

# No alternative to improving English teaching methods

## Speakers tell int'l conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to developing professional skills and proactive mindsets, teachers from different countries have assembled at a conference in Dhaka, sharing their ideas and discussing the challenges and issues of English teaching.

Since teachers play a crucial role in the process of language learning, there is no alternative to improving the methods of teaching up to international standard, speakers told the inaugural session yesterday.

Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (Belta) is hosting the three-day 6th international conference on "The Multiple Realities of English: ELT and Beyond" at National Academy of Educational Management (Naem). It will feature 97 presentations, 27 workshops, two panel discussions and a PechaKucha event.

Belta President Prof Rubina Khan said, "Educational transformation for achieving global standards cannot take place without due emphasis on English language education." Belta aims to establish a support network to empower English language teachers throughout the country, she added.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid emphasised ensuring the quality of language learning and said many students did well in the exams and achieved GPA-5 but many of them did not have proficiency in English.

This conference, he hoped, would play a role in improving the quality of English teaching in the country.

Dr Arifa Rahman, co-chair of the conference, said, "It is an attempt to bring together English language educators from home and abroad for networking on issues and challenges that we all face in this field."

At a presentation, some researchers observed that despite an emphasis on communicative English, the standard of English in learners remained poor in Bangladesh.

With the assistances of different donors, the government has run several projects to improve competencies of English learners since the 1980s but the outcomes are still frustrating, they said.

A key reason for poor English has been identified as a lack of an effective structure to improve English and that of proper monitoring of the initiatives, said one of the presenters, Dr Sharmistha Das.

Talking to The Daily Star, Kathryn Kelly, English language advisor of the British Council, said 2013 was a very important year for all teachers of Bangladesh, as 270 million copies of new textbooks were handed over to students all over the country on January 1.

"I take the opportunity to congratulate all the teachers of the country for this achievement," she said.

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

## Memories of a Visionary

The world was a very different place during the early 1980s. There was no World Wide Web, a phone call abroad cost a small fortune, and when you went on an international trip, friends and family gathered at the airport to see you off.

I had just finished my engineering studies in the US and had started work there, but I was struggling with a vexing question. Should I return to Bangladesh instead?

During my Dhaka vacation, I was discussing this issue with my family one day when my maternal uncle Mejo Mama (Mr. A. S. Mahmud) dropped by our house.

His surprising assessment: "You see, it does not matter where you choose to live and work because the world is about to become a much, much smaller place." He added, "You will succeed anywhere if you put your heart into your work."

That was pure Mejo Mama: a clear vision for the future laced with a contagious optimism.

A few days later, he told me, "I have a message for all you techies - why don't you try to make it easier for everyone to use technology? Why are computers so difficult to use?"

His words proved prophetic because the Apple Macintosh computer arrived within months. It was the first easy-to-use computer - with a mouse and a graphical user-interface - and it took the world by storm.

A. S. Mahmud was born in Sylhet in 1933 and started his career working at the Shell Oil Company in Rangpur. My earliest memory of him is of a trip he made to our home in Sylhet. I was eight or nine and his style, humour and world-view enchanted me.

But it is from my vacation trips to Dhaka that I remember him most. He took a keen interest in my photography, telling me, "You have a talent - be sure to nurture and grow it." That same trip, he bought me a copy of Noazesh Ahmed's *Portrait of Bangladesh*, a photo-book that I still cherish. Encouraged by Mejo Mama, I had my first exhibition here during the following trip.

During another vacation, I happily learned that Dhaka's business community had honoured his pre-eminence as a businessman by electing him the president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce.



Mr. A. S. Mahmud.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

It was during these trips that he told me about his new ventures in media, the great love of his professional life. He was the visionary and driving force behind the Daily Star and, later, Ekushey TV, the first private TV channel in Bangladesh where many of Dhaka's top television professionals cut their teeth.

This brilliant man who had inspired and influenced so many passed away on January 22nd, 2004 in London under tragic circumstances. He was heartbroken after his beloved Ekushey had been shut down.

Very often I wonder what Mejo Mama would have thought about today's Bangladesh which has moved forward while boasting a vibrant and omnipresent media.

I suppose I will never know. But I do know that the legacy of Mr. A. S. Mahmud lives on.

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir



(From left) Kathryn Kelly, Bilal Faruqi, Rosemary Arnott, Nurul Islam Nahid, Sheikh Ekramul Kabir, Rubina Khan and Dirk Smits attend the 6th Belta International Conference 2013 in the capital's National Academy of Educational Management yesterday. The Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (Belta) organised the event.

PHOTO: STAR

## Petrol pump owners to go on strike from tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Petrol pump and tank-lorry owners and workers announced an indefinite strike across the country from tomorrow to press home their nine-point demands, including a hike in commission on fuel sales.

Bangladesh Petrol Pump and Tank-Lorry Owners-Workers Unity Council leaders, at a press briefing yesterday at the council's office in the capital, said during the strike there will be no fuel transportation across the country and that they will also refrain from supplying fuel to the aircrafts.

Nazmul Haq, convener of the council, said the ministry of power and energy has not taken any initiative to meet their demands before January 20, the deadline set by the owners and workers of petrol pump and tank-lorry.

He said they met leaders of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) and urged them to solve the problems but they (BPC leaders) did not take any initiative to meet the nine-point demands, according to a press release.

Nazmul said they will enforce the strike from 6:00am tomorrow.

Their demands include a 3.4 percent hike in commission on sales of diesel and 4 percent on sales of petrol and octane and increase of fares of tank-lorries due to price hike of fuel.

Nazmul Haq told The Daily Star that around 10,000 owners and workers across the country will observe the strike.

## PROPOSED RIVER COMMISSION

# Green activists for executive power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Green activists yesterday suggested inclusion of executive power provision for river commission in the proposed National River Protection Commission Act, 2013 to remove illegal structures on rivers.

They said the act did not have any specific provision empowering the proposed body to remove illegal structures from river banks.

The cabinet approved the act on January 7 this year after the High Court order of July 19, 2009.

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) also said out of the country's 230 rivers, 25 have died out, 17 are under threat, and eight are near-dead.

Citing instances of some commissions of the country which could not work properly in want of executive power, Bapa Vice President Prof Nazrul Islam said a name only commission without executive power could not protect rivers. "A powerful independent commission can eliminate irregularities and corruption and thus save rivers," he said.

Coordinator of National River Protection Movement Abdul Motin pointed out eight recommendations to make the commission effective and powerful.

Some of those are adoption of a modern river policy, re-evaluation of the existing acts dealing with rivers, inclusion of at least three experts in the selection committee who will form the commission, and inclusion of a provision regarding bringing back navigability.

## MPO seekers postpone demo for 3 months

### Nahid assures taking up their demand with higher authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The agitating teachers and employees of non-MPO educational institutions yesterday suspended their demonstrations, including the fast-unto-death, for three months.

The announcement of suspension came following a meeting between leaders of Non-MPO Shikkha Pratishtan Shikkhak Karmachari Oikya Jote and Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid at latter's residence in the capital yesterday afternoon.

The Jote President Esharat Ali said the minister assured them that he will take up the issue of incorporating their institutions in the monthly payment order (MPO) list with the higher authorities, including finance ministry within three months.

"We suspended our programmes for three months as we found sincerity of the minister towards our demand. Besides, he [the education minister] sought some time mentioning the government's fund crisis," he said.

After the meeting, Nahid also talked to journalists and said, "We would sit again after three months to review the issues."

"So, I would request them to return home and hope that they will join their work soon," he said.

All the issues were discussed at the meeting and both sides tried to understand each other, he added.

Under the banner of the jote, the teachers and employees have been agitating since January 7 to press home their demand to include their institutions in the MPO list.

But, they faced obstruction from the law enforcers to hold their demonstrations. Even, police clashed with them charging batons, firing rubber bullets and tear shells, and a liquid spray during their protest.

According to the jote leaders, over 100,000 teachers and employees of around 7,000 non-government secondary schools, colleges, madrasas and technical educational institutions have been deprived of MPO facilities for long.

## NEWS IN brief

### Six Hizb-ut Tahrir men arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), in two drives, arrested six alleged Hizb-ut Tahrir activists in Chittagong city yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team from Rab-7 held five of them in front of Belal Masjid in Muradpur area of the port city around 5:00pm, said ASP Nazmul Hossain.

They are Mofijul Islam, 23, Osman, 27, Shariful Islam, 19, Saiful Alam, 25, and Abdur Rahim, 53, of Chittagong.

Rab also seized many leaflets, posters, magazines and books on Jihad from them.

Later, the battalion caught Emdadul, 19, from a house in Nasirabad Housing Society.

### Worker hacked to death in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Some miscreants hacked a day labourer to death and hanged the body from a tree in Shikalbaha area of Chittagong early yesterday.

The deceased Nurul Alam, 52, son of Abul Hossain, of the area under Karnaphuli Police Station, worked at Boatghat in Shikalbaha.

Police recovered the body with injury marks in the forehead from near Khal No-1 area under the police station around 9:30am.

Officer-in-Charge Md Shamsul Islam suspected that after hacking Alam, the criminals hung the body with his shawl from the tree, as he witnessed any illegal activities of the gang.

### Body of domestic help recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A minor domestic help was found dead at her employer's residence at Nayatola in the capital's Moghbazar on Thursday.

Police recovered the body of Rosy, 12, which was lying on the floor, around 11:00pm.

Four people--the deceased's employer Mosharaf Hossain, his wife Shamima Akhter Sumi, her younger sister and their newspaper hawkers--were detained in this connection.

Quoting the detainees, Ramna police, said Rosy committed suicide by hanging herself with a towel from a pipe in the bathroom. They broke open the door and found her dead around 8:30pm.

However, police could not ascertain the reason behind the alleged suicide.

### 37 drug peddlers held in Benapole

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested 37 listed drug peddlers in Bhoberber area in Benapole early yesterday.

The Rab team during a drive in the village arrested the 37 drug peddlers. The arrestees were first handed over to Benapole police and then to Jessore police.

A case was filed with Benapole Port Police Station in this connection.

### DHAKA TODAY

<p><b>Seminar</b> Banglcraft and the Brac University Law Club will organise a seminar on the law in Bangladesh; Venue: the university; Time: 9:30am.</p> <p><b>Orientation</b> North South University (NSU) will arrange an orientation programme; Venue: NSU campus, Bashundhara,</p>	<p>Baridhara; Time: 10:00am.</p> <p><b>Roundtable</b> Bangladesh Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha will organise a roundtable discussion on politics; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 11:00am.</p> <p><b>Human chain</b> Poribesh Bachao Andolon will form a human chain on public health; Venue:</p>
--	--

## WEATHER TODAY

### Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

Light rain or drizzle is likely to occur at one or two places over Rangpur division.

Moderate fog may occur over the river basins and light to moderate fog elsewhere over the country during midnight till morning, said Met Office.

Night temperature may rise slightly and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

**The sun sets in the capital today at 5:36pm and rises tomorrow at 6:43am.**

Country's highest temperature 32.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 09.3 degrees at Srimangal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max:	Min:	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	28.1	14.0	67	57
Chittagong	29.5	13.5	81	64
Rajshahi	26.8	12.4	92	76
Rangpur	25.2	13.0	77	70
Khulna	29.2	14.0	96	84
Barisal	28.7	12.4	85	75