



From left ... Freelancers Ariful Islam Sakib, Mizanur Rahman Milon, Emrazina Islam Khan, Saidur Mamun Khan, Mahmud Hassan Sunny and Sany Ahmed at The Daily Star Centre. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Young freelancers

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4.5 lakh registered users in Bangladesh.

Saidur stressed the need for improved Internet bandwidth for grabbing more job orders.

Sharif Muhammad Shahjahan, who earned \$152,000 last year, said, "Many global companies are placing orders to us due to cost competitiveness and good quality."

Sharif has only passed HSC and he mainly works in image processing for different clients in Australia, the USA, the UK, Norway, South Korea, Singapore and China and has his own outsourcing firm: Ideal Computer and Digital Studio in Savar employing 15 people.

"Bangladesh is emerging as a leading player in freelancing jobs due to its huge young population base," said Emrazina Islam Khan, chief executive of Creative Kittens, a leading outsourcing firm in the country.

"We have been making websites for 6Connex, an US based company for last one year," the 27-year-old said, adding that more than 100 organisations, including GE, Oracle, Perkin Elmer, Ericsson, Sears, Child Help, and North Central University, rely on 6Connex.

Outsourcing firm ewebicon.com is earning on an average \$8,500 a month

and plans to increase the earning to \$12,000 by 2016, said Sany Ahmed, chief executive officer of the company, who is just 27.

"We offer professional SEO services that help businesses increase organic search results and stay on first page rankings of targeted keywords on Google," he said, adding that his company also develops micro-business websites for marketing of The Amazon Kindle.

Demand for new mobile apps is increasing rapidly due to increased use of smartphone globally, said Mahmud Hassan Sunny, app architect of Business App Station, a local app developing company.

Business App Station has so far developed more than 300 mobile apps for various sectors such as education, health and game, said the 25-year-old.

"Anyone can earn money freelancing if he or she knows the work properly," said Ariful Islam Sakib, a freelancer, who is studying for his Fazil degree at a madrasa in Demra.

English is a must to get jobs, the 22-year-old said.

Sakib, who started the freelancing in December last year after four months' training on graphic design, is now earning \$600 a month on an average.

State loses sense of humanity

Rulers detached from people, says Dr Kamal

UNB, Dhaka

Noted jurist Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the state now has lost the sense of humanity as the rulers have got detached from people.

"The state has lost the sense of humanity. Why? Those who are running the country have become totally isolated from people. They don't give any importance to what people say," he said.

Dr Kamal was addressing a discussion on human rights, organised by Bangladesh Human Rights Monitoring Council (BHRMC) at the Jatiya Press Club.

"The rulers have lost the ability to listen to people's voices ... they should be given mental treatment ... they should be given hearing treatment,"

Dr Kamal continued.

Both the rulers and people count the cost when the former does not give an air to the latter, he said, adding that people pay for it through sufferings caused by hartal, vandalism and atrocities and the rulers pay for it by getting ousted from power.

Dr Kamal also observed that the rulers have a mentality to remain in power at any cost, even at the expense of bright possibility of development.

Citing media reports about corruption in the judiciary, the jurist voiced his grave concern and said he will issue a letter urging the Chief Justice to take stern actions in this regard.

Reminding the countrymen that they are the only source of the state power, he urged people to get united

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People wary of unrest

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so many incidents of hurling petrol bombs at buses full of passengers, burning alive people or helper sleeping inside covered vans or trucks using gun powder and pouring petrol on CNG drivers and setting them afire.

None was spared -- be it kids travelling with parents, patients, daily labourers, students, office-goers or cook.

On a hartal day, 14-year-old Monir was waiting inside a parked van on Dhaka-Gazipur highway for his father, who had gone to see if the road ahead was free of trouble.

Pickets appeared from nowhere to set the vehicle alight, leaving the boy charred beyond recognition. He died on November 7.

While the memories of the mayhem are still fresh in people's minds, a renewed tension in the political arena has created public anxieties, especially after Chhatra League's attack on BNP and Chhatra Dal in the capital, the government hardline against the BNP rally in Gazipur and the opposition alliance's countrywide hartal.

BNP chief Khaleda Zia's latest call on the New Year's eve urging Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to accept her seven-point demand, including a fresh election as soon as possible, or face dire consequences, clearly points to a looming conflict.

Then there is the two rival camps' programmes centring on the first anniversary of January 5 polls.

Tajul Islam, a roadside vendor in Farmgate area, said he stayed nearly 10 years in Sudan during the civil war.

"But I never saw the rival camps setting fire to public vehicles or carrying out attacks on common people or business outlets there. But in Bangladesh the scenery is totally opposite. I fear that the horror of 2013 might revisit this year," he told this correspondent.

Bangladesh has gone through many chaotic political events since its birth in 1971, but neither of those remotely similar to the violence on common people in 2013.

The yearlong gruesome events were part of the campaign by the BNP-led opposition to realise the demand for

parliamentary election under a non-party administration. While the Jamaat and its student wing Shibir unleashed terror to get the ongoing war crimes trials stalled.

At least 66 people were killed, including law enforcers, and scores others injured in four days from February 28 in clashes with Jamaat-Shibir men.

The party used women and children as human shields during clashes with law enforcers at different parts of the country, resulting in the death of three women in Bogra and a boy in Rajshahi in early March.

Jamaat also used its propaganda machine to mislead uneducated and religious people into joining their lethal movement. It was all lies, outright and outrageous, but it worked.

After a special tribunal's verdict against Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee on February 28, their propaganda machine used a photoshopped image of Sayedee's face on the moon to entice people into unleashing a wave

of terror.

Jamaat-Shibir men on March 3 gouged out an eye of a policeman and hacked him indiscriminately to death in Jhenidah.

Police arrested over 130 top and mid-level leaders of BNP and filed criminal cases against them throughout the year. Even leaders aged 70 to 80 were not spared.

As part of its hard line, law enforcement agencies did not allow opposition to hold rallies, processions and other modes of political activities on streets.

Amid nonstop hartals and blockades, economy was hit hard.

Md Imran, a small trader of Karwan Bazar, said he had to take a loan of Tk 40,000 in December 2013 to ensure food for his four-member family as sales almost went down to zero. "We never want to go through such horrible experience."

He added that the two top leaders of the country must resolve the dispute among them through discussion.

"We don't want to be victims of their political game anymore."

Women who dream

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Her job responsibilities include observing the railway signals and position of tracks while the loco master drives the train.

An ALM needs at least 10 years' experience to become a loco master, said Harun-ar-Rashid, chief mechanical engineer of BR (East Zone).

When the British introduced the railway in the subcontinent, coal-fired steam engines used to power the trains. Driving trains was then deemed too physically strenuous a job for women and they were not even considered. Over the years, the mindset had changed and so did the locomotives.

Md Tafazzal Hossain, former director general of BR, said it was very encouraging that Bangladeshi women, though in a small number, were entering the profession and competing with men.

"These girls are a shining example of the ability of women. They can do anything," he said.

Siddiqua assists the loco master of the Chittagong University commuter train that operates between the univer-

sity and the port city.

"I enjoy my job very much as it's quite adventurous," she told The Daily Star, thanking her family for supporting her throughout the "way".

But, not all of the female ALMs had it so easy.

ALM Kulshum Akhter, who studied mathematics from Eden Mohila College in Dhaka, said she faced many hurdles while discharging her duties. "Many onlookers pass offensive comments seeing a girl inside the locomotive," she said.

Women constitute half of the total population and they are equally in need of jobs, said Kulshum, adding that such attitudes towards women have to change.

Women in many cases were not considered fit to be train drivers mainly for existing social and traditional inhibitions, she added.

Another female ALM, wishing anonymity, said because of safety concerns only a few women were taking up the job.

"It's the duty of the government to ensure women's safety everywhere," she added.

Five rescued after boat sinks in Bay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Five fishermen, who went missing after a boat capsized in the Bay's Bangla Channel yesterday, were rescued after nearly two and a half hours of the accident.

The boat sank after being hit by a seatruck ferry carrying tourists around 3:30pm, said Abu Taher, president of Fishing Boat Owners' Association in Saint Martin's Island.

The association sent three trawlers to rescue the missing men, and the rescuers brought the victims to the seashore alive around 6:00pm, he said. Their identities could not be known immediately.

The fishermen were taken to a Saint Martin's hospital. However, the boat still remained untraced, Taher added.

The boat capsized around four kilometres north off the island.

The seatruck, a vessel of Keari Sindabad, on its way to Teknaf from Saint Martin's Island hit the fishing boat, leaving all the five fishermen missing, said Assistant Sub-inspector Harun-or-Rashid, in-charge of Saint Martin's Police Camp.

Jubo League man shot dead in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Masked assailants shot a Jubo League activist dead in Satkania upazila of Chittagong last night.

The dead is Jamal Uddin, 32, of Shantirtek area.

Around 7:30pm, a group of criminals shot Jamal at a tea stall at Fultala Bazar and fled in a CNG-run autorickshaw immediately, said Nazmul Haque, sub-inspector of Satkania Police Station.

The local Jubo League activist was killed on the spot, said the SI.

The motive behind the murder could not be known immediately.

Jubo League is the youth front of ruling Awami League.

Small is beautiful

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The works are set to go on display in his home city, giving a cash boost to local literacy and learning initiatives.

Part of the proceeds from the exhibition of pieces will support community programmes operated by the Library of Birmingham.

The Birmingham-born sculptor was awarded an MBE for services to art in

2007, and is also a patron of the £189 million Library of Birmingham, which opened in September 2013.

He said: "As a child, I escaped into a fantasy world."

"Now local children have the Library of Birmingham on their doorstep, with free access to millions of stories to fuel their imaginations."

"Literacy and learning initiatives can support, encourage, challenge and

enhance them, whatever their abilities. These initiatives are even more important in Birmingham where literacy levels are amongst the lowest in the country.

"I became a patron of the Library of Birmingham Trust so that, whatever a child's background or ability, there will be a chance for them to be original and creative, to make their mark on the world."

Democracy perverted

FROM PAGE 1

get the magic number to form government. Against such a modest requirement, the party picked 105 more seats in the polling, securing three-fourths majority on its own.

Such an unprecedented election gave birth to even more unprecedented events. The 10th parliament was formed even as the previous ninth parliament was still in existence. Ershad's Jatiya Party was made the main opposition, but some of its MPs joined the cabinet as well.

Raushan Ershad was recognised by the Speaker as the leader of the opposition though Khaleda Zia was still holding office as the ninth parliament had not yet been dissolved. Ershad, chief of the main opposition party, was made special envoy of the prime minister with the status of a minister.

Thus, a "new model" of parliamentary democracy was set up in Bangladesh.

The model has already proved ineffectual. The opposition MPs have been overenthusiastic about maintaining good relations with the government and have not held the executive branch accountable for its activities. The parliament for its part has turned into a one-sided body. The result: There is no check and balance in the state power.

But all this did not happen overnight. The cancellation of the nonparty caretaker government system in June 2011 through constitutional amendment was at the root of this one-sided election.

This constitutional change allowed the AL to stay in power during the polls. Aggrieved and unhappy, the BNP-led alliance decried the amendment and refused to participate in the

polls unless the caretaker system was restored. This was only the beginning of a political stalemate that still persists and threatens unrest and street violence.

Soon after the amendment, the BNP-led alliance took to the streets in its effort to force the government to yield to its demand.

But the government would not bow down. Top AL leaders and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made it clear that the government would not restore the caretaker system. Moreover, instead of taking steps to break the deadlock, it foiled the opposition's street agitations by using police force and the legal system, filing dozens of cases against the opposition leaders and activists.

The crisis deepened in 2013 with both sides flexing their muscles. The violence turned ugly and deadly.

The United Nations and foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka made abortive attempts to bring the two sides together for talks. Senior government officials of some foreign countries, including the US, came to Dhaka to broker a deal. But in vain; neither side would compromise.

Amid this, the government went ahead with the polls plan. The PM formed an election-time cabinet at the end of November last year. In this, she banked on the Jatiya Party and inducted seven of its MPs into her polls-time cabinet.

As the country headed for the one-sided election, some civil society members met President Abdul Hamid and requested him to ensure participation of all parties in the polls. BNP chief Khaleda Zia and the Election Commission also met the president

separately to make the same request, but the president did not take any step.

In a last-ditch effort, the UN secretary general sent his special envoy, Oscar Fernández Taranco, to Dhaka in early December to mediate talks between the parties. He succeeded in bringing the two sides to the discussion table, but the talks failed as both sides were rigid on their stance.

Then, in the run up to the polls, the JP staged a drama. Its chief Ershad suddenly announced that there was no atmosphere for fair polls and his party would not participate in it. The former military chief announced that his party MPs would resign from the cabinet and his party candidates would withdraw their nomination papers to quit the polls.

His announcement was not welcomed even by his own party, however. Blessed by the government, some senior JP leaders, led by Ershad's wife Raushan Ershad, revolted against Ershad and declined to quit the electoral race.

Ershad was picked by an intelligence agency from his residence and forcibly admitted to the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka cantonment to stop him from talking to the media.

In the meantime, some JP candidates withdrew their candidacies following Ershad's announcement. But Ershad was not allowed to pull out. The JP drama exposed the government's desperation to hold the polls.

The voting day came and it turned out to be the deadliest polling day in the country. Naturally, voter turnout was low.

(Part-II on AL's election strategy tomorrow.)