

Tithi receives scholarship, but a month too late

News of road crash victim's brilliant result reopen wounds

OUR CORRESPONDENT, M'singh

What she wouldn't give for this around two months ago?

On Thursday, the results for Primary Education Completion Examination were published. Tithi, from Mymensingh's Gouripur Paura Model Govt Primary School, got GPA-5 in the exams. On top of that, she received talent pool scholarship for her brilliant efforts.

On any other timeline, her family would be ecstatic. But unfortunately, Tithi died on January 13 in a road accident at Gouripur Madhyabazar area in Mymensingh. She was killed on the spot.

Tithi, a resident of Gouripur municipal area, met her end on just the second day of the new academic year, on her second day of sixth-grade classes.

"Tithi was the youngest of my two daughters. We had high hopes for her. The accident took away everything," said Rita

Rani Pal, Tithi's mother.

Clearly grieving, Rita could barely stop herself. "I remember her touch. I cannot forget her memories, it's as if she's still around us."

The accident occurred as Tithi and her classmate Rupa took the pavement on their way to a coaching class. After they reached Gouripur Madhyabazar area, a truck lost control and rammed onto them, killing Tithi and seriously injuring Rupa.

Soon after the accident, police arrested driver Humayun and helper Robin. They were sent to jail through a Mymensingh court.

Mazharul Anwar, headmaster of Gouripur Paura Model Govt Primary School, said, "We've had enough of losing brilliant minds to the road." He demanded that the authorities consider putting a ban on heavy vehicles plying streets around school areas.

Syed Rafiqul Islam, mayor of Gouripur



2 killed, 4 injured in road crashes

STAR REPORT

In Gopalganj, an army personnel was killed and two were injured in a road accident at Tetulia area under Sadar upazila around yesterday afternoon.

The deceased is Acinta Biswas (35). Hailing from Madaripur, he was posted in Rangpur Cantonment as a lance corporal.

"The accident took place when a truck and a motorbike collided head-on.

This killed biker Acinta on the spot, and left his wife and a relative injured," said Md Mukul, sub-inspector of Gopalganj Sadar Police Station.

The injured were taken to Gopalganj General Hospital, added the SI. Police have seized the truck but the driver managed to escape the spot.

In Gazipur's Porabari area, a youth was killed and two were injured in

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DISPUTE OVER CRICKET MATCH Ten students injured in clash at RU

RU CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 persons were injured in a clash among students of three departments at Rajshahi University, following a cricket match yesterday.

Two of the injured are Saiful Islam and Sheikh Saadi, master's students of philosophy department; and Shariful Islam Sonet, a second-year student of public administration department.

Of them, Saiful Islam was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. Identities of the rest injured could not be known immediately.

Witnesses said during a cricket match at university stadium between senior and junior students of philosophy department, the second and fourth-year students scuffled with the master's students around 1:30pm. The department teachers then handled the situation.

Later, several junior students of the department called their friend Shariful Islam Sonet of public administration and jointly attacked their seniors at Deans Complex around 3pm.

At that time, Saiful and Saadi were attacked with sticks and brickbats, said Zahidul Islam, a teacher of philosophy department.

Later, around 20-25 students of philosophy chased Sonet and beat him. During the chase, four marketing department students were beaten when they scuffled with them in front of Tukitaki Chatter, witnesses said.

Proctor Prof Lutfur Rahman said the injured were sent to the medical centre. "I have already discussed the matter with the teachers and students concerned for settlement."

OVERHEAD CABLE-FREE SYLHET CITY Many hurdles to untangling mess



Sylhet city's Zindabazar is currently entangled in kilometres of cable, which makes the whole area unsightly. Authorities, however, are planning on giving the place a facelift by removing them. What may result is the current scenario at Dorga Gate area, right, which has become free of all cables. But the process is full of hurdles, as authorities, internet providers and regulatory organisations have been going back and forth for months to find a suitable solution for all stakeholders. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: DWOHA CHOWDHURY, SHEIKH NASTIR

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Sylhet city was highly praised recently for ridding one of its roads from cobwebs of overhead cables, but expanding the project to other areas of the city is like traversing a room full of wire-traps.

Sylhet City Corporation (SCC), internet service providers (ISP) and Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Network (NTTN) providers have been going back and forth for months over implementing the plan. On one hand, the project will be a boon for the city's beautification, but on the other, it will be too expensive for ISPs to carry out, and the city might be devoid of internet connection for an indefinite period.

First phase of the underground power line project of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) is about to end, and a seven-kilometre road, stretching from Amberkhana to Circuit House, is about to be detangled of cables.

"We are almost ready to go cable free in these areas [adjacent to the road] and tested our new system successfully. We will soon start to remove all electric poles gradually," said Ziaul Haque, executive engineer of Power Distribution System Development Project of BPDB.

Mentioning these facts, SCC issued a circular on Sunday, urging all ISPs to take proper initiatives and discuss with NTTN providers by March 8, saying that the corporation is not liable if the city suffers broadband disconnection.

NTTN is the regulatory body of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). According to NTTN guidelines, only licensed NTTN providers are authorised to build distribution networks within the country and all network providers avail the service from them.

Summit Communications Ltd and Fiber@Home Ltd are the only licenced NTTN providers in the country.

According to Sylhet ISP Association, around

43 licensed ISPs in Sylhet are providing broadband internet services to approximately 50,000 city residents.

Nayeemuzzaman Nayeem, general secretary of the association, said, "Almost all ISPs' uplink [central hub for connections] is located at Zindabazar, which is included in the underground project. Moreover, the roads included are prime locations, where all ISPs have coverage. If the lines are cut, the whole city will be affected."

SCC, Sylhet ISP Association, NTTN providers and BTRC have been meeting repeatedly to solve the problem.

In a press conference arranged by the association on February 25-26, the association claimed that SCC Mayor Ariful Haque Chowdhury assured ISPs that alternatives will be offered, but finally on February 18, he gave up on those ideas.

"The mayor in previous meetings said they would attach all internet cables to streetlamp poles and formed a committee on November 24 last year to assess possibilities," said Nayeem. "But the committee estimated a cost of Tk 4.3 crore for implementation, which is impossible for us to spend."

He further said, "During a meeting, Summit Communications provided a tariff to avail their service. If we avail, the cost of providing broadband service will significantly rise. Furthermore, they want us to lock an end user's connection agreement for at least four years, which is unrealistic."

"For these reasons we're incapable of availing NTTN services," he added.

In reply, KM Tariquzzaman, chief technology officer of Summit Communications, said, "We are the only legal way for ISPs to reach end users, and providing our services to ISPs is time consuming and costly."

"Considering all factors, we offered a rate and some conditions to ISPs. We don't want

customers to bear the brunt of an excessive price hike either," he said. "Moreover, to bar illegal use of the service, we want lock client connection agreements for the time being."

Meanwhile, ISP owners claimed that SCC has double standards, as Sylhet Cable Systems (SCS), an organisation that provides satellite cable connections, has built its own underground cable network without going through NTTN.

In reply, Md Juned Alam, managing director of SCS, said, "We built our own network after getting approval from SCC. The corporation also needs our network to get benefits through our cable channels."

Mayor Ariful echoed Juned's comment, saying, "Permitting SCS to go underground will eventually help the city corporation, as we'll be using their underground channels to connect the city's CCTVs."

Regarding the whole situation, he said, "As some local youths are involved in the ISP business, I thought about supporting them. Although they are bound to avail services from NTTN companies, which they found costly, I asked them to run their cables through drains the corporation is constructing beside the road, but they refused due to excessive cost."

"Finding no other way, I published the circular so that people are prepared to avail alternative internet services if broadband is cut off," the Mayor said.

"All large institutions like banks and offices in the project areas have already found alternative ways to connect to the internet. As far as I know, ISPs are now trying to reroute their cables behind buildings near the road, and that would keep the main road cable free," he added.

ISP owners, however, have not yet decided on their next course of action, and putting cables behind buildings is only a temporary solution, as the authorities are planning on making the entire Sylhet city cable free.

Where will elephants go?

Habitat loss, food scarcity and development work fuel elephant-human conflict

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Cg

Parveen Akther (45), a resident of Joistopura village under Boalkhali upazila in Chattogram, used to hardly experience elephant attacks. The fear of elephant attack has never been a part of daily life for her. But in the last five or six years, a herd of elephants have regularly scoured their village in search of food, in the process attacking people and damaging crops.

Now the constant fear of elephant attacks have gripped not only her but the whole village.

On November 24 last year, at least three people died in an elephant attack at Kodurkhil, a neighbouring village. Another person died in December in a similar kind of attack in Joistopura.

Parveen told The Daily Star that they never saw such frequent attacks before. They are afraid of stepping out in the evenings, as darkness makes it tough to locate a charging elephant's position.

Thousands of people are spending sleepless nights in various parts of six upazilas in Chattogram due to a sharp increase in elephant attacks. At least 10 people died in multiple attacks in the last four months at Rangunia, Boalkhali, Anwara, Bashkhali, Lohagora and Satkania upazilas.

According to the forest department, at least 88 elephants died from 2001 to 2019 in Cox's Bazar, Chattogram and three districts of the Hill Tracts combined. Around 50 people died in elephant attacks from 2010 to 2019.

Md Kamal Uddin (40), a resident of Sharaf Bhata union under Rangunia upazila, told The Daily Star that he did not see such frequent attacks even five years back.

"Every now and then, elephants attack our village and damage crops and claim people's lives," he said. An elderly person died in his village in January in such attack.

Abu Naser Md Yeasin Neyaz, divisional forest officer (nature conservation and wildlife) of Chattogram, said they formed nine elephant response teams comprising of 10 members each in the wake of repeated attacks.

The committee is actively working now at Anwara, Bashkhali and parts of Chakaria upazilas, he said, adding that they will form at least 30 such committees to reduce human-elephant conflict.

"Elephant response teams firstly try to understand the behaviour of

IUCN classified Asian elephant as an endangered species, with a population of 268 at present in Bangladesh



FILE PHOTO

Elephants need large habitats. As connectivity between habitats are shrinking due to various development work, they have few spaces left to roam, forcing them to swoop in on localities. Our development work must be elephant and wildlife friendly

Md Raquibul Amin
Country Director of IUCN

We see reluctance of policy makers in most cases when it comes to conserving nature and wildlife. Politicians are not conscious enough. Those who advise them about development projects have their own interests. These are the bitter truth. That's why the issue of conserving nature does not get reflected in development planning

AHM Raihan Sarker
Elephant expert

elephants and then try to move them back to the forest, depending on their behavioral trend. The second task is to keep curious people outside of the range of elephants, so that no fatalities take place," he said.

Md Raquibul Amin, country director of International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN), told The Daily Star the extent of attacks have seen a sharp rise in recent years as forest area reduced and the elephants lost access to food.

Elephants hardly marauded across Rangunia and Anwara upazilas before, but in recent days elephant attacks in those areas became a common phenomenon, he said. It was necessary to look for the reason seriously, the IUCN country director added.

"Elephants need large habitats. As connectivity between habitats are shrinking due to various development work, they have few spaces left to roam, forcing them to swoop in on localities. Our development work must be elephant and wildlife friendly," he said.

IUCN classified the Asian elephant as an endangered species, with a population of 268 at present in

Bangladesh.

Asked, elephant expert AHM Raihan Sarker, associate professor of Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science at Chittagong University, said the habitats of elephants are getting destroyed in the name of development. Authorities often spurn the opinions of relevant experts in development planning, in the process costing forest areas and wildlife.

The correct methods of protecting forests are not followed properly, and results in people encroaching on forest land and shrinking the habitats of herbivores like elephants. Forest land is being leased out to many influential people in the locality, thus constricting the roaming space for elephants, he further added.

"We see the reluctance of policy makers in most cases when it comes to the conservation of nature and its wildlife. The politicians are not conscious enough. Those who advise them about development projects have their own interests. These are the bitter truth. That's why the issue of conserving nature does not get reflected in development planning," he added.

President convenes special JS session

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament, for the first time in its history, is going to hold a special session on March 22 and 23 to mark the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

President Abdul Hamid yesterday convened the two-day special session, exercising his power bestowed upon him by Article 72 (1) of the constitution, said a release of the parliament secretariat.

Former Indian president Pranab Mukherjee and Nepalese President Bidya Devi Bhandari will deliver speeches during the special session, said sources at the parliament secretariat.

Speakers and lawmakers of different parliaments are also invited on the occasion.

The parliament went into special sittings on January 31 and June 18 of 1974 when former Yugoslav President Marshal Josip Broz Tito and then Indian President VV Giri addressed the Bangladesh parliament, respectively.

CASE AGAINST EX-DIG MIZAN

Publish ads for wife, brother's presence: court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed court authorities to publish advertisements in two national dailies, asking former DIG Mizanur Rahman's wife, Sohelia Anar Ratna, and his brother Mahbubur Rahman, to appear before it on April 2 centring a graft case.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order.

Earlier on February 9, the same court accepted charges against Mizan, his nephew Sub-inspector Mahmudul Hasan, wife and brother, and issued arrest warrants against Ratna and Mahbubur after the investigation officer of the case showed them as fugitives in the charge sheet.

On June 24 last year, ACC filed the case with its Integrated District Office in Dhaka on charges of amassing over Tk 3 crore beyond known sources of income.

Following the case, Mizan was arrested while his nephew was sent to jail after his surrender.

GK SHAMIM'S WIFE SUBMITS APPLICATION TO RELEASE BANK ACCOUNTS

Shamima Sultana, wife of expelled Jubo League leader GK Shamim, yesterday submitted an application with the court, seeking release of bank accounts which were earlier frozen in connection with a graft case.

After hearing, Judge Emrul directed the case's investigation officer to submit a report by April 13 on whether to release it.

In the petition, Shamima's lawyer Shawkat Osman mentioned that his client, who is accused in the case, is a government employee and her salary was deposited in the frozen account.

His client cannot withdraw her salary, so she appealed to the court to release the accounts, the lawyer added.

On October 21 last year, ACC filed the graft case against GK Shamim and his mother Ayesha Akhter for amassing over Tk 297.7 crore through illegal means.

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