

## Two former MPs, Hasina's APS arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested seven people, including two former lawmakers from reserved women's seats and an assistant press secretary to ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, from different places yesterday.

Shamima Akhter Khanam, a Krishak League leader and former MP from reserved women's seat of Sunamganj, and Ashraf Siddiqui Bitu, assistant press secretary to former PM Hasina, were held from the capital's Jigatola area yesterday, said Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Media) of DMP.

The arrestees were trying to destabilise the country by disrupting law and order and inciting public fear through flash processions in different parts of Dhaka, said DC Talebur.

Meanwhile, Selina Islam, another former MP from reserved women's seat, was held from a house in Gulshan, said Rabiul Hossain Bhuiyan, joint commissioner (North) of DB.

Selina's arrest is linked to a recent flash procession organised by the AL at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, said Rabiul.

Selina, along with her husband Kazi Shahid Islam Papul, a former MP from

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**A JOB WELL DONE.** What looks like a pristine waterbody used to be covered with algae, *inset*, in Hatirjheel lake near the Tejgaon area. Due to discharge of sewage and other pollutants the water became like that. The Daily Star published a photo on the issue on May 6. The authorities took initiative and cleaned the lake on Friday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Banning any political party not a solution

### Says Gayeshwar

UNB, Dhaka

Banning any political party is not the solution to problems, as people themselves eliminate any party that goes against their interests, said BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy yesterday.

"No problem is ever solved by banning political parties. Rather, by changing the mentality of society and ensuring the rule of law, people decide who is acceptable or prohibited," he said at a discussion meeting.

The 12 Party Alliance, a coalition led by BNP and other like-minded parties, organised the programme at Jatiya Press Club, demanding the removal of any obstacles to BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman's return to Bangladesh and ensuring maximum security for him.

Gayeshwar said the Muslim League was the main architect behind the creation of Pakistan.

"But now, it's difficult to find any trace of its existence," he said.

He mentioned that the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) was once a major political force after the country's Liberation War in 1971, but it has

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### HEALTH REFORM

## Commission proposes four national health support networks

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Health Sector Reform Commission has recommended building national networks for four vital healthcare support services to ensure the availability, quality, and coverage of health services.

The four networks are: the National Pharmacy Network (NPN), National Diagnosis Laboratory Network, National Blood Supply Network, and National Ambulance Network.

The commission, which submitted its report last week, said each service would be interconnected and managed nationwide through its own integrated digital platform based on specified standards, ensuring that people can access them easily, quickly, and reliably.

The recommendations come at a time when service seekers face numerous hurdles in accessing these essential services.

For example, there are around four lakh registered pharmacies in the country, and 220 pharmacies, on average, receive approval daily, according to the commission's report.

However, most of these pharmacies operate without trained pharmacists, leading to the unregulated sale of antibiotics, widespread drug misuse, and an uncontrolled market, it said.

This situation jeopardises medicine quality, treatment efficacy, and patient safety, it added.

The commission recommended that a National Pharmacy Network be established by setting up 24-hour, in-house licensed pharmacies in all government hospitals, primary healthcare centres, and general practitioner (GP) clinics across the country.

The initiative aims to ensure that

poor and marginalised populations receive essential medicines free of cost or at subsidised prices.

These pharmacies must maintain an adequate stock of medicines according to the national essential drug list, and the services would be applicable for both inpatients and outpatients.

They would be operated by trained pharmacists, who would provide



#### PROPOSED SERVICES

**PHARMACY NETWORK:** Regulated, 24/7 hospital-based pharmacies

**LAB NETWORK:** Standardised national diagnostic services

**BLOOD SUPPLY NETWORK:** Centralised, safe blood distribution

**AMBULANCE NETWORK:** GPS-enabled emergency transport system

guidance on medicine use and promote rational consumption.

By digitally tracking the supply and distribution of medicines, it would be possible to forecast future demand and prevent theft and wastage.

Referring to similar systems in Sri Lanka and Thailand, the commission

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### HAMID ABROAD

## Home adviser pledges legal action

UNB, Dhaka

Legal action will be taken against those found responsible for allowing former president Abdul Hamid to leave the country, said Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after visiting Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, the adviser confirmed that several officials have already been suspended, while others have been attached (transferred) pending investigation.

"A probe committee has been formed and asked to submit its report within three working days. Once the findings are in, necessary legal steps will be taken against those found guilty," he said.

The adviser noted that his airport visit was aimed at assessing current immigration procedures firsthand.

"I haven't travelled abroad since 2011. I came here to better understand the system. I found that immigration processes have improved significantly compared to before," he added.

Asked about reports of a travel restriction allegedly issued by the Special Branch (SB) prior to the former president's

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## 'Raise tobacco tax to curb use'

### Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-tobacco campaigners yesterday urged the government to raise cigarette prices and reform tax structures to effectively reduce tobacco consumption, especially among the youth and low-income groups.

Speaking at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club, they proposed merging the low and medium tiers of cigarettes into a single category and increasing prices to discourage smoking. The event was organised by Platform Doctors Foundation, in association with the National Heart

**Tobacco use is directly linked to four major NCDs, including heart and respiratory illnesses, which account for about 70 percent of deaths in the country.**

**Prof Sohel Reza Choudhury**  
Head of Epidemiology and Research at National Heart Foundation

Foundation of Bangladesh, as part of their budget proposals.

"Cigarettes are very cheap and

easily accessible in Bangladesh, posing a serious threat to public health, particularly among the youth," said Farzana Rahman Moon, joint secretary of Platform Doctors Foundation.

She said the current four-tier system -- low, medium, high, and premium -- allows users to easily shift between categories due to minimal price differences, especially between low and medium tiers.

Merging these two tiers and raising prices would reduce consumption and boost government revenue, she said.

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**The Daily Star**  
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## 'Dream big and read more'

### Speakers tell students at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mountaineer Nishat Majumder, the first Bangladeshi woman to conquer Mount Everest, yesterday urged students to read more books to become better human beings.

"To become a truly good human being, there is no alternative to reading more books," she said while addressing an award ceremony for school students under the reading programme organised by Bishwo Shahitto Kendro at Bangla Academy.

Nishat shared how reading and determination shaped her life.

"Climbing Everest was my dream, and I achieved it. You, too, must hold on to your dreams and keep moving steadily towards your goals," Nishat said.

Speaking at the event, Bishwo Shahitto Kendro trustee Iftekharul Islam said, "Books have the power to transform young minds. You can clearly see the difference between those who read and those who don't."

The essence of a good book lingers in a reader's heart for years, Iftekharul told students.

"Back in 1978, Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed founded this institution with just 10 copies of poet Jasimuddin's 'Nakshi Kanthar Math', purchased for Tk 35. Today, his dream has engaged millions across the country in instilling the habit of reading among them," he also said.

During his speech, actor, writer, and translator Khairul Alam Sabuj said, "Real dreams aren't the ones you see in your sleep -- they're the ones you pursue with your eyes wide open."

He said, "The stronger your connection with books, the more you'll uncover your true self. And as you grow, so will the nation."

The Bishwo Shahitto Kendro's book reading programme, supported by Grameenphone, involved over 20,000 students from 65 schools in the capital.

Of them, more than 5,000 students received awards in eight separate sessions on Friday and Saturday.

In total, around 2.5 lakh students from 1,400 educational institutions nationwide are currently enrolled in the book reading programme.

