

Spelling Bee back again

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Last year, more than 1 lakh students took part in the event mainly in seven divisions and this year, he hoped, the number would double in 64 districts.

He thanked the teachers for encouraging students to participate in the contest.

The main purpose of the competition is to help students improve their English spelling and vocabulary, learn concepts, and develop correct English usage, mentioned Russell.

GlaxoSmithKline is the power sponsor of the event, while Channel i is the official telecast partner.

The contest journey will have three phases -- online round, divisional round, and TV round. After getting registered on www.champs21.com, the students in the first round will have to play "Spell Bangladesh" game on the

website.

They will have to read The Daily Star regularly as the words for the online round will be picked from a specific page of the newspaper.

Shykh Seraj, director and head of news of Channel i, said the last year's Spelling Bee is a perfect example of an educational programme being aired and gaining huge popularity.

The channel will telecast 32 episodes of the contest.

Expressing happiness to be a partner of the initiative, Soumendra S Das, marketing director of GlaxoSmithKline Bangladesh Ltd, hoped that the contest will have a positive impact on learning.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said building a nation can be possible in many ways and making the future generation is one of the biggest ways, which the teachers are

doing.

Being the mother tongue, Bangla has to be learnt, preserved and promoted, but to be a part of the global world and be able to compete internationally, there is no alternative to learning English, he mentioned, adding that Spelling Bee can in a bigger way help the youth learn English.

Thanking teachers and students, he said it is the cooperation between teachers and students which has made the initiative successful. He hoped that the teachers would cooperate similarly this year.

Hafiz Ahmed, managing director of Faber Castell Bangladesh, and Syed Hammudul Karim, sub-regional COO of MetLife Alico, were present.

The champion speller will win a Tk 500,000 education policy and a trip to Washington DC, the city of Spelling Bee, with one parent. The first and sec-

ond runner-ups will receive Tk 300,000 and Tk 200,000 education policies respectively.

Detailed information

Abul bins

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on false information. He claimed that he had no detrimental involvement in the project.

He said as per the purchase policy, the minister concerned can only approve appointment of any consultant for a project if the contract value is not more than Tk 10 crore, or a contractor for any development project if the contract value does not exceed Tk 50 crore.

"In case of the contract value going beyond that, the project must be placed for consent before the Cabinet Committee on Purchase with recommendations of the minister concerned," the statement said.

about the competition is available on www.champs21.com, the first e-learning portal of Bangladesh.

Mentioning that the contract value of appointing a consultant in the Padma bridge project was about Tk 300 crore, Abul said, "The communications minister is not the highest authority to approve the contract under any circumstances as per the purchase policy of the government."

"It is not fair to accuse me without having the proper knowledge on Bangladesh's public procurement rules," he added.

The former minister hoped the truth would come out through proper investigation of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and the WB would be proven wrong.

Beast lot better

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marriage registrar's office in the capital's Chankharpul where she was allegedly taken under duress.

The victim, Sharmin Akter Ankhi, is an honours final-year student at Eden College. Her alleged attacker is 28-year-old Monir Uddin, who is an "acquaintance".

Neither Ankhi nor her family would comment on how and since when the two knew each other.

The girl is now being treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital with 12-13 percent burn injuries on her face and other parts of the body, doctors said.

She also sustained five stab wounds -- two in the hands and three in back -- but they are not life threatening, said DMCH resident doctor Haridas Saha.

At her DMCH bed, she told this correspondent that her "acquaintance" Monir called her over the phone around 11:00am and asked her to go to Chankharpul.

On her reaching there at about 11:30am, Monir "forcibly" took her to a marriage registrar's office and asked her to marry him.

An altercation ensued as she refused, and at one stage Monir brought out a bottle of acid from his bag and poured it on Ankhi's face. Monir then stabbed her with a knife even as she screamed in pain.

Locals said marriage registrar Habibullah Khan was present when the incident happened. Also present at the scene was Masum, a friend of Monir.

The two went into hiding after the attack, police said.

Habibullah Khan was not available for comment but his boss Mahbobul Alam said Ankhi and Monir "looked normal" when they entered the office.

The attack came all of a sudden as the girl rejected the marriage proposal, he added, quoting Habibullah.

Alam, who is the authorised marriage regis-

trar of the area, also claimed Habibullah sustained some burns as some acid splashed on him while trying to stop Monir.

Ankhi's relatives said Monir lived at Mohammadpur in the capital and that they heard Monir used to supply medicine to pharmacies.

Owners and employees of several medicine shops at Chankharpul said they heard a girl screaming and then saw two youths running away. The marriage registrar followed them shouting: "Catch, catch."

Within a few minutes, a girl came down the stairs from the first floor screaming with blood oozing out of her body, they added.

Locals called the police, who then took the girl to the hospital.

Ankhi's brother, Mohiuddin Ahmed, filed a case against Monir and Masum in connection with the incident, Bangshal police said.

Unruly for graft

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AK Azad Chowdhury.

Apart from students' agitations, a tendency to disrupt academic and research activities in the name of teachers' movement has been apparent in recent times, said the chairman, urging all to play a responsible role.

The number of students at tertiary level is around 26 lakh, and uninterrupted academic atmosphere is a must for their proper education, the statement added.

The educational institutions that saw unrest in the last four years include Jahangirnagar University, Jagannath University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Patuakhali

Science and Technology University, Pabna University of Science and Technology, Dhaka Medical College, Sir Salimullah Medical College, Dhaka College and Khulna Medical College.

Sources say members of BCL, pro-Awami League student organisation, are active in resisting anti-administration movement, as they too are involved in the alleged corruption by the authorities concerned.

At present, Islamic University (IU) in Kushtia, Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur and Dhaka Polytechnic Institute are plagued by unrest.

Academic activities at IU have been stalled since September last year, threatening severe session jam.

On September 8, teachers under the banner of IU Teachers Association went on strike demanding removal of the vice-chancellor, pro-VC and treasurer over alleged irregularities in recruitment of 132 teachers,

employees and staff against 76 posts.

Although the government late last month relieved VC Prof M Alauddin and Pro-VC Prof M Kamal Uddin of their duties, the treasurer remains.

The teachers continued their agitation for removal of the treasurer. Things took a turn for the worse when a group of BCL activists on January 12 attacked a teachers' meeting with iron rods and bamboo sticks, leaving at least 30 hurt.

"The impasse will cause irreparable loss to around 12,000 students of 22 departments, as it may put the university into a year-long session jam," said a teacher preferring anonymity.

"Around 1,300 examinations of different departments have been put on hold due to the ongoing crisis," the teacher added.

Although the university was supposed to hold the admission test on November 17 last year, it failed to do so while all other public universities have almost completed the admission process.

The BCL activists in November launched another attack on the teachers' sit-in against the university administration.

Begum Rokeya University was closed indefinitely on January 10 following an attack by outsiders, reportedly BCL activists, on the teachers who have been agitating for resignation of the VC, accusing him of corruption.

Seven teachers suffered burns from battery acid when the attackers vandalised loud speakers and destroyed batteries.

Uncertainty looms large over the fate of more than 4,500 students of the uni-

versity since the demon-strating teachers remain adamant about their demand. The situation may lead to severe session jam at the university, launched in 2008.

Dhaka Polytechnic Institute was shut indefinitely on January 6 after BCL activists went on the rampage and attacked teachers demanding pass marks for two students. The activists vandalised several rooms and furniture and swooped on the teachers at a meeting.

The institute plunged into chaos repeatedly due to the clashes in the last four years.

On the prevailing situation, the UGC chairman on Monday told The Daily Star that earlier, campus unrest was caused mostly by students, but now teachers are also getting involved in it.

"Certainly, the teachers will have logical demands and they will protest wrongdoings, but their way of protest should be different.

"Please stay away from anything that disrupts academic activities because it affects lives of innocent students," he said, calling upon the teachers to inform the UGC enquiry committees so that they can make proper recommendations to the government.

For the students, he said, "Whatever institution you [students] belong to, refrain from doing such activities that create anarchy."

Prof Azad added they would request the government to take stern action against troublemaking students irrespective of their political affiliations.

The UGC chairman did not rule out the possibility of political instigation behind campus unrest.

Al-Badr, Biharis killed 10 in a Faridpur village

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Jahidul Islam, ninth prosecution witness in the case, also said Alim used to dictate members of the Peace Committee and Razakar force about their duties during the war.

Peace Committee and Razakar Bahini, two anti-liberation forces, collaborated with the Pakistani army in committing genocides and other crimes against humanity during the nine-month-long war, according to prosecution document.

Saidur Rahman, second prosecution witness in the case against Alim, gave almost similar description in his testimony.

The three-member tribunal headed by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Judge M Shahinur Islam recorded their testimonies before adjourning both the cases until today.

The tribunal indicted Jamaat Secretary General Mojaheed, also a former minister of the BNP-led four-party government, with seven charges and Alim, a member of BNP founder late president Ziaur Rahman's cabinet, with seventeen charges of crimes against humanity committed during the war.

During his 38-minute testimony, Chitta from

Bakchar of Faridpur said he was involved in the Language Movement in 1952 and took part in the election campaign for an Awami League candidate in the 1970's elections.

"At that time [1970], Ali Ahsan Mojaheed and some other people took part in the election campaign for the Muslim League. I had seen him [Mojaheed] but he was not acquainted with me," he added.

Chitta said Pakistani army had entered Faridpur town on April 21, 1971 and afterwards, Mojaheed and some other people formed the Peace Committee. After some days, Razakar and Biharis (Urdu-speaking people) attacked their village and burned down houses, he added.

"My brother remained in the village to rebuild the house, but out of fear I left the village and took shelter in the house of Deben Ghosh of Laxmipur village and was running a shop at Kailipur market," said Chitta.

Around 10:00 to 11:00am on May 13, Chitta saw up to 12 people passing through his shop on an uncovered jeep towards the nearby board office, said the witness, adding, "I got panicked watching them and asked some prominent persons of the

market about their identity.

"They informed me that a meeting over Machchar Union Peace Committee will be held at Khalilpur and that's why Peace Committee men Ali Ahsan Mojaheed and Advocate Afzal, Alauddin Kha, Kalu Bihari and some other people came from Faridpur."

Chitta left the market quickly but came back around 3:00pm to get information about the Peace Committee meeting, said the witness.

"I was informed by Lokman Kha, Abdus Salam Mollah and Sohrab Sardar that members of the Peace Committee, Al-Badr and Biharis had gone to our Bakchar Hindu village and many people were killed there," said Chitta.

"I started for Bakchar to enquire about my brother. When I reached his house, my sister-in-law informed me that he was killed," said Chitta in tears.

Around eight to ten people including Prafulla Mitra, Nripen Sikder, Upen Saha, Sanu Saha, and some others were killed that day, he added.

"They were shot dead at Bakchar Shree Angan and I had seen their bodies there," he said.

One of his cousins' female relative, who had

taken shelter at his house, was brutally tortured before being shot dead, said Chitta.

"Members of Shanti Committee [Peace Committee], Al-Badr and Biharis, whose names I have mentioned earlier, killed [her]," said Chitta.

Meanwhile, during his 39-minute testimony, Jahidul Islam from Akkelpur of Joypurhat said he was a higher secondary student during the war. He along with 13 other people started for India on May 7 or 8 after the war started, he added.

"When we reached Bhatsha union around 11:00pm, we heard sound of bombing and shooting and got dispersed," said Jahidul.

He said he had taken shelter in a nearby house. Members of the house told him that 13 others of his group had gone to the house of one Syed Ali Doctor, who confined them at his guest house.

He returned home and informed Rahim Uddin, brother of Samir Uddin Mandol, who was in their 14-member group, and Rahim went to Syed Ali, added Jahidul.

"Later I learned from Rahim that Razakar commander Abdul Alim and his men of Shanti Committee and Pakistani

army had come to Syed Ali's house and the army took three of the 13 people."

He added 10 others were handed over to the Razakar and Peace Committee men.

Jahidul said the 10 were detained at the waiting room of Akkelpur Railway Station for three days. He had seen them at the waiting room one day and heard rumour they would be handed over to the Pakistani army, he added.

"In the morning [of the third day] I went towards Akkelpur Railway Station and saw Abdul Alim, Azim Munshi, Noor Bakht and Matiur Rahman Chairman there and under their instruction, Khan sena [Pakistani army] took away the 10," said Jahidul.

"Later, I heard that the ten were shot by a pond at Koktara near Panchbibi station. Nine of them died on the spot and one escaped with injury," said Jahidul, adding, after the incident he left for India.

The tribunal also heard the closing arguments of the defence of another Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah for the sixth day yesterday.

Defence counsel Abdus Sobhan Tarafder placed his arguments before the tribunal adjourning the case proceeding until today.

Mushtaq asked prison boss

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before the apex court on the first day of the hearing on the government's appeal against the High Court verdict that acquitted six former army personnel who were among those convicted and sentenced by a lower court.

The six are Marfat Ali Shah, Abdul Hashem Mridha, Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Farooq-ur Rahman, Lt Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Maj (ret'd) Bazlul Huda and Maj (Ret'd) AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed.

Yesterday, the six-member full bench of the SC headed by Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain adjourned the hearing till January 22.

Anisul Huq told the apex court that Ziaur Rahman, who had taken over the state powers on November 7 in 1975, stopped all proceedings and investigations into the jail killing case.

He also argued that the HC judgement, which acquitted six army personnel, was arbitrary, as it (HC) convicted only Mulseemuddin and sentenced him to death.

Earlier yesterday, Attorney General

Mahbubey Alam told the SC that there are serious defects in the HC judgement, as it said telephone connection at the Bangabhaban had been cut off on November 3, 1975 due a military coup.

The government filed the appeal with the apex court in 2011.

In 2004, the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka awarded death sentence to three former army personnel and life imprisonment to 12 others in the case. The HC in 2008 upheld the death penalty of one, acquitted six of the convicts

and did not say anything about the eight others.

The metropolitan court had sentenced to death Muslemuddin, Marfat Ali and Abdul Hashem.

And the 12 awarded life imprisonment are Syed Farooq-ur Rahman, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Bazlul Huda, Lt Col (dismissed) Khondaker Abdur Rashid, Lt Col (relieved) Shariful Haq Dalim, Lt Col (ret'd) SHMB Noor Chowdhury, AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, Lt Col (ret'd) AM Rashed Chowdhury, Maj (relieved) Ahmed Shariful Hossain,

Capt (ret'd) Abdul Majed, Capt (relieved) Kismet Hasem and Capt (relieved) Nazmul Hossain for abetting the killers.

The HC in its verdict on August 28, 2008, upheld the capital punishment of Muslemuddin and acquitted Marfat and Hashem.

It exempted from the case Farooq, Shahriar, Mohiuddin and Bazlul Huda, who were already executed in the Bangabandhu assassination case, and did not say anything about the eight others given life term by the lower court.

Court accepts

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a report on execution of the arrest order.

Khaleda appeared in the court around 2:15pm yesterday and left around 3:30pm with permission from the judge.

She was allowed to sit during the hearing. Special Public Prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain Kajol at that time placed his submissions, saying that the charges brought against the accused were primarily proved and that they should be brought under trial.

Opposing the prosecution plea, barrister Aminul Haque told the court that the charges brought against Khaleda were false and fabricated and intended to harass her politically.

Moreover, the charitable trust was purely a private organisation and no body had any jurisdiction to interfere in its operation, he added.

Hearing arguments from the prosecution and the defence for nearly one and a half hours, the court

came up with the rule.

When Khaleda was leaving the court premises, supporters of BNP and its associate bodies were chanting slogans, demanding withdrawal of the "false case" against her.

The ACC pressed charges against the four on January 16 last year.

The opposition chief was absent from all the previous hearings of the case. She last appeared in the court on February 2, last year only to secure permanent bail.

Hit them with shoes

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wall on Bangshal and Raisaheb Bazar roads in Old Dhaka, said witnesses.

They also shouted slogans against ICTs: "Seize the tribunal, abolish the tribunal; Let's march towards the tribunal, free our leaders; Every house will be set on fire, if anything happens to

Maulana Sayeede [Delawar Hossain Sayeede]."

With the party's top leaders including its chief and secretary general facing charges of crimes against humanity at the tribunals, Jamaat is now facing worst situation since it resumed its activities in Bangladesh after 1975.

The Islamist party, a key component of the BNP-led alliance, is desperately trying to foil the trial terming the trial process "motivated."

In collaboration with the Pakistani occupation forces, the Razakars committed killings, genocide and other crimes during the 1971 Liberation War, according to

historic documents.

Asked about Jamaat's slogans, BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain told journalists that it was their [Jamaat] own matter.

Major Gen (ret'd) KM Safiullah, senior vice-chairman of Sector Commanders' Forum, said

it is impossible to stop the war crimes tribunal.

Criticising BNP for its lack of political acumen, eminent war crimes researcher Shahriar Kabir said there are a lot of freedom fighters in BNP. They need to be aware of how Jamaat's programmes are degrading their party.