



Divisional round qualifiers from Chittagong Grammar School, Manarat International School, Saint Gregory's High School, Saint Xavier Francis Girls' High School, SOS Hermann Gmeiner School and South Valley International English School pose with Golden Tickets yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Contest held

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(Class 8) and Shahria Jahan Monisha (Class 10).

The other two schools were Manarat International School and Chittagong Grammar School. The qualifiers from Manarat were Raiyan Ishrak Ahsan (Class 9), Mahzabin Amin (Class 8) and Faisal Bin Ibrahim (Class 7). From the other school qualified Tahmid Kazi (Class 8), Tanisha Guha (Class 7) and Helen Mahmood (Class 8).

In Khulna, two schools were visited. From South Valley International English School won two students -- Farzana Hossain Mim and Syeda Jill Anjuman, both from class 9.

The other school in Khulna was SOS Hermann Gmeiner School, from where the three students to get the Golden Tickets were Rajin Binte Reaz (Class 9), Samia Tasnim Ahona (Class 7) and Khondakar Nabil Hasan (Class 8).

Anyone who did not qualify through their school can still participate through the online game on www.champ21.com.

The Spelling Bee finals are to be held in June.

Detailed information about the competition is available on www.champs21.com, the first e-learning portal of Bangladesh. Students who want to qualify through the online rounds can visit the website and play the Spelling Bee Game to their heart's content.

Hartal

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in all 16 districts of Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions.

Minu also threatened to go for tougher agitation programme if the government interrupts their peaceful protests during hartal hours.

The press conference was organised by the party's coordination committee of two divisions.

Earlier, BNP placed barricades on highways and railways for an hour on February 2 and held demonstrations at district and divisional level on January 27, Minu added.

Harun-ur-Rashid, divisional organising secretary of BNP, Shafiqul Islam Milon, city general secretary of BNP, and Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul, a central BNP member, among others, attended the press conference.

Robbers kill

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Chouddogram area, said Munshiganj Additional Superintendent of Police Tarikul Islam.

On the Meghna-Gomoti bridge, a police team had been waiting in ambush for the truck carrying the transformer. On a minibus, another team was following the truck.

The first team barricaded the highway at Gazaria around 5:30am and stopped the truck, said Officer-in-Charge Jahangir Alam of Gazaria Police Station.

As Shariful tried to board the truck, a robber hit him in the head with a rod, leaving him critically injured, added the OC.

The truck then rammed into the police minibus behind it and drove away.

One of the teams took Shariful to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and the other chased after the truck.

In Hossaindi area of Gazaria, the robbers abandoned the truck and started running off the road.

At one stage, the law enforcers and the gang engaged in a shoot-out. One of the gang members, Shipon, received a bullet and fell to the ground.

The others managed to make a getaway. Shariful was declared dead when police rushed him to the DMCH.

Shipon, 23, is now undergoing treatment at the DMCH under police guard.

The Black Hornet

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target and the hum from Black Hornet's rotors is scarcely audible even from a distance of a few yards.

Soldiers can either pilot it directly or program it to fly to a given set of co-ordinates on the battlefield using GPS, then return to base after spying on enemy positions.

The Mail on Sunday was last week given an exclusive demonstration of Black Hornet in Camp Bastion by soldiers from the Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF).

The 'recces' soldiers, who operate the tiny drone from a safe distance, and their commander, Major Adam Foden, explained how they had used Black Hornet with great success on recent missions into Taliban territory.

Major Foden, 34, said: 'Black Hornet is a game-changing piece of kit. Previously we would have sent soldiers forward to see if there were any enemy fighters hiding inside a set of buildings.'

'Now we are deploying Black Hornet to look inside compounds and to clear a route through enemy-held spaces.'

'It has worked very well and the pictures it delivers back to the monitor are really clear. And Black Hornet is so small and quiet that the locals can't see or hear it.'

On most operations the Black Hornet 'nanocopter' is controlled by a soldier using a computer game-style joystick. As the drone hovers near an enemy position, pictures are beamed back to a monitoring station. It delivers high-resolution still and moving images.

Pressing a button, a soldier can zoom silently on to a

When Black Hornet is flown inside Taliban compounds it can barely be heard and is difficult to see against the grey mud walls of village compounds.

Enemy fighters, hiding among civilian populations in villages, would be unaware that the drone was watching them.

One BRF soldier said: 'It's a cool piece of kit. The pictures are amazingly clear and we can see who is a local civilian and who is a Taliban fighter and whether any weapons are being stored there. We can then make our plans accordingly. It saves a lot of time and a lot of mistakes. It can zoom right up to somebody's face and hold that frame for as long as is required without them even knowing it's there. It makes it possible to identify a high-value target.'

While Black Hornet is a priceless tool in Afghanistan, it is unlikely it could be used on Britain's streets because of civil liberty concerns.

Before soldiers are allowed to use Black Hornet they are required to go on a training course which teaches them not just the drone's capabilities but also how it should be deployed.

The whole package, the helicopter, monitor and stick, fit into a pocket-sized case.

The Black Hornet - properly called a Prox Dynamics PD-100 Personal Reconnaissance System - is a joint UK-Norwegian venture and was passed fit for service in Afghanistan after extensive field trials in Cyprus last year.

Israel 'confirms'

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Damascus said, targeted a military complex near the capital, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak spoke to reporters in Munich but refrained from directly confirming that Israel staged the strike.

Barak told the Munich Security Conference it was "another proof that when we say something we mean it."

We don't think that it should be allowable to bring advanced weapon systems into Lebanon, the Hezbollah from Syria, when Assad falls."

Wednesday's air strike targeted surface-to-air missiles and an adjacent military complex believed to house chemical agents, according to a US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Damascus has threatened to retaliate, further fuelling fears of a regional spillover of the country's 22-month conflict, which the UN says has already left more than 60,000 people dead.

Forty-eight hours after the reported strike, US Defence Secretary Leon Panetta told AFP Washington was increasingly concerned that "chaos" in Syria could allow Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah Shia movement to obtain sophisticated weapons from Damascus.

Ahead of the air raid, Israeli officials cranked up the rhetoric about Syria's arsenal, which includes chemical agents, warning of dire consequences if they end up in the hands of the Iran-allied Hezbollah.

Israel and Hezbollah fought a devastating war in the summer of 2006.

In Damascus, Assad on Sunday accused Israel of seeking to "destabilise" Syria, state news agency SANA reported.

The raid "unmasked the true role Israel is playing, in collaboration with foreign enemy forces and their agents on Syrian soil, to destabilise and weaken Syria," he told Saeed Jalili, who heads Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

Iran has joined UN Security Council members Russia and China in consistently backing Assad's regime throughout the almost two year-long conflict which has also forced more than 650,000 people to flee Syria.

After Khatib met Iranian and Russian representatives in Munich, speculation was rife over whether there had been a change in Moscow's position, but Syria's state-owned daily Ath Thawra said there has been no such shift.

"Bets that Russia would change its mind and modify its stance clash with its policy, which is commanded by its interests and strategic considerations," the daily wrote in an editorial.

Moscow is one of Assad's last remaining allies, and its support for the fight against rebels seeking to overthrow his regime "is becoming more solid each day," the papers said.

Russia has blocked three UN Security Council resolutions threatening sanctions against Assad over the crackdown in Syria, and has been accused by the armed opposition of being partly responsible for the bloodshed.

FBCCI

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government along with the private sector is pressing the US for duty-free access of Bangladeshi products to the US and retaining the GSP facilities for Bangladesh, it said.

Bangladesh's economy would be affected directly if the US withdraws the GSP facilities, said the country's apex trade body.

Festivity

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rich history, culture, heritage and economic prospects of Chittagong.

Samuel Berthet, director of AFC, said boat technology was part of Bangladesh's heritage. But with rivers drying out and technology changing, boat technology is gradually disappearing.

Yves Marre, a French sailor renowned for inventing safe boat-making technology, thanked The Daily Star for organising the festival.

Marre, who has been living in Bangladesh for more than 15 years, said he had been making boats at TaraTari Shipyard in Kalurghat to help fishermen sail safely.

Speaking on the occasion, Mahfuz Anam, the editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said the message of the festival was tolerance -- tolerance of diversity in culture and opinion.

About the rich heritage of boat technology of Bangladesh, he said it was a matter of marvel that people invented the science of boat technology through which they made voyages 2000 years back.

Termining the 21st century a century of communication, he urged all to shun the path of intolerance to be able to achieve collective humanity.

With a traditional drum performance by a group called "Joy Baba Loknath," the festival offered a local flavour in the afternoon.

Mahfuz Anam later inaugurated the photography exhibition at Shilpakala Academy Gallery.

In the evening, the Ritwik Ghatak film "Titas Ekti Nadir Naam" was screened on a giant screen on the academy premises.

SSC exams

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appeared in Bangla 1st paper while Dakhil candidates in Bangla exam yesterday.

This year, a total of 13,03,203 examinees from 27,073 educational institutes registered for the exams across the country.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid urged the political parties to act responsibly in case of holding their programme during the examinations.

"The examinees are our children and I hope the political parties will not hold any programme that turns out to be a setback for the children," he told reporters while visiting Azimpur Govt Girls School in the capital.

The minister sought cooperation from all concerned to help end the exams fairly and peacefully.

Apart from having the highest number of expelled students, Madrasa Board had the highest number of absentees yesterday.

A total of 21 students were expelled while 3,801 candidates did not take the exam from this board alone, according to the control room of education ministry.

Dhaka Board stood second highest in terms of absentees as 1,214 students did not appear in the exams. Sylhet board had the lowest number with 124 candidates.

Among the expelled students, 13 are from Technical Board and one from Chittagong Board, said the control room.

Two invigilators from Comilla Board were expelled for helping examinees unfairly during the examination while police arrested a person for impersonating a candidate at Char Fashion in Bhola.

Probe to continue

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the global lender and the government had been scrapped.

"As long as the MoU is in place, the World Bank will help us, and we will also take their help in conducting investigation," he added.

The chairman made the remarks in reply to queries from journalists at the ACC office. Asked about the government's withdrawal of the request for WB funding, he said, "The government's schedule and that of the World Bank do not match, as the government wants to implement the project without delay."

Queried if the non-inclusion of former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain in the case had led to the present situation concerning the Padma bridge project, Ghulam said, "It proves the ACC does not yield to any pressure."

He went on, "You guys [journalists] wanted to implicate him [Abul Hossain] as the World Bank wanted to, even though there may or may not be documentary evidence for this. ACC will not give in to it."

The ACC investigation in the case would continue regardless of the latest developments, Ghulam reiterated.

After a year-long enquiry into the graft allegation over Padma bridge project, the ACC on December 17 last year filed the case against seven people for conspiring to commit bribery.

The accused include former secretary of the Bridges Division Mosharrar Hossain Bhuiyan. But the anti-graft body did not include in the case Abul Hossain and former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury.

ACC REPLY TO WB PANEL

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the ACC chairman's January 21 letter to Luis Moreno Ocampo, chairman of the WB external panel of experts.

Ghulam Rahman wrote the letter in reply to Ocampo's letter to him on January 9.

In his letter, the WB panel chief expressed displeasure at the non-inclusion of Abul Hossain on the list of the accused in the Padma bridge corruption case. The absence of Abul's name on the list showed the ACC was not carrying out a complete and fair probe into the corruption conspiracy, he added.

Below is the ACC chief's letter to Ocampo.

Date: 21 January, 2013

Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo
Chairman
External Panel of Experts
The World Bank
1818 H Street NW
Washington, DC 20433
USA

Subject: Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project

I acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter of January 9, 2013 on the above subject and would like to reiterate and assure you ACC's told and unconditional commitment to conduct a fair, adequate, transparent, correct and complete investigation of the Banani police station case No. 19, dated December 17, 2012.

The ACC appreciate the Panel's offer or assistance in the fulfillment of its role, in particular to provide training for its staff and technical assistance such as forensic accounting and in investigative planning. ACC would welcome any assistance from the External Panel of Experts and the World Bank compatible with Bangladesh laws, rules and regulations. Visits and dialogue at Panel's convenience may please be considered.

I have asked the ACC's Investigation Team to prepare answers to the questions contained in your above mentioned letter. The Commission has reviewed the replies and annexed them with this letters for your perusal and advice.

In the body of the FIR the names of the former Communication Minister Syed Abul Hossain and former State Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Abul Hasan Chowdhury have been mentioned as persons who held meetings with SNC Lavalin officials.

Syed Abul Hossain's name came up as the person who was met by the SNC Lavalin officials and Abul Hasan Chowdhury's name came up as a facilitator. Moreover, it was mentioned that their names were written in Ramesh Shah's notebook in reference to percentage allocation in the form of Padma PCC after award of contract. They were not included as accused as during enquiry there was no corroborative evidence, witness statements, etc that they were involved in the criminal conspiracy to take or give bribe.

In any case, in the investigation phase after rigorous scrutiny if Syed Abul Hossain and Mr Abul Hsan Chowdhury or any of them were found involved in the conspiracy, no leniency will be shown or their names will be shown and their names will be included in the charge sheet.

ACC is looking forward to working together with the World Bank's External Panel of Experts to bring to justice all those who were involved in Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project corruption conspiracy through a fair, adequate, transparent, correct and complete investigation.

I am also availing this opportunity to extend to you and to the members of the External Panel of Experts from my own behalf and on behalf of my ACC colleagues best wishes for your good health, great happiness and every success in 2013.

Sincerely yours,

Ghulam Rahman
Chairman

138 fortune-seekers

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All the 15 are from Bangladesh, said Mostafa Tasin, a physician at the hospital where they are taking treatment.

The survivors told naval officials that they had survived only on seawater for a long time.

"I was on the sea for 12 days," Kabir Hossain, a Bangladeshi, told Sri Lankan journalists in broken Hindi.

The rest of the survivors are in a naval camp while the body has been kept in a morgue.

The boat had been stranded for 10 days prior to the rescue. Reports from local fisherman alerted the Sri Lankan Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, which in turn asked the navy to help. The navy conducted a 20-hour rescue mission, says its press release.

"We sent three ships for the rescue at a location 50 miles off the eastern coast of A k k a r a i p a t t u," Warnakulasuriya told AFP.

Statements of the survivors would be recorded, police spokesman Prishantha Jayakody told AFP.

According to different news agencies, the authorities were having trouble

communicating with the survivors because of language barrier and had asked for translators from the two embassies in Sri Lanka.

It was unclear whether the Myanmar nationals were Rohingya, officials said.

The rescue mission took place amid increased naval patrols to stop Sri Lankan fishing boats from carrying people illegally to Australia.

According to a Sri Lankan newspaper, citizens of the country pay as much as \$3,000 to travel across the sea.

When contacted, an official of Bangladesh High Commission in Colombo told The Daily Star that two officials were sent early Saturday to the temporary shelter where the rescued people were kept under judicial supervision.

The local administration was taking care of the survivors and there were arrangements for taking them to hospital in case of emergency, the official added.

He said a process was underway to know the identities of the people. The high commission sent another official to assist the local administration in confirming identities of the people rescued.

Taliban bombs kill Afghan family, cops

AFP, Kandahar, Afghanistan

Taliban roadside bombs killed five civilians, including a family of four, and two police officers in the country's troubled south at the weekend, officials said Sunday.

The family -- mother, father and two daughters aged eight and nine -- died along with their driver in Helmand province's Khanishin district when their vehicle hit an improvised bomb late Saturday.

"The blast was so powerful that nothing was left of the bodies, they are shattered in small pieces," district governor Shah Mahmoud said, blaming Taliban insurgents for the attack.

Two police officers were killed on the same day in a similar bomb attack in Musa Qala district, another restive part of Helmand where insurgents have an active presence, the local district governor Nemat Khan said.

The officers were on a routine patrol when their pick-up truck was blown up.

Roadside bombs are favourite weapons of Taliban Islamists fighting to oust the Western-backed government and the indiscriminately placed explosives regularly kill civilians.

2 journalists

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ATM Fazle Kabir fixed the new date following a time petition from the counsel of the two journalists.

The tribunal on December 6 last year served the notice on Chief Editor Rob Gifford and South Asia Bureau Chief Adam Roberts of the British magazine asking them to reply within three weeks why proceedings under section 11 (4) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, would not be taken against them.

The move came after a person, claiming to have been from The Economist, had called Justice Md Nizamul Huq, former chairman of the tribunal, and said the weekly possessed the record of his Skype conversation with expatriate legal expert Ahmed Ziauddin.

Section 11 (4) of the Act says a tribunal may punish any person, who obstructs or abuses its process or disobeys any of its orders or directions, or does anything which tends to prejudice the case of a party before it.

Mustafizur Rahman Khan, counsel of the journalists, told the tribunal his clients had received the show-cause notice in the last part of January and he received Vokalatnama (power of attorney) on Saturday.

The tribunal fixed March 4 as the lawyer sought four weeks' time for preparation.

Justice Huq resigned from the tribunal on December 11 amid controversy over the leak and media reports on his Skype conversation with Ziauddin, following which the government reconstituted the two tribunals.

Meanwhile, the tribunal yesterday completed recording the testimony of Brig Gen (dismissed) Abdullahi Aman Azmi, son of former Jamaat-e-Islami ameer Ghulam Azam, and the first defence witness in the case against Azam.

Azmi, who gave his testimony on November 12, 2012, exhibited a total 329 documents to defend his father.

The tribunal adjourned the case proceeding until today when Azmi is set to face cross-examination.

The tribunal also recorded cross-examination of Zahir Uddin Jalal, second prosecution witness in the case against incumbent Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami before adjourning the proceeding until tomorrow.

In his testimony on December 18 last year, Jalal said he had heard Nizami asking a Pakistani army officer to have him killed along with martyr freedom fighter Rumi, son of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam, and musician Altaf Mahmud when they were detained at a camp during the Liberation War.

Meanwhile, the International Crimes Tribunal-2 extended the time until February 26 for BNP standing committee member MK Anwar to explain his alleged derogatory comments over the war crimes trial.

The tribunal fixed the new date following a time petition filed by Anwar's lawyer for preparation.

"We want to contest the case and [for this reason] we want time for preparation," said Anwar's counsel Munshi Ahsan Kabir.

The tribunal on January 24 issued the show-cause notice following a prosecution-filed contempt petition in connection with Anwar's comment published in the media.

The daily Sangram quoted Anwar as saying, "The government out of political vengeance is staging a farce in the name of war crimes trial."

He was addressing a discussion at Mahanagar Natyamancha marking the 77th birth anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman on January 20.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Benazir Ahmed has meanwhile visited the tribunal to inspect security measures taken by law enforcers.