

## Heads they keep

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meet from Gazipur.  
Like her, hundreds of acid survivors from the country and around the world shared similar stories, experiences and thoughts, calling on other victims to say no to defeat but fight against all odds to live on.

Jenny from Pakistan, Thong Kham from Cambodia, Regina from Uganda -- all shared their experiences about how they survived with distorted faces and limbs and bodies after heinous attacks on them.

Jenny (not real name), now 19-years-old, was attacked twice with acid at the age of 13 by the same man. Her crime had been to refuse his proposal of marriage.

"Jenny was attacked a second time by the same man as his first attempt to totally disfigure her had failed. And yet there is still no law in Pakistan to combat acid violence. The perpetrators are still active," said Samina Afzal Naz of Islamabad-based ASF Pakistan.

The foundation in Pakistan began its work in 2006 and followed the model in Bangladesh.

Executive Director of ASF Monira Rahman said, "Following the continuous movement against acid violence, awareness has been increased in our society and the acid violence have reduced but not stopped yet."

"It is time to combat the violence globally as there are alarming incidents of acid violence all around the world now," she said.

Social Welfare Minister Enamul Haq Mostafa Shahid said enacting law alone could not have prevented such a

heinous crime.  
"It all has been made possible for the mass awareness created against such violence," he said.

"The government has been working to stop acid violence and soon will also conduct a survey to find out the exact figure of the acid survivors in the country," the minister said, adding that government organisations and NGOs should coordinate their work in this effort.

John Robert Morrison, one of the founders of ASF Bangladesh, was also present at the programme along with British High Commissioner Stephen Evans and Dr Ronald William Hiles -- a plastic and reconstructive surgeon from UK who has been helping with the reconstructive surgeries required by many of the victims.

Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam said, "The intrinsic strength of all acid survivors is that evil forces tried but failed to shatter their lives."

She said legal support and rehabilitation are of utmost importance for all victims and pointed out that active coordination between the National Acid Control Council and the district acid control committees is crucial in this regard.

Nasreen Huq (posthumous), Ivy Rahman (posthumous), John Morrison, Dr Ronald Hiles and BRAC-Bangladesh were conferred awards for their significant contribution towards stopping acid violence in the country, and rehabilitating the acid survivors.

## UZ chairmen

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for the roads at upazilas and we are going to buy them at the minimum prices possible," the minister said, after chairing the meeting held at Cabinet Division.

Answering to a question by a journalist, Muhith said the jeeps they committee has decided on buying are the cheapest available in the market.

Of the 420 jeeps to be purchased, 180 will be bought in the current fiscal at a cost of Tk 59.54 crore. Another 240 jeeps will be bought in the next fiscal year at Tk 80 crore.

Mitsubishi jeep (2350 CC) will be purchased from the government-owned Progati Industries Limited.

The purchase committee yesterday also okayed the import 1.80 lakh metric tonnes of diesel and kerosene from a state-owned agency in Philippine for the July-December period in the current year.

The committee also approved the purchase of medicines, worth Tk 103 crore, and the appointment of a device and management consultant and a financial and capacity building consultant at total cost of Tk 100 crore.

## August 21

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Rahman of Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge ANM Bashir Ullah filed June 1 for hearing the bail petitions submitted by the three.

Earlier on April 13, the ex-CID officials appeared before the High Court (HC) to seek bail. But the HC bench turned down their pleas and ordered them to surrender before the lower court within eight weeks. It also directed the law enforcement agencies not to arrest or harass them during the period.

On March 29, CID's ASP Fazlul Kabir, present IO of the grenade attack case, filed the case against his former colleagues with Paltan Police Station.

According to the complaint, the accused had implicated a number of innocent people in the August 21 case to conceal facts and let the actual criminals get away.

The charges include destroying evidence and forcing people into making confessional statements.

The grenade attack on an Awami League rally on August 21, 2004 left at least 24 people dead and scores injured.

## RMG exporters

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city's Gulshan area yesterday, which is a fresh example of deteriorated law and order in the country, he said at the hurriedly arranged press conference at the BGMEA office.

He said some unknown persons have been demanding extortion from the garment factory owner over the last few days and the actual targets of the criminals were Delwar's school-going children.

Several hundred RMG workers vandalised over a dozen garment factories in BSCIC industrial area at Fatullah of Narayanganj on Monday morning demanding a hike in their salaries. Another group of workers put up blockades on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway in Savar and damaged around 30 vehicles halting traffic movement for over an hour.

Even yesterday unruly workers went on a rampage in five garment factories leaving 10 persons, including a policeman, injured.

Murshedy referred to a recent meeting between the BGMEA leaders and Home Minister Sahara Khatun, State Minister of Home Affairs Tanjim Ahmad Sohail Taj and a few lawmakers where the ministers promised better law and order situation. "But the result is zero as terrorism is still going on for establishing supremacy in jhoot trading," he said.

He also blamed internal clashes of some so-called trade unions and meddling of NGOs for the spread of vio-

lence in the garment sector.  
"We want security for the highest export earning sector," Murshedy said.

He urged the government to immediately introduce industrial police and enhance the number of police stations to ensure security in the industrial sector, protecting imported raw materials from being taken away and to provide security to the trucks carrying goods for export.

Citing the incident of shooting the security guard of Epyllion Group in Mirpur area recently, the BGMEA president said the criminals, claimed to be members of Shahadat Bahini, are yet to be held.

Criminals are threatening garment owners for money every day, he added.

UNB adds: About 400 workers of GC Fashion Wear at Gouripur in Ashulia demonstrated, demanding payment of salary for the last month. They turned violent as the management assured them of payment after the lunch hour.

Later, they ransacked four other factories at Charabagh and Kumkumari, forcing the workers to come out of the factories.

Ten people were injured as police aided by workers of Matshuka factory went to prevent the unruly workers.

Aminur Rahman, managing director of GC Fashion Wear, said they are under financial stress due to global economic recession. That is why the payment of salary to workers was delayed.

## Astronauts scan Atlantis for damage

AFP, Houston, Usa

Shuttle Atlantis astronauts yesterday scanned fragile heat shields aboard their spacecraft for signs of damage from launch debris, as they raced toward a rendezvous with the Hubble Space Telescope.

Early results of yesterday's 10-hour long inspection of the wings, nose and belly of Atlantis by the seven shuttle astronauts revealed no obvious signs of damage.

Atlantis was on course to rendezvous with the 560-kilometer (350-mile) high observatory Wednesday shortly after 1600 GMT.

As mission commander Scott Altman steers his ship close to the observatory, astronaut Megan McArthur will reach out with the shuttle's robot arm to grab the 13.2-meter (43-foot) long telescope.

Using the mechanical limb like a construction crane, McArthur will mount the telescope upright atop a circular work platform in the shuttle's cargo bay.

Early Tuesday, the astronauts sent commands that positioned the platform to await Hubble's arrival. They checked out the space suits that four of the shuttle's astronauts will wear during five spacewalks, as well as hand tools they will use for the task.

The toolkit includes 180 pieces of equipment, most custom-made for Hubble's overhaul.

Monday's launch initiated a challenging, 11-day mission devoted to a final refurbishment of the 19-year-old space telescope, a collaboration between NASA and the European Space Agency.

The upgrade should extend Hubble operations by at least five years and equip the world's best-known telescope to search for signs of the earliest star systems, provide a deeper understanding of dark energy and dark matter, and about the way planets form.

After lift-off, mission managers counted four small pieces of unidentified debris moving near Atlantis in tracking camera views of the shuttle's climb to orbit.

A brief camera survey of the spacecraft's crew compartment by the astronauts after launch revealed no obvious signs of damage, however.

"We have a great vehicle," said Bill Gerstenmaier, NASA's associate administrator for space operations. "This is a great start to a very challenging mission."

Tuesday's damage inspection of the wings and underside of the shuttle will test Gerstenmaier's optimism. The shuttle crew used a camera and laser-tipped extension of the shuttle's robot arm to carry out Tuesday's damage survey. The imagery was transmitted to Mission Control, where experts were to assess the pictures.

NASA expects to have preliminary results before the shuttle astronauts start the first of their spacewalks early Thursday.

The spacewalkers have trained to equip Hubble with new batteries and gyroscopes to fortify Hubble's electrical power and steering systems, one of the mission's highest priorities.

The spacewalkers will replace a computer that prepares the telescope for celestial observations and formats the pictures for transmission to Earth. The science instrument command and data handling computer experienced a partial electrical failure in late September, forcing NASA to postpone the mission from October to May while it prepared a replacement.

## Quick disposal

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celebrate the 10th anniversary of ASF. Around 500 acid victims and their representatives from India, Pakistan, England, Uganda and Cambodia participated in the conference.

The day's proceedings started with a colourful procession from the Fine Arts faculty of Dhaka University. The procession ended at the Institution of Engineers Bangladesh.

Social Welfare Minister Enamul Haq Mostafa Shaheed was present during the inaugural session of the conference.

The concluding session of the conference was chaired by ASF acting Chairperson Parveen Mahmud. British High Commissioner Stephan Evans, Canadian High Commissioner Robert McDougall, plastic and reconstructive surgeon Ronald Williams Hiles, Chief Child Protection (section Unicef) Bangladesh Rose Anne Papavero and Editor of The Daily Prothom Alo Mattur Rahman spoke on the occasion.

Later, acid victims lit candles and a cultural programme was also held.

## Nadim, Millat

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upazila and said the cases were filed against him during the army-backed caretaker government for harassment.

Nadim's lawyer barrister AKM Fakrul Islam said his client appeared before the trial court as per order of the High Court (HC). His client will also surrender before the court within a short time in seven other cases filed against him, Fakrul said.

An HC bench on May 3 ordered Nadim to surrender at the trial court within two weeks in connection with two cases while another HC bench on May 11 ordered him to surrender within eight weeks in seven other cases.

A Rajshahi court on August 14, 2007 sentenced Nadim to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) in connection with an extortion case in Durgapur upazila while another court on July 3, 2007 gave him five years' imprisonment in a fraud case.

The seven cases were filed with Ramna police station in Dhaka and Rajshahi, Naogaon and Natore between 2004 and 2007 on different charges, including abetting militancy and misappropriation of state money.

His name was dropped from at least three cases, filed against him for patronising militancy of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

**EX-BNPP MILLAT**  
Former BNP lawmaker M Rashiduzzaman Millat was also sent to jail after he surrendered before a Dhaka court yesterday in connection with a graft case in which he was sentenced to eight years' RI in absentia.

Judge Firoz Alam of Special

Court-1 passed the order rejecting Millat's bail prayer when he appeared before it. The court also ordered the jail authorities to provide him with first class division in jail as his lawyers prayed for it.

Millat was shown arrested in a tax evasion case, filed by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) on October 7, 2007.

Moving the bail petition, Millat's lawyers told the court that their client had earlier appeared before the HC challenging the legality of the conviction and sought bail in the case. After the hearing, the HC had given a split verdict on the issue. Later another bench on May 3 asked their client to surrender before the trial court within two weeks.

On November 28, 2007, he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for evading taxes worth Tk 1 crore by concealing information and also filing false information about his health in tax returns submitted to the NBR.

On January 29 last year, the same court sentenced him to eight years' imprisonment on charges of amassing wealth beyond his known sources of his income and giving false wealth statement.

**Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Deputy Director Mubara Khanom** filed the case on June 3, 2007. Millat was among 50 graft suspects on the first list the ACC published on February 18, 2007.

Meantime, Jatiya Party (Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju, former foreign minister M Morshed Khan and ex-state minister for law barrister Shahjahan Omar were also sent to jail on surrender in separate graft cases.

## Bodies of workers

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Among the 391 deaths by cardiac arrests, 119 were in Saudi Arabia, 82 in Malaysia, 72 in the United Arab Emirates, 35 in Kuwait, 16 in Oman, 10 in Qatar, 10 in Bahrain, 7 in Singapore, and 2 were in Lebanon the major destinations abroad for Bangladeshi labourers.

The number of deaths of migrant workers abroad has been increasing exponentially since 2004.

Last year, the number of dead bodies transported home was 2,237, which had been 1,673 in 2007, 1,402 in 2006, 1,248 in 2005, and 788 in 2004.

"It is usual that our workers have acute mental tension, as they work far from their relatives, and quite often their incomes are not up to their expectations," said Prof KMHS Sirajul Haque, chairman of the cardiology department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University in the capital.

"Acute mental tension increases the risk of heart attacks," Haque said. Referring to patients who returned from Middle Eastern countries, he said they spent Tk 2 lakh to Tk 3 lakh to go to those countries, but could not earn much.

In the Middle Eastern countries the migrant workers also eat more meat and other fatty foods than vegetables, he added saying, such food habits also increase the risk of heart attacks.

Al-Amin Nayon, executive director of International Migrants Alliance Research Foundation, said it is surprising that many deceased workers aged between 25 and 40 had been medically fit at the time of leaving home, but died in a few months of getting to their workplaces abroad.

Job seekers pay too high a price to go abroad for jobs, but in many cases they can neither recover the money to repay the loan sharks nor can they help their families back home, which make their lives miserable in faraway lands, Nayon added.

Deaths of many such workers overseas in heart attacks have become a matter of public concern in recent times, especially since job cut has become a regular phenomenon due to the ongoing global economic recession.

Rezaul Haque, 40 of Faridpur, is one such victim who died of a cardiac arrest. His body returned home on May 8. He had gone to Dubai 18 months ago, but sent only Tk 40,000 since then, said his sister Mita.

"My brother did not have any job for many months initially. Later, he worked for a company other than the one that originally hired him," Mita said adding that her brother had to spend Tk 2.20 lakh for going to Dubai, most of which had been borrowed at a staggering annual interest rate of 96 percent, and has to be paid in monthly instalments.

Another Bangladeshi worker Ikhtiar, 30, of Naogaon, who

died in a Malaysian detention camp early April, had been allegedly tortured by the special immigration police of that country, because he along with some others could not show work permits as those had been retained by their employers.

Mahesh Sarker of Tangail died in late 2007 following months of unemployment and abuses in Malaysia.

There are unimaginable exploitation of workers abroad, but the authorities have done really a little to address the grave problem, said Al-Amin Nayon who returned from Malaysia in late 2007 following abuses by his employer.

"The number of untimely deaths will continue to increase unless the government takes strong measures immediately to ensure migrant workers' jobs and welfare, instead of only being proud of the remittance they send back home," Nayon added.

## Zero tolerance

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reports come in almost every day about the arrest of suspects.

State Minister for Home Affairs Tanjim Ahmad Sohail Taj heads the high-powered committee as chairman. Representatives from the ministries of home, law, education, religious affairs, LGRD, information and different law enforcement and intelligence agencies will be its members.

The state minister said since militants operate beyond geographical boundaries, the government will share information and experience with neighbouring countries to deal with the menace.

Taj said the National Committee in its short-term plan has taken up 6-point motivational work among the people to create awareness against militancy.

Under the comprehensive combat plan, upazila law and order committee with the support of Ansars will conduct awareness program among the people in each upazila.

The education ministry has been given the responsibility of spearheading campaigns for building anti-militancy awareness at schools, colleges and madrasas through teachers under the leadership of upazila nirbahi officer and education officer in each upazila.

The LGRD ministry will constitute committees with union council chairmen to create awareness in each union while the religious affairs ministry will carry forward the awareness program in all religious institutions.

On its part, the information ministry will circulate leaflets at civic spots and prepare documentary films to wage a cyber war against militancy.

As striking force, law enforcing and intelligence agencies will remain active in each area to take "immediate action on information from local people about the militants and terrorists."

## 30 projects

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In the public-private partnership budget, the government will keep a block allocation and the private sector will contribute to it.

"We want the private sector play a leading role in the partnership budget. The private sector can submit a project proposal to the government after conducting feasibility studies," Muhith said.

The minister added the size of the ADP will be Tk 30,500 crore in the next fiscal year.

"I admit that it will be a highly ambitious budget," the finance minister said, adding the government has taken such budget for two reasons.

The government will firstly have to fulfill its election pledges. Secondly, the development budget of the country is very low and it will have to be increased, he continued.

"So, we deliberately keep the size of ADP ambitious and will take initiatives for implementing the programme," the minister said.

Finance ministry sources say different projects will be implemented on power, health, education, agriculture, roads and communications and infrastructure under the public-private partnership budget.

The infrastructure sector includes power, roads, railway and land port. The finance minister yesterday also said the Dhaka-Chittagong express highway can be built under this partnership budget.

Sources say the government high officials, including the finance minister, planning minister and the finance and planning adviser to the prime minister, held a number of meetings about the new concept.

The government will give allocation from its funds for the projects, while the private sector will also take part under the partnership budget. Funds from multinational donors like the World Bank's sister organisation IFC can also be utilised.

The sources say according to the primary plan there will be a committee to select project proposals and conducting feasibility studies.

The committee may also hire experts from the private sector, the sources add.

## 15 hurt

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The members of the two groups became involved in an altercation on the BWDB office premises over submission of tender documents.

Later, they clashed at Bera bus stand halting traffic movement on Dhaka-Pabna highway for half-an-hour, said sources.

On information, police rushed to the scene and fired four blank shots to bring the situation under control.

Officer-in-charge of Santhia Police Station Md Moniruzzaman said they arrested Barkat, Uzzal, Shafiqul and Sekandar from the spot for questioning.

Of the injured, Swetchha Sebak League leader Barkat, 38, Nayan, 18, Hakim, 40, Sayed, 30, Majid, 32, Kuddus, 33, Babu, 32, Khokan, 30, Taimul, 28, and Rezaul, 35, were admitted to Santhia and Bera hospitals.

Meantime, Shahidul Islam Talukdar, engineer of Bera BWDB office, said, "Following the directives of higher authorities, we suspended the tender process."

## Army deployed

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extraction. However, another source of BCMCL claimed that the army personnel would leave the site within a day or two.

According to mine official sources, the army was deployed Monday morning, to prevent any attempts of the miners to create unrest at the mine.

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Zheng Qingdian met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina following the unrest at BCMCL on May 5. During the meeting, the ambassador expressed his concern over the unrest and urged Bangladesh government to arrange for precautionary security measures for CMC officials, Chinese miners as well as Petrobangla officials.

BCMCL, Petrobangla and CMC officials and miners are worried about their security. The officials and staffs of BCMCL brought out a silent procession at Barapukuria on May 8 demanding punishment for those involved in the May 5 unrest.

They also wrote to Petrobangla recently asking for additional security measures and urged to declare the BCMCL site a "key point area", sources said.

On May 5, miners vandalised a number of rooms of Petrobangla officials and CMC miners and officials to realise their demands, which include arrears wages for the months of February, March and April.

## HC vacates stay

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proceedings of the case and also granted bail to Hasina following a petition filed by her.

The public prosecutor (PP) will now pray to the trial court for withdrawal of the case.

Meanwhile, Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu has recommended that 11 other cases against the prime minister be withdrawn as, he mentioned, those were filed to "tarnish the image of the Awami League chief and her previous government".

The cases include those filed by the last BNP-led government for alleged graft in the purchase of MiG-29s for the air force and Frigate for the navy, and in the construction of Bangabandhu Planetarium (now Bhashani Novo Theatre) and for 'illegal entry' in Dhaka cantonment area to visit the now deceased writer Humayun Azad at the CMH.

Yesterday morning, Rafique-Ul Haq prayed to the HC to vacate its stay order so that the trial court can withdraw the case considering it as a politically motivated one.

He told newsmen later that the government has decided to withdraw politically motivated cases, but the PP concerned recently informed the authorities that the trial court cannot let this (extortion) case be withdrawn as the HC stayed its proceedings.

AFM Mesbahuddin, another counsel for Hasina, told The Daily Star that they will also take legal steps soon for withdrawal of other cases

against her, including Niko and barge mounted power plant corruption cases, since all those were "false, fabricated and politically motivated".

In January this year, the government decided to withdraw the extortion case against Hasina following Azam J Chowdhury's application to the home ministry for dropping charges against her.

Earlier, he had given a statement before the trial court to the effect that he did not bring any allegation against the AL chief while filing the case.

The home ministry then asked the district magistrate to take initiative for withdrawal of the case.

Metropolitan PP Ehsanul Haq Samaji informed the district magistrate that the HC had stayed proceedings of the case following a petition from Hasina. So, necessary steps will be taken after its disposal.

Azam J Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, had filed the case against Hasina and her cousin Sheikh Selim with Gulshan Police Station on June 13, 2007, on charge of extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him in exchange for awarding a contract to set up a power plant at Siddhirganj.

On June 15 the same year, Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court sent the case to the Special Court-5 for quick disposal.

Hasina's younger sister Sheikh Rehana, who lives in London, was included in the charge sheet and shown absconding.

## 49 die as Lankan

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A second hospital official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media, said a hospital administrator was among those killed.

Two overnight artillery barrages pounded the area over the weekend, with several shells landing inside newly demarcated "safe zone," where the government had urged civilians to gather, according to Dr V Shanmugarajah, another doctor at the hospital.

A total of 430 ethnic Tamil civilians, including 106 children, were either brought to the hospital for burial or died at the facility after those attacks, he said. But the death toll was likely closer to 1,000 because many of those killed would have been buried in the bunkers where they were slain, and many of the gravely wounded never made it to the hospital for treatment, he said.

The shelling attacks which the UN labelled a "bloodbath" marked some of the worst violence in this Indian Ocean island nation since the civil war flared up again more than three years ago.

In New York, the British, French and Austrian foreign ministers urged the UN Security Council to take action to prevent more killings of civilians. Sri Lanka is not on the Security Council agenda because Russia, China, Japan and Vietnam consider the fighting an internal matter.

"Are we waiting, all of us, to the end of the bombing, to the end of any life not only suffering, but any life in this siege pocket?" asked French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner.

UN figures compiled last month showed that nearly 6,500 civilians had been killed in three months this year as the government drove the separatist rebels from their northern strongholds and vowed to end the war.

The rebels, listed as a terror group by the US and the EU, blamed the artillery assaults on the government. Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe denied the government was responsible and claimed health officials in the area were under pressure from the rebels to lie.

Army troops pushed further into the remaining rebel territory Monday, killing dozens of rebels in fierce fighting.