

Poor kids' day out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shishu Park in the capital's Shahbagh is a place that always buzzes with screams of joy and excitement and laughter, but yesterday it had more of those when visited by some of the most jubilant children.

A hundred urchins, who had all along fallen victim to the harsh reality of the world, were taken to the amusement park by the legal aid organisation Ain o Salish Kendra to bring smiles to their faces for a day.

Their happiness knew no bounds, though the children had to wait from morning until 2:00pm for the rides to be turned on. They did not fidget like other children. Instead, they entertained themselves by singing, dancing, or simply by running around and playing tag.

Even the flower gardens, swings and see-saws were a novelty to them. They rode those with no less excitement.

A five-year-old girl ran up to this correspondent and asked if it would be okay to take her T-shirt off. She introduced herself as Mita.

"I am not used to wearing clothes, and it feels hot," Mita said.

Another five-year-old told a story of how she had got her feet cut with broken bricks. When asked why she

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Urchins get a rare opportunity to spend an entire afternoon at Shishu Park yesterday courtesy of Ain o Salish Kendra, a legal aid organisation. In the photo, a number of them are seen enjoying rides on bumper cars.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt's slumber over, finally

Initiatives to counter militancy ideologically set to resume

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After keeping them inactive for 10 months, the government yesterday decided to revitalise its socio-cultural and religion-based campaigns to fight militancy.

"We discussed how to tackle militancy without using force. We decided to place more importance on mass awareness against the evil," said State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan after chairing a meeting of the National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention at his ministry.

He said the awareness building drive would be carried out at places like mosques, schools, colleges and other socio-cultural programmes across the country.

The state minister, who heads the committee, said the authorities were going to intensify the campaign. They would focus on educational institutions, especially private universities where students are being brainwashed.

"We have identified the places," he told the reporters.

Denying the rise of militancy in recent times, he said the campaign would be carried out through using the media.

When asked why the committee at every meeting discusses the same things, comes up with the same

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Zila parishads turn AL's political offices

TIB study finds properties of many parishads grabbed by some leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The zila parishads have turned into political organisations of the Awami League as they are run by partisan administrators instead of elected representatives, says a study conducted by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).

The parishads (district councils) are being used as political offices of ruling party men and their tea and breakfast expenses are being paid by zila parishad funds. They even use official vehicles of the councils for personal purposes, it said.

Besides, properties of zila parishads in many cases have been grabbed by a section of politicians, according to the findings of the study, revealed at a press conference at BIAM Foundation in the capital yesterday.

Lack of political will and limitations in legal and administrative framework have caused zila parishads

to become ineffective, the study said.

The parishad, which is considered a vital component of the local government system, has become completely dependent on the government since the existing law gives it authority to control all activities of the district councils.

Exercise of political control on zila parishads and the influence of lawmakers have turned the bodies into organisations showing absolute obedience to the government, it said.

Besides, government officials do not want public engagements in the power structure at the district level.

All these factors have turned the zila parishads into institutions without teeth, notes the study presented by TIB official Nahid Sharmin.

Addressing the function, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said it was very urgent to hold zila parishad elections

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DB to probe RU killing

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The RMP yesterday asked the Detective Branch (DB) to investigate the murder case. The DB is likely to take over the case today.

In a separate order, ABM Rezaul Islam, the officer-in-charge (OC) of Motihar Police Station, with which the case was filed, was transferred to the RMP Special Branch at the same time. Alamgir Hossain has been appointed the new OC of the police station.

"The case was given to the DB to ensure better investigation," RMP Commissioner Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star.

When asked about the case having been filed by the alleged masterminds themselves, the RMP boss exclaimed in surprise and said, "I am hearing such a claim for the first time".

Asked whether police talked to the victim's family ever since the murder, he said he was not investigating the case.

A top ranking RMP official, preferring not to be named, said, "Facts about the killing are now an open secret on the [RU] campus. It is known to the university authority as well".

"The university authority could have filed a complaint as the murder occurred inside its dormitory", said the official.

Rustam Ali Akand, 22, a fourth-year student of political science and the hall unit BCL joint secretary, was shot dead inside his room at Suhrawardy Hall on Friday.

A day later, Mehedi Hasan, vice-president of RU unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), filed the case against the four leaders of Islami Chhatra Shibir and six unnamed people.

However, the victim's family and witnesses have alleged the involvement of BCL men in the killing.

Rustam's elder brother Rawshan Ali Akand alleged that BCL men, who are likely to have been involved in the murder, filed the murder case taking advantage of the fact that their (Rawshan's) family was too poor to pursue the case.

Following the murder, The Daily Star has talked to a number of RU students, BCL activists and leaders, and classmates, friends and family members of Rustam. All of them, wishing anonymity in fear of reprisals, said "some BCL men" were behind the killing.

It's Guinness

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anthem together.

The Guinness World Records made the announcement on its official website yesterday afternoon, stating: "The most people singing a national anthem simultaneously is 2,54,537."

"It was achieved by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the National Parade Ground in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 26 March 2014."

Earlier, the world record of the largest number of people singing national or regional anthem together belonged to Sahara India Pariwar (India). Some 1.21 lakh people sang India's national anthem at that event on May 6, last year in Lucknow.

Though representatives of the Guinness World Record were not present at the programme, they will be confirming the record through videos of the event sent to them, according to its website.

As the clock struck 11:20am on the country's Independence Day on March 26, the national anthem "Amar Shonar Bangla...Ami Tomay Bhalobashi" in chorus by as many as 2,54,681 people reverberated through the venue and its adjoining areas.

Thousand others failed to enter the parade ground but stood outside

joining the event.

People in red and green set off for the venue from all corners of the city early in the morning to join the event, "Lakho Konthe Sonar Bangla", sponsored by the cultural affairs ministry and supervised by the Armed Forces Division.

They walked miles as traffic blocked the roads leading to the venue.

By 10:00am, the entire ground was dotted with people from all strata of life. Students, teachers, garment workers, artists, freedom fighters, politicians and members of civil service, police and armed forces went there to be part of the historical moment.

They were provided with lyrics of the anthem and national flags.

After two trials, participants sang the anthem making the record. They celebrated the achievement cheering and waving the national flags.

The programme continued for around one hour with performances by the country's renowned singers.

The event was aimed to have Bangladesh's name in the Guinness Book of World Records through paying tributes to the three million martyrs for their supreme sacrifice for the country and to reignite the spirit of the Liberation War and patriotism.

Cracks in the soul

FROM PAGE 1

ambit the tumultuous times it came wrapped in, took him to ever widening spheres of experience. After Insaf, it was the Pakistan Observer which beckoned, followed by a stint with the Sangbad before he made his way back to the Observer. In later life, he gave the Morning News the benefit of his association. And then of course there was Jugantor.

But what made Musa different from so many other journalists was not so much his work for the various newspapers that called him as it was the richness that increasingly defined his professionalism. At the news desk, he clearly understood the need for clarity and objectivity. Neutrality, he believed like any newsmen of commitment, was no part of journalism. If the newspaper did not inform and then educate the reader, its purpose amounted to little. Musa Bhai's preoccupation was to have his audience keep their ears to the ground. They did, in that era of ideal-

ism. We speak of the 1950s and 1960s. Musa Bhai's sincerity to his profession would not go unnoticed. London's Sunday Times sought his opinion on the issues of the day.

For a brief part of his life, ABM Musa donned the raiment of a politician. No, he sought no political office, entertained no high ambition in the corridors of power. But when Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman decided that Musa needed to be by his side as a lawmaker, Musa Bhai knew what he needed to do: follow the advice of the Father of the Nation. He took part in, and won, the 1973 general elections. That phase of his life was brief, seeing that the tragedy of August 1975 gave a bad jolt to Musa's life as it did to the lives of the people of this country.

Musa Bhai may have been shaken, but he was not broken. The world was his oyster and he reached out to it. At the Press Institute, at the Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, his experience was

the input that was to enrich the lives of young men and women aiming to pursue a journalistic career.

ABM Musa's sense of humour was pronounced and often self-deprecating. He poked fun at others, taking care not to undermine and humiliate anyone he had made the object of his remarks. Close to Bangabandhu, he was part of the journalistic trio Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delighted in referring to as "aapod-bipod-musibot". Of the three men, two -- Faiz Ahmed and Musa -- are now gone into the ages. Only Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury remains. Two others not part of the group, KG Mustafa and Abdul Matin, have already succumbed to mortality.

ABM Musa leaves a huge void where intense journalism used to be. There are cracks, in the soul and in the universe, that cannot be mended. The world of Bangladesh's journalism cracked when the life went out of ABM Musa on

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Self-destructing

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"You don't expect your cell phone to dissolve someday, right?" said Reza Montazami, an Iowa State University assistant professor of mechanical engineering.

"The resistors, capacitors and electronics, you don't expect everything to dissolve in such a manner that there's no trace of it."

Montazami believes his 'transient materials' could make it a reality.

The materials are special polymers designed to quickly and completely melt away when a trigger is activated.

The team has already built and tested a degradable antenna capable of data transmission, and presented some of its research results at the recent meeting of the American Chemical Society in Dallas and in a paper in the journal Advanced Functional Materials.

"Investigation of electronic devices based on transient materials is a new and rarely addressed technology with paramount potentials in both medical and military applications," the researchers wrote in the paper.

One of the first tests was to create a blue light-emitting diode mounted on a clear polymer composite base with the electrical leads embedded inside.

Add a drop of water and the base and wiring begin to melt away.

The researchers have also developed and tested transient resistors and capacitors.

They're also working on transient LED and transistor technology, said Montazami.

Just think, he said, if you lose your credit card, you could send out a signal that causes the card to self-destruct.

TEESTA WATER SHARE

BNP plans long-march

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP will hold a long march programme towards the Teesta Barrage, demanding "fair share" of the Teesta waters from India.

The decision was made at the BNP standing committee meeting with Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office last night.

The date of the programme, however, was not finalised. The party also decided not to go for a "vigorous" anti-government movement at the moment.

The highest policy-making body of the party also decided to hold rallies in all divisions in phases from this month. The BNP chief will address the rallies to drum up public support for a fresh parliamentary election under a non-party administration, meeting sources told The Daily Star.

Sources also said Khaleda would soon announce BNP's Dhaka city unit committee minus excluding its incumbent convener Sadeque Hossain Khoka.