

# Unique effort to promote Adivasi languages

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

Chapainawabganj administration has for the first time printed invites for the International Mother Language Day programmes in five languages, including three indigenous ones.

Besides Bangla and English, the letters are written in Sadri, Santal and Kole -- a nod to indigenous communities in the district who speak these languages.

In previous years, the letters meant for officials, journalists and dignitaries were written only in Bangla.

Folded in half, the front side of the invite also contains greetings in different languages of the world.

"We thank the administration for the gesture," Hingu Murmu, president of Uttarbanga Adivasi Forum, said.

The government should promote and preserve languages that are on the verge of extinction, he added.

"A language survives when it is written. It's very important to preserve our mother language to maintain linguistic and cultural diversity in the country," he said.

Over 50,000 indigenous people of Santal, Oraon, Mahato, Kole, Rajbangshi and several other communities live in the district. The Santal community is the largest, he said.

Deputy Commissioner AZM Nurul Haque said, "We want to promote all ethnic minority communities. The textbooks of Sadri language are already distributed in primary schools."

The idea to celebrate International

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks at scale model tanks during the inauguration of International Defence Exhibition at Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre yesterday morning.

PHOTO: PID

# 12-hr gas supply

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which carries natural gas to the national grid.

The sudden outage of gas inflicted untold sufferings on the city dwellers who woke up to the disruption, as there was no prior announcement from the state-run utility company.

"The gas supply resumed at 10:30am on Sunday," said Engineer Md Enamul Huq, manager (Emergency Gas Control Centre - North) of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd.

Kamruzzaman said, "We could not notify the customers about it beforehand because it took us past midnight on Friday

to make preparations for the repair work." "We communicated with the customers on Saturday morning."

Titas Gas used TV scrolls and text messages to notify the customers about the disruption.

A valve went out of order at the Ashulia gas station of the GTCL, resulting in the disruption. The GTCL fixed the problem by replacing the valve.

Clients in Ashulia, Savar, Aminbazar, Gabtoli, Mirpur, Paikpara, Pirebagh, Kalyanpur, Shyamoli, Ring Road, Mansurabad, Kadirabad, Mohammadpur, Lalmatia, Dhanmondi, Azimpur and Hazaribagh suffered seriously due to the crisis.

# Dhaka, Abu Dhabi sign four deals

FROM PAGE 1  
Partnership Authority under the Prime Minister's Office inked the first MoU to set up a port, dry port and industrial park in Bangladesh.

Chairman of DP World Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem and Bangladesh Shipping Secretary M Abdus Samad signed the document.

DP World said whenever they construct any port, they do not limit their activities to the port but set up an industrial park, said Shahidul Haque. "They're thinking of a massive investment," he said.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

invited them to Bangladesh and told them that the government will extend all the necessary cooperation," he added.

The second MoU was signed between the Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC) and the power, energy and mineral resources ministry of Bangladesh to supply LNG to Bangladesh on a long-term basis and develop a land-based LNG receiving terminal in Payra.

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Narsul Hamid and ENOC Group CEO Saif Humaid Al Falasi inked the MoU on behalf of their respective sides.

The ENOC wanted 300 acres of land in Payra where they will construct the terminal.

Khaled Mahmud, chairman of Power Development Board of Bangladesh, and Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook Al Maktoum, a member of ruling family of Dubai, inked the third MoU.

The objective of the deal is to set up an integrated 800-1000MW LNG power plant in two phases. Besides, there will be a 100MW solar power project.

The fourth MoU was signed between the private office of Sheikh Ahmed Dalmook Al Maktoum and

Bangladesh Investment Development Authority.

Sheikh Ahmed Dalmukh inked the deal for his side while PM's Principal Secretary Nojibur Rahman signed it for Bangladesh.

The focus of this MoU is on setting up a special economic zone in Matarbari.

The office wanted 300 acres of land where they will set up a company for investment.

By signing these MoUs, the foreign secretary said the possibility of opening a new door has been created for trade and business between the two countries.

# Fire kills nine in slum

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Asked, Jashim said the number of casualties was high, possibly because most of the victims were asleep.

The slum, just beside the Rajakhali canal, is illegal and set up on a government land. A small group of influential locals control the place and takes Tk 1,000 to Tk 2,000 as rent from each shanty, said locals.

They also provide illegal electricity and gas connections to the slum dwell-

ers, they added.

Talking to The Daily Star, several slum dwellers said they wanted to leave the place after the administration launched an eviction drive on the banks of the Karnaphuli earlier this month. They, however, could not due to those influential locals.

Meanwhile, the district administration has announced that it would give Tk 20,000 to the family of each dead.

# 43 godfathers still at large

FROM PAGE 1  
members of former lawmaker Abdur Rahman Bodi and 10 local elected representatives.

ABM Masud Hossain, police superintendent in Cox's Bazar, said they got some detailed information and would conduct operations soon to arrest the dealers and their patrons soon.

Besides, they will write to the authorities concerned for action against those staying abroad. "We are verifying all the information and will go for action to destroy the syndicate,"

this month. The Rapid Action Battalion seized 40,000 pieces of yaba and arrested a drug trader on Saturday.

A high official of BGB, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star that they have a list of 1,500 yaba dealers and carriers. About 700 of them got arrested, he added.

43 STILL OUTSIDE  
Locals and law enforcement sources say some 15 top listed godfathers are often found roaming different areas of Teknaf.

Four of them were even seen in the

said. The father and son could not be reached over the phone for comments.

Rafiq Uddin used to work in different mosques and madrasas but now he is the owner of a duplex and several plots in the upazila, locals said.

His brother Aziz Uddin was also a madrasa teacher. Like his brother, he also got engaged in yaba trade and made a fortune, sources say.

None of them were available for comments.

Although Bodi's four brothers and

of a private company.

Anisur Rahman Yahya, 58, hails from Shah Porir Island of Teknaf but he mostly lives in Khulshi area of Chattogram. All of his family members are involved in smuggling since their home is located near the Myanmar border, sources claim.

Nurul Hoque Bhutto, 45, has a luxurious building in Nazirpara area of Teknaf. As he is on the run, a close aide now looks after yaba smuggling in his place.

A group of journalists came under

# Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 1  
said Abu Sabiq Mahdi, the team leader.

"I cannot express my feelings of winning this kind of global award and now we will get opportunities to meet the best space scientist in NASA and can experience the launching of satellites directly," said Mahdi, a student of the geography and environment department of SUST.

The other three members of the team were Kazi Mainul Islam and Sabbir Hasan from the same department and SM Rafee Adnan from the physics department.

The team's moderator Bishwapriyo Chakrabarty, assistant professor of Computer Science and Engineering department of SUST, will also accompany the team during the NASA visit.

Team Olik beat 1,395 teams from around the world.

The announcement was made on Saturday via an email sent to the winners. The team has been asked to visit the aeronautics and space science

research center of NASA soon, Mahdi added.

Earlier in the selection round, Team Olik made it to the top four along with teams from California, Kuala Lumpur and Yamaguchi in Japan on December 8.

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), under the initiative of BASIS students' forum, has been organising teams from Bangladesh for the NASA Space Apps Challenge every year.

For this year, the BASIS had chosen eight teams to submit their projects to NASA, after a massive competition across the country where they selected the top 40 from 2000 projects.

Telecom and ICT minister Mustafa Jabbar and ICT state minister Zunaid Ahmed Palak have congratulated the winning team.

Jabbar said digital Bangladesh was developing by holding the hands of the country's youth.

"This young team has made us proud," said Jabbar, also a former president of BASIS.



Mujib Saiful Yahya Zafar Shajahan Rafiq Aziz Mostaq Bhutto Sohel

he added.

According to an intelligence report finalised after quizzing the 102, three types of pink tablets -- R7, WY and unnamed -- cross the Myanmar border through 12 points and enter Bangladesh from 36 points of Teknaf and Ukhia upazilas in Cox's Bazar.

In Teknaf, the price of R7 is Tk 60 per piece, WY Tk 40 and the unnamed Tk 30.

The report, seen by The Daily Star, also says Rohingyas working as carriers bring five to 20 thousand pills each apart from the smugglers.

The 102 godfathers and dealers were kept in police "safe house" in district police line since January 10 before their surrender, but the yaba shipments continued.

The database of Department of Narcotics Control shows the agency recovered some 8,200 yaba pills in Teknaf alone over the first 16 days of

audience during the surrender programme. They are Zafar Ahmed, 65, chairman of Teknaf upazila; his son Md Shajahan, 39, chairman of Teknaf Sadar union; Rafiq Uddin, 60, Teknaf upazila vice-chairman, and Aziz Uddin, 53, Baharchhara Union Parishad chairman.

Once a day labourer, Zafar was an associate of former Awami League lawmaker Abdur Rahman Bodi's father Ezahar Company. With Bodi's blessings, he became upazila chairman in 2014.

Sources said Zafar got involved in yaba business in early 2010. His elder son Mostaq Ahmed, another top yaba dealer, went missing four years back and still remains traceless.

His another son, Didar Mia, 35, surrendered to police on Saturday but Zafar and Shajahan are yet to give themselves up. They have two buildings and a dozen plots in Teknaf, locals

12 relatives surrendered to police, one of his younger brothers Mujibur Rahman, whose name is on the third position of the home ministry list, is still free.

Mujibur, the panel mayor of Teknaf municipality, is said to be one of the major patrons of yaba smuggling. He owns a number of plots in Teknaf, locals say.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mujibur, however, claimed his name mistakenly appeared on the list and he applied to the ministry, police and Rab to remove it.

According to law enforcement sources, top yaba smuggler Haji Saiful Karim, 46, has been playing a key role from Dubai in running the syndicate as the payment system is controlled mostly by him.

He has flats, buildings, residential hotels in Cox's Bazar and Chattogram though he started his career as a peon

attack in 2017 for reporting on him, sources said.

Neither Yahya nor Bhutto could be contacted.

Listed godfather Kashem Ansari, 35, is the younger brother of yaba dealer Shajahan Ansari, 45, who surrendered to police on Saturday.

Sources say Kashem started as a carrier for his brother and now he owns several luxurious buildings. He could not be found in the locality.

Md Younus Bhutto, 50, a pick-pocket, shop worker Azizul Islam Sohel, 35, small trader Mostaq Ahmed, 38, small product supplier Nurul Amin, 55, caretaker Nurul Afsar, 40, and Salahuddin, 35, have emerged as godfathers, according to the list.

None of them was found for comments.

Police say apart from the listed godfathers, some 500 new dealers are active in Teknaf now.

# Controversial leaders given road safety job

FROM PAGE 1  
projects and empowering the relevant government bodies.

Earlier in 2011, the government formed a sub-committee headed by Prof Anwar Hossain of Dhaka University to give recommendations on road safety.

"We worked extensively, held several meetings and gave a report with short, mid and long-term recommendations ... I don't know how many of them have been implemented ... There would be no need for a new committee if our recommendations had been implemented," Prof Anwar said last night.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader announced the formation of the new committee after the 26th meeting of the National Road Safety Council (NRSC) at the head office of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority in the capital's Banani.

The meeting of the NRSC, the apex body comprising representatives of the government, transport sector and civil

society as well as experts, was scheduled to be held more than a year ago, on January 14 last year.

Shajahan Khan, also former shipping minister, is the executive president of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, an umbrella for at least 235 transport workers' unions across the country. The federation represents more than 60 lakh workers.

Osman Ali, general secretary of the federation; Mashur Rahman Ranga and Khondaker Enayet Ullah who are president and secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association; and two representatives from the associations of truck and covered van owners and workers, have been made members of the committee.

Ranga is also a Jatiya Party MP while Enayet is an Awami League leader, and their Association represents about 3 lakh owners.

Shajahan, Ranga, Enayet and Osman were present at the meeting. The committee also includes prom-

inent road safety campaigner Ilias Kanchan and writer and researcher Syed Abdul Maksud.

Road safety campaigners, representatives from BRTA, Roads and Highways Department, Accident Research Institute (ARI) at Buet, BRAC, Highway Police and Dhaka Metropolitan Police are also on the committee.

The committee will place its report in 14 working days.

After the meeting, Quader said their plan to bring discipline in the sector was "highly ambitious" but its implementation was "relatively limited and slow."

About any potential conflict of interest of committee members, the minister said, "Let them work. Let the report come out, and let the work begin based on their recommendations. I will then comment on the matter."

A BIG QUESTION MARK  
Road safety campaigners have questioned the inclusion of Shajahan,

whose past role on road safety matters clearly show his conflict of interest.

His comments last year over the death of two college students sparked fury.

Amid a week-long student protests, Shajahan offered an apology, saying he was "saddened and ashamed."

The agitation forced the government to pass the Road Transport Act-2018 in September last year with relatively stringent punishment for drivers for road accidents.

But the Shajahan-led federation observed a two-day strike on October 28-29 to press home their eight-point demand.

Their demands included revoking the Tk 5 lakh fine for causing road accidents, making all accident-related cases bailable, and reducing the mandatory educational qualifications from class-VIII to class-V for getting a driving licence.

Five months after its passage, the law is yet to take effect allegedly due to

pressure from transport workers.

OTHER DECISIONS  
A separate three-member committee was formed to look into how the Road Transport Act-2018 can be implemented, said Obaidul.

The law minister, home minister and railways minister are members of this committee, which will submit its report in 14 working days.

After the passage of the law, some stakeholders made some comments and observations, said Obaidul.

The three ministers will look into how the law can be implemented in line with the reality, the minister added.

Sources at the BRTA said a committee is currently working to formulate rules for the act.

At the meeting, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia said they would observe a traffic week every month from now on to bring discipline and create awareness.

- In August 2011, Shajahan said a driver does not need to be educated to get a driving licence.
- "If a driver can sign his name, can read traffic signs and signals, can tell a cow from a goat and has good driving skills, what's the problem in giving him a licence?" he told a press conference on August 18 that year.
- In February 2012, Shajahan placed a demand before a parliamentary sub-committee that extortion on highways be made legal to stop rampant corruption in the transport sector.
- In February 2017, the Shajahan-led federation called a country-wide strike protesting a verdict that gave life sentence to a bus driver over the deaths of filmmaker Tareque Masud, media personality Ashfaque Munier Mishuk and three others in an accident in 2011.