

## ‘Alor Iskul’ brings light to their lives

**Underprivileged children get free education, essentials**

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A year ago, attending school was a distant dream for 10-year-old Alamin Islam.

Due to financial constraints, his father, a worker at the capital's Postagola crematorium, wanted to admit him to a madrasa.

However, hope arrived in the form of “Alor Iskul”.

“My father admitted me to class one last month,” Alamin shared, excitement evident in his voice.

“The school provided me with books, pens, and paper just after my admission. They also gave me a bag, a school dress, a sweater, and a new shoe,” Alamin added.

This Valentine's Day, the school also organised a programme where 106 students, including Alamin, received all the necessary school materials. Of them, 67 are in nursery, 24 in class one, four in class two, four in class three, and five in class five.

Under the initiative of the Shyampur Zone of the Wari Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, “Alor Iskul” started its journey in 2019 to cater to underprivileged children of Dhaka.

“Children of poor families, such as doms, rickshaw pullers, daily workers, and cleaners receive education and

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PHOTO: STAR

**Children in their favourite “Alor Iskul,” the place that has been providing them with a safe space to study and play.**

## Promote research at universities

**President asks UGC**

BSS, Dhaka

President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday asked the University Grants Commission to take initiatives to promote and enhance research activities at universities.

He said this as a six-member delegation of the regulatory authority, led by its acting chairman Prof Dr Muhammad Alamgir, handed him over its 49th Annual Report at Bangabhaban.

Shahabuddin, also the chancellor of universities, directed UGC to play an effective role for expanding quality education across the country and increasing the number of students in the field of higher education.

President's press secretary Md Joynal Abedin briefed reporters after the meeting.

The president also suggested UGC to form a panel in accordance with the policy for appointing vice chancellors and pro-VCs of public universities.

## KHALEDA CASE

### Charge framing hearing adjourned

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned until March 6 the hearing on charge framing in the Gatco graft case against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and 14 others.

Judge Muhammad Ali Hussain of the Special Judge's Court-3 passed the order after a hearing on charge framing. Farhana Hossain, bench assistant of the court, told The Daily Star.

During yesterday's hearing, defence lawyer Masud Ahmed Talukder partially placed his submission in support of the BNP chief.

Then the lawyer sought adjournment of the hearing, and the court accepted the plea.

Khaleda, who is out of jail following an executive order from the government, is ailing and taking treatment at her Gulshan residence.

On September 2, 2007, the Anti-Corruption Commission ACC filed the case accusing Khaleda and several others of misappropriating around Tk 1,000 crore while dealing with Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Company Ltd (Gatco).

## BENAPOLE EXPRESS FIRE

# ‘Why should we suffer for political vengeance?’

**Bodies identified, handed over to relatives after 40 days; police yet to find perpetrators; PBI to take over case**

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Around 40 days after the arson attack on Benapole Express on January 5, police handed over bodies of four victims to their relatives from Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue yesterday.

Ferdous Ahmed Biswas, officer-in-charge of Dhaka Railway Police Station, handed over the bodies around 12:30pm.

“The bodies were completely burned by the fire and were beyond recognition,” he said.

“We took the DNA samples of relatives who claimed the bodies and made cross-matches in the Criminal Investigation Department's laboratory as per the directives of the court,” he said. “We handed over the bodies after the results came.”

The deceased were identified as Elina Yasmin, 44; Abu Talha, 23; Chandrima Choudhury, 28, and Natasha Jeasmin Neki, 25.

Relatives and close ones of all four deceased were present to receive their bodies, according to police.

Syed Sajjad Hossain Chapol, husband of Elina, who came to receive her body alongside Elina's brother Moniruzzaman Mamun, said, “Why should we suffer for political vengeance?”

“Some people, including my wife, died due to political vengeance. What am I going to say to my child?” Chapol told The Daily Star.

“We want these to stop,” he said, requesting everyone to pray for his family.

Natasha's elder brother Khurshid Ahmed said, “After waiting for 40 days, I got my sister's body. I cannot explain how our family spent

these 40 days. No one should be subjected to such agony.”

Khurshid demanded a fair trial for the incident.

Talha's father Md Abdul Haque, a private company employee by profession, is still in shock.

“My son is no more, and he will not return. I have nothing to say about justice. What will I do with the trial?” Haque said.

At least four people were killed and over a

dozen were injured after arsonists set fire to the Benapole Express train in Dhaka around 9:00pm on January 5.

To this day, police remain in the dark regarding who set fire to the train.

After the incident, the police's Detective Branch arrested BNP leader Nabiullah Nabi and Jubo Dal leader Kazi Mansur Alam for setting fire to the train. Later, they were shown arrested by Dhaka Railway Police.

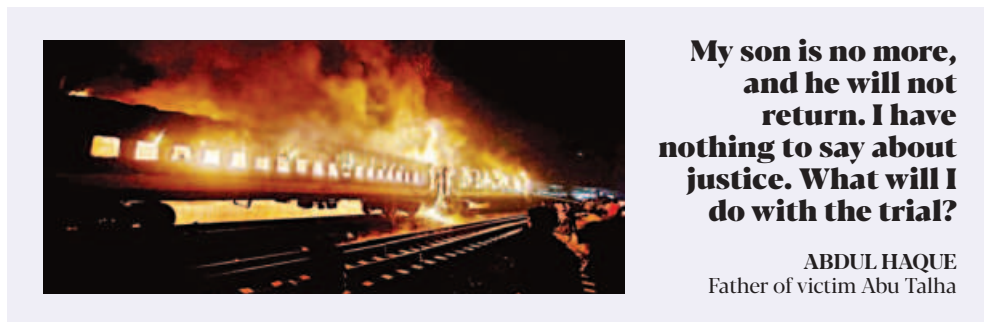
Police said in interrogation, the arrestees admitted that they held a virtual meeting for planning sabotage.

However, the police failed to identify who set fire to the train.

Anwar Hossain, superintendent of Dhaka Railway Police, said, “We are investigating the case.”

“The Police Headquarters has decided to transfer the case to the Police Bureau of Investigation. We have yet to receive the documents. Once we get them, we will hand them over to PBI,” Anwar added.

The police have also failed to trace those



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behind the arson attack on Mohanganj Express. On December 19 last year, miscreants set fire to the train early in the morning, killing four, including a woman and her children.

Police said two individuals were seen boarding the train from the Airport Railway Station in the CCTV footage. They got off the train at the Tejgaon station before the fire broke out. Their movements were suspicious. However, it was not possible to identify them.

Investigation of this case was directed to the CID, said SP Anwar.

## SSC exams underway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent examinations began across the country with Bangla (first paper) yesterday morning.

During a press conference held at the International Mother Language Institute yesterday, Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury urged everyone to refrain from using loudspeakers excessively during religious or cultural programmes.

He emphasised the negative impact of such noise pollution.

The minister specifically urged religious leaders to move away from this practice. Besides, he said cultural programmes should not be held during exam periods.

Breaking away from tradition, the new education minister did not visit any examination centres. He explained that such visits create a stressful and disruptive environment for students, causing “a kind of harassment, mental torture, and public suffering”.

According to the Secondary and Higher Education Division, a total of 20,24,192 examinees are expected to sit for their SSC at 3,700 centres from 29,735 educational institutions this year. Among them, 10,31,314 are girls.

Meanwhile, 14 candidates from Mukhi Pallisebok Bahumukhi High School in Mymensingh's Gafargaon upazila could not appear for SSC exams because they did not receive admit cards, due to a mistake by the school authorities.

A total of 9,731 students were absent on the first day of SSC examination this year.

## ‘TRIBAL’ QUOTA IN MBBS

### Admission of eight Bangalee students cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nominations of eight Bangalee students for admission under the “tribal quota” following the recently held MBBS entrance tests for 2023-24 academic year have been cancelled.

These quotas will be filled by indigenous students who passed the exam, Prof Md Mahiuddin Matubber, director (medical education) of the Directorate General of Medical Education, told The Daily Star yesterday.

At the same time, the eight students have been show-caused to explain why they selected the quota, he said.

The development came following a report titled “Bangalee students in ‘tribal’ quota,” published in this newspaper on February 14.

He said five out of the eight Bangalee students who got nominated have already admitted that they are not from any indigenous community.

The admission committee is working to take necessary steps in this regard, he added.

The director also said they had already informed the principals of respective medical colleges not to admit those eight Bangalee students.

Something like this did not happen for the first time, as in 2017, four Bangalee students got nominated at the admission test for dental units of government medical colleges. After media reports, the authorities cancelled their admission and selected students from indigenous groups.

The MBBS entrance test for 2023-24 was held on February 10, and results were published the following day, revealing the selection of eight Bangalee students within a designated quota meant for indigenous communities.

**The development came following a report titled “Bangalee students in ‘tribal’ quota,” published in this newspaper on February 14.**

## HC stays leasing of 5 balumahals in Someshwari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed all tender proceedings for leasing out five Balumahals (designated sand quarries) of Someshwari river in Netrokona's Durgapur upazila till further order.

The HC bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu passed the order following a petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association seeking necessary orders to implement its previous directives on this issue.

According to the petition, Netrokona district administration floated fresh tenders on January 28 to be submitted by February 15 for leasing out the balumahals of Someshwari river, violating the Balumahal and Soil Management Act, 2010.

In response to a petition earlier filed by BELA, the HC in July 2015 issued a rule upon the government asking why the leasing out of balumahals in the river should not be declared illegal.

It also asked the authorities concerned to show causes why they should not be directed to declare Someshwari river as ecologically critical.

The HC also directed the local administration to regulate and monitor sand lifting in leased-out areas to prevent damage to the river and its ecology, and assess its impact.

Since the district administration further floated tender to lease out the balumahals even though the HC directives are still unimplemented, BELA submitted the petition recently seeking necessary HC orders.



**Demanding justice and a fair investigation into the death of Preeti Urang, a human chain was organised in front of The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday. The 15-year-old house help died after falling from the eighth-floor flat of the newspaper's Executive Editor Syed Ashfaqul Haque on February 6. The human chain was held under the banner of “Shocheton Nagorik Shomaj”.**

PHOTO: STAR