

Hasina not to attend Kolkata convocation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was invited to the annual convocation of Calcutta University (CU) as chief guest, will not be attending due to "preoccupations" at home, a highly placed source at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) told The Daily Star yesterday.



The CU authorities were conveyed the message, the source said.

According to diplomatic sources, Hasina's "refusal" to visit Kolkata is apparently because of Dhaka's cold relations with the West Bengal's government led by Mamata Banerjee, who blocked the signing of the Teesta Water Sharing Treaty and opposed implementation of other agreements between Bangladesh and India.

Hasina visited Tripura on January 11-12 to attend the 9th convocation of Tripura University where Indian Vice-President Hamid Ansari conferred an honorary doctorate on her.

"The Bangladesh PM visited Tripura last month (January) and has refused to come to our state now. This is a clear indication how the government has failed to keep a cordial relationship with Bangladesh", Indian Express reported quoting a senior CPM leader.

CU had invited Hasina a few months ago to deliver the convocation address.

The Bangladesh prime minister, who was to deliver the convocation speech as chief guest, would be giving the programme a miss, West Bengal Governor MK Narayanan, who is also the chancellor of CU, said in Kolkata on Thursday. "I do not think she is coming", Narayanan told journalists, The Asian Age reported.

The CU authorities had originally planned to hold the convocation in January 2012 and had accordingly written to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"However, despite primary acceptance of the invite, the PMO of Bangladesh did not get in touch with the varsity officials with further details", The Asian Age said.

The Indian newspapers, including the Indian Express and The Asian Age, quoting experts in political circles said Hasina might have cancelled her visit, as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee backed out of the Indo-Bangla Teesta Water Treaty.

She (Mamata) also refused to visit Dhaka with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who paid an official visit to Bangladesh on September 6-7, 2011.

Even Mamata is now opposing implementation of the Land Boundary Agreement, under which Bangladesh and India are to exchange the enclaves and plots of land adversely possessed, and demarcation of 6.5-kilometre stretch of the border.

Eminence, an NGO, forms a human chain before Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday on the occasion of World Cancer Day with a call to establish a globe free from the killer disease. (Story on Page 2)

PHOTO: STAR



2 murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two men were murdered in separate incidents in the city on Friday night.

In Shantinagar, unidentified miscreants stabbed vegetable vendor Moktar Hossain alias Badsha, 30, of Jatrabari indiscriminately at around 11:30pm.

Locals rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries 18 hours after being injured.

Nur Jahan Begum, the elder sister of the deceased, said it might have been a pre-planned murder as the attackers did not take the mobile phone set and Tk 22,000 which was in Moktar's possession during the attack.

However, police claimed that Moktar was a drug peddler and he was killed by some other drug peddlers following a previous enmity.

The police detained Shahidullah, one of the associates of Moktar, for interrogation in this connection.

Meanwhile, the decomposed body of an unknown man, aged around 35, was recovered from a flat on the top floor of a seven-storey building at Nikunja-2 under Khilkhet police station, said Khilkhet police.

On information from Tofazzal Haque, the caretaker of the building, police recovered the body of the man whose hands and legs were tied with rope and neck was wrapped in a towel.

Tofazzal said four men rented the flat on December 14 but after the day they never came there. On the night of January 27, four men came to the flat and from the next day the caretaker found the flat locked again.

Tofazzal couldn't identify the men who came on January 27.

DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE

Bangladesh makes progress

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has made progress in the areas of democracy, good governance, rule of law, and human rights during the last 40 years but is still far from international standard or that of Nordic countries, speakers observed at a seminar yesterday.

They said state power has shifted from one political party to the other but the overall situation has not changed much and the people did not get benefits that much due to intolerance among the political parties, disrespect to others' opinions, misuse of laws, culture of impunity, and absence of necessary and effective institutions.

The seminar on "governance and human rights issues" was held at the Senate Hall of Dhaka University yesterday. It was one of the two seminars organised in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the recognition of independence Bangladesh by three Nordic countries--Norway, Denmark,

and Sweden.

"The overall trend is upward but we should not be complacent for this, as we still need to go a long way in the areas of good governance, rule of law, women empowerment, and human rights", said Prof Mizanur Rahman, chairman of National Human Rights Commission, who moderated the seminar.

Barrister Sara Hossain explained how the poor people of the country were being deprived of justice and how security forces can maintain zero tolerance about all forms of torture, killing, and human rights violation.

In reply to a question by a student, she said the Indian human rights organisations and the media strongly protested the incident of torture of a Bangladeshi youth on the borders.

At the seminar, Norwegian Ambassador Range Birte Lund assured Bangladesh of more cooperation for further improvement of democracy, good governance, and human rights situation. She also prom-

ised to increase more scholarships for Bangladeshi students.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, Prof Rawnak Jahan, Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) executive director Dr Iftekharuzzaman, and Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) executive director Prof Mustafizur Rahman also took part in the discussion.

Another seminar on "business and future relations between Bangladesh and the Scandinavian countries" was organised at the same venue, which was attended by entrepreneurs, students, and teachers.

The seminar, which turned out to be very lively for a question and answer session, was chaired by president of Nordic Chamber of Commerce and Industries Arild Klokkehaug.

President of Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Rokia Afzal Rahman, Danish Ambassador Svend Olling, Group Director of Rahimafrooz Munawar

Misbad, and Prof Syed Munir Khasru of Institute of Business Administration of Dhaka University answered various questions on how economic and business relations can be increased between Bangladesh and the Nordic countries.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, who spoke at the inaugural session as chief guest, said the three Nordic countries continued their cooperation in various areas since they had recognised Bangladesh on February 4, 1972. She hoped that the relations would be further strengthened in future.

Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, vice chancellor of Dhaka University, said a large number of Bangladeshi students were going for higher studies in the Nordic countries. He requested the countries for increasing the scholarship for Bangladeshi students.

Swedish Ambassador Anneli Lindakl Kenny gave the welcome speech at the opening session.



From left, Dr Mizanur Rahman, NHRC chairman, Afzaal Mahmood, deputy envoy of Pakistan, Shaher Mohammad, Palestinian ambassador, Ahmed Sareer, high commissioner of Maldives, Zet Mirzal Zainuddin, Indonesian ambassador, AB Tajul Islam, state minister for liberation war affairs, M Nooruddin Khan, president, Institute of Hazrat Mohammad (SAW), Monsur Ahmed Choudhuri, former president of BVIPS, Md Mosharrar Hossain Majumder, president of BVIPS, Mohammad Oraei Karimi, cultural counselor of Iranian embassy, Hasan M Mazumdar, country representative of Asia Foundation and Karma S Tshosar, counselor of Bhutanese embassy. They attended an essay competition for visually impaired on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladunnabi organised by the Institute of Hazrat Mohammad (SAW) at a city hotel on Friday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Anti-liberation forces obstruct democracy

Says Dipu Moni

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni yesterday said the country's democratic political trend was obstructed several times during the first 20 years after independence.

"Anti-liberation forces were responsible for that," she said.

The minister said this as chief guest at a function at Senate Bhaban of Dhaka University (DU) to observe 40 years of the official recognitions given by Denmark, Norway and Sweden to Bangladesh.

She recalled the cooperation of these countries during and after the Liberation War.

Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique was present as the special guest.

Swedish Ambassador in Dhaka Anneli Lindahl Kenny, Danish Ambassador Svend Olling and Norwegian Ambassador Ragne Birte Lund also attended the function.

Raise reserved JS seats to 33pc for women

Urge women leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women leaders at a discussion yesterday urged the government to pass an amendment bill over increasing the number of women's reserved parliamentary seats to 33 percent, from the current 16.66, to facilitate women's direct contestation in the national polls.

The discussion, "Women's political empowerment and the role of women lawmakers", was organised by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad in the city's Cirdap auditorium.

Since female voters are greater in number than male voters, "they (women) should be represented with a higher number of seats in parliament," said lawmaker Tarana Halim.

If women leaders were united, the bill would have already been passed in parliament, she added.

Pointing at the helplessness of women lawmakers in carrying out their responsibilities in their constituencies, lawmaker Nilufar Chowdhury Moni said, "Even

union level leaders did not let us do our job properly. We often have to follow their commands."

Speaking as special guest, Centre for Policy Dialogue Chairman Rehman Sobhan said, "Women's contribution in readymade garment sector and micro-finance is vital", sectors which acquired prosperity and led to Bangladesh's international recognition.

"Since the present government in its election manifesto pledged to increase the number of reserved seats for women, I expect them to keep the promise," he added.

Women empowerment can be achieved through the trial of war criminals, who prevent women's development through religion-based politics, said Deputy Leader of Jatiya Sangsad Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury.

Parishad President Ayesha Khanam chaired the programme while its Secretary (movement) Rekha Chowdhury read out the keynote paper.

AL to choose party candidate today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League (AL) will decide the party nomination for the by-elections to Shariatpur-3 constituency today.

The constituency remains vacant after the death of its lawmaker Abdur Razzak. The AL veteran leader died on December 23 last year.

Senior leaders, members of AL Parliamentary Board (ALPB), of the party will sit in a meeting at Gono Bhaban, residence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, at 6:00pm. Shiekh Hasina, also president of the party, will chair the meeting.

Earlier on February 1, the Election Commission announced that the by-poll will be held on March 15 this year.

According to the party sources, Nahim Razzak Sammu, son of late Abdur Razzak, former presidents of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Bahadur Bepari and Enamul Haque Shamim are seeking the nomination.

A member of Razzak's family, either his son or wife Farida Razzak, may get the party ticket, the sources said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Bahadur Bepari, BCL former president of Dhaka University unit, said: "If the party gives me the nomination I will take part."

"If I don't get it, I'll work for the party nominated candidate," he added.

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How to Apply
Interested candidates are requested to submit their complete resume with (One) recent passport size photo to The Daily Star, 64-65, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215, alternatively candidates can also send their resume to hr@thedailystar.net Please mention the name of position at the top of the envelope or email subject line.

Last date of Application: February 10, 2012.