

PM's visit sparks excitement in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

Excitement is in the air in Mymensingh and adjacent districts as Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina is due to visit the city today. The city has been decorated with colourful posters, festoons, and banners to welcome the Prime Minister, who is expected to address a grand rally at the Mymensingh Circuit House ground. The last time Sheikh Hasina visited the city was in 2018.

Local leaders and activists expect the Prime Minister to announce some new additions to the ongoing development process during her visit. The visit is also expected to encourage the party's grassroots-level leaders and activists ahead of the national election.

The district and city units of AL and its front organisations have already held several preparatory meetings for the Prime Minister's visit, said Advocate Moazzem Hossain Babul, secretary of Mymensingh District AL.

Party leaders claim that over 15 lakh people will attend this gathering from the Mymensingh region.

Nurul Amin Kalam, secretary of Mymensingh Nagarik Andolon, said they have placed several demands, including upgrading the 1000-bed

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On the second day of Gulshan Book Fair, a vibrant session of poetry and story recitation by the writers of Star Literature was offered to the visitors. The fair had multiple stalls of reputed publishing houses and will conclude today with a discussion on creative writing. PHOTO: STAR

Gulshan Book Fair enthrals crowd with stories, poetry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the second day of the third edition of Gulshan Book Fair, visitors were treated to the readings of short stories and poetry by writers of Star Literature.

The session was moderated by Sarah Anjum Bari, editor of Books and Literature, The Daily Star, and attended by Prof Kaiser Haq, Prof Niaz Zaman, Farah Ghuznavi, Shazia Omar, Dhaka Lit Fest Co-Director and Producer Sadaf Saaz, and Curator of HerStory Foundation Katerina Don.

There were musical performances by school students and jazz bands as well.

Gulshan Book Fair has been organised at Gulshan Society Lake Park in Gulshan 2, by Shayaan Seraj, convener of Gulshan Society Lake Park Management and Zone-5. The fair featured stalls of UPL, Bookworm

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The blast that shattered dreams

Young husband and sole earner's life cut short, leaving family devastated

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Shariatpur

The burden of running a household and taking care of his family fell onto the young shoulders of Robin Hossain when he completed his higher-secondary education a few years ago. He left his home in Nagerpara village of Shariatpur's Gosairhat upazila and came to Dhaka in search of a job, and luckily, he found one. He joined a sanitary ware and ceramic item shop in the capital's Siddikbazar, earning a monthly wage of Tk 7,000.

With his meagre income, Robin had to cover all the expenses, including the medical costs of his parents. Despite the challenges, everything was going well for him. He even got married to Jesmin Akhter, 18, from a neighbouring village around five months ago. However, he could not bring his wife to his house because he could not afford to hold a marriage ceremony. Instead, he was saving money to arrange a wedding programme after Eid-ul-Fitr.

All of Robin's dreams and plans were shattered within a matter of minutes. He was one of the 22, who perished in Tuesday's deadly blast at Siddikbazar.

The loss of a loved one is always heartbreaking, and in Robin's case, it has left his family in an uncertain situation. The tragedy has highlighted the struggles and sacrifices of the many young people who leave their homes to make a better life for themselves and their families in the city.

"I have become a widow before going to my father-in-law's house," said a sobbing Jesmin.

"Now will my in-laws and I survive? Everything has been ruined," she added.

Robin's father Sohrab Sardar is a heart patient, and his son was the breadwinner of the family. "Who will buy medicine and food for us now?" asked a distraught Sohrab.

"Robin's wage was supposed to be increased within

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COMMERCIAL USE OF BASEMENTS

A massive risk for residents

HELEMUL ALAM

Building owners who put their basements up for commercial use, violating the approved plans, not only contribute to reduced parking spaces but also severe risks of accident.

Experts said airtight basements needed for commercial use are prone to fires and explosions.

"If anyone uses the basement, they will have to keep a proper ventilation system to keep the place risk-free," said Prof Mehedi Ahmed Ansary of Buet.

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), the authority that regulates buildings under their 1,528-square kilometre jurisdiction in the capital, has no specific data on the buildings that violate their approved plans. No action has been taken so far for the high-rises guilty of the violation.

“After getting Rajuk’s approval, building owners often stray from the guidelines during the construction phase. The authorities responsible for regulating buildings during and after construction do not play their role properly. Residents have to bear the cost of their inefficacy.”

FAZLE REZA SUMON
BIP President

Following the fire in Banani's FR Tower in 2019, Rajuk, in April that year, carried out a field survey of high-rise buildings that are above 10 floors. The survey found that 475 buildings have been constructed without Rajuk's approval. The rest 1,343 expanded vertically or horizontally, violating the approved plan.

The survey team also found 1,34,925 out of 2,04,106 surveyed buildings faulty, said a Rajuk official.

After the explosion at Siddikbazar on Tuesday, Rajuk has formed eight committees in eight zones under its jurisdiction.

The committees will find out the presence of markets or commercial establishments in basements of



buildings in their respective area and assess the risks and legality of such operations, said Tonmoy Das, member (development control) at Rajuk.

He said they will collect data and check supporting papers of their approvals from the building authorities.

"We will provide a building owner seven additional days if they fail to submit legal documents supporting the use of the establishments. We will decide on the building's fate after collecting all the documents," he added.

A meeting of Nagar Unnayan Committee of Rajuk will be held today in this regard at Osmani auditorium. It will be headed by Kazi Wasi Uddin, secretary of the housing and public works ministry, Tonmoy informed.

"We will prepare our working plan after the committee's decision," he added.

When asked about Rajuk's survey on high-rise buildings in 2019, Tonmoy said they are taking action upon finding any violation.

"It is also difficult for us to assess all the buildings in their entirety, as that would account for 26 lakh structures. We will discuss the issue in our meeting," he added.

Prof Adil Mohammad Khan, executive director of Institute for Planning and Development, said constructing any kind of commercial establishment in basements is totally prohibited.

"The number of buildings violating this guideline is unfortunately great," he said.

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ATTACK ON AHMADIYYAS

8 more held, total arrestees now 173

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Eight more people were arrested between Thursday night and early Friday in connection with attacks on the Ahmadiyya community in Panchagarh.

With this, the total number of arrestees has reached 173, confirmed SM Sirajul Islam Huda, superintendent of police in Panchagarh.

"We are arresting people on the basis of specific information and footage, irrespective of their political background," the SP added.

The incident was planned and a group of trained cadres, equipped with lethal weapons, carried out the attacks on the Ahmadiyya community, he said. Meanwhile, members of civil society and law enforcers were alert to avoid any untoward incident centering yesterday's Friday prayers in the villages where people of Ahmadiyya community resides.

On March 3, two people were killed and at

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SITAKUNDA BLAST

Probe body wants expert opinion, seeks more time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The committee formed to probe the blast at Seema Oxygen Plant in Sitakunda's Kadamrasul area has sought the opinion of experts to determine the specific cause behind the incident.

The probe body has also termed the blast that claimed seven lives as the country's first oxygen plant blast.

They have also appealed to Chattogram Deputy Commissioner (DC) to extend the deadline to wrap up their investigation by two working days. The probe committee was expected to submit their findings in the Sitakunda oxygen plant blast on March 9.

Headed by Additional Deputy Magistrate (ADM) of Chattogram Rakib Hasan and other members visited the spot several times and spoke with different people and recorded their statements.

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First reunion of DU's Mohsin hall alumni held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first reunion of Dhaka University's Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall Alumni Association was held on the campus yesterday amid much enthusiasm and reminiscence of old days.

Festivity was in the air as several hundred alumni met their old friends after a long time, chatted and took photographs during the day-long programme, which began at 11:30am on the hall's ground.

The programme was inaugurated by DU Vice Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman, while a former resident student of the dormitory and current

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Catching up with old friends was the purpose of the day during the first reunion of Dhaka University's Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall Alumni Association, which began at 11:30am on the hall's ground yesterday. DU Vice Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman inaugurated the event. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Shishu Palli: much more than an orphanage

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Anika (not her real name) lost her parents shortly after her birth seven years ago. She was brought to SOS Children's Village (Shishu Palli) in the capital's Shyamoli at the age of three days because she had no one to take care of her.

Anika is now growing up in a family of seven, with a mother and siblings. Sabera Sultana is the mother of eight such children. Sonali House is the name of her family.

There are now 15 women in Dhaka Shishu Palli, who are taking care of many orphans in the capital.

Officials of Shishu Palli told The Daily Star that children who have lost their parents are kept here until they become independent. Besides, these children are provided with formal education. They are also engaged in cultural activities. Some of them are also married to respectable families when they come of age.

Many of these children have grown up in this place, completed higher education, and are now working abroad.

Sabera Sultana said, "I can't express in words the joy I feel when these children call me a mother. All my pain goes away in a jiffy. I have no children of my own. They are all I have."

Sabera said she has been raising children in this place for the last 18 years. She has 26

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SABERA SULTANA

children so far, most of whom are now well-established in society. Of them, one became an engineer and another a teacher.

Another such mother is Amirunnahar. She has been raising children in this village

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