



A bulldozer knocks down an illegal jetty on the Meghna river during an eviction drive by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority in Ashuganj of Brahmanbaria yesterday. A total of 11 such jetties were demolished during the drive.

PHOTO: STAR

Boy killed over buying phone

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A teenage boy was hacked to death in Char-Shadhupara village of Pabna Sadar upazila on Thursday night.

His family alleged that Anik Hossain, 16, a hosiery factory worker, was killed over buying a mobile phone from one of his friends.

Four suspects were arrested in connection with the murder.

Quoting victim's father Ishaque Ali, Nasim Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said Anik came out of the factory in the afternoon after receiving a phone call. Since then, he was missing.

Police later found his body on the flood protection embankment of the village around 7:30pm. The body was sent to Pabna Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy yesterday.

Victim's father yesterday lodged a case with the police station against two known people and five to six unknown others, the OC added.

Italy militant guilty of 1980 bombing that killed 85

AFP, Rome

A court in Italy has sentenced a former far-right extremist to life in prison for his part in a bombing at a railway station 40 years ago that killed 85 people.

Gilberto Cavallini, 67, a former member of the far-fight Armed Revolutionary Nucleus (NAR), was convicted for providing logistical support to those who carried out the attack in the northeastern city of Bologna.

On August 2 1980, a bomb exploded in the railway station's waiting room, killing 85 people and injuring more than 200.

From the 1960s to the start of the 1980s, Italy was hit by more than 12,000 attacks in which 362 people died.

Bishwa Ijtema

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last two days, said Emdad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Tongi Police Station.

They are Shahidul Islam of Noagaon, Khoka Miah of Sirajganj, Mohammad Ali of Chattogram, and Yakub Sikdar of Gopalganj.

Their Namaz-e-Janaza was held at the Ijtema ground after Juma prayers led by Maulana Quari Zobayer, imam of Kakrail Mosque.

During the prayers, vehicular movement on Dhaka-Meykensingh highway and other adjoining roads came to a halt for a few hours.

To ensure security during the programmes, law enforcers have taken up a multi-layered security system.

Uniformed and plain-clothed members of police, Rab and intelligence agencies have been deployed in the area, said Gazipur Police Commissioner Anowar Hossain.

Over 400 closed-circuit television cameras at the 20 entries to the ground, 25 watch towers, and 11 checkpoints have been set up to monitor the area, he said.

A central and eight sub-control rooms have also been set up for the proper monitoring of the whole security system, he added.

Gazipur Deputy Commissioner SM Tariqul Islam said uninterrupted electricity and water supply were being provided in the area during the congregation.

He said the authorities were also providing health care facilities to the devotees participating in the Ijtema.

Indefinite curb illegal

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group Access Now.

The government has argued that the blackout in Kashmir was needed to maintain order in a Himalayan region where security forces have been fighting a long-running separatist insurgency encouraged by neighbouring Pakistan.

The Supreme Court's decision, which also asks authorities to make public all orders on internet shutdowns, should enable more scrutiny of suspensions, internet freedom activists said.

"This sheds light on the rationale behind internet shutdowns which then can be challenged as being constitutional or proportionate or not," said Nikhil Pahwa, digital rights activist and editor of MediaNama, a Delhi-based publication.

"So if the state is forced to be transparent, they will be more accountable."

In 2019, India's documented internet blackouts lasted for more than 4,000 hours, costing Asia's third-biggest economy \$1.3 billion, according to a report by website

Top10VPN.

India's home ministry and department of telecommunications did not respond to requests for comment.

DISRUPTING LIFE

In Kashmir, the blackout has severely disrupted the lives of millions and has had an impact on everything from college admissions to businesses filing tax returns.

For Yasin Tuman, who runs a travel agency in Kashmir's main city Srinagar, the loss of internet access has hit his business hard, as tourists stay away.

"I've suffered losses of 7 million rupees (nearly \$100,000) in the past five months," he told Reuters.

The government says it was necessary to block the internet to stop agitators orchestrating mass, potentially violent, protests against its decision to revoke Kashmir's special status.

It also ordered a massive deployment of security forces, and after some protests in the initial days anti-government demonstrations have died down.

Gouhar Geelani, a journalist and

writer from Kashmir, said Modi's Hindu nationalist party had used the internet clampdown "to control the Kashmir narrative by placing restrictions on mainstream media and social media platforms."

Stricter regulations are necessary to safeguard users and the nation's security as the internet has emerged as a "potent tool to cause unimaginable disruption to the democratic polity," India's technology ministry has previously said.

India is the biggest market for social media such as Facebook and its WhatsApp messenger, and with 450 million smartphone users it is second only to China.

As of now, an uneasy calm prevails in Kashmir. The internet was restored in hospitals last week and some mobile phone connections are working.

Yesterday, the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries welcomed the Supreme Court's ruling saying although delayed, the order could pave way for them to claim compensation for losses of as much as 180 billion rupees.

Mars loses its water faster

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While the hydrogen and oxygen atoms that they are made up of. When they are broken down, Mars's weak gravity is unable to keep hold of them and they disappear off into space.

The speed of that process suggests that Mars could lose its water more quickly than previously thought.

The planet was once flooded with flowing water, which has largely disappeared in its more recent history, previous studies have showed.

The new discovery is published

in the journal Science. It was found using the Trace Gas Orbiter probe that was sent to the red planet on board the ExoMars mission, run by the European Space Agency and its Russian counterpart Roscosmos.

Instead of staying as expected on the Martian surface, the water is being carried up in much larger than projected proportions to an altitude of more than 80km, hanging in the planet's atmosphere.

That atmosphere contains up to 100 times more water vapour than

its temperature should theoretically allow, the researchers write in the newly observed paper.

Water is also much more able to escape during the planet's warm and stormy seasons, researchers found using the same data.

Nowadays, Mars is largely dry: what water does exist is frozen in its ice caps. Though various formations on Mars show that it was once much wetter, that water was lost into space, and Mars gradually turned into the largely arid place it is today.

Winds fan Australia bushfires

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While the winds are expected to move through by this morning, Andrews urged residents to stay on high alert and leave the community "if you are told to".

Authorities sent emergency texts to 240,000 people in Victoria, telling them to leave. People in high-risk regions in New South Wales and South Australia were also urged to think about leaving, but officials did not say how many.

Since October, 27 people have been killed and thousands subjected to repeat evacuations as huge and unpredictable fires scorched more than 10.3 million hectares (25.5 million acres) of land, an area roughly the size of South Korea.

In the coastal town of Eden in New South Wales, where the alert status was upgraded to 'watch and act' yesterday evening, smoke filled the horizon as winds blew smoke and ash, reports Reuters.

Shereen and Kim Green, who live on a farm with three houses and 50 cattle just outside Eden, were racing to fill two 1,000-litre tanks of water.

"This is to put out the spot fires and we'll be staying up all night to defend our property," said Shereen, as the wind shook her utility vehicle. "We're taking the opportunity while we can."

Sitting under the town's watchtower, another resident Robyn Malcolm said: "If it all goes wrong, we'll dash down to the wharf and get on a tugboat."



A young protester holds a placard as she participates along with others in a demonstration against India's new citizenship law in Hyderabad yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Israel releases man convicted of spying for Syria

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel has announced the release of two prisoners -- one of whom was convicted of spying for Syria -- as part of a swap deal brokered by Russia.

Sidqi al-Maqt, from the Druze community in the annexed Golan Heights, was jailed in 2015 to 11 years for spying, treason, contact with a foreign agent and transfer of information to the Syrian government.

He had already spent several years behind bars in Israel for spying.

"Security prisoner Sidqi Al-Maqt will be released tomorrow (Friday) January 10, before the scheduled end of his imprisonment," Israel's prison authority said late Thursday.

Authorities also announced the early release of another Golan resident, Amal Abu Saleh, who was jailed for the murder of a Syrian who crossed the Israeli border. He had been due to remain behind bars until 2023.

The early releases are a "gesture of goodwill" after the repatriation

to Israel last year of the remains of Zachary Baumel, an Israeli soldier missing since the 1982 war in Lebanon, the prisons authority said.

Israeli authorities had promised the release of two Syrian prisoners after the repatriation of the remains.

According to Israeli media, the release of Maqt and Abu Saleh was delayed because the two men wanted to return to the town of Majdal Shams in the annexed Golan Heights, rather than travel to Syrian-held territory.

Maqt told Syrian state news agency SANA his release was "without conditions and that is a victory of the will of the Syrians over the will of the occupier".

SANA said Maqt had been released in August 2012 after 27 years in Israeli detention.

"He was re-arrested on February 25, 2015... after he documented cooperation between the Israeli occupying army and the terrorists of Al-Nusra Front," it said, referring to Syria's then Al-Qaeda affiliate.

Campaigns officially

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on February 1.
CAMPAIGN BEGINS

Immediately after the electoral symbol was allotted, Awami League mayor candidate for DSCC Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh went to Demra area to launch his campaign.

"This is the beginning of a journey to build a developed Dhaka," he said while taking part in the electioneering.

Taposh conducted door-to-door campaign and distributed leaflets among passers-by, shopkeepers and others.

BNP DSCC mayor candidate Ishraque Hossain started his election campaign after Juma prayer at the Baitul Mukarram mosque.

He was accompanied by party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir during the campaign.

"We are in a movement for the restoration of democracy," Ishraque said.

Fakhrul said they were taking part in the election in an attempt to "reinstate democracy" and free BNP leaders Khaleda Zia from jail.

In DNCC, AL mayor candidate Atiqul Islam hit the campaign trail in Uttara after Juma prayer.

He sought people's mandate to finish his incomplete development work.

"I will make releasing of annual income and expenditure of the mayor and ward councillors mandatory," he pledged.

He urged the Election Commission to allow MPs to take part in the campaign.

BNP mayor candidate Tabitha Awal launched his campaign in Uttara.

He said that people would cast their votes against the government's "misrule, abduction, killing and repression".

During the campaign, Tabitha was accompanied by BNP standing committee member Goyeshwar Chandra Roy and his father Abdul Awal Mintoo.

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) mayor candidate for DNCC Sajedul Haq Rubel began his campaign in Mirpur. He was accompanied by CPB President Mujahidul Islam Selim.

They sought votes from citizen promising a clean and liveable Dhaka.

FEWER RUNNERS THIS TIME

The number of candidates for the offices of mayors and councillors in the upcoming Dhaka city corporations polls has dropped compared to the last Dhaka city elections in 2015.

The EC on Thursday said a total of 753 candidates will be running in the elections this year. Of them, 13 are running for the two mayor posts while 740 for councillors.

In 2015, the total number of candidates was 893 -- 36 for mayors and 857 for councillors.

In DSCC, seven candidates are vying for the office of mayor this

year while 335 for general ward councillors and 82 for reserved women councillors.

In DNCC, six mayor candidates, 248 ward councillors and 75 reserved women councillors candidates are running.

SYMBOLS

In DNCC, Awami League's Atiqul got the party symbol "boat", BNP's Tabitha got "sheaf of paddy", CPB's Sajedul got "sickle", Islami Andolan Bangladesh's Sheikh Md Fazle Bari Masud got "fan", Progressive Democratic Party's Shahin Khan got "tiger", and National Peoples Party's Anisur Rahman Dewan got "mango".

In DSCC, AL's Taposh got "boat", BNP's Ishraque got "sheaf of paddy", Jatiya Party's Mohammad Saifuddin got "plough", Islami Andolan Bangladesh's Abdur Rahman got "fan", Bangladesh Congress' Md Akhtaruzzaman got "coconut" and National People's Party's Bahrane Sultan Bahar got "mango" and Gonofront's Abdus Samad got "fish".

Their brutality

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place.

A video clip of the incident went viral yesterday. The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the clip, but decided not to run it since it was too graphic.

The victims are dyeing mill worker Md Nayeem, 20, bus helper Md Ratul, 18, and electrician Amir Hossain, 25 -- all from Brahmanagan Muslim Para area in Fatullah.

Police and local sources said the incident took place at the office of local Awami League leader Alauddin in Fatullah's Kutubpur area.

According to them, the AL leader, also a member of the local union parishad, was present at the scene and the three youths, now in jail, were beaten at his order.

On December 12, two goats were stolen from the house of one Shafiqul Islam in Shahi Mahallah area, according to local police.

Nayeem's uncle Mohammad Shipon said Alauddin called him over the phone on December 31 and informed him that Nayeem was involved in the theft.

Shipon later learnt that Nayeem was handed over to the police.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shipon said, "My nephew is innocent. Even if he was guilty, does anyone have the right to beat someone this mercilessly?"

Nayeem's mother Nazma Begum demanded justice.

Contacted, Alauddin claimed that the theft was captured by a CCTV camera and he intervened after police asked him to "settle" the matter.

He denied that he ordered others to beat the three youths.

Officer-in-Charge Aslam Hossain of Fatullah Police Station said they did not ask Alauddin to resolve anything.

He said they would take action if anyone filed complaints over the torture.

Pak mosque blast

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The chief minister said they would not let anyone destroy the hard-earned peace that had been achieved through the sacrifices of the armed forces and citizens.

Balochistan Home Minister Zia Langove also condemned the blast, saying that "terrorists were scared of Pakistan's development".

"Internal and external enemies are making failed efforts to create panic and unrest in the country," he said in a statement.

Langove vowed that "defeated terrorists will never be allowed to succeed". He expressed solidarity with the victims and said that

no negligence will be tolerated in the medical treatment of the injured.

The incident comes three days after a motorcycle parked close to a Frontier Corps (FC) vehicle blew up in Quetta, leaving two people dead and another 14 injured. That blast had come after a respite of some weeks in what has traditionally been a violence-prone area.

In November, at least two FC personnel were martyred and five others injured in an explosion in Quetta's Kuchlak area. The security personnel were on routine patrol in the area when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated.