

Shamsur Rahman Khan passes away

CITY DESK

Shamsur Rahman Khan, a retired civil service officer, breathed his last on March 4 following a brain hemorrhage. He was 93, said a press release.



Born at Jantrael in Nawabganj, Dhaka, SR Khan graduated in Economics from Dhaka University before joined the civil service in 1961. He was responsible for coordinating relief and rehabilitation of the Chattogram Division after the 1970 tide.

Khan was honoured for his cooperation with Armed Forces officers in the Liberation War. While serving in the home ministry, he was instrumental in administering Fire Service and Civil Defence as its DG. He was later appointed governor of Bhola.

His qulkhani will be held at his house -- House-43/A, Road-5, Dhanmondi, Dhaka today after Maghrib prayers.

Moyrunnesa no more

CITY DESK

Mosammat Moyrunnesa, mother of Newspaper Hawkers' Welfare Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd secretary Md Shahabuddin, passed away on Friday night.

She was 95. She had been suffering from old age complications, said a press release.

Moyrunnesa, wife of Shamsul Haque Sardar from Khodkhasta village in Sonaimuri upazila of Noakhali, left behind three sons, grandchildren and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn her.

Idle time

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Char for the displaced Rohingyas is safer than in Cox's Bazar camps, as "all modern facilities, income-generating opportunities, and heightened security systems have been ensured" on the island. To make livelihood in Bhasan Char sustainable, the report recommended few steps, including preservation of rainwater and its use in daily life.

It also recommended creating small and cottage industries and ensuring education of Rohingya children in their mother language.

Addressing the seminar, international relations expert Prof Delwar Hossain said understanding the geopolitical context of the Bay of Bengal, where there is a "scramble for influence", is important to understand the Rohingya situation. It is also important to understand the situation in Myanmar in terms of their repatriation.

He said Cox's Bazar has become a congested area, where Rohingyas were living in destitute condition. It is clear that living conditions in Bhasan Char is much better compared to situation not only in Cox's Bazar but in cities of many other countries.

The reported challenge Bangladesh faced regarding relocation is "misinformation", he said.

There is a huge information gap among Bangladeshis and among global citizens when it comes to seeing the reality, he further said, adding that since Rohingyas are not well educated and informed, they could be used by different organised groups in Cox's Bazar.

Addressing as chief guest, DU Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof ASM Maksud Kamal said international communities need to put pressure on Myanmar and its junta for repatriation.

Prof Maksud, also a noted geologist, said from recent studies it was found that deposition phenomena of sedimentation in Bhasan Char was more stable than erosion phenomena. The island is a safer place for Rohingyas.

As per geological conditions, Bhasan Char is a stable area, since the island is still having sedimentation, said Prof Zillur Rahman of DU's disaster science and management department. More engineering measures should be taken to keep the island stable.

CFISS Chairperson Commodore (ret'd) MN Absar said misconceptions and negative propaganda were spread regarding Bhasan Char in terms of its sustainability to accommodate Rohingyas.

Prof Rafiqul Islam, lead researcher and chairperson of DU's peace and conflict studies department, and Prof Sadeka Halim, dean of DU's social science faculty, also spoke at the seminar.

Book on

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Register, a list of world's important documentary heritage, in 2017.

According to Unesco, the speech constitutes "a faithful documentation of how the failure of post-colonial nation-states to develop inclusive, democratic society alienates their population belonging to different ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious groups."

According to a press statement by the Bangladesh Mission in Paris, the book contains statements of Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Education Minister Dipu Moni.

Paying homage to the memory of Bangabandhu, Bangladesh Ambassador to Paris and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to Unesco Kazi Imtiaz said the March 7 speech worked as a major source of inspiration for the nine-month long war.

He also thanked the ambassadors and permanent representatives who participated in the event, and those who worked for translation and printing of the book.

The envoys present at the event recalled the leadership of Bangabandhu in the 1971 Liberation War and lauded the Bangladesh mission to Unesco for this significant publication.

Taqi's

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on March 18, accusing seven persons by name and 8-10 unnamed.

Eight of the accused remain absconding, while five have been arrested in the case. But, law enforcers are yet to file charge-sheet in the case.

Govt to turn it into

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In September 2019, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in an Ecenc meeting, instructed the authorities concerned to collect tolls from long-haul vehicles on the national highways.

The move got momentum after she inaugurated the 55km expressway in March last year.

Earlier, the authorities had decided to start collecting tolls on the expressway once the Padma Bridge has opened to the public. The authorities have not yet finalised the toll for the bridge.

But the Road Transport and Highways Division, in the last month, decided to start toll collection from vehicles using the country's first expressway -- Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway -- from July.

The division also agreed to a toll rate proposed by a special committee. As per the proposal, the toll for a medium truck (two axes) would be Tk 9.9 per kilometre.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader has fixed the rate at Tk 10 and the division has sent the proposal to the Finance Ministry last week, sources said.

If the finance ministry approved the rate, a medium truck would have to pay Tk 550 for using the entire 55km expressway on top of the toll for using the Padma Bridge once it is open to the public in June 2022.

After the toll collection starts on the expressway, the authorities will gradually begin collecting tolls on the national highways that are at least dual-carriageways. Bus service operators and road-

safety campaigners say the passengers will ultimately shoulder the burden as the transport companies would charge more from them once the decisions are implemented.

TOLL FOR SASEC CORRIDOR

The Division on January 11 wrote to RHD for implementing PM's instruction regarding toll collection from four-lane roads and recently gave a reminder, sources said.

In this given situation, RHD on Wednesday held a meeting with its Chief Engineer in the chair and attended by officials concerned, they said.

At the meeting, a committee led by Abul Kalam Azad, superintendent engineer (maintenance), was formed, Abdus Sabur said.

The committee will visit the highway and select sites for setting up toll plazas, he said, adding that they would submit a report regarding all necessary aspects within 15 days.

"We will take further steps following their report," he added.

The RHD is currently collecting tolls on the two-lane 50km Hatikumul-Bonpara highway, 13.7km Chattogram Port Access Road, and 74km Dhaka-Sylhet highway between Jagadishpur and Sherpur.

Under 22,362km road network of RHD, 17.50km are eight-lane, 20.60km are six-lane and 584.54km are four-lane highways, according to its 2019-20 annual report.

Besides, 617km roads are now being upgrading into four lanes, Obaidul Quader said last month.

Missile strikes on Syria oil refineries kill 4: monitor

AFP, Beirut

Missile strikes on makeshift oil refineries in northern Syria killed four people and injured more than 20 others, a war monitor said yesterday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a series of strikes launched from Russian warships and by allied Syrian government forces hit the makeshift refineries in Aleppo province on Friday night, causing a massive blaze in the area controlled by Turkey and its Syrian rebel proxies.

The Britain-based monitor "documented the deaths of four people, while 24 others sustained various injuries and burns" in the attacks near the town of Jarablus.

At least one Syrian rebel was among the dead, said Observatory head Rami Abdul Rahman.

Rescue workers spent hours trying to extinguish the fire which spread to about 30 oil tankers, according to the war monitor.

Oil installations in Turkey-controlled parts of Aleppo have come under repeated attack in recent months although Moscow and the Syrian regime have not claimed responsibility.

The Observatory reported two such missile attacks last month.

I was made

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Expressing worries about his future, Kishore said despite his ailments, he would have to appear before a court soon to prove himself to be innocent.

A doctor treating the cartoonist said they would examine him today and check his right ear to determine whether they would need to operate on it.

Kishore walked out of jail on bail on Thursday after staying behind bars for 10 months.

Inmate goes

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with a murder case filed with Sadarghat Police Station," said the OC.

The Daily Star made several phone calls to the jail but no official picked up the phone.

However, jail sources said the prison guards were looking for the inmate inside the jail. They believe that he was hiding inside the jail.

Police said a businessman named Abul Kalam Azad was stabbed to death by criminals in SRB Gate area under Sadarghat police station on February 5.

Rubel was arrested in this connection on February 9 after the victim's mother Marzina Begum filed a case.

Astonishing nearby super-Earth

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It is found around a star just 26 light years away, a relatively close neighbour at the scale of the universe. Gliese 486b orbits around and close to a red dwarf star that allowed researchers to find it in the first place.

One of the reasons it is so exciting is because it is a "transiting" planet, allowing scientists to examine it as it crosses in front of its star and makes itself visible to scientists who can examine its atmosphere.

But that is not the only way that scientists are able to study the planet. It is unusual because it can be seen in two ways: as well as spotting as it crosses its stars, it can also be detected through Doppler radial velocity, which looks for planets in the way their gravity wobbles other stars, and sticking the two together could allow for even more detailed understanding of the planet and its atmosphere.

That atmosphere is especially exciting, too – it is so hot that the atmosphere is "puffed up" by the temperature, letting astronomers measure it.

'Our revolution must win'

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township with cafes, restaurants and bars that has emerged as a hotspot for unrest.

Security forces fired tear gas and stun grenades in the morning, scattering protesters, and removed their makeshift barricades with bulldozers.

Activist Maung Saungkha said the movement would persist -- even as security forces continued to step up their enforcement tactics -- as many remember the repression under the previous junta.

"In our past revolutions, we never won... this time we must fight to win," he told AFP. "We must fight together with the younger generation to get victory."

Meanwhile, authorities in Myanmar have asked India to return several police officers who sought refuge to avoid taking orders from a military junta, an official in northeast India said yesterday.

A Reuters report said around 30 Myanmar police and their family members came across the border to India seeking refuge in recent days.

The senior-most official in Champhai, a district in the Indian state of Mizoram, told Reuters that she had received a letter from her counterpart in Myanmar's Falam district requesting the return of eight police "in order to uphold friendly relations."

Deputy Commissioner Maria CF Zuali said that she was "waiting for the direction" from the India's Ministry for Home Affairs

Adolescents'

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Many said they live in such a community or groups, that belong to and practice age-old traditions and don't encourage any discussion on SRHR issues and in many cases, don't allow children discussing such issues.

Education Minister Dipu Moni joined the webinar as chief guest and said the responsibility of parents, teachers and health workers is to raise awareness among adolescents. The adolescents do not open up about their sexual and reproductive health with their parents or teachers, while the parents also do not make them aware of the issues. "This is why we need to work on changing mindsets. Two lakh teachers will soon start working to provide counselling at school level."

According to a 2018 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics survey, the number of adolescents in the country is 2.77 crore.

Bangla Academy fellow Prof Dr Ratan Siddiqui; Dr Sabina Faiz Rashid, dean and professor at BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health and Umama Zillur, founder of Kotha also spoke at the event, moderated by MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam.

Historic

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Shortly before his arrest on the black night, Bangabandhu proclaimed the independence.

On October 30 in 2017, Unesco recognised the historic speech as part of the world's documentary heritage.

To mark the day, different political parties and socio-cultural organisations have chalked out various programmes, including laying wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu and holding discussions and rallies, maintaining health guidelines.

The government has made hoisting national flag at all public and private buildings in the country and its diplomatic missions abroad compulsory on the historic March 7 from this year.

The "Historic March 7 National Day" observance programme will be held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre at 3pm today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will join it virtually as chief guest. Marking the day, Islamic Foundation called for arranging special prayers at all mosques, seeking eternal peace of the departed souls of Bangabandhu and 1971 Liberation War martyrs.

Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television as well as private television channels and radio stations will broadcast special programmes while national dailies will bring out special supplements.

US, Australia

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The delegation met government officials and international agencies assisting host communities and Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar. They reiterated their unwavering support for Bangladesh's refugee response, according to a statement issued by the US embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

It also visited a disaster preparedness project, food programmes, a learning centre, a health facility, and spoke with community health volunteers about their role in the Covid-19 response in the refugee camps and host communities.

The latest visit marks a year since the first cases of coronavirus were reported in Bangladesh. It was the first visit since the October 2020 Rohingya donor conference, which raised nearly \$600 million in additional relief funds for Rohingya refugees and host communities.

Since the outbreak of violence in Myanmar in 2017, Australia has provided over \$240 million, Japan has contributed \$140 million, and the US responded with an assistance of \$1.2 billion in humanitarian assistance to Rohingya and host communities in Cox's Bazar.

"We continue to work with international organisations to encourage Myanmar to create the conditions that allow for the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of refugees," said Miller.

"We strongly support all those calling on the Myanmar military to restore power to the democratically elected government, release all those who have been unjustly detained, and cease attacks on journalists, activists, and others.

"The military must exercise maximum restraint and refrain from additional violence."

Australian High Commissioner Bruer said Covid-19 created many new challenges in Cox's Bazar.

"With case numbers steady and with the vaccine in sight, it is as important as ever, for us to work together with the Bangladesh authorities to ensure humanitarian partners can deliver the much-needed assistance to both Rohingya and Host communities," said the high commissioner.

Japanese Ambassador Ito said the aim of the visit was to further promote support for Bangladesh and to strengthen cooperation with international organisations and NGOs.

"We strongly hope that, as the coronavirus situation has been improving, comprehensive service delivery including education will restart soon," the ambassador said.

Nine int'l rights bodies urge

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Kennedy Human Rights.

In a joint statement on Friday, the organisations also urged the government to repeal the Digital Security Act (DSA) - under which both writer Mushtaq Ahmed and cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore were charged.

"All digital and cybersecurity laws must conform to international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," it said.

Mushtaq and Kishore are among hundreds of victims whom the Bangladesh authorities have held in detention under the DSA, it added.

"These vaguely defined provisions of the law are incompatible with international human rights law and are being used to criminalize freedom of expression."

It added that Mushtaq, 53, and Kishore, 45, a prominent cartoonist, were held in pretrial arbitrary detention under the draconian Digital Security Act of 2018, following their arrests in May 2020 for Facebook posts and social media communications that were deemed critical of the government.

There are strong reasons to believe that Kishore has been tortured while in custody of the Rab, which has been accused of serious human rights violations in the past.

In light of these developments, the organisations call on Bangladeshi authorities to conduct prompt, thorough, impartial, and transparent investigations into the death in prison of writer Mushtaq Ahmed and the allegations of torture against cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore. Perpetrators must be identified and brought to justice, the organisations said.

Authorities must also unconditionally and permanently release Kishore, and end

DSA should

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for abolishing or the amendment of the law, the eminent jurist said, "We are for abolishing the Digital Security Act."

About the his party leaders leaving, he said, "Some of our men have left the party. Ask them why they left. We urged all of them to come back, we need unity.

"But they might have different reasons for leaving the party. There might have been power-related interests. If they have a disagreement at the policy level, we can

resolve it. But if not, how could we...?"

Gonoforum's acting secretary AHM Shafiqullah, Mostak Ahmed, and Jan-E-Alam, Suraiya Begum, among others, were present at the press conference.

On the other hand, another portion of Gonoforum organised a human chain in front of the press club, demanding the abolishment of the DSA and justice for Mushtaq Ahmed, who died while in jail under the DSA. Jaglul Haider Afrik and Latiful Bari Hamim, among others, were present at the human chain.