

Two teens die in Banani fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two teenagers died and a woman was injured after a fire originated at a residential building in Dhaka's Banani area early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Mim (16) and Swapna (14). Both used to work as house helps at a duplex flat -- on the fourth and fifth floors -- of a 10-storey building on Road 3 (Block-F) in Banani.

The fire originated around 1:40am on the fourth floor and four firefighting units doused it around 2:40am, said Rasel Sikder, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence Headquarters.

The bodies were recovered from the fourth floor's bathroom, fire officials said.

The owners were on the fifth floor at the time, they added.

Fire officials rescued the three and rushed them to a nearby hospital where doctors declared Mim and Swapna dead, said Rasel.

Injured Rinta (30), who is a relative of the flat owner, took treatment at the hospital.

The cause behind the fire that damaged the living room, kitchen, and furniture of the flat could not be ascertained immediately, said the fire officer.

Nur-e-Azam Mia, officer-in-charge of Banani Police

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Every dawn, people from all over the capital gather in front of Agargaon passport office and wait for hours to get their passports made or renewed. Why dawn? Because, unless one gets there early, chances are that their visit will be in vain due to people flooding the premises. The offices remained closed for many days due to Covid-19 and were recently reopened, but now, authorities are having a tough time dealing with the endless queues, inset. Although, signs of maintaining health rules are plastered on the walls, with so many people, social distancing is virtually impossible.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DGHS dedicates six hospitals

Another dies, 276 hospitalised

DENGUE TREATMENT

- Salimullah Medical College Hospital
- Ahsan Ullah Master General Hospital in Tongi
- Railway General Hospital at Kamalapur
- Aminbazar Govt Hospital
- Lalkuthi Hospital in Mirpur
- Kamrangirchar Hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid the rise in dengue cases, the Directorate General of the Health Services (DGHS) yesterday announced six hospitals in Dhaka dedicated to treating the dengue patients.

A notification signed by Dr Mizanur Rahman, DGHS director of Management Information System (MIS), was issued in this regard.

The hospitals are: Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital, Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master General Hospital in Tongi; Railway General Hospital at Kamalapur, 20-bed Aminbazar Govt Hospital, Lalkuthi Hospital in Mirpur, and 31-bed Kamrangirchar Hospital.

Meanwhile, one more dengue patient died while at least 276 more dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday. Among the 276 new cases, only 33 are from outside Dhaka.

According to DGHS, dengue fever has claimed 37 lives so far. Of them, 12 people died in July and 25 in August so far.

With the new cases, a total of 5,659 persons were diagnosed during the running month out of the total 8,317 infected. Of them, 511 are from outside Dhaka.

At least 2,286 patients were hospitalised in July, 272 in June while 43 were infected in May, according to DGHS.

Though most of the patients who were hospitalised have so far been released, 1,146 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals in Dhaka, and 87 outside the capital, the DGHS data shows.

Over 4,100 polls by Dec!

EC decides in meeting

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission (EC) is going to hold more than 4,100 elections by December. Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC) mayoral election, and all district council and union parishad (UP) polls are to be held in this period.

Besides, EC has decided to hold by-polls to Sylhet-3 constituency on September 4. EC Secretary Humayun Kabir Khandaker said yesterday, following a commission meeting. Candidates can start their campaigns at 8am on September 1 and run them for 24 hours.

The Sylhet-3 by-polls, which was scheduled to take place on July 28, was postponed by the High Court on July 26 due to the imposed lockdown at that time. The Sylhet-3 constituency fell vacant after parliamentarian Mahmud Us Samad Chowdhury died of Covid-19 on March 11.

In the first week of next month, the EC will announce dates of by-election to Cumilla-7 constituency, NCC mayoral election, first phase polls for 167 UPs, second phase polls for UPs, and elections for nine municipalities, he said.

He said the commission will need to hold elections for more than 4,000 UPs by December. In March, the EC decided that elections to all UPs will be held in several phases. On March 3, the EC announced the schedule for polls to 371 UPs in the first phase, fixing April 11 as the election day.

But it delayed the election due to Covid-19 and fixed the election date to be June 21.

In early June, the commission decided to postpone elections to 163 union parishads in Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Noakhali, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar due to a surge in Covid-19 cases.



Sylhet-3 by-polls on Sept 4

Dates for more polls in first week of Sept

Many polls delayed due to Covid-19

5-year tenure of NCC, 20 municipal mayors to end soon

Elections to the remaining 204 UPs were held on June 21.

EC officials said elections for 61 district councils will be due by January 2022.

Besides, elections to nine municipalities were postponed due to Covid-19 as well, and the five-year tenure of another 20 municipal mayors will be completed soon.

The five-year tenure of NCC mayor will end on February 7, 2022, as the first meeting of the corporation was held on February 8, 2017. The NCC election was held on December 22, 2016.

The Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009 requires holding city corporation polls 180 days before the tenure of the incumbent mayor ends.

The present EC will also complete its five-year tenure on February 14 next year, as the current commissioners assumed office on February 15, 2017.

NID-wing officials at the meeting proposed registering data of people who were born on or before January 1, 2006, aiming to issue National Identity Cards (NIDs) to all citizens aged 16 and above and include them in the voter list when they become 18.

Those interested to get NID will need to go to the Upazila Election Office and apply, or they can register online. Citizens will be given NIDs only after completing biometric registration.

Humayun said a committee under Election Commissioner Brigadier General (ret) Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury usually observes NID activities. "The committee will review the matter and send their recommendation to the commission regarding the proposal."

'Spend more money on research'

Education minister tells private university authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The private university authorities were yesterday asked to abide by laws and spend their money on research rather than buying luxurious items.

Education Minister Dipu Moni and Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury made the call during a virtual discussion marking the death anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The government will continue its support to private universities, they also said at the discussion held by Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB).

Dipu Moni said the problems in education should be identified and resolved. "We should abide by the law and rules. We will work for expansion of education, and development of its quality staying within the law."

The government will never take any decision that can obstruct smooth running of private universities, she added.

Private universities in Bangladesh run as non-profit higher education institutions under the Private University Act 2010.

Mohibul said despite having legal obligation to provide full studentship for certain percentage of students, many private universities are not doing so.

According to law, general funds of any private university should be spent only on necessary expenses of that university, on the research and creation of knowledge and for the betterment of students, he added.

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But what about the trees?

Liberation War ministry's meeting resolution mentions nothing about their preservation

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs yesterday submitted a meeting resolution centring the construction of an independence monument at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan to the High Court. The resolution, however, did not specify any decisions on whether the old and ecologically important trees will be cut.

Environmentalists have been demanding the government refrain from any further tree felling in the historic Suhrawardy Udyan for various projects to save the environment.

The ministry has prepared the resolution of the views-exchange meeting held on June 24. Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque presided over the meeting, where several professionals, including professors of Dhaka University and journalists, attended.

Yesterday, the ministry placed a copy of the resolution to the HC through Deputy Attorney General Samarendranath Biswas during hearing of a writ petition over this issue.

The HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice SM Maniruzzaman fixed Wednesday for hearing the matter, as writ petitioners' lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan said they will make a reply to the resolution after examining it.

According to the resolution, Minister Mozammel told the meeting that he will take an initiative to form a committee to

recommend which species of trees will be planted at Suhrawardy Udyan, and will think about narrowing its pathways.

The minister said they are trying to properly preserve and protect the history of the Liberation War.

He also said a symbolic structure of the stage where Bangabandhu had delivered his historic March 7 speech has been established, according to the resolution.

Advocate Minhazul Haque Chowdhury, another lawyer for the petitioners, who went through the resolution, told The Daily Star that there is no decision on whether the old and ecologically important trees will be kept intact.

While hearing the petition filed by six rights bodies and an activist, an HC bench on June 29 sought the resolution of the ministry meeting held on June 24.

The petitioners claimed the ministry is sponsoring a project titled "Suhrawardy Udyane Swadhinata Stomvo Nirman -- Threitiya Porjay (Construction of Independence Monuments at Suhrawardy Udyan -- Third Phase)", which is being implemented by indiscriminately felling hundreds of old and ecologically important trees. Meanwhile on July 23, Minister Mozammel told this correspondent that cutting trees has already been stopped, and construction work will continue keeping the trees intact.

SUHRAWARDY UDYAN



FILE PHOTO

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Editors Guild gets full-fledged committee

Mozammel Babu president, Inam Ahmed general secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Editors Guild, Bangladesh has formed its full-fledged committee with Ekattor Television Editor-in-Chief Mozammel Babu as its president and The Business Standard Editor Inam Ahmed as general secretary.

The committee formed during its general meeting on Sunday night will function for the next two years, said a press release of the guild.

Senior journalist Toab Khan, Daily Jagoron Editor Abed Khan, Daily Ajker Patrika Editor Golam Rahman, and Daily Ittefaq Editor Tasmima Hossain have been made its advisory council members.

The presidium members are: Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha Editor-in-Chief Abul Kalam Azad, Daily Sangbad Editor Altamash Kabir, DBC Television Editor-in-Chief Manzurul Islam, Amader Orthoneeti Editor-in-Chief Naimul Islam Khan, DOT magazine Editor Mustapha Khalid Palash, Daily Jugantor Editor Saiful Alam, Bangladesh Journal Editor Shahjahan Sardar, Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamal Dutta,

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'Want peace, stability in Afghanistan'

Says Bangladesh permanent representative to OIC

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has called for peace in Afghanistan, security of its people, and quick evacuation of foreigners who got stranded following Taliban's takeover on August 15 after the US withdrew troops.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Permanent Representative to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Javed Patwary, said this at an emergency meeting of OIC on Sunday.

As a responsible member of the international community, Bangladesh believes in peaceful coexistence with neighbouring countries and does not interfere in any country's internal affairs, said Patwary.

Bangladesh's policy for South Asia comes from the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 1972 speech where he said, "We will work together with our neighbours for common development and prosperity of South Asia."

"Bangladesh wants sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan, and as a bridge between South and Central Asia, Afghanistan should utilise its natural resources and geostrategic position properly."

As Afghanistan's political situation normalises, Bangladesh will share its experiences of socio-economic development with the country.

Ambassador Patwary said the international community should continue humanitarian and development assistance for the Afghan people under the current circumstances. The OIC should keenly watch the situation and make necessary recommendations for Afghanistan's peace, security, stability, and development.

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Taking full advantage of the care-free spirit of youth, these teens from Sylhet's Khadim Nagar union decided to take a dip into the water on a hot day, jumping right off a culvert's railings. This photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR