

PM FLIES TO MOSCOW TOMORROW Deals on defence purchase, nuclear power plant likely

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka and Moscow will ink several deals, including in the areas of defence purchase and setting up of a nuclear power plant, during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's four-day official visit to Russia beginning tomorrow.

The two countries will also ink a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on its second phase loan deal.

The prime minister will fly to Moscow by a special flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines at 9:00am tomorrow.

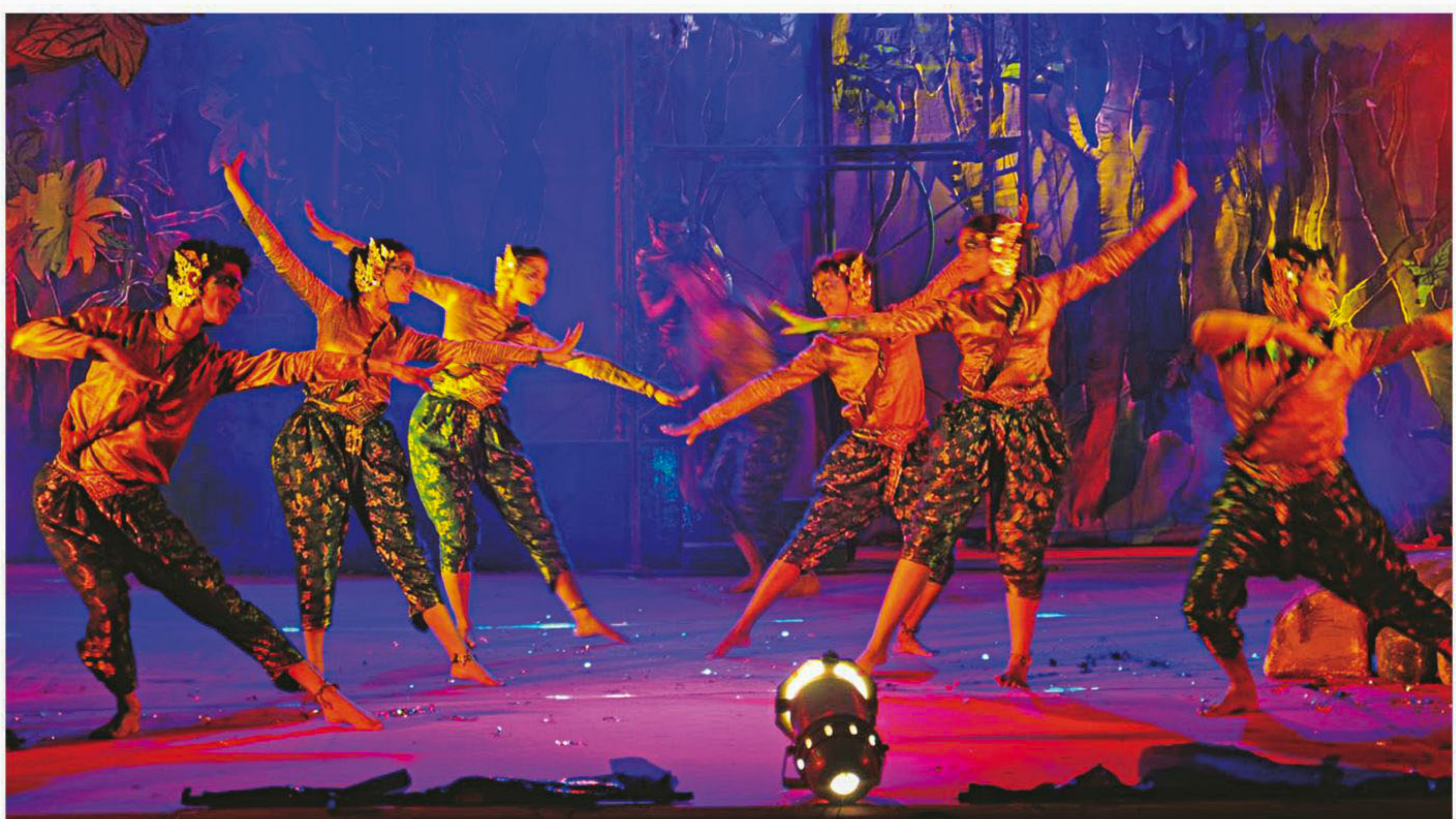
During the visit, Hasina will be accompanied by a high powered delegation, including Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and State Minister for Science and Technology Yeafesh Osman and other senior civil and military officials.

On Tuesday, she will hold talks with Russian President Vladimir V Putin at his Kremlin office which will be followed by signing of deals, likely in the areas of education and culture.

On the day, she will also have meetings with Chairperson of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation Valentina I. Matvienko and Minister for Communication and Mass Media of the Russian Federation Nikolay Nikiforov.

On Wednesday, the prime minister will address the faculty members and students of Moscow State University. The theme of the speech will be "Contemporary Bangladesh-perspectives for Collaboration with Russia".

Later, she will have a meeting with General Director for State Atomic Energy Corporation 'ROSATOM' of the Russian Federation Sergey Kirienko.



Artists of Sadhona perform Rabindranath Tagore's dance-drama "Mayar Khela" on the DC Hill premises in Chittagong city yesterday during the "Celebrating Life 2012" programme, jointly organised by The Daily Star and Standard Chartered Bank. PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka's first bus map in the making

ANJA BURRI

There is good news for the not less than 5 million bus passengers in Dhaka: The city's first bus map is in the making to ease their daily journeys through the labyrinthine bus system.

A group of four American researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and volunteers from the Bangladeshi start-up Kewkradong are currently collecting data for the map.

The map, scheduled to be prepared by the end of next May, will make the bus system more accessible for passengers by showing and providing information about the city's 59 bus routes.

Currently the drafts of the map show different bus routes marked by different coloured lines and similar coloured signs to show the map user where and when a certain bus stops.

"Even people who do not know how to read should be able to use it," Elizabeth Resor, one of the researchers,

when people have to pay for it.

Another way could be to make large copies and post them at spots like food stands where public gatherings take place. It could also be published in newspapers. For smartphone users there will be an app available.

As part of the project to develop the map, the researchers are thinking about installing bus stop signs in the city.

Initially a master's thesis of two researchers, the revolutionary project is surprisingly operating on a small budget.

The researchers, the cooperating MIT social venture Urban Launchpad and Kewkradong work almost for free or through MIT's support. Their office is a hidden, small and unpretentious room near New Market area.

The American researchers' journey to Dhaka was paid by the worldwide internet-community. "We have collected money on the crowdsourcing-platform kickstarter.com," explained one of the researchers, Kuan Butts,



Elizabeth Resor, left, and Kuan Butts, two researchers from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, hold drafts of Dhaka city's first bus map in their office near New Market area in the capital. The duo and two other researchers from the institute, Albert Ching and Stephen Kennedy, are currently preparing the map. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: ANJA BURRI

told The Daily Star recently.

But how can you get information about a complex and instable bus system where rarely a bus stops regularly at the same place and people jump aboard moving vehicles?

The researchers found a way by developing an application for smartphones.

Since January 4, a flock of 15 volunteers - armed with smartphones - have been going by the bus stops on the 59 routes.

For two weeks they will be recording different data, including the number of times each public or private bus makes a stop and the number of passengers that get on and off. Furthermore, the volunteers will collect people's opinion about the bus service.

All these information will then be fed into the application and the printed version of the map.

The researchers are still reflecting on how to reach the map to the masses. One way, they think, is to make it available at a small price. The researchers believe that their work is more valued

recently.

During the 30 day-period when the fund was open for donations, almost 500 deposits were made bringing in a total of more than US\$ 14,000.

The researchers are thinking beyond the adoption of the map in Dhaka.

"This model could be adapted and deployed in other cities that rely on informal bus transport and have to be scrappy about their limited resources," the researchers Albert Ching and Stephen Kennedy, the two initiators of the project, wrote on kickstarter.com.

The project does not stop once the map is completed, say the researchers. All the collected data will be made available for everyone to use and for bus riders, operators and the city to visualise into other important insights.

The bus companies of Dhaka and the government authorities have not been officially informed about the map-project though. The researchers emphasised that they want to finish their work first.

'Bikash demands extortion from Krishnakoli'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A caller identifying himself as top listed criminal Bikash Kumar Biswas allegedly demanded Tk two lakh as extortion from popular singer Krishnakoli Islam around 12:00pm yesterday.

Talking to The Daily Star, Krishnakoli said, "One man first identified himself as Didar and said his boss Bikash would talk to me. Then another man, identifying himself as Bikash, demanded Tk two lakh.

"Bikash said he needed Tk two crore and had prepared a list of 25 people from whom to realise the amount. He had asked me not to make it public. The man also told me to arrange the amount within an hour but afterwards I received no such call."

Officer-in-Charge Sirajul Islam of Shahbagh Police Station, with which Krishnakoli filed a general diary in this connection, said they were trying to locate the caller.

Bikash, arrested in 1997, was freed secretly on December 14, 2012 after serving 15 years in jail in connection with several murder cases, raising debates across the country and even in the government.

THE DAILY STAR-STANDARD CHARTERED CELEBRATING LIFE Cultural soiree thrills port city people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The "Celebrating Life" gala event, jointly organised by The Daily Star and Standard Chartered Bank Ltd, was held amid the natural beauty of DC Hill in Chittagong city yesterday.

Braving the cold, hundreds of people came to witness the programme and were left enthralled by the evening's cultural extravaganza.

The highlight of the evening was Rabindranath Tagore's dance drama "Mayar Khela," which was performed by the dance artistes of Sadhona, a cultural troupe of Dhaka, under the direction of Lubna Marium.

The gala event was organised as part of the "Celebrating Life 2012" programme of The Daily Star and Standard Chartered Bank.

Welcoming the audience, Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, managing editor of The Daily Star, said the daily plans to conduct different socio-cultural programmes in Chittagong to reach out to its people.

Rashidul Huda, director of Standard Chartered Bank, said success comes not only through business activities, but cultural activities also play a vital role behind it.

Abul Momen, resident editor of the daily Prothom Alo, said Rabindranath Tagore played a significant role in creating a modern civic lifestyle in the sub-continent through his writings, songs, lyrics, and dramas.

Sadhona's artistes also performed group dance performances to the songs "Ore aay aay" and "Shono surya er samne danrale," which were composed on the award-winning lyrics of the "Celebrating Life 2012" talent hunt.

Appreciating the event, cultural activists and spectators at the programme said they were enthralled by the unique staging of the Tagore's dance drama in an open auditorium under the sky.

"Celebrating Life" is a platform inviting young and gifted filmmakers, lyricists and photographers from across the country to express their creativity and talent.

No food scarcity in Bangladesh Says Hasan Mahmud

CU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has solved its food scarcity problem, said Environment and Forests Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday.

"We don't have food scarcity now, but the food preservation methods used in our country are not healthy and there are malpractices here for which our people are suffering from deadly diseases," he said.

The minister made the remark while inaugurating a two-day conference titled "Biochemistry and Molecular Biology for Better Health, Environment and Food Security" held at the business faculty auditorium of Chittagong University (CU).

The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of CU and Bangladesh Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (BSBMB) organised the event with CU Pro Vice Chancellor Md Alauddin in the chair. CU VC Anwarul Azim Arif and BSBMB President Sayid Salehin Kaderi also attended it.

US professor meets DU VC

BSS, Dhaka

Professor Joe Foote, Dean and Edward L Gaylord Chair of the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Oklahoma, USA met Dhaka University (DU) Vice-Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique yesterday at DU.

They discussed matters of mutual interest specially possibilities of undertaking joint collaborative academic programmes between the DU television and film department and the Gaylord college of journalism.

Canadian student dies as train hits her

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

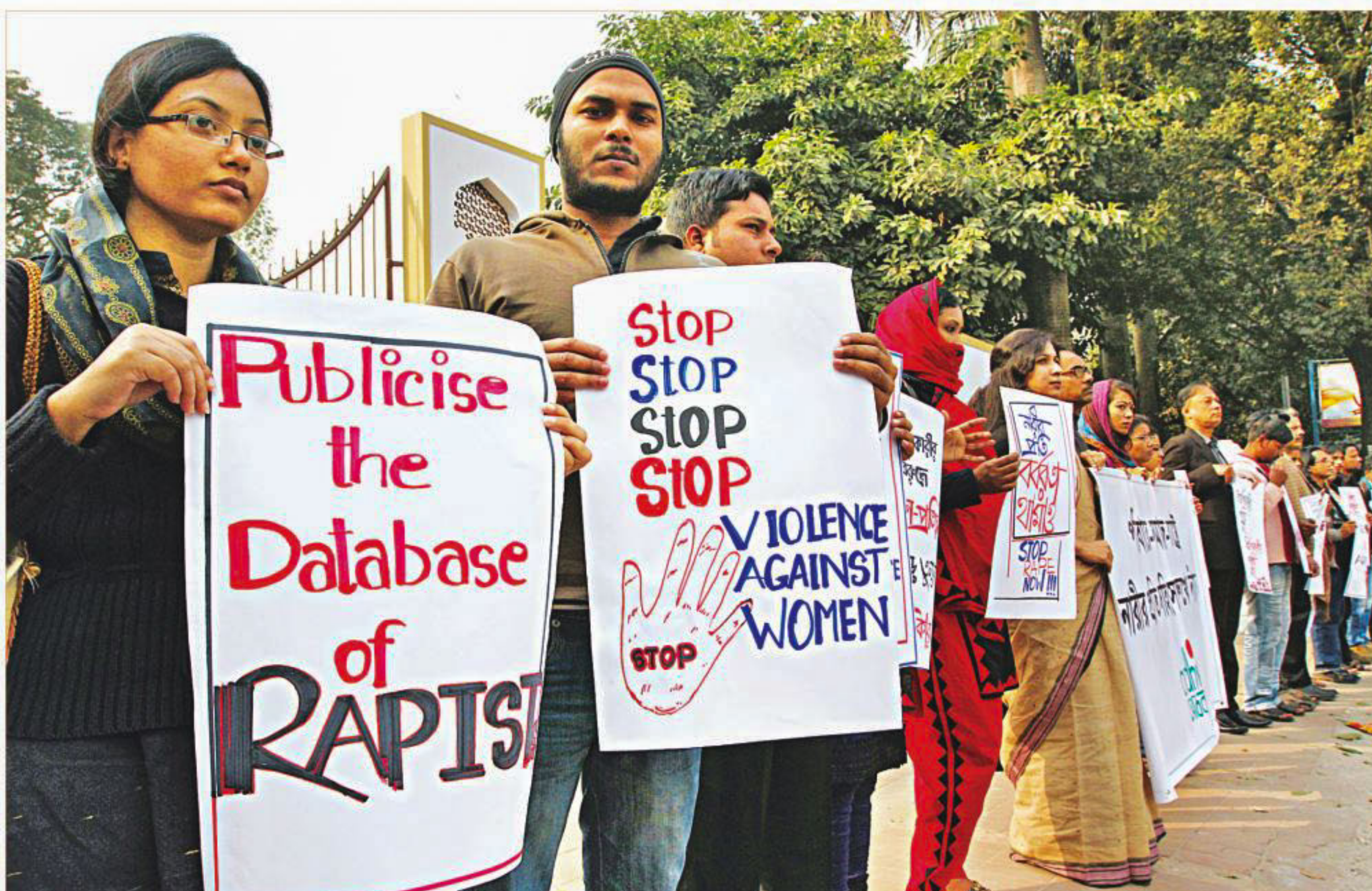
A Canadian female student died after being hit by a train near Cantonment Railway Station in the capital last night.

The deceased Mungerina Arabin Jerin, 22, came to Bangladesh in 2012 and got enrolled in Uttara Women's Medical College (UWMC), the victim's uncle, Abu Bakar Siddique, told The Daily Star.

"She (Jerin) went for a walk with a friend, Mohiuddin Sharan, at the Cantonment Railway Station area behind Hotel Radisson around 6:30pm. Sharan took her to a nearby hospital after the accident," said Abu Bakar.

The critically injured Jerin was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared her dead. She was residing in the UWMC hostel while her Bangladeshi parents and family members reside in Canada.

Officer-in-Charge Sirajul Islam of Shahbagh Police Station said Mohiuddin was being questioned to unearth what happened during the incident.



Human rights organisation Odhikar forms a human chain before the National Eidgah in the capital yesterday demanding that the government make public the database on rapists. PHOTO: STAR