

Chittagonians, keep your weddings small!

District admin says no more than 100 guests at ceremonies, to curb Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Culturally renowned for their extravagant weddings with huge crowds, port city residents now have to settle for only 100 guests at events as the district administration has given directives to control the spread of Covid-19.

Chattogram's culture is one of opulence when it comes to weddings -- thousands of guests gather at the venue to eat traditional mezbani beef and celebrate the nuptials. During prolonged shutdowns in 2020 due to the pandemic, there was a damper on these celebrations.

But the traditions were picked back up once health guidelines were relaxed, and in the last four months, weddings with throngs of people have taken place with no concerns about the coronavirus.

With the alarming rise in Covid-19 infections in Bangladesh, District Administration of Chattogram has issued seven points of directives on gathering in community centres, convention hall, restaurants and recreation spots yesterday.

The administration has asked not to allow over 100 guests in any social, cultural, political, or religious programmes to contain the spread of the virus.

Signed by Chattogram's Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mohammad Mominur Rahman, the circular stated that action will be taken if anyone violates the directives and remains indifferent to the health and safety guidelines.

According to the directives, community centres can only fill one-fourth of their total seating capacity at any programme, while the presence of over 100 guests is strongly discouraged.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



An air-conditioner mechanic stands on a narrow window ledge to fix the appliance, with no safety harness. As summer is in full gear, such mechanics can be seen in precarious positions in the coming days, neglecting safety equipment. This photo was taken yesterday from Dhaka University area.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

MAYHEM IN SUNAMGANJ Police, local admin were negligent: ASK

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local police and administration were negligent in carrying out their responsibility to control the situation and prevent attacks on the Hindu community in Noagaon village of Sunamganj's Shalla upazila on March 17, a leading rights organisation said yesterday.

Ain o Salish Kendra made the observation after its two-member fact-finding team visited the area on March 19.

Many of the affected people complained that law enforcers on March 16 (a day before the attack) repeatedly assured people of the Hindu community that there was no reason to be fearful. Despite this, the attack was carried out.

The attack could have been avoided if law enforcers took coordinated steps to protect the community, ASK said in a press statement.

"It is not understandable to anyone why the administration did not tighten security but relied on verbal assurance," it said, adding that it thinks the lack of coordination by the administration contributed to such a crime.

The rights body demanded to hold local police and administration accountable

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

'They have to wear prison uniforms'

Authorities issue order noticing convicted prisoners wearing regular outfits in jail, as means to escape

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Every accused, convicted after trial and sent to jail, has to wear black/white striped shirt and pajamas as a uniform in prisons.

This outfit has been provided to the convicted inmates as a strategy to separate them from the non-convicted inmates. But in recent time, inmates were found wearing regular clothes inside the prisons.

Due to such rules violation, it became difficult to monitor and maintain the discipline inside prisons and the convicted inmates were using it as a scope to escape, several prison officials said while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

The latest example of escaping from jail wearing regular clothes was found in August last year.

Abu Bakkar Siddique, a convict sentenced to life-term imprisonment, escaped from Kashimpur Central Jail-2 by walking out through the main gate with a ladder in his hand. He was not wearing any

prison uniform, sources claimed.

Besides, inmates often allegedly flee from hospitals in Dhaka while undergoing treatment. Sources said they often change to regular attires at hospital washrooms and escape.

After such irregularities were noticed by the Department of Prisons, a letter was sent to jail superintendents and jailers of all the district and central jails on March 15.

The letter, signed by Col Abrar Hossain, additional inspector general of prisons, said it has been noticed in recent period that convicted inmates are not wearing prison uniforms and are moving around inside the prisons wearing regular clothes.

"It is disrupting the prison discipline... There is also a chance of untoward incidents such as prisoners escaping taking place, which is not desirable under any circumstances," according to the letter, also sent to all deputy inspector generals of prisons.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

LAUNDERING Tk 494.6CR

6 more cases filed against PK Halder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed another six cases charging PK Halder as prime accused for laundering about Tk 494.6 crore from International Leasing and Financial Services Limited (ILFSL).

Earlier, ACC filed 15 cases against Halder and his associates for laundering about Tk 1,128 crore from ILFSL, a non-banking financial institution (NBFI). ACC Deputy Director Gulshan Anwar Prodhan filed the cases yesterday accusing 37 people including Halder for laundering Tk 494.6 crore of the NBFI.

The other accused are: Imam Hossain, proprietor, Imexco; Uttam Kumar Mistri, managing director, Lipro International; Ratan Kumar Biswas, proprietor, RB Enterprize; Ramprashad Roy, proprietor, Konika Enterprize; Subrata Das, chairman, Ookayama Limited and Proshanto Deuri, chairman, Earthscope Limited.

According to the case statement, Halder took loans from financial institutions against at least two dozen non-existent companies created by him.

In some cases, he used part of the funds to repay installments of loans taken against several fictitious firms.

Imexco took loan of about Tk 58 crore, Lipro International Tk 174 crore, Ookayama Tk 87.6 crore, RB enterprise Tk 55 crore, Konika Tk 60 crore and Earthscope Tk 60 crore from ILFSL.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A visitor ruffles through pages of a book at a stall in Suhrawardy udyan in the capital, at this year's Ekushey book fair.

EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR

Readers on the hunt for new-release titles

MATHEWS CHIRAN

One of the key attractions of Amar Ekushey book fair is the release of innumerable new books. Many wait for a whole year to satiate their hunger for newly released material, and the fair fulfils their desire in the form of novels, poetry, fiction and sci-fi.

Although the pandemic delayed the fair, book lovers still came to the Suhrawardy Udyan. Yesterday was the fair's fourth day, and although the crowd was not as big when compared to pre-pandemic times, as the sun set in, the number of visitors started to grow.

"New books are always refreshing to read, and the fair always offers a wider variety. So, I like to always come to the fair whenever it takes place," said Dhaka University student Ratul Talukder, who was looking for the new release of Muntassir Mamoon, one of his favourite writers.

Ridi Islam is a private university student who came to enjoy the evening with her friends at the fair and buy new books.

"We can buy books, even new ones, online. However, coming to the fair physically to buy them has a different meaning. It invigorates your passion towards literature and gives you a unique kind of joy," said Ridi, who loves to read sci-fi and was looking for the new release of Dr Zafar Iqbal.

Many prefer to buy books for their friends or loved ones during the fair, and new releases get priority. Depending on the genre and choice, they select books for people as gifts.

"I'm buying a book for my friend who lives outside Dhaka. We don't meet much, but he is coming here for the fair. I hope he likes it," said private job holder Rakib, while buying *Amader Hariya Jawa Paltan* by Muntassir Mamoon, a new release at Subarna publication.

Publishers also wait for the fair to release new books and get generous profits. Therefore, at their stalls, they display the new releases to catch readers' attention. However, many books are yet to arrive, as only four days have passed.

Ananya Prokashoni Publisher Monirul Hoque said, "We are releasing 125 books this year, and 100 of them came till now. Hopefully, the rest will come within a week."

"During this pandemic, everything became uncertain. We hope the crowd will come, and we will be able to maintain health precautions. Wearing masks, our staffers are showing readers new releases," said Monirul, also executive director of Academic and Creative Publisher's Association of Bangladesh.

Muktijudher Bhinnno Dolippro by Muntassir Mamoon, *Japanider Chokhe Bangalee Bir* by Dr Noor Nobi and *Sabuj*

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Charges framed against expelled Jubo League leader Khalid in two cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against expelled Jubo League leader Khalid Mahmud Bhuiyan in connection with two cases filed under the Narcotics Control and Special Powers acts.

Khalid, now in jail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Judge Md Robiul Alam of the Metropolitan Special Tribunal-4 of Dhaka read out the charges to him.

The judge fixed June 1 for starting the trial. The case under the Narcotics Control Act was filed with Motijheel Police Station on charges of possessing 190 pieces of yaba pills, while the other one under the Special Powers Act was filed with Gulshan Police Station for possessing a significant amount of foreign currencies.

In October last year, police pressed charges against Khalid in the cases.

On February 26 last year, the same court framed charges against Khalid in another case for possessing 585 pieces of yaba pills.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

NGOs need to unite to keep up sustainable development

Speakers tell discussion marking Brac's 49th anniv

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Non-governmental organisations must be united to continue sustainable development for Bangladesh's future, and ensure timely, quality services for the grassroots, speakers said at an online discussion yesterday.

Effective collaboration between the government and NGOs is also a prerequisite to sustain the fruits of development, they told the discussion, marking the 49th anniversary of Brac, said a press release.

Moderated by Brac Executive Director Asif Saleh, the topic of the discussion was "Bangladesh and Brac: Collaboration for Development".

Brac, one of the country's largest development organisations, celebrated its anniversary when Bangladesh is also marking the golden jubilee of its independence.

Founded in 1972, Brac innovated frugal and effective solutions in many fields, including socio-economic sectors, including education, health and nutrition,

and microfinance and social enterprises, the release said.

Its graduation model to tackle extreme poverty through combined services of handing over assets for income generation, livelihood and life-skills training, and health and education is now implemented by many agencies and governments in 46 countries, it said.

In the last nearly five decades, Brac maintained the journey of liaison with the Bangladesh government and other partners to bring essential services and opportunities for self-development at the door of the marginalised and poorest people, it added.

Praising Brac for its role in empowering women and reducing gender discrimination, lawmaker in the reserved seat and Prip Trust Executive Director Aroma Dutta said, "Bangladesh today is the best example of women empowerment in the world. Certainly, there were government initiatives, but it is Brac that has brought

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

CID official, staffer assaulted with hammers in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police official and his employee were assaulted with hammers over a land dispute in Dhaka's Mohammadpur yesterday afternoon.

Gazi Mizanur Rahman (50), an inspector of Criminal Investigation Department in Narayanganj, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

He needed 26 stitches on his head after the assault, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in-charge of DMCH police outpost.

Golam Mostafa (42), the CID inspector's caretaker, was also receiving treatment at the hospital.

Injured Mizanur alleged that a group of eight people from a local housing group attacked them around 1pm while Mostafa was working on the boundary wall of his five-katha land in Bosila Garden City.

"They beat us with hammers over a land dispute," the CID officer said, lying on a bed at the hospital.

On information, his relatives rushed there and took them to the hospital.

Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Police Station, said Mizanur is badly injured and has not filed a complaint yet, but they have begun an investigation.



A large hole was created in the middle of the road in the capital's Bangshal about two weeks ago, allegedly due to development work carried out by Dhaka Wasa. However, there has been no initiative to fix the road, and the stick that locals put there to warn oncoming vehicles does little to prevent accidents from occurring every now and then. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

ASSAULT CASE AGAINST ERFAN SALIM

Court summons complainant for opinion on probe

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday summoned the complainant of the case filed against lawmaker Haji Mohammad Salim's son Mohammad Erfan Salim and four others over the assault of a Navy officer in October last year.

Dhaka's Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Hasibul Haque summoned Lt Wasif Ahmed Khan to appear before it on April 28, for his opinion over the probe report submitted by detectives.

If the complainant does not agree with the probe report, the court will then decide whether to accept it or order further investigation into the case, court sources said.

Earlier on February 11, Sub-Inspector Mominul Haque of Detective Branch of police and the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge-sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court of Dhaka.

The other accused are: Erfan's bodyguard Zahidul Mollah, chauffeur Mizanur Rahman, protocol officer of Madina Group AB Siddique Dipu and Kazi Ripon, a close associate of Erfan.

Of them, Erfan and three others are now in jail while Ripon was shown fugitive in the charge sheet. The IO appealed to the court to issue arrest warrant against Ripon.

According to the case filed by navy officer Wasif, an SUV with the plate "Dhaka Metro-Gha 11-5736" rear-ended his motorcycle in the capital's Dhanmondi when he and his wife were returning to their Dhaka Cantonment home from Nilkhet around 7:45pm on October 25.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4