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INTO THE MYSTIC

Baul artistes perform songs of Fakir Lalon Shah at Zainul Udyan in Mymensingh city yesterday, marking the mystic poet's 136th death anniversary. Organised by Samaj Rupantar Sanskritik Sangha, the programme, titled "Manush Bhajle", celebrated Lalon's musical legacy and philosophy. Similar programmes were held across the country, including in Kushtia, Pirojpur and Manikganj.

PHOTO: **COLLECTED**

IN FOCUS

50 hurt as RMG workers, police clash in Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 50 people, including 18 police personnel, were injured in a clash between garment workers and law enforcers in Dhaka's Uttara yesterday.

The clash ensued around 11:30am near Rajlakshmi as police charged batons and used sound grenades and water cannons to disperse workers attempting to block the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway for the fifth consecutive day, demanding higher wages and payment of arrears.

Locals said workers from garment factories in Uttarkhan and Dakshinkhan areas began gathering around 10:00am at several locations, including Kasaibari, Jamtala, Azampur railway gate and the Holy Mill intersection near Jasimuddin, before assembling on Road 13 in Sector 4.

The workers hurled brickbats at policemen, triggering the clash with chase and counter-chase for nearly an hour.

After being dispersed from the Rajlakshmi area, some protesters vandalised a vehicle belonging to the Industrial Police in Sector 4, and also assaulted an Industrial Police constable.

Several workers, requesting anonymity, said at least 30 workers sustained injuries.



SCREENGRAB

The clash ensued around 11:30am near Rajlakshmi as police charged batons and used water cannons to disperse workers attempting to block the highway for the fifth consecutive day, demanding higher wages.

Rezaul Karim, deputy commissioner (Uttara Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said police initially tried to persuade the demonstrators to leave the road, but the situation escalated as the workers attacked law enforcers.

"Around 17 to 18 policemen were injured, including an Industrial Police constable who suffered a broken hand," he said.

Rezaul said that while the government was working to form a wage board and had already constituted a committee regarding the wage issues, workers from a few factories in Uttara were repeatedly blocking roads, causing public suffering.

He also claimed that workers from one particular factory, owned by an Awami League leader, made up the majority of the protesters.

Sadikur Rahman, assistant commissioner of the Industrial Police, said the motorcycle of an assistant superintendent of police (ASP) was vandalised by protesters.

"They also assaulted a constable who had no involvement in the incident," he said, adding that legal steps were underway.

'Judge Farrukh Ahmad by his poetry, not politics'

Say speakers at 33rd edition of Star Itihas Adda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poet Farrukh Ahmad has often been judged through the lens of his political identity, with his literary contributions overlooked, said speakers at an event yesterday.

They called for assessing his literary works, evolving ideas and personal identity beyond such biases.

They made the remarks at the 33rd edition of The Daily Star Itihas Adda, titled, "Farrukh Ahmad Amid Political Changes", held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

They said dismissing a poet's work because of his political beliefs or portraying him solely as a representative of a particular ideology would be unfair to his legacy.

Poet Zakir Abu Zafar said Farrukh's literary strength had been overlooked because of assessments based on his political identity. "When a nation weighs its art, literature, poetry and poets on political scales, it can never become a civilised nation," he said.



PHOTO: **STAR**

Participants at the 33rd edition of The Daily Star Itihash Adda, held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

Highlighting the language, imagery and humanist outlook of Farrukh's poetry, Zakir said, "Farrukh Ahmad has not endured merely because of his ideology. He has endured because of his words, his message and his imagery. He is a humanist, a poet of universal humanism."

Referring to the relevance of Farrukh's poetry after the July uprising, he said, "When we read Farrukh Ahmad's poetry, it sometimes feels as though these poems were written after the July revolution."

Poet, essayist and art critic Sakhawat Tipu said judging a poet solely by political identity made it difficult to appreciate the significance of his language, imagination and aesthetics.

Referring to Farrukh's love for Bangla and his role in the Language Movement, Sakhawat said the poet should not be confined to a single political or religious identity.

Khorshed Alam, professor of Bangla at Jahangirnagar University, highlighted the influence of Arab-Persian traditions, Bangla folk literature and humanist thought on the poet's work.

Referring to "Sat Sagorer Majhi" (The Sailor of the Seven Seas), which he said had attained classical status, Prof Khorshed said, "This Bangladesh will rediscover Farrukh Ahmad."

Farrukh Ahmad's son, Syed Wahiduzzaman, said his father always wrote for people, keeping marginalised communities at the centre of his thoughts.

The poet was mentored by politician, journalist and writer Abul Mansur Ahmad, he said.

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Bangladesh economy caught in 'structural trap'

Rising poverty, household debt, stagnant investment threaten growth, says PPRC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's economy is trapped in a cycle of household distress, stagnant investment and weak governance, undermining sustainable growth, according to a new analysis by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC).

The think tank said breaking the cycle requires deep institutional reforms rather than a focus on headline growth targets.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of PPRC, and Namira Shameem, a senior research associate, presented the findings yesterday at the launch of a publication titled, "State of the Real Economy: Dynamics of Reversals and Resilience in Bangladesh".

"This is not a temporary economic downturn. The economy is caught in a deep structural trap, and breaking out of this trap is the biggest challenge," Zillur Rahman said.

He said economic challenges went beyond rising poverty, as households faced greater financial vulnerability, inadequate savings and growing debt.

Poverty, which had been declining, is rising again, while the middle class is becoming increasingly fragile, he said.

"The issue is no longer just the poverty rate. We must now consider the dimension of vulnerability, particularly the lack of buffers between household income and expenditure."

The PPRC survey found that 27.93 percent of the population lived below the upper poverty line in May 2025, while extreme poverty stood at 9.35 percent. Another 17.97 percent of households were vulnerable to falling into poverty.

In 2022, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics reported poverty at 18.7 percent and extreme poverty at 5.6 percent.

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Household debt also exceeded average savings by 44.6 percent. Among the poorest 10 percent, average debt stood at Tk 62,767, against savings of Tk 19,737, the survey found.

Zillur Rahman said job insecurity, inadequate

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Workers sort discarded plastic items by colour and quality at a recycling facility in Khulna's Lata Mor area yesterday. Collected from different locations, the plastic waste is sorted, cleaned and processed for reuse as raw materials to manufacture new products.

PHOTO: **HABIBUR RAHMAN**

Another beef feast at JnU

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *JnU*

A beef feast was organised at Jagannath University for a second consecutive day yesterday, with the university unit of Bangladesh Khelafat Chhatra Majlis hosting the event under the banner of a "harmony feast".

Organisers slaughtered a cow on the road between the vice-chancellor's building and the mathematics department in the morning. Beef tehari was distributed in front of the Central Shaheed Minar from 3:30pm to 5:30pm, alongside a scheduled evening qawwali programme.

Students paid Tk 40 each to register for the feast. The organisers said they had bought the cow for Tk 85,000 and made arrangements to serve around 600 students.

Obaidul Islam, member secretary of the JnU unit of Bangladesh Khelafat Chhatra Majlis, said disagreements among students over a recent campus incident, along with

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