



Guests stand for the national anthem at the 28th anniversary of The Daily Star at International Convention City Bashundhara yesterday. *Bottom from left, dignitaries go round a photo exhibition at the venue. Singers perform at the programme. A section of guests at the venue.*

PHOTO: STAR

Two lighthouses honoured

FROM PAGE 1
Dhopadi Secondary School in Jashore's Monirampur upazila, where he teaches mathematics and science. He gave classes on the day he married and the day he lost his father.

Then there is Taherul Islam from Pabna. After retirement, the 70-year-old former headteacher set up a free school for underprivileged children and continued what he does best: spread knowledge. There are now 50 children learning to read and write at this roadside school -- Bina Poishar Pathshala -- at Shara-Gopalpur village in Ishwardi.

On the occasion of its 28th anniversary, The Daily Star yesterday honoured these two lighthouses for their dedication and contribution to education.

Earlier, this paper ran stories on both the teachers.

Satyajit and Taherul thanked The Daily Star for the honour.

Taking the podium at the capital's International Convention City Bashundhara, Taherul said, "Teachers should be watchful so that no students drop out."

In his reaction, Satyajit said, "If we can impart proper education to students living in remotest areas, the country will make real progress."

Readers, patrons, advertisers and

well-wishers of The Daily Star made up the audience of several hundred people, who were visibly moved as they came to know their stories. Some shook their heads, not in disagreement, but in awe.

The two teachers were given Tk 1 lakh each amid cheers from the audience.

Ayman Sadiq, founder and chief executive officer of the YouTube channel "10 Minute School," handed over the crests and cheques to Satyajit and Taherul.

The ceremony was also attended by politicians, academics, businessmen, diplomats, journalists and development workers from home and abroad.

The celebration under the theme "Journalism without Fear or Favour" began with the national anthem, which was followed by the screening of a documentary on the history of Bangladesh and the achievements it made so far.

Mahfuz Anam, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher, highlighted the importance of a free media, freedom of the press and freedom of thoughts, to drive the country forward.

He said governments are sometimes nervous about free media, but independent press can bring to light, say, when there is something wrong

with a development project. So a free media allows a government the opportunity to communicate with the citizens, correct course of action and allocate resources.

"As Bangladesh is on course to become a middle-income country, it must build the critical infrastructure of mind compatible to the stature of the middle-income country," he said.

He said journalism sits in the critical centre where societies get new ideas and planners and policymakers are able to provide good governance. But many a time because of the critical nature of journalism, governments feel uncomfortable with a free press.

Bangladesh has a vibrant media with the entry of a significant number of new television channels, radio stations, newspapers and online media outlets. But the legal framework is becoming stricter, he noted.

He particularly talked about the Digital Security Act, called it stringent and called upon the government to revisit it, by looking at the world. He also spoke of the possibility of Bangladesh and how the country can advance riding on a free media.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, chairperson of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of The Daily Star, said the jour-

ney of the last 28 years had not been always smooth. In addition to financial challenges, there have been challenges related to press freedom and forced suppression of advertisement.

"Through your support, we were able to overcome them. Some of the past challenges remain to which new ones have been added, the most dramatic of which is that of technology.

"This new challenge is making us reinvent the newspaper industry and reform journalism in some very fundamental ways. Whatever changes we make and whatever new direction we take, one thing will never change: our focus, which has been and will remain is you, our readers," she said.

"We exist only because you read us. Hence, all our efforts are directed at serving our readers and we pledge to intensify them," she added.

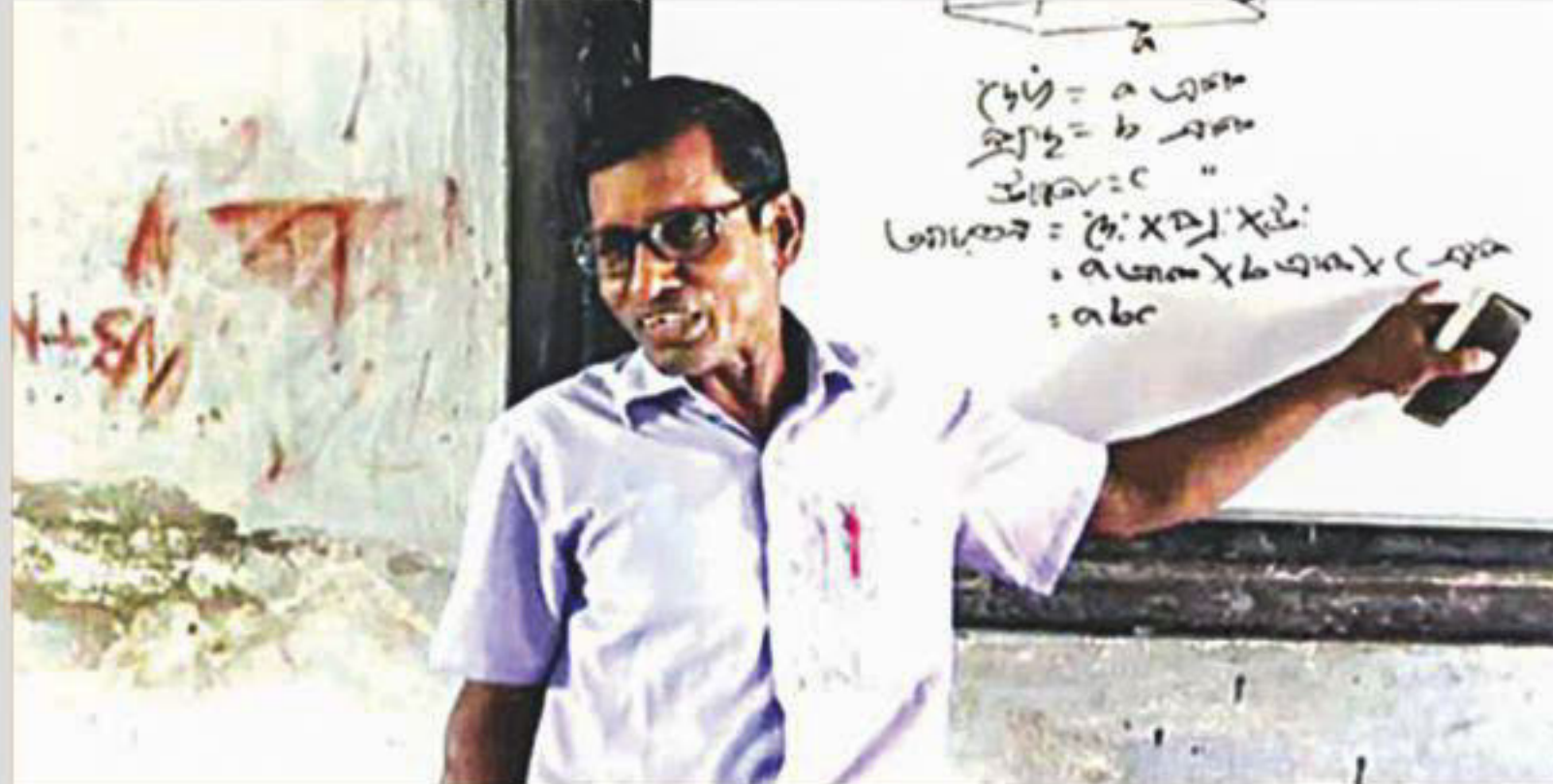
Distinguished guests include:
Dr Kamal Hossain, noted jurist and president of Gonoforum; Planning Minister MA Mannan; Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue; Hasanul Huq Inu, a lawmaker and president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal; former caretaker government advisers Geetiara Safiya Chowdhury, Syed Manzur Elahi, and M Hafizuddin Khan; BNP leader Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and

Abdul Moyeen Khan; Inam Ahmed Chowdhury, an Awami League leader; Supreme Court Bar Association President Zainul Abedin; Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, chairman of Bangladesh Kalyan Party; Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of the Transparency International Bangladesh; industrialist and entrepreneur Abul Khair Litu; Monirul Islam, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police; SM Ruhul Amin, deputy inspector general (media), police headquarters; Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner for media and public relations of the DMP; Rashed Khan Menon, a lawmaker and president of the Bangladesh Workers' Party; Jatiya Party leader Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu; Gonoforum leader Subrata Chowdhury; A Atiq Rahman, executive director of the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies; Centre for Policy Dialogue distinguished fellows Debapriya Bhattacharya, Rounaq Jahan and Prof Mustafizur Rahman; Khurshid Irfan Chowdhury, managing director of Transcom Beverages Ltd; Jillur Rahim, managing director of Wartsila Bangladesh; Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Dhaka Bank; Shamsur Rahman,

a director of The Daily Star; Sara Hossain, rights activist; Sharmeen Murshid, chief executive officer of Brottee; rights activist Hamida Hossain; Manzil Morshed, a noted lawyer; Shahidul Alam, internationally-acclaimed photographer; veteran journalist Mahfuz Ullah; Faridur Reza Sagor, managing director of Channel i; Shykh Seraj, pioneer development journalist; Shahiduzzaman Khan, acting editor of the Financial Express; Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, former secretary general of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists; Gitiara Nasreen, professor, and Fahmidul Haq, associate professor, of the mass communication and journalism department at Dhaka University; Prof Mahbub Ullah, a former teacher at Dhaka University; Ilias Kanchan, film star and leading campaigner for road safety; actress Bidya Sinha Mim; actor turned director Tauquir Ahmed; actress and screenwriter Bipasha Hayat; singer Maqsoodul Haque; model Jannatul Ferdous Peya; filmmaker Animesh Aich; singer Fahmida Nabi; and artistes Ashna Habib Bhabna and Shahidul Alam Sachchu.

THE TWO AWARDEES

Satyajit Biswas



Satyajit Biswas is a rare breed of a dedicated teacher who has never been late at work nor taken a sick leave in his 31-year career. He never missed school, not even on his wedding day or the day his father died.

The assistant headteacher of Dhopadi Secondary School at Monirampur upazila of Jashore, Satyajit always arrived at the school half an hour before class time.

"I never set out to achieve anything grand," he says. "I never thought much about it at all, really. It's just that I know that I am the only science teacher at the school. If I take leave, the students don't have anybody else to teach them maths and science."

He said he felt uneasy if he did not get to see his students.

Once he was giving a mathematics class with high fever.

"But I was so weak that I fell down, suddenly. My students had to carry me to the office room," added the teacher, who lives a simple life but has a big dream.

"I want my school to be the best in the area," says the teacher from Kucholia village in Monirampur.

Nazrul Islam, the headteacher of the school, said of Satyajit, "He doesn't only teach. Satyajit is also there for our students when they need advice on any matter, be it school or life-related."

Taherul Islam



Taherul Islam has retired from school but not from his dream of making a positive change in the society. As he discovered many underprivileged children dropping out of school in his locality in Pabna, he motivated them and set up a free school some eight years ago.

The school -- Bina Poishar Pathshala -- sits by the road at Shara-Gopalpur village in Ishwardi and has 50 students who are learning to read and write for free.

The 70-year-old former headteacher of Rooppur Girls Primary School not only motivates parents to send their kids to his

school. Initially, he even picked up the kids from home and dropped them off after school hours.

Now that the locals know about his school, they send their children on their own, Taher said.

Rabeya Khatun sends her son Azmir, 7, to the school.

"Just a few years ago, I was not interested in his academic education. Taherul came to our home and persuaded me to send him to his school. At the beginning, I sent him reluctantly, but it was the best decision I ever made."

Last year, Azmir got a chance at Shara Gopalpur Primary School. He is now going to the school as well as

getting free lessons from Taherul. More and more children are coming to his school every year.

The initiative inspired other youths as well. Two college-going girls in the village are now helping him out.

"I am fortunate to be learning the duties of teachers from Taherul Sir," said Muslima Akter Borsha, a part-time teacher at the school.

Taherul is now talking to locals for a piece of land to set up a concrete structure so that the children never have to miss a day for bad weather.

"I want to continue my duty to educate till my last breath," he said.

The 70-year-old former headteacher of Rooppur Girls Primary School not only motivates parents to send their kids to his school. Initially, he even picked up the kids from home and dropped them off after school hours.

Pak will pay

FROM PAGE 16
India will take all possible diplomatic steps to ensure the "complete isolation" of Pakistan, cabinet minister Arun Jaitley told reporters soon after the cabinet committee met at Modi's residence.

Jaitley said India had withdrawn most favoured nation (MFN) trade privileges given to Pakistan and was working on a plan to isolate the country internationally in the wake of the attacks.

But bilateral trade between India and Pakistan is barely \$2 billion per year and Modi facing a tough election is likely to come under pressure for a more muscular response.

He took office in 2014 promising to tackle Muslim Pakistan, with which India has twice gone to war since independence from Britain in 1947.

The last major attack in Kashmir was in 2016 when militants raided an Indian army camp in Uri, killing 20 soldiers. Modi responded with a surgical strike on suspected militant camps across the border in Pakistan Kashmir weeks later.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the latest Kashmir attack a matter of "grave concern".

But in a brief statement early yesterday it added: "We strongly reject any insinuation by elements in the Indian government and media circles that seek to link the attack to the State of Pakistan without investigations."