

## Journo Peer Habib no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist Peer Habibur Rahman died while undergoing treatment at the Intensive Care Unit of LabAid Hospital in the capital yesterday.

The 58-year-old journalist breathed his last at 3:58pm, said Chowdhury Meher-e-Khuda, public relations officer of the hospital.

Rahman, the executive editor of Bangladesh Pratidin, was suffering from cancer and kidney diseases. He was receiving treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

He had a stroke at BSMMU on Friday. He was then shifted to LabAid Hospital's ICU.

On January 22, he tested positive for coronavirus. He recovered from the virus but was admitted to BSMMU with kidney problems.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed profound shock and sorrow at his death.

"It is a great loss for the country's journalism," the president said.

Planning Minister MA Mannan, State Minister Dr Shamsul Alam; Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud and many

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Rifat, a fifth grader, pushes a cart full of potted flowers near Mirpur-2 intersection. With the classrooms closed due to the pandemic, he has been selling these on the streets to help out his father, whose income has shrunk in recent weeks as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# New Paxovir will be a game-changer

Experts hail Eskayef's Covid pills at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new Paxovir will be a game changer in treating Covid-19 patients with mild to moderate symptoms as it reduces the need for hospitalisation and risk of death by almost 89 percent, said speakers at a scientific seminar yesterday.

But physicians must ensure proper use of the oral antiviral drug to get the best outcome, they added.

Renowned physicians of 42 medical institutions from Bangladesh and 30 other countries participated at the discussion titled "An Update on Antivirals for Covid-19".

They also lauded Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd for the fast-paced introduction of the world's first generic version of Paxlovid, developed by Pfizer, with the brand name Paxovir on December 30 last year.

Paxovir can be prescribed to both vaccinated and unvaccinated Covid patients aged 12 and over.

Medicine specialist Prof Robed Amin, line director of the Non Communicable Disease Control at

the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), presented the keynote paper at the event organised by Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd in its office in the capital.

"The outcome is better if Paxovir is given to patients three days within the onset of symptoms. It reduces the viral load. The drug has emerged as the lifesaver during the emergence of the new [Omicron] variant," he said.

Paxovir is a combination of nirmatrelevir, which was designed to interfere with an enzyme the coronavirus uses to make copies of itself, and ritonavir, an antiviral that slows down the body's metabolism of the other medication, he said.

Pfizer's laboratory studies indicated that Paxlovid is likely to work against the Omicron variant, which has spread across the world.

Former DGHS director general Prof MA Faiz who joined via video link said, "To win over the coronavirus, effective drugs should be applied at the very beginning of the infection."

Prof Nazmul Islam, director of communicable disease control at the

DGHS, lauded Eskayef for introducing the drug in the local market, adding that misuse and indiscriminate use of the drug should be avoided.

The DGHS will soon publish updated treatment protocols for Covid-19, he informed.

Prof MA Jalil, former chairman of the medicine department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, who also joined online, said, "Time will tell how effective the new drugs are."

Prof Khalilur Rahman, head of medicine department at Rajshahi Medical College, said some drugs to treat Covid-19 infection have been overused.

Prof MA Hasan Chowdhury, head of medicine department at Chattogram Medical College, said, "Paxovir is a groundbreaking drug for patients with mild to moderate symptoms."

Prof GKM Shahiduzzaman, head of medicine department at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College, said he expected Paxovir

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## Zayed out, Nipun in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terminating the candidature of Zayed Khan, an appellate department yesterday declared Nipun Akter the new general secretary of Bangladesh Film Actors' Association.

At a press conference, Sohanur Rahman Sohan, head of the department, announced that Zayed was disqualified as the GS.

"We have found enough evidence to prove Zayed Khan was bribing voters. We got written statements from two people who admitted taking money from him."

Full versions of these stories are available under the same heading at [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net)

## Man held for raping girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A Rab team arrested a 55-year-old man yesterday for raping a minor in Joypurhat's Khetlal upazila.

The accused, Ishak Ali was held in the upazila's Nishi Nazirpara village around 5:00am, said Jahid Hasan, commanding officer of Rab in the district.

Police said the 12-year old girl on February 1 went to Ishak's house to meet her friends. But, Ishak, who was alone there, raped her and fled.

The girl was rescued and admitted to Khetlal Upazila Health Complex. Later, her father filed a rape case with Khetlal Police Station. Ishak was sent to jail through a court yesterday afternoon.

## Wildlife trafficker held in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Environmentalists caught a wildlife trafficker and handed him to Rab in Sylhet city's Shahi Eidgah area.

The detainee was Rasel Miah, 37.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Sylhet's Bangladesh Paribesh Andalan, said Rasel had long been illegally selling wild animals on social media.

Posing as customers, environmentalists asked him to come to Shahi Eidgah area yesterday, where he was caught red-handed.

## Two EVMs vandalised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Criminals yesterday attacked a school, where locals were being trained on voting with electronic voting machines (EVMs) ahead of the seventh phase of the union parisha polls tomorrow.

Two EVMs were vandalised in the attack at Borobari Government Primary School in Mainamati union, said Burichang Upazila Election Officer Delwar Hossain.

The attackers also assaulted the presiding officer.

Locals said the attackers were supporters of an independent chairman candidate.

## A SKETCH OF THE EC SEARCH PANEL



JUSTICE OBAIDUL HASSAN

He became a justice of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division on September 3, 2020. He was made an additional judge of the High Court Division on June 30, 2009, and he became judge of the same division on June 6, 2011. He also served as member of the International Crimes Tribunal-2 and later as the chairman of the tribunal from March 22, 2012 to September 15, 2015. Born in 1959, justice Obaidul obtained his BSS (Honours), MSS in Economic and LLB from Dhaka University. He was first enrolled as an advocate of the District Court in 1986. Later, he was enrolled as a lawyer of the High Court Division and the Appellate division of the Supreme Court in 1988 and 2005 respectively.



JUSTICE SM KUDDUS ZAMAN

He entered in the Bangladesh judicial service on 22 February 1984 as a Munsif. He worked in various district courts as

Senior Assistant Judge, Joint District Judge and Additional District Judge and was finally promoted to the apex position of the service, District Judge, on October 9, 2006. He was appointed District and Session Judge of Dhaka on February 5, 2015 and later elevated to the High Court Division on May 31, 2018. Born on August 12, 1960 in Rajbari, he passed Secondary School Certificate Examination in 1975. He obtained Bachelor of Laws (Honours) Degree in 1982 and Master of Laws degree in 1983 from the Dhaka University. He was the International Judge of United Nations in East Timor where he worked for dispensation of justice in civil and criminal cases.



MD SOHORAB HOSSAIN

He became the chairman of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission on 21 September 2020. Before that, he was the Senior Secretary in the Secondary and Higher Education Division. He obtained his Mr. Sohorab Hossain pursued his BA (Honours) and MA in Bangla Language and Literature from Dhaka University. He joined the Bangladesh Civil Service in 1986. He was born in in Chatkhil, Noakhali in 1961.



MOHAMMAD MUSLIM CHOWDHURY

He joined audit and accounts cadre of Bangladesh Civil Service in 1984 batch, and has been serving as the comptroller and auditor general of Bangladesh since July 17, 2018. He was also Finance Secretary. Chowdhury was Finance Secretary. Before his elevation to the position of Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh, he had served as Deputy Secretary, Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary in the Finance Division, Ministry of Finance. He graduated with a Bachelor degree in Commerce with Honours and Master of Commerce in Accounting from the University of Chittagong. He also holds a Master of Science (MSc) in Finance and Accounting from the University of Birmingham, UK.



MUHAMMAD SOHUL HUSSAIN

He was appointed as election commissioner on February 5, 2007 and continued till 2012.

During his tenure, then commission prepared the draft the law of appointment of the Chief election commissioner and election commissioners. He started his career as Munsif in 1967. He became the law secretary in 1997 and went on retirement on 2000. The following year, he enrolled as a lawyer of the Supreme Court. Born in Sylhet on April 27, 1942, Sohul's followers collected nomination papers for him to contest the national election from Sylhet-1.



ANWARA SYED HAQ

She is an eminent fiction writer and a psychiatrist by profession. Born in Jashore in 1940, she won the Bangla Academy Award in 2010 for her contribution to literature and in 2019 she was awarded with the Ekushey Padak for language and literature. After completing her SSC and HSC in Jessore, she enrolled in Dhaka Medical College from where she obtained her MBBS degree in 1965. In 1973 went to the United Kingdom for higher education. After having completed her post graduate degree in medical psychiatry in 1982 she returned home from the UK. She married to the eminent writer and poet Syed Samsul Haq on November 19, 1965.

## Short time, tough task

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"We will carry out our responsibilities, given by the honourable president on behalf of the nation, with utmost sincerity and fairness," said Justice Hassan.

Replying to a query, he, however, said, "I cannot say whether the new Election Commission to be formed following recommendations by the search committee will be neutral and acceptable. But we will do our job as per the law and the constitution."

The new panel will recommend two names for each of the posts of the CEC and other commissioners, who will oversee the next general election slated for late next year.

The outgoing EC and the previous one faced huge criticisms over their roles in the national elections in 2014 and 2018.

Many alleged neither of the polls was credible.

For making the recommendations, the new committee can seek names from political parties and professional bodies. It will make decisions based on the majority.

As per the EC law, the search committee can get 15 working days to recommend names to the president.

If the new EC is to be formed by February 14, when the current EC expires its tenure, the committee has only six working days to complete its task.

Based on the recommendations, the president will appoint the CEC and other

commissioners, according to the law.

Soon after the formation of the search committee, the ruling Awami League welcomed the move while its arch rival BNP said it was "very much like the previous ones".

The previous search committee was formed in 2017 by President Hamid following talks ahead of the 2018 polls.

The one before that was formed in 2012 by the then president Zillur Rahman after talks with 23 registered parties.

The Rakib-led EC drew huge flak for holding the 2014 January 5 "one-sided" election, in which 153 lawmakers were elected unopposed.

The Huda-led commission received criticisms for massive vote rigging and polls irregularities.

Asked about the new committee, Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakawat Hossain, a former election commissioner, said, "I hope that something good will happen. I don't know much about them except Mr Sohul Hussain. I hope they will find the right people so that the current electoral crisis can be overcome."

Transparency International Bangladesh said the search committee should maintain transparency and impartiality in forming a new EC.

In a statement, it said there was no scope of deviation from the constitutional consciousness behind the formation of a neutral,

acceptable and efficient Election Commission and the fulfilment of the expectations of the people.

Dr Ittekkharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said, "We respectfully request the members of the committee to consider the names of people who are well known for their honesty, impartiality, fairness, objectivity and sincerity in their personal and professional lives. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the nominees are not involved in any form of crime such as immorality, corruption and defaulting on loans."

TIB also hoped the committee would ensure the names recommended are made public.

Hailing the formation of the search committee, AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim said the upcoming EC would be the first under the new law.

"We hope it will strengthen democracy and the electoral system. The next Election Commission will be formed in light of the constitution. It will be more powerful and elections under it will be free, fair and participatory."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told The Daily Star, "The issue of search committee is not important for us. We have repeatedly said that free and fair election is not possible without an election-time neutral government."

**WHAT NEW MEMBERS SAY**  
Talking to The Daily Star

yesterday, Justice Obaidul Hassan said it has not yet been decided when the search committee would start functioning.

"The gazette on the search committee was issued around one hour back. The cabinet secretary is yet to communicate with me. I could not talk to my colleagues in the committee. However, I hope we can start working very soon."

Justice Hassan declined to make any comment on the current EC and its criticisms.

Justice SM Kuddus Zaman, another member of the search committee, said they would work with all their heart in the interest of the nation.

He hoped the next EC would be fair and neutral.

Sohul Hussain said, "This is a very important task for me. I am grateful to the president. If the right people are not picked as the commissioners, the entire electoral system will be at stake."

PSC Chairman Sohorab Hossain said, "I believe the committee chief will convene the first meeting soon, and there will be discussion on our work models there."

Asked what they would consider while recommending the names, he said, "I think the committee head will be the right person to speak on it."

The first meeting of the committee will be held at 4:30 pm at Supreme Court Judges lounge, justice SM Kuddus Zaman told The Daily Star.