



Guests at the celebration of 29th anniversary of The Daily Star standing for the national anthem at Noboratri Hall-4 of International Convention City Bashundhara yesterday evening. Prof Anisuzzaman, *bottom left*, inaugurates the paper's new bilingual website. A lively performance, *centre*, of patriotic songs enralls the audience. Guests at the photo exhibition outside Hall-4, *bottom right*.

PHOTO: STAR

## Hail the power of one

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lies in its simplicity, in its replicability. Drawing inspiration from them, many may ask themselves: "What if we and everyone around us do the same?"

On the occasion of its 29th anniversary, The Daily Star yesterday honoured these two change makers for their courage to dream big and their commitment to materialising it.

Earlier, this paper ran stories on both the farmers.

Soinuddin and Rashid thanked The Daily Star for the honour.

Speaking at the programme at the capital's International Convention City Bashundhara, Rashid said, "I've a niece who has disabilities. While raising her, I realised the needs of children like her.

"I gave away two-thirds of my land for the school. I feed my students selling my crops. I have never been able to pay my teachers. I spend Tk 18,000-20,000 on their food, books and stationeries per month. I raise this money by selling my harvest.

Sometime, my neighbours come to my rescue."

After the end of the speech, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, who was also on stage, asked the audience, "If this man doesn't inspire us, who will?"

Receiving the award, Soinuddin said, "It was impossible to take anyone to hospital if they fell sick in my village. So I decided to reduce their pain and started making the road on my own."

The audience, made up of readers, patrons, advertisers and well-wishers of The Daily Star, were visibly moved as they came to know their stories.

The two awardees were given Tk 1 lakh each amid cheers from the audience.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, chairperson of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of The Daily Star, and Shykh Seraj, a renowned development journalist, handed the crests and cheques to Soinuddin and Rashid.

The ceremony was also attended by politicians, academics, businessmen,

diplomats, media personalities, journalists and development workers from home and abroad. It began with the national anthem, which was followed by the screening of a short film on the importance of mother language.

National Professor Anisuzzaman, president of Bangla Academy, unveiled a portrait of The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He also inaugurated The Daily Star's newly-minted dual-language website, which will provide news contents in Bangla, in addition to in English, with the aim to reach more readers.

While addressing the audience, Rokia Afzal Rahman thanked readers for being with The Daily Star, saying the newspaper has practised the highest form of ethical journalism in the last 29 years.

"Interests of Bangladesh and its people have always been the most important factor. Whatever we did, whatever we are trying to do, we are totally committed to the values of our Liberation War."

Rokia said, "It is a belief that we hold to our heart that freedom of speech and expression lies at the core of evolution of the human mind. Without which none of the discoveries of science and creative writing would have been possible."

Mahfuz Anam, in his address, highlighted the importance of a free media in driving the country forward. "Journalism was born to tell governments what their masters, the people, feel. It was born to tell how a government should run. It was the communication of the people with power.

"Who will tell the government that the project they are implementing is not working? Only independent journalism [can do that]."

He added that Bangladesh's desire to be a middle-income country is linked to a free press.

**DISTINGUISHED GUESTS INCLUDE:**

Dr Kamal Hossain, noted jurist and president of Gonoforum; Rehman Sobhan, chairman of

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD); Mahbubey Alam, attorney general; Sultana Kamal, a former caretaker government adviser; Abul Hasan Chowdhury, a former foreign minister; Prothom Alo Editor Matiuir Rahman; The Financial Express Editor Shah Husain Imam; bdnews24.com Editor-in-Chief Toufique Imrose Khalidi; Dhaka Tribune Editor Zafar Sobhan; Business Standard Editor Inam Ahmed; BNP leaders Moudud Ahmed, Tabith Awal, Ishraque Hossain; Gonoforum's Subrata Chowdhury; Emeritus Professor of Brac University Ainun Nishat; CPD's distinguished fellows Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Rounaq Jahan; Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Riva Ganguly Das; rights activist Hamida Hossain; Dhaka University teacher CR Abrar; Supreme Court lawyers Manzill Murshid and Motaher Hossain Sazu; US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller, Australian High Commissioner Jeremy Bruer; and veteran actress Sarah Begum Kabari.

## A homecoming

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atmosphere around the locality.

After Akbar Ali and Co. landed in the country and completed their formalities at the airport, they headed towards Mirpur aboard the team bus which was emblazoned with one word: 'champions'.

As the team bus was pulling up to the stadium, the crowd that had been awaiting the newest superstars of the country went wild and began chanting 'Bangladesh', which was an incredible sight to witness.

The cricketers were undoubtedly tired after the long journey from South Africa, but the excitement in the eyes of every single team member showed that fatigue had long been overshadowed by celebration, and they enjoyed every moment of their reception.

Upon reaching the home of cricket, the players and team staff were shown to the meeting room for an almost hour-long meeting. By the time they were done, the VIP Grand Stand had been filled to the brim by enthusiastic supporters who eagerly awaited a glimpse of the young Tigers.

The floodlights were on, the gates were open and the scenes were chaotic. People pushed each other into the stadium and although there were concerns over security, there was no stopping any fervent fan from getting in yesterday.

Suddenly, huge cheers broke out around the ground as the young cricketers finally walked out. Hands were stretched out from the stands towards the golden boys and after a few moments acknowledging the crowd, they walked over the red carpet towards the stage, where they cut cakes with the board president before fireworks further lit up the evening.

The cricketers' parents were also present at the festivities, including captain Akbar Ali's father. However, he was yet to have a proper conversation with Akbar, who had to rush to the press room to interact with the swarm of media that awaited his reaction.

The press conference was jam-packed and it was perhaps then that Akbar, looking around anxiously with his tired eyes, realised they had done something really big.

Akbar was asked for a reaction to what he had witnessed on the team's homecoming and the journey from the airport to the stadium and the mature, soft-spoken teen said: "We knew something was going to happen but what we received today was unbelievable and totally unexpected."

Things were at stark contrast with how they were when the young Tigers had departed for the World Cup and when questioned about if his life had changed dramatically, Akbar's reply was calm.

"Not really. Yes, there is a different feeling because it's a huge achievement and the response we are getting from the fans is different. Let's see how it goes tomorrow."

Overall, after the red carpet had been rolled back up and the fireworks dissipated into the night, the teenagers could certainly say they received a hero's welcome. And why not? They are the new Under-19 world champions after all!

## No one

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not be declared illegal and why directives should not be given to implement the relevant laws, including the Motor Vehicles Ordinance 1983.

Yesterday, the HC bench also wanted to know from the authorities concerned of the government how the unfit vehicles were still operating.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and Inspector General of Police (IGP) have been asked to inform the court on February 16 about their action in this regard.

The court fixed February 16 to pass further orders on this issue.

Earlier in the day, BRTA submitted a report before the HC bench saying that only 1,65,764 vehicles renewed their fitness certificates till December 30 last year among 4,58,359 that the BRTA had identified to be without valid documents.

Therefore, 2,92,595 vehicles without valid fitness documents are plying the roads since December 30 last year, according to the BRTA report.

Advocate Rafiqul Islam submitted the report on behalf of BRTA to the HC as per its earlier order.

Meanwhile, the office of the inspector general of police submitted another report to the HC saying that notices have been sent to filing stations so that fuel is not sold to vehicles without valid fitness documents.

Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik placed the report on behalf of the IGP office.

While hearing the same rule, the HC bench on October 23 last year directed the authorities concerned to take necessary steps so that vehicles without valid fitness documents do not get fuel from any filling station.

It also ordered law enforcers to strictly monitor filling stations across the country so that they do not supply fuel to those vehicles.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



### Lighting the way

Abdur Rashid sets up school for children with special needs

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

In Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila, Abdur Rashid, a farmer, felt the need to do something for the children with special needs, who are often neglected by society.

Rashid, 61, who could study up to 10th grade, decided to establish a school for the children in Dakkhin Dalgram, his village, about 40km from the district headquarters.

With help from the villagers, he built the Kaliganj Pratibandhi Bidyalay in 2011 on a piece of land with bamboo, corrugated tin and wood.

Now, the school has more than 200 students.

"Farmer Abdur Rashid is a lighthouse for

our children," said Selina Begum, whose 12-year-old physically challenged daughter is a student of the school.

Selina said she has been bringing her daughter to the school for the past three years because the school makes the child smile every day.

"It's nice to see my daughter smiling and learning," she said.

Every day, many parents like Selina bring their differently-abled children to the school from remote villages.

At Rashid's school, the students include physically and intellectually challenged children, along with children with visual impairment and with autism.

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### Road of love, toil

Soinuddin builds one all by himself to lessen sufferings of fellow villagers

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Mohammad Soinuddin Miah, a poor farmer from Chakgagadhar village in Tangail's Nagarpur upazila who almost single-handedly constructed an earthen road to ease the sufferings of his fellow villagers, now hopes to see it concreted over by the authorities concerned.

It took four years of his unparalleled labour and perseverance to build the 1.5km-long road that facilitates the daily commute of the villagers to the nearest local market and education institutions.

"I gave my land and labour and spent my money to construct the road. The villagers also helped me by giving their lands," he said.

Before the road was constructed, the villagers used narrow ridge to go to the local market for trading. It was also the only passage for their children to school.

But during monsoon, that passage would go under waist-deep water causing immense sufferings. With no easy alternative route, the villagers had to take a boat or wade through water to go about their business.

The road has already taken a shape and light vehicles like easy bikes, car and minibuses are already using it, Soinuddin said, adding that a little effort from the government's concerned department can turn the road into a concrete one and make my effort a success.

The 45-year-old farmer said he, along

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