

Secretariat fire  
sabotage or  
accident still  
not known

Says fire service DG  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Division-formed investigation committee yesterday began probing the fire that ravaged four floors of a Bangladesh Secretariat building, destroying important files, documents, computers, furniture, and other materials from six divisions across five ministries.

The fire, which was noticed around 1:52am on Thursday in two sections of the nine-storey Building No 7 within the highly secured Secretariat complex, caused significant damage to walls and floors.

It affected the Road Transport and Highways Division, two divisions under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives, the Posts and Telecommunications Division, the Ministry of

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Do not use  
fireworks on  
New Year’s Eve

Environment  
ministry urges all  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has urged everyone to refrain from using fireworks and firecrackers while celebrating New Year’s Eve on December 31.

Such activities are harmful and unlawful during the 31st night celebrations for the safety of public health and biodiversity. Cooperation from all is earnestly requested in this regard, the ministry said in a press release.

It said such activities significantly exacerbate existing noise and air pollution levels. In a past incident, media reports highlighted the tragic death of a child suffering from heart disease, frightened by the loud noise of fireworks during New Year celebrations.

Excessive noise can lead to numerous health

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PRAYER  
TIMING

DECEMBER 28

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:27 7:00

JAMAAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:30 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Stop leasing  
Ctg port  
terminals  
to foreign  
entities

Demand trade  
unionists  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Ctg

Labour leaders of Chattogram Port yesterday voiced strong opposition to leasing container terminals to foreign entities, warning that such actions could jeopardise national security and sovereignty.

This concern was placed at a views-exchange meeting between the Labour Reforms Commission and Chattogram’s trade union leaders at the Circuit House auditorium.

The meeting, chaired by Commission Chairman Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, was attended by members Dr Mahfuzul Haque, Tapan Dutta, ANM Saif Uddin, Professor Zakir Hossain,

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A crime scene team member of CID examines the aftermath of a devastating fire that broke out at Building No-7 of the Secretariat in Dhaka early Thursday. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A Bangladesh for all

Speakers call for equal citizenship, protection of minority rights



DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an event yesterday emphasised the need for political reform and vigilance to uphold the ideals of the July uprising and ensure justice for all.

They said this at a rally held at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital, organised by the Minority Rights Movement.

The programme brought together voices from different faiths, united in their call for equal citizenship and protection of minority rights.

They called for a Bangladesh where no concept of minorities exists, envisioning a state where all citizens enjoy equal rights and freedom of religious practice.

Speaking at the event, poet and writer Farhad Mazhar said, “There is still oppression of Sanatan religion

followers, and this oppression aims to destabilise Bangladesh.”

“Those responsible for these actions oppose the state. We cannot ignore the possibility that they may be agents of foreign powers,” he added.

Emphasising equality, he said, “We are all citizens of the same country, born on this land. If anyone attempts to separate or divide us – whether from India or Myanmar – they must not be allowed to do so.”

Mazhar criticised the labelling of Sanatan followers as agents of India, calling it unjust.

“Just as Hefazat-e-Islam has the right to voice their demands, Sanatan followers also have the right to speak as equal citizens of this country,” he said.

He accused former prime minister Sheikh Hasina of

suppressing freedom of speech.

“The fascist Sheikh Hasina has denied people their right to speak. A thousand martyrs sacrificed their lives for this right. After her ousting, when Sanatan followers spoke out for their rights, why do we oppose them? These are the same people who once labelled us militants for wearing caps, and now they call Sanatan followers terrorists.”

Jamaat-e-Islami Naye-b-e-Ameer Professor Mujibur Rahman stressed unity, saying, “We may have differing opinions, but we are all one, regardless of religion. Everyone has the right to practice their faith as citizens of this country. Unity must prevail.”

Albert P Costa, president of the Bangladesh Christian Association and former acting president of

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No bar for  
Khaleda to  
participate in  
next election

Says attorney general  
STAR REPORT

There is no legal bar for BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to participate in the next general election, said Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman yesterday.

“The false and conspiratory cases filed against Khaleda Zia have already been settled. Therefore, there is no legal obstacle to her participation in the next election,” he said.

The attorney general was speaking at a shadow parliament organised by Debate for Democracy at the FDC in the capital.

He also said, “If convicted for the July murders, many Awami League leaders, including Sheikh Hasina, would be ineligible to participate in the election.”

He also added that the participation of the Awami League is not crucial for ensuring inclusive elections.

“Those who have destroyed the election process, torn up the constitution, and violated people’s rights have been identified as the villains of history. They will face imprisonment through trial,” he further said.

The attorney general

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Stop construction  
of expressway at  
Panthakunja park  
Demand speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts, locals, and green activists yesterday protested the ongoing construction work of additional links for the Dhaka Elevated Expressway at the capital’s Panthakunja Park.

They said these additional portions from Sonargaon to Palashi will severely damage both the Hatirjheel and Panthakunja Park, as around 2,000 trees have already been cut down from the park due to the project.

At a programme held at Panthakunja Park as part of an ongoing movement that green activists have been staging for the past two weeks, they urged the government to prioritise environmental preservation over urban development.

At the programme, Prof Adil Mohammed Khan, president of the Bangladesh Institute of Planners, criticised the additional links, saying the expressway should have been a bypass from the airport to Jatrabari as per the Strategic Transport Plan - 2005.

“The additional links will worsen traffic congestion, affecting 99 percent of people while benefiting only one percent,” he said, urging the government to revise the plan and cancel the portion.

**The expressway should have been a bypass from the airport to Jatrabari as per the Strategic Transport Plan - 2005. The additional links will worsen traffic congestion, affecting 99 percent of people while benefiting only one percent.**

PROF ADIL MOHAMMED KHAN  
President, Bangladesh Institute of Planners

Saying the previous government had taken many unnecessary projects, Adil hoped the current government will accept the logical demands of the people.

Shamsiara Zaman, mother of Tahir Zaman, who lost his life during the July uprising, emphasised the need to build a greener country for future generations and urged the government to take measures in this regard.

Mizanur Rahman, who led the freshwater movement, questioned why the demands of locals and environmentalists are being ignored.

AFM Alamgir, president of Provati Sangha of Panthakunja Park, shared that the park was originally a water body, which was transformed into the Panthakunja Park during the Ershad period.

As the park got damaged with time, in 2007, locals planted around a thousand trees to restore it under the Panthakunja Park Recovery Committee, he added.

Meanwhile, former DSCC mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh set up a Secondary Transfer Station in the park, violating a High Court order, he also said.

Activist Syeda Ratna, who led the Tetultala playground protection movement, said, “We have to be united and continue the movement to protect playgrounds and parks.”

Writer and researcher Pavel Partha highlighted that the park once had 35 varieties of trees, most of which are now gone.

HASINA’S FASCIST REGIME  
In-depth analysis  
of the media’s  
role needed  
Shafiqul Alam tells event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There should be an in-depth analysis of media’s role during former prime minister Sheikh Hasina’s fascist regime, rather than just resorting to superficial criticisms, said Shafiqul Alam, the press secretary to the chief adviser, yesterday.

“We need comprehensive books, brilliant journalism, and credible peer reviews that can be published in journals,” he said.

He made the remark at a seminar titled “Hasina’s Goebbels: Manufacturing Consent for Fascism”, held at a city hotel.

The event was organised by the Anti-Fascist Coalition, a collaboration between the Historical Transparency Society and Citizen Initiative.

“Analyse how an editor legitimised fascism through his writings. Take every column they wrote over the last 15 years and analyse each and every word. Publish these analyses in journals – only then will the narrative hold.”

Shafiqul suggested conducting in-depth research on the role of media during key incidents such as the abolition of the caretaker government in 2011, enforced disappearances in 2013, the one-sided election of 2014, the surge of fire incidents in 2015, the controversial ICT trials between 2013-16, the “cheerleading” role of

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Makeshift shops on the footpath in the New Market area and cars parked on the road have become common sights in Dhaka. These practices contribute to severe traffic congestion and compel pedestrians to walk on the road, putting their lives at risk. The photo was taken yesterday.