



FROM LEFT...participants of Mohammadpur Preparatory School, Scholars' Home Sylhet, SFX Green Herald International School, Sylhet International School and College, and Sylhet Khajanchibari School and College who progress to the next round of The Daily Star Spelling Bee contest yesterday.

PHOTO:
STAR

Spellers

FROM PAGE 20
Swagata Sangeet Datta and Sadman Sakib from Khajanchibari International School and College joined the increasing number of participants competing in the divisional rounds.

From Sylhet International School and College, the winners were Bakhtiar Rashid Akhib, Tohura Tahsin and Tahmid Ahmed while Ifrat Jahan Prova, Wakila Hussain and Nishat Karim Chowdhury qualified from Scholars' Home Sylhet.

Anyone who has not made it to the divisional round through their school can still participate through the online game at www.champs21.com. The finals of the competition are to be held in June.

Detailed information on the contest is available on www.champs21.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.

16,000 killings

FROM PAGE 20
19,422 of those last year alone.

He said 900 people were punished in the cases filed for repression on women, acid throwing, abduction and rape.

Of the murders, the minister said, 51 were political and 16,285 were apolitical.

The law enforcement agencies have prepared a list of criminals and are keeping constant vigil on their movements to improve law and order, he mentioned.

In response to another query, Muhiuddin said 20 to 25 people were made accused in the first information report in the Biswajit murder case, and 11 were arrested.

There are 68 prisons in the country and they can accommodate 33,570 prisoners but there are now 68,402, he said.

Mars rover

FROM PAGE 20
Nasa said in a statement.

This is the first time a robot has drilled to collect a Martian sample.

John Grunsfeld, Nasa associate administrator for the agency's Science Mission Directorate, said "The most advanced planetary robot ever designed is now a fully operating analytical laboratory on Mars."

The hole can be seen in pictures taken by Curiosity next to a shallower test hole nearby.

As images from the drilling operation streamed to Earth, some team members shared their excitement on social media.

The "full drill hole was a success! I'm sure it was LOUD and they heard the drilling action for MILES!" tweeted rover driver Paolo Bellutta.

Curiosity drilled into a rock named John Klein' after a Mars Science Laboratory deputy project manager who died in 2011.

In the next few days, ground controllers will command the rover's arm to process the sample by delivering bits of it to the instruments inside Curiosity.

Before the rock powder is analysed, some will be used to scour traces of material that may have been deposited onto the hardware while the rover was still on Earth, despite thorough cleaning before launch, Nasa said.

The drilling and analysis is part of Nasa's Mars Science Laboratory Project, which is using the Curiosity rover to figure out whether an area in Mars' Gale Crater ever offered a hospitable environment for life.

Thank you

FROM PAGE 1
"I heard them take the oath, and its every word is justified. We will do whatever is necessary to honour their oath. It is our commitment," she said.

At Friday's grand rally, thousands of people took an oath that they will continue their movement until capital punishment is handed down on the members of Razakar and Al-Badr, who committed crimes against humanity like genocide and rape in 1971.

A group representing the protesters submitted to the Speaker the six-point demand that includes death penalty for Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah and all war criminals, revoking state power to grant general amnesty to the persons convicted by the tribunals, amending the law to provide scope for appeal against inadequate punishment and imposing a ban on Jamaat and religion-based politics.

The prime minister said her government would take steps to close loopholes in the related law if there is any. "We all should create an atmosphere conducive for holding a fair trial of war criminals and implementation of the verdicts."

Hasina lauded the youths for staging unprecedented demonstrations in Shahbagh and elsewhere in the country, and said the Shahbagh intersection should be named "swadhinatar torun projomno square".

She urged the youths to continue the movement side by side with their studies.

Teesta deal

FROM PAGE 20
caused a stir at both home and abroad.

Queried if the Indian government would finance the Padma multipurpose bridge, he said, "We have not begun any formal discussion. This is a very large project and it is not possible for a single partner to finance the project."

He said the Indian government had made a \$200 million grant out of its \$1 billion Line of Credit and Bangladesh was free to use that grant.

Mathai said the Bangladesh government is discussing with various partners to finance the project. If there is a consortium, the Indian companies would be happy to take part in it, he added.

On the war crimes issue, Mathai said India supports the trial of war criminals of 1971, saying justice is being done after a long time.

In reply to a question about the ongoing demonstrations at Shahbagh, he said the demonstrations and outcome of the trial is entirely an internal matter of Bangladesh.

Driver, helper

FROM PAGE 20
After recording the confessional statements of the duo and 13 witnesses, and findings of the medical report on the victim, police submitted the charge sheet, Shahidur, also officer-in-charge of Manikganj Sadar Police Station, said.

Police arrested the bus driver Dipu Mia, 30, and helper Kashem Mia, 28, from their village homes in Manikganj Sadar upazila on the same day of the rape incident.

They were sent to Manikganj Jail after recording their confessional statement before the Manikganj Judicial Magistrate Court-1 on the following day.

After the rape incident, deferent socio-cultural organisations formed human chains, brought out rallies demanding exemplary punishment to the culprits.

Hasina said the youths have proved that there is no place for war criminals in Bangladesh, and that they will take forward the country in the spirit of the Liberation War.

"I will die in peace knowing that the war criminals will have no place in Bangladesh," she said.

A total of 33 lawmakers took part in the discussion in parliament.

Govt behind

FROM PAGE 1
Chhatra Shibir from the gatherings of their party activists, Jamaat acting secretary general Moulana Rafiqul Islam Khan said in a statement.

The party also announced to stage demonstrations across the country tomorrow for what it said to protest against the countrywide anarchy patronised by the government to implement its political agenda.

The demonstration is meant for pressing home their various demands, including dismantling of the war crimes tribunals, releasing the party's top leaders facing war crimes charges and restoration of the caretaker government system.

In the statement, Rafiqul said, "I strongly condemn and protest the government's ill move to create anarchy in the country through its patronage to make its petty political gains."

The countrywide movement began after a war crimes tribunal on Tuesday sentenced Jamaat leader Quader Mollah to life term in prison for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

Hours after the verdict, a mass uproar started at Shahbagh intersection in the capital when an online activists' group gave a call through online social networks to wage protests against the verdict.

It continued for the sixth day yesterday amid spontaneous participation of several thousands pro-liberation activists.

In the statement, Rafiqul alleged that since formation of the tribunals, the ruling party MPs, ministers and leaders had been commenting on execution of top Jamaat leaders to run the tribunal proceedings as per the government's own plan.

"We want to clearly state that the people of the country won't let the government implement its plot chalked out to take its political revenge," he said.

The Jamaat leader also sought cooperation from the countrymen, party leaders and activists to make their tomorrow's programme a success.

Taliban not serious about talks

Says Pak Interior Minister

IANS, Islamabad

The Taliban are neither serious nor sincere about peace talks with the government, Pakistani interior minister Rehman Malik said.

The minister's remarks came after Taliban spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan offered "conditional" talks and called for the release of two former spokesmen Maulvi Said Umer and Muslim Khan, Xinhua reported.

The spokesman said the two will lead the Taliban negotiation team.

Malik said the Taliban's offer for dialogue was "suspicious" and that Ehsan has no credibility.

Lonely

FROM PAGE 1
Sarwar. Other photos capture some happy moments of a visit to a park with his parents.

Mahir Sarwar Megh, who turns six this year, yesterday went to Drik gallery where Runi's family has organised a three-day exhibition of family photos, starting today.

Sagor, news editor of Maasranga television, and Runi, senior reporter of ATN Bangla, were killed at their Rajabazar house in the capital on February 11 last year.

"Megh is not aware that tomorrow [today] is the first death anniversary of his parents. But he wanted to come with me as he heard about the exhibition of his parents' photos," Nawsher Alam Roman, Runi's brother, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Still, he cannot focus on anything; very much sensitive," added Roman.

Megh reacts painfully whenever he sees the bloody images of his parents on TV, but he is going to school, according to a family friend.

Roman said although Megh was slowly coming to terms with life, his mother still remained in a traumatic state. "I think we need to take her to a psychiatrist."

He added they were frustrated that the law enforcers were yet to catch the killers and unearth the motive behind the double murder.

Bomb kills 6 in Afghanistan

AFP, Kandahar

A landmine explosion ripped through a civilian vehicle in southern Afghanistan and killed six members of a family, provincial authorities said Saturday.

"Six people all onboard -- two elderly men, two women and two men -- were killed in a landmine explosion in Nad Ali district of Helmand province," Ahmad Zirak, the provincial governor's spokesman, told AFP.

The blast at around 7:00 pm on Friday took place as they were travelling from one village to another in the district, Zirak added.

Mohammad Ismail Hotak, deputy director of the coordination center for security forces in Helmand, confirmed the toll.

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

Less than a week ago a Taliban roadside bomb killed five civilians, including a family of four, and two police officers in the country's troubled south.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Commonwealth pushes Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

The Commonwealth Secretary-General opened talks with Sri Lanka yesterday by pushing for judicial independence on the island, as Canada renewed calls to boycott the bloc's summit in Colombo later this year.

Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma is holding talks with Sri Lankan leaders in Colombo on the rule of law and the separation of powers after the island defied international appeals and sacked its chief justice in January, the bloc said.

Sharma's four-day visit to Sri Lanka came as Ottawa urged others in the 54-member grouping to stay away from the November Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) hosted by Colombo.

Change law to try Jamaat

FROM PAGE 1
acquittal order given by the tribunal to any accused, as per the proposed amendment.

Replying to a question, the minister said as per the proposed amendment, the government can file an appeal with the SC against the ICT-2 verdict that awarded Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdul Quader Mollah life term.

The amendment will be given retrospective effect from September 25 last year.

Eminent writer and journalist Shahriar Kabir told The Daily Star that a provision has to be included in the ICT law for trying Jamaat-e-Islami that led the heinous crimes like genocide, killings, rapes, lootings and arsons during the war.

If the party is not tried and punished, the present government will face serious danger, he said.

The noted campaigner added that seven political parties including Nazi party were tried and punished in the Nuremberg trial as war criminal organisations and their properties were confiscated.

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 verdict, which awarded life term imprisonment to Jamaat leader Quader Mollah without giving any directive about his future politics, is not acceptable at all, he said.

"We want death sentence

for Quader Mollah," he said, adding that the properties of Jamaat-e-Islami have to be confiscated.

A prominent jurist requesting anonymity told The Daily Star that as per the constitution's article 47 (3), there is no bar to trying the political organisations under which the crimes were committed during the Liberation War.

Asked about the trial of the political parties, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday he might discuss the issue during today's cabinet meeting.

Before finalising the proposal for amending the ICT law, Shafique along with State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam held a meeting with some legal experts at his office yesterday.

The experts included former High Court judges Justice Syed Amirul Islam, Justice Zaki Ebadul Huq, Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice MA Rashid, Law Commission acting chairman Prof Shah Alam, National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman, Attorney General Mahubey Alam and Additional Attorney General MK Rahman.

The original law of 1973 had no provision for the government to appeal against any verdict in war

crimes cases.

In 2009, the law was amended to give the government the right to appeal to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against a war crimes verdict in the event of "an order of acquittal".

But the government, which represents the victims in the crimes against humanity cases, did not have the right to appeal against an inadequate sentence.

The defence, however, enjoys the right to appeal against any "conviction and sentence" in both the original and the amended law.

This difference in the rights to appeal has come to the fore following the verdict in Quader Mollah's case on February 5.

Hours after the verdict was delivered, people from all walks of life started non-stop demonstrations at Shahbagh intersection, demanding death penalty to Mollah.

The law minister said the decision to amend the law has been taken to fulfil the expectations of people, he said, adding that amending the laws is a continuous process.

The government has taken steps to amend the ICT act to ensure equal right of the government, aggrieved persons and victims and the accused, he added.

Rally enters day 6

FROM PAGE 1
against their expectation.

These two incidents have forced the young generation to take to the streets, they said, adding that the wave of Shahbagh movement has vibrated the whole nation.

"Seeing the anarchy of Jamaat-Shibir activists, many people thought Jamaat-Shibir to be the dominating force in the country. But the Shahbagh movement has shown that the pro-liberation people are the dominating force and that Jamaat-Shibir are just a parasite in the society," said Mokarram Hossain Shuva, a protester and blogger.

Kajal Abdullah, an organiser of the movement, said, "Our predecessors have done their job by freeing the country. Now it is our turn to eliminate the anti-liberation forces from Bangladesh."

The nonstop protest began just hours after the International Crimes Tribunal-2 on February 5 sentenced Quader Mollah to life term in prison for crimes against humanity during the Liberation War.

The movement was launched by Bloggers and Online Activist Network, but it soon transformed into a people's movement. Demonstrators say a life

sentence for Mollah was too lenient. They want death sentence for him and all other war criminals.

On Friday, the nation saw the biggest gathering in recent memory as tens of thousands thronged the Shahbagh intersection to call for death penalty to war criminals.

From the 3:00pm-6:00pm mass rally that day, people took an oath to continue the movement until their demand is met, and vowed to boycott all businesses, banks, media outlets and social and cultural organisations owned by Jamaat leaders. They also called for banning Jamaat and its student wing, Shibir.

Joining the protest yesterday, Duronto Rajshahi owner Mushfiqur Rahman said it was a good news for the country that no Pakistani players were playing in this year's Bangladesh Premier League T20 tournament.

The team members left the protest ground, which has come to be known as "Prajanmo Chattar," around 11:30am.

Protesters made a mock gallows at the venue that turned into a human sea with the participation of thousands of people in the evening.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, writer Anisul Haque,

Human Rights activist Khushi Kabir and National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman also joined the demonstrations yesterday.

Earlier on Saturday night, Khulna Royal Bengals skipper Shahriar Nafees joined the Shahbagh demonstrations.

Yesterday, students of different schools, colleges and universities from Dhaka and elsewhere in the country took part in the movement. People from Chuadanga, Kushtia, Mymensingh, Kishoreganj, Barguna and several other districts also joined the protest.

Protesters announced that Bangladeshis living in the US also expressed solidarity with them.

A seven-year old boy gave the full speech that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered on 7 March 1971.

The cable operators of Srimangal upazila in Moulvibazar, in an unprecedented move, have stopped broadcasting Diganta television, which is owned by a Jamaat leader.

Demonstrations also took place in Tangail, Khulna, Magura, Manikganj, Rangpur, Pabna, Munshiganj and Natore.

Students flock to Shahbagh

FROM PAGE 20
some others did not attend classes to join the demonstration.

They joined the call for boycotting Retina and Focus coaching centres and other educational institutions that have links with the Jamaat-e-Islami whose several top leaders are now facing trial for committing crimes against humanity in 1971.

Enamul Haque Nayon, a class eight student of Siddheswari Girls High School in the capital's Mouchak, came to the spot in school uniform only to chant slogans along with others, demanding capital punishment for war criminals.

Aged only four, Rafi Ahmed, a student of Jasim

Uddin Institute at Khilkhet, was with his family members. He seemed very energetic, having "Hang War Criminals" painted on the face.

"It is the responsibility of the parents to instil the spirit of our nationalism in their children and make them aware of the glorifying sacrifices of the martyrs [in 1971]," said Rafi's mother Nilufa.

Students, teachers and employees of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital marched in procession from the institution to Shahbagh.

The fact that Quader Mollah and his associates are alive is an insult to the sacrifices made by the 30 million martyrs, said Nishit, a fourth year student of the college.

"We won't leave the street until all war criminals are handed down death sentences. We have committed to our martyrs."

Rokibul Islam, who was leading a group of people in chanting slogans, said the movement was a wake up call for the nation to boycott the Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir.

He said his father was a freedom fighter. "We are planning to bring out a procession of teachers, students and officials of schools on February 15."

Rokibul said like him thousands of youths vowed to stay on the streets as long as their demands were not met.

New Titas well ready to supply gas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Limited (BGFCL) yesterday completed drilling the 17th well of Titas Gas Field in Brahmanbaria and is now ready to supply 25 million cubic feet of gas to the national grid daily.

The drilling which began on August 31 last year at Shimirikandi point of Titas gas field concluded last week, official sources of BGFCL, said, adding that the well is now being checked and re-checked to ensure its condition to operate in full swing.

BGFCL appointed Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration & Production Company Ltd (Bapex), a state-owned exploration and production company, to drill the well.

BGFCL funded the total cost of drilling and provided the necessary man power and equipments to Bapex.

Md Shafiqur Rahman, managing director of BGFL, said the new well will start supplying gas to the national grid within the next couple of days.

BGFCL will drill another well and build a processing plant at the same place at a cost of Tk300 crore from their own fund, he added.

At present BGFL has six gas fields -- Titas, Habiganj, Bakhrabad, Narsingdi, Meghna and Kamta -- supplying 37 percent of total gas to the national grid.

The fields possess 32 functioning wells which produce 760 million cubic feet of natural gas. The gas fields of BGFL are also producing 465 barrels of condensed oil to mitigate the partial demand of fuel in the country.

BGFL has plans to drill seven more gas wells by the end of 2013.

Azmi

FROM PAGE 20
cross-examination.

In reply to a question, Azmi said Jamaat-e-Islami is a political organisation as it works in the political arena.

Ghulam Azam has several charges against him, including involvement in murder and torture of unarmed people; and conspiracy, planning, incitement and complicity to commit genocide and crimes against humanity during the 1971 war.

The three-member Tribunal-1 led by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir yesterday adjourned the proceedings of the case until today when Azmi's cross examination would continue.

The defence yesterday completed the cross-examination of the 17th prosecution witness in a war crimes case against BNP leader Salaudun Quader Chowdhury behind closed doors.

Meanwhile, defence counsel Ahsanul Haque Hena apologised to the tribunal yesterday after the tribunal had asked him to do so.

On January 30, SQ Chowdhury fired Ahsanul and the tribunal asked Ahsanul to submit in writing that he was no more representing SQ Chowdhury.

The defence counsel did not follow the tribunal's order. SQ Chowdhury on February 6 told the tribunal that he had reappointed Ahsanul.

The tribunal yesterday asked Ahsanul to submit his apology prayer in writing. The proceeding of SQ Chowdhury's case was adjourned until February 12. The prosecution is set to produce the 19th witness on that day.

Earlier, Prosecutor Zead Al Malum had a heated debate with Tribunal-1 member Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim, which Chief Prosecutor Golam Arief Tipoo later termed unfortunate.