

Buet students warmly welcome admission-seekers

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Amid protests by Buet students over the gruesome murder of one of their peers Abrar Fahad, the general students of the country's premier engineering university yesterday warmly welcomed admission-seekers for the academic session 2019-2020.

Although there was uncertainty over the admission tests ever since the protests began, the students relaxed their demonstration on Saturday to ensure the entrance exam went smoothly.

They handed out pens, pencils, water bottles and biscuits to candidates and their parents as part of the effort by current students to help admission-seekers and their parents.

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Buet students distributing free bottled water among guardians of examinees during the admission tests yesterday. Right, an admission seeker, middle, arrives on campus on a bike about 10 minutes after the tests began and is helped by a volunteer, right. Failing to find any transport, the examinee was crying in Asad Gate area when the biker gave him a ride. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



HC stays arrest warrant against Prof Yunus

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday stayed until October 25 a lower court order that issued an arrest warrant for Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus in three cases, filed over sacking of three employees of Grameen Communications.

The HC bench of Justice Muhammad Abdul Hafiz and Justice Ahmed Sohail passed the order following an appeal by Yunus' lawyer Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud.

The trial proceeding of the three cases and the arrest warrant will now remain stayed until October 25, said Rakanuddin.

On October 9, the Dhaka Labour Court issued the arrest warrant as Yunus did not appear before it.

Three employees of Grameen Communications had filed the cases against Yunus and two others with the labour court on July 3. The court had asked them to appear before it on October 8.

The two other accused -- Naznin Sultana, managing director, and Khandakar Abu Abedin, deputy managing director of Grameen Communications, -- secured bail after appearing before the court on October 9.

Why this brutality?

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find them to be easy preys.

In some cases, children become victims of attacks carried out due to grievances against their adult family members, she told The Daily Star over phone.

Over yesterday's incident, police detained seven family members of Tuhin for interrogation.

Mijanur Rahman, acting superintendent of police in Sunamganj, said they primarily suspect some of the detainees could be involved in the gruesome murder.

He, however, did not elaborate on the matter.

Sub-Inspector Abu Taher Mollah of Derai police station said they were investigating the killing.

The body was sent to a Sunamganj hospital for autopsy, he said.

No case was filed till last night.

Police said they believed Tuhin, son of Abdul Basir and Monira Begum, was killed on Sunday night. On information, they recovered the body around noon yesterday, the OC said.

Talking to The Daily Star, one of Basir's relatives, Imran Ahmed, said Tuhin was second among three brothers and a sister.

He said the families of Basir and his brother Abdul Mosabbir lived in adjacent rooms. The families went to bed after having dinner on Sunday night.

Around 2:30am, they realised the door of Basir's room was open, he said, adding that they then found Tuhin was missing.

The families and their neighbours started searching the area for the boy and found the body about an hour later, he said.

He also said they found bloodstains on a road.

Before being detained by police, Mosabbir told this paper that Basir had a land dispute with some locals.

"But I don't think the murder was carried out over such an issue. Whoever has done this, we want their punishment."

Dhaka University's Prof Mahjabeen said exemplary punishment through the establishment of the rule of law was necessary for stopping violence on children.

She stressed the need for enforcing laws effectively to bring down the rate of the crime.

Trio awarded for work on poverty alleviation

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Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo are married.

"This year's laureates have introduced a new approach to obtaining reliable answers about the best ways to fight global poverty," the jury said.

The science academy said that "more than 700 million people still subsist on extremely low incomes", and that around five million children under the age of five still die every year from preventable or curable diseases.

The three found efficient ways of combatting poverty by breaking down difficult issues into smaller, more manageable questions, which can then be answered through field experiments, the jury said.

"They have shown that these smaller, more precise, questions are often best answered via carefully designed experiments among the people who are most affected," it said.

Duflo is only the second woman to win the Nobel Economics Prize in its 50-year existence, following Elinor Ostrom in 2009.

Duflo, 46, told the Nobel committee in a phone interview the honour was "incredibly humbling".

"I didn't think it was possible to win the Nobel Prize in Economics before being significantly older than any of the three of us," she added.

Banerjee is 58 and Kremer is 54.

In the past 20 years, more than three-quarters of economics laureates have been American white males over the age of 55.

Duflo has made her name

conducting research, together with her husband who was her PhD supervisor, on poor communities in India and Africa, seeking to weigh the impact of policies such as incentivising teachers to show up for work or measures to empower women.

Her tests, which have been likened to clinical trials for drugs, seek to identify and demonstrate which investments are worth making and have the biggest impact on the lives of the most deprived.

"Our vision of poverty is dominated by caricatures and cliches," she told AFP in a September 2017 interview.

French President Emmanuel Macron hailed the "magnificent" Nobel to Duflo, writing on Twitter that her work "shows that research in this field can have a concrete impact on the well-being of humanity".

Banerjee, the son of two economists, grew up in Kolkata in eastern India, and has been a vocal critic of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Ahead of elections earlier this year -- that saw Modi cruise to a second term -- Banerjee advised the opposition Congress party on its proposed guaranteed basic income guarantee scheme for tens of millions of India's poorest, a programme akin to Universal Basic Income.

His mother Nirmala Banerjee told Indian television that she had yet to hear from her son, who now lives in the US and has become an American citizen.

"He is very much an Indian in every sense. He was very reluctant to change

his citizenship," she told broadcaster NDTV, visibly excited.

She added, jokingly, that her son failed to tell her the award was coming his way when she spoke with him on the telephone on Sunday. "I will tell him off," she said.

Banerjee and Duflo are both professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the US, while Kremer is a professor at Harvard University.

In the 1990s, Kremer used field experiments to test interventions to improve school results in western Kenya. He has also helped develop programmes to incentivise the distribution of vaccines for diseases in the developing world.

Unlike the other Nobels awarded since 1901, the Economics Prize was not created by the prizes' founder, philanthropist and dynamite inventor Alfred Nobel, in his 1895 will. It was devised in 1968 to mark the 300th anniversary of Sweden's central bank, and first awarded in 1969.

Each of the Nobels comes with a prize sum of nine million Swedish kronor (\$914,000, 833,000 euros), to be shared if there is more than one winner in the discipline.

But unluckily for recent winners, the prize's value has lost around \$185,000 in the past two years, due to the depreciation of the Swedish krona.

This year's Nobel laureates will receive their awards at ceremonies in Stockholm and Oslo on December 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death of Alfred Nobel.



Participants at a roundtable titled "South Asia in a Changing World" at the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday. The programme was jointly organised by Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) and The Daily Star.

PHOTO: STAR

Revive Saarc to take up challenges

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Shamim Ahmed.

He said with the Saarc failing, India is now focusing on BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), a sub-regional grouping of Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan.

"The BIMSTEC cannot be a substitute for Saarc."

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of Centre for Policy Dialogue, said when the global GDP growth is 2 percent, it is 6 percent in South Asia.

However, inequality in this region is very high, meaning it is a jobless growth. With the fourth industrial revolution driven by technology, the unemployment scenario will worsen in future, she said. On the other hand, there are increased risks of terrorism and conflict that impact economy directly.

The South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan that are graduating from the LDC (least developed countries) bracket will also face challenges of accessing finance and market in future, she added.

"Therefore, regional trade integration is very important. Policymakers must think deeply about how we can utilise the regional body Saarc and other sub-regional groupings to improve connectivity and trade," she said.

BIPSS President Maj Gen (ret'd) Muniruzzaman said South Asia has all the ingredients to become a great region, but security dynamics of the region is destroying the potentials.

The high tension between two nuclear powers -- India and Pakistan -- must be addressed, he said.

South Asia is one of the most energy-

starved regions. Climate change can force millions out of their homes in this region.

Hydro-politics and border disputes are destabilising this region, he added.

"Unless we are able to promote South Asian regionalism, we will never have the place in history in the international system," Muniruzzaman said.

"The Saarc can be a platform for starting dialogue. Many of the bilateral issues were addressed in the past Saarc summits."

Norwegian Ambassador to Bangladesh Sidsel Bleken said South Asia as a region does not appear to be a big factor when looked at it from outside though its population size, economic growth, and strategic position are very important.

In comparison to that, China, ASEAN and even African Union draw more global attention when it comes to trade and investment, she said, expecting that Saarc will grow by resolving the disputes.

Obaidul Haque, associate professor of international relations at Dhaka University, said Pakistan was increasingly reaching out to China, while India was expanding its focus towards ASEAN.

Also, India is looking to the West for its trade and strategic interests, while its rival China is moving with its Belt and Road Initiative where India is not a party yet, he said.

India, meanwhile, seems supportive of the Indo-Pacific Strategy promoted by the US to deter China in the Indian Ocean region, Obaidul said.

"These are the aspects of future conflicts and we need to devise our policies with utmost care," he said, adding that there was no alternative to

regional integration of South Asia.

Security analyst Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahedul Anam Khan, also associate editor of The Daily Star, said individual policies of some South Asian countries seem hostile towards each other, while countries are also promoting populist policies that can create more conflicts in future.

He suggested strong regional cooperation in Saarc to mitigate the challenges, taking lessons from the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) that has become a successful regional alliance despite differences on many issues.

Former ambassador Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury said some of the countries in South Asia are driven by narrow geopolitical interests. Such attitude needs to be changed.

"We are waiting for the Asian century. And, South Asia shouldn't remain fragmented," he said, calling for initiatives to reinvigorate Saarc.

Lt Gen (ret'd) ATM Zahurul Alam said South Asian countries, especially India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, have a common history.

The countries of the European Union once fought so many wars, but they are united today.

"If they can, can't we?" he said, adding that the small South Asian countries should start coming together to revive Saarc. "There would be no South Asia without Saarc."

Former diplomats M Sirajul Islam, ASMA Awal, Mahmood Hasan, AMSA Amin and The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam also spoke at the roundtable attended by diplomats, academics, and representatives from the foreign missions in Dhaka.

Two more lines

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These projects are part of a long-cherished metro rail network for Dhaka and its adjacent areas. They are expected to ease the two major problems facing the capital: congestion and pollution.

The government aims to build five metro lines -- an elevated, an underground, and three elevated and underground -- in the capital and its adjacent areas by 2030.

In the last 10 years, the average traffic speed in Dhaka has dropped from 21kmph to 7kmph, which is slightly above the average walking speed, said a World Bank analysis of July 2017.

"Congestion in Dhaka eats up 3.2 million working hours a day. This costs the economy billions of dollars every year," it said.

Dhaka is the second most polluted capital in the world, according to the World Air Quality Report released in March. The Greenpeace and AirVisual, that monitor global air quality.

Work on MRT-6 between Uttara and Motijheel, the country's first metro rail project, has made 30.05 percent progress as of September and the lines are expected to open on December 16, 2021, when the country will be celebrating the golden jubilee of independence.

Once completed, the 20.10km metro rail service with 16 stations will be capable of carrying 60,000 passengers an hour, reducing travel time from Uttara to Motijheel from at least two hours to less than an hour.

State-run Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd is implementing the projects according to the Revised Strategic Transport Plan (2015-

2035).

MRT LINE-1

This line will begin from the proposed Terminal-3 of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

An estimated 14 lakh people will use this route a day, officials said.

It will also have an elevated part to connect Purbachal with Notun Bazar.

The 31.24km MRT Line-1 from the airport to Kamalapur will consist of underground, elevated, and transitional lines.

The route will have underground stations at the airport, Terminal-3 of the airport, Khilkhet, Jamuna Future Park, Notun Bazar, Uttar Badda, Badda, Hatirjheel, Rampura, Malibagh, Rajarbagh and Kamalapur.

The Purbachal part will have stations at Notun Bazar, Jamuna Future Park, Bashundhara, Police Officers' Housing Society, Mastul, Purbachal West, Purbachal Centre, Purbachal Sector-7 and Purbachal depot. Of these stations, Notun Bazar and Jamuna Future Park would be underground.

Of the total cost, the government will provide Tk 13,111 crore and Jica Tk 39,450 crore.

MRT-5 (NORTHERN ROUTE)

MRT-5 has two sections -- northern and southern.

The northern line will be between Hemayetpur of Savar and Bhatara via Baliarpur, Modhumoti, Amin Bazar, Gabtoli, Dar-us-Salam, Mirpur-1, Mirpur-10, Mirpur-14, Kochukhet, Banani, Gulshan-2 and Notun Bazar.

This 20km route will have 14km underground lines with nine stations and 6km elevated lines with five stations, according to the project documents.

Of the total cost, the government will provide Tk 12,122 crore and Jica Tk 29,117 crore.

The southern route, which is being planned, will connect Gabtoli with Purbasha Dasherbandi.

The 17.40km route, consisting of elevated and underground sections, will be completed by 2030, according to documents.

TWO OTHER MRTS

MRT-2 will connect Gabtoli with Chattogram Road via Basila, Jhigatala, Science Lab, Azimpur, Shaheed Minar, Golap Shah Mazar, Motijheel, Mugda and Demra.

MRT-4 will connect Kamalapur with Narayanganj with underground lines.

Hasina

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Ihsanul said on arrival of the PM at the meeting room of the Gono Bhaban, Abrar's mother embraced her and burst into tears. The PM held her with great affection for some time and sat down beside her instead of sitting on the chair set aside for her.

Abrar's brother Abrar Faiz, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, and Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif were present, among others.

Abrar, a second-year student of Buet's electrical and electronic engineering department, was beaten to death by a group of Chhatra League men at the university's Sher-e-Bangla Hall on October 7.

Later, his father filed a murder case against 19 Buet students, mostly Chhatra League leaders, and several other unnamed accused with Chawkbazar police station.

