

Govt focusing on rail and river transport

Road transport and bridges secretary says

After decades of suffering, residents of two unions in Chattogram's Raozan have joined the efforts of one visionary, to end their recurring commuting woes every year. People of Kadalpur and Pahartoli unions are providing voluntary labour to build a bridge on a 300-metre (about 1,000 feet) stretch of path comprising a paddy field and a few ditches between the unions that go under water every monsoon. All these years, nearly 20,000 villagers of neighbouring areas were left with no option but to take the alternative route, four kilometres in length, to commute between the unions in the rainy season. The initiative was taken by U Pannya Cakka Thera, a Buddhist monk. He is the principal of Dhamma Vijayarama Bihar in Khaiyakhali village. During a recent visit to the site, some 50 villagers were seen working tirelessly under the scorching Baishakh sun to build the structure. During a recent visit to the construction site, villagers, irrespective of age and sex, were seen working enthusiastically. Sexagenarian Adhir Barua came all the way from the port city's Chandgaon neighbourhood to lend a hand. "I am feeling blessed to be a part of this great initiative. The bridge will remove long-standing sufferings of villagers," he told this correspondent. Sumi Barua, a homemaker, said, "The bridge is being built for the villagers. So I could not help but come and take part." Antu Barua, a fourth-year student of physics at Chittagong College, said he was proud to be a part of the philanthropic act. Siddiqur Rahman, a teacher at Khaiyakhali High School, said the monk had brought respite to 300 students of his school. "Villagers have been trying to build a bridge here for decades, but to no avail. At one point, they lost hope. Students of four schools in the unions are the worst sufferers," said Ashutosh Barua, a member of Pahartoli Union Parishad. The stalemate remained as the two union councils could not decide who would lead the project, and villagers were also divided, Ashutosh explained. Pannya took up the initiative at the beginning of this year. "I first talked to villagers to know whether they had any objection if a bridge was built over the isle of the paddy field. The land owners said they had no objection," the 54-year-old monk told this paper. "Then I talked to Utpal Barua, former engineer of Chattogram City Corporation and he agreed to design the bridge. Once the design was done, I started work on January 21, with Tk 100,000 of my savings," he went on. Pannya said his disciples at home and abroad, as well as villagers made contributions to fund the project. Initially, Panna started the construction work for 232 feet of the bridge. Once completed, the 5.5-foot high bridge would be 1,464 feet in length and four feet in width, engineer Utpal Barua said. About 60 percent of the work is done while the rest was expected to be completed before the advent of monsoon, he said, adding, the estimated cost was Tk 50 lakh.

Power to the people

Villagers join Buddhist monk's initiative to build bridge

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram



Local volunteers pour and smooth out concrete on the under-construction bridge, while others form a supply chain of the material. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

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JAHA ALAM'S JAILING

Next hearing on compensation May 13

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday stayed the proceedings on a High Court rule regarding compensation to Jaha Alam, till May 13. Chamber judge of the Appellate Division Justice Md Nuruzzaman passed the stay order following a petition filed by Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on April 21. The court also sent the petition to its full bench hearing on May 13. In the petition, ACC said that the bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader, who issued the suomoto rule regarding Jaha Alam, has no jurisdiction to deal with ACC's cases. Replying to a question, Advocate Khurshid also said, in its petition, that ACC did not challenge the HC order for releasing Jaha Alam from jail. Following a newspaper report, the bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader on January 28 issued the suomoto rule asking ACC and government why they should not be directed to compensate Jaha Alam for his sufferings in jail for three years in connection with the cases. On April 17, the same bench sought for the ACC probe report about Jaha Alam in order to see who are responsible for his wrongly suffering imprisonment for three years. It also asked the ACC to submit the probe report before it by May 2 and also fixed May 2 for further hearing on this issue. Jute mill worker Jaha Alam was wrongly imprisoned for three years because of an identity mess-up. He got released on February 4, a day after the HC exonerated him. He was arrested in connection with cases filed by ACC for misappropriating Sonali Bank money.

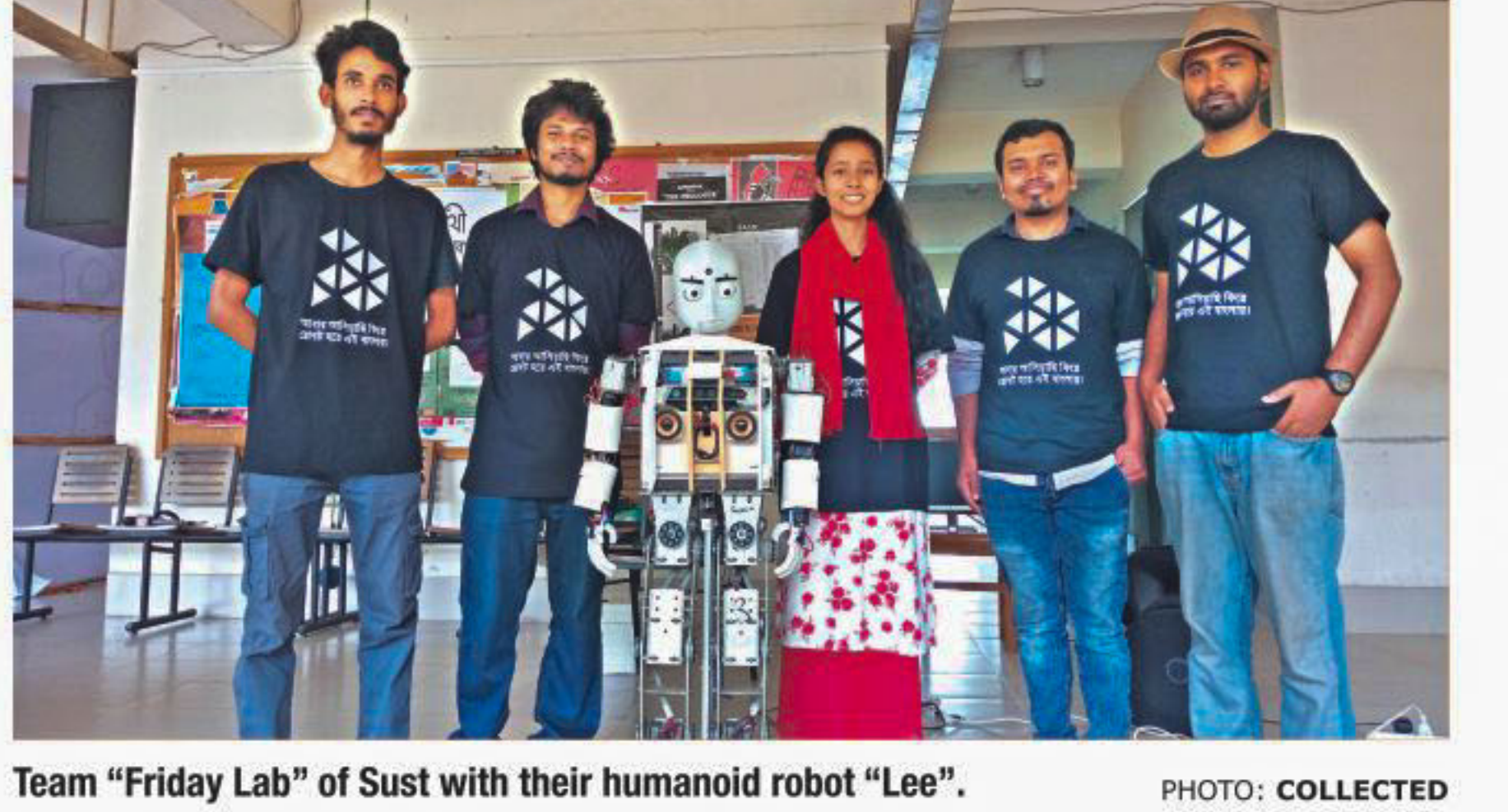
Made in Bangladesh

Developed by Sust students, humanoid robot 'Lee' generates buzz

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

His name is Lee. Standing at around four feet tall, he can interact with people, walk, and communicate in Bangla. Did we mention -- he can even dance! Lee the humanoid robot was developed by "Friday Lab", a group of five students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust), recently. They officially introduced Lee at an event on Monday on the campus. Prior to that, a demo was shown before State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak and noted educationist Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal on April 20 during the university's Tech Fest. Friday Lab worked three years to develop the humanoid robot with the funding of ICT division, they said. Noushad Sojib, former student of the department of Computer Science and Engineering at Sust and a lecturer at North East University Bangladesh, led the team. The other members are: Mehedy Hasan of Architecture department; Saiful Islam of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, and Samiul Hasan and Sultana Jyoti of Mechanical Engineering.

They said many students of the university also supported in their effort. On naming the humanoid robot, they said they named it after the extinct Bangla letter "Lee". Lee can stand and walk on two feet. He can also shake hands, gesture with his eyes and replicate dance moves. "With the help of its artificial intelligence, it can answer any question on the country and the Liberation War," said Noushad. The developers said Lee is being operated with Ubuntu operating system and programmed with Java and Python coding languages. The humanoid robot contains eight gigabytes of Ram and is being processed with a Core i5 processor. Lee has three motor and three micro controllers along with an android phone inside. "We believe robots will play an important role in future, especially for household and office work," said Noushad. "We developed Lee to show that we can develop humanoid robots in our country too." In 2016, another team "ROBO SUST" developed a robot named "RIBO", which was capable of speaking in Bangla and interacting with people.



Team "Friday Lab" of Sust with their humanoid robot "Lee". PHOTO: COLLECTED

Steps required to achieve potential of dairy industry

Roundtable told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dairy industry has great potential in the country, and to realise it, steps like decreasing production cost, subsidy to farmers and raising awareness among people are needed, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

Bangla daily Prothom Alo, with assistance of Pran Dairy Limited, organised the roundtable on "Present and Future of Local Milk Industry" at its conference room in Karwan Bazar. Director General of Department of Livestock Services Dr Himesh Ranjan Bhowmik said high production cost of per litre milk is the main obstacle in the dairy industry, while quality is another issue. Emphasising the role of institutionalised markets for dairy products, Himesh said farmers will deliver quality milk and dairy products when such markets flourish. Director General of Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute Dr Nathuram Sarkar said there are huge prospects in the country's dairy industry. Urging local entrepreneurs to come forward, Nathuram said although the poultry industry has flourished, dairy could not reach its expected goal. Stressing the need for raising awareness on nutritional value of milk to increase its demand, president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh Golam Rahman said per capita milk consumption is low in Bangladesh. Managing Director of Pran Group Ilias Mridha said Bangladesh was once a food-deficient country, but has achieved self-sufficiency in food due to concerted efforts.



A trader puts finishing touches to handicrafts, to be sold at a Baishakhi fair as part of the century-old wrestling competition "Jabbar-er Boli Khela" in port city. Considered one of the oldest traditions of Chattogram, the event will be held at Lalidighi Maidan tomorrow.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Country's first genocide corner opens at Sugandha

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has set up country's first ever Genocide Corner at the historic building Sugandha, now the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka, in remembrance of the three million victims of 1971 Liberation War. The government formally opened the corner on April 18, said a press release. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will make arrangements so that heads of state and government, ministers, politicians and diplomats can visit the Genocide Corner. Students from all educational institutions across the country will be able to visit the Genocide Corner with permission from the foreign ministry, the release added. Visitors from home and abroad will also be able to write on its visitor's book. The building was built during the British Raj. Queen Elizabeth II stayed in Sugandha in the 1960s. Later, it was used as the President's House. After independence it became Gonobhaban - the Prime Minister's Office and was renamed Sugandha, which was later converted to Service Academy in 1996.

Safe workplace for women must

Speakers say on achieving middle income status

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unsafe environment for women at workplace and other institutions is a major barrier to Bangladesh's aspiration of becoming a middle income country, speakers at a discussion said yesterday. Women, in general, will be benefited if victims and people from all walks of life raise their voices, they said at a programme at Bangladesh National Museum in Dhaka. CARE Bangladesh, a US-based development organisation, held the programme titled "Sketching Women's World of Work". Some 62 works of 16 photographers -- predominantly female -- were also displayed at an exhibition as part of the event, while a photobook was also unveiled. The exhibition and the discussion highlighted the contribution of female workers in various formal and informal sectors, their challenges, and the necessity of ensuring their safety at work. Speaking as chief guest, Monnujan Sufian, state minister for labor and employment, said, "Sexual harassment at work is happening in Bangladesh as well as all over the world. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina [and her government] is [positively] aware of the ILO convention." From June 10 to 21 this year, a new convention to ensure harassment and violence-free workplace, particularly for women workers, is expected to be adopted at ILO's 108th conference in its Geneva headquarters. Speaking as special guest, Shoko Ishikawa, country representative of UN Women in Bangladesh, spoke of recent incidents of violence against women and stressed on ensuring women-friendly institutional setting. "There is a lack of legal and institutional responses to violence against women in Bangladesh." Tuomo Poutiainen, ILO country director, said, "Empowering women requires a structural and attitudinal change." He stressed vocational and technical training for young girls. The discussion was presided over by Zia Choudhury, country representative of CARE. Noted artists Monirul Islam and photographer Mohammad Rakibul Hasan also spoke at the discussion.

SC upholds stay on former MP Rana's bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday upheld its chamber judge's order that stayed the High Court bail to former Awami League lawmaker Amanur Rahman Khan Rana in a murder case filed in 2012. A four-member bench led by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order after disposing of the petition filed by the state seeking a stay. Following the order of the apex court, Rana cannot get released from jail, Deputy Attorney General Dr Md Bashir Ullah told The Daily Star. Following a bail petition filed by the former lawmaker, HC granted bail to him on March 6. Later, SC chamber judge stayed the order and sent the petition to the full bench for hearing. Jubo League activists Shamim and Mamun were killed on the orders of Rana and his brother Kakon in Tangail on July 2012, according to Ashoke Kumar Sinha, investigation officer of the case. Mamun's father Abdul Aziz filed a case on July 2013, accusing 13 persons including lawmaker Rana. He was shown arrested in the case in May 2018.

Voter list updating begins

Transgender to be included for the first time in Khulna

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

With a target to collect information about 1.8 lakh voters, the Election Commission started a voter list updating programme in Khulna district yesterday. Divisional Commissioner Lokman Hossain Mia inaugurated the programme at Khulna Government Girls College. In this regard, a door to door activity will continue till May 13 this year. Speakers at the programme said registration process will be implemented from May 25 to October 30 this year. Information about those who reached 16 years of age will be collected, and of those who turned 18 will also be included. Md Yunus Ali, regional election officer in Khulna, told The Daily Star that data about those who were born between

January 1, 2000 and January 1, 2004 will be gathered during the programme. According to official records, transgender people will be included in the up-to-date list, which is the first in the country. M Majharul Islam, chief election officer in the region, said the number of total voter is currently 18 lakh in the district. Once the up-to-date programme is finished, 1.8 lakh more voters are expected to be included in the voter list. Information about deceased persons will also be collected, he said. They will be excluded from the list, he added. Md Iqbal Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of Khulna; Sarder Rafiqul Islam, additional commissioner of Khulna Metropolitan Police; and Md Habibur Rahman, additional DIG (Khulna range), also spoke at the event, among others.