

Welcome back!

Mymensingh medical in mood for celebration as Bhutan PM, an ex-student, visits campus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Mymensingh Medical College today welcomes back to their campus Bhutan's Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering, who was a student here nearly 20 years ago.

The campus was adorned with celebratory elements to welcome the premier.

Tshering was admitted to the college in 1991, college sources said.

The premier will lead a 14-member delegation including Bhutan's Minister for Foreign Affairs Tandi Dorji, who was also a student of MMC's 24th batch, said Prof Dr Anwar Hossain, principal of MMC.

He will attend a programme at the MMC auditorium as chief guest and later visit the classrooms where he attended his classes. He will also be meeting his classmates at MMC Gallery-2. He will then visit the college canteen, doctors club and Ward No-6 of MMCH where he took an eight-months long

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Mymensingh Medical College has been decorated to welcome the visiting Bhutanese Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering, who was a student here. The picture was taken in front of the auditorium yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Why Ecuador gave Assange up after 7yrs

CNN ONLINE

Hours after Julian Assange was ousted from his diplomatic refuge at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, the country released a laundry list of alleged transgressions which brought the WikiLeaks founder's seven-year residency to an end.

Foreign Minister José Valencia and Interior Minister María Paula Romo accused Assange of riding scooters around the cramped embassy hallways, insulting staff and smearing feces on the walls.

But while Ecuador had undoubtedly tired of its London house guest the motivations for stripping Assange of his asylum and allowing in officers of the Metropolitan Police are likely to have been more complex.

WikiLeaks had already been needing the Ecuadorian authorities in other ways. For months, Assange had been pursuing a legal action against the Ecuadorian government, accusing it of violating his rights by introducing strict new house rules for living at the embassy. An Ecuadorian judge rejected

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Justice tangled

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the state side is ready for placing arguments on them.

Moniruzzaman also said another case filed under the explosive substances act in connection with the 2001 Ramna Batamul bomb blast is still pending with a Dhaka court.

The HC bench led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim had started hearing the death references and appeals of the Ramna Batamul carnage case on January 8, 2017, and after hearing for several days it adjourned the hearing on February 22.

This bench dropped the matters from its cause-list on August 8, 2017, as the state side did not officially informed it about the execution of Mufti Abdul Hannan, the principal accused of the case, in connection with another case, court sources said.

Later, the chief justice assigned the HC bench led by Justice Md Ruhul Quddus to finish the hearing of the death references and appeals.

A Dhaka court on June 23, 2014 handed down death penalty to eight militants of Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji), including its chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, for killing 10 people in the attack on a Chhayanaunt event during the Pahela Baishakh celebrations at Ramna Batamul on April 14 in 2001.

Six other militants of the banned Islamist outfit were sentenced to life in prison for involvement in the blasts.

Mufti Abdul Hannan, one of the country's most notorious militants, involved in plotting and carrying out all the terror attacks by Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh, was executed on April 13, 2017 at Kashimpur High Security Prison. Hannan was executed for carrying out a grenade attack on the then British high commissioner Anwar Choudhury in Sylhet on May 21, 2004. Some other accused in that case are absconding.

Defence counsel Advocate SM Shahjahan could not be reached for his comments despite repeated attempts over the phone.

Brutality followed meet with Siraj

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against principal Siraj Ud Doula. As she refused to budge, one of them poured kerosene on her from a glass and set her ablaze," her elder brother had earlier told The Daily Star, quoting her.

While the family members want a quick trial, the PBI said it would try to complete the investigation as soon as possible after arrest of other suspects.

"We want a fast, free and fair trial of those responsible," Nusrat's father AKM Musa told The Daily Star yesterday.

Earlier, local police officials had excluded the principal's name from the case but were forced to include it following objections from the family. The officer-in-charge of Sonagazi Model Police Station was withdrawn for negligence in handling the complaint of attack on Nusrat.

Meanwhile, two more accused, including Shamim, got arrested from Mymensingh and Feni on Friday night.

BURQA-CLAD ATTACKERS

Banaj, also deputy inspector general of police, said Nuruddin and some others met the principal in jail on April 4 after holding a rally and submitting memorandums to different authorities, seeking his release.

"They got a directive from the meeting," the DIG said.

Both Nuruddin and Shamim are Fazil (graduation) students of the madrasa and loyal to the principal, who was arrested on

March 27 in the sexual harassment case filed by Nusrat's mother.

The two were made convener and joint convener of the 20-member committee that waged protests in the upazila town demanding release of the principal. They allegedly put pressure on Nusrat's relatives and others to withdraw the sexual harassment case.

Banaj said that around 9:30pm on April 5, Nuruddin, Shamim, Javed Hossain, Hafez Abdul Quader, and another youth held a meeting at the West Hostel of the madrasa and planned to set Nusrat on fire.

They later shared their plan with five others including two female students. As part of their plan, one girl was tasked with bringing three burqas and kerosene.

The next morning, the girl handed those items to Shamim and two others who were hiding inside the toilet on the rooftop of the building, he said.

"Another girl -- Shompa or Champa -- called Nusrat out of her exam hall and took her to the rooftop of the administrative building, saying her friend Nishat was being assaulted there. As she reached the rooftop, the attackers in burqas first tied up her hands with her scarf and set her on fire.

"The building, also used as a cyclone centre, was empty and nobody heard her screaming."

Officials learnt that Shompa or Champa, now behind bars, is a relative

of Siraj.

The attackers fled wearing burqas while five including Nuruddin stood guard at the gate to keep vigil, the PBI chief said.

"All [of the attackers] were students of the madrasa ... We have come to know their identities," Banaj said replying to a query how the attackers escaped safely from a secured exam centre where police were deployed.

He declined to give names of the attackers, except for Shamim.

TWO MORE ARRESTED

Law enforcers said they arrested Shamim from Janata Guest House in Muktagachha municipality in Mymensingh and Javed, another student of the madrasa, from Rampura area in Feni on Friday night.

Mononesh Das, an owner of the guest house, said Shamim booked a seat on Friday morning using a fake name. As he was from Feni and his behaviour was suspicious, they contacted police.

With Shamim and Javed, some 13 persons have so far been arrested and seven of them are listed accused.

PBI officials said they are conducting raids taking Shamim with them to arrest the others. At least six others involved in the murder are still on the run, PBI officials said.

Meanwhile, a Feni court placed

Javed on a seven-day day remand after PBI Inspector Shah Alam, also the investigation officer in the murder case, produced him before the court seeking a 10-day remand.

The court will hear the remand prayer for Maksud Alam, councillor of Ward-4 of Sonagazi municipality and expelled acting general secretary of the municipal AL, today. He is also an accused in the case.

Inspector Shah Alam said 10 arrestees among the 13 have been already been placed on remand.

'CONFIDENT TO COVER IT UP'

The planners earlier covered up several incidents of sexual harassment at the madrasa. Those who carried out an attack on Nusrat in 2017 also went unpunished, PBI officials said.

Talking to The Daily Star, a PBI official who interrogated at least two arrestees said the attackers and the planners left Feni and some of them came to Dhaka to avoid arrest.

Those who came to Dhaka were planning to meet at a city hotel on April 10 but they failed as the incident drew huge protests and media coverage. They changed their locations frequently and later Nuruddin and Shamim fled to Mymensingh, they said.

Both were planning to flee to India within a couple of days, said a PBI official after interrogating the arrestees.

Duty-free, quota-free access

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agriculture and tourism sectors and cooperation between the Public Administration Training Centres of the two countries for exchange of faculty members as well as training and capacity building.

The two prime ministers were present at the signing ceremony.

During the talks, the two countries put emphasis on strengthening cooperation on trade, business and connectivity, said the foreign secretary.

Bangladesh has a historical relation with Bhutan as it was the first country to recognise Bangladesh as an independent country on December 6 in 1971, he said.

Over the years, this relationship has developed from strength to strength, the foreign secretary said adding that the trade figures and people-to-people

contact in tourism sector of the two countries have increased, particularly after Hasina's visit to Bhutan in 2017.

Shahidul Haque said the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) initiative was also discussed at the meeting.

Though all the countries signed the BBIN initiative, Bhutan is yet to place any proposal to ratify the initiative of sub-regional connectivity in South Asia.

At the bilateral talks, it was said the new Bhutanese government will place a fresh bill in their upper house of parliament in this regard.

"They're very optimistic about it," the foreign secretary said.

He said Bhutan also showed interest to hire Bangladeshi specialist doctors to meet up demand of such physicians to improve its health sector.

In this connection, the PM said she will personally look into the matter.

Pointing out that the cooperation between the two countries in the field of health sector is increasing, the foreign secretary said the number of seats for Bhutanese students in Bangladesh medical and nursing colleges have risen to 15 from 10.

Dr Tshering, who was a student of Mymensingh Medical College, highly appreciated Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry for producing quality drugs, said the foreign secretary.

He said the two sides discussed the regional electricity trade.

Haque said discussions are underway to produce hydropower in Bhutan and marketing that in the region.

Hasina mentioned that Bangladesh is going to invest in hydroelectricity in

Bhutan. "The discussion is at the advanced stage, and we hope an agreement to this end will be signed soon," Haque said.

He added there will be trilateral cooperation, and if hydroelectricity is produced in Bhutan, it will be marketed in India and Bangladesh.

The Bhutanese PM also highly praised the leadership of Hasina, he said.

Mentioning the significant role of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the development of this region, Dr Lotay Tshering said Bhutan has deep respect in her leadership.

About autism awareness campaign, the Bhutanese Prime Minister noted that Saima Wazed Hossain, the daughter of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has made huge contributions to it, the Foreign Secretary said.

Woman 'raped'

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Mofiz, 21, Tanjirul Islam, 22, and Ibrahim Ibne Al Beruni, 20. They were hailed from different villages in Tangail's Sadar upazila.

The two others accused Md Hasan Sikder, 22, and Md Uzzal, 25, were on the run, police said, adding that they were raiding different areas to arrest them.

Mohammad Mosharraf Hossain, investigation officer of the case, said the plaintiff alleged that his wife, 25, and he went to his father-in-law's home in Kalihati upazila that night.

When they were waiting for a bus in Tangail New Bus Terminal area around 9:00pm to return to their work place in Mirzapur upazila, a group of eight men approached them. They took him away from his wife, beat him up and snatched his mobile phone and Tk 1,200.

They took his wife away to DC Lake area on a motorcycle where they gang-raped her, he said.

While his wife was taken away, he informed the matter to a patrol police team.

Police detained three of the criminals from the Bus Terminal area and later, raided different places while holding the three in custody, told Saidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Tangail Model Police Station.

Police later arrested three more of the accused from different places in the upazila and as per their confession, rescued the victim from a primary school in Chorjana area of the upazila around 2:00am, he said.

Of the accused, three -- Yusuf, Robin and Jahid -- admitted to police that they raped the woman and others were involved, he said.

Robin confessed that he raped the woman again after taking her at an abandoned house in Chorjana area and left her on the local school premises, he added.

Sanjit Kumar Roy, superintendent of Tangail Police, at a press briefing at his office yesterday afternoon, told journalists that three of the accused had given confessional statements as per section 164 before a magistrate court.

The three others were produced before the same court seeking ten days remand each for interrogation, he said.

He alleged that all the accused in the case are drug addicts and criminals based in Tangail New Bus Terminal area and several criminal cases were already pending against them.

Narayan Chandra Saha, superintendent of Tangail General Hospital, said police took the woman to the hospital around 5:00am, adding that medical examinations found symptoms of rape.

Look back at roots of the festival

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Bangabada or Bangla year in our part of the world.

Eventually it became customary to clear up all dues on the last day of Chaitra, the last month of solar Bengali calendar, and businessmen treating their customers with sweets. Arrangements of village fairs and other festivities became part of a rich cultural heritage.

Some 432 years later, the celebration of Pahela Baishakh comes to us today at such a critical juncture of time when a section of people are trying, in vain, to extract "new meaning" of what has been all through a non-communal national cultural journey.

Pleasantly, though, an overwhelming majority -- irrespective of their cast and creed and religious beliefs -- consider the Pahela Baishakh as a day of merriment, as a day of reinvigorating rich national culture and heritage, and there is nothing irreligious in it.

It's true that over the years the New Year celebrations have shed many rituals while inducing newer forms and events to rejoice but the core value of upholding own language, history, culture and heritage still remain the celebration's centrepiece.

Many old festivals connected with New Year's Day are no longer practised. On the other hand, new festivals have been introduced. Though agricul-

tural in origins, the Pahela Baishakh festivities are now more marked in urban societies than in rural societies.

With a vividly colourful and pompous rally called Mangal Shobhajatra -- the centrepiece of the Pahela Baishakh observance -- being recently recognised by the United Nations as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, this year's celebration is set to reach a new height.

Stray incidents of attack on the Pahela Baishakh murals in Chittagong would in no way dampen the indomitable spirit of a nation.

In view of the Unesco, "The Mangal Shobhajatra festival symbolises the pride the people of Bangladesh have in their folk heritage, as well as their strength and courage to fight against sinister forces, and their vindication of truth and justice. It also represents solidarity and a shared value for democracy, uniting people irrespective of caste, creed, religion, gender or age. Knowledge and skills are transmitted by students and teachers within the community."

As the sound of drums beating resonates through the streets, onlookers feel a deep yearning to join Mangal Shobhajatra and that is the beauty of it.

People from all walks of life have been showing enthusiasm more and more for participating in the proces-

sion organised by the Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University on Pahela Baishakh every year since 1989.

Traditional village fairs, folk festivals and Mangal Shobhajatra apart, rendition of music by the Chhayanaunt artistes under the banyan tree in the open of Ramna remains a rich part of a long tradition. And opening of new ledger book (Hal Khata) by business people, having pantha-ilish (Hilsa and watery rice) delicacy have all become part of the celebration.

Islamic scholar Syed Ashraf Ali once wrote it was the New Year celebration that enabled Prince Selim (later Emperor Jahangir) to meet and fall in love with Meherunnisa (known as Nurjahan in history). It was again in one such new year festival that the Prince Khurram (later Emperor Shahjahan) first came across Mumtaz Mahal, whom he immortalised through the great "poetry in marble" -- Taj Mahal.

"Had there been no Nobobarsha festival, there perhaps would be no Nurjahan, and no Taj Mahal," said the late scholar.

Our very own great Bengali poet Tagore told us not to be afraid of northwester as and when it darkened the evening sky.

In his verse "Oi Bujhi Kalboishakhi" Rabindranath Tagore says (as translated by Dr Fakhrul Alam),

"There it comes -- Boisakh's seasonal thundershower

Enveloping the evening sky!

What or who do you fear? Open all doors everywhere

Listen to the sky rumble intensely and its loud insistent call.

Respond to its overture with song-lyrics and melodies

Let whatever shakable shake; let anything transient go!

Let everything fragile shatter; let only the permanent stay!"

Three killed

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Nazmul Islam said the level crossing in Koyelgati area was unauthorised.

"Nobody consulted with the railway authorities before constructing the level crossing," he said, adding that they still installed a red notice asking the drivers to remain alert while crossing it.

A four-member probe committee headed by a transportation inspector would investigate the collision and installation of the level crossing without their approval, he added.

Kamarkhand Upazila Nirbahi Officer Jahangir Alam said he visited the families of the victims and handed them over an immediate compensation of Tk 25,000 each.