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Sudden rise in arrests

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and JAMIL MAHMUD

In the winter chill, Nur-e-Alam was waiting outside the Shahbagh Police Station early Tuesday. He had been hanging around there for the second straight night trying to get his cousin released from detention. Police picked up Alam's cousin during a clash between the ruling Awami League men and pro-BNP lawyers on the Supreme Court premises on Sunday afternoon. A few more relatives of other detainees also gathered there. But the situation outside the police station was more chaotic on Sunday night as around 50 people waited there to get their dear ones freed. The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) made "wholesale arrests" on Saturday and Sunday suspecting that some people might carry out subversive activities during the opposition's "March for democracy" programme, complained relatives of detainees. Over 60 people were in the custody of Shahbagh police on Sunday night. Of them, Masum Hawlader, 26, was lucky enough to walk free around 12:30am Monday. Police had detained him on Sunday morning before the Jatiya Press Club. "Throughout the day, I couldn't manage anything to eat, except for dry bread. I'm very hungry now," mentioned Masum, a hardware painter. He along with around 10 to 12 other detainees had to stay in the corridor of the police station for several hours as there was no space left in the lock-ups. "I was scared of what might happen as other detainees told me that I might be jailed for several months," said a relieved Masum. Requesting anonymity, a DMP official said its 49 police stations produced 1,420 detainees before courts from December 25 to 31, though they rounded up nearly four times more.

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PHOTO: FILE

Family members of people arrested in law enforcers' drives through the Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station. The photo was taken on Saturday.

Burn unit in tight spot

Accommodates all patients, but fails to ensure proper care

ZYMA ISLAM

The DMCH burn unit has had its doors open to all arson victims, but it might have been able to prevent a few deaths if it were not for a lack of space, inadequate equipment and staff negligence.

Shahjahan Mia, 30, a burn victim who died on December 27, had developed a deadly infection in his lungs after breathing fumes, said the burn unit's Resident Surgeon Partha Shankar Pal.

He had only 31 percent burns. By the time he died, the condition of his breathing tract had become so bad that each gulp of air was a stab of pain -- he cried out every time he breathed.

Similarly, twenty-six-year-old Al-

Amin died in the High Dependency Unit on December 18 with only 26 percent burns, mainly because of infection he acquired from other patients very close to him.

Al-Amin may have had a chance at life if the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) authorities had kept him in isolation, added Pal.

"The flames had flayed Al-Amin's skin and left him exposed to infection. Yet he had to be kept beside other patients because there were too many of them."

His infection went out of control to such an extent that he developed a resistance to antibiotics.

Samanto Lal Sen, veteran burn expert at the unit, told The Daily Star

that the High Dependency Unit (HDU) needs to be a completely isolated ward.

According to DMCH sources, the wards are forced to let family and caregivers in because there are not enough nurses to take care of so many patients.

"Only three nurses take care of the twenty patients in the HDU and the others who had to be kept in the corridor because the beds were not enough," said Partha Shankar Pal.

Even the ICU has only one ward boy to attend to the patients.

Around 70 staff are yet to be on the payroll since the burn unit is still running as a government project, said Samanto Lal.

FORMING GOVT AFTER POLLS

AL wants to make it early

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The ruling Awami League is looking for a way to form the government immediately after the 10th parliamentary polls when a constitutional provision does not permit it to do so before January 25.

The AL wants to do this since the polls-time government cannot perform in full-swing, sources in the party told The Daily Star.

A number of ruling party leaders and some senior officials of the government discussed the issue on Tuesday at a meeting at the residence of former law minister Shafique Ahmed, now adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The meeting was also attended by Hasina's former advisers HT Imam and Mashur Rahman, Law Secretary Shahidul Haque and Attorney General Mahbubey Alam.

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Confined or not?

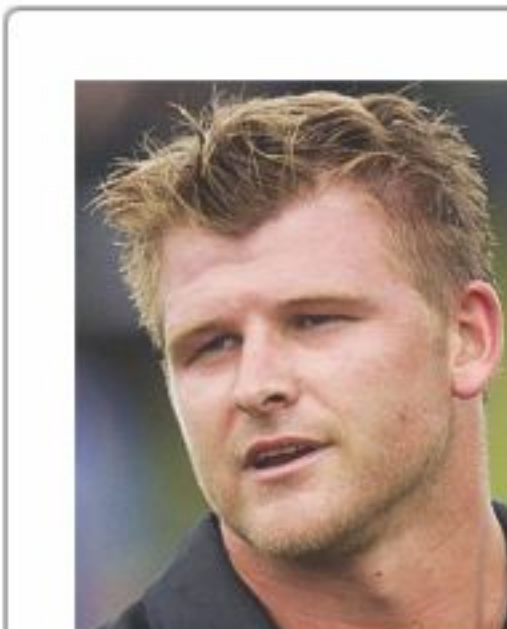
BNP leaders, ministers differ on Khaleda's status

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As criticism poured in over placing the BNP chairperson under virtual house arrest, the environment and information ministers yesterday insisted that the opposition leader was not under such conditions. "Khaleda Zia has kept herself confined in her house," Environment Minister Hasan Mahmud said while talking to reporters at his Secretariat office.

He ruled out BNP leaders' claim that the party

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Anderson hammers fastest ton

REUTERS, Queenstown

New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson scored the quickest century ever in international cricket on Wednesday, taking

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PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Police escort electoral materials for the January-5 elections to upazilas concerned. The photo was taken outside the gym of MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong city yesterday.

Campaign ends tomorrow morning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has put a ban on campaigning for the 10th parliamentary polls from 8:00am tomorrow, making today the last day for the MP-aspirants to campaign.

In a circular yesterday, the EC said the embargo would be in place in the electoral areas only till 4:00pm on Tuesday.

According to the electoral code of conduct, the candidates will have to conclude their electioneering 48 hours before the voting time, the circular stated.

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Conspiracies on to thwart polls

PM urges people to resist the attempt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said different quarters are conspiring to thwart the January 5 elections that are important for continuing the constitutional process in the country.

"The conspirators of 1/11 of 2007 are back with multifaceted plots and schemes to foil the upcoming elections and bring undemocratic forces to power," she told an election rally at Mirpur Adarsha High School ground in the capital.

The address by Hasina comes three days before the national polls boycotted by the majority of political parties, including the main opposition BNP.

Saying the elections would be held in a free, fair and neutral manner, the AL president urged people to exercise their democratic right to vote, and resist those who try to foil the elections.

শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন

মানিকগঞ্জ জেলার কৃতি সন্তান জনাব বি.বি. সাহা রায়, ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক ও প্রধান নির্বাহী কর্মকর্তা, এলিট পেইন্ট এন্ড কেমিক্যাল ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ লিমিটেড এবং পরিচালক এবি ব্যাংক লিঃ, ২০১৪ সালের জন্য বাংলাদেশ পেইন্ট ম্যানুফ্যাকচারার্স এসোসিয়েশন (বিপিএমএ)-এর সভাপতি নির্বাচিত হওয়ায় মানিকগঞ্জ বাসীর পক্ষ থেকে জানাচ্ছি আন্তরিক শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন।
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