

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Travelling Light

Recently I had a pleasant surprise when checking in for a flight at Dhaka airport. After I placed my suitcase on the weight scale, the ticketing agent looked at me, puzzled. "Sir, your luggage is so light that it is showing a negative weight."

So there it was. Airline weight scales can be erroneous in either direction. I had to abandon my hypothesis that airlines bias their scales towards heavy to extract overweight luggage charges from passengers.

But, more importantly, this was the best compliment that anyone could give me, the traveller.

"Travelling light" - those two words imply mobility and freedom. You can pack quickly and be on the move, without anyone's help, without bothering anyone. Depending on your mode of travel, though, light travel can mean a lot more. Take, for example, my days of backpacking in the American wilderness. When you go off by foot into the remote back country of Yosemite National Park for several days carrying everything you need on your back - clothes, tent, sleeping bag, food, water, cooking utensils, stove, fuel - the weight of each item becomes crucial. You become keenly tuned to what you really need to survive and function. (Incidentally, during the warm months, a small shovel is among those necessities - for your toilet, so you dug a small hole in the ground and covered up your excreta. In the snow, protocol requires you to carry out your solid waste.)

That's how I learned about Ultralight Backpacking. The goal was to keep the weight of basics under ten pounds; to this you added food and water. I never quite reached that goal but came close by using items made of lightweight material. Some of it came down to money. Lightweight gear was almost always more costly. But there were also skills involved: how to wear a frameless backpack so your back is not in pain after miles of walking, how to seal the seams of a single-wall tent so you are not drenched in your sleep when that midnight shower arrived



A Lighter Footstep.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

(the commonly-used but heavier double-walled tents are more waterproof in rain); how to identify every useless strap that your backpack came with and cut it off.

My backpacking and camping days are largely over. But some of the lessons I learned remain with me. Travelling light can become a way of looking at life, which, after all, is just another journey. Have we stepped lightly on our life's journey? How deep an imprint have we left on this planet? How has our journey impacted others

- now or in the future? Did we deal a heavy hand on our fellow humans by denigrating them or their beliefs? And, in this age of climate emergency, how heavy is our carbon footprint?

As we leave behind an extraordinarily tumultuous year and stand on the verge of a new one, these are thoughts to ponder.

Dear Reader, I wish you a happy new year filled with lighter steps.

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BNP fears vote rigging in Ctg by-polls

Says AL lawmaker's bragging of taking over polling centres in city elections may fuel chaos

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

With Chattogram-8 by-polls around two weeks away, BNP has expressed fears of vote rigging.

Party candidate Abu Sufian filed a complaint with the returning officer on December 26 in this regard after an Awami League lawmaker boasted of taking control of polling centres at an in-house meeting on Wednesday.

The election is slated to be held on January 13. The constituency fell vacant due to death of lawmaker Moin Uddin Khan Badal on November 7. Badal, also executive president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, was elected lawmaker with the "boat" (Awami League) symbol from the constituency in three consecutive polls, between 2008 and 2018.

On Wednesday, Abu Reza Muhammad Nizamuddin Nadvi, lawmaker from Satkania (Chattogram-15), at a meeting organised as part of election preparation at Awami League candidate's residence in city's Lalkhan Bazar bragged that he himself took control of seven polling centres in the 2015 city corporation election, apparently indicating that he

would repeat the same in the upcoming election.

He also said they will ensure that AL candidate wins the election. Awami League nominated Moslem Uddin Ahmed, president of Chattogram district (south) unit of AL, as a candidate for the by-polls.

A video recording of the meeting went viral on social media. This newspaper has also obtained a copy of that.

Meanwhile, Abu Sufian in his written allegation said there could be massive vote rigging as AL activists are planning to flex their muscles to gain control over the voting centres.

"This is inflicting fear among people and raising questions on how fair the voting will be," he said. Sufian urged the returning officer to take steps to ensure a safe environment for voters on election day.

"It's unfortunate that a lawmaker, who is supposed to uphold the law, said something like this," Sufian told The Daily Star yesterday. "Now it's up to the Election Commission to show how true they are to their words and hold an election free of fear and intimidation," he added.

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Gaibandha-3 MP Yunus Ali NO MORE

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Awami League lawmaker Yunus Ali Gaibandha-3 Sarker died at a hospital in Dhaka yesterday morning. He was 67.

He breathed his last at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) around 7:30am.

Yunus, who had been suffering from lung cancer for a long time, was admitted to BSMMU five months ago, Awami League sources said.

He was elected an MP from Sadullahpur-Palashbari constituency in Gaibandha for the first time in 2014.

The lawmaker left behind his wife and two sons to mourn his death.

He had also been suffering from respiratory health complications, said Khandker Zillur Rahman.

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Weather in Barishal became chillier yesterday after a morning drizzle that continued till noon. Rain also added to winter woes. This photo was taken from Sadar Road in the city.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Back to back accidents on same Kishoreganj road

STAR REPORT

Four people were killed in separate accidents across the country in the last two days, reports our correspondents and a news agency.

At least two people were killed and 20 were injured when a passenger bus fell into a ditch beside Bhairab-Kishoreganj road at Kamaliarchar in Katiadi upzila of Kishoreganj around 4am yesterday. Hours after, another truck plunged into a nearby ditch around the same area, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.

The deceased were identified as Faizul Islam Chowdhury (60) and Zinat Khan (50), a nurse of Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said police.

The accident occurred when a Mymensingh bound bus skidded off the road and fell into a road side ditch. This killed Faizul and Zinat on the spot and injured the others, said DM Johirul Islam, in-charge of Katiadi Highway Police.

On information, police rescued the injured and rushed them to Kishoreganj General Hospital.

During the rescue operation, another truck plunged into the same ditch as its driver lost control over the steering, Johirul said. However, no casualties were reported.

Dense fog and slippery road caused the accidents, he added.

Police have seized all the vehicles involved. Separate cases were lodged in this regard.

In the port city, an engineer was killed after he was run over by a lorry at port city's Ambagan early yesterday, reports our Chattogram correspondent.

The deceased was identified as Emdadul Hasan Showan (29). He worked as an electrical engineer in a project of Chattogram Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), said Md Kashem, sub-inspector of Khulshi Police Station.

The accident occurred as Emdadul was going to Tiger Pass on his motorbike. Around 12:10am, his bike collided head-on with a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, pushing him off into the road. As soon as he fell, a recklessly driven covered van drove over him, killing him on the spot.

Police chased the covered van but it managed to flee the scene, SI Kashem said.

In Rajshahi, a college teacher was crushed under the wheels of a truck on the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway in Biraldoho Mazar area of Puthia upazila on Thursday afternoon, reports UNB.

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Barishal univ admission tests being held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

The admission test of "Ka" unit of Barishal University (BU) for the 2019-2020 session will be held on the BU campus and 17 other local venues today. The exam is scheduled to take place between 11am and 12:30pm.

This will follow the exams for "Kha" and "Ga" units held at the same venues yesterday.

Visiting the venues, newly appointed VC of Barishal University Prof Arefin Matin said the first day of admission tests was held under peaceful conditions without any disruption. He hoped for the second day to go the same way.

A total of 49,956 candidates have registered to participate in this ninth intake of BU.

The first year honours candidates will compete

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Remembering Syed Shamsul Haq

Birth anniversary observed in Kurigram

CITY DESK

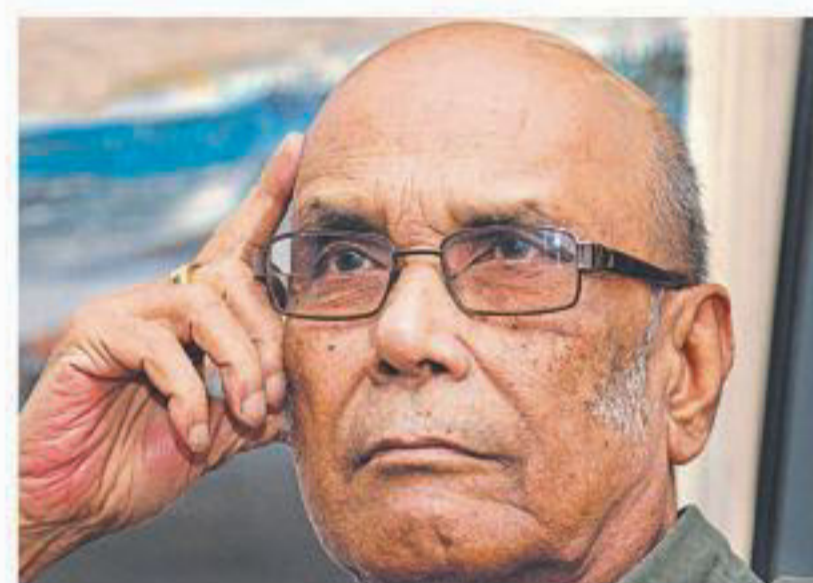
Be it verses, plays or stories -- Syed Shamsul Haq depicted a nation's proud history with a mastery that no one else could hope to achieve in one life.

His "Nurulniner Shara Jibon" (The Life and Times of Nuruldin) captured the rise of peasants of Bengal in rebellion against the tyranny of the British around the end of eighteenth century in Rangpur, the region he was born in about 200-years later.

1971, the nation's most glorious year in modern history, reemerges as a truthful flashback each time Haq's famous play -- "Payer Awaj Pawa Jay" -- (We Hear the Footsteps) is staged at theatres.

Years later, in the '90s, Haq delivered yet another of his legendary poetic creation -- "Amar Porichoy" (My Identity). It has it all -- from the anthropological history to cultural heredities, from remote ancestry to Bengali nationhood.

Yesterday marked the birth anniversary of Syed Shamsul Haq, one of the most prolific poets, writers and playwrights of the country.



Born in Kurigram on December 27, 1935, he commanded contemporary Bangla literature for over six decades as a literary giant.

Starting from Pakistan days, Haq's fountain of literary creations flowed ceaselessly for decades, inspiring hundreds of thousands of poetry lovers, and connoisseurs of literature at home and abroad.

Haq married Anwara Syed Haq. Together they had two children.

Popularly known as Syed Haq, he wrote innumerable poetry, fiction, plays (mostly in verse), and essays. He wrote several film scripts and penned many patriotic songs. His literary works were included in the curriculum of junior school, secondary, higher secondary, and graduate level Bangla

literature.

Haq is also credited for introducing the Bengali audience to some of the great plays of world literature with his translation work.

He had won every major award there was in the field of literature in the country including Independence Award (2000), Ekushey Padak (1984), Bangla Academy Award (1966), Adamjee Literary Award (1969), Alakta Gold Medal (1982), Alaol Literary Award (1983), Kabitlap Award (1983), Literary Award of the Association of Women Writers, Jebunnessa-Mahbubullah Gold Medal (1985), Padabali Kabita Award (1987), Nasiruddin Gold Medal (1990), National Poetry Award (1997), National Poetry Honour (2001), and TENAS Medal (1990).

Haq passed away at a Dhaka hospital on September 27, 2016, at the age of 81. He was buried next to Kurigram Government College as per his last wish.

PROGRAMME IN KURIGRAM

Syed Haq's birth anniversary was observed in Kurigram in a befitting manner yesterday.

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Huddling around fire made in public places to stay warm is a common scene in Bangladesh during winter. This photo was taken at Dhaka's Beribadh area.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Boatman's body recovered from Karnaphuli

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police recovered the body of a boatman at Banglabazar Ghat from the Karnaphuli river in the port city yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Nur Ahmed (45), from Ichhanagar under Karnaphuli upazila, said police. He had been missing since Tuesday.

Inspector Jobayer Syed of Karnaphuli Police Station said Nur was returning on an empty boat after dropping off passengers in Sadarghat on Tuesday. Before he could reach land, a lighter vessel hit his boat and it capsized.

Locals found his body in the Banglabazar Ghat area around 8am yesterday.

Roof collapse in Cumilla kills one, injures ten

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

The roof of an under-construction building collapsed in Cumilla yesterday -- killing one worker and injuring 10, according to fire service.

The victims were working at the building "Rupayan Delowar Tower" in Kandirpar area, said their co-workers.

The deceased was identified as Reza (19), son of Rafikul Islam from Rangpur.

Sabuj, one of the survivors, said, "The incident happened all of a sudden."

The injured were taken to Cumilla Medical College Hospital.

Fire service personnel were deployed at the building to conduct emergency rescue work while police and Rab members were deployed to maintain law and order.

Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of police in Cumilla, said, "We are looking into whether any worker is trapped under the debris."

Abul Fazal Mir, deputy commissioner of Cumilla, visited the site, said officials.

A four-member committee has been formed by the district administration to probe into the incident.

No one from the authorities of the building was found at the construction site.

Missing teen's body found in septic tank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A teenager was found dead in a septic tank of a mosque in Kaunia upazila of Rangpur yesterday, 10 days after he had gone missing.

The deceased was identified as Suman Mia (18), son of late Rahim Mia from Sarai New Kazipara village in the upazila.

His family members said the boy went missing on December 17.

Police said students of Nurai Hafiza Madrasa in the upazila were playing badminton near the mosque yesterday afternoon. They noticed the body inside the septic tank as its lid was open, said law enforcers.

On information from locals, a team from Haragachh Police Station

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