

## Bodies exhumed

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access in the 1980s, was exhumed from the Banani graveyard in the capital following a court order. The exhumation was carried out over one and a half months after her burial.

A Dhaka court had passed the order on November 26 hearing a petition filed by Lopa's mother Razia Sultana where she rejected the postmortem report prepared by Dhaka Medical College.

Apart from Razia, Executive Magistrate Shamima Banu and officials of Banani and Gulshan police stations were also present at the graveyard during the exhumation.

Later, the body was sent to the morgue of Sir Salimullah Medical College for a fresh autopsy report.

"Lopa's husband Aly Amin was a drug addict and he killed her following a feud over his extra-marital affair with a Bangladeshi woman who lives in the USA," Razia told The Daily Star.

"Aly used to torture my daughter every now and then," she alleged.

"Lopa did not file any general diary or case over the matter considering family reputation. And finally, her husband killed her and hung the body with the ceiling fan to make it look like a suicide," she alleged.

On October 16, the hanging body of Lopa, who played Tunji, a young girl in a popular drama serial "Ei Shob Din Ratri" aired on Bangladesh Television in 1985-86, was recovered from her Gulshan home.

Aly Amin, who was arrested soon after the incident, is now out on bail.

On the other hand, the parents-in-law of Lopa got the bail yesterday after they had appeared before the HC bench of Justice Syed AB Mahmudul Huq and Justice Md Akram Hossain Chowdhury.

The court passed the order on the grounds that there was no allegation against them of being involved in the incident, said Deputy Attorney General Bashir Ullah.

### MAHAJABIN'S BODY EXHUMED

The body of Dr Shamirukh Mahajabin, who was found dead at her in-law's house in the capital's Dhanmondi on November 13, was exhumed in Jessore town yesterday morning for a fresh autopsy report.

The body was exhumed from Karbala graveyard around 11:45am in the presence of a team, comprising of the local administration, police members and doctors, led by Executive Magistrate Abdus Sobhan, said Shahanur Sharif, brother of Mahajabin.

The body was buried again in the afternoon after collecting viscera samples, said, Mahajabin's father Nurul Islam.

A Dhaka court on November 25 ordered that the body be exhumed for a fresh postmortem after Nurul filed a petition, rejecting the first autopsy report, which was also prepared by Dhaka Medical College.

Mahajabin husband Humayun Sultan and his parents claim she committed suicide, but her father says she was murdered by her husband and in-laws.

Humayun is in jail while his parents -- former lawmaker of Jessore-5 constituency Khan Tipu Sultana and Jesmin Ara -- are on bail.



Farmers take a break from tending their farmland in Narsingdi's Shibpur. City-dwellers are likely to see an abundant supply of winter vegetables this year.

PHOTO:  
ANISUR RAHMAN

## Vegetables aplenty for Dhaka

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Shyambazar Krishi Panya Aarot Banik Samity.

"Vegetables in large quantities are brought to Shyambazar by road and waterways," he said.

Loaded with vegetables, around 150 trucks and 50 boats, mainly from Munshiganj and Keraniganj, arrive at the wholesale market every day, said Mohsin.

Farmers of Singair upazila in Manikganj alone supply around 20 truckloads of vegetables to the capital daily, said Belal Hossain Protundar, a farmer in the area.

He cultivates mainly seasonal vegetables including radish, onion, potato, green chilli, and carrot.

"Vegetable production in Manikganj is expected to exceed last year's production, thanks to favourable weather," said Md Alimuzzaman, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Manikganj.

The farmers of the district produced more than 2.10 lakh tonnes of vegetables in the last fiscal year. "Vegetable production will increase this year as the country has not witnessed any major natural disaster," he said.

Narsingdi, another vegetable

production hub, has so far witnessed a good yield, said Subhash Chanda Gayen, deputy director of DAE in the district.

"Farmers in this area are increasing crop production by 1-2 percent each year." They mainly cultivate aubergine, cauliflower, cabbage, tomato, bean, bottle gourd and pointed gourd, he mentioned.

Vegetables of this district are not only supplied to Dhaka but also are exported to different countries, he added.

Subhash said the district DAE has set a target to cultivate vegetables on 8,800 hectares of land this year, although Narsingdi is gradually losing arable land due to setting up of new factories.

Vegetable production in different upazilas of Dhaka soared by more than 11 percent in five years from 2006.

The annual vegetable production was 2.34 lakh tonnes in 2010-11 in Dhaka district including Savar, Dhamrai, Keraniganj and Dohar, up from 2.10 lakh tonnes in 2006-07, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

However, farmers are yet to make profit from their produce as most of the profit goes to the middlemen, who buy farmers' produce in bulk at a

cheaper rate, and sell those for much higher prices in the capital city.

"I have a good harvest of vegetables this year, but I am not getting fair price for the output," said Anwara Begum of Shibpur upazila in Narsingdi.

She sells each bottle gourd for Tk 5-Tk 10 to local wholesalers, who then resell those for up to Tk 40 in city markets.

"Unfair prices are highly discouraging to cultivation," she told The Daily Star over the phone.

The supermarkets in the city could source directly from the farmers, which would benefit farmers and consumers, said farmers.

"If supermarkets buy more from farmers in the nearby areas like Manikganj, Savar and Narsingdi, the products will be both fresher and cheaper," said Belal Hossain.

Moreover, huge supply of vegetables has also brought down their prices in city's kitchen markets.

Each piece of cauliflower is now selling at Tk 10-Tk 15 at Mirpur 1 kitchen market and a cabbage sells for Tk 12-Tk 20.

Traders of Karwan Bazar kitchen market are selling each kilogram of radish at Tk 10-Tk 15, and bitter gourd at Tk 25-Tk 30.

## Mamata melting

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Bengal's Jalpaiguri, linking Bangladesh with Bhutan and Nepal through India.

Mamata's comments about the LBA assume significance as they come a few days after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted in Assam on Sunday that his government would go ahead with operationalising the LBA with Bangladesh, contending that it was in the long-term security interests of India.

On Monday, a parliamentary standing committee of India's external affairs ministry had submitted a "unanimous" report to parliament recommending immediate passage of a long-pending constitution amendment bill in the House to help implement the LBA signed wayback in 1974.

The bill, introduced in Rajya Sabha, upper House of parliament, last year during the Congress-led government, needs two-thirds majority support because it requires constitutional amendment and because it involves exchange of land with Bangladesh.

Mamata appeared very positive about the LBA even at a meeting with a Bangladesh parliamentary delegation led by LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam in Kolkata late last month, sources said.

However, Mamata's party earlier had reservations about the agreement, particularly with regard to loss of territory and the fund needed for the rehabilitation of

## Ex-BTCL boss sent to prison

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday sentenced SOM Kalim Ullah, a former managing director of Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Limited, to four months in prison for contempt of court.

He was also fined Tk 1 lakh, in default, to suffer imprisonment for another month.

The former top official of BTCL was sent to Dhaka Central Jail hours after the HC single bench with Justice Md Rezaul Hasan passed the order yesterday, said police.

The court, however, acquitted BTCL director Shah Farid Uddin and IFIC bank official Helal Ahmed.

The HC delivered the verdict after hearing a contempt-of-court petition filed by Oxinnel Services Private Ltd (OSPL), a telephone company, alleging the trio did not comply with a previous HC order.

The HC order had asked them to refund OSPL Tk 72,000.

Kalim Ullah would lose retirement benefits from his service following the verdict, Aneek R Haque, counsel for the telephone company, told this correspondent.

The convict retired from his job in February.

The lawyer said due to business relationship, OSPL had deposited Tk 1.40 crore in IFIC bank in favour of BTCL.

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## Where? Why?

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that the government and its agencies were involved in any sort of enforced disappearance.

"I asked Rab. I asked DC whether they knew about any such incident or if it was committed by them. They all denied," he told BBC Bangla Service last night.

About the disappearance of the eight, the home boss said he was aware of the allegations as some of the victims were from his constituency. He claimed the families did not inform him of the incidents after he became state minister.

But Sajedul's sister Sanjida Islam claimed that the families wrote to the state minister and the home secretary on July 24 this year about the alleged disappearances.

Asked whether the ministry will probe the allegations against Rab, the state minister told BBC Bangla that he would look into the matter.

Contacted, Rab Director General Mukhlesur Rahman said they had received complaints about the alleged disappearance of some of the eight and they are trying to trace the victims.

About the allegation against Rab, the DG said they were yet to have any evidence for these claims.

At the press conference, Prof CR Abrar of Dhaka University; Mahmudur Rahman Manna, convener of Nagorik Oikya; Nur Khan, director (investigation) of Ain o Salish Kendra, and Zakir Hossain of rights platform Maulik Adhikar Suroksha Committee were present alongside the victims' family members.

Sajedul's mother Hajera Khatun said her son, general secretary of ward-38 BNP, had been staying out of home fearing arrest and sometimes spent nights at his cousin Tanvir's house.

On the evening of December 4, Sajedul was hanging out with Tanvir, Russel, Masum, Rana and Al Amin beside a road near Tanvir's under-construction building at Block I in

Bashundhara.

Around 8:00pm, some 15 Rab personnel reached there and picked up the six, Sajedul's sister Sanjida quoted a construction worker, who claimed to have witnessed the whole incident, as saying.

Al Amin's family lodged an abduction case with Bhatara Police Station on January 26 against some unidentified people. This is the only case filed in this connection.

Two other victims, Adnan Chowdhury and Kawsar Ahmed were allegedly picked up from their residences at Shaheenbagh around 2:00am on December 5.

"A group of seven to eight people with firearms entered our house and took away Adnan, saying that they needed to interrogate him for some information. They used two vehicles including one with 'Rab' written on its side," Adnan's mother told The Daily Star.

Another victim Rana, who was from Rangpur, had been staying at his sister's home in Dhaka and preparing for the BCS exams at the time of the alleged abduction.

"My mother has called me almost every day over the last one year," said Rana's sister Minara Begum. "All she wants to know if there is anything about him. But I got no answer for her."

She added, "I don't think anybody is listening to us. I don't also think the prime minister is seeing us shed tears."

Russel and his younger sister Laboni used to have fun all the time, as they are immediate siblings.

"I can hardly sleep now. I wake up too often thinking that he might come back," said Laboni, choking back tears. Masum's mother said she had barely gone out of home all her life. But now she had been going from door to door. Her son was preparing to be a banker.

"Eight people have been abducted one day... What kind of country is this?" she asked, wailing.

## Whatever happened to our sense of decency?

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of power or sheer arrogance?

Bangladesh has been an independent country for too long to be ignorant about diplomatic etiquettes. Therefore, it is our view that the abusive language that Syed Ashraf, general secretary of the ruling Awami League and minister for the LGRD, used while referring to Nisha Desai Biswal, US assistant secretary of state, and Dan Mozena, the US ambassador to Bangladesh, is a result of immaturity, produced by a delusion of power, triggered by unthinking arrogance.

In the world of diplomacy, you can be firm, stern and even politely rebuff your counterpart. But you can never insult and that too in public, unless you have already decided to downgrade diplomatic relations with the country concerned.

We believe that Bangladesh wants the best of relationship with the US. If so, then what are we to make of what Syed Ashraf said? Our LGRD minister termed Nisha Biswal as a "two penny worth of a minister". He referred to her ethnic origin, her age, her sex, and to the fact that she was not married. Doesn't the minister know, as he

had spent a long time in England and is quite modern in many ways, that such references to a career woman, leave aside a professional diplomat, can easily be construed as racist and his reference to her marital status as downright sexist.

For the love of God, doesn't Syed Ashraf know that nothing about Nisha Biswal matters -- her ethnicity, sex and age, or whether she was "two penny" or "twenty penny" minister -- except the singular fact that she was representing the government of the United States of America while visiting Bangladesh.

Whatever she did, whatever she said and whom so ever she met, it was all on behalf of the government she serves. Nothing was done in her personal capacity.

Ashraf's reference to the US ambassador was even more hurtful. While talking about Dan Mozena, he told his audience in Khulna Saturday last that he has a domestic servant called "Morzina" who now wants to change her name after the minister told his servant that Dan Mozena was trying to remove the AL from power.

The reference to Ashraf's domestic servant while talking about the US

ambassador leaves no doubt in anybody's mind as to his intentions, and how demeaning it is in our cultural context. Why say all this when the person concerned was leaving anyway unless, as we said, the intention was to insult.

This is no way to conduct foreign relations. It is inconceivable that two sovereign countries will not have, on occasions, serious differences on policies and in assessment of situations. The more globalised the world becomes the more intricate will be the mutual dependencies and the resultant interstate relations. The more we will be bound to each other the more will our differences surface and more will be the need to navigate our way through them.

The future will have to be one of delicate firmness and intelligent flexibility. In none of it there is even the smallest of space for abuse and insult.

What is perhaps more shocking than Syed Ashraf's self-defeating remarks is the absence of any attempt to minimise the obvious damage that has resulted from it. In similar situations, more sober minds and people in higher echelons of power make

public statements and private efforts to minimise the damage. To the best of our knowledge, nothing remotely so has been undertaken.

There has been neither a withdrawal, nor an explanation or an apology. An insult can be a product of an unthinking moment or a momentary slip. But if nothing is done to explain the situation even after considerable time elapses then one has to conclude that the "insult" was not as unthinking as we had hoped it was or are making it out to be.

That is a conclusion we are still not ready to arrive at. But further silence will leave us no option. Then we will need to ask what national interest, if any, has been served by Syed Ashraf's remarks. If, on the contrary, damage has been caused to our bilateral relations with the US then what steps are we ready to take to mend it?

On a different note, for us away from the world of power and diplomacy, the sad feeling lingers on as to whatever has happened to our everyday sense of decency. It is still not too late to extend an apology. In apologising for a mistake, one's stature is never compromised but only enhanced.

## Dhaka-Ctg highway blocked

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science department of Comilla Govt College.

Assistant Education Officer Rowshan Ferdous of Sonaimuri Upazila told The Daily Star that she was going to Dhaka but got stuck for about five hours on the highway.

Transport owners said all inter-district buses that use Ashrafpur Bus Terminal have to pay Tk 100 illegal toll. More than 1,000 buses use the terminal a day. Ruling party men and transport union workers collect the toll taking turns every other year, they

claimed.

Workers got angry yesterday morning after ruling party men wanted to take full control of the illegal toll collection, bus owners said requesting anonymity.

General Secretary Ali Monsur Faruk of Comilla Motor Association said a group of people led by Dulal Hossain Opu began collecting toll at Poduar Bazar area of Comilla in the name of ruling Awami League and its associate organisations.

port owners, workers and the ruling party men. Transport workers Mohammad Ali and Kazi Motaher Hossain were assaulted. Several vehicles were vandalised as well.

Ali and Motaher had to be hospitalised.

Witnesses said the bus owners went for the blockade soon after the news of Ali and Motaher getting injured spread around noon. Agitating workers also burnt tyres on the highway and demanded arrest of Opu.

The blockade was withdrawn around 5:30pm following local

administration's assurance of legal action against the culprits.

But by then, people travelling on the highway were stranded for five hours.

Abdul Malek Bhuiyan, general secretary of Sadar Dakkhin Upazila Awami League, admitted that Opu was indeed a ruling party man and the problem was about illegal toll collection.

He, however, said it was not a party affair and the ruling party had nothing to do with it.