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# Sculptures for survival

Rana Plaza victims express aspirations for their lives through artwork

TAMANNA KHAN

Shepu Rani Das, 20, was busy braiding wax hair on a statue of black molten wax, while her sister Shilpi Rani Das, 18, looked on and recounted their rescue from under the debris of Rana Plaza.

"I used to work as a machine operator on the sixth floor at New Wave Style. I was rescued after three days," said Shilpi describing how her left arm had to be amputated later as a result of injuries from the eight-story building collapse on April 24, 2013.

The catastrophe also left a lasting mark on Shepu, who worked in the same line as her sister. "Her right ankle bone had to be cut off to bring her out," said Shilpi, as her sister lifted a part of her sari to show the injury.

Despite the trauma the two sisters carried, the wax structures they were working on spoke of joy, a happy life.

In fact, 34 other female survivors of the disaster, which claimed the life of more than 1,100 people and injured thousands, were expressing aspirations of their lives by creating wax figures at an art workshop.

It was the second such event organised by the Embassy of Denmark, a day before the International Women's Day was observed on March 8 worldwide.

Through art, these women can escape and get relief for a while from the trauma they experienced three years ago, explained Farhana von Mitzlaff, founder and chairperson of Meena, an NGO that works for Rana Plaza victims.

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Shepu Rani Das working on a wax statue while her sister Shilpi Rani Das talks to a volunteer at an art workshop organised by the Embassy of Denmark in the capital last month. Thirty-six female survivors of the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster, including the sisters who lost limbs, expressed aspirations of their lives through art at the programme.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Yunus Centre trashes report on US fund

Yunus neither received fund personally, nor because of ties with Clinton

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yunus Centre in a statement yesterday protested a news article, saying neither Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus received funds from the USAID personally, nor the Grameen companies got funds because of his friendship with former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton.

The report was run by The Daily Caller, a US-based online newspaper, on April 17. It was picked up by several Bangladeshi media outlets in the last two days.

The statement said the report created a great deal of misunderstanding among readers. It falsely says that the State Department has awarded at least \$13 million to Prof Yunus in grants, contracts, and loans.

"The State Department has no authority to do such thing. The congressional oversight agency on USAID operations would have protested vehemently. The newspaper completely ignored how the US government agencies work."

Citing the Clinton Foundation website, the Daily Caller stated that Prof Yunus donated between \$100,000 and \$300,000 to the Foundation.

"That too is a lie. The Clinton Foundation website mentions Grameen America under the category of contributions related exclusively to membership, sponsorship, and conference fees to attend the Clinton Global Initiative, which is an

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## Accused dies 'jumping off Rab vehicle'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

An abduction and murder accused died yesterday after "jumping from a Rab vehicle" in Sreepur upazila of Gazipur.

The deceased, Russell, 20, was accused in a case filed with Sreepur Police Station for abduction and murder of a woman, Helalul Islam, officer-in-charge of Maona Highway Police Station, told The Daily Star.

The incident took place on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Beraderchala of Sreepur around 5:00am.

A team of Rapid Action Battalion picked up Russell early yesterday and was taking him to its Gazipur office. To escape from custody, the arrestee jumped from the vehicle and died on the spot, the OC added.

His body was sent to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

## BB CYBER HEIST

# Probe panel turns in interim report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-member government panel probing the \$101 million Bangladesh Bank heist submitted its interim report yesterday.

Former BB governor Mohammed Farashuddin, who led the panel, handed the report to Finance Minister AMA Muhith at the secretariat in the evening. He was, however, tight-lipped about the findings of the probe.

"It is a sensitive issue. It is more sensitive than the Pay Commission's report. The government has to be given a breathing space," he told reporters.

"You should ask the government. The government will have to read the report first. Then it will talk about it," Farashuddin said.

Replying to a query, he said the report was final; only a technical analysis will be added to it.

Asked if any BB officials were involved in the theft, Farashuddin said, "It's the most substantive issue. How will it look if I say anything about it now? First the government has to know about it."

He said the probe committee had worked very hard in the last one month. "We have submitted an objective report keeping in mind the best interest of the country."

The committee was formed on March 15, more than a month after hackers stole \$101 million from the BB account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

The committee was asked to look into how the illegal payment instructions were issued from Bangladesh Bank and to whom, and examine whether the steps taken by the central bank to prevent the payment were appropriate.

It was also asked to evaluate the reasons behind concealing the information on the heist from higher authorities.

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## PRESS FREEDOM INDEX Bangladesh moves two notches up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has moved two notches up to the 144th place among 180 countries in this year's World Press Freedom Index.

Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), in its flagship annual report released yesterday, however, voiced serious concern over the state of freedom of expression in the South Asian country.

"In Bangladesh, it is a bad idea to criticise the constitution or Islam, the state religion. Journalists and bloggers who refuse to submit to censorship or to censor themselves on these subjects risk life imprisonment or the death penalty," observed the RSF, an organisation that promotes the cause of free press.

"Outspoken secularists are also targeted by Islamist militants. The media are nonetheless quite diverse and fairly outspoken on less sensitive issues."

The index reflects the intensity of the attacks on journalistic freedom and

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## Half of Great Barrier Reef 'dead or dying'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Half of the Great Barrier Reef is "dead or dying" and almost all of it is on the brink of extinction, according to scientists.

A "significant" event is occurring that could lead to the death of the world's biggest living ecosystem, according to Australian ministers.

Only seven percent of the reef has escaped "bleaching", which happens when the water warms and leads to the coral to expel the algae that lives inside of it and turn white. If temperatures don't drop, then the coral will not be able to recover and will lead to it dying.

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**PRAYER TIMING**  
APRIL 21

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-25 12-45 4-45 6-27 8-00  
JAMAAT 5-00 1-15 5-00 6-31 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



US President Barack Obama is greeted by King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia at Erga Palace in Riyadh yesterday. Obama arrived in Saudi Arabia for a two-day visit hoping to ease tensions with Riyadh and intensify the fight against jihadists.

PHOTO: AFP

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## Obama meets Saudi King amid friction over 9/11 bill

AFP, Riyadh

US President Barack Obama held talks with Saudi Arabia's King Salman yesterday as he began a two-day visit hoping to ease tensions with the historic US ally.

Riyadh and its Sunni Arab Gulf allies have bristled at what they see as Washington's tilt towards regional rival Iran after Tehran's landmark nuclear deal with world powers.

Obama, on what is expected to be his last visit to Saudi Arabia as president, is to attend today a summit of Gulf leaders focused on intensifying the fight against the Islamic State group and resolving the wars in Syria and Yemen.

After landing at King Khalid International Airport in the early afternoon, Obama was taken to the Erga Palace for a meeting with the 80-year-old Salman. The two exchanged brief greetings

## Revoke licences of 20 drug firms

Recommends expert committee citing the companies' failure to ensure quality, submits report to JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An expert committee has recommended revoking licences of 20 drug companies for failing to ensure quality of products.

The companies have repeatedly and grossly failed to comply with the good manufacturing practices (GMP), according to a report prepared by the committee upon inspections.

An evaluation of the GMP of 84 drug makers was done for two years following a decision of the parliamentary standing committee on the health and family welfare ministry in August 2014.

Prof ABM Faruque, who led the team of experts, gave a presentation yesterday on the findings at a meeting of the parliamentary body at the parliament building.

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