



Kazi Nazrul Islam’s death anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 49th death anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam will be observed in the country today.

According to the Gregorian calendar, Nazrul died on August 29, 1976, at the then PG Hospital, now Bangladesh Medical University, in Dhaka. But his death anniversary is observed in Bangladesh on 12 Bhadra (today) of Bangla calendar.

The Rebel Poet breathed his last in Dhaka and was buried next to the mosque on Dhaka University campus, fulfilling a wish he had made in one of his poems.

Nazrul was a poet, lyricist, musician, and philosopher.

Different political parties, socio-cultural and professional bodies

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Heavy traffic congestion grip the Shahbagh area yesterday afternoon as students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) block the busy intersection to press home their three-point demand.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Protesters were shot from above

DMCH doctor tells ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka Medical College Hospital doctor yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 that many patients with gunshot wounds sustained during last year’s July uprising were shot from high above.

“Several patients reported being shot from high places or helicopters. In some cases, bullets entered through their heads and exited through their backs,” said Dr Mostak Ahmed, then a medical officer and now residential surgeon at the hospital’s casualty department.

He said bullet trajectories indicated top-to-down firing, unlike the usual upward or horizontal trajectories.

Mostak was testifying as a prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her two top aides. He said he treated a large number of gunshot victims between July 19–21 and August 4–5 last year, most of them aged 20–30.

Recalling one harrowing case, he said a father and son arrived with bullet wounds, but the father died in hospital as his injured son mourned helplessly.

The doctor alleged that some colleagues affiliated with Swachip (Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad), a pro-Awami League doctors’ association, asked them not to be over enthusiastic in treating the victims and said that criminals should not be treated. He added that five doctors were transferred on July 25 last year to obstruct treatment of the injured.

Mostak further said that during the anti-discrimination

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Govt to fix prices of essential medical tests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to reduce people’s out-of-pocket healthcare expenses, the government is going to prepare a list of essential diagnostic tests and fix their prices.

The health ministry has already sought technical support from the World Health Organisation (WHO) in this regard, said Prof Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry.

He disclosed this at a views-exchange meeting on “Role of Mass Media in Health Services” at Shaheed Abu Sayed International Convention Center in Dhaka yesterday. Senior ministry officials, its agencies, and journalists attended the event.

The move to fix the test prices comes amid allegations that patients are often prescribed unnecessary tests and forced to pay widely varying prices, causing immense hardship.

Sayedur said people in Bangladesh spend 64–67 percent of their healthcare costs on medicines and another 11–12 percent on diagnostic tests. “Therefore, the government needs to intervene in these two sectors to reduce people’s burden and prevent them from falling into poverty,” he said.

He added that a taskforce has already been formed to prepare a list of essential medicines and a mechanism to regulate their prices.

During a recent meeting with WHO, the ministry formally sought support to draw up a similar list for diagnostics.

“At first we will prepare the list of essential medicines, then the list of essential diagnostics, and finally move

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MEDICAL DEVICES IN NEONATAL UNITS

Unicef to pull plug on maintenance support

Officials fear service disruption unless prompt actions taken

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Unicef is set to discontinue its equipment maintenance support for Special Care Neonatal Units (SCANUs) from September, a move that may disrupt lifesaving services for newborns unless the authorities act promptly, say experts and health officials.

They suggest the authorities urgently come up with a transition plan to ensure uninterrupted services, noting that the health sector is already struggling with a shortage of technical staff.

Last month, the UN agency informed the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) of its decision to withdraw the support it has provided over the past 12 years through a third-party provider.

Currently, SCNAUs are available at 60 hospitals across 52 districts, providing specialised support to sick and premature newborns, shows DGHS data.

Prominent paediatrician Prof Mohammad Shahidullah said that out of 30 to 32 lakh babies born in Bangladesh every year, more than three lakh or around 10 percent are premature. Besides, many children suffer from serious

infections, and all of them require SCANU services.

He said the health authorities have the capacity to fill the gap left by the withdrawal of Unicef’s support, but they must develop a transition plan in consultation with the UN agency.

The Unicef decision comes at a time when a significant number

UNICEF’S WITHDRAWAL, CHALLENGES

In a letter to DGHS on July 16, the Unicef Bangladesh office said, “After reviewing our progress and aligning with the new country programme direction, we regret to inform you that Unicef will no longer continue the current equipment maintenance

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of medical devices at 60 SCANUs remain out of order.

According to a DGHS assessment in mid-2024, at least 802 or 20 percent of 4,159 pieces of equipment at the SCANUs were non-functional with 209 deemed to be beyond repair.

Besides, 213 pieces of equipment were more than a decade old, said the DGHS report based on an inspection team’s findings.

support for SCANU and Neonatal Stabilisation units (NSU) after the end of the existing contract with the third-party provider. This contract will conclude on September 30, 2025.”

The UN agency also suggested exploring government-oriented services in collaboration with NEMEMW & TC, an agency under the health ministry, for carrying

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Cocaine haul raises transit route concerns

Guyanese held at airport with 8.6kg of contraband

RAFIUL ISLAM

A Guyanese national was arrested with around 8.6kg of cocaine at Dhaka airport yesterday, and officials said the drug was not meant for local use.

They added that since the cocaine use is almost nonexistent here, Bangladesh may be a transit point for the drug trafficking.

The Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (CIID) seized the consignment, the largest in recent times, and detained the Guyanese citizen, Karen Petula Stuffle, at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

She arrived in Dhaka from Doha around 2:00am. During a search, the CIID officials found the cocaine in 22 large capsule-shaped objects hidden inside her luggage.

The value of the contraband is estimated to be Tk 130 crore, said CIID Director General Mohammad Neazur Rahman while talking to reporters at his office.

The woman travelled to Doha from Brazil and then to Bangladesh, he said, adding that she was convicted in her country for carrying cocaine earlier.

She posed as a tourist to avoid drawing the attention of law enforcers. She had a plan to stay in Bangladesh for about a month and the smuggle the drug to another country, said Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), CIID, and police officials who interrogated her.

In the past, most of the cocaine consignments seized in Bangladesh were traced back to South America and their

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Drones take on Everest’s garbage

AFP, Kathmandu

A team of drone operators joined climbers and guides at Everest Base Camp this climbing season, armed with heavy-duty drones to help clear rubbish from the world’s highest peak.

Tonnes of trash – from empty cans and gas canisters, to bottles, plastic and discarded climbing gear – have earned once-pristine Everest the grim nickname of the “highest dumpster in the world”.



Two DJI FC 30 heavy-lifter drones were flown to Camp 1 at 6,065 metres (19,900 feet), where they airlifted 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of trash down during the spring climbing season, which usually lasts from April to early June.

“The only options were helicopters and manpower, with no option in between,” said Raj Bikram Maharjan, of Nepal-based Airlift

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Once an important waterway in South Keraniganj, the Shuvadda Canal now barely resembles a canal. Unregulated dumping has reduced it to a landfill. A glimmer of hope emerged yesterday as the government launched a re-excavation initiative, starting from the Jhaubari Bridge area. This photo was taken on the same day near the Twin Bridges.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Digital bank licence window reopens

BB seeks applications between Sep 1 and 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank has once again invited applications from interested investors willing to establish a digital bank.

The central bank has, in principle, decided to issue licences for digital banks against suitable proposals under the Bank Company Act, 1991, according to a statement.

Applications can be submitted between September 1 and September 30 this year, it added.

The statement said BB now seeks fresh sealed applications from eligible and qualified sponsors to set up digital banks.

“As a processing fee, each application must be submitted along with a non-refundable pay order of Tk 5 lakh issued by any scheduled commercial bank in favour of Bangladesh Bank,” as per the circular.

It added that failure to provide all required documents and information would result in the automatic

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