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Sarjis steps down from Shaheed Smriti Foundation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sarjis Alam, a coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination, has resigned as general secretary of the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation.



He shared this information in a post on his verified Facebook profile yesterday's morning. "I am no longer the general secretary of the July Shaheed Smriti Foundation. Changes have been made to the foundation's constitution, structure, and working process to accelerate its progress," he wrote. He said the executive committee will now oversee the foundation's operations, with the chief executive officer (CEO) SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Students of Medical Assistant Training Schools (MATS) blocked Shahbagh intersection in the capital yesterday to realise their four-point demand, including recruitment to vacant positions in the 10th grade and the creation of employment opportunities. The protest caused severe gridlock, causing immense sufferings to commuters.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Protests disrupt city life, again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protests blocking major thoroughfares in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar and Shahbagh yesterday left the capital largely paralysed, causing immense sufferings to commuters. The traffic situation worsened as a demonstration by stranded migrant workers blocked Karwan Bazar and another by students of Medical Assistant Training Schools (MATS) Shahbagh intersections for hours, disrupting traffic almost all day long. Vehicular movement at Karwan Bazar remained suspended for nearly three hours as a group of stranded migrant workers demonstrated from around 9:00am till 12:00pm, demanding government steps to ensure their return to Malaysia. The blockade caused severe traffic congestions on the roads across Farmgate, Bangla Motor, Panthapath and adjacent areas. Afternoon, the protesters marched towards the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment on Eskaton Garden Road to press home their demand, and continued their demonstrations there till 3:30pm. Meanwhile, students of MATS blocked Shahbagh Intersection for over six hours to realise their four point demand including recruitment to vacant positions in the 10th grade, and creation of employment opportunities. The students initially started their protest at 10:40am, blocking one side of the main road under the Karwan Bazar metro rail station. Later, at around 11:15am, they rallied to the National Museum in Shahbagh, and enforced a blockade there at around 12:50pm, halting vehicular movement around the four sides of the intersection, prompting many commuters to walk to their destinations. SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Stop using loud horns, black glass DMP urges people to use footbridges, zebra crossings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Drivers must stop installing loud horns and black tinted glasses on vehicles. Pedestrians must also use foot-over bridges and zebra crossings where available, said a public notice issued by Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday. Signed by DMP Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali, the notice said any driver or pedestrian failing to comply will face legal actions through regular operations and mobile courts. Drivers often use their horns unnecessarily or excessively. Sometimes they even use illegal high-decibel horns, which poses significant health risks to those nearby, the notice added. SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

WASA WATER SUPPLY Address gap between service seekers, providers

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday said customers are dissatisfied due to delays and harassment in obtaining water connections from Wasa. They called for awareness campaigns, an increase in Wasa's manpower, and implementation of other necessary measures to address the gap between the recipients and providers of water supply. The seminar was organised by NGO Forum for Public Health, with assistance from Water Integrity Network (WIN), Wave Foundation, Bangladesh Water Partnership, DASCOH Foundation, and Bangladesh Water Partnership (BWP). Addressing as chief guest, Fazlur Rahman, additional secretary of Water Supply Department of Local Government Division and also managing director of Dhaka Wasa, said ensuring good governance in water management requires significant contributions from both the government and civil society. Delivering the welcome speech, SM Rashid, executive director of NGO Forum in Public Health, said ensuring good governance in water management requires significant contributions from both the government and civil society. Dr Mary Galvin, programme lead of WIN in Germany, highlighted that 26 percent of allocated funds are wasted due to corruption, lack of transparency, and inadequate risk management, often leading to the complete failure of projects. She also addressed issues such as sexual harassment within the process. Presenting the keynote paper, Dr Tanvir Ahmed, a professor of BUET, said while a significant funding gap exists in implementing SDG 6, yet one-fourth of the existing funds are being wasted due to corruption. Mohammad Saiful Islam Mazomder, joint secretary of Policy Support Branch (PSB) under Local Government Division, said while regulatory mechanisms are in place, those need to be brought under a proper framework. He emphasised the importance of strengthening coordination among all stakeholders to improve the water supply situation. SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

- RECOMMENDATIONS
- Awareness campaigns
 - Manpower increase
 - Proper framework
 - Ensuring accountability



Khaleda Zia acquitted in sabotage case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla A Cumilla court has acquitted BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and 35 others in a sabotage case filed with Chaudhagram Police Station in 2015. Judge of Cumilla Additional Sessions Judge Court-1 Afroza Jesmin passed the order on Monday, said Public Prosecutor Advocate Kaimul Haque Rinku yesterday. According to the case statement, a covered van was vandalised and torched SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Biman bomb threat came from Pakistani WhatsApp number Says CAAB chairman; officials confirm no bomb or explosives found on aircraft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The WhatsApp message which claimed that a Dhaka-bound Biman flight from Rome was carrying a large amount of explosives originated from a Pakistani phone number, said Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman yesterday. Meanwhile, the Dhaka airport authorities in a thorough search found no bomb, bomb-like object, or explosive substance, confirmed Group Captain Kamrul Islam, executive director of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. "As per protocol, all baggage and items were checked. No threat was found. At 12:30pm local time, we called off the search," he added. Earlier, speaking at a press conference, Mafidur Rahman said the message, sent to the official WhatsApp number of an Armed Police Battalion (APBn) duty officer at Dhaka Airport, alleged that 34 kilograms of explosives were aboard the Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight BG 356 from Rome, which would detonate upon landing at HSLA. SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Man found hanging from tree at DU identified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The man found hanging from a tree in the Dhaka University area yesterday has been identified as Abu Saleh from Keraniganj upazila. Khalid Monsur, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station, said a national identity card was found with the body. The CID crime scene unit confirmed the identity by matching the fingerprints with the NID server. Shahbagh police, in association with fire service teams, recovered the body around 9:00am. Later, it was handed over to the family after an autopsy, Monsur added. He said locals believe the man lived on the sidewalk and had mental health issues. "Preliminary findings suggest he climbed the tree on Tuesday night and hanged himself. Further investigation is underway," he said. SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Court orders ACC to seize Nafeez Sarafat's Dubai properties

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to confiscate a three-bedroom flat and a five-bedroom villa in Dubai belonging to former Padma Bank chairman Chowdhury Nafeez Sarafat. Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after ACC Deputy Director Md Masudur Rahman, who is the head of an enquiry team, submitted an application in this regard. ACC Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam moved the application on behalf of the anti-graft body. An investigation by The Daily Star titled "Parking wealth under the Dubai sun," published on January 7, revealed details of properties in Dubai owned by 19 Bangladeshi individuals, including Chowdhury Nafeez Sarafat. According to the report, Nafeez Sarafat's two properties in Dubai are worth at least Tk 10.4 crore, with the three-bedroom flat located in the Burj Khalifa neighbourhood and the five-bedroom villa being located in the Damac Hills neighbourhood. Sarafat had declined to comment on his Dubai properties, citing ongoing investigation against him. But he added that any non-resident Bangladeshi and dual citizenship holders can own properties abroad. On January 7, the day The Daily Star published the story, the Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court ordered the ACC to confiscate 22 flats—located in various areas of Dhaka and Gazipur that are owned by Nafeez Sarafat, his wife, and their son—over allegations SEE PAGE 4 COL 8



A woman covers her face as she walks through a cloud of dust and fumes to cross the street in the Madani Avenue area of Baridhara. Dhaka's deteriorating air quality continues to pose serious health risks to its residents. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN