



Activists of Urban Study Group gathered in front of Mongolabash in Old Dhaka's Sutrapur yesterday, demanding a stop to the renovation work that puts the structure's heritage at risk.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

CENTURY-OLD MONGOLABASH AT SUTRAPUR Renovation at the cost of historical aesthetic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The century-old Mongolabash at Dhaka's Sutrapur is being renovated to improve the living space of Kabi Nazrul Government College students, but this improvement is happening at the cost of the building's historical value and aesthetic style.

Mongolabash is well-known in the area as a place for Mukti Khelaghor. It was built near the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century by Zamindar Jatindra Kumar Saha. The esteemed Zamindar left the country after the partition in 1947.

The building has been used as a dormitory for students of the college since 1997 and as a hub for cultural organisation Mukti Khelaghor since 1973. The building was in need of renovation to better accommodate the students, but the work is being done using cement plaster instead of the lime shurki (brick dust) used for the original structure.

Taimur Islam, chief executive of Urban Study Group (USG) yesterday led a human chain in front of Mongolabash. Representatives of USG met with the college's principal

last week and were assured that steps will be taken within a week. However, the work remained halted for just one day after the meeting, and the use of cement plaster was resumed soon afterwards.

Taimur explained that renovation of historical buildings should be done in a way that preserves the structure's original aesthetics instead of modifying it. "Using cement plaster for renovation will weaken the structure as it was built using separate materials, and it will ruin the building's historical aesthetic," he said.

"We were supposed to prepare a design for primary renovation work for them and we would also identify the places where renovation is necessary," he said.

There was a time in Dhaka's history when this building was considered one of the most beautiful structures in the city besides Rup Lal House and Ahsan Manjil, explained Taimur, adding that it was also used to shoot films and drama.

"We have studied buildings such as these and we know using cement plaster will cause more harm than

good in renovating the structure. Removing the shurki will not help preserve the building," said Taimur.

Principal of Kabi Nazrul Government College, Prof IK Selim Ullah said the work is continuing as "no one has given any written proposal in this regard."

"The compound is far from the college and worth crores of money. It is often occupied by others besides the students. We couldn't even clean the building and put up a signboard of the college due to interference from others," he said. However, he did not specify which parties are interfering with these activities.

"This organisation [USG] that's now creating obstacles [to the renovation] did not come to us earlier," said the principal, "if they submit a formal proposal then we can carry it forward to the authorities to take necessary steps."

"The students feel insecure in the building. It needs better facilities and renovation," explained Prof Selim Ullah.

About the meeting with USG, he said only one student came to them

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ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Quader for more int'l pressure on Myanmar

BSS, Dhaka

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday called upon the international community to take more effective strategies for mounting pressure on Myanmar to take back its Rohingya nationals from Bangladesh.

Quader, also general secretary of Awami League, said this at a regular press conference at his official residence on parliament premises in the capital.

He said since the outset of Rohingya crisis, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been continuing diplomatic efforts seeking cooperation from the international community for a peaceful solution to the problem.

The economy and environment of Bangladesh have been affected badly for hosting around 12 lakh Rohingyas who took shelter at Ukhaia and Teknaf, he added.

The minister said social environment and ecological balance of the areas are now at stake due to excessive number of people living there. It is also putting adverse

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ROHINGYA INFLUX

Host community faced challenges for lowered labour costs: RIB study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Working-class people in host communities near Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar faced occupational challenges as Rohingyas could be hired as labourer at lower cost.

Besides, some Rohingyas were involved in selling relief materials, especially gas cylinders, which caused shrinkage of occupation for local firewood sellers.

These were revealed in a research conducted by Research Initiative, Bangladesh (RIB) on six groups of people in the host community and six groups in Rohingya community at four camps in Teknaf and Ukhiya.

Findings of the research were shared yesterday during a webinar on "Building Capacities of Local Communities to Mitigate Problems Created by the Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar".

Field work and a dialogue with NGOs, humanitarian actors, academics for the research were conducted in two phases -- from May 2019 to March 2020.

Sharing the findings, RIB Executive Director Meghna Guhathakurta said all respondents in Rohingya community wished to return to their homeland in Myanmar, but not unless they feel safe and secured there.

Also, some Rohingyas in Teknaf camps said they do not want to be relocated to Bhasan Char, Meghna said.

As reason, they mentioned they were inhabitants of hilly areas in Myanmar, and were in fear of living in a coastal area.

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Ensure transparency in procurement, distribution of Covid-19 vaccine

Demands rights body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency and accountability in the procurement and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines must be ensured, demanded Committee for the Protection of Fundamental Rights yesterday.

In a statement, on behalf of the committee, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said the health minister has recently informed people about the government's process to procure Covid-19 vaccine from various sources. As per its latest announcement, people have been informed that about 10 crore vaccines will be collected by the government.

"First of all, we welcome this initiative and we are sure that vaccination will start in the country very soon. But we urge the government to provide adequate information to people about the news of the import of vaccines through the mediation of non-government organisations," reads the statement.

"In particular, we urge the government to provide the citizens with detailed information on whether the legal requirements were met and competitive bids were invited for the selection and identification of the said public limited company," the statement also added.

"We are concerned that since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, widespread corruption in various sectors of the state, especially in the health sector, has been exposed or reported in the news. We fear that if transparency and accountability in the procurement and distribution of these vaccines are not ensured, hundreds of crores of taka of the government may be misappropriated and particular quarter may benefit from it through illegal means."

The committee also demanded that a policy is formulated on vaccination on a priority basis.

It also urged the government to hold a press conference at least once a week to ensure transparency and accountability, inform people about the details of each process and its associated costs and who will get priority in getting the vaccines.

FAKE COVID CERTIFICATES

Sabrina seeks bail from HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

JKG Healthcare's Chairman Dr Sabrina Arif Chowdhury has filed a bail petition with the High Court in a case filed for issuing fake Covid-19 certificates.

Sabrina's principal lawyer Syed Mamun Mahbub told The Daily Star yesterday that the HC may hold hearing on the petition today.

He, however, refused to say the grounds mentioned in the bail petition on which the HC may grant her bail.

Deputy Attorney General Monirul Islam told this correspondent that Sabrina Arif Chowdhury sought bail citing ground that she has been in jail for a long period of time and there is no specific allegation against her.

Earlier on July 20, a Dhaka court denied bail to Sabrina in connection with the same case.

On July 12 this year, police arrested Dr Sabrina, wife of JKG Healthcare Chief Executive Officer Ariful Chowdhury who was arrested earlier in the same case.

Md Kamal Hossain, a resident of Mirpur in Dhaka, filed the case with Tejjagon Police Station on June 23 on charge of issuing fake Covid-19 certificates under the JKG Healthcare.

Dr Sabrina was working as a registrar doctor at National Heart Institute and Hospital.

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Govt official found dead in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered body of a government official from the capital's Moghbazar area yesterday morning.

The deceased, Mir Aftabul Islam Sumon (46), was a deputy assistant engineer of BTCL, said Sub-inspector Shariful Islam of Hatirjheel Police Station.

On information, police rushed to T&T colony area around 8:30am and recovered the body between two buildings, he said.

A rope was around his neck and part of it was found tied to a water tank of a building, the SI said.

The man used to live in the colony with his wife and three children. He went out of home for morning prayers but did not return. The family and neighbours then found his body there, the SI said.

EMBEZZLING ZAKAT FUND

Hearing on charge framing against Sayedee on Jan 11

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed January 11 for hearing on charge framing in a case filed against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee and five others for embezzling Tk 1.27 crore from Islamic Foundation's Zakat Fund.

Judge Sayeda Hosneara of the Special Judge's Court-1 of Dhaka passed the order after a time petition was filed with the court by them, Muzahedul Islam Shahin, a defence lawyer, confirmed to The Daily Star.

In the petition, the defence mentioned that they were yet to get some papers which were necessary for the hearing on charge framing.

ACC Public Prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain Kajol told the court that the case was filed against the accused 10 years ago. The petition was filed to delay the trial proceedings, he said.

During yesterday's hearing, Sayedee, who was earlier convicted for life until death for crimes against humanity during

the Liberation War in 1971, was produced before the makeshift court at Alia Madrasa in Bakshibazar of Old Dhaka.

The other five accused are: Mohammad Lutful Haque, former director of Islamic Foundation; Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, former chairman of Mosque Council for Community Advancement; Mia Mohammad Yunus, chief secretary of Bandhujan Parishad; Tofazzal Hossain, former president of Islamic Social Welfare Center; and Md Abdul Haq, assistant director of Islamic Foundation's Mosque Council.

Among the five, four are now on bail, while Abul Kalam Azad is on the run, according to sources.

Islamic Foundation's finance and accounting director Aiyub Ali Chowdhury filed the case with the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station on May 24, 2010.

Wajed Ali Gazi, an assistant director of the Anti-Corruption Commission, filed the charge sheet in the case on April 30, 2012.



The Rayer Bazar Graveyard, located right behind the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial, is not just any graveyard. During the coronavirus pandemic, its eighth sector was dedicated for burying coronavirus patients. But these days, it has become a hub for hanging out, recording social media content and the occasional drug dealing, according to locals. This not only compromises the graveyard's environment, but is also a public health risk. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Ensure legal aid for rape survivors: BNWLA to govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To stop the frequent rape incident and other forms of violence against women, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) recommended ensuring survivor-centric comprehensive legal assistance to women and children rape survivors -- including psycho-social services, women and child-friendly legal aid services, and if applicable, safe shelters having women and child-friendly environment.

It also suggested establishing a separate court at the High Court for the speedy trial of the cases related to violence against women.

Apart from the speedy trial and witness protection, BNWLA also urged the government to use modern forensic technology to ensure proper investigation of such cases.

The recommendations were made at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club yesterday, organised by BNWLA.

BNWLA President Advocate Salma Ali also recommended a fair probe, free from political influence and demanded trained personnel at all levels of the judiciary.

She suggested redefining penetration in rape definition so that penetration using objects is also criminalised as rape. At the same time, section 155 (4) of the Evidence Act must be amended so that the defence lawyers cannot assassinate the characters of the survivors in court by asking irrelevant questions.

Apart from that, she urged the government to formulate effective sexual harassment complaint committees at educational institutions and workplaces, as per the 2009 High Court guidelines.

Zakia Anarkali, executive member of BNWLA, among others, spoke at the conference, moderated by Advocate Jobaida Parveen, general secretary of the organisation.

French envoy at Saidabad Water Treatment Plant

CITY DESK

The Ambassador of France to Bangladesh, Jean-Marin Schuh along with Fanny Nesen, project officer in charge of the water and sanitation sector of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) in Dhaka recently visited the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Dwasa) headquarters.

The visit included a tour of the Saidabad 1 and 2 water treatment plants, said a press release.

The visit served as an opportunity to renew the French Government's commitments toward the organisation.

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Fourth bomb found on site of Dhaka airport's 3rd terminal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another 250kg bomb buried at the construction site of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's (HSIA) 3rd terminal was found yesterday.

Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan, director of HSIA, confirmed this in a WhatsApp message. The message said a Bangladesh Air Force team recovered the General Purpose (GP) bomb from the third terminal construction site.

The bomb disposal unit of Air Force's Bangabandhu Base soon rushed to the spot and defused the bomb, the message added.

Later, the bomb was taken to a safe place for dismantling, with necessary precautions.

Bomb experts believe it was dropped sometime during the Liberation War in 1971, the message said. Earlier on December 9, 14 and 19, workers found three more 250kg GP bombs buried about three metres deep into the ground when they were excavating for construction work of the third terminal.

আমরা গভীরভাবে শোকাহত

ইস্টার্ন ইউনিভার্সিটি পরিচালনা পর্ষদের প্রতিষ্ঠাতা সদস্য বিশিষ্ট শিল্পপতি ও সমাজসেবক প্রকৌশলী মো. রিয়াজত আলী বাচ্চু (৭৪) ইন্তেকাল করেছেন (ইয়া লিলাহি ওয়া ইল্লা ইলাইহি রাজিউন)। ভারতের সন্ন্যাসিদের অ্যাপোলো হাসপাতালে চিকিৎসাধীন অবস্থায় গত ২৫ ডিসেম্বর তিনি মারা যান। তিনি স্ত্রী, দুই ছেলে, এক মেয়েসহ অনেক আত্মীয়-স্বজন ও ভগ্নসাহী রেখে গেছেন। মো. রিয়াজত আলী বাচ্চু আউটরাইট গ্রুপ, আউটসোর্সিং স্পিনিং মিলস লিমিটেড ও আর. এ. স্পিনিং মিলস লিমিটেডের চেয়ারম্যান ছিলেন। এ ছাড়া, তিনি মোহাম্মদান ক্লাবের একনিষ্ঠ সংগঠক এবং অস্ট্রেলিয়ান ইস্টারন্যানাশাল স্কুলের পরিচালনা পরিষদের পরিচালক ছিলেন। আমরা শ্রদ্ধেয় মো. রিয়াজত আলী বাচ্চুর মৃত্যুতে গভীরভাবে শোকাহত। তার বিদেহী আত্মার মাগফিরাত কামনা করছি।

শেখ সাহিদুর রহমান
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