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# Tax bothers shoo off foreign charity groups

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Uncertainty arises over humanitarian organisations' coming to Dhaka with free healthcare services as one such international group recently faced difficulties in releasing as well as taking back their medical equipment and medicines.

American organisation Interplast was charged taxes on their equipment by the customs although the Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (DPRS) of the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) brought the humanitarian group with permission from the authorities concerned.

DPRS Chairman Dr Shafquat Hussain Khundkar said the Interplast has been sending two groups to Bangladesh each year for

the last seven years to provide surgery free of cost.

This year the American team arrived in Bangladesh on November 26 on a two-week programme for performing difficult surgeries. But the Interplast could not start its work properly and made slow progress as it took them a whole week to release their stuffs.

"The 15-member experts group came to perform complex surgery so that poor patients can receive better treatment. But as they could not release their goods in the first week due to taxation and harassment, only easier surgeries requiring local anaesthesia were conducted," Shafquat said.

The Interplast experts performed only 49 surgeries out of 110 patients scheduled for the programme. The local surgeons later operated upon some of the

# Indo-Bangla coastguard exercise ends

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Bangladesh and India yesterday concluded the first-ever joint coastguard exercise in the Bay of Bengal on pollution control, search and rescue operations, anti-poaching and anti-smuggling.

Bangladesh Coastguard was represented by Lt Commander MS Bari, while West Bengal Coastguard DIG Gurupadesh Singh led the Indian side.

Bangladeshi coastguard vessels 'CGS Rupasi Bangla' and 'Taufiq' along with vessels 'Bazra', 'Sucheta' and 'Kripalani', two hovercrafts, a Dornier aircraft and a helicopter from the Indian side took part in the three-day exercise.

Coastguard sources said the exercise took place following an agreement signed between India and Bangladesh in 2003. Last year, two Indian coastguard vessels visited the Chittagong port.

Yesterday's exercise was

rest.

On a visit to the surgery camp at the DMCH, many patients were found frustrated as they could not have the surgery this year.

Anamika, a four-year-old girl with burn injuries on her cheek and hand she had received at the age of three, was found sharing a bed with three other patients and starving since the previous night.

The poor girl, who lost her father three years ago, came from Kishoreganj with her mother, a housemaid in Shariakandi village of the district.

"The doctors have told us that the foreign surgeons cannot treat us this year, so we can go back home. But we have already spent a lot of money on travelling to Dhaka and staying at the hospital," Anamika's mother said in a tired voice.

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# Hearing of govt petition today for dropping blast case against Pintu

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court will hear today the government petition for withdrawal of a bomb blast case filed against the ruling BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

Judge Mohammad Aman Ullah of the Fifth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court will hear arguments from the prosecution and the defence sides in presence of three accused including Pintu.

Pintu failed to appear before the same court on November 20 last year as was directed by it, but will appear today, Masud Ahmed Talukder, Pintu's lawyer told The Daily Star.

The government had already withdrawn two other criminal cases filed against Pintu. One was for snatching bidding documents

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PHOTO: STAR

Water from the construction site of Motijheel City Centre floods the adjacent road, causing trouble to traffic and pedestrians. The picture was taken yesterday.

# 2 burned workers die at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two workers who suffered burns in a fire at a factory in Tejgaon on Friday died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

The dead are Noor Alam, and Babul, both 30, machine operators of label-making factory SRA Label Industry.

Noor Alam died Tuesday night, while Babul died yesterday noon. Their relatives took the bodies without any autopsy.

Firefighters said the fire at the factory on Friday that left six of the factory employees injured, originated due to an electric short circuit.

Other injured are still in a critical condition, doctors said.

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# Criminals burn a man to death inside tea stall

UNB, Comilla

An unidentified man was burnt to death inside a tea stall at a village in Sadar South upazila early yesterday.

Local sources said a gang of miscreants forced the unidentified man to enter into the tea stall of Chand Miah at village North Kamalapur at about 1:00 am.

Later, the gang locked the tea stall from outside and set fire to it, roasting the man alive.

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# BANSHKHALI CARNAGE

## Charge sheet placed secretly last month

### Prime suspect dropped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The charge sheet in the Banshkhali 11 murder case was submitted secretly about a month and a half ago accusing 31 persons including the 29 already arrested, but it does not contain the name of the suspected mastermind on the list of the accused.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case, Assistant Superintendent of Police Clarence Gomez of Satkania Circle, in his charge sheet also recommended for acquittal of 19 of the accused, sources said.

Although the charge sheet was submitted in a Banshkhali court on December 14, the public prosecutor

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PHOTO: STAR

Concrete boulders and sandbags dumped on the bank of Gulshan Lake near Mohakhali-Gulshan link bridge. Locals say slum dwellers use these materials in making their houses on filled up part of the lake.

# Iran accuses Britain of bombing link

BBC ONLINE

Iran has accused the UK of cooperating with bombers who killed eight people in attacks in the restive south-western city of Ahwaz on Tuesday.

"Britain must respond to the doubts of Iranians concerning the events," said Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki.

Mottaki said the masterminds of the bombing "or people of their mind" had been photographed with UK officials.

A UK Foreign Office spokesman in London has denied the accusation, saying Britain condemned terrorism.

"Any linkage between HMG (Her Majesty's Government) and these terrorist attacks is completely without foundation," said the official.

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# Opposition conspiring against country

## Blames PM, says people to thwart bid to grab power thru' backdoor

UNB, B'baria

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday blamed her political opponents for trying to boycott or foil the coming elections in the name of movement.

"They are conspiring against

elections...If you want to come to power, you will have to get people's mandate through elections," she said while addressing a big public meeting at Niaz Mohammad High School ground.

Khaleda said the democracy-loving people of Bangladesh will

participate and cast their votes in the upcoming polls. "People will not allow any conspiracy to capture power through backdoor."

Defending the existing system of non-party caretaker government, she reminded that three

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# Dump Iran or nuke deal will die

## US warns India

AGENCIES, New Delhi/Moscow

United States has warned that India's support to Iran could have a "devastating" effect on the future of the nuclear deal.

The Indo-US nuclear deal initiative will "die" if New Delhi did not vote against Tehran's nuclear

programme, US said on Wednesday, just a week ahead of the IAEA meeting on Iran issue.

"We have made it known to them (India) that we would very much like India's support because India has arrived on the world stage and is a very important player in the world," US Ambassador to

India David C Mulford said in New Delhi.

Washington also feels that the ideas put forth by India on separation of its civilian and military nuclear establishments had not met the "test of credibility" and the negotiations process need to be

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Prayer Timing		
January 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-35	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-46	5-50
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

We are all overcome with a sense of shock and sadness at the demise of our beloved Dolly Apa (Khorshedi Alam).

She served as past President with her hard working and dedicated attitude. She will be sorely missed by WVA family.

May God give her eternal peace.

WVA MEMBERS C-150

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