



A distraught Kumar Bishwajit, a long-time friend of Ayub Bachchu, visits Square Hospital in Dhaka where the body of the latter was kept. Upon hearing of Bachchu's death, thousands of people including his fans, artists, friends, and colleagues thronged the hospital premises yesterday.

DU 'GHA' UNIT ADMISSION

## Calls grow louder for fresh exam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demand for holding fresh exam for Dhaka University's "Gha" Unit rang louder yesterday, with more and more students joining protests and bringing widespread allegations of questions leak in the previous test.

Agitating students warned of waging tougher programmes if the university authorities do not meet their demand soon.

Meanwhile, Akhtar Hossen, a DU student who went on hunger strike on Tuesday with the same demand, broke his hunger strike at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) last night upon assurance of authorities, after he was rushed to the hospital earlier in the day as he fell ill on the third day of his fast.

Prof Md Ziaur Rahman, provost of Muktijoddha Ziaur Rahman Hall of DU, visited him at the hospital last evening and assured him of action being taken in this regard as soon as VC Md Akhtaruzzaman, who is now traveling to Turkey, returns to the country.

Earlier, DU Proctor Prof AKM Golam Rabbani and some teachers visited Akhtar at Raju Memorial Sculpture where he was

holding his hunger strike, and tried to persuade him to break his fast offering coconut water, saying they would discuss the issue. But the third year law department student denied.

The university team met Akhtar after the protesting students strongly criticised DU authorities for not coming to see him despite him falling sick.

In the afternoon, Bangladesh Chhatra League's DU unit in a press statement demanded that authorities come up with a clear administrative decision, either on re-conducting "Gha" Unit admission test, or taking a special admission test for successful candidates.

Yesterday's protest started around 11:00am as Akhtar's fellow classmates and a teacher from his department formed a human chain, expressing solidarity with him.

A group of students locked the office of VC Prof Akhtaruzzaman in a symbolic protest.

An hour later, more than a hundred students under the banner of Bangladesh Sadharon Chhatra Odhikar Songrokkhon Parishad, which waged the quota

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## Official documents should recognise preferred gender

Hijra community urges authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chaity was excited to attend a renowned fashion brand's festival recently. But issues arose when she went for registration. As she showed her national identity (NID) card, the person who was registering names was confused.

Chaity's NID read "Mamun Molla". It was uncomfortable for her to explain that her name was Mamun before, but now she calls herself Chaity, as she is a transwoman.

She has to face such unpleasant experiences regularly whenever official documents like NID, passport, and certificates are involved. She had to face this situation while casting her vote in the last city election as well.

The story is the same for almost every transgender person living in the country.

Chaity and some others from the transgender community were sharing their

ordeals yesterday at a seminar titled "Legal Gender Recognition: Challenges and Way Forward" at Cirdap International Conference Center in Dhaka, jointly organised by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Asia Pacific Forum (APF).

Social Welfare Minister Rashed Khan Menon was present as chief guest while NHRC Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque chaired the programme.

Chaity said she recently got a job at NHRC as an executive officer and thanked the NHRC chairman for recognising a representative from the Hijra community.

Joya Sikder, an activist from the community, said they have been facing harassment during medical treatment, in public transport, and while trying to rent houses.

"My sex at birth was male but I identify as a woman and live as a woman," she said, adding that there are misconceptions pre-

vailing in the society about them.

In a presentation, M Rabiul Islam, deputy director of NHRC, said the Hijra community faces challenges when trying to change names on legal documents such as NID, passports and certificates.

Rabiul said many in the community have started transitioning into the gender they identify with, which logically results into wanting to change names -- from a man's to a woman's and vice versa.

There is no law or policy in regards to this although the government recognised the Hijra as a third gender in 2013, he added.

Social Welfare Minister Rashed Khan Menon said the stigma of being a Hijra in the country starts within the family. From then, Hijras are deprived of legal rights, including inheriting properties.

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## Apologise or face law suit

Journos, rights activists warn Barrister Mainul over derogatory remarks on Masuda Bhatti

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists and rights activists have demanded that Barrister Mainul Hosein publicly apologise for hurling abuses at journalist Masuda Bhatti and terming her "characterless" at a television talk show on Tuesday night.

They also warned of taking legal actions against Mainul Hosein, former adviser to a caretaker government and printer and publisher of English daily The New Nation.

"Barrister Mainul has personally sought apology from her. However, it's not enough as we think he has not only attacked journalist Masuda, but also women and journalist community," said Nasimun Ara Hoq, president of Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra.

She was speaking at a protest programme at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Writer Anwara Syed Huq, women's rights activist Rokeya Kabir, Barrister Tania Amir, journalists Munni Saha, Syed Ishtiaque Reza and others also spoke at the meeting.

This correspondent spoke to Mainul Hosein yesterday evening. He said Masuda Bhatti must apologise to him publicly unless she can prove that he is a Jamaat agent.

"I made the remarks [about Masuda Bhatti] because I got very angry. I also called her on Wednesday and sought apology," he said. Mainul Hosein said it was audacious on her part to pose such a question.

"How can she do that? It was not journalistic, but a political ques-

tion," he said and added that he always worked for upholding independence, peace and democracy.

However, at yesterday's meeting, Nasimun Ara said if Mainul Hosein does not seek an unconditional apology for his comments, they will be forced to take legal action and call upon the media not to give him any scope of participating in any talk show.

She also called upon the newly formed Jatiya Oikya Front, an alliance led by Dr Kamal Hossain ahead of the national polls, not to give him a leadership position as the alliance then risks becoming controversial.

Masuda Bhatti, acting editor of Dainik Amader Notun Somoy, read out a written statement at the programme. She said she and Sakhawat Hossain Shayanta were



People crowd the Durga Puja mandap at Kalabagan playground in Dhaka as they celebrate Nabami, the penultimate day of the festivity, yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Law and order will be under control during polls: Amu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law and order situation in the country during the upcoming parliamentary election is not likely to deteriorate, Amir Hossain Amu, the chairman of cabinet committee on law and order, said yesterday.

The ones who could be the cause for concern are themselves talking about atmosphere during the polls. "So, I don't think there's a scope that might destabilise law and order," Amu, also the industries minister, said.

He made the observations while responding to queries of journalists at the Secretariat following a meeting of the cabinet committee.

Everyone has the belief that the next general elections will be held in a free and fair manner, the committee chairman said, adding that it

is of utmost importance that the people are headed towards the election and they are speaking in favour of it.

In response to a query regarding allegations of filing "ghost cases" against BNP activists and dead people, the minister discarded the allegations and said BNP will not be able to provide any specific allegation that fresh ghost cases have been filed against their leaders and activists.

In the case BNP comes up with any specific information, the government will look into it, he assured.

The ongoing drive against illegal arms will continue ahead of the elections and the law enforcers remain alert at 30,000 puja mandaps across the country during the Durga Puja, Amu also said.

## 44pc of marriages involving underage girls go unregistered

Says report of Child Rights Advocacy Coalition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Almost half of the marriages involving underage girls were not registered in the country in 2016 and 2017, while none of those registered used any proof of age or birth certificate, according to a new study report.

The report is based on the analysis of 85 case studies done in 19 districts.

Findings show that out of the 85 child brides, 80 percent were 14-16 years old, 13 percent were 10-13 years of age, and only seven percent were 17-18. In 56 percent of cases, the marriages were registered, while the rest were not recorded.

The report "Children in Bangladesh: Progress towards Commitments in 2017" was unveiled yesterday at a programme organised by the Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh at Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka.

The 10-member network of development and rights organisations as well as civil society members prepared the report using

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