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A dream he refuses to let go

55-yr-old applies for DU; VC talks about changing rules to install age barrier

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

A 55-year-old man is going to take part in the tests for admission to Dhaka University.

Balayet Sheikh of Mawna, Gazipur, always dreamt of being a student at the DU, but circumstances and financial constraints prevented him completing his schooling for years.

Now a correspondent for Daily Karatoa, Balayet wants to study mass communication and journalism and on June 11, he will sit for the admission test at DU.

Like most students serious about admission to universities, he attends a coaching centre to prepare for the fierce competition.

"It has not been easy for me with the relatives and neighbours mocking me for continuing my studies at this age," he told The Daily Star.

Different universities across the world encourage citizens willing to study with some even offering free courses when the admission seeker is an elderly person.

However, when notified about the matter, DU Vice

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Four girls returning from school on a motorcycle driven by a man wearing a cap on the capital's Elephant Road yesterday. They risk serious injuries as a motorcycle is only designed to carry one passenger and none of them are wearing helmets, even though one is hanging from the handlebar. Soon after the photo was taken, the rider nearly dropped the bike trying to avoid a hole dug for construction work.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Woman harassed at railway station 'for her outfit'

A CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Unidentified people assaulted a woman and her two friends at the Narsingdi Railway Station on Wednesday morning because of the clothes she was wearing, which the attackers had termed "indecent".

A video of the incident started doing the rounds on social media from Thursday morning, sparking backlash and protests from different women's rights organisations, which demanded the attackers be arrested.

On Wednesday morning, the victims had called the police after going into the stationmaster's room for refuge from the attackers. Law enforcers then went to the spot and helped them board a Dhaka-bound train, said Ekbal Hossain, a sub-inspector of Narsingdi Police Station, yesterday.

No complaint was lodged by railway authorities or the victims, the SI said.

Sougatul Alam, officer in-charge of the police station, said, "I learned of the incident from you. If I get any written complaint from railway authorities or a victim, we will take necessary steps."

"I don't know about the incident, let alone about the video on social media."

ATM Musa, the stationmaster of Narsingdi Railway Station, said, "The incident took place around 5:30am when the female along with her two friends was waiting at the station for a Dhaka-bound train."

Another woman waiting at the station first started hurling abusive words at the victim for wearing what she said were "indecent clothes".

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Food shortages add to Sri Lankans' woes

President expands cabinet, still no finance minister

REUTERS, Colombo

Thousands of people queued for cooking gas and petrol in Sri Lanka's commercial capital yesterday and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe warned of a food shortage as the island nation battles a devastating economic crisis.

Lines formed in many parts of Colombo, a city of around 900,000 people, as residents tried to stock up on fuel, which is mostly imported and is in extremely short supply with the government running out of foreign exchange.

"Only about 200 cylinders were delivered, even though there were about 500 people," said Mohammad Shazly, a part-time chauffeur in a queue for the third day in the hope of procuring cooking gas for his family of five. Hundreds of others were in line, with empty cylinders by their side.

"Without gas, without kerosene oil, we can't do

anything," Shazly said. "Last option what? Without food we are going to die. That will happen hundred percent."

Public transport is depleted and traffic is light as most people are staying at home because of the scarcity of petrol.

Wickremesinghe, warning also of a food crunch, vowed to buy enough fertiliser for the next planting season to boost productivity and meet the food demand of its 22 million population.

"While there may not be time to obtain fertiliser for this Yala (May-August) season, steps are being taken to ensure adequate stocks for the Maha (September-March) season," the prime minister said in a message on Twitter late on Thursday.

"I sincerely urge everyone to accept the gravity of the ... situation."

Japan, which has long-standing economic ties with the island, said it would provide an emergency grant of \$3 million

for medicine and food, its foreign ministry said.

Nine new members were appointed to the cabinet yesterday, including to the critical health, trade and tourism ministries. But no one has been named to head the finance ministry and lead negotiations with International Monetary Fund for a bail-out. The portfolio is likely to be retained by Wickremesinghe.

When a truck arrived at a cooking gas distribution centre with fresh supplies yesterday, soldiers with automatic rifles guarded the vehicle while people in the queue applauded.

State-run Litro Gas is hoping to start distributing 80,000 cylinders a day by today but has to scramble to fill an estimated 3.5 million cylinder shortage in the market, Chairman Vijitha Herath told Reuters.

The government has also called for tenders to procure \$120 million worth of cooking

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FLOODS IN NORTHEAST Cries for relief intensify

Water levels slightly reduce in the Surma and Kushiyara

DWOHA CHOWDHURY and MINTU DESHWARA

With the weather forecast indicating deterioration of the flood situation in the north-eastern region, the demand for relief is increasing in the affected areas of Sylhet and Sunamganj.

The flood victims say they are facing difficulties in getting relief materials as those reach them after exchanging several hands. Some of them say they have not received any relief.

"For the last three days, we are marooned. Whenever we see a boat approaching our village, we rush to get relief materials. But we are yet to receive any government relief," said Sazzad Miah, of Narshingpur village in Sunamganj's Dowerabazar upazila.

Jashim Miah, of Lalpur village in Sunamganj Sadar upazila, said, "As the overflowing Surma inundated our house, we are in dire need of food and freshwater."

Contacted, Abdus Sahid, chairman of Dowerabazar Sadar union, said after distributing relief among the people at flood shelters, they do not have sufficient stock to distribute among the affected villagers.

The chairman added that he sought more relief goods from the upazila administration.

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A man celebrates as a truck carrying domestic cooking gas cylinder arrives for distribution, amid the country's economic crisis, in Colombo, Sri Lanka yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Dhaka expresses commitment to human rights

Says it has zero tolerance on terrorism at EU-Bangladesh Joint Commission meet

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh expressed its commitment to guarantee human rights of all, as enshrined in its constitution, as the European Union raised concerns on alleged human rights violations in Bangladesh and stressed on ensuring accountability.

During the 10th EU-Bangladesh Joint Commission meeting in Brussels yesterday, Dhaka also said it has a "zero tolerance policy" against terrorism and violent extremism and highlighted the remarkable success of the security apparatus in this regard, said an EU statement.

Economic Relations Division Secretary Fatima Yasmin led the Bangladesh delegation and EU External Action Service Deputy Managing Director Paola Pampaloni the EU delegation.

The Joint Commission reviewed

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SP fired over covering up gold recovery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Superintendent of Tourist Police in Sylhet Region, Altaf Hossain, has been terminated for his role in concealing 1.4kg of gold recovered in Satkhira in 2016, when he was the Satkhira SP.

Patkelghata police seized the gold from one Biplob Chatterjee on October 16 in 2016, made a seizure list and informed the matter to SP Altaf Hossain.

But no case regarding recovery of the gold was registered with the police station; instead a case was filed under the Narcotics Control Act in this regard, according to the termination order issued by the home ministry on Thursday.

"Altaf was fully aware of the development and despite knowing everything, he did not take any legal action against the policemen involved," reads the order.

Altaf also provided a false report regarding the matter to higher officials at the police headquarters (PHQ) after it asked him for information following a complaint, according to

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