

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 16, 2020, MAGH 2, 1426 BS

How did we get to this point?

Lawmakers demand the law be done away with

WE are stunned at the demand of senior lawmakers to have rapists killed "in crossfire". How can individuals who are supposed to make the laws of our nation stand in the middle of parliament and ask that the most basic of all laws in any civilised society—that of due process—be violated in this most appalling manner? The concept of due process has developed over time from Clause 39 of the Magna Carta—one of the greatest achievements of human civilisation. That our lawmakers can dismiss it so trivially in this day and age is shocking beyond belief.

This is not a matter of downplaying an offence. Rape is a most egregious crime, for which a person must be held to account and exemplarily punished. However, in a nation that believes in the rule of law, and is governed by it, due process cannot be violated for any reason whatsoever.

Unfortunately, according to reports submitted by human rights groups to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1,335 people were extrajudicially killed by law enforcing agencies through crossfire between January 2014 and May 2019, demonstrating the corrosion of due process and the rule of law that has happened in our country in the recent past—and many MPs had even indirectly admitted in parliament that the state is using crossfire in the war against drugs launched in 2018, by asking why the state cannot use similar tactics against rapists. That deterioration will only speed up if we have MPs believing and promoting the use of "crossfire" to do away with suspected criminals, regardless of the alleged offence.

One MP even went so far as to say that "you will go to heaven if you kill rapists in crossfire." This is the type of rhetoric we have grown accustomed to hearing from extremists, not MPs.

It is extremely saddening to watch discussions in our parliament being reduced to such levels. At the same time, it is a perfect example of the risks we face of going down the slippery slope, once we abandon the most basic of laws—for once the use of crossfire is normalised, as it has been against alleged drug dealers, it was only a matter of time before it was expanded to include others as well.

This entire episode demands some serious reflection as to the direction we are headed as a nation. We hope the MPs will immediately retract their absurd statements and acknowledge the importance of due process—and in light of that, investigate the countless violations of due process that have occurred in recent years. As without that, the rule of law, we fear, will be in terrible jeopardy.

Use of surplus funds of state agencies

Commendable, but we should proceed judiciously

WE welcome the initiative taken by the government to utilise the surplus funds of the state enterprises to implement various development projects. The organisations with the highest surplus funds include Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), Petrobangla, Rural Electrification Board, Rajuk, Titas gas, etc. According to the finance ministry, the state-owned autonomous organisations held Tk 218,839 crore at banks until June 30 last year.

As of June 30, 2020, BPC and BPDB alone had a surplus fund of Tk 21,611 crore and Tk 19,474 crore, respectively. It makes absolutely no sense as to why such large sums of money should be lying idle in the banks while many of the development projects taken by the government remain unimplemented because of fund crisis. This daily reported earlier how many infrastructure development projects remained unimplemented or could not be completed in time because of uncertainty over financing. While the move to use underutilised funds is welcome, we hope the government will make good use of it and not spend it on vanity projects.

The government has already placed a bill in the parliament in this regard to bring the surplus money held by 61 state organisations to the national exchequer. According to the bill, the surplus funds will be deposited to the national exchequer after keeping aside the operational cost, additional 25 percent of the operational cost as emergency funds, money for general provident fund and pension, etc. It also states that the agencies will have to deposit the funds to the national exchequer within three months of completion of a fiscal year.

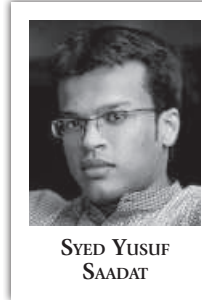
However, the fear of the bankers—that the law would hit hard our already cash-starved banking sector—in particular, should be taken into account so that the soon-to-be-passed law becomes implementable and people-oriented. Since the bill has now been with the parliamentary standing committee on finance for examination, we hope the committee will examine all the pros and cons before finalising it. The government should take expert opinions from those in the state enterprises and especially the banking sector, which would be the worst affected as most of the money was deposited with them.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Monitor cigarette sales

Recently, the National Heart Foundation disclosed an alarming survey report finding which mentioned that the evidence of smoking such as cigarette butts and odor were found at 71 percent of public hospitals in Dhaka, which goes against the Smoking and Tobacco Control Act. As per the tobacco control act, hospitals in the country are supposed to be completely tobacco-free. Smoking in all public places are strictly prohibited by the law yet it is such a rampant practice no matter where we go. In public places, if one requests a smoker to put out their cigarette, they retaliate often with aggression and disregard, even when children are present. There should be separate zones for smokers so that the non-smokers can be at ease. The concerned authorities must take steps to restrict the sale and smoking of tobacco within hospital vicinities as well as public places. Md Zillur Rahaman, Dhaka



SYED YUSUF SAADAT

IT is dark. There seems to be light on the other side, but it seems very distant. You see only parts of objects, and it makes it hard for you to discern what the entire thing may be. Since you are acclimatised to seeing the picturesque panorama of the world from childhood, even momentarily restricting your vision makes you feel confined and confused. Yet, those who are unfortunate enough to be born into poverty, live their entire lives inside the clenched fist of the world. Such an existence is characterised by persistent pressure from all forces—natural, social, economic and political. It is a deprivation that degrades humans into lesser beings. Those who are cursed with poverty from birth have committed no crime. They were only born to the wrong parents.

In his book, "Challenging the Injustice of Poverty", eminent economist Professor Rehman Sobhan advocates that poverty is not merely income deprivation, but rather a multi-dimensional exclusion from opportunities for development and decision-making in society. Professor Sobhan argues that injustice lies at the crux of poverty, and it is an unjust social order which creates unequal opportunities that lead to unequal outcomes. Such injustice is structural in nature, since it stems from a social order which determines the operation of both market forces and institutions. He points out that structural injustice originates inequalities in terms of access to assets, participation in the market, access to human development and governance. To correct structural injustice, Professor Sobhan proposes several measures, such as expanding the ownership and control of the excluded people over productive assets and strengthening the capacity of the excluded people to compete in the market.

Bangladesh has made commendable progress on the first sustainable development goal (SDG), which calls upon countries to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. According to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the proportion of population living below the national upper poverty line in Bangladesh has fallen from 56.7 per cent in 1991-92 to 24.3 per cent in 2016. However, in order to reach the government's milestone of having

a maximum of 18.6 per cent of the population living below the national upper poverty line by 2020, the rate of poverty reduction needs to be increased.

The total number of underprivileged people in Bangladesh has been reduced from 83.06 million in 1992 to 39.60 million in 2016. Thus, roughly halving the incidence of poverty between 1991-92 and 2016 has resulted in around 43.46 million people coming out of poverty in a matter of only 24 years. Bangladesh's accomplishments in reducing extreme poverty are even more impressive. The percentage of population living below

2010 to 2016, poverty rates fell by 1.2 per cent. This means that as the last mile is approaching, Bangladesh may find it challenging to repeat its miraculous poverty reduction record of the past.

Concurrent with poverty alleviation, Bangladesh has also managed to expand the coverage of its social safety net programmes. The proportion of households receiving social safety net benefits increased from 13.06 per cent in 2005 to 27.80 per cent in 2016. This is clearly a step in the right direction, in terms of making sure that "No One is Left Behind". Nevertheless, there is still

gradually shift from the humanitarian approach of safety nets to the rights-based approach of social protection.

Nonetheless, ultimately it must be kept in mind that there is no elixir that can magically end poverty. As long as the unjust economic, political and social structures that produce and perpetuate poverty are not decisively dismantled, the deprivation of the poor shall persist. The first step towards rejecting the socio-economic order that prevents elimination of poverty is to understand the sufferings of the poor. But for most



Ultimately, there is no elixir that can magically end poverty.

PHOTO: SYED YUSUF SAADAT

the national lower poverty line decreased from 41 per cent in 1991-92 to 12.9 per cent in 2016. At this rate, it is likely that Bangladesh will reach the government's milestone of having a maximum of 8.9 per cent of the population below the national lower poverty line by 2020. Nevertheless, the pace of poverty reduction has been slowing down. Between the period 2005 to 2010, poverty rates fell by 1.7 per cent annually on average, whereas between the period

much that needs to be done. For example, the social safety net allocation has been hovering at around 14 per cent of the total national budget during fiscal year 2008-09 to 2018-19. Additionally, the bulk of funds allocated for social safety nets is earmarked to provide pension for government officials. Therefore, in order to ensure that the "farthest behind are reached first" it is important to decouple pension of government officials from the social safety net budget allocation, and

of us, this will be no easy task. Since privilege usually goes unnoticed to those who are privileged, it is unlikely that we will be able to empathise with the plight of the poor. This is why we need to view the world through a loosely clenched fist, because it is only through the act of closing down our field of view, that our eyes will really be opened to poverty and the limited lives of the poor.

Syed Yusuf Saadat is Senior Research Associate, Centre for Policy Dialogue

An argument for nuance

One Bangladeshi man's story shows why linking climate change with conflict is no simple matter

SONJA AYE-B-KARLSSON

FROM Sudan to Syria to Bangladesh, climate change is often presented as a powerful and simple root cause of violent conflict and mass migration.

These narratives can be dangerous. Directly linking climate change with aggression and mass migration risks dehumanising those vulnerable to environmental stresses, and casts their attempts to escape a problem caused by mainly rich nations as a security threat. It promotes fear and isolation, rather than compassion and assistance. It also frames conflicts as "natural", ignoring myriad preventable causes.

The truth is more complicated than a hotter planet inevitably meaning more violence, war and chaos. Research uncovering the individual life experiences of vulnerable people on the ground show that the link between climate and conflict is not simple, nor linear. A destabilising climate merely adds extra pressure to a great many pre-existing difficulties.

My research in Bangladesh, and the story of one man in particular—55-year-old Muzaffar from Babupur in the north-east of the country—perfectly illustrates this complexity. In order to truly defend his future, and that of countless others in similar positions, we must understand and tackle structural and social causes of conflict.

Muzaffar's story begins like so many others here: with a difficult past. Poverty forced Muzaffar to work as a child and he never had a chance to attend school. The day he got a family of his own, his main concern was putting food on the table.

At the time, food in the area was scarce due to the lack of rain and, as the local climate became less stable, his village struggled increasingly with drought. It was difficult to make money in the village, so Muzaffar decided to leave his wife and eight children behind and migrated to the capital, Dhaka.

Here, he worked as a day labourer in the harbour, carrying sand and stones on his head. Unable to afford a house, he lived in a shared dormitory shed made of tin, and full of mosquitoes and ants.

I suffered a lot. We were about 50-60 people stuck in there... As I was not educated I could not really change my profession or build up a career. I just made sure to care for my family. That was all that kept me going. After deciding to return home,

Muzaffar settled down close to a pond on government-owned land. The local government reassured him that he could stay there. However, powerful men, who had already filed a claim to the land in the local court, showed up one day planting trees next to his house—a common land-grabbing strategy in the area. Muzaffar described their encounter:

I told the man... If you win, you will get the land, but for now I will not allow you to plant trees on my land. You can plant [your trees] in the open land instead... They did not want to listen and kept on planting trees.

The police came to the village to investigate what had happened, but Muzaffar could not afford the payment or bribe commonly required for their service. Unable to pay the police, the case is still running in the regional high court, decades later. In the words of Muzaffar, "he who is poor cannot afford to pay the price for justice".

Thankfully, Muzaffar's life took a positive change. He did not get justice in court, but a few years ago a local NGO gave him a few goats and a sheep, and Bangladesh's largest NGO gave him a

bachelor's degree.

Others, of course, are not so lucky. Some are unable to pay their loans, some are forced to sell their land and assets to pay them off—and some lose their livelihoods or end up in jail.

Complex causes

The loss of natural resources in the area due to climate stress played a role in the conflict Muzaffar faced. However, so did land politics and power dynamics, social stigmatisation, discrimination, and the legacy of colonialism.

Muzaffar was poor. He was landless. He was not protected by the law. The justice system made it easy for those with more power to take his land. The men who attacked him had powerful connections in the village.

Many of these power relations, both in Bangladesh and elsewhere, owe their existence to decisions made during colonial rule. For example, while colonial laws governing the division of land no longer apply, they entrenched inequality in access to resources and influence that still persists today, giving rise to conflict that may never have occurred had countries developed autonomously.

Muzaffar is a man of working age, but many in similar positions suffer added structural barriers. Women, the elderly, and children suffer more from the impacts of both conflict and climate change. Unless we address the social power structures responsible for these inequalities, they will continue to be disproportionately affected.

We have surprisingly little empirical evidence of how social, psychological, financial, geographical, and political factors contribute to conflict, and how climate change interacts with them. We need much more diverse and interdisciplinary research to better understand how to protect vulnerable people from both conflict and climate change.

Arenas such as COP25, the latest iteration of the UN's annual climate change summit, have the capacity to advance these research efforts. Our children recognise the urgency and are demanding that we look at the science. It is time to listen.

Sonja Aye-B-Karlsson is Senior Researcher, Institute for Environment and Human Security, United Nations University. The article was originally published on The Conversation.



Muzaffar's life story illustrates the complex linkages between climate change and conflict.

So after a while I went over there to reason with him and pulled away his hand to stop him. He stood up abruptly, and hit me with his spade. I tried to protect myself with my hand, but it cut straight through my hand into my face, here, right next to my eye.

Muzaffar fainted as soon as the spade hit his head. His landless indigenous neighbours tried to help him and put him into a taxi to the hospital but his attackers tried to stop him from getting into the vehicle. They would not allow the taxi to leave until Muzaffar's uncle screamed: "If you want him dead, you better kill him now!".

PHOTO: SONJA AYE-B-KARLSSON

cow. Muzaffar decided to sell his animals, using the money to get a loan, buy a harvester machine, and start a small business.

These days he keeps livestock, harvests other people's land, rents out his machine, and does share cropping—a collective form of agriculture in which a landowner allows people to farm their land in return for a share of the crops. He has already started to pay back his loans. His eyes were filled with pride during my last visit as he shared the news that his youngest daughter had just finished her

The Future of Digital is Human

SABHANAZ RASHID DIYA

RAFIA dreads going to her phone carrier's customer service centre. Her commute to work at the local clinic is roughly 40 minutes, while she spends at least an hour and half, inclusive of traffic, in a public bus to reach the nearest centre. In addition to standing in the bus in sweltering Dhaka summer, longer hours typically mean more chances of getting groped or pinched. The commute only explains half her frustration. At the centre, she must stand in line and enter her personal number at the kiosk to be waitlisted for the next available customer agent. Twice, someone peered over her shoulder and wrote down her number while she was entering it at the kiosk. Later, they would call her nonstop at midnight or during work hours, making sexual passes and obscene comments. While her phone's technical issue is arguably resolved every time, Rafia does not recall having a pleasant experience at the centre or with what often happens afterwards.

Similar to many women (and men) like her, owning an internet-enabled phone has been transformative in Rafia's life. She is the archetype of what technology experts would call an *advanced user*.

wrong button and losing money. Where does this money go? How does one recover this money? *Rafiqer baap* will be furious.

Digital Exclusion: From Access to Usage

The promise of technology did not (entirely) disappoint, especially since the smartphone boom that ushered the world into an era of affordable, bilateral and communicable digital tools. As high as 80 percent of the population in low- and middle-income countries today have basic cell phone coverage, including 3G or higher quality networks. Globally, 60 percent of unique mobile subscribers have access to smartphones. Among comparable economies, South Asia provides the cheapest bundling of calls, data and text messaging services.

Despite these advancements, three billion people are still predicted to be offline in 2023. As a result, the global debate on technology heavily skews towards ensuring access through investing in infrastructure. However, data on usage of digital services illustrate equally alarming gaps. The latest estimates from International Telecommunications Union suggest only 51 percent of the world's connected population is using the internet. This means having a phone

to use the internet to participate in public life. Further, women are 40 percent less likely to have used the internet than men, irrespective of age, income and geography. In short, digital exclusion is not a new phenomenon: it mirrors and exacerbates long existing structural inequalities.

The reality of digital technology is therefore a paradox. On one hand, millions of connected people, like Rafia, can now leapfrog traditional barriers to enjoy the benefits of a modern economy: faster communication, ease of transactions and multifaceted services at their fingertips. On the other hand, as one group moves up the ladder, another, like Mariam, inadvertently slides back. In absence of targeted interventions, they are unable to perform intermediate to advanced functions on their devices and quickly become suspicious of newer digital tools. They are more susceptible to the dangers of technology: pervasive exclusion, job loss, loss of privacy, data abuse and loss of agency.

As advances in artificial intelligence strive to replicate more complex, human-like computational abilities, in many ways, it has left behind the need for technology to be human-first, that is, centering the design and dissemination of digital



ILLUSTRATION: AMIYA HALDER

technology companies investing or taking over smaller logistics outfits and training "agents" to deliver "nouveau" services. More recently, F-commerce (businesses run predominantly on and through Facebook products) has created newer economic opportunities, especially among stay-at-home and self-funded entrepreneurs—many of whom are women.

Given significant resource constraints, Bangladesh's sharp shift to digital came with low investments in research, design and implementation. Sometimes, timely rollouts and rapid scaling resulted in disproportionate sunk costs and even negatively affecting people. In most cases, the product never reached scale. Perhaps the steepest price for Bangladesh has been the premature import of Silicon Valley's "fail fast" culture, especially among younger people, that has confounded how the market has evolved. Unlike the Valley (where culture is its own ghastly problem), Bangladesh is still early in setting up its digital rails—connectivity, rapid adoption of smartphones, government capacity, pro-people technology and privacy regulations, and so forth. In absence of an enabling environment, the country's digital transformation relies heavily on its ability to leverage human capital and capacity. This starts with prioritising people, not tools.

If less than a quarter of the country is actively online, it begs the question, whose problems are the myriad of smartphone-only apps trying to solve? Is there a rush to serve the same 25 percent of the population, most of whom are urban and tend to move from one service to another? Doesn't the real opportunity for innovation lie in creating affordable and compelling products to serve the untapped (yet connected) population?

Designing Technology for People

The adverse disconnect in the digital ecosystem is twofold: one, almost

all "solutions" today target the same 25 percent of the market with few meaningful attempts to serve the rest of the population; and two, even when technology is aimed for this 25 percent, the lack of research and thoughtful design result in misplaced and unscalable products.

Rafia's discomfort at the customer service centre is a classic example of low investment in user research and lack of contextualisation of solutions, especially when designing for women and marginalised populations. The kiosk is only as good as its ability to provide an easy, private and secure solution to different user segments. This requires investments in extensive inquiry into the problem, mapping the end user's journey, rapid prototyping, holistic design and contextualisation of the nuances in the local market, including class, gender and power dynamics—all of which is possible only through spending time in the middle of the chaos and talking to people. This shift in problem-solving therefore demands bringing designers, anthropologists, psychologists, economists, sociologists and other social scientists into the technology industry. There is a disproportionate emphasis on building capacity of computer programmers and engineers whose expertise are limited to developing tools, not designing for people and society. Having a tunnel vision approach poses the risk of missing out on the tenets of designing an *inclusive* digital economy. Technological solutions should aim to equalise, not proliferate, existing problems and structural inequalities.

User research and inclusive design are half the approach. The rest comes down to investing in human capacity. In recent years, Bangladesh has experienced a boom in programmes and boot camps for entrepreneurs, (future) programmers and engineers. There are national campaigns to train "creators of apps" but little has been done to bring the potential

users of these apps into the fold. In addition to being offline, digital literacy remains a significant barrier for market entry, especially potential users like Mariam who are typically poor and living in rural areas. The benefits of building capacity of the end user through hands-on programmes are evident. In a research titled *Poverty and Migration in the Digital Age* by Lee et al in Bangladesh, the researchers find when they spent 30-45 minutes providing hands-on training to users to send and receive money on bKash and translated the application's menu to Bangla, users are 48 percentage points more likely to have an active bKash account than the control group.

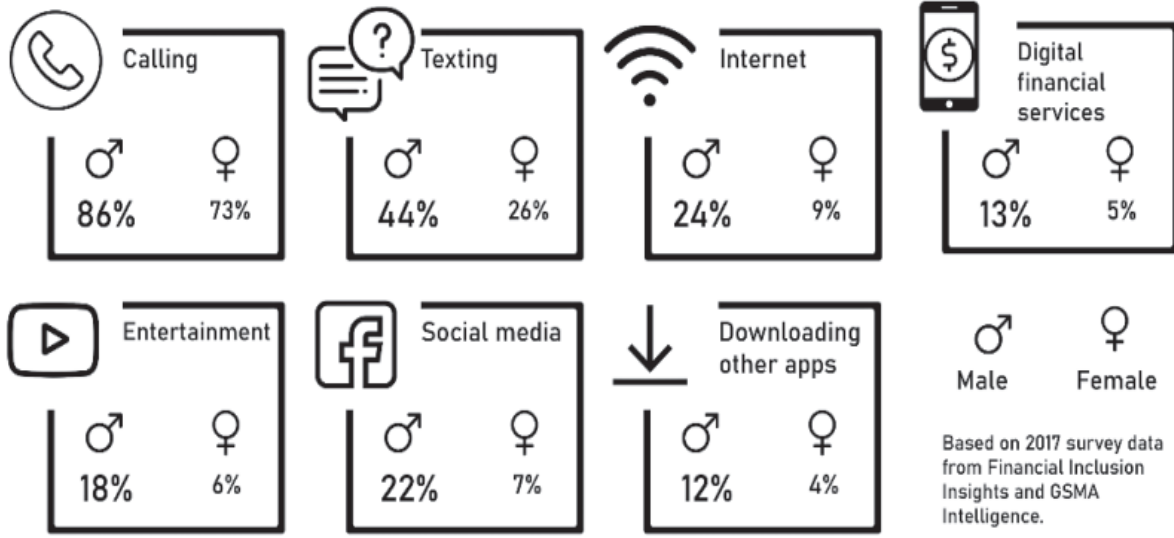
Back in her *mess* (shared housing facility) in Agargaon, Rafia sometimes ponders whether she should simply switch back to a feature phone, despite the ability to watch videos and listen to *adhaan* on her smartphone. Feature phones are easier to use and don't require as many "fixes". She can always go to the agent to send money. She has considered switching numbers or registering for a second number for the times she must go to a customer service centre, but regulations are "tight" these days.

Under the tin shed home in Palashbari, Mariam carefully wraps her phone with an old cloth and places it next to her pillow before going to bed. She used to keep her phone under her pillow before, but once, accidentally pressed a button and called one of the numbers *Rafiqer baap* saved in the phone. She lost her entire balance.

For now, Rafia dreads the next time she is forced to make the longer commute, get groped and her personal number, without her consent, is broadcasted to the public. Mariam fears accidentally pressing a button and losing her savings. If only...

Sabhanaz Rashid Diya is a computational social scientist working in international development and technology.

% of Bangladeshis who have used a mobile service in the past year (2017)



She talks and sends money to her mother and brothers in the village every month, and watches *natoks* on YouTube—otherwise inaccessible—in between shifts using the clinic's Wi-Fi. Five times a day, her phone recites the *adhaan* and she receives daily *duas* in her SMS inbox.

252 kilometres north of Dhaka, Mariam (widely known as *Rafiqer maa*) sits in front of the stove in Palashbari and fiddles with her Micromax phone. Although she went to school for a few years, Mariam never appeared for her SSC exam. She was hastily married off to one of her distant cousins when her father unexpectedly fell ill. She uses her phone to receive calls from her brothers and husband, and despite using a feature phone, finds it difficult to text or activate internet. Her neighbour tells her that nowadays one can receive money on their phones, but Mariam worries about accidentally pressing the

and network by itself are insufficient to reap the benefits of a connected and digital ecosystem.

In Bangladesh, based on the 2017 survey data from Financial Inclusion Insights and GSMA Intelligence, there is close to 90 million unique mobile subscribers and 35 million unique internet subscribers. Yet, there is a striking drop in the proportion of users as more complex digital services are introduced: from surfing the web to sending money. The gender gap is prevalent across all services with at least 50 percent fewer women than men using the internet, downloading music and posting regularly on social media.

Technology disproportionately benefits early adopters everywhere—male, young, urban and typically upper middle class—and leaves behind marginalised groups. A study of 10 countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America finds women are 30 to 50 percent less likely than men

tools to solve problems faced by humans, particularly of those who have historically been left behind.

A Case of Bangladesh
Bangladesh is no stranger to this conundrum. In the past decade, as the country experienced significant economic growth, digitisation of services has remained central to the national agenda. The government rapidly transitioned to citizen-centric web platforms, offering major services online as well as through one-stop digital solution hubs across the country. Simultaneously, the private sector introduced a wide range of digital services: e-commerce, food delivery, ridesharing, digital financial services, education, e-medicine, e-agriculture and e-manythings. While the US was grappling with the explosion of a market-driven gig economy, Bangladesh experienced its own form of (dis)organised gig economy:

BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott



BETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

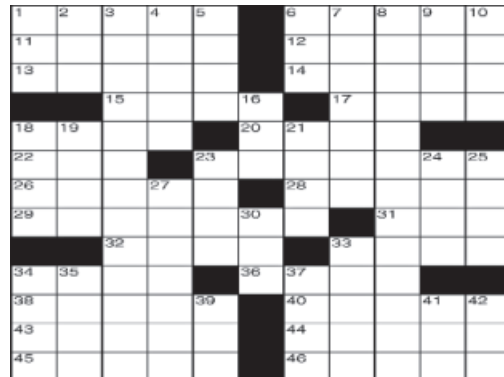


JANUARY 16, 1991
Beginning of Persian Gulf War

The Persian Gulf War, triggered by Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in August 1990, began on this day in 1991 with a US-led air offensive against Iraq that continued until a cease-fire was declared on February 28.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Use the tub
 - 6 Light lunch
 - 11 Broadway worker
 - 12 Suspect's story
 - 13 Distorts
 - 14 Thin cookie
 - 15 Abound
 - 17 Stiff drink
 - 18 Ran away
 - 20 Role for Peck
 - 22 - Gatos
 - 23 Seriocomic show
 - 26 Set free
 - 28 "The Godfather" group
 - 29 Check recipients
 - 31 Sitcom planet
 - 32 Act sullen
 - 33 God of war
- DOWN**
- 1 Do restaurant work
 - 2 Invite
 - 3 Margaret Atwood book
 - 4 Chopped down
 - 5 Gaelic
 - 6 Carpenter tool
 - 7 Mobile setting
 - 8 Margaret Atwood book
 - 9 Third person
 - 10 Grime
 - 16 Spoil
 - 18 Mess up
 - 19 Solitary
 - 21 Corny performers
 - 23 Profound
 - 24 Terrible
 - 25 Talks at length
 - 27 Magnetite, e.g.
 - 30 Spectrum end
 - 33 Cartoon genre
 - 34 Speedy horse
 - 35 Artist's inspiration
 - 37 Skip
 - 39 Negating word
 - 41 Sense of self
 - 42 Cub's cave



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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GARMENTECH
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Concurrent Shows :
GAPEXPO 2020, PACKTECH BANGLADESH 2020, YARN & FABRICS

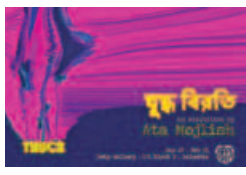
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WHAT'S ON



Solo Art Exhibition
Title: Truce
Artist: Ata Mojib
Venue: Dvip Gallery, Lalmitia
Date: January 25 – February 1
Time: 3 pm – 9 pm (Except Mondays)



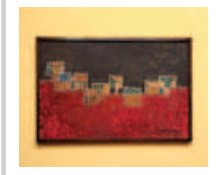
Workshop
Title: Kata Kuti - Collage Workshop
by Kazi Tahsin
Agaz Apurbo
Venue: Studio 6/6, Mohammadpur
Date: January 25, 2020
Time: 11 am – 6 pm



Cultural Festival
Title: Bangladesh Shanskritik
Utshab 2020
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala
Academy
Date: January 3-23, 2020
Time: 4 pm – 8 pm



Musical Evening
Title: Plugged Out IV - One Night Stand
Venue: Counter Culture Club,
Dhanmondi
Date: January 31, 2020
Time: 5 pm onwards
Tickets: BDT 300



Group Art Exhibition
Title: Breaking Ground: Modern Art in
Transition
Venue: Subir Choudhury Exhibition Hall,
Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi
Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15
Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)



Artworks by Mohammad Eunos.



PHOTO: COURTESY

“PURSUING ART IS A SOLEMN PERSEVERANCE”

-Mohammad Eunos

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Renowned artist Professor Mohammad Eunos was born on this day in 1954 to M Eusuf and Fajilatun Noor, of Thakurgaon. His father was a lieutenant of Pakistan Army and founder of Thakurgaon and Dinajpur Scouts. Mohammad Eunos was also a member of scout and joined many jamborees including Pakistan National Jamboree. He has always been interested in art. After he passed his matriculation in 1972, a signboard artist Saifur Rahman from Thakurgaon, influenced Mohammad Eunos greatly. “My father had a sketchbook, and I was fascinated with his sketches. I drew banners for many *jatrapala* and stage plays, including one on the Liberation War,” said Mohammad Eunos. “Then, I went to the Faculty of Fine Art (FFA), University of Dhaka (DU). As my hand writing and drawing skills were pretty good, one of our teachers, Mahbulul Amin, encouraged me to enroll at the Department of Graphic Design.”

Mohammad Eunos worked on many projects with renowned artist Alakesh Ghosh. He received the best award in Graphic Design when he was a third-year student. He also received the best award in Painting when he was a fourth-year student, competing with the students of Drawing and Painting Department, and in his fifth-year, he won the Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Best Award in Painting.



After completing courses in fine art, he joined Bangladesh Television and married Riffat Eunos, who was a student at the Department of Ceramics, FFA, DU. Their son Ragib Yasar Mohammad Eunos is a computer science engineer.

Mohammad Eunos has exhibited his artworks in five solo shows and went to Japan to study art on a scholarship. “Before going to Tama Art University in Japan, I did realistic paintings. But I was not satisfied with what I was doing. My interactions and internal exchanges with the canvas were not appeased and I

switched to abstract paintings,” he added. Renowned Japanese painters Miyazaki Susumi and Toshio Gi Tanaka were his guides in Japan.

For him, the essence of the rhythm of poetry, the melody of classical music and the visual beauty of abstract paintings are the same. He thinks surrealist poems, especially those composed by Jibanananda Das, Indian classical music and abstract paintings are nearly identical. The painter has been depicting abstract, semi-abstract and pure-abstract works for over four decades. He employs colours,

lines and textures to give his paintings a classical character.

“Pursuing art is a solemn perseverance. It’s a meditative worship that ultimately leads one to the realm of spirituality. A strong passion for art is imperative to become a great artist,” says Eunos.

The artist tries to express the inner feelings, elements and incidents of nature through his paintings. “Nature calls out to me at a deep level. My ‘Wall’ series is such an example. A wall evolves like a society; and sometimes we deliberately mess with it. We throw paint at it, hit it, damage it and then, we try to cure it. Society heals, leaving scars. My ‘Wall’ series endeavours to capture those healing walls,” he asserts. “My painting is a journey without any destination. I converse with the canvas in a meditative way when I start painting, playing with lines, colours, textures, themes and proportions.”

He likes the works of Antoni Tapies and Anthony Claps. He regards Mohammad Kibria as the abstraction guru, the father of modern art in Bangladesh.

Mohammad Eunos has many national and international awards to his credit, including the Grand Award in Japan and an honourable mention award in Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh. His artworks are in the collection of the British Museum, Fukuoka Art Museum in Japan, and many private museums around the world.

NOBLE

returns to acting

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Adil Hossain Noble has been a popular name in the modelling business for many years. He is also a seasoned actor, who has appeared in various TV commercials and shows. After a one-year hiatus, he returned to acting with Rupon Bin Rouf’s one-hour tele-fiction, ‘Be Positive’. In a recent conversation with The Daily Star, Noble shares his thoughts on acting and more.

Rupon Bin Rouf’s ‘Be Positive’ marked your return to acting after a one-year break. How does it feel to be back?
As I have a full-time job, I cannot dedicate enough time to television dramas, even when I want to. I keep busy with something or the other even on the weekends. So, it is difficult, but I felt great to be acting again after a long time.

Can you tell us a little more about ‘Be Positive’?
‘Be Positive’ revolves around a family that goes through many hurdles after an accident, but chooses to remain optimistic. I believe that the story will resonate with the audience.



PHOTO: STAR

You played the role of Masud Rana in Atiqul Haque Chowdhury’s ‘Prachir Periyé’, the first private production of Bangladesh Television. It has been twenty-five years since that show aired. Tell us about your experience on the show.
Working on ‘Prachir Periyé’ was a delightful experience, as I got to team up with an amazing bunch of people. It feels like these 25 years just went by in a flash. I was very nervous initially, but Bipasha Hayat, who also starred on the show, was very supportive. She inspired me to give it my best. We faced many limitations during the making of the show, but it was all worth it.

You are still regarded as one of the most prolific male models in the business. What would you say is your mantra for success?

Modelling is my passion. I have been able to sustain in this business for so long because I surround myself with the right people, who inspire me every day. I share great bonds of friendship with all my directors. I enjoy fully immersing myself into every project that I take up. Having said that, I am humbled to receive so much love and appreciation from the audience even today.

MUNMUN AHMED

to perform at ‘Sambandh: Bestowing Inspiration’



ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

As a tribute to the legend Pandit Vijay Shankar, Prerna-Centre for Performing Arts is organising a music and dance ensemble titled, *Sambandh: Bestowing Inspiration* at Ghanshyam Das Birla Sabhagar, Kolkata. The programme will be inaugurated on January 18.

The two-day event features performances by renowned music and dance maestros, including Kathak exponent Munmun Ahmed from Bangladesh, Pandit Subhankar Banerjee, Smt Luna Poddar and Pandit Debasish Sarkar, among many others.

Munmun Ahmed feels privileged to be a part of this event. “Getting to perform in different countries brings me joy as I get to interact and present my art in front of people who come from different cultures. The appreciation that comes from such performances is what I truly rejoice as a dancer,” she says. “I expect a large audience at the Sabhagar on the 18th.”



PHOTO: STAR

‘Pala Gaan’ programme in Shirajganj

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, from Pabna

Marking the 15th founding anniversary of Sirajganj Baul Shilpigoshthi, a leading cultural organisation based in the northern districts of Bangladesh, a two-day *Pala Gaan* session was recently organised by its artistes at the Shahid Monsur Ali Auditorium.

Aynal Boyati, prominent folk singer of Sirajganj and Nilufar Yeasmin, leading folk artist

of Naogaon performed the night long Pala-Gaan.

Traditional Bangla folk music, such as *Jari Sari*, *Pala Gaan*, *Bhatiyali*, and *Bhoiayi*, are losing its practice apart from cultural programmes. “Once upon a time, people living in the rural regions of Bangladesh used to celebrate the night long Pala Gaan. However, with almost no platform to practice this art form, *Pala* singers now prefer to pursue other careers as they also have to think

about their survival,” shared Sanjib Sarkar, President of Sirajganj Baul Shilpigoshthi, demanding to enhance support for the folk artists to survive in the society. “People are habituated with the remix music and modern songs. Through the presentation of *Guru Shishho*, the artistes highlighted the real picture in the society.” The event also featured various *Pala* performances and rendition of folk songs by local artistes.