

Holiday hangover claims 88 patients in 7 days at RMCH

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Thirty-year-old housewife Lal Banu died yesterday, five days later her admittance into Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

Her mother Ez Banu was lamenting while her hapless husband was sitting silently by two minor children on the hospital premises for the release of her body.

"Life of my wife must have been saved, if I could afford proper treatment. Doctors seldom attend patients at the government hospital," Lal Banu's husband Haider Hossain of Vetkibari village under Niamatpur upazila in Naogaon described his plight with certain anger in his eyes as this correspondent proceeded there.

"There is only one doctor at Ward No 3 that was full with patients as we admitted her with both of her legs severely broken in a road accident and she was bleeding profusely," Haider, a solvent farmer, added.

He said, "We managed them (doctors) whatever medicine or medical equipment they sought. She was given blood. But doctors and nurses did not appear on time when she needed an injection, medicine or checkup."

"There was none beside her when she expired despite her utmost desire to live. Doctors came

later only to confirm her death," he added.

With Lal Banu, some 10 patients died at RMCH yesterday as a total of 88 patients died in last seven days since October 1 while most of the doctors did not turn up almost deserting the hospital to celebrate Eid and Puja festivals and holiday hangover.

The RMCH records show that at least 12 patients have been dying at the hospital every day since October 1.

According to the records, 11 patients died on October 1 while 12 on October 2, 14 on October 3, 11 on October 4, 14 on October 5, 16 on October 6 and 10 on yesterday.

The rate of death is higher at ward numbers of 8, 10, 14, 16, 20, 21, 24 and 27 in comparison with other wards.

Usually on public holidays, the pressure on RMCH mounts as other hospitals and clinics refer their critical patients here, said RMCH sources.

The number of patients was high in the first four days of October and on an average, 300 to 400 patients visit the hospital's emergency department every day, the sources said, adding that the number increased up to 450 and even more during the vacation.

While visiting RMCH wards yesterday, attendants complained

of shortage of doctors and said that instead of doctors, interns are giving treatment. A few consultants and specialised doctors were seen on duty, but they were providing time to representatives of different medicine companies.

The air in the hospital was thick with grief of relatives of the dead patients while the hospital staffs were also seen passing busy hours releasing the bodies.

Attendants of the patients alleged that most patients are released from the emergency department following shortage of doctors.

Sirajul Islam of Banesar at Puthia upazila was admitted to RMCH with breathing problems.

He died on Monday due to lack of proper treatment, claimed his family.

"If we could have predicted of such poor condition of treatment here, we would not have taken him here," said his daughter Piari Begum while weeping. She said no specialised doctor attended his father since he was admitted on Sunday.

With labour pains, Lucky was rushed to RMCH from Tarash upazila in Sirajganj. She was kept on waiting for a doctor to operate her until she died on Monday. Her husband Jahangir questioned dignity of doctors.

Jahir Uddin of Kushtia was admitted at Ward No 17 with liver ailments. When his son was frantically looking after a doctor in and outside the ward, his father expired on the same day.

"There should be a specialised doctor at every ward round the clock, but there was none at the ward," Jahangir's son Rezaul said.

Some three specialised doctors at three wards told this correspondent that they each were looking after more than one department.

"How I can deal with so many patients alone and the authorities take little care about attendance of doctors at the hospital," said one of them preferring anonymity.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, RMCH Director Brig Gen Khademul Insan M Iqbal said the deaths are 'normal' at the hospital that usually deals with 1300 patients daily. "If it is not normal, why 10 patients have died today (Tuesday) that is not a holiday."

"Ours is not a European country, we are working amid shortage of doctors, poor facilities as elsewhere in the country, but we did never lack sincerity," he said.

He denied the allegation of poor treatment and said, "We employed sufficient doctors and kept mobile phone numbers of senior doctors for calling them in serious condition."

US excited about Bangladesh's election

Says USAID official

UNB, Dhaka

Mark Ward, a senior official of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), yesterday said the US government is excited about the upcoming national polls of Bangladesh.

The high official of USAID bureau for Asia made the comment while talking to UNB at a programme at Westin Hotel in the city.

Replying to a question, Ward said: "There will have some rumours before the election, but we hope for a free, fair election. We hope some good result would come on December 18."

Mentioning the experience of Bangladesh's natural disaster management, he said it had helped him to convince the US Congress to provide more assistance to Bangladesh.

Nazimuddin Alam gets bail in another case

UNB, Dhaka

A vacation bench of the High Court yesterday granted bail for six months to detained former BNP lawmaker Nazimuddin Alam of Bhola in another criminal case, clearing the way for his release from jail as he earlier got bail in six other criminal cases.

The case he got bail yesterday was filed with Ramna Police Station on April 9, 2001 under the Public Safety Act.

Alam, a former assistant general secretary of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), was arrested from the residence of party leader Brig Gen (Retd) Hannan Shah in Dhaka on July 27.

The criminal cases Alam facing include attempt to murder, arson attacks, extortion and offences under the Explosive Substance Act.

Barrister Mahbub Uddin Khokon appeared for Alam.

Ershad sees plot to foil JS polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said the government will have to hand over power to an elected government after holding the election on the scheduled date for strengthening democracy.

He also said conspiracy to foil the election will have to be staved off as the countrymen are prepared for the election.

The JP Chairman was speaking at a ceremony at the party office at Banani in the city where leaders of the Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) joined his party.

JP-Manju Central Vice Chairman Amanat Hosain Amanat, Joint Secretary General Saiful Islam Sentu, Social Welfare Secretary Shabbubur Rahman Lifton and central member Asgar formally joined JP.

Ershad said it is not proper for a non-elected government to stay in power for a long time.

The present government and Election Commission (EC) took an initiative to hold the election in an appropriate time by preparing a fair voter list, he said adding, "An opportunity to establish a truly democratic government through the election has come now and we have to make the best use of this opportunity."

US envoy visits Puja mandaps at Dhamrai

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

US Ambassador in Dhaka James F Moriarty yesterday visited a number of Puja mandaps (worship pavilions) at Dhamrai on the occasion of the holy Durga Puja, the largest Hindu festival.

The envoy exchanged greetings with the Hindu community. He also visited Dhamrai Metal Crafts of metal artisan Sukanta Banik.

Cultural Affairs Officer of the embassy Kathy Hallock and Head of Press Marina Yasmin were present during his visit.

Moriarty said parliamentary election of the country is drawing nearer, urging all to come forward to holding the election in free, fair, acceptable and peaceful manner.

He said this at a meeting with newsmen at Kayetpur at Dhamrai after visiting the mandaps.

The envoy said this time is very important as the Eid, Puja and election are being held near simultaneously. Bangladesh is similar to the US as there live people of different religions and nationals in both the two countries.

Doing the Eid and Puja at a time, the Muslims and Hindus have proved that Bangladesh is a country of communal harmony, he added.



Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad addresses a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

Divert resources to poverty cut in developing states

Dhaka urges major military powers

BSS, Dhaka

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations Ismat Jahan underscored the need for refocusing on the link between disarmament and development, and urged the major military powers to divert the resources to poverty alleviation in the developing countries.

She said the global military expenditure exceeding 1.3 trillion US dollar in 2007 was increasingly having a negative impact on the development agenda of the developing countries, according to a message received here yesterday.

Addressing the general debate of the first committee of the 63rd UN General Assembly Ismat Jahan also stressed the impact of disarmament on ecology and global climate regime

to grapple with the new and emerging challenges of climate change.

She said disarmament is a cornerstone of foreign policy of Bangladesh, which is bound by its constitution to general and complete disarmament. She also mentioned that Bangladesh, which is a party to all major international instruments pertaining to disarmament, believes that the continued existence of weapons of mass destruction constitutes the greatest threat to humanity.

She observed that article IV of the Non Proliferation Treaty guarantees the inalienable rights of all states to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. These guarantees must apply without discrimination, and the rights of non-nuclear-weapon states to the peaceful uses of nuclear

energy and technology must be upheld and promoted, she added.

Ismat Jahan said Bangladesh strongly believes in regional approaches to nuclear disarmament. She maintained confidence-building measures through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free-zones (NWFZ) can contribute significantly to this goal. Nuclearisation of South Asia is a particular concern for Bangladesh, she added.

She urged upon India and Pakistan to relinquish their nuclear option and join the NPT regime. Israel must also do the same in the Middle East, she emphasised. She said that the bilateral agreements on civilian use of nuclear energy should not, in any way, hinder the cause of regional disarmament.

Dhaka condemns blast in Turkey

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh strongly condemned the terrorist blast in Northern Turkey on October 4 that killed 15 Turkish soldiers and injured a number of innocent civilians.

A spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement, said, "We offer our heartfelt condolence to the bereaved families of the victims and injured and reiterate our solidarity with the brotherly people of Turkey."

Reaffirming the principled stance of Bangladesh rejecting and condemning terrorism in all its manifestations and forms and regardless of its sources, the spokesperson said that war could not be a solution to any political problem and that all disputes should be resolved through peaceful negotiations and reconciliation.

'Declare inundated area of Jessore-Khulna as disaster zone'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the 11-party yesterday urged the government to declare inundated area of Jessore-Khulna region as a disaster zone, says a press release.

In a statement they said livelihoods and shelter of lakhs of people in the area are at stake as the river Kapatakha inundated vast area of the region.

Expressing concern they demanded adequate relief materials and treatment for the affected people and rehabilitation in agriculture sector.



Prof Sirajul Islam elected president of CAMHADD

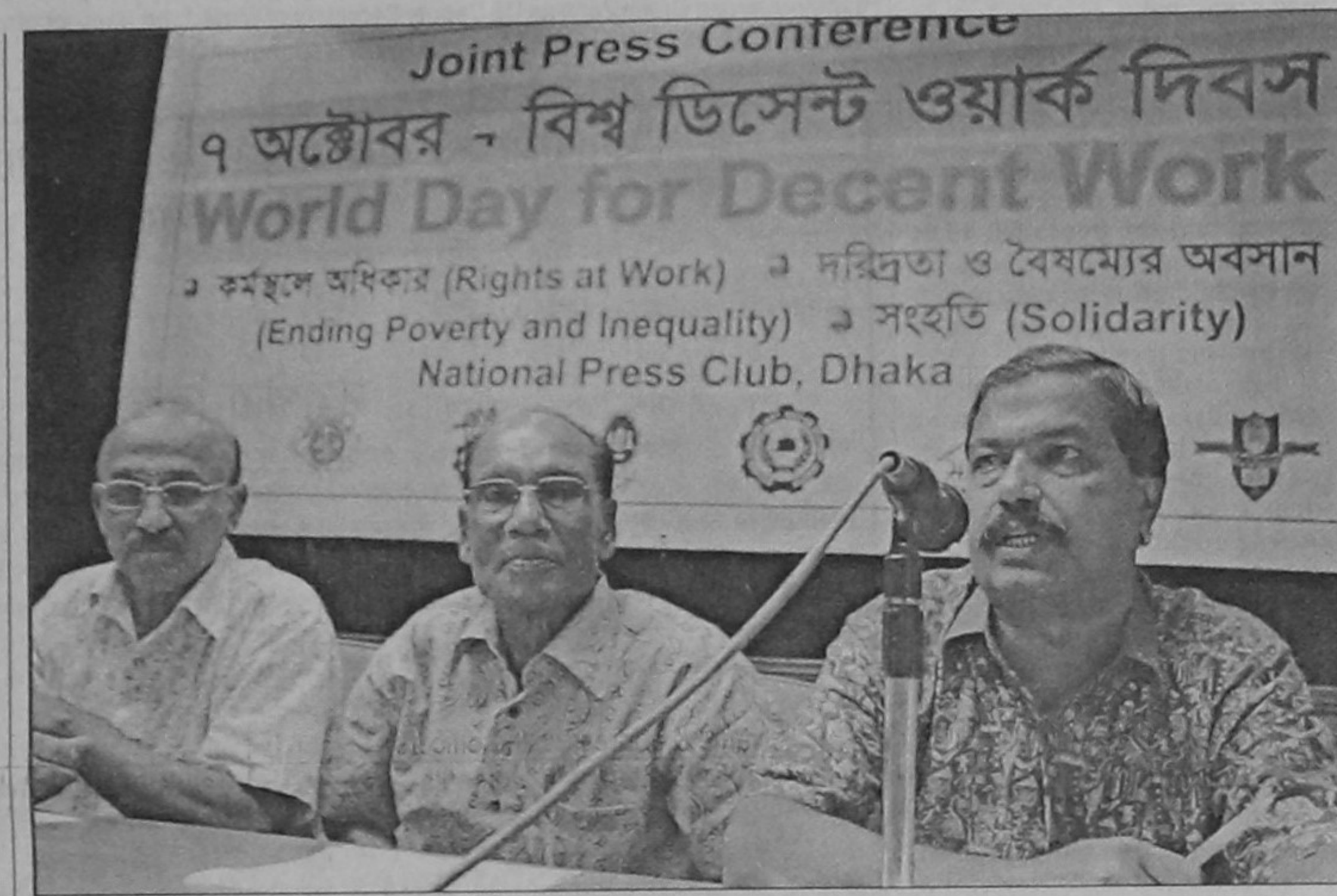
METRO DESK

Prof Sirajul Islam, an eminent child specialist, has been elected president of the Commonwealth Association of Mentally Handicapped and Developmental Disabilities (CAMHADD) at its conference in India, says a press release.

Prof Islam was also the academic director of Bangladesh Institute of Child Health.

The two-day conference and scientific meet of the organisation was held at Mahatma Gandhi Medical College at Pondicherry in August.

Dr Islam has been associated with the organisation for over 20 years and contributed to original research on resuscitation of newborn babies at the community level.



Jahangir Alam Chowdhury speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are Mamunur Rashid Chowdhury and Habibur Rahman Akand.

Lift all restrictions on trade union activities

Demand rights activists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a call to lift all kinds of restrictions on trade union activities, rights activists yesterday observed the World Day for Decent Work for the first time in the country.

They also placed a seven-point demand at a press conference organised by Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation at the National Press Club.

The demands include formulating a national labour policy, providing need-based wages, implementing labour law, ensuring safety of the workers and framing laws to ensure rights and social security for the workers of all infor-

mal sectors.

"According to a survey of Health and Environment Foundation, 953 workers died and 1,637 workers were severely injured due to unsafe working environment in the country between January and June 2008," said general secretary of Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress Mamunur Rashid Chowdhury in his keynote paper.

The sectors where workers face risky working conditions are garments, transport, construction, steel and re-rolling mills, he added.

Representatives from seven organisations working to ensure the workers' rights attended the

press conference. The organisations include Jatiya Sramik League, Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress, Bangladesh Sanjukt Sramik Federation, Bangladesh National Council of Textile, Garments and Leather Workers, Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation and Homenet Bangladesh.

Workers are now passing a hard time as they cannot enjoy all of their rights, Vice-President of Jatiya Sramik League Habibur Rahman Akand said.

Right to organise and bargain, right to dialogue and right to social safety are key aspects of decent work, said the speakers at the press conference.

UNHYGIENIC CONDITIONS

Mobile court warns Madhu's Canteen

DU CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday warned the authorities of Madhu's Canteen at Dhaka University (DU) that stern action would be taken against them if they do not keep the kitchen clean and hygienic.

The court led by Mohammad Faisal Shah, a senior assistant secretary, expressed concern over unhygienic conditions of the kitchen during an inspection at the canteen.

Talking to The Daily Star, Faisal Shah said this is the final warning to Madhu's Canteen.

Last month, another mobile court visited the canteen only to find the same unhygienic conditions in the kitchen.

JU dramatics deptt exams begin Oct 30

JU CORRESPONDENT

The masters examinations 2005 of Department of Drama and Dramatics of Jahangirnagar University (JU) will begin October 30, says a press release.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Removal of RMG executive demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred readymade garment (RMG) workers took out a protest procession with shoes in their hands yesterday, protesting repression on a female worker by the general manager of a garment factory in the city's Kadamtali area.

They staged a daylong demonstration in front of Imam Dyeing and Garments, demanding removal of its General Manager Kamrul Islam who was allegedly involved in engaging miscreants to beat the RMG workers in front of the factory three days ago.

Agitating workers alleged that almost every day Kamrul called a female worker to his room and would try to violate her. The incident some male workers protested few days ago.

Following the protest, the factory executive engaged some local miscreants who severely beat workers Sagar and his pregnant wife Sumona in front of the garment, leaving them injured, they added.

While contacted, Officer-in-Charge (OC) Md Nur Hossain of Kadamtali Police Station said, RMG worker Sagar filed a case with the police station on Monday, accusing some unidentified miscreants.

But the agitating workers said Sagar filed the case accusing the general manager.

British MPs visit FIVDB projects

METRO DESK

Six British MPs led by Rt Keith Vaz, MP visited different projects of Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) in Sylhet on October 7, says a press release.

Zahin Ahmed, executive director of FIVDB, welcomed the delegation of UK Home Affairs Select Committee.

They appreciated different initiatives taken by FIVDB aiming at disadvantaged communities in Sylhet.

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