

# Cultural events capped on DC Hill

ARUN BIKASH DEY, City

The sudden decision of limiting the number of cultural programmes on the DC Hill premises by the Chittagong District Administration will impede smooth cultural practices in the port city, experts and locals opined.

However, no formal declaration has yet been made neither any notice has been issued regarding the decision. But, the authorities concerned have stopped giving permission to hold cultural programmes in DC Hill, a well-known cultural arena in the port city.

On September 23, Housing and Public Works Minister Engineer Mosharrif Hossain after joining a cleaning campaign there told journalists that different organisers dump rubbish on the premises during programmes and make the place dirty.

The minister on that day announced that only three programmes -- Pahela Baishakh, Rabindra Jayanti, and Nazrul Jayanti -- will be allowed on the spot.

Rubel Das Prince, chief coordinator

of Nabanna Utsab Udjapan Parishad 1424 Bangla, told The Daily Star that the CDA rejected the application of Shishumela, a cultural organisation of children, seeking permission to celebrate "Nabanna Utsab" there.

Later, the festival was held on a college ground in the city on November 14.

In last two years, the festival was held on the DC Hill premises, said Rubel, adding, "Had we held the programme on that spot, we could have drawn more audience."

Different cultural organisations and locals are observing various programmes, including forming human chains, protesting the decision.

Akbar Reza, president of theatre group Arindam Natya Sampraday, told The Daily Star that the DC Hill premises has enormous importance as it is located in the centre of the city and has an open stage.

The stage was built some 16 years ago by the then government and later, a gallery and two walkways were also

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Rohingya refugee Suruj Job, whose family says she is 105 years old, is seen inside a temporary shelter at the Balukhali refugee camp near Cox's Bazar, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Cease violence against civilians in Rakhine State

World organisations to Myanmar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep anguish and concern over escalation of violence in Rakhine State and the attacks against unarmed civilians, world organisations have urged Myanmar to prioritise protection of civilians in Rakhine State and address the roots of the conflict.

A joint statement signed by 114 civil society organisations, people's organisations and 32 individuals addressed to Myanmar and ASEAN called on Myanmar to cease violence against and abuses of unarmed civilians in Rakhine State.

They also urged the Myanmar government to prioritise immediate dialogue between Myanmar and other ASEAN members on Rohingya issue to seek a sustainable solution to the conflict and to address the continuous rights violations against the Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar.

There will be no end to the cycles of conflict and displacement in Rakhine

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# He got govt job

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Bluetooth ear pieces to people intending to cheat in freshmen exams. He had been doing this for the last five years and even while holding the post at the BKSP.

The CID officials learnt about Alip after arresting Mohiuddin Rana, an expelled assistant secretary of the BCL central committee, and Abdullah Al Mamun, theatre and debate affairs secretary of the BCL's Amar Ekushey Hall unit, on October 20. The CID filed a case in this regard with Shahbagh Police Station on that day.

The Daily Star learnt that Alip was given unusually high score in his viva-voce during recruitment, the process of which started in 2014.

This paper obtained a copy of the marks of the first 31 candidates who had been called in for the viva-voce. Of them, 28 showed up.

According to the copy, the highest scoring candidate got 43 out of 75 in the written test followed by two others scoring 40 each.

Alip only got 33. But in viva-voce tables had turned. The top scorer in the written test got 10 out of 25. None except Alip got more.

Alip was given 21 out of 25, which gave him a score one more than everybody else.

He eventually joined on January 6, 2016.

Several BKSP officials alleged that the seven-member selection committee led by the then director general was forced to give the job to Alip as he was a state minister's preferred candidate.

"The committee called in 31 candidates for interviews only to take Alip," a BKSP official said.

Requesting anonymity, a high official of BKSP and also a member of that selection committee, told The Daily Star, "The selection committee is actually insignificant and has nothing to do when the recruitment is finalised by the ministry of youth and sports."

"The files were sent to the ministry after the interview. The ministry approved the appointment and the

former director general just signed it."

Asked about Alip's viva-voce marks, the official said, "What can I say? I am just a government employee."

Contacted, Biren Sikder, state minister for youth and sports, refuted the allegations of him having anything to do with Alip's recruitment.

"I was not in the selection committee. I don't know anything about it. Please ask those who were in the committee," he added.

Contacted, Brig Gen Ali Murtaza Khan, former director general of BKSP and also the president of that selection committee, told The Daily Star that he could not recall the appointment.

"It was two to three years ago. I can't remember anything specific about the appointment. I have to see the files," Murtaza said.

On September 2, 2014, BKSP published the circular seeking application on different posts for coaches, doctor, researcher and admin.

The recruitments of around 35 coaches, teachers and officials at BKSP between 2011 and 2016 are under investigation by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). The ACC recently approved filing of cases against seven coaches.

Alip's recruitment is among those being investigated.

ABM Ruhul Azad, director (administration and finance) of BKSP, told The Daily Star that Alip was suspended following allegations of his involvement in the question-paper leak and for his absence at work.

According to the CID, Alip had several students of DU, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, and some involved in coaching centres in his gang.

After his involvement came to light, Alip went to BKSP on October 26 and sought leave. The leave was not granted.

Molla Nazrul Islam, special superintendent of CID, said, "The CID is trying to arrest him [Alip] and will not spare anyone who is accused in the case."

Alip could not be reached for comments.

# 6,700 Rohingyas killed in 1 month

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"Violence against children cannot be tolerated and cannot remain unpunished."

The figure is the highest estimated death toll yet of violence that erupted on August 25 and triggered a massive refugee crisis.

The group's findings come from six surveys of more than 11,426 people in Rohingya refugee camps and cover the first month after the crisis erupted.

Rohingya refugees have shocked the globe with consistent stories of security forces and ethnic Rakhine Buddhist mobs driving them out of their homes with bullets, rape and arson that reduced hundreds of villages to ash.

The UN and US have described the military operation as "ethnic cleansing" of the Muslim minority, but have not released specific death tolls. Last week, a top UN human rights official said last week that Myanmar's security forces may be guilty of genocide against the Rohingyas.

"SHOCKING NUMBERS" Gunshot wounds were the cause of death in 69 percent of the cases, according to the aid organisation.

Another nine percent were reported burned alive inside houses, while five percent died from fatal beatings.

For children under five, nearly 60 percent died after being shot, MSF found.

MSF said the peak in deaths coincided with the launch of "clearance operations" by the army and local militias in late August, and showed "that Rohingyas have been targeted".

Myanmar's government did not respond to a request for comment.

But it has consistently denied committing atrocities in Rakhine, saying the crackdown was a proportionate response to the Rohingya militants who attacked police posts on August 25, killing around a dozen officials.

Richard Horsey, an independent political analyst based in Yangon, said the MSF estimates were "quite shocking" and would "inevitably lead to a renewed focus internationally on the question of accountability".

Before the latest crisis, Bangladesh was already hosting hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas who fled previous waves of persecution.

"I think the MSF figure is an underestimate," Mohammad Zuabir, a Rohingya teacher and community leader who has been a refugee in Bangladesh for 25 years, told AFP.

"Almost every Rohingya family has one or multiple members killed in the violence. When people fled their villages in Rakhine, they saw roads and homes littered with dead bodies," he added.

[From AFP, Reuters]

# Naypyitaw, Dhaka miss deadline

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"We have completed the preliminary work for setting up the body. A Myanmar delegation will arrive in Dhaka on Tuesday to take forward the process of forming the Joint Working Group," a senior foreign ministry official said.

The two sides would meet in Dhaka on Tuesday and an agreement on the Rohingyas' repatriation would be reached in a "speedy manner", the official added.

Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque and Permanent Secretary of the Myanmar foreign ministry Myint Thu will lead their respective delegations to the meeting.

The 24-member JWG is likely to be composed of officials from home and foreign ministries of the two countries.

According to the November 23 agreement, the return of the Rohingyas should start within two months.

More than 647,000 Rohingyas have crossed into Bangladesh since August 25, escaping a military crackdown in Rakhine.

Rohingyas will have to fill in forms with names of family members, addresses in Myanmar, birth date and sign a statement of voluntary return. The requirements for identification documents have been a contentious issue for the stateless Rohingyas.

UN bodies and rights groups have voiced concern over the "premature" repatriation process. They raised ques-

tions about the safety and resettlement of the returnees as hundreds of their villages have been razed and an anti-Muslim sentiment is in existence in Rakhine.

However, foreign ministry officials in Dhaka told The Daily Star that Bangladesh and Myanmar agreed to take help from the UNHCR in the repatriation process.

"The signing of the arrangement in Myanmar was an initial step... there are more steps to go," they said, adding that the JWG would soon finalise the terms and conditions of the bilateral arrangement.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has conveyed to the United Nations that a Joint Working Group will be formed soon.

Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, permanent representative of Bangladesh to the UN, said this at a recent meeting of the UN Security Council in New York on the situation in Myanmar.

Momen said Bangladesh continues to receive fresh arrivals of the Rohingyas, with an average of 100-400 people entering the country daily.

He said it appeared that the situation in Rakhine was still volatile. He expressed concern over recurrent reports of arson in Rohingya localities in northern and central Rakhine.

The envoy said the bilateral arrangement's mandate was only limited to the possible voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas, whereas the root causes

and other related questions and issues would have to be addressed by Myanmar.

The Third Committee of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on "Situation of human rights in Myanmar" on November 16 by an open vote.

The resolution will be placed before the General Assembly Plenary for final adoption soon.

Besides, a special session of the UN Human Rights Council was convened in Geneva on December 5 where another resolution was adopted on the human rights situation in Myanmar.

ENVOYS TO VISIT ROHINGYA CAMPS

Around 19 ambassadors and high commissioners, based in New Delhi and concurrently accredited to Bangladesh, will arrive in Dhaka today to hold talks with the government and visit Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

Diplomatic sources said the envoys from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Georgia, Greece, Mauritius, Portugal, Slovenia, Ukraine, Zambia, Nigeria, Austria, Ghana, New Zealand, Kenya and Fiji are coming to Bangladesh at the invitation of the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi.

The diplomats will hold a meeting with the Bangladesh foreign secretary and other top government officials. They will travel to Cox's Bazar on December 16.

# Jubo League expels land minister's son

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Wednesday afternoon," Abu Mohammad Nasim Pavel, organising secretary of the Awami League's youth front, told The Daily Star.

Tomal, who held the post of Ishwardi upazila Jubo League president, was sent to Pabna jail on Wednesday by a local court on charges of attacking four journalists in the upazila over two weeks ago.

Armed with sticks, he along with around 30 of his supporters attacked the journalists in Shahpur Natunhat area on November 29, a day before Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's arrival here to inaugurate the main construc-

tion work of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

Saikat Afroz Asad, Pabna correspondent of Somoy TV; Rizvi Joy, local correspondent of ATN News and its cameraperson Milon Hossain; and DBC News correspondent Partho Hasan came under attack when they were capturing videos of Tomal's men vandalising some vehicles of his rivals. The attackers also snatched laptops, mobile phones and cameras from the newsmen.

The attack left the four journalists injured. Two of them were admitted to a Pabna hospital.

Partho later that day filed a case with Ishwardi Police Station accusing Tomal,

upazila Jubo League General Secretary Rajib Sarkar and 30 other unnamed people of carrying out the attack.

The son of Land Minister Shamsur Rahman Sherif went into hiding after the incident. On Wednesday, he appeared before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court and sought bail. But the court rejected his bail prayer and sent him to jail.

Tomal faces several other criminal cases. On May 19, he along with 10 of his cadres was picked up by police on charges of attacking a freedom fighter's house in the upazila and looting valuables from there.

Later, he was released on bail.

# Israel closes

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condemned Trump's move and called on the world to respond by recognising East Jerusalem, captured by Israel along with the West Bank in a 1967 war, as the capital of Palestine.

Trump's declaration has been applauded by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a recognition of political reality and Jews' biblical links to Jerusalem, a city that is also holy to Muslims and Christians.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister yesterday said the US administration is serious about getting a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians, but its proposed plan is still being put together.

Trump's adviser and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, is leading efforts to restart negotiations, though his bid has shown little public progress so far.

"We believe the Trump administration is serious about bringing peace between Israelis and Arabs," Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, a former ambassador to the United States, told France 24 television late on Wednesday.

"They were working on ideas and were consulting with all parties, including Saudi Arabia, and they are incorporating the views represented to them by everybody. They have said they would need a little bit of time to put it together to present it."

Trump's decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel overturned decades of US policy and ignored international consensus that the city's status should be decided only in a future peace agreement.

Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its capital, including the eastern part which

it annexed after capturing it in a 1967 war. The Palestinians want the eastern part of the city as capital of a future independent state of their own.

The Trump administration argues that any credible peace plan would put the Israeli capital in Jerusalem, and that moving past the question can help unblock a peace process frozen since 2014. Washington says Trump's decision does not affect Jerusalem's borders or future status which can still be decided in talks.

Trump's aides say the peace plan could be released early next year and the US president has said he hoped for an agreed two-state deal between the two sides.

Jubeir emphasized that Riyadh continued to support a two-state solution, which Washington had indicated to the Saudis was its working proposal.

Jubeir also denied the Sunni Muslim kingdom had any relations with Israel despite sharing Israel's concern about the regional influence of Shia Iran. He repeated that Riyadh had a "roadmap" to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel should there be a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Israel also says it is waiting for Washington to finish drawing up a peace plan.

"The Americans are preparing a peace deal. They did not tell us the details. They did not speak about a 'Deal of the Century'. Rather, they asked what we can accept, and they asked the Palestinians the same thing. And they will offer -- as they put it -- something creative," Israeli Intelligence Minister Israel Katz said in interview with Saudi-owned news site Elaph, published on Wednesday.

# Rackets busted

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But the CID official could not say anything about the alleged question paper leak of DU's "Gha" unit exam this year.

Admission seekers alleged the questions of the English part were leaked around eight hours before the test began on October 20.

The DU authorities dismissed the allegation and published the results in just two days, although the CID arrested a number of DU students over the alleged leak about five hours before the exam.

Over the past three months, police busted a number of rackets involved in leaking question papers of various public universities' admission tests as well as recruitment exams for government jobs.

In the last one week alone, police arrested 10 alleged members of various gangs, including Raqibul Hasan Esami alias Atik, 28, a sports officer of Nature.

"The rackets used to leak questions by using electronic devices, often hours before the exams," the CID official said.

Based on information from the arrestees, the CID arrested two Rajshahi University students -- Boni Israil and Maruf Hossain -- on December 9.

Two days later, they arrested Raqibul, who told them about the printing press worker Khan Bahadur, 28, and his friend Saiful Islam.

The CID official said that Raqibul and Saiful used to share a room in Uttara in 2015.

After learning that Bahadur works at a printing press, Raqibul, then a college teacher in Uttara, requested Saiful to help him get the question paper for his (Raqibul's) brother, who was seeking admission in DU that year.

Later, they devised a scheme to make money by leaking questions, Nazrul said.

Another key member of the gang is Navid Anjum Tonoy of DU.

"Raqibul, a former student of Rajshahi University, used to contact admission seekers through Boni and Maruf, who had connections with Tonoy," he said.

Contacted, Farid Uddin Ahmed, the then dean of Social Science Faculty of DU and currently vice chancellor of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), dismissed the allegation of the leak in 2015 and 2016.

"Some students may have got admitted through a digital forgery syndicate, but there is no scope of leaking questions before the exam as the question papers were prepared very confidentially," he said.

Over the years, question papers of all public exams --- including ISC, SSC and HSC --- medical college and university admission tests, and government banks' recruitment exams have all been leaked at some point.

The trend of leaking question papers has hit a new low. Earlier this week, question papers of classes I, II and IV were leaked in different districts of the country.

In a letter to the government, the Anti-Corruption Commission said it was a failure of the state machinery.

Although the authorities denied that this year's "Gha" unit question paper of DU was leaked, the CID arrested two Chhatra League leaders -- Mohiuddin Rana, an assistant secretary of the BCL central committee (now expelled), and Abdullah Al Mamun, theatre and debate affairs secretary of the BCL's Amar Ekushey Hall unit, early on October 20, only hours before the admission test.

Another key suspect, Alip Kumar Biswas, now a suspended BKSP official, is on the run.

Asked about DU students' involvement in the leak, DU Proctor Prof AKM Golam Rabani said, "We will take actions in line with the university rules after we get the documents to prove their involvement."