

DEATH OF AYAAN HC forms new probe body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court itself formed a five-member probe committee yesterday to find out the reasons behind the death of five-year-old Ayaan at United Hospital, saying that the inquiry report submitted by Directorate General of Health Services has anomalies and is not satisfactory.

The committee comprises principal of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Prof ABM Maksudul Alam, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University's Professor Shashanka Kumar Mondal, Dhaka University's Law Faculty's Professor Sheikh Hafizur Rahman Karzon, Dhaka Shishu Hospital's Professor Aminur Rashid, and assistant professor of National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine Sathhi Dasidar.

The court asked the committee to submit its

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A woman bargaining with a florist over a bouquet near Shahbagh intersection yesterday evening. People from all walks of life will pay homage to the language martyrs at the Central Shaheed Minar today, marking International Mother Language Day.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Controversial yet in DU BCL committee

DU CORRESPONDENT

Mugging, ragging, and infighting – some members of the newly-formed full committee of the Dhaka University Chhatra League have a tainted past.

Two of them, however, have been acquitted by the relevant courts, while formal charges were never placed against many of them despite the incidents they were involved in being widely covered in the media.

Victims said in most cases they did not file complaints, fearing repercussions.

Some of the newly appointed leaders were suspended by DU BCL after incidents of their wrongdoings came to light. But the organisation lifted their suspension a few days before announcing the committee.

Take the case of Aktarul Karim, alias Rubel, for example. He earned the nickname "King of Udyan" for several allegations of mugging brought against him, all of which allegedly took place at the Suhrawardy Udyan premises during 2020 and 2021.

He was arrested in July 2021 on charges of beating a staffer of Sheikh Hasina National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute at Chankharpool for extortion money.

He was released after serving some jail time, as the relevant court acquitted him.

Aktarul's expulsion order was withdrawn by the central BCL a day before the announcement of the full committee, and he was appointed as vice president of the DU unit.

Similarly, Nur Uddin and two DU BCL leaders were arrested for robbery and assault at Suhrawardy Udyan last May. However, he too was released following a court order. Nur has also been appointed as vice president.

Over 12 leaders with a controversial past have secured positions in the full committee of DU BCL.

After a clash at Fazlul Haque Muslim Hall last February, one Jihadul was expelled from BCL. But he has been appointed as deputy for information and research in the DU BCL unit.

Belayet Hossain, also known as Rocky, accused of extorting a shop near Dhaka Medical College Hospital and assaulting the shopkeeper, has been named as joint general secretary.

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Afreen Akhter to visit Dhaka Feb 24-26

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs

Afreen Akhter will arrive in Dhaka on a three-day visit on February 24, diplomatic sources said.

It will be the first visit by any US official after the January 7 elections.

The visit is aimed at taking forward the bilateral relations that saw strains over the last two years as Washington imposed sanctions against Rab and did not invite Bangladesh to Biden's Summit for Democracy in 2021 and 2023.

In May last year, the US also announced a visa policy, saying it would deny visas to Bangladeshis who undermine the democratic process.

Following the elections, the US State Department in a statement said the elections were not free and fair. It, however, said the US would deepen people-to-people contact, economic partnership in the context of greater Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Afreen Akhter, who also visited Bangladesh before the elections, is likely to hold meeting with senior

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Election brings 'rewards' for cops

418 police members may get medals for preventing violence, 'sabotage' centring polls; highest in a decade

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

It seems like the election years bring "blessings" for the police force, since, if not anything else, the number of Police Awards recipients increases manifold right after the national polls.

The government doesn't seem to hold back from showering police officials with "rewards" after a successful election.

The number of police officials who were awarded by the government almost doubled in 2019, the year after the 11th national polls.

Following the trend, the Police Headquarters finalised a list of nearly 500 officials for the awards this year, just after the 12th parliamentary election.

At least 418 officials may get the "Bangladesh Police Medal" and "President Police Medal" awards during Police Week 2024, which is the highest in a decade, as a "reward for preventing violent activities and sabotage before and during the election".

The list comprises the names of all the district superintendents of police (SPs), and PHQ will send it to the home ministry within a day or two, according to sources.

Enamul Haque Sagor, assistant inspector general (media and publication) of PHQ, told The Daily Star, "This year's police week will begin on February 27."

"But it is difficult to say how many officials will finally get the awards, as

a government order will be issued in this regard," he said.

Besides, the PHQ is also preparing a list of demands – a medical college, upgrading divisional medical services, interest-free car loans, risk

POLICE WEEK

- » BANGLADESH POLICE MEDAL
- » PRESIDENT POLICE MEDAL

YEAR	AWARDEES
2024	418 (proposed)
2023	117
2022	115
2021	115
2020	118
2019	349
2018	182
2017	132
2016	115
2015	86
2014	105

allowances, and high-risk allowances for officials who work in militancy combating units – to place during the week.

Anwar Hossain, deputy inspector general (operation) of PHQ, said, "We do not want to call them demands. We

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Flights won't be diverted to foreign airports

Says minister; Ctg, Sylhet airports to operate 24/7 in winter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

From now on, Chattogram and Sylhet airports will operate 24 hours a day during winter so that any Dhaka-bound flight can be diverted there instead of any airport outside Bangladesh.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Mohammad Faruk Khan told this yesterday during a meeting with the executive committee of Aviation and Tourism Journalists Forum of Bangladesh at his Secretariat office.

He said work is going on to upgrade the Instrumental Landing System (ILS) at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport so that Dhaka-bound aircraft do not need to divert to other airports due to dense fog.

Passengers going through suffering from flight diversions due to dense fog in winter is a common practice at Dhaka airport.

Due to low visibility between November and February at HSI, diverting aircraft to different airports in India, Bangkok, and even Malaysia has been a common scenario in recent weeks, sources at HSI said.

In reply to a query, Faruk Khan said Biman Bangladesh Airlines is evaluating both the proposals of Boeing and Airbus regarding the purchase of their aircraft.

Civil Aviation Secretary Mokammel Hossain, Joint Secretary Sayed Kutub, ATJFB President Tanzim Anwar, and Acting Secretary General Baten Biplob, among others, were present at the meeting.

Less severe but spreads fast

Says BSMMU vice chancellor
on new Covid subvariant JN.1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new JN.1 sub-variant of Covid-19 can infect even those who were given vaccine twice previously, said Prof Sharfuddin Ahmed, vice-chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

Patients diagnosed with the JN.1 coronavirus strain, however, exhibit few mild symptoms with low rate of hospitalisation, he also said.

Prof Sharfuddin was addressing a press conference yesterday, organised by BSMMU to announce the results of its latest genome sequencing research on Covid-19.

The World Health Organization has already termed JN.1 a "variant of interest" or "variant to watch for" as it is spreading fast.

In January 19, Bangladesh reported five people diagnosed with the new sub-variant, despite not having any travel history.

Amid a rising infection rate globally, WHO recently said the overall risk posed by the sub-variant is low, while the existing vaccines are enough to offer protection against it.

From the third week of January to the first week of February this year, BSMMU conducted genome sequencing of samples from 48 patients infected with the virus. The study identified the new JN.1 sub-variant in three patients who were given two doses of vaccine previously, said the BSMMU VC, who led the research.

"Two of them had travelled abroad recently," he said.

"The symptoms of this sub-variant are similar to other types, including fever, chills, sore throat, headache and other mild symptoms. Anyone with such symptoms should undergo a test," he also said.

"However, there is no option to continue research to know its long-term effects yet," he added.

India for joint ventures in defence manufacturing Says Pranay Verma

UNB, Dhaka

Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma



yesterday said India is willing to share wide-spectrum capabilities in defence manufacturing with Bangladesh.

He also proposed elevating bilateral defence cooperation by building joint ventures in defence manufacturing.

Verma was speaking at an event on "Seminar on Indian Defence Equipment - SIDE 2024" hosted by the High Commission of India in Dhaka.

He described SIDE 2024 as a reflection of Indian defence industry's interest in partnering with Bangladesh and taking India-Bangladesh defence cooperation to the next level, including by utilising

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CONJOINED TWINS Nuha, Nuba separated after 15hr surgery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nuha and Nuba were joined at the spine since they were in their mother's womb. Since their birth on March 21, 2022, the conjoined twins underwent six surgeries.

They finally got separated after a 15-hour surgery that completed early yesterday.

The sixth phase of surgery on Nuha and Nuba was performed at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) from 9:00am.

A team of 100 surgeons and physicians led by Prof Mohammad Hossain, dean of the Surgery Faculty at BSMMU, conducted the 15-hour surgery, which finally ended around midnight.

Post surgery, the twins have been kept at the High Care Unit of the hospital.

Nuha-Nuba was born as conjoined twins to Md Alamgir Rana, a transport worker from Kurigram's Kathalbari, and Nasrin Akhter.

Rana could not bear the expenses for the medical procedure.

The twins were admitted to the hospital's neurosurgery department on April 4, 2022. Since then, BSMMU doctors have been examining the babies to determine whether they could be separated through surgery.

The first surgery on Nuha and Nuba was completed on January 31, 2023. Despite being finally separated

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As the sun, no longer trapped in fog, shines brighter, mango flowers bloom in joy, announcing the arrival of the much-loved summer fruit. The photo was taken in Khulna city's Khalishpur area yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN