



Makeshift shops selling fresh produce stand perilously close to a railway line, where passing trains come within inches of the stalls and vendors. A single misstep by anyone nearby could cause a tragic accident. The photo was taken at Malibagh in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

‘Sharot Utsav’ barred at DU, Gendaria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Satyen Sen Shilpigoshthi was barred from holding its traditional Sharot Utsav (Autumn Festival) at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Dhaka University’s Bakultala and later in Gendaria yesterday.

At Bakultala, the Faculty of Fine Arts authorities stopped the event to “avoid unwanted incidents”, while in



Gendaria, police halted the festival, saying the organisers had not taken permission from the Kisholoy Kachi-Kachar fairground authority or the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

For 19 years, Satyen Sen Shilpigoshthi has organised the Sharot Utsav at Bakultala of the Faculty of Fine Arts. This year, the group had prepared for the event and sought permission from the university administration.

Manzar Chowdhury, general secretary of Satyen Sen Shilpigoshthi, told Prothom Alo that they had planned to hold the event at Bakultala from 7:00am yesterday.

He said they had received permission from the faculty earlier, but on Thursday evening, they were told the event could cause trouble.

According to him, they were informed that there were complaints that the festival was being used to rehabilitate a banned political party, and there might be unrest. As a result, they were not allowed to hold the programme there.

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STUDENTS’ UNION ELECTIONS

A safe campus for everyone Pledges Cucus VP candidate Sajjad

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

Sajjad Hossain Hridoy, vice president (VP) candidate from the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal panel in the upcoming Chittagong University Central Students’ Union (Cucus) election, has pledged to make the campus more student-friendly and safe.

In an interview with The Daily Star, he said, “After 35 long years, the election is finally being held. Our demand is that it be included in the academic calendar and held at a fixed time every year.”

Sajjad, a Philosophy student from the 2015–16 session, stressed that university authorities must remain accountable to students.

“There are session jams in many departments because teachers conduct classes and exams as they wish. Some also show bias while grading, rewarding loyal students and penalising others. Whether I win or not, I will work to ensure teachers and administrators are held accountable so students can claim their rightful due,” he said.

Explaining his decision to contest, Sajjad said, “I have always been uncompromising about students’ rights. I was even named a prime accused in a false case filed by the university administration. I also played a leading role in the movement to bring the Fine Arts Faculty back to the main campus. Through Cucus, I want to

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Accommodation for all students Assures Cucus GS candidate Dinar

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK

Rashid Dinar, general secretary candidate from the Swatantra Shikharthi Sammelan panel in the upcoming Chittagong University Central Students’ Union (Cucus) election, has pledged to work toward transforming the university into a “full-fledged and lively university”, if elected.

In an interview with The Daily Star, Dinar, a former joint coordinator of Students Against Discrimination, said he has always stood by students whenever needed.

“I was at the forefront of the July movement, as students witnessed it. I never compromised with anyone. Whenever required, I spoke to the administration and others on behalf of the students without backing down on logical demands,” said Dinar, a master’s student of History department.

He added that students know him well and have been responding positively. “They understand who can really work for their rights and who dares to speak up, no matter what. I believe they will choose the right candidate through their votes.”

Dinar said many members of his panel were coordinators or joint coordinators of the July movement. “We formed our panel based on each member’s expertise, and we believe students will appreciate our lineup,” he said.

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Farmers transport Aus paddy through village canals by boat after harvesting it from the wetlands in Barakula village of Narail. This year’s harvest, which can be used to produce various kinds of rice, is being sold for Tk 1,000–1,100 per maund. The photo was taken yesterday.

One in three child brides now divorced

Says global report by Plan International

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly one in three girls who were married as children are now divorced, facing stigma and financial hardship, according to a new global report by Plan International.

The study found that 35 percent of these girls left school after marriage, while 63 percent are not in education, employment, or training, showing how early marriage continues to deprive girls of their futures.

Many face pressure to become pregnant soon after marriage, with husbands controlling contraception and finances, leaving them with little autonomy over their lives and bodies.

Plan International’s State of the World’s Girls Report 2025 titled “Let me be a child, not a wife: Girls’ experiences of living through child marriage” gathered testimonies from more than 250 girls and young women across 15 countries, including Bangladesh. All were married or in informal unions before the age of 18.

In Bangladesh, the stories of girls and young women echo these global findings, exposing how poverty, social pressure, and weak enforcement of laws continue to push families to marry off their daughters before the age of 18.

“I was married at 14 because my parents

thought it was the only way out of poverty. I was so unhappy in that marriage, but after my divorce, I started working in a factory and now I can support my family,” said Sumaiya, 21.

“I want other girls to have opportunities, not child marriage. If I have a daughter, I’ll tell her to study and stand on her own feet. And if I have a son, I’ll teach him to be the



kind of man who never ruins a girl’s life,” she added.

Another young woman, Useaking, from Cox’s Bazar, said she left school at 15, got married, and became a mother soon after.

“I feel bad when I see my friends studying and working. They can live freely, but I cannot. If I had known the consequences, I might have made different choices,” she said.

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Why this tug of war over sheaf of paddy?: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General

Mirza Fakhrul Islam

Alamgir yesterday criticised

the National Citizen Party

(NCP) for demanding that

the Election Commission

remove other national

emblems, including the

“Sheaf of Paddy,” from the list of election symbols

if their request for “shapla” is not granted.

NCP has been warning that it will not contest

the election unless the party is allocated the

shapla (Water Lily) symbol.

“Brother, we have not stopped you from getting

any symbol. Which symbol you will receive will

be decided by the Election Commission. We

never said you could not be given that symbol. So

why this needless tug of war over BNP’s Sheaf of

Paddy?” Fakhrul said.

He said the reason behind talking about BNP’s

Sheaf of Paddy is simple, as it is an irresistible symbol.

“Everywhere in the villages, the slogan is the

same: ‘In Bangladesh, the BNP’s Sheaf of Paddy is

unstoppable.’ That is why it must be restrained —

because if the BNP’s Sheaf of Paddy survives, the

enemies of Bangladesh will be forced to abandon

all their conspiracies and be defeated.”

Fakhrul was addressing a discussion at IEB

auditorium in memory of Nazir Uddin Ahmed

Jihad, who was shot dead in Dhaka on October 10,

1990, during the anti-Ershad movement.

Urging the government to maintain complete

neutrality, he alleged that attempts were being

made to place bureaucracy under the control of

a particular party ahead of the national election.

“We [BNP] will never tolerate such moves.

During the election, the bureaucracy, government,

and the Election Commission must remain

completely neutral,” he said.

He said the national election must be held only

within the February 2026 timeframe set in June by

BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman and Chief

Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at a meeting in

London. “Otherwise, there will be no election.”



Dengue patients crowd Suhrawardy hospital

HELEMUL ALAM

Soniya Akhter, 25, a resident of Mirpur-1, has been undergoing treatment at the dengue ward of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital since Wednesday night.

She had been suffering from fever for a week but went for a dengue test only on the sixth day, which worsened her condition.

“We took medicine from a dispensary thinking it was a normal viral fever, but we admitted her to the hospital when her condition deteriorated,” said her sister, Faria Islam.

Faria said Soniya had been suffering from vomiting, fever, and abdominal pain at the time of admission.

Echoing a similar experience, Eshrat Jahan Surovi, an eleventh-grade student from Farmgate, said she also took the dengue test three days after her fever began.

Mohammad Harish Mollah, 22, a resident of Shewrapara, said, “My platelet count dropped to 11,000, and I had to take one bag of blood for that.” He too took the NSI dengue test three days after his fever started.

Like them, many dengue patients have been admitted to the dengue ward of the hospital, putting heavy pressure on the facility. Many of the admitted patients are in critical condition.

Currently, 58 patients are receiving treatment at the 60-bed dengue ward, which has been operational since October 1, said Shahnaz Parveen, senior staff nurse of the hospital.

She said more patients were expected to be admitted on Thursday evening, but the hospital would be able to accommodate only five to six new patients as some would be discharged by then.



“If more dengue patients arrive, they will initially be admitted to the medicine wards and later shifted here when beds become available,” she said.

She added that while most patients are from Dhaka city, some are also coming from outside the capital.

Medical experts said people often ignore early symptoms and delay testing, which leads to complications.

“My brother was admitted to Ma O

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