



Welcoming 1431...

With hopes for a new beginning, the country celebrated Bangla New Year on Sunday. Artists render songs at Ramna Batamul. Many took to the streets in the morning, dressed in red and white. Meanwhile, performers set the stage on fire following weeks of practice. The photos were taken on Pahela Baishakh at different areas of the capital, Chattogram city and Barishal Sadar.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, PRABIR DAS, TITU DAS, RAJIB RAIHAN



LABOUR LAW CASE
Prof Yunus
to seek
permanent
bail today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus will appear before the Labour Appellate Tribunal in Dhaka to seek an extension of his bail in a labour law violation case today.

Prof Yunus will appear before the tribunal around 10:00am to seek permanent bail, Abdullah-Al-Mamun, a lawyer for Yunus, told The Daily Star yesterday.

On March 3, the tribunal set April 16 for hearing on the appeal filed by Yunus and three Grameen Telecom directors against a labour court's sentence in the case.

On January 1, the Labour Court-3 of Dhaka sentenced the four to six months' imprisonment and fined Tk 30,000 each for violating labour laws.

EID HOLIDAYS

Patients endure hours of wait at understaffed Pongu Hospital

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and AHMED DEEPTO

Arosh Mia, a 35-year-old autorickshaw driver from Narsingdi's Raipura, found himself in a difficult situation in the afternoon of Eid-ul-Fitr. After his right leg was broken in an accident, he knew he needed medical attention fast. He rushed to the National Orthopedic Hospital and Rehabilitation Institute (Nitor), popularly known as Pongu Hospital, hoping to get the help he needed.

Unfortunately, upon arrival at 4:30pm, Arosh was met with a sight that filled him with dread. The emergency department was overflowing with patients. Being it Eid holidays, the facility was understaffed.

Despite his broken leg requiring emergency surgery, Arosh's surgery was only scheduled for 8:30pm.

But even that wasn't the end of his wait. The emergency unit at Nitor was understaffed, struggling to keep up with the influx of patients during the three-day Eid holiday rush. Arosh ended up waiting an additional four and a half hours before finally going into surgery around 1:00am. The combination of

a busy holiday and understaffing had turned what should have been a prompt medical intervention into an agonising wait for Arosh.

"My husband was in agony. I repeatedly asked the operation theatre staffers to get my husband for surgery quickly. However, many other patients were waiting outside the

There are over 450 doctors in the hospital. Of them, less than 100 doctors were on duty during Eid holidays. Of the 700 nurses, 153 were on duty, according to Nitor's roster list.

OT for surgery, and at least 12 patients were waiting in serial before my husband," Arosh's wife Tanzila Begum told The Daily Star on Saturday afternoon.

Arosh was not alone. Others too had to go through similar experiences.

Shamim Ahmed, 19, was also seeking

treatment at Nitor, as his right leg broke after his motorcycle got hit by another motorcycle in the capital's Diabari area on Eid day.

He was rushed to Nitor just after the accident and was given primary treatment on Thursday night. He was kept at the facility for operation.

However, no doctor came to attend to him afterwards, said Shamim while talking to these correspondents on Saturday evening.

"Only a doctor came to see me this afternoon [Saturday] and just asked me how I was feeling. He left after that," said Shamim.

Nitor is the country's largest facility for treating fractures. According to the authorities, there are over 450 doctors in the hospital. Of them, less than 100 doctors were on duty during Eid holidays, and almost all of them were non-Muslims.

Of the 700 nurses in the hospital, 153 were on duty during the holidays, none of whom are Muslims, according to Nitor's roster list.

On the afternoon of Eid, there were patients in every seat in Nitor's emergency department, most of whom were sent for operation.

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Publish list of 60 lakh jailed activists, or apologise

Quader tells Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader has challenged BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam's statement that the government has filed cases against 60 lakh leaders and activists of BNP.

He also asked Mirza Fakhrul to provide the list of jailed BNP leaders and activists.

"How did the number of jailed activists increase from 20,000 to 6 million? They should immediately publish the list of 6 million prisoners; otherwise, Mirza Fakhrul will have to apologise before the nation for lying," said Quader while briefing reporters at AL president's political office in the capital's Dhanmondi yesterday.

Talking about Mujibnagar Day on April 17, the ruling party leader said, "It [April 17] is the oath day of the first government of independent Bangladesh... But BNP does not recognise it."

"BNP was created to destroy the spirit of Bangladesh's independence. They aim to attack the very existence of Bangladesh," Quader also said.



Health experts urge govt to ban asbestos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health experts and rights activists have urged the government to immediately ban asbestos use due to severe health risks.

At a programme held yesterday, the speakers called for action during a press conference jointly organised by the Bangladesh Ban Asbestos Network (B-BAN) and Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE Foundation) at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

"Asbestos can cause fatal diseases like lung cancer and asbestosis. The government must act now to protect public health and ban the import and use of this hazardous substance," said Aminur Rashid Chowdhury Repon, executive director of OSHE Foundation.

Repon highlighted the alarming rise in asbestos imports, noting that they have increased six fold from 2018 to reach 115,963 kg in 2023. He also pointed out that asbestos is widely used in sectors such as cement roofing sheets and brake shoes.

"Around 50 percent of cement roofing sheets and vehicle brake shoes contain 15 percent chrysotile asbestos, which poses significant risks," he said.

Public health expert Dr MH Faruque stated that urgent government intervention is needed.

Dr SM Morshed, vice chair of OSHE Foundation, added, "The government has a responsibility to safeguard the health and wellbeing of its citizens. Banning asbestos should be a top priority."

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Captivated by the beauty of the two giraffes, visitors at the capital's zoo gather around their enclosure to cherish the moment on the second day of Eid. While the streets were comparatively empty this holiday season, many who stayed behind were engaging in lively conversations and capturing memories with friends and family at the zoo, one of the few recreational places open to the public in Dhaka.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

AL oligarchs celebrated while the poor suffered
Rizvi on Eid observance

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday said that the number of wealthy people who are like former Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed has increased in the country.

Rizvi said it in a press conference held at BNP's Nayapaltan central office in the capital citing recent media reports on Benazir Ahmed's alleged corruption and lavish lifestyle.

He claimed that under the Awami League regime, those who control tenders and syndicates have become affluent with the blessings of the ruling party.

He added that while the Awami League and their oligarchs celebrated Eid lavishly, there was no joy among the country's poor and limited-income people.

The poor people celebrated this year's Eid with starvation and unprecedented sorrows, he said.

"Awami League's 15 years' misrule and embezzlement of people's money have caused a silent famine," Rizvi claimed.

