

## Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid's death anniv

STAR REPORT

Today is the 12th death anniversary of eminent educationalist, diplomat and intellectual Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid.

On the occasion, wreaths will be placed at his grave at the capital's Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at 10:30am. Besides, prayers will be offered and food will be distributed among the destitute, said a press release.

Born in 1924, Murshid was at the forefront of the Language Movement of 1952, the Mass Upsurge of 1969, the Six-Point Movement and the Liberation War of 1971.

During the Liberation War, he was a member of the planning commission of the Mujibnagar government in exile.

In his illustrious diplomatic career, Murshid served as the Bangladesh high commissioner to Poland and Hungary. Murshid was the first chairman of Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) and a former vice chancellor of Rajshahi University.

## Youth stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A college student, Md Shimul Hossain, 21, was stabbed to death, and two others were injured in a clash at Char-Ghoshpur village, Pabna Sadar, on Friday night.

Police arrested three suspects and investigations are ongoing, said Pabna Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Abdus Salam.

The two injured—Shimul Hossain, Kawsar Hossain and Dishar Ali, are admitted to Pabna General Hospital.

Shimul was caught up in a dispute with a group of locals over a trivial issue regarding an event, the OC added. Shimul's family was preparing to file a case, he said.

## CJ stresses

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accessible through technology, legal aid, and procedural reforms," he said.

Quoting Lord Hewart's famous words, "Justice delayed is justice denied," the chief justice underscored the urgency of addressing case backlogs and procedural delays in Bangladesh, which, he warned, could undermine public trust in the judiciary.

"It is our duty to ensure that justice is swift without compromising its integrity," he said, adding that the judiciary must not only resolve disputes but also uphold principles of fairness, equality, and dignity.

He further described judicial independence and efficiency as the twin pillars sustaining justice, which he called the "lifeline for the vulnerable, a shield for the oppressed, and a symbol of hope for all."

"Independence ensures that justice is free from undue influence, while efficiency guarantees it is timely and accessible. Together, they form the foundation of a judiciary that is not only fair but also trusted by the people it serves," he added.

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At the onset of winter, farmers are busy harvesting Aman paddy from the fields to their homes. After threshing, the new rice will be used to prepare seasonal dishes like pitha and payesh. The photo was taken from the Kedarpur village in Keshabpur upazila of Jashore recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

# Fertiliser crisis hits farmers

Prices soar amid artificial shortage

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers in the district of Lalmonirhat are suffering from an acute shortage of fertiliser just as the Rabi season started. Meanwhile, fertiliser stock in the warehouses of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) and Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) has run out.

Taking advantage of this circumstance, some unscrupulous individuals have started selling fertilisers to farmers, and unregistered traders are selling fertiliser to farmers at incredibly inflated prices.

Rafiqul Islam, 60, from Durgapur village in Aditmari upazila, told The Daily Star that he is disappointed as he has not been able to get MOP, DOP, TSP and Urea fertilisers from the registered fertiliser dealers. He had prepared his land for cultivating maize and tobacco, but the fertiliser shortage has halted his plans and left him distressed.

Haider Ali, 66, a farmer from Parulia village in Hatibandha upazila, said that the fertiliser crisis at the beginning of the Rabi season is an incredibly serious concern for farmers. Now, some well-off farmers and unscrupulous traders have stockpiled fertiliser and have created an artificial crisis.

Traders said the government fixed the rate for each sack (50kgs) of DAP fertiliser at Tk 1,050, TSP at Tk 1,350, MOP at Tk 1,000 and Urea at Tk 1,350.

However, some unscrupulous

sellers are secretly selling fertiliser at Tk 200-300 higher per sack than the government rate.

Fertiliser dealers told The Daily Star that they did not get any allocation of urea fertiliser in October and November. Due to this, there is no stock of urea fertiliser in their warehouses. However, they got the allocation of MOP, TSP and DAP from BADC. Due to the huge demand for MOP, TSP and DAP at the beginning of the Rabi

season, the government-allocated fertilisers ran out in the first week of November.

Farhad Alam Suman, a BADC fertiliser dealer at Burirbazar in Aditmari, said he sold almost all his stock of fertiliser in the first week of November. If he gets further allocation in December, he will be able to sell again.

Jewel Islam, sales officer of the BADC fertiliser warehouse in Lalmonirhat, said there is currently

no fertiliser stock in the warehouse. Due to transportation issues, the supply of fertiliser in the warehouse is being disrupted. This problem will be resolved within the next week. The supply of fertiliser to the warehouse will be ensured in the first week of December.

Dr Saykhul Arifin, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Lalmonirhat, said the government does not allocate BCIC urea fertiliser in October and



## Families of victims

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from the July Uprising in Uttara, was organised by Chobbishe Uttara, a platform formed during the anti-discrimination movement that began on July 18.

The programme began with the publication of a list of 46 individuals killed in Uttara during the uprising, including their names and identities. Among them, the identities of eight individuals were confirmed, but their photographs were unavailable.

The relatives of 12 victims spoke at the event. **HEART-WRENCHING TESTIMONIES**

Halim Sarkar, father of Sajib Sarkar, an MBBS doctor who was shot dead on July 18, said, "My son provided immediate care to injured protesters. That afternoon, he was shot and later declared dead at Uttara Adhunik Hospital. I urge the government to honour their memory by establishing a memorial. It might bring some solace to grieving families like ours."

Bilkis Zaman, mother of engineer Jahiduzzaman Tanvin, broke down as she recounted her son's death. "Tanvin built drones and worked on innovative projects. On July 18, he left home to withdraw money from the bank, promising to return in half an hour. He never came back."

Calling for justice, she added, "I demand that my son's name, along with all

the martyrs, be etched in golden letters in history. The killers must face justice urgently."

Forhad Ali, father of Kishorganj Polytechnic Institute student Samit Hossain, killed on August 5, recalled, "Samit left home to visit a friend. By 3:30pm, I received the devastating news of his death. I demand justice for my son and all the victims of this movement."

**CALL FOR DOCUMENTATION**

Samia Rahman and Sohana Saki, organisers of Chobbishe Uttara, moderated the event. The platform began compiling a list of those killed on September 20.

Samia said, "The July uprising in Uttara saw significant participation. We built networks through the protests, but the exact number of victims remains unknown. While some figures have been released, many cases remain unreported."

She urged the interim government to create an official list of victims and injured protesters.

The event concluded with a candlelight vigil and a minute of silence in memory of those who lost their lives during the uprising.

Families reiterated their demands for justice and accountability, calling for recognition of the sacrifices made during the anti-discrimination student movement.

## 16,500 murders

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Prevention Act, often covering rape incidents.

Additionally, 3,15,000 drug-related cases, nearly 14,000 smuggling cases, and over 9,000 illegal arms recovery cases were reported during this time. Crime in Early 2024

In the first six months of 2024, 1,533 murders were reported. Other crimes included 183 robberies, 1,222 incidents of mugging and looting, 281 abductions, 9,000 cases of violence against women and children, 33,000 drug-related cases, 15,000 smuggling cases, and over 1,500 illegal arms recovery cases.

During the July Uprising July and August 2024 saw heightened unrest, with student-led anti-discrimination protests

escalating into a mass uprising. The government responded with lethal force, resulting in numerous civilian deaths.

Police statistics show 334 murders in July and 618 in August. During these months, there were 64 dacoity cases, 203 incidents of mugging, 59 abductions, and over 1,000 cases of theft.

Additionally, 2,774 cases of violence against women and children, 307 smuggling cases, 5,818 drug-related cases, and 149 illegal arms cases were also reported in this period.

The Awami League government fell on August 5 following the uprising. Many police stations were damaged, disrupting law enforcement operations and limiting the filing of new crime cases.

## Teenager

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is abroad, and my brother had gone to pray at a nearby mosque," she said.

"Arman and three accomplices broke into our room and tried to stab me in the neck with a knife. When my mother rushed to save me, she was injured as the knife struck her hand. Then they stabbed my mother several times in the abdomen. After that, they stabbed me three times in my back," she said.

"When we started crying, they left us," she added.

Raisa's paternal uncle Majid\* said he was at the mosque with her brother that night.

"Hearing their cry, we rushed to the home and found them bleeding profusely. Later, we took them to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital, but due to the severity of their injuries, they were referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital," he said.

"They were in no condition to survive. Raisa's mother suffered three perforations in her intestines. Emergency surgery was performed at DMCH. Meanwhile, Raisa had a punctured lung that doctors initially missed. When we brought her home after a week, complications reappeared, and we had to take her back to Dhaka. One surgery has already been done, and another is still pending," he added.

"We informed his family many times about the harassment, but no one took any action. Since no one stopped them, they gained the courage to carry out such a brutal attack," Raisa said.

"We demand exemplary punishment for this injustice so that no stalker dares to break into someone's home and attack like this," she added.

Following the attack, Raisa's uncle, Majid, filed a case at Gopalganj Sadar Police Station.

However, the accused have yet to be arrested, while the perpetrators have been issuing threats to force them to withdraw the case.

Sajedur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Gopalganj Sadar Police Station, said, "The accused are absconding, which is why we haven't been able to arrest them yet. However, we are trying to apprehend them as soon as possible."

\*Names have been changed to protect the identities of the victims.

## Dhaka's disappearing flood-flow zones

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Rajuk has further divided flood-flow zones into "open flood-flow zones" and "general flood-flow zones".

While development is restricted in open zones, conditional development is now permitted in general zones, reducing the total flood-flow area by 23 percent.

"Rajuk has effectively legitimised encroachments and now has the power to alter land use based on individual or other considerations," said Iqbal Habib, vice president of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon.

"This will reduce Dhaka's flood-flow zones to a mere 26 percent of their original size."

**CONSEQUENCES FOR DHAKA'S ENVIRONMENT**

The gradual loss of flood-flow zones has dire implications for the city. Without sufficient floodplains, rivers like the Buriganga face reduced inflows, endangering their ecological health.

"When houses are built on elevated flood-flow zones, roads are also raised, creating low pockets that trap water," explained Iqbal Habib. "This leads to severe waterlogging in areas like Kalabagan, Kathalbagan, Rayerbazar, Matikata, and the DND region."

Mohammad Azaz, chairman of the River and Delta Research Centre (RDRC), highlighted how Dhaka has transformed from a wetland city into a

concrete maze.

"Dhaka should have been a sponge city, retaining water during rains. But unplanned urbanisation and inadequate town planning have buried natural water channels and wetlands, leaving the city defenseless against flooding."

Adil Mohammad Khan, president of BIP, added, "Flood-flow zones were once restricted for farming and water retention, ensuring natural flood mitigation. Now, the absence of penalties for encroachments has made the current DAP toothless."

Iqbal Habib warned, "Without sufficient flood-flow zones, Dhaka will face increased flash floods and river flooding. Vulnerable areas along the Buriganga's banks and other low-lying pockets will suffer the most."

**HOUSING PROJECTS: GOVT, PVT CULPRITS**

Government agencies have played a leading role in this crisis by developing large housing projects on wetlands, such as Uttara phases 1, 2, and 3, Purbachal, Jheelmil, and Baridhara J Block, according to experts. Private developers followed suit, with Jahirol Islam's Banasree and Eastern Housing becoming models for indiscriminate wetland encroachment, said Azaz.

"Even local housing societies are now filling wetlands and flood-flow zones for new projects," added Iqbal Habib.

The Drainage Masterplan 2016 by Dhaka Water Supply

and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) revealed that many back swamps, depressions, and natural channels have already been filled in Dhaka, exacerbating the city's drainage issues.

**THE WAY FORWARD**

Experts emphasise that protecting flood-flow zones require strict enforcement of existing regulations and meaningful penalties for encroachment. Developing Dhaka's town planning with a focus on ecology and sustainability is also crucial.

"The government must prioritise ecological and social considerations over mere land use," said Azaz. "Dhaka's survival depends on its ability to balance urbanisation with environmental preservation."

Stressing the need for proper protection of flood-flow zones, Adil said any type of development should be completely restricted in the flood-flow zones around Dhaka.

He said main flood-flow and sub-flood flow zones should be merged in the DAP to prohibit any types of development in these areas as they are imperative for water retention and protecting biodiversity, he added.

"Vested interest groups that were involved in the destruction of flood-flow zones for housing, industry, or other activities, should be identified and penalised accordingly. Culpable officials of Rajuk, DoE, water development board, DC office, and other

government offices should be punished as well for their misconduct," Adil said.

Adil said environmental laws should be modified and amended to increase the punishment for encroachers of flood-flow areas.

"Connectivity between different canals, waterbodies, and water channels should be restored. Appropriate demarcation of flood-flow zones is necessary as well and community engagement is also required to conserve these areas," he said.

Unless urgent action is taken, the city risks losing its remaining flood-flow zones, leaving its population exposed to unmanageable water crises in the years to come, experts warned.

## NSU 25th

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Azim Uddin Ahmed, chairman of the NSU Board of Trustees, congratulated the graduates. NSU Vice-Chancellor Prof Abdul Hannan Chowdhury also addressed the gathering. The convocation was attended among others by Prof AKM Waresul Karim, dean of the School of Business and Economics; Prof Md Rizwanul Islam, dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences; Prof Shazzad Hosain, dean of the School of Engineering and Physical Sciences; and Prof Dipak Kumar Mitra, dean of the School of Health and Life Sciences.