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ASADUZZAMAN NOOR
CULTURAL AFFAIRS MINISTER



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NASER EZAZ BIJOY
CEO, STANDARD CHARTERED BANK, BANGLADESH



The recipients of lifetime achievement award -- Runa Laila, Syed Hasan Imam and Aly Zaker -- pose during the award ceremony of Celebrating Life 2018 at the International Convention City Bashundhara in the capital yesterday. *Top right*, acclaimed singer Mitali Mukherjee performs at the programme; *Bottom right*, dignitaries in the audience.



PHOTO: STAR

Honour for 3 cultural icons

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The competition brought in thousands of entries in the film-making, photography and lyric writing segments, among which the best were recognised and awarded in the lavish gala.

Portraits of this year's lifetime achievement winners -- singer Runa Laila, actor and cultural activist Syed Hasan Imam and actor, director and thespian Aly Zaker -- were elegantly decorated on the red carpet entrance of Nabaratra Hall, alongside those of the jury and past winners.

An impressive display of the photographic entries of this year's competition inside the venue further bright-

ened the atmosphere already lit up by Shadhona's mesmerising dance performance as the audience filled up the hall.

Minister of Cultural Affairs, Asaduzzaman Noor, chief guest at the event, commended The Daily Star for promoting and rewarding young talent from even the remote areas of the country.

“Economic development can never be the only yardstick of a nation,” he said, adding, “It has to be accompanied by cultural enlightenment.”

He went on to thank the lifetime achievement awardees for their contributions to the nation.

Md Abu Rasel Rony, Salma Aktar

and Ram Krishna Shaha emerged as the winners of the photography, lyrics and film (debut documentary) segments while Chowdhury Asif Jahangir Arko was announced the winner of the Best Film (Fiction) award.

Speaking at the programme, Naser Ezaz Bijoy, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank, Bangladesh, said, “Even though the last 11 years of Celebrating Life has given us a lot of memorable moments, being able to discover talented individuals from the remotest parts of Bangladesh will always be the highlight for me.”

In his welcome address, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz

Anam mentioned that the institution itself feels privileged to be able to felicitate awards to luminaries of such stature. “Journalism is an all-absorbing profession. However, events as such also fall into a broader world of journalism, as no nation is truly complete without the practice of liberal arts and creativity.”

Throughout the event, musicians of the highest pedigree entertained the audience. Shahjahan Munshi, a popular Baul artiste, stunned the crowd with his soulful performance of “Ekti Premer Protidaan”. Promising singers Oyshee and Barna came up with a fantastic rendition of

the winning entry of Celebrating Life's lyric competition, “Bangladesh Priyo Bangladesh”.

One of the highlights of the evening was a stellar performance from National Award winning singer Mitali Mukherjee. The noted singer paid tribute to the lifetime achievement award winners with soulful renditions of her blockbuster songs, as well as Rabindra Sangeet “Purano Shei Diner Kotha”.

The event ended with an energetic performance from Band Lalon, one of Bangladesh's most sought after bands.

Celebrating Life began its journey as a national-level contest in 2008. Many

established names of the film, music and photography sectors today found their footing with this unique competition, which looks to encourage and reward aspiring talents who have the potential to be staples of the industry. The competition introduces a new theme every year, which the contestants must base their work accordingly. The theme of last year's Celebrating Life was “Celebrating Diversity in Bangladesh”.

The likes of Mustafa Monwar, Babita, Ferdausi Majumdar, Abdur Razzak, Firoza Begum, among many other cultural luminaries, have received the lifetime achievement award.

Cigarette butts cause 13.55pc fire incidents

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Smoking causes cancer, heart diseases and lung problems -- such warnings found on cigarette packets are known to all.

But do you know that cigarettes, apart from being so harmful for your health, have also become a top reason for damage to houses and other properties in the country?

The fire department gives startling data: out of over 18,000 fire incidents in Bangladesh last year, 2,453 were caused by burning cigarettes.

It means fire from thrown out cigarette butts accounts for 13.55 percent of the total fire incidents, making it the third largest cause of fire, according to an inspection report of Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence (BFSCD).

On a yearly basis, fire incidents caused by cigarettes have remained almost the same in the last five years. In 2013, burning cigarettes caused

around 14 percent of the fire incidents that year.

Last year, the highest number of fire incidents were caused by electrical short circuits followed by burner fire, said the BFSCD.

Talking to The Daily Star, fire officials said public awareness would significantly bring down the number of fire incidents caused by cigarettes.

“Public attitude is the main reason for fire sparked from lit cigarettes. Most of the smokers drop lit cigarette butts here and there,” said BFSCD Director General Brig Gen Ali Ahmed Khan.

Smoking in public is prohibited but this ban is blatantly overlooked, he said.

“That's why people smoke almost everywhere ... the worrying thing is that many of them remain completely oblivious to the risk from burning cigarettes,” Ali said.

The inspection report said fire originated from cigarettes caused damage

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Disaster looms as fire safety ignored

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The BFSCD listed an establishment in the risky category if it didn't have any fire exit plan, fire detection and alarm systems, fire extinguishers, hose reels and water reservoir, among others.

The establishments, which have neither fire safety measures nor accessible roads, fall in the very risky category, said BFSCD officials.

Of the 432 private and public hospitals inspected, 174 were found to be very risky, 247 risky and the other 11 satisfactory.

A number of reputed hospitals are on the list of very risky and risky establishments, according to the report.

Of the 1,191 private and government-owned malls, supermarkets and kitchen markets inspected, 523 were very risky while only 45 were found to be satisfactory.

The report showed a gloomy state of the educational institutions inspected, as 971 of the 989 institutions lacked fire safety measures. The fire department found 91 institutions very risky and 880 risky.

Mirpur, Tejgaon and Savar have the

maximum number of vulnerable establishments, says the report.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Brig Gen Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of the BFSCD, said, “We found a grim picture in our inspection.”

Among the establishments inspected, the hospitals are in a very vulnerable situation, he said.

A fire at such hospitals and clinics would result in heavy casualties, said the DG.

Besides, hospitals and clinics keep oxygen cylinders, chemicals and other highly flammable materials that could cause fire to spread quickly, he added.

The DG said their inspection teams found that many buildings didn't have

YEAR	CIGARETTE ORIGINATED FIRE INCIDENTS	TOTAL AMOUNT OF LOSS
2017	2453	Tk 15.18cr
2016	2357	Tk 16.24cr
2015	2532	Tk 13.26cr
2014	2819	Tk 15.26cr
2013	2660	Tk 51.24cr

proper fire exit routes.

“This is very dangerous in the event of a fire,” he said.

Bangladesh National Building Code clearly explains everything about fire safety, fire resistance and fire escape routes in buildings.

The code says the fire exit route has to be designed in a way that it is unobstructed. A building will have fire-rated doors and be connected directly to the road outside for easy access and exit.

Ahmed said the number of fire incidents has been rising due to a lack of awareness and unwillingness to put in place fire safety measures because it involves investment.

“We must understand that these measures have to be taken for the sake of our life and property,” he said.

According to the fire department, the number of fire incidents more than tripled in the last 21 years.

In 1996, the number was 5,376 which rose to 18,105 last year.

The DG suggested setting up “satellite fire stations” at different points in the capital so that they could rush immediately to the spot whenever a

fire incident occurs.

Talking to this newspaper, an expert stressed the need for periodical inspections of establishments to avert big disasters.

“Everybody knows that we are sitting on a ticking bomb,” said architect Iqbal Habib.

Given the existing situation, if a fire incident occurs, the consequences would be colossal, he cautioned.

“I don't know what we are waiting for despite knowing all these problems.”

Iqbal, also a member-secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said the fire department acts only after an incident.

“But who will do regular monitoring so that such incidents don't take place?”

He said there should be a “compliance commission” to inspect periodically mechanical equipment at establishments.

To avert possible disasters, the government should at least take the initiative to inspect those establishments where a large number of people gather, Iqbal added.

Parties plan to hold

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divisional headquarters.

A senior leader of Jatiya Oikya Prokriya said they might come up with an announcement in a day or two about forging the “greater national unity”.

He said the declaration would be made at a press conference at a city hotel. The leader, however, declined to give any further details.

Leaders of the political parties have already agreed on a seven-point demand and an 11-point goal to forge the “greater national unity”. The demands and goals will be finalised today at a meeting at the house of Dr Kamal Hossain, convener of Jatiya Oikya Prokriya.

“We will sit again tomorrow [today] to finalise the demands and goals and then we will finalise our movement programmes,” Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of Nagorik Oikya, told The Daily Star after the meeting yesterday.

Meanwhile, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh Joint Secretary General Mahi B Chowdhury told the meeting that they should not forge any unity with the anti-liberation forces, meeting sources said.

Manna in reply said they were not forging any unity with anti-liberation forces, but with the BNP.

The meeting also discussed the strategy on ensuring checks and balance of power if the political parties were voted to power.

Speaking on the issue, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir proposed forming a small committee to finalise the strategy.

Leaders said the committee would be formed in a day or two as it was the only issue pending a decision over forging the “greater national unity”.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Fakhrul said discussions on checks and balance of power were still at a preliminary stage. “We hope the issue will be settled soon. Apart from this, all the processes of forging the greater national unity have reached close to an end.”

On September 22, several top BNP leaders shared a rally stage with Dr Kamal and Badruddoza and extended their support to Jatiya Oikya Prokriya's three-point demand, including formation of a polls-time neutral government.

Senior BNP leaders at another rally in the capital on September 30 called for a “greater national unity” and put forth demands similar to those of the Oikya Prokriya.

BNP standing committee members Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain and Moudud Ahmed, Gono Forum leaders Subrata Chowdhury and Mostafa Mohsin Montu, among others, were present at yesterday's meeting.

Leaders of the political parties had earlier met on October 7 and 8 at Rob and Mosharraf's houses respectively.

Turkey says it has proof of murder

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unnamed US and Turkish sources.

The audio recording in particular provided “persuasive and gruesome evidence” that a Saudi team dispatched to Istanbul was responsible for Khashoggi's death, the Post reported.

“You can hear his voice and the voices of men speaking Arabic,” one person with knowledge of the recording told the Post. “You can hear how he was interrogated, tortured and then murdered.”

TRUMP RULES OUT ACTION

US President Donald Trump said on

Thursday that he saw no reason to cut off arms sales to Saudi Arabia because of the disappearance of Khashoggi, possibly setting up a clash with the US Congress.

Trump also said the US may be closer to finding out what happened to Khashoggi.

“They're spending \$110 billion on military equipment and on things that create jobs ... for this country. I don't like the concept of stopping an investment of \$110 billion into the United States, because you know what they're going to do? They're going to take that money and spend it

in Russia or China or someplace else,” he told reporters.

A Saudi delegation arrived in Turkey yesterday for talks on the disappearance of Khashoggi, a Turkish diplomatic source told AFP.

BUSINESS BACKLASH

International pressure has mounted on Saudi Arabia to explain what happened to Khashoggi, a former Saudi royal insider who became a critic of the regime and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The business world has also signalled its disquiet, with British tycoon Richard Branson saying he's pulling

back from two tourism projects in Saudi Arabia and has suspended discussions with Riyadh about a \$1 billion investment in Virgin's space companies.

The Future Investment Initiative has seen a litany of cancellations from prominent names who decided it best not to be associated with Saudi Arabia at this time.

The CEO of ride-hailing app Uber, Dara Khosrowshahi, said that he will no longer be attending the event unless “a substantially different set of facts emerges”, explaining he was “very troubled by the reports”.

Doctors warn of global C-section 'epidemic'

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C-sections worldwide -- 21 percent of all births. This was up from 16 million in 2000, or 12 percent of all births, according to research published in The Lancet.

It is estimated that the operation -- a vital surgical procedure when complications occur during birth -- is necessary 10-15 percent of the time.

But the research found wildly varying country rates of C-section use, often according to economic status: in at least 15 countries more than 40 percent births are performed using the practice, often on wealthier women in private facilities.

In Brazil, Egypt and Turkey, more than half of all births are done via C-

section.

The Dominican Republic has the highest rate of any nation, with 58.1 percent of all babies delivered using the procedure.

But in close to a quarter of nations surveyed, C-section use is significantly lower than average.

Authors pointed out that while the procedure is generally over-used in many middle- and high-income settings, women in low-income situations often lack necessarily access to what can be a life-saving procedure.

“We would not expect such differences between countries, between women by socioeconomic status or between provinces/states within coun-

tries based on obstetric need,” Ties Boerma, professor of public health at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, and a lead author on the study, told AFP.

Jane Sandall, professor of social science and women's health at King's College London and a study author, told AFP that there were a variety of reasons women were increasingly opting for surgery.

These include “a lack of midwives to prevent and detect problems, loss of medical skills to confidently and competently attend a vaginal delivery, as well as medico-legal issues.”

Doctors are often tempted to organise C-sections to ease the flow of patients through a maternity clinic,

and medical professionals are generally less vulnerable to legal action if they choose an operation over a natural birth.

Sandall also said there were often “financial incentives for both doctor and hospital” to perform the procedure.

The study warned that in many settings young doctors were becoming “experts” in C-section while losing confidence in their abilities when it comes to natural birth.

It also identified an emerging gap between wealthy and poorer regions within the same country. In China, C-section rates diverged from 4 percent to 62 percent; in India the range was 7-49 percent.