



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at the opening ceremony of 13th national council of Jatiya Sramik League, the labour wing of Awami League, at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday morning.

PHOTO: PID

Badal laid to rest with state honours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Valiant freedom fighter and lawmaker Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal was laid to rest with state honours at his village home Sarowatali under Boalkhali upazila of Chattogram last night.

His third and fourth namaz-e-janaza were held at Boalkhali upazila mosque and his village home Sarowatali, reports our correspondent from Chattogram.

The second namaz-e-janaza of Badal, lawmaker from Chattogram-8 (Boalkhali-Chandgaon), was held at the Jamiatul Falah mosque in the port city in the afternoon, participated by a huge number of people -- including ministers, whip of the parliament, MPs and leaders of different political parties.

A smartly turned out contingent of police gave state salute to Badal, the executive president of a faction of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD).

The veteran politician died early Thursday, while undergoing treatment at the Narayana Institute of Cardiac Sciences (NICS) in Bangalore, India.

The body of Badal arrived in Dhaka on Friday night, and his first namaz-e-janaza was held at the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday morning.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid rich tributes to Badal, by placing a wreath on his coffin.

After placing the wreath, the prime minister stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of profound respect to the memory of Badal.

Flanked by senior leaders and parliament members of the party, Sheikh Hasina, also the Awami League president, laid another wreath on the coffin on behalf of the party.

On behalf of President Abdul Hamid, his military secretary placed a wreath on the coffin.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Deputy Speaker

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Noor Hossain Day today



BSS, Dhaka

Shaheed Noor Hossain Day, a red-letter day in restoration of democracy in Bangladesh, is being observed today with due solemnity.

On this day in 1987, Noor Hossain, who imprinted his bare chest and back with the slogan "Swairachar nipat jak, gonotrantra mukti pak" (down with autocracy, let democracy be freed), was gunned down when police opened fire on an anti-autocracy demonstration in Dhaka's Zero Point.

This place was renamed "Noor Hossain Chatter (square)".

The martyrdom of Noor Hossain and others during the mass upsurge of late 1990s expedited the anti-autocracy movement.

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Real or fake?

Man held with pistol, ammo at airport claims those are toys

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials yesterday arrested a man along with a "pistol" and 100 rounds of "bullets" at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital.

The arrestee was identified as Hasan Ali, 30, from Jashore, Sazzad Hossain, assistant commissioner of customs, told The Daily Star.

Hasan, an Italian expatriate, arrived in Dhaka by a flight from Turkey around 5:30am.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of customs took position at key points of the airport and arrested Hasan while he was crossing the green channel, the assistant commissioner said.

After scanning his luggage, officials found the foreign pistol and bullets, he added.

In primary interrogation, Hasan claimed that it was a toy gun and he bought it and the ammunition in Italy, Sazzad said.

Officials, however, suspected that the firearm and bullets were real.

Hasan was handed over to police after customs officials filed a case with Airport Police Station under the Arms Act.

Noor-e-Azam Mia, officer-in-charge of the police station, said law enforcers will seek court's permission for a ballistic test to confirm whether the firearm and ammunition are real.



'Open your hearts to peace, harmony'

Religious leaders urge all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called upon all to forge communal harmony, irrespective of their religious identity, to ensure peaceful coexistence and to take the country forward.

Christian Unity and Interreligious Dialogue Commission organised the seminar on communal harmony at Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) Centre in the capital's Mohammadpur.

The event was organised to mark the second anniversary of the visit of Pope Francis -- the head of the Roman Catholic Church -- to Bangladesh.

Father Patrick Gomes, general secretary of the Christian Unity, said there will be no violence and hatred if people of all religions learn to live in harmony, which is highly necessary for the country.

"Openness can bring peace and harmony. We should keep our hearts open and respect each other, including their beliefs," he said.

Speaking at the event, Cardinal Patrick D'Rozario said the main theme of all

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Eden college student stabbed in dorm

Attacker and victim both BCL activists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Centring alleged "seat allocation business", a Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activist of Eden Mohila College allegedly attacked another activist of the college with a sharp weapon yesterday.

The injured is Sabikunnahar alias Tamanna, a follower of BCL's joint convener (Eden College unit) Anjuman Ara alias Onu.

Former BCL joint convener (Eden College unit) Mahbuba Nasrin alias Rupa's follower Nabila Akhter allegedly attacked Tamanna.

The incident took place at around 8am at Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Hall of the college. According to witnesses, Nabila is an outsider and used to live at room number-219 of the dorm illegally, under the shelter of Nasrin.

Students said she is a student of Lalmatia Mohila College.

After knowing of the incident, Anjuman Ara and her followers went to the room and asked Nabila to leave the dorm. On information, Nasrin rushed to the spot too, said witnesses.

Both parties engaged in an altercation, and at one point, Nabila attacked Tamanna with a crescent kitchen blade.

Nabila was later handed over to Lalbagh Police Station with help of college authorities, said witnesses.

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DHAKA TODAY

SEMINAR

Beat the Diabetics: Current Trend in Practice

Organiser: Bangladesh Academy of Diabetics and Nutrition

Venue: AKM Giasuddin Milky Auditorium, Khamarbari

Time: 8:30am

EXPOSITION

International Yarn, Fabric, Trims and Accessories Expo

Organiser: Bangladesh International Fabric and Yarn Expo

Venue: International Convention City Bashundhara, Kuril Bishwa Road

Time: 10:30am

WORKSHOP

Cinematography and Lighting

Organiser: IAFM

Venue: International Academy of Film and Media, Monipuripara

Time: 10am

MUSIC CLASS

A Journey with Irish Whistle

Venue: Jatra Biroti, Banani

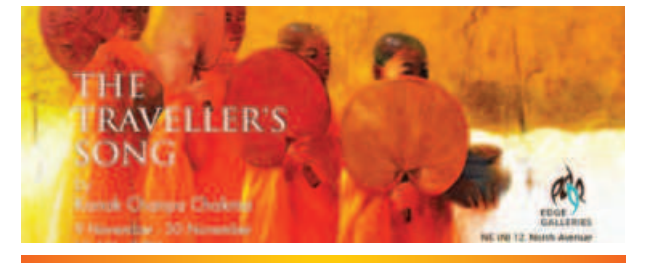
Time: 3pm

EXHIBITION

The Traveller's song

Venue: Bay's Edgewater, Gulshan-2

Time: 10am



RUPNAGAR SLUM CYLINDER BLAST

Bleak days ahead for victim families

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and HELEMUL ALAM

Ten days after the Rupnagar gas cylinder blast in Mirpur, 13-year old Bishwajit can barely see in his left eye.

Before the incident, he was working in a t-shirt printing factory, to support his family -- single mother and garment worker Jhuma Rani Das, and two-year-old sister Rakhi Das.

A day after the tragic incident on October 30 that left seven children of Rupnagar Slum dead and at least 20 others -- mostly children -- seriously injured, Bishwajit was taken to National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital with splinters in his eyes.

"My salary is about Tk 9,000 and my son earned Tk 3,500," said Jhuma, who has been raising her two children alone since she was abandoned by her husband a year ago.

"I took him to the hospital today," Jhuma told this newspaper yesterday.

"Doctors have just prescribed medicine and tell me to continue the dosages for a month. I don't know how I will continue his treatment. I have missed work for so many days, I don't even know if I still have my job," said a hapless Jhuma, adding that she did not

get any financial assistance. She loaned Tk 20,000 from lenders at a monthly interest of Tk 2,000. "I don't know how I will return the money," said Jhuma.

Shahjahan, father of seven-year-old Mohammad Shaheen who got hit by splinters in his cheek, neck and right arm, has also spent around Tk 20,000 taking loan from lenders at high interest, but is still short of cash.

Shaheen was rushed to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, and later referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). However, it became so difficult for his impoverished parents to afford the commute back and forth from Mirpur, as well as medicines, that they released their son from the hospital two days later, and brought him home.

"I have been living in the slum for the last 12 years, but never took loans. This time around, I had no alternative," said Shahjahan.

He said he and his wife -- a domestic help -- earn around Tk 12,000 per month, and the additional expense is a huge burden for them.

"We don't know what we will do now, as we have to pay Tk 3,000 monthly to the lenders alone, and

have to continue Shaheen's treatment as well," said frustrated Shahjahan.

Unlike Bishwajit and Shaheen, Jannat Begum is still admitted at the hospital -- the burn unit of DMCH. However, her family seems to be in a deeper crisis.

She will need reconstructive surgery in her arm, said Resident Surgeon Partha Shankar Pal of DMCH burn unit on Friday.

Jannat's husband -- a 25-year old rickshaw-puller -- has had to go to his village home in Bhola to get loans from a microcredit lender, as he failed to get loans from his slum since he is new to the city.

"Doctors advised me to be prepared for surgery... But I cannot see any way to gather funds," said Nazrul, who got around Tk 15,000 as assistance from well-wishers and spent Tk 25,000 more in loans.

"I am thankful that my wife is still alive, though she has lost her right hand. But it is getting tougher by the day for me to continue her treatment," said Nazrul.

He said he earns Tk 500 per day pulling rickshaw, and a large part of it goes in his day-to-day living cost.



A lion's share of the road underneath the Bijoy Sarani-Tejgaon flyover has been taken over by low-income people, who have set up shops and shanties, keep their rickshaw vans parked here, and even rear chicken. As a result, vehicular movement on the road has become constricted. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Clockwise from left, seven-year-old Shaheen has gone back to their Rupnagar slum home from the hospital, because his father Shahjahan cannot keep up with the costs of having him there; Jannat Begum sits on her bed at the burn unit of DMCH, with her right hand wrapped in layers of plasters and bandage; and Bishwajit, who has lost most of his vision in one eye in the cylinder blast, has also returned home but his treatment is far from over. PHOTO: SHAHEEN MOLLAH



The Daily Star
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Manager (Corporate Affairs)
The Daily Star, 64-65, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue
Dhaka-1215
Phone: 09610-222222, Mob: 01711-582702