

Tough contest

FROM PAGE 20
out on top. Even as harder words came up, the number of participants to be knocked out rose very slowly. The four students of Mastermind to move on to the divisional round were Mayisha Masud, Azman Anju Khan Chowdhury and Mahin Ar Rahman from Class 9 and Mehbeez Binte Marur from Class 8.

The other school visited by the Champs21 team in Dhaka was Aga Khan School. There, too, qualified four spellers: Fayad Rahman (Class 8), Md Mustakeen ul Bari (Class 7), Nipuni Rajapaksa (Class 8) and Alif Meraz Hamid (Class 9).

Meanwhile in Khulna, two schools were visited. From Khulna Zilla School, Zisan Siddiqui Siam, Md Ferdous Rabbany and Faizul Karim Ali -- all students of Class 9 -- qualified.

The other school was Govt Laboratory High School, where three students of Class 10 -- Farhana Muzib Keya, Tanzana Khan Mim and SM Nahin Rahman -- qualified for the next round.

Anyone who has not made it to the divisional round through the school can still participate through the online game on www.champ21.com until February 28. Online participants can play the game as many times as they want. Only their highest scores will be considered while selecting the qualifiers for the divisional rounds.

The finals of the competition are to be held in June.

Detailed information about the competition is available on www.champ21.com, the first e-learning portal of Bangladesh. Students who want to participate in the event through the online rounds can visit the website and play the Spelling Bee Game.

Barca

FROM PAGE 1
Tuesday, to which it is yet to respond.

"Yesterday [Tuesday] we got an offer from an agent to host FC Barcelona in August at an appearance fee of three million euros (32 crore taka). He wanted to know if we were interested to host Barcelona. Definitely I would love to host them [Barcelona], but I have not taken any decision yet," said BFF president Kazi Salahuddin.

The appearance fee asked by the agent of the Spanish giants is almost the same amount the BFF spent to play host to an international friendly between Argentina and Nigeria in September 2011. Country's one of the leading business houses Beximco sponsored the trip. Even though that friendly match was a huge success and created a lot of enthusiasm among the fans, questions were raised about disbursement of the fund.

Unusual

FROM PAGE 1
scheduled to visit the district on Saturday.

Club Secretary Rana told The Daily Star over phone, "The commissioner [Shahabuddin] has been a life-long member of the press club. He arranged for the advertisement promising that he would bear its expense."

Rana said Pabna Press Club was not in a position to bear the expense of the ad as its lone source of income was the Tk 20 monthly free collected from its 58 members.

However, Commissioner Shahabuddin denied any knowledge of the ad, let alone promising to pay for it.

He told The Daily Star, "I felt embarrassed by such an ad which had my name without my consent. Pabna Press Club President Shibjit Nag was my classmate and he used my name in the ad."

When asked if such political advertisement could be sponsored by someone so high in the nonpartisan anti-graft body, the commissioner side stepped the question.

Asked what step was taken in this regard, he said, "I rebuked them [press club authorities] and told them not to repeat such a thing ever."

The ad published on the front page of Bengali daily Samakal bears the name "Shahabuddin Chuppu" as its sponsor.



Students from Aga Khan School and Mastermind School from Dhaka and Govt Laboratory High School and Khulna Zilla School from Khulna are proudly showing Golden Tickets they won to compete in the divisional round.

PHOTO: STAR

Jamaat banks

FROM PAGE 1
there has been no exception to this although the party faces the worst crisis in its history," said a staff at Jamaat's central office at Moghbazar. He would speak only on condition of anonymity.

Jamaat and its student front Islami Chhatra Shibir, meanwhile, continued their violence for a third consecutive day yesterday, injuring policemen, sporadically blasting bombs at different places of the city and vandalising and torching a number of vehicles.

Today, Jamaat is enforcing a half-day hartal in Dhaka and Chittagong and dawn-to-dust shutdown elsewhere in the country protesting the "police refusal" to hold a rally before the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the capital.

Police rejected the allegation and said it was just an excuse for creating further violence.

Monirul Islam, joint commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they had received a letter seeking permission for the rally, but police could not reach the person whose name and phone number were mentioned in the letter, reports ATN Bangla.

The war crimes trial has been a longstanding national issue. Ahead of the 2008 general elections, the Awami League pledged to try the war criminals if voted to power. The party won a landslide victory in the December 29 polls that year, and later the Jatiya Sangsad unanimously passed a proposal for the trial.

Among those facing the trial are some top leaders of Jamaat, which actively tried to foil Bangladesh's birth through helping the Pakistani occupation forces in committing mass killing, genocide, rape and other crimes against humanity. The party now looks determined to stop the trial by any means.

"We will now carry out our leaders' instructions even at the cost of our lives to save the party," said the Jamaat activist at the party's central office.

He added the party had several thousand dedicated staff members who had been entrusted with the task of creating violence during the party's recent street programmes.

A top Jamaat leader of Chittagong (south) unit said the party high-ups had instructed them to display a "big showdown" employing their full strength in and outside the port city.

Instead of wearing traditional Pajama and Punjabi, many of them, particularly the field-level Shibir activists, were asked to wear T-shirts and jeans. "It is easy to mingle with pedestrians when police move to chase them," said the Jamaat leader, preferring not to be named.

On the other hand, a number of district-level leaders have said as the International Crimes Tribunal has started delivering verdict in war crimes cases, a feeling to axe its convicted leaders gets stronger in the party's mid-level leadership.

These leaders say they will not share the responsibility of the crimes committed by their top leaders in 1971.

A section of Jamaat leaders is also of the view that the party is facing the hardest time ever because of their top leaders.

"Many of us in both Jamaat and Shibir think that Jamaat can be reorganised leaving out the current top leadership," said a top leader of Jamaat's Chittagong city (north) unit.

"We have such a plan in our mind as we believe the top leaders of the party who are now behind bars will not be able to lead the party under the situation," he added, wishing to remain unnamed.

more than two years or so anyway. "Then why don't we go for new leadership?"

This Jamaat leader says he would not be surprised if he heard one morning that the party started recasting its top brass.

Party policymakers have been gripped by fear after the International Crimes Tribunal-2 sentenced to death former Jamaat member Abul Kalam Azad, also known as Bachchu Razakar, for genocide and murder during the Liberation War.

Seven top leaders of Jamaat, including its current and former ameer and secretary general, are behind bars on war crimes charges.

A Sathkira district Jamaat leader said there were many leaders in the party who thought the party should not suffer for the "alleged misdeeds" some of their top leaders committed during the war.

"We do not want to share the blame. And there are many district-level leaders who think like me," he said, requesting anonymity.

ACID THROWING
2 workers injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Two readymade garment workers sustained burn injuries yesterday evening when the husband of one of them hurled acid at Mirpur in the capital.

Mariam Begum, 25, was attacked around 7:30pm when she along with her colleague Mamta Akhter, 18, was returning home on foot from work at Darus Salam area.

Mariam, while receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, told reporters that her addict husband Md Russel hurled acid at her and both of them sustained injuries.

Jahangir Alam, brother of Mariam, said Russel used to beat up his wife and used to take money from her to pay for his addiction.

Munir

FROM PAGE 20
During his a little over two-year stint in the department, Mohammad Munir Chowdhury earned high public esteem with his fearless, stern and vigorous action against powerful polluters.

He has been made the general manger of Milk Vita, a state-run dairy, under the ministry of local government, rural development and cooperatives.

As the director of the Department of Environment (DoE), he carried out more than 400 enforcement drives and realised Tk 73 crore in fine against the environmental offenders.

For his tireless efforts, the DoE's revenue leaped from Tk 31 crore to Tk 128 crore, according to records.

With no enforcement drives against industrial polluters until 2010, the DoE embarked on such action against river polluters, dyeing factories, destruction of wetlands and croplands, hill-cutting, noise pollution, illegal housing, illegal high-rises, brick fields and other industrial units.

He conducted drives against influential businesses including many owned by high-profile conglomerates, ministers and lawmakers and reclaimed 300 acres of hills, forest and river land; evicted over 250 illegal brick fields and saved 400 acres of cropland.

In the face of enforcement drives, nearly 300 industries and factories set up effluent treatment plants at their units, said DoE sources.

Environmental activists see his transfer as a measure to stop his dedicated move against the polluters.

Bangladesh plans to set up 8 SEZs

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

Commerce Minister Ghulam Quader has said Bangladesh is going to set up eight Special Economic Zones and three of them would be near the Indian border.

"We are trying to set up special economic zones for foreign investors, and Indian investors could look into them," Quader said while addressing a select group of journalists in New Delhi on Tuesday.

The minister, however, said availability of land for this was a problem.

He also said Bangladesh and India were close to finalising an agreement to ensure steady supply of cotton to the textile industry in Bangladesh.

Quader said his government was concerned over the United States' concern about the lack of proper maintenance and workers' rights in many garment factories in Bangladesh.

He said successive Bangladesh governments have allowed mushrooming growth of garment factories without properly checking the fire-safety norms, protection of the rights of workers, 80 percent of whom are women, and other aspects of work environment for such industries.

"We didn't do the job properly although we tried. There is governance failure," Quader said.

SSC exams

FROM PAGE 20
board statistics, a total of 1,86,763 students dropped out as they did not fill in the forms in spite of being registered as regular students of Class IX.

The exams would end on March 5 with the practical exams beginning on the following day.

At a pre-examination press briefing at the secretariat yesterday, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said a total of 6,68,268 boys and 6,34,935 girls will appear in the SSC and equivalent examinations at 2,758 centres under 10 education boards.

Of them, more than 9.89 lakh students will sit for the SSC exams while some 2.25 lakh students will appear in Dakhil (secondary level of madrasa) examinations and around 88,360 in SSC vocational exams.

"The number of examinees used to be higher as there was no public examination after class VIII earlier and almost all the students of class VIII could enrol in class-IX," argued Nahid.

Of the total examinees, about 2,21,830 are irregular who either failed in one or more subjects or refrained from taking examinations last year while some 2,437 will take the improvement examinations, he said.

Regarding the dropout rate, Education Secretary Kamal Abdus Naser Chowdhury said the dropout rate has fallen significantly and now stands at 14.76 percent as opposed to 48 percent in 2009, 36 percent in 2010, and 22 percent in 2011.

All papers except Bangla 2nd paper, English, mathematics and higher mathematics of SSC general exams will be held under the creative question method, he added.

He also said disabled students will get an additional 20 minutes for each paper in the exams.

A total of 293 overseas students will sit for the exams in seven overseas centres under Dhaka Board.

SQ fires his counsels

FROM PAGE 20
petition at length. After the court rejected the petition yesterday, defence counsel Ahsanul Haque Hena told the tribunal that they would file a review petition in this regard and sought adjournment for seven days to prepare the petition.

The tribunal rejected his plea.

SQ Chowdhury then placed two other petitions, one almost identical to the one rejected earlier but mentions a different act and the other for making the tribunal proceedings public.

In his submission, defence counsel Fakhru Islam said SQ Chowdhury was entitled to get bail as per East Pakistan Assembly Members' Privileges Act, 1965.

The tribunal then asked the defence counsel if the act was "alive" in Bangladesh as the judges did not find it in their books.

Fakhru said he too was not sure.

He then said, "My Lord, please adjourn the proceedings for two days. Let me find out."

The tribunal rejected his prayer.

Prosecutor Zead Al Malum in his submission said, "Bangladesh was born in 1971 and therefore the act is not supposed to be alive. This petition is filed to cause nuisance and delay the trial proceedings."

However, he too could not say for sure whether the East Pakistan Assembly Members' Privileges Act, 1965, was still "alive".

The tribunal rejected the petition.

Ahsanul Haque Hena later on prayed for adjourning the proceeding as they would file a review petition.

"For a review application the tribunal will not adjourn original proceedings even for a day," said Tribunal-1 Chairman Justice ATM Fazle Kabir.

Prosecutor Sultan Mahmud Simon told the tribunal that the 17th prosecution witness had gone to the tribunal to testify on several days but the testimony was yet to be recorded behind closed doors.

Ahsanul Haque then sought permission to leave the courtroom mentioning that his client was not happy with the defence's performance.

was appointed. The Jatiya Sangsad, founded in 1973, did not yet make a law defining its own privileges and those of its members even though several moves had been made to legislate on the privileges of parliament and its members in the last four decades.

Before independence, members of national and provincial assemblies used to enjoy some privileges given under the Members of the National Assembly (Exemption from Preventive Detention and Personal Appearance) Ordinance, 1963, and the East Pakistan Assembly Members' Privileges Act, 1965.

According to the law, no member of the national assembly would be detained under any law relating to preventive detention during its session and for a period of 14 days before and after its sessions.

After independence, the then government headed by president Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had issued the Constituent Assembly Order, 1972, determining the privileges of members of the then assembly.

But with the constitution framed, the constituent assembly order was repealed and article-78 of the constitution speaks of enactment of a new law to determine the privileges of the House, its members and committees. That law was never passed by parliament.

Meanwhile, the Tribunal-2 adjourned the case proceedings of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed until February 12.

Yesterday was fixed for recording the testimony of a prosecution witness, but the prosecution could not produce the 80-year-old witness due to his sickness.

The tribunal also adjourned the case against another Jamaat leader Muhammad Kamaruzzaman until February 7.

The prosecution yesterday produced a seizure list witness but his name was not in the prosecution witness list.

The tribunal asked the prosecution to file an application, if they wanted to adduce this seizure list witness.

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EU worried

FROM PAGE 1
deaths of young workers from a fire this weekend in a garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh," said Catherine Ashton, high representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Karel De Gucht, commissioner for Trade, in a joint statement.

"This tragedy is all the more shocking as it follows only two months after another textile factory fire in Bangladesh killed more than a hundred people."

Their concern was aired after at least seven female garment workers had died of suffocation in a fire incident at Smart Export Garment Ltd in Mohammadpur on January 26.

The EU is Bangladesh's largest trade partner and the country benefits from preferential access to the EU market.

The joint statement also said: "The European Union is deeply concerned about the labour conditions, including health and safety provisions, established for workers in factories across the country."

"In the light of both these tragedies, the European Union calls upon the Bangladeshi authorities to act immediately to ensure that factories comply with

international labour standards including International Labour Organisation conventions."

The duo also said the EU was willing and ready to assist the Bangladeshi authorities in any way it could to meet the international standards.

The joint statement also urged the European and international companies to do more to promote better health and safety standards in garment factories in Bangladesh, in line with internationally recognised guidelines on Corporate Social Responsibility.

However, no western buyers have come forward to aid the victims of the fire at Smart Export Garment, although the factory was producing clothes for some renowned brands in western countries.

The government yesterday launched countrywide inspection of garment factories as part of its efforts to stop fire incidents in the country's most important sector.

Md Habibur Rahman, chief inspector of the Department of Factory and Establishment, told The Daily Star that the department had begun the inspection to check the safety standards in factories and

offer remedies. A total of 20 teams have been formed to complete the checking of 4,500 factories across the country. Initially, they would visit factories in the capital, Narayanganj and Narsingdi, he said.

The official said his teams were checking whether the factories have fire and building safety permits, enough fire fighting equipment and that their emergency exits are locked.

"If we find minor faults, we will write to them setting deadline for correcting the loopholes. We will file cases with the labour courts if they default. The factories that grossly violate the fire and safety standards and are very risky will be shut down," said the chief inspector.

Following the deadliest fire incident at Tazreen Fashions in Ashulia last November, the fire department conducted inspections at garment factories in Ashulia, its adjoining areas and in Chittagong.

At least 1,000 garment workers have been killed and 3,000 were injured in more than 275 incidents in factories in Bangladesh since 1990, according to the Washington-based International Labour Rights Forum.

Eat earlier

FROM PAGE 20
Now scientists have found there is some truth in this.

A study of Spanish dieters on a 20 week programme found those who ate their main meal, which is lunch in Spain, before 3pm lost more weight than those who ate it later.

This was despite overall calorie intake being similar in both groups.

Researchers found late lunchers lost an average of 7.7kg, compared with 9.9kg for early lunchers, the equivalent of nine per cent and 11.3 per cent of their body weight respectively, over the 20 weeks.

The study was conducted by researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH) in Boston, America, in collaboration with the University of Murcia and Tufts University.

The findings were published in International Journal of Obesity.

Author of the study Dr Frank Scheer, also director of the Medical Chronobiology Program of BWH, said "Our results indicate that late eaters displayed a slower weight-loss rate and lost significantly less weight than early eaters, suggesting that the timing of large meals could be an important factor in a weight loss programme."

The study involved 420 overweight dieters who were divided into two groups, early or late eaters.

Researchers found that timing of the other, smaller meals did not play a role in the success of weight loss.

However, the late eaters -- who lost less weight -- also consumed fewer calories during breakfast and were more likely to skip breakfast altogether.

Late-eaters also had a lower estimated insulin sensitivity, which can lead to diabetes.

Parking toll

FROM PAGE 20
policemen in uniform were seen helping them in collecting tolls.

Member of the traffic police Mohammad Sahur, who was checking parking tickets, said, "The leaseholder has bought the road for this month. Therefore, no vehicle will be allowed here free of cost."

Abu Alam, who was collecting tolls at the entry point near the school gate, echoed the same.

However, when the correspondent identified himself, the toll collector toned down his comment: "If anyone says they will just pass by and not park on the road, we do not charge them."

Only vehicles of government offices located in that area were allowed to use the road without paying the toll, said most of the toll collectors.

Drivers of many cars and CNG-run auto-rickshaws alleged that they were forced to pay parking fees even though they did not park.

"I took this road as a short-cut to Agargoan," said Manzoor Ahmed, an employee of a private firm. "But I had to pay a parking charge."

Iqramul Habib, deputy commissioner (traffic-west) of the DMP, denied the allegations. "We are collecting tolls only from the vehicles that park here," he claimed.

He continued, "Many people try to deceive the traffic management, saying they will just drive by. But it has been noticed that they park their cars there and visit the fair."

Those who really want to drive on the road and do not visit the fair can easily use alternative roads, said the deputy commissioner.

The on-duty staff said they were struggling to manage parking space as the number of visitors arriving on cars was on the rise. Besides, auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers park their vehicles haphazardly, creating bottlenecks.

Talking to The Daily Star, EPB Vice-Chairman Shubhashish Bose said, "We have not heard of such allegations. If they [traffic management] are charging cars that do not park there, they are not doing the right thing."

"If we had leased the road to any private organisation instead of traffic police, it would fail to control the traffic situation."