

MY DHAKA



PHOTO: COURTESY, STAR

# LETTERPRESS PRINTING near death of a trade

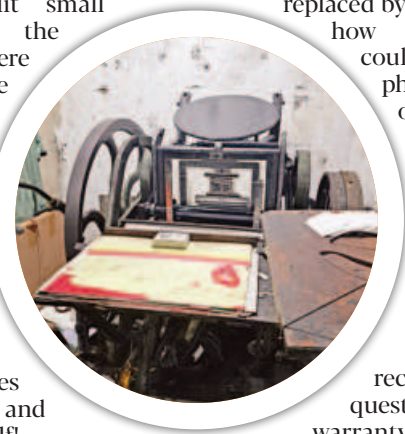
RBR

The sound of printing in a letterpress machine has a certain rhythm to it. The ink, which is evenly spread on the platen or the flat platform of the press; the wheels running while copies of an image are produced by repeated direct impression -- all have a nostalgic pull to this near obsolete technology. Halim Hossain's "Ekota Letter Press" on the dark, dingy ground floor of Banija Bitan Super Market in Nilkhet, is probably one of the last few letterpress machines in operation. Hossain has been in the printing business since 1989. He initially worked in a similar press at Lalbagh. When he decided to start his own business, the machine he works with now was bought some 20 years ago

from a second-hand dealer with an investment of Tk 70,000. In the dimly lit small room that houses the old letterpress, there is hardly any space to manoeuvre and Hossain is the only man working. He learned all the nuances of the printing trade when he came to the capital as a teen. Today, he is so skilled that the printer even does all his maintaining and repairing work himself. "The business of letterpress printing was booming up until there

came a point where skilled printers like myself became redundant and were replaced by people -- no matter how unskilled -- who could run automated photographic and offset press," Halim says. His primary clients were banks and NGOs but the pandemic made him lose big contracts. He could not recover fully. "I do print money receipts, visiting cards, question papers, and warranty cards but orders are few and far in between. At one point I was printing not only books but

also cigarette labels, election posters, and more." For me letterpress means posters for liberation from the British or the Pakistanis; it means posters of Ekushey February. Right now, Halim needs to be recognised as an artisanal printer because letterpress printing is more of a utilitarian art, trade, or craft. Such prints do add an old-world charm and people who can afford and lean towards the retro feel can make unique wedding/gaye holud cards; fine handmade, limited-edition books; artists' books; high-end greeting cards and single sheet publications. Giving Halim Hossain a few such work orders can keep his old trade going and keep the old machine running.



## Ex-army chief Long way to go for readiness

FROM PAGE 1 Joseph alone was accused in 10 cases filed in connection with extortion and possession of illegal firearms. Joseph was sentenced to death and Haris and Anis to life in prison in a murder case in 2004. Aziz got media attention after Joseph got clemency in the murder case in 2018 and Haris and Anis in 2019. Al Jazeera on February 1, 2021, aired a documentary titled "All the Prime Minister's Men" in which it claimed that Aziz exerted influence to help his three convicted brothers get various contracts. The army headquarters and the foreign ministry refuted the allegations made by Al Jazeera, labelling it "false" and "slanderous". Both Haris and Joseph are now believed to be abroad. EC sources said several media reported that in Joseph's mother's application for remission of his sentence, she mentioned Abdul Wadud and Renuja Begum as the parents of Joseph. But Haris took a NID (national ID) card under the name Mohammad Hasan using the names Suleman Sarkar and Rahela Begum as his parents. He also changed his photo in the NID card in 2019. The then army chief General (ret'd) Aziz Ahmed made the recommendations for changing the photo.

FROM PAGE 1 country, he said. The global average customs tariff hovers around 7.5 percent. India's average is 14 percent, the USA's 2.5 percent, and the EU's 4 percent, said Razzaque. For instance, Bangladesh is negotiating with Japan for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) to retain the duty-benefits after it graduates. If the EPA goes through, Bangladesh will have to cut duty on 90 percent of the products being considered. The duty could be gradually cut like over a 10-year period, but it has to be done for a trade deal and the products in question for Bangladesh is nearly 14,000, he said. The government in its budget said it was trying to sign free-trade agreements with major trading partners like Japan, India, and China to retain duty benefits after it graduates. But so far, it has signed only a

preferential trade agreement (PTA) with Bhutan. Currently, the customs department fixes a minimum import price on products. Since Bangladesh is in LDC, developed and developing countries do not argue over the matter in the World Trade Organisation. But after the graduation, the government would not be able to fix the minimum price under the WTO rules. The government has now decided to gradually abolish the system of minimum import price by 2026. To prepare for the graduation, the government formed a committee to deal with the challenges. The committee is led by the principal secretary to the prime minister. The committee has seven sub-committees. Since businesses won't be able to have direct cash subsidies after the country graduates from LDC, the government has come up with some alternatives to improve

competitiveness of local exporters. A senior official at the customs department, requesting anonymity, said the duty cuts were not adequate but the process has started. The process is slow as the government needs to generate revenue and consider the interest of the local industries. So far, duties on more than 400 products have either been cut or have been recommended for cuts. Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), echoed Razzaque. He said the government has at least used a sub-section in the proposed budget on LDC graduation. In the next budget, a major chapter might be dedicated to the graduation and there might be big challenges to address. He acknowledged that the government had taken a lot of major measures to make the local business competitive in the global market when Bangladesh graduates.

## Detectives have no clue

FROM PAGE 1 him. He was later arrested by Gulshan police from the scene. SM Jahangir Hasan, additional deputy commissioner of police, said, "Kawsar has not disclosed anything yet. He is acting like a mentally distressed person. But we are hoping to learn everything in later interrogations." "In primary interrogation, we did not find any previous conflict between the two constables. We quizzed Kawsar, who was punctual in his duty as per the record of the last couple of months," said Kh Mahid Uddin, additional commissioner (crime and operations). "We are yet to ascertain what initiated their altercation," he added. The police officer said they would be able to know more by interrogating the suspect within a day or two after he settled down mentally. Asked whether the constable was overworked or not getting leave for the Eid holidays, Mahid Uddin replied in the negative. "He was not stressed or overworked, as there was no pressure on duty... Besides, our force members now get adequate leaves," he said. Meanwhile, the victim's elder brother, Mahbulul Haque, also a police constable, filed a case with the

Gulshan Police Station. Kawsar was shown arrested in the case and produced before a Dhaka court, which placed him on a seven-day remand. Mahbulul told this newspaper, "My brother was very gentle, and had no enmity with anyone." Monirul got married after he joined the force in 2018. He has a 19-month-old boy. "I did not know how to console his wife and my parents as they broke down after learning about the incident," he added. His body is expected to be buried at his family graveyard in Netrakona today. The incident happened at 11:41pm on Saturday near the Palestine Embassy in Dhaka. A driver of an embassy vehicle, Sajjad Hossain, was also injured in the shooting and is now at United Hospital. According to police reports, 22 bullets and 34 bullet casings were recovered from the spot. The shots were fired from Kawsar's service weapon -- an SMT9 sub-machine gun. Monirul's body bore some 18 bullet wounds (including entry and exit wounds) on his head, chest, and stomach, said sources at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital's morgue.

## 999 calls surge, reflect reliability

FROM PAGE 1 Tofael Ahmed alias Joseph, another brother of Aziz Ahmed, has two NIDs. Tofael had an NID card with names of parents as Abdul Wadud and Renuja Begum and another NID card using his name as Tanvir Ahmed Tanjeel, with names of parents as Suleman Sarkar and Rahela Begum. According to the National Identity Registration Act 2010, a person can be punished with one year in jail or slapped a fine of Tk 20,000 or both for providing false or distorted information or concealing information to get an NID card. A person can be sentenced up to seven years in prison or fined up to Tk 1,00,000 for forging an NID card or carrying a forged one knowingly. If any person helps in forging NID cards, he or she will also face the same punishment.

FROM PAGE 1 fights over land disputes, money lending and other social feuds, mainly from rural areas. In 2023 alone, the helpline received 94,135 calls regarding such disputes. In 2022, the number was 73,084. The trend continues with 37,273 such calls already logged in the first quarter of this year. Medical emergencies and ambulance services follow closely behind, with 30,285 calls recorded in 2023; 27,624 in 2022, and 11,872 calls in the first quarter of this year. Fire emergencies rank third with 30,160 reported calls in 2023, up from 24,460 the year before. The first quarter of this year received 14,311 such calls. Sound pollution complaints, especially during festive seasons and wedding celebrations, garnered the fourth-highest volume of calls, totaling 30,021 in 2023 and 20,561 in 2022. Instances of various forms of violence against women, including dowry-related issues, domestic abuse, sexual or other kinds of harassment, also remain high, with 25,090 calls reported in 2023, reflecting an increase from 20,251 the year before. The first quarter of this year witnessed 9,287 calls. Meanwhile, calls to report accidents finished the list with 22,604 reported incidents in 2023 and 22,125 in 2022. The first quarter of this year saw 8,649 accident-related calls. IMPROVING SERVICES, INCREASING CAPACITY

At present, the 999 helpline has 100 workstations and can receive 120 calls at a time. "We've already gotten the approval to set up another 100 workstations in Purbachal and received an allocation from the home ministry," Mohammad Tabarak Ullah, additional deputy inspector general of police, also the chief of the national emergency helpline, told The Daily Star. "We are hopeful about completing the setup within the next fiscal year, and then we will be able to provide services to more people." Additionally, separate phones were installed in 294 police stations as part of improving services and increasing capacity. "This way, we can reach local police stations without delay. We'll gradually install the phone line in all the 600 police stations across the country." Tabark Ullah further said the government recently approved 999 as a separate unit of Bangladesh Police with a manpower of 549. "The public administration ministry already approved the helpline as a separate unit. We now await the final approval from the finance ministry. Once approved, we will have our separate force, place and administration with a deputy inspector general as the chief." He said the helpline will become more efficient with updated software soon after becoming a separate unit, and will be able to provide up-to-date services to the people.

Following day, saying that he would visit a doctor. On May 22, India and Bangladesh police said the lawmaker was murdered. Meanwhile, the West Bengal CID yesterday recovered bones, suspected to be of the lawmaker, from the bank of a canal in the Kashipur area of South 24 Parganas district. The recovery was made after CID officers interrogated Siam, who is now on a 14-day remand. Siam was brought to Kolkata after he was arrested in Nepal. "We have recovered some bones. Prima facie, it appears to be human bones. We are sending them for forensic analysis," said A K Chaturvedi, inspector general of police (IG), West Bengal CID. "The bones appear to be that of the human rib cage and arms. The skull was yet to be recovered." West Bengal CID officials said that the spot from where the bones were recovered on the bank of the canal is about 15km away from the New Town apartment where the MP was killed and his body was dismembered. "We have been searching this area for over two weeks based on the information provided by another accused Jihad Hawaldar, a butcher, arrested on May 23. Siam gave the specific location during interrogation," said another CID officer. Earlier on May 28, some remains were recovered from a septic tank of the New Town apartment.

## AL leader Babu

FROM PAGE 1 also had a WhatsApp conversation with Amanullah, who goes by the alias Shimul Bhuiyan, around 10:30pm the previous day, said the report by Senior Assistant Commissioner (DB) Mahfuzur Rahman, who is investigating the case. Police arrested Babu in the capital's Sayedabad area on Saturday, taking the number of arrestees in the case to four. A court yesterday placed him on a 7-day remand. Babu is also a cousin of Aktaruzzaman, one of the masterminds behind the murder. Amanullah earlier admitted before a court that he was the coordinator among the people who took part in the killing of the Jhenaidah-4 lawmaker. A top officer of DB, requesting anonymity, said, "Babu deleted most of the online conversation he had with Aktaruzzaman and Amanullah. We have evidence suggesting that he was involved with the planning of the abduction and murder." Three other arrestees, Celesty Rahman, Amanullah, and Tanvir Bhuiyan, have made confessional statements and are in jail. West Bengal CID arrested Jihad Howlader and Siam Hossain. But Aktaruzzaman, who used to run a gold and narcotics smuggling racket with Azim, is believed to be in the US. Azim went to Kolkata on May 12 and stayed at his friend Gopal Biswas' house for a night. He left the

## St Martin's Island cut off from mainland

### Multiple trawlers were shot at by criminals from Myanmar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

All types of water transport have been halted between Saint Martin's Island and Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar for the last three days since Friday due to several firing incidents on boats by Myanmar criminals, triggering a food crisis on the island. Abdur Rashid, president of the Trawler Owners' Association on this route, said multiple trawlers were shot at on Thursday and Friday. "On Friday, criminals from Myanmar fired at my boat. The crew narrowly escaped unharmed." He could not confirm whether it was the Border Guard Police of Myanmar or the rebel Arakan Army shooting at them. The incidents took place at the estuary of the Naf River, and this is the only way to St Martin's Island, he said, adding that the other way would be through the sea, which is rough and perilous.

## 134 Myanmar troops sent back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A total of 134 members of the Border Guard Police (BGP) and the junta of Myanmar who crossed the border and took shelter in Bangladesh to escape the fighting between the junta and the Arakan Army, were sent back to their homeland yesterday. In exchange, 45 Bangladeshis imprisoned in Myanmar have returned home from the neighbouring country. Around 12:30pm, Bangladesh ship Karnaphuli Tug 1 carrying the 134 Myanmar nationals left the BIWTA jetty in Nunyarchhara in Cox's Bazar town. They would return on a Myanmar Navy ship stationed in Myanmar waters in the Bay of Bengal. Earlier around 7:00am, they were brought to BIWTA jetty under tight security of BGB in four buses. Later, around 9:50am, 45 Bangladeshis returned home from Myanmar after serving a long time in prison. The Bangladeshis were brought back by the same Bangladesh ship from Myanmar Navy ships stationed in Myanmar waters. Confirming the matter, Cox's Bazar Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Yamin Hossain, said that the process of handing over Myanmar citizens who have taken refuge in Bangladesh and Bangladeshis imprisoned in Myanmar has been completed.

## Benazir's family

FROM PAGE 1 On May 28, the anti-graft body wrote to Benazir, requesting his presence at the ACC headquarters on June 6. Benazir's wife, Jissan Mirza, and their daughters Farheen Rishta Binte Benazir and Tahseen Raisa Binte Benazir were asked to appear on June 9 and make statements regarding the graft allegations. Benazir also failed to show up for the interrogation on June 6 and sought time. His quizzing was deferred to June 23. On April 18, the ACC initiated an enquiry into Benazir and his family members in connection with allegation of amassing wealth illegally.