

# Govt to expand Open University activities

BSS, Gazipur

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday said the government aimed at expanding academic activities of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) to offer an opportunity of education to the irregular students and the people engaged in different professions.

"Open University has already played an important role in providing education to the irregular students and the people of different ages... The people who were forced to stop their studies due to various reasons are now getting the opportunity of continuing their studies," he told the fourth convocation of BOU in Gazipur.

Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of National University Prof Harun-or-Rashid, teachers and senior officials of different organisations, among others, addressed the convocation with BOU Vice-Chancellor MA Mannan in the chair.

Nahid said, "At present, nearly six lakh student are studying in the BOU and we are planning to double the figure within next five years to ensure access of the people to education."

The country witnessed a notable progress in the field of education in the past couple of years as the present government made its best efforts to bring a positive and meaningful change in the entire education sector, he added.

# Hasina calls

"I would like to emphasise three development issues -- fight against hunger and inequality, combat terrorism and violent extremism, and close and sustained cooperation."

She laid emphasis on work with united efforts for the betterment of the countries in Asian and African regions, also known as global South.

"Let's renew our commitment to work together in achieving a peaceful and prosperous global South. "I believe, together we could build a stable, prosperous and just world -- free from oppression, intolerance, violence and extremism," she expressed firm optimism.

About the potentiality of Asian and African countries, Hasina said, the South accounts for half of the world's GDP, produces half of its economic output and conducts more than half of the global trade.

"Therefore, the South-South cooperation is critical for attaining sustainable development and building resilience of Southern countries," she added.

Hasina also mentioned that her government maintains a 'zero-tolerance' policy towards all forms of terrorism and extremism.

To address climate change, Hasina said, "We have introduced stress-tolerant crop varieties and set up the Climate Change Trust Fund with our own resources."

"However, it is not possible for a single country to tackle the climate change challenges. I look forward to seeing a strong commitment to address climate change in the region," she added.

# BCL men

FROM PAGE 16 according to witnesses.

The Daily Star has identified about a dozen of the attackers from the photos and footage run by different newspapers and TV channels. Locals and sources in the BCL, the pro-AL student body, confirmed their identities. Their own Facebook pages also validate their party posts.

These attackers are frequently seen with top BCL leaders, including its president HM Badiuzzaman Sohag. They also have numerous photos with Sohag and State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal on their Facebook pages.

Even so, the state minister claimed that traders in Karwan Bazar who incurred losses due to the three-month BNP-led alliance's blockade carried out the attack.

Tejgaon thana Chhatra League in its official Facebook page claimed the same. It also said the attack was BNP's internal matter.

However, the photos and the clips say otherwise.

# Dog

FROM PAGE 16 Abington, South Lanarkshire.

It later emerged that a sheepdog called Don, owned by farmer Tom Hamilton, had leaned on the controls of his utility vehicle, taking it on to the road.

Police and Hamilton later recovered Don, who was unhurt, and the vehicle, from the central reservation.

Hamilton told BBC Scotland that he was out on his off road pick up checking lambs in a field above the M74 near Abington.

# Trial of 2 more

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along with other Razakars and Pakistani army, allegedly committed the crimes between October 10 and November 2 in 1971.

The three-member tribunal headed by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Shahinur Islam concluded the hearing of closing arguments placed by the prosecution and the defence and kept the case waiting for verdict.

Wrapping up their arguments, the prosecution prayed for "exemplary punishment" for the duo claiming that they had been able to prove two of the charges. The prosecution did not produce any witness for the third charge.

A defence counsel, however, sought acquittal of his clients saying the prosecution "failed" to prove the charges. He also accused the investigation officer of the case of hiding information about the third charge, for which the duo was convicted earlier and even served lifetime.

AMBIGUITY OVER THIRD CHARGE Defence counsel Abdus Sobhan Tarafder yesterday said one Laijuddin had filed a case in connection with his father's killing during the Liberation War and a district court handed down life sentence on Mahidur, Chutu and another one in 1973.

The High Court upheld their sentence and they also served the lifetime, said Sobhan. Yet, the prosecution brought the charge [third] in connection with the killing.

Sobhan said ZM Altafur Rahman, the investigation officer in the case, recorded statement of Laijuddin, but the information was not mentioned in his statement and Laijuddin was not produced as a witness.

Altafur, during his cross-examination, however said Laijuddin had told him about the case, said Sobhan, adding that the prosecution did not produce any witness in connection with the third charge after they had produced documents related to the case.

Justice Hassan said the investigation in connection with the charge

number three was "flawed" indeed.

Sobhan said, "This [flaws regarding the third charge] creates suspicion over two other charges and the benefit of doubt should go in favour of the accused."

But Justice Mozibur Rahman said each charge was separate and investigation regarding one should not affect another.

Justice Hassan asked a question as to why the defence had not raised the issue when they framed charges.

"While framing charges, we even read out those in Bangla, why the accused or you didn't tell us about the matter [conviction]? Then we wouldn't frame the charge [regarding the incident]," said Justice Hassan.

"In true sense, the defence too did not assist properly," observed Justice Shahinur Islam.

Sobhan said Mahidur and Chutu were convicted in a case. If they committed the crimes mentioned in the first and second charge, they might have been faced trial.

"Actually, my clients were not involved in the crimes and I prayed for their acquittal," said Sobhan.

TRIBUNAL IRKED

Sobhan further said it was often told at home and abroad that the tribunals only gave capital punishment and imprisonment until death. The tribunal could prove it wrong by acquitting his clients, he added.

The remark apparently irked the tribunal and Justice Hassan said: "Please don't try to scare us or give any excuse of what the foreigners said. We really do care a little about what they say."

"...We see what they [foreign community] do to other countries [in this regard]... Our judiciary is strong enough," he said. One could challenge the tribunal verdict at the Supreme Court, which was rare regarding war crimes trial in the world, he added.

"How can you say that only release [of your client] will ensure justice? The victims have all the right to get justice," said Justice Hassan.

Prosecutor Tureen Afroz gave short rebuttal before the tribunal kept the case waiting for verdict.

# Bangla-wash accomplished

FROM PAGE 1

If Bangladesh cherishes this success in the days to come then Pakistan will have a hard time forgetting it, especially the way the Tigers decimated their morale in yesterday's game will be hard to swallow. Riding on Soumya's sparkling unbeaten 110-ball 127 -- a knock which contained 13 fours and 6 sixes -- Bangladesh's batting looked resolute as they overtook Pakistan's 250 runs with ease to cancel Pakistan skipper Azhar Ali's maiden ton.

Soumya drew the attention of the cricket pundits, despite only showing glimpses of his effortless batting since the World Cup and he yesterday made it known that he would justify his talent and entertain the fans with his ability, like he did yesterday at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

It was entrancing to watch his effortless boundaries and the stylish left-hander reached the magical three-digit figure in superb fashion, as he rocked back and powerfully pulled Azhar Ali over deep midwicket for a six, before vigorously swinging his bat in celebration.

Bangladesh had declared themselves as favourites in the series, but it was beyond anybody's imagination the way this Mashrafe Bin Mortaza-led team finished the job to make their words come to life on the field. The whitewash was clinched in such a

smooth manner that it even eclipsed their feats New Zealand, against another highly-ranked side.

The margins of 79-run, seven-wicket and eight-wicket victories might not fully describe how flawless and ruthless the Tigers were in the series against their South Asian neighbours, who left the Tigers mystified for sixteen long years before the series.

The 'killer instinct' they showed in the series, particularly in the last game was incredible. The way two Bangladesh openers Tamim Iqbal and Soumya toyed with the Pakistan attack chasing 250 runs was refreshing for Bangladesh cricket.

When Tamim walked back to the dressing room, Bangladesh were already well placed, as the left-hander shared a 145-run partnership with another southpaw, Soumya, which came only in 25.3 overs.

Pacer Junaid Khan trapped Tamim in front to deny him from making a hat-trick of centuries, but the left-hander still got a standing ovation from the cheering crowd, as he showed rare consistency in his batting, hitting a 76-ball 64 which featured eight fours and one six.

After a brilliant World Cup where he made two consecutive hundreds, Mahmudullah Riyad finished the series without any notable success. The right-hander managed only four runs

which saw Bangladesh lose their second wicket in quick succession, but once again the dismissal only brought the run-machine, Mushfiqur Rahim, to the middle. Mushfiqur continued his run-sprees and provided support to Soumya as the pair saw out the game comfortably.

A terrific Mushfiqur was not out on 49 off 43 balls.

Earlier, Pakistan had a chance to pose a challenge to the home team in the last game as they were in a position to put up a big score after electing to bat first, but Bangladeshi bowlers, supported by brilliant fielding, clawed back to take the initiative.

Pakistan lost their last eight wickets for only 47 runs and they were dismissed for 250 runs, after being 203 for two.

Azhar Ali and debutant Sami Aslam set up a strong platform with a 91-run opening stand and the Pakistan captain followed that with a 98-run second wicket stand with Haris Sohail to put his side in a strong position, but his dismissal changed the scenario of Pakistan's innings.

Shakib Al Hasan gave the much-needed breakthrough, removing Azhar and he then picked up the wicket of Mohammad Rizwan. Mashrafe Bin Mortaza also took two wickets during the final period to kill any hopes Pakistan had of challenging the strong Bangladesh batting line-up.

# Bankers term it unusual

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likely to have serious ramifications in the banking sector, especially on the issue of security.

The central bank has written to the police chief seeking more security for banks and their branches across the country, and launched a probe to ascertain whether there was any possible security flaw at the Ashulia branch of Bangladesh Commerce Bank Ltd (BCBL).

A gang of 8-10 robbers attacked the bank soon after the lunch break on Tuesday, looted around Tk 7 lakh and killed seven people, including the branch manager and two armed security guards. Three robbers were later caught while fleeing and one of them was beaten to death by an angry mob.

AN UNPRECEDENTED ATTACK

"I joined the banking profession 52 years ago but never saw any robbery so daring as this one until now," former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank Khondker Ibrahim Khaled told The Daily Star.

No such attacks on a bank took place even during the Liberation War, he said.

Echoing Ibrahim Khaled, Bangladesh Bank's Deputy Governor SK Sur Chowdhury and BCBL Chairman Yousuf Ali Hawlader said they never even heard of such a bloody attack on a bank in broad daylight.

At a press conference yesterday, SK Sur Chowdhury said the banks have their own security system to prevent

common robbery and theft. But if robbers use modern weapons, bombs and grenades, it can only be resisted by the law enforcement agencies.

The central bank has sent an inspection team to the BCBL's Ashulia branch to see if there were any security lapses. If any fault on the bank's part is found, necessary actions will be taken against the people responsible, he added.

ROBBERY OR EXTREMIST ATTACK?

Ibrahim Khaled thinks the way the attack was carried out suggests that it might be an extremist attack aimed at creating an anarchic situation in the country.

Similar concerns were voiced by a senior police official.

"The robbers used hand grenades, crude bombs, firearms and cleavers. These are usually used by militant groups. So, we suspect militants' links with the heist," Superintendent of Police Habibur Rahman of Dhaka said at a press conference yesterday.

BB Deputy Governor SK Sur Chowdhury said criminals usually break into bank vaults at night or rob people at gunpoint when they exit banks with money, unlike the Ashulia incident.

However, only police, not the central bank, can uncover whether the criminals wanted to loot the bank or commit a terrorist act or murder, he added.

The BCBL's Ashulia branch had around Tk 35 lakh in its vault and Tk 5 lakh from there was moved to cash section on Tuesday for the day's trans-

actions, according to an official of the branch.

"Apart from this, clients deposited some more money into their accounts. This means there was around Tk 7 lakh in the cash counters," he said, wishing anonymity.

BCBL Chairman Hawlader said around Tk 93,000 was missing after the heist, according to their primary estimate. But later police recovered around Tk 6 lakh, taking the total money looted to around Tk 7 lakh.

"There was no big transaction scheduled for Tuesday. Why did such a daring robbery took place in broad daylight for such a small amount of money? We are at a loss," BCBL Managing Director Abu Sadek Md Sohel said.

GOVERNOR SEEKS MORE SECURITY

BB Governor Atiur Rahman yesterday wrote a letter requesting the Inspector General of Police to bolster security for bank branches.

Termining the Ashulia incident "heart-rending and a threat to the banking sector", he also requested the police chief to issue necessary orders to police stations to establish hotlines with the local bank branches to ensure proper security for the branches.

There are more than 9,000 branches of different banks across the country now.

SK Sur Chowdhury said the central bank will ask the police to set up hotlines with at least the important branches if not with all of them.

# Cops suspect

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robber. These weapons are usually used by militant groups. The symptoms raised suspicions that the robbers might have links with militant groups," said Habibur Rahman, superintendent of police in Dhaka.

"Like me, many other senior police officials who have knowledge about militancy are of the same opinion," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The SP said although there was apparently no resistance from bank officials, the robbers killed four people inside the branch.

One of the arrested burglars identified the dead robber as Hafiz. The other arrestee claimed that he did not know the deceased.

Militant outfits usually employ a cut-off system among different groups so that law enforcers cannot get information about their activities and top leadership from an arrestee.

Police yesterday raided a house in Chandra of Kaliakoir upazila in Gazipur. Some of the robbers rented the house and had been staying there for the last few days, mentioned Habibur.

Law enforcers seized some books on Jihad and Islami Chhatra Shibir there, he added.

Arrestee Borhan Mridha, who is a Hafiz of the Quran, stayed in a mess at the house. Aged about 25, the youth was undergoing treatment at Enam Medical College Hospital in Savar.

The other arrestee is Saiful. Investigators were also looking into whether there was any link of Jamaat-Shibir with the robbery.

deputy inspector general (Dhaka range) of police, claimed that Borhan of Kashiani upazila in Gopalganj was a Shibir activist and his family members were involved in Jamaat politics.

"The robbers didn't go to the bank only for committing the robbery," he told reporters at a press briefing at Savar Model Police Station yesterday.

The burglars had enough chances to grab the keys to the vault and rob it, but they didn't do that, he added. "They [robbers] had gone there seemingly to commit some kind of atrocities."

The DIG said they sent eight CCTVs to experts for analysing the footage and identifying the other members of the robbery gang.

State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan visited the BCBL branch yesterday afternoon. He endorsed police claim that the incident was not like any previous bank robberies.

Talking to The Daily Star, bank official Md Shahadat said he was offering Zohr prayers near the cash counter when three armed robbers entered the branch and asked everyone to lie on the floor.

Instead of lying, he tried to move forward. All of a sudden, the robbers stabbed in his waist and back with sharp weapons and shot at him. He is at the intensive care unit of Enam Medical College Hospital in Savar.

A total of 17 injured, mostly traders at Kathgora Bazar, were receiving treatment at the hospital yesterday. Of them, 10 were at the ICU. Hospital sources said the victims at the ICU were not out of danger.

Physicians had to amputate vegetable trader Shafiqul Islam's left leg from below the ankle as he was seriously injured from a grenade blast. He went in front of the bank gate to resist the robbers.

Sources at Dhaka Medical College morgue, where autopsies were carried out on seven bodies, said most of the victims died from stab injuries.

# HC hearing

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out the case statement before HC bench of Justice Md Nuruzzaman and Justice Zafar Ahmed.

The bench fixed today for resuming the hearing on the petition.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the graft case with Tejgaon Police Station on December 9, 2007.

It accused Khaleda and several others of abusing power while she was the prime minister to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to the Canadian company, Niko.

Following a writ petition filed by Khaleda, the HC on July 9, 2008 stayed the case proceedings and issued a rule upon the ACC and the government to explain why the initiation and proceedings of the case against her should not be declared illegal.

Three other pleas by the BNP chief in 2008 challenging the legality of the proceedings of Barapukuria coalmine and Gatco corruption cases are pending with the HC bench.

# Shazneen's

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the incident.

Four years later, a Nari-o-Shishu Nirjatan Daman Tribunal found six persons guilty and sentenced them to death. They included contractor Syed Sajjad Mainuddin Hasan, then engaged in renovating the house, his accomplice Badal, carpenter Shaniram, domestic help Shahidul Islam Shahid and maids Estema Khatun Minu and Parvin.

In July 2006, the High Court upheld the death sentence of five of the convicts but absolved Shaniram. Later, the five filed appeals with the Supreme Court.

Like every year, Shazneen's family has arranged a milad mehfil after the Asr prayers at 5:30pm today at their residence -- House No# NE(1)4, Road #83, Gulshan-2 in the capital.

Shazneen's father Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Group, and mother Shahnaz Rahman have requested all relatives, friends and well-wishers to attend the milad mehfil.