

# Amrai Pari changing women's lives in slums

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bibi Amena has been serving as a domestic worker in the capital's Mohammadpur area for several years but was never introduced to modern home appliances.

Now she knows how to use toaster, blender, vacuum cleaner that are widely used in the household today thanks to a training by SHOKHI, a project implemented by Amrai Pari Paribarik Nirjaton Protirodh Jote, an alliance of women rights organisations.

This gives her not only the confidence she needed but also an opportunity to earning a better wage.

"When I told my madam I know how to use these electronic equipment, she was very happy. She raised my monthly wage from Tk 5,000 to Tk 6,000," said Bibi Amena, 30, a resident of Rayer Bazar.

Like Amena, at least 1,000 women, who were given the training with support from the Royal Netherlands Embassy, were given the certificates at a programme at the city's Liberation War Museum on Tuesday.

Members of the alliance have been training the women of marginalised communities at 15 slums in the capital since 2015. The trades of the vocational training include driving, electronics, home management, cooking and beverage, sewing and computer.

Salma Akhter, another woman who received the training and is now earning for her family, said her husband used to abuse her for trivial matters.

Now that she has launched a food business and earns for the family, his previous attitude changed immensely.

"My husband knows I am solvent and no longer dependent on him. Now he helps me sell soup and noodles to the passers-by at my roadside shop," Salma said as she was sharing her experience at the programme.

Amrai Pari [We Can] Paribarik Nirjaton Protirodh Jote Chairperson Sultana Kamal said, "We need to be educated, skilled and independent and earn money to avail all citizen rights."

She said women should be equipped with training so that they can run their own life instead of depending on men.

Acid Survivors Foundation Executive Director Selina Ahmed congratulated the women who received the training and have already been contributing to the socio-economic sphere of life.

"It is a constant fight to establish a discrimination-free society and put an end to violence against women," she observed.

State Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Mashiur Rahman Ranga suggested that women should get involved in cooperative societies that can help them get loan and investment in income-generating activities.

Dr Annie Vestjens, first secretary of the Royal Netherlands Embassy, said they can see a positive change in women's life through the SHOKHI intervention.

"They should be role models of the society," she said.

## No timeframe

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responsibilities of the chief justice until a new chief justice is appointed.

Amid criticism from the ruling quarters over different issues, including the 16th amendment verdict, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha resigned on November 10.

Anisul said judges would be appointed in the Appellate Division to address the shortage of judges after the president picks a new chief justice.

Appointments of both the chief justice and Appellate Division judges are the prerogative of the president according to the constitution.

The law minister added that he would meet the Appellate Division judges this afternoon to talk about the disciplinary rules for lower court judges, but the issue of appointing a new chief justice would not be discussed there.

Anisul stressed the need for raising awareness against the harmful effect of drugs alongside implementing laws to stop drug smuggling into the country.

He said drugs and militancy are now the two biggest threats in the world.

Terming drugs a "virus" that spreads rapidly, Bangladesh ODI cricket team captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza emphasised the importance of creating awareness against this social menace.

He also called upon addicts to return to a drug-free life.

Nazmul Haque, chairman of Prottoy Medical Clinic Ltd, also spoke on the occasion.

## Mugabe 'ousted' in coup d'état

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Mugabe, still seen by many Africans as an anti-colonial hero, is reviled in the West as a despot whose disastrous handling of the economy and willingness to resort to violence to maintain power destroyed one of Africa's most promising states.

He plunged Zimbabwe into a fresh political crisis last week by firing his vice president and presumed successor. The generals believed that move was aimed at clearing a path for Grace Mugabe to take over and announced on Monday they were prepared to "step in" if purges of their allies did not end.

"We are only targeting criminals around him (Mugabe) who are committing crimes that are causing social and economic suffering in the country in order to bring them to justice," Major General SB Moyo, Chief of Staff Logistics, said on television.

"As soon as we have accomplished our mission, we expect that the situation will return to normalcy."

Western countries mostly called for calm.

"We cannot tell how developments in Zimbabwe will play out in the days ahead and we do not know whether this marks the downfall of Mugabe or not," British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson told parliament. "We will do all we can, with our international partners, to ensure this provides a genuine opportunity for all Zimbabweans to decide their future."

Finance Minister Ignatius Chombo, a leading member of the ruling party's 'G40' faction, led by Grace Mugabe, had been detained by the military, a government source

said.

By yesterday afternoon it was business as usual in Harare's suburbs while there was less traffic than normal in the city centre. Soldiers continued to man armoured cars but had relaxed searches on vehicles on some checkpoints. Residents spoke in awe of events that had previously seemed unthinkable.

"I don't support the army but I am happy to see Mugabe gone, maybe this country can start to develop again," said Rumbi Katepfu, preparing to shut her mobile phone shop early in downtown Harare. "I did not think this would ever happen... We used to think Mugabe and Grace were invincible."

Mugabe supporters seemed disinclined to fight to defend him. Tinashe Murisi, washing a car emblazoned with a picture of Mugabe in the poor township of Mbare a few minutes from the city centre, said: "All I need is peace in the country and the rest we don't have to get involved in that what does not concern us."

Whatever the final outcome, the events could signal a once-in-a-generation change for the southern African nation, once a regional breadbasket, reduced to poverty by an economic crisis Mugabe's opponents have long blamed on him.

Even many of Mugabe's most loyal supporters over the decades had come to oppose the rise of his wife, who courted the powerful youth wing of the ruling party but alienated the military, led by Mugabe's former guerrilla comrades from the 1970s independence struggle.

"This is a correction of a state that

was careening off the cliff," Chris Mutsvangwa, the leader of the liberation war veterans, told Reuters. "It's the end of a very painful and sad chapter in the history of a young nation, in which a dictator, as he became old, surrendered his court to a gang of thieves around his wife."

The opposition Movement for Democratic Change called for a peaceful return to constitutional democracy, adding it hoped the military intervention would lead to the "establishment of a stable, democratic and progressive nation state".

Zuma - speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) - expressed hope there would be no constitutional changes, and urged Zimbabwe's government and the military "to resolve the political impasse amicably".

While most African states gained independence by the end of the 1960s, Zimbabwe remained one of the last European colonies on the continent, ruled by white settlers as Rhodesia until 1980. Mugabe took power after a long guerrilla struggle, and two decades later ordered the forcible seizure of white-owned farms.

The fall in output that followed was one of the worst economic depressions of modern times. By 2007-2008 inflation topped out at 500 billion percent. Mugabe blamed Britain and the United States for sabotaging the country to bring it to heel. His followers used violence to suppress a growing domestic opposition he branded lackeys of former colonial powers.

## Shajahan Khan

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The shipping minister attended the meeting which was part of a two-day representatives' gathering organised by the BB's CBA.

"As a politician and a minister, he can attend CBA programmes, no problem. But the question is, can he do it at the central bank?" said a top banker with four decades of experience in the industry.

This, however, was not the first time Shajahan showed up at the Bangladesh Bank for CBA meetings. He had done it six times before and three times whilst being a minister. "I have come here to talk with the central bank's CBA leaders and activists about two issues. It is not my job to exchange views with the CBA on the overall situation at the central bank," said the shipping minister after the CBA meeting yesterday.

Shajahan told reporters that he discussed mobilising funds for Rohingya refugees and sensitising trade unions to demand trial of BNP-Jamaat people who had bombed and killed people between 2013 and 2015. Some people described his central-bank visit negatively with an ill motive, he added.

Each garment worker would donate Tk 10 through their respective factory owners to the fund he initiated for Rohingya refugees, Shajahan said.

Nearly 100 organisations under the Workers, Employees, Professionals and Freedom Fighters Coordination Council would also give money to the fund, the minister said.

Asked what was his opinion of the current state of the country's banking sector, Shajahan said the finance minister would talk about that.

Shajahan left Bangladesh Bank around 3:45pm.

## Pope advised

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Annan, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and author of an advisory commission report on Rakhine State given to the Yangon government in August, gave the pope a copy of his 63-page report. It does not use the term Rohingya to Rihingyas but refers them only to "Muslims in Rakhine State".

Human rights groups hope the pope does not pull his punches in Myanmar.

"The Rohingya have little left besides their group name after years of statelessness, discriminatory restrictions on movement and access to life-sustaining services, and being targeted by a military subjecting them to ethnic cleansing and atrocities," said Phil Robertson, deputy director for Human Rights Watch in Asia.

"The Pope absolutely should stand up for the Rohingya by using the name Rohingya," he said in an email.

Asked if the pope should say Rohingya, Laura Haigh, London-based Myanmar expert for Amnesty International, said: "International law recognises the right of a group to self-identify. It comes down to a principled stand."

## Second time unlucky

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showed he had gotten first division in SSC and HSC exams in 1997 and 1999 respectively from Domarakandi High and Government Yasin College in Faridpur.

He also secured a first class in honors and a second class in masters in management from Government Rajendra College.

He got the job and within a few years he was made a permanent staff and promoted to the post of officer.

Unbeknownst to his superiors, his credentials were fake. However, this would not be his downfall.

Having gotten away with his first crime, his second one, however, would not bear the same results. In 2015, six years after his posting, he was caught embezzling about Tk 9 crore from the bank by forging foreign remittance documents.

He was soon dismissed from the bank and the same year was arrested by Rapid Action Battalion from Kamlapur Railway Station in connection with the case.

Earlier this year, ACC issued a notice to Siddiquir to submit wealth statement. After scrutiny and inquiry into his wealth, ACC found that Siddiquir and his wife amassed about Tk 6 crore illegally.

Two other cases were filed against him with Motijheel and Ramna police stations for embezzling foreign remittance and concealing information in his wealth statement in 2015 and 2017 respectively.

"His [Siddiquir] actions grew more suspicious. I inquired about his educational qualifications and found he only passed SSC exams," said Fazlul, also the investigation officer of the case.

"Availing the job with fake certificate made him more desperate in committing more offence," said Fazlul Haque, deputy director of ACC, who yesterday filed a case against him with Motijheel Police Station for submitting fake certificates.

According to the case statement, on

January 1, 2009 Siddiquir applied for data processing post of NCC bank and on February 9 the same year he joined the bank.

The accused submitted attested copies of his educational qualifications.

To verify the documents, the investigation officer requested all the educational institutions to send related information.

The Head Master of Domrakandi High School replied that Siddiquir had indeed passed his SSC securing first division in 1997.

But, the principal of Government Yasin College said there was no record of an examinee with the particular registration and roll number Siddiquir showed who sat for HSC examination in 1999.

The principal of Government Rajendra College said no student named Siddiquir Rahman took admission in 1999-2000 sessions for a Bachelor's degree on management subject. Similarly no such information was found regarding Master's degree.

Exam Controller of National University also verified his B.Com and Masters certificates as fake.

Fazlul said one Billal Hossain, lecturer of Social Science Department of Government Rajendra College, attested his documents in 2009 but the college authority confirmed that no lecturer under that name worked in their college at the given time.

"So it is apparent, the accused Siddiquir Rahman has obtained only an SSC degree," said Fazlul in the case statement.

Meanwhile, ACC yesterday arrested assistant general manager of Sonali Bank Saifuddin Sabuj in connection with a case filed over misappropriating Tk 5 lakh of clients.

According to the case statement, between September 26 and October 10 of this year, several clients deposited Tk 5 lakh but Sabuj did not deposit those in their accounts and pocketed it.

The case was filed with Kishoreganj Model Police Station on October 19.

## 2 'robbers'

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information they had received. The Rab team conducted the drive in the early hours of Wednesday in Katler Khal area of Baleswer where members of Abbas Bahini were hiding.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the robbers opened fire on them forcing the force members to retaliate. The "gunfight" started at around 7:45am and lasted for about 45 minutes.

Two alleged robbers were killed during the gunfight, he added.

"We also recovered seven local and foreign firearms and 124 bullets from the spot. The other members of the gang managed to flee," the wing commander of Rab-8 said.

## Purbokone

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Kalim Sarwar, news editor of the Bangla daily.

Taslim had been suffering from cancer for years and he was recently admitted to the hospital as his condition deteriorated, said Kalim, also president of Chittagong Press Club.

His namaz-e-janaza was held in Chittagong city's Nasirabad Government Boys High School field after Esha prayers yesterday. He was later buried at his village home in Sultanpur area of Chittagong's Raozan upazila, Kalim added.

Taslim's father Yusuf Chowdhury had established the daily in 1986, and Taslim took charge of the daily as the editor in 1989. In 2007, he became the chairman of Purbokone Group.

Chittagong Press Club, Chittagong Union of Journalists and several other organisations expressed deep shock at his death and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family.

Born in January 1, 1958 in Chittagong, Taslim had completed his primary education from Chittagong's Saint Placid's High School and high school education from Faujdarhat Cadet College. He graduated in architecture from Buet.

Taslim had been the president of Chittagong Dairy Farm Association for the last 10 years. Apart from that, he was the former president of Chittagong chapter of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, and vice-president of Chittagong Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Before his death, Taslim was a director of Chittagong Stock Exchange, chairman of Chittagong chapter of Institute of Architects, Bangladesh, president of Brihattar Chattagram Unnayan Sangram Parishad, member of Chittagong Development Authority's city development committee and syndicate member of Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Sciences University.

The journalist was also involved with various social and educational institutions.

## Planet found nearby

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of its star make it one of the most likely candidates for finding life near our own planet.

As well as those similarities, the star that the planet orbits around is a red dwarf. Those are cool, faint and common in the universe, and scientists are working hard to find planets surrounding them as they hunt for more worlds and potentially forms of life elsewhere in space.

Scientists have found a number of potentially life-supporting exoplanets that are relatively nearby. But many of them are hampered as life-supporting planets by the fact that their stars are very active, throwing out energy that could destroy any life that has tried to grow there.

Ross 128, by comparison, is a very "quiet" star, and is now the quietest to be known to have a planet orbiting it. That means that it could be a far more comfortable place to live, and so improves the chances that life could be found there.

## Evidence of genocide

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internal probe made public on November 13, it said it found no instances where its soldiers had shot and killed Rohingya villagers, raped women or tortured prisoners.

It denied that security forces had torched Rohingya villages or used "excessive force". Amnesty International termed the findings a "whitewash".

The research says Myanmar state security forces and civilian perpetrators committed mass killings in dozens of villages in Maungdaw Township in 2016 and in villages throughout all three townships of northern Rakhine since August 25, 2017.

"They slit throats; burned victims alive, including infants and children; beat civilians to death; raped and gang raped women and children," says the report.

State security forces opened fire on men, women and children at close range and from a distance from land and helicopters, killing untold numbers, it added.

Survivors from some villages described how perpetrators slashed women's breasts, hacked bodies to pieces and beheaded victims, including children, the report says.

Matthew Smith of Fortify Rights said these crimes thrive on impunity and inaction. "Condemnations aren't enough. Without urgent international action towards accountability, more mass killings are likely."

The Myanmar Army-led assault on Rohingya civilians comes in response to attacks by the Rohingya militant group, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) on three police outposts on October 9, 2016 that left nine dead, and another attack on 30 police outposts and one army base on August 25, 2017, that left at least 12 dead.

Members of ARSA are also responsible for human rights violations, the report added.

Myanmar continues to deny the delivery of essential humanitarian aid, including food and nutrition, to affected areas of northern Rakhine State.

"These crimes won't end on their own," said Matthew Smith.

The report suggested enacting targeted sanctions on the individuals responsible for crimes in Rakhine, instituting an arms embargo on Myanmar and referring the situation to the International Criminal Court.

The star is currently 11 light years away from Earth, but it's gradually moving closer. In just 79,000 years, it will become our nearest neighbour – meaning that Ross 128 b will unseat Proxima b as the closest known exoplanet to us.

The star was found by a team working with the European Southern Observatory's High Accuracy Radial velocity Planet Searcher, which is also known as HARPS.

"This discovery is based on more than a decade of HARPS intensive monitoring together with state-of-the-art data reduction and analysis techniques. Only HARPS has demonstrated such a precision and it remains the best planet hunter of its kind, 15 years after it began operations," Nicola Astudillo-Defru, who co-authored the discovery paper, said in a statement.

Planets around red dwarf stars also easier to detect than those that orbit brighter planets like our own sun.

SUU KYI "PART OF THE PROBLEM"

HRW, which has been documenting sexual violence against Rohingya by the Burmese military, attacked the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development (DfID) for failing to send specialist teams to speak to victims who had fled to Bangladesh, it said.

The International Rescue Committee estimated there were 75,000 victims of gender-based violence, and that 45% of the Rohingya women attending safe spaces in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh had reported such attacks.

"Yes, I'm afraid she is complicit," said Mark Farmaner, director of Burma Campaign UK, on Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi. He said the Nobel peace prize winner had "authoritarian tendencies", and used repressive laws to restrict freedom of expression, pointing out that she had refused to free political prisoners, one aged 14.

"The biggest tragedy here is she is the one person in the country who really could change attitudes towards the Rohingya. She's chosen not to do that," he added. "We've seen a change in tone but we haven't seen a change in policy."

"I'm saying that we need to look again at the support we have given to her government," he reportedly said.

A spokeswoman for the Foreign Office said two civilian experts had flown to Bangladesh on Tuesday, to conduct a needs assessment of the extent of sexual violence and service provision among the Rohingya. The deployment followed a visit by the head of team for the FCO's preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative to Cox's Bazar and Dhaka this month, alongside the UN secretary general's special representative on sexual violence in conflict, Pramila Patten.

Japan urges Myanmar for repatriation

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe urged Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Tuesday to make it possible for refugees to return to their homes in Rakhine state, reports Japan Times.

Abe also appealed to Suu Kyi in their meeting in Manila to restore order in the province and to allow access for humanitarian aid. He also assured Japan is ready to give as much support as possible to Myanmar to improve the situation in Rakhine.