

Prof AK Azad Khan gets Rotary SEED Award



STAR REPORT

The Rotary Club of Metropolitan Dhaka Foundation has honoured National Prof AK Azad Khan with the “Rotary SEED Award 2024” for his contributions to education, health, and the development of a primary prevention programme for diabetes in Bangladesh, said a press release.

The award includes a gold medal, a cheque for Tk 2 lakh, and a citation.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, founding president of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro, presented the award at the installation ceremony for the newly elected board members of the club at a city hotel recently.

EDUCATION REFORM USAID promotes student voices

STAR REPORT

Jahangirnagar University (JU) recently hosted a panel discussion as part of USAID’s “Amio Jitte Chai” campaign, aimed at gathering student insights to improve educational standards in Bangladesh.

Organised by Democracy International, the event took place at JU’s Selim Al Deen Muktamancha, said a press release. Addressing the event, JU’s History Professor ATM Atiqur Rahman criticised faculty politics and lack of merit-based hiring.

Associate Professor Syed Moynul Alam Nizar from Philosophy and National Citizen Committee member Mushfique Us Saleheen also spoke. The event was moderated by Shaila Rahman Ema. Democracy International’s Aminul Ehsan presented the awards.



Controversial

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stance and expressed regret yesterday afternoon.

“I thought the portrait had been taken down from the Darbar Hall, where photos of all the presidents are displayed. Actually, the photo was removed from another office,” he said.

“Under Sheikh Hasina’s fascist regime, a law had been enacted obligating everyone to display a portrait of Sheikh Mujib. Fascist laws should have no effectiveness. I am sorry for the unwarranted remark.”

PRAYER
TIMING

NOVEMBER 13

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	5-00	12-45	3-45	5-22	7-00
JAMAAT	5-35	1-15	4-00	5-25	7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Empower women-led

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developing climate-resilient products and techniques.

“Women must be empowered to negotiate with government actors independently for the project’s sustainability,” she said.

Syed Matiul Ahsan, development programme adviser at the Embassy of Denmark, proposed frameworks to ensure long-term sustainability and market access by leveraging government support, private partnerships, and technology.

“Certification is crucial for green products to gain credibility,” he said.

Involving men and other stakeholders is necessary to foster broader community acceptance, he added.

Dhaka University Professor Tania Haque said, “A gender-neutral market system is essential to provide women with equal access, and impact analysis is crucial to measure effectiveness.”

She called for a shift towards a green and gender-equal mindset.

Mousumi Poervin, senior climate change officer at ADB, underscored the importance of improving the value chain to ensure fair prices for women in remote areas and highlighted the need for advanced green

technologies, continuous capacity building, and networking opportunities to help women-led SMEs thrive.

Other speakers included Nazim Hossain Sattar, general manager at the SME Foundation; Syed Muntasir Ridwan, co-executive director of Bangladesh Youth Environmental Initiative; Shakhawat Hossain, joint director of Bangladesh Bank; Esrat Karim Eya, founder of Amal Foundation; and Tahmina Islam, M&E analyst at UNCDF.

The event was moderated by Tanjim Ferdous, in-charge of NGO and Foreign Mission at The Daily Star.

Smoke and shadows

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unsanitary and heavily worn down from overuse.

Outside, a tubewell stands broken, further inconveniencing workers.

This branch employs around 532 permanent workers, each assigned a weekly quota of 16,000 to 32,000 biri sticks.

The demand for handmade biri has decreased, so most workers complete their tasks in three days, leaving the factory idle for the rest of the week.

Essential safety measures, such as providing masks and gloves could significantly mitigate health risks for workers and their children, said experts.

None of the factories visited by this correspondent saw such measures at place.

AN EXPLOITATIVE SYSTEM

In the biri industry, the wage disparity between factory owners, permanent workers, and subcontracted labour reveals a deeply inequitable system.

A factory owner packages 1,000 sticks into 40 packets of 25 biris each, which sell wholesale for around Tk 800.

However, permanent workers receive only Tk 90 for the same 1,000 sticks.

By the time the biri packets reach consumers, they’re sold at retail prices ranging between Tk 22 and Tk 24 per packet – multiplying the revenue that never trickles down to the labourers who craft the products by hand.

Orders for rolling biris are distributed

according to seniority, with veterans given the highest production targets of up to 32,000 sticks per week.

To stretch their earnings, these “permanent” workers resort to subcontracting most of their work to local women and children, while they pull rickshaws and work in local tea stalls to earn extra money.

The subcontracted workers are paid a paltry Tk 35 for every 1,000 biri produced, while the permanent workers are left with a net profit of Tk 55.

The process is broken into three stages: assembling the biri sticks, filling them with tobacco, and sealing and packaging them.

Subcontractors get just Tk 16 for rolling the biri sticks, Tk 3 for filling, and Tk 16 more for final packaging.

Abdur Rashid, general secretary of the Karikor Biri Workers Union, voiced concerns about stagnant wages amid rising costs of living. “Prices are climbing, but our wages remain unchanged. Many of us are lucky if we earn between Tk 5,000 and Tk 12,000 monthly,” he said.

A VICIOUS CYCLE

Meanwhile, in Barishal’s biri factories, generations of workers – mothers, daughters, grandmothers – persevere through suffocating conditions for meagre wages.

These stories of multi-generational toil capture a sad reality: the cycle of poverty that has entangled entire families within these smoke-filled sheds for decades.

In the first part of this

series, we told the story of 19-year-old Fatema Akther, who spends long hours packing biris holding her 13-month-old son.

Her own journey in this industry began much the same way – guided by her mother, Minara Begum, who, at 40, still works here, her health rapidly declining.

“I sometimes need an inhaler, and my body swells up during the hotter months. But this is all I know,” said Minara.

Despite the toll, she cannot afford consistent medical care; her wages, barely Tk 150-200 for two to three days’ work, rarely stretch beyond basic necessities.

Shila Halder, a mother of one, holds a master’s degree, yet finds herself here, rolling biris alongside her four-year-old daughter, who sits patiently beside her, absorbing the grim routine that may one day be her own.

Shila’s mother, Dipali, who has been working in the factory for over 30 years, suffers from chronic chest pain. “I can’t afford a doctor,” she says, rolling yet another biri.

Rina Begum, 40, has worked at the factory for 25 years. Despite suffering from allergies and asthma, she hasn’t seen a doctor in years. “I earn Tk 80 for packing 5,000 biris a day,” she said.

Rina rents a house near the factory for Tk 2,000 a month.

Shah Alam, a worker since 1975, says he starts to cough soon after entering the factory. “But this [rolling biri] is the only thing I know. What else can I do?”

Rahul Dey, a director at Karikor Biri, said considering the health hazards, the factory plans shifting to food production. But relocating workers to new roles will take time, he said.

He said government support is necessary for workers to transition effectively.

SIMILAR CONDITION EVERYWHERE

The Karikor Biri’s second

branch at Fishery Road, employing 275 permanent workers, reveals a similar pattern.

Many workers, particularly women and children, suffer from breathing problems and other physical complications due to the toxic environment.

Parul Begum, 40, has been working in the factory for 30 years. Despite seeing a doctor two years ago, who prescribed an inhaler and advised against tobacco factory work, she feels trapped by her circumstances.

She said she earns just Tk 160 for packing 10,000 biris in three days, making it hard to afford medical treatment.

Sonali Akhter, a 24-year-old, helps her father, Zakir Sikder, pack biris after he developed chest pains. Sonali packs 5,000 biris a day.

Maksuda Begum, 65, has worked at the factory for 30 years.

Struggling with breathing issues, she earns Tk 96 for packing 6,000 biris a day. Like many of her colleagues, she relies on local store medicine, unable to afford regular medical visits.

Most biri-makers live in the Palashpur and Kala Kha slums of the city.

Their homes, cramped and dilapidated, are often little more than single-room shelters with leaky roofs, providing barely enough space to accommodate all family members.

Firoza Begum, 65, resides in the Palashpur Ino slum. She began rolling biris after her husband’s death. She makes just Tk 32 for 2,000 sticks.

Parul Begum, another resident, makes up to 25,000 sticks a week, earning only Tk 16 per thousand sticks.

The situation is no different in Kala Kha, where Chan Banu, 65, has spent over 40 years in the profession. Her home is a small, dark room with worn-out walls.

She continues her work

despite suffering from waist pain.

HEALTH HAZARD

There is a significant correlation between exposure to harmful environments in tobacco factories, and an increased risk of respiratory diseases, including tuberculosis.

Research has shown that workers in such environments are particularly vulnerable to respiratory conditions due to long-term exposure to tobacco dust and poor air quality, which weakens their immune systems and heightens susceptibility to infections like TB, said experts.

Siddiqui Rahman, a former professor at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College in Barishal, treats around 2,000 TB patients annually, with over 60 percent caused by direct or indirect impacts of tobacco.

Saiful Islam from BRAC said 70 percent of people carry TB germs, and its symptoms often surface when the immune system is weakened. Exposure to tobacco increases the chance of TB infections.

WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY?

Osman Gani, deputy director of the Barishal divisional department of labour, said, “We held awareness meetings last year, advising workers to use masks and gloves, but they do not follow these guidelines.”

Gani also mentioned that around 1,000 workers from different sectors received free treatment as part of the government’s initiative last year, but biri workers showed little interest.

Abdur Rashid, general secretary of the Karikor Biri Workers Union, said workers have not received any safety or medical facilities in the last 40 years.

Meanwhile, Rahul Dey, director of Karikor Biri, said the factories are managed by local union workers, with the company only collecting the completed biri packets.

“Even then, when we hear any complaints, we try to solve those immediately,” he claimed.

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projects came to the fore, BR officials said.

Railways ministry last month directed BR’s director general to resume the study as well as the detailed design with two conditions in mind – avoiding land acquisition as much as possible to save time and cost and using the existing infrastructure as much.

Contacted, Railways Ministry Secretary Abdul Baki said BR officials told him about the necessity of the two projects during a meeting.

After knowing about all aspects, he briefed the railways adviser, who gave the nod to resume the studies and detailed design, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

WHY THE TWO PROJECTS IMPORTANT

Currently, the existing 320km Dhaka-Chattogram rail route goes through Tongi-Bhairab-Akhaura-Cumilla-Laksham route.

So, discussions for constructing a chord line to cut the route short went on for decades, with BR carrying out a feasibility study in 2010.

In 2012, the ministry sent a proposal for constructing the line under a public-private partnership. But this did not see much progress.

Apart from reducing distance, the shortened route will also reduce BR’s operational cost and increase BR income as more people may take train rides, BR officials said.

Once the new line is built, it can be used

as a dedicated line for passengers, with the existing line reserved for freight service, they said.

“I think this project should have been implemented much earlier for the benefit of the railway and its passengers. We should give the highest priority to the project now,” a top BR official said.

On the other hand, the Hardinge Bridge, which already recorded 110 years of use and counting, is one of the many structures built by the British empire.

The bridge is significant in the country’s history.

But the old bridge should be replaced by a new one, and thus the study and detailed design should be done as early as possible, he said, wishing anonymity.

আইডিয়াল স্কুল অ্যান্ড কলেজ
মতিবিল, ঢাকা-১০০০

২০২৫ শিক্ষাবর্ষে ভর্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তি

২০২৫ শিক্ষাবর্ষে মতিবিল, বনশ্রী ও মুগদা ব্রাঞ্চে বাংলা মাধ্যম ও ইংলিশ ভাষানে বিভিন্ন শ্রেণিতে ছাত্র-ছাত্রী ভর্তি করা হবে।
১২/১১/২০২৪ তারিখ থেকে শুরু হয়েছে ৩০/১১/২০২৪ তারিখ পর্যন্ত ভর্তি সংক্রান্ত বিস্তারিত তথ্য এবং অনলাইন আবেদন শুধুমাত্র <https://gsa.teletalk.com.bd> এর ওয়েবসাইটে পাওয়া যাবে।

অধ্যক্ষ (ভারপ্রাপ্ত)
আইডিয়াল স্কুল অ্যান্ড কলেজ, মতিবিল, ঢাকা-১০০০

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Center of Excellence in Higher Education

TENDER NOTICE

Tender No. NSU/24-25-T04

North South University is inviting sealed offer from bona fide printing firm/ reputed supplier for printing & supplying of various printing items for North South University for upcoming year-2025 as described in the tender schedule.

Detail of the items mentioned below:
1. Note Book-2025 2. Desk Calendar-2025 3. Pocket Diary-2025
4. New Year Greeting Card with Envelope-2025 5. Gift Carry Bag-2025

Interested bidders may collect a schedule of tender from **Southeast Bank Ltd. Bashundhara Branch, Dhaka** within the banking hour on all working days till **November 20, 2024** by paying non-refundable amount of Taka 1,000.00 (One Thousand) in cash for each schedule.

The bidders must submit **earnest money @ 2.5%** of the quoted price in the form of Pay Order issued from any scheduled bank drawn in favor of **North South University** along with their offer. The sealed offer must be submitted on **November 21, 2024 by 2:15 p.m.** at the office of the undersigned. The offers will be opened at 2:30 p.m. on the same day. Representatives of the participating bidders may remain present at the time of opening the bids. NSU authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason.

Director, Internal Affairs
NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
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NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Center of Excellence in Higher Education

TENDER NOTICE

Tender No. NSU/24-25/T-05

Construction of Boundary wall at North South University New Campus Project site in Purbachal-Rupganj.

North South University is inviting sealed offers from bona fide, reputed, experienced civil contractors for the construction of a boundary wall (approx. 3520 meters) along with the perimeter of the 100 acres of NSU’s new campus project site at Rupganj, located 1.4 kilometres South of Sector-3, Purbachal.

Interested Bidders may collect a schedule of tender from **Southeast Bank Ltd. Bashundhara Branch, Dhaka-1229**, within the banking hours on all working days till **Sunday, November 24, 2024**, by paying the non-refundable amount of **Taka 5,000.00 (Five Thousand)** in cash for each schedule. The bidder has to bid for all works mentioned in the Tender schedule.

The bidders must submit **earnest money @ 2.5%** of the total quoted price in the form of a Pay Order/ Bank Guarantee issued from any scheduled bank drawn in favour of North South University along with their offer. The sealed offer must be submitted on **Monday, November 25, 2024, by 2:15 p.m.** at the office of the undersigned. The offers will be opened at 2:30 p.m. on the same day. Representatives of the participating bidders may remain present at the time of opening the bids. NSU authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason.

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Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)
PKSF Bhaban, E-4/B, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar
Dhaka-1207 Phone: 02-222218331-31, Website: www.pksf.org.bd

OPEN TENDER NOTICE (Goods)

Memo no: 53.23.0000.001.03.108.24.7333 Date: 12 November 2024

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) was established by the Government of Bangladesh for poverty alleviation through employment generation. PKSF invites Tender in sealed envelopes from competitive tenderers for **"Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Electro Mechanical Component of Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) for PKSF's Shyamoli Building"** under Package No: PKSF/Shyamoli Building/2024-2025/G-02.

The tender document including specification for the procurement should be submitted using prescribed **'Tender Document'**, which can be collected from PKSF during office hours from **13/11/2024 to 27/11/2024** upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **BDT. 1000/- (Taka One Thousand)** only in cash.

Tender documents should be submitted at the office of PKSF by **2:30 pm** on or before **28/11/2024**. Tender documents will be opened at **3:00 pm** on **28/11/2024** in presence of the tenderers or their representatives.

Interested suppliers are requested to visit the link: <https://pksf.org.bd/tender/> for detail tender notice and instructions regarding the tender procedures.

PKSF reserves the rights to accept or reject any or all the bid documents without showing any reason whatsoever.

(Dr. Md. Jashim Uddin)
Additional Managing Director

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