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Harijans take it upon themselves

Set up own schools so their children don't face discrimination, humiliation

KM REZAUL HOQUE with ANDREW EAGLE

Parents in Gaibandha's Harijan community often worried about their children's schooling. Due to the failure of mainstream primary schools to provide a congenial study environment, one that was free of discrimination and prejudice, Harijan children often found the experience of going to school harrowing. Many dropped out. But the Harijan, who commonly work as sweepers in Gaibandha, value education. They decided to establish their own school, where their children could feel welcome and safe.

Located beside Bonarapara railway station in Shaghata upazila and accommodated in a formerly abandoned tin shed, 'Our School' was pioneered in 2014 by Rajesh Basfore who is committed to providing the opportunity for future generations of his community to excel.

"I studied up to class nine," Rajesh explains, "and through the years of my education I suffered a lot. I faced social barriers, being ignored and disregarded by classmates; and also because of my family's poverty I could not continue my education."

In local primary schools, Harijan children often find it difficult to find friends among classmates. They are sometimes excluded from games and cultural events. As a result, many feel isolated and lonely in the crowded school grounds.

"The situation leads to an inferiority complex among Harijan children," says Megha Basfore, a resident of the Bonarapara railway colony. "Our children often discontinue their study in the first few years of primary school. From bitter experience we felt that we needed a separate school where they could learn without any hesitation."

The school currently has 27 students enrolled to class five and Rajesh is the sole teacher. In the classroom, they sit on jute sacks in place of chairs. Nonetheless, the students feel at ease.

"Nobody hates us here," says Riya Basfore, a student of the school. "We

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Rajesh Basfore and his students in a class at "Our School", a tin shed school pioneered by the 32-year-old for the Harijan community, near Bonarapara railway station in Gaibandha's Saghata upazila. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Heavy rains, not damaged dams, to blame

Claims minister over haor floods

UNB, Dhaka

Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud yesterday claimed that the country's haor regions, especially in the northwest, were submerged due to heavy rains, not because of the damage to any embankment.

"Excessive rainfall is the main reason for this year's flashflood in haors. Water flows over the embankments. It didn't happen due to damage to embankments," he said.

The minister was addressing a seminar titled "Blue Economy: New Frontier, New Possibility" organised by Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) at its auditorium.

Describing flood as a regular phenomenon, Anisul said it struck early this year. "It's a big disaster for us. So, our first and foremost responsibility is to stand by the affected people."

Mentioning that the government took a tough stance on corruption, he said 12 officials under his ministry had already been suspended in connection

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Sumaiya with parents. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Kidnapped baby rescued after 24 days

Two arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sumaiya woke up to see her parents at a police station yesterday, 24 days after she was kidnapped from her house in the capital's Kamrangchar.

And as she saw them, she burst into tears. The last time the five-year-old was awake, she was confined to a house in Rahmatbagh area of Kadamtali.

The mother held her into her arms and began kissing her. "The parents were also crying with joy," said Shaheen Fakir, officer-in-charge of Kamrangchar Police Station.

Sumaiya, daughter of Zakir Hossain and Munia Begum, had been playing in the

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DENUCLEARISATION OF KOREAN PENINSULA US vows to force N Korea back to talks

Threatens sanctions; China says move a positive development

AGENCIES

The United States has pledged to step up sanctions to force North Korea to resume dialogue over its nuclear program, but said it was not looking to bring Kim Jong-Un's regime to its knees.

After briefing senators at the White House, top US officials said President Donald Trump also aimed to pursue diplomatic measures with allies and regional partners.

"We are engaging responsible members of the international community to increase pressure on (North Korea) in order to convince the regime to deescalate and return to the path of dialogue," read a statement from Pentagon chief Jim Mattis, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats.

China yesterday welcomed the apparently softer tone by the United States on the North Korean nuclear and missile crisis but stressed its opposition to a US missile defence system being deployed in South Korea.

China has long promoted dialogue to resolve the "Korean nuclear issue" as North Korea has repeatedly threatened to destroy the United States which in turn has warned that "all options are on the table" in ending North Korean provocations.

Earlier, Admiral Harry Harris, who heads the Pacific Command, welcomed recent moves by Beijing to defuse soaring tensions between Pyongyang and Washington, and suggested a non-military solution remained the preferred outcome.

"It's critical that we're guided by a strong sense of resolve, both privately and publicly, both diplomatically and militarily," Harris said in Washington.

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RAILWAY JOB SCAM Ex-GM Mridha, 2 others get 4-year jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chittagong court yesterday handed down jail sentences of four years to three suspended railway (east zone) officials, including General Manager Yusuf Ali Mridha, and fined them Tk 10,000 each in two cases over recruitment irregularities.

Chittagong Divisional Special Judge Mir Ruhul Amin delivered the verdict in the cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission over four and a half years ago.

The two other convicts are Senior Welfare Officer Golam Kibria and Additional Chief Mechanical Engineer Hafizur Rahman.

The convicts would have to spend three more years in jail in default of the fine, said Public Prosecutor

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Cassini goes thru' Saturn and rings

SPACE.COM

Nasa's Cassini spacecraft has survived its first plunge through the narrow gap between Saturn's cloud tops and the giant planet's innermost rings, a region that no probe had ever explored before.

The space agency's Deep Space Network Goldstone Complex in California picked up Cassini's signal at 6:56am GMT yesterday, nearly a full day after the historic dive took place. Data began coming in from the probe 5 minutes after contact was established, Nasa officials said.

"In the grandest tradition of exploration, Nasa's Cassini spacecraft has once again blazed a trail, showing us new wonders and demonstrating where our curiosity can take us if we dare," Jim Green, director of Nasa's Planetary Science Division, in Washington, DC, said in a statement.

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Teacher beaten up for refusing to pay bribe

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pubna

An office assistant of Shahzadpur upazila primary education office has been arrested after a retired school-teacher filed a case accusing the former of assaulting him for refusing to pay a bribe.

Abdur Rashid was arrested at the office on Wednesday afternoon and sent to jail by a Sirajganj court yesterday, Shahzadpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Golam Kibria told The Daily Star.

The 59-year-old victim,

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 28
Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-20 12-30 4-45 6-29 8-00
JAMAAT 4-55 1-15 5-00 6-34 8-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A nightjar inside Lawachhara National Forest in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj recently.

PHOTO: ENAM UL HAQUE

Moulvibazar's Nightjars in danger

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

They are rarely seen during the day. As darkness falls, they come out of their nests, make a repetitious call which sounds like knocking on wood, flap their wings and try to catch insects.

One may mistake the bird for dried leaves as it nests and rests on the ground, amid fallen leaves.

They are the large-tailed nightjars.

Previously, they could be easily found in large numbers at Lawachhara National Forest in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj. However, logging has caused a serious habitat loss to this bird.

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13th Meena Media Award 2017

Introduced in 2005, Meena Media Award has stepped into the 13th year in 2017. The award recognizes excellence in promoting children's issues in the media. Submissions are solicited from Bangladeshi citizens working with print and visual media in two different age groups: Under-18 and 18 & above. News, articles, features, news photographs published in print/online media and news/programmes broadcast by radio and television that investigate and explore into children's issues or provide healthy entertainment for children are eligible to compete for the award. Entries are invited in the following seven categories:

- Print/Online Media
- Print/Online Media
- Visual Media
- Visual Media
- Radio
- Radio
- News Photography

- Reports (news reports, investigative reports, post editorials)
- Creative (articles, features, stories, poems)
- Reports including videography (news reports, investigative reports)
- Creative contents including videography (features, documentaries, short films, animations, plays, songs)
- Report (news reports, investigative reports)
- Creative (features, documentaries, radio dramas, songs)
- Online/print media

For all categories prizes are:
First Prize: A Crest, certificate and Taka 50,000
Second Prize: A Crest, certificate and Taka 25,000
Third Prize: A Crest, certificate and Taka 15,000

Entries should be published/broadcast between May 01, 2016 and April 30, 2017.
Submission deadline: June 01, 2017

To download the details of the submission, eligibility criteria and application form, please visit www.unicef.org.bd or collect from the Reception Desk, UNICEF Bangladesh, BSL Office Complex 1 Minto Road, Dhaka 1000

unicef for every child