

Horse jockeys

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of the National Human Rights Commission, told The Daily Star. Local businessmen organise horse races on the sidelines of local fairs. Three to five horse races are organised in Jhalakathi every week. Horses of the area are also used in races in the neighbouring districts.

Contacted, Md Masuduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Rajapur Police Station in the district, said they had no knowledge of horse racing in the area.

"No permission was taken from the police in this regard," he said, adding that they would investigate the matter and take necessary action if there was any wrongdoing involved.

According to district administration officials, horse racing itself is not illegal but the law clearly prohibits engaging children in such work.

Rights activists say such types of work expose children to the dangers of injuries.

Akkas Shikder, a lawyer in Jhalakathi, said it was sad that when these children are supposed to go to school, they are being forced to do such life-threatening work due to poverty.

For decades, children have been used as camel jockeys in the Middle East for the same reasons they are used in Bangladesh still now. But in the face of international outcry, countries in the region are stopping to hire children in the risky job.



Eight-year-old Shakil beside the horse he will be competing on.

PHOTO: STAR

Affair with

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Democratic president engaged in "predatory behavior" with a woman, Lewinsky, who was 22 when her liaisons with Clinton began in 1995. Clinton's lies about the relationship contributed to his impeachment by the House in 1998; the Senate acquitted him.

Lewinsky writes that she deeply regrets the affair and made a point of staying silent through several presidential campaigns to avoid becoming a distraction. Now, she writes, it's time to stop "tiptoeing around my past — and other people's futures. I am determined to have a different ending to my story. I've decided, finally, to stick my head above the parapet."

Invoking her headwear from endlessly repeated TV clips and the stained garment considered as evidence against Clinton, she writes: "It's time to burn the beret and bury the blue dress."

But these aren't her first public words on the scandal. Lewinsky broke her silence in 1999 with a blockbuster interview with Barbara Walters, gave several subsequent interviews and cooperated with author Andrew Morton on his book the same year, entitled "Monica's Story."

"Sure, my boss took advantage of me," she writes now, "but I will always remain firm on this point: it was a consensual relationship. Any 'abuse' came in the aftermath, when I was made a scapegoat in order to protect his powerful position."

Reform of Rab is a must

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against this important institution was raised over the years?

When Rab was formed, there was general acceptance of the force by the people because they thought given the corruption and slide in the police department, Rab would be a powerful crime busting force.

And Rab did quite some commendable jobs in the beginning. One can remember its actions against the JMB and Bangla Bhai.

But, then, there was an inherent weakness in the force -- it was given virtually free rein over its affairs without any questions being asked. The famous phrase that power corrupts finally became true of Rab as well.

Rab started killing criminals and people with doubtful criminal records. And every time it dished out the same old, cliched crossfire story -- that its forces had come under attack while searching for firearms with arrested criminal(s) and during the firefight the criminal got killed.

The story became so lame and so incredulous that even a child would not believe it. We, the media professionals, have privately heard from Rab men and witnesses in detail of how

these "crossfires" were carried out. And yet our political leadership was blissfully blind to the total lawlessness happening around this force. Not only that, the government machinery gave Rab full-throated support after every "crossfire" incident.

Here we can recall a few of the awful happenings.

Think of the case of Limon, an innocent HSC student, who was maimed by Rab. The poor boy had the most traumatic dual experience of fighting his crippled state and the false cases filed against him.

Think of the looting of Tk 2 crore from a Chittagong shrine in 2011 by Rab men. Think of the case of Mridul, the goldsmith of Chittagong, who was kidnapped by Rab, tortured and robbed of his 80 tola gold. Or think of Jubo League leader Jahid Siddique Tarek, who allegedly shot Jubo League leader Riazul Haque Khan Milky dead. Tarek was also killed in Rab "crossfire".

And only a few days ago, Rab produced four JMB men in connection with the ambush and snatching of three top JMB kingpins. All these four men had been kidnapped more than a week before they were produced by Rab. The force never disclosed when

and from where they were arrested. We would be quite right in assuming that they were kidnapped by Rab and kept illegally confined without being produced in court within 24 hours of their arrest.

All these events and many more and the political leadership's continued silence and overlooking of such unlawful activities have today turned Rab into a monster. Rab itself has started playing God. Anybody can disappear today and be killed without any questions asked. We are now hearing that Rab men are being paid to carry out nasty jobs for private citizens as if they are not law enforcers but mercenaries.

This indeed is a dangerous situation. There is a palpable sense of insecurity prevailing today in society because of such activities. Encouraged by Rab, other forces are following in the same footsteps. Now we see "crossfires" by police as well in the guise of similar cruel theatrics.

These things can underline only one thing -- Rab must be reformed, its job should be specifically defined and the government should respond proactively to every allegation of misdeeds. Otherwise, every citizen's

Sandwiches from the skies

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known in Australia as Jaffles - attached to plastic parachutes from high rises to people eagerly awaiting on the streets below.

The restaurant works on a system where sandwiches are pre-ordered on PayPal for \$5-\$6, then caught by hungry customers at an agreed time and place where X marks the spot.

The location of the drop currently happens somewhere in the Melbourne CBD, but the employees don't reveal the exact spot until the day of the drop.

The Melbourne entrepreneurs have coined themselves as the cities 'first

float-down eatery' saying on their website 'It wasn't, [a thing] but it is now. We're the first.'

A much more interactive way of getting take-away, the concept has steadily grown in popularity and recently Jafflechutes launched a Pozible campaign to take the idea to The United States.

On Tuesday the campaign reached its \$5000AUD target and will now take on New York City as their next big venture.

The campaign cites the funds will be used 'to call in reinforcements, to make 1000 parachutes, to replenish supplies, and to pay for favours.'

It also emphasises that they want 'to make sure no one puts this on their credit card' as the restaurant's functions are all profit-neutral.

Jafflechutes will also replace your lunch if it happens to get lost or stuck in a tree on the way down, and they remind customers not to endanger themselves by climbing said trees: 'You're not a kid anymore. We'll give you another jaffle.'

The endeavor began around nine months ago in Melbourne, during which time they have been floating down toasted sandwiches to Melbournians in lane-ways across the city.

Govt challenges acquittal of 69

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criminal charges by a lower court last year.

The Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in Dhaka on November 5 last year awarded death penalty to 150 BDR men and two civilians for their role in the massacre.

It also sentenced 161 others, including ex-BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and ward-level Awami League leader Torab Ali, to life imprisonment for the crime.

The court handed down rigorous imprisonment ranging from three to 10 years to another 256 people, mostly BDR jawans, in the case filed with Lalbagh Police Station on February 28, 2009.

Sources in the HC said most of the convicts have filed separate appeals with the HC seeking acquittal on the charges.

Talking to The Daily Star, Deputy Attorney General Farhad Ahmed

yesterday said the government will not file any appeal against the rest of acquitted suspects as it did not find any evidence of their involvement in the incident.

The acquitted suspects have not been released from jail as they are facing trial in another case filed under the explosives act, he added.

After the bloody mutiny in the BDR, the government renamed the force as

Doctors won't

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else," Gulbar Ali Jewel, a photojournalist of local Daily Natun Prokhat, quoted an intern as telling his wife Fawzia Shahnaz.

"I did not feel safe at the hospital after this and considering the ongoing protests by interns, I left," he said.

Jewel, who also works for bdnews24 and Daily Jay Jay Din, broke his right leg on February 2 in an attack by Rajshahi University students. He underwent surgery at RMCH on February 3 and doctors advised him a second surgery in three months' time to remove the steel rods inserted in his leg.

On Sunday, when Jewel was admitted to the hospital, Prof BK Dam, head of surgery unit at RMCH, fixed Monday to operate on him.

His surgery has since been rescheduled twice citing excuses and on Tuesday morning Prof Dam advised him to undergo some tests.

Around noon that day when Jewel's wife went to the doctors' chamber to collect the test advice slip, some interns on duty told her that she should know that no journalists would be treated at RMCH.

Jewel left the hospital around 4:30pm.

When contacted, Prof Dam told The Daily Star that he was not aware of the incident, "Jewel didn't inform me of the matter before leaving".

"Interns are still angry with journalists and some of them might have told him something out of anger. It is not a serious comment," he said.

Local journalists have called for a rally in the city today to protest the incident.

On April 20, some interns injured 10 journalists while they were in the hospital to cover a reported incident of an untoward exchange of words between interns and a patient's attendant. The incident is being investigated by the health ministry.

A paean to heritage

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and in your own individual way try feeling Tagore in the soul.

As the day wanes in the steep decline of twilight, sing *amar je deen bheshe gachhe chokher-o jole*; and a slight thump in your heart, a whisper in the soul, will speak to you once more of the eternal loneliness of man in a forbidding universe.

But there is too *gogone gogone aponar-o mone ki khela*, truly a paean to Creation. In Rabindranath, therefore, lived a man for all seasons, a being in whom was defined an entirety of life and thoughts of what lay beyond it. Listen to Himadri Shekhor recreate that Tagorean ambience with *tumi robe nirobe*, with *aami ki gaan gaabo je bhebe na pai*. You get the sense once more of why Rabindranath continues to exercise such a powerful hold on the Bengali imagination.

And that imagination is but a seductively charming combination of the lyrical and the romantic, inter-

persed with the magical. Debabrata Biswas brought it all out in his renditions of Tagore's songs. Listen to his *gaaye amar pulok laage or aji joto tara tobo akashe*. Hum, if you will, *gopone dekhechhi tomar byakul noyone bhaaber khela*. The universe will come to be symbolised in you; or you will move away, even if momentarily, from the banalities that afflict the world you are part of.

If you have not heard *diner sheshe ghoomer deshe*, you have missed a whole lot. Rabindranath's is a poetic voice which brings deep pathos with its flow. When Mita Huq sings *tumi kon bhanger pothe ele shupto raate*, it is the stary stillness of the night that pounds away in your soul. In an earlier time there was Papia Sarwar in our part of the world. And, yes, individuals of a calling beyond the ordinary -- Waheedul Haque, Sanjida Khatun and Kalim Sharafi -- responsible for a preservation and enrichment of the Tagore heritage, have always been

there.

On the other side of this large pasture, beyond geography but within heritage, there has been the overwhelming presence of Suchitra Mitra, of others. Chinmoy may not have appealed to the perfectionists, but his songs have generally been our initiation into the world of Tagore music. Think of *amar mon kemon kore*. All these years after Sagar Sen passed into the great beyond, he remains our claim on Tagorean romanticism, or a large slice of it. His soul cuts through brilliantly in *prokhoru topono taape akash trishaye kaanpe*.

But, in a larger, deeper sense, you cannot recall Tagore without letting the light fall on Subinoy Roy. In *tumi daak diyechho kon shokale*, in *hridoy amar prokash holo onoto akashe*, you get a sense of the pristine world that once gave meaning to life for us. Romance in the softness of passion came alive when Hemonto sang *tomaye gaan shonabo tai to amaye jagiye rakho*. It is all

part of the Tagorean ethos, this ability to raise love to the heights of sublimity. You appreciate the beauty that defines womanhood, you sing paens to the beloved and then you give it a push of Olympian proportions to make it come level with the heavens.

You move closer to God as you sing *chiro bondhu chiro nirbhor chiro shanti tumi he probhu*. Or there is that pure buzz of romance, as in *amar praaner pore chole galo ke boshonter batash tuku moto*. Go through a rebirth of youth in that evergreen number *amar-o poran-o jaha chaye tumi tai go*.

On 25 Baishakh, therefore, we celebrate the cultural traditions we have sprung from.

Let us make our way to the banks of the river, even as the sun descends in the distance, to hear the strains of a song brought along the waltzing waves.

Aaji shaanjher Jamunaye-go toruno chander kirono tori bheshe jaaye-go speaks to us of the passage of time, of

Thai court ousts PM from office

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transfer Thawil Pliensri were also stripped of their status.

But fears that the court would dismiss the entire cabinet proved unfounded.

Niwattumrong, a Thaksin-loyalist who is also commerce minister, was quickly promoted to the role of caretaker premier. He vowed to press ahead with a planned July 20 election to establish a new government. That poll date has yet to be endorsed by a royal decree.

Observers said the court ruling does nothing to ease Thailand's prolonged political malaise.

Anti-government protesters are still on Bangkok's streets and the promotion of a Thaksin supporter may make Yingluck's dismissal a hollow victory.

"Red Shirt" supporters of the government meanwhile threaten to rally to defend it and to press for elections, raising fears of clashes. They will mass on Saturday in a Bangkok suburb.

Paul Chambers of the Institute of South East Asian Affairs at Chiang Mai University.

"And the arch-royalists (anti-government forces) are winning it. They are cutting away at the Puea Thai government slice by slice, hoping to exhaust it into submission," he said predicting fresh legal cases against the new premier.

The kingdom has been bitterly split since 2006 when an army coup deposed former telecoms magnate Thaksin as prime minister.

He now lives overseas to avoid jail for corruption convictions, but is accused of running the country by proxy through his sister.

Thaksin is reviled by the Bangkok elite, middle class and royalist southerners who say he has sponsored nepotism and widespread corruption and who see him as a threat to the monarchy.

But he is loved in the poorer north and northeastern regions and among the urban working class for recognising their burgeoning political and

economic aspirations. They have returned Shinawatra-led or linked governments to power in every election since 2001.

In a defiant press conference Yingluck reiterated her innocence of the abuse of power accusation.

"I am proud of every minute I have worked as prime minister because I came from a democratic election," she said, at times fighting back tears.

In the six months since the latest street protests erupted, 25 people have been killed and hundreds wounded in gun and grenade attacks, kindling fears of wider clashes.

A general election called by Yingluck in February to shore up her besieged government was disrupted by protesters and boycotted by the main opposition party. It was later annulled by the Constitutional Court, enraging Red Shirts who said the judges effectively stole their vote.

Anti-government demonstrators are likely to reject the latest poll date too.

Toxic fumes

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occurred when two of our nationals and an Egyptian man inhaled toxic fumes," he told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

Quoting a Sharjah police official, the Gulf News has claimed that the workers were working in the shop without any safety measures.

"We found three people in a very critical condition and in distress and we helped them out of the shop, and transferred them to Al Kuwaiti Hospital where they were pronounced dead," said the police official.

"There should not be any laxity in safety procedures and such violations that risk workers' lives attract severe punishments," the police official added.

Sharjah Police have recently run several awareness campaigns regarding exposure of workers to harmful fumes, whether in the form of pesticides or smoke, in a bid to avoid accidents, reported the Gulf News.

7 still missing

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Meanwhile, a furniture trader of Bishwanath upazila in Sylhet was allegedly abducted on Tuesday night when he started for home from his shop.

Faizul Khan's cell phone was found switched off since 8:30pm that night, said his son Zainul Khan.

Next morning, someone from his cell phone called them and demanded Tk 3 lakh ransom for his release, said Zainul.

In Cox's Bazar, three people, including a local leader of the ruling party, remain missing since they were allegedly abducted from Teknaf and Kutubdia on April 26.

Locals said a group of people picked up Nur Mohammad Prakash, 35, president of Teknaf municipality Jubo League, and Mohammad Salman, 22, from Lama Bazar of Teknaf.

Both of them were listed Yaba traders, according to police.

was kidnapped by pirates.

Following the abduction, the pirates phoned his family and demanded Tk 60 lakh in ransom, said Musa's brother Abu Omar.

Meanwhile in Rangpur, organising secretary of Mominpur union BNP Rezwatul Haque, 40, has been missing since Monday morning.

His wife Rina Begum, who is contesting the female vice chairman post in Rangpur Sadar upazila parishad polls slated for May 19, said Rezwatul went to collect her posters from a printing press. His cell phone was found switched off since 11:30am that morning.

TWO ABDUCTEES RESCUED
The Rapid Action Battalion have rescued a construction worker and arrested two people in Mymensingh.

Shaheen Mia was rescued from Town Hall area a few hours after his abduction.

In Sylhet, a security guard of a private bank was found at a hospital yesterday, nine hours after his alleged abduction