



PHOTO: IUB

Former chief adviser to a caretaker government Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman speaking at the 15th Convocation of Independent University, Bangladesh, yesterday at the Army Stadium in Banani.

Call for talks by parties lacks heart

FROM PAGE 16

to the 15th convocation of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

The ongoing political turmoil will die out after some time, and one should not despair in this period of transition, said the convocation speaker.

Held at the capital's Army Stadium, the convocation was attended by 1,955 students from business administration, science and engineering and social sciences programmes.

Rahman, who has also served the country as the chief justice, called upon the graduating students not to shy away from politics, saying any nation aspiring to walk the path of progress needs healthy politics.

Unfortunately, he said, the educational base of the country is very weak, with 90 percent of the total workforce having education below the secondary level. The quality of science and mathematics education is far below the global standards.

Terming the academic quality at public univer-

sities deplorable, he said Dhaka University, considered the country's premier seat of higher education, stands near the bottom in the world ranking of 6,000 universities.

The universities are of local standards, not even national, and fall far short of global standards, said Rahman.

There are 79 private universities in the country, many of which even lack a campus, a library and a laboratory, he said, but the government has a lenient attitude towards them apparently for the sake of partisan and business interests.

Rahman said a civilised society should have a uniform education system, but Bangladesh has a general, an English-medium and a madrasa system.

Prof M Omar Rahman, vice-chancellor of IUB, conferred the degrees on the graduates.

IUB Founding Trust Chairman Saifur Rahman and IUB Trustee Board Chairman Rashed Chowdhury, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Gene therapy's big wins against

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remain cancer-free today. Now, at least six research groups have treated more than 120 patients with many types of blood and bone marrow cancers, with stunning results.

"It's really exciting," said Dr Janice Abkowitz, blood diseases chief at the University of Washington in Seattle and President of the American Society of Haematology. "You can take a cell that belongs to a patient and engineer it to be an attack cell."

In one study, all five adults and 19 of 22 children with acute lymphocytic leukaemia, or ALL, had a complete remission, meaning no cancer could be found after treatment, although a few have relapsed since then.

These were gravely ill patients out of options. Some had tried multiple bone marrow transplants and up to 10 types of chemotherapy or other treatments.

Cancer was so advanced in eight-year-old Emily Whitehead of Pennsylvania that doctors said her major organs would fail within days. She was the first child given the gene therapy and shows no sign of cancer today, nearly two years later.

Results on other patients with myeloma, lymphoma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, or CLL, will be reported at the haematology group's conference that starts on Saturday in New Orleans.

Doctors say this has the potential to become the first gene therapy approved in the United States and

the first for cancer worldwide. Only one gene therapy is approved in Europe, for a rare metabolic disease.

The treatment involves filtering patients' blood to remove millions of white blood cells called T-cells, altering them in the lab to contain a gene that targets cancer, and returning them to the patient in infusions over three days.

"What we are giving essentially is a living drug" — permanently altered cells that multiply in the body into an army to fight the cancer, said Dr David Porter, a University of Pennsylvania scientist who led one study.

Several drug and biotech companies are developing these therapies. Penn has patented its method and licensed it to Switzerland-based Novartis AG. The company is building a research centre on the Penn campus in Philadelphia and plans a clinical trial next year that could lead to federal approval of the treatment as soon as 2016.

Talking with the researchers, "there is a sense of making history ... a sense of doing something very unique," said Hervé Hoppenot, president of Novartis Oncology, the division leading the work.

Lee Greenberger, chief scientific officer of the Leukaemia and Lymphoma Society, agreed.

"From our vantage point, this looks like a major advance," he said. "We are seeing powerful responses ... and time will tell how enduring these remissions turn out to be."

Hartal added to blockade

FROM PAGE 1

The blockaders attacked a convoy of Border Guard Bangladesh in Jessore and a magistrate's car in Chapainawabganj, and also torched a policeman's motorbike in Gazipur yesterday, the first day of the 72-hour blockade of roads, rail and waterways that began at 6:00am.

However, the extent of violence and damage was apparently lesser than in the previous days.

The BNP-led alliance has enforced countrywide blockade thrice in the last two weeks, demanding suspension of the election schedule, installation of a non-party government to oversee the next polls and the release of its detained leaders.

In the capital, a man and his six-year-old son were hit by stray pellets as police fired on blockaders, who exploded crude bombs near Malibagh Bazar around 11:30am yesterday.

Injured Abdul Majed, 35, and his son Mahir Ahmed were released after being given first aid at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Blockaders also set fire to a parked bus at Jatrabari around 3:45am and another in front of the Dhaka Judge's Court in Old Dhaka around 9:00pm.

Meanwhile, a mobile court sentenced four activists of the Islami Chhatra Shibir, student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, to imprisonment for different terms, ranging from four to six months, for possessing crude bombs.

Police arrested them from a procession brought out at Rampura in the capital.

Hundreds of goods-laden vehicles that left the Chittagong port for the capital on Thursday and Friday after the 131-hour blockade remained stranded on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday due to the fresh spell of blockade.

Though law enforcers, especially highway police, took measures to ensure safety of goods-carrying vehicles on the highway, many of the

vehicles took shelters at different points to avoid attacks by blockaders, reports our Chittagong Correspondent.

BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal is enforcing dawn-to-dusk hartals today in Chittagong, Patuakhali and Khagrachhari, demanding the release of its president and general secretary.

It has also called shutdowns for tomorrow in Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions and Narail.

JCD's Narsingdi district unit enforced a daylong hartal in the town yesterday, protesting the arrest of JCD President Abdul Kader Bhuiyan Jewel on Friday night.

Jatiyatabadi Swachhasebak Dal, another associate body of the BNP, is enforcing a dawn-to-dusk hartal today in Sylhet division, demanding immediate release of its central leaders and withdrawal of "false cases" against its central and local leaders.

Sylhet city and district units of the 18-party alliance have called hartal in the district for Wednesday, demanding the release of its leaders.

The BNP-led alliance has called dawn-to-dusk hartals for today and tomorrow in Bogra, protesting "the conspiracy" against BNP Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman and leaders of the 18-party alliance.

The main opposition party has also called dawn-to-dusk shutdowns in Moulvibazar for today and tomorrow, and in Titas upazila of Comilla for today.

During the blockade in Jessore yesterday, a BGB convoy carrying its regional commander came under attack from Jamaat-Shibir men at Rupdia Bazar around 3:00pm. BGB personnel opened fire to disperse the attackers.

There was no report of any casualty, said police.

Trucks stuck

FROM PAGE 1

"Only 10 could reach the destinations," said Ishaque Chowdhury, owner of the business house.

David Hasanat, managing director of Viyellatex Group, a leading garment maker, said he sent 25 trucks on Friday for shipment through Chittagong port, but none could reach the port till yesterday evening.

He said they were sending their export items to the port with the help of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), which has arranged police protection for their vehicles.

Abdus Salam Murshedy, a former president of the BGMEA, said police escort goods-laden vehicles from five points in Dhaka to Kanchpur. "All the vehicles gather at Kanchpur by 10:00pm and then they start for Chittagong," he said.

Mohammed Amirul Haque, managing director of Premier Cement, said his trucks took more than 20 hours to reach Chittagong from Muktarpur in Munshiganj, though usually it takes only six to seven hours.

Haque said he had to hire a truck at Tk 52,000 for a trip to Chapainawabganj. "The fare is only Tk 15,000 on normal days," he said.

Six JP ministers

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[today], we will leave our resignation letters with the official concerned at the Prime Minister's Office."

Four days have elapsed since party Chairman HM Ershad dramatically announced that his party would not take part in the January 5 polls since a "proper atmosphere" for the election was missing. He also said he would not take part in the polls unless all political parties participated in them.

He then asked his party's leaders to quit the polls-time cabinet and from the post of adviser to the prime minister.

On November 18, Ershad left the Awami League-led grand alliance and urged the BNP to join the election "to save the country and maintain the democratic process".

'I AM THE CHIEF'

A rumour that Ershad was quitting the JP, through making Raushan Ershad its acting chief, spread like wildfire yesterday.

It gathered momentum when expelled JP leader Kazi Zafar Ahmed at his Gulshan home claimed that Ershad had appointed his wife Raushan as the party's acting chairman and the former dictator might retire or go for treatment abroad.

However, Ershad brushed it aside and said, "This is nothing but propaganda. I am the party chief and will remain so as long as I am alive."

Mentioning that there was no scope for making anyone else acting Jatiya Party chairman while he is alive, Ershad said, "Raushan didn't take over from me and she hasn't been made acting party chairman."

He urged the media not to spread "propaganda".

BNP sticks

FROM PAGE 2

The BNP team said as many as 33 ruling Awami League men have already been elected unopposed, which proves a one-sided election is going to be held.

They stressed they want an "understanding" but the polls-time government has to be without Hasina.

The two sides also talked on UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's recent letters to Khaleida and Hasina on reaching a consensus through dialogue.

Lt Col Motiur Rahman, commanding officer of Jessore 26 BGB battalion, said the attackers pelted the convoy with brickbats and exploded crude bombs on the Jessore-Khulna highway.

Brigadier Shamsur Rahman, south-western region commander of the BGB, was travelling with the convoy to the Jessore headquarters from Khulna, he said.

In Munshiganj, blockaders set ablaze two anchored launches and two buses near Mawa launch terminal a couple of hours before the blockade began.

Locals put out the flames in the two launches -- MV Rajib-2 and MV Masum, said Abul Kalam, officer-in-charge of Louhajang Police Station.

Opposition activists also vandalised another vessel, MV Sajal-1, anchored at the terminal.

Blockaders torched a bus of Great Bikrampur Paribahan and another of Gangchil Paribahan parked near the terminal around 3:15am, said the police officer.

Fire-fighters from Srinagar fire station went to the spot and doused the flames.

In Chapainawabganj, blockaders hurled brickbats at a vehicle carrying a magistrate at Khoirabad around 10:30am, said Yeasir Arefin, upazila nirbahi officer of Gomostapur.

The magistrate escaped unhurt though the vehicle's windows were shattered, he said.

Arefin said police arrested Sajjad Hossain, president of Swachhasebak Dal upazila unit, in connection with the incident.

In a separate incident, miscreants set fire to an Awami League office at Gunaritala union in Jamalpur nearly three hours before the blockade. The local AL unit blamed the BNP for the arson attack.

SA prepares for historic funeral

FROM PAGE 16

Large numbers of mourners, carrying candles, flowers and messages of respect have turned up every day outside Mandela's residence in Johannesburg and in the once blacks-only township of Soweto.

Memorial events to begin today with South Africans invited to go to churches, mosques, synagogues and other places of worship, to pay their respects.

President Jacob Zuma will attend a service at Bryanston Methodist Church in Johannesburg.

Zuma urged South Africans to turn out in force and in singing voice.

"We should, while mourning, also sing at the top of our voices, dance and do whatever we want to do, to celebrate the life of this outstanding revolutionary," Zuma said.

On Tuesday around 80,000 people are expected to attend a memorial service in the Soweto sports stadium that hosted the final of the 2010 World Cup.

US President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle will travel to South Africa together with former first couple George W and Laura Bush.

Another former US leader, Bill Clinton, who was in office when Mandela became South Africa's first black president, will also attend.

In a tribute shortly after the revered statesman's death was made public, Obama mourned Mandela as a "profoundly good" man who "took history in his hands and bent the arc of the moral universe towards justice".

On Friday, ordinary South Africans across the country poured out onto the streets in a riot of colour, dance and song to celebrate the life of their beloved ex-leader, known affectionately as Madiba.

In Cape Town, a crowd of thousands from all races and ages gathered for a multi-faith celebration at the site where Mandela made his first public speech after nearly three decades in apartheid jail.

"Tonight we stand in solidarity as the people of Cape Town -- black, white, coloured, Indian, all the religions together," said mayor Patricia De Lille.

Mandela spent 27 years in apartheid prisons before being elected president in 1994 and unifying his country with a message of reconciliation after the end of white minority rule. He shared the Nobel Peace Prize with South Africa's last white president, FW de Klerk, in 1993.

Palestinians and Israelis, Beijing and the Dalai Lama, Washington and Tehran all paid heartfelt tribute to Mandela, describing him as one of the towering figures of the 20th century who inspired young and old with his fight for equality.

Even reclusive North Korea sent its condolences, praising Mandela's "struggle against racism and for democracy".

Flags flew at half-mast in numerous countries, including the United States, France, Britain, and at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

New York's Empire State Building and Paris' Eiffel Tower were lit up in the colours of the South African flag.

India declared five days of mourning for a man the premier labelled "a true Gandhian".

In Brazil, organisers of the 2014 football World Cup flashed Mandela's image up on a giant screen and held a minute's silence before the groups' draw.

Mandela had waged a long battle against a recurring lung infection and had been receiving treatment at home since September following a lengthy hospital stay.

Mandela's eldest grandson Mandla expressed gratitude for the international outpouring of support, saying the messages had "heartened and overwhelmed" the family.

Once considered a terrorist by the United States and Britain for his support of violence against the apartheid regime, at the time of his death Mandela was an almost unimpeachable moral icon.

Scrap polls fixture

FROM PAGE 16

"It is our specific call to the ruling party that army should not be made controversial by using them in a one-party election, in partisan interest," he added.

He also proposed formulating a new citizen charter, to be signed by all political parties, to forge a consensus on three key issues.

The issues are, a) finding out a polls-time government system; b) formulating guidelines for political parties and candidates for pre-election period; and c) guidelines on post-election activities.

The Shujan secretary said the government should postpone the election to resolve the political deadlock.

He called upon the government to stop "suppressive" action to resist opposition's movement and release opposition leaders and

take initiative for a dialogue.

He also urged the opposition parties should stop violence and holding talks with the government.

While addressing the function, noted jurist Shahdeen Malik said the way things were going, it was clear that there would be a one-sided election, which would not be acceptable in and outside the country.

Shahdeen, also a member of national committee of Shujan, urged the chiefs of the ruling and opposition parties not to think about imposing emergency in the country because it curbed people's democratic rights.

Ain o Salish Kendra Chairperson Hameeda Hossain, media personality Muhammad Jahangir, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (Bela) Chief Executive Syed Rizwana Hasan, among others, spoke there.

Convicts wait for

FROM PAGE 16

The single death-row convict, who filed a regular appeal, could obtain a certified copy of the verdict from the court authorities in a personal capacity.

The lower court authorities have supplied 137 certified copies to the Dhaka Central jail authorities on Sunday for annexing those to the jail appeals of the convicts, the sources added.

Aminul Islam, one of the lawyers for the convicts, told The Daily Star yesterday that his clients had not got the certified copies of the verdict till date.

Although as per the relevant law, the court was supposed to supply the copies on the day of the pronouncement of the verdict free of cost, he said.

"We applied to the court for the certified copies of the verdict on behalf of our clients on November 5, the day the verdict was delivered, so that they can file regular appeals to the High Court challenging their convictions."

But the Dhaka Court authorities recently told the lawyers that they would not provide more copies to the convicts, Aminul said.

The Dhaka Central Jail authorities also refused to provide the copy to the convicts' lawyers, he said, adding that they [convicts] are not prepared to file appeals for this reason.

He said the convicts would file regular appeals so that they could defend themselves by their individual lawyers.

The jail appeals will be moved by the state-counsels, the lawyer said, adding that almost

all the convicts are ready to buy the copies at a cost.

He said the certified copies are necessary for regular appeals, not for the jail appeals.

Habildar Jalal Uddin, a death row convict, has got a copy in his personal capacity, therefore, he could file a regular appeal with the High Court, Aminul said.

Aminul also said they were trying to obtain copies through alternative means to file regular appeals.

As per the Limitation Act, the convicts, who got death sentences, have to submit the appeals to the HC within seven days after receiving the certified copies of the verdict, and the accused, who were awarded life imprisonment, must appeal within 60 days after receiving the copies.

An official at the Copy Section under the Metropolitan Sessions' Judge Court, Dhaka told The Daily Star they could not supply the certified copies to the convicts other than 138 ones, because the court authorities had sent the case records to the HC.

The trial court had sent death reference to the HC on November 10 for confirmation of the death penalties for 152 convicts.

On November 5, Judge Md Akhtaruzzaman of the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in Dhaka awarded death penalty to 150 soldiers of erstwhile BDR (now Border Guard Bangladesh) and two civilians.

Seventy-four people, including 57 army officials, were massacred in the BDR mutiny on February 25-26 in 2009 at the Pilkhana headquarters of the paramilitary force.

NOTICE

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Vacancy Announcement

Issued on: 08 December 2013
Deadline for Application: 18 December 2013

The FAO Representation in Bangladesh is inviting applications from qualified candidates to the following vacant position for its project **"Improving food security of women and children by enhancing backyard and small-scale poultry production in the Southern Delta Region (GCP/BGD/048/USA)"** to be filled as soon as possible:

- **Participatory Training Specialist**
(UN Salary scale and benefits for similar position apply)

Interested qualified candidates will find the post descriptions, the link to the Personal Profile Form (PPF) and the information on how to apply in the following web link: <http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/bangladesh>. All applicants must submit their PPF to: FAOBD-Vacancies@fao.org by close of business on **18 December 2013**.

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