

Syed Ahmed Kamal's death anniversary today

CITY DESK

Today is the sixth death anniversary of Alhaj Syed Ahmed Kamal, son of late Syed Anisuzzaman from village Durmut in Jamalpur, said a press release.

His father Anisuzzaman was a renowned income tax lawyer, former president of Chittagong Bar Association and former chairman of Hoechst Pharmaceuticals.

Late Syed Ahmed Kamal is father of Syed Mohammad Kamal, country manager, Mastercard. A quarkhuni and doa mahfil will be held at Durmut Central Jame Masjid, Jamalpur.

ERADICATING POVERTY

Bangladesh should learn from Chinese experience

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh needs to apply lessons from the Chinese experience to eliminate poverty and take the country to the developed nations' list by 2041, speakers said at an international webinar on Wednesday.

Titled "Poverty Eradication: Experiences from Bangladesh and China", it marked the declaration of a 25-member and two-year-long executive committee of the Association of Bangladesh-China Alumni (ABCA).

"Bangladesh and China are among the most populous countries in the world, both with poverty alleviation goals," said chief guest Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni.

Chinese envoy in Bangladesh Li Jiming urged the country to adopt plans with specific measures for poverty alleviation within a specific timeframe, as China did four decades ago.

'Culture of impunity reason behind the attacks'

Observe leaders of Hindu organisations

STAR REPORT

A culture of impunity is the main reason behind recurrent attacks on Hindus in the country, observed leaders of Hindu organisations yesterday.

They called for exemplary punishment for those involved in the attacks, which occurred in various parts of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad, at a press conference held at the capital's Dhakeshwari Temple, raised some questions over the Cumilla incident, which eventually triggered a series of communal attacks on the Hindu community.

"The puja mandap at Nanua Dighirpar was temporary. On the day of the incident, there was a power cut at the mandap between 3am and 4am. Is this not something worth investigating?" asked Nirmal Kumar Chatterjee, general secretary of the organisation, while reading out a written statement.

In addition, he raised questions over the incendiary Facebook Live video, which went viral. "Why did the officer-in-charge [police] allow the video's broadcasting, even after they [police] arrived at the scene?" he asked.

Referring to events at Cox's Bazar's Ramu on September 29, 2012, Nirmal said in the years after, business establishments of the Hindu community were regular victims of arson attacks, vandalism, and looting.

As the real culprits behind these attacks are spared from punishment, owing to political mudslinging, rule of law and communal harmony erodes in the country, he added.

"This culture of impunity and injustice encourages such heinous events to continue," he said.

He said the common people want to know the perpetrators' "source of strength". "How can they carry out these attacks despite stern warnings from the prime minister and intelligence agencies?"

Recalling law enforcement agencies' assurances of security ahead of the Durga Puja, Nirmal said in every meeting with the agencies, high officials and representatives assured of complete security, and yet little was done to contain the series of violence.

The organisation has decided to



Questioning authorities' role and demanding exemplary punishment for the perpetrators of the recent communal attacks, Ramakrishna Math and Mission organised a human chain, where members of different organisations participated, at the capital's RK Mission Road yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

not celebrate Dipabali this year, in protest of the Durga Puja attacks and citing safety reasons.

They will instead hold Shyama Puja in a single day and cancel all other programmes centring the puja.

Among others, Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad President Milon Kanti Datta addressed the press conference.

Meanwhile, multiple organisations held protests yesterday in several areas of Dhaka.

Hundreds of activists blocked Shahbagh intersection yesterday afternoon for about half an hour.

"Since October 13, we've been seeing a series of attacks on Hindu minorities," said Advocate Sumon Kumar Roy, president of Bangladesh Hindu Lawyer Parishad.

Such communal attacks had also taken place earlier, but justice was not ensured, he said. Around 5:30pm, protestors brought out a torch bearing procession from Shahbagh and stopped at Jatiya Press Club.

Earlier in the morning, Ramakrishna Math and Mission formed a human chain at the capital's RK Mission Road, protesting the recent attacks.

Swami Purnatmananda, principal of the organisation, other monks and different like-minded organisations, including Vivekananda Shikha o Sangskriti Parishad and Sarada Sangha, took part in the human chain.

"The absence of exemplary punishment is the main reason behind recurrent communal attacks on the minority community," said Purnatmananda.

"If exemplary punishment was ensured, no such incidents would happen," he said, urging the government to take strict action to save minorities.

He said Ramakrishna Ashram at Chandpur's Hajiganj upazila came under attack on October 13.

At a separate meeting, President of Workers Party of Bangladesh Rashed Khan Menon said the arrested Iqbal Hossain is being termed a "vagabond", but it does not trivialise his offence.

"We've been saying from the beginning that the whole incident was preplanned. Now, we need to find the masterminds," he said at a meeting of Bangladesh Jubo Maitri in Barishal's Ujirpur upazila.

Menon had joined the meeting virtually.

DEMANDS PLACED FOR JUSTICE

At the press conference, Puja Udjapan Parishad also put forward a set of demands, including rebuilding all damaged temples and houses with government funds, and rehabilitation of those who became homeless after the attacks.

They also demanded compensation for affected traders, treatment cost for the injured, and reparations for family members of those who died in the attacks.

In applicable cases, the government should also arrange for government jobs for family members of the deceased, they said.

The demands also include formation of a judicial probe committee, taking immediate steps against perpetrators, and exemplary punishment for culprits through a special tribunal.

At a protest event, Bangladesh Hindu Parishad's Narayanganj unit convener Uttam Kumar Saha demanded formulation of respective laws for minorities to ensure their safety.

Protestors also demanded the government form a separate ministry for minority groups, return "Debottar" properties, and a 20 percent quota system in government services.

FORCIBLY CUTTING HAIR

Probe report on Farhana submitted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The probe body formed to investigate into the incident of forcefully cutting students' hair at Sirajganj's Rabindra University has submitted its report on Thursday afternoon, though its findings are yet to be revealed.

"We have taken statements of over 50 witnesses -- including teachers, officers, departmental employees, cleaners, and students, including the 14 victims whose hair were cut," Laila Fardous Himel, head of the probe body and chair of the Rabindra studies department, told The Daily Star.

Asked about the details of the report, she commented, "This is confidential. University syndicate committee will disclose the findings later."

However, Farhana Yeasmin Baten, former chair of the Department of History and Cultural Heritage, who allegedly cut the students' hair, did not appear before the probe body.

"We waited till 3pm on Thursday [October 21] for the self-defence statement of the accused teacher, but she didn't appear before the investigation committee," said Laila Fardous.

Talking to The Daily Star, Md Abdul Latif, treasurer of the university and also acting vice chancellor, said, "In the syndicate meeting, we will take a decision about the accused teacher."

A syndicate meeting over the report was held in the evening yesterday but no decision has been taken yet, he said.

"She was given two dates for her comments but she didn't appear before us. So, we have submitted the report without her comment," she added.

On September 26, Farhana Yeasmin Baten allegedly asked university employees to cut the hair of male students who had long hair before they entered examination halls. One of the students tried to die by suicide following the incident. The university authorities formed the five-member probe committee headed by Laila Fardous on September 28.

Two killed under train wheels

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police recovered the bodies of two people killed as trains ran over them in separate incidents in Gafargaon upazila of Mymensingh yesterday morning.

One of the victims was identified as auto-rickshaw driver Faruq Hossain (25), of Sholohasia village in Gafargaon, police confirmed. The identity of the other male victim -- aged around 28 -- could not be known as of this report's filing.

Faruq died on the spot after being hit by the Dhaka-bound Aghnibina Intercity Train as he was crossing the railway track in the station area, said sub-inspector Md Shahadat Hossain, also in-charge of GRP Police Outpost in Gafargaon.

His body was handed over to family members yesterday noon, the official said.

Meanwhile, the unidentified body was recovered from Rouha Mirbazar area on the Dhaka-Mymensingh rail track and was sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.



Located at the city's Alampur area, near the Surma river, the park has already attracted significant attention from city dwellers since its unofficial launch on September 25.

Sheikh Hasina Shishu Park opens in Sylhet city

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

After 15 years of wait, the Jananetri Sheikh Hasina Shishu Park was finally inaugurated yesterday evening at Sylhet city's Alampur area, near the Surma river.

Foreign Minister and Sylhet-1 Parliamentarian AK Abdul Momen inaugurated the park, while Sylhet city mayor Ariful Haque Choudhury and Sylhet-3 MP Habibur Rahman Habib were present at the ceremony.

Unofficially open since September 25 this year, the park has already stirred attention among the city's residents, especially children, with entry fees set at Tk 50.

Originally planned in 2006, the project saw multiple delays, thanks to a dispute over the park's name. Though all the rides were installed by 2017, the wait for its inauguration was prolonged, until the city corporation decided on the current name.

According to the city corporation, it cost around Tk 15 crore for the park's construction while another Tk two crore budget was allocated this fiscal year for upgradation.

ANTI-GRAFT CARTOON

Deadline for TIB competition extended

CITY DESK

The deadline for Transparency International Bangladesh's (TIB) anti-corruption cartoon competition has been extended to October 31 from its original deadline of September 30. The contest will be held over the Zoom platform virtually.

Upholding the slogan "say no to corruption", TIB organises the yearly cartoon competition to draw the youth's attention to corruption, marking International Anti-Corruption Day on December 9. The topic for this year is "The Impacts of Covid-19 Pandemic on Health and Education Sector", said a press release.

This year marks the 16th edition of the contest. Once the competition is over, an online exhibition of the cartoons submitted will be held, and the cartoons can be explored on TIB's website.

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Putting

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When informed that fifty-two families are currently living in the establishment, she said, "These many people are not supposed to be living in such a confined space, as per my knowledge."

"We will go and visit the site," she added.

Meanwhile, the issue has raised concern among urban history conservationists.

Talking to The Daily Star, Taimur Islam, chief executive of Urban Study Group, said, "The zamindar palace in Sutrapur is one of the most beautiful monuments in old Dhaka. In 2015, when plans were underway to construct a multi-storey building there, we protested against it and the plan was dropped. But later they constructed the building anyway."

"This is against the Antiquities Act and the High Court's judgment. The way 52 families are living in this space can severely damage the site. This has to stop, and the establishment needs to be saved," he said.

As if trees

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Meanwhile, Farhana Rumzum Bhuiyan, assistant professor of the Department of Botany of Chittagong University, said the tree-felling could upset the ecosystem and biodiversity of the area, endangering habitats of many animals.

Construction of the country's first underwater expressway tunnel began in 2019. The tunnel goes under the Karnaphuli River at the Naval Academy point in the port city's Patenga to connect to Anwara upazila on the other side.

The tunnel's total length will be around 9.3 kilometres. Construction works for it are underway in full swing, with a target to complete the project by December 2022.

ANOTHER 1,000 MARKED FOR FELLING

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) recently marked over thousand trees to chop down in Chattogram to facilitate a road development project.

The trees stand on both sides of the road stretching from Patiya upazila's Badamtol to Karnaphuli upazila's Crossing.

Contacted, RHD's Rafiqul Islam said "We have recently marked 1,084 different trees -- most of them rain trees -- to be felled for the development of this road."

Contacted, Dr Tarit Kumar Baul, associate professor of Chattogram University's Forestry and Environmental Sciences Department, said, "These trees act as a carbon sink for the area. They can also mitigate dust in the area's air."

"If such a huge amount of trees are cut down, the biodiversity of the area will be severely affected," he said.

Contacted, RHD executive engineer in Chattogram's Dohazari area Suman Singha said, "Under the Periodic Maintenance Programme (PMP) we are enhancing Badamtol to Crossing, which is around 6.5 kilometres, at an estimated cost of Tk 35 crore."

"We have to cut the trees down for the development of the road", he said.

Dolphins disappearing

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wiped out from the river in the near future."

He added that most of these deaths are from strangulation in fishnets. "While trying to eat fish caught in the net, they get strangulated and die," he said, adding, "We urge authorities to put a stop to the use of gill nets in the river."

"Just last month, we conducted a post-mortem on a dead dolphin at Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (CVASU) and found that it was killed from strangulation," he said.

He also said conserving dolphins is important for the river's ecosystem. "We get an idea of the river's health from the presence of dolphins. It's a good indicator," said Dr Kibria.

According to experts, the Ganges river dolphin was first discovered in 1801. Named Shushuk in Bangla, it's an endemic aquatic mammal found only in the Indian subcontinent.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Ganges river dolphin is endangered globally as well as in Bangladesh (IUCN Bangladesh, 2015).

The species is included in the First Schedule of Bangladesh Wildlife (Protection & Security) Act, 2012 to ensure higher level of protection for their conservation, said Dr Kibria.

In 2019, Bangladesh Forest Department formulated an action plan under "Expanding the Protected Area System to Incorporate Important Aquatic Ecosystems Project" to conserve the Ganges river dolphin and Irrawaddy dolphin.

The plan was prepared by Dr Muhammad Abdul Aziz, a national consultant of Dolphin Conservation Action Plan and professor of Jahangirnagar University's

zoology department.

In it, a total of 25 important habitats of the Ganges river dolphin were identified. Of them, Madunaghat to Sattarghat areas of Halda river and New Bridge Halda estuary were identified as two very important habitats.

But why is it important to protect the Ganges river dolphin?

The action plan report says the Ganges river dolphin is a tertiary organism in the food chain and is an important indicator species of our river ecosystem.

Although the species is found in almost all major rivers of Bangladesh, the north-eastern regions, including some upstream rivers, have been a stronghold of the species.

They are a flagship species for river conservation, whose protection can benefit a wider range of aquatic and threatened species, including the softshell turtle (Aspideretes gangeticus), gharial (Gavialis gangeticus), and smooth-coated otter (Lutra perspicillata), the report says.

Protection and maintenance of the species will ensure better health of the river ecosystem, which will ultimately benefit millions of local communities that survive on aquatic resources.

Its conservation is therefore important and urgent, before the species gets listed on the IUCN Red List of threatened species, says the report.

Contacted, Molla Rezaul Karim, conservator (wildlife and nature conservation) of Bangladesh Forest Department, said the action plan has provided a roadmap on how to conserve the endangered mammalian species, but the pace of implementation is slowed due to some limitations of the department, including human resource shortage and lack of proper logistics support.

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