on deputation or to the force's junior officers by promoting them. The director general will command, administer and control the force in accordance with the law.

The bill also suggests that during war the border force will be placed under the control of the defence ministry and will discharge duties assigned by the ministry.

The bill has provision for formation of a reserved force consisted of retired junior officers and border guard men. The reserve force members will have to assist the regular force when asked to do so.

Upon government approval, the director general may appoint reserve force members as junior officers and rank-holder border guard members for a certain period due to shortage of manpower in the force.

Meanwhile, the House also passed another bill amending the electoral rolls law for registration of emigrant Bangladesh citizens in the voter list.

WAR CRIMES 'See if govt deviates from holding trial'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Ektattur Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee Executive President Shahriar Kabir yesterday called upon voters of next general election to oversee the government's commitment for building a secular Bangladesh and carrying out the war crimes trial.

"People supported the grand alliance in 2009 election as they were united over the ideology of 1971.

"If the government now slips from the ideologies, people, specially the new generation, will answer through the next election," said Kabir, also a writer and journalist.

He was addressing a conference organised by the committee's Rajshahi University (RU) convening unit at RU Central Shaheed Minar premises.

A five-member board of the committee's RU council was formed at the conference making Saddam Hossain Tipu president and Abdul Gaffar Sumon the general secretary.

Kabir said if the government tries to restore the constitution of 1972 keeping some changes brought since 1975 by the allies of Pakistan, there would be no doubt that ghosts of Jamaat-Shibir are living within the government.

He said politics in the name of religion is dangerous and has been proven during the rule of BNP-Jamaat between 2001 and 2006 through the rise of fanaticism.

He warned Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of danger saying she should be aware that Bangabandhu's liberal views are one of the reasons that led to his assassination.

Chaired by the committee's RU convening unit Convener Shiddartha Sankar Saha, the conference was addressed among others by the committee's General Secretary Kazi Mukul, Central Vice President Dr Sayed Shafikul Islam and Rajshahi Muktiyuddha Pathagar President Shafiqur Rahman Badsha.

PM warns against drug peddlers

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday administered strong warning against drug peddlers and suppliers as well as requested parents and teachers to give more time to youngsters to protect them from getting spoiled.

"I am warning drug peddlers of severe consequences. At the same time, I would request parents and teachers to be more attentive to their children. If your child remained laid on the streets taking drugs, what would you do with your wealth?" she said.

Hasina made the remarks while inaugurating the National Youth Day 2010 at the Osmani Auditorium in the city.

The prime minister expressed her concern over "competition" of becoming rich in a short time.

"It is very unfortunate that a group of people is running after money blindly. In doing so, they are not taking care of their children," she said.

Hasina said in the society many parents are searching for money and at the same time their children are eligible for drugs.

She urged the youths to make them skilled and eligible to lead a life of dignity in the present era of modern technology.

The prime minister also underscored the need for increasing amount of loan from the Employment Bank to Tk one lakh from the existing highest amount of Tk 50,000.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarkar chaired the programme, which was addressed by Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Youth and Sports Jahid Ahsan Russel MP and Secretary to the Youth and Sports Ministry Mahub Ahmed.



Activists of Nari Pakkha hold a candlelight vigil at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday commemorating the martyrs of the War of Liberation in 1971.

PHOTO: STAR

Tk 1,400cr to fight climate impacts

State minister tells parliament

BSS, Sangsad Bhaban

State Minister for Land Advocate Mustafizur Rahman yesterday said the government has so far allocated Tk 1,400 crore from its own fund for implementing afforestation programme with an objective to adapt to the climate change impacts.

He said this while replying to a supplementary question from lawmaker Sandana Halder of women constituency-32 at the Jatiya Sangsad here.

"The government has already allocated Tk 1,400 crore for afforestation, social afforestation, river dredging and coastal afforestation which have been undertaken as a strategy to adapt to the climate change impacts in the country," he said on behalf of the State Minister for Environment and Forests Dr Hasan Mahmud.

Replying to another supplementary question on the benefit of social afforestation from AL lawmaker Manzur Kader Quorehly, he said the government has increased the share of beneficiaries up to 75 percent under the social afforestation programme, which was only sixty percent earlier.

Import of 1.10 lakh tonnes food grains gets cabinet body nod

UNB, Dhaka

A food ministry proposal to import about 1.10 lakh metric tons of food grains was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Public Purchase yesterday.

Food Department will import the food grains in bulk under three separate packages as part of the government move to meet domestic demand through imported rice.

Of the food grains, 60,000 tonnes will be boiled non-Basmati rice in two packages and the remaining 50,000 tonnes wheat in one package.

An Indian supplier, New Delhi-based Emmsons International Limited, will supply both rice and wheat. The price of boiled non-Basmati rice has been fixed at 510 US dollar per metric ton while the price of wheat fixed at 348.91 US dollar

per tonne.

Official sources said the two rice import tender proposals were earlier rejected by the tender evaluation committee (TEC) as the rate was higher than that offered by the Indian government under a government-to-government agreement.

"But the same TEC committee backed out from its earlier stance on tender rejection and approved the proposal for reasons not known," said an official source.

The cabinet body's meeting, chaired by Finance Minister AMA Muhith, also approved some other projects including procurement of consultancy services for JICA-funded South-Western Rural Infrastructure, additional renovation and construction works for Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong and Osman Ali Stadium in

Narayanganj, and appointment of contractors for railway rehabilitation works on Sholashahar-Dohazari and Fateyabad-Nazirhat sections.

A proposal for procurement of biscuits under a "European Commission (EC) assisted School Feeding Programme" also received the nod of the committee.

Under the proposal, placed by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, five local factories will supply the biscuits for the school children.

The suppliers are Nabisco Biscuit & Bread Factory, Central Marketing Company, Masafi Bread and Biscuit Factory, Resco Biscuit & Bread Factory, and Mona Food Industry.

Of them, Masafi will supply biscuits for schools under two lots while others will supply the biscuits in single lot. The total cost of the project is Tk 108 crore.

BNP rally at Muktagon today

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition BNP will hold a rally at the city's Muktagon today to press home its demands including arrest of price hike of essentials, end to crisis of public utility services and worsening law and order.

VESTED PROPERTY BILL Minority communities concerned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different organisations yesterday expressed deep concern over placing the bill of Vested Property Return (amendment) Act 2010 in the parliament without necessary amendment and demanded reviewing of the act to protect rights of minority communities.

In a statement leaders of the Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad said the bill has been sent to the parliamentary standing committee on land ministry for further scrutiny and hoped it will be passed in the parliament after the necessary amendment recommended by the organisation.

Leaders of the Arpito (satu) Sampatti Ain Pratirodh Andolan sought prime minister's interference to review the act. They said the bill is going against minority community's interest.

DHAKA TODAY

Cultural programme
Steps Towards Development will organise a cultural programme. Venue: Central Shaheed Minar, Time: 3:00pm.

Heritage show
Arts Council Dhaka will arrange a heritage show programme. Venue: 12, Gulshan Avenue, Gulshan-2, Time: 5:00pm.

Commemorative speech
Bangla Academy will arrange a commemorative speech on Begum Rokeya. Venue: Academy seminar hall, Time: 4:45pm.

Seminar
USAID PRAGATI will organise a seminar on the occasion of international anti-corruption day. Venue: Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, Time: 9:00am.

Ananda mela
Mahila Committee of Officers Club will arrange ananda mela. Venue: Officers Club premises, Time: 10:00am.

Signature campaign
Green Bangla Coalition will arrange a signature campaign. Venue: Aparajeyo Bangla, Dhaka University, Time: 12:00pm.

Exhibition
An International Medical Equipment and Healthcare Services exhibition will be held. Venue: Sonargaon hotel, Time: 10:30am.

Workshop
Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission will arrange workshop. Venue: Atomic Building, Agargaon, Time: 10:00am.

Seminar
Centre for Advanced Research in Humanities will hold a seminar. Venue: Lecture theatre, Dhaka University, Time: 4:00pm.

Conference
A three-day long 16th Diabetes and Endocrine conference will be held. Venue: Bangladesh Institute of Health Science, Mirpur, Time: 9:00pm.

Cartoon exhibition
Transparency International Bangladesh will hold a cartoon exhibition. Venue: Fine arts department, Dhaka University, Time: 3:00pm.

Meeting
Jatiya Sangbadik Sangstha will arrange a meeting. Venue: Photo Journalist Association auditorium, Purana Paltan, Time: 4:00pm.

Observance
United Nations Information Centre and Daffodil University will jointly observe the human rights day 2010. Venue: Prince Plaza, Sobhanbagh, Time: 10:00am.

Discussion
Bangladesh Jatiya Mahila Ainjibi Samity will hold a discussion programme. Venue: Sheraton hotel, Time: 3:00pm.

BrandWitz contest starts today

METRO DESK

A national business competition in Bangladesh, BrandWitz 2010, is beginning in the city today, says a press release.

The contest, organised by the Institute of Business Administration Communication Club (IBACC), will continue till December 15.

Under the banner "Clear", this event is sponsored by Unilever Bangladesh Ltd. BrandWitz initiated under the leadership of Prof Syed Munir Khasru of IBACC, which focuses solely on branding and marketing issues.

ATN Bangla is the media partner of BrandWitz that seeks to redefine business competition exposure across Bangladesh.

A number of teams from different institutions have been joining the competition every year since its inception in 2008. BrandWitz judging panel consists of leaders from the corporate world.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Gopichand Sinha, a Manipuri poet and social activist, passed away at his village at Kalarabil of Komolganj upazila in Moulvibazar on Tuesday night due to old age ailments at the age of 79, says a press release.

He left behind his four sons and one daughter.

Gopichand has written a number of poems and songs in Bangla and Manipuri language. He was a regular contributor of Betar Bangladesh, Sylhet.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (CHT)

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh, seeks proposals from interested and well qualified International, National organizations in response to the following RFP in the CHT.

RFP for the production of a documentary film/movie on CHTDF, UNDP Health Activities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

The RFP along with the instructions for submission can be downloaded from UNDP website: http://www.undp.org.bd/proc_more.php

All interested organizations are requested to attend a **pre-bid meeting** to be held on **Sunday, 19th December, 2010 at 3pm** at Conference Room, 3rd floor, IDB Bhaban, Sher-e-bangla Nagar, Dhaka -1000. Maximum two (2) participants from each organization are allowed.

The deadline for proposal submission is **Sunday, 26th December, 2010 04:30 pm (Local Time)**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (CHT)

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh, seeks proposals from interested and well qualified International, National organizations in response to the following RFP in the CHT.

RFP for the provision of Fast Boat Services in the Kaptai Lake of Chittagong Hill Tracts

The RFP along with the instructions for submission can be downloaded from UNDP website: http://www.undp.org.bd/proc_more.php

All interested organizations are requested to attend a **pre-bid meeting** to be held on **Sunday, 19th December, 2010 at 10am** at Conference Room, 3rd floor, IDB Bhaban, Sher-e-bangla Nagar, Dhaka -1000. Maximum two (2) participants from each organization are allowed.

The deadline for proposal submission is **Thursday, 30th December, 2010 04:30 pm (Local Time)**