

DU bars Prof Imtiaz from all academic activities

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University yesterday barred Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, of Center for Genocide Studies, from engaging in any academic activities of the university for allegedly distorting the country's history and defaming Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The decision was made at a meeting of the university's syndicate after a probe committee placed its report, said a press release issued by the public relations offices of the university.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman presided over the meeting.

According to the press release, the book titled "Historicising 1971 Genocide: State versus Person (UPL,2009)" by Imtiaz Ahmed defamed the father of the nation and distorted the history of the Liberation War.

The syndicate called on Imtiaz and publisher UPL to immediately withdraw the book, published in 2009.

The syndicate also requested the government to take legal action against those who insult Bangabandhu and are involved in distorting the history of the Liberation War, the press release said.

Woman alleges assault in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 20-year-old woman alleged that four or five security guards assaulted her and shaved her head in the Bashundhara residential area yesterday morning.

She was preparing for university admission tests at her flat in Block-D around 8:00am when four to five unidentified security guards of the residential area came and forcibly took her to Madani Avenue Nursery, she wrote in a complaint filed with Bhatara Police Station.

The guards then assaulted her and shaved her head, she said, adding that she managed to call her mother around 11:00am.

Her mother, sister, and a team from Bhatara Police Station went to the scene and rescued her around 4:00pm, but the guards fled when they saw police coming.

The complaint mentioned that she

SEE PAGE 7 COL 3

MY DHAKA

OPEN SPACE THEATRE

Captivating audience WITH ‘ART’

RBR

Written by the famous French playwright, Yasmina Reza, and translated and directed by M Arifur Rahman, "Art" was performed recently at the Experimental Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. This is Open Space Theatre's fourth production following the immensely popular stage performances of "12 Angry Men", "And Then There Were None", and "Arsenic and Old Lace".

A comedy about the relationship between three friends – Marc, Serge, and Yan – Art explores the subtle intricate nature of friendship where ego, frivolity, and inter-dependence play a part.

Arifur Rahman's direction of Art is highly acclaimed for its naturalistic performance and brilliant adaptability. He has masterfully translated Reza's work into Bangla, bringing the humour and the nuances of the play to life. An actor par excellence, Rahman brought the stage to life with appealing support from fellow performers, Tahmid Suprav and Ritwik Mahubb.

"The Open Space Theatre's production of Art was an entertaining experience. The play explored the complex and often humorous dynamics of a group of friends whose relationship is challenged by

the purchase of an expensive, white painting. The actors delivered good performances with witty dialogues and captivating stage presence.

"The minimalist set design and clever use of lighting added to the overall aesthetic.

Open Space Theatre was established on January 7, 2017 by Mahjabeen Chowdhury and M Arifur Rahman. They aimed to make Dhaka "the city of theatre", where going to theatre becomes an intrinsic part of everyone's lifestyle.

As people have unlimited entertainment options at home and on their phones, it takes spectacular performances to bring them out of their homes and into the auditoriums. And it is exactly here that Chowdhury grabbed people's attention.

Mahjabeen says, "In our entertainment-deprived city, good quality theatre is what people crave. Whenever possible, we try to stage shows at different university campuses to make theatre popular among students. Recently, we introduced a special student discount. Most of our shows are filled with new theatre audiences, and they keep returning to watch all of our productions. It really doesn't matter whether the script is an adaptation or taken from a local source. What truly matters is the performance."

Open Space Theatre is a platform that provides a positive, judgement-free, practical environment for the audience to learn about theatre at their own pace and escape the drudgery of life.

Librarian shot dead in Rajbari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajbari

Criminals shot a librarian dead in Pangsha upazila of Rajbari last night.

Mizanur Rahman worked at the Pangsha Pilot Girls High School. He also had a fertiliser-insecticide business in Hossendanga Bazar.

Mizanur was returning home from his shop on a bike along with two others. They only managed to ride about 500 metres when the criminals ambushed them and shot Mizanur around 9:45pm.

The others were unscathed, said Shahidul Islam Maruf, his brother-in-law.

Rajbari SP MM Shakiluzzaman said Mizanur died on the spot.

‘Cattle thief’ beaten to death in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A man, accused of stealing cattle, was beaten to death by angry villagers in Tangail's Mirzapur upazila early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Mannan, 54, of Katuee village in the adjacent Delduar upazila.

He was caught red-handed by locals with a cow from a crop field in Ufulki village, said Saheb Ali, a member of Jamurki union.

They later gave Mannan a beating, leaving him dead on the spot, he added.

Mirzapur Police Station OC Abu Saleh Mohammad Masud Karim said the body was sent to Tangail General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Worker dies under tractor trolley

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A day labourer died after being run over by a tractor trolley in Ajmiriganj upazila of Habiganj yesterday afternoon.

Aminur Mia, 35, was pulling a wheelbarrow carrying a paddy threshing machine, when he was run over by the paddy-laden trolley, which was entering the small road of Shantipur village from the Baniachong-Ajmeriganj road.

He died on the spot, said Ajmiriganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Masuk Ali.

2 held with goods stolen from Rampal plant

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Two men were arrested with goods worth about Tk 3.2 lakh stolen from the Rampal thermal power plant in Fakirhat, Bagerhat.

Rab arrested the thieves – Biplab Hossain, 19, of Pabna and Mehedi Hasan Shanto, 23, of Khulna – in Katakhal area of the upazila Saturday night.

At the time, they recovered 5,495kg of iron tools, 50kg of copper wire, and a mini truck used in the theft.

"The two thieves and the recovered goods were handed over to Fakirhat Police Station. A case was filed in this connection," said Rab-6 Company Commander Md Badruddoza.

An evolving partnership

FROM PAGE 1

of the WB that provides concessional financing. In aggregate, the WB is also the country's largest external supplier of development funding. Additionally, the IFC and MIGA have provided some \$3 billion to support the Bangladesh private sector.

The functioning of the WB as a development partner has evolved over time.

In the early years, the relationship was often perceived by Bangladesh policymakers as one of arrogance and an inflexible "take it or leave it" stance of the WB.

Policymakers often felt that the WB staff dealing with low-income countries like Bangladesh were very arrogant, with a know-all and inflexible attitude.

The carrot of loan financing was often used as a source of power and authority. And the design brought in from Washington was pushed as the only way to go.

There was little willingness among the WB staff to listen and learn from country knowledge and experiences.

There was also a perception that both the Bretton Woods Institutions, the WB and the IMF, were captured by G7 leadership, especially the US, and their domestic policy agenda found its way into the functioning of the two global financial institutions.

The unfortunate Padma bridge debacle that substantially hurt Bangladesh's relationship with the WB is cited as a prime example of this political capture of the WB by the US.

In recent years, there has been marked improvement in the way that the WB conducts business with its member countries.

The word "donor" has been replaced by "development partner", country offices have been established with an empowered country director located in the country and available for consultation and conflict resolution on call, and country partnership documents are prepared with full consultation and involvement of country officials.

The dialogue over policies and the design of loans is now done with full participation from government officials, and the volume of loans and the types of loans are now substantially determined by country priorities.

These major changes in the way that the WB does business with Bangladesh and other member countries have significantly improved the relationship between Bangladesh and the WB. It has also strengthened the development impact of WB operations in Bangladesh.

Moving forward, the policymakers must always be in control of the development agenda and accept only those loans including technical assistance programmes that are consistent with Bangladesh's development priorities.

To make this fully effective, Bangladesh must also strengthen its capacity to negotiate with the WB staff.

The political role of G7 and especially the US remains a serious issue for the effectiveness of both the Bretton Woods Institutions. This is not unique to Bangladesh.

The WB's management often has little control in this matter. On the other hand, there is a strong role that member countries represented in the WB's operational board and the board of governors can play.

Non-G7 members like Bangladesh, India, Brazil, Pakistan, China, Korea and Vietnam can mobilise majority member opinions to fight back and adopt policies that lower the scope for G7 members to insert their political agenda in polluting normal business operations of the WB.

Approval or withdrawal of lending operations must be dealt with on merit and strictly in line with agreed operational principles and policies.

The author is a former country director and chief economist of the WB and the vice chairman of Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh

WB to equip

FROM PAGE 1

loans from the International Development Association, the WB arm that provides concessionary loans to the world's poorest nations, according to Hussain.

"Going forward, it has now become clear how the WB will extend its assistance. The CPF's main focus would be increasing private sector competitiveness for post-LDC graduation, adaptation to climate change and mitigation, and inclusive growth," he added.

The CPF will support Bangladesh's goal to achieve upper-middle-income country status by 2031 by helping the country address key barriers to higher and sustainable growth, said Abdoulaye Seck, the WB's country director.

The annual allocation from IDA is expected to be within the \$1.5-2 billion per annum range.

"Together with a current balance of about \$8.24 billion to be disbursed under the existing projects, this offers an opportunity for a series of transformational projects across key sectors."

Some of the transformational projects earmarked include the development of an economic corridor centring on Jamuna River, restoration of the ecology of Dhaka rivers, Bay Terminal project, modernisation of public sector operation, and learning acceleration in secondary education.

At the same time, the International Finance Corporation, the WB arm that helps develop the private sector in developing countries, will strive to increase its investment programme to \$900 million per annum, including mobilisation.

The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, the WB arm that promotes investment in developing countries by offering political and economic risk insurance, will continue to support its existing portfolio of \$1.1 billion in gross outstanding exposure across the energy and manufacturing sectors.

In collaboration with the IFC, MIGA will seek to support foreign direct investment into the country through its guarantee instruments as well as find opportunities to use its trade finance support instruments.

Productive, transformative

FROM PAGE 1

will remain unfulfilled.

The conditionalities covered a wide ground including privatisation, import liberalisation, pricing reforms such as removal or reduction of subsidies, improving tax collection, financial sector reforms and improved public financial management.

Many Bangladeshis believe that many, or most, of the conditionalities imposed by the WB have been inappropriate and possibly harmful to the country.

They believe that successive governments have accepted these conditions due to their undue dependence on the donors and their inability, or lack of inclination, to push back on donor demands.

While valid in some cases, by and large, such concerns are misplaced, as reflected in the case of the closure of the Adamjee Jute Mills, one of the most contentious policy actions asked for by the WB.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the WB provided several loans to help modernise the state-owned jute industry. The results were not satisfactory.

The WB then concluded that it will be better for Bangladesh to privatise some jute mills and close the rest. The most significant example of closure is that of Adamjee Jute Mills. This happened in 2002, leading to a job loss of 26,000.

Many people in Bangladesh were critical of this decision and accused the WB of supporting the de-industrialisation of the country.

However, it is not widely known that an export processing zone was subsequently developed on the land of the former Adamjee Jute Mills and that, by mid-2019 (the latest period for which I have data), more than 55,000 people have been employed in the zone. This is double the number of jobs lost when Adamjee closed.

A dynamic economy requires a regular process of reallocation of resources from activities that are no longer profitable to those that are more promising.

The WB's advice to close the Adamjee Jute Mills was in line with this important lesson of economics and the performance of the Adamjee EPZ has vindicated this position.

The WB Group has also played an instrumental role in the development of the economic zones program of the country. This is a good example of how the WB Group can bring together its rich set of instruments, spread across its various parts, in the service of a transformative agenda.

In 2007, the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the WB Group, published a report where it argued for a more organised and environmentally friendly industrialisation process in Bangladesh through the establishment of several economic zones in the country.

Once the government accepted the arguments and decided to go for an ambitious economic zones programme, the IFC helped draft the Economic Zones Act and associated rules and regulations, and supported the establishment and institution building of the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority.

Later, the WB stepped in with loans to help build the infrastructure in the zones. Now there is some talk of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), another arm of the WB Group, coming in with guarantees to encourage foreign investment in these zones.

Going forward, the emphasis will increasingly be on creating the enabling environment for private sector investment, whether domestic or foreign.

This would involve assistance in improving the investment climate, catalysing private foreign investment and de-risking private investment.

While the traditional lending and knowledge work of the WB will remain important, we are likely to see an increased engagement of IFC and MIGA in Bangladesh.

In summary, despite some frictions and tensions, the relationship between the Bangladesh government and the WB Group has been largely productive.

The often strived to develop a common vocabulary to communicate with each other, trying to understand each other's positions and limitations.

And, when they did find a common vocabulary, as they often did, the deliberations turned out to be productive and the results positive and, at times, even transformative.

The author is a former global lead of the World Bank Group's regulatory reforms and public-private dialogue

IMF chief

FROM PAGE 1

is necessary to go ahead with prosperity confronting all hurdles, according to Momen.

Georgieva said Bangladesh has achieved the remarkable progress due to massive infrastructure development, widespread connectivity and maintenance of law and order.

She also hailed Bangladesh's success in maintaining macro-economic stability.

Momen said Hasina briefed the global lender chief of her government's initiatives to maintain the pace of overall development of her country.

The PM said Bangladesh has taken the \$4.7 billion loan from the the International Monetary Fund as a "breathing space".

"The development of the country didn't come overnight; it has rather been the result of longtime planning."

The PM said she planned how she wanted to develop Bangladesh when she was in jail (for about 11 months from July 16, 2007) and started working with the plan after assuming power for the second time in 2009.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder separately told reporters that the IMF always stood by Bangladesh over the last 14 years to maintain stability in the macro economy.

He said Bangladesh is currently engaged with a programme of \$4.7 billion with the IMF that Bangladesh got only after two weeks of negotiations despite the fact many countries fail to get loans after years of negotiations.

"The IMF will continue such cooperation in future," he said, quoting the global lender chief.

The BB governor said the PM hailed the IMF role in the journey of Bangladesh's development.

Under a programme approved in January this year, Bangladesh will get the \$4.7 billion loan in seven instalments over the next 42 months. The average interest on the loan will be 2.2 percent.

Bangladesh has already received the first tranche of \$476.2 million of the IMF loan.