



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**  
Shilpakala holds programme to mark noted actor Khaled Khan's birth anniversary today  
PAGE 9

**INDIA REACH FINAL**  
Defeat Sri Lanka by 97 runs to reach ICC Under-19 World Cup final  
PAGE 14

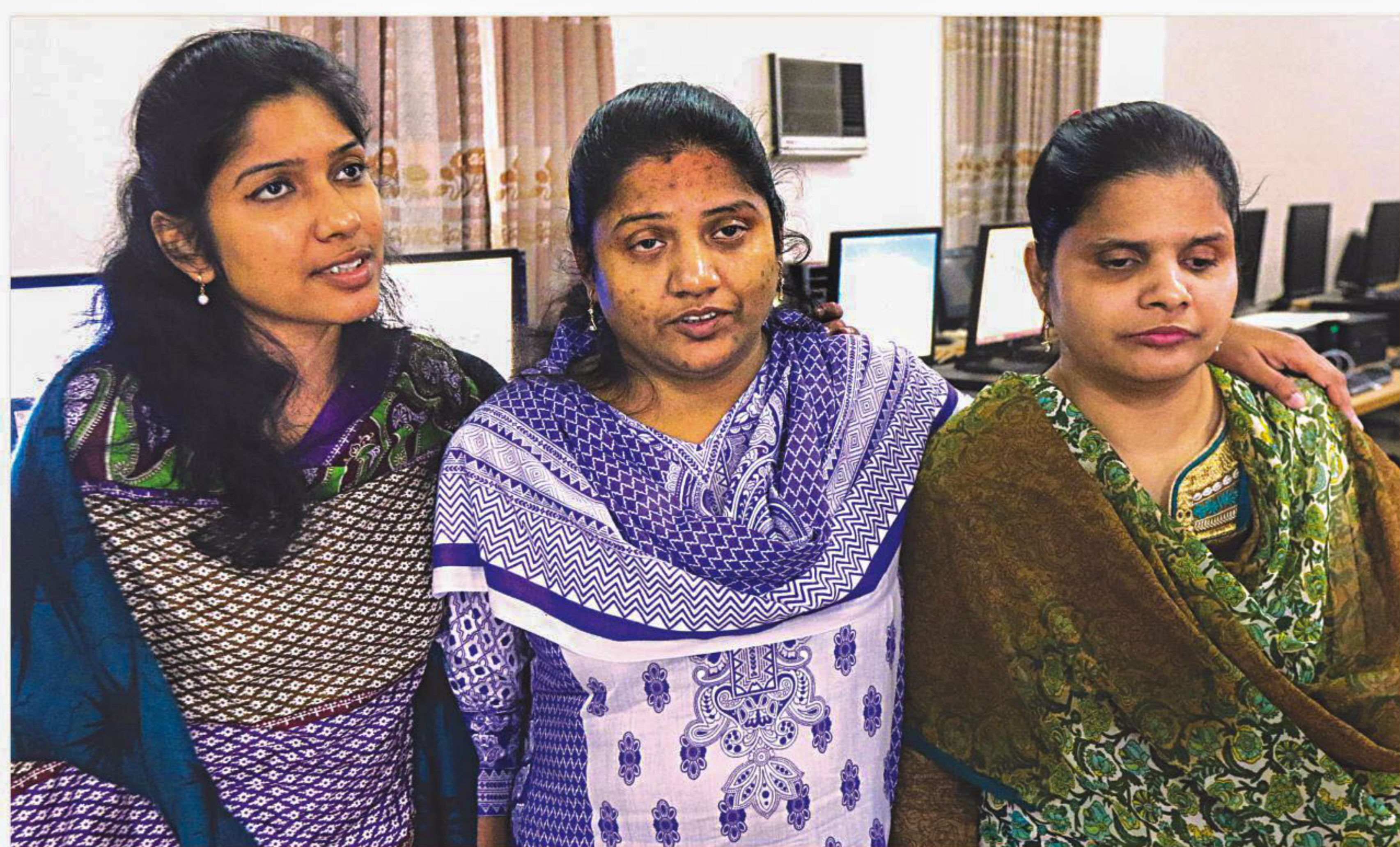
**GOODBYE KOIRALA**  
The former Nepal PM, once jailed for hijacking a plane, dies at 77  
PAGE 8

## The sisters indomitable

Visually impaired since birth, they would not give in

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Who would have thought the four sisters would be where they are today? Visually impaired since birth, they grew up seeing their parents endure frequent taunts from neighbours and gossip-mongers who labelled them as "ill-omened". The only other response they elicited from people was that of pity as everyone had thought they would end up being a burden to the family. But what the sisters from Patia of Chittagong have achieved with their unswerving determination is an awe-inspiring story of refusing to give in to disability and of realising their goals. In a country where facilities for visually impaired people are scant, Umme Habiba Chowdhury completed her master's in law and Umme Taslima Chowdhury in political science, and both Umme Tanzila Chowdhury and Umme Salima Chowdhury are currently doing their master's in sociology. All of them have studied at Chittagong University. What is more, three of them have already embarked upon a teaching career at primary schools in Patia, and they are doing their job with reputation. Their parents deserve special mention as they left no stone unturned to see their children established in society. "Perhaps the proverb 'Where there is a will, there is a way' applies to us. A person with disability can be established in society if they are determined and motivated," said Taslima, a teacher of South Gobinderhill Government Primary School in Patia upazila. The Daily Star recently had the opportunity to talk to three of them when they along with 22 other visually impaired teachers were attending a 14-day



Refusing to be written off by blindness since birth, four sisters from Patia of Chittagong defied all odds and went on to pursue higher education at Chittagong University. Three of them are now primary schoolteachers. They recently had training on digital content development. The photo was taken at Teachers Training College in the capital last month. The photo of the other sister is on page 2. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Coming back to life

Trafficking victim tells her tale to the Star, wants to come out in the light



Ayesha Siddika talking to The Daily Star. PHOTO: STAR  
TAMANNA KHAN

Chhaya (shadow) now wants to come out in the light. She is the Bangladeshi woman whose poetry collections -- Ahoto Ami (Injured Me) -- was published from India last year after her rescue from a sex racket there. The title was published under the pseudonym, Chhaya. SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## It was brave of him to admit mistake

Information minister on Star editor's comment at a talk show

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam has done a courageous thing by admitting his mistake, Information Minister Hasanul Huq Inu has said. "In my view, Mahfuz Anam's comment is a lesson for the media. I also think that he has done a courageous thing. It is good to admit mistakes," he said in an interview with BBC Bangla last night. At a talk show in a private TV channel on February 3, Mahfuz Anam made an introspective comment about a lapse in his editorial judgement in publishing, following the 1/11 changeover, a few reports that the newspaper could not verify independently. Inu yesterday said the reactions that are coming out following Mahfuz Anam's comment are helpful for democracy. If the question of trying Mahfuz Anam arises, then some ruling party leaders who lied about Sheikh Hasina and made defamatory remarks about her during the post-1/11 period are also "triable", he said. Inu's remarks came hours after two defamation cases

## Star editor sued for defamation

BCL leaders file cases in 2 districts

STAR REPORT

Local leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in Laxmipur and Khulna yesterday filed two defamation cases against The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam. In the cases, they demanded compensation of Tk 51 crore for "publishing without verification reports on Sheikh Hasina based on information provided by the DGFI after the 1/11 political change-over". The cases were filed two days after some ruling Awami League lawmakers and leaders demanded Mahfuz Anam's arrest on SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

## Submit BASIC Bank scam probe reports

HC asks ACC, central bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the Anti-Corruption Commission and Bangladesh Bank to submit their probe reports on BASIC Bank loan scam. The anti-graft watchdog has been given seven days and the central bank four weeks to present the reports. The court also asked the authorities of the state-owned BASIC Bank to submit its documents on the decisions taken by its board of directors for granting loans to different institutions. The HC bench of Justice Md Ruhul Quddus and Justice Mahmudul Haque came up with the order after hearing a writ seeking further investigation into the loan scam, ZI Khan Panna, counsel for petitioner Harun-or-Rashid of Noakhali, told The Daily Star. In his petition filed on November 12, Harun said 57 cases had been lodged over the BASIC Bank loan scam, but Abdul Hye Bacchu, former chairman of the bank, and the board members responsible for the scam were not implicated in any of them. He prayed to the court to direct the ACC to implicate them in the cases. One of the best-run banks until 2009, the BASIC Bank was mired in financial irregularities following Bacchu's appointment as its chairman that year. Early last year, a functional audit by the bank outright blamed the SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

## ZIKA PATIENTS Govt to bear treatment cost: Nasim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Mohammad Nasim has urged people not to be panicked regarding the risk of Zika virus infection. "The government has taken precautionary measures. It is capable of tackling any circumstance [regarding the epidemic]," he told a press briefing at his ministry in the secretariat yesterday. He said if anyone is detected with the virus, the government will bear the cost of their treatment. On February 1, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global public health emergency on mosquito-borne Zika virus, first discovered in Uganda in 1947. A Zika virus infection causes symptoms like fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting a week. At the press briefing, Prof AKM Shamsuzzaman, director of the Centre for Disease Control of the Directorate General of SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## A SELFLESS SOUL SAVING LIVES



A fruit vendor, Mazed pulls down the barricade at a rail crossing in the city's Gendaria while a Narayanganj-bound train passes. The selfless man arranged money for installing the bar and has been working there voluntarily for about 15 years. Below, Bangladesh Railway put up a warning sign at the crossing (left), declaring that the level crossing is unmanned and the commuters should cross it on their own risk. Mazed, right, holding the bar tight. The photos were taken on Saturday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



## 49pc children encounter cyberbullying

Reveals Telenor study on Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around half of the school-goers in the country have encountered cyberbullying, global mobile phone giant Telenor yesterday said. The parent company of Bangladesh's top operator Grameenphone conducted a survey last year of 1,510 students aged between 12 and 18 years to understand internet use patterns and practices among youths here. Young people are increasingly becoming vulnerable to online harassment with 49 percent of the students having fallen victim to cyberbullying in one way or the other, according to the study. As many number of students also said they had succumbed to at least one form of peer pressures like being encouraged to visit unsuitable websites or use bad language on social networks. However, 39 percent students in Malaysia and 35 percent in Thailand admitted to having been bullied in the cyber world. Telenor's region-wide survey between June and July involved 1,896 students in Malaysia and 1,336 in Thailand. The survey report was released yesterday marking Safer Internet Day. Grameenphone celebrated the day through an internet safety awareness session at HURDCO International School in the capital's Bashundhara Residential Area. The inaugural study also found that school students in all the three countries tend to confide in parents and teachers when they face online issues that they do not know how to solve alone. SEE PAGE 10 COL 1