



An air of grief pervaded Old Dhaka's Churihatta lane yesterday, on the third anniversary of the horrific fire that took away 71 lives in 2019. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# 'Living in France, running theft gang in Dhaka'

## Local cohort held over burglary at 2 jewellery shops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nasir Hossain (50) was already accused in several burglary cases before he left the country years ago, illegally, for France.

Before leaving, he had been involved in theft for about 15 years. But even when in France, he just couldn't stop his criminal activities.

Once a Bagerhat-based thief, Nasir now plans and organises for a gang that loots ornaments from jewellery shops in Dhaka and surrounding areas.

His name came up after the Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Manjurul Ahsan Shamim (38), who took part in the burglary of two jewellery shops at Rajanigandha Tower in the capital's Kachukhet area on February 5, AKM Hafiz Akhter, additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told a press briefing yesterday.

Owner of the two shops – both named Rangapori Jewellers – primarily estimated that more than 300 tola of gold ornaments worth around Tk 2 crore, diamond worth around Tk 35 lakh and Tk 5 lakh in cash were looted.

A team of DB's Mirpur division arrested Shamim on Saturday, after conducting raids in Gazipur and Munshiganj. DB recovered Tk 9.5 lakh from his possession, which he got from selling the looted ornaments.

The DB official said other members of the gang also have several cases filed against them in Dhaka and Narayanganj.

"Nasir's role is to plan and fund the operations through Shamim. With his money, the gang rented a house in Kishoreganj," the officials said. "After an operation, Nasir get's lion's share of the money, while the rest is shared among the other members."

After primary interrogation, Shamim told DB officials

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



# Covid restrictions end tomorrow

## Masks still a must, says cabinet secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the transmission of Covid-19 continues to decline steadily, the government has decided to withdraw existing health restrictions from tomorrow, around six weeks after it was imposed on January 13.

However, all authorities concerned were instructed to ensure that everyone uses masks in all gatherings, said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, following yesterday's cabinet meeting where the decision was made.

"A clear instruction has been given to reopen schools (secondary and higher) tomorrow and primary schools on March 1. No Covid restriction will be effective anymore from February 22," Khandker Anwarul Islam said while briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the virtual meeting from Gono Bhaban, while others joined from the cabinet division of secretariat.

Yesterday, the daily case detection declined to 1,987 – the lowest since January 13, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Besides, a total of 21 Covid patients died in the past 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, raising the total number of casualties to 28,965.

Due to the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, the number of Covid-19 cases skyrocketed since early last month.

The highest positivity rate was reported at 33.37 percent on January 28, which has also declined to 7.82 percent yesterday.

Amid the spread of Omicron, which was first detected in the country on December 9 last year, the government also stepped up its vaccination campaigns and introduced booster doses, initially for senior citizens and frontline workers.

Last week, the DGHS also announced a campaign to vaccinate one crore people with the first dose of Covid vaccines by Saturday.

As of yesterday, around 10.25 crore people received the first dose, which is around 86 percent of the target population.

Noting the special campaign, the cabinet secretary said the cabinet has requested the media



- Schools (secondary and higher) reopen tomorrow
- Primary schools to reopen on Mar 1
- 7.82pc positivity rate as of yesterday
- 10.25cr vaccinated with first dose

All authorities concerned have been instructed to ensure that every one uses masks in all gatherings.

to conduct a massive circulation of the vaccination drive.

He also said the field administrations, including DCs, SPs and civil surgeons, mayors, chairpersons, other local government representatives and members of different political parties were asked to conduct an all-out campaign so that no one is left out of the vaccination coverage after February 26.

Besides, the health ministry is mulling to vaccinate children aged under 12, adopting experiences from other countries.

On January 13 last year, the government imposed an 11-point Covid-19 restriction till February 7. Later, the restrictions were extended up to February 21.

The education ministry closed all educational institutions from January 21.

# 'Not here to reminisce'

## Affected families of 2019 Churihatta blaze mark anniversary with hard demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They were not there to reminisce the loved ones they lost to the 2019 Chawkbazar fire. The members of the affected families who congregated at the location of the ill-fated inferno were there to drive home their demands yesterday.

They were there hoping to get some compensation, some help, any kind of help. Three years of running families without the primary earning member has bore down hard on them. As such, yesterday's memorial to mark the anniversary of the incident did not feature a harmless ramble down the memory lane.

Instead, they came with hard demands, like completely rooting out the chemical industry from Old Dhaka and providing adequate compensation for the affected families. After all, as the authorities themselves stated, the 71 deaths from the fire could have been prevented had there not been a chemical warehouse in the residential area in the first place.

Dozens of burkha-clad women thronged the narrow lane in Churihatta where everything was burned to cinder just three years ago. They each carried laminated photo of their loved ones, their brothers, fathers, husbands, as if making an ardent appeal to society-at-large: do not forget them.

Their demands also include an end to being

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

# Building better future for girls

## 35.3pc parents marry off underage daughters in fear of sexual harassment, reveals Plan Int'l survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A recent survey by Plan International Bangladesh found that 35.3 percent of parents marry off their underage daughters in fear of sexual harassment, while roughly 25.6 percent of parents do the same out of concern over social exclusion.

"This fear must be overcome. Media must convey this message to the public that marriage is not the solution to these problems," said Kashfia Feroz, director of Girls' Rights, Plan International Bangladesh.

She made the remarks yesterday during the handover ceremony of "Plan International Bangladesh Media Award 2021: Building Better Future for Girls", organised by Plan International Bangladesh, at Jatiya Press Club.

Nine national and regional journalists were awarded at the event.

The Daily Star's journalist Nilima Jahan has been awarded for her report titled "Good initiative, yet ineffective", which focused on how union-level committees to prevent child marriage and gender-based violence remain mostly non-functional.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PRAYER  
TIMING  
FEB 21



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5:20	12:45	4:30	6:03	7:30
Jamaat	5:55	1:15	4:45	6:07	8:00
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

# Ekushey fervour takes over Boi Mela

DIPAN NANDY

On the day before February 21, there was an onrush at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela yesterday to find books on the Language Movement. From visitors' enthusiasm to publisher's marketing, books on the topic took up the fair grounds since morning.

However, publishers cited a lack of new books on the movement, with only two publishing a handful of titles.

Among them are Uzan and Agami Prokashoni, whose proprietor Osman Gani told this correspondent writers don't really delve into this topic much, as it requires substantial research. "If we get good write-ups, we're definitely interested to publish more," he said.

According to Bangla Academy, 468 new books have arrived over the first six

days of the fair, including 89 that were published yesterday.

Although there's no separate category to record books on the Language Movement, this correspondent came across five, including M Abdul Alim's "Rashtra Bhasha Andolan: Jilla Bhittik Itihash" and Habibullah Fahad's "Dui Bhasha Sangramir Mukhomukhi: Ahmed Rafiq and Rafiqul Islam".

All five books are written by the two authors.

However, though not all publishers could unveil new books on the topic, most of them republished old titles.

Meanwhile, yesterday's sudden bout of rainfall scared publishers, some of whom chose not to open shop out of this fear.

Majeedul Hasan of Jayati Prakashan said, "It rains around this time every year. We accept this adversity but hope that the rain won't be too much of a peril for us."



On the day before Ekushey February, much of the fervour centring International Mother Language Day could be felt at the Boi Mela, with visitors looking for books on the Language Movement.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

# Low-priced essentials for 1cr needy in Ramadan

## Hasina directs commerce minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given directives to provide daily essentials at low prices to 1 crore needy families during the upcoming Ramadan.

Food will be distributed to the families twice during the holy month at cheaper prices.

The prime minister gave the directives to Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi during cabinet meeting yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4