

## 'Mitali Express' to be announced on Saturday

Fares for new train from Dhaka to India's New Jalpaiguri fixed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India are going to announce launching of the new passenger train, which will run between the two neighbouring countries, on Saturday, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan said yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, who is scheduled to be in Bangladesh on March 26 and 27, will jointly give the announcement, he said.

"This is going to be a historic moment. This will be a big achievement for communication between the two countries," the minister said at a press briefing inside Rail Bhaban.

However, the train's operation between Dhaka and West Bengal's New Jalpaiguri (NJP) will start after the Covid-19 situation reaches normalcy, he added.

The railways ministry in October last year announced that Bangladesh and India were planning to introduce a passenger train service on Dhaka-Siliguri route from this March to mark 50 years

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**THE IRONY...** Drove of outgoing international passengers gather at Chattogram General Hospital premises, at a spot where there isn't even enough room to stand properly, to get tested for Covid-19 around 9am yesterday. Just a day earlier, the district administration released a circular, instructing establishments like community centres and restaurants to disallow gatherings of more than 100 people.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

NEW MEDICAL CENTRE ON CAMPUS

## DU syndicate divided over naming building

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

The Dhaka University (DU) administration has become divided over naming a to-be-constructed building of University Medical Centre.

The building is supposed to be named after a top industrialist of the country, as per the decision of university engineering office.

University Vice Chancellor Md Akhtaruzzaman and a syndicate member, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star that the decision on naming the building was taken in the last syndicate meeting.

Meanwhile, Pro-VC Muhammad Samad and two other syndicate members said no concrete decisions were taken, rather it was only discussed at the meeting.

On February 28, a proposal was placed at the syndicate meeting to decide on whether a newly constructed building of the University Medical Centre will be named after the industrialist or not.

This correspondent spoke to six syndicate members including the VC. Of them, three members said the agenda was "only discussed and yet to be finalised" while two others said the decision was finalised, and one declined to comment.

The VC said, "The proposal was finalised as the majority of members supported it."

Eleven days after the meeting, chief engineer of the university Abul Kalam Sikder issued a letter to the businessman to take further steps in this regard.

The letter also stated that the engineering office gave permission to construct the building and name it after the businessman, who is also an alumnus of DU.

Pro-VC of administration, Prof Samad on March 14 wrote to the VC opposing the decision and opined that the names of martyred teachers of the University should be prioritised.

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## Young activists find creative solutions to gender inequality

Care Bangladesh's Tipping Point initiative battles social stigma in remote villages

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People of a remote village in Sunamganj were stunned to see teenage girls competing alongside boys at a cricket tournament, considering they do not even allow girls and boys to take a walk together.

But the 50 young boys and girls from that village in Jamalganj upazila did not pay heed to any obstacles, and remained focused on their goal.

Under an initiative titled "Tipping Point" by Care Bangladesh, youth clubs called Fun Centres were established in multiple villages across the country. Each centre has 25 boys and 25 girls as members who engage in promoting equality in all spheres of life.

During a roundtable discussion titled "Boli Kotha Okopote" organised by Care Bangladesh at The Daily Star Centre yesterday, young women activists spoke about overcoming social stigmas to ensure gender equality in their communities.

Sadia Akhter from Jamalganj Upazila said, "When we decided to organise a

cricket tournament with participation of boys and girls, villagers began discouraging us, saying such initiatives are unheard of and girls should only do household duties. They began complaining about us to our parents."

"So we decided to include parents' teams in the tournament as well. We had fathers' teams and mothers' teams," Sadia explained.

"With great difficulty, we were able to make people understand that if a boy can play in the field, then a girl has the same right to play. When the tournament started, we had bigger crowds than boys-only tournaments. We realised, the bigger the challenge, the bigger the success," said Sadia.

Speakers at the roundtable spoke on the many kinds of social obstacles they had to face, including child marriage, violence, hindrance in education, not being allowed to do cultural activities, and not being allowed to even walk on their own.

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## 4 more cases filed against PK Halder

His associate held at airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed four more cases over the laundering of about Tk 248.5 crore from International Leasing and Financial Services Limited (ILFSL), accusing 30 people.

Former managing director of now-defunct NRB Global Bank PK Halder is made prime accused in the cases.

So far, the anti-graft watchdog has filed 25 cases for laundering of about Tk 1,871 crore from ILFSL. Sixty-seven people are made accused in the cases.

According to the case statements, 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 loan instalments taken against his several fictitious firms. The investigation officer did not find the existence of these organisations.

Kolasin took loan of about Tk 60 crore, Drinan Apparels Tk 60 crore, Wintel International Tk 68.5 crore and Neutraceutical Limited Tk 60 crore from ILFSL.

Managing director of Drinan Mohammad Abu Rajib Maruf, Director of Wintel Sukumar Saha, chairman of Kolasin Atoshi Mridha and proprietor of Neutraceutical Swapan Kumar Mistri are among the accused in the four cases.

Meanwhile, an accused - Shubhra Rani Ghosh, a director of Ookayama international, was arrested at Dhaka airport yesterday in connection with a laundering case.



**Ayman Sadiq and Munzereen Shahid drew a large number of visitors to a stall yesterday. They had to repeatedly ask the crowd to maintain distancing, between clicking selfies and signing autographs with fans.**

PHOTO: STAR

EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR

## Young readers thrilled to meet favourite writer

MATHEWS CHIRAN

On the fifth day of the book fair, the crowd was a little relaxed at the Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday.

But there was an exception. Tamralipi was thronging with visitors.

The visitors were mostly young students, they were there to meet and cheer for their favourite author, as Ayman Sadiq was present at the stall yesterday. Awaiting his presence all day, the youth in attendance started to take autographs from him and selfies with him once he arrived.

On his first visit to this year's Boimela, Sadiq met them with equal enthusiasm, but cautioned everyone to maintain safe distance due to the ongoing spike in coronavirus cases across the country.

Kefayet Ullah, a student of Sarkari Soheed Suhrawardy Collegee, was excited to get his autograph. "I never thought I will see him in person. I'm a huge fan, I always follow his videos. This is amazing for me," he was oozing with excitement.

Sisters, Maisha and Mou Akther, from Bir Sreshtha Noor Mohammad Public College, made their way through a thick crowd just for Sadiq's autograph.

"If we didn't get it, we would've felt guilty all day. He's like our favourite person," Maisha said, holding her copy of Never Stop Learning by Ayman Sadiq.

Along with autographs, Ayman Sadiq was busy answering his followers' questions, mostly advising them on queries related

to life and education. He also asked those in attendance to read more and do the best they can with life.

"This year's fair is different because of the need to maintain health guidelines. Despite the necessary, I miss the Boimela of old, when I'd get to walk around amid so many young readers," he told this correspondent.

"This year, my brother (Sadman) and I co-wrote a book named Digital Marketing Hacks, though it's yet to hit the shelves," he informed. "This year, I have taken a backseat from writing. Instead, I've transitioned into more of a behind-the-scenes guy for books published by 10 Minute School affiliates."

Popular 10 Minute School instructor Munzereen Shahid also came to the stall, to promote her own books and interact with the crowd. She came back to Dhaka from London recently, just to attend the fair. The crowd was ecstatic to meet one of their most beloved internet personalities.

"I'm so glad to be here. I hope my two books on English will help ward off the fear of English language and make learning it easier easily," she said, while signing autographs.

Both 'Sobar Jonno Vocabulary' and Ghorebose Spoken English' by Munzereen Shahid are available at Tamralipi.

Apart from Never Stop Learning, 'Student Hacks' and 'Communication Hacks', Sadiq's older publications, are selling like hot cake at Tamralipi.

BARAPUKURIA GRAFT CASE

## Hearing on charge framing against Khaleda May 20

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set May 20 for hearing on charge framing against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and six others in Barapukuria coalmine graft case.

Judge ASM Ruhul Imran of the Special Judge's Court-2 of Dhaka passed the order after a petition was filed with the court on behalf of Khaleda, seeking an adjournment of the hearing. Advocate Masud Ahmed Talukder, one of her lawyers, told The Daily Star.

In the petition, Masud said Khaleda, who is now out of jail after an executive order of the government, is unwell and cannot leave her residence due to Covid-19 pandemic. So, the hearing should be adjourned, he said.

During the hearing, two other accused including BNP leader Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, now on bail, were present at the court while three others, including Mozammel Hossain, were absent.

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## 'Yaba dealers using expats as carriers'

Man held with 10,000 pills in pickle jars at Dhaka airport; directives issued for steps to avoid impact on labour market

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

With an aim to stop narcotics smuggling from Bangladesh to abroad through expatriates, the airlines have to ensure that their passengers packed their own luggage.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen came up with the suggestion after the director general (DG) of Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) said that a tendency of getting involved with narcotics smuggling was found among Bangladeshi workers going or staying abroad.

DNC DG Muhammed Ahsanul Jabbar said this at the first virtual meeting of the National Narcotics Control Advisory Committee on December 28 last year.

DG Jabbar also said such illegal practices could have a negative impact on the labour market. In response to that, the home ministry's security service division's secretary has asked all officials concerned to take necessary action in this regard.

"People were sent back due to their involvement with narcotics smuggling," said the secretary.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, who presided over the meeting, said anti-narcotics awareness among those going abroad has to be increased.

Muhammad Abdur Rauf Miah, deputy secretary of the home ministry, issued the written directives regarding the virtual meeting on February 14.

The issues came to the fore after transnational narcotics smuggling syndicates were found using expatriates travelling abroad or coming back home as carriers.

Bangladeshi citizens got arrested in different countries in the last couple of years with yaba inside their luggage, according to law enforcers.

Even in a meeting with Chattogram district police on January 5, 2019, expatriate representatives said drug dealers were tricking "innocent" migrants into carrying the pills.

Meanwhile, a Saudi Arabia-bound passenger was arrested from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) early yesterday while attempting to

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BASURHAT POLITICAL CLASH

## 72 get anticipatory bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to another 72 Awami League leaders and activists from Basurhat area under Companiganj upazila of Noakhali for four weeks in two separate violence and arson cases.

The HC also ordered the accused ruling party men to surrender to the trial court concerned in four weeks in connection with the cases.

The bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Khandaker Diliruzzaman came up with the orders following eight separate petitions filed by the accused seeking bail in the cases filed against them.

Earlier in the day, the accused petitioners appeared before the HC bench for anticipatory bail in the cases.

Companiganj's former upazila chairman Mizanur Rahman Badal and Sub-Inspector of police Mahfuzur Rahman filed the two cases with Basurhat police station on February 19 and 22 respectively, following a clash between two groups of local AL men over a political dispute on February 19, said SS Arefin Junnun, petitioners' lawyer.

He said the HC granted them bail as there is no specific allegation against them and no casualty took place in the incident.

Lawyer Farhad Ahmed appeared for the accused AL leaders and activists during hearing of the bail petitions.

Earlier on March 18, the same HC bench had granted anticipatory bail to 107 local AL men of the same area in four similar cases.

During hearing their bail petitions on that day, the HC bench expressed dissatisfaction at the recent incidents of violence between two groups of ruling AL men at Basurhat area, questioning what is happening in the area to lead to such incidents.

Mentionable, Abdul Quader Mirza, younger brother of Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, has stirred up a debate in the country's political arena with some of his remarks at Noakhali's Companiganj upazila.



**As the city gets hotter by the days, watermelons, and their ability to quell the heat, get more and more appealing for those who have to stand under the scorching sun. A street vendor at the capital's Green Road area readies a plate of the juicy fruit for his customers. This photo was taken yesterday.**

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

EMBARGO ON LEAVING COUNTRY

## ACC petition seeks stay on HC verdict to formulate law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday moved a petition before the Supreme Court, seeking stay on the High Court verdict over formulating a specific law or rule regarding imposition of embargo on corruption suspects or accused from leaving the country.

After a brief hearing, Chamber judge of the SC's Appellate Division Justice Obaidul Hassan adjourned hearing till March 28.

ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan submitted the petition.

In the petition, the commission said if ACC is to take permission from the special judge's court for imposing embargo on any corruption suspect or accused leaving the country, the inquiry or investigation against him or her will face obstacles.

Delivering verdict on a petition, the HC on March 16 observed that a specific law or rule is needed soon regarding imposition of embargo on corruption suspects or accused leaving the country.

There is no specific law or rule to ban people, against whom inquiries or

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