

Saraswati Puja brightens up festivity

SAYED MOHMUD ULLAH

The enthusiasm, festivity and fervour centring Saraswati Puja could be seen across the Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela yesterday, as devotees and a large number of people visiting the nearby Jagannath Hall puja mandaps thronged Suhrawardy Udyan and Bangla Academy.

Dressed mostly in traditional attires, people of all ages visited the fair throughout the day. Though there were long queues, it could not dampen the festive atmosphere.

"Many visited the book fair after offering prayers to goddess Saraswati," said Dhaka University's Jagannath Hall Provost Prof Asim Sarker.

He said people of all religions enjoy the colourful occasion of the puja. The book fair also enriches the celebration manifolds. "Such joyous occasion truly highlights the non-communal spirit of the country and its people," he added.

Since most educational institutions were closed on the occasion of worshipping Saraswati, the goddess of learning, to mark the coming of spring, presence of young people was also high.

Puja Mohanta, a fourth-year student of Jahangirnagar University, was seen visiting bookstalls with her friends at Suhrawardy Udyan. "It's a great day to hang out with friends after seeking blessings of goddess Saraswati in pursuit of



Clockwise from left, A child being given "Hatey Khori", a ritual of first lesson in alphabets, in front of an idol of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, at the Jagannath Hall temple in Dhaka University. Saraswati Puja was held amid festive fervour at the hall field yesterday, with all departments of the university setting up their own versions of the idol. A mass prayer session was also held at the temple in the morning.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BAN OF JAMAAT'S REGISTRATION: SC hearing on appeal to start soon: AG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam yesterday said his office will take an initiative soon for the apex court hearing on the 2013 appeal against the High Court verdict that declared illegal the registration of Jamaat-e-Islami with the Election Commission.

If the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court upholds the High Court verdict regarding cancellation of Jamaat's registration, the party (Jamaat) cannot operate as a political party in the country, he said while talking to media at his office on the Supreme Court premises.

On February 6, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the parliament that the government has nothing to do about banning the Jamaat-e-Islami right now as a case in this regard is pending at a court.

On August 1, 2013, following a writ petition, a three-member special HC bench by a majority view declared illegal the registration of Jamaat as a political party and ruled that its registration has no legal effect.

The same year, Jamaat, a component of the BNP-led 20-party alliance, filed an

Will push again for Jamaat's war crime trial: law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday told parliament that the government will settle the issue of trying Jamaat-e-Islami as a political party for its involvement in crimes against humanity, through a legal process.

In reply to a query from Awami League MP Waresat Hossain Belal, the minister also informed the House that the law ministry will take initiative again to send the amendment to International Crimes Tribunal law to the cabinet division, in line with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's direction so that it can be placed before the cabinet meeting.

In a scripted answer, Anisul said the law ministry had earlier sent the amendment to the ICT law to the cabinet division aimed at trying Jamaat-e-Islami as a political party for its involvement in crimes against humanity in the country's Liberation War in 1971.

In reply to another question, the law minister said his ministry has taken various measures including appointing 571 assistant judges in lower court since 2014, for quick disposal of the huge number of cases in different courts across the country.

In reply to a query of AL lawmaker Nizam Uddin Hazari, the minister said it is under

the government's active consideration to set up Attorney Service in a bid to conduct cases by public persecutors.

3.36 LAKH POSTS VACANT AT GOVT OFFICES

State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain yesterday informed parliament that the government has taken various steps to fulfill vacant posts of the government offices, as 3,36,746 posts are now vacant at public offices of the government.

"Bangladesh Public Service Commission has recommended for 1,289 posts from different cadres through 37th BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service), aimed at appointing vacant posts," he said this replying to a question made by AL MP M Shamsul Haque Tuku of Pabna-5.

The state minister said the government has requested agencies concerned to verify pre-service curriculum of the recommended candidates, adding, "After getting verification report of the pre-service information, freedom fighter certificate and health check-up, they will be given final appointment."

In addition to this, the appointment process of 8,719 vacant posts of different ministries are now underway through the 38th, 39th and 40th BCS, he said.

JP's Farazi to lead House committee on Public Accounts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A lawmaker from the main opposition Jatiya Party was made chief of the parliamentary standing committee on Public Accounts (PA), for the first time in the country's history.

The Jatiya Sangsad last night unanimously formed the parliamentary watchdog on PA, with JP lawmaker Rustam Ali Farazi as its chief.

The House yesterday also formed nine other parliamentary standing committees on different ministries, with two former heavyweight ministers dropped from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's new cabinet as chief of two bodies.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, who was social welfare minister in Sheikh Hasina's immediate past cabinet, was made chief of parliamentary standing committee on the same ministry.

Another former minister Mostafizur Rahman was made chief of parliamentary standing committee on primary and mass education ministry. He led the ministry in Sheikh Hasina's last government from 2014 to 2018.

Sources in the parliament secretariat yesterday confirmed to The Daily Star that no MP from the opposition was made chairman of a PA committee in the country's parliamentary history. It is considered one of the most significant and important parliamentary standing committees.



Tawfiq Aziz Khan's death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 18th death anniversary of Tawfiq Aziz Khan, former executive editor of The Daily Star, sports writer and commentator.

One of the leading journalists of the country, Tawfiq joined the then Pakistan Observer as a staff reporter in 1958 while he was a student of Dhaka University.

He joined The Daily Star in 1990 as its founder managing editor. He became the executive editor in 1997 and served until his death in 2001.

Tawfiq was the first English sports



Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam speaks to students in a coaching classroom at Farmgate yesterday, where a mobile court conducted a drive. The magistrate counseled the students to focus more on studies in school and not to depend on coaching centres, heard their complaints, and assured he would discuss those with authorities concerned. PHOTO: STAR

Six coaching centres sealed in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six coaching centres in the capital, running in defiance of a government ban during the month of SSC exams, were sealed off yesterday.

A mobile court of Rab carried out the raid and sentenced eight persons to one-month jail each for the offence.

Executive magistrate of Rab-2 Sarwoer Alam sealed off the coaching centres including Moby Dick, Nabadiganta Academy, Joy Jatra, Onanya Dreams, Creatives and Blaze during the drive.

In Farmgate, the team sealed Moy Dick coaching centre.

Owners of the coaching centres were running business by hanging a "closed" sign on the main gate, said Sarwoer.

"Many students complained that teachers don't take proper care in schools. I will report this to the ministry," he told The Daily Star.

DNCC BY-POLLS EC allocates symbols for mayor candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Campaign for Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral by-polls officially began yesterday, with the allocation of symbols among five mayoral candidates by the Election Commission.

The election will be held on February 28.

Awami League (AL) candidate Atiqul Islam will contest the polls with "boat" symbol, while Shafin Ahmed of Jatiya Party (JP) was allocated "plough"; Anisur Rahman of National People's Party (NPP) got "mango"; Progressive Democratic Party's Shahin Khan got "tiger" and independent candidate Abdur Rahim got "table clock".

After allocating the symbols, returning officer Abul Kalam requested all candidates to follow the electoral code of conduct during their campaign.

The candidates can continue their election campaign till midnight of February 26, he said.

The Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral post fell vacant following the death of Annisul Huq on November 30, 2017.

He was elected mayor on April 28, 2015.

Election to councillor posts in the 36 new wards -- 18 under the Dhaka North City Corporation and 18 under the Dhaka South City Corporation -- will also be held on February 28.

Hasina saved global leaders from disgrace

Says finance minister on sheltering Rohingyas

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has saved the face of the global leaders from "ignominy and disgrace" by sheltering the persecuted people of Rakhine province in Myanmar.

"If she wouldn't have given them shelter, it would end up with the gravest and worst genocide of the century since WWII," he said, urging world leaders to show genuine commitment to human rights values by sending the Rohingyas back to their place of origin with safety and dignity.

Momen was addressing the inaugural session of a seminar titled "Bangladesh and Human Rights" at a hotel in the city.

United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Mia Seppo, among others, spoke.

Members of the diplomatic core and civil society were also present.

Momen said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina through sheltering these persecuted people has become a "role model of

Complaints and cases their last resort: Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP has nothing to do except lodging complaints and cases, after their miserable defeat in the 11th parliamentary election.

"Everyone has right to lodge cases against any election result... We welcome the decision of lodging cases from the BNP's district level against the national polls results," he said, talking to the reporters at the AL president's political office in the capital's Dhanmondi.

Earlier, Quader declared the names of AL chairman contenders for the second phase of local government body upazila parishad elections in 122 upazilas, scheduled to be held on March 18.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said BNP has no ability to run any movement. So, complaints and cases are their last resort.

He said the names of AL candidates for the upazila polls will be declared on February 22 for the third phase polls, on February 23 for the fourth phase and in June for the fifth phase polls.

Replying to a query, Quader said, "We are trying our best to follow the Election Commission's rules. We even didn't give any nomination to the municipality mayors or upazila chairmen in the last parliament election. We also didn't give any nomination to municipality mayors or union parishad chairmen in the upazila polls till now. If we get any allegation [against any nominee], we will investigate."

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