

# Trump taps country stars for inauguration

President-elect Donald Trump, who has struggled to recruit prominent artists for his inauguration, on Friday tapped country stars known for their patriotic anthems.

Trump's inaugural committee announced that country stars Toby Keith and Lee Greenwood as well as Broadway singer Jennifer Holliday would perform at the Lincoln Memorial.

The event, during which Trump will speak, will be free to the public and take place on Thursday on the eve of the real estate tycoon's inauguration as the 45th president.

Keith, one of the most prominent country singers of the 1990s, after the September 11, 2001 attacks released the song, "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)," a passionate call to arms in Afghanistan.

Keith later entered a high-profile feud with Dixie Chicks over the group's criticism of the Iraq war, but the singer has also spoken admiringly of President Barack Obama.

Greenwood, 74, is a veteran country singer best known for his 1984 song "God Bless the USA," which has risen

back in popularity at times of war.

"I'm honored to be part of history again and sing for President-elect Donald Trump. This is a time to overcome challenges in our country and band together," Greenwood, who performed at inaugurations of the last three Republican presidents, said in a statement.

Country music historically is most popular with white Americans, especially in the South, a stronghold of support for Trump who campaigned on a hard line against Mexican immigrants, Muslims and other minorities.

The inauguration will have a rare African American performer in Holliday, who won a Tony Award in 1982 for the original Broadway musical "Dreamgirls," later turned into a movie with Beyonce and Jennifer Hudson.

Holliday said she that been barraged with negative responses, including online threats, since the announcement.

"I was like, nobody knows that I'm alive and then I decide to sing a song and I wake up and they all hate me," the 56-year-old told music magazine Billboard.

Holliday said she voted for Trump's rival Hillary Clinton but believed it

was important to provide "fair representation" at a presidential inauguration, rather than have exclusively white performers.

Holliday, a recording artist in the 1980s who has a loyal following in the gay community, said she had been motivated by Obama's calls for a smooth transition.

The inauguration lineup pales in comparison to the star power amassed by Obama.

## Shape up

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The reason can be put down to their lack of agility.

It could be a tall order to introduce a culture of fitness to the police force, admit the men in whites. Some point fingers at the Bengali aversion for physical activities. "We are lazy by nature and lose the motivation to keep in shape. As policemen get older and rise in rank, they tend to stay away from action. By the time they turn 40, their physique turn irretrievable. But it's never too late to change," said a retired policeman.

This is one change that will probably not make the city rise in protest.

# President 'highly likely'

Earlier, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia had placed a proposal on the formation of the EC detailing how the commission should be formed and who could be the members of the search committee and election commissioners.

A delegation of the Awami League led by its president Sheikh Hasina held a meeting with President Abdul Hamid on December 11 where they requested the president to form a search committee, said party leaders.

"The president will make the decision on the appointment of election commissioners. We also want a law for appointing the election commissioners but there is a time constraint," said Abdul Matin Khoshru, law affairs secretary of the party and a member of the delegation.

"After talking to the president, it seems to us that the president will appoint election commissioners through a search committee," he told The Daily Star.

At the talks, Hasina said if possible, a suitable law or an ordinance could be promulgated now for appointing the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners.

"If this cannot be done right away due to time constraint, steps need to be taken to formulate a law for the formation of future election commissions," President's Press Secretary Joyanal Abedin quoted Hasina as saying.

On Thursday, Law Minister Anisul Huq told journalists that a law for the constitution of the Election Commission cannot be hurriedly formulated because such an act would have a far-reaching impact.

This law should be made after proper scrutiny and detailed assessment of relevant issues, he said.

When president Zillur Rahman held talks, the Awami League, the BNP, Jatiya Party and other major political parties participated in the process.

Following the talks, the then president formed a four-member search committee led by Supreme Court Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain to recommend people for appointment to the CEC and election commissioner posts.

The search committee had proposed 10 names.

The then ruling Awami League and five other parties recommended names for appointments but then opposition BNP, AL's key ally Jatiya Party, and 16 other parties did not recommend any names.

# Hefajat slams critics

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He blasted those criticising the changes, terming them "communal" and "objectionable". "They will be resisted strongly."

Hefajat also came down hard on the media for running "provocative reports" saying that its demand for bringing changes to textbooks was fulfilled completely.

The statement came at a time when the government is facing widespread criticism from different quarters over some embarrassing blunders in text-

books and dropping of some topics.

Hefajat and Bangladesh Awami Olema League have been demanding exclusion of some of the poems written by "Hindus and atheists".

Many have alleged that some poems including one "Boi" (book) written by Humayun Azad and prose have been dropped from Bangla textbooks of different classes as per the demand of the two organisations.

Eminent citizens and different organisations strongly condemned the

anomalies in textbooks and demanded withdrawal of the "error-ridden textbooks" immediately.

Following criticism, the education ministry made National Curriculum and Textbook Board chief editor Pritish Kumar Sarkar and its senior expert Lana Humayra Khan officers on special duty (OSD), a post with official duties and regarded as a punishment.

Two committees have also been formed to identify the mistakes in textbooks and also those responsible.

# A dog's deed melts hearts

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its kindness to the dead infant. They looked around but the loving creature was nowhere.

"While I feel great admiration for the dog that picked up the body from the drain, I am angry at those who dumped it," said the student of Rajshahi Commerce College.

The place where the baby was left abandoned was surrounded by clinics and hospitals including Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital.

Police must act swiftly and arrest the criminals who disposed of the body, said Selim Reza, a signboard artist who was working inside the library compound at the time.

"It is horrifying to see a tiny cute

baby left by the road," he said.

Police arrived at the scene as early as they could and sent the corpse to Rajshahi Medical College for an autopsy, said Mahfuzur Rahman, sub-inspector of Rajpara Police Station.

"Surprisingly, there was no mark of the dog's bite on the body."

The skin appeared to be peeling off, probably because the body had been soaked in drain water for long, the SI said.

Officer-in-Charge Amanullah said the body was kept at the college mortuary after taking DNA samples to identify the parents since no one claimed the

body yet.

Asked about the police's next course of action, Mahfuzur told The Daily Star that a case of unnatural death had already been filed.

Police are gathering information to find out if the mother stayed at any nearby clinic or hospital and if the body was dumped by any of those facilities.

They are waiting for the autopsy report to know whether the baby was killed at birth, the SI added.

# Word Rohingya

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for verification and repatriation of those who are proved to have fled from Myanmar following the 9 October attacks against police outposts.

The ministry released the statement following the visit of U Kyaw Tin to Bangladesh as special envoy of the state counsellor from January 10-13, it said.

The special envoy had separate meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque.

During the meetings with the foreign minister and foreign secretary, it said, the two sides cordially discussed issues of mutual interest and expressed the common desire to deepen bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and Bangladesh and to resume the existing annual bilateral consultation mechanisms as well as to hold regular meetings between the two border security forces and army-to-army talks.

They also stressed the importance of exchanging information with a view to maintaining peace and security along the border and to preventing infiltration of terrorists.

The statement said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed her desire to strengthen ties with its neighbouring countries and reiterated Bangladesh's zero tolerance policy against terrorism. She also stressed that Bangladesh would not allow its soil to be used for terrorist acts against its neighbouring countries and sought Myanmar's cooperation to resolve the border issues through negotiations.

The special envoy also presented to the PM the state counsellor's letter expressing her confidence that Myanmar and Bangladesh would be able to address the issues of mutual concern in a spirit of good neighbourliness, trust and mutual understanding between the two countries.

## Part of country

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work in fields.

In Lalmonirhat, over 500 children were admitted to local hospitals with cold-related illness in the last six days, said sources at hospitals.

"My child has been suffering from pneumonia. He got the disease because of the cold temperature," said Mazibar Rahman of Khuniyagach village in Lalmonirhat.

In Dinajpur and Rangpur, the dip in mercury levels disrupted normal life. A large number of children with pneumonia were undergoing treatment at local hospitals.

Agriculture experts said Boro seedbeds in the district might be damaged if such weather continued for long.

In Rajshahi, the mercury dropped to 5.1 degree Celsius yesterday, the lowest in four years, said an official at the city Met office.

The cold wave coupled with 7 km/hour morning wind almost paralysed normal life.

Hundreds of people thronged local markets and makeshift shops to buy warm cloths. Many were seen trying to fight cold with bonfires along the streets. Underprivileged people were seen sharing blankets with others at Rajshahi Railway Station and bus terminals in the city.

"I have a blanket, but I can only cover part of my body with it while pulling the rickshaw. I cannot pull the rickshaw in such a cold weather," said rickshaw-puller Kamruzzaman.

Our correspondents from respective districts contributed to this report.

# Comedy of error

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Quasar Laskar and his younger brother Baharul Laskar from Hailakandi district in the Indian state of Assam were all set to enter Bangladesh on Friday. They went to Zakiganj border checkpoint in Sylhet, but Baharul was not allowed to exit India as there was this mistake in his visa.

Talking to The Daily Star over the phone yesterday, Quasar, a school teacher, said that as there was no Bangladesh mission in Assam, they submitted their tourist visa applications to the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala, the capital of Tripura, through a local broker on December 23 last year.

"Agartala is at least 350km away from our district. So it is difficult to go there each time and complete the visa procedures. Later, we got our visas done through a local broker," he said.

He said they got their visas on January 9 and went to Zakiganj port on Friday. But when they approached the Indian immigration, the officials there identified that the date of issue and the last date of entry were incorrect in Baharul's visa.

The issuance date was written as "05-02-17" (February 5, 2017) and the last date of entry as "04-01-17" (January 5, 2017).

"As the Indian immigration officials refused my younger brother to exit India, we had no other option but to go back home," Quasar said.

He said he immediately contacted an official at the Agartala high commission office over the phone, but the official allegedly refuted his complaint and also blamed them for the error.

"The official refused to disclose his name. He also misbehaved with me

and asked me to go to the high commission to have the visa corrected," Quasar alleged.

He said they had already handed the passport over to the local broker for the correction, which they said might take at least a week.

Sultan Ahmed, an official of the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala, told The Daily Star over the phone last night that the mistake occurred as a large number of visas for were being issued for the people intending to attend Biswa Ijtema in Tongi of Gazipur.

He also apologised.

## BCL chief

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"The trip is luxurious and will send wrong message to the grassroots leaders of the ruling party's student organisation about the spirit and ethics of student politics," Rafiqul Islam Rumon, immediate past district secretary of BCL, added.

Mostafizur Rahman Russell, former BCL leader of Pabna, said the incident might beget more such lavish incidents in future. He urged everyone to avoid such incidents to protect political ethics.

"It is nothing but showing arrogance as it was not a state programme," Jakir Hossain, secretary of district unit Workers Party, observed.

Contacted, Shohag told The Daily Star last night that he went to Pabna to attend a programme organised Shofiqur Rahman Kanak, son of the land minister, and that the chopper was rented by the organiser.

"The one who invited [me] made all the arrangements."

# Russia sanctions

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saying intelligence reports of Moscow's interference in the 2016 election and possible ties to American political parties "raise profound concerns."

Trump has expressed admiration for Putin, and only reluctantly accepted US intelligence's conclusion that Russian hackers acting on Putin's authority interfered in the US elections.

Separately, he blasted the leak of the unsubstantiated report that Russia had gathered compromising personal and financial material on him as "totally made up facts by sleazebag political operatives."

He promised a "full report" on the hacking claims within 90 days.

The Senate investigation, backed by both Democrats and Republicans on the Senate Intelligence Committee, could trigger forced testimony by officials of both Barack Obama's outgoing administration and the incoming government of Donald Trump, who won the November 8 presidential vote.

US intelligence agencies allege that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a covert effort to interfere in the election to boost Trump and harm his opponent, Democrat Hillary Clinton.

A report from the Director of National Intelligence released early this month says the Russians hacked Democratic Party computers and accounts to release files embarrassing to Clinton, and also conducted a campaign of media manipulation with the same aim.

But the public version of the report was questioned for offering only weak evidence of its claims.

An unproven dossier compiled by a former British MI6 intelligence agent also alleged close ties between the Trump campaign and Russian government, and said Moscow had lurid video of Trump with prostitutes while in Russia.

"It is critical to have a full understanding of the scope of Russian intelligence activities impacting the United States," the Senate panel said Friday.

Trump, who will take office in one week, has repeatedly rejected suggestions that Moscow aided in his election victory.

He has also compared US intelligence agencies to "Nazi Germany" for allegedly leaking to the media their analyses to undermine him.

The probe will review the intelligence community's assessments and also other assessments, "including any intelligence regarding links between Russia and individuals associated with political campaigns," the committee said.

That suggested the former British spy's explosive report could also be reviewed.

Vowing to "get it right," the panel said most of the work will be done out of public scrutiny to protect classified information.

In light of the hacking allegations, Trump's close ties with Russia, and especially President Vladimir Putin, have come under growing scrutiny.

The Washington Post reported that Trump's incoming national security advisor Michael Flynn telephoned Moscow's ambassador to Washington, Sergey Kislyak, several times the day before Obama unveiled punitive measures over Russia's alleged cyberattacks to influence the US election.

Flynn receives a speaking fee from Russian government-funded Russia Today.

Turning to the longstanding US practice of not recognizing Taiwan diplomatically, Trump said: "Everything is under negotiation, including One China."

Trump has already irked China by accepting a congratulatory phone call from Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-Wen after he won the election, upending decades of diplomatic precedent in which the White House has foregone direct communication with the island's leader.

Beijing considers the island to be a breakaway province to be brought back within its fold, by force if necessary.

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