

MOSQUE BLAST
Petition seeks
Tk 50 lakh per
victim family
from Titas Gas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday, seeking its order upon the authorities concerned of Titas Gas Ltd to give Tk 50 lakh in compensation to each family of victims, who died and suffered injuries from the Narayanganj mosque blast.

Twenty-six people have so far died and several others suffered injuries from the explosion at Pashchim Talla Baitus Salam Mosque of Narayanganj after Esha prayers on Friday.

There has been widespread allegation that the explosion was caused by gas that leaked from underground pipeline and accumulated inside the ground floor of the mosque.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



This pathway looks less like a street and more like a ditch, where people have to carefully cross wobbly bamboo bridges to get to the other side, and one small misstep could have severe consequences. This apparent “road” at the capital’s Babubazar, near Mitford Hospital, has been in this condition for the past month, after authorities started working on it. With dangling wires, under-construction buildings and chemical shops on the sides of this street, it’s seems like a recipe for disaster. This photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Differently abled, not disabled
Better health, mobility for wheelchair-bound
people through sports

ZYMA ISLAM

“Differently abled, not disabled” -- this is how Noor Nahian, the founder of Bangladesh Wheelchair Sports Foundation captioned a photo of himself sitting in his wheelchair, that he posted on Twitter.

Similarly he is very clear about something else -- disability is a social construct.

“Accessibility is the biggest issue, and this is because of discrimination by society, not because of a lack of ability on our part,” said Nahian.

It is with this idea that the foundation was created to inspire the practice of sports -- to inspire mobility -- among mobility-bound wheelchair users.

Noor Nahian has been a wheelchair athlete since 2015. He is the vice captain of Bangladesh Wheelchair Cricket Team and has participated in wheelchair cricket tournaments internationally.

But in an atmosphere where the needs of differently abled people are always an afterthought, he decided to go beyond his own interest in cricket and create an umbrella organisation that supports a number of sports.

“We started work in April 2018. Our main motivation was to teach differently abled people how to play a certain sport while sitting in a wheelchair. On the cricket pitch, we are the ones fielding, bowling,

batting, conducting the whole game. Many differently-abled people wonder how they can do all this while strapped to a wheelchair,” said Nahian.

That is the crux of it -- the foundation is a support group that teaches differently-abled bodies to adapt to the challenges of fitting into a world that denies them space and opportunities.

The lack of movement among wheelchair users can be life-threatening. In 2015, Nature journal published a survey done on 350 spinal cord injury patients by Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) and John Walsh Centre for Rehabilitation Research at University of Sydney. The survey found that one in five people with spinal cord injury that are wheelchair-dependent die within two years of leaving CRP due to sepsis from pressure ulcers.

Pressure ulcers, or bedsores as they are commonly known, are a common skin injury that paralysed patients suffer from.

But more than just teaching, the foundation also arranges the logistics of movement. “We arrange for volunteer support from able-bodied individuals. They push the wheelchairs, carry food, bags and help players use public transport,” informed Nahian.

“We dream of sending our athletes to the Paralympics. Currently we are working

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Salahuddin Swapan, lovingly called Swapan mama by his loyal clientele, fixes a camera with utmost concentration at his shop in Farmgate’s Saudia Market.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

A surgeon of film cameras

FAISAL BIN IQBAL, from SHOUT

In this era of digital photography, we’ve almost forgotten about the time when the art form required much more tedious work. In fact, with the old 35mm film cameras, the whole process of taking a photo and getting to see how it came out, could take days. All that can be achieved in a matter of seconds now.

Fixing digital cameras aren’t as big of a hassle either -- the issues with such cameras are usually with the firmware or shutter. But back in the day, fixing a film camera was more of a surgical procedure than some simple tweaking.

And one person (or camera doctor, in this case) known for his ability to mend these old broken cameras is Salahuddin Swapan.

Born in Narsingdi, Swapan came to Dhaka soon after his birth. In 1974, he found himself working as tea boy at a camera repair workshop in Farmgate, ran by one Md Altaf Hossain.

Swapan was quite curious about cameras, and would often lurk around Hossain, and watch him fix those old film cameras. Hossain took note of his curiosity, and soon took Swapan as an apprentice in the workshop.

“That’s how I got into this hobby of

mine,” says Swapan. “I learned to fix these cameras by observing my mentor. No one can learn a skill like this by trying things out on their own. They need to observe and study a professional first before they can take these cameras apart, find what’s wrong, and fix it back to working order.”

Soon enough, Swapan found himself at the helm of his own camera repairing workshop deep inside Saudia Super Market, opposite Ananda Cinema Hall in Tejmunipara.

His passion for cameras and photography turned into a successful business, and people from all walks of life would visit his “Swapan Camera Hospital” to get their devices repaired.

“When a person falls ill, their treatment is conducted in many ways,” explained Swapan. “You might even need to take them to the hospital, where the doctors will try to help them get better. For me, this shop does a similar job, but instead of human beings as patients, I tend to cameras.”

Swapan also had the good fortune of working at Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC) in the early nineties, when stars like Ilias Kanchan, Faroque, and Abdur Razzak ruled the silver screen.

Swapan has embraced the digital era

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

DHAKA-5, NAOGAON-6
AL announces
candidates for
two by-polls

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League yesterday announced the names of its candidates for the Dhaka-5 and Naogaon-6 by-elections.

Party General Secretary Obaidul Quader announced their names at a regular press briefing held at his official residence.

The party nominated Monirul Islam Monu for Dhaka-5 and picked Mohammad Anwar Hossain Helal for Naogaon -6.

Dhaka-5 fell vacant following the death of Awami League MP Habibur Rahman Mollah on May 6, while Nagaon-6 became unoccupied after the demise of AL MP Israfil Alam on July 27.

The by-polls are scheduled for October 1, according to the Election Commission.

In the meantime, Awami League presidium members and former ministers Mohammad Nasim and Sahara Khatun have passed away, leaving the Sirajganj-1 and Dhaka-18 seats vacant respectively.

The candidate for Dhaka-18 will be announced later, said Quader.

COVID-19 FALLOUT

4,100 more migrant workers
to return home from Iraq

JAMIL MAHMUD

About 9,500 migrant workers are expected to return home from Iraq, with about 5,400 of them have already been repatriated, following job losses in the Arab country amid the pandemic.

The rest 4,100 will fly back home in coming months, according to Bangladesh Embassy in Baghdad.

Iraq is home to over two lakh Bangladeshi migrant workers.

The economy of the Middle Eastern country, which largely depends on its oil revenue, was already facing crisis before the pandemic.

The crisis was deepened by the pandemic, since many businesses closed their operations and started to lay-off workers, according to media reports.

According to the Bangladesh mission, two large Iraqi government projects -- one refinery and one construction -- had about 15,000 Bangladeshi workers employed before the pandemic.

But the projects, which were being implemented on contractual basis under two separate foreign companies, recently started downsizing their workforce amid the pandemic.

Cyber-bullying an
omnipresent threat
Speakers tell webinar on safe
internet for children

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eighty-seven percent of youths are victims of cyber-bullying, while 60 percent of children are exposed to cyber-risks globally, said speakers at a webinar yesterday.

International School Dhaka and DPS STS School jointly organised the programme on “Safer Internet for Children”, facilitated by Crameenphone.

Creating a safer and balanced digital space for children to help them experience only what is suitable was the core theme of the event.

Citing resources, speakers also said that one-third of middle-school students report dealing with cyber-bullying at least once a week to daily. Girls get cyber-bullied three times more than boys.

Due to Covid-19, children have been compelled to use the internet to connect to their education and other activities. To help eliminate possible adverse effects of these web-sessions, Khairul Basher, head of communications

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

N’GANJ MOSQUE EXPLOSION

17 testify before district
admin probe body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N’ganj

A total of 17 people, who witnessed the explosion that left 26 persons dead and some others injured in Narayanganj, yesterday described the incident before the probe body formed by the district administration.

Committee head Khadiza Tahera Bobby, also additional district magistrate, confirmed it to The Daily Star.

“Our investigation is progressing. But we cannot say anything more for the sake of it,” she added.

The public hearing started around 10am. But the probe body got poor response till noon. People started coming from 1pm and it continued till around 4pm.

The explosion happened at Pashchim Talla Baitus Salam Mosque in Narayanganj around 8:45pm after Isha prayers on September 4.

There has been a widespread allegation that the explosion was caused by gas leaked from the underground pipeline and accumulated in the ground floor of the mosque.

After the incident, the district administration formed a five-member probe body which is scheduled to submit its report by Thursday.

Meanwhile, locals said the blast could be avoided, if the mosque’s management committee took quick measure to get the gas pipeline repaired.

They told this newspaper that they used to smell gas during prayers. They informed the matter to the management committee, but to no avail.

Now the committee is blaming Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company for not fixing the problem on time.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Musicians struggle
to stay afloat in Ctg

Out-of-work instrumentalists seek govt help

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With no income for over six months, instrumentalists in port city are passing their days amid serious financial crisis as all sorts of social and cultural programmes have remained stopped since March due to the ongoing pandemic.

Most of these musicians depend on the money they make through performing at various events round the year.

“I have finished all my savings in the last six months,” said Piplu Dutta, an octopad player. “I don’t know what to do... Like me, many instrumentalists are passing their days in uncertainty,” he told The Daily Star, adding, “We have not got any assistance from the government.”

Masud Parvez Lavlu, a keyboard player, said he used to perform in at least 50 programmes per month in peak seasons and around 20 programmes in off seasons.

“At first I thought everything will be alright in three to four months... I have already finished the money I had. At 45, it is very tough to change my profession,” he added.

Artist Arko Chowdhury said, “Guitar was my passion and I pursued that and became a guitarist. Though I am a graduate, I did not try to look for other jobs... I was content with what I had and a career in music industry.”

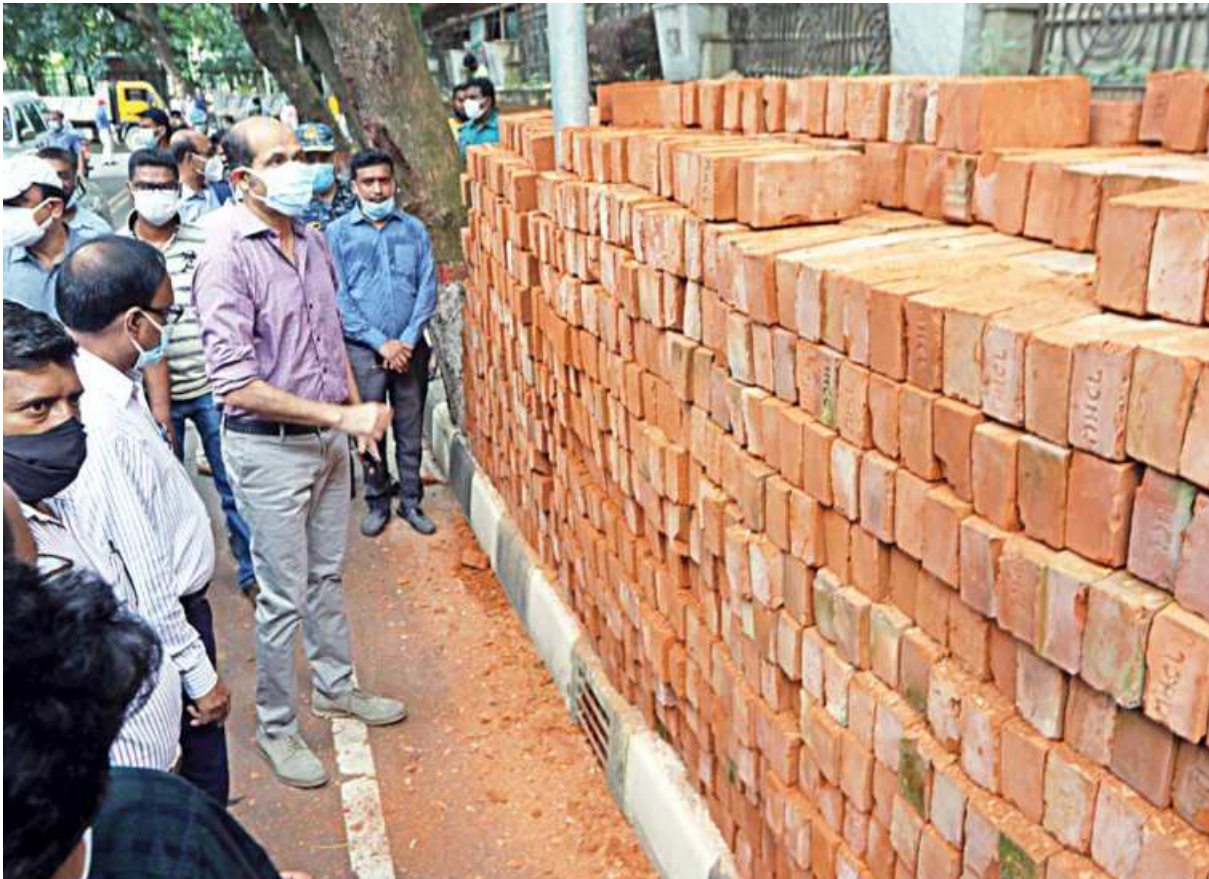
“But this pandemic has changed everything... I don’t know how I will survive in the days to come,” said a worried Arko.

Sources said around 500 instrumentalists in the city have been passing days amid financial crisis for over six months.

Asim Chanda Bappy, general secretary of Chattogram Jantro Shilpi Sangstha, said most musicians are from middle and low-income families who are solely dependent on the income from performing at events.

“We are trying to stand by them. We have given assistance to 150

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam yesterday accompanied officials during a drive to combat the prevalent practice of leaving construction materials on roadsides and footpaths, occupying space illegally and blocking the walkways. The officials seized materials kept this way, put them up for auction, and fined those responsible. This photo was taken from Gulshan.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DNCC auctions off
materials kept on
roads, footpaths

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday started a drive against construction materials kept illegally on footpaths and roads, creating obstacles to pedestrian movement.

Mayor Atiqul Islam inaugurated the drive at Road-86 in Gulshan in the morning. Many of the construction materials were seized by DNCC officials and auctioned off in front of him. The drive started simultaneously across the DNCC areas.

DNCC held 32 auctions and realised Tk 13.08 lakh and fined Tk 6.45 lakh during the drive. The mobile courts of DNCC also evicted 200 illegal structures from footpaths.

“No one will be spared if they keep such construction materials on footpaths, no matter how influential they are, said the mayor.

During the drive, he also visited roads 86, 87 and 67 in Gulshan and Road-15 in Banani.

“We earlier warned city dwellers not to keep any construction material on footpath but they did not pay any heed. This is why we are now conducting this drive at all 10 zones simultaneously,” said the mayor.

He said roads and footpaths are being

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3