Ex-BGMEA vice president Sirajul Haque passes away

Bss, *Dhaka*

Md Sirajul Haque, former vice president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), passed away at a hospital in the capital on Thursday night.

He was 78.

Sirajul, also elder brother of the Industries and Trade Affairs Secretary of Awami League Md Siddiqur Rahman, breathed his last around 11pm.

He left behind his wife, three sons, two daughters, a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Prime Minister and AL President Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at the death.

In a condolence message, she prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

In another condolence message, Road Transport and Bridges Minister and AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader expressed sorrow at Sirajul's death.

Mujibnagar

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large number of stenos and typists are urgently needed to take over the responsibilities of the large number of stenos and typists now working in English.

BHUTTO ENVISAGES SOME KIND OF LINK WITH BANGLADESH

Pakistan President Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto has envisaged some kind of link with Bangladesh. "A time will come when some kind of relationship will be established between us and the Muslim Bengal. We look forward to the moment when our differences with our brotherly people of 'Muslim Bengal' will cease to exist. No power on earth can prevent this," he adds.

INDIAN ARTISTS CALL ON BANGABANDHU

A group of Indian artists led by Gouriprasanna Majumdar calls on the Bangabandhu at the Gono Bhaban today. The artists now on a tour of Bangladesh stay with the prime minister for some time.

Source: December 20, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Bangladesh Observer and Ittefaq.

7 held

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suspect, asked her to meet in Naraidartek Karaitola area on Thursday.

As she went there around 9:30pm, Shakhawat along with the seven others raped her, said the SI.

A case was being filed against the eight alleged rapists with the police station, said Farzana Yasmin, assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Kaliganj circle.

The woman was sent to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital in the district for medial tests, she added.

Chicken

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Scientists excavated the specimen from two slabs of stone and, using X-rays, found previously hidden skeletal elements and soft tissue – including a section of the long, thick mane running down the animal's back that was preserved nearly intact. The arms were also covered in fur-like filaments down to the hands.

South Korea donated 5,000 face masks, sanitisers, desk shields and other medical equipment to the doctors and health workers of Korea-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital in Savar on Thursday. Korean Ambassador Lee Jang-keun and Doh Young-Ah, director of Koica Dhaka Office, handed over the medical equipment and safety kits at a programme at the hospital. PHOTO: COLLECTED

104 UK MPs urge govt

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Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya, a minority ethnic group who live in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

More than 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military crackdown and took shelter in Bangladesh in 2017.

The ICJ has ordered provisional measures, requiring Myanmar to take steps to protect the Rohingya who remain in Myanmar, and submit regular reports to it. Canada and Netherlands have already intervened in the case.

The letter said the United Kingdom has traditionally led the world in promoting human rights in Myanmar. The UK is now the "penholder" at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the founder of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI).

"At the same time, given our leading role, and our status as penholder at the UNSC, our failure to join the case could unintentionally send the wrong signal to the military regarding our commitment to addressing impunity."

The MPs said with human rights violations against the Rohingyas continuing, including the disenfranchisement of Rohingya in the recent election, and no sign of any changes by the government of Myanmar that would create conditions for safe return of Rohingya refugees, it is clear more still needs to be done.

With Russia and China blocking a full referral of Burma to the International Criminal Court by the UNSC, joining the case at the ICJ is currently the best available avenue for pursing justice and ending impunity, the letter said.

"It is essential the British government throws its full weight behind this case."

They said in addition to British parliamentarians, experts in international law, and human rights organisations believe that a UK intervention would bring benefits in helping to ensure the most positive outcome from the case.

Protect farmers from Covid-19

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have been shifted elsewhere; agricultural workers are not being properly paid; and pastoralist communities and indigenous people have been impacted as national borders have been closed.

"On the other hand, politicians and state leaders have taken advantage of the pandemic to consolidate their power by suppressing dissent," said Quizon, former chairperson and executive director of NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC).

Overall, the Covid-19 health crisis has created an environment, where it is easier to violate the land tenure rights of vulnerable populations, he added.

At the webinar, participants from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Cambodia, Indonesia and Philippines discussed farmers' land rights situation in their respective countries.

ALRD Deputy Executive Director Rowshan Jahan Moni said, "Despite bumper production of rice this year, harvested crops could not reach markets in time due to [the coronavirus-driven] lockdown. Incidents of land grabbing of minorities and indigenous people and violence against women, including their rape and torture, have also increased."

Ujjaini Halim, executive director, Institute for Motivating Self Employment (IMSE), India, said at present, 60 percent of India's population or an estimated 812 million people live below the World Bank-determined poverty line of $3.2 a day for lower middle income countries. Due to the pandemic, 104 million more people could fall below that poverty line in India."

Dewi Kartika, general secretary of Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (KPA) from Indonesia, said, "Agrarian conflicts have increased during this pandemic due to increased land grabbing, intimidation and political suppression. Demonstration and street protests have been prohibited or restricted in many countries."

Jagat Deuja, former executive director, Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC) and Expert Member of Land Issues Resolving Commission, Nepal said, "Violence and abuse have increased up to eight percent in Nepal during this pandemic. Farmers are also being forced to sell their products at much lower rate than the normal market price."

Vaing Samrith, programme manager, Star Kampuchea from Cambodia, said, "Many farmers who had taken loans from banks could not pay them back as they could not cultivate their lands or sell their goods during the lockdown. They are now selling their lands to repay the loan."

Nathaniel Marquez Don, executive director, Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, said, " In the Philippines, more than two million hectares of lands have been contested in the last nine months which is way more than the normal times. An estimated 252,241 households have been adversely affected by these conflicts."

Followed by the participant's presentation, a panel discussion took place where panelists emphasised on immediate land reforms so that farmers' rights on lands can be protected legally. They also demanded reformation of social safety net programmes to include more farmers and small entrepreneurs in them.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive, Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said, "We need to have law on right to food, we need to have legal promulgation on farmers' rights and we need to have law on the protection of agricultural land."

Prof Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir of Dhaka University's Department of Development Studies said, "To increase resilience against food insecurity and poverty induced by this pandemic, we need to introduce a universal social security system which covers formal education, nutrition, medical services and skill development training. This social security system is based on the human life cycle, which provides support for every phase of our life cycle."

Mohammed Helal Uddin, director research at Centre for Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (Cirdap), said, "According to the current vaccine development trends, we can estimate that the pandemic may last for at least another one to three years."

"This duration will prove fatal for many small farmers and entrepreneurs who don't have enough savings to sustain for such a long time. The governments should bring these extremely vulnerable populations under the social safety net programmes," he added.

Good move; now follow them up

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facilitate Bangladesh's connectivity to Nepal and Bhutan," said Munshi Faiz Ahmad, former ambassador and chairman of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS).

India is also getting connected via inland waterways. Trial run of trans-shipment of Indian goods from Kolkata to Agartala via Chattogram has already taken place. The Sonamura-Daudkandi protocol route has been operationalised, while the trans-shipment of Indian goods through Chattogram and Mongla ports will also begin in the near future.

Munshi Faiz said India is investing in these connectivity projects, which is likely to draw more investments in the future. Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami on Thursday said Bangladesh can also use Indian ports for third-country exports.

Bangladesh earnestly wants implementation of the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) for augmenting regional connectivity. For the same purpose, Dhaka sought to join the ongoing India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway project.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said it is very positive sign that Dhaka sought to join the trilateral highway project, which Delhi may consider.

"This highway would be crucial for Bangladesh as it connects South and Southeast Asia, and talks are underway for FTA in the BIMSTEC," he told this correspondent.

Implementation of the MVA is taking long, and the countries involved need to speed up to do whatever is necessary for its operationalisation, Prof Mustafizur said. He lauded Bangladesh's proposal to India on allowing Bangladeshi trucks to use the Feni Bridge, once completed, to transport goods from Chattogram port to India's North East.

The talks on Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement that took place between the two premiers need to be taken forward as it would be important for Bangladesh that is moving to graduate from the LDC category soon, he said.

The economist said it is a good sign that exports from Bangladesh to India are growing, but there are still some non-tariff barriers and anti-dumping duty on exports of jute products -- issues that need to be sorted out.

He also said it is a positive sign that India offered Bangladesh to join the New Development Bank of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as it can help get concessional loans for infrastructure projects.

"These are all great talks. What's needed now is to take these forward," Mustafizur said.

Dhaka University International Relations Prof Amena Mohsin agreed that the PM-level summit ushers new hope and is expected to yield concrete results.

While India's support to Bangladesh for Covid-19 vaccine supply as well as co-production is welcome news, one needs to keep in mind that lots of vaccine doses will be required for the pandemic to be controlled. Therefore, all avenues of vaccine supply should be kept open, she said.

All three analysts said the long pending issues of Teesta water-sharing deal and bringing border killing to zero has seen little progress, which may create mistrust in the public mind and therefore needs special attention from the Indian side.

Amena Mohsin said although India supports Bangladesh's position on Rohingya repatriation and is investing for development in Myanmar's Rakhine state, it is not clear how initiatives at the political level are being taken by India to convince Myanmar. It is more a political problem than an economic or social one and needs a political solution, she said.

Munshi Faiz said sorting out these issues can make the bond between the two nations even stronger. Also, it will help India lead on the global stage -- something to which the regional power is aspiring.

Sculpture of Bagha Jatin vandalised

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quizzing. They were later freed after questioning.

According to police sources, the authorities tightened the security and set up CCTV cameras in the district after Bangabandhu's sculpture was vandalised.

However, another such incident happened.

SM Tanvir Arafath, superintendent of Kushtia police, told The Daily Star that the college authorities had shown negligence in protecting Jatin's sculpture.

They also clearly violated the instruction of the government, he added.

Kumarkhali Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Rajibul Islam Khan said the government was already considering a proposal of renaming the college after Bagha Jatin.

Jatindranath Mukherjee, popularly known as Bagha Jatin, grew up here. However, none of his successors live here now, he added.

The night guard of the Kaya College Khalilur and his family live at Bagha Jatin's grandmother's house now, said local sources.

Ziaul Haque Swapan, chairman of Kaya Union Parishad, said he never received any response from any higher authorities although he repeatedly asked them what measures were taken to protect the sculpture.

Abdus Samad, the then Khulna Divisional Commissioner, inaugurated the bust on December 6, 2016. It was built by Kumarkhali Upazila Administration.

Later the same year, the Governor of the Indian state of Tripura, Shri Tathagata Roy, visited the college and reopened the bust.

A memorial plaque was placed next to the bust in honor of the Tathagata Ray.

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Approval from 3 authorities must for foreign trips

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This is to ensure that public money spent for the trip is not misused.

The bench of Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury and Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque made the observation on Thursday while delivering verdict on a writ petition filed in 2016 in connection with the issue, Deputy Attorney General Sk Shaifuzzaman told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said Jonny Corporation, a fog light importing company, filed the petition challenging the legality of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation's action to confiscate the contractor's bank security money of Tk 28 lakh as the company had imported and supplied 10 substandard fog lights for BIWTC ferries plying the Mawa and Paturia routes.

The lights were imported from the US in 2016.

Citing the HC observation, Shaifuzzaman said the government officials below the rank of joint secretary must concentrate on the state purpose and cannot spend any leisure time during the official visit abroad.

In the judgement, the bench also observed that the government officials must report about the visit and expenditures to the cabinet division and finance ministry after joining the office, he added.

Shaifuzzaman said the government officials concerned are now to take permission from his or her own ministry for any official foreign tour.

He added that the detailed observations of the HC would be available when it would release the full text of its verdict.

Shaifuzzaman said the BIWTC had confiscated Jonny Corporation's security money after its probe committee found that the supplier company received a payment of Tk 6 crore for supplying 7,000W high-power fog lights, but those were not more effective than the 3,000W lights usually used in ferries.

He added that the probe also found that government officials -- one from the BIWTC, three from the shipping ministry and the managing director of Jonny Corporation -- had visited the US in summer instead of winter and that is why the effectiveness of the fog lights could not be tested properly.

Following the probe report, the BIWTC confiscated the security money of Jonny Corporation. Then the company filed the petition with the HC challenging the BIWTC's action.

The HC on Thursday delivered the verdict after rejecting the petition.

Jonny Corporation owner Omer Ali's lawyer Bahadur Shah told this paper yesterday that his client did not communicate with him after the judgment was delivered. So, he did not know whether the company would move any appeal before the Supreme Court's Appellate Division, the lawyer added.

Covax to begin

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have access to doses in the first half of 2021, with first deliveries anticipated to begin in the first quarter of 2021," the statement said.

Mahmudullah

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Ali, but fell short in the end.

Yesterday's final also marked the successful hosting of the second domestic tournament in the country amid the coronavirus pandemic, with the first being the 50-over BCB President's Cup in October. It sets the stage to host the West Indies for two Tests and three ODIs beginning from January next year.

The win was also Mahmudullah's first triumph in domestic T20 tournaments.

Five teams – Khulna, Chattogram, Beximco Dhaka, Minister Group Rajshahi and Fortune Barishal – participated in the Bangabandhu T20 Cup, which started from November 24.

Chattogram were by far the strongest team in the tournament, winning seven of their eight group games. However, they came up short in yesterday's final against the experienced Khulna, who also beat them in the first qualifier.

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)

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Request for Expression of Interest (REOI)

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), an apex microfinance and employment generation organization has been working for poverty alleviation in Bangladesh since 1990. PKSF wants to **"Engage an Audit Firm to Conduct Audit of Computerized Information System (CIS) of PKSF"**.

Competent national Audit firms are invited to express their interest in the above service. They are requested to collect Request for Expression of Interest (REoI) with Terms of Reference (ToR) from the office of PKSF during office hours or from PKSF website (**www.pksf-bd.org**).

Last date of Submission of REoI is **07 January 2021, upto 12:00 PM**.

Request for Proposal(RFP) will be issued to the short-listed audit firms for the submission of proposals. Firm will be selected based on"Least Cost Selection (LCS)" method.

PKSF reserves the right to accept or reject any or all expressions of interest without assigning any reasons.

Dr. Md. Jashim Uddin
Deputy Managing Director