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'As if a part of my son has returned'

Firefighter's baby born 12 days after his death in Tongi blaze



STAR REPORT

Twelve days after firefighter Nurul Huda sacrificed his life while battling the devastating chemical fire in Gazipur's Tongi, a new life entered his home -- a baby boy who will never see his father.

The child was born around 10:30am yesterday at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, bringing both tears and solace to a family still mourning the loss of their beloved one.

"My son gave his life serving the nation, and today Allah has blessed us with his son -- as if a part of my son has returned. It's a moment filled with both joy and sorrow," Nurul's father Abul Mansur told The Daily Star.

He sought prayers for the baby.

"Nurul had been kind and helpful since his childhood. He was always the first to help others, and now, while trying to help others, he gave his own life," said Nurul's cousin Mostafa Kamal.

Nurul Huda, a member of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, was among those who rushed into the flames at a chemical warehouse in Tongi on September 22, risking everything to save others.

He suffered severe burns while trying to extinguish the fire. Despite days of treatment and prayers at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, he lost his battle for life on September 24.

Two other firefighters and a shop employee also succumbed to the injuries they sustained in the fire.

Born on July 21, 1987, in Gafargaon upazila of Mymensingh, Nurul Huda joined the force in 2007 with a dream to serve his country and protect lives.

In his 17 years of service, he lived true to that vow -- even to his last breath, fire service officials said.

Nurul Huda left behind a grieving wife, a 10-year-old daughter, a 3-year-old son, and now a newborn baby -- a child who will grow up hearing stories of his father's courage and dedication.



Wading through chest-deep water in a rain-fed wetland in Abhaynagar, Jashore, Shariful Molla gathers bundles of water lilies -- a monsoon bloom that becomes a source of livelihood for many low-income families. For three to four months each year, he collects, cleans, and sells the lilies, earning Tk 10 per bundle.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES Investigation reports on major cases by this week

Says Tajul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam yesterday said investigation reports of several major enforced disappearance cases committed during the Awami League's tenure will be submitted this week.

Tajul made the remarks while talking to reporters after the ICT-2 took cognisance of charges against AL leader and former Kushtia lawmaker Mahbubul Alam Hanif and three others in a crimes against humanity case.

The tribunal ordered the authorities concerned to arrest the four accused, who are on the run, and produce them before it on October 14.

"Many cases are now at their final stages,"

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Dengue cases cross 50,000 mark

3 die, 782 get hospitalised in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With 782 new dengue cases reported yesterday, the total number of cases this year has surpassed 50,000, marking an alarming trend, according to official data.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said at least three dengue patients died yesterday, raising the total death toll to 215 and confirmed cases to 50,689.

Currently, 2,473 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at hospitals across the country, of whom 1,622 are from outside Dhaka.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, said dengue comes in waves, and when mosquito density is high alongside rising cases, it becomes very difficult to stop.

"Our forecasting model shows that cases will peak in October, start to decline in November, but continue significantly until January. Stopping it completely now is almost impossible," he said.

He stressed that while city corporations must intensify source reduction, breeding site

management, hotspot control, and other measures, community involvement is equally crucial.

"Without active participation in eliminating breeding grounds, controlling this outbreak will be extremely difficult," Bashar added.

GM Saifur Rahman, an entomologist at National University, also urged intensified mosquito-

» Total cases this year: **50,689**

» Total deaths this year: **215**

» Currently hospitalised: **2,473**

» Last month's death toll: **76**



control drives in hotspots, including targeted breeding site eradication, adult mosquito elimination, and sustained nationwide action. He further called for community mobilisation through awareness campaigns.

In a press statement on October 6, the DGHS urged all patients with fever to undergo dengue testing

immediately at the nearest hospital and to seek prompt medical attention if diagnosed.

Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, director (hospital) at DGHS, told The Daily Star that delayed hospitalisation has been a major factor behind the recent rise in fatalities.

According to DGHS data, seven of the nine patients who died recently passed away on the very day of hospitalisation, while one of the remaining two died the following day. "Primarily, the delay in reaching hospitals caused the dengue infection to become complicated, leaving little opportunity for effective treatment. Late admissions or delayed consultation with doctors make treating complicated cases extremely difficult," read a DGHS statement.

The health authority also said all hospitals are stocked with sufficient dengue testing kits, saline, and medicines. However, it emphasised that reducing fatalities will require rapid detection, treatment in line with clinical guidelines, and simultaneous mosquito-control measures.

Hold referendum on July Charter on election day

Says Salahuddin

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said those insisting on holding a referendum on the July Charter before the upcoming national election have an ulterior motive to delay the polls.

"The next parliamentary election is only a few months away, and arranging it is already a huge national task. If we try to hold a separate referendum before the election, it will need the same preparations, manpower, logistics, and budget as a general election. This will only waste time and delay the polls," he said.

The BNP leader made the remark while speaking at a discussion organised by Nagorik Jubo Oikya at Jatiya Press Club.

He said referendum can easily be held on the same day as the national election, using the same polling stations, officials, and ballot boxes.

Without naming anyone, Salahuddin

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CA's duty goes beyond holding polls

Says Sarjis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

National Citizen Party Chief Organiser (North) Sarjis Alam yesterday said the chief adviser's responsibility extends beyond simply holding an election.

The position demands bold and visionary leadership to meet expectations of people who placed their trust in him, Sarjis told reporters at Rajshahi.

He said the chief adviser has earned public trust and must act accordingly. If July Charter is implemented and parties cooperate, there should be no obstacle to holding elections by February next year, he said.

Referring to Nahid Islam's earlier remarks on advisers' "safe exit", Sarjis said, "We want to see how their chapter ends. When they embraced the uprising, they were supposed to bring reform, take bold decisions, and end misdeeds. Now that those same issues have resurfaced, they must take responsibility."

PURBACHAL SCAM

3 more testify against Hasina, family in 3 cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Three more prosecution witnesses yesterday testified in three graft cases filed against 23 people, including Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana, and niece British MP Tulip Siddiq, over Purbachal plot scam.

They are Gautam Kumar Sikdar, Shoriful Islam, and Riad Mahmud.

Judge Md Rabiul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 in Dhaka recorded their statements, said ACC Public Prosecutor Khan Md Moinul Hasan Lipon.

He said that witnesses testified in the graft case filed against 17 people, including Hasina, Rehana, and Tulip; in another graft case filed against 18 people, including Hasina, Azmina Siddiq, and Tulip; and in a third graft case filed against 18 people, including Hasina, Radwan Mujib Siddiq, and Tulip.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Makeshift shops have occupied the footpath in front of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital on Mirpur Road in Dhaka, leaving little space for patients and their attendants to reach the entrance. The stalls also obscure nearby warning signs meant to alert drivers to slow down near the hospital. Although the vendors cater to visitors, the food sold is often unhygienic and unsuitable for patients. The photo was taken recently.

'Draft Labour Act undemocratic'

Labour leaders tell event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Industrial Bangladesh Council (IBC) has protested what it termed an attempt by the government to finalise amendments to the Labour Act without considering workers' key proposals.

At a press conference at Jatiya Press Club yesterday, former IBC general secretary Salauddin Swapan read out a statement saying the government's draft is "undemocratic and contrary to ILO Convention 87".

He said recent Tripartite Consultative Council discussions were concluded abruptly without allowing labour representatives to speak on the minimum membership needed to form unions.

Under the proposed formula, factories with 51 to 60 workers would need 80-100 percent support to form a union, those with 60 to 70 workers over 72 percent, 70 to 100 workers over 50 percent, and 100 to 150 workers over 30 percent. "This will make forming unions even more difficult than before," the IBC said.

It proposed instead that 10 workers be enough to form a union in factories with 20-50 workers, 20 members for 51-200 workers, and gradually up to 300 for factories with over 3,000 workers.

Other demands include six months' maternity leave, reducing the resignation notice period from 60 to 30 days, and one month's wages per year of service for those resigning after a year.

The IBC will submit a memorandum to the labour adviser on October 12 and warned of a wider movement if the law is finalised without addressing their concerns.



Khwaja Habibullah Askari no more

CITY DESK

Khwaja Habibullah Askari, founding secretary and a former member of Board of Trustees of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Foundation Bangladesh passed away yesterday, said a press release.

Khwaja Habibullah Askari was the youngest son of Nawab Hasan Askari.

As a representative of the Rangoonwala Foundation UK, he played an instrumental role in the establishment of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Foundation Bangladesh in 2006 and served as its honorary secretary from

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