



Visually impaired Fazlul Haque giving lessons in Braille at Char Khatamari Govt Primary School in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. He has been voluntarily teaching students there for the last two years.

PHOTO:
S DILIP ROY

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Tale of a visually impaired teacher

S DILIP ROY

As the children in the classroom open their English grammar books for the day's lesson, their teacher Fazlul Haque picks up his book too. But it is a bit different than the students' classroom books. It is in Braille, a system of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or who have low vision.

Fazlul Haque is visually impaired but he is teaching voluntarily at a govt primary school and a junior high school on the same campus at a remote village, Charkhatamari, in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila in the Dharla river basin.

Nineteen-year-old Fazlul Haque, who was blind at birth, studied Braille from 2005 to 2009 at RDRS Bangladesh, an NGO in Haribhanga area of Lalmonirhat town. There he completed the fifth grade.

He has been teaching for the last two years now. He works voluntarily and wants to continue his work as long as he can.

"I couldn't continue my studies at school because of poverty, but I want the students of this village to continue their studies so that they can have a better future in life," said Fazlul.

"I took up teaching as I can't work like

everybody else," he said, adding he was trying to become an ideal teacher.

Abdus Samad, the headmaster of the primary school in the village, said, "Fazlul is really brilliant. The students never act up when he is teaching."

"We have no fund for helping Fazlul Haque, but I am going to ask the managing committee to pay him for his work," he said.

The headmaster of the junior high school, Noor Islam, said they were impressed with Fazlul's teaching of English grammar.

"Students pay attention to Fazlul's lessons, and he has become a popular teacher in my school," he said.

Monowara Begum, an assistant teacher of the primary school, said, "Fazlul makes his lessons very interesting and easy. His talent is really a gift from God."

Fazlul's father, Mozahar Ali, is a fisherman. He said he was very worried about their son's life but now he felt proud of him when people greeted him as Fazlul's parents.

"We don't have any land. We live on a piece of Khas land owned by the government, and we live hand to mouth. But we now we hope our son will have a better future," he said.

Shakib-Shishir

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Thank you for all your sincere prayers, kind thoughts and warm wishes...Please pray for us and especially our daughter so that she can grow to her full potential with humility, compassion and love for all. Ameen," Shakib wrote.

After playing the first ODI, where he claimed his maiden five-for, Shakib was scheduled to feature in Monday's second game but had to leave early for the United States when he was updated with the news that the ETD had been brought forward.

Shakib's mother Shirina Akhter was over the moon with the news. "I can't describe how happy I am. My granddaughter is in good health," she told inquisitive reporters.

TIB asked to apologise

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important notices was less in the current parliament.

And only six percent of 388 working hours had been spent on formulation and passage of 30 laws in 14 months, said the study based on the current parliament's second to sixth session from June 2014 to July this year.

It also said the main opposition, the Jatiya Party, failed to play its due role in the present parliament.

Terming the JP a so-called opposition, the TIB said the party was working as "B-team of the government".

Talking to reporters on the same day, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman termed the present parliament "a puppet theatre".

Speaking on a point of order yesterday, Opposition Leader Raushan

Ershad raised the TIB issue.

Lambasting the TIB, she questioned whether it had any jurisdiction to make such "derogatory remarks" on the opposition and the House.

"The TIB has undermined the country, its people, the constitution and the House by making the comment that the present parliament has become a stage of puppet show."

She urged the TIB to analyse the activities of opposition MPs in parliament since the restoration of democracy in the country in 1991, and then make comments on the main opposition of the present parliament.

Taking part in the discussion, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed said the TIB had no jurisdiction to make such remarks.

The TIB launched the study report

right after two foreigners were killed and some foreign missions overreacted to the murders, he said.

"TIB's only aim was to create obstacles to the country's advancement."

"I urge the Speaker to summon immediately TIB officials to the Privilege Committee of the House so that we can question them on the source of the organisation's income and expenditure," he said.

The main objective of organisations like the TIB is to humiliate Bangladesh internationally, added the senior AL lawmaker.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, AL MP Abul Kamal Azad, Jatiya Party MP Kazi Feroz Rashid, JSD MP Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal and independent MP Rustam Ali Farazi also blasted the TIB.

ATTACK ON ASHULIA CHECKPOST Policemen carried 'unloaded' rifles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One of the three constables, who had fled the attack on their checkpoint in Ashulia, yesterday said none of their firearms were loaded as they reached the checkpoint 45 minutes ahead of their duty schedule.

Speaking at a meeting chaired by the inspector general of police, the constable also said they were perplexed by the attack and ran for cover after an assailant opened fire and another started hacking indiscriminately on November 4.

He, however, admitted that they

made a mistake by deserting their colleagues in the face of the attack and apologised for it, said officials who attended the meeting.

The assailants stabbed a constable to death, injured another critically and left the scene.

Many field-level policemen, from constables to inspectors, and senior officials of Dhaka district and Dhaka Metropolitan Police were present at the view-exchange meeting at Rajarbagh Police Lines.

The three constables, now under suspension, joined the meeting.

Diseases to spread rapidly on insects

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diabetes and heart diseases.

Experts say dengue, malaria, chikangunya and Japanese encephalitis are all transmitted by mosquitoes.

Higher numbers of dengue cases in Bangladesh and its neighbouring countries this year, amid such climatic conditions, have become a concern for experts.

They say certain realities like climate change, urbanisation, and density of population cannot be altered, but control of mosquitoes and treatment of the infected patients were doable, and the focus should be on these aspects.

Rising temperatures and longer periods of rainfall are helping insects like mosquitoes and flies to breed. As it is not possible to do much about the rise in temperature and the longer periods of rainfall, experts suggest urban authorities focus on more effective mosquito control programmes.

Most other Asian countries, including Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines were seeing higher numbers of dengue cases this year.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), some 50-100 million cases of dengue were reported worldwide each year, and 75 percent of the cases were in the Asia-Pacific region.

The WHO said it was approximately 30 times more than that of 50 years ago.

Globally, a billion people were estimated to be infected from vector-borne diseases, like dengue, malaria, lymphatic filariasis and kala-azar, and over a million die from them each year, it said.

Bangladesh's leading environmental experts Ainun Nishat and Atiq Rahman said the rise in dengue cases and its spread from only a few countries in the 1950s to over 100 countries

now have a direct link to global warming.

"Increase in temperature, rainfall and humidity accelerate breeding of vectors like mosquitoes," said Atiq Rahman, executive director of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS).

Citing this year's intermittent rainfall and higher temperature, he said those were erratic behaviours of climate, which would continue in the coming decades.

Ainun Nishat, professor emeritus of Brac University termed the heavy rainfall even in October "very erratic."

Apart from that, increased traveller traffic between countries, rural-urban migration and unplanned urbanisation were other factors that contribute to the spread of these diseases.

"A person may get infected, say in India, and visit Bangladesh. That person could be a source of transmission,"

said Saif Ullah Munshi.

"Urbanisation in Bangladesh is growing rapidly and rural people are moving to the cities. Those who have been living in the cities may be immune, but those coming to the cities newly remain more at risks," he said.

Besides, densely packed homes in Dhaka help such vector-borne diseases spread very quickly, Munshi said.

Prevention and control relies heavily on reducing the places where standing water supports mosquitoes breeding, according to WHO. But this needs actions of affected communities, it said.

During outbreaks, insecticides may be sprayed to kill flying mosquitoes, applied to surfaces in and around containers where the mosquitoes land, and used to treat water in containers to kill the immature larvae.

Prof Mahmudur Rahman, director at the Institute of Epidemiology,

Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), said authorities should think of architectural designs so that buildings do not have any open spaces storing rain water.

Mushtuq Husain, principal scientific officer at the Institute of IEDCR, said doctors in Bangladesh were already well trained in treating dengue patients, which checked mortality from dengue significantly.

However, if more people were affected, they would surely affect the whole health system, causing financial burden, he added.

"For Bangladesh, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are major health challenges. If vector-borne diseases go up, it would double the health care burden," Husain said.

Husain suggested regional cooperation in tackling the vector-borne diseases by exchanging technical expertise and best practices.

Is Modi's new dawn fading?

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His image got a further boost when he concluded a historic land boundary agreement with Bangladesh and visited Dhaka in June this year. He himself compared the land boundary agreement after four decades with the "fall of the Berlin wall".

For observers, his actions demonstrated his sincerity and goodwill to India's neighbours ushering in a new dawn in regional cooperation efforts.

But what Delhi has been doing with Nepal has surprised many and raised questions about the Modi-led Indian government's sincerity to maintain friendly relations and cooperation with neighbouring countries. Delhi's alleged meddling with Nepal's internal politics over the promulgation of a new constitution for the Himalayan country has cast a shadow of doubt on the whole goodwill projection.

Nepal's new constitution has annoyed Indian policymakers. Even after passage of the constitution, the Indian foreign secretary was dispatched to explain Delhi's displeasure. The foreign secretary reportedly suggested changes in the constitution including addressing the grievances of Madhesi who are people of Indian origin, living in Terai, the plain land in the south adjoining Bihar in India.

Their suggestions were not followed

in the new charter.

The ethnic Madhesi community has been waging agitation in the Madhes for the last two months demanding a separate province for them. The United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) has intensified their agitation which turned violent after enactment of the constitution.

Protests and demonstrations called by Madhes-based political parties in key Nepal-India customs points have made the political unrest worst. Agitating Madhesis blocked the road entering Nepal from India.

India seems to have taken advantages of the unrest and imposed unofficial blockade from September 23, days after the enactment of the new constitution by reportedly asking its officials at the borders points not to allow vehicles to enter Nepal.

The Himalayan nation gets all of its petroleum products from India. It is also largely dependent on India for all its essentials. The blockade turned out to be a nightmare for Nepal, a country affected by a massive earthquake in April killing more than 9000. It caused severe shortage of fuel and other essentials, affecting life across the country.

The fuel shortage also hampered aid works. Hundreds of tonnes of food aid meant for the earthquake victims are reportedly stuck in warehouses. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator on

October 16 warned that Nepal's aid agencies had just weeks left to deliver aid to high-altitude areas before they would be cut off by snow. "Acute shortages in fuel supplies continue to impede planned deliveries to affected villages and trailheads," the office said in a statement.

Al Jazeera in a report on October 20 said Nepal's vital tourism sector is facing a double whammy amid acute fuel shortages that have quashed hopes of an economic recovery following the cataclysmic April 25 earthquake.

As a result of the fuel shortages, Nepal's economy is being strangled. Ordinary Nepalese citizens are bearing the brunt of the shortages, after fuel and cooking gas became black-market commodities that only the privileged few can afford, reports Al Jazeera.

TIME in its report on October 19 said regardless of intention, the impact has been substantial. In early October, Nepal's scant reserves neared exhaustion and the government was forced to introduce fuel rationing. Since then, the effects have spread to every sector.

"Buses are severely overloaded, private transport uncomfortably expensive. Getting petrol requires waiting for hours, or even days, on queue for the government ration or paying black market rates out of reach

for most Nepalese. Ambulances don't have enough petrol to operate, hospitals are running out of supplies, social services severely curtailed."

People of Nepal are accusing India for their ongoing sufferings. They staged demonstrations denouncing India's action resulting in the blockade. Though very small in size, some Nepalese nationals living in Dhaka have also taken to the streets protesting India's action. India has also been criticised in newspapers and social media as it is popularly believed the blockade is an expression of India's disapproval of Nepal's new constitution.

Delhi has denied any political interference. "The reported obstructions are due to unrest, protests and demonstrations on the Nepalese side, by sections of their population," said a statement issued on the Indian Foreign Ministry website on Sept. 25. It has also said its truck drivers and tourists are too scared to enter Nepal because of violence and unrest in the Terai region.

But Delhi's claims fails to satisfy the suffering people in Nepal and others who strongly believe that India is responsible for the crisis in Nepal. The undeniable truth is people in Nepal have been suffering from the blockade.

Nepal finally raised the issue before the UN and what it told the world is not pleasant for India.

Speaking at the UN in Geneva on November 4 Nepal's deputy prime minister, Kamal Thapa said his country was facing a humanitarian crisis due to the blockade.

Nepal's new Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on November 6 said the blockade is 'more inhuman than a war'.

Members of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) on Sunday urged the Indian authorities to immediately lift the unofficial blockade.

It looks like Modi has lost more than he gained with this policy. Modi's popularity is declining in Nepal says an opinion piece by Akhilesh Upadhyay, editor in chief of The Kathmandu Post, published in The New York Times on November 6. He says Modi is now an object of scorn there.

Modi's effigies have been burned, and a #BackoffIndia hashtag was recently trending on Twitter. While Nepal's allies, including China, welcomed the new Constitution, India merely "noted" it, writes Akhilesh.

Drawing up a new constitution was certainly a major political achievement for Nepal. The demand for a new constitution was raised by Maoists rebels, who had waged a 10-year civil war that ended with a 2006 peace deal. The Maoists won elections to a constituent

assembly two years later, leading to the abolition of the 240-year-old monarchy. But because of a lack of consensus, that assembly had failed to draw up a new constitution.

A new assembly elected in 2013 is once more dominated by the traditional parties. This time too, political squabbles delayed matters but finally Nepal's constituent assembly has been able to enact the constitution which has been described by many as progressive.

After this historic moment Nepal was supposed to celebrate the achievement. But the ongoing crisis has dampened the spirit. And it is because of the constitution and Delhi cannot shirk the responsibility for the present situation in Nepal.

How much did Delhi gain out of the situation in Nepal? The answer is not clear. But one thing is certain that Delhi has lost enormously in this crisis. Modi must do something extraordinary to repair the damage. Otherwise, the promised new dawn for regional cooperation risks going back to darkness.

Policymakers in Delhi should not forget that their relentless efforts to transform India into a global power will always have a boost only when they will not play "Big Brother" to neighbors and maintain the attitude of "Elder Brother" with care.