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Reinstate the word ‘adivasi’ in textbooks  
Demand indigenous students, supporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous students and their supporters held a demonstration at Dhaka University’s Raju Memorial Sculpture yesterday, calling for the reinstatement of the word “indigenous” (adivasi in Bangla) in textbooks.

The protest, organised under the banner of “Aggrieved Indigenous Student-Masses,” also demanded justice for the attack on fellow students on January 15 by a group identifying itself as “Students for Sovereignty.”

Shurmi Chakma, a Dhaka University student, said: “Our demand was to reinstate indigenous graffiti in the textbooks. We were on our way to the NCTB building on January 15 when a group called Students for Sovereignty attacked us. Despite the

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People from the indigenous communities in Dinajpur form a human chain yesterday, protesting the attacks on indigenous people and their supporters on Wednesday and Thursday. The indigenous people were demonstrating against the removal of the term “adivasi” (indigenous) from textbooks. Similar protests were held in Dhaka.

PHOTO: STAR

GOVT SOCIAL ALLOWANCES  
‘Discrepancies found in list of beneficiaries’  
Says social welfare adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has detected massive discrepancies in the list of beneficiaries of the government’s social allowances, including old-age and widow allowances, said Sharmeen S Murshid, adviser to the Ministry of Social Welfare, yesterday.

“There are many ghosts, or corruption, sitting inside the list of beneficiaries in absence of any monitoring and quality control system. We are trying to correct it,” she said.

The adviser said this while addressing a symposium titled “White Paper and Thereafter: Economic Management, Reforms, and National Budget”, at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

“After the interim government took charge, a rumour spread that we [interim govt] would stop the allowances. But we didn’t stop paying the allowances, rather, we have continued while trying to correct the discrepancies with help of digitalisation,” she added.

Data discrepancies mostly happened during the past 15 years under the ousted Awami League government’s regime.

Some prominent think-tanks have long been raising the issues of data discrepancies in allowances.

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‘We escaped death by 20-25 minutes’  
Says Hasina in audio clip shared by AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina has claimed that she and her sister, Sheikh Rehana, narrowly escaped death on August 5 last year.

The Awami League president said, “Rehana and I were able to get away [on August 5]. We probably dodged certain death by just about 20 or 25 minutes.”

In a 49-second audio clip posted on the Awami League’s official Facebook page on Friday evening, Hasina was heard addressing a group, though it is unclear whether she was speaking in person or over a speaker.

Reflecting on surviving attempts on her life, she said, “I keep thinking about coming out of the grenade attack on August 21 (2004) alive or escaping that huge bomb in Kotalipara or escaping death on August 5...”

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Air pollution kills 102,456 Bangladeshis every year

Says Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Air pollution is responsible for 102,456 deaths annually in Bangladesh, as per a new study by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

Titled “Public Health Impacts of Fine Particle Air Pollution in Bangladesh”, the report highlights the severe consequences of particulate matter (PM2.5), which causes diseases such as ischemic heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lower respiratory infections, and lung cancer.

Young children are particularly vulnerable, with 5,258 deaths annually from PM2.5-related lower respiratory infections.

PM2.5 refers to tiny pollution particles, smaller than a fraction of a human hair, that come from sources like cars, factories, and fires.

In Bangladesh, the amount of these harmful particles in the air averages 79.9 microgrammes per cubic metre, which is more than double the country’s safety limit of 35, and 15 times higher than



the World Health Organization’s recommended safe level of 5, the report finds.

The report, launched yesterday at the Jatiya Press Club, said Bangladesh ranked as the most polluted country in the world in 2023.

Urban areas face the highest pollution levels, with Dhaka and Chattogram accounting for 48 percent of air pollution-related deaths. Rural and coastal areas experience significantly lower levels of pollution.

The study suggests that controlling air pollution could prevent 5,254 child deaths annually and avert 29,920 deaths from heart disease, 23,075 from strokes, 20,976 from COPD, 9,720 from pneumonia, and 3,063 from lung cancer.

Air pollution-related illnesses lead 669,000 people to seek emergency hospital care annually and result in 263 million lost workdays each year, significantly harming the economy.

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Dev model continues to ignore public welfare

Says Kallol Mustafa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government’s reliance on foreign loans, often misrepresented as “donations,” places a significant financial burden on citizens, said activist and writer Kallol Mustafa yesterday.

He was speaking at an event organised in support of the Tree Protection Movement, a group of activists who have been protesting for 37 days at Panthakunja Park in Dhaka’s Bangla Motor area.

The activists are calling for the cancellation of a section of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway that passes through Tejgaon, Panthakunja Park, and Hatirjheel Lake, arguing that the project will have severe environmental and social consequences.

Addressing a discussion on development projects funded by foreign loans, Kallol criticised the damage

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Over 11,000 crossed Mediterranean to reach Italy in 2024

JAMIL MAHMUD

As many as 11,231 Bangladeshis reached Italy via the Mediterranean Sea between January and October last year, an increase from 10,152 during the same period in 2023, according to a recent UNHCR report.

Of last year’s migrants, 11,091 left Libya, a key departure point on the perilous central Mediterranean route that frequently garners international attention due to fatal shipwrecks.

The report, published on January 3, as part of UNHCR’s “Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard” for October 2024, highlighted that Bangladeshis topped the list of migrants and refugees reaching Italy during the first 10 months of the year.

This increase occurred despite a significant overall decline in arrivals to Italy, which fell by 62 percent – from 1,44,098 people in 2023 to 55,413 in 2024. Between January and December 2023, 12,774 Bangladeshis made the journey to Italy by sea.

Experts in Bangladesh’s labour migration sector attribute the continued flow of irregular migrants

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APPG report on Bangladesh ‘one-sided’

Says British MP Rupa Huq

UNB, Dhaka

British parliamentarian Rupa Huq, who visited Bangladesh recently, criticised the report released by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the Commonwealth, describing it a “one-sided account”.

“This Autumn, a one-sided account of the Bangladeshi Yunus government surfaced in the name of the APPG for Commonwealth, pedalling falsehoods that was widely press-released, leading to confusion on UK govt policy,” Huq said, sharing a video on her verified X, formerly known as Twitter.

Taking a floor on a point of order, she confirmed the House of Commons that it has “zero official relevance”.

The UK public elects 650 members of parliament (MPs) to represent their interests and concerns in the House of Commons.

The Commonwealth All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) has released a comprehensive report detailing the aftermath of Bangladesh’s political turmoil following the fall of Sheikh Hasina’s government on August 5.

The report highlights a volatile mix of political, social, and security challenges under the interim administration led by Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus.

It paints a picture of violence, human rights abuses, and escalating sectarian tensions, threatening the nation’s stability and international standing.

Nazrul’s grandson burnt in gas explosion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Babul Kazi, grandson of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, was admitted to Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery with severe burn injuries early yesterday.

Babul, 59, suffered 74 percent burns in a fire followed by an explosion at his Banani residence around 5:00am, Shaon Bin Rahman, a resident surgeon of the hospital, told The Daily Star.

Babul has been shifted to the ICU as his condition is critical, the doctor said.

The victim’s elder sister Khilkhil Kazi said Babul was burnt in an explosion when he lit a gas-lighter to smoke in the bathroom.

Dr Md Maruful Islam, joint director of the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, said a 16-member medical board has been formed for his treatment.



Buses recklessly weave through Mirpur Road, overtaking each other and increasing the risk of accidents. This photo was taken in the capital’s Shyamoli area yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN