



PHOTO OF THE DAY

AMRAN HOSSAIN



Spring flowers adorn the trees at High Court premises and brighten the grounds as they fall. Two children collect these fallen petals, later to be made into floral arrangements. This photo was taken recently.

Youths want to be agents of change, not onlookers

Says UNV Asia-Pacific regional manager in interview with Star

PORIMOL PALMA

South African anti-apartheid revolutionary Nelson Mandela's saying "The youths of today are the leaders of tomorrow" remains true in every sense even today. When they aspire to be leaders – be it in politics, economy or society – or become professionals, they need to learn the skills relevant to their field.

In the era of artificial intelligence, skills-set requirements are also changing. Teamwork, negotiation, critical thinking and creativity are some of the abilities which will be essential in the coming days.

"These are the skills you will learn when you become UN volunteers," said Shalina Miah, UN Volunteers (UNV) regional manager for Asia-Pacific, during her recent visit to Bangladesh to inspire the country's youths to engage in volunteering.

During her visit, she signed a memorandum of understanding with the Economic Relations Division (ERD), with the latter committing to fully fund ten Bangladeshi civil servants to work as UN volunteers in Asia-Pacific and Europe as experts on various areas of development.

This is the first such deal between UNV and Bangladesh, which will increase the representation of the country in the UN system.

"It's a landmark deal," Shalina, a Bangladesh-origin Belgian citizen, said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star at UNV Bangladesh office in the capital on February 17. She lauded how the country is now playing important roles in the international development discourse.

The civil servants, who will gather international experience while working as volunteers, will add value to the services they provide to the people at home, she said.

UNV engages a lot of youths as volunteers, and Bangladeshi youths should be engaged more in the UNV programme, she said.

"We have database of more than



Shalina Miah

3,00,000 volunteers worldwide. Of them, only 337 Bangladeshis are registered in the database. Given the level of population in Bangladesh, the number should be more," Shalina said.

"We want more volunteerism. This is one way of accelerating Sustainable Development Goals. When we reach 2020, there will be only ten years left for achieving the SDGs," she added. "You can achieve the SDGs with more volunteers who can reach out to the marginalised levels."

Noting that Bangladesh is at the stage of demographic dividend, having more than 40 percent youths in its population, she said through volunteering they can learn technical skills and soft skills like teamwork, negotiation and creativity.

"For youths, this is a very good pathway to learn these skills and then use [them] in different contexts – government, private sector or international development. This helps them to be selfless and contribute to the society," Shalina said.

She said youths in Bangladesh are very engaged, active, passionate and eager to make the world a better place.

"Wherever I go, I have the best time seeing the spirit of the youths. The youths today are active. They want to be agents of change, not onlookers. We want to bring that spirit to the UN level."

NINE PERCENT INTEREST RATE Writ petition filed against BB decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday challenging the legality of Bangladesh Bank's (BB) decision that instructed the scheduled banks to set a maximum nine percent interest rate on all loans except credit cards.

Md Mahfuzur Rahman, an apprentice lawyer, submitted the petition praying to the HC to issue a rule upon the respondents to explain why the direction issued by BB on February 24 should not be declared illegal.

The finance secretary, BB governor and its general manager (Banking Regulation and Policy Department) Rezaul Islam have been made respondents to the prayed rule.

The petitioner also requested the HC to stay all operation of the direction till disposal of the rule.

In the writ petition, Mahfuzur Rahman said the central bank's February 24 decision may severely affect the already suffering banking sector and such restriction about reducing the interest rate is unlawful against establishment

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Charred remains of a family's hopes and dreams

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Thirty-eight-year-old Jannatul Ferdous dreamed of becoming a successful entrepreneur.

She was resolutely working her way towards the goal. Along with her job as an accountant of a pharmaceutical company, she had started an online clothing business.

"She named her business "Rushdi's Closet" after her son AKM Rushdi," Sheikh Reshma, Jannat's sister-in-law told The Daily Star yesterday.

Although her career was in line with her dreams, Jannat was exhausted from having to work double duty all day. She was desperately looking for some free time to spend with her family. It showed on her Facebook. She last posted - "How far is Friday?"

But all of this is a memory now. One of the victims of the fire that broke out at Eskaton's Dilu Road last Thursday, Jannat lost the battle with her injuries while undergoing treatment at the Incentive Care Unit (ICU) of Sheikh Hasina National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute.

With 95 percent inhalation burn, she was put on life support from Thursday noon. She later died around 9:30am yesterday, said Dr Samanta Lal Sen, coordinator of the institute.

Not only Jannat, the fire also killed her beloved Rushdi, who died in tragic circumstances. With 45 percent burns, her husband Shahidul Kirmany Rony is undergoing treatment at the same facility.

After the fire broke out in the five-storey building around 4am, the family woke up from sleep and tried to escape. With Rushdi in his arms, Rony tried to lead the family out of the building using the stairwell.

However, unable to see in the dark, Rony lost his footing and tumbled down the stairs, with Rushdi falling out of his arms, said Nasrin Akter, Rony's sister. This is the last thing Rony said before being put on life support, she added.

Seeing Rushdi fall into the fire, Jannat jumped in to try and save her son, but failed to do so. Rony wasn't going to abandon them. Already under duress, he tried crawling back up the stairs but lost consciousness due to the smog, Nasrin said.

Moments before she was put on life support, Jannat repeatedly asked for her baby and husband, in whispers, the only sound she could muster.

"We did not let her know that Rushdi had already died. We thought that she might come

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



In an effort to rid Dhaka of dusty roads, a vehicle sprays water on the streets as it drives along. In a recent report, Bangladesh's air ranked the worst, and authorities are taking measures to get the situation under control. This photo was taken on Saturday in front of the High Court.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DHAKA TODAY

SEMINAR

Bangladesh and India: A Promising Future
Organiser: BIISS and High Commission of India
Venue: Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel
Time: 10am

DISCUSSION

Crisis of Public Toilet, Health Hazards and Our Responsibilities
Organiser: People's Health Movement –Bangladesh
Venue: Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital, Dhanmondi
Time: 10am

BOOK LAUNCHING

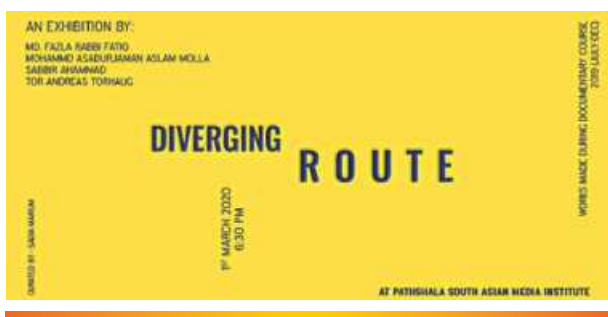
Jamdani: A World Class Tradition of Bangladesh by Maleka Khan
Organiser: Ananya Prokash
Venue: National Museum
Time: 3pm

ACADEMIC SESSION

English Speaking Club
Venue: EMK Center
Time: 4pm

EXHIBITION

Diverging Route
Venue: Pathshala South Asian Media Institute, Dhanmondi
Time: 11am



EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR

4,919 new books, none published from DU

SAYYED MOHMUD ULLAH

The month-long Amar Ekushey Granthamela, which ended on Saturday, witnessed the highest number of newly published books. However, no new title was released by Dhaka University (DU) publication, bringing into question why the university is lagging in the publishing scene.

The university's stall, which covered a gigantic area on Bangla Academy premises, only displayed old reprinted books, dissatisfying booklovers, this correspondent observed.

Academics said many writers belonging to the university bring their books out through commercial publication houses, as most do not get quick response from DU publication's authorities, due to its lengthy procedures for releasing new books.

Different publication houses, government service providers and autonomous bodies published a total of 4,919 new books this year, according to the information centre of Bangla Academy.

DU publication's dismal condition is nothing new, as the university had

published only three books last year, two in 2018, one in 2017, four in 2016, and none in 2015 and 2014, according to the catalogue of DU Publications Bureau.

"This sad situation indicates the waning impact of the university that was once the hub for many renowned writers and researchers in the country," said noted educationist Syed Anwar Hussain.

According to the bureau, the university has published only 180 books in the 99 years since its establishment in 1921.

The first published book was "The Construction of Reading Material for Teachers of Foreign Language" by Michel West in 1926, said DU publication stall attendants.

When asked, they failed to provide any updated catalogue, as it was last updated in June 2019.

"DU updates it [the catalogue] in June every year, but we generally make a temporary list of new titles for the fair. We didn't make any list this year as no book was published," said MD Shaheed, one of the stall attendants.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Release Baul singer Shariat Sarkar

Demand 44 eminent citizens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-four eminent citizens demanded unconditional release of Baul singer Shariat Sarkar who have been in jail since January 11 in a case filed under the Digital Security Act, on the charge of hurting religious sentiment.

In a statement, they demanded abolishing controversial provisions of the Digital Security Act and urged police to play unbiased role while implementing the law.

"We believe that arresting and imprisoning Shariat Boyati under Digital Security Act is a breach to freedom of expression. Apart from this, it also contradicts Bangladesh's obligation to international laws regarding human rights," read the joint-statement.

The 40-year-old Baul singer was arrested in Tangail's Mirzapur on January 11 after a cleric filed a case over comments made at a stage performance in December.

The civil society members said they have listened to the video clip of the show but did not find it hurting the belief of the religion.

"Freedom of expression will shrink further if the arrest spree under the Digital Security Act continues. Such incidents may put the country into a deep trouble in future," the statement added.

They said diversity in opinion is a major prerequisite for democracy and running the country in line with the spirit of Liberation War.

With the shrinking of freedom of expression,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Submit probe report by March 24

Court asks ACC in case against Khalid Bhuiyan

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to submit by March 24 the probe report of a case filed against expelled Jubo League leader Khalid Mahmud Bhuiyan over amassing wealth through illegal means.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order as ACC Deputy Director Zahangir Alam, also investigation officer of the case, failed to submit any report yesterday.

On October 21 last year, the ACC filed the case against expelled Jubo League Dhaka south organising secretary Khalid for amassing Tk 5.58 crore illegally.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2