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Firefighters battle a massive blaze that broke out at the cargo section of Dhaka airport yesterday. People were moved to safety as thick smoke engulfed the area, while several firefighting units worked to bring the flames under control. Authorities said all aircraft were safe, while flight operations were suspended as efforts to fully extinguish the fire continued.

PHOTO: STAR

'A lighthouse for all of us' Speakers recall Syed Manzoorul Islam's warmth, wisdom, enduring legacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The legacy Professor Emeritus Syed Manzoorul Islam left behind must be carried forward and shared with the younger generation, said speakers at a commemorative event yesterday.

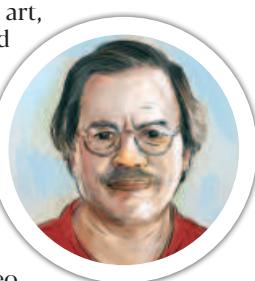
They also described him as a beacon of intellect and humanity.

Author of around 50 books in both Bangla and English, Prof Islam wrote extensively on art, literature, and aesthetics. Beyond the classroom, he was celebrated for his steadfast commitment to liberal and secular values, they said.

The programme, held at Bengal Boi in Dhamondi, began with a one-minute silence in memory of Syed Manzoorul Islam, followed by the screening of a video highlighting his life and contributions.

Writer and Prof Fakrul Alam said, "He was a writer of great stature – witty and fond of lively conversation. He may have left us, but he will remain with me for as long as I live, and with all of you as well."

Dhaka University Prof Farida Zaman said, "We cannot forget Syed Manzoorul Islam. He is constantly in our thoughts. Artists will never forget him. He was a powerful writer, novelist, and critic. Through his writing, he



SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

'One repatriation, one recruitment'

Dhaka, Rome in talks on new deal for legal hiring

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh and Italy are working on a new mechanism under which the European country will hire one Bangladeshi worker for every irregular migrant repatriated from Italy.

The idea was discussed when Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Rome Mayor Roberto Gualtieri held a meeting on the sidelines of the World Food Forum in Rome on October 13.

It was also discussed during Yunus' meeting with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in late September.

"Italian authorities said they will recruit one Bangladeshi in exchange for repatriating one irregular one," Yunus told a Bangladeshi community event at a hotel in Rome on October 14.

He said Bangladesh was negotiating for the recruitment of two Bangladeshis in exchange for repatriation of one irregular migrant.

Foreign ministry officials told The Daily Star that Italy was concerned over the growing irregular migration from various countries, especially through the Mediterranean Sea.

There are about 4,00,000

Bangladeshis in Italy, but the exact number of irregular ones is not known.

According to the Italian home ministry, between January this year and October 15, more than 15,000 Bangladeshis arrived in Italy through the Mediterranean.

Amid the surge in illegal migration, the European Union (EU) and Bangladesh signed a memorandum of

➤ 15,000 Bangladeshis reached Italy via the Mediterranean this year

➤ 4 lakh Bangladeshis currently live in Italy

➤ 28,000 irregular migrants have been repatriated since 2017

understanding (MoU) in 2017 for the repatriation of irregular migrants.

By 2023, around 28,000 Bangladeshis have been repatriated, he said.

The EU also signed another MoU with Bangladesh last year to promote skilled labour migration from Bangladesh to EU countries.

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Gono Forum to sign July charter today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum is set to sign the July National Charter today, after the National Consensus Commission accepted its demand to retain the Proclamation of Independence in the constitution.

According to a press statement issued by the commission, the charter will be signed at 12:00pm at the LD Hall of the Jatiya Sangsad.

Confirming the decision, Gono Forum General Secretary Mizanur Rahman said the party agreed to sign the charter as the commission had accepted its demand.

Gono Forum was present at the charter signing event yesterday but refrained from signing, opposing the commission's initial recommendation to remove the Proclamation of Independence issued on April 10, 1971 by the Mujibnagar Government from the constitution. "It is one of the bases of the constitution," Mizanur said.

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MPO teachers continue protest for seventh day



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

MPO-listed teachers and employees of private educational institutions continued their sit-in protest at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka for the seventh consecutive day yesterday, pressing for a three-point demand.

As part of the programme, they held a black flag procession from the Shaheed Minar and blocked the Kadamtola intersection near the Jatiya Press Club after 12:00pm for half an hour.

Their demands include a 20 percent house rent allowance on basic pay, a medical allowance of Tk 1,500, and an increase in festival allowances for employees to 75 percent.

Rashed Khan, general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, joined the demonstration in solidarity.

Addressing the gathering around 12:45pm, Rashed Khan urged Education Adviser Professor CR Abrar to accept all the teachers' demands.

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'Condemned cells dehumanise people' Speakers call for major reform of death penalty system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal experts and rights activists yesterday called for sweeping reform of Bangladesh's death penalty system, describing it as inhumane, overextended, and burdened by systemic failures that deny justice to those on death row for years.

They made the observations at a seminar held at Drik, organised to mark an exhibition by Mosfigur Rahman on the lives of death row convicts.

The event brought together members of the legal and rights community to discuss the human cost of prolonged confinement and the urgent need to reform laws prescribing capital punishment.

Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman, professor at the Department of Law, Dhaka University, said the appeal process for prisoners sentenced to death remains stalled even six years after sentencing due to the massive backlog in the courts.

"With this systemic miscarriage of justice, the state must take responsibility," he said. "It is not justice to keep a person in a condemned cell for many years. Condemned cells dehumanise a person."

People can be dissuaded from demanding the death penalty if trust in the justice system can be restored, he said. He also highlighted the absence of safeguards for

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Artists perform on the second day of the special programme organised to commemorate the 135th death anniversary of Fakir Lal Shah. The event took place at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyana yesterday.

Songs of the soul

Grand tribute marks Lal Shah's 135th death anniversary at Suhrawardy Udyana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As dusk fell over Suhrawardy Udyana, the air was filled with the rhythmic sound of ektaars and soft hum of mystic verses that have travelled through generations.

Fakir Lal Shah – the philosopher, saint, and poet whose words still echo across Bengal – is being remembered once again.

Marking the 135th death anniversary of the legendary bard, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs organised a three-day festival. The programme, began on October 17, concludes today with a discussion and musical soiree at Sajid's Mazar, Lal Shah Academy, in Kuakata.

The celebrations moved to Dhaka yesterday, with a Lal Shah fair. The evening featured a special tribute to one of Lal Shah's most celebrated interpreters, Farida Parveen.

The musical segment featured performances by Anny Bairagi, Fahmida Ahmed Shifa, Suchona Shely, Baula Band, Pathik Nabi and Team Creative, Arup Rahi, Samageet, Neerab and Bauls, Dina Mondal, Mujib Pardeshi, and numerous others.