

# NO STATEMENT in the world is above scrutiny

## MAMUNUR RASHID

I have always felt obligated to talk about injustice. When a girl was raped and killed in Tangail's Madhupur, I raised my voice. I regularly write about the rampant inflation, which puts my fellow countrymen in harsh circumstances. Where are the naysayers then? Do they not see it?

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Mamunur Rashid is a bona-fide legend in the country's theatre and television industry. After fighting for Bangladesh in our Liberation War, he went on to establish his mark on Bangladeshi art and culture, winning the coveted Ekushey Padak and the Bangla Academy Literary Award.

However, his statement on the 'famine of taste', reflecting on how the audience's taste was losing its integrity, giving way to cheap content to plague social media, has been a hotly debated topic. "The advent of the likes of Hero Alom is a testament to our famine in taste", he had said.

"It is completely fine to debate my statement," said the eminent thespian to The Daily Star. "I believe in democracy, and people are well within their rights to do so. However, some are also bringing in class divide in their arguments, without ever reading the full interview. My words are being twisted."

The artiste, with utmost humility, said that he is only a cultural worker who has always strived for the betterment of the society. "Why would someone assume that the social status of a person was being discussed? I am merely a cultural worker, but there are greats like Kazi Nazrul Islam, who do not come from a wealthy background. So why is that coming in to the discussion?" He pointed out that despite his background, he educated and enlightened himself, reaching the pinnacle of his craft.

"I do not know the person in question," said Mamunur Rashid about his controversial statement, "I only used his name as a general



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



example. I have never seen his works. Some have asked why I only took his name, and not anyone else's – and to that I will say that many more names could have come up, but that was not the point." He also mentioned that he knows that not all entertainment is tasteful, and he does not expect it to be. However, for the artiste, education is always important, regardless of the medium.

"Some learn from schools, colleges and other institutions, and some from their gurus. There is always the opportunity if one

is really dedicated."

Rashid urged everyone to feel free to debate his and any other statements, but after knowing the context and with logic. "I have always felt obligated to talk about injustice. When a girl was raped and killed in Tangail's Madhupur, I raised my voice. I regularly write about the rampant inflation, which puts my fellow countrymen in harsh circumstances. Where are the naysayers then? Do they not see it?"

The thespian has recently been honoured with the "Jibankriti Lifetime Achievement Award" in Kolkata, and the special honour on World Theatre Day. "I have spent my life in service of the arts. I have struggled a lot, but never once thought of leaving this path. To be recognised for my service is always humbling," he concluded.

Translated by Sadi Mohammad Shahnewaz



## Jury Board for National Film Awards 2022 selected

The annually celebrated National Film Awards is the highest honour and recognition given in the arena of films, from the state.

Now, the government has already started preparing for the 2022 edition of the awards ceremony. On March 27, the government announced a 13-member jury board, who will be evaluating films from the year 2022.

The board includes noted personas from the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation and members of the concerned ministries.

According to the government notice, the jury members will soon submit a shortlist of films released in 2022. Afterwards, they will have two months to evaluate and scrutinise the films.

## Mahiya Mahi blessed with baby boy

Actress Mahiya Mahi was blessed with a baby boy on Tuesday (March 28), at the capital's United Hospital. The news was confirmed to The Daily Star by her husband, Rakib Sarker.

"The mother and son are both doing well, please pray for us", he said.

Mahi had tied the knot to Rakib on September 13, 2021. She was arrested and subsequently bailed on two cases this month, with the entire entertainment industry protesting her arrest.



# NEWS

## At least 18

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Gias had been a cable TV technician in Saudi Arabia for 22 years.

He left behind his wife, Rabeya Akter, a 16-year-old son, a 12-year-old daughter and a six-year-old daughter.

"Please bring the body of my husband for burial; I would stand beside his grave and pray for him. I never thought that this was in my fate," said Rabeya as she burst into tears at their home in Debidar upazila yesterday.

Apart from Gias, two other deceased are also from Cumilla. They are Mamun, son of Abdul Awal of Mostapur village, and Rasel Mollah of Muradnagar upazila.

Awal said that he borrowed Tk5 lakh to send his son to Saudi Arabia six months ago.

The foreign ministry has also provided the details of 10 other deceased.

They are Shahidul Islam, son of Shariat Ullah of Noakhali's Senbagh; Md Helal Uddin of Noakhali; Sabuj Hossain of Laxmipur; Md Asif and Sifat Ullah from Cox's Bazar's Maheshkhali; Md Imam Hossain Roni of Dhaka's Tongi; Ruku Miah, son of Kalu Miah of Chandpur; Mohammad Nazmul, son of Kawsar Mia (district unknown); Rony, son of Iskandar of Jashore; and Mohammad Hossain of Cox's Bazar.

## Rab arrests

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area and arrested him.

The statement said that Al Amin, during initial interrogation, admitted his involvement in a racket that used the name of Enamul to lure unemployed youths and conned them.

Meanwhile, Rights body Ain o Salish Kendra yesterday called for formation of a judicial commission for enquiry into the death of Sultana.

Speaking at a meet the press in the Lalmatia office, Mohammad Nur Khan, executive director of ASK, said Rab made so many deviations from the beginning of her detention to the death. A judicial inquiry should be launched in this regard.

## Jugantor reporter

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The plaintiff, who stands accused in a case filed over the double murder in Chattogram's CRB area on June 24, 2013, mentioned in the case statement that the report defamed him.

The court has directed the cyber unit of the Counter Terrorism Unit of Chattogram Metropolitan Police to investigate the case, said Mezbah.

## No point of sitting with EC

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Gulshan office yesterday.

The BNP yesterday in a meeting of the standing committee, its highest policy-making body, discussed the letter sent by the CEC to the secretary general.

Fakhrul said the national elections in 2014 and 2018 have proved that the Election Commission is not independent and it does not have the power to conduct elections in a free, fair and impartial manner, even if it is willing to do so.

"It was decided in our meeting that the BNP is unable to accept the Election Commission's invitation because there is no possibility of resolving the main political problem through a discussion or view-exchange meeting with the commission."

Replying to a question, Fakhrul said they will not send any letter to

## UNOs can't serve

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says, "Local government in every administrative unit of the republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law."

Article 60 says, "For the purpose of giving full effect to the provisions of article 59, parliament shall, by law, confer powers on the local government bodies referred to in that article, including power to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds."

The HC observed that since the UNO is not an elected representative of the people and he or she has not been made accountable to upazila parishad, which is a local government body, and therefore sections 33 (1) and (2) of the law are a violation of articles 59 and 60 of the constitution.

The bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Ahmed Sohail delivered the verdict after two writ petitions were filed in 2020 challenging the sections 33 (1) and (2) of Upazila Parishad Ain.

Petitioners' lawyers Hassan MS Azim and Md Minhadduzzaman Leeton told The Daily Star that the UNOs will perform duties under the upazila parishads led by their elected chairmen.

The UNOs will remain accountable to the upazila parishads, and they

the EC conveying the party decision.

"I am informing him [CEC] about our decision through this press conference. I hope he would accept our opinion."

In response to another question, Fakhrul said there is no point in sitting with the EC which has no power to resolve the problem of the country and its people.

"He [CEC] is not a mailbox where we will drop a letter for sending it to the government. It is absolutely a matter of the government. Since the government has the two-thirds majority in parliament, it can do this and nobody else can take this decision."

He added the party will consider if the government proposes talks on the caretaker government issue. "There'll be no talks except for that on the issue of polls-time neutral government."

cannot exercise absolute powers in the administration, they added.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Mehedi Hassan Chowdhury, additional attorney general, told this correspondent that the UNOs have been giving secretarial assistance to upazila parishads and they are always accountable to the parishads.

The HC has rejected the petitioners' prayers for not to allow the UNOs become heads of the committees funded by the government in upazilas and provide security to upazila chairmen like the UNOs get, he said.

The additional attorney general said in another writ petition, they (petitioners) sought HC verdict to scrap the provisions of Upazila Parishad Ain that allowed removal and suspension of upazila chairmen or vice-chairmen and expressing no confidence on them, but the court did not allow their prayers.

Senior lawyer Ajmalul Hossain argued for the petitioners.

Details of the HC observations could not be known as its full text is yet to be released.

Several upazila chairmen, including Harun-Or-Rashid Howlader and Md Abdul Aziz, and Supreme Court lawyer Minhadduzzaman Leeton filed the petitions in 2020 and 2021 challenging the legality of different relevant sections of Upazila Parishad Ain.

## Nur-E-Alam Siddique passes away

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breathed his last while undergoing treatment for old-age complications at United Hospital in the city at the age of 79. In the evening, he was buried at Zirani in Savar, near a mosque that was built with his fund, said Aniket Rajesh, his press secretary.

Earlier in the morning, his body was taken to his village home in Jhenaidah by a helicopter for his first Namaz-e-Janaza.

After the body was flown back to the capital, another Janaza was held at Gulshan Central Mosque after Asr prayers. The district administration of Dhaka also gave Nur-e-Alam Siddique a guard of honour.

A pall of gloom descended on the political arena as soon as the news of his death spread.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, ministers, distinguished personalities, top leaders of different political and socio-economic cultural organisations, including the Awami League and Workers Party of Bangladesh, expressed deep shock at his demise.

Born in Jhenaidah in 1944, Nur-E Alam left behind his wife, two sons and a daughter. His son

Tahzeeb Alam Siddique is an Awami League lawmaker from Jhenaidah-2 constituency.

Nur-E-Alam Siddique, a student of Dhaka University, was one of the student leaders who spearheaded the struggles against the oppression by West Pakistan regime.

He took active part in the movement centring the six-point programme of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1966 and the mass upsurge in 1969.

Nur-E-Alam Siddique and his three comrades Shajahan Siraj, ASM Abdur Rab and Abdul Kuddus Makhon eventually became known as "four caliphs" of Bangabandhu.

On March 2, 1971, a massive crowd, mostly students, thronged Dhaka University defying curfew to witness a milestone event of history. In the presence of three others, Abdur Rab hoisted the flag of Bangladesh for the first time ever.

Nur-E-Alam, as the Chhatra League president, was the convener of Sangram Parishad.

The next day, the four leaders organised an event where Shajahan Siraj, read the manifesto for the country's independence. They also organised a

national flag hoisting ceremony all over the country on March 23.

During the Liberation War, he was a member of Bangladesh Liberation Force (BLF), commonly known as Mujib Bahini.

After independence, Nur-e-Alam became the founding general secretary of the Awami Jubo League.

He was elected a member of parliament as a candidate of Awami League in the first national parliamentary election held in 1973 and served as the chairman of various parliamentary standing committees from 1973 to 1975.

He was also a member of the Bangladesh Constitution formation committee.

With the ruling Awami League tickets, he contested the 1996 and 2001 parliamentary elections from Jhenaidah-2.

This veteran politician authored several books including "Awami League Birodhi Noi, Tabu Samalochona Kori", "Kaler Jayodhvani", "Titwas Akdin Kotha Bolbei," and "Sekaler Rajniti of Chhatra League".

A good orator, he was popular a face at different television talk-shows specially on political issues.

## BR project runs

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Later, the BR sought three and a half years more and an additional Tk 279.69 crore to complete the project. The revision proposal is now pending approval by the Planning Commission, shows the project document.

As the revision proposal was not approved, project authorities failed to pay the contractors.

If the proposal is approved, the total cost of the project would go up to 658.34 crore and the deadline would be June 2026.

A BR official said the contractor's payment arrears is only Tk 15 crore and that it has already been handed over the land of 11km out of the total 12km.

The project office on March 23 wrote to the contractor giving an explanation about its allegation.

BR Director General Quamrul Ahsan said they have informed the Project Steering Committee about the issue.

"We have written to them [contractor] and asked them to sit with project authorities to solve the problem amicably," he told The Daily Star.