



# She won't stop at anything

*Badly hurt in road crash, girl sits SSC exam*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

She was badly injured in a road crash on way to the exam hall, had nine stitches to her wounds and yet she refused to give up on her SSC exams.

Within around one and a half hours of the accident, the 15-year-old student of Binyakuri High School in Chirirbandar upazila sat the religious studies exam on Thursday morning.

Ismat Ara along with her father left her Dakkhin Nagar village home in the upazila on a bicycle around 9:15am for the exam centre at Chirirbandar Govt Girls School.

When they reached near the Fire Service and Civil Defence Station in the upazila, a speeding bus hit the bicycle from behind, leaving the two injured.

Morshedur Rahman, headmaster of Beltoli Girls School in the upazila, with the help of locals rushed the wounded to Chirirbandar Upazila Health Complex, but doctors referred Ismat to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital as her wounds were serious.

The girl needed six stitches in head and three around chin. Although she

was not fit to be discharged, doctors released her as she insisted on taking the exam, said hospital sources.

Physicians, said Morshedur, decided to release her as they were impressed by her strong determination.

Ismat said she reached the exam centre around 10:50am and started on the exam within just 10 minutes. She finished writing all the answers in the remaining two hours.

Mahtab Uddin, centre secretary at Chirirbandar Govt Girls School, said the examinee was allowed to sit the exam at 11:00am upon a request from Upazila Nirbahi Officer Firoz Mahmud.

Ismat said her father, day labourer Ekramul Haque, was struggling to bear her educational expenses.

"I can feel the pain of my wounds, but it would be more painful for my parents if I fail to sit the exams," she added.

Yesterday, she was undergoing treatment at the upazila health complex. However, her father was back home.

She was optimistic about being able to take the seven remaining exams.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

With bandages on her head and cheek, Ismat Ara starts writing on her answer script in the SSC exam held on Thursday at Chirirbandar Govt Girls High School in Dinajpur. Just an hour and a half ago, the bicycle on which her father was taking her to the exam centre was hit by a bus and she had to have nine stitches.

# Polluted air causes 5.5m deaths a year

*Says study; 55 percent of them die in China, India*

BBC ONLINE

Air pollution kills more than 5.5 million people around the world each year, with over half of those deaths occurring in fast-growing China and India, researchers said yesterday.

The main culprit is the emission of small particles from power plants, factories, vehicle exhausts and from the burning of coal and wood.

The data was compiled as part of the Global Burden of Disease Project.

Scientists involved in the initiative say the statistics illustrate how far, and how fast, some nations must travel to improve the air their citizens breathe.

"In Beijing or Delhi on a bad air pollution day, the number of fine particles (known as PM2.5) can be higher than 300 micrograms per cubic metre," explained Dan Greenbaum from the Health Effects Institute, in Boston, US.

"The number should be about 25 or 35 micrograms."

Breathing in tiny liquid or solid

particles can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, respiratory complaints and even cancer. And while developed nations have made great strides in addressing this problem these past few decades, the number of citizens dying as a result of poor air quality in developing countries is still climbing.

According to the study, air pollution causes more deaths than other risk factors like malnutrition, obesity, alcohol and drug abuse, and unsafe sex. The Global Burden of Disease Project puts it as the fourth greatest risk behind high blood pressure, dietary risks and smoking.

In China, there are said to be about 1.6 million deaths a year; in India, it is roughly 1.3 million. This data is from 2013, the most recent year for which it is available.

The key sources of pollution concern are slightly different in each nation, however.

In China, the dominant factor is particle emissions from coal burning. The project calculates this source alone

is responsible for more than 360,000 deaths every year.

And even though China has targets to restrict coal combustion and emissions in the future, it may struggle to bring down the number of deaths because it is acquiring an aging population and these citizens are naturally more susceptible to the illnesses associated with poor air quality.

In India, the problem that draws particular attention is the practice of burning wood, dung, crop residues and other materials for cooking and heating.

This "indoor pollution" causes far more deaths than "outdoor pollution".

And looking at the broad economic trends in India, the research team says the country runs the risk of having even poorer air quality in the future.

Chandra Venkataraman, from the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, in Mumbai, warned: "Despite proposed emissions control, there is significant growth in the demand for electricity as well as industrial production.

"So, through to 2050, this growth overshadows the emissions controls (in our projections) and will lead to an increase in future air pollutant emissions in 2050 in India."

Michael Brauer, from the University of British Columbia in Canada, said the statistics should make governments think hard about the scope of their anti-pollution policies.

They ought to spur greater ambition, he added.

"The trick here is to not take the 50 or 60 years that it took in the high income countries, and to really accelerate the process; and that's really where we think these statistics, the data, will come in handy," he told BBC News.

"In the US, we know that for every dollar spent on air pollution improvements, we can get between a \$4-\$30 benefit in terms of reduced health impacts."

The research team was presenting its findings here at the annual meeting of the American Association for the

# 30 turtles seized at Shahjalal airport

*3 held for their alleged involvement*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Armed Police Battalion (APBn) on Friday night seized 30 Indian pond turtles at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and held three employees of an airline over their alleged involvement in trying to smuggle the turtles out of the country.

The trio put the turtles in three bags and booked those under the names of three passengers of the airline, according to the APBn.

They are Samiur Rahman, 35, Jewel Ahmed, 29, and Mizanur Rahman, 30.

A magistrate court at the airport fined them Tk 1 lakh each and sentenced Jewel and Mizanur to one year's imprisonment.

The turtles were spotted by an APBn member who first noticed something moving inside a black bag on the

conveyor belt, said Alamgir Hossain, senior assistant police superintendent of APBn.

After checking other luggage on the belt, they found two more bags containing turtles.

As the bags had tags of an airline, APBn contacted the airline concerned and got details of three passengers whom the bags belonged to.

However, after speaking to the passengers and watching CCTV footage, law enforcers found that the bags actually belonged to the airline's three personnel who booked those under the names of the three passengers.

The turtles were handed over to wildlife inspector Asim Mallik yesterday morning.

Asim said the turtles were released at Bangabandhu Safari Park in Gazipur.

# Case backlog falls

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and solve problems, SC sources said.

He has given necessary directives to the lower court judges and talked to the local administrations for solving the problems. And that way some problems have been resolved, added the sources.

Shortage of courtrooms for judges was one of the main hurdles and steps were taken to solve this problem.

The SC authorities have taken initiatives so that the government constructs separate court buildings for the judicial magistrates, many of whom have to share courtrooms of other judges to hear and settle cases.

Only five districts have separate court buildings for judicial magistrates, according to sources.

The legal problems regarding the recruitment of support staff for the lower court judges have already been fixed, said the sources.

ABM Khairul Haque, law commission chairman and former chief justice, told this correspondent that at least 4,000 judges are required to deal with the current backlog of cases.

"But we have only around 1,600 posts for judges and some 400 of them are now vacant. This is very alarming," he said, claiming that Bangladesh has the highest rate of case disposal in the world.

Some 100-200 new judges should be appointed every year, said Justice Khairul. "There's one judge for every 10,000 people in the USA and for 67,000 in

India. But in Bangladesh, we have only one judge for more than 1 lakh people," he mentioned.

Law ministry sources said the government has taken steps to recruit 400-500 lower court judges in phases.

# Thai students mock junta at football match

APP, Bangkok

Thai university students lampooned the military at a football game on Saturday in a rare act of open defiance against the junta, which has strangled political expression since seizing power two years ago.

In a colourful parade around the Bangkok stadium where crowds gathered to watch a match between two of kingdom's top universities, students brought out elaborate hand-made floats and banners mourning prolonged military rule.

The parade is a long-running tradition at the annual game between rival universities Thammasat and Chulalongkorn and is often provocative and political.

But the show has taken on new significance in the past two years as a rare chance to speak out under the military junta that outlawed all political activities in Thailand after toppling an elected government in May 2014.

# Aglow with Falgun flames

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and three-month-old son Shuprovo at the park surrounding Dhanmondi Lake.

"This is Shuprovo's first spring and so we came out with him," he said clicking pictures of the baby in a green shirt. In fact, all three of the family were in green.

"We chose this colour to look a bit different," Shariar added.

Md Noman, third year student of fine arts, University of Development Alternative, preferred the traditional spring colour: yellow.

Applying light brush strokes on a watercolour painting he was working on at one corner of the park, he said, "Yellow is a warm colour. It

signifies the transition from the cold towards warmer weather."

Selina Rahman, who came to the park with her two daughters, wore a brightly coloured sari.

"We dress up on the day like the nature that adorns itself with new leaves and flowers," she said.

Forty-two-year-old Shahnaz and her sister Jamila Akhter, 27, were busy selling flowers at the park. They were dressed up in yellow too.

Shahnaz said she had bought flowers to sell them on Pehela Falgun and Valentine's Day that is today. She has been selling flowers on such occasions for the last two years. At other times, she runs a gymnasium.

Floral head wraps were in

demand yesterday while roses and bouquets sell well on Valentine's Day, she said.

Pahela Falgun this year coincided with Saraswati Puja, a festival of the Hindus. Many visitors in spring colours were seen at the DU Jagannath Hall's Puja Mandap.

Shukla Baksi and Antara Pal in bright yellow saris came there with their families and relatives from Savar. After attending the puja ceremony, they were roaming around the university campus.

"We don't have any particular plan, but we will spend some time here," Shukla said.

Reminded of the sexual harassment that took place last year during Pahela

Baishakh celebration, college student Fahad accompanied by his friend Afroza said he was initially worried about security but he felt relaxed after seeing this year's security measures.

He pointed to a watchtower near Bangla Academy.

Law student Saima, who came out with her boyfriend, was celebrating the first day of spring for the first time in her life.

"I didn't know the day is celebrated with such fervour."

Today is Valentine's Day. Hira Monir and his wife Naznin Islam said the day is a weekday this year and "so probably we would spend some time with family and then go out at night."

# Rab detains Rab man for 'extortion'

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victim's mother-in-law, Mahbub Islam, 30, a microbus driver, Hasanuzzaman, 24, brother of the vehicle's owner, and one Amjad, 31.

Lt Commander Gulzar Hossain, deputy director of Rab-11, told The Daily Star that a team led by ASP Alamgir Hossain caught the "culprits" red handed in front of the house of Mohammad Mohsin, the victim, in Narayanganj around 11:00am.

They were handed over to Sonargaon Police Station later, he said.

Gulzar said Mohsin, a Kabiraj (quack), got married to one Shilpi Begum two years ago. However, in September last year, Shilpi filed a case against Mohsin under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with the police station.

Later, Humayun allegedly contacted Mohsin over the phone and informed him that a complaint was also lodged against him with Rab-11.

The Rab constable also "threatened" to pick him up "soon", if he did not pay him a "considerable amount"

of money, Gulzar said.

"Humayun has already taken Tk 3.5 lakh from Mohsin in several phases over the last five months," he said, adding that the victim had to sell his land to collect the money.

On Thursday, Mohsin contacted Rab-11 and learnt that there was no such complaint against him there.

Immediately, he informed Rab-11 about the matter and said Humayun would come to Narayanganj yesterday to collect his "last installment" of Tk 1 lakh.

Acting on the information, the Rab men detained the constable and four others inside the microbus in front of Mohsin's house.

The Rab official said Shahida, the victim's mother-in-law, and Humayun are from the same place in Munshiganj and the entire crime was planned by the duo.

Mohsin filed an extortion case accusing five people, including Humayun, with Sonargaon Police Station last night, said Manjur Kader, officer-in-charge of the police station.

# Go for fresh impact study by UN team

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The Committee, a citizen platform of 101 eminent personalities, also sent a letter to the Unesco headquarters earlier this month and requested the UN body to recognise the site on the list of its World Heritage in Danger.

In a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity, the Committee called on the government to stop and cancel all the ongoing and future projects in and around the world's largest mangrove forest.

Advocate Sultana Kamal, convener of the platform, said they had long been demanding that the government stop

development activities there, but without success.

"We have come to know that the government is going to sign a deal with a company very soon to start the work [of the main power plant]," said the rights activist.

Under the government plan, the 1,320MW power plant will be jointly built by India and Bangladesh, roughly 14km from the Sundarbans, a Unesco World Heritage Site.

On February 1, the committee wrote to the Unesco to intervene. A copy of the letter was also sent to the state minister for power and energy.

According to the letter, obtained by The Daily Star, the Sundarbans will face serious threats from air pollution, from storage and production of toxic gas, from shipping, from river dredging and from excessive use of river water.

As part of its own assessment of the impacts, a Unesco team was due to visit the site this month, but the government requested the delegation to come in March.

The Sundarbans does not belong to Bangladesh alone but to the whole world. "The Sundarbans is our national resource. It is our constitutional right to protest any activity that might harm the

forest," said Sultana.

And it is also the duty of the government to listen to our logical arguments and accordingly, she said.

"If the government does not do that, we need to think how democratic this government really is," she said, adding that the area of the Sundarbans was 17,000sqkm in 1911, which has now come down to 10,000sqkm.

The mangrove forest is already facing many threats. And the people of the country and also the international communities are expressing their concerns about further perils to it. But the government has been showing an

indifferent attitude, said Sultana Kamal, also the TIB trustee board chairperson.

Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, was also present at the press conference.

"We are the worst victim of climate change. It will be very embarrassing for us as a nation if we become a polluter country through constructing coal-based power plants, as our prime minister has recently received an award for her contribution to protecting the environment," he said.

He said the Committee was not against electricity generation or the

power plant itself, but that they merely wanted to protect the Sundarbans.

Professor M Shamsul Alam, a coordinator of Consumer Association of Bangladesh, said, "The Sundarbans protects us from natural disaster. It is our duty to protect the Sundarbans."

He added it was already proven that the existing EIA was not up to the mark. So the government should conduct a fresh impact assessment.

Abdul Matin, joint convener of the Committee and also general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA), said the government was not showing any interest to protect the