

# Friend with a pen in India

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government and citizens for Bangladeshi freedom fighters and refugees in 1971.

Now, 41 years after the liberation, he wants to pick up his pen once again for the advancement of Bangladesh.

"I want to work for the country in whatever way I can afford over the rest of my life," he told The Daily Star a day before he was awarded Friends of Liberation War Honour by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday.

He feels proud as Dhaka recognised his "little" contribution made four decades ago, he added.

In 1971, Sukharanjan managed to make all his colleagues at the Anandabazar Patrika office in Kolkata to donate one day's salary for wounded refugees sheltered in India.

He thus collected 68,000 Indian rupees and handed it over to the then prime minister of Bangladesh, Tajuddin Ahmad, sometime in April-May.

"I was shocked at the

conditions of refugees pouring in through the borders. I saw most of them are seriously wounded and suffering from food and medicine crisis."

He wrote a number of stories, seeking Indian aids for refugees.

"I was assigned to cover the Liberation War. I reported on the war by gathering information from freedom fighters inside Bogra, Kushtia, Dinajpur, Khulna and other places in Bangladesh," he said.

Talking to this correspondent at Hotel Sonargaon in the capital on Friday, the veteran journalist said he established the name of Mujibnagar through date-lines in his reports.

"On the oath-taking of the Mujibnagar government in exile, every journalist mentioned Meherpur on the datelines of their reports. But I used Mujibnagar," he said.

"The next day, Tajuddin Ahmad told me that the Pakistani army will bomb

Mujibnagar as its name has been made public."

Sukharanjan, born in a village called Ranomoti in Barisal, helped Bangladesh also in different other ways.

"I had close contacts with prime minister Tajuddin Ahmad and others. One day, he said the freedom fighters need bidi [cheap cigarettes]. I telephoned one of my friends who used to work at the top position of a tobacco company. She sent three-truck bidi and cigarettes for the freedom fighters. I took those to Tajuddin," said the senior newsmen.

"Also, I managed doctors for the injured."

He believes the war crimes trial should have been held 41 years ago. "The trial of the war criminals must be held. This is my position as a friend."

The friend of Bangladesh said he dreams the people of this country will always live in a secular and democratic society, a goal which he and freedom fighters pursued in 1971.

# Gone with the wind

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Investigation found that Sonali Bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch lent Tk 3,838 crore against fake documents to Hall-Mark and five other companies between 2010 and 2012. Of the sum, Tk 1,950 crore was funded against inland bill purchase and the rest was non-funded liability, which the branch had accepted to pay.

But the six companies embezzled the amount through opening and settling of letters of credit (LC) among themselves, with no business transactions taking place in reality.

The four-member inquiry committee has held the bank's top management responsible for the forgery, saying the swindle was possible due to weak surveillance and risks management system and flawed internal audit method.

The entire scam was designed by AKM Azizur Rahman, the then deputy general manager of the branch, who sanctioned loans beyond permissible limits. To sanction these loans, Azizur did not seek the required documents and valid records of the LCs, flouting the relevant laws, said the report.

Focusing on Hall-Mark's assets, the report said it would not be worth more than Tk 200-300 crore although Tanvir claimed to have owned properties worth many times the Tk 2,686 crore loans it secured.

"Tanvir has failed to produce his detailed wealth statement before the committee despite repeated notices."

The report heavily criticised the top management,

including the then managing director, for its sheer failure in supervising the bank's activities.

The International Trade Finance Division (ITFD) of the bank made a major mistake, according to the committee, which was formed in September.

For instance, the ITFD detected some irregularities in the Ruposhi Bangla branch in 2009 and 2010. Even after the detection, the branch disbursed loans and advances worth Tk 915 crore in 2011, against a target of Tk 191 crore.

"None in the ITFD, including Mainul Huq, deputy managing director and in-charge of the division, questioned this massive growth in loan," says the report.

Inspection and Audit Division-2 also failed miserably to inspect the branch. In this case, the then managing director of the bank ordered an inspection of the branch on 26 January this year. The ITFD took two months to begin the inspection, and in the meantime Tk 1,900 crore more went out of the bank's coffers.

"So it can be categorically stated that the ITFD has completely failed to monitor the foreign trade activities of the Sheraton Hotel branch [now Ruposhi Bangla]."

Two deputy managing directors Atiqur Rahman and Mainul Huq, who were responsible for monitoring the ITFD's activities, never alerted the managing director about the irregularities.

Two general managers Nani Gopal Nath and Mir Mohidur Rahman also failed to protect the bank's interest.

The probe committee

also held responsible the then board of directors for their failure to run the country's largest bank properly.

"The parliamentary probe committee has observed that the overall management structure of Sonali Bank has collapsed," says the report.

The committee, however, did not find any "direct influence" of Syed Modasser Ali, prime minister's health adviser, in the swindle.

Still, it was not fair on Modasser's part to visit the branch so frequently given the post he held, the report said, adding: "It is evident that the manager of the branch cashed in on the adviser's image."

The report offered 11 suggestions for preventing irregularities in the banking sector. They include introduction of SWIFT code in advising or accepting an LC, handing over full regulatory authority of all banks to the central bank and digitisation of banks.

## Ansar man bullet injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Sylhet

**An Ansar force member sustained a bullet injury to his head from the rifle of a fellow Ansar at a bank in Sylhet city yesterday.**

**The injured, Bachchu Miah, was admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.**

**Dakshin Surma police said the incident took place at the Station Road branch of Janata Bank at 12:30pm.**

**However, police could not ascertain whether the incident took place due to callous handling of the firearm.**

## 850 factories

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factories, he said.

Currently the association has more than 5,500 members.

The new move came as the trade body had always been held responsible for any accident in the sector, Faruque said.

"These factories do not comply with any standards set by the international buyers or the government or BGMEA. Many of them are dysfunctional."

But a few of these factories execute orders through sub-contracts in the peak season, the BGMEA vice-president said, adding sub-contractors hardly paid heed to compliance issues and so frequently faced hazardous accidents.

Some of such non-compliant garment units are also involved in forging GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) certificates. Bangladesh enjoys the facility as a least developed country in exporting products to the developed nations.

Meanwhile, the BGMEA authorities in the wake of the fire at Tazreen Fashions that killed 111 garment workers decided to form a taskforce to conduct drives against non-compliant factories.



The skyline of Qingdao. One of the rapidly growing economic hub, Qingdao of Shandong Province hosts the third biggest port in China. Also one of the most planned and livable cities in China, Qingdao provides jobs to many adjacent townships and villages.

PHOTO:  
STAR

# Can China sustain?

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According to government officials, on an average 80 villages are disappearing every day out of a few hundred thousand because of the migration and also because of assimilation of the villages into the cities.

And there is no stopping since it is the government policy that the rate of urbanisation should hit 70 percent by 2030 from 51 percent now. The present rate, the Chinese government believes, is too low.

"You can see that young men are no longer willing to live in the villages. They are coming to the cities and the villages are increasingly being populated by women, children and old people," said Fan Jida, specialist on reforms and economics of the China National School of Administration.

If rural outflow continues, will it not harm agriculture and thus jeopardise food security?

According to Fan Jida, this question is currently being

debated at academic level. "If every Chinese ate one more egg, the entire Brazil could not produce that much. Therefore, we attach high importance to food security," he said.

"China cannot afford a mistake in the area of food security. But we forecast that even if we attain 70 percent urbanisation rate two decades later, we will still have 400 million people living in rural areas due to population growth," he added.

"And then if the population declines further, China will turn to a centralised agricultural production. Then one household many have several hundred hectares of land for better production," Jida noted.

According to Tan Weiping, director general of the State Council Leading Group Office for Poverty Alleviation and Development, China, the agricultural land is protected by the law from being used for any other purpose.

There are 1.8 billion Chinese units or MU of land. Each

MU is equivalent to 666 square metres.

Population boom in the large cities also has other pitfalls, demanding the government redesign its urban planning again and again. The remedial plans can be environmentally devastating.

For instance, the city of 30 million people Beijing has a serious water crisis. To reduce this crisis, China is spending billions of dollars to divert the Yangse river to Beijing. This river originates from the Himalayas and meets the sea near Shanghai. The diversion will benefit several cities.

"But there will be a negative environmental impact on the people in the lower riparian areas due to this diversion. But many provinces will be benefited by it," said Fan Jida, during a discussion with a delegation of Bangladesh Awami League, in Beijing.

Of the 650 cities in China, 400 lacks adequate water supply and for more than one fourth, the crisis is acute.

# Post office launches e-pay

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Managing Director Amjad H Khan of Bangla Phone said the customers would have to register with their particulars at post offices, where Post e-Pay has been launched.

A photo ID such as national ID or copy of the passport would be required, while finger print and photo would be kept by the post office agents, he said.

Customers would have to have an internet enabled mobile phone to get the service. The post office was also trying to get support from mobile operators so that customers could use very basic mobile phones as well, Amjad said.

However, the customers would have to go to the post offices to deposit or withdraw cash.

The post office would charge Tk 3 for every transaction while it would take Tk 5 for cash withdrawals.

Amjad said the service

would be launched in seven divisional headquarters very soon and Bangla Phone would bear all expenses during that period.

In phases, around 10,000 post offices would have the service and another 100,000 agents would be employed.

Bangla Phone is providing financial support to the post office.

Amjad said, "The service is essentially a payment gateway where mobile phones will be used as wallets."

He said from now on post offices would provide services such as direct deposit of payroll, all types of financial transactions, balance transfer, salary transfer, insurance premium payment, all kinds of utility bill payments and any other payments.

The utility service providers would have to sign an agreement with the post office to get the service, he said.

The agents of the post

office would be given "Bangla Pad", a hand-held tablet computer to provide people with services.

The local IT experts have developed the entire solution of Post e-Pay, said Amjad.

The ambitious project would cost around Tk 300 crore, he said.

Director General Nayeb Delwar Hussain of Bangladesh Post Office said all upazila post offices would have the Post e-Pay service after its successful operation in seven divisional headquarters.

The post office would split the profits with Bangla Phone in the first three years by 42:58 percent. The ratio would be 56:44 in the post office's favour after the first three years.

He said early next year, the post office would start a new service for the expatriates by signing an agreement with the Malaysian government.

The employees of the

In addition to this, China is also witnessing a massive real estate growth. Anyone visiting the country will notice dozens of high-rise buildings in newly developed areas in a city. While these apartment complexes are costly, these are quickly being sold out. But many people are buying them as investments.

Officials say there are now three million apartments in China which are not being occupied. These are being purchased by hoarders, who are counting on better days to sell them out at much higher prices.

The Awami League central committee delegation headed by Akhtaruzzaman included lawmaker Khalid Mahmood Chowdhury, Badiuzzaman Bhuiyan, Ashim Kumar Ukil, Afzal Hossain, Sujit Roy Nandi, Mohammad Aminul Islam and AKM Enamul Hoque Shamim.

They exchanged views with Chinese counterparts on poverty alleviation measures in Bangladesh.

post office would be trained so that they could provide people the services smartly. Only technology-friendly services could help the postal department survive, claimed Abubakar Siddique, the telecom secretary.

Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday said the post office would have to compete with private banks which have very interesting offers to get its customers.

If the officials of the postal department work hard they would be able to provide the services, she said.

The service was supposed to be launched last year but it did not happen due to red tapism.

Two private banks -- Brac Bank and Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd -- are providing financial services via mobile phones in the country with the help of carriers. They have 18 lakh registered customers, according to central bank officials.

## People living

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have become the highest risk factors for ill health.

They replace child malnourishment, which topped the list in 1990.

But some researchers have criticised the way the data was put together, and suggested it is based on poor evidence.

The five-year project, involving almost 500 authors, found heart disease and stroke caused around one in four deaths almost 13 million - world wide in 2010.

The burden of HIV/Aids remains high - accounting for 1.5 million deaths that year.

While the age people can expect to live to has increased around the world, the gap in life expectancy between countries with the highest and lowest figures was broadly unchanged since 1970.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to have a high rate of early death.

Prof Christopher Murray, from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, led the work.

He said: "There's been a progressive shift from early death to chronic disability."

"What ails you isn't necessarily what kills you."

Diseases such as diabetes and lung cancer moved up the rankings, while diarrhoea and tuberculosis moved down.

The researchers said deaths from diarrhoea have declined by 60pc in the past 20 years, although some scientists feel the disease toll from poor sanitation has been underestimated.

## Kerry

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CNN cited a Democratic source who had spoken to Kerry, while ABC mentioned unnamed sources. Asked for comment by AFP, the White House did not immediately confirm the reports, but Kerry is seen as a frontrunner for the role.

The defeated 2004 Democratic presidential candidate, Kerry is currently head of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations committee.

On Thursday, Obama's ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, withdrew her name from consideration for the secretary of state post, effectively elevating Kerry to the prohibitive favorite.

Rice had been a hot favorite to succeed Hillary Clinton as the top US diplomat in the president's second term beginning next year.

Hillary said she will not run for another term for the top post.

Rice had come under fire over controversial statements about the deadly September 11 attack on a US mission in Libya which killed four Americans including the ambassador, and some Republican lawmakers had vowed to block her path to becoming top diplomat.

However, lawmakers on both sides of the political divide agreed that her departure opened the door for Kerry.

Kerry is a known commodity. He has served on the Foreign Relations Committee for some three decades, ran for president, and is well-traveled in global hot spots like the Middle East, where the United States must tread carefully.

"Even if we don't agree with Senator Kerry on some of the domestic issues, we think that he has handled foreign relations as chairman pretty good," said Senator Chuck Grassley, a Republican from Iowa.

With Rice out of the picture, he said "I think we'll be able to approve a secretary of state faster," particularly if Kerry, 69, gets the nod.

"I think he'd have an easy confirmation."

NBC News, which first reported Rice's withdrawal, quoted an official close to the nominations process, who said Kerry was virtually assured the State job.

"There were two people on the list," the person told NBC. "Two minus one is one."

# Stabber quizzed

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A team from the Detective Branch of Police first interrogated Rafiqul Islam Shakil, known as a Chhatra League cadre, who hacked Bishwajit with a machete while the other assailants beat the poor tailor with sticks and iron rods.

Earlier yesterday, a Dhaka court remanded Shakil for eight days.

"We asked him [Shakil] why he and the others killed him [Bishwajit] and if it was a planned murder or not," investigation officer (IO) of the case Tajul Islam told this correspondent last night.

So far 10 people have been arrested in the case, and the remand of Shakil, the number of those remanded rose to six, the IO said.

A DB team led by Tajul yesterday morning produced Shakil before a metropolitan magistrate's court, seeking a 10-day remand, and the court granted an eight-day remand.

On Saturday, a Dhaka court remanded for eight days two other accused in the case -- Saiful Islam and Rasheduzzaman Shaon -- arrested on the previous day.

Three of the seven people held earlier for the murder were also remanded for eight days. They are Mahfuzur

Rahman Nahid, HM Kibria and Mohammad Kayyum Miah.

In his forwarding report to the court yesterday, Tajul, who is an inspector of Bomb Disposal Unit of the DB, said Shakil is the prime accused in the case as they identified him from photos and video footages of the murder. Shakil was seen hacking Bishwajit with a machete.

Talking to this correspondent, the IO said all the six now on remand confessed their involvement in the murder but it was yet to be ascertained if they were Chhatra League activists.

"We are hopeful of unearthing everything concerning the murder soon," he added.

Bishwajit, 24, was beaten and hacked to death by activists of the pro-Awami League student body Chhatra League at Johnson Road in Old Dhaka during the opposition-called December 9 blockade.

Detectives arrested Shakil, a second-year student of Islamic history at Jagannath University, at a relative's house in Barguna through tracking his mobile phone calls early Saturday. Later at night, they also recovered the machete from a shop on the JnU campus.