

## Novera dies

FROM PAGE 1

The iconoclastic artist died on Tuesday in France where she had lived in seclusion for over four decades. She was 85.

The Banglapedia entry on paintings mentions that Hamidur Rahman "along with sculptor Novera Ahmed designed the historic shaheed minar that commemorates the martyrs of the language movement."

The recalcitrant air that she had about herself in a male-dominated art scene of the time was aptly captured in Novera, a novel written by Hasnat Abdul Hye. Creative glimpses of her creative association with Hamidur Rahman are to be found in the novel *Taish Number Toilochitro* by Alauddin Al Azad. Very few artists in the country have seen such passionate novels written about their life and work, a feat which also demonstrates the power of her art amongst contemporary artists.

Born in 1930 in Kolkata, Novera studied in Kolkata and Comilla, and against all odds went to England to obtain her Diploma in Design in the Modelling and Sculpture course from Camberwell School of Art in London in 1955.

At Camberwell she studied under the renowned British sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein and Karel Vogel of Czechoslovakia. She also enriched her perspective on European sculpture by studying under the sculptor Venturi Venturino in Florence and later in Vienna.

She was influenced by many western modern sculptors such as Henry Moore and the modern art approach of the Western World.

Within a short span of time, from 1956 to 1960, Novera had worked on about 100 sculptures in Dhaka. Her first exhibition was held in 1960 in erstwhile East Pakistan.

Out of 100, 33 sculptures were collected by the Bangladesh National Museum (BNM).

Marked by diverse experimentations with history, forms and treatment of materials and media, her creations have become part of our history.

She has been a keen observer of village life and folk motifs and has based many of her artworks on what she had observed.

She has created an extensive family series, including sculptures of endearing women with their children.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at her death, reports UNB.

In a condolence message, Hasina said Novera's death was a great loss to the whole nation. She also prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and expressed her sympathy to the bereaved family members.

## Three mayors

FROM PAGE 16

commitments to make all-out efforts for the development of their cities.

Annisul Huq and Sayeed Khokon of Dhaka north and south city corporations and AJM Nasir of Chittagong city came up with their fresh vows while talking to reporters at the Prime Minister's Office.

Earlier, they participated in the swearing-in ceremony at the PMO in the capital.

Annisul expressed his gratitude to the voters who cast their ballots in favour of him and to those who campaigned for him in the polls.

Stating his resolve to build a neat and clean city, the DNCC mayor said, "I need everyone's cooperation."

He urged the city dwellers to come up with their suggestions for the development of Dhaka north, leaving behind any personal request.

Talking to the journalists, Annisul also said he would be working for building a liveable city pursuing short, mid and long-term programmes.

Sayed Khokon of Dhaka south said he would make all-out efforts to ease traffic congestions, repair roads and make the city areas free from garbage.

"I will do all that from the day one," he told the reporters.

Chittagong city mayor AJM Nasir vowed to mitigate water logging problem in the port city, but reminded that it would not be possible overnight.

He also mentioned that the problem would be solved within his tenure. "I am hundred percent sure about it," Nasir said.

"We will have to take a long-term plan for this. We will have to increase the capacity of the existing drainage system and build a new system," he told the reporters.

## Land boundary bill

FROM PAGE 1

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said, "This is a historic situation. We are going to implement the agreement after 41 years. I am happy that everyone supported the bill."

Swaraj hoped that following the bill's passage, India's ties with Bangladesh would go back to the level of what existed in 1971 after the creation of Bangladesh.

On the BJP's opposition to the bill when Congress-led UPA was in power, she said "Earlier we had opposed it... We were told to include Assam, which has been done."

Contending that the agreement would benefit both India and Bangladesh, Swaraj said the Indian home ministry would be the "nodal ministry" for implementing the LBA.

"We are aware of the complexities involved in implementation of the agreement. The earlier we implement [the agreement], sooner we reap the benefits," she said.

The LBA was signed in 1974 but was not ratified by India as it involved transfer of territory which required a constitutional amendment.

The bill on the LBA aims at giving effect to acquisition of territories by India and transfer of territories to Bangladesh and exchange of enclaves in line with the 1974 agreement.

The territories in Assam, West Bengal, Tripura and Meghalaya come under the ambit of the bill.

The bill will be placed in the Lok Sabha today where too it needs to be passed with two-thirds majority. It will also have to be okayed by legislatures of the states concerned -- West Bengal, Meghalaya, Tripura and Assam.

Once the Lok Sabha passes the bill to complete the seal of approval by both Houses of parliament, the green signal from the states' legislatures is a mere formality.

The bill also provides that the Indian government may, by issuing notification in official gazette, set the date for acquisition and transfer of territories.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, Asom Gana Parishad and Trinamool Congress had opposed the bill when it was brought by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2013.

On September 6, 2011, protocol to the agreement concerning demarcation of land boundary between India and Bangladesh and related matters to the LBA was signed during then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka.

The constitution amendment bill to operationalise the agreement was introduced first in the Rajya Sabha in 2013 but couldn't be passed due to stiff opposition.

When the Narendra Modi government came to power, the bill was again sent to the standing committee on the external affairs ministry.

The bill refers to demarcated land boundaries in accordance with the 1974 agreement which underwent further modification through letters exchanged thereafter and the 2011 protocol.

Swaraj noted that the government would ensure Indians moving to Bangladesh would enjoy "dignified life", and said there wouldn't be any "demographic change or exchange", and people from either side can avail citizenship if they wish under the exchange of 161 enclaves between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Asom Gana Parishad called a 10-hour Assam bandh from 6:00am today to protest against the inclusion of the state in the LBA.

In a statement, AGP General Secretary Kamalakanta Kalita criticised the BJP and the Indian government for their "surrender" to Bangladesh.

### FACTS ABOUT LBA

The LBA has three components. One is un-demarcated land boundary of approximately 6.1 km in three sectors in Bangladesh's Nilphamari and India's West Bengal, Muhuri River in Bangladesh's Feni and Belonia in India's Tripura, and Lathitila-Dumabari in Bangladesh's Moulvibazar and India's Assam.

The other two are exchange of 162 enclaves and over 5,000 acres of adversely possessed land.

India will transfer 111 enclaves with 17,158 acres of land and a population of 37,369. The enclaves are spread across four districts in Bangladesh -- 12 in Kurigram, 59 in Lalmonirhat, four in Nilphamari and 36 in Panchagarh.

The 51 Bangladeshi enclaves, all located in Cooch Behar of West Bengal, have 7,110 acres of land and population of 14,215.

Once the exchange is done, Bangladesh will have a net gain of around 10,000 acres of land.

The exchange of enclaves will fulfil a major humanitarian need to mitigate the hardships that the enclaves' inhabitants had to endure for over six decades for lack of basic amenities and facilities.

In respect of adversely possessed land, India will get 2,777.038 acres and transfer 2,267.682 acres to Bangladesh.

## UK polls today

FROM PAGE 16

2010 and resigned from the Labour frontbench to abstain from the House motion for permitting military action in Iraq in September 2014.

Dr Rupa Huq is out to reclaim London's Ealing Central and Acton seat from the Conservatives.

The other Labour Party contenders are Anwar Babul Miah in the Welwyn Hatfield in Hertfordshire constituency, Marina Ahmad in Beckenham, Ali Akhlakul Islam in Luton and Amran Hussain in North-East Hampshire.

Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservative Party has nominated Mina Sabera Rahman for the Barking constituency.

The Liberal Democrats has picked Prince Sadik Chowdhury for the Northampton South constituency, Ashuk Ahmed for Luton South and Mohammad Sultan for Bangor, North Wales.

Sumon Haque is contesting the polls from the Banff and Buchan constituency of Scotland with the Scottish Labour Party ticket while Mohammad Rowshan Ali is an independent candidate in the Bethnal Green and Bow constituency.

Among the thirteen, Labour Party candidates Tulip Siddiq, Rushanara Ali and Rupa Huq are being considered favourites in their constituencies.

Like others, the Bangladeshi-Briton candidates spent a busy day yesterday seeking votes from all, especially the Bangladeshi-Indian community living in the UK.

## Traffickers cheat

FROM PAGE 16

several Bangladeshis were found there in the last few days.

The elite force started investigating the matter after they received allegations that a transnational human trafficking racket had been deceiving people with promises of jobs in the developed countries, including Canada, in exchange for Tk 14-20 lakh.

The traffickers used to attract their "clients" saying that they do not take money in advance, and that they only take the money after their clients reach the developed countries, Rab officials said.

To trick the victims' families into believing that their relatives reached Canada and got jobs, the traffickers used illegal voice over internet protocol technology which showed Canadian phone numbers on the families' mobile phones when the victims called them from their confinement, Rab officials said.

After the phone calls, the families paid the money to the gang as per the agreement.

Briefing reporters at Rab-2 headquarters in the capital yesterday, Lt Col SM Masud Rana, commanding officer of Rab-2, said the arrestees were doing business through a consultancy known as "Planet Overseas Consultant" in the city's Lalmatia.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees confessed to their involvement in human trafficking, the Rab official said, adding that three of the gang members were on the run.

Lt Col Masud said the gang members usually took their clients to Nepal via India and kept them hostage there. They also had agents in India, Nepal and Canada. Later, they forced the clients to contact their relatives in Bangladesh over mobile phones and compelled them to tell their relatives

that they were fine.

The victims were released only after the traffickers got the ransom from the victim's families in Bangladesh, he said.

Rab officials said the victims came back to Bangladesh from Nepal in different groups in March this year.

### VICTIMS' STATEMENTS

Eleven victims along with their families were present at yesterday's press briefing. They said they were confined to a house in Nepal for at least 20 days.

Raju Ahmed of Kushtia told The Daily Star that he met one Shetu through a relative one and a half years ago. Shetu promised him a job in Canada.

Shetu took him to Planet Overseas Consultant office and they had an agreement that Raju would pay Tk 15 lakh for the job.

Raju paid Tk 10 lakh at different times until February 2014, and told them that he would pay the rest of the money gradually after reaching Canada.

In February this year, Raju and four others made the journey for "Canada" by road. They were told that their flight would take off from Kolkata.

As soon as they reached Benapole, the traffickers took away their passports, said Raju, who was in Malaysia for several years until 2010.

The traffickers then took them to Nepal from Kolkata, saying that their passports were there. Upon reaching Nepal, they were confined to a one-storey building.

"They would beat me after tying my hands and legs. They gave me food once in a day. They did the same thing to others as well," he added.

Raju said he was confined there for 22 days and came back to Bangladesh on March 20 through India after his family paid the rest of the money to the traffickers.

## Govt creates

FROM PAGE 16

Every exporter will contribute 0.03 percent of his or her total yearly export earning to the fund which in the first year should cross Tk 72 crore, the minister said.

"Every year the fund will increase in line with the rise in our export earning," the minister said, adding that this fund can provide workers with insurance coverage in the case of any industrial disaster such as the Rana Plaza building collapse.

"Money from this fund will be used during any crisis moment in the industrial sector. Rana Plaza building collapse was a wake-up call for us. So we have formed this fund as a safety measure against such disasters," the minister also said.

About how the fund will be used, Mikail Shipar, secretary to the ministry of labour and employment, said this fund is only for the workers of the export-oriented industrial sectors as the government has a separate fund for other informal sectors.

"We run a separate welfare fund of Tk 100 crore for the workers of the informal sectors like construction, poultry and other sectors. So, they will not be entitled to this fund," Shipar told The Daily Star after the meeting.

Bangladesh Employers' Federation will run the fund with the formation of a board in which government officials will also be included, he said.

Shipar said the fund has been formed mainly keeping in mind emergency situations such as the one at Tuba Group.

Last year the workers of the Tuba Group, a local garment group, did not receive salaries and festival bonuses before the Eid-ul-Fitr as the owner of the factory Delwar Hossain was in jail in a case over one of the worst industrial disasters at Tazreen Fashions, which had killed 112 workers in November 2012.

Workers of Tuba Group staged a demonstration in front of the factory in the city's Badda area during the Eid vacation as they could not visit their village home for Eid celebrations without money.

Later, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), the garment makers' platform, paid a portion of the workers' salaries and bonuses with contribution from other big exporters.

"So we will address such emergency incidents with the money from this fund, but the owners will have to prove to the board that they are not capable of paying the workers in the case of an emergency situation," Shipar said.

## Descending

FROM PAGE 16

Kourounis, 44, rappelling 100ft down into the crater amid 1,000C temperatures and walking across its surface.

The Canadian was part of the first-ever expedition into the flame pit, located in remote Turkmenistan, which is named the 'Door to Hell'.

The bizarre landmark -- officially called The Darvaza Crater -- has been alight for more than 40 years after a drilling accident caused Soviet scientists to set it on fire to burn off excess gas.

When Kourounis, from Toronto, Canada, heard a rumour the Turkmenistan government was planning to extinguish the flames, he decided to up his efforts to visit the location.

In the past he has taken on volcanoes and revealed his aim, as well as to walk on the surface of the fire pit, was to collect samples of dirt to be analysed.

He completed the challenge in the winter of 2013 and it was later discovered bacteria was present, despite the hot, methane-rich environment.

Newly-released images capture him dangling precariously above the crater wearing a heat-reflective suit, breathing apparatus and a custom-made Kevlar harness.

He would stay in the crater for around 15 minutes before being pulled out by the rigging team.

He said, "I was in a spot where no human had ever been. It was like stepping onto an alien planet - more people have been on the moon. It was exciting, adventurous, dangerous, a world first and a contribution to science."

## ASK worried at slave trade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday expressed concern over the discovery of mass graves and the recovery of skeletons of migrant workers, including Bangladeshis, in the jungles of Thailand.

Quoting media reports, the ASK in a press release said the people of Bangladesh and Myanmar who risked their lives while trying to enter Thailand or Malaysia by sea were confined in the deep jungle and tortured by human trafficking gangs for ransom.

## Khaleda charged

FROM PAGE 1

cases over recent blockade violence.

According to the charge sheet, Khaleda masterminded the arson attack on the passenger bus.

She was not named as an accused in the First Information Report (FIR), which mentioned that the attack was carried out on her instructions.

The charge sheet showed Khaleda and 30 others as fugitives since they are not on bail in the case.

Contacted, Shimul Biswas, Khaleda's special assistant and also an accused in the case, said: "Any conscious citizen will realise that these cases are false and politically motivated, and are meant to harass the BNP leaders."

A UNB report said the party condemned the submission of the charge sheet.

"We have no word to condemn the ruling party's wrong notion with which it has been advancing to annihilate the opposition out of vengeance," the news agency quoted a BNP statement as saying.

### THE CASE

A day after the January 23 attack, Jatrabari Police filed two cases against 68 BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders. The cases were later transferred to the Detective Branch (DB) of Police.

Last evening, Basir Ahmed, a DB sub-inspector submitted two charge sheets to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka in one case. One charge sheet involves killing and causing injuries and the other involves blasting firebombs.

The accused include BNP leaders MK Anwar, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed, Amanullah Aman, Barkatullah Bulu, Habibunnabi Khan Sohel, Mir Sarafat Ali Sapu, Azizul Bari Helal, Sultan Salauddin Tuku, former BNP lawmaker from Dhaka Salauddin Ahmed, Khaleda's advisors Khandker Mahbub Hossain and Shawkat Mahmud, her special assistant Shimul Biswas and press secretary Maruf Kamal Khan.

Seven of the accused, including Rizvi, are in jail.

Four of the arrestees -- Parvez, Sohag, Liton and Jony -- gave statements before magistrates on different dates admitting their involvement in the attack. The four said they were hired by some central and local BNP leaders to carry out the arson attack to create anarchy in the city, court sources said.

After submitting the charge sheets, Basir Ahmed, also the investigating officer of the case, appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against the fugitives.

The court is expected to decide on accepting the charges and issuing the arrest orders on May 28.

The IO appealed to the court to drop charges against 31 people named in the FIR, including BNP Standing Committee Member Rafiqul Islam Mia and Vice-chairman Selima Rahman, as their involvement was not proved.

### FOUR MORE CASES AGAINST KHALEDA

The second case over Jatrabari attack, filed under Special Powers Act for carrying out subversive activities, is under investigation. The same 68 people are accused in the case. Khaleda is named in this case as an "instigator," not as an accused.

According to the FIR, 18 BNP leaders planned the attack while 50 others carried it out.

Khaleda has been sued for "instigating" another arson attack on a vehicle at Chouddagram in Comilla. Eight passengers were killed in the incident in January.

Besides, she is accused of masterminding torching a bus in Damodar in February in Khulna.

The BNP chief has been named as the prime suspect in the crude bomb attack on a rally of Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan outside her office at Gulshan in the capital.

All these cases are under investigation.

## Salman jailed for killing

FROM PAGE 1

punishment," Deshpande told the packed sessions court in Mumbai yesterday.

Salman has always denied being behind the wheel, and the conviction and sentence are likely to hit the career of one of the Indian movie industry's biggest box-office stars.

The 49-year-old looked stunned and tired as the sentence was read out, sinking into his chair as his family gathered around, according to an AFP reporter in the court.

He later applied for bail and a decision is pending, while he is also expected to appeal.

The sentence had been keenly awaited both by his fans and by Bollywood studios, who stand to lose millions of dollars if they have to cancel filming for movies for which he has been signed up.

The sentence sparked a storm on social media, with Bollywood celebrities taking to Twitter in support of Salman. At least one blamed the homelessness for being there in the first place.

"Roads are meant for cars and dogs not for people sleeping on them," playback singer Abhijeet Bhattacharya tweeted.

Salman fled the scene of the crash that left labourer Nurul Mahbob Sharif dead and several others injured, according to prosecutors.

After his trial began in earnest last year, several prosecution witnesses, including survivors of the crash, testified that Salman was driving the vehicle when it ploughed into the men sleeping on the street in September 2002.

A constable attached to Salman's security detail said in his statement to police that the actor lost control of the car while driving at about 55mph.

When Salman finally took the stand

## Innovative

FROM PAGE 16

aware of it and keep away from acts of nuisance."

The minister said they received a good public response so far. "We'll support the mosques financially for letting pedestrians use their lavatories throughout the day."

Visiting the Masjid-e-Noor Mosque at East Segunbagicha around 12:20pm yesterday, this correspondent found that the collapsible gate was unlocked, but unfolded. It was opened five minutes later.

Abul Kashem, one of the caretakers of the mosque, said they open the gate around 12:30pm everyday and close it at 10:00pm.

Some 10 yards from the entrance to the mosque, a youth was urinating on the footpath.

"I didn't want to do it here, but I couldn't bear the pressure. If there are enough public toilets in the city, no one would urinate in the open," added the youth.

Sources at Dhaka North and South city corporations said there are only 70 public toilets, including those unusable, in the capital against the demand of around 200.

Brig Gen AKM Masood Ahsan, chief health officer of Dhaka North City Corporation, said the two city corporations are working to build 43 public toilets with funds from an international charity.

in March, he said his driver was responsible for mounting the pavement in the suburb of Bandra West. The driver testified in court last month that he had been behind the wheel.

But the judge found Salman guilty of all charges including driving while under the influence of alcohol and without a licence.

Salman has starred in more than 100 films and television shows since his first hit "Maine Pyar Kiya" in the 1980s.

But the victim's wife, Begum Shaikh, said she had been waiting a long time for justice, adding, "We have gone through a lot of hardships."

Salman becomes the second big-name Bollywood actor to be sentenced in the last two years. Sanjay Dutt, the star of a series of gangster movies, is behind bars over possession of weapons linked to several bombings in Mumbai in 1993.

## Nepal quake

FROM PAGE 16

"This (the Nepal disaster) is an opportunity for the rest of Asia to turn things around. We can't go on building death traps," Kumar, whose organisation works to reduce quake risks, told AFP.

As buildings crumbled in Nepal around midday on April 25, the quake was felt more than 1,000km away in New Delhi, where residents fled onto the streets, and Bangladesh where walls of busy factories cracked.

The region regularly suffers quakes as the Indian subcontinent gets pushed below the Eurasian tectonic plate.

Among the worst of the recent disasters was a 7.7 quake which killed around 25,000 people in the western Indian state of Gujarat in January 2001 while 75,000 died in a quake centred on Pakistan in October 2005.

Experts warned the region's governments against turning a blind eye to the devastation in Nepal, imploring them to work harder to reduce their own vulnerability.

In impoverished Bangladesh, engineer Mehedy Hasan Ansary predicted a catastrophe in the capital Dhaka where millions are crammed into apartments, whose owners have skimped on building materials.

"More than 100,000 buildings in Dhaka are risky and could collapse," Ansary, from the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, told AFP.

A study by Bangladesh's government in 2009 concluded that 250,000 buildings nationwide would implode if a major earthquake hit, with many built on landfill and other soft soil that shifts during tremors.

"Many are also made by masons who did not use any steel rods or reinforced concrete in constructing buildings," Abdul Qayyum, head of the government's disaster management programme, told AFP.

GeoHazards has also been working with Bhutan, east of Nepal, to better protect its hospitals