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Police block march to Indian High Commission

Organisers demand repatriation of Hasina, others who fled to India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police barred a march towards the Indian High Commission in Dhaka's Gulshan yesterday afternoon, which was held with several demands, including the repatriation of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and others who fled to India during and after the July uprising.

The protest followed the shooting of Sharif Osman Hadi, an independent MP aspirant for Dhaka-8 and spokesperson of Inqilab Moncho, amid reports that the prime suspect and an associate had fled to India.

The programme, titled "March to Indian High Commission", was also held to protest what organisers described as "continued conspiracies by Indian proxy political parties, media, and government officials".

Several hundred protesters under the banner of "July Oikya" gathered at the Rampura Bridge area and began the march around 3:15pm.

When the procession reached North Badda around 4:00pm, police set up barricades and stopped the march.

Protesters later broke through the barricade but were halted again by a stronger blockade. They eventually sat on the road, chanting slogans and delivering speeches through loudspeakers.

At a sit in front of Hossain Market in North Badda, July Oikya leaders alleged that those involved in the July-August 2024 killings had fled to India and demanded their immediate return.

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Drop charges against Anis Alamgir immediately
CPJ urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi authorities must immediately drop terrorism charges against veteran journalist Anis Alamgir, release him unconditionally, and stop targeting the press under national security laws, said the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) yesterday.

In a statement, CPJ said police on December 15 opened an investigation against Alamgir and three others under the Anti-Terrorism Act. They were accused of spreading propaganda through talk shows and social media posts and of conspiring to rehabilitate the banned Awami League, citing news reports.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Gaps in laws, enforcement fuel cyber violence against women

Speakers tell discussion

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact clear, survivor-friendly laws
- Introduce paralegal and case-companion support for survivors
- Strengthen coordination between police, NGOs, cyber units
- Create digital platforms or apps for filing complaints safely
- Ensure faster removal of harmful online content
- Regulate social media platforms that profit from harmful content
- Promote digital safety education in schools and families

Technology: Preventing Digital Violence and What to Do for Legal Protection", organised by Cyber Support for Women and Children (CSWC) at The Daily Star Centre yesterday afternoon.

The speakers also recommended paralegal and case-companion support to help victims collect evidence and file complaints more easily, stressing the need for coordination.

The remarks were made at a dialogue titled "Women and

exist, most people, including police and young users, do not fully understand them."

She said the government alone cannot address online harassment and called for collaboration with NGOs, technology companies and service providers.

"If victims can file complaints through an app, they will feel

safer and more comfortable, without having to visit a police station in person," she also said.

Sayed Ahamed, founder and CEO of the Institute of Informatics and Development, said online violence against women remains a serious problem due to weak legal protection and limited government action.

"Online harassment and misinformation are not being properly addressed. Victim blaming is still common, and women who led the July uprising have faced online attacks even after the protests ended," he said.

He criticised government initiatives, saying reform commissions often exclude women and focus on power-sharing rather than addressing inequality and online abuse.

"Social [media] platforms profit when violent content spreads. The

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

CHRISTMAS, NEW YEAR
Police roll out special security measures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have taken special security measures ahead of Christmas, the largest religious festival of the Christian community, and New Year's Eve.

A meeting on security and law and order for the celebrations of Christmas on December 25 and New Year's Eve on December 31 was held yesterday at the Police Headquarters, chaired by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Baharul Alam.

Leaders of the Christian community who attended the meeting expressed satisfaction with the security arrangements and thanked the police administration, according to a press release issued by the Police Headquarters (PHQ).

They said they hoped that, with everyone's cooperation, Christmas would be celebrated this year in a festive atmosphere while maintaining religious solemnity, as in previous years.

Welcoming the community leaders, the IGP said Christmas is a universal festival and that police remain alert around the occasion.

He expressed optimism that Bangladesh Police would use its full capacity to ensure peaceful celebrations of both Christmas and New Year's Eve.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

47% newlyweds face mistimed pregnancies

Says icddr,b study conducted on 666 couples

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An icddr,b survey has found a strikingly high rate of mistimed pregnancies among newlywed couples in Bangladesh, with 47 percent of respondents reporting that their pregnancies occurred earlier than intended, largely due to social and familial pressure for early childbearing.

The rate was three times higher among participants in two urban slums compared to two rural sites, according to the cohort study conducted on 666 newlywed couples across four selected locations.

The study also identified high rates of early marriage, education discontinuation among newlywed women, and intimate partner violence.

Findings of the study, titled "Understanding the context and needs related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) among newlywed couples in selected rural and urban areas of Bangladesh," were presented yesterday at a programme organised by icddr,b.

icddr,b Scientist and Principal Investigator Fauzia Akhter Huda, along with Assistant Scientist Tarana E-Ferdous and Research Investigator Syed Hassan Imtiaz, presented the findings.

The study was carried out between

AT A GLANCE

- Mistimed pregnancy rate three times higher in urban slums
- 73% couples became pregnant mostly within first year of marriage
- 43% of rural, 65% of urban slum women married before 18
- 60% of rural, 66% of urban women dropped out of education after marriage

of 18. Most marriages were arranged – 85 percent in rural areas and 53 percent in urban areas.

Early marriage among men (before 21 years) was comparatively lower, at 15 percent in rural areas and 37 percent in urban areas.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

A move to safeguard cultural heritage

Unesco launches exhibition, unveils action plan

STAR REPORT

Unesco Dhaka launched a cultural exhibition yesterday at the United Nations House in Gulshan, Dhaka, spotlighting a newly introduced National Action Plan aimed at safeguarding Bangladesh's cultural heritage and creative industries in times of crisis.

The event, supported by Unesco's Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF), brings together documentation, research insights, and community



uprising in August 2024, Unesco conducted a rapid, evidence-based assessment across tangible and intangible heritage and creative industries, using field data and stakeholder consultations to inform the development of the National Action Plan.

According to Kizzy Tahmin, head of culture at Unesco Dhaka, the action plan translates ground-level findings into practical measures for immediate recovery while strengthening coordination and preparedness

narratives to showcase both the country's rich cultural diversity and the pathways towards long-term resilience in the culture sector.

Following the student-led mass

preparing for future challenges.

Addressing the event, Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of Italy in Dhaka, Federico Zamparelli, underscored the human dimension of heritage protection.

He observed that many traditional art forms and crafts are increasingly at risk as artists and artisans struggle to sustain their livelihoods, stressing that safeguarding heritage also means supporting the people who keep these traditions alive.

Among the exhibition highlights was the presentation of the traditional saree weaving art of Tangail, recently inscribed on Unesco's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The exhibition also featured visual documentation of heritage and creative industries, video storytelling on Old Dhaka's cultural legacy, and displays celebrating Bangladesh's internationally recognised heritage elements and stories.

Actor and producer Jaya Ahsan attended the event as a special guest.

