

Early rush as seats

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dormitories increased to 23 from 16. However, the number of seats in the library has increased to 1,100 from 700.

According to library officials, the central library can now seat only 1,100 students while the capacity of science library building is 400. This means one out of 25 current students can get access to these.

Moreover, as there is no checking at the entrance, non students and outsiders can also get into the library to take preparation for exams like Bangladesh Civil Services examinations or for other jobs, deepening the space crisis and depriving the regular students.

"Former students and outsiders often keep seats occupied," alleged Arifuzzaman, a third-year student of Institute of Education and Research.

Noor Alam, a freshman at the anthropology department, said, "We have to struggle during exam times, as it is hard to get a seat at the central library. I along with my 25 friends live in the 'gono room' [common room of a dorm where freshmen are crammed into] at Shahid Sergeant Johurul Haque Hall where it is almost impossible to study."

Although there are one or two reading rooms in every residential dormitory of DU, students prefer going to the central library due to the better atmosphere.

Shamsuzzoha Mridha, a student of Arabic studies and a resident of Sir AF Rahman Hall, told this correspondent that they suffer a lot as the dormitory lacks suitable atmosphere for studying and the seats in the reading room are also limited.

"There are not enough lights and fans at the reading room and the library in our dormitory. That's why we want to study in the air-conditioned central library," said Farhad Uddin, another student of Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall.

Mohammad Sayed graduated from Pali and Buddhist Studies department recently but visits the library regularly. "I come here with some of my friends to prepare for job tests. We have breakfast and lunch on campus and keep our books on the seats so that others can know that those are occupied. We can study here soundly which is not possible in our mess at Kathalagan."

During a visit to the library late last month, this correspondent saw that most of people there were studying books on job exams they had brought with them. Besides, such guide books were kept on the vacant seats so that others could not use them.

Contacted, librarian Prof SM Zayed Ahmed admitted that there was a shortage of seats in the library and said another building was needed to resolve the crisis. "The central library building is a heritage and it cannot be expanded vertically," he said, adding that 400 seats have been added to the library in the last two years and another 200 new seats will be added this year.

About the access of irregular and former students, he said, "Some DU students come here with their friends of other institutions. Some bring fake IDs. We will introduce digital ID cards by December after which only the regular students will get access."

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique also acknowledged the accommodation problem.

"It needs a huge amount of money to construct another build-

ing and there is also a lack of space to build that. Digitisation process of the library is going on so that students can read books from their dormitory."

The library that began its journey simultaneously with the Dhaka University in 1921 has 6,74,538 books and magazines. Besides, it has 30,000 rare manuscripts and a large number of booklets, leaflets, pamphlets, and puthis which are preserved in microfilms along with some rare books and documents.

Lightning kills

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Sahed Sohagh, 21, a computer science student at Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, and Noman Hasan Lincoln, 21, a computer engineering student at Mohakhali Polytechnic Institute, died on the spot.

Eight people, including two school students, were killed after being struck by thunderbolts in Sujanagar, Chatmahar and Faridpur upazilas of Pabna.

The dead were identified as Shahid Sarder, 58, of Dakkhin Char village, Hira, 13, son of Yusuf Sheikh of Sonatola village and a class-VII student of Boalia High School, Moyan Sarder, 65, of Bagholpur union, and his grandchild Bagholpur High School student Shikha Khatun, 13, of Sujanagar upazila; Fazlur Rahman, 40, and Fakir Uddin, 70, of Daudkandi village in Chatmahar upazila; and Mosharrif Hossain, 38, and Ajrat Ali of Demra village in Faridpur.

Five people, including a woman and a child, were killed in Ullapara and Raiganj upazilas of Sirajganj. The deceased were identified as Abdul Latif, 30, of Simla village, and Shahinur, 26, of Betua village in Ullapara; Nupur, 8, and Motaleb, 42, of Chakpur village, and Anwar Hossain, 35, a madrasa teacher and resident of Bejgati village in Raiganj upazila.

In Rajshahi, five people were killed and four others injured by lightning strikes in Mohanpur, Durgapur and Godagari upazilas. The dead are Abdur Razzak, 28, son of Shamsuddin of Ata Narayanpur village, Abdul Aziz, 50, of Hattoir village, and Sri Soito Chandra, 30, of Ghashigram village in Mohanpur; Laily Begum, 40, of Gushira village in Godagari; and Morzina Begum, 40, of Palsha Khamarupara in Durgapur.

Four people were killed in the same fashion in Kishoreganj. They are Shariful Islam Shuvo, 18, a 1st-year student of Hossainpur Degree College, Mamata Begum, 40, of Ishapshar village in Tarail upazila; Rojia Khatun, 56, of Koikuri village of Bajitpur upazila; and Swapan, 17, son of Bahar Nagar village.

A housewife, Rubina Akhter, and a day labourer, Sattar Ali, 26, were killed in Targaon and Uttar Khamer areas of Kapasia upazila of Gazipur. Lightning left two siblings -- Anwar Hossain, 37, and Ariful Islam, 25, sons of Hadu Sarker -- dead in Betgari village of Sherpur upazila in Bogra.

In Natore, Mobarak Hossain of Raghunathpur village and Sahara Banu of Uttar Lalpur in Lalpur upazila were killed and two other injured by lightning strikes. Josna Begum, wife of Musa Miah, died after being hit by lightning in Fakirer char area of Raipura upazila in Narsingdi.

Lovely Begum, 35, wife of Alam Hossain, died in the same manner in Fulerghat village at Kishoreganj upazila in Nilphamari.



Bangladeshi-origin Nadia becomes Camden mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi-origin Labour Party councillor Nadia Shah has been appointed as the new mayor of Camden, UK.

Nadia, the first Bangladeshi-origin female mayor in any city in the UK, was officially given the charge at a ceremony in Town Hall on Wednesday night.

She represents Regent's Park ward of Camden where Tulip Rizwana Siddiq was a councillor before becoming MP last year. Nadia was born and raised in Camden.

Her ancestral home is in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar.

Juvenile hotel

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then shifted to Jessore Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

Munna's body bore several injury marks, said doctors of Jessore Medical College Hospital. Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not contact Abu Taleb as his phone was found switched-off.

Apurbo Hasan, officer-in-charge of the Benapole port police station, said victim's father yesterday filed a case against the hotel owner, his wife and son in this connection.

Police already arrested hotel owner's wife and son, said the police official.

The hotel owner went into hiding, the OC added.

Shudhir

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Seychelles company, since its incorporation on June 24 of the same year. However, The Daily Star in a report published on May 11 mistakenly identified Mullick as a former commissioner of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

Actually, the former BTRC commissioner is Mallick Sudhir Chandra. In a statement, he yesterday said details given about him in The Daily Star were "false and fabricated".

"The false and fabricated news seriously harms my reputation," he said in the statement.

The Daily Star regrets the mistake. The Indian Express also wrote that Best Concept Group Ltd (Seychelles), according to records, is the holding company of Alta Vista Fashions Limited, a Hong Kong company, and its principal place of business is Dhaka, Bangladesh. The accounting records for Eco-Ocean Group Ltd (Seychelles) are kept in Hong Kong.

According to his parents in Delhi's Janakpuri, Mullick is based in Dhaka where he operates an apparel and fashion business. He owns Alta Vista Ltd (www.avl-bd.com), which was set up in 2012 in Bangladesh.

According to its website, Alta Vista also has offices in New York (AVL Fashions Inc) and in New Delhi's Okhla (OSR Textiles Resources).

Turkey envoy asked to report

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Later, diplomatic sources in Bangladesh told The Daily Star that the ambassador left Dhaka on a flight of Turkish Airlines for Ankara in the evening.

The Turkish move came a day after Pakistan's national parliament passed a resolution of condemnation over the same issue.

It also coincided with Pakistan's summoning of Bangladesh high commissioner in Islamabad yesterday for lodging its protest against the hanging of Nizami.

Though news agencies Reuters and AFP reported that Turkey has withdrawn or recalled its ambassador from Bangladesh, the state minister for foreign affairs said that the envoy informed the foreign ministry before leaving for Ankara and this is usual.

Recalling the ambassador is a formal way of protest in diplomacy. It is more serious than summoning the ambassador of a country and less serious than suspending diplomatic relations, according to some former diplomats.

With modern means of communication available, they said, it has few practical consequences or utility, but it is still indicative of a serious strain on bilateral relations.

"When a country is extremely displeased at a certain policy or action of another country, the former withdraws its ambassador from the latter to express its displeasure," said a former diplomat wishing anonymity.

Before taking such action, a country usually informs the host country about it. In retaliation, the host country may recall its ambassador from the other one, he added.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, however, said the report that the "envoy has been withdrawn" is not true and Turkey has not informed Bangladesh about anything of this sort.

"We have no information, officially or unofficially, on this matter. Our embassy in Ankara has also not received anything from the Turkish government," he told The Daily Star.

However, he added, the Turkish ambassador handed a letter to the foreign ministry, stating that he was going outside Bangladesh for a few days and informed the ministry who would be in charge in his absence.

"This is a usual practice by diplomats. They inform the host country whenever they go out of the country for vacation or any other reasons," he added.

Asked if the decision of the Turkish government will have any impact on Dhaka-Ankara relations, Shahriar said, "I don't think so. I don't think there will be any impact on the existing excellent bilateral relations between the two countries."

'NIZAMI HAS NO EARTHLY SIN'

Immediately after Nizami's hanging in the early hours of Wednesday, Erdogan voiced his concern while protests were staged in the Turkish capital Ankara and Istanbul against the execution.

"I condemn the mentality that sentences to death a mujahid, who is over the age of 70 and who we believe has no earthly sin," said Erdogan after the execution of Nizami.

"I think that such proliferation of hatred there, and the ordering of such death sentences despite our repeated initiatives, is neither fair governance nor a democratic mentality."

Erdogan's description of Nizami is not backed by historical facts.

Nizami was the chief of Al Badr, a brutal paramilitary force that assisted Pakistan army and, in the process, participated in genocide during the nine-month war in 1971.

He was sentenced to death by Bangladesh court for the killings of intellectuals, murder of 450 civilians and rape in Bausgari and Demra, Killings of 52 people in Dhulauri, killings of 10 people and the rape of three women in Karamja in Pabna.

He was also sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of involvement in the killing of Karim Uddin and two others, and Sohrab Ali in Pabna, and torture and killing at the Mohammedpur Physical Training Centre in Dhaka.

EFFORTS TO SAVE JAMAAT LEADERS Since the beginning of the trials of top Jamaat leaders, including Ghulam Azam, Nizami, Ali Ahsan Mojaheed and Abdul Quader Mollah, Turkey has been making various efforts to save them.

"We have in the last three years repeatedly called upon the leaders of Bangladesh at the highest level to suspend the execution of death sentences," Turkish foreign ministry said on Wednesday.

"We strongly condemn the execution, since we do not believe that Nizami deserved such a punishment."

It said Turkey believes that the injuries of the past cannot be healed through such methods and "on the contrary, they will incite hatred and enmity among our Bangladeshi brothers".

Erdogan's predecessor Abdullah Gul in December 2012 also sent a letter to then Bangladesh President Zillur Rahman, requesting him not to pursue the trial of war criminals. Gul requested clemency for former Jamaat chief Ghulam Azam and the other accused.

His letter intensified tensions between the two countries as Ankara summoned Bangladesh ambassador to Turkey a day after Dhaka summoned Turkish ambassador in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh foreign ministry stated

that the letter from Turkish president is "not acceptable" and it is a "clear interference" in the internal affairs of Bangladesh.

Besides, a visit of a 14-member delegation of Turkish NGO Cansuyu Aid and Solidarity Association from December 20 to 24 hiding their identity and misusing "on arrival visa" facilities and its inappropriate activities also made Dhaka unhappy.

Some foreign ministry officials then said the government could have sent back the NGO delegation but it refrained from doing so considering the excellent bilateral ties with Turkey.

They also said the Turkish envoy had violated certain diplomatic norms and he could be expelled as he did not give prior information to the government about arrival of the delegation and subsequently he concealed information about its programmes and schedules.

The ambassador did not inform the foreign ministry about the delegation's meeting with leaders of the BNP and Jamaat and others as well as its visit to the international crimes tribunal set up to try those accused of crimes against humanity.

The foreign ministry summoned the Turkish envoy and asked him to explain the NGO team's visit without informing the government.

80pc of world's city dwellers breathe bad air: UN

AFP, Geneva

Over 80 percent of the world's city dwellers breathe poor quality air, increasing their risk of lung cancer and other life-threatening diseases, a new World Health Organization (WHO) report warned yesterday.

Urban residents in poor countries are by far the worst affected, WHO said, noting that nearly every city (98 percent) in low- and middle-income countries has air which fails to meet the UN body's standards.

That number falls to 56 percent of cities in wealthier countries.

"Urban air pollution continues to rise at an alarming rate, wreaking havoc on human health," Maria Neira, the head of WHO's department of public health and environment, said in a statement.

The UN agency's latest air pollution database reveals an overall deterioration of air in the planet's cities, and highlights the growing risk of serious health conditions also including stroke and asthma.

No hajj for Iranians this year

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"Their attitude was cold and inappropriate. They did not accept our proposals concerning the issuing of visas or the transport and security of the pilgrims."

"Saudi officials say our pilgrims must travel to another country to make their visa applications."

Iran wants Saudi Arabia to issue visas through the Swiss embassy in Tehran, which has looked after Saudi interests since Riyadh broke off ties in January following the ransacking of its diplomatic missions by protesters after it executed a leading Shia cleric.

Said Ohadi, head of the Iranian Hajj Organisation, said that Riyadh had also refused to lift a flight ban on Iranian airlines for the pilgrimage, which all capable Muslims are expected to perform at least once in their lifetime.

Another contentious issue has been security, after a massive stampede at last year's hajj killed more than 2,000 foreign pilgrims, including 464 Iranians.

Jannati's ministry of culture and Islamic guidance oversees Iran's hajj organisation which held the abortive negotiations in Saudi Arabia.

Iran and Saudi Arabia are at odds over a raft of regional issues, notably the conflicts in Syria and Yemen in which they support opposing sides.

"Unfortunately in Saudi Arabia there is a very hostile political climate towards Iran," Ohadi said.

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states have been staunch backers of Syrian rebel groups who have been fighting to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad since 2011.

Iran, with Russia, has been among

the regime's main supporters in the conflict that has killed more than 270,000 people.

Saudi Arabia is also leading an Arab military coalition fighting Iran-backed Huthi Shia rebels who have seized swathes of territory in Yemen.

The hajj had been a source of dispute even before last year's stampede.

In 1987, Saudi security forces suppressed an unauthorised protest by Iranian pilgrims, prompting a break in diplomatic relations that lasted until 1991.

The official death toll was more than 400, including 275 Iranians.

Iran suspended the lesser pilgrimage, umrah, which is undertaken throughout the year, in April 2015 after an alleged sexual assault on two teenage Iranian boys by Saudi police at Jeddah airport.

Pak amnesia intentional

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The foreign ministry's claim is factually incorrect because Pakistan did not have any constitution during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

The constitution promulgated by the government led by General Ayub Khan in 1962 was abrogated on March 25, 1969 by General Yahya Khan.

Ousting Ayub from power, Yahya grabbed state power. He declared martial law, making all other existing laws subservient to the martial law proclamations and orders.

Pakistan did not have any constitution until the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who grabbed power by ousting Yahya, promulgated a new one in 1973.

So how did Nizami uphold the Pakistan constitution which did not exist at all in 1971?

The Pakistani MPs, those who claimed that Nizami and other who were executed for committing war crimes did not violate the constitution of Pakistan by their activities, however, are correct in the sense that there was no constitution at that time.

But their claim that Nizami and others did not violate any law of Pakistan is false. It is because the Pakistan Penal Code of 1860 that existed then did not allow them to kill

and torture people and rape women.

Pakistan's foreign ministry and some of its MPs did not consider the fact to make the false claim.

They, however, proved by their actions, that they are grateful to Nizami for what he did in 1971 in support of Pakistani occupational army that carried out the heinous genocide on unarmed Bangalis.

Yes, Nizami upheld a law of Pakistan which was -- Razakar Ordinance of 1971. General Yahya's government promulgated the ordinance to raise Razakars as a paramilitary force that would assist the Pakistan army to annihilate freedom loving Bangalis.

Nizami was the chief of Al-Badr, the brutal killing squad mostly comprised of leaders and activists of Islami Chhatra Sangha, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami in 1971. Jamaat's secretary general Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, who was the second in command of Al-Badr and was executed in November last year for committing crimes against humanity.

Being chief of Al-Badr, Nizami worked to uphold the spirit of the Razakar Ordinance. In that case, Pakistan can now make the claim that what Nizami did in 1971 was to uphold the law of Pakistan.

The Al-Badr, as part of General Tikka Khan's scorched earth policy, made a list of intellectuals and picked them up around mid-December when they felt Pakistan was losing.

They shot and bayoneted the best minds of the country -- writers, teachers, editors, physicians and intellectuals on December 14, 1971 at Rayer Bazar and Mirpur.

Nizami was sentenced to death for masterminding the killings of intellectuals, murders of 450 civilians and rape in Bausgari and Demra, Killings of 52 people in Dhulauri, killings of 10 people and the rape of three women in Karamja in Pabna.

He was also sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of involvement in the killing of Kasim Uddin and two others, and Sohrab Ali in Pabna, and torture and killing at the Mohammedpur Physical Training Centre in Dhaka, the Al-Badr torture centre where many intellectuals were taken before being killed.

His second in command, Mojaheed was hanged for leading the killing of intellectuals and other atrocities.

The killings and atrocities carried out by Nizami, Mojaheed and their cohorts were no way to uphold the so called Pakistan constitution. But their works had pleased the Pakistani

generals in 1971 and those who still speak for them.

General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, who was chief of the Pakistani force in the then East Pakistan and led the genocide until the surrender in December 1971, lauded the Razakars for their performance.

Niazi dedicated his book "The Betrayal of East Pakistan," among others to these Razakars, who he thought, had fought valiantly for Pakistan.

The way the present Pakistan leadership are reacting to the war crimes trial in Bangladesh proves they still remain grateful to Nizami and other Razakars.

The Pakistan foreign ministry in its statement offered condolence to the bereaved family members and the followers of Nizami. It also termed the trial proceeding flawed.

The national parliament did something more. It offered fateha for Nizami.

All these actions by the Pakistan ruling class prove Nizami along with other Razakars did a great job for Pakistani army that carried out the massacre to thwart the birth of Bangladesh as an independent country.

Pakistan did not come out suddenly with its outrageous reactions on

Wednesday. It also reacted in the same manner to the execution of Mojaheed and BNP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury in November last year.

In a statement issued by its foreign ministry in last November, it denied committing any war crime or atrocities during the 1971 War of Independence. It also rejected what it called "baseless and unfounded assertions" of Bangladesh against Pakistan.

Pakistan is deliberately forgetting that its atrocities are all in black and white. There are thousands of Bangladeshis who have testified of the harrowing tales of genocide. There are hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis still living who carry the dark memories of the darkest hours in their lives.

The realities of its atrocities come out even in those Pakistani's own versions of the war. These are found in Pakistan's top military leaders' memoirs of the war as well as in the depositions of military officials to the Hamoodur Rahman Commission headed by the chief justice Hamoodur Rahman. The Pakistan government on 26 December, 1971 formed the commission to find out the reasons of defeat of the Pakistan army.

Pakistan remains consistent with its policy against the trial of war crimi-

nals. From the very beginning, it has sided with them.

After the end of the war, the Pakistan government made desperate efforts to block the trial of 195 Pakistani military officials for war crimes. To achieve this goal, then Pakistani government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto even threatened to block repatriation of 4 lakh Bangalis stranded in West Pakistan. He even requested China to use its veto power to deprive newly born Bangladesh of UN membership. His government also went to the International Court of Justice in The Hague with the request that India not have over 195 POWs to Bangladesh.

Some of its MPs on Wednesday urged the Pakistan government to raise the issue of trial of war criminals in the UN and to put pressure on Bangladesh. Their threat is a manifestation of Pakistan's old strategy.

All these however suggest Pakistan's present leadership are still following the legacy of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the then military juntas who were desperate to block the trial of war criminals and in so doing they are deliberately distorting history. It seems they are suffering from amnesia of sorts from some perverted sense of political expediency.