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The country fires long-range rocket sparking global outrage
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Kids trapped in TOBACCO MENACE

Lalmonirhat children's health, education suffer from rising tobacco farming

S DILIP ROY with ANDREW EAGLE

For many struggling Lalmonirhat families, relatively lucrative tobacco farming appears to be a blessing. But cultivating the crop brings significant health consequences. Worse still, with children commonly engaged in tending fields, the health of many youngsters is compromised.

"Our three sons and one daughter help in the tobacco field," says Afsar Ali, 45, of Aditmari upazila's Saptibari village. "It saves labour costs. But even we adults suffer headaches, cough, fever and pain from working with tobacco. For the children it's really serious." Ali says he has no viable alternative.

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Kids along with their parents and relatives working in a tobacco field in Thakurer Malli village of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. For many struggling families in the district, tobacco farming may seem lucrative but in reality it has significant health consequences, especially for the children. The photo was taken last month. PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

7 lawmakers lambast Star in parliament

Demand trial of its editor for 'treason', closing down of the daily

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six treasury bench lawmakers and an independent MP last night demanded trial of The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam for "running false reports" on Sheikh Hasina after the 1/11 political changeover in 2007.

They said treason charges should be brought against Mahfuz Anam as he "committed sedition" by getting involved in a "conspiracy" to destroy democracy and establish an unconstitutional government.

At a talk show at a private TV station on February 3, Mahfuz Anam made an introspective comment about a lapse in his editorial judgement in publishing, following the 1/11 takeover, a few reports that the newspaper couldn't independently verify.

Ruling Awami League lawmaker Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh raised the issue in the House, taking the floor on a point of order after the Maghrib recess.

Taposh said Mahfuz Anam "confessed" without any hesitation that he ran stories in his newspaper in 2007 on the basis of fabricated information on corruption provided by the then DGFI "as part of a conspiracy to create grounds to banish Sheikh Hasina from politics, file false cases"

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Yesterday, seven honourable members of parliament demanded my trial for "treason" for publishing reports that they claimed to have led to Sheikh Hasina's internment. We fundamentally reject this link as it is not based on facts. Below, we reproduce in full my signed commentary published on the day after her arrest and urge the honourable MPs making the accusations on the sacred floor of the parliament and our readers to judge whether the author of such a commentary could have wished for her arrest, let alone 'created grounds' for it?

I also want to point out that The Daily Star published 203 editorials, which is one editorial every third day during the whole period of emergency caretaker government, demanding repeatedly the earliest restoration of democracy through "free and fair election." This, we think, remains an unmatched commitment to democracy for any newspaper during the period dominated by an army-backed regime.

I urge the readers to examine and judge for themselves the validity of the vilification and character assassination campaign that has been going on since I made an introspective comment about a lapse in my editorial judgement in publishing a few reports following the 1/11 takeover that we could not independently verify.

--Editor

This is no way to strengthen democracy

Just as 'command economy' failed, so will 'command politics'

MAHFUZ ANAM

The only reason that the caretaker government has survived six months in power, and the chief advisor acknowledges it every time an occasion arises, is because the general public think of it to be an instrument to strengthen democracy. But now if this very instrument of 'strengthening democracy' becomes a symbol of mindless and arbitrary use of power, then how will the public distinguish it from such previous abusers of power and continue to lend it support?

As a newspaper which supported the reform process of this government, we raise the above question in all seriousness.

COMMENTARY

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON JULY 17, 2007
A DAY AFTER THE ARREST OF SHEIKH HASINA

law. To say that nobody is above the law must also mean that law is not the handmaiden of anybody either.

Examine the arbitrariness with which Sheikh Hasina has been treated. She was allowed to go abroad and just because she spoke out against some actions of this

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The golden girls

ANISUR RAHMAN from Guwahati



Mabilia

Mahfuza

Weightlifter Mabilia Akter Simanta and swimmer Mahfuza Khatun Shila yesterday bagged the first two gold medals for Bangladesh in the 12th South Asian Games, being co-hosted by the north-eastern Indian cities of Guwahati and Shillong.

Mabilia, participating with a right-elbow injury, won the first gold in the morning lifting a total of 149kgs -- 67kg in snatch and 82kg in clean and jerk -- in the 63kg category at the Bhogeswari Indoor Stadium in Guwahati. In doing so, she became the first female weightlifter from Bangladesh to win an SA Games gold medal.

With the national flag of Bangladesh hoisted and the national anthem playing in the background, Mabilia burst into tears saluting the red and green flag.

"I was not expecting to win gold with my elbow injury and I competed only for silver, but I bagged the gold medal. I still can't believe it," Mabilia said in her instant reaction, adding that she was still feeling pain in her hand.

However, it was an unexpected gold for Mabilia as Indian gold-medal hopeful Reena, who lifted 22 kilos more than Mabilia in snatch, failed in her last three attempts in clean and jerk to pave the way to gold for the young Bangladeshi weightlifter.

Later in the afternoon, Mahfuza made it a double delight for Bangladesh by winning gold in the 100m breaststroke at the Dr Zakir Hussain Aquatic Complex in the same city.

Unlike Mabilia, Mahfuza dominated her event from the start and finished her swim in 1min 17:86sec to win the title, which she had lost to Sri Lanka's MSN Karunaratne by 17 microseconds in the 2010 SA Games in Bangladesh.

"Last time I was defeated by a few microseconds and this

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Hard to believe this walkway along the Buriganga river in Pagla of Narayanganj was built only two years ago. Locals claim that poor quality construction material was the reason for the collapse of the pavement. The government built the walkway to keep the river free from occupiers and pollution. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BANGLADESHI JUTE PRODUCTS India to shelve investigation

SAJJADUR RAHMAN

India agreed in principle not to carry out investigations relating to anti-dumping and countervailing duties on jute goods exported from Bangladesh, a senior commerce ministry official said yesterday.

"We were successful in convincing India that Bangladesh has sufficient reasons to give subsidy and cash incentive against exports and that it is given in line with international trade norms," Monoj Kumar Roy, additional secretary of the commerce ministry, told The Daily Star.

Monoj led a Bangladesh delegation comprising officials of Tariff Commission, World Trade Organisation (WTO) cell and Jute Department to discuss the anti-dumping and countervailing duties initiated by India on Bangladeshi jute products. The meeting with India's Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) was held in Delhi on Wednesday.

At the meeting Monoj explained Dhaka's position vis-à-vis India's allegations against Bangladesh giving subsidy and cash incentive to its jute products.

The issue came to the fore in October last year when the DGAD under the ministry of commerce of India started investigating imposition of anti-dumping and countervailing duties on jute goods exported from Bangladesh based on the claims of Indian Jute Mills Association.

If a company exports a product at a price lower than that in the home market, it is considered to be "dumping" the product. Accordingly, the importing government takes action against "dumping" in order to defend its domestic industries.

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Return case files, don't talk to press

CJ asks Justice Manik

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha yesterday wanted that Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik, a former Supreme Court judge, immediately return all the files of cases of "unsettled judgments pending with him" to the SC registrar general's office.

Earlier in the day, Justice Manik in a letter informed the CJ that he finished writing all the judgments and orders, but Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, presiding judge of the apex court bench, of which he (Manik) was a member, refused to accept those "on instructions" of the CJ.

Manik also requested the CJ to take necessary steps for accepting the judgments and orders he has written after his retirement on October 1 last year.

Later in the evening, Manik told The Daily Star that Justice Wahhab Miah agreed to accept the judgments and orders from him

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