



PHOTO: ORCHID CHANGMA

"What's past is prologue."  
— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

**SNAPSHOT**

## MAILBOX

Please note we have a new email address:  
starweekendtds@gmail.com

### No words remain to express condolences

The 50 lives lost in the tragic incident of the US-Bangla plane crash at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu on March 12 marks what is undoubtedly the deadliest aviation accident in our history. No words remain to express condolences to the family members of the victims, who are passing excruciating moments. The loss of lives can never be compensated with a price and is an irreparable loss for both countries. The passengers who lost their lives included holidaymakers, young couples, and young Nepali students studying in Bangladesh to become doctors.

The most tragic scenario was that of those desperate to see a glimpse of their loved ones one last time. And so, the grief-stricken families broke down in tears when receiving the dead bodies of their loved ones at the army stadium. I am praying for the departed souls and expressing condolences to the grief-stricken families.

Abul Khaer  
Govt Saadat College  
Tangail



ILLUSTRATION: MANAN MORSHED

### Significance of March 26

March 26 is a historical and glorious day for all Bangladeshis as, on this day in 1971, a new history was created by declaring the independence of this country. Innocent Bengalis took up arms to fight against the injustice of the

Pakistani junta who were perpetrating genocide. We are among those people of the world who have had to sacrifice a lot for liberation. Ultimately, we achieved liberty but at the cost of a sea of blood. On this glorious day, all of us should swear to

shun self-destructive politics and work together to build a "Golden Bengal" that was envisioned during the time of the Liberation War.  
Sayek Ahmed Sajib  
Sharankhola, Bagerhat

The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the *Star Weekend*.

### CURRENT AFFAIRS

Last Sunday (March 25, 2018), university students all over the country brought out a unique procession. Putting all their educational certificates around their necks, they took to the streets with mops and brooms. As the procession moved forward, the students started sweeping the streets. Hundreds of thousands of university and college students brought out this unique, peaceful demonstration all over the country demanding reformation of the government's current quota system in public service recruitment, where 56 percent of the candidates are recruited on a quota-based system; not one based on merit. Md Yamin Molla, Joint Convener of Shadharon Chhatra Odhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad (Committee to Protect Rights of All Students) says: "It is a part of our cleaning campaign on the occasion of Independence Day. However, it also has a symbolic implication."

One of his fellow protesters, Nur Muhammad, who completed graduation and post-graduation from the University of Dhaka explains the symbolic meaning: "Due to discriminatory quota system, qualified graduates cannot avail government jobs. We have to wait year upon year for a job only to be ultimately refused as we do not have the privilege



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# THE QUOTA CONUNDRUM

*Refusal to reform the quota system is pushing the civil bureaucracy downhill*

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

of the quota. At that point, our educational credentials are rendered useless. We took to the streets with brooms and mops to convey the message that if the existing quota system is not reformed immediately, we shall be forced to take lesser jobs which do not require higher education degrees."

College and university students of Bangladesh have been demonstrating for a reform of the quota system for more than a decade. Recently, the students' movement reached new heights when

some protesters were arrested and the police foiled their demonstration near Shikkha Bhaban by shelling the students with tear gas canisters on March 14, 2018. On the same day, students all over the country staged continued demonstrations by blocking the national highways, demanding the release of their comrades. On March 15 all of their comrades were released as a result of the intense protests.

However, the students' five-point demands to reform the quota system fell upon deaf ears. Their demands include: reduction of quota down to 10 percent from 56 percent; recruitment of candidates on the basis of merit if

eligible candidates with quota privilege cannot be found; no more special recruitment exam for the candidates eligible for quota; uniform age limit for all in government jobs and prevention of all forms of discrimination in the recruitment process which has been enshrined in Clauses 1 and 2 of Article 29 of Bangladesh's constitution.

To their dismay, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced on March 21, 2018 that the quota system for the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters, who enjoy more than half of all the reservations (30 percent of 56 percent), will not be changed. However, she also said: "The existing quota system might be relaxed to that extent that if anyone cannot be found to fill the quota then steps can be taken to fill those vacant positions with other brilliant students."

The PM's remark clearly indicates that the Bangladesh government is not going to reduce the current 56 percent quota in the public service recruitment. According

to this system, if Bangladesh Government's Public Service Commission (PSC) recruits 100 officers through a recruitment exam, 44 of them will be recruited on the basis of merit, 30 will be recruited from the applicants who are children or grandchildren of freedom fighters, 10 female candidates will be recruited due to 10 percent female quota, 10 candidates will be recruited from under-developed districts (district quota), five will be recruited from indigenous candidates and one disabled candidate will be recruited thanks to only one percent disabled quota.

However, if the vacant positions cannot be filled with candidates eligible for quota, the reserved positions will remain vacant and special exams can be arranged only for these candidates to fill in the positions. However, this system of prioritising quota over merit has been criticised by many, even by current and former bureaucrats, as the Bangladesh government is the first and foremost victim of this bizarre recruitment system.

Former adviser and renowned civil servant Akbar Ali Khan says: "Due to preserving huge number of job positions only for candidates with quota privilege,

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বিশ্ব বলেছিলো- পদ্মা সেতু 'সম্ভব না'  
একজন প্রধানমন্ত্রী আর ১৬ কোটি বাঙালি বলেছিলাম-  
'কেন না!'