

# Unique efforts to end disparity in education

Teach for Bangladesh helps univ graduates teach at primary schools

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"I teach for Imon and students like him... to keep them inside the classrooms and off the streets... so that they learn multiplication tables instead of swear words... get addicted to reading, not to smoking. I teach for Imon. I teach for Bangladesh."

The monologue about class III student Imon and how he was transformed from a school bully and a possible dropout to an eager learner was presented by Zarifa Zakaria, Imon's primary school teacher. But Zarifa is not a regular government teacher, who has been forced to take up the profession as her last choice.

Equipped with education from the country's top public institution, Dhaka University, she volunteered to work at Sher-e-Bangla Government Primary School in Mirpur, thanks to a fellowship programme run by non-

profit organisation Teach for Bangladesh (TFB).

Zarifa and others from the first batch of fellows shared their experiences of teaching at primary schools of Dhaka yesterday at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel where TFB welcomed its 2015 fellows, who would go through a six-week training on teaching and later volunteer to work as teachers in primary schools.

Starting in 2012, TFB aims to fight educational disparities by bringing top talents from the best universities of the country under a two-year fellowship programme, during which they would teach full-time in low-income schools.

The fellowship includes stipends and one and a half years' evening master's programme on education leadership, planning and management at Brac University for free.

The first batch of 12 fellows has been teaching class II and III students in four

government and two non-government primary schools in Dhaka.

The 31 fellows of the 2015 batch would be teaching in 17 more schools in the capital for two years from January 2015, said Abu Jafor, partnership development manager, TFB.

"With the help of the Department of Primary Education, Dhaka division, we select schools where the student-teacher ratio, teacher turnover and dropout rates are high and which suffer from resource constraints," he said.

The same batches of students will be groomed by the fellows till they take the junior school certificate (JSC) examinations.

Twenty-five-year old Saila Nusrat used to work at development firms after completing her master's in international relations from Jahangirnagar University. Hearing about TFB, she felt the urge to get involved in the

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## Qulkhwani of Lily Rahman today

CITY DESK

Qulkhwani of Lily Rahman will be held today after Asr prayers at her Dhanmondi residence, House No-26, Road No-4, in the capital.

Lily, wife of former adviser to a caretaker government Kazi Fazlur Rahman and daughter of late MA Jalil, a retired judge, died in a Dhaka hospital on Wednesday, says a press release.

All of her relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the programme.

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



The fallen tree

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## Saving a Tree

The Fazli mango tree, over sixty years old, stood five stories tall. It had a colourful past.

In 1947, just before Partition, Mr. Fazlul Karim was working as the Curator of Calcutta Botanical Garden situated within Eden Gardens. There, he planted and looked after many types of trees. Two years earlier, he had graduated as a botanist from the Agricultural College, Dhaka.

Then came Partition. Karim - originally from Chandpur - migrated to Dhaka. Settling into his new life, he moved to a house with a large yard in Monipuri Para. Eventually he became the Chief Arborist of the Construction and Buildings (later Roads and Highways) department of the government.

His new job responsibilities included planning and planting the garden in Ramna. He set up his office in a tin-shed inside the park. Emphasizing a geometric pattern in gardening, he planted small seedlings in Ramna. Today, these have grown into massive trees and thousands of people enjoy them.

While he was working in Kolkata, Karim had access to many different plant varieties. He brought several fine mango seedlings with him to Dhaka. Among them were Fazli, Khirshapati and Lengra varieties. He kept them alive in containers and, once settled in his new home, planted them in the yard. Over the years, about fifteen of these trees grew tall and strong.

Karim lived in interesting times. In 1967, a group of singers and cultural activists - led by our pioneering singer Mrs. Sanjida Khatun - came to see him in his Ramna office. They had brought an application which sought permission to have a cultural function

in Ramna on Pohela Boishakh, the Bangla New Year's day. The application mentioned a *bot* tree under which the group wanted to perform.

But Karim did not have authority to approve such a request. Nevertheless, he encouraged them and assured them that they would not be bothered if they held such an event. The *botomul* tradition of singing songs at Pohela Boishakh was born.

He also made a correction to the group's application. The tree they had mentioned was not *bot* - it was an *ashtho*, he informed them. So the Ramna *botomul* really is an *ashthomul*.

Seeing his passion for trees, his son Nazmul once asked him, "Why do you plant so many trees?" "So others after me can enjoy them," replied the elder Karim.

Karim's mango trees survived him when he passed away in 1994. However, after a night of rain earlier this year, one of the trees fell. It was the sixty-year-old Fazli tree. As it fell, its top caught in the apartment building next door. It came to rest at an inclined position.

Nazmul wanted to save his father's tree. Some advised him to upright it. But he left it untouched (other than chopping off the top part colliding with the apartment.) Instead he built an elaborate support system to hold it in place. Several roots had broken through the ground. He carefully covered them with soil and *gobar*.

Soon, the tree sent new shoots skyward reaching for the sun. New leaves appeared. It had survived the fall.

I don't know the next chapter in its life, but I have a feeling it will be interesting.

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir



A section of the first batch of a fellowship programme on teaching at primary schools of Dhaka, run by non-profit organisation Teach for Bangladesh, vows to enlighten the education system in Bangladesh at a programme in the capital's Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## AL leader killed in factional gunfight in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A local Awami League leader was killed in a gunfight between two factions of ruling AL over establishing supremacy at Chalitabari village under Shakharia union in Bogra Sadar upazila on Thursday night.

The deceased was Moazzem Hossain, 55, vice president of ward-7 unit of AL under the union.

Police sources said two factions led by Abu Shufian Shafique, president of sadar upazila unit of AL, and Kamrul Huda Uzzal, former Bangladesh Chhatra League leader of Azizul Haque College, clashed around 8:00pm.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation

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## Tengratila gas leakage panics locals

DC writes to Petrobangla to take immediate steps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The leakage of gas in Tengratila field in Sunamganj, which has been abandoned since two big blowouts occurred during well drilling in 2005, has intensified in the last couple of days, sending a panic wave through the surrounding villages.

Bubbles were seen in the trench inside the gas field and in different water bodies in the villages.

"We heard a big sound last Saturday, and since then the gas leakage is getting intensified," said Azim Uddin, a resident of Tengratila village and retired teacher of Tengratila High School.

Gas was emitting through small holes on the road, backyards of houses, and ponds, he said, adding that there were several hundred such places where leakage has been seen.

After the 2005 blowouts, about 200 families were evacuated, and they lived away from homes for about six months.

Farid Uddin Ahmed, headmaster of the adjoining Tengratila High School, said, "Attendance of students has gone down in the last few days due to panic."

Visiting the site on Thursday, Deputy Commissioner of Sunamganj Sheikh Rafiqul Islam told The Daily Star, "Since the gas leakage is getting intensified, I have written letters to the Petrobangla chairman, the energy secretary, and the Sylhet divisional commissioner informing them of the situation and urging necessary steps." Meanwhile, many of the villagers have started using the leaked gas through water pipes for household work defying warnings against the hazardous act.

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## Robbers shoot dead farmer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Robbers shot dead a farmer and injured his nephew in Boro Hatia village in Lohagara upazila of Chittagong early yesterday.

The deceased was Anil Rudro, 48, of Boro Hatia village. His nephew, Sanjay Rudra, 28, has been admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital with bullet wounds in his right arm and shoulder.

Police and locals said the duo had been guarding their croplands from wild elephants which sometimes wander into the lands from the bordering hills.

Around 20 robbers, after looting six houses and shops, were fleeing from villagers when they came across the duo around 3:00am, said Officer-in-Charge of Lohagara Police Station Md Shahjahan, adding that the gang began shooting at Anil and his nephew after coming across them. Anil died on the spot.

## 28 Indian fishermen held for intrusion into Bangladesh waters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Bangladesh Navy arrested 28 Indian fishermen yesterday morning with two trawlers for illegal fishing inside Bangladesh maritime boundary in Bagerhat.

Navy patrol ship BNS Teesta spotted the fishing boats in Fairway Buoy area in the Bay of Bengal, some 90 nautical miles off Mongla port, said police.

The 28 were handed over to Mongla Police Station in the evening.

Sub-inspector Monjur Elahi said the detained men, all of whom hail from South 24 Parganas district in India's West Bengal state, would be produced before a

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Pipes set in Tengratila gas field in Sunamganj to ease a sudden intensification of leakage, inset, coming to notice a couple of days ago. The gas field had been abandoned since two big blowouts occurred during well drilling in 2005. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SECULARISM, STATE RELIGION IN CONSTITUTION

## Parallel existence enigmatic

Prof Anisuzzaman tells Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Oikya Parishad's 25th anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pointing out that secularism returned with the reinstatement of the four fundamental principles while Islam remained as the state religion, Prof Emeritus at Dhaka University Anisuzzaman yesterday said it was difficult to understand how both could simultaneously exist in the constitution.

Addressing as chief guest a discussion in the capital's Bangla Academy celebrating Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Oikya Parishad's 25th founding anniversary, the eminent educationalist also condemned recent attacks on minority communities, especially Hindus.

"The administration sometimes fails to perform its due role to prevent such attacks for some reasons. But when the local representatives come forward to resist the communal attacks, the administration becomes active," he added.

The noted academician urged civil society members to protest any form of communal violence to maintain harmony, stating that all communities would be able to live peacefully once secularism was completely existent in the constitution and the administrations.

He, however, said communalism in the majority might

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Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brinda Rani Das, 26, mother of a five-year-old girl, has been suffering from acute renal failure and hepatitis C for nearly six months.



Doctors at the Christian Medical College and Hospital, India, where Brinda has been for the last five months, say she needs immediate kidney transplant.

Her husband Joydeb Kumar Das, 35, a government employee with a meagre income, has already spent all his savings and incurred a debt of Tk 14 lakh for the treatment.

Before taken to India, Brinda was treated in some of the hospitals in the country for a couple of years.

As her condition did not improve, doctors at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib

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