



Milon Islam is seen playing tabla at the house of a local school teacher at Sarkarerhat village in Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Gifted tabla player Milon stares at a bleak future

The visually impaired national award winning tabla player passing days in abject poverty, seeks help to continue studies

S DILIP ROY

Milon Islam (25), a visually impaired student who received a national award in tabla in 2014, has been passing his days amid hardship and uncertainty over his further studies. Due to the lack of financial support, his aspiration for higher studies is getting blurred.

His poor parents are unable to bear his educational expenses. Yet he aspires to sit for the BCS examination.

He is not only skilled in playing musical instruments, but he is also skilled in singing songs. He completed his graduation in November this year.

Milon Islam is the son of Sufiar Rahman and Manju Ara Begum of Kharija Jongra, a bordering village under Jongra union of Patgram upazila in Lalmonirhat. Among the five siblings, only Milon is visually impaired from birth. Despite being visually impaired, Milon raises cows at home and

cultivates vegetables on the land beside their homestead.

Milon was a beneficiary of RDRS Bangladesh, a non-government rehabilitation centre for the visually impaired in Haribhanga area of Lalmonirhat town.

From where he passed SSC and HSC in 2013 and 2015 respectively. Later, he moved to home as there was no opportunity in the centre to continue his studies further.

Milon said, "I received training in musical instruments and music at the rehabilitation centre. I have also received training on rearing cattle from the department of youth development."

"My dream is to take part in the BCS examination," he said adding,

"I have to study in Braille method. It is difficult to collect books written in the Braille method. It costs a lot of money. But my poor father is unable to bear my educational expenditure."

"I also want to go to Dhaka for learning computers but I can't make it happen due to the abject

poverty of my family," he also said.

Milon's father Sufiar Rahman said that his son is keen to study but the family cannot afford it. Because of the visual impairment, he faces difficulty in performing day to day tasks and needs constant care and attention.

"We have nothing to do but pray to Allah for our son," he said.

"I only have the homestead and a little cultivable land. My family lives on cultivating the land and I have no means to help my blind son pursue higher education," he also said.

Milon's mother Manju Ara Begum said that if the government or the rich come forward, the dream of their visually impaired son can be fulfilled.

"We can't buy books for him. We can't afford to materialise his dream," she said.

Milon demanded that the government make Braille books cheaper and available to enrich the knowledge of the visually impaired.

1,120kg of jatka seized in Munshiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Law enforcers during a drive yesterday seized 1.12 tonnes (1,120kgs) of jatka (hilsa less than 10 inches) from the bank of the Dhaleshwari river in Mirkadim of Sadar upazila.

Muktarpur Naval Police and Fisheries Department jointly conducted the raid around 8:30am and seized the hilsa fries in an abandoned condition, Inspector of Muktarpur Naval Police Outpost Nurul Islam said.

The perpetrators, however, managed to flee leaving behind the hilsa fries, sensing the presence of the law enforcers, he said.

The seized fish, packed in 44 boxes, were later distributed among 12 orphanages and madrasas.

Pre-poll violence leaves 10 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

At least 10 people, including a member of the village police, were injured in a pre-poll clash between the supporters of two chairman candidates in Lokerpara union of Ghatail upazila yesterday.

The election is scheduled for December 26.

Meanwhile, Lokerpara union parishad (UP) office, a motorcycle and a number of shops were also vandalised during the half an hour long clash, witnesses said.

The clash took place between the supporters of independent candidate Shahidul Haque Milion, and Awami League (AL) backed candidate Sharif Hossain, also the incumbent chairman of the UP, in Pachhtikri area at noon.

Locals said the incident occurred when the men of the incumbent chairman chased a procession of independent candidate Milion, triggering a clash between the two groups that left 10 people hurt.

The injured took treatment at different local hospital and private clinics.

Independent candidate Milion was not available for his comment in this regard.

Contacted, incumbent Chairman Sharif claimed that Milion's supporters attacked the union parishad office with sticks, leaving several people including village police member Faruk injured. Quoting witnesses, Officer in Charge of Ghatail Police Station Azharul Islam said several people were injured in a clash between supporters of two chairman candidates.

Surveyor dies falling from vessel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A surveyor died after falling from a mother vessel at the outer anchorage of Payra Port in Kalapara upazila on Wednesday night.

The deceased, Shamim Fayed, 65, son of late Abul Fayed under Dhaka North City Corporation, was serving at Asserive Valuers Pvt Ltd, a survey firm in Khulna.

According to the workers, Shamim boarded a coal-carrying mother vessel MV Nerida from Indonesia on Wednesday to measure quantity of the imported coal.

After measuring the coal, Shamim was trying to board into a lighter ship from the vessel when he suddenly slipped and fell in the sea.

He was rescued and taken to Kalapara Upazila Health Complex, where the doctors declared him dead.



Students of Thakurgaon Government Boys' High School form a human chain at Thakurgaon Deputy Commissioner's Office premises yesterday, demanding justice for the brutal killing of one of their fellows Mehedi Hasan Miraj, an SSC examinee, who was hacked to death by miscreants on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

Electrolyte

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mineral has increased or decreased in the body, how severe the issue is, and whether a person has other health conditions.

For instance, low sodium levels in the blood can cause hyponatremia and high sodium levels can result in hypernatremia.

Common symptoms of electrolyte imbalance are: irregular heartbeat, fatigue, lethargy, seizures, nausea, diarrhoea or constipation, muscle weakness or cramping, confusion, headaches etc.

Drinking a rehydration solution should help replenish the mineral levels of healthy adults with mild dehydration.

However, in case of any health condition or severe symptoms of electrolyte imbalance, seeking doctor's guidance is recommended.

Having a healthy diet with enough fluid is important to prevent such imbalance. For most people, electrolytes are replenished with a normal diet.

Regularly eating watery foods like melons, salads, things that are naturally juicy, is a good idea. If you are a sports person or otherwise more active physically than an average person, you should increase intake of rehydration solutions like healthy sports drinks.

Japan professor

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professor Homei Miyashita.

"The goal is to make it possible for people to have the experience of something like eating at a restaurant on the other side of the world, even while staying at home," he said.

Miyashita works with a team of about 30 students that has produced a variety of flavour-related devices, including a fork that makes food taste richer. He said he built the TTTV prototype himself over the past year and that a commercial version would cost about 100,000 yen (\$875) to make.

Potential applications include distance learning for sommeliers and cooks, and tasting games and quizzes, he said.

Miyashita has also been in talks with companies about using his spray technology for applications like a device that can apply a pizza or chocolate taste to a slice of toasted bread.

Meiji student Yuki Hou, 22, demonstrated TTTV for reporters, telling the screen she wanted to taste sweet chocolate. After a few tries, an automated voice repeated the order and flavour jets spritzed a sample onto a plastic sheet.

"It's kind of like milk chocolate," she said. "It's sweet like a chocolate sauce."

Full genome sequence

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changes in crop phenotype under the influence of imposed mutations.

But it would not be possible to explain what kind of DNA sequence in the genome caused such a desired feature.

In 2019, genome sequencing of parent and selected mutant rice was completed, which is the first in Bangladesh.

By analysing the researched theories and data, the joint efforts of BINA and BAU scientists have unveiled the first life secret of salt and waterlogged tolerant paddy.

The scientists disclosed the complete genome sequence at a time when more than 10 lakh hectares of land in coastal districts of Bangladesh are affected by various levels of salinity, which is considered a major obstacle to increasing cropping intensity in the area.

The coastal belt accounts for 25 per cent of total land and 93 upazilas of 18 coastal districts are affected by various levels of salinity in Bangladesh, according to data presented at a

seminar on World Earth Day.

"Salinity is a big problem in the country," Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque said at the programme recently.

Complete unveiling of the genome will facilitate the invention and propagation of rice varieties tolerant to salinity and submergence in the country, Razzaque said.

About 2 million hectares of land in the country is saline, where only a single crop is cultivated per year.

"To make food security sustainable and to meet the growing demand for food in the future, we are emphasising on the production of 2-3 crops a year in adverse areas including saline and haor areas," he said.

BINA Director-General Mirza Mofazzal Islam, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council Executive Chairman Sheikh Md Bakhtiyar, BAU Vice-Chancellor Lutful Hasan, Bangladesh Rice Research Institute Director General Md Shahjahan Kabir and others were present.

Dense fog deals blow

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Thursday, and my bus could still not board a ferry," said Selina Khanam, a Dhaka-bound passenger, travelling from Kushtia.

"We are becoming ill sitting inside the bus for so long. We cannot go out of the bus to stretch our legs due to the bone-chilling cold," said Rezaul Islam, a bus passenger travelling from Jhenidah towards Savar.

Monir Hossain, a truck driver, said, "I reached near Daulatdia terminal around 9:00pm on Tuesday. But I cannot board ferry till now [11:00am yesterday morning]."

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) is responsible for operating ferry services.

"We were forced to suspend ferry operations due to poor visibility caused by dense fog. As a result, the lines of vehicles became longer on both sides of the ferry route. A ferry was even stranded mid-river," said Mohiuddin Rashel, assistant manager (commercial) of BIWTC's Aricha office.

"The service resumed around 10:00am. Then we allowed passenger vehicles and those carrying perishable goods to board ferries on a priority basis," he said.

Currently, a total of 14 ferries are plying this route. Speaking to The Daily Star, several

passengers demanded increasing the number of ferries on this route.

An BIWTC official, requesting anonymity, also admitted that the number of ferries should be increased to cope with excessive number of vehicles.

On the Shimulia-Banglabazar route, ferry services were disrupted from around 2:15am yesterday due to dense fog. Services resumed around 8:30am, said BIWTC officials.

Besides, operations of passenger launches and speedboats were also halted for around two and three hours respectively.

"I reached Shimulia terminal around 3:00am. I found the service was suspended. I have been waiting here for around five hours to board a ferry," said Rifat Hossain, a Shariatpur-bound passenger from Dhaka.

"The fog was so thick that the ferry, launch and speedboat operators could not see even those objects that were close. That is why we stopped the services," said Mohammad Faisal, BIWTC manager at Shimulia terminal.

Over 350 vehicles were stranded at Shimulia terminal, said Md Zakir Hossain, traffic police inspector at Mawa zone of Munshiganj.

Our correspondents in Manikganj, Faridpur and Munshiganj contributed to this report.

A serious offence

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of money laundering has been imputed therein though the respondent's [Joy Gopal] name was not disclosed in the first information report. His name was disclosed by one of the confessing accused.

"The trial court is directed to complete the trial of the case as expeditiously as possible, preferably within a period of one year."

Following four bail petitions filed Joy Gopal, the HC on August 19 granted him bail in all four cases.

He was arrested on July 14 last year in connection with five money laundering cases filed with different police stations, including the capital's Wari and Sutrapur police stations, on various dates in 2019 and 2020.

Another case was filed against Joy Gopal and others at Bangshal Police Station on August 31 last year, Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik told The Daily Star.

2,000 BNP men

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BNP men hurled brickbats aiming at police from the procession and police shot teargas and rubber bullets.

Iran nuclear talks to resume next week: EU chair

AFP, VIENNA

Talks to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal will resume next Monday, the EU diplomat chairing the negotiations said yesterday, urging a "picking up of the pace".

Officials have said the deal would become obsolete within weeks if Iran continued to step up its nuclear activities as it has been doing since 2019, a year after the United States left the landmark agreement and reimposed sanctions.

"Vienna talks to resume on Monday 27 December. The JCPOA Joint Commission will meet to discuss and define the way ahead," EU diplomat Enrique Mora wrote on Twitter, referring to the acronym of the deal's formal name.

"Important to pick up the pace on key outstanding issues and move forward, working closely with the [US]. Welcome to the 8th round."

Negotiations restarted in November after a five-month hiatus to try to restore the deal, which was to offer Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme.

Most returnees find

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Some 21 percent of the returnees said they were in debt, while 39 percent perceive they have poor access to employment and training and 8 percent reported having poor access to housing.

Only 48 percent are satisfied with the quality of housing with 10 percent reported being very dissatisfied with housing conditions.

As much as 70 percent of the respondents said they are satisfied with their current economic situation, whereas 35 percent of the forced returnees and 48 percent of female returnees reported being satisfied.

In terms of children's enrolment in school, 3 percent reported poor access to education, with 18 percent unable to send all children to school.

Some 2 percent of the returnees are yet to get the national identity (ID) card and 12 percent reported poor quality of healthcare available.

In terms of access to social services, 58 percent of the forced returnees

reported poor access to justice and law enforcement.

In terms of sense of physical security and experiences of domestic conflict, discrimination and distress, most respondents (94 percent) reported feeling safe in their current location.

However, 41 percent of the people reported experiencing signs of psychological distress since returning to Bangladesh, and 17 percent reported experiencing discrimination with a higher prevalence among forced returnees (44 percent) and female returnees (43 percent).

And yet, 81 percent of the returnees feel that they would be able to permanently live in Bangladesh.

Of those indicating a desire to migrate again, 97 percent cited it as a need due to inability to establish sustainable living.

Migrants returned mostly from Libya (25 percent), Greece (13 percent), Italy (10 percent), Germany (10 percent) and Saudi Arabia (6 percent).

Boosters may prolong Covid

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supply to countries that already have high levels of vaccination coverage, giving the virus more opportunity to spread and mutate."

Nor should a third dose of vaccine be seen as carte blanche, he added. "Boosters cannot be seen as a ticket to go ahead with planned celebrations".

Unrestrained end-of-year celebrations could still prove to be major source of new infections, the WHO warned.

The threat of the highly mutated Omicron variant is looming large over the end-of-year holidays, pushing many governments to roll out new restrictions and urge citizens to get vaccinated.

The latest data suggest Omicron does not cause more severe illness than previous variants, including Delta, but as soaring infection numbers threaten to overwhelm health systems, scientists warn it could still cause more deaths.

Germany's Robert Koch Institute for infectious disease confirmed the country's first death due to the Omicron variant yesterday.

The person was between the age of 60 and 79, the institute said.

The states across India have begun clamping down fresh curbs on large gatherings in the run up to Christmas and New Year celebrations, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

The curbs reimposition came a day after the Indian Health Minister cautioned about faster spread of

Omicron and noting its "initial signs of surge."

In UK, official estimates showed yesterday that around 1.2 million people were likely infected with Covid-19 last week, representing 1 in 45 of the population and a new pandemic record as the Omicron variant spreads rapidly.

London was worst hit with an estimated 1 in 30 people infected with the coronavirus last week, according to the figures from the Office for National Statistics, reports Reuters.

Scotland announced that it will close nightclubs from next week to fight the spread of Covid-19.

The National Health Institute in Italy said yesterday that the Omicron variant is spreading rapidly, releasing preliminary data of a flash-survey showing it accounted for 28% of cases on December 20. The previous survey showed Omicron at just 0.19% of cases on December 6.

The United States on Wednesday authorised Pfizer's anti-Covid pill for high-risk people aged 12 and up, as a surge of cases driven by the highly infectious Omicron variant threatened holiday plans and Americans struggled to find tests.

Paxlovid, which comprises two types of tablet, was granted an emergency use authorisation by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after a clinical trial showed it to reduce the risk of hospitalisations and deaths among at-risk people by 88 percent.