

# Shop for children

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compound in Dhamalia village of Dumuria, Khulna, is one of such kind. It is a store with a difference, without any salesperson.

Here, schoolchildren pick whatever they want to buy from the shelves, consult a price chart and deposit the money in a tin-box. In other words, they look after themselves.

"The objective of the store is to promote honesty from a young age," says AM Kamrul Islam Akunji, 52, one of the founders of Wasek Ali Akunji Education Trust that started the non-profit stationery store in 2011.

The trust was founded in 1992 as a family initiative by Kamrul Islam, additional superintendent of Manikganj police, and his industrialist brother AM Harunur Rashid, 55. It has been named after their father, a Liberation War supporter killed by Pakistani collaborators in 1971.

Initially the trust organised interschool educational and cultural competitions. But over time it began providing needy students with supplies in the once poverty-stricken locality.

The funds for the trust come from the profits of a Tk 40 lakh family investment.

"We found many talented children leaving school just because their parents are unable to pay the fees," said Sheikh Abdul Jalil, director of the trust and Kamrul Islam's former college teacher.

At present, the trust operates in 82 high schools and madrasas and seven colleges in the upazila. It processes 30 financial aid applications per month based on applicants' needs. A number of recipients are now studying in public universities and medical colleges while others have already embarked upon their careers.

The Wasek Ali Akunji Education Trust also publishes a monthly magazine named Sonamukh. It contains success stories from students, farmers and entrepreneurs with the best articles, stories and poems winning awards. An annual reception is arranged for the winners.

After their mother's demise in 2005, the Akunji brothers established Sokina Ali Seba Project to assist farmers, fishermen, women and young people -- from providing quality seeds and interest-free loans to training in computers and English.

Around 60 women have been given training and sewing machines under this project.

"So far, we have donated more than 500 cows to poor families in the locality on condition that the parents will send their children to school," said Kamrul Islam, who in his policing career has contributed to UN peacekeeping missions.

The project also arranges medical camps from time to time for the elderly and women.

"There are many affluent and educated people in society, but what counts most is becoming an honest and responsible person," noted Kamrul Islam.

As for Sonamukh Satota Shopping, the initiative has been an outstanding success. Nobody cheats here. Instead, the young customers sometimes pay more in cases of a

# Balihash back in big numbers

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The Baikka Beel, a wetland at Srimangal in Moulvibazar, has put on a fascinating look this winter with flocks of cotton pygmy geese, natively known as Balihash, swimming all around.

Balihash, an endangered species of waterfowls, could hardly be seen in the area even a few years ago but thanks to the awareness and sincerity of the local communities, there has been a significant increase in the number of the perching ducks now.

While visiting the wetland, this correspondent saw some boxes hidden in the bushes on the banks. He approached one and saw a female goose sitting on some bright white eggs inside the box.

The boxes have been installed under a USAID-funded project as shelters and breeding nests for the birds.

"We have installed 21 boxes on the banks of Baikka Beel, and the female geese are laying eggs in them," said Mazharul Islam Jahangir, regional coordinator of Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) project.

A male goose, in the breeding season, has a glossy blackish green crown and white head, neck and belly. It has a prominent black collar and white wing-bar, rounded head and short legs. A female goose is paler, without black collar and sometimes has only a narrow strip of white wing-bar. However, in the non-breeding season, male birds resemble females except for their white wing-bar.

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A cotton pigmy gander incubating eggs in a nest built inside a box at Baikka Beel of Srimangal in Moulvibazar. An NGO with the help of locals is trying to restore the population of the species in the area.

PHOTO: STAR

# 6 projects

**THE \$5 B DEEP SEA PORT**  
(first phase costing \$1.7 b to be completed in four years)

**\$300 M LNG TERMINAL**  
to import Liquefied Natural Gas (to be completed in two years)

**THE \$2.7 B METRO RAIL**  
project for Dhaka commuters (to be completed in six years)

**\$2 B NUCLEAR POWER**  
project for 1,000 MW power (to be completed in five to six years)

**THE \$2.9 B PADMA BRIDGE**  
(to be completed in four years)

**\$1.5 B RAMPAL 1,320 MW COAL POWER PROJECT**  
(to be completed in five years)

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At the meeting, Hasina directed all ministries concerned to complete the work of the projects as quickly as possible.

Of the five components of the Padma bridge project, the construction of the main bridge will cost \$1.32 billion, the Economic Relations Division said in a progress report placed at the meeting.

Three pre-qualified bidders submitted technical proposals for the task on January 9, and the evaluation of the proposals would be completed by March, it said.

The report said the shipping ministry is preparing a guideline on the financing of the deep-sea port project.

Bangladesh can build this port on

Sonadia island in three phases, and it will cost around \$5 billion, according to a Japanese study in 2009.

Later, China and several other countries showed interests in financing and constructing the port.

"We have received three separate proposals from China, Germany and the Netherlands till now," Zaman said.

"But we are waiting for a proposal from Dubai-based DP World that has the experience of constructing 50 deep-sea ports in different countries. The company had earlier expressed its interests in the project."

Zaman said they would review all the proposals and accept the one that would serve the country's interests the most.

# AL eyes new leaders

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has recently spoken for holding the council after the upazila elections, said highly placed sources in AL, adding that its General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam had already discussed the matter with some party leaders.

The upazila parishad polls, slated to begin on February 19, may be over in March or April.

Party insiders told The Daily Star that through the 20th council the AL president might go for a major reshuffle in the party as she did in the AL-led cabinet.

In the reshuffle, poor-performing leaders and leaders with corruption allegations against them may be ousted from the party central committee.

Awami League presidium member and Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star that the special council was

being planned to reorganise the party. She also hinted at a major reshuffle among the party leadership.

Sources said when the special council is over AL would go for the district-level council. As the grassroots are busy with upazila polls, the party high-ups think it is not the time to hold the district councils, they added.

Meanwhile, tenures of 61 out of 73 organisational district committees of AL expired long ago. The new central committee would be tasked with completing the district councils.

The last and the current committees could hold councils of Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachhari, Dhaka city, Chittagong (North), Feni, Barisal district and city, Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Rangpur city.

On the central council, party General Secretary Ashrafur told The Daily Star, "The national election has just ended and the government has been formed. Now the parliament will go into its session. We will consider the issue when the [political] situation returns to normalcy."

Meanwhile, there has been a rumour that Sheikh Hasina is looking for a more dynamic general secretary for the party who would be able to make the grassroots more proactive.

However, party sources said Hasina might keep Ashraf in the post for the third time. Ashraf was first elected as the AL general secretary in the 18th council on July 24, 2009.

Besides, veteran leaders like Amir Hossain Amu, and Tofail Ahmed may be included in the party presidium, AL's highest pol-

icy-making body. The duo was dropped from the presidium at its 2009 council allegedly for their roles during the January 11, 2007, changeover.

At present two posts of the presidium are vacant. One became vacant after the last council while the other after Syeda Zohra Tajuddin passed away.

The 19th council of AL witnessed no major reshuffle in the party, but the 18th did.

In that, the party aiming to bring dynamism in the central committee injected many fresh faces and dropped high-profile leaders, including Amir Hossain Amu, late Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Abdul Jalil, Mukul Bose, Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Mohammad Mansur Ahmed. However, the young leadership have apparently failed to meet that expectation.

# Tensions running high

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"It's likely that the motive for the shooting is political," Police Colonel Kowit Charoenwattanasak told AFP by telephone from the province of Udon Thani, adding Kwanchai's life was not in danger.

The attack came as a state of emergency went into force in Bangkok and nearby areas to deal with mass protests trying to force Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra from office.

And amid high tensions, the

Election Commission yesterday asked the Constitutional Court to delay the polls due to the unrest, after the government rejected its call for a postponement.

The Red Shirts are broadly loyal to Yingluck's older brother Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted as prime minister by the military seven years ago and lives in Dubai to avoid a jail term for corruption.

While they have largely remained on the sidelines during the current protests, Red Shirt

leaders have warned that their supporters could rise up if a government which they helped to elect is removed from power again.

Yingluck is under intense pressure to step down after more than two months of street rallies aimed at ousting her elected government and installing an unelected "people's council".

"We're not taking any notice of the state of emergency and are continuing our protest as usual," rally spokesman Aka Nat

Promphan told AFP.

"It shows that the government is getting desperate because the momentum is with us."

Nine people have been killed and hundreds injured in grenade attacks, drive-by shootings and street clashes since the rallies began at the end of October.

The backdrop to the protests is a years-long political struggle pitting the kingdom's royalist establishment against Thaksin, a billionaire tycoon-turned-politician.

# Moudud, 4 other

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Shahjahan during a clash between police and Hefajat men in Motijheel on May 5.

The other case was lodged in connection with assaulting police and preventing them from discharging their duties.

Judge Md Zahirul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after their lawyers submitted separate bail petitions challenging the rejection orders from a lower court in two out of the three cases on January 9.

Moudud, Anwar, Rafiqul and Biswas were shown arrested in the cases on January 6.

Moudud, Anwar and Rafiqul were detained in front of the Hotel Sonargaon in the capital on November 8, while Biswas near Khaleda Zia's Gulshan residence on November 9 last year.

**KHANDKER MAHBUB HOSSAIN**

On January 8, Metropolitan Magistrate Aminul Haque placed Mahbub on a two-day remand in connection with a bomb blast case.

Police filed the case on January 5 after miscreants hurled several crude bombs at the New Circular Road office of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Ramna).

On January 9, another HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Mohammad Ullah stayed the remand order and issued a rule upon the government to explain why it should not be declared illegal.

On Tuesday, the HC declared illegal the remand of Mahbub.

Detectives picked up Mahbub, also vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council, on January 7 when he came out of the capital's Jatiya Press Club after a programme where he denounced the January 5 election.

**SHAMMI AKHTER**

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Hasibul Haque granted bail to Shammil Akhter after her lawyer submitted a bail petition in an arson case.

On January 5 last year, police filed the case with Banani Police Station for her alleged role in vandalising and torching

vehicles, assaulting police and preventing them from discharging their duties in front of Titumir College.

On December 25, law enforcers detained the BNP leader when she was about to enter Khaleda Zia's Gulshan residence.

**CHITTAGONG COURT**

A Chittagong court yesterday rejected bail prayers of seven BNP leaders, including BNP chairperson's adviser Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin and its central organising secretary Golam Akbar Khandakar.

Judge Abdur Rashid of the Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after they were produced before the court.

Akbar and Nasir were shown arrested in a case filed with Chawkbazar Police Station in connection with vandalism and arson attack on a CNG-run auto-rickshaw and its passengers in VIP Tower area on November 27.

On November 28, Akbar was arrested along with five other BNP activists from the city's Kazir Dewri area while he was leading a procession in support of BNP-led 18-party alliance's blockade.

Nasir was held from Shah Amanat International Airport that evening in connection with two arson cases.

BNP Joint Secretary General AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon and former lawmaker Sarder Sakhawat Hossain Bakul were freed from Kashimpur jail in Gazipur yesterday morning, reports our correspondent there.

Khokon was released two days after the High Court granted him a six-month bail in three separate cases. He was arrested on December 26 in front of Matsya Bhavan in the capital.

Bakul was released from jail after a High Court bench on Sunday directed the government not to harass or show him arrested in any other cases "without due process of law".

Law enforcers detained Bakul on December 25 when he was entering BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan home.

# Wealth of 7 politicians under ACC scanner



Ruhul Haque



Mannan Khan



Mahbubur Rahman



Abdur Rahman Bodi



Aslamul Haque



Enamul Haque



Abdul Zabbar

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Talking to Ekattor TV, he said the ACC has the capacity to dig deeper if there was any discrepancy in the wealth statements of the MP aspirants.

As per a Supreme Court verdict in 2007, the Election Commission has to collect eight particulars about lawmaker aspirants, including their wealth statements, and make those public so that voters can know about their prospective representatives.

Former state minister for water resources Md Mahbubur Rahman Talukder had only 20 acres of agricultural land in 2008.

In the run-up to the 10th parliamentary elections, Mahbubur, who got elected unopposed from Patuakhali-4 constituency, stated

that he had 2,865 acres of arable land, an astounding increase by 143 times in only five years.

According to the two wealth statements Mahbubur submitted before the Election Commission in 2008 and in December, he and his wife had their wealth increase by 18.18 times.

His previous affidavit mentioned that the couple had wealth worth about Tk 41.88 lakh. In December, they had wealth worth about Tk 7.61 crore.

The couple's annual income increased to Tk 1.74 crore from Tk 2.15 lakh from five years ago.

Former state minister for housing and public works Abdul Mannan Khan, of Dhaka-1 constituency, and his wife had their wealth increase by

107 times in the last five years.

The couple had wealth worth about Tk 10.33 lakh ahead of the ninth parliamentary elections. According to the statement submitted to the Election Commission in December, they had wealth worth about Tk 11.03 crore.

He did not clarify the sources of his money elaborately.

Last night, he told Ekattor TV that he would provide details of his wealth if the anti-graft body asked him to do so.

Lawmaker Aslam, of Dhaka-14 constituency, was an individual who had studied up to class-VIII and had five acres of land in Dhaka five years ago. Now aged 52, he claims to have enrolled in a BBA programme and owns 145 acres.

An alleged land grabber, Aslam did not mention in his wealth statement submitted to the Election Commission in December that he owns a couple of power plants.

He grossly undervalued his 14,567 decimals of land (above 145 acres) and claimed that he and his wife had net assets worth only Tk 4.94 crore after deducting their bank liabilities of Tk 4.70 crore.

As per his statement for the 2008 election, the net value of the couple's assets was Tk 1.44 crore.

Talking to BBC Bangla Service, ex-minister Ruhul welcomed the probe and claimed that incorrect information was put in the affidavits and he would be proved innocent through the investigation.

# BNP back-flips on death claim

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filed against 2.2 lakh leaders and activists of the alliance between November and January.

He also expressed concerns over what he called "gross violation of human rights" in the country through extra-judicial killings, disappearances and false cases against the "opposition" men.

He also urged international rights bodies to probe the "extra-judicial killings" during the recent joint forces operations.

"The international rights organisations should come forward and probe the matter," he said.

When contacted for his remarks on the allegations yesterday, Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker declined to comment immediately.

"I would be able to comment on this only after getting the list," the police chief told The Daily Star.

This was the first time the BNP

came up with a list containing the names of the opposition men who died at the hands of law enforcers. In several occasions earlier, the party raised such allegations but never came up with the names of the victims. One glaring example of this was when the BNP alleged that the law enforcement agencies had carried out "genocide" on Hefajat-e Islam during their Dhaka siege programme on May 5 last year. But it could not present a list of the killed to back its claim.

During yesterday's press briefing, Fakhrul also criticised Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam who had described BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's remarks on Indian forces' participation in the joint forces operation in Satkhira as "seditious".

"I do not know why and in what condition he [Ashraf] said this. But he did not tell the truth," he said.