

Wazed Miah’s 13th death anniv today

BSS, Dhaka

Today is the 13th death anniversary of internationally reputed nuclear scientist Dr MA Wazed Miah, husband of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

In a message, President M Abdul Hamid yesterday paid tributes to his memory.

Hamid recalled that Wazed made notable contributions to atomic research in Bangladesh.

He served the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission in different capacities successfully, the president said.

Hamid said Jatiya Samannita Unnayan Foundation was established in 1997 at the advice and under the patronage of Wazed.

Wazed will remain a source of inspiration to the future generation, he said, adding that Wazed was arrested during the movement against Aiyub Khan’s military rule in 1962.

The noted scientist tied the knot with Hasina on November 17, 1967, and stood by Bangabandhu’s family during the Liberation War.

EXTORTION MONEY Shop owner beaten to death in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A shop owner was beaten to death by a group of criminals in Chattogram city’s Pahartali Bazar area yesterday.

According to locals, the victim – Mohammad Farid, 45, owner of a motor workshop in Pahartali Railway Colony – was murdered as he refused to pay extortion money.

Members of Double Mooring Police Station arrested one Mohammad Didar, alias Tedi Didar, 34, in this connection.

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An excavator demolishing illegal structures of the hawkers’ market on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday. Around 100 such structures were knocked down by the Dhaka South City Corporation to free the space from the illegal occupants.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

END OF EID HOLIDAYS

Sufferings abound on road, rail, waterways

STAR REPORT

Eid holidaymakers suffered immensely on ferry terminals, roads and highways while returning to Dhaka yesterday.

Long tailbacks, slow-moving vehicles and a delayed train, coupled with the scorching heat, doubled their sufferings.

A seven-kilometre tailback of Dhaka-bound vehicles caused thousands of passengers to suffer on the approach to Zero Point of Daulatdia ferry terminal.

Most of the passengers, returning to Dhaka from 21 southern districts, had to wait there for around 10 hours to board ferries on the Dauladia-Paturia route.

Hashem Seikh, driver of a Dhaka-bound bus from Narail, said, “We reached Goalanda Bazar [a point near Daulatdia terminal] around 12:10am today. We could board the ferry around 11 hours later.”

Masud Sheikh, a passenger of a Dhaka-bound bus, said, “I along with my wife and two children had to wait 10 hours to board the ferry. Scorching heat added to our sufferings.”

Launch passengers had to walk long distances to reach the terminals as buses were stranded a few kilometres away.

Contacted, Shehab Uddin, manager (commerce) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) at Daulatdia terminal, said such a situation was created due to excessive pressure of vehicles.

Meanwhile, vehicular movements on both sides of Bangabandhu Bridge were slowed down because of the excessive pressure of Dhaka-bound vehicles.

A 13-kilometre tailback was created on the bridge’s east link road in Tangail’s Elenga area.

Ataur Rahman, in-charge of Elenga Highway Police Outpost, said, “The highway is facing huge pressure of Dhaka-bound vehicles which is causing slow vehicular movements.”

Mosaddek Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge West Police Station, said the vehicles were not stuck, but they were moving slowly on the bridge’s west link road in Sirajganj.

The bridge is considered the gateway of 26 districts, including 16 northern districts.

According to the highway police, around 15,000 to 20,000 vehicles move on the highway daily but the number rises to 50,000 to 60,000 vehicles during Eid.

In Banglabazar ferry terminal, queues of vehicles were noticed yesterday noon. Over 100 vehicles and several hundred motorbikes were seen waiting there to board ferries.

The pressure of vehicles intensified as the day wore on. Around 200 vehicles and 300 motorbikes were in queues yesterday evening around 7:15pm, said officials concerned.

In Lalmonirhat, several hundred passengers endured sufferings as a Dhaka-bound intercity train was delayed for about four hours.

The Lalmonirhat Express was scheduled to leave Lalmonirhat station for Dhaka at 10:20am but it left at 2:20pm.

Mizanur Rahman, 55, a passenger, said, “My family and I had to wait for four hours at the station. No rail official was available here even for talks.”

Zillur Rahman, 56, another passenger, said, “My wife and daughter fell sick in the railway station.”

Contacted, Lalmonirhat Station Master Nizam Uddin said he did not know the proper reason for the delay of the train.

[Our Faridpur, Tangail, Munshiganj and Lalmonirhat correspondents contributed to this report]

KG Mustofa no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned journalist and lyricist KG Mustofa died last night at his Azimpur residence.

He was 84. KG Mustofa had been suffering from old-age complications and various ailments for several months, Jatiya Press Club Joint Secretary Mainul Alam told The Daily Star.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Press Club premises following Zohr prayers today, he said.

Mostafa was born on July 1, 1937, at Begumganj in Noakhali. He started journalism as a cub reporter at Daily Ittehad in 1958. He later joined Dainik Majlum as assistant editor.

He also worked with Weekly Janata. After Bangladesh’s independence, Mustofa worked as chief reporter at Dainik Ganokantho and Dainik Swadesh.

He joined the Department of Films and Publications in 1976 and became senior editor before retiring in 1996.

Mustofa was a renowned lyricist and wrote timeless songs including “Tomare Legeche Eto Je Bhalo” in the movie “Rajdhanir Booke” and “Ainate Oi Mukh Dekhbe Jokhon” for movie “Nacher Putul”.

He also wrote several books including poetry titles “Kache Thako Chuye Thako” and “Uranta Ruma” and several others novels and children’s literature.

Man held for killing wife and daughters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Police yesterday detained a man on charges of killing his wife and two daughters in Manikganj’s Ghior upazila on Saturday night.

The accused is Asaduzzaman Rubel, 40, provided dental services at a chamber in the upazila. The victims are his wife Lovely Akhter, 35, his elder daughter Chhoa, 16, and younger daughter Kotha, 12.

According to neighbours, Rubel was fined Tk 1, 20,000 for improper dental treatment, which was supposed to be paid by yesterday morning during an arbitration arranged in his chamber.

Riyaz Uddin, OC of Ghior Police Station, said, “After the murders, Rubel had gone into hiding. He is now in police custody. He was in huge debt and is suffering from depression.”

ASP (Shibalaya circle) Noorjahan Laboni said, “A murder case was filed by Lovely’s father at noon and investigation has already begun. Rubel, during primary interrogation, has confessed to the triple murder.”

Cop killed, 12 others injured in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A policeman was killed when a passenger bus hit a roundabout point and flipped over on a truck on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Moulvibazar’s Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Ragib Ali, 23, a constable of Sherpur Highway Police Station.

At least 12 others, including two more policemen – Kamran, 23, and Anisul, 24 – were injured in the accident and sent to hospital by police and locals who rescued them.

The driver of the SD Jalalabad bus, which was leaving Mymensingh for Sylhet, lost control of the steering. The vehicle hit the Sherpur roundabout point, then flipped sideways on a truck, crushing at least 13 people, including 12 on-duty policemen, said Parimal Deb, OC of Sherpur Highway Police Station.

Twice bitten

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We wanted to give democracy a chance by joining the polls [in 2018] but what we found was another stolen election,” Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, the party’s standing committee member, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the question of them joining the polls comes up before an election, but the election is basically “deception and falsehood” when held under the Awami League government.

Tabitha Awal, BNP’s mayoral candidate for the Dhaka North City Corporation polls in 2020, said elections must be held under a government formed by consensus, and no single party would dictate the electoral system or the outcome anymore.

“Until there is some visible action, no statements can lead to any positive outcome.”

The next parliamentary election is very crucial for the BNP, as it has long been almost absent from the political landscape.

BNP leaders said the party joined the last JS polls to give democracy a chance to thrive, but even after that did not happen, they participated in some local government elections under its electoral symbol of “sheaf of paddy”.

But since 2021, the party has boycotted all local government polls, saying free and fair elections are not possible under the current administration and also announced that it would not participate in any election under this government.

BNP is now focusing on introducing a non-partisan polls-time government, for which it has been campaigning over the last decade, but the government did not pay any heed.

Yesterday, Fakhrul also said that after an interim government is formed, a new Election Commission should be constituted based on public consensus.

The BNP did not participate in the process of forming the new EC, sticking to its stance on the need for a neutral polls-time government.

Party leaders said if the government did not meet their demand for a non-partisan interim government, the issue would be settled on the streets.

They said that taking part in polls under the incumbent government would be nothing but giving legitimacy to the elections and the government.

Nepali scales Mt Everest for record 26th time: official

REUTERS, Kathmandu

A Nepali sherpa scaled Mount Everest for a record 26th time, beating his own previous record set last year, a government official said yesterday.

Kami Rita Sherpa, 52, scaled the 8,848.86-metre (29,031.69-foot) mountain on Saturday along the traditional southeast ridge route leading 10 other Sherpa climbers.

Twin challenges

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foreign exchange reserves thanks in part to the inflation abroad that has swelled the import bill.

Bangladesh’s foreign currency reserves have come down to less than \$42 billion, which is the lowest in 18 months.

The reserves are sufficient to cover five months’ import bills, down from six months previously.

Given that remittance, a major source of foreign currency, remains sticky downwards despite the

higher cash incentive from this year, the pressure on reserves will continue in the foreseeable future.

The situation can be navigated deftly, Hussain said.

“The government should not take up projects with its own funds that have a sizeable import component.”

For now, the government should not take up projects with its own funds that have a sizeable import component.

“There should be a restraint on the government’s expenditure.

Many stores still face supply crunch

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“I’ve provided half of it. The rest will also be distributed. The oil will reach the retail level within a week.”

Our correspondent visited Kazir Dewri, Andarkillah, Chawkbazar Aturar Depot, and Hamzarbagh kitchen markets in Chattogram and found only three shops selling soybean oil.

“The dealers came yesterday and took orders. They said they will be able to supply oil in two or three days,” said Aminul Haque, owner of Nihad Store at Hamzarbagh kitchen market.

Anwar Hossain, a resident of Kazir Dewri, said, “I had no edible oil in my house over the last two days. I was then forced to buy sunflower oil.”

OLD STOCKS, NEW PRICES

Several shops in Chattogram and Sherpur have been selling previously

collected supplies of bottled oil at the newly fixed prices. Some have been selling at a price higher than the new ones fixed by the government.

According to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, some traders have been selling oil at Tk 210.

One- and two-litre bottles of brand Fresh’s soybean oil were found at Akbar Shah Store and Shahidul Store at Hamzarbagh and Hillview areas of the port city. They are selling the one-litre bottles at Tk 200 and two-litre bottles at Tk 400.

The shop owners and employees declined to comment. They, however, claimed the bottles were collected before Eid.

In the Sreebordi Upazila Market of Sherpur district, Pusti’s one-litre bottled soybean oil, which sold at Tk 168, now sells at Tk 198.

Meanwhile, after the

All foreign tours by government officials and car imports for government officials should be put on hold – it would lower the pressure on reserves.”

The government should also speed up the implementation of projects that are mostly foreign-funded.

“That way, foreign currency will come in,” he added.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, called for greater

price hike, bottled soybean oil was released in the market from Saturday at the new prices, with the old price tags being removed from branded bottles.

“I don’t know anything [about old supplies being sold at new prices]. We are just trying to deliver oil to different parts of the country,” said Biswajit Saha, director for corporate and regulatory affairs at the City Group, a leading oil refiner and importer.

Shafiul Ather Taslim, director of TK Group’s finance and operations, said the mill opened on Saturday after Eid.

“After that, it takes 24 hours to set up the production. The supply of oil at the new prices started yesterday ... We can’t cover all parts of the country in one day. It will take two or three days.”

Abdul Hakim, owner of Khwaja Store in

support for the small- and medium-sized enterprises, which are yet to bounce back from the pandemic whirlpool.

“The stimulus package has not been of much help to them. How they can be helped more should be explored in the budget.”

He also called for a greater focus on employment generation.

“It is a longstanding problem but it has become more pressing in light of the pandemic as many lost jobs,” he added.

Rail reinstates

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Bhaban yesterday, the minister reiterated that the TTE would be rewarded if an ongoing investigation found the allegations of misconduct were wrong.

Shafiqul, a TTE of BR’s Pakshey division in Pabna, was suspended on Friday, a day after he fined the three people who boarded the Dhaka-bound “Sundarbans Express” at Ishwardi junction without tickets.

The incident triggered outrage in social media. Transparency International Bangladesh called upon Nurul Islam Sujan to step down from his post temporarily for an investigation into the suspension.

Meanwhile, the railways ministry yesterday ordered legal action if anyone tried to take advantage, claiming to be relatives or personal assistants of the minister or BR officials.

Since November 2020, similar notices have been issued three times.

TTE Shafiqul’s suspension was widely covered by the media. The reports mentioned that he was suspended on instruction of the minister’s wife Shammy Akhter.

“I learnt about the incident just as you learnt about it. I had no knowledge of it,” he said.

The minister said he was not aware that the three individuals were his relatives when he was talking to reporters on Saturday.

About the allegation that his wife asked a top

official to suspend the TTE, he then first said, “I have no idea about that. If that is the case, a probe committee has been formed and everything will be unearthed. Everyone has to be liable.”

A little later, he said the DCO apparently made the decision after a phone conversation. Otherwise, he would not have gotten the allegation so quickly.

“My wife made the complaint as she learnt about the [TTE’s] misconduct. She did not ask for suspension of the TTE,” he said, adding that he was not sure whether the TTE was suspended following her complaint.

“As a relative of a passenger, she can lodge a complaint. She can not lodge a complaint as the wife of a minister. She should have told me if she had any complaints regarding the railway. But she did not do that... So, we thought the suspension order was not proper.

“I have been trying to work here, maintaining transparency. But the way the incident unfolded is embarrassing for me.”

Meanwhile, Shahidul Islam, divisional railway manager of Pakshey, said an order withdrawing the suspension and a show-cause notice to DCO Nasir Uddin were already issued.

Nasir was asked to reply in seven working days.

In another development, the three-member probe committee got three more days to complete the investigation into the incident.