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Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Karachi airport after his arrest by the Pakistan junta at the beginning of the Liberation War in 1971.

INTO THE 46TH YEAR OF Independence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation celebrates the 45th Independence and National Day today to pay tributes to the martyrs and valiant sons of the land who laid down their lives for the country's independence. On this day in 1971, Bangabandhu

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence of Bangladesh through EPR wireless at 00-30 hours on March 26 (the night following March 25) from his Dhanmondi-32 house. The great leader also called upon the people to build a

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PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

He was here only for his job. When the Liberation War broke out, he could have slipped out of the country to safety.

But William AS Ouderland, who came to East Pakistan in the 70s as the CEO of Bata Shoe Company, chose to join the fight for the independence of Bangladesh. It was because of the "love and affection" he "felt for the Bangalee people", as he once wrote in a letter to a friend.

This was not the first time war came to the Dutch-Australian man's life. Born in Amsterdam during the First World War in 1917, he participated in the resistance against the occupying Nazis in WWII.

"Therefore, when events of March 1971 started with Tanks and Pakistani forces rolling in to Dhaka, I was reliving my experience of my younger days in Europe," wrote Ouderland to his friend Anwar Faridi more than two decades later after 1971 war.

Ouderland, also a former sergeant of Royal Signal Corps of the Netherlands, is the only foreigner who was honoured with the fourth highest gallantry award, Bir Protik, for his outstanding role in the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

When the Pakistan army launched the infamous "Operation Searchlight" on March 25, 1971, Ouderland, at the first chance, took pictures of different parts of the city, including

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TRIBUTE

A friend in need

It was not his war, not his land and yet Ouderland joined the 1971 resistance



SCBA Polls Pro-AL lawyers win eight out of 14 posts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After six years, a candidate from the ruling Awami League-backed panel, Sammito Ainjibi Samonnoy Parishad (SASP), has been elected as the president of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).

The panel members bagged eight out of the 14 executive posts, also including that of the treasurer, in this year's SCBA polls. Pro-BNP lawyers' body Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Oikkyo Panel (JAOP) got the rest of the posts.

AL Advisory Council Member advocate Yusuf Hossain Humayun became the president while BNP leader AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon retained the post of the secretary.

Of the 3,921 votes that were cast, Yusuf Hossain Humayun got 2,047 votes while his rival Zainul Abedin, a BNP leader, 1,779 votes.

Mahbub Uddin Khokon bagged 2,057 votes. His opponent Azhar Ullah Bhuiyan secured 1,789 votes.

The other winners of SASP are Taherul Islam (vice president), Ramzan Ali Sikder (treasurer), AKM Rabiul Hasan Suman and Sheikh Sirajul Islam Siraj

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Breaking the barriers

Visually impaired teachers learn multimedia programmes to make class lessons a fun

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

SM Sohel stooped over the keyboard in front, with close attention to a speaker, as he was trying to fix an image of a macaw over a text box on the computer.

Blind since birth, the high school teacher from Brahmanbaria struggled for quite a while to create an animation. He pressed "enter" and the image of a bird began emanating from the texts of a rhyme.

"Wow... you have done it," his instructor told him.

A broad smile lit up his face.

He made the animation, using a software application called screen reader, for his students to see.

"Now I will make lessons more interesting to my children in class with the help of multimedia," said Sohel, an assistant teacher at Sabera Sobhan Government Girls High School in Brahmanbaria Sadar.

In January, Sohel and 24 other visually impaired teachers received training in basic computing and use of multimedia to do PowerPoint presentations in classrooms.

The training, first of its kind in Bangladesh, was jointly organised by Teachers' Quality Improvement, a project under the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, and Access to Information (a2i) Programme of the Prime Minister's Office, at the Teachers' Training College (TTC)

in the capital.

The college in Dhanmondi facilitated the 14-day training while Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) and Bangladesh Visually Impaired People's Society gave technical support.

These correspondents attended one session to learn how these teachers were introduced to the modern technology.

Inside a large hall room at the institute's main building, the primary and secondary school teachers were all seated in front of computers with the screen reader software installed and keyboards that guide the users by telling them what they have pressed or selected.

The software application allows visually impaired people to read texts on the computer screens through speech synthesis.

The exact number of visually impaired teachers in Bangladesh is hard to come by. However, according to Vashkar Bhattacharjee, national consultant (web accessibility) of a2i, more than 100 such teachers are now working at schools across the country.

During the session, two facilitators were giving lectures on making digital contents and two trainers, who are unsighted themselves, were teaching techniques.

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SM Sohel during a training programme at Teachers' Training College in the capital. He is among 25 visually impaired teachers who took part in a course on basic computer operation and multimedia.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Army helping in probe into Tonu murder

Protests continue



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army authorities are providing full support to the police in investigating the murder of Sohagi Jahan Tonu near Comilla Cantonment area, the Inter-service Public Relations (ISPR) said last night.

The unconscious body of the 19-year-old college student was found in the bordering area of the cantonment by her father around 11:00pm on Sunday and he informed the military police, it said in a press release.

Right away, Tonu was taken to the Combined Military Hospital there and the duty-doctor declared her dead.

"Efforts to dig out the reason behind the murder of Sohagi are already underway and the army authorities are extending all out support to the police/administration," said the release, signed by Md Reza-ul Karim Shammi, assistant director of the ISPR.

Initial reports, mostly based on social media, suggested that Tonu, a history student at Comilla Victoria College, was raped, but police are waiting for the autopsy findings to confirm that.

Superintendent Shah Abid Hossain of

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Tigers seeking solace in Eden

AL-AMIN from Kolkata

Bangladesh will sign off from the ICC World Twenty20 after they take on New Zealand at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata today. Although the game, which starts at 3.30pm, has only an academic interest for Bangladesh after three straight defeats -- including that heart-stopping one-run loss against India at Bangalore on Wednesday -- it will have a special focus since this could very well be the inspirational Tigers captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's last hurrah in an ICC World Twenty20.

Although 33-year-old Mashrafe kept the inquisitive reporters guessing regarding his retirement plan from T20is by saying that he would have to go back home first before making a decision, it is understood that his heavily strapped legs will not be as mobile as they are now after four years, when the next T20I World Cup will be staged in England.

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Man who ate toothbrushes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Nineteen toothbrushes, four broken pieces of miswak sticks, a broken part of a tablespoon, two plastic wrappings, two broken shells of batteries and a piece of cloth -- this might sound like a description of items found in a household trash bin.

Surprisingly, all these items were found inside the stomach of a 28-year-old man in Mymensingh.

Doctors retrieved these objects after operating on Shamimur Rahman Akondo's stomach at a private clinic in the district on March 18.

Shafiqul Islam, senior consultant of surgery at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), who also practices medicine at the private clinic, conducted the surgery with his team.

He said there are instances in medical history of retrieving a toothbrush or a blade from a patient's stomach, but existence of so many solid objects inside a man's stomach was an astonishing case.

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