



Kanchan Ali Sikder during class at Bilkis Jahan Technical School and Business Management College recently.

PHOTO:STAR

Two decades on, he carries on

Age-defying retired teacher continues giving free English lessons at schools he established

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Freedom fighter Kanchan Ali Sikder, now 90 years old, still teaches after retirement following a career spanning 60 years -- and plans to do so for the rest of his life. Locally known as Kanchan Master, he has established two educational institutions in his native village Deuli, and has been teaching English here free of charge for over 24 years now. Earlier, Kanchan Master served as head teacher in seven educational institutions in Barishal and Patuakhali districts for 36 years, retiring in 1996 from Hanua Motijan High School in Barishal. "I could not stay idle without learning further or teaching -- it's my habit-turned-

addiction," Kanchan told The Daily Star. Deuli is part of Garuria union under Bakerganj upazila of Barishal. Kanchan studied at Garuria Secondary School and then at BM College in Barishal. His first job, in 1960, as head teacher was for a salary of Tk 10. "From then until 1996, when I retired, I served as the head teacher at seven high schools," he said. Though Kanchan got the opportunity to enter public service in the police and air force among others, he felt unable to leave the teaching profession. "In 1977, I was elected union parishad chairman, but was not disconnected from the school. I loved very much my students, my classroom, and I could not separate myself from them," said Kanchan.

Though he taught both English and Bangla regularly, Kanchan said teaching English has been the most rewarding aspect of his six-decades-long career. A dedicated teacher, even in his old age, he has never been late to class or sat down while taking lessons. "Until my death, I want to stay with my students and continue teaching them." The inspirational teacher sets an example for local teachers. Mihir Karmakar, a teacher of Kanchan Sikder Bidyaniketan High School, said he understands the honour in teaching after joining the school. "Where people pass their leisure time at home, Sir took classes for such a long time, many times taking two classes back-to-back

but I have not seen him sit down," he added. Ninth-graders at the school -- Lamia Akhter, Mukta Akhter, Nayan Sikder, and Arifur Rahman -- said they used to wait for Kanchan Sir's English class. "My father loves his students and loves teaching," said ASM Zulfikar Haider, chairman of Garuria union parishad and elder son of Kanchan. His other son is principal of Bilkis Jahan Technical School and Business Management College. He also has three daughters; all his children are well educated. They are involved in the work of the two schools their father had set up in Deuli -- Kanchan Ali Sikder Bidyaniketan High School, in 2013, and Bilkis Jahan Technical School and Business Management College in 2012.

1,000 poor people get eye operation for free

BNSB Eye Hospital in Moulvibazar Sadar arranged the programme marking Mujib Borsho

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

As many as 1,000 poor and elderly people got free treatment for different eye problems including cataract at BNSB (Bangladesh National Society for the Blind) Eye Hospital in Matarkapon area of Moulvibazar Sadar upazila during a three-day programme ending yesterday. The programme, held with the support of ANDHERI-HILFE, Germany, was arranged on the occasion of



Mujib Borsho. Talking to The Daily Star, day labourer Jalal Mia, 59, a patient from Zakiganj village in Zakiganj upazila under Sylhet district, said, "I couldn't imagine seeing with my left eye as the problem got very serious. But BNSB helped me to see again with the eye, providing treatment for free." A 61-year-old farmer, Javed Mia, who came from the same village, echoed him. Moulvibazar BNSB Eye Hospital organized a free eye screening camp in Zakiganj upazila of Sylhet with the support of ANDHERI-HILFE, Germany, said Abdul Hamid Mahbub, joint secretary of the hospital's 17-member executive committee. "Of the 1000 selected patients, 70 received cataract operation while others got treatment for different complications in the eyes. Medicines and dark glasses were provided to the operated patients yesterday, the last day of the three-day programme," he added. "Our mission is the prevention of blindness by creating mass awareness and early intervention," said Syed Mushahid Ahmed Chunnun, general secretary of the hospital's executive committee.

Unmarked speed breakers pose risk

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Unmarked speed breakers in Inderhat-Chandkathi road in Nesarabad upazila of Pirojpur pose risk of accidents for drivers and commuters. There are 31 unmarked speed breakers in the 16-kilometre road that is used for going to Pirojpur district headquarters, Nazirpur upazila, Goplaganj, Barishal and other areas of the country. The speed breakers, made allegedly by locals for their convenience, cause problems for users of the road including a large number of motorcyclists, especially at night. "As the speed breakers are unmarked, we often fail to identify them from a reasonable distance. When a motorbike comes across such a speed breaker, it becomes difficult to control the vehicle," said Koushik Bepary, a motorcyclist on the road. "I have to run my motorbike along the road several times daily. And so, I know where the speed breakers are and have got used to the situation. Still I face trouble when I have to move at night," said Md Nadim, another motorcyclist. The road with roughly made speed

breakers poses risk for the newcomers, he said. Over 2,000 vehicles including battery-run auto-rickshaws, leguna (locally made motorised three-wheelers), passenger carrying motorbikes and personal motorbikes move on the road daily, locals said, adding that the unmarked speed breakers pose problems for the vehicles. "I find it difficult to move on the road as I have to cross over 30 speed breakers," said Mohammad Ibrahim, driver of a battery-run auto-rickshaw plying the road. Mir Ali Shakir, upazila engineer at Nesarabad, admitted that the unmarked speed breakers cause sufferings to people using Inderhat-Chandkathi road. "I also face trouble while traveling along the road by motorbike. The speed breakers were not made when Local Government Engineering Department constructed the road. Locals made those later for their own interest. "We asked the local public representatives to see the matter but they seem not careful about it. At this moment we do not have any fund for removing the speed breakers," he said.



Acute manpower crisis hampers operational activities at Hemnagar railway station in Tangail's Gopalpur upazila for long. Below, local farmers now use the railway station for threshing and drying crops.

PHOTO:STAR

Hemnagar rly station a sorrow for commuters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Acute manpower crisis has been hampering operational activities at Hemnagar railway station in Gopalpur upazila for the last five years, causing immense sufferings to commuters. As a result, furniture of the office rooms and other structures in the station have been lying damaged, said locals, adding that some valuable things were also stolen from there. Farmers now use the lone railway station for threshing and drying crops during the daytime while the same place becomes a heaven for drug addicts and sex workers at night. Md Masum Khan, stationmaster of nearby Bangabandhu Bridge East Railway Station, said posts of three stationmasters, three points men, three booking clerks and a fourth-class employee in Hemnagar railway station have been lying vacant for the last five years. Although three local trains and an intercity train stop at the station, local passengers cannot collect tickets from there for not having any ticket master at the station, said commuters. Construction of 42 km metre-gauge line stretching from Tarakandi to Bangabandhu Bridge east was completed in 2011. The prime minister inaugurated the rail line the following year. There are 52 bridges and culverts and four railway stations in the long rail track. The Hemnagar railway station is one them. There have been no formal activities in Hemnagar railway station since 2015 as its staffers have been transferred to different



stations, said local railway sources. Only one gateman has been performing duty at the railway station for the last five years, it added. Despite repeated pleas, the authorities concerned are yet to take any steps to recruit manpower at the station to mitigate train passengers' sufferings, said local commuters. Mohammad Kamal Hossain, a schoolteacher of Hemnagar area, said they have to collect tickets from Bhuapur and Sarishabari railway stations, about 10 km to 15 away from Hemnagar. On the other hand, local passengers feel serious insecurity for not having any security guards at the lonely station, said the schoolteacher. Shawkat Jamil, divisional manager (east) of Bangladesh Railway, said the posts of stationmasters, points men and booking clerks are lying vacant at Hemnagar railway station for long as its staffers have been transferred to different busy and important stations. They have already informed the higher authorities about recruitment of manpower at the station, but to no respond yet, he said.



Unmarked speed breakers, like this one on Inderhat-Chandkathi road at Sohagdal village in Nesarabad upazila of Pirojpur, cause nuisance for vehicles. Inset, a motorcyclist avoids a bump on the road at Batnata village in the upazila.

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