



City dwellers have been suffering for the last couple of days as Titumir College students blocked roads and rail line, demanding to change the status of their college into a university. Yesterday, the blockade started at 12:20pm and continued till 3:30pm. Students blocked the Mohakhali to Gulshan-1 Road and then moved to the Mohakhali rail crossing. From left, a man adjusts his wife's oxygen tank as they wait for a train at Kamalapur Railway Station. People wait with their luggage inside the station. A man pushes a woman on a wheelchair while many others opt to walk on foot amid the road blockade.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, ANISUR RAHMAN



Schoolgirl raped and murdered; body dumped in Hatirjheel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of an eighth-grader was recovered from Hatirjheel Lake on Sunday, 17 days after she went missing from Dhaka's Dakshinkhan.

The 13-year-old was abducted on January 16 and later gang-raped and murdered, but the crime came to light after her body was recovered, said Rawnaj Jahan, deputy commissioner (DC) of the Uttara Division, in a press briefing yesterday.

Two suspects, Robin Hossain, 32, and Rabbi Mridha, 26, were arrested on January 30 in Sreepur of Gazipur, in connection with the crime, said the Uttara DC.

Her father filed a general diary (GD) with Dakshinkhan Police Station on January 19 and later lodged a kidnapping case on January 27 after learning from locals that a group of men had abducted her in a private car near Joynal Market in Dakshinkhan.

Using technological assistance, police traced the suspects through the victim's mobile number and arrested Robin and Rabbi. The two were remanded for two days following a court order on January 31.

During interrogation, they admitted to their involvement in the crime and led police to recover the victim's body from a roadside slope in Hatirjheel at 8:45am on Sunday.

In their confession under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code, Robin and Rabbi said they trapped the victim and took her to a house in Mohakhali, where the two along with three others raped her after tying her hands, feet, and face.

They then wrapped her body in a bag and dumped it near Hatirjheel using a rickshaw. Police are now working to arrest the remaining suspects involved in the rape and murder, added the official.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad yesterday
SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Second phase of Ijtema begins

STAR REPORT

The second phase of Bishwa Ijtema began on the banks of the Turag River in Tongi early yesterday.

The Ijtema commenced with Aam Bayan (general sermons) after Fazr prayers and will conclude with Akheri Munajat (final prayers) on February 5, said Tabligh Jamaat Bangladesh Shura-e-Nizam Media Coordinator Habibullah Raihan.

Following the final prayers of the first phase on Sunday, participants have vacated the Ijtema ground, making way for those joining the second phase.

The ground is now fully prepared for second phase attendees, with devotees from 22 districts, including parts of Dhaka, set to participate, he added.

Currently, about 3,050 foreign guests from 76 countries are staying at the Ijtema venue.

To ensure the safety and convenience of foreign guests, members of Gazipur Metropolitan Police have arranged for a general diary system in the foreign tents. The first phase of Ijtema was held from Friday to Sunday, where five devotees passed away. Around 40 lakh devotees participated in the final prayer of the first phase.

Convictions in graft cases hit 8-year low

Rate dropped to 47pc in 2024, says ACC annual report

DIPAN NANDY

The conviction rate in corruption cases in Bangladesh dropped to 47 percent in 2024, the lowest in the past eight years, raising concerns about the effectiveness of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in combating corruption.

This marks a sharp decline from a 57.18 percent conviction rate in 2023, a 10 percent drop in one year. Over the past four years, the conviction rate has fallen from 72 percent in 2020 to 47 percent in 2024 -- a total decline of 25 percent.

Experts attribute this decline to several factors, like weak investigations, lack of skilled public prosecutors, and inadequate supervision.

According to data, more than half of the accused in corruption cases were acquitted in 2024. A total of 341 corruption cases were resolved in 2024, with 47 percent resulting in convictions.

Cases filed by the now-defunct Anti-Corruption Bureau had a lower conviction rate of 29 percent, while cases filed by the ACC had a slightly higher rate of 48 percent.

According to ACC's annual reports, the conviction rate was 60.98 percent in 2022, 60 percent in 2021, 72 percent in 2020, 63

percent in 2019, 63 percent in 2018, and 68 percent in 2017.

The last time the rate was this low was in 2016 at 37 percent, with 2015 recording 35 percent.

CONVICTION RATES IN LAST 10 YEARS		
2024	:	47%
2023	:	57.18%
2022	:	60.98%
2021	:	60%
2020	:	72%
2019	:	63%
2018	:	63%
2017	:	68%
2016	:	37%
2015	:	35%

The rate of case disposal has also declined, with only 8.65 percent of cases disposed of in 2024 compared to 10.17 percent in 2023.

Meanwhile, the ACC continued

to face a backlog, with 3,410 pending cases in lower courts -- 3,066 filed by the ACC and 344 by the erstwhile Anti-Corruption Bureau.

Despite this backlog, courts ordered fines totalling Tk 1,147.33 crore in corruption cases in 2024, while assets worth Tk 11.75 crore were seized.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director and head of the ACC Reform Commission, Iftekharuzzaman, told The Daily Star, "This reflects the ACC's lack of effectiveness, which peaked in the final year before the fall of the authoritarian regime. The new leadership is expected to overcome this legacy and restore public trust, given the opportunities created by the July uprising."

"The low conviction rate is also due to the slow and complex judicial process. Reforming the ACC must be part of broader state and judicial reforms," he added.

ACC Director General (Prevention) Aktar Hossain said the commission is working diligently to prove corruption charges.

"Successful convictions depend on the quality of evidence presented in court. ACC is focusing on capacity-building to strengthen investigations," he said.

FOREIGNERS WITH EXPIRED VISAS 11-member task force formed to address issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Home Affairs yesterday formed an 11-member task force to determine the course of action regarding foreign nationals residing illegally in Bangladesh.

Led by the additional secretary (Security and Immigration) of the Security Services Division, the task force will be convened by the joint secretary of the Immigration-2 Wing, who will also serve as the member secretary.

According to its terms of reference, the task force will coordinate and provide recommendations on all matters concerning foreign nationals living in the country without proper documentation.

It is also authorised to issue directives and, if necessary, formulate further recommendations on related issues.

According to the home ministry's database as of January 20, a total of 33,648 foreign nationals are either residing illegally or have overstayed their visas.

POLITICAL UNREST IN JAN 124 incidents led to 15 deaths and 987 injuries: HRSS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four people including Touhidul Islam, a union-level Jubo Dal leader in Cumilla, died in the custody of law enforcement agencies in the country last month, Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) said yesterday.

Besides, one person was killed in Rangamati during "gunfight" with law enforcement agency members, HRSS said in a media release, as it released its monthly rights situation report.

The custodial torture victims include a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver in Kishoreganj, a former union-level Chhatra Dal assistant general secretary in Noakhali, and a grocer in Shariatpur,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

UK rights envoy meets BNP leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UK Human Rights Ambassador Eleanor Sanders yesterday met with BNP leaders Abdul Moyeen Khan and Shama Obaed to discuss the human rights situation and upcoming national elections in Bangladesh.

The meeting was held at the British High Commission in Dhaka at 3:30pm.

A source present at the meeting said the UK rights envoy expressed concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in Bangladesh, as well as the ongoing rights issues, including the recent alleged extrajudicial killing of a Jubo Dal leader in Cumilla.

The BNP delegation briefed Sanders on the background of the July-August uprising and the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Italian citizen mugged; items recovered in 12 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested two snatchers, including a ride-sharing driver, and recovered an Italian citizen's stolen passport, mobile phone, cash, and other belongings within 12 hours of the reported mugging.

Khorshed Alam, 28, an Uber motorcycle driver, and Shahin Mia, 22, were arrested in Turag area on Sunday.

Speaking at a press briefing at the DMP Media Centre yesterday, Rawnaj Jahan, deputy commissioner of Uttara Division, said Italian citizen, Tania Mohammad Sheikh Noor, arrived at Dhaka airport on a flight from Italy around 4:00am.

She hired an Uber motorcycle from outside the airport to travel to a hostel in Uttara (sector 19). However, instead of taking her there, the motorcycle

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

US fund cuts to worsen Rohingya crisis: Touhid

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Possible funding cuts by the new US administration will further complicate efforts to address the Rohingya crisis, said Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain yesterday.

"Foreign aid for over a million Rohingya has already been declining, and any US fund cuts will worsen the situation," he said at a seminar at the Foreign Service Academy (FSA) in the capital.

The Department of International Relations of Dhaka University organised the event in collaboration with the FSA.

Since the 2017 influx, Bangladesh has struggled to manage the Rohingya crisis. The situation worsened last year when about 80,000 more Rohingya entered amid intensified conflicts between Myanmar's military and the Arakan Army in Rakhine State.

The new Trump administration has issued an executive order to review foreign funding projects, though emergency food assistance remains out of its purview.

According to the UN, of the US \$852.4 million required for the Rohingya in 2024, donors have provided \$548.9 million, with the US contributing \$301 million -- 55 percent of the total.

"Many see the Rohingya crisis as Bangladesh's problem, but it is a global issue. If the Rohingya become desperate, it will challenge not just Bangladesh but the entire region," the adviser said.

The international community must come forward

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

EKUSHEY BOI MELA

A celebration of knowledge

DIPAN NANDY

On a bright morning filled with the promise of spring, the Ekushey Boi Mela sprang to life, drawing in crowds eager to celebrate literature and culture.

Coinciding with the vibrant festivities of Saraswati Puja yesterday, the fair transformed into a lively hub of activity, where the worship of knowledge and the joy of reading merged beautifully.

Visitors arrived in droves, their excitement palpable as they explored the myriad stalls brimming with new releases and beloved classics. Couples, friends, and families wandered from stall to stall, sharing recommendations and discovering new titles.

Shantinagar resident Debayan Choudhury, said, "Worshipping the Goddess, celebrating Basanta Panchami, and enjoying the book fair -- there couldn't be a greater coincidence than this. This is a truly special moment."

Sanjida Afrin, a visitor from Hatirpool, said, "The fusion of Saraswati Puja and Boi Mela created a unique experience, where the pursuit of knowledge and creativity thrived in unison."

The publishers were also seen busy helping visitors find their favourites.

Amzad Hossen Kajol, manager of Oitijhyha, said, "Readers have been coming



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

in since day one, and sales haven't been bad either. We hope on Fridays and Saturdays both readership and sales will increase."

As the day unfolded, the main stage of the fair hosted various discussions and cultural programmes, enriching the experience for attendees.

According to Bangla Academy, the fair saw the release of 32 new books on its third

day. Notable titles included Hasnat Abdul Hai's "Chindeshe Koyekbar" and Anwara Syed Haque's "Somoy Bohiya Gelo".

As evening approached, the book fair continued to draw in visitors, the excitement of discovery keeping the energy alive. Many attendees lingered, reluctant to leave the treasure trove of literature that surrounded them.