



20th death anniversary of Tawfiq Aziz Khan today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 20th death anniversary of Tawfiq Aziz Khan, former executive editor of The Daily Star and eminent sports writer and commentator.

One of the leading journalists of the country, Tawfiq joined the then Pakistan Observer as a staff reporter in 1958 while he was a student of Dhaka University.

He worked as public relations officer at the erstwhile EPIDC (East Pakistan Industries

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



A family member holds the hands of a vaccine recipient, as he sits on a wheelchair at the post-vaccination waiting room at Dhaka Medical College yesterday morning. A total of 1,58,451 people, including eminent personalities and diplomats of foreign missions in Dhaka, got inoculated yesterday across the country, according to the Directorate General of Health Service (DGHS).

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Ctg mayor-elect, councillors to take oath today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The newly-elected mayor and ward councillors of Chattogram City Corporation are scheduled to take oath at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka today. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will virtually administer oath to mayor-elect Rezaul Karim Chowdhury from her official residence Gono Bhaban, said Kazi Mohammad Mozammel Hoque, chief executive officer of CCC.

The LGRD minister will administer oath to elected councillors, said the CEO.

Awami League candidate Rezaul became mayor defeating BNP candidate Shahadat Hossain in the polls held on January 27.

A total of 40 councillors in general seats and 14 for reserved seats for women were also elected. Polls were postponed in one councillor seat due to death of a candidate.

'Voters trusted my manifesto'

New CCC mayor Rezaul Karim Chowdhury speaks to Star

ARUN BIKASH DEV, Ctg

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, the mayor-elect of Chattogram City Corporation, is set to take oath of office today, after winning last month's election with ruling Awami League's symbol "boat" in polls marred by low voter turnout and violence. In an interview with this newspaper, the new city father answered some unpleasant questions about his election, and shared his plans for the city.

The Daily Star (DS): You have been elected mayor in the polls where just 22.5 percent votes were cast. Are you happy to be elected mayor through votes of such a small number of constituents?

Rezaul Karim: Those who went to polling centres cast their votes. Nobody violated people's right to vote. If large number of voters do not go to polling centres, what can we do? BNP spread propaganda so voters do not go to polling centres. They engaged in violence, so people panicked, and felt discouraged to come to polling centres. Another reason was that the day of polls was not declared as a public holiday. So people went to work and did not come to cast votes. I am happy as I have been elected by a huge margin.



SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

ANANTA BIJOY MURDER CASE

Two more witnesses testify

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Sylhet court yesterday recorded testimonies of two witnesses in the case filed for the murder of science writer, freethinker and blogger Ananta Bijoy Das, who was brutally hacked to death on May 12, 2015.

With these, testimonies of 18 witnesses out of 29 total has been recorded.

Anwarul Haque -- the judicial magistrate who recorded confessional statement of accused Mannan Yahya -- and Pubali Bank Limited senior official Sirajul Haque Chowdhury deposited their testimonies to the Anti-terrorism Special Tribunal of Sylhet, said Shahidul Islam Shahin, lawyer of the plaintiff.

Two accused -- Abul Khaer Rashid Ahmed and Shafiqur Rahman Farabi-- also appeared before the tribunal.

After the witnesses' deposition, judge Md Nurul Amin Biplod of the tribunal set February 24 as next date for the case.

Ananta was hacked to death by a group of youths in Subidbazar area near his residence in Sylhet on May 12, 2015, when he was on a walk to his office with his sister.

Banned militant outfit Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) claimed responsibility online for the murder.

Ananta's brother Ratneswar Das filed a murder case accusing some unnamed persons with the airport police station the next day, and the investigation was later handed over to CID.

On October 18, 2016, Arman Ali, inspector of CID and investigation officer of the case pressed a charge sheet but the court rejected the charge sheet and ordered CID to reinvestigate the case and file a supplementary charge sheet, which was filed on May 9 last year.

The accused in the charge sheet are Shafiqur Rahman Farabi, Mannan Yahya alias Mannan Rahi, Abul Khaer Rashid Ahmed, Abul Hossain alias Abul Hussain, Harunur Rashid and Faisal Ahmed.

Among them, Farabi and Abul Khaer are in jail while Mannan Yahya, the only one among them confessed before the court, died on November 2, 2017 after he fell ill at Dhaka Central Jail. Other accused are on the run.

Drone, fireworks, aerial shows approved

BSS, Dhaka

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday approved a proposal in principle for following the Direct Procurement Method (DPM) to hold drone, aerial and fireworks shows to celebrate the golden jubilee of the country's independence on March 26 this year.

The approval came from the fifth meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs of this year, held virtually with Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal in the chair.

Briefing reporters after the meeting virtually, Kamal said the government wants to observe the golden jubilee in a colourful, befitting and festive manner.

For this, he said the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs will hold drone, aerial and fireworks shows, as well as highlight various achievements of the country over the years.

"These shows will be held to inform citizens about our achievements through creating a nice environment. We hope people, irrespective of their age, will enjoy these shows," he added.

Subject to necessary amendments to the Public Procurement Rules, the meeting approved, in principle, a proposal from the Ministry of Food to reduce the timeframe of procurement process for importing rice and wheat through international open tendering method for emergency state purposes.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Children's health, safety should be top priority

Speakers tell "Safe Back to School" project launch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Educational institutions should be opened with students' safety as the top priority, development practitioners said at the launching of "Safe Back to School (SB2S)" project.

Ensuring psycho-social counselling, training up the teachers on protocols related to Covid-19 and mental health, ensuring proper facilities such as soap, disinfectant, mask and water supply, and running awareness campaign to bring back girl children to school are the activities that should be undertaken by the govt and the stakeholders, they also stressed.

Fifteen international NGOs including Save the Children, Brac, World Vision and Plan International launched the project together at The Westin Dhaka in Gulshan-2 with the aim of working with the government in the next six months to ensure the safe return of students to schools.

Presenting a keynote paper, Brac Senior Director KAM Morsheed said, "During the period when schools were closed, incidents of domestic violence increased and many students dropped out."

Mentioning a report of the World Bank, he said, the learning process of all students through online and television mediums were not entirely effective as these methods were not highly accessible for everyone.

He also raised concern about social distancing at schools due to the large number of students.

Speaking as chief guest, Education Minister Dipu Moni said although educational institutions were closed, government's initiatives to educate the students did not stop.

She also said the government arranged an assignment system so that everyone could be involved with learning activities.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



This crowded section of Noor Mansion Shopping Centre in the capital's Mirpur Road, where there is no available space to maintain distance and masks are few and far between, might imply that everyone has received the vaccine. But with many still waiting to get immunised against the virus, this is probably just another episode of people disregarding dangers Covid-19 poses to their health.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Hijra community stages flash mob

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the hijra community yesterday staged a flash mob in front of the capital's Bashundhara City shopping complex.

Their performance's theme was "Human Rights and Patriotism". It was organised by non-government organisation Sustho Jibon -- under a project of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) -- to raise awareness about the community among people and realise rights of hijras, said a press release.

The message of the flash mob was that the community could engage themselves in every work just like any other person would, added the press release.

Sustho Jibonis working to ensure socio-economic development, human rights and participation of disregarded and neglected hijra community in all aspects of life.

Poppy Hijra, Bobby Hijra, Ohidul Islam Parvati participated among others in the flash mob. Ishrat Parveen Ima and Mahfuzur Rahman from MJF were also present at the event.

A flash mob is a sudden gathering and performance at an open area.

It became popular in Bangladesh among youngsters, since ICC T20 World Cup 2014.

How Savar became a hub of rose cultivation

AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH, Savar

Sabed Ali was 16 years old when he began working as a gardener at Bangladesh National Zoo.

The young man was fascinated by gardening and nurturing plants from the very beginning. He quickly became an expert gardener after joining in 1979.

The rose -- a globally revered symbol for friendship, love and feelings -- was of special interest to him. Taken by the flower's beauty and the meanings it conveys, the young Sabed Ali dreamt of having a rose garden at his house.

And so he bought ten seedlings with Tk 350 and planted those in pots at his house in Nobaberbagh area in the capital's Mirpur-1 back in 1983.

Soon enough, his small initiative started scaling up. Within two years, his home garden became a sight to behold with blooming roses, even attracting visitors from nearby areas.

This inspired Sabed Ali to begin rose cultivation on a commercial basis. In 1989, he leased 20 decimal of land in Sadullapur area of Savar and began the venture.

"Starting off wasn't easy. Many people discouraged me from pursuing this commercially and criticised me. But I kept at it," recalled the 57-year-old Sabed Ali.

Eventually, his garden yielded enough flowers to be sold at the wholesale market in Dhaka's Shabbagh.

Sabed Ali then scaled up even more, leasing another 30 decimal of land.

He was the pioneering force behind large-scale rose cultivation in Sadullapur and adjacent villages of Shyampur, Mostapara, Birulia, Bhakurta and Bhabanipur.

At present, around 1,500 people from

this villages are involved in commercial rose cultivation. The villages have gained a reputation as golap-er graam.

Farmers cultivating rose say they are making profit from the business, and to add to that, the area is attracting visitors from other areas.

Sabed Ali says he had no idea that his humble venture from 1989 would open new horizons for the people in the area.

"Many people are taking up this craft now. It makes me happy to see that. I welcome everyone into this venture and try to help them with my knowledge and experience," Sabed said while talking to this correspondent at his rose garden in Savar's Shyampur last January 30.

Mokbul Hossen, a farmer from Bonogram area said, "I began rose cultivation about 15 years ago. I was inspired by Sabed bhai. Now my garden covers 60 decimals of land."

"My family was poor. Through rose cultivation, we have been able to lift ourselves out of poverty. It would not have been possible without Sabed bhai's great initiative," said Mokbul.

Despite the success, the flower market has also taken a hit during the pandemic, and due to the popularity of plastic flowers. Sabed Ali said the production expenditures have skyrocketed, but the selling price of roses has dropped.

"Plastic flowers have flooded the market. This affects the demand for fresh roses," he explained.

Sabed Ali urged the government to patron rose cultivation and ensure fair prices for farmers.

"We need a wholesale rose market, a cold storage for preserving flowers and government's cooperation for flower export," added Sabed Ali.



What began as a small venture in 1989 has now become a viable livelihood option for many farmers in Savar, and that is Sabed Ali's life's work. He was picking flowers from his garden full of red roses when this picture was taken recently.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

DISABILITY RIGHTS IN BANGLADESH

Lack of data hampering progress

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

How many people with disabilities are there in Bangladesh?

Seven years after passage of Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, the answer to this question is still ambiguous.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) has been conducting a disability detection survey since 2013 and identified 21,43,357 people with disabilities all over the country till February 3. It is around 1.19 percent of the total population. Experts say the data does not reflect the exact number of people with disabilities in the country. There are also reliability and validity issues with the data, they added.

Of the total, 13,16,894 are male which is 61 percent of the total population, and 8,23,855 are female, which amounts to 38 percent. Transgender people with disabilities account for one percent of the total population, with the number being 2,608.

The DSS identified 4,65,693 children with disabilities, 21.72 percent of the total population.

"Our team in every upazila diagnoses them according to

KEY ISSUES	RECOMMENDATIONS
Registration often remains inaccessible	Include disability data in 2021 census
Doctors, social workers not trained enough	Ensure security of collected data
Corruption in attaining "Golden Citizen Card"	Pass data privacy guideline

degree, type and severity following the guidelines of International Classification of Functioning Disability of World Health Organization. Every team has a doctor for this purpose," Dr Ashrafi Ahmad, programme director, disability detection survey program, told The Daily Star.

"After registering them, we are distributing ID cards denoting them as Golden Citizen. They are entitled to receive disability allowances and they also get priority to receive other benefits from the government," said Ashrafi, also a joint secretary of the social welfare ministry.

AHM Noman Khan, executive director, Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), does not

think the identification survey reflects the prevalence of people with disabilities in the country.

"Because in most places disabled people have to visit the local administration offices to register themselves as disabled, which they often cannot do because of many reasons such as poverty, inaccessibility, distance etc. As a result, there is no doubt that many disabled people are still left unidentified," he said.

There are also reliability issues with these data, he added.

"Doctors and social workers who register people with disabilities are also not trained enough to distinguish between five types of neurological development

disorders which require specialised knowledge on disability," said Noman, a Ramon Magsaysay awardee for mainstreaming persons with disabilities.

About the training, Dr Ashrafi commented, "The doctors are appointed by the health ministry. We give a short, introductory training on disability before deploying them. So, we cannot ensure whether these doctors have prior knowledge on disability or not."

DISABILITY PREVALENCE DATA
DSS has disaggregated these data based on 12 types of disabilities. Physical disability is the most identified type of disability -- accounting for 46 percent of the total identified disabled people.

After physical disability, comes people with visual impairment (13.79 percent), followed by multiple disabilities (9.86 percent), intellectual disability (7.67 percent), speech impairment (6.9 percent), cerebral palsy (4.29 percent), hearing impairment (3.17 percent), chronic mental illness (3.5 percent), autism (2.74 percent), audio-visual impairment