

17th anniversary of Aug 21 grenade attack observed

AGENCIES

The country observed the 17th anniversary of the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka with various programmes yesterday.

On this day in 2004, a grisly grenade attack was carried out on an anti-terrorism rally organised by AL at Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

Sheikh Hasina, then leader of the opposition, was the target of the attack. The BNP-Jamaat alliance government was in office at that time.

At least 24 people, including AL women affairs secretary and late President Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman, were killed. Three hundred others were also injured.

AL President Sheikh Hasina, who was addressing the rally, survived the attack but suffered injuries in her ears.

Fourteen years later, a Dhaka court sentenced 19 people, including the then BNP government's state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, to death.

Tarique Rahman, the eldest son of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia and the party's current acting chairman, and 18 others were also sentenced to life in prison.

Awami League and affiliated bodies observe the day as "Grenade Attack Day".

Marking the day, AL, its front and associate bodies and its left-leaning allies, and other political parties, socio-cultural and professional organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes across the country, maintaining health guidelines, reports UNB.

A discussion was held in the morning to recall the

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People from all walks of life gathered at the capital's Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday to pay respects to those who lost their lives in the grisly August 21 grenade attack in 2004. At least 24 people were killed and around 300 were injured in the incident. An altar was set up at the site of the tragedy to commemorate the departed souls.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Muqtadir Ali passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Major (ret'd) Muqtadir Ali, a valiant freedom fighter and former chairman of Petrobangla, died on Friday at the Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka.

He was 69, said Retired Armed Forces Officers Welfare Association in its website.

"Muqtadir Ali fell on the floor and hurt his head while he was trying to put something high up in his home. Immediately, he was taken to the hospital. He didn't regain his sense afterwards. He died around 5pm on Friday," said Maj Gen (ret'd) Jiban Kanai Das, batchmate and friend of Muqtadir.

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Upgraded research, training facility for RHD on the way

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is finally getting an upgraded research and training facility, much-needed given the volume of projects the government agency implements and the upkeep needed of the existing sprawling network.

At present, the department only has Bangladesh Road Research Laboratory (BRRL), spread over 41 acres of land in the capital's Mirpur area, with separate sections for laboratory tests, soil investigation and quality control. But the workforce and testing apparatuses at the facility is inadequate, leaving the RHD dependent on Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology for complex tests, according to officials.

The state of the training centre is worse due to severe workforce shortage, said an RHD executive engineer, on condition of anonymity to speak candidly on the matter.

"The centre is running with less than 10 people. As a technical

- New centre to be built at Mirpur
- 4 buildings to be set up at a cost of Tk 251.6cr
- It's part of RHD's plan to strengthen research, training
- Existing facilities not adequate

department, the training facilities should be robust," he added.

In this given situation, consultants under another RHD project titled "Technical Assistant for Sub-Regional Road Transport Project Preparatory Facility" had recommended bringing the BRRL and training centre together under a new wing and create a "Centre of Excellence", shows RHD document.

In the first phase of the project under one of the 11 packages of SASEC Road Connectivity Project-2, funded by the Asian Development Bank, a Road Research and Training Centre (RRTC) will be set up on 14 acres inside the BRRL's complex at a cost of Tk 251.6 crore.

The cabinet committee on

government purchase on Thursday approved a proposal for appointing a contractor for the works.

As per the proposal, the complex will be constructed by the National Development Engineers within two and a half years.

Apart from the one-year "defect liability period", the contractor will have to provide maintenance for three more years, officials said.

A defect liability period is a specified period after completion of a construction project during which the contractor may have to return to the site to fix defects.

"We hope the construction work will start within three to four months," Project Director Waliur Rahman told The Daily Star on Thursday.

There would be residential facilities for about 160 trainees, a six-storey main office for the research centre, a six-storey training centre, a three-storey testing laboratory building and a two-storey welfare building, shows documents.

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It's 'hateful and aggressive'

Say 64 eminent citizens over BCL stance against Prof Asif Nazrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-four eminent citizens have condemned Bangladesh Chhatra League's (BCL) "hateful and aggressive" actions against Dhaka University law department chair Dr Asif Nazrul over a Facebook post made on August 17.

"We strongly condemn the hateful and offensive role of the ruling party's students' wing and an associate organisation against Asif Nazrul over a Facebook post," they said in a joint statement released yesterday.

Such an aggressive attitude is a direct threat for people's right to freedom of thought and speech, and is part of a reprehensible project to create an environment of fear against free expression,

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'Meth trade in the hands of a few'

10 held with crystal meth, yaba in Dhaka

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Alongside yaba, drug traders are now peddling the high-priced synthetic drug crystal meth, also called "ice", according to narcotics officials.

In the last two years, different law enforcement agencies conducted raids in Dhaka and Chattogram, and seized a huge amount of crystal meth.

A high official in the narcotics department, wishing not to be named, said five to seven persons are now controlling the ice trade in Dhaka. He, however, refused to share their details.

On Friday, Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrested 10 persons with 500 grammes of crystal meth and 5,000 yaba pills from the capital's Uttara, Banani, Banasree, Khilkhet and Bashundhara Residential Area.

DNC officials said in recent times, meth is being smuggled in from Myanmar through Teknaf border, an established gateway for yaba.

It is sold to affluent people living in upscale neighborhoods - 10 grammes go

for a minimum of Tk 1 lakh, said narcotics officials.

Crystal methamphetamine, a powerful drug that affects the central nervous system, poses high risks of stroke, heart attack, teeth decay, and permanent hallucinations, according to the website of the US National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Shafiqul Islam Sarker, an assistant chemist at DNC, said the drug is more hazardous than yaba. Meth is about 20 times more potent than yaba. A raw material for yaba - methamphetamine, in its cube form, is called crystal meth.

He added it is possible to make one lakh yaba pills with 500g of ice. Now drug dealers are bringing more ice than yaba. As it is easy to carry, it is possible to evade law enforcers.

The detainees include drug traders and those addicted to the drug. Most of them are businesspersons, private university students, and youngsters from rich families in Dhaka, DNC Additional Director Fazlur Rahman told a press briefing at its Tejgaon office yesterday.

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Hasan Azizul Huq shifted to BSMMU

He was flown to capital in morning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Noted writer Hasan Azizul Huq has been shifted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) from the National Heart Foundation yesterday evening around 6pm.

Earlier in the day, he was flown to Dhaka on an air ambulance and taken to the National Heart Foundation's CCU unit, family sources said.

From there, he was taken to BSMMU's medicine unit after Prime Minister's Office representatives

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South Sudan names road after Bangladesh

Keen to build partnership between 2 countries, says foreign minister

UNB, Dhaka

The South Sudan government has named a road in its capital Juba as "Bangladesh Road".

It was constructed with the help of the Bangladesh UN Peacekeeping Engineering contingent. The contingent was praised by the people of the country for their pro-people construction works, said the foreign ministry yesterday.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen, who is on an official visit to the country, met with the South Sudanese acting Defence Minister Gen Chol Thon Balok at his office in Juba on Friday.

The acting defence minister praised the role of Bangladesh Peacekeepers deployed in UNMISS.

He referred to the contribution of Bangladesh peacekeepers in infrastructure development of South Sudan as well as that in health services and commended them for being trained, disciplined and efficient.

Foreign Minister Momen suggested that cooperation between the two countries may be built in areas like pharmaceuticals, RMG, agriculture and ICT sectors.

He also underlined the importance of partnership to achieve the common aspirations of the people of the two countries for social and economic development.

Visit to Turkey Army chief for boosting defence ties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed, who is on an official visit to Turkey, met Turkey's President of Defense Industries Ismail Demer and Deputy Minister of National Defense Muhsin Dere on Thursday.

During the meeting, the army chief said there have been long-standing strategic friendships and cultural ties between the armed forces of Bangladesh and Turkey, said a press release of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

He also hoped that these relations would reach new heights in the future.

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Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed visited different stalls of International Defence Fair-2021 in Turkey on Friday, as part of his official visit to the country. Earlier, General Shafiuddin met Turkey's President of Defense Industries Ismail Demer and Deputy Minister of National Defense Muhsin Dere on Thursday.

PHOTO: ISPR



As part of an initiative by the railway authorities, areas around rail tracks are being cleared up across the country. But the continued existence of this Railway Colony Bazar beside the Khilgaon rail-crossing, a track that opens up at Kamalapur Rail Station, shows that the authorities' efforts are not nearly enough. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Parents worried over Aga Khan School's planned closure

Authorities to start anew; guardians say fees will be 3 times higher

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Many parents of Aga Khan School are anxious about the future of their children, as authorities concerned will close down the school and establish a new institute, which will reportedly charge more and restrict the option of choosing curriculums.

Besides, parents are worried whether they will be able to admit their children to the new institute.

They wrote a letter to Education Minister Dipu Moni, and sent copies to Secondary and Higher Education Division Secretary Mahub Hossain, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Prof Syed Md Golam Faruk and Dhaka Education Board Chairperson Prof Nehal Ahmed and others in this regard.

One of the parents, Noor Khan, said they had sent the letter on August 16.

In the letter, parents urged

authorities to take necessary steps to keep the present English-medium school open and continue Cambridge International Examinations and International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculums, so students can choose between them.

Prof Faruk and Prof Nehal both said they are yet to receive the letter.

"After getting the letter, we will take necessary steps following discussions with the education ministry," Prof Nehal told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon. Parents said the present school has been operating at the capital's Uttara for 33 years, and about 1,000 students are studying there.

Aga Khan Education Service, the managing authority of Aga Khan School, in an online meeting on June 16 and then via email, said the school would be closed down in phases during the next two academic years.

Aga Khan Academy's campus will be at Bashundhara Residential Area.

Many of the 1,000 students of the present school will have to be transferred. "We'll have to transfer our children to Aga Khan Academy or change schools," Noor Khan said.

The letter said authorities assured that there will be an opportunity to transfer students to Aga Khan Academy. Some days later, after an exchange between guardians and school authorities, parents came to know that tuition fees of the new school will be three to four times higher than that of Aga Khan School.

Current tuition fees vary from Tk 21,000 to Tk 25,000 per month.

Parents in the letter said the new school will offer only IB curriculum, which is reportedly not accepted by all universities in the country.

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