

# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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## Promises yet to be kept

*Families of Chawkbazar fire victims get no compensation, no help in one year*

ZYMA ISLAM and NILIMA JAHAN

As bodies after bodies were wheeled into Dhaka Medical College's morgue on February 21 last year, there was no dearth of offers of help.

There was a realisation of the fact that the Chawkbazar fire was the result of a collective failure of the state and the society. The government as well as many from the private sector stepped in with promises of financial aid for the victims and their families.

A day after the tragedy, on February 21, the Ministry of Labour and Employment promised a compensation of Tk 1 lakh for the families of each of the deceased, who were either street hawkers, rickshaw pullers or workers at different establishments in the area. A press release signed by Monnujan Sufian, state minister for labour and employment, stated such.

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On the night of Feb 20, 2019, Old Dhaka experienced one of the deadliest fire incidents in the country's history. The blaze originated from Haji Wahed Mansion at Chawkbazar before spreading to five buildings like wildfire. Firefighters took 14 hours to douse the fire.

The 71 victims include pedestrians, people travelling on rickshaws and cars, residents of the buildings, owners and staffers of the shops. Cause of fire is still unknown. But probe bodies suggest flammable chemicals fuelled the fire and caused it to last longer.

Fire risk in Old Dhaka is not over. The area still has hazardous stocks of flammable chemicals and many plastic factories.

There are no visible efforts to relocate chemical warehouses and stores from Old Dhaka. The government is still working on the issue.

Traders relocated some chemical warehouses to other parts of the city on their own.



Haji Wahed Mansion now

Victims get no compensation as of now (except Tk 20,000 each for burial expenses).

Owners of the chemical warehouses at Wahed Mansion are still off the hook.

Building owners are on bail.

Victims' post-mortem reports are yet to be submitted.

## Blaze over, not danger

WASIM BIN HABIB and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The walls scorched black. A thin film of soot covering the burnt-out pillars and roofs. A smell of burnt remnants still wafting through the air around it.

This is Haji Wahed Mansion, a building in Chawkbazar's Churihata where a chemical-fed fire last year left 71 people burnt to death a year ago.

The inferno forced the government to take a flurry of measures like sealing off and removing chemical warehouses in the area. Another major plan was to relocate chemical stores from the densely-populated neighbourhood to somewhere safe.

Still, Old Dhaka houses extremely hazardous stocks of flammable chemicals and risky factories without any safety measures whatsoever, putting lives of hundreds of people at serious risk of fires.

The government is still working on relocating chemical warehouses and factories from residential areas to a chemical industrial park, a move that began around 10 years ago following the Nimtoli blaze.

Shifting chemical factories and warehouses was one of the recommendations by the home ministry's committee formed after the Nimtoli tragedy. But the government could not complete it, thanks to problems in land acquisition and bureaucratic complexities.

Even the government's work to set up a temporary chemical hub is yet to be completed.

"There were huge hue and cry after the fire incident. We've seen mobile court drives and sealing off chemical warehouses. But as the public focus moved away from the Chawkbazar tragedy, many have restarted their business,"

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

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## ZIA TRUST CASE HC to hear Khaleda's bail plea Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court will hear the bail petition of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Sunday.

She has been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case by a lower court.

The bench of Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice AKM Zahurul Huq yesterday set the date after Khaleda's lawyers requested the judges to hold the hearing.

Before setting the date, the judges said the same bench had earlier rejected her bail petition and the Supreme Court's Appellate Division also upheld the order.

The court asked why a similar bail petition was brought before it.

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## Sinking into the depths of despair

*70 Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia unpaid for months; employer yet to renew their work permits*

PORIMOL PALMA

Unpaid for five months, over 70 Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia are living at a factory dorm in Balakong with money borrowed from relatives.

Their employer -- SSN Medical Products Sdn Bhd -- also did not have their work permits renewed, even though those had expired last year.

This has left the workers even more vulnerable as law enforcers can now take actions against them, said the migrants and an independent researcher based in Kuala Lumpur.

"We were paid no wages since October last year. We are now borrowing from relatives or friends either in Malaysia or in Bangladesh for our survival," migrant worker Sagor Khan of Tangail told this paper over phone yesterday.

"For over a year, we were charged 150 Ringgit [Tk 3,000] every month for renewal of the work permits, but our company did not renew those. So, it is now risky for us to go outside the factory because police can detain us."

According to the workers, 130 Bangladeshis went to work for the company in February 2018 through Unique Eastern Pvt Ltd recruiting agency. However, over the last five months, some 60 of them left for not being paid.

The workers said they had to pay between Tk 3.5 lakh and Tk 4 lakh for the jobs in Malaysia.

The company had promised, in their contracts, that they would not have to pay for renewal of work permits and accommodation. But their employer took RM 200 from their salaries every month.

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## COVID-19 CASES IN S'PORE

### One Bangladeshi patient in 'very critical condition'

Says foreign minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One of the five Bangladeshis infected with coronavirus in Singapore is in "very critical condition", Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said yesterday.

Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs Vivian Balakrishnan gave the updates during a telephone conversation with his Bangladeshi counterpart earlier in the morning.

The 39-year-old Bangladeshi patient who has been kept in the intensive care unit (ICU) for the last 13 days has not been responding to the medicine given to him, the minister informed referring to the updates.

The patient had been suffering from respiratory and kidney disease before he got infected with coronavirus.

"They [the Singapore government] are doing their best to take care of him with medical services of the highest level," Momen told reporters following the inauguration of an OIC meeting in Dhaka.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

## CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

### Death toll tops 2,000 in China

Number of cases drops; passengers leave Japan, Cambodia cruise ships

AGENCIES

Hundreds of relieved passengers finally disembarked a coronavirus-stricken cruise ship in Japan yesterday after testing negative for the disease that has now claimed more than 2,000 lives in China and spread panic worldwide.

With 542 positive cases, the Diamond Princess is easily the biggest cluster outside China, and Japan has faced mounting criticism for its quarantine arrangements as the passengers disperse into the wider world.

"I'm relieved... I want to take a good rest," said a 77-year-old Japanese passenger, who declined to give his name. He said he would be boarding Japan's famously crowded railway system home.

A fleet of yellow-dotted city buses, plus a dozen or so taxis, whisked away the passengers, many of whom dragged their luggage behind them and waved to former ship-mates on balconies as they disembarked.

The promising sign out of China came from the National Health Commission, which reported 1,749 new confirmed cases, the lowest tally since Jan 29. Hubei - the epicentre of the outbreak - reported the lowest number of new infections since Feb. 11, while outside of Hubei there were just 56 new cases, down from a peak of 890 on Feb. 3.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

The Daily Star  
CELEBRATING  
**74**  
YEARS OF  
JOURNALISM WITHOUT  
FEAR OR FAVOUR

## ANNOUNCEMENT

As we move towards an era of rampant digitalisation, the youth have taken the opportunity to innovate and re-construct the way we look at issues such as employment, empowerment and equality. Find out more in the fifth and the last instalment of The Daily Star's five-part special supplement series, titled "THE YOUTH IN THE ERA OF DIGITALISATION", which is out today. **MAKE SURE YOU GRAB A COPY OF THIS COLLECTOR'S ITEM FREE OF CHARGE FROM YOUR HAWKER!**

## BUSINESS GP in a tight spot

The ongoing legal battle between Grameenphone and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) over unpaid dues has reached a critical point.

The telecom regulator has refused to accept payment from the network provider to continue negotiations on a Tk 12,580 crore audit claim.

Meanwhile, Grameenphone's review petition, which seeks permission to pay Tk 575 crore in instalments against the dues over a 12-month period, was scheduled to be heard by the court today.

However, since the case is listed at 182 on the Supreme Court's cause list, there is little chance for the hearing to be held as scheduled.

Should Grameenphone fail to pay their dues on time, the telecom regulator will appoint administrators to run the company's operations, according to BTRC officials.

STORY ON B1



A fine arts student painting a language movement-themed graffiti on a wall of Central Shaheed Minar at Dhaka University yesterday. Preparations for February 21 are being made across the country.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Woman dies in police custody

*Family alleges torture; DB men picked her up not finding husband*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A mother of two died several hours after she was picked up from home by Detective Branch of police in Gazipur on Tuesday night.

40-year-old Yasmin Begum's son said he saw multiple injury marks on her body. However, a doctor at the hospital, where she died, said there was none.

Her 17-year-old-son Yasin Arafat Jisan said about 4-5 men in plain clothes, who introduced themselves as DB officers, showed up at their home in Bhawal in the evening and said they were looking for his father Abdul Hai over allegations of drug dealing against him.

When he and his mother told the men that Abdul was not at home, they started beating her up and took her into custody, he told The Daily Star.

Jisan said his sister, aged around 12, was at home at the time. Around 11:00pm, Jisan received a phone call from someone who told him that his mother had fallen ill and had been taken to Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital.

Due to difficulties in finding transport, he reached the hospital around 1:00am yesterday and saw that her mother had died.

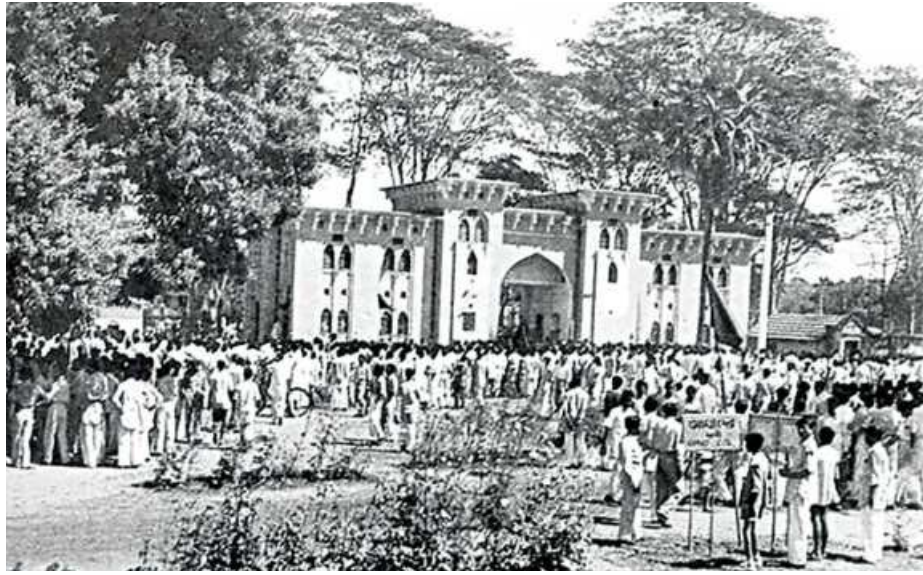


Yasmin Begum

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



# The unrecognisable epicentre of EKUSHEY



Left, the historic Amtala, where the Language Movement heroes defied Section 144 to demand Bangla as state language in 1952. Top right, this site near the emergency gate of DMCH remains occupied by vendors throughout the year. Bottom, like every year, the authorities concerned are sprucing up the area before Amar Ekushey. These photos were taken on February 21, 1952, Tuesday and yesterday respectively.



PHOTO: COLLECTED, ANISUR RAHMAN

HASAN MEER

Vendors encroaching footpaths, garbage lying around, self-promoting posters on the wall and haphazard parking -- residents of Dhaka are all too used to these sights, and to a large extent have accepted these nuisances and eyesores.

But what if such is the condition of a place that is of utmost importance, bearing testimony to a nation's struggle for establishing their right to speak and express emotions in mother tongue? That too in the month of February, when Language Movement martyrs laid down their lives for the recognition of Bangla as a state language on the 21st of this month -- 68 years ago.

**AN EPICENTRE OF HISTORY**  
The historic Amtala, where Language Movement activists gathered on February 21, 1952 to defy a curfew and protest the then Pakistan government's refusal to recognise Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan, has become covered behind encroachers.

That day, protesters broke the

police barricade to march towards the assembly at Jagannath Hall.

Police swung into action firing teargas shells and beating up the protesters. The battle between them and law enforcers spilled out on to the streets. As they kept marching, shooting began, killing Salam, Barkat, Rafique, Jabbar, Shafiq and others.

Pakistan government was ultimately compelled to include an article in the country's constitution on February 29, 1956 that declared, "The state languages of Pakistan shall be Urdu and Bengali."  
However, Ekushey did not end there; it rather planted the seed of freedom in the hearts of Bangalis and 19 years after the Language Movement, an independent country named Bangladesh was born.

In 1999, Unesco declared February 21 as International Mother Language Day, in recognition of the sacrifice of our language martyrs.

**UNRECOGNISABLE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR**  
But throughout the year, it is impossible to be able to recognise the spot, unless one reads a signboard

hanging atop a Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) gate.

It is now crammed with hawkers with waste lying around and posters on the wall.

Every year, right before Amar Ekushey, authorities concerned conduct eviction drives in the area, and things go back to the same after a couple of days.

This year has been no different. This correspondent visited Amtala on February 16 and 17, and found the place barely noticeable. However, on February 19, the place was cleaned up of hawkers and garbage.

When asked, vendors at the spot said they were unaware of Amtala's significance. "We are trying to make a living here, that's all," said Mohammad Harun.

Laily Begum added, "On 21st [February], people come here and take some pictures then head back to Shaheed Minar."

"The authorities conduct eviction drives before special days," said Laily, who has been selling kitchenware in the area for over 10 years.

"Where will we go?" she asked

this correspondent when pointed out that they were damaging a historical site.

This newspaper also spoke to passersby in the area on February 17. Many were busy buying products from vendors, some were walking towards their destinations sidestepping all the nuisance, and only a handful paused to glance at the gate.

Mahtab Mahbub, a student of Dhaka University, said, "It's unfortunate that this historic place is in such a condition. The authorities must do something about it."

Asked about negligence of such a historical site, eminent historian Prof Muntassir Mamoon said, "It's the tradition of the country. Here, historical significance is not given its due value."

Expressing frustration over the government's indifference to such sites, the former professor of history at Dhaka University said they had been trying to protect such historical structures -- like Amtala -- for a long time, but the authorities did not pay heed.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## PM offers Nepal use of airport, seaport

BSS, Dhaka

As part of Dhaka's push for regional connectivity for common prosperity, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said she wants Nepal to avail Bangladesh's airport and seaport facilities.

The PM said this while speaking to visiting Nepalese Foreign Minister Pradip Kumar Gyawali, as he called upon the premier at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

"Bangladesh prioritises neighbours when it comes to cooperation," the premier's press secretary Ihsanul Karim quoted her as saying at a briefing after the meeting.

Sheikh Hasina told Gyawali that her government was developing Saidpur airport (in Nilphamari) as an international aviation facility, expecting it to be a centre for regional connectivity, the PMO spokesperson said.

"Nepal and Bhutan can use the Saidpur airport and Chattogram and Mongla ports for mutual benefits," the PM was quoted as saying.

Sheikh Hasina said she always advocates for transit facilities for Nepal as part of Dhaka's campaign for enhanced regional cooperation, particularly under The Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative, a sub-regional union of the eastern South Asian nations.

Hasina said joint hydroelectricity projects involving Dhaka, Kathmandu and New Delhi could be a good example of regional cooperation. While Nepal enjoys a special natural advantage to generate hydro power, Bangladesh already purchases electricity from India.

On the other hand, Bangladesh could export vegetables and fish to Nepal during the winter season, when the mountainous nation needs supplies from outside, Karim quoted the PM as saying.

Gyawali said Kathmandu expects its ties with Bangladesh to take a new turn against the backdrop of Bangladesh's fast socio-economic development.

## 'Stop asking us about bail of Khaleda'

Quader urges journos

BSS, Dhaka

Reiterating that the court will decide about the bail of Khaleda Zia, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday asked journalists not to "embarrass" him by asking about the issue repeatedly.

Speaking at a special joint meeting of Awami League (AL) at the party's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue, he said the matter is not in the hands of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Presidents and secretaries of all organisational districts and city units of AL under the Dhaka division joined the meeting.

Directing the AL leaders to strengthen the party from the grassroots level, the general secretary asked leaders not to allow controversial people into the party to strengthen their own positions.

"The government can never be strong if the party remains weak organisationally, he said."

## Five luminaries awarded 'Bishwa Bangali Puraskar'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five eminent personalities from Bangladesh and India's West Bengal were awarded with "Bishwa Bangali Puraskar 2019" yesterday, for their extraordinary contributions in their respective fields.

They are: Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury, professor emeritus of Dhaka University; Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, founder of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro; Subhas Chandra Mukhopadhyay, a noted historian of India; Parthasarathi Basu, a popular Indian poet; and Tapadhiri Bhattacharjee, former vice-chancellor of Assam University.

Bishwa Bangali Sangha (Bibas), a Dhaka-based social organisation, conferred the awards -- introduced for the first time this year -- at a ceremony held at Prof Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium of DU.

Mozib Mohammad, coordinator of Bibas, said the luminaries have guided people of both Bengals towards excellence,

and their knowledge have enlightened the society.

"The award is a small effort to honour their vast contributions to the society and people," he added.

Sharing his feelings, Prof Serajul said cooperation and exchange of views among the people of both Bangladesh and West Bengal have to increase, for their own development.

"About 30 crore Bangalees live across the world, but all of them are not going through a good situation. Cooperation is a must to change their current status," said Prof Serajul.

In his speech, Subhas Chandra said youths will have to come forward to enrich and flourish Bangla language, and the main role in this regard has to be played by the people of Bangladesh.

A cultural programme, poetry recitation, music and dance, was also held on the occasion.



A girl points a smartphone camera at a dinosaur on a book; inset, a 3D model of the creature appears on the screen. The photo was taken yesterday at Bino's stall in Bangla Academy.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Getting more out of books

MATHEWS CHIRAN

In this era of connectivity, digital technology has a deep impact on book publishing and the way people read.

To keep pace with the change, a number of publishers are also providing readers with e-book facilities in this year's book fair.

These electronic books -- a publication made available in digital form -- can be read on computers or handheld devices.

Some organisations have also introduced apps for readers to avail their services. Many have taken help of IT firms in this regard. Most of the stalls are located on Bangla Academy premises.

"Sheibo" is one such app. "Anyone can use the app by downloading it from an online store. The app requires opening up an account," said Nafees Istiaque, a volunteer at the stall 103.

He said the app has more than 3,000 books in its collection and at least 500 books can be read for free. "Some of the books require purchasing through bKash or banking system."

"We also take permissions from authors and publishers for selling the books. They

also receive a percentage from the sales," said Shah Abdul Islam, a volunteer at "MuthoBoi".

They are offering 110 books for free out of 600 books, he said.

At stall-44, volunteers at "Boitoi" were helping people use it. The app has more than 600 books and one can read around 200 of them for free, said Afrina, a volunteer at the stall. "We are adding new books every day."

Price of the books range from Tk 12 to 100. "I use e-books when I travel. It's convenient to carry," said Dhaka University student Sazia Akhter.

Some booklovers, however, were a little skeptic about the usage of the apps. University student Arefin Orni said she does not like to read books in PDF format as she has to scroll down to read a book rather than turning pages.

The attendees at the stall assured her she can easily leaf through a book while reading in the app. Orni finally smiled and asked them to show her how to download the app in her phone.

Not just e-books, a publisher has introduced an interactive experience

ENROLLING EXTRA STUDENTS

## SC fines City Univ Tk 10 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday fined City University Tk 10 lakh for enrolling more than 50 students to the law department each semester, violating a UGC decision.

The university has been asked to pay the fine to Bangladesh Bar Council.

Students will be allowed to appear for the bar council enrollment test, if City University pays the fine, the apex court added.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order after disposing of a review petition filed by the bar council, seeking necessary order to this effect.

Earlier, the apex court fined Tk 10 lakh each to five private universities for the same reason.



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Staffers at Chattogram General Hospital cook food for patients using firewood yesterday. The hospital's gas line was disconnected on Monday by Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company, due to unpaid utility bills of over Tk 4 lakh.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

# Land surveyor held, Tk 93 lakh recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday detained a surveyor of Cox's Bazar district administration, and seized around Tk 93 lakh in "bribe money" from his possession and from houses of two other surveyors in different areas of the town.

Md Wasim, a surveyor of district administration's land acquisition branch, was detained from a house in Taraboniachara area. Tk 16 lakh, cheques of different banks and government papers were recovered from the spot.

Other surveyors -- Farid and Ferdous -- managed to escape but Rab recovered Tk 60 lakh from Farid's house and Tk 17 lakh from Ferdous' residence, in Baharchara area.

Maj Mehedi Hasan, Ramu Company Commander of Rab-15, said works of around 50 development projects of the government are going on in Cox's Bazar, and land acquisition for those projects are also ongoing.

There are long-standing allegations that a vested quarter is realising huge sums of money from land owners centring land

acquisition, and several victims have already given written complaints, he said. Based on that, a Rab team conducted raids in different parts of town, detained one and recovered the money and other documents.

A case was filed against Wasim with Cox's Bazar Model Police Station.

Several victims alleged that not only these three, but also many other surveyors and staff of land office of the district are involved with the quarter, who hold land owners at hostage. Victims do not get remedy as several top officials allegedly get share of the money, they said, adding that land owners are forced to take help from surveyors and brokers in exchange of 20 to 50 percent commissions, they added.

A former deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar and ADC were arrested earlier for their alleged involvement in bribery centering a mega project.

DC Kamal Hossain told reporters that he came know about the development, but said it was Wasim's personal offences and legal and departmental action would be taken against him.

He, however, rejected other allegations.

# Blogger Rasel Parvez no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Writer and blogger Rasel Parvez died of cancer at a city hospital yesterday morning. He was 49.

Rasel breathed his last around 11:30am at Apollo Hospital, said a duty manager of the hospital.

The physics teacher had completed his masters in the United States, and went to Japan to pursue PhD. He recently returned home after being diagnosed with cancer, his fellow bloggers wrote in Facebook posts.

Blogger Subrata Shuvo on Facebook wrote Rasel had nearly 2,000 blog posts.

Hasan Murshed and Kungo Thang, among his fellow writers, paid tributes to Rasel on social media, as one of the brightest minds among those who had started blogging in Bangla in the mid-2000s.

## RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION

# Payloader driver loses control, kills one and injures four

OUR CORRESPONDENT

The operator of a payloader lost control of the equipment yesterday in Cumilla and rammed it into two battery-run auto-rickshaws, and two stationary rickshaw vans. One person was killed in the accident while four were injured.

The equipment was being used at Akhaura-Laksm double-line railway expansion project, and the accident occurred near Akhaura railway crossing.

The deceased was identified as Shahida Begum (55). She was buying vegetables from the roadside van.

The vegetable vendor and his wife, one of their customers, and one auto-rickshaw passenger were injured in the accident that happened around 9:45am.

Nurul Islam, in-charge of Kandirpar police outpost said, "The driver was arrested

and the payloader was seized. The body has been sent to Cumilla Medical College Hospital for autopsy."

The construction work is being supervised by Max Railway Constructions Ltd.

The arrested driver, Md Shamir (30), said, "I have been working with this company since 2017. The brake has not been functioning smoothly for a year. I had notified my supervisor about it, but to no avail."

Max Railway Constructions Ltd's officials could not be reached despite repeated attempts.

Meanwhile, Ram Narayan Dhar, deputy assistant engineer of Cumilla regional railway office, said this construction work is being done under a separate project and the regional office is not responsible for it.

## CTG MAYORAL ELECTION

# AL candidate gets warm reception

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League leaders gave a warm reception to mayoral candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury at Chattogram railway station yesterday, as he reached there from Dhaka after receiving the party's nomination for the mayoral election to Chattogram City Corporation.

Rezaul, senior joint general secretary of Chittagong city unit AL, received by a large contingent of leaders and activists of AL and its associate organisations.

AL's city unit general secretary and incumbent mayor AJM Nasir, however, was not present.

Speaking at the programme, Rezaul said ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury served Chattogram City Corporation (as mayor) for 17 years, then a BNP-backed mayor took office. "The city returned to our hands in 2015. AJM Nasir built a citizen-friendly city, and I want to continue in that direction," he said.

"If I am elected mayor, I will build a planned and modern city, protecting the hills and rivers. I will perform the responsibility the Prime Minister has given me," he added.

# Pinpoint crab breeding season to protect industry

## Speakers say at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of Khulna University scientists yesterday said the government should properly identify the peak breeding season of mud crabs based on scientific evidence, to protect mother crabs and halt the industry's decline.

At present, harvesting crabs from the Sundarbans, a prime natural source for catching the crustaceans, is banned in January and February, they said at a roundtable discussion at The Daily Star Centre.

However, March-April is the peak breeding season of mud crabs at the location, they said, referring to their study report.

Abundance of fully mature mother crabs can be seen from late February to late April. Alongside March and April, February should also be included in peak breeding season to protect mother crabs, they added.

CARE Bangladesh and The Daily Star, with support of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, arranged the roundtable on "Prospect and Challenges of Crab Cultivation: Policy Perspective".

In 2017-18 fiscal, Bangladesh exported about 11,000 metric tonnes of crabs and earned around Tk 217 crore in foreign currency. Some three to four lakh people are directly and indirectly involved in the crab industry, from harvest to export, according to the report.

Prof Yousuf Ali of Khulna University's fisheries and marine resource technology discipline said in 2013, 32,000 metric

tonnes of crabs were caught from natural sources. That number dropped to 25,000 metric tonnes in 2016.

Placing a ban on catching crabs during peak breeding season is an effective way to ensure appropriate spawning and migration of mud crabs, he added.

Prof Abdur Rouf, head of the discipline, said understanding crab's life cycle is important for the industry to flourish. "If we harvest mother crabs, it will be a big loss," he said.

Jahidul Kabir, conservator of forests of the Department of Forests, said the findings can be an authentic document based on which the department can undertake initiatives to change existing policies on crab export.

Demand of crab in foreign countries -- especially in China -- remains high during the year's beginning, said Gazi Abul Kashem, chairperson of Bangladesh Live and Chilled Food Exporters Association.

The price also stays high at that time, he said.

Belayet Hossen -- divisional forest officer of Sundarbans East Division, Bagerhat -- said some 242 crab farms have been registered in the area since 2001. However, only 64 of those are operational now.

Sundarbans West Division Forest Officer Bashirul-Al-Mamun said crab harvesting from natural sources have increased since 2017.

The coronavirus outbreak has reduced crab export from the Sundarbans significantly, said SM Mahbob Alam, coordinator of NGO-based initiative Nowabanki Gonomukhi Foundation.



Scientists of Khulna University and officials of different organisations at the roundtable at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the public at large that our client, Mrs. Ruba Ahmed, Founder and General Secretary of **Abinta Kabir Foundation** of Elegant Heights (14th Floor), 30/2, 30/3, Progoti Sharani, Shahjadpur, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh is the mother of **Late Abinta Kabir**, one of the victims who lost her life during the heinous **Holey Artisan Attack** on 01.07.2016. Since Abinta's tragic demise, some media personnel have approached Mrs. Ahmed with the proposition of making motion pictures etc. on the incident of the attack and her account of the event to which our client has clearly objected and did not at all give her consent.

Ms. Abinta Kabir was the only child of our client and after her tragic demise, our client's regular life has been seriously affected and she has been devastated mentally and emotionally. To have the precise story made in the public domain would further excavate the tragic memories of the catastrophic day, which she and her family struggle to forget each passing day.

Accordingly, our client, Mrs. Ahmed hereby demands that all producers, directors, actors, media companies, media distributors, author, script-writer etc. shall strictly refrain from producing, directing, distributing, authoring etc. of any film, short-film, tele-film, drama, novel, story, short-story, fiction or any other form of media production, whether visual or print, depicting any character or incident which has any direct or indirect resemblance with Ms. Abinta Kabir. In the event of failure to comply with the said demand, we have clear instruction from our client to initiate appropriate legal proceedings against each of the individual violators to the fullest extent of the laws in Bangladesh and other applicable jurisdictions.

In case if anyone has any query or concern, you are requested to directly contact the undersigned.

**Omar H. Khan**, Barrister-at-Law Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

**Miti Sanjana**, Barrister-at-Law Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Chambers: **LEGAL COUNSEL**

Momtaz Vision, Suite B-4 (Level-2), House-11/A Road-99, Gulshan-2, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh. E-mail: info@legalcounselbd.com

## The unrecognisable

FROM PAGE 3

### A BAG FULL OF PROMISES

On February 17, Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin, director of DMCH, said, "Amtala is an important part of the country's history. Though it is not under our jurisdiction, we try our best to keep it clean."

"Every year before February 21, we spruce up the area and will start doing so soon," he added.

The director continued, "We took initiatives before but vendors keep occupying the place. It is under Dhaka South City Corporation's jurisdiction. We have already asked the city corporation and the cultural affairs ministry to erect a permanent monument to preserve the historic spot."

Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, secretary to the ministry of cultural affairs, did not respond to calls and text messages.

The area falls under ward-20 of DSCC. Contacted on February 18, councillor Farid Uddin Ahmed Ratan said, "I will send a letter to the city corporation officials immediately, so that they can initiate an eviction drive there."

When asked why such initiative did not take place earlier, he could not provide an appropriate answer.

DSCC Executive Officer (Zone 1) Mizanur Rahman said, "Amtala is part of history. Unfortunately, whenever we evict hawkers, they occupy the place again. This is the reality."

Asked if they have any plan to preserve it, he said, "Right now, we are focusing on eviction drives to free up the place. In future, we will pay more attention to it."

## Getting more out

FROM PAGE 3

through an augmented reality app for children in order to feed their curious minds.

Augmented reality is a technology that superimposes a computer-generated image on a user's view of the real world. Microtech Interactive Limited developed the app -- Bino.

Once the app is downloaded and activated, a camera will pop up. If anyone moves the camera over the pages of the book, the content comes to life on the screen.

"It is a nice combination of book and technology. I wasn't expecting such an item at the book fair," said Shahabuddin, a visitor at the stall. His daughter, Zinat, was holding a book with large pictures of animals.

As soon as she placed a cellphone over the book and looked through the display, a dinosaur sprang to life and started moving around. When the salesperson touched the screen, it made a deep bellowing sound similar to a horn.

The father and daughter started laughing.

Zulfikar, a stall attendee, said, "We are offering the app for free. But it requires our books, priced at Tk 120 to Tk 400."

Besides, there are stalls at the fair selling audiobooks.

At stall-10, volunteers were showcasing "Boighar", an app which boasts more than 8,000 audiobooks.

In front of Burdwan House, a stall of the government's a2i programme is promoting a website called "Kishor Batayan", where children can learn, play and share creative ideas.

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- Attested photocopy of all academic certificates, one copy passport and one copy stamp size photographs must be attached with application form during submission.

**Professor Dr. A.K. Shamsuddoha**  
Director

Contact : IBA Office- 0721-711167, 0721-711286  
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## Alarming number of rape cases in 2019

When will this culture of impunity end?

ACCORDING to data from the Police Headquarters, 6,321 rape cases were filed with police stations in 2019, a 19 percent increase from the 5,123 cases that were lodged in 2018. Another report published in the Prothom Alo identified the rapes of 211 women and children in the first month of 2020 alone. Let that number sink in.

It is an understatement to say that we are appalled by the rape statistics that are splattered across our papers every single day, but what is even more appalling is how few of these rape survivors are given justice in the end. The comments of certain lawmakers in mid-January to "crossfire" rapists sound even more hollow now—why make emotional statements to rile up public sentiment when Women and Children Repression (Prevention) Tribunals and the district courts are still failing to complete rape trials within 180 days as stipulated by the law, and less than two percent of rape cases are leading to convictions?

Data from one-stop crisis centres across the country also show that around 78 percent of rape survivors who visited the centres do not choose to pursue legal action, even after taking the initial step of treatment. This means that the actual number of rapes in Bangladesh are likely to be far higher than the data shown by the PHQ. In fact, the higher incidence of rape cases in 2019 may be a reflection of survivors feeling more emboldened to come forward with their stories. However, given the low rates of conviction and the culture of impunity that currently exists, along with the social stigma faced by survivors that often leads to out-of-court settlements and a promise of silence for the sake of protecting their "honour"—a vile and outdated sentiment used to cover up the worst forms of violence—this trend may soon be reversed.

On January 19, the High Court directed the government to form a commission within 30 days under the Ministry of Law to stop rape and violence against women. We urge the authorities to immediately set up this commission, as well as to take the advice of legal experts in enacting witness protection laws and strengthening the use of the evidence act to ensure speedy trials and punishments for rapists. Additionally, we urge the authorities to provide legal aid and create safe spaces for rape survivors who are susceptible to being pressurised by their family members and local communities. Let us not forget that a large number of rape victims are minors in incredibly vulnerable positions, and an even larger portion of these rapes are committed by people in positions of trust. Without urgent action, we may never be able to get a clear picture of how many women and children are silently suffering abuse in this country.

## Forest grabbers on the prowl

Forest department needs increased manpower to do its job

IT is bad enough that we have only 11.2 percent forest area left in the country (according to a 2016 report by ADB), which is much less than what is required for a proper ecological balance. But it is particularly upsetting that even the remaining forests including the reserved ones are being encroached upon by powerful grabbers across the country. According to a report by *The Daily Star* published on February 19, a tea estate in Chattogram has been ravaging the Ramgor-Sitakunda reserve forest in Fatikchhari upazila for over a decade and expanding its territory illegally. The tea estate authorities foiled the forestation attempts by the forest department, cut down trees indiscriminately, and even built a bridge inside the forest ignoring a court directive. What is more, whenever forest department officials tried to prevent them, they were attacked by the tea estate staff who threatened them at gunpoint and also vandalised their vehicles.

Visiting the forest area recently, our correspondent has seen at least three excavators cutting the hills at Badurkhill block of the forest. Reportedly, there had been some mistakes in the land records, in both the Bangladesh Survey (BS) and the digital survey, which have led to the dispute between the forest department and the tea estate. However, since the court imposed a status quo at Badurkhill after the forest department filed a case seeking amendment to the BS ledger, both parties should follow the status quo order until the court delivers its verdict. Sadly, the tea estate authorities are not complying with the court order and continuing with their illegal activities.

Since the forest department does not have the manpower to stop the powerful grabbers, the government needs to take urgent steps in this regard. The department also needs more support from the local administration and police in dealing with such cases. Our reserved forests must be saved at all costs and necessary action should be taken if the government wants to reach its goal of increasing the country's forest coverage to 20 percent by 2030.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Lamia's request to PM meets a satisfactory end

According to a recent report by this daily, a fifth grader named Lamia Akter, from the Dakkhin Gazipur Government Primary School in Pirojpur Sadar upazila, wrote to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last year requesting for a new school building to replace the existing one, which was established in 1975 and is now in a dire state. In the letter, Lamia had mentioned the precarious condition in which some 128 children were putting their lives at risk while attending classes.

I am immensely delighted that the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education took her words into consideration and, upon inspection, decided to construct a new building. This is refreshing news indeed. Such proactive measures in our education sector will help the future generation tackle the problems of the modern world.

Sadat Hossain, RAJLUK Uttara Model College

# Central admission tests: Turning the wheels too hastily?



ZOBAIDA NASREEN

THE idea of the proposed central admission tests in public universities has been promoted as a fairer, inexpensive alternative to the existing system of university entry. The new system promises to be the most efficient way of relieving admission-seekers and their parents of tremendous physical, mental and economic pressures that they endure due to separate university tests. This change demands a massive cultural transformation in higher education. But the way it has been put forward seems to be unnecessarily hasty and does not raise confidence that reasonable efforts have been made to implement it across a large and complex system.

If implemented, the standardised tests are expected to be a transformative event, a life-determining one for the students. That is why, due diligence is required before the plan is set in motion. But the current situation gives one the impression that everything is happening too fast. Not even the new admission procedures have been publicised yet. The lack of visible preparatory efforts to steer and monitor the implementation of the uniform testing system, given that not enough time is left before the next admission season, is deeply worrying.

Since no pilot experiment has been conducted before taking the decision of implementing it countrywide, no one really knows how the whole system will work and what challenges it will face. While it is of utmost importance that the universities have a stake in decision-making at every step of the way, it has not been the case. So, the decision seems to have been imposed from the top.

The big question now is how it will be conducted; who will ultimately be responsible for such a massive-scale testing situation; who will develop the questions and who will evaluate the scripts. Not just the students, but teachers also have no clear idea about these issues. Perhaps it would have been more logical to take such an important decision after developing necessary strategies to counter possible challenges. For example: at a time when preventing the leakage of question papers is still an ongoing struggle and a highly sensitive and important task, a single leakage can ruin the chances of its success. Even the quality

of invigilation in different places may have different standards. Also, in order for the students to make informed choices, they need a discipline-based ranking of universities. We do not know when and on what basis it will be done.

This concern is particularly important because of a problem that is inherent in our culture of educational policymaking. Contemporary experience shows that major changes in our education sector occurred too quickly and without necessary preparations, resulting in failures to achieve intended outcomes. Replicating reforms and changes implemented successfully in other countries often turned out to be a recipe for disaster here. Though the multiple-choice question (MCQ) format could have been an efficient way of assessing

at a public or government university. The testing system is not just a way of measuring competency or proficiency; more importantly, it is effectively a way of shutting down access to public-funded higher education. The proposed central tests appeal to the logic of convenience above anything else. This is important, but at what cost? What will happen to the diverse enrolment mechanisms, essential for a good number of disciplines? We are still in the dark about the whole process. Almost no discussion took place involving stakeholders at universities.

The major challenges that any unified system faces are related to ensuring equality and diversity. Our education system has become increasingly pressurised with centralised exams. The addition of another massive, centralised

advancement.

If we are relying only on MCQ for standardised exams, leaving out comprehensive tests and diverse admission criteria, then we're actually going backwards, since many universities are already implementing those things to value creative and critical thinking. To ensure that students with diverse interests do not fall behind in their quest for securing the subject of their choice, holding general testing and subject-specific cluster testing can be a possible solution.

On the other hand, every testing involves evaluation. While standardisation of testing has been talked about quite a lot in recent years, the issue of standardisation of evaluation has not been raised at all. If we are to see a comprehensive evaluation system for the integrated tests, it will demand massive preparations involving a huge number of teachers, not just those who are affiliated with the ruling party. I have not yet seen or heard anything about any preparation of that sort.

At this point, it is hard to imagine how the proposed central tests will be able to overcome the challenges faced by the existing system (like the difficulty in selecting innovative talents who are otherwise not very competitive, question paper leakage, and so on). A bottom-up approach to address these will be much more useful.

It is possible to address most of the concerns of the autonomous universities about the proposed system through careful planning and necessary engagement. In that case, any arrangement must uphold the autonomy of the universities. We expect that the issue of the unified system will be discussed by the academic councils, the highest body for taking any academic decision in public universities, and a decision will be taken as soon as possible. For the UGC and the government, there is no harm in recognising the central role of the universities in the whole testing and evaluation process, given that they are the leading autonomous institutions of the country. The universities should have the final say—maybe through comprehensive tests (if not included in the standardised tests) and interviews—when it comes to enrolment. The introduction of the new system, therefore, requires long and engaged discussions.

Zobaida Nasreen is an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Dhaka. Email: zobaidanasreen@du.ac.bd



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

learning outcomes, here it has been reduced to a testing method that deals with the mechanical repetition of something to be learned. This is because we have never had enough trained teachers capable of drafting multiple-choice questions that effectively test learning outcomes. The same can be said about the much-publicised introduction of the creative question method at secondary schools. On the other hand, it is hard to say if the Primary Education Completion (PEC) and Junior School Certificate (JSC) exams actually have any effect on improving the quality of education or they are just adding undue burden on the young students.

The problem we have is that almost half of the students finishing higher secondary education will not find a place

and annual tests runs the risk of imposing additional burden on an already highly-pressurised system. If the centralised exam is the only thing considered by universities for enrolment, and there are no interviews or other admission criteria, then it will be hard to control the mushrooming of coaching centres. Due to this special characteristic, it runs the risk of increasing inequality in education by widening urban-rural gap and regional differences. If the uniform tests take place as a singular annual affair, it may put excessive strain on students by shrinking the horizons for many of them, especially those from the poor and disadvantaged backgrounds. Soon it may also turn into a dreaded and stressful exercise. That is why, implementing another such exams requires careful consideration and gradual

# How the free-rider problem affects youth employability

SYEDA TASFIA TASNEEM

IN economics, the free-rider problem is referred to a market failure which is often associated with public goods. It occurs when someone benefits from the consumption of a shared resource or privilege without having to pay a fair share for it. Let's look at the classic example of streetlights. Suppose a locality is considering installing an additional streetlight which has a certain cost. Once built, everyone on the street would have full access to the light and thereby receive equal benefits from its consumption. Even the people who refuse to pay for the light would enjoy its benefits. On the other hand, the additional resource cost of a new member on the street consuming the light is zero.

Similarly, consider the mundane task of cleaning a common area inside a house such as the living room. Now, imagine having a roommate who claims to be unaffected by tidiness and thereby leaves the entire strenuous task of cleaning on your shoulders. However, no matter how hard you try, there is no way you can fully prevent your selfish roommate from enjoying the comfort of the clean room.

What this means in economics is that these goods being consumed are both non-excludable and non-rivalrous. In other words, the free rider gets a good slice of the pie without having to pay for it and there is no way to deny them their share.

If you are a high-school or college student, trapped in a group task with lazy members, this phenomenon might sound familiar to you. Oftentimes, we come across at least one member in every group assignment who skillfully glides past the workload without putting in a single ounce of effort. Since the nature of these assignments requires teachers to award equal grades to all members of a group, the "slackers" receive full credit for the work they had no contribution in. These assignments contribute significantly to the grades we receive on each course and consequently to the highly prestigious degree that we like to flaunt after graduation.

Several studies around the globe have confirmed that employers are increasingly rating "group work" as one of the most important criteria in the recruitment process. Therefore, college curriculums focus a great deal on team-building skills but they often fail to

achieve the desired outcomes because of the situation described above. Sadly, the free-rider problem is not limited to just group tasks. Every now and then, we find that one person in the class who turns in someone else's work as their own. Thanks to plagiarism-checker software, students have at least improved on their paraphrasing skills. But this also puts a question mark on the quality of our degree. What knowledge is derived from completing courses that have allowed us to reap

unemployment rate for graduates with a university degree to be 38.6 percent. Even though unemployment for the highly educated is currently a common phenomenon worldwide, it is an alarming issue for a country like Bangladesh where jobs have been growing by only around one-eighth of the rate at which the economy has been growing.

Surprisingly, it is also common knowledge that employers in most of the large organisations of the country, particularly in the RMG sector, prefer to

countries in the World Bank Group's Migrants and Remittances Report (2018), we are far behind the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan in terms of sending skilled workers abroad. Out of the workers who have been sending remittance to the country since 1976, only 33 percent were skilled. These workers face various problems in foreign countries and earn low wages owing to their lack of skills and inadequate training.

Even though much is discussed about the problem of unemployment



Youth unemployment remains a big problem for Bangladesh.

SOURCE: CORPORATESANGBAD

the benefits of somebody else's hard work? What kind of workforce are these beneficiaries capable of creating?

In a recent study by the Centre for Development and Employment Research (CDER), it was found that youth unemployment in Bangladesh has most severely affected the highly educated group of the workforce. According to the labour force survey (2016-17) of Bangladesh, 29.8 percent of people with a secondary-level education and 13.4 percent with a tertiary-level education were unemployed. A similar survey by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) reported the

recruit foreigners for the top managerial positions of their companies. This dependency on foreign workers is an indication of the inability of our highly educated youth in fulfilling workplace roles. There is overwhelming evidence that our fresh graduates often fail to exhibit the skills or training they are expected to have by virtue of their educational degrees.

Furthermore, as remittance is one of the key drivers of our growth, Bangladesh also needs to focus on the quality of the workforce it exports to foreign countries. Even though Bangladesh was ranked as the top 9th remittance-receiving country globally and the third among South Asian

in our country and the failure of our educational institutions and policies, very little attention is given to the declining work ethic of our students and workers. The free-rider problem is real and it undermines, and imposes a threat to, the quality of education being delivered in our universities. It is high time we stopped blaming our educational institutions for everything that is wrong and started taking responsibility for lacking the required skills because of our unethical practices and half-hearted dedication to learn as we graduate.

Syeda Tasfia Tasneem is a student of economics at BRAC University.

# The debate over Khaleda Zia's parole



GOLAM MORTOZA

EVER since the imprisonment of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, her party has systematically demanded her release. Recently, a possibility for

under observation by the police. According to the policy, when released on parole, the prisoner will be handed over to the police by the jail authorities and the police will hand over the prisoner back to the jail authorities within the designated time.

Supreme court lawyer Arif Khan told *The Daily Star*, "According to the policy, a person released on parole is

the necessary details including their current address, the hospital they are visiting for treatment and other relevant information must be provided to the embassy."

In 2008, Awami League's then Secretary General, Abdul Jalil was released on parole and he went to Singapore to receive treatment, though it created some controversy later as,

the ongoing cases. And even if she gets bail in all the ongoing cases, she cannot escape prison.

Apart from getting out on "parole" there is a scope to seek presidential clemency. According to Article 49 of the Constitution, if someone admits one's guilt, such clemency can be given. The president has the power to reject the plea for clemency. He can also pardon

him not to enter into such discussions. According to the MP, Khaleda Zia's health had seriously deteriorated, so much so that she couldn't even stand by herself.

A few days ago, Khaleda Zia's sister and a few other relatives had visited her in jail. A senior BNP leader told *The Daily Star* that after the visit, Khaleda Zia's relatives reported that her health was in the worst possible state; both her arms had become bent with stiffness; she could not eat properly. According to Khaleda's relatives, this was the first time she had resigned herself to the idea of bail or release on parole, remarking: "Do whatever you think best." It seemed to them that she was at the end of her life and that was why she made that remark. But one thing is for sure—under no circumstances will Khaleda Zia seek presidential clemency, as according to her, she has not committed any crime.

According to a source, BNP as a party will not appeal for parole. Only if her release on parole is guaranteed will the family appeal for it. Then BNP can claim that the family, on humanitarian grounds, had requested parole. The appeal would have nothing to do with the party.

Almost all BNP leaders believe that her health is more important than anything else and appealing for release on parole will not taint her "no compromise" image. BNP leaders think that even if the government tries to propagate such a notion, the people of this country will not believe it. If Khaleda Zia is released on parole on humanitarian grounds, it will be a positive development for BNP's politics. Yet they cannot shed the apprehension of what the head of the government is thinking. Despite talks between Obaidul Quader and Mirza Fakhrul, this unease has not been alleviated. It is not the court on which Khaleda Zia's release depends; it depends on the decision of the government. And this decision lies mainly with the head of the government.

Golam Mortoza is a journalist. The article was translated from Bangla by the Editorial desk.



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

PHOTO: STAR/PALASH KHAN

According to Khaleda's relatives, this was the first time she had resigned herself to the idea of bail or release on parole, remarking: "Do whatever you think best." It seemed to them that she was at the end of her life and that was why she made that remark.

her "parole" has come up in discussion, even amongst the leading members of the ruling Awami League. The high officials and lawyers of BNP are emphasising on the fact that "parole" is not equivalent to being discharged from prison. They are further stating that since the charges brought against Khaleda Zia are for political reasons, if the government wishes, it can grant bail to the BNP chairperson based on her medical condition. And if her bail petition is approved, then she will be sent to the UK for better treatment.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir learnt of Khaleda Zia's condition from her family members, who were the only ones granted permission to meet with the former prime minister. The possibility of Khaleda Zia's release raises a number of issues. According to the law, does she have the opportunity to get bail? Is there a possibility of her being released on parole? If she is released on parole, will she be able to go abroad for treatment?

First, let us look into the possibility of parole.

There are no laws passed by parliament on parole. It is within the ambit of the Home Ministry. According to the policy of the ministry dated June 1, 2016, there is scope for a conditional temporary release. When someone close to a prisoner of a significant status or other classes passes away, a parole can be granted to them.

The policy states that the time of the temporary release will not exceed 12 hours. However, in certain cases, if the government wants, the time period can be adjusted, but there is no specific allocation of the time frame. During the time, the prisoner must be constantly

not allowed to travel abroad, whether it be for medical purpose or otherwise. Moreover, whether a prisoner admits their guilt or not has nothing to do with the parole.

"Those released on parole do have the opportunity to travel abroad," said S M Rezaul Karim, former Awami League legal affairs secretary and currently the minister of Fisheries and Livestock. "Anyone on parole will have to report to the Bangladesh embassy in the destination country. All

according to parole regulations, this was not permissible.

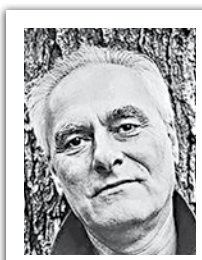
Now let us come to the question of bail.

So far, there are 34 ongoing cases against Begum Khaleda Zia; she has already been sentenced for two of them. The two cases have been disposed of at the Appellate Division. Which means, the cases have ended. Since they have been disposed of, there is no scope of her getting bail in these two cases. The only way Khaleda Zia can get bail is for

all the sentences or reduce the duration of the sentence. He can also suspend the sentence for a specific time and arrange for release from prison.

The most crucial question to be considered is, what exactly does Khaleda Zia want? A few months ago, BNP MPs met with her in jail. One of these MPs told *The Daily Star* that when he had broached the subject of taking up the issue of parole or a way for her release, with the government, Khaleda Zia said "there's no use", and asked

# Is Pakistan's press freedom under threat?



JAMES M DORSEY

SWEEEPING new regulations restricting social media in Pakistan put freedom of expression and the media at the heart of the struggle to counter both civilisationalist and authoritarian aspects of an emerging new

world order. The regulations, adopted without public debate, position US social media companies like Facebook and Twitter at the forefront of the struggle and raise the spectre of China's walled-off internet with its own state-controlled social media platforms becoming the model for a host of illiberal, authoritarians and autocrats.

The regulations, which take effect immediately, embrace aspects of a civilisationalist state that defines its legal reach, if not its borders, in terms of a civilisation rather than a nation state with clearly outlined, internationally recognised borders that determine the reach of its law and that is defined by its population and language.

The regulations could force social media companies to globally suppress criticism of the more onerous aspects of Pakistani law, including constitutionally enshrined discrimination of some minorities like Ahmadis, a sect widely viewed as heretic by mainstream Islam, and imposition of a mandatory death sentence for blasphemy.

The new rules force social media companies to "remove, suspend or disable access" to content posted in Pakistan or by Pakistani nationals abroad that the government deems as failing to "take due cognisance of the religious, cultural,

ethnic and national security sensitivities of Pakistan." The government can also demand removal of encryption.

Social media companies are required to establish offices in Pakistan in the next three months and install data servers by February 2021. The government justified the rules with the need to combat hate speech, blasphemy, alleged fake news and online harassment of women.

The Asia Internet Coalition, a technology and internet industry association that includes Facebook and Twitter, warned that the regulations "jeopardise the personal safety and privacy of citizens and undermine free expression" and would be "detrimental to

Pakistan's ambitions for a digital economy."

The introduction of the regulations reflects frustration in government as well as Pakistan's powerful military with social media companies' frequent refusal to honour requests to take down content. Pakistan ranked among the top countries requesting Facebook and Twitter to remove postings.

On the assumption that Facebook, Twitter and others, which are already banned in China, will risk being debarred in Pakistan by refusing to comply with the new regulations, Pakistan could become a prime country that adopts not only aspects of China's 21st-century Orwellian surveillance state but also its tightly controlled media.



People using computers are seen in Islamabad, Pakistan, on October 20, 2017. Recently, the country's government secretly passed regulations that restrict social media activity.

PHOTO: REUTERS/CAREN FERROU

*The introduction of the regulations reflects frustration in government as well as Pakistan's powerful military with social media companies' frequent refusal to honour requests to take down content. Pakistan ranked among the top countries requesting Facebook and Twitter to remove postings.*

The basis for potential Pakistani adoption of the Chinese system was created in 2017 in plans for the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a USD 60-billion-plus crown jewel of the Belt and Road, an infrastructure, telecommunications and energy-driven initiative to tie Eurasia to China.

The 2017 plan identifies as risks to CPEC "Pakistani politics, such as competing parties, religion, tribes, terrorists, and Western intervention" as well as security. The plan appears to question the vibrancy of a system in which competition between parties and interest groups is the name of the game. It envisions a full system of monitoring and surveillance to ensure law and order in Pakistani cities. The system would involve

deployment of explosive detectors and scanners to "cover major roads, case-prone areas and crowded places...in urban areas to conduct real-time monitoring and 24-hour video recording."

A national fibre optic backbone would be built for internet traffic as well as the terrestrial distribution of broadcast media that would cooperate with their Chinese counterparts in the "dissemination of Chinese culture." The plan described the backbone as a "cultural transmission carrier" that would serve to "further enhance mutual understanding between the two peoples and the traditional friendship between the two countries."

Critics in China and elsewhere assert that repression of freedom of expression contributed to China's delayed response to the Coronavirus. China rejects the criticism with President Xi Jinping calling for even greater control.

Pakistan's newly promulgated regulations echo Mr Xi's assertion during the Communist party's January 7 Politburo Standing Committee meeting that "we must strengthen public opinion tracking and judgment, take the initiative to voice, provide positive guidance, strengthen integration, communication and interaction, so that positive energy will always fill the Internet space... We must control the overall public opinion environment. It is necessary to strengthen the management and control of online media."

Dr James M Dorsey is a senior fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, an adjunct senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute and co-director of the University of Wuerzburg's Institute of Fan Culture.

## QUOTABLE Quote

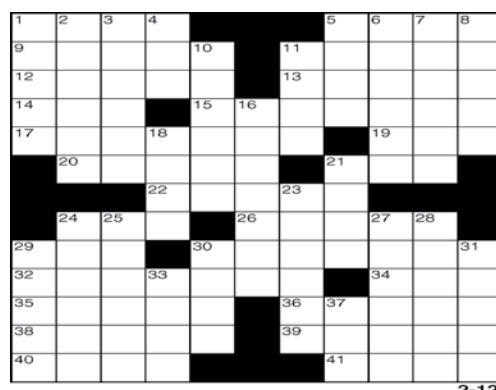


GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (1856–1950) Irish playwright

*If you cannot get rid of the family skeleton, you may as well make it dance.*

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Appliance part
  - 5 Baby bull
  - 9 Love affair
  - 11 Dwight's wife
  - 12 Disney deer
  - 13 Make amends
  - 14 Santa --, California
  - 15 Paint oil source
  - 17 Flowering trees
  - 19 Tour carrier
  - 20 Waffle topper
  - 21 Grammys category
  - 22 Sung story
  - 24 Sassy talk
  - 26 Ladder parts
  - 29 Slump
- DOWN**
- 1 Plotters' group
  - 2 Muscat natives
  - 3 Gypsy language
  - 4 Supply voices for
  - 5 Alley prowlers
  - 6 One-celled organism
  - 7 Roster
  - 8 Flows into
  - 10 Anger
  - 11 Supplies with staff
  - 16 Under attack, perhaps
  - 18 Plunge
  - 21 Tirade
  - 23 Track athlete
  - 24 Sick in bed
  - 25 Disregard
  - 27 Frozen dessert
  - 28 Christian of "Mr. Robot"
  - 29 Strikes, in a way
  - 30 Single
  - 31 Boat back
  - 33 Rowing team
  - 37 Bar topic



## YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

A R O U N D B O N D  
R E D S E A A H O Y  
M O S E S M A L O N E  
S T E A K  
P L U S R A T S  
R E A P G O N U T S  
A C T R O N D O E  
N O T B A D C O O T  
S E A L Y A R D  
S P E A R  
I S I A H T H O M A S  
S E L L C O M E T O  
M E L T H O S T E D

## BETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



## BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).

**NEWSIN**  
brief

**Iran reports first coronavirus cases**

Two people in Iran tested positive yesterday for the deadly new coronavirus, the health ministry said, in the Islamic republic's first cases of the disease. Kianoush Jahanpour, a ministry spokesman, said the cases were detected in the holy city of Qom, south of the Iranian capital. The United Arab Emirates was the first country in the Middle East to report cases of coronavirus last month.

**Old is gold**

A helmet used by French soldiers in World War I provided better protection from overhead blasts than a modern American model, according to a US university study. Biomedical engineers from North Carolina's Duke University tested the performance of several models of World War I helmet and the US Advanced Combat Helmet by subjecting them to shock waves. "We were surprised to find that the 100-year-old helmets performed just as well as modern ones," said study author Joost Op 't Eynde. "Indeed, some historical helmets performed better in some respects," Op 't Eynde said.

**Netanyahu's trial to start March 17**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption trial will open on March 17, just two weeks after the embattled leader tries to secure re-election, officials said Tuesday. Netanyahu has been charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust. Israeli law says that government ministers who are subject to criminal prosecution must resign. But this does not apply to the prime minister, meaning no legal barriers are likely to prevent Netanyahu, 70, from remaining in office.

# Drowning the sound of death with laughter

AFP, Sarmada

In Syria's Idlib, there's no escaping the war, so Abdullah al-Mohammed says the only way he found to reassure his daughter Salwa was to turn the shelling into a game.

A video in which she laughs every time an explosion goes off was widely shared on social media in recent days as a heartening but grim reminder of Idlib residents' daily lives.

"Is it a plane or is it a mortar?", he asks, as a whizzing sound grows in the background.

"A mortar," the three-year-old answers. "When it comes, we will laugh."

In another video, Salwa is standing on her father's lap in their living room and her hearty laugh is set off by the sinister thunder of a bomb dropped by a warplane.

"Tell me Salwa, what did the plane do," the father asks his daughter.

"The plane came and I laughed a lot. The plane just makes us laugh, it tells us: Laugh at me, laugh at me," she says.

Mohammed explains that when Salwa was still 12 months old, she started crying when she heard fireworks in the neighbourhood.

He had to explain that it was only the sound of children playing for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr. "After that, whatever was coming to us from the air, I would take out my phone and tell her: 'Come, let's laugh together, these are children playing for Eid,'" he says.

"I try not to show her that what is happening is a bad thing but rather show it as something funny," he explains.

"One day, she will know that this is a sound of death but by then, she will have understood who we are and what our story is," Mohammed says.

The north of the province of Idlib is a dead end for hundreds of thousands of civilians displaced from other former rebel bastions across Syria.

It has been described by aid groups as the world's largest de facto open-air displacement camp.

Hundreds of people, many of them children, have been killed in recent weeks as pro-regime bombardment spares nothing, from homes to hospitals.

According to the United Nations, 900,000 people have been forced to flee their homes and shelters since December alone. More than half of the displaced are children and at least seven of them have died from the cold and the bad living conditions.



# Russia warns Turkey after Erdogan vows Idlib ops

Aid groups say tens of thousands of lives at stake as they have nowhere else to go

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey and Russia exchanged warnings yesterday after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened an "imminent" operation in Syria to end the regime's brutal assault on the last rebel enclave.

Syrian aid workers called urgently for a ceasefire and international help for nearly a million people fleeing the regime onslaught in the country's northwestern Idlib province -- the biggest wave of displaced civilians in the nine-year conflict.

Turkey, supporter of some rebel groups in Idlib, has been pushing for a renewed ceasefire in talks with Russia, which backs the Syrian regime. Ankara is eager to prevent another flood of refugees into its territory adding to the 3.7 million Syrians it already hosts.

The Syrian NGO Alliance said displaced people are "escaping in search of safety only

to die from extreme weather conditions and lack of available resources".

Erdogan said talks with Moscow over the past fortnight had so far failed to achieve "the desired result" and warned that Turkey would launch an offensive into Syria unless Damascus pulled its forces back by the end of the month.

He called for Syrian forces to retreat behind Turkey's military posts in Idlib, which were set up under a 2018 deal with Russia designed to hold off a regime advance.

The Kremlin quickly responded to Erdogan's threat, warning that any operation against Syrian forces would be "the worst scenario".

With the Russian-backed offensive, Syrian troops have reconquered swathes of Idlib and retaken the key M5 highway connecting the country's four largest cities as well as the entire surroundings of Aleppo city for the first time since 2012.



## NEW EAST JERUSALEM SETTLEMENT

# Israel plans to build 9,000 more homes

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel has developed plans to build 9,000 settler homes in annexed east Jerusalem, the first such project in the city in more than 20 years, watchdog Peace Now said Tuesday.

Details of the plan emerged a day after Israel's transport ministry approved a controversial proposal to extend a train line from Tel Aviv into Jerusalem's flashpoint Old City.

Peace Now said the housing ministry had a week ago submitted plans to Jerusalem's Municipality to build the settlement units on the site of the former Atarot airport, between two Palestinian neighbourhoods.

It said final approval of the project could take years.

But if built, it would drive "a wedge in the heart of the Palestinian urban continuity between Ramallah and East Jerusalem, thus preventing the establishment of a viable Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem."

It would be the first new settlement in east Jerusalem since a previous government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu built the Har Homa settlement near Bethlehem in 1997, Peace Now said.

More than 600,000 Jewish settlers live in the occupied West Bank and annexed east Jerusalem, in communities considered illegal under international law.

Peace Now said the Atarot plan "also includes the demolition of dozens of Palestinian residential units that were built in the area without permits throughout the years."

A Middle East peace plan unveiled last month by US President Donald Trump gave a green light for Israel to declare sovereignty over all of Jerusalem as well as settlements and other territory in the West Bank.

The Trump proposal has been rejected by the Palestinians, who demand east Jerusalem as the capital of their state.



Demonstrators hold placards as they wave Indian national flags during a protest organised by various Muslim organisations and opposition parties against India's new citizenship law, in Chennai, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



## POINT-BASED IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

# UK eyes high-skilled workers

REUTERS, London

Britain will prioritise access for high-skilled workers from around the world in its post-Brexit points-based immigration system, the government said on Tuesday, setting out its plans to put an end to a reliance on "cheap labour from Europe".

Concern over the impact of high levels of immigration from the European Union was one of the key drivers behind Britain's 2016 vote to leave the bloc and the government has said it plans to bring overall migration numbers down.

The new system, in place from Jan 1, 2021, will assign points for specific skills, qualifications, salaries or professions and only give visas to those who have enough points. It will treat EU and non-EU citizens the same.

It will mark a sea change for businesses who have grown used to having access to a large pool of EU workers, particularly since 2004 when the accession of several former communist states in central and eastern Europe saw a big influx of migrants coming to Britain to work.

"We have got a number of routes through the points-based immigration scheme that will enable people to come here with the right kind of skills that can support our country and our economy," interior minister Priti Patel said.

"We need to shift the focus of our economy away from reliance on cheap labour from Europe and instead concentrate on investment in technology and automation. Employers will need to adjust," the government said in a policy document.

The Home Office said it would follow a recommendation made last month by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), an independent body which advises the government, to lower the minimum general salary threshold for skilled migrants to 25,600 pounds (\$33,330) a year, from 30,000 pounds.

Skilled workers will need to meet criteria including the ability to speak English and will need to have a job offer.

# US, China escalate media spat

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday ordered three reporters from American newspaper the Wall Street Journal to leave the country over what Beijing deemed a racist headline, in one of the harshest moves against foreign media in years.

The expulsion came as Beijing also slammed Washington's decision to tighten rules on Chinese state media organisations in the United States, calling the move "unreasonable and unacceptable".

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the Journal op-ed -- titled "China is the Real Sick Man of Asia" -- had a "racially discriminatory" and "sensational" headline, and slammed the newspaper for not issuing an official apology.

The Journal reported that deputy bureau chief Josh Chin and reporter Chao Deng, both US nationals, as well as reporter Philip Wen, an Australian, had been ordered to leave the country in five

Beijing expels WSJ reporters over 'racist' headline over coronavirus outbreak

US to tighten rules on China state media over 'propaganda'

Pompeo, in Africa, tells leaders not to fall for China's 'empty promises'



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrives in Saudi Arabia yesterday.

days. The three journalists are in the Wall Street Journal's news section, which is not linked to the editorial and opinion section.

The op-ed, written by Bard College professor Walter Russell Mead, criticised the Chinese government's initial response to the new coronavirus outbreak -- calling the Wuhan city government at the virus epicentre "secretive and self-serving", while dismissing national efforts as ineffective.

The phrase "sick man of Asia" originally referred to China in the

late 19th and early 20th century, when it was exploited by foreign powers during a period sometimes called the country's "century of humiliation".

The February 3 piece "slandered the efforts of the Chinese government and the Chinese people to fight the epidemic", said Geng.

The new coronavirus epidemic has killed over 2,000 people in China and infected more than 74,000, and has spread to at least two dozen countries.

The expulsions come a day after

the United States angered China for classifying five state media outlets, including Xinhua news agency and the China Global Television Network, as foreign missions, with State Department officials saying they were part of Beijing's growing "propaganda" apparatus.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo yesterday closed a three-nation Africa tour with a thinly-veiled swipe at China as he talked up Washington's ability to stimulate growth and entrepreneurship on the continent.

"Countries should be wary of authoritarian regimes with empty promises. They breed corruption, dependency," Pompeo said in a speech to diplomats and business leaders at the UN's Economic Commission for Africa in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

"They run the risk that the prosperity and sovereignty and progress that Africa so needs and desperately wants won't happen."

# 'He has his limits'

Report says US attorney gen may quit over Trump tweets

REUTERS, Washington

US Attorney General William Barr is considering resigning over President Donald Trump's tweets about Justice Department investigations, a source familiar with the situation told Reuters on Tuesday.

Barr has told people close to Trump about his concerns, but it was not immediately clear if Barr had told Trump directly, the Washington Post added in a report.

"He has his limits," the newspaper quoted one person familiar with Barr's thinking as saying.

Barr may be sharing his position with people close to Trump in hopes the president gets the message and stops tweeting about the Justice Department's criminal investigations, the Post said.

The White House and the Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the Post report.

Trump said on Tuesday he had total confidence in Barr, who last week said in an interview that Trump's tweeting habit had made it impossible for him to do his job.

"I do make his job harder ... I do agree with that," Trump told reporters before boarding Air Force One. "The attorney general is a man with great integrity."

Last week senior Justice Department officials withdrew an earlier sentencing recommendation for longtime Trump friend Roger Stone, who was found guilty in November of seven counts of lying to Congress, prompting upheaval within the department.

More than 1,000 former department officials have now called for Barr to resign.

Trump has used Twitter to attack the four prosecutors who had argued the case as well as the judge presiding over it.

Barr said in an ABC interview on Thursday that he could not do his job "with a constant

background commentary" and that it was "time to stop the tweeting about Department of Justice criminal cases."

While Trump offered words of support for Barr, he also spoke enthusiastically about tweeting. "Social media for me has been very important because it gives me a voice," he said.



## CORONAVIRUS

# WHO declares 'progress'

AFP, Cairo

The World Health Organization yesterday hailed "tremendous progress" in the fight against the deadly new coronavirus since it emerged in China in December.

"We are making tremendous progress in a short period of time ... trends are very encouraging but we are not at a turning point yet," said Richard Brennan, WHO's regional emergency director, at a press conference in Cairo.

In response to Chinese efforts to contain the virus, he said that Beijing "has really thrown its weight behind the outbreak" and that reports of concealing the severity of the disease are "frankly unwarranted".

## Lanka says will not honour UN pledge on war probe



Sri Lanka Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday said the country was withdrawing from a 2015 United Nations resolution investigating alleged war crimes. Rajapaksa was president when Sri Lankan troops defeated Tamil Tiger guerrillas in 2009, but rights groups accused the army of killing at least 40,000 Tamil civilians in the final months of the conflict. His brother Gotabaya, who is now president, was defence secretary at the time. Rajapaksa said Washington's recent decision to ban current Sri Lanka army chief Shavendra Silva from visiting the US was because Colombo had signed up to the resolution. Before winning the presidency, Gotabaya had pledged he would not honour the previous government's commitments to the UN.

SOURCE: AFP

**WHAT'S ON**

**Art Camp**  
 Title: 4th Annual Art for Autism 2020  
 Venue: Charukola, University of Dhaka  
 Date: February 22  
 Time: 8:30 am - 3pm

**Solo Exhibition**  
 Title: Parables of the Womb  
 Artist: Dilara Begum Jolly  
 Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, Dhamondi  
 Date: February 4 - March 28  
 Time: 2 pm - 8 pm (Except Sundays)

**Book Fair**  
 Title: Amar Ekushey Boi Mela  
 Organiser: Bangla Academy  
 Venue: Bangla Academy Premises  
 Date: Feb 2 - 29  
 Time: 3 pm - 8 pm; 11 am - 9 pm on weekends

**Art Exhibition**  
 Title: In/Out of the stones of our mind  
 Venue: Dwp Gallery  
 Date: February 19- 29  
 Time: 3pm to 9 pm (February 19 from 6pm to 9pm)

**Art Workshop**  
 Title: Kata Kuti - Collage Workshop  
 by Kazi Tahsin Agaz Aurbo  
 Venue: Studio 6/6 (Mohammadpur)  
 Date: February 22  
 Time: 11 am to 6 pm



Abul Khair (3-R) hands over the award to Vijay Kichlu (2-R) in the presence of Pandit Tejendra Narayan Majumdar (2-L) and Ustad Zakir Hussain (Extreme Right).

PHOTO: COURTESY

## Shilper Shadhak Abul Khair Litu presents Vijay Kichlu with the SSF Lifetime Achievement Award in Kolkata

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Dedicated to Swara Samrat Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, the Swara Samrat Festival (SSF) is a four-day annual event of Indian classical music and dance. It takes place in Kolkata, usually between the months of December and February. The event, organised under the banner of Shree Ranjini Foundation Trust, is an initiative of sarod maestro Pandit Tejendra Narayan Majumdar.

This year, the stage of SSF was graced by the performances of Indian classical music and dance legends such as Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, Pandit Birju Maharaj, Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia and Pandit Jasraj along with Ustad Zakir Hussain, Vidushi Girija Devi, Begum Parveen Sultana, Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri, Guru Karaikudi Mani, Ustad Rashid Khan, Shankar Mahadevan,

Pandit Ulhas Kashalkar, Pandit Venkatesh Kumar, Pandit Ajoy Chakraborty, Ustad Shahid Parvez, Pandit Tejendra Narayan Majumdar, Pandit Kushal Das and Kaushiki Chakraborty, among others.

At the festival, Abul Khair, Chair, Bengal Foundation, Bangladesh, presented the SSF Lifetime Achievement Award to Vijay Kichlu, the Founder and Head of ITC Sangeet Research Academy, for his contributions toward the propagation of Indian classical music. Present on the stage were tabla maestros Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri and Ustad Zakir Hussain, along with Pandit Tejendra Narayan Majumdar and Manasi Majumdar. The award ceremony was followed by a three hour *jugalbandhi* of Pandit Tejendra Narayan Majumdar on the sarod, and Ustad Zakir

Hussain on the tabla.

Khair himself received the 2018 SSF Lifetime Achievement Award for his role in the propagation, promotion and facilitation of proper training of Indian classical music and dance as well as other artistic fields across Bangladesh. It was presented to him by renowned painter Jogen Chowdhury. The title of *Shilper Shadhak* was also conferred upon Khair, along with a beautiful sculpted memento.

Swara Samrat Ustad Ali Akbar Khan (14 April 1922 - 18 June 2009) was a sarod maestro of the Maihar gharana. He was born in the village of Shibpur in Brahmanbaria, Cumilla, to renowned musician and teacher, Baba Allauddin Khan and Madina Begum. Young Ali Akbar had the privilege of learning to play the sarod and receive training in classical music from

his father Baba Allauddin Khan, who is considered to be one of the most notable teachers of Indian classical music of the 20th century. Other than playing the sarod, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan had also composed numerous classical ragas and film scores. He is reputed for popularising Indian classical music in the West, both as a performer and as a teacher. He first visited the United States in 1955 upon the invitation of violinist Yehudi Menuhin and later, taught and settled in California.

Ustad Ali Akbar Khan was honoured with India's second highest civilian award, the Padma Vibhushan, in 1989. A recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship and the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship, he was also nominated five times at the Grammy Awards.

## EKUSHEY SPOTLIGHT

# Exploring robotics with Abrar and Pushpita's 'Robotics Masterplan'

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

*Building onto the recent trends in robotics, especially among the Bangladeshi students, Abrar Shahriar Swopnil and Subha Nawar Pushpita's debut book, Robotics Masterplan, was released at the Ekushey Boi Mela 2020, recently. Most of the available books and articles on Robotics is mainly in English, which can be a barrier in basic robotics learning. The urge to creating more such books in Bangla is what inspired the brother-sister duo to write this book.*

The book aims to strengthen the fundamental ideas of robotics, electronics and programming, by solving projects practically in the book after reading each chapter.

The basic understanding of robotics comes from three main subjects—programming, electronics and mechanics. "There are many books in our country based on programming and only a few on robotics," asserts Abrar who graduated from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in Mechanical Engineering recently and

is currently working there as a research assistant. "That is why we decided to go ahead with this book."

Abrar developed a passion for mechatronics back in his first year of undergrad studies. Inspired by her brother, Pushpita, an undergrad student at MIT, also joined her brother in this initiative. "I want to see a country where people will grow up with love for STEM and humanity," expresses Pushpita, who also works as an undergraduate researcher at MIT Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and MIT Media Lab. I think humanity and kindness are two big qualities we badly need now and reading has a big role to play in this aspect."

Pushpita and Abrar is planning a second part to *Robotics Masterplan*. "We designed the first part to suit



PHOTO: COURTESY

beginners," shares Abrar. "The second instalment will be related with image processing and pneumatics, advancing from the first one."

The book, published by Adarsha Publications, is now available in stalls 421 to 424 at the Ekushey Boi Mela, for BDT 240 (under discount).



PHOTO: COURTESY

## Group exhibition 'Impression of Nature' underway at Zainul Gallery

ZAHANGIR ALOM

A group exhibition, titled *Impression of Nature*, is underway at Zainul Gallery, University of Dhaka (DU). Outdoor Community has organised the exhibition, featuring 21 painters, who, in protest of global warming, have portrayed different facets of nature. The six-day event, which runs every day from 10 am to 8 pm, will conclude on February 22. Deneb Zeenat Latif, Managing Director of Magnum Management Consulting Limited, inaugurated the show on February 17.

Taslina Yasmin, an Assistant Professor of the Department of Law, DU and Doctoral Researcher at Brunel University, UK, and Ahsan Rony, Founder, Green Savers, attended the inaugural ceremony as guests. Painter Sajja Rahman Sondha hosted the inaugural ceremony.

"We are destroying nature in different ways," said Deneb Zeenat Latif. "But this nature is our real canvas. The intensity of environmental

pollution has increased so much that nature is not in balance. I believe the exhibition will play a significant role in countering environmental pollution."

On behalf of the Outdoor Community, Tanjima Tabassum Easha, a freelance artist, said, "We are bringing destruction upon ourselves. Nature is losing its colour, form and variety. Everyone needs to think about how they are contributing to the protection of the natural environment. We have organised this show to raise awareness about environmental issues."

Azmal Hossain, Dipro Bonik, Helal Shah and Khadiza Tun Numani are exhibiting their works at the event, alongside Khing Shai Marma, Liza Sharifa, Madhubanti Raya, Maneek Bonik, Marzan Kabir, Mohosin Kabir Himalay, Mrinal Banik, Nusrat Jahan Titly, Pritom Mozumder, Pradip Saha, Rajib Mahabub, Shakimohito Subir, Seema Mandal, Sajja Rahman Sondha, Shakti Nomaan, Tanjima Tabassum Easha and Tariqul Islam Herok.

## 'Saturday Afternoon' wins two awards at Vesoul Film Festival

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Mostofa Sarwar Farooki directorial *Saturday Afternoon (Shomibar Bikel)* has won two jury awards at the 2020 Vesoul International Film Festival of Asian Cinema in France. The film was bestowed the NETPACK award and the High School Jury award on its concluding day on February 18. The film had been on display in the festival in February 15 and 16, to much adoration from the audience and critics. *Saturday Afternoon* had previously been displayed in the Sydney, Busan and Moscow Film Festivals, the latter of which also honoured the film with two jury awards. It will have a special screening in Paris's Espace Saint-Michel on February 27, organised by Dissidence Films.



PHOTO: COURTESY

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# Couple bloom tulips first in Bangladesh

SHYKH SERAJ

During the mid-80s, I got engaged with Bangladesh Television's agricultural documentary programme Mati O Manush (Soil & People). During that time, I met a Belgian named Jean Paul Perrin, who came to Bangladesh through an NGO and had a bond with floriculture or flower farming. He worked on gerbera flower back in 1988 and also worked on chrysanthemum and carnation flowers. He was successful in some of them. He also tried to cultivate tulip, the most acclaimed ornamental flower. Jean even showed me a bulb of tulip which was the first tulip bulb I had ever seen. But the flower did not bloom that time and he could not become successful in growing tulip in Bangladesh. I had been fortunate enough to visit Keukenhof of The Netherlands back in May, 2015. For the very first time, I could see tulip and had the idea how its magnificent field would look like.

A few days back, I went to Kewa village located in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila. Today, I will tell my dear readers an outstanding story of a young entrepreneur couple. They are involved with floriculture and flower farming for about 15 years. They have managed to bloom Tulip on Bangladeshi soil for the very first time. When I first heard this, it sounded unbelievable. So many projects, so many people have tried to make it happen from time to time but no one succeeded. But this young duo hasn't only been able to grow tulip, but has successfully managed to grow capsicum, gladiolus, gerbera, China rose and many other flower varieties. Delwar Hossain along with his wife Shelly Hossain made this miracle happen a month back.

I don't know where Jean Paul Perrin lives now as I don't have any contacts with him. But



Shykh Seraj talks with Delwar Hossain and Shelly Hossain at their tulip orchard at Kewa village in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

Shykh Seraj is Bangladesh's pioneer development journalist. He received country's two highest civilian honours, Swadhinata



Puroshkar and Ekushey Padak, respectively. He is a BIDS, Ashoka and Bangla Academy Fellow. He also received highest award for agricultural journalism from the United Nations, FAO A.H. Boerma Award, Gusi Peace Prize (Philippines) and many other prestigious accolades at home and abroad. At Channel i, he's the Founder Director and Head of News. He's also Director and Host of Channel i's popular agro-documentary, Hridoye Mati O Manush.

I want to let him know that, "Dear friend, your dream has come true in the land of Bangladesh. Your mission has been accomplished by a young Bangladeshi couple Delwar and Shelly." "When did it first bloom?"

"A month back." One morning, Delwar came to his European orchard and saw something red is blooming. Then he took a picture of it and sent it to his wife, Shelly. She forwarded the photo to The Netherlands. They both knew it was tulip but was later confirmed that yes the couple made the impossible, possible. They grew tulip.

Back in 2017, the duo received a short training from a Dutch flower company named Royal Van Zanten in The Netherlands. They returned with 60,000 bulbs of liliium and other agricultural tools. Over the years they have remained in touch with the organisation, as part of which they received 1,000 tulip bulbs for free.

I asked Delwar and Shelly, whether they have any plans to sell the tulips they grew.

"No, we don't want to sell. At least two or three people have called us from Gulshan asking whether we would sell those. But our

point is everything cannot be measured by money," replied Delwar.

"People from our region are coming here, seeing tulips, taking selfies; not everyone can afford to visit Kashmir or The Netherlands to enjoy this view. It is a great pleasure to us," added Shelly.

"If everything goes fine, we have plans to sell next season," both said with a wide smile on their faces.

They have kept the tulips under net house. The couple say it would have been better if they could mix urea with some more fertilizers and pour the liquid mix into the flowers, but instead they are giving the inputs directly. They look forward to get water soluble fertilizer. The agriculture officers have already confirmed that they have a very good soil to grow tulips here. Delwar and Shelly believe more tulips can be grown in the colder regions like the northern district of the country. They are trying to grow tulips in a larger shade so that they can sell it next year. The market price for each tulip would be around Tk 70 (USD 0.82) per flower.

Shelly looks after the international communication. She has seen a great possibility

in this commercial flower production project. The couple is very serious about learning the language skills which will soon deliver them even better news in the near future.

"My background and studies tell me to go for teaching profession, but all my passion and my world is bonded with Delwar and this beautiful flower orchard," says Shelly.

"The most important fact is both of us love nature, trees, flowers and farming. We have been married for the past 14 years and anything you love, won't disappoint you," believes Delwar.

"My father was a traditional farmer and it was in my blood to carry on with the heritage of profession," says Delwar.

"Flowers always make me feel good. So, at first I bought gladiolus bulbs, worth Tk 4,000 (USD 47.05), knowing that I would be able to sell each flower at Tk 15 (USD 0.17)," Delwar added.

"Then I bought 20,000 bulbs from Sher Ali Sardar, a flower farmer from Jashore's Godkhali. I have sold almost 35,000 sticks of flowers at Tk 24 per stick and earned around Tk 8,40,000 (USD 9881) from gladiolus.

The obstacle they have is the bulb price goes up to Tk 12 (USD 0.14), which is caused by the quarantine cost of up to Tk 2 (USD 0.02) for each bulb and there is also 10 percent tax included for each bulb.

Dear readers, with the initiative of this loving and caring couple, tulip has bloomed for the first time in Bangladesh. To keep going with the rhythm of life, they want to strengthen this bond with flowers. Local demand is currently being met by importing flower from The Netherlands, China, India and other countries. Initiatives could be taken to cultivate tulips in northern districts, considering low temperature there in the winter season. I believe, tulip will spread all over the country by this couple and by many others following their footsteps. One day, our country will have a flower paradise like Keukenhof. Belated warmest greetings of Pabela Falgun and Valentine's Day. Advanced deepest respect for the Language Martyrs on International Mother Language Day, the day also marks another glorious occasion as the illustrious agricultural TV programme Hridoye Mati O Manush is going to step into its 17th year.

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## We are victims of political vindictiveness

Owners came up with the allegation after their structures near the Dhamai river were demolished in an eviction drive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A group of locals, whose structures near the Dhamai river in Barlekha upazila were demolished by local administration, alleged that they have been victims of political vindictiveness.

Locals claimed that their properties were not illegal, and therefore, the structures should not be demolished.

Wishing anonymity, a resident of Sonatola village said as most of the people in the area are BNP supporters, some influential locals convinced the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) to conduct the eviction drive.

Later, the eviction drive had triggered resentment among the locals.

The villagers said excavation of the river has recently begun.

On February 13, the upazila administration and local union parishad jointly conducted the drive without prior notices, causing huge loss to locals, said Mortuz Ali, a grocer of the area, adding that his shop was also demolished.

"During the drive, we tried to talk to the officers but they did not listen to us," he said.

Mortuz claims to have lost more than Tk 5 lakh in the drive.

Around 50 structures which included houses and shops in Sonatola Bridge area were demolished during the eviction drive, said locals, adding that UNO Md



A man stands beside his house near the Dhamai river in Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila. A portion of the house has been demolished in an eviction drive recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Shamim Al Imran and Barlekha Union Parishad (UIP) Chairman Siraj Uddin were present at the time.

Angered by the incident, locals then seized the excavators used in digging the river. On information, Barlekha Upazila Parishad Chairman Shueb Ahmed and Vice Chairman Taj Uddin rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Another resident Shelly Begum claimed that although her property

was legal, the local administration demolished the boundary wall of her house without issuing a prior notice.

"We always vote for AL-backed candidates, but some local influential persons branded us as BNP supporters. They had planned to destroy our own land," she said.

Contacted, the UNO said those structures demolished were illegal. During the drive, no one claimed ownership of the structures.

### 3 to die for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A court here on Tuesday sentenced three people to death and another to life term imprisonment for killing a man over a disputed pond in Birampur upazila in 2011.

The convicts are Moslem, 55, Mostafizur, 35, and Mamunur, 37, of Phulbari upazila.

According to the prosecution, there had been a dispute between the convicts and Wakil Mondal over the ownership of a disputed pond.

As a sequel, the convicts killed Wakil on June 25, 2011.

**ব্রাক, গ্রামীণ ও গণস্বাস্থ্য পরিচালিত**

**সর্বসাকুল্যে দৈনিক ২০০০০ (বিশ হাজার) টাকায় দেশের সেরা গণস্বাস্থ্য ICU সুবিধা নিন।**

গণস্বাস্থ্য বীমা নিলে দৈনিক খরচ কমে।

**বিভিন্ন বিশেষজ্ঞগণ যতবারই দেখুন না কেন, কোন অতিরিক্ত চার্জ নাই।**

**বিশ হাজার** টাকায় সার্বক্ষণিক চিকিৎসক ও সেবিকা সেবা, প্রয়োজনীয় অক্সিজেন, রক্তের পরীক্ষা, এক্সরে, সনোগ্রাফী, ECG, ECHO, কার্ডিয়াক মনিটর, ভেন্টিলেটর, নেবুলাইজার, ইনফিউশন পাম্প ব্যবহার এবং ওষুধ সুবিধা পাবেন।

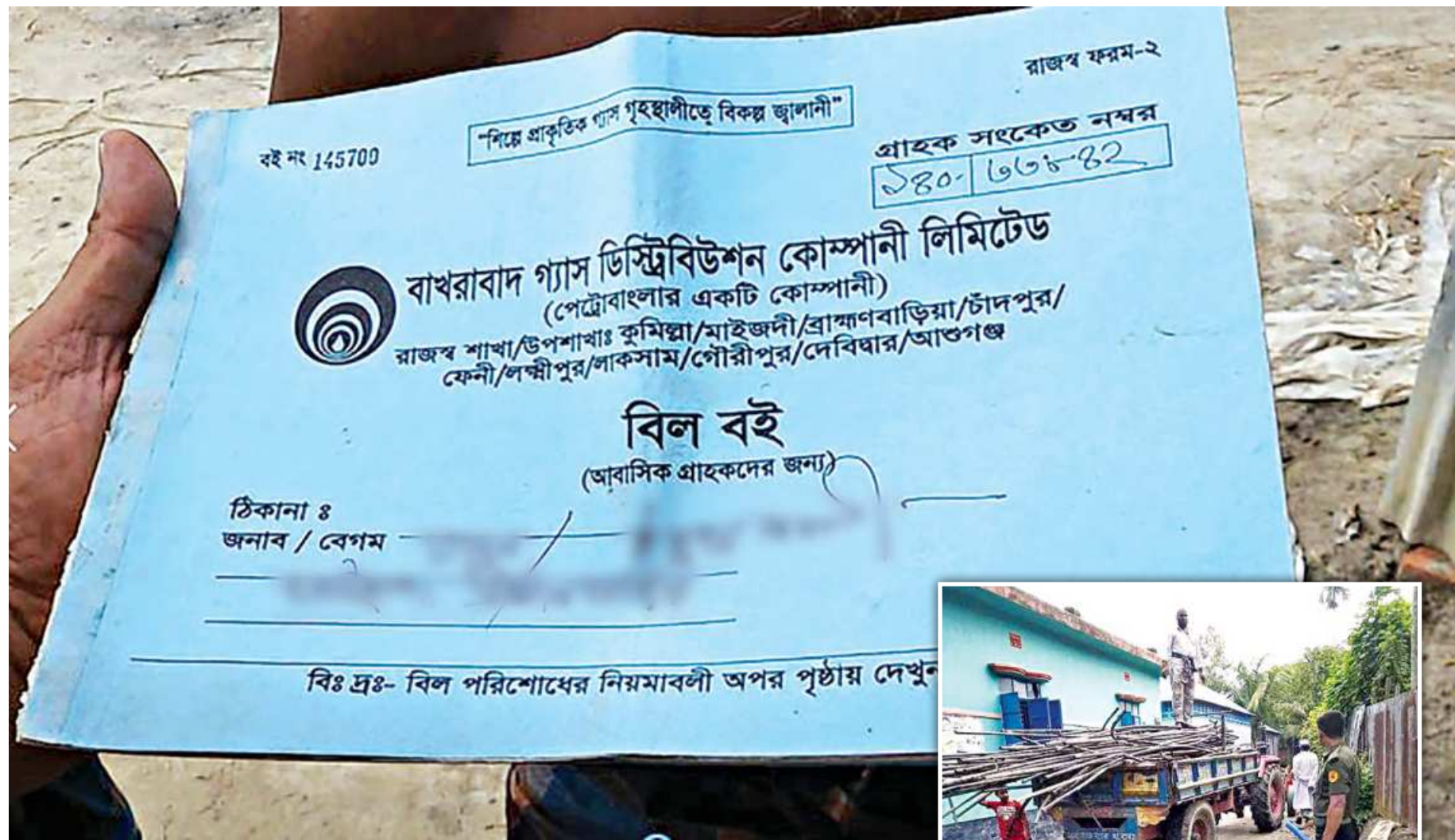
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প্রতিদিন গড়ে ২৬০ জন বিকল কিডনী রোগী ৬০০ থেকে ৩০০০টাকায় ডায়ালাইসিস নিচ্ছেন, কেবিনে ডায়ালাইসিস নিলে খরচ ৩৫০০ টাকা। সার্বক্ষণিক সেবিকা, চিকিৎসক ও বায়োমেডিকেল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারের উপস্থিতি থাকেন। গণস্বাস্থ্য ডায়ালাইসিস সেন্টারে একবার ডায়ালাইসিস নিলে, আপনি সেবার তফাত বুঝতে পারবেন।



A fake 'bill book' issued to a gas consumer in Ghatihata area of Brahmanbaria. Inset, pipes confiscated from different areas are brought to the Bakhraabad Gas Distribution Company Limited office, in Ghatura of Sadar upazila, on a tractor wagon.

PHOTO: MASUKHRIDYO

## ILLEGAL GAS CONNECTIONS

# Racket pocketing crores of taka a month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

An illegal gas line racket in three upazilas of Brahmanbaria has been plundering natural gas worth crores of taka from gas supply lines each month.

The organised criminals are so reckless that they are even issuing "demand notes" and "bill books" to their clients, mentioning the name of Bakhraabad Gas Distribution Company Limited (BGDCL), and collecting "monthly gas bills" in bank accounts they opened with different banks.

The racketeers include public representatives including a chairman of a union parishad and several local political leaders, alleged locals.

They said in Brahmanbaria Sadar, Sarail and Ashuganj upazilas, the crime syndicate so far "sold" at least 15,000 illegal connections and they usually collect Tk 60 thousand to Tk 90 thousand

for each connection, based on the distance of a consumer's house from the main line.

However, sales division officials at Bakhraabad Gas Distribution Company Limited (BGDCL) said the number of illegal connections in those upazilas would be around 5,000 and they traced 54,031 feet of illegal gas line in those areas.

Most of the illegal connections BGDCL found were in Suhilpur and Budhal unions under Sadar upazila, the officials said, adding that BGDCL has 24,000 valid residential gas connections in the three upazilas.

Locals requesting anonymity, apparently for security reasons, said the key figures in the illegal gas line racket include Suhilpur Union Parishad (UP) Chairman and Jubo League's Sadar upazila unit Joint Secretary Azad Hajari Angur, a member of the same UP and Jubo League's Organising Secretary of the same unit Mohsin Khandaker, Belal

Mia from Bakail village in Suhilpur union, Kazi Pabel and Kazi Manzu from Ghatura village in the same union, and Sahed Mia from Madhhayapara of Brahmanbaria town.

Engineer Zahidur Reza, deputy general manager of BGDCL in Brahmanbaria, said they disconnect illegal connections routinely and last year alone, with assistance from the local administration, they so far confiscated 17,953 feet of gas pipes that were laid illegally.

The gas line racket is so powerful that they are often attacking BGDCL officials during disconnection drives, he said, adding that on Monday, they handed over two people to police for attacking four BGDCL officials during a drive in Kalishima area of Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila.

The pace of disconnecting and confiscating illegal pipes by BGDCL is not fast enough as the gas line racket

lays kilometres of illegal pipeline in one night. As such, the number of illegal gas connections are on the rise, said locals.

Requesting not to be named, a resident of Malihata village in Suhilpur union said he paid Tk 70 thousand for an illegal connection to his house two and a half years ago. Like others, he was not given any "bill book", but he has been paying his "gas bill" against the "demand note" each month to an account with United Commercial Bank.

Another resident of the same village said after getting gas connection from the same people, he found out later that the documents he had received against the connection were all fake.

According to Bangladesh Gas Act 2010, consumption of natural gas illegally is punishable by three months to a year of jail term and subject to fines between Tk 10 thousand and Tk 5 lakh.

## Sinking into the depths

FROM PAGE 1

Sagor said they got wages regularly in the first two months but since then delays in payment began. Every month they had to ask the management for pay.

Around a month ago, operations at the factory, which is some 20km away from Kuala Lumpur, stopped, he said. The migrants filed a complaint with the Malaysian labour department and on February 8 wrote to Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur seeking intervention.

"We have not had any help from the Bangladesh high commission. We are now in total uncertainty," he said. He said they also tried to contact the recruiting agency but failed to get any help.

The Daily Star could not reach Jahurul Islam, labour counsellor of Bangladesh in Malaysia, despite repeated phone calls yesterday.

Noor Ali, managing director of Unique Eastern Pvt, said he had no idea that the workers were facing problems.

"Let me talk to them. I will take immediate action," he told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

Abu Hayat, an independent researcher and migrant rights activist based in Kuala Lumpur, said it was unfortunate that none of the authorities were extending a helping hand to the migrants.

These workers paid so much for migration that they need more than two years in Malaysia to recover the cost, he said.

"Bangladesh high commission should intervene in the issue immediately and ensure justice for them," he said.

The workers could be transferred to other companies or compensated, Abu Hayat said.

He said labour recruitment from Bangladesh has been suspended since September last year following allegations of irregularities. Now, talks for a new recruitment deal between Bangladesh and Malaysia are at the final stage.

The Daily Star could not get in touch with SSN Medical Products Sdn Bhd for comments.

## HC to hear Khaleda's bail

FROM PAGE 1

In reply, Khaleda's lawyer Khandaker Mahbub Hossain told the court that there was no legal bar for his client to move the petition before the court.

The court then fixed Sunday for hearing the petition. Moudud Ahmed, Zainul Abedin, and Sagir Hossain Leon also appeared for the BNP chief.

Khaleda, who is now in jail, filed the bail petition with the HC on Tuesday, citing poor health.

In the petition, the BNP chief said she has been suffering from several diseases like diabetes and dental problem, and her physical condition has been deteriorating since December 12 last year.

She is now seriously ill. She cannot move freely, take food, and medicine without the help of others. She needs immediate treatment/therapy abroad, like in the UK, says the petition.

Earlier, the Supreme Court's HC Division denied her bail twice in the case and the Appellate Division once.

On August 8, 2011, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed the Zia Charitable Trust graft case with Tejgaon Police Station against four people, including Khaleda. They were accused of abusing power in raising funds for the trust from unknown sources.

A special court in Dhaka jailed Khaleda and three others for seven years in the case on October 29, 2018.

The BNP chief landed in jail after being sentenced to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case by the same special court on February 8, 2018.

On October 30, 2018, the HC enhanced her punishment to 10 years in the case after dismissing her appeal.



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## Last hurrah for captain Mash

SPORTS REPORTER

**Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan put to rest the recent speculation surrounding the future of Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza by saying he would lead the team against Zimbabwe, but hinted that the series would probably be the 36-year-old's last as ODI captain as the board were contemplating the appointment of a long-term captain with the 2023 World Cup in mind.**

Although Hassan did not write-off Mashrafe's chances to play for the national team after the Zimbabwe series, he added that the Narail Express would have to come through general procedures like any other member to qualify for a spot in the national team spot.

"Mashrafe will definitely lead the side in the Zimbabwe series and he will play if he is fit. However, we are not that strict over his fitness this time around but we also need to take a decision quickly on appointing a captain for the upcoming World Cup because we want to select a captain two years before the event," Hassan told reporters at the Sher-e-Bangla National

Zimbabwe series, specifically mentioning that the board will not be monitoring his fitness too strictly.

But that also raises questions about Mashrafe, who has been in poor form since 2019 World Cup -- where the pacer bagged just one wicket in eight games. He returned to competitive cricket after a long gap in the

Definitely, it is board's sole authority when it comes to appointing a captain. During my tenure, we proposed a name for board's approval and normally they accepted it. I don't know how things happen now but it is standard practice all over the world that a player is only considered for the [captaincy] post if he is eligible for the squad.

**FARUQUE AHMED**  
FORMER BCB CHIEF SELECTOR

There is no question over the selection of a player if the board declares him as captain. The selection panel does not have a decision to make about that.

**MINHAJUL ABEIDIN**  
CHIEF SELECTOR

Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"We don't have much time on our hands and I think we will be able to take a decision within the next one-and-a-half months. We are waiting until this [Zimbabwe] series is over and will take a decision after that. Whether he will retire or not is a personal decision and he can even play in future. We are worried about the captain at the moment. If we name someone else as captain then he can get into the team as a player through performances and there are no problems with that."

Hassan's stance on Mashrafe however hints that the board has given the Tigers' most successful captain special consideration by including him for the

Bangladesh Premier League in November last year but his performances remained below par and that led to confusion about whether selectors would take his performances into consideration when naming teams.

When chief selector Minhajul Abedin was asked whether they had selected Mashrafe for the Zimbabwe series based on his performances, he said: "There is no question over the selection of a player if the board declares him as captain. The selection panel does not have a decision to make about that."

Although standard procedure in the selection policy suggests a player must first be eligible to be part of the team based on their performance, in Mashrafe's case it seems the board has kept his portfolio as captain ahead of recent performances.

Hassan paid tribute to Mashrafe's contribution to Bangladesh cricket but the BCB boss also said that the time had come for the pacer to think about retirement.

"There is no question about Mashrafe's contribution to Bangladesh cricket and his leadership is very important to us, but the time has come for him to take a decision on how long he wants to continue. There are a lot of things related to this," Hassan added.



Having branded Test captain Mominul Haque "soft" and "shy" yesterday ahead of the one-off Test against Zimbabwe starting February 22, Bangladesh Cricket Board President Nazmul Hassan (R) said that seniors such as Tamim Iqbal -- who he spoke to in training yesterday -- would need to help him pump up the team.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## 'Don't take Zimbabwe lightly'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan yesterday issued a warning to the national team ahead of the upcoming home series against Zimbabwe.

The BCB boss expressed his disappointment over the poor performances from the national team recently and urged the Tigers to not take Zimbabwe lightly and to go into the series with a new mindset.

"I have been seeing in the media over the past few days that things will be great after beating Zimbabwe. I don't see that happening. I have no hope. I told them, 'if you take them lightly, it will be a big disaster'. Zimbabwe are where Zimbabwe were. We are not where we were. They have performed better than us recently," Hassan told the media yesterday.

"If someone asks me what Bangladesh's worst performance was at home, I would say losing to Afghanistan. It was unacceptable. If we lose to Afghanistan, we can lose to Zimbabwe. We need to have a new mindset. Our seniors must take major responsibility and it has to be a team game."

Hassan also slammed the T20I side for losing 2-0 to Pakistan recently and also branded Test captain Mominul Haque "soft" and "shy" and marked him as someone who would need help from senior cricketers like Tamim Iqbal and Mushfiqur Rahim. He also said that the Tigers must beat at least four or five teams in home conditions.

"I told them to not take Zimbabwe lightly. We must work in a planned way. Mominul is new, plus he is quite shy... soft. I said Tamim and Mushfiqur must be involved fully in charging up the team," he added.

Interestingly, Hassan had instructed the team management to provide him with all the team information, including the playing XI and even the batting order before the game.

"I want to know the game plan the day before the game and the playing XI," he said. "Why? It started from the World Cup and then the Afghanistan series, there is a total change; nothing has happened the way I expected. Those who had never played in the top order were given those roles. It was experimentation. In Pakistan too, what was told to me didn't happen," Hassan added.

"I have told them that they have to give me the batting sequence and that they cannot drop a player in one game and then pick him again. I understand that they want to try a few boys. Our coach, who is relatively new, wants to see the fast bowlers. But whatever happens, they have to let me know in advance."

## 'You must understand your role'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh's pace bowling department has been one of the chief concerns in all formats of the game and despite a lot of chopping and changing, especially in Tests, the Tigers are yet to find stability and get things right.

Although Bangladesh's recent showing in the longest format have been abysmal -- the Tigers lost all six of their last Tests, five of them by an innings -- Abu Jayed has been able to come up with decent performances during the bleak period.

Since 2019, Jayed featured in five of the six Tests Tigers played, only being dropped for the home Test against Afghanistan in September, when Bangladesh opted for four spinners and no specialist fast bowler. In those games, the 26-year old was the Tigers' leading wicket-taker, with 12 to his name at an economy of 3.77.



Although he has played just eight Tests, Abu Jayed (L) has quickly become Bangladesh's most dependable pacer in the format. PHOTO: BCB

And with selectors emphasising 'continuity', Jayed will likely be a key figure in the Tigers' line-up for the lone Zimbabwe Test, scheduled to begin from February 22.

The 26-year-old, who relies on his line and length, is also the only

player in the current squad with ability to swing both ways, but he said that Test matches demand different things from a player.

"It depends on game situation. There will be times when I will need to take a wicket and not worry about

runs. If the captain thinks we do not need wickets but to maintain an economy rate, then I need to ensure that I am bowling in the right areas," Jayed said after the Tigers' practice at the outer nets in Mirpur yesterday.

The way Jayed emphasised on playing a certain role in a game shows why the right-arter has been successful in recent times.

"You need to understand your role in the team. If the wicket is not friendly and spinners are not getting wickets and there is a set batsman, then our job is to bowl at economically for four-five overs. That might help spinners take the wicket. It creates chances. That's the role you have to play when the wicket is flat," said Jayed.

However, Jayed who has just played eight Tests, understood that he had a long way to go before becoming a leading cricketer for Bangladesh. And maybe that is the mentality a player needs to possess in a team that has been emphasising 'continuity'.

## Tanzid, Al-Amin rescue BCB XI

SPORTS REPORTER



Tanzid Hasan, who featured for the Bangladesh during their recent ICC Under-19 World Cup triumph, again showed tremendous character and the youngster's unbeaten century, alongside an unbeaten ton from skipper Al-Amin, helped the BCB XI salvage a draw in the two-day warm-up match against the Zimbabweans at the BKSP-3 in Savar yesterday.

The BCB XI were in a spot of bother after having lost five for just 69 in 24.2 overs after the visitors had declared for the overnight score of 291 for seven. But Tanzid countered the pace and bounce of the Zimbabweans effectively and the 19-year-old got to his century off just 87 deliveries.

While Tanzid was fearless during his 99-ball 125 that was laced with 14 boundaries and five maximums, BCB XI skipper Al-Amin played a steady 145-ball

100. The duo strung together an unbeaten 219-run sixth-wicket stand that not only resuscitated the BCB XI from dire straits but also saw them through the day.

The warm-up match was played as a lead up to the lone Zimbabwe Test for the Tigers, starting from February 22. According to BCB XI skipper Al-Amin, the Bangladesh national team will not be tested by this Zimbabwe side.

"I think the national team will be able to handle Zimbabwe very easily considering the way we are playing now. They can get a very commanding victory in the Test," Al-Amin said after the only warm-up fixture ahead of the Test.

The way BCB XI finished the day was in stark contrast to how they had started. Before Tanzid's blistering innings, four of his U-19 teammates were unable to put up a good showing. Parvez Hossain was somewhat of an exception, getting a 66-ball 34, but Mahmudul Hasan, Shahadat Hossain and U-19 skipper Akbar Ali fell quickly for cheap scores of 1, 2 and 1 respectively.



With the BCB XI teetering at 69 for five, skipper Al-Amin Jr and Tanzid Hasan (R) scored impressive centuries and piled on a mammoth, unbeaten 219-run sixth-wicket partnership to salvage a draw for the hosts against the Zimbabweans yesterday.

## Coronavirus now hits volleyball

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Volleyball Federation (BVF) has deferred the Bangabandhu Asian Senior Men's Central Zone Volleyball Championship after some participating nations expressed reservations connected to the coronavirus outbreak, as well as some financial constraints.

Although there are no infected patients in Bangladesh, teams in the region are reluctant to travel after the outbreak in China's Wuhan, with the International Solidarity World Ranking Archery Championships in Bangladesh also being postponed on Monday.

The meet was scheduled to take place from March 22 to 28 at Suhrawardi Indoor Stadium in Mirpur with the participation of eight nations -- Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and hosts Bangladesh -- but the championship is now likely to be held in September.

"We did not get a good response as Sri Lanka and one of the central Asian nations wrote to us to express concerns about the coronavirus outbreak while some others told us informally. That's why we, on February 15, decided to defer the championship by six months and hold it in September," BVF general secretary Ashikur Rahman Miku told The Daily Star yesterday.

Miku also said that uncertainty over financial assistance from the youth and sports ministry also played a part in the deferment.

"The ministry had told us they would provide financial assistance to organise the tournament but we are still in the dark about whether we will get that help," said Miku. "We could have organised the championship by managing sponsorships like before but we could not do it because the BVF president [Atiqul Islam] was busy in the DNCC election campaign." National team captain Horosit Biswas

believes the deferment will help them achieve better results as they needed at least four months' preparation to regain the title they clinched in the 2016 edition held in Dhaka.

"We lacked preparation because players scattered after the National Championship. We were also supposed to go to Iran to avail better training facilities for two months but we could not because of the political crisis between Iran and America," Biswas told The Daily Star yesterday.

Biswas informed that they will go after the completion of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games to be held from April 1 and have uninterrupted training until the championship.

"We will compete in the ABC Challenge Cup in Kyrgyzstan in June featuring teams like Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand. It is a better tournament than the Central Zone championship, so it will help us perform better at home in September."

# What to WATCH

**TEN 1**  
UEFA Europa League  
Ludogorets v Inter  
Live from 11:55pm

**TEN 2**  
UEFA Europa League

Club Brugge v Manchester United  
Live from 11:55pm  
**SONY ESPN**  
UEFA Europa League  
Cluj v Sevilla

Live from 11:55pm  
**SONY SIX**  
UEFA Europa League  
Copenhagen v Celtic  
Live from 11:55pm

## DAY'S EVENT

**Bangladesh Premier League**  
Bangladesh Police v Bashundhara Kings  
Time: 3:30pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium  
Rahmatganj v Sheikh Russel

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium  
Time: 6:30pm

# Simeone's Atletico stifles Liverpool

REUTERS, Madrid

There have been plenty of doubts aired this season about whether Atletico Madrid were capable of reproducing their past glories, but on Tuesday against an all-conquering Liverpool, Diego Simeone's side returned to their roots.

Their 1-0 win in the Champions League last-16 first leg was akin to a greatest hits set, containing all the ingredients of what has made Atletico so compelling in the last eight years under Simeone.

The cacophony of flares that greeted the team's bus was their opening track, Saul Niguez's fourth minute goal the smash hit, while Simeone, as usual clad in his all-black suit, was the excitable frontman, whipping up the crowd like Mick Jagger.

"I don't know if Diego saw a lot of the game because he was constantly animating the crowd," said Liverpool coach Jurgen Klopp, partly in bewilderment but mostly in admiration.

Liverpool and Klopp's previous club Borussia Dortmund are renowned for their atmospheres on European nights but the German coach was impressed.

"We speak about Anfield and the power a stadium can have and tonight we saw it," he added.

Simeone added: "You don't ever forget nights like this, one of the best teams around coming here and us winning. I can remember few nights like this in my eight years here. It was truly exciting."

Atletico have built a reputation on upsetting the apple cart but they have endured a terrible season, losing to a third division team in the Copa del Rey, suffering numerous injuries and falling 13 points behind leaders Real Madrid in La Liga.

"Lagging behind in the league, out of the Copa and (former captains) with Diego Godin and Gabi gone, everything pointed to the end of an era," said newspaper AS.

"Then suddenly, no. Against the hardest test of all, the best team in Europe, Simeone's Atletico rose again and produced one of their best performances in years."

El Pais added: "Even champions like

Liverpool end up begging for mercy when faced with a dentist like Atletico."

Atletico were euphoric after the final whistle, but they know the hardest part is still to come, 90 minutes at Liverpool's coliseum. Klopp was talking up the power of his side's stadium, warning 'Welcome to Anfield'.

Liverpool's 4-0 comeback win over Barcelona in last year's semifinal will be in the back of Atletico's minds, as will their own side's 3-0 defeat to Juventus last season after beating the Italians 2-0 in Spain.

Simeone, though, was not willing to discuss the threat of Anfield, insisting: "Sincerely, I'm not thinking about that."

This, after all, was a night to savour, the night his side were backed into a corner but came out swinging.



**Energetic as always, Diego Simeone orchestrated Atletico Madrid to a vintage performance in a 1-0 win over Liverpool in their Champions League Last 16 fixture in Madrid on Tuesday.**

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Welcome to Anfield'

AFP, London

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp expects a very different atmosphere at Anfield will help turn his side's Champions League last 16 tie with Atletico Madrid around after a 1-0 first leg defeat in the Spanish capital on Tuesday.

Saul Niguez's early strike inflicted just Liverpool's second defeat of the season in all competitions with a senior team.

The holders were frustrated by the hosts' playacting and Polish referee Szymon Marciniak's performance as Atletico boss Diego Simeone whipped the Wanda Metropolitan crowd into a frenzy.

"Wow, that's energy!"

Klopp told BT Sport when asked about Simeone's touchline antics.

"I don't think I have to do that much to be honest (in the second leg), I hope I can be focused a little bit more on the game."

"Our people will be ready. Welcome to Anfield! It's not over yet."

The visitors were riled by the celebrations of Simeone and some of his players at full-time after they secured a victory that could kickstart at faltering season.

"They've celebrated as if they've won the tie after the game, so let's see," said left-back Andy Robertson.

"We've got a couple of weeks, Premier League business to take care of, and then we're coming back to Anfield."

"We know our fans will be there, we'll be there, so it's up to them to come as well."



**Dortmund's Norwegian sensation Erling Braut Haaland might have not scored from this header, but he scored two superb goals as the Germans beat star-studded Paris Saint-Germain in the first leg of their Last 16 tie of the Champions League in Dortmund on Tuesday.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Haaland outshines PSG superstars

REUTERS, Dortmund

Borussia Dortmund's lethal teenage striker Erling Haaland scored twice in eight minutes to lead them to a 2-1 win over Paris St Germain in their Champions League last 16, first leg on Tuesday.

The Norwegian, 19, who joined in the last transfer window and has eight goals in five Bundesliga matches, stabbed in from close range after a quick-fire passing move in the 69th minute.

He then thundered home an unstoppable shot for his second goal in the 77th, two minutes after PSG's Brazilian forward Neymar had levelled for the French champions.

Haaland, the first Dortmund player to score in his first league, German Cup and Champions League matches, has reached 10 goals in seven games in Europe's elite competition this season, including eight for Salzburg in the group stage, faster than anyone.

He is only the second teenager to net 10 Champions League goals, after Kylian Mbappe, and is the first teenager to score 10 in a single

campaign in the competition.

He is also the first player to score with two different teams in the same season in the competition.

"I still need to improve, keep working," Haaland said. "I want to go far in the Champions League. With the second goal I enjoyed the moment."

PSG, who were eliminated at this stage of the competition in the previous three seasons, had fit-again Neymar and French striker Mbappe back in the starting lineup but were almost completely shut out by an efficient Dortmund backline.

"Obviously, maybe we deserved the draw but Dortmund were very good," said PSG defender Thomas Meunier.

"They didn't lose one game here at home this season and we saw today it is so difficult. We thought they had defensive problems, but we didn't create many chances."

In a cautious first half the French side had the slight advantage in possession but Dortmund carved out the only real chance after 27 minutes with a curled shot from Jadon Sancho.

Mbappe and Neymar were kept under tight surveillance,

with Dortmund defenders Mats Hummels, Lukasz Piszczek -- on his 350th appearance for the club in all competitions -- and Dan Axel Zagadou denying the pair any space to manoeuvre.

The Germans' main source of firepower, the livewire Haaland, was also shackled for about an hour before finally finding some space to instinctively round off a quick Dortmund move.

PSG, who will be without midfielder Marco Verratti and Meunier for the return leg after they picked up bookings, drew level through Neymar, who found the net after a fine run down the right by Mbappe. The Brazilian also later hit the post.

But the visitors could do nothing when 17-year-old substitute Giovanni Reyna found Haaland on the edge of the box and the prolific forward released a fiercely struck left-foot shot that gave PSG goalkeeper Keylor Navas no chance.

"Everyone played an outstanding game," Dortmund midfielder Emre Can said. "But it was important that we all defended extremely well. It was a big statement from the team, but we know it is not the end, it is just halftime."



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**SHAH CEMENT**

# No high rises along Cox's Bazar coast

PM directs authorities

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the authorities concerned not to build high-rise establishments along the sea in Cox's Bazar.

"We will not allow construction of high-rise structures along the sea as it will harm the natural beauty of Cox's Bazar," she said.

Speaking at a programme at her office in the capital, Hasina said tourism parks should be developed without spoiling the natural beauty of the region.

The programme was organised to present the master plans of three special tourism parks, to be built in Cox's Bazar, before the PM.

The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) has been tasked with setting up the Sonadia Eco-Tourism Park in Moheshkhali upazila and NAF and Sabrang Tourism Parks in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar.

The aim of the master plans is to develop tourism-friendly zones protecting ecological balance and biodiversity, national heritage, culture, and tradition.

Hasina directed the authorities concerned to set up structures in the tourism parks by ensuring that those would be tolerant to disasters such as earthquake, cyclone, and tidal surge.



SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Men climbing metal rails with spikes on the Dhaka-Aricha highway central reservation just to avoid having to use the nearby footbridge at Savar Bazar yesterday. Jaywalking puts all road users at risk.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# Star wins bronze at SA Digital Media Awards 2019

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star has won bronze prize in "Best in Social Media Engagement" category of the prestigious South Asian Digital Media Awards 2019.

WAN-IFRA, world association of newspapers and news publishers, gave the award in Delhi on Tuesday.

The Daily Star was awarded for its "Bangladesh in World Cup" campaign which was a joint initiative with Polar Ice Cream.

The campaign was designated to the ICC Cricket World Cup 2018 and provided readers with a platform to showcase their love for Team Bangladesh.

Tajdin Hassan, head of marketing at The Daily Star, said the accolade earned from WAN-IFRA was a worthy remuneration for the campaign.

Quazi Almach Hasan, senior brand manager of Polar, said it was a privilege to get the award. "Our

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

# RELIGIOUS, EDN INSTITUTIONS Structures close to city rivers to be relocated

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said the government would take up a project to relocate religious and educational establishments built within the boundaries of the rivers in and around the capital.

"We don't want to evict religious structures. We have discussed with the government whether it would be possible to build these structures in a planned way," he said at a meeting in this regard.

Khalid said the government wanted to free the rivers surrounding the capital to make the city livable.

The state minister was speaking at the meeting with officials of religious affairs ministry, Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority and two Dhaka city corporations.

He said 113 religious and educational establishments were built along the Buriganga, Turag, Balu, Shitalakkhya and Dhaleshwari rivers.

Of the establishments, 77 are mosques, madrasas, orphanages, and shrines, five graveyards and places for washing dead bodies, an Eidgah, 14 schools and colleges, and 13 temples, bathing places and crematoriums.

"We are yet to make any move against those structures which are related to religious sentiment. A discussion is underway in this regard," the state minister added.

Khalid assured that these structures

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

### Excess land will go to landless peasants



Bangabandhu is seen excavating soil with a spade in the WAPDA embankment at Ramgati, Noakhali on February 20, 1972.

FEBRUARY 20, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

#### BANGABANDHU VISITS NOAKHALI AND BHOLA

Bangabandhu today visits Ramgati in Noakhali and Shantirhat in Bhola. This is the prime minister's second visit to the rural areas of Bangladesh after his assumption of office.

#### WORK FOR AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

Bangabandhu addresses a huge gathering at Baggotola near Ramgati on the banks of River Meghna, where he does earthwork on the damaged embankment to initiate and inspire voluntary reconstruction at a national level.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

# 'CROSSFIRE THREAT' 7 cops sued for extorting money from businessman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CIG

Seven policemen, including two officers-in-charge of two police stations in Chattogram, were sued yesterday for taking Tk 23 lakh from a businessman by "threatening to kill him in crossfire".

Yasin, 55, owner of M/S Yasin Enterprise in Chattogram city, filed a case with the court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Mohiuddin Murad.

The man, a resident of Khulshi, accused Khandokar Ataur Rahman, former OC of Bayezid Bostami Police Station; Pritan Sarkar, incumbent OC of the police station; Sub-inspector Aftab; assistant sub-inspectors Ibrahim and Mitun Nath; and constables Rahman and Saiful of the police station.

Mentionable, Ataur joined Chandgaon Police Station as OC in January this year.

"Taking the case

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

# SpaceX to send four tourists into deep orbit



AFP, Washington

SpaceX announced a new partnership Tuesday to send four tourists deeper into orbit than any private citizen before them, in a mission that could take place by 2022 and easily cost more than \$100 million.

The company signed the deal with Space Adventures, which is based in Washington and served as an intermediary to send eight space tourists to the International Space Station (ISS) via Russian Soyuz rockets.

The first of these was Dennis Tito, who paid \$20 million for an eight hour stay on the ISS back in 2001. The last to go was Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberte, in 2009.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

# UPDF man 'shot dead' in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) claimed that one of their activists was shot dead by unidentified criminals at Banduk Bhanga union in Sadar upazila of Rangamati yesterday.

The dead is 30-year-old Suman Chakma alias October, read a statement of Rangamati unit UPDF organiser Sochol Chakma.

Suman, along with another UPDF member Akarshan Chakma, went to Sarikkhong Boalkhali area in the upazila for

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5



## PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 20

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5:20 12:45 4:30 6:03 7:30  
JAMAAT 5:55 1:15 4:45 6:07 8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার  
কৃষি মন্ত্রণালয়  
বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিষয়: 'বঙ্গবন্ধু জাতীয় কৃষি পুরস্কার ১৪২৫ ও ১৪২৬' এর মনোনয়ন আহ্বান।

বঙ্গবন্ধু জাতীয় কৃষি পুরস্কার ট্রাস্ট এর ট্রাস্টি বোর্ডের ৫ম সভার সিদ্ধান্ত অনুযায়ী 'বঙ্গবন্ধু জাতীয় কৃষি পুরস্কার ১৪২৫ ও ১৪২৬' প্রদানের নিমিত্ত মনোনয়নপত্র আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে।

মনোনয়নপত্র দাখিল ও বাছাইয়ের তফসিল নিম্নরূপ-

উপজেলা কমিটির নিকট মনোনয়ন ফরম দাখিলের সর্বশেষ তারিখ	৩০ মার্চ ২০২০
উপজেলা কমিটি কর্তৃক মনোনয়ন বাছাইয়ের সর্বশেষ তারিখ	১৫ এপ্রিল ২০২০
জেলা কমিটি কর্তৃক মনোনয়ন বাছাইয়ের সর্বশেষ তারিখ	০৫ মে ২০২০
কৃষি মন্ত্রণালয়ে মনোনয়ন দাখিলের সর্বশেষ তারিখ	২০ মে ২০২০

'বঙ্গবন্ধু জাতীয় কৃষি পুরস্কার ১৪২৫ ও ১৪২৬' এর মনোনয়ন ফরম ও নিয়মাবলি কৃষি মন্ত্রণালয়ের ওয়েবসাইটে [www.moa.gov.bd](http://www.moa.gov.bd); কৃষি সম্প্রসারণ অধিদপ্তরের ওয়েবসাইটে [www.dae.gov.bd](http://www.dae.gov.bd); কৃষি তথ্য সার্ভিসের ওয়েবসাইটে [www.ais.gov.bd](http://www.ais.gov.bd); সকল জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয় এবং সকল উপপরিচালক, কৃষি সম্প্রসারণ অধিদপ্তরের কার্যালয়ে পাওয়া যাবে।

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# MONEY LAUNDERING Global watchdog to put Myanmar on watchlist

REUTERS, Jakarta

Myanmar is set to be placed on a watchlist by a global finance watchdog this week, amid concerns of money-laundering by transnational drug traffickers and weak regulation of its financial system, two sources familiar with deliberations said.

A decision to put Myanmar on the "grey list" by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) would mean the inter-governmental body had found "strategic deficiencies" in the country's ability to counter money-laundering and terrorism financing.

While being on the list does not carry any sanctions, it could curtail the growth of financial, investment and trade flows to and from the Southeast Asian nation, a high-level official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters.

Kyaw Win Thein, the head of Myanmar's Financial Intelligence Unit who is attending the FATF meeting in Paris this week, told Reuters that Myanmar "is not on the grey list so far". Its fate will be decided at a plenary meeting on Thursday, he said.

The FATF typically announces its decisions on Friday at the end of its Paris plenary meetings.

Kyaw added that Myanmar's government has developed

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

In loving memory of  
**Late Captain Syed Ali Asghar Rizvi**  
(22 April 1944 - 20 February 2017)  
**3<sup>rd</sup> DEATH ANNIVERSARY**

His love, laughter and generosity  
Will be dearly missed by all.

**Milad Mehfil will be held at The Rizvi's Residence after Magrib prayers Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2020.**

His loving wife **SALMA**, sons **ZAKI & RAZI**  
and  
Grandchildren **AFRAZ, ARIANA & ALAZNE**