

## 2 BOILER EXPLOSIONS 7 workers burnt critically

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least seven workers suffered burns, four of whom are in critical condition, in two boiler explosions at a steel mill and a garment washing factory in the capital's Shyampur and Keraniganj yesterday.

They all were admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Of them, Bulbul Ahmed and Motiur Rahman with 85 percent burn injuries and Badsha Mia and Awal Hossain with 45 percent burns were fighting for life.

Three others -- Abu Sayeed, Sujan and Mahbubur -- sustained 30, 15 and five percent burns, said sources at the hospital.

In Shyampur, the explosion occurred around 1:00am when Bulbul, Motiur, Sayeed and Mahbubur were liquefying irons in a boiler at Salma Steel Mills.

Fire service officials suspected that the incident happened as the temperature inside the boiler crossed its maximum operating temperature.

In Keraniganj, a boiler exploded around 2:00am in an unnamed

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



The victims of the broiler explosion in Keraniganj being treated at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

PHOTO:  
SK ENAMUL HAQ

## Asia's concern poor health systems

FROM PAGE 10  
States has not been able to completely prevent it," said Yatin Mehta, a critical care specialist at the Medanta Medicity hospital near New Delhi.

"The government is trying. They are preparing and they are training, but our record of disaster management has been very poor in the past."

Asia, home to 60 percent of the world's population, scores higher than West Africa on most development indexes and includes emerging or developed countries like Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan.

But countries like India, China, the Philippines and Indonesia have vast numbers of poor, many of whom live in crowded slums, and underfunded health systems.

The Philippine government estimates there are up to 1,700 Filipino workers in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, plus more than 100 peace-keeping troops in Liberia. The Department of Health is suggesting a 21-day quarantine period before its citizens leave those three countries, but doesn't know how it will pay for that,

said spokesman Lyndon Lee Suy.

Indonesia has put 100 hospitals that have experience of treating patients suffering from bird flu on standby for Ebola, said Tjandra Yoga Aditama, head of the Health Ministry's research and development board.

Airports in Asia have stepped up their defences: screening passengers who have travelled from affected countries, taking any with high temperature for observation and trying to keep contact them with for 21 days - the incubation period.

Even assuming these measures are carried out effectively, people can and do lie about their travel history, and common drugs like Paracetamol are effective in reducing fever.

Authorities in China say 8,672 people have entered southern Guangdong province from Ebola-ridden areas since Aug 23.

In Hong Kong around 15 passengers a day arrive from the affected region, chief port health officer D Edwin Tsui Lok-kin said.

Dale Fisher, the head of the infectious diseases' division at the

Singapore National University Hospital, said: "Asia is very diverse in its capacity, and there are some countries with people that travel a lot that may not have the best infrastructure and are at greater risk."

Asian health systems and workers have experience in countering infectious diseases, including severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, which first appeared in Hong Kong in 2003, infecting more than 8,000 people and killing about 800.

The region grappled a highly pathogenic strain of bird flu around the same time that killed about 800 people in 12 countries, and new strains continue to crop up.

Sujatha Rao, a former Indian health secretary, said India's health system kicked into overdrive when confronted with a health crisis, as was seen during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. "In India we're very good at crisis management, but we are hopeless at routine care," Rao said.

Asked whether the country was prepared for Ebola, she added: "We are not ready. But that said, there is only so much preparation that any country can do."

## All 7 acquitted

FROM PAGE 1  
Canadian, one India origin Canadian and the other a Canadian national. They are officials of Canadian firm SNC Lavalin, which was selected for the Padma bridge project's consultancy job.

On September 14, Mirza Jahidul Alam, ACC deputy director and also investigating officer of the case, submitted the final report to the court, saying the charges against the accused could not be proved.

Earlier on September 3, the commission cleared all the seven of conspiracy charges and also exonerated former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain and former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, though their names came in the alleged bribery scam.

They were so cleared although the World Bank shared with the ACC some information that show these persons were indeed conspiring to award the project's consultancy job to SNC Lavalin in exchange for bribe.

The WB was to finance the project along with several other development partners. But in June 2012, the Bank cancelled its \$1.2 billion funding, saying it had proof of a "corruption conspiracy" involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some individuals.

In a letter to the ACC last year, the WB external panel of experts said, "The panel considered that the evidence suggested a criminal conspiracy that included the former minister of communications as the most senior official personally involved."

"His name and the indication of payment of 4% were subsequently included in a list of people that were to receive compensation for their alleged involvement in the conspiracy."

"The ultimate award of the contract likely required his [Syed Abul Hossain] approval. He met with SNC Lavalin management at the request of the former secretary which was likely in furtherance of the negotiations for an illegal payment."

The Panel was also of the view that Abul should be named in the case and investigated for a fair probe into the case. But the ACC did neither.

Intriguingly, the ACC's final report is full of contradiction.

It admits that the diary of an accused -- India born Canadian national Ramesh Shah -- was vital in probing the allegation, but the commission failed to collect the diary

because it was seized by the Canadian authorities.

The issue of the diary in which Ramesh allegedly mentioned that Abul Hossain, Mosharraf and others were to be given bribes was raised in the preliminary hearing of the Canadian trial court, the report states.

Asked why the commission did not wait till the Canadian court verdict to get a copy of the diary, a top ACC official said the commission decided to "end the investigation" instead of waiting that long.

The commission even failed to interrogate the three SNC Lavalin officials -- Ramesh, Mohammad Ismail and Kevin Wales -- as they are facing trial over the same charge in Canada. ACC Deputy Director Mirza Jahidul Alam went to Canada to quiz the trio in vain.

The report also said the ACC found evidence that Abul held two meetings with SNC Lavalin officials at Setu Bhaban in the capital.

The meetings took place when the tender evaluation process for awarding the consultancy job was going on, the report said, adding that they were only courtesy calls when the SNC Lavalin officials were assured of "proper evaluation."

The report also admits the commission's failure to collect the email correspondences between the accused government officials and the Lavalin officials.

In his reaction over the acquittal, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said although the case proceedings ended, the controversy over the matter would remain.

"The case was lodged based on the inquiry and investigation by the Anti-Corruption Commission itself. Then in the same case, the Anti-Corruption Commission has concluded that it does not have enough evidence. The logic behind these varying decisions is not clear," he told the BBC Bangla.

The allegation of the corruption conspiracy drew a lot of criticisms from different quarters at home and abroad.

Amid huge outcry, the ACC in December 2012 filed the case against ex-Bridges Division secretary Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Superintendent Engineer of Bangladesh Bridge Authority Kazi Mohammad Ferdous, Executive Engineer of Roads and Highways Department Reaz Ahmed Zaber, and former local agent of SNC Lavalin Mohammad Mostafa and its ex-officials Ismail, Ramesh and Wales.

## Case book

FROM PAGE 16  
for hearing the death references and appeals, he said.

For easy handling, the enormous paper-book will be published in 47 volumes, he added.

At least 250 more copies may have to be produced for the appellants if the HC orders so, said an SC official involved in the production of the paper-book. He wished anonymity.

A total of 257 convicts have appealed to the HC challenging their convictions and sentences, he said.

Three digital printing machines and a binding machine have been brought from Japan at a cost of Tk 32 lakh for preparing the paper-book copies, as Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain has given priority to quick disposal of the appeals.

A Dhaka court on November 5 last year awarded death penalty to 150 soldiers of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and two civilians, and sentenced 161 others to life imprisonment for their roles and involvement in the carnage.

It also handed down rigorous imprisonment, ranging from three to 10 years, to another 256 people, mostly BDR soldiers. A total of 846 people, 823 of them BDR members, stood the trial. The remaining 277 accused were acquitted.

Seventy-four people, including 57 army officials, were slain in the BDR mutiny on February 25-26 in 2009 at the Pilkhana headquarters in Dhaka. The paramilitary force was later renamed Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

## Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1  
November 9 after Khaleda's lawyers filed four petitions. The judge asked Khaleda and four other accused, now on bail, to appear before the court on November 9 for taking depositions from witnesses in connection with the graft cases. The judge said Khaleda Zia must be present at the court on that day.

Meanwhile, Sammilito Islami Dalsomuho, a platform of different Islamic organisations yesterday observed a slack dawn-to-dusk countrywide hartal demanding arrest of sacked minister Abdul Latif Siddique for his anti-Islam remarks.

Our correspondents from different districts said there was no report of any unwarranted incidents due to the hartal.

The Islamic alliance, many of whose members are components in the BNP-led 20-party alliance, announced fresh protest programmes on Friday at the country's mosques following the Jumma prayers to drive home their demand.

The hartal did not appear to have affected businesses in Dhaka. However, traffic on the city streets and roads was thinner than usual. Plying of vehicles on long distances was suspended.

Meanwhile yesterday, the Supreme Court fixed November 6 for hearing three separate appeals filed by the BNP chief.

Of the appeals, two were filed on July 7 this year against a High Court verdict that had rejected her two writ petitions challenging the charge framing order against her and eight others in the graft cases.

The other appeal was filed in 2012 against another HC verdict that had rejected a petition of the BNP chief challenging a lower court order that had accepted charges against her in a graft case.

Yesterday, a five-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain set the date, Khaleda Zia's lawyer Zainul Abedin told The Daily Star.

The Anti-Corruption Commission had filed the two cases in 2008 and 2011. Khaleda, her son Tarique Rahman and four others embezzled Tk 2.1 crore by forming the charity that exists only on paper, according to the charge sheet of one of the cases.

In March this year, the lower court indicted Khaleda and eight others in the cases. ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told this correspondent that the lower court can run trial proceedings of the cases as the SC has not stayed the proceedings.

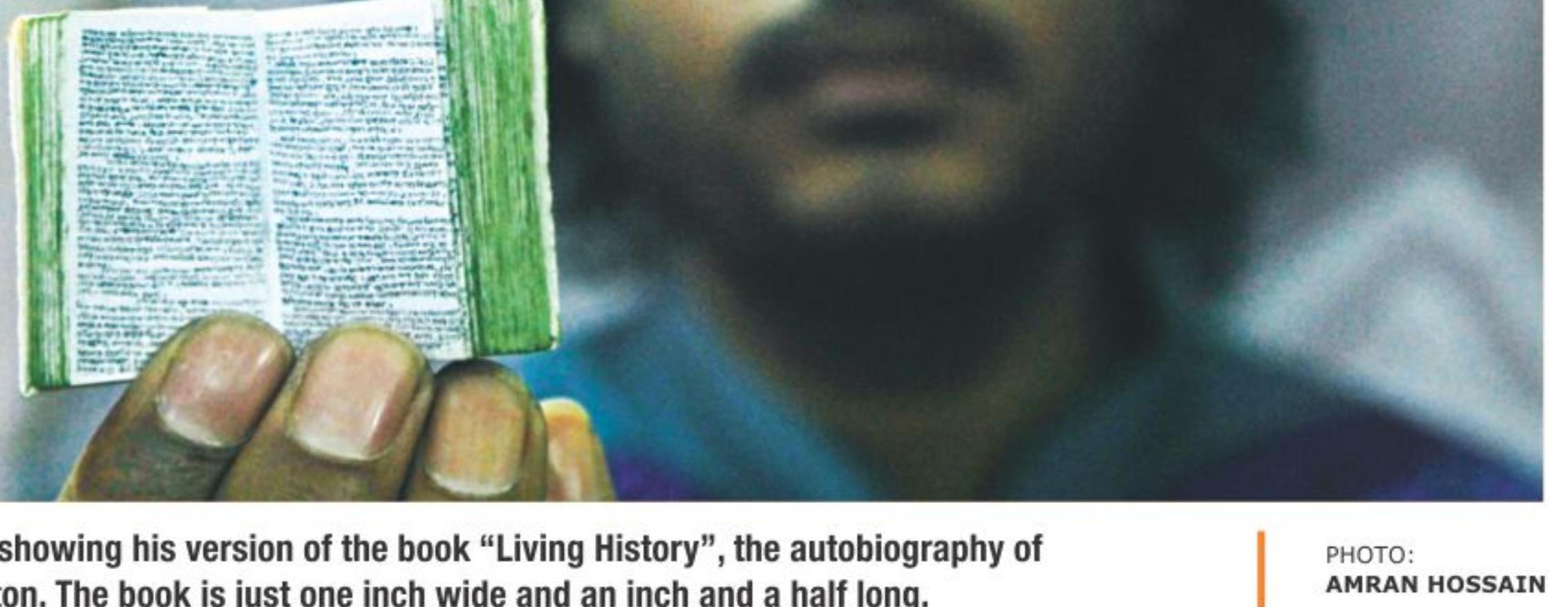


PHOTO:  
AMRAN HOSSAIN

Mintu Dey showing his version of the book "Living History", the autobiography of Hillary Clinton. The book is just one inch wide and an inch and a half long.

## 123ft letter for Hillary

FROM PAGE 1

The arrangements made to observe the occasion in a small classroom of Green Art Academy in the capital's North Dhamondi -- almost 11,000km away from Hillary's country -- were simple: a cake and two flower bouquets surrounded by a few well-wishers, none of whom were even remotely related to or known to Hillary.

They gathered there to celebrate the occasion with artist Mintu Dey, 35, who has been writing a letter to Hillary since April 2000.

Displaying parts of the 123-foot-long letter, Mintu told The Daily Star what had inspired him to get into this venture.

"While I was studying honours at the Institute of Fine Arts under Khulna University, I wanted to do something different," said the freelance artist who also runs the Green Art Academy along with a few friends.

"I started off with a plan to make the world's largest painting, but at one point it turned out to be too costly. So I changed my focus towards miniature art."

This thought led him to pick Hillary as his subject because back then in 2000 she was the first lady of the US.

While researching on Hillary, his

interest grew and around April that year he began writing her letters on 15.5-inch-wide papers.

At first, the pages were separate but then he came up with the idea of joining them with drawings on scenery and landscapes of Bangladesh.

Now, there are 31 such drawings and on the margin of the letter Hillary's name has been written 10,388 times in tiny letters.

The letter invites Hillary to Mintu's home in Khulna's Digholia upazila. He describes not only the tiniest detail of his home but also his day-to-day thoughts, including those on Hillary and what her reaction would be if she saw his home and so on.

Mintu never saw this woman who is considered one of the most powerful and influential in the world. He did get a chance to meet her when Hillary came to visit Bangladesh in 2012 as the US secretary of state. "Seven people were supposed to meet him. But she only had time to meet six and I was unfortunately the seventh," he said with a sad tone in his voice.

The letter is not the only thing Mintu has for Hillary. He is also composing a micro-miniature version (1"x1.5") of Hillary's book "Living History". He has also done a portrait of

Hillary with her name on a mustard seed.

His miniatures include a 1"x1.5" Tagore's *Geetanjali*, a 0.5mm diameter *Agnibina* of Kazi Nazrul Islam and a Mona Lisa, among others.

Mintu claimed that he had done all this without the help of any specialised equipment.

"I only used a magnifying glass to check the work," he said.

However, he could not yet exhibit his micro-miniature work. "It would be very costly because for each work I have to make a glass case and provide magnifying equipment for the spectators to look at the artwork."

His paintings and watercolours, though, were exhibited in 2008 and 2014 in Dhaka. Since miniatures are not widely known in the country, he has not yet met any collectors interested in this art form, Mintu said.

He has written several times to the Guinness Book of World Records about his miniatures but was yet to get a positive response since they do not have a category on miniature art.

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In Syria, Muhammad Mehdi Hassan, 19, from Portsmouth was killed in fighting on Friday. He said: "There are Britons who upon wanting to leave have been threatened with death, either directly or indirectly."

The news comes after it was revealed that another young Muslim from Portsmouth had been killed on the frontline in Syria, the fourth to die from a group of six men known as the "Pompey lads" who travelled together to fight for ISIS.

Meanwhile, the former Guantánamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg confirmed that he was also aware of dozens of British men keen to return to the UK but who were trapped in Syria and Iraq, in effect held by a group they wanted to leave.

Begg said he knew of more than 30 who wanted to come back. They had travelled to join rebels fighting the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad but had subsequently become embroiled with ISIS, some for language reasons -- ISIS had more English-speaking members.

He said that a lot of Britons were currently "stuck between a rock and a hard place". He added: "There are a

large number of people out there who want to come back. The number in January was around 30, that was the number given to me. That number has definitely increased since."

He also said that many of those who had gone to Syria to fight government forces and returned because they did not want to become embroiled in the rebel infighting were jailed despite being ideologically opposed to ISIS.

Hassan's Twitter account has been quiet since 17 October, the last entry documenting the frequency of US air strikes which have been targeting ISIS positions near Kobani for weeks. Images of the teenager's dead body with fellow fighters calling him a martyr emerged

Hassan was part of a group of five calling themselves the Britani Brigade Bangladeshi Bad Boys. The fanatics, all from Portsmouth, had been seduced by glamorous tales of martyrdom to join ISIS in establishing a Muslim caliphate in the Middle East.

2 | The Daily Star

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