



With flower crowns on their heads signaling the anticipation of Pahela Falgun, three students of Dhaka City College browse books at a stall yesterday. Inset, Prof. Muhammed Zafar Iqbal is swarmed by fans during his visit to the fair.

This is the most beautiful of all fairs: Zafar Iqbal

MATHEWS CHIRAN

For bookworms in Bangladesh, the name of Prof Muhammed Zafar Iqbal is synonymous with science fiction.

The eminent professor continues to enthrall booklovers of various ages through his writings.

Every year, readers eagerly await the Amar Elkhushay Grantha Mela for his new books to hit the stalls. The joy of reading also increases manifold when the readers get to meet their favourite author in person.

Yesterday was no different.

For the first time, the renowned author visited this year's book fair in the afternoon. He was surrounded by readers who were taking his autographs as well as selfies with him.

The good professor happily complied.

Though busy, Prof Iqbal spared some time for this correspondent when he approached him on the Suhrawardy Udyan premises.

"I want everyone to read books," he said. "I expect the youths to read books... Stop spending time on Facebook and spend more time reading."

"Leave the 'face' from 'Facebook'... just books no Facebook... alright?" he said to this correspondent with a smile. On a serious note, Prof Iqbal said if someone

does not read books they cannot be a "complete" person.

"Then again, this has become a global issue. More and more young people are reading less these days." He said there is a difference between browsing through and reading a book. One should take time and relish the joy of reading.

While talking to this newspaper, Prof Iqbal was approached by a teenager, Joyantu. The tenth-grader said he came to the book fair for the first time with his father from Barishal. He wanted Prof Iqbal to sign "Niyani", a new science fiction written by the professor.

He also wanted to take a selfie. Prof Iqbal smiled and obliged.

Prof Iqbal said, "Every time I visit the book fair, I genuinely feel happy. Among all the fairs, 'boi mela' is the most beautiful one."

This year, different publication houses including Kakoli, Somoy and Tamralipi brought out books written by him.

"Obishashsho Sundar Prithibi" from Kakoli, "Ek Dozon Ekjon" from Somoy and "Niyani" by Tamralipi are drawing readers' attention at the fair. Besides, his old works are also much sought-after.

Yesterday, a total of 161 new books hit the fair.

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EVICTION ON BURIGANGA 290 more structures knocked down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

shed structures.

BIWTA had earlier identified 906 illegal structures along the bank of the river, stretching from Sadarghat to Gabtoli, but during the drive found the number to be higher.

They started a 13-day drive on January 29 to evict all illegal structures and free Buriganga from encroachers.

The joint director of BIWTA said influential people are behind the encroachment.

"We will not bow down to anybody and will demolish every illegal structure; we are getting the support of administration, judiciary and people," said Arif.

The joint director said Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority will continue the drive for seven more days to free the rivers surrounding the

capital.

Under a new project, the government will install some 12,000 demarcation pillars along Dhaka rivers, to protect those from encroachers.

A tender for the work is expected to be floated by this month, and work of pillar installation may begin in the next three months.

The government has already appointed a consultant to implement the Tk 850 crore project.

Under the new project, the government will build some 50km of walkways, plant trees along the walkways and set up three eco-parks at Shinnirtek, Tongi and Ashulia.

The authorities will also build 19 jetties, including at Amin Bazar, Gabtoli, Kanchpur, Tanbazar, Machuwa Bazar, and Khanpur.

Strengthen security of lawmakers Says House committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The House Committee yesterday suggested that authorities concerned intensify overall security for MPs.

In its first meeting chaired by chief whip Noor-E-Alam Chowdhury, the committee made proposals for safety of lawmakers and maintaining a secure atmosphere in their flats and offices, and the parliament complex.

These include restricting entry of outsiders at MPs' flats after 11pm and fixing the number of visitors allowed in flats and offices.

The House Committee also formed a four-member sub-committee, headed by the chief whip, to allocate flats for MPs.

The sub-committee was asked to submit a report at the earliest, after visiting the flats and offices.

Access for disabled persons must be ensured everywhere

Speakers tell consultation meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government should ratify the Marrakesh Treaty immediately to make production and international transfer of specially-adapted books for people with blindness or visual impairments easier, speakers at a consultation meeting said yesterday.

They also urged the government to ensure equal access for people with disabilities to all social services such as infrastructure, communication, transportation, information and technology.

The treaty does so by establishing a set of limitations and exceptions to traditional copyright law.

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), Visually

Impaired People's Society (BVIPS) and Benetech Book Share, the largest online library of accessible ebooks for people with print disabilities, jointly organised the programme.

"Access for persons with disability must be ensured everywhere -- from transportation to toilet to education. We could overcome the challenge only if the society not only accepts them, but also promote accessibility for them," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF in her welcome speech.

Disability rights advocate Vaskar Bhattacharjee of YPSA and Elizabeth Beaumont, CEO of Benetech Book Share gave separate presentations on accessible books and technology in Bangladesh and global perspective.

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Rizvi invites Obaidul Quader to join BNP

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday invited Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader to join BNP as its adviser, since he has long been giving the party various suggestions.

"The Awami League general secretary is regularly giving BNP various advice at different programmes about what the party should do... he's also saying in advance about decisions of our party, and giving us various suggestions," Rizvi said.

Speaking at a press briefing at BNP's Nayapaltan central office, he further said, "The way he [Quader] is talking about BNP, it seems he wants to join BNP. So, there's no point for him to remain with Awami League now. Rather, I urge him to join BNP, and our party's door is open for him."

The BNP leader said ruling party leaders

and activists are passing days with anxiety thinking of the consequences they will have to face for their "misdeeds".

"They are secretly keeping contact with BNP leaders and activists in different areas. Awami League leaders and activists are worried about their future. So, Obaidul Quader and some other leaders are voluntarily trying to be the adviser of BNP."

Rizvi said though their party is not in the parliament, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is "spitting venom" against the Zia family in the House.

The BNP leader said no one, except for the prime minister and her party leaders and activists, said the election was free and fair. "Even partners of the grand alliance are saying the voting was held the night before the election. The prime minister's digital hunger for power has snatched democracy."

Human rights violators will not be spared

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Whoever violates human rights will be brought under the purview of law and tried by a competent court, Law Minister Anisul Huq said yesterday.

"The government's stance about human rights violation is clear: to establish human rights in Bangladesh. The government is working towards this goal. The human rights situation has developed in the country," he said.

The minister said this while talking to reporters following a meeting with a

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a photo-session with graduates of 2018-19 batch of Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) at Mirpur Cantonment yesterday.

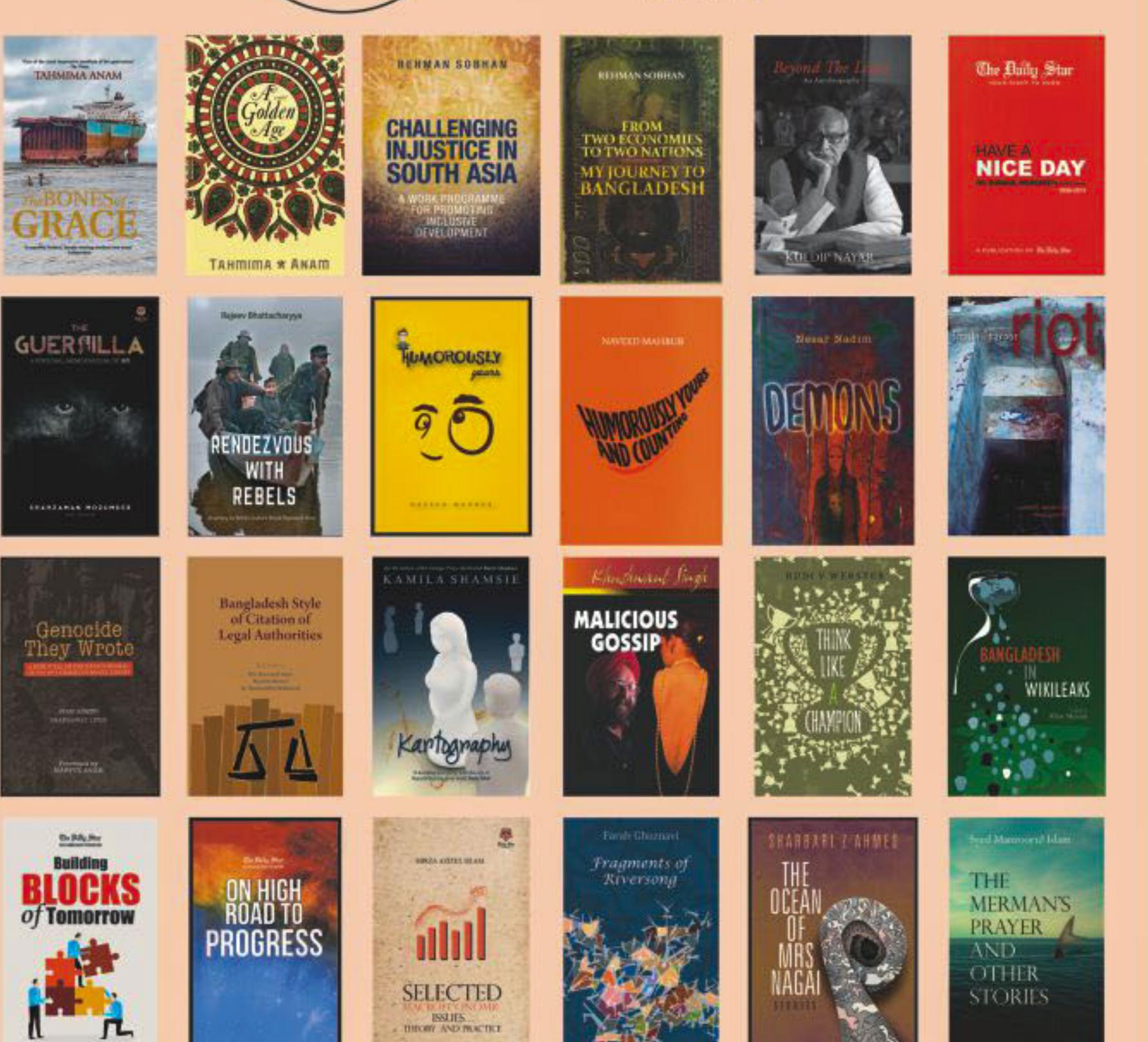
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Favourable job market for youths created in country Says Nasrul Hamid at BYLC career fair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid yesterday said favourable job market for the youth has been created in the country.

"If dedication is there, no one will remain unemployed," he said.

He was addressing the inaugural ceremony of "Third Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC) Career Fair" at ISMIL Jarnaikhana in the capital.

BYLC hosted the fair which brought together over 300 youths who took leadership training at BYLC and 26 leading private and nonprofit sector employers, said a BYLC press release.

The fair also featured two panels on tackling youth unemployment, it said.

According to a press release of the ministry, the state minister said some 1,000 engineers are required for the power and energy sector. A huge opportunity has also been created for geologists.

Nasrul said 265 individuals have

so far completed internship at the ministry while it has a further initiative to provide internship to more talented individuals.

Some of the interns are employed at different power and energy companies at present, he added.

Lauding the career fair, he said BYLC is creating economic opportunities by facilitating important connections between employers and job-seekers.

BYLC President Ejaj Ahmad, among others, spoke at the inauguration.

Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center, the country's first leadership institute, exists to build connections among youths from diverse backgrounds, equip them with leadership skills, and enable them to have high impact in public, private, and civil sectors, the BYLC press release further said.

All their efforts aim to strengthen prosperity, justice, and inclusiveness in societies worldwide. Over the past year, BYLC has provided leadership training to over 3,500 youths in Bangladesh, it added.

UPAZILA POLLS

Second phase on March 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday announced schedule of the second-phase election to 129 upazila parishes slated for March 18.

EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed declared the polls schedule at a press conference at the Nirban Bhaban in Agargaon of the capital in the afternoon.

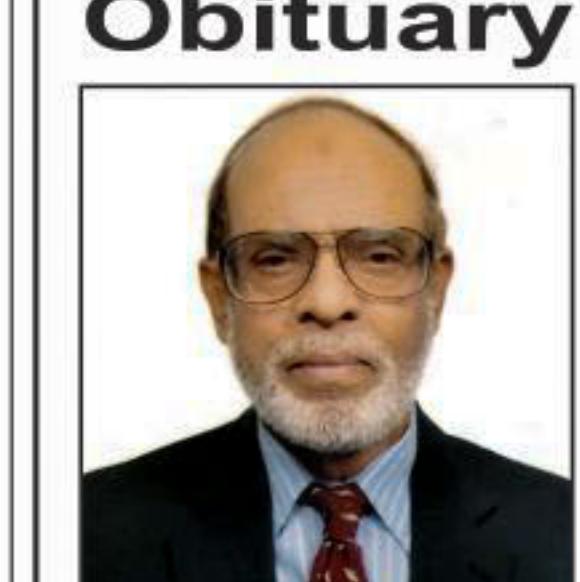
The first phase of the five-phase election will be held on March 10. For the first time, political parties will nominate aspirants in the upazila election.

Helal at the press conference said the last date for filing nomination papers is February 18. The papers will be scrutinised until February 20 and last date for withdrawing candidature is February 27.

According to the schedule, second phase of the local body polls will be held in all upazilas of Thakurgaon, Rangpur, Gaibandha and Dinajpur districts under Rangpur division and all upazilas of Bogura, Naogaon and Pabna districts under Rajshahi division.

Polls will also be held in all upazilas of

Obituary



Abu of Naveed, Noshin Dada of Neven and Noah, Nana of Nukrat & Numair LT. COL. (Rtd) Kh. NURUL HOQ of Mohakhali DOHS died at 11:30am on 30th January 2019 in Dhaka CMH (Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaahi Rajun). He was 76. He left behind his wife, one son, two daughters, son-in-law, daughter-in-laws, 4 grandchildren, so many relatives, friends and dear ones. May Allah grant him jannat and forgive his mistakes as He is the most merciful. Ameen.

Summa Ameen.

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