



# The Daily Star

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UKRAINE JET CRASH

## Fatal mistake

*Iran admits human error led to shooting down of aircraft; President Rouhani vows to 'prosecute perpetrators'*

AFP, Tehran

Iran said yesterday it "unintentionally" shot down a Ukrainian passenger jet, killing all 176 people aboard, in an abrupt about-turn after initially denying Western claims it was struck by a missile.

President Hassan Rouhani said a military probe into the tragedy had found "missiles fired due to human error" brought down the Boeing 737, calling it an "unforgivable mistake".

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei offered his condolences and ordered the armed forces to address "shortcomings" so that such a disaster does not happen again.

The acknowledgement came after officials in Iran had for days categorically denied Western claims that the Ukraine

International Airlines airliner had been struck by a missile in a catastrophic error.

The jet, which had been bound for Kiev, slammed into a field shortly after taking off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport before dawn on Wednesday.

It came only hours after Iran launched a wave of missiles at bases hosting American forces in Iraq in response to the killing of Qasem Soleimani, one of Iran's top generals, in a US drone strike.

The aerospace commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards accepted full responsibility.

But Brigadier General Amirali Hajizadeh said the missile operator acted independently when he shot down the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



**A perfectly serviceable set of traffic lights, complete with a timer, is ignored as cars go through the red light following the gestures of a policeman at the capital's Kakrail intersection. The photo was taken recently.**

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

UNUTILISED TRAFFIC LIGHTS

## Money wasted, streets made dangerous

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Traffic lights at each side of Kakrail intersection turns green every 160 seconds. But you would probably get into trouble if you abided by the signal while on foot or behind the wheel.

The traffic lights, bought with crores of taka lent by the World Bank (WB), serve only decorative purposes because the vehicles and

pedestrians are controlled by traffic police's hand gestures.

Approaching the intersection from Hare Road in a recent evening, Monwar Hossain, who just came back to the country after years, saw the lights turn green and as the road was relatively empty, he slowed down his car a little.

But a traffic police signaled him to stop at the last moment and he slammed on the brakes as hard as he

could and narrowly avoided being rammed by a bus.

"Had I not been able to stop the car, something terrible would have happened," Monwar told The Daily Star. "What's the point of having the costly traffic lights if they are not followed?"

Between 2002 and 2005, a total of 68 traffic lights were set up spending Tk 13.6 crore under the Dhaka

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



## Stay away from graft, irregularities

President urges VCs

UNB, Dhaka

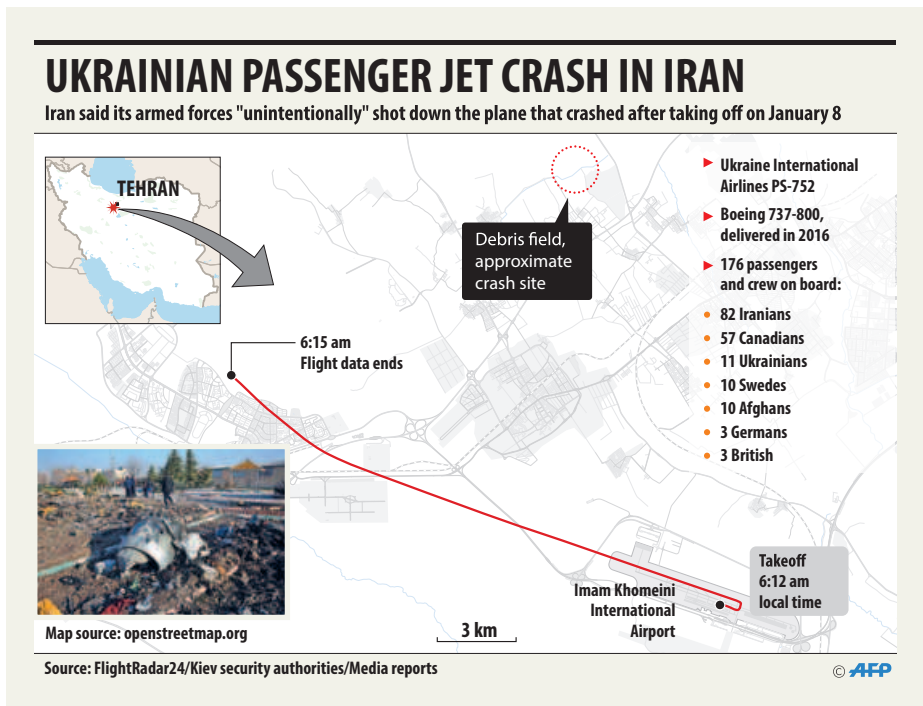
President Abdul Hamid yesterday urged the vice-chancellors of public universities to perform their duties with dedication and honesty and stay away from corruption and irregularities.

"Vice-chancellors are the chief executives of universities. You have to prove your honesty, sincerity and skills while carrying out your duties. What will be the condition of the universities if you allow irregularities or get involved in corruption?" he asked the VCs.

The president was addressing the first convocation of Jagannath University at the capital's Dhupkhola playground.

Hamid, also the chancellor of the university, called upon the teachers to uphold the dignity of their profession without being attracted to any kind of greed.

"You could join any other lucrative job or hold positions if you had wanted. But instead of doing that, you chose teaching as a career. Therefore, you should uphold the dignity

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1  
PHOTO ON PAGE 5

## Najmul ton guides Khulna

SPORTS REPORTER

Khulna Tigers opener Najmul Hossain Shanto became the first local player to score a century in the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) during his side's eight-wicket win over Dhaka Platoon under lights at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The left-hander remained unbeaten on 115 runs off just 57 balls to register his maiden T20 ton with the help of seven sixes and eight fours as

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## Failing to rape, driver kills woman in bus

STAR REPORT

A woman was killed in a bus by its driver after he failed to rape her in Dhaka's Dhamrai upazila on Friday, said police.

The victim was identified as Mamata, 19, a worker of a ceramic factory in the upazila.

Police arrested Firoz Elahi Sohail, 31, the driver of the bus, which belongs to the same factory, hours after recovering the body from beside a road.

During primary interrogation, Firoz confessed to attempting to rape before killing her, said police.

Depok Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of Dhamrai Police Station, said the victim boarded the bus, meant for carrying factory workers, around 4:30am to reach her workplace, which is around three kilometers from her house.

She was the first passenger. At one point, Firoz stopped the bus beside a road and attempted to rape her, the OC said, quoting the arrestee.

As the girl bit at his hand to escape, Firoz strangled her to death and dumped her body by the road, the OC said, adding that the body bore injury marks.

Depok said upon filing of a general diary by the victim's

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3, 11

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

DHAKA CITY POLLS

## EC, AL at odds over lawmakers campaigning

RASHIDUL HASAN and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Tension has grown between the ruling Awami League and Election Commission over MPs participation in the Dhaka city polls campaign.

After a meeting with the chief election commissioner (CEC) and other election commissioners at the Nirbachon Bhaban yesterday, senior AL leaders said MPs could take part in campaigns.

However, after the same meeting, CEC KM Nurul Huda said the MPs participation would be considered a breach of conduct.

On January 9, Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukdar said the "level playing field" would be affected if MPs started electioneering.

"With concern, I'm noticing that parliament members are taking part in campaigns. It is a clear violation of the Electoral Code of Conduct 2016," Mahbub said in an unofficial note to the CEC.

After meeting an AL delegation on January 8, Talukdar said, "There is law... Very important persons like ministers and members of parliament cannot participate in any election activities and campaigns. They can only cast their

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6





# Row erupts in Germany over plans for Turkish schools

AFP, Berlin

The proposed opening of three Turkish schools in Germany has rekindled a long-standing row over the perceived influence of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government on the country's three-million strong Turkish community.

Coming after years of debate over Turkish influence in German mosques, the proposal has met fierce criticism from conservative politicians.

"We don't want Erdogan schools in Germany," declared Markus Blume,

general secretary of the Bavarian CSU, the sister party of Angela Merkel's ruling conservatives, in an interview with media group RND yesterday.

The German government is currently in negotiations with its Turkish counterparts to open three private Turkish schools in Frankfurt, Cologne and Berlin.

While critics such as Blume fear that the schools will extend Erdogan's influence over the Turkish diaspora, Ankara sees the proposal as a simple reciprocal move.

# Stay away from graft

FROM PAGE 1

of the profession without being attracted to any kind of greed or lure. Only then the students will consider you as their ideal."

He said some teachers use the university job as a shield. "They spend busy hours in weeklong evening courses and taking classes at private universities. They are very sincere in all these activities."

On the other hand, the same teachers are very reluctant to taking their scheduled classes, the president said.

"These teachers are also very serious about completing the syllabus. So, they take classes for three to five hours continuously. Sometimes, even on the weekends, students are called to attend classes for several hours together without bothering about how much they understand."

Hamid also urged the VCs to look into the matter strictly. The academic programmes of the universities must be monitored to ensure that those were being administered properly, he

added.

Mentioning that the major portion of the total expenditures of public universities comes from the national exchequer, he said, "You must give the highest priority to the responsibilities of that university where you work."

Terming VCs and teachers the main driving force in running a university, the president said each public university has its own law. Therefore, they must be respectful to the law and abide by that, he added.

Noted physicist Prof Emeritus Dr Arun Kumar Basak delivered speech as the convocation speaker. A total of 18,284 graduates and post-graduates were conferred upon degrees at the convocation ceremony.

Education Minister Dipu Moni and JnU VC Prof Mijanur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

The Speaker of Jatiya Sangsad, cabinet members, lawmakers, VCs of different universities, and senior civil and military officials, among others, were present.

# Failing to rape

FROM PAGE 1

brother over her going missing, police recovered the body from a bush beside the road in Kawalipara area and sent it to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College for autopsy.

The autopsy would confirm the cause of death and whether she was raped before being killed, the OC told our Savar correspondent.

Police seized the bus and a murder case was filed in this regard.

**MAN ARRESTED FOR RAPING TWO GIRLS**

Police on Friday night arrested the manager of a mess on charge of raping two female boarders in the city's Rampura area recently.

A Dhaka Court yesterday sent GM Mushfiqul Alam, 38, to jail after police produced him before it, Akhtaruzzaman Munshi, sub-inspector of Rampura Police Station, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Both the victims, aged 19 and 18, were working girls and used to share a flat in a mess in Rampura area.

The SI said the accused used to run several messes in adjacent buildings but the dining was common. As the 19-year-old victim was alone in her room on Thursday evening, the accused raped her and warned her not to disclose it to anyone.

He also raped her roommate on December 25 and January 1. But she kept silent in fear of social humiliation and reprisal by the rapist, the SI said.

The victims were sent to the one-stop crisis centre at Dhaka Medical College Hospital after they filed two separate cases against Mushfique on Friday night, police said.

According to a case forwarding submitted to court by the SI, the accused is a serial rapist, who has been running messes for about nine years. He maintains good relations with female mess members and rape them whenever he gets a chance.

Many of the victims kept mum in fear or considering the social stigma. After the two rape victims came forward, many other girls lodged verbal complaints against him, the SI

said in the forwarding.

**ACCUSED ARRESTED OVER GANG-RAPE**

Meanwhile, Rab yesterday arrested another accused in the case filed over the gang-rape of a 13-year-old girl in Keraniganj.

Md Ratan, 18, from Shariatpur, was arrested in Savar, said Maj Mohammad Anisujjaman, a company commander of Rab-10.

Kamrangirchar police arrested five others, including a female friend of the victim, on Friday, hours after the girl was raped at an under-construction building on Thursday night.

Three of them -- Hasan, Sifat, Sabuj -- gave confessional statements before magistrates, while another accused, Rony, was placed on a one-day remand.

The victim's friend was sent to Gazipur Correction Centre as she was underaged.

**GANG-RAPE IN N'GANJ**

A class-nine student was kidnapped by three men on Thursday and was raped until she was released yesterday morning.

Police arrested two youths -- Towsib Mia, 22, and his friend Afzal Hossain, 24 -- after the girl's mother filed a case with Rugganj Police Station yesterday, said Rafiqul Haque, inspector (operations) of the station.

The police officer said Towsib borrowed Tk 500 from the victim a couple of days ago. As the victim was on her way home after taking the money back from Towsib on Thursday, the two men, along with their accomplice Abu Sufian, dragged her into a microbus and took her to a house in Rupshi area.

The accused confined the girl there for two days and raped her, police said quoting the case statement.

As the girl fainted, the accused dropped her in Mouchak area yesterday morning. On information, the family members rushed there and took her to hospital.

Rafiqul said the arrestees during primary interrogation confessed to raping the girl. He also said they were trying to arrest Sufian.

# Money wasted

FROM PAGE 1

Urban Transport Project funded by the WB. The first two sets of lights were installed at Gulshan-1 and -2 intersections. But in a 2006 report, the WB mentioned that the system went out of order due to lack of maintenance.

Under the Clean Air and Sustainable Environment project that ended in March this year, Tk 112 crore funded by the WB were spent between 2010 and 2018 for repairing and installing 100 traffic lights and other intersection infrastructure. The city corporations handed the lights to Dhaka Metropolitan Police. But the latter does not have any monitoring and maintenance capacity, officials said.

Visiting at least 30 intersections in the capital recently, this correspondent found that the lights were working only at six.

At Gulshan-2, a traffic policeman was seen struggling to control traffic flow. Police often use ropes to control traffic at Rajarbagh and Gulshan-1 intersections.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority took another Tk-15.6 crore project, funded by Japan International Cooperation

Agency, to set up what officials an Intelligent Traffic System at Gulistan, Paltan, Gulshan-1 and Mohakhali intersections. These lights may start operation soon.

Transport expert Prof Shamsul Hoque of Buet said, "We need to have people to look after these traffic lights. Launching one project after another will only help those who are involved in the projects."

Asked why the automatic signaling system is not being followed at Kakrail, Traffic Inspector Tariqul Alam said, "Nightingale and Kakrail intersections are only about 100 metres apart. If we follow the same timeframe for each intersection, the tailbacks would be too long."

Contacted, Chief Town Planner Sirajul Islam at Dhaka South City Corporation said most of the traffic lights were out of order because the DMP didn't look after them.

Additional DMP Commissioner (traffic) Mofiz Uddin Ahmed said police are working to form a separate division to look after the lights.

"There should be a system in which the intersections are further apart so that traffic can be controlled as per the automatic signals," he said.



Thousands of devotees flood the banks of the Turag river in Kamarpara area of Tongi yesterday. The first phase of Biswa Ijtema will end today with the Akheri Munajat. Story on page 16.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# Najmul ton guides Khulna

FROM PAGE 1

Khulna chased down the huge 206-run target posted by Dhaka with eleven balls to spare. It was the highest ever successful run chase in BPL history.

With this win, Khulna climbed to second position on the points table, just behind Rajshahi Royals despite having an equal eight wins in twelve games due to the net run rate. The two sides will face off in the first qualifier tomorrow evening.

Chattogram Challengers also have eight wins out of twelve matches,

however, they hold third position due to their net run rate and will take on the fourth placed Dhaka in the eliminator tomorrow.

The winner of the eliminator match will face the losing team of the first qualifier on January 15 while the final is scheduled for January 17.

In chase of the daunting target, Khulna made a flying start as Najmul and Mehedi Hasan Miraz paired up to add a quick 70 runs for the opening stand. Miraz was eventually dismissed on 45 runs off 25 balls but Najmul went on to register his maiden T20

hundred off 51 balls.

Skipper Mushfiquur Rahim remained not out with 18 at the other end as Najmul struck the winning boundary to seal a fantastic win for Khulna.

Earlier, Dhaka posted a big 205 for four total in their allotted 20 overs, courtesy of a 59-ball 91-run knock from opener Mominul Haque. Mominul, along with Mahedi Hasan, added 153 runs for the fourth wicket with the latter remaining unbeaten after a quick-fire 68 off 36 balls to help post the huge total, which however ultimately went in vain.

## PLANES BROUGHT DOWN BY MISSILES SINCE 1973

**298 KILLED, UKRAINE**

July 17, 2014: A Boeing 777 of Malaysia Airlines was shot down over eastern Ukraine, killing all 298 people aboard. The Kiev authorities and separatist pro-Russian rebels accuse each other of firing the missile that downed the flight.

**11 KILLED, SOMALIA**

March 23, 2007: An Ilyushin Il-76 cargo aircraft belonging to a Belarusian airline was shot down by a rocket shortly after takeoff from the Somali capital of Mogadishu, killing 11 people.

**78 KILLED, BLACK SEA**

October 4, 2001: 78 people were killed when a Siberia Airlines Tupolev Tu-154 exploded mid-flight over the Black Sea due to the accidental firing of a Ukrainian missile.

**290 KILLED, GULF**

July 3, 1988: An Airbus A-300 belonging to Iran Air, was shot down in the Gulf by two missiles fired from a US frigate patrolling the Strait of Hormuz, apparently mistaking it for a fighter aircraft, killing 290 passengers.

**269 KILLED, SAKHALIN**

September 1, 1983: A Boeing 747 belonging to Korean Air was shot down by Soviet fighter jets over the island of Sakhalin, killing all 269 people on board.

**108 KILLED, SINAI DESERT**

February 21, 1973: A Libyan Arab Airline Boeing 727 was shot down by Israeli fighter jets over the Sinai Desert, killing 108 people.

# N Ireland govt returns after three-year suspension

AFP, Belfast

Northern Ireland's government will reopen for the first time in three years after rival parties rallied around a new power-sharing agreement that can help the volatile province handle the pressures of Brexit.

The region's devolved assembly at Stormont collapsed in January 2017 over a scandal caused by the runaway costs of a renewable energy scheme.

Numerous rounds of increasingly acrimonious negotiations failed to reach a solution and basic services were left unattended.

Pro-Irish republicans and pro-British unionists were pushed into an agreement on Friday by the threat of a new regional election if they missed a looming deadline on Monday.

The UK government in London also promised a large cash infusion into the tiny but strategically vital region if the republican Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) came to terms.

"Sinn Fein has taken the decision to re-enter the power-sharing institution and nominate ministers to the power-sharing executive," party leader Mary Lou McDonald told reporters.

# EC, AL at odds

FROM PAGE 1

votes. It is not possible to go beyond the law."

The AL-EC tension began after the AL on January 3 formed two committees to coordinate the campaigns for mayor hopefuls from the AL tent.

AL advisory committee members Tofail Ahmed and Amir Hossain Amu will lead the committees for DNCC and DSCC. Both of them are lawmakers.

AL presidium member Faruk Khan MP and Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif MP are members of the DNCC committee. Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque is a member of the DSCC committee.

Talking to reporters after meeting the AL delegation led by Tofail Ahmed, the CEC yesterday said MPs would not be able to seek votes on behalf of any candidate in the city polls.

The CEC said MPs were not allowed to be coordinators of a campaign. Be it indoors or outdoors, they must keep away from any election related activities.

"We have explained it to them. The prime minister, ministers, and MPs cannot speak on behalf of or against a candidate."

Asked whether Tofail and Amu would be able to act as campaign coordinators, the CEC said, "I think they will not be able to do that... We are yet to be informed officially about this. Once we are formally informed, we will tell them that they won't be able to become campaign coordinators."

After yesterday's meeting at the EC, Tofail said they went to the EC to learn about the electoral code of conduct regarding the bar on MPs taking part in the election campaign.

MPs have no bar to act as coordinators staying inside their office, he said.

Coordinators will be able to do every election related activities, except for seeking votes, he added.

The AL senior leader claimed that all the election commissioners, except Mahbub Talukder, agreed with them.

Meanwhile, AL leader Mohammed Nasim yesterday said the EC should amend its electoral code of conduct allowing MPs to participate in the campaign.

"It's unfortunate we couldn't participate in the campaign," he said at AL President Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi office.



A toddler is being given a capsule of vitamin A at a health centre in the capital's Mugdapara during the semi-annual national vitamin A+ campaign yesterday. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ





The election buzz continued throughout the day with mayor candidates of Awami League and BNP campaigning in full swing in DSCC and DNCC areas. Clockwise from top left, Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh greets prospective voters on RK Mission Road in Old Dhaka. Ishraque Hossain distributes leaflets in Shahjahanpur area. Atiqul Islam waves at people in Mirpur-1. Tabitha Awal shakes hands with a resident in Uttara's Azampur.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, COLLECTED

## A busy day for candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mayoral and councillor candidates for the two Dhaka city corporations polls spent a busy day yesterday trying to woo prospective voters.

A 19-day campaign for elections to Dhaka north and south city corporations officially began on Friday with the ruling party candidates pledging to continue the ongoing development work in the capital.

Meanwhile, the BNP candidates said they would participate in the elections to DNCC and DSCC for "re-establishing democracy" in the country.

The campaign will continue until midnight of January 28. The voting will start at 8am on January 30.

DNCC

On the second day of the campaign, candidates and their supporters held street meetings, conducted door-to-door campaigns and distributed leaflets among passers-by.

While following the campaign trails in Uttarkhan, Chalaban and Azampur areas, this correspondent saw people were enthusiastic and hopeful that their problems will be addressed and given priority.

These areas became a part of DNCC last year. "The roads in Chalaban area are very narrow for vehicles to ply. We hope the candidates will address the issue and keep their pledges once elected," said shop-owner Rahamat Mia.

Nazrul Islam of Azampur said, "We continue to face waterlogging issues. The mayoral and councillor candidates must do something about it if they want our votes."

Mostafa Kamal, a private job holder from Uttarkhan, said their main concern is waste management and the mayoral candidates should give priority to that.

Amid such expectations from people, Awami League



## Govt to grade recruiting agents based on efficiency

Expatriates' welfare ministry to monitor low-performing agents

JAMIL MAHMUD

The government is going to identify "outstanding" recruiting agents based on their track record under a new monitoring mechanism -- aiming to efficiently promote human resource export.

As per the mechanism, a committee headed by an additional secretary of the expatriates' welfare ministry will evaluate agents' performance in light of 14 types of activities related to labour migration and its trade.

For example, an agent will be evaluated as an efficient one if he or she can arrange recruitment of 200 workers whose migration costs will be borne by the recruiters.

Likewise, an agent will be recognised as a superior one if 40

percent of workers sent by them in a year are in the "skilled" category.

This way, recruiting agents will be rated or classified in four categories: Grade-A (outstanding), Grade-B (satisfactory), Grade-C (standard), and Grade-D (below standard).

A recruiting agent will be given a grade for two years, according to the draft rules.

The government will promote the classification and indicator against each of the grades among people, especially those who are interested in recruiting agents and overseas employment, says a clause of the draft rules.

Besides, the government will "consider and implement" different incentives including recognition for "safe, quality and responsible"

activities on a regular basis, it says.

Ahmed Munirur Saleheen, additional secretary at expatriates' welfare ministry, said the mechanism will help the ministry promote competent agents.

"A person [recruiting agent] facing punishment will obviously not be included in Grade-A," he recently told this newspaper over phone.

Saleheen said the ministry will strengthen monitoring of low-performing recruiting agents and try to find out the underlying reasons to take necessary steps for improvement.

The rules will be formulated in line with the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act-2013, said officials of the ministry.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

INCREASING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## A failure of the state and society: Naripokkho

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite public and private initiatives, violence against women continues to escalate, which indicates a failure of the state and society, said activists of Naripokkho, a women's rights platform.

Terming the involvement of ruling party men with such violence "deeply concerning", the platform, in a campaign yesterday in front of Dhaka City College, also urged all to step up efforts against such violence.

They organised the event as part of their campaign titled "Drive against Violence on Women 2019".

Naripokkho has been staging the event fortnightly in the city since September last year.

Members of the platform staged a sit-in, gave away leaflets, shouted slogans, and played protest songs at the spot as part of

the campaign.

Two members of the organisation read out a leaflet which contains the current scenario of violence against women across the country.

Compiling data from different newspapers, they said that around 1,115 women have been raped between January and October 2019.

Of them, 57 were killed after rape while eight died by suicide.

Moreover, three women and two men were killed for protesting rape.

Leaders and activists of the ruling party are directly or indirectly involved with many incidents, which is very concerning... absence of rule of law and justice, unethical influence of ruling party men, and corruption in the administration have left the country in this situation, they said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## PM leaves for Abu Dhabi today

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will leave Dhaka today for Abu Dhabi on a three-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to attend "Abu Dhabi Sustainable Week", "Zayed Sustainable Awards Ceremony" and other programmes.

A VIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the premier and her entourage will depart Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport for Abu Dhabi at 5pm.

The flight is scheduled to reach Abu Dhabi International Airport at 8:55pm (local time) where Bangladesh Ambassador to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Bring an end to crimes against humanity

Bangladesh to UN Security Council

UNB, Dhaka

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, Ambassador Rabab Fatima, has urged the UN Security Council to bring an end to crimes against humanity and genocide.

She was addressing the Security Council's open debate on Friday on "Upholding the United Nations Charter to maintain International Peace and Security".

Reiterating Bangladesh's abiding commitment to the UN, Ambassador Fatima recalled Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's maiden speech at the UN in 1974 where he said, "The noble ideals enshrined in the charter of the United Nations are the very ideals for which millions of our people

have made the supreme sacrifice."

It is from this same steadfast commitment Bangladesh continues to be a leading contributor to the UN peacekeeping, said a press release yesterday.

The humanity and courageous leadership shown by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in hosting more than a million persecuted Rohingyas -- which saved the region from potential destabilisation -- also stems from that commitment, the ambassador added.

Highlighting the new and emerging challenges such as cybercrimes, climate change, poverty and inequality, violent extremism, and displacements, she underscored the growing relevance of multilateralism and the UN in addressing those.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Year-long event involving UN planned

'Mujib Borsho' countdown begins in Bangladesh missions

AGENCIES

Ambassador Rabab Fatima, the permanent representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, has announced that a year-long programme involving the UN will be organised to celebrate the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

She made the announcement on Friday while celebrating Homecoming Day of Bangabandhu as well as inauguration of the countdown to "Mujib Borsho" at the New York mission's Bangabandhu Auditorium, reports UNB.

The messages of the president and prime minister issued on the occasion were read out at the beginning of the event. Later, a documentary highlighting the day's significance was screened.

Ambassador Fatima said the return of Bangabandhu to independent Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Rape has become an epidemic: Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Alarmed by the growing incidents of rape in the country, Jatiya Oikyafront leader Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday urged people to forge a movement to ensure people's security and establish the rule of law.

"Rape has turned into an epidemic, we are getting news of rape not only from Dhaka but also from Chattogram and rest of the country every morning through newspapers," Dr Kamal, also the president of Gonoforum, said.

While addressing a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka, the eminent jurist blamed the deteriorating law and order situation for this increase in rape incidents.

"Why is there a rising trend in rape cases? Why does lacking still remain in our law and order? It has really emerged as a deep concern for us," Kamal said at the human chain.

Claiming that it is constitutionally recognised that there will be rule of law and security of people's lives and properties in the country, Kamal said those who take charge of the country should give first priority to these two issues.

"Why will this not stop? This should be stopped immediately and effective steps should be taken to this end. Otherwise, give the people a scope to elect a capable government that can free the society from violence," Kamal said.

He also criticised the government for its failure in dealing with the issues and said there is no democracy in the country in a true sense.

"We are seeing a light of hope as people are standing up now. Let's come forward unitedly to continue the fight for establishing effective democracy in the country," he said.

### DHAKA TODAY

DIALOGUE

On creating a women friendly Dhaka

Organiser: Bangladesh Mahila Parishad

Venue: Sufia Kamal Bhaban, Segunbagicha

Time: 11am

SEMINAR

On climate change adaptive embankment construction

Organiser: Coast Trust

Venue: Cirdap

Time: 10:30am

DISCUSSION

Observing the 86th execution day of revolutionary Masterda Surya Sen

Organiser: Siren

Venue: Masterda Surja Sen Hall, Dhaka University

Time: 3:30pm

CELEBRATION

Marking the 157th Birth

Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

Organiser: Vivekananda Shiksha O Sangskriti Parishad

Venue: Jagannath Hall, University of Dhaka

Time: 9:30am

FAIR

Dhaka International Trade Fair

Organiser: Ministry of commerce and Export Bureau of Bangladesh

Venue: Agargaon

Time: 10am



Dr Kamal Hossain speaking at the human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club.

PHOTO: STAR



Another

FROM PAGE 5  
quoted the family as saying. He had been missing since then, SI Farid added.

The auto-rickshaw is yet to be found. An investigation is underway, said police.

The body was sent to Narayanganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

On January 5, another battery-run auto-rickshaw driver was found killed in Narayanganj.

The deceased -- identified as Tipu Howlader, 25 -- was from Fatullah's Bhoile area.

A failure

FROM PAGE 3  
In this context, they urged people from all walks, the parliament, the judiciary, and the government to stand strong against violence on women.

They demanded to form and activate anti-sexual harassment cell in all educational institutes and workplaces, examining implementation of related acts, and taking steps accordingly.



PHOTO: STAR

Naripokkho formed a human chain in front of City College in Dhaka yesterday, protesting violence against women including rape.

Govt to grade recruiting

FROM PAGE 3  
A final draft of the rules has been submitted recently to the law ministry for vetting, said an official of the expatriates' welfare ministry who is involved in the drafting process.

The rules will be published through a gazette notification, according to ministry officials.

The move comes amidst widespread allegation that recruiting agencies resort to malpractices while sending workers abroad.

At present, over 1,200 licensed recruiting agencies are operating in the country, according to expatriates' welfare ministry website.

The ministry has so far suspended licenses of 168 recruiting agents and cancelled licenses of another three for their involvement in labour recruitment-related malpractices, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training.

Under the new mechanism, a guilty recruiting agent will be penalised and their status will be revoked while recruiting license can be cancelled based on the "nature of punishment".

As per the draft rules, there will be evaluation on number of migrant workers sent by a recruiting agent, as sending 1,000 workers in a year will be considered "high performance".

Recruiting agents will be evaluated for sending female migrant workers abroad, for sending migrant workers based on

demand letters, and for having better financial transaction record through banking channel, it says.

Besides, they will be recognised if they pick migrant workers from the government database.

Also, they will be evaluated if they have training centres in operation, for providing service through own website, better educational qualification, trade experience, for office at authorised location with IT facilities, and for branch office outside Dhaka.

The agents will be evaluated on the basis of an aggregated 100 points for 14 types of activities, the draft rules say.

A recruiting agent will earn 20 points for sending 1,000 migrant workers in a year, 10 more points for 40 percent "skilled" workers, and another 5 points for sending 50 female workers, it adds.

According to the draft rules, skilled workers are those individuals who are "capable of doing their job without other's instructions", such as welders, electricians and drivers.

Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies Secretary General Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman praised the new initiative, saying the law aims to increase competitiveness among recruiting agents.

He, however, said there is concern that those agents who will be graded as low performers may lose trade opportunities under the new initiative.

A busy day

FROM PAGE 3  
and BNP mayoral candidates continued their campaigns. BNP's Tabith Awal started his at 9am from Azampur in Uttara while AL's Atiqul Islam began his in Mirpur around noon.

Tabith was seen holding sheaves of paddy -- electoral symbol of BNP -- while campaigning.

"Dakhinkhan and Uttarkhan areas have waterlogging problems. These areas came under DNCC recently and they are yet to get necessary civic facilities," he said, promising that he will provide all the due facilities to the area, once elected mayor.

Tabith also inaugurated campaign offices of the BNP councillor candidates. He ended his campaign in Khilkhet area around 5:30pm.

Meanwhile, Atiqul spent most of the day in Mirpur, talking to residents and greeting passers-by.

He promised to address waterlogging issues in the area and making the city women-friendly and congestion-free. "I have worked for you [people] as a mayor for nine months. I want to continue serving you," he told a rally in Mirpur-1.

DSCC

Awami League mayor candidate Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh started his campaign from the historic Rose Garden mansion in Old Dhaka around 11am.

He continued his campaign in the old part of the town throughout the day, greeting residents and handing out leaflets among passers-by.

At one point, he visited the residence of former mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Sadeque Hossain Khoka in Gopibagh and spoke to locals. Khoka's son is BNP mayor candidate Ishraque Hossain.

While talking to journalists there, Taposh said he believes in political harmony, which will prevail in Dhaka from now on as development can be attained through coordination and cooperation.

Ishraque, on the other hand, started the day near Kamalapur Railway Station. He visited Shahjahanpur Railway Colony and spoke to residents.

PM leaves

FROM PAGE 3  
the UAE Muhammad Imran will receive the premier at the airport.

After the reception, a motorcade will escort her to Shangri-La Hotel in Abu Dhabi, where she will be staying during her visit to the UAE.

On January 13, Hasina is expected to attend the "Abu Dhabi Sustainable Week" at 11am and "Zayed Sustainable Awards Ceremony" at 12pm at ICC Hall, Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC).

Later at 6:30 in the evening, the premier will join the envoys' conference at the hotel.

The next day, Hasina is expected to meet UAE Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid al Maktoum and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan and wife of UAE Founder and Founding President Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak Al Ketbi.

At 5:30pm, the premier will attend an interview session on "The Critical Role of Women in Delivering Climate Action" at Hall-11, the ADNEC.

Concluding the three-day official visit to the UAE, the premier will return home on January 14.

Bring an end to crimes

FROM PAGE 3  
This was the first open debate of the council this year chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vietnam Pham Binh Minh, marking the advent of the 75th anniversary of the UN Charter.

The meeting was addressed by over 100 member states. António Guterres, UN secretary general, and Mary Robinson, chair of the elders, briefed the council at the beginning of the debate.

Three killed in road

FROM PAGE 5  
of Sadar upazila. The deceased was identified as Ujjal Hossain, 28, son of Ashir Uddin from Shakhariadah village in Harinakundu upazila of the district.

Police said the accident happened while Ujjal, a computer operator at Jhenidah DC office, was heading to town.

**বিক্রয় হইবে**  
একটি ১০০% রপ্তানীমুখী Garments Accessories Factory ৪ তলা বিশিষ্ট সর্বমোট ৪২,০০০ স্কয়ার ফিট space, ২৬ কান্ট্রা জমি এবং সমস্ত দেশোদারীত্ব সহকারে বিক্রয় হবে। অক্ষয়ী ক্রেতাদল যোগাযোগ করুনঃ ০১৭১৩৩৬৯৪৫৬

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a2i launched eight digital

FROM PAGE 5  
Union Digital Centers are connected with ekShop.

On the other hand, there are various services that were launched by Service Innovation Fund (SIF), such as developing "telephone based home palliative care service" in the Centre for Palliative Care at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU); introducing online General Diary, and Lost and Found service; services to address the mental health issues of women; introducing online KAIZEN training; and launching the e-cataloguing and standards sale for Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI).

To make the palliative care service popular in Bangladesh, the telephone-based Home Palliative Care Service was introduced, which will provide the patients with services such as, website portal, hotline service, video-call service, home care, and ensuring essential medicines for the patients.

The online General Diary (GD) service was introduced by SIF, and the lost and found service was also included. It will simplify the whole system of GD while the delivery of the final report will be faster.

To increase the production of jute mills in the country, the KAIZEN, a concept referring to business activities that continuously improve all functions and involve all employees from the CEO to the assembly line workers, was necessary.

SIF has provided the KAIZEN training through online and made the access easier for everyone in the jute industry.

Meanwhile, the online catalogue was launched by Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) which allows the entrepreneurs and the local businessmen to know the prices and purchase the standard one.

Policy advisor of a2i, Anir Chowdhury said, "Nearly 700 services have been digitalised in different ministries and government offices so far with a view to digitising the country".

Coordinating with the ICT Division, different ministries and government offices, a2i is assisting the government to establish Digital Bangladesh, he added.

Year-long event involving

FROM PAGE 3  
in 1972 marked the fulfillment of independence. The permanent representative also formally inaugurated a countdown clock, to be displayed at the mission.

Meanwhile, the countdown to Mujib Borsho was also inaugurated amid much enthusiasm and festivity at Bangladesh missions in Washington DC, Tokyo, Seoul, Hanoi and London, reports BSS.

Bangladesh mission in Washington DC also observed the event in a befitting manner, attended by Ambassador Mohammad Ziauddin.

Earlier, the ambassador accompanied by officials and employees of the embassy placed wreaths at the statue of the Father of the Nation.

In Hanoi, the mission organised a discussion at the chancery where

Ambassador Samina Naz was present as the chief guest.

Besides, Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi observed Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day through a discussion. After the discussion, the mission observed a live telecast of the countdown ceremony in Dhaka.

Messages from President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina were read out at all the programmes.

The prime minister formally inaugurated the nationwide ceremony at the capital's National Parade Square where Bangabandhu landed in the newly-liberated Bangladesh on January 10, 1972.

The PM opened the event through unveiling the logo of the Mujib Borsho, to be celebrated from March 17, 2020 to March 26, 2021.

Maternity leave for bank staff now 6 months

Bss, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank has issued a circular directing authorities of the scheduled banks to ensure maternity leave of six months for their female staff.

The circular of the central bank dated January 9 said that this directive has been issued as per section 45 (1) under the Bank Company Act, 1991 and this will take immediate effect.

It said the tenure of maternity leave for all permanent and temporary female officials and employees of the scheduled banks will be six months and they will be able to enjoy such leave maximum twice during their entire service period.

The bank officials and employees concerned will get their usual salaries and allowances during the maternal leave period.

BETTER TREATMENT

Textile minister to be flown to S'pore today

Bss, Dhaka

Ailing Textile and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi, who is currently admitted to the capital's Asgar Ali Hospital due to pneumonia, will be taken to Singapore for better treatment today.

The minister will be taken to Singapore General Hospital by an air ambulance this morning, a ministry press release said yesterday. He is now at the ICU of the hospital as his condition has deteriorated, it added.

Golam Dastagir Gazi participated in the Liberation War under Sector-2. As a fighter of the famous "crack platoon", he participated in various front wars. In recognition of his contribution to the war, the government honoured him with the title "Bir Pratik".

Rapists cannot enjoy

FROM PAGE 3  
"So the fight should also be against capitalism," he said. Meanwhile, another group of DU students continued to protest at the base of Raju Sculpture, demanding highest punishment for the rapist.

On January 5, a student of the university was raped and tortured in the capital's Kurmitola area.

Three days later, Rab arrested Majnu, a 30-year-old, from Shewra area in Dhaka amid a firestorm of protests and condemnations across the country.

Majnu was placed on a seven-day remand by a Dhaka court on January 9.

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This is to notify to all concerned that the following tender has been published through e-GP Portal.

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Tender ID: 409708	Procurement of	27.01.2020 16.00 hrs
Reference No. AGMP/PT/EGP/07/2019-20	Thermo Density Meter/Thermo Hydro Meter	28.01.2020 15.00 hrs
Publishing date: 09-01-2020		

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১.	পাড়ির ধরণঃ (ডাবল এসিমুক্ত মাইক্রোবাস)	ডাবল এসিমুক্ত মাইক্রোবাস	
২.	পাড়ির ব্রাড	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
৩.	পাড়ির মডেল (মডেল বছর ২০১২ এর পূর্বে নয়)	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
৪.	প্রস্তুতকারী দেশ	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
৫.	পাড়ির রেজিস্ট্রেশন নং	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
৬.	পাড়ির ইঞ্জিনের মডেল নং	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
৭.	দরজার সংখ্যাঃ ০৪/০৫ দরজা	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
৮.	সিডি/ইঞ্জিন ক্ষমতা	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
৯.	মাস্টার আসন সংখ্যাঃ ৮/৯ আসনের নিম্নে নহে	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১০.	পাড়ির রং (সাদা/সিলতার অগ্নাধিকার)	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১১.	পাড়ি কত কিলোমিটার চলেছে	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১২.	সার্ভিস/সেবা দেয়ার দিন সময় ও পরিমাণঃ সপ্তাহে সর্বোচ্চ ৬ দিন, প্রতিদিন গড়ে ১২০ কিমিঃ পাড়ি চলাচল করবে। সাধারণ দিনে প্রতিদিন সপ্তাহে ৭.৩০টা থেকে রাত ৯.৩০টা পর্যন্ত চলাচল করবে। সপ্তাহে অধিবেনবকালীন অধিবেশন সমাপ্তির অর্থ ঘন্টা পর পর্যন্ত পাড়ি চলাচল করবে	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১৩.	এয়ারকন্ডিশনের অবস্থাঃ (ডাবল এসিমুক্ত মাইক্রোবাস) উদ্ভূতমালের হতে হবে	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১৪.	অন্যান্যঃ ডাবল এসিমুক্ত মাইক্রোবাস, টিপিট, উভম ডেকোরেশন, এয়ার কন্ডিশন পরিভার পরিষ্কার, উত্তমকক্ষে চলাচলে সক্ষম এবং আধুনিক সকল সুযোগসুবিধা সম্পন্ন	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১৫.	দৈনিক ১৪ ঘন্টা সেবা প্রদান হিসেবে দৈনিক মূল্য	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১৬.	দৈনিক ১৪ ঘন্টা হিসেবে (২৬ দিন সেবা প্রদান করা বাক্য) মাসিক মূল্য	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১৭.	ড্রাইভারের যোগ্যঃ কমপক্ষে ৮ম শ্রেণী পাস, 'মার্ট', 'অন্', লগ বুক লিখতে সক্ষম এবং হালকা/ভাড়া পাড়ি চালানার বৈধ লাইসেন্স থাকতে হবে	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১৮.	পাড়ির যান্ত্রিকী জ্বালানি, রোড বরফ, ড্রাইভারের বেতনসহ অন্যান্য যান্ত্রিকীয় দরদাতা কর্তৃক পরিশোধযোগ্য। এ সংক্রান্ত কোন ব্যয় প্রকল্প হতে বহন করা হবে না	দরদাতা কর্তৃক পূরণযোগ্য	
১৯.	সরকারী ছুটির দিনে এবং ক্ষুঃ ও শনিবারে পাড়ি চলাচলের বিবরণ	প্রকল্পের আবেদনাতা না থাকিলে পাড়ি চলাচল করিতে না এবং সরকারি ছুটির দিনগুলিতে পাড়ি চলাচল না করিলে বিল পরিশোধে কর্তৃপক্ষ বাধ্য নহে।	
২। দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়ের <a href="http://www.parliament.gov.bd">www.parliament.gov.bd</a> ওয়েবসাইটে পাওয়া যাবে।			
এম. এ. কামাল সিদ্দিকী প্রকল্প পরিচালক, এসপি/সিপিডি প্রকল্প বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা			
জিডি-৭৭			



## Three killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed in road accidents in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Chattogram, two persons -- including a police constable -- were killed as a motorcycle carrying them and a vehicle collided on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Foujdarhat area of Sitakunda.

The victims -- Alamgir Hossain, 24, the constable; and Shahidul Islam, his relative -- were from Cumilla, said police.

The accident occurred in the morning, said Abdul Awal, officer-in-charge of Bar Awlia Highway Police Station, adding that the vehicle was yet to be identified.

In Jhenidah, a motorcyclist was killed as a microbus and the motorbike collided in Kighshook Brick Kiln area

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Couple held for fake savings certificates worth Tk 9 crore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police arrested a couple in Khulna for allegedly faking savings certificates worth Tk 9 crore.

HMA Barik alias Badal alias Hawlader alias Mostak Ahmed and his spouse Murshida Afrin were arrested from Khalishpur area on January 7, Faruk Hossain, additional superintendent of CID, according to a press briefing at CID headquarters in Dhaka yesterday.

The Economic Crime Squad of the Organised Crime Unit of CID arrested the couple for misappropriating Tk 8.65 crore from two private banks by faking identities and amassing loans, the CID official said.

"The ring has 21 members who embezzle money from banks by showing fake savings certificates with the help of bank officials," said the CID official.

This gang has been engaging in fraud since 2004 and there are seven cases against them filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission, he added.

The arrested couple has Tk 2 crore in the bank and three multi-storey buildings in the capital's Gulshan, Uttara and Uttarkhan areas, he added.

"Mostak was absconding in India and Malaysia after a warrant was issued against him. Returning to the country in 2011, he continued the same fraud," the CID official added.

The CID said the kingpin of the ring is an industrialist and he had business in Dhaka Stock Exchange.

Process is underway to bring him under the law, the police official added.



President Abdul Hamid handing over certificate to a graduate at the first convocation of Jagannath University yesterday. PHOTO: BANGABHABAN

BY-POLLS TO CTG-8 TOMORROW

## BNP concerned, AL confident



Left, Awami League candidate Moslem Uddin Ahmed campaigning in Chandgaon. BNP's Abu Sufian distributing leaflets in Boalkhali.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With the by-polls to Chattogram-8 (Boalkhali-Chandgaon) set to be held tomorrow, BNP is expressing doubts whether the election will be free and fair.

Awami League, on the other hand, is confident of winning the polls by a huge margin.

Yesterday, the Election Commission (EC) organised a mock voting through electronic voting machines (EVM) in all 170 polling centres of the constituency.

While visiting polling centres in Chandgaon and Panchlaish areas, this correspondent saw a significant number of people gathering to cast votes.

"I have come here to learn how to cast vote through EVM," said Jamal Uddin, a resident of Chandgaon who was waiting outside a polling centre at Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) School. "I don't think using EVM will be complicated," he said.

BNP candidate Abu Sufian also cast his mock vote there.

"Apparently, it seems easier to cast vote through EVM," he said. "But what good is a machine if the person operating it is not being transparent. There is scope of manipulation here," Sufian added.

He, however, admitted that people were enthusiastic to use EVMs.

"The ruling party activists have been threatening our supporters not to come to the polling centres on

Monday," he said, adding, "If people go to the polling centres defying all obstacles, I will win."

Sufian, also convener of Chattogram south district unit of BNP, alleged that law enforcers were raiding homes of their probable polling agents in Boalkhali upazila.

Denying the allegations, Awami League candidate Moslem Uddin Ahmed said the BNP candidate has made it "a habit" to complain against AL activists.

"Actually, he has realised that people will not vote for him. That's why he is spreading propaganda

Voters	4,75,988
Candidates	6
Polling Centres	170

against us, police and the EC to make the polls controversial," he said.

Moslem, president of Chattogram south district unit of AL, expected that people in droves will go to the polling centres on the polls day to cast their votes without any fear or intimidation.

"I expect to win by a big margin as I have received massive support from voters during my campaign," he said.

Contacted, Mohammad Hasanuzzaman, regional election officer in Chattogram and returning officer (RO) of the by-polls, said the EC is all set to hold the polls on

Monday.

"A control room has been set up in the gymnasium of MA Aziz Stadium. Ballot papers and all electoral items will be sent to the polling centres today, he said. "Eighteen members of law enforcement agencies will be deployed at each centre," said the official.

Besides, 14 mobile teams comprising of police, Ansar and Armed Police Battalion; six striking forces; six patrol teams of Rapid Action Battalion and five platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh will be deployed to maintain law and order, said the RO.

Asked about the number of risky or important polling centres, he said all 170 polling centres are important.

Apart from AL and BNP candidates, four candidates from Bangladesh Nationalist Front, Islamic Front Bangladesh, National Awami Party and an independent candidate are vying in the polls.

A total of 4,75,988 voters are expected to exercise their franchise through EVMs, said Election Commission officials.

The constituency fell vacant due to death of lawmaker Moin Uddin Khan Badal on November 7. Badal, also executive president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, was elected lawmaker with the "boat" (Awami League) symbol from the constituency in three consecutive polls, between 2008 and 2018.

## Night blindness below 1pc in country

*Zahid Maleque says while inaugurating Vitamin A campaign at Dhaka Shishu Hospital*

Bss, Dhaka

Health and Family Planning Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said night blindness rate is below 1 percent in the country due to regular administering of Vitamin A capsules.

"We want to prevent childhood blindness by administering Vitamin A-plus capsules. Blindness has been reduced significantly. Now the rate of night blindness is below 1 percent," he said.

He was this while inaugurating Vitamin A campaign at Dhaka Shishu Hospital, said a press release.

The rate of night blindness was 3.76 percent in 1974 when this campaign was launched, said the minister. He said a child who ingests the capsule will be safe from night blindness, their immune system would be boosted, eyesight would be perfect and natural growth would be ensured.

Vitamin-A plus campaign has been observed across the country, with an aim to feed children, aged between six months and five years, the capsules.

Health workers and volunteers fed the capsules to around 2.1 crore children at 1.20 lakh permanent and 20,000 makeshift centres from 8am to 4pm.

Some 25 lakh children, aged between six and 12 months, were fed blue capsules while around 1.95 crore children, aged between one and five years, were given red capsules.

## Another driver of auto-rickshaw killed in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Six days into a battery-run auto-rickshaw driver's murder in Narayanganj, another driver was found killed in the district yesterday.

The deceased -- Majir Uddin, 47 -- was from Keriya area in Rupganj, said police.

On information from locals, the law enforcers recovered the body from a crop field in Purbachal Sector-2 area of Rupganj.

He was gagged and his hands and legs were tied with a muffler, said Farid Uddin, sub-inspector of Rupganj Police Station. The body also bore injury marks in the head, he added.

Majir Uddin might have been strangled, said the SI.

He left home with his vehicle at 11pm on January 9, the police officer

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

PHOTO OF THE DAY

RASHED SHUMON

As Sylhet took its first step towards becoming a cleaner city with no overhead cables last week, the situation in Dhaka remains as bad as ever. This cobweb of cables was spotted at Bir Uttam AK Khandakar Road in Mohakhali.

## Liberation War organiser Ahmed Ali passes away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Advocate Ahmed Ali, a Liberation War organiser and first administrator of greater Cumilla (Brahmanbaria, Chandpur and Cumilla), died at a Dhaka hospital early yesterday. He was 97.

He breathed his last around 1:47am.

Also a veteran politician, Ahmed Ali left behind five daughters, four sons and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

Ahmed was the first president of Chhatra League of greater Cumilla in 1953.

On December 8 in 1971, he hoisted Bangladesh flag at Cumilla Town Hall. He stopped being involved in politics after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

## a2i launched eight digital public services in 2019

Bss, Dhaka

With a view to enabling people to access different government services including utility bills and fees payment facilities through digital means, Access to Information (a2i) introduced eight major digital public services and platforms last year.

In line with the government's vision to transform the country into "Digital Bangladesh", a2i -- under ICT Division with the support of the Cabinet Division and UNDP Bangladesh -- launched those services.

Three digital one-stop services -- ekSheba, ekPay and ekShop -- with the theme "Contribution of digital Bangladesh: All solutions under one umbrella" were launched to enable people to access different government services, utility bills and fees payment facilities and e-commerce.

Prime Minister's ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy inaugurated the three digital one-stop services at an event organised by the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division at ICT Tower in Dhaka's Agargaon area on October 20 last year,

a2i officials told the news agency.

The one-stop service centre -- ekSheba -- will act as the platform for providing all digital government services. Currently, a total of 172 government services of 7,149 offices have been brought under the platform while service seekers have been divided into three categories -- citizens or institutions, businessmen, government officials and employees, the officials said.

Gradually, all services (around 2,800) will be connected to the digital platform, which would play a vital role in establishing e-governance by creating ways for online applications and receiving services.

Any service seeker will be able to submit an online application by paying the fees online and check the latest status of the application as well.

The "ekPay" brings the benefits of paying numerous bills from a single platform. It is a one-stop payment platform for easy and hassle-free payment of utility bills, educational fees and all other fees.

By registering with the ekPay's

website or mobile app, all people of the country can pay their required utility bills at any time through debit card, credit card, mobile banking, digital wallet, internet banking, digital centre or any agent point.

With around 99 million internet users and an increasing GDP, Bangladesh is holding a big possibility for the expansion of e-commerce industry.

The "ekShop" is one of the first rural assisted e-commerce platforms in Bangladesh, which would be able to quickly deliver essential products to the doorsteps of people.

Through "ekShop", products ranging from T-shirt to television can easily be bought and sold, rural producers can easily upload specifications and photos of products to all e-commerce sites and buyers of different e-commerce sites would be able to purchase those products.

In addition, over a million essential products, including medicines, books, clothing, will be accessible from any part of the country. More than 4,000

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

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FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY JANUARY 12, 2020, POUISH 28, 1426 BS

# Near-routine cost escalation of govt projects

*The burden eventually falls on the taxpayers*

We are concerned at the reported cost escalation of the project of a rail bridge to be built over Jamuna river. According to The Daily Star, the cost of the project has increased by 33 percent (amounting to Tk 3,216 crore) even before the start of the physical work. Although the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) approved the Development Project Proforma (DPP) in December 2016 and the project was supposed to be implemented between January 2016 and December 2023, until now the consultants appointed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) have been able to only carry out some studies, review feasibility and prepare the design of the project.

Reportedly, the project budget has increased because of the decision to use “new technologies”. So now the railways ministry will have to place a revised DPP before Ecne for approval again and the work order will be issued once the Ecne approves it. This means more time will be wasted before the project work starts.

Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, such cost escalations and time extensions of development projects have become like a norm these days. Often projects are passed with a certain budget and after a few years we get to learn about moves to increase their cost and duration. Over the past few years, this has been the case for all the important infrastructure development projects in the country. For example, the cost of the much-hyped Padma Bridge project has been increased several times. The same is the case for the Dhaka Metro Rail Project which was supposed to be complete by the end of 2020 but has been delayed by one year.

Apart from that, the project cost of Khulna-Mongla rail track had also been increased several times because of the delay in implementation, modification of components and extension of the services of consultants. Only in November 2019, *The Daily Star* reported that the estimated cost of constructing a third terminal at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport has been increased by 40 percent!

While corruption, inefficiency and a lack of foresight are generally the reasons for such cost increases, nobody is ever held responsible for this. This is unacceptable. It is time the government took a strong stance to stop this disturbing trend because when the time for a certain project is extended and the cost goes up, the burden always falls on the taxpayers.

# Iran’s welcome admission

*Flight safety must be an urgent priority*

THAT Iran has finally admitted to unintentionally shooting down a Ukrainian jetliner is a welcome move, as heart-breaking as the accident has been. Iran has termed the incident a “disastrous mistake”, where the doomed Flight 752 had been mistaken for a “hostile target” as a result of “human error”. Iran should now come forth with detailed reports of its investigations into the accident and what we can learn from it.

This incident brings to light a universal truth—that it is always the civilians who have to pay the ultimate price for the warmongering of powerful nations. While both the USA and Iran can keep blaming each other for the circumstances of this accident, these are not going to right the wrong that has been committed. This also further shows that war always comes at a terrible price.

The US’ attempts at de-escalation is also visible as it has decided not to retaliate after the Iranian attacks on its bases in Iraq. However, the US must realise that imposing additional economic sanctions against Iran—which is already bearing the burden of crippling sanctions imposed by the US earlier—does not help its calls for dialogue. The US, in order to really fulfil its goal of engaging in constructive dialogue with Iran, must demonstrate their openness to such a move through actions. Crippling Iran through stricter sanctions is likely to only force the country to be more belligerent.

As a result of the Ukrainian jetliner crash, other airlines are considering if it would be safe to fly over the Gulf in the current situation. And a war in the Middle East will not only be disastrous for the region, it will also create widespread reverberations that will be felt in the far corners of the world. In the wake of Qassem Soleimani’s assassination, oil prices had gone up by four percent, and its consequences have been felt in as far as Bangladesh, too.

While Bangladesh needs to prepare itself to face the repercussions should tensions continue to rise in the Middle East, especially in ensuring the safety of our migrant workers, the world—especially the US, Iran and the United Nations, along with other world powers—must do everything they can to diffuse the tensions. Let the Flight 752 crash serve as a reminder and a warning for all that it is ultimately the innocent who fall victim to power jostling between irresponsible nations, and that war must be avoided at all costs.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Parental favouritism

Favouritism is a common phenomenon in many households. It may not represent a difference in the love parents feel, but it can look and feel that way to a child. A study titled “Mothers’ Differentiation and Depressive Symptoms Among Adult Children” found that siblings who sensed that their mother consistently favoured or rejected one child over another were more likely to exhibit depression in middle age. True, it may not be possible to treat every child equally because they are all different. But what parents can, and must, do is treat their children with compassion and fairness, by meeting all of their requirements.

Rabeya Hashmi, by email

## EFFICIENCY IN RMG SECTOR

# The key to unlocking our potential



MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

IT is widely agreed that boosting efficiency is vital to the long-term health and well-being of Bangladesh’s RMG industry. Our efficiency rates are low compared to those of rivals in Pakistan, Vietnam and China. Boosting efficiency and optimising productivity levels will make us more competitive globally and ultimately boost profitability. So what do we need to do to make this happen?

Here I offer ten points that we need to consider to address this critical issue:

### Too many helpers

The main reason buyers moved into Bangladesh in the first place was because labour costs here were generally extremely low. The resulting boost to manpower led to an increase in production and was hailed as an increase in productivity. But this is wrong.

Factories used more helpers—unmeasured workers—to increase productivity. To begin with, this worked because of the exceptionally low cost of labour. But things have changed, and in Bangladesh, the cost of labour is often as high as in rival countries; indeed, it is even higher than in the likes of Ethiopia.

Using more helpers has become a culture in our garment industry. This might provide the right product—but without implementing the right method, standard or the right technique. Excess staffing has masked underlying issues within factories. It has also hidden the fact that in many cases, these workers are not adding any overall value.

Another issue with the use of too many helpers is that it creates a mentality where no single person takes responsibility. There is no ownership and this can hamper productivity and efficiency.

The presence of too many people also creates an unnecessary hierarchy on the production floor with too many tiers of lower-to-middle management. This simply creates an excess of beurocratic layers and a slower decision-making process.

### Lack of skilled workers

Another issue related to the above is the lack of skilled workers in the industry. There is a tendency to assume that an industry of more than 20 years’ maturity like that of Bangladeshi RMG will have an abundance of skilled workers. However,

there is a lack of understanding among the mid-to-senior management in terms of uplifting efficiency in critical production areas such as sewing efficiency. Perhaps there is a fear among some factory owners that workers who are trained up will leave once that initial investment in training has been made.

### Too much front-end focus

Most of the time, front-end or pre-production activities are killing 70 percent of the lead time. This is mainly because of the merchandising handling by the owners and often the owners’ relatives, many of whom have a limited educational background or qualification to work in these areas.



Bangladeshi women working in a garment factory in Dhaka.

PHOTO: AFP

What we see in most of the front-end operation is inefficiency but that is not highlighted because Bangladesh management does not use the right Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for monitoring purposes. If you check their critical path, you can see how much time they are hiding. Unfortunately, in the majority of the factories, they are not monitoring this and not challenging them.

An improvement in the pre-production processes can substantially improve the flow of orders and factory efficiency as well as sales turnover from the resources.

### Poor research and development (R&D) process

Bangladesh lags behind its competitors in the area of R&D. Less investment in R&D is hampering the industry as it means that factories are engaging in trial and error on the production floor. This leads to operational inefficiencies and factories ultimately pay a high price for their use of incorrect production methods. This could

be solved by investing more in R&D up front.

### Use of fixed salary system

The use of a fixed salary system in Bangladesh is not motivating workers to improve their efficiency. In Pakistan, Vitenam and China, they use a piece-rate pay system and this provides a vital incentive for workers to improve their skill and efficiency levels so that they can earn more.

Bangladesh should consider a system similar to Vietnam to boost motivation and productivity. In a non-incentivised environment, it is unlikely that you will see individual performance rates above 75 percent, and this restricts overall



operational efficiency.

### Traditional quality system creates inefficiency

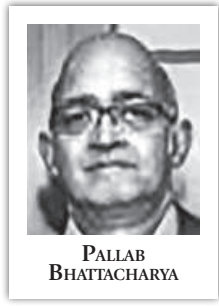
Bangladesh continues to use an inefficient quality checking system. This system creates higher quality cost and inefficiencies and also demotivates the operations team.

Bangladesh needs to alter its quality assurance system, not its checking system. To achieve this, we need to improve front-end R&D and implement a continuous training programme. A rival garment producing country is now achieving Zero checker system by giving the ownership to the operator—reducing quality costs and creating a smoother production flow. Some factories in Bangladesh are already implementing this system, with promising results.

We need to consider the role of buyers also. They need to understand that there will always be a trade-off between quality checking and efficiency levels. They need

## CAA/NRC IN INDIA

# Maverick Mamata and a disunited opposition camp



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the proposed NRC—West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has set the proverbial cat among the pigeons. And the knives are finally out in the open in the opposition camp.

The meeting in Delhi has been called by Congress President Sonia Gandhi to frame a joint action plan against the CAA/ NRC and the National Population Register (NPR). Leaders of opposition parties like Samajwadi Party, Left parties, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Rashtriya Janata Dal and Nationalist Congress Party are likely to attend the meeting, which is also likely to discuss the political response to keep up the heat of street protests on the government and meet the Bharatiya Janata Party-led governments’ sustained campaign in favour of the CAA/NRC/NPR and a push to update the NPR. One has to wait and see if Mayawati-led Bahujan Samaj Party and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s Aam Aadmi Party, which is in the midst of a campaign for the forthcoming assembly poll in the Indian capital, will attend the January 13 meeting. The BSP and the AAP have of late been skipping the opposition gatherings.

Mamata’s decision to stay away from the meeting has come as a setback to efforts to unite the opposition parties against the CAA and violence on university campuses. The decision brings to the fore the simmering one-upmanship among the Left and the Trinamool Congress over the CAA-NPR issues. Mamata has always squirmed at the prospect of sharing the dais with the Left parties who, along with the Congress, are her known detractors in West Bengal politics. Mamata has, however, reiterated her vow to carry on the battle against the CAA/NRC/NPR independent of any other opposition party. This reinforces how Mamata’s political compulsions in West Bengal are not in sync with the imperatives of a national-level united face against the Modi government on the issue. The same holds true for all other key regional parties. This precisely is the most serious challenge for a

pan-India anti-BJP unity whose limitations were all too visible in the run-up to last year’s Lok Sabha polls that saw the Modi-led party returning to power with even a bigger mandate than in 2014.

During the last one month of agitation against the CAA/NPR/NRC, both Mamata and Kerala’s Marxist Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan were engaged in a race for putting themselves in key positions in the anti-BJP agitation. It was Mamata who first shot off a letter to nine non-BJP chief ministers of states underlining the need for a pan-India opposition unity against the amended citizenship law. Later, a similar letter was sent by Vijayan. Again, it

suggestion to pass a similar resolution against CAA/NRC at a one-day special session of West Bengal Assembly, citing that the House had passed a resolution against NRC in September. The Left-Congress argument was that a fresh resolution was needed since the CAA was passed by parliament in December. Legally speaking, these assembly resolutions cannot obstruct the implementation of a law passed by parliament and at best serve to highlight a political message.

That Mamata sought to make herself the central figure in the anti-CAA/NRC campaign was also evident from the fact

CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury hit back at Mamata’s decision to skip the January 13 meeting. His push-back had two main components: 1) criticism of the Mamata government for not agreeing to a fresh anti-CAA/ NRC resolution in the assembly on January 9, and 2) keeping the doors open for Trinamool Congress to join the opposition parties’ unity efforts at a later time, stating that local differences and rivalries at the state level should not come in the way of defending India’s secular democracy. However, Mohammed Salim, Yechury’s party colleague from West Bengal, was blunt in his attack on



Mamata Banerjee and her party supporters attend a protest march against India’s new citizenship law and the National Register of Citizens, in Kolkata on December 16, 2019.

PHOTO: REUTERS

was Mamata who was first off the blocks to issue a formal order halting the state-level work related to NPR. Then Vijayan followed suit. Vijayan, with the help of the opposition Congress, also got a resolution passed in the Kerala assembly opposing the CAA.

If there were similarities, there was also one important divergence. Vijayan and senior Congress leaders shared the dais at two separate public rallies against the CAA/NRC in Kerala despite their state-level adversarial positions; Mamata’s party has not so far gone for any joint programme with the Congress and the Left in West Bengal on the issue.

Secondly, the day Mamata announced her decision to boycott the January 13 meeting, she opposed the Left-Congress

that she was the only opposition chief minister to lead the highest number of street marches (10), and she announced monetary compensation for the families of those killed in police firing on anti-CAA protesters in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh. Mamata also had sent her party delegations to Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh to sympathise with the families of those killed.

In staying away from the opposition parties’ January 13 meeting in New Delhi, Mamata sought to take the moral high ground of non-violence, as she accused the Left and the Congress supporters of unleashing violence in West Bengal during the 24-hour strike called by India’s major trade unions to protest the Modi government’s economic policies.

Mamata, alleging, along with the state Congress leaders, that she was trying to please the top BJP leadership.

The unity in the opposition camp on the CAA-NRC issue has always appeared to be skin-deep. For instance, when leaders of a number of opposition parties, including Mamata, gathered at the December swearing-in ceremony of Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren at the helm of an anti-BJP coalition, the list of absentees was longer than that of those present. The exercise failed to attract any party that has reservations about NRC, outside the BJP-NDA and the non-Congress-UPA formations.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent for The Daily Star. He writes from New Delhi, India.



# ‘The only constant in life is change’

Of course, but is it always for the better?



SAYEED AHMED

The nations that once took pride in leading the human civilisation have all shrunk to become Lilliputs of the Gulliver's Travels. Their bodies remain big but the hearts and minds have given in to narrow and abrasive nationalism.

ON November 29, 2019, *The Daily Star* announced the demise of its Star Weekend magazine and the birth of Toggle, quoting Heraclitus as a justification, but without giving him due credit.

It was Heraclitus of Ephesus (c.535-475 BCE), a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, who said “Panta rhei”, or “everything flows”, meaning everything or all things change. This is regularly explained in everyday English, for the benefit of the common people like us, as “the only constant in life is change”.

So, change is inevitable. But are all changes for the better?

The last few decades have witnessed massive changes in the world we live in. Science and technology have taken giant leaps that have surpassed all developments made since the start of civilisation, by a large margin. The world has transformed from being bipolar to unipolar, then quickly to multipolar. War has been privatised by the presence of so many terrorist outfits that we have lost track of who is affiliated to whom and who is real and who is perceived. News has become divided into two types: real and fake. As it appears, even photographs and videos can be faked to an extent that only experts can tell them apart. A group of people as far as in the Middle East or Afghanistan can be killed with a mere video game-like software in Pentagon! With no accountability.

The United States of America has abandoned its role as the “leader of the free world”. Instead, it has made “America only” its official policy in every sector: trade, foreign policy, science and technology, military, environment, etc. They have been doing this all along but, before, there was a veneer of modern liberal values to hide it. But this is no longer the case.

The United Kingdom, despite being a nation that led the world in the industrial revolution and



produced a long line of great thinkers, scientists, leaders, philosophers, writers and economists, has decided to abandon the rest of Europe and tow along the isolationist line of the USA. They were for a long time considered a junior partner of their richer cousin, but now they have decided to throw away the façade of Europeaness as an official policy. Seeing this, William Shakespeare would have written an excellent piece of comedy, or Adam Smith a new edition of his “Wealth of Nations”, had they been alive today.

The nations that once took pride in leading the human civilisation have all shrunk to become Lilliputs of the “Gulliver's Travels”. Their bodies remain big but the hearts and minds have given in to narrow and abrasive nationalism, so much so that they can't even tolerate a little difference of opinion or another faith, culture or ethnicity, let alone dissidence. Where are we heading, really!?

India is a lucky nation. Its sages gave them a

strong guiding principle many centuries ago, a privilege enjoyed by only a few nations of the world. But that was an India of diversity and tolerance. Rigveda, an ancient Indian sacred canonical text of Hinduism, written somewhere between 1500 and 1200 BC, states, “Let there be oneness in your resolutions, hearts and minds; let the determination to live with mutual cooperation be firm in you all.” While the Indian sub-continent is still reeling from the shock and horror of its partition and paying the price, the supposed safekeepers of Hinduism have decided to abandon the core of its ancient values and constitutional obligation, and reopened the wounds of 1947. This is another change, with potentially disastrous consequences.

China is almost as old as the history of civilisation itself. Emperor Qin Shi Huang unified all of China and founded a modern state with legal systems, scientific standards and a centralised

bureaucracy. The 2008 Summer Olympics opening ceremony comprised two parts titled “Brilliant Civilisation” highlighting the Chinese civilisation and “Glorious Era” showcasing modern China and its dream of harmony between the people of the world. The Chinese dream of harmony, however, is now mired in controversy, with many observers pointing out the heavy-handedness of its dealing with smaller nations and its own minorities.

We never learn from history, and that is also a lesson of history. Throughout the history of mankind, great nations usually followed some sort of openness and inclusiveness in their policy, and their downfall almost always coincided with the abandonment of those policies. A notable example of this is the fall of the Arabs in the Iberian Peninsula, when they were wiped out by the conquistadors of Spain during the 15th century.

The world seems to have forgotten that violent nationalism and religious intolerance in one country are likely to stoke up a similar environment of hatred and intolerance in other countries as well, with no apparent connection with the source country. Neil Thompson wrote in a column for *The Diplomat* about how extremists in Asia are feeding off each other's unrelated conflicts (“Terrorism in Asia: The Global Village Effect”, August 1, 2018). While nations are drifting apart with their own narrow agenda, terrorist outfits are taking advantage of that, uniting in their efforts to undermine people's freedom and the right to live.

But there is hope. In a wider interpretation, “Panta rhei” means “the way up and the way down are one and the same. Living and dead, waking and sleeping, young and old, are the same.” These things are the “same” in that they are all subject to change, arise from one change to vanish into another and all things, constantly, are in flux and are, in that regard, the same. Will Toggle again change into something better? Let's hope so.

Sayeed Ahmed is a consulting engineer with experience in infrastructure project management in South Asia.

## PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

# Dystopia is Arriving in Stages



ALEXANDER FRIEDMAN

IT is commonly believed that the future of humanity will one day be threatened by the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), perhaps embodied in malevolent robots. Yet as we enter the third decade of the millennium, it is not the singularity we should fear, but rather a much older enemy: ourselves.

Think less *The Terminator*, more *Minority Report*.

We are rapidly developing literal mind-reading technology without any framework for how to control it. Imagine, for a moment, if human beings had evolved to be able to read each other's minds. How would that have gone for us?

To answer this question, consider your own internal dialogues. It is safe to assume that every one of us has had thoughts that would be shocking even (or especially) to those closest to us. How would those who might not wish us well have reacted to being able to hear what emotional rants go through our heads from time to time? Would they have had the judgment to let them pass, recognising them as just flashes of emotion? Or would some have responded opportunistically, taking advantage of thoughts we would otherwise not wish to betray?

Evolution did not enable us to read minds because that power might have ended our existence as a species. Instead, as our ancient ancestors organised into groups for protection, most of us learned what could be said and what was best left unspoken. Over

time, this became a highly evolved human trait that enabled societies to form, cities to rise, and even hundreds of stressed out people to be jammed into a flying tube, usually without attacking their seat-mates. It forms a core part of what we now call EQ, or emotional intelligence.

And yet technology is now beginning to threaten this necessary evolutionary adaptation in a fundamental way.

The first stage has taken place in social media. Facebook underscored this trajectory, when Russian manipulation of the platform affected the United States' presidential election in 2016. And Twitter, which empowers a user to dash off a passing thought or emotion that might then be shared with millions, amplifies this trend. Imagine how North Korean leaders struggled to interpret President Donald Trump's tweet of nuclear “fire and fury.” Was it a real threat from a new and erratic US leader, or just a spur-of-the-moment exhalation, a mental flash without a filter that would best be ignored? Back in the days of the bipolar superpower world, the iconic US-Soviet hotline phone was installed as a way to clarify each side's intentions, lest through some misunderstanding the world might otherwise disappear beneath a nuclear mushroom cloud.

Today, in our much more complicated multipolar and asymmetric-threat-driven world, social media offers all who are willing a giant, unedited megaphone. Social media has become a tool that can undermine democracy; and yet it is mere child's play compared to what is now barreling our way.

Companies ranging from start-ups to multinational conglomerates have recently announced startling



Consider the myriad of thorny ethical, legal, and social-order implications of a policeman stopping a crime before it takes place because he or she could “assess” an individual's likely intent by reading their brainwaves.

PHOTO: REUTERS

innovations that enable mind reading. Elon Musk's company Neuralink is seeking approval for human trials of a device implanted in users' brains to read their minds. Nissan has developed “Brain-to-Vehicle” technology that enables a car to read instructions from a driver's mind. Facebook has funded scientists that use brainwaves to decode speech. A recent paper in the science journal *Nature* explains how AI can create speech by analysing brain signals. Researchers at Columbia University have developed technology that can analyse brain activity to determine what a user wants and vocalise those desires via a synthesiser.

Clearly, these kinds of advances can offer real benefits, including helping

those suffering from paralysis or neurological disorders. Early examples of neuroprosthetics, such as cochlear implants, which enable a deaf person to hear, or promising devices that could allow the blind to see, are already in use.

But there are also darker potential applications, like enabling advertisers to micro-hone their offerings to individuals' unspoken desires, or employers to spy on their workers, or police to monitor citizens' possible criminal intent on a vast scale, akin to the way London residents today are tracked on CCTV. An early warning is ToTok, one of the most downloaded social-media apps, which, it was recently revealed, the United Arab Emirates government had been using to spy on users. And what happens if mind-

reading devices are hacked? It is difficult to imagine a more relevant area of data privacy than that which exists in the human brain.

Musk believes that brain interfaces will be necessary for humans to keep up with AI. This brings us back to Philip K Dick's science-fiction horror story “The Minority Report” (the basis of the 2002 film). Consider the myriad of thorny ethical, legal, and social-order implications of a policeman stopping a crime before it takes place because he or she could “assess” an individual's likely intent by reading their brainwaves. When is a crime committed? When the thought takes place? When actions begin that manifest the thought in reality? When the gun is pointed? When the trigger finger tightens?

A principal challenge of technological innovation is that it usually takes society a long time to catch up, understand the broader implications of how the new technology can be used and abused, and provide appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks to regulate its conduct.

In the second decade of this millennium, social media moved from a tool to connect to a platform with immense power to spread lies and manipulate elections. Society is now grappling with how to harness the best of this innovation, while mitigating its potential for abuse. Perhaps, before we have even figured that out, the third decade of the millennium will confront us with far more consequential technological challenges.

Alexander Friedman, an investor, is a former Chief Executive Officer of GAM Investments, Chief Investment Officer of UBS, Chief Financial Officer of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and White House Fellow.

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[www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org)  
(Exclusive to *The Daily Star*)

The first stage has taken place in social media. Facebook underscored this trajectory, when Russian manipulation of the platform affected the United States' presidential election in 2016.

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

### ACROSS

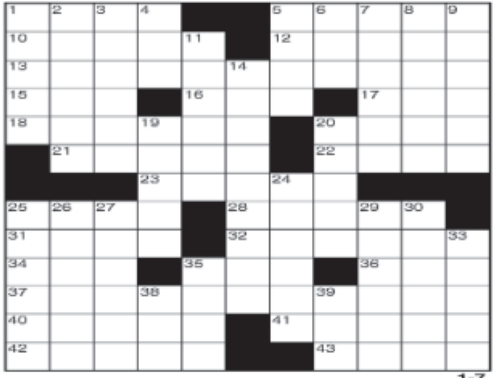
- 1 Atlantic catches
- 5 Elizabethan barmaid
- 10 Similar
- 12 Honolulu hello
- 13 Race ends
- 15 Holiday lead-in
- 16 Parrot or puppy
- 17 Manx, for one
- 18 Belgrade's nation
- 20 Aspiration
- 21 Did shoe work
- 22 “That's my cue!”
- 23 Small body of land
- 25 Danson and Nugent
- 28 Pop stars
- 31 Regrets

- 32 Right angle's degrees
- 34 Play division
- 35 Pres. day mo.
- 36 Verb for you
- 37 Revue groups
- 40 More loyal
- 41 Lauder of cosmetics
- 42 Feudal workers
- 43 Young ones

### DOWN

- 1 Casual eateries
- 2 Relish-tray items
- 3 Moolah
- 4 Enjoy the slopes
- 5 Poet Whitman
- 6 Yale student
- 7 Sergeant, for one

- 8 Low-quality, in slang
- 9 Hurry up
- 11 Spots
- 14 Frontpage items
- 19 Total happiness
- 20 Think up
- 24 Like some mushrooms
- 25 Plots of land
- 26 Trick-taking card game
- 27 Redirected route
- 29 Crude shed
- 30 Parade site
- 33 Agreeable
- answers
- 35 Trappers' wares
- 38 Game caller
- 39 Supporter



## YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



## BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



## BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott



## ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



JANUARY 12, 2010  
Haiti severely damaged by earthquake

On this day in 2010, a magnitude-7.0 earthquake devastated Haiti, especially Port-au-Prince, killing more than 200,000 people and leaving more than one million homeless and touching off a massive international relief effort.

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NATIONAL VITAMIN A CAMPAIGN

# The chronicle of a health worker

DR MAHMOOD KAZI MOHAMMED

More than a hundred countries are affected by vitamin A deficiency. It is a global public health problem that causes serious conditions like child blindness, night blindness, and even death. In developing countries like Bangladesh, vitamin A deficiency is a public health obstacle. A country-wide vitamin A campaign is a significant strategy to supplement the population with vitamin A twice every year. Over the years, this campaign has evolved through several changes and improvements, through the association of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like Nutrition International along with other civil society partners.

In a conversation with a medical technologist Pradumna Kumar Das, who works on the vitamin A campaign in the hard-to-reach area of Balaganj Upazilla of Sylhet district, we explored the importance of the campaign. When asked about his opinion regarding the usefulness of the vitamin A campaign, his response was spontaneous, "When I started working back in 1989, night blindness was like an epidemic. But, with the gradual growth and spread of vitamin A campaign, the frequency of the disease has notably reduced."

He explained how the



PHOTO: NUTRITION INTERNATIONAL BANGLADESH

campaign works. "We provide two kinds of capsules in the campaign – blue capsules for the infants aged 6-11 months and red ones for the children aged 12-59 months. Providing the capsules has done wonders to reduce vitamin A deficiency."

He drew anecdotes from his initial years of working on vitamin A supplementation. He memorised, "I used to live in a village with a small river, which I had to cross every day to go to work. The boat that I used to ride in had a boatman who could never reach his hand to collect money in the evening. I assumed that he had night blindness, but

I was assured after I asked him, and he confirmed. I gave him the red capsules as per prescription, and fortunately, his eyesight was better in about two to three months." He further added, "This is when I truly understood the impact of the vitamin A campaign in reality. Now, the national vitamin A campaign has raised awareness among the people as well."

Mr Das quoted from his experience of more than 20 years to describe the reality of the situation back then. He said, "We would go to households and provide capsules, but people would throw them

out. Now with NGOs like Nutrition International's help, the campaigns run more pragmatically. Instead of just providing the capsules, we help people consume them and make sure that they understand its importance."

Nutrition International has provided logistical and financial support to the National Vitamin A Campaign (NVAC). Additionally, it has designed the innovative 'Child-to-Child (CIC) Search Strategy' to reach children in the hard-to-reach areas of Bangladesh. Mr Das shared, "Balaganj Upazila has 14 unions, most of which are hard

to reach. Before, we had to use our own money to reach those areas to perform our duties. But now, with the support of Nutrition International, the work is easier, and people are more motivated. They also provide volunteer honorarium, which did not exist earlier. The honorarium has helped in improving and increasing our workforce."

Speaking about the success of the NVAC, Mr Das said, "You see, these kinds of extensive campaigns are impossible to run in such adverse surroundings with low workforce and resources. Moreover, people were not even aware enough to cooperate with us. But because of Nutrition International's support, the campaign has gained momentum. It is now a huge success and runs twice a year with nearly 100 per cent efficiency."

There is always scope for improvement. While Bangladesh has achieved tremendous progress in conducting a nationwide Vitamin A supplementation, it is essential to mainstream it as a part of the National Immunisation Programme. A successful vitamin A campaign in Bangladesh will give future generations a chance to a healthier and more productive tomorrow.

The writer is a Programme Coordinator - Health Systems at Nutrition International Bangladesh. Email: mmohammed@nutritionintl.org

## DID YOU KNOW?



## Tongue fat might be key in obstructive sleep apnea

Losing tongue fat might help improve obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), suggests a small study in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

Researchers enrolled 67 obese patients with OSA who were undergoing a structured weight loss program or bariatric surgery.

At 6 months, patients who lost a greater percentage of weight overall also had greater reductions in the volume of tongue fat, pterygoid, and total lateral wall (measured by volumetric MRI). After controlling for weight change and clinical covariates, the percentage of tongue fat lost was associated with greater reductions in the apnea-hypopnea index (AHI).

The researchers calculated that reductions in tongue fat accounted for roughly 30% of the total effect of weight loss on AHI reductions, while no other soft tissue changes mediated the association.

They concluded that new treatments that reduce tongue fat should be considered for patients with OSA. They mentioned cryolipolysis as a potential therapy.

## HEALTH bulletin



## 5 practices to help improve the physician–patient connection

Researchers have proposed five practices that could help "foster presence and meaningful connection with patients" during clinical encounters. Reporting in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), the researchers examined studies of interpersonal interventions, analysed physician–patient interactions, and interviewed professionals outside of health care whose jobs required "intense interpersonal interactions."

Ultimately, with the help of experts, they narrowed a list of 31 potential practices to five:

1. "Prepare with intention" — Take time to familiarise yourself with the patient before starting the visit.
2. "Listen intently and completely" — Sit and lean forward as you listen to the patient. Do not interrupt.
3. "Agree on what matters most" — Seek out what the patient cares about most and make these things priorities during the visit.
4. "Connect with the patient's story" — Ask patients about life circumstances; give genuine praise for efforts in specific areas.
5. "Explore emotional cues" — Be alert for verbal and nonverbal cues from the patient and validate the patient's emotions.

The researchers note, "Evaluation and validation of the outcomes associated with implementing the 5 practices is needed, along with system-level interventions to create a supportive environment for implementation."

## Sciatica: an obnoxious experience

DR MD FARUQUIL ISLAM

Sciatica is the name given to pain caused by irritation of the sciatic nerve. Anything that irritates this nerve can cause pain, ranging from mild to severe. Sciatica is usually caused by a compressed nerve in the lower spine. It commonly occurs by spinal degeneration, such as spinal stenosis or slipped disc. Sciatica most commonly occurs in adults in the 20 to 60 years age group.

There are several factors that increase the likelihood of developing sciatica, which includes pregnancy, overweight, smoking, disc herniation, trauma, slipped vertebra and spinal tumour.

The nature of pain is mild to very severe and can occur suddenly or appear gradually. It is described as a cramp-like pain that can be burning or sharp in nature and is typically felt in the lower back and hip, and going down the back of one leg. It may be associated with sensations such as pins and needles, tingling, numbness and weakness. Pain may be aggravated by specific actions, such as sneezing, coughing, lifting or sitting.

In order to diagnose sciatica, detailed medical history needs to be taken and physical examination including movement analysis and functional limitation needs to be assessed properly. Radiography, computerised tomography (CT scan) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI scan) may be recommended in some cases in order to assess the nerves, discs and spine in detail.

A person having sciatica may take the following steps to relieve them from the pain:

- Continue all normal activities as much as possible. Avoid activities that causes hurts the back or increase pain
- Regular back stretching exercise as suggested by a physiotherapist
- Apply hot compression in the painful areas for 10 to 15 minutes
- Avoid sitting or standing for a prolonged period
- Make sure you have a good posture when sitting and standing
- Use chairs that provide good back support and are designed to provide a good sitting posture
- A lumbar roll or contoured cushion can help to provide lower back support
- Lose weight if you are overweight
- Quit smoking. Smoking can increase the risk of getting sciatica
- Always practice safe lifting techniques. During lifting, bend the

knees and keep your back straight. Hold the object close to the body. The further away the object is from the body, the more stress is put onto the lower back.

Physical therapy is often very useful in management of sciatica that includes manual exercises, manipulation and mobilisation of spine, neuro-dynamic stretching, sciatic nerve stretching and introduction of core stability exercises to prevent further injury.

There are several factors associated with lower back pain and sciatica is one of them. However, there are a number of measures that can help to prevent it occurring or reduce the likelihood that it will recur. Therefore, accurate examination and early diagnosis will help individuals to prevent and manage sciatica pain and associated symptoms.

The writer is the Head of Outpatient Services at Proyash, Dhaka Cantonment. Email: faruqch6@yahoo.com



## The warning signs of psychotic disorders

Psychotic disorders are a group of mental health conditions that change your sense of reality. They make it hard to know what is real and what is not. When you have these disorders, you might see and hear things that do not exist or believe things that are not true.

The first symptoms can be hard to spot. You might not realise you have a problem right away. So, see a doctor if you notice any of these changes:

- You cannot concentrate or think clearly.
- You are suspicious of people around you.
- You see or hear things no one else can.
- You pull away from loved ones and spend more time alone.
- You have strange new beliefs, and no one can convince you they are untrue.
- You stop bathing or caring for yourself.

### How are they treated?

You will have the best chance of recovery if you get treated during your first outbreak of symptoms.

Your doctor may suggest medicine and talk therapy. A therapist helps you understand your thoughts and behaviours and teaches you healthier ways to manage your problems. Antipsychotic drugs can help ease hallucinations and delusions. Your doctor may prescribe antidepressants if you also have symptoms of depression, like despair and sadness.

### Life with a psychotic disorder

Lean on friends, family members, your doctor, and a support group in your community to help you get through treatment. Find out all you can about your condition and what to expect. Take the time you need to recover. Don't try to push yourself too hard. If you have a problem with drugs or alcohol, get help from your doctor or a substance abuse programme.

Source: WebMD



## 6 tips to get relief from joint pain in WINTER

### DRESS WARMLY

If it's cold outside, keep aching hands warm with gloves, and add extra layers over knees & legs

### HYDRATE

Even mild dehydration might make you more sensitive to pain, according to study results published in the September 2015

### LOSE WEIGHT

A 2013 article in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) highlighted the significant improvement people with knee arthritis can get from weight loss, from diet, & exercise

### ADD FISH OIL

The Arthritis Foundation recommends up to 2.6 grams of fish oil capsules twice a day. Make sure to let your doctor know if you try omega-3s, as they can increase the risk for bruising or bleeding

### GET A MASSAGE

Getting an hour long massage once a week for at least eight weeks was shown to reduce pain, according to research in the June 2015

### LET WARM WATER COMFORT YOU

Swimming in a heated pool is both great exercise & soothing to joints. You can also get relief from warm baths, according to the Arthritis Foundation.



In Search of Excellence





WHAT'S ON



**Group Art Exhibition**  
Title: Calling of the Roots  
Venue: Zainul Gallery, DU  
Date: January 8 – 14  
Time: 11 am – 8 pm



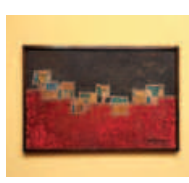
**Workshop**  
Title: Kata Kuti - Collage Workshop by Kazi  
Tahsin Agaz Apurbo  
Venue: Studio 6/6, Mohammadpur  
Date: January 25, 2020  
Time: 11 am – 6 pm



**Cultural Festival**  
Title: Bangladesh Shanskritik  
Utshab 2020  
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala  
Academy  
Date: January 3– 23, 2020  
Time: 4 pm -8 pm



**Musical Evening**  
Title: Plugged Out IV – One  
Night Stand  
Venue: Counter Culture Club,  
Dhanmondi  
Date: January 31, 2020  
Time: 5 pm onwards  
Tickets: BDT 300



**Group Art Exhibition**  
Title: Breaking Ground: Modern Art in  
Transition  
Venue: Subir Choudhury Exhibition Hall,  
Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi  
Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15  
Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)



Shongshoptok



Kothau Keu Nei

## Revisiting Bangladeshi television's GOLDEN ERA

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Television dramas took up a new turn during the 1980s, as the audience experienced timeless stories, including *Shongshoptok*, *Matir Kole*, *Jonaki Jole*, *Bhanganer Shobdo Shuni*, *Ayomoy* and *Bohubrihi*. Looking back on the golden era of the industry, *The Daily Star* celebrates few of these television classics.

Presented in a parrot's voice, *Bohubrihi*'s famous slogan, “Tui Rajakar!” became an everlasting echo for generations. This post-liberation war drama, written by Humayun Ahmed and produced by Newaz Ali Khan, reignited the fire of freedom, seen during the Liberation War. Through their commendable

performances, Abul Hayat (Sobhan) Asaduzzaman Noor (Anis), Afzal Hossain (Doctor) and Aly Zaker (Farid Mama), struck a chord with the viewers.

Set during the British Raj, tele-fiction *Ayomoy*, written by Humayun Ahmed and directed by Nawazish Ali Khan, was an all-time favourite. The drama narrates the tale of a declining Bengali zamindar family.

On the other hand, Imdadul Haq Milan's adaptation of Shahidullah Kaiser's *Shongshoptok*, featuring Ferdousi Mazumder as Hurmotti and Humayun Faridee as 'Kaankata' Romzan was critically acclaimed. It was produced by Abdullah Al Mamun, and directed by Humayun Ahmed.

*Kothau Keu Nei*, produced

by Barkatullah and directed by Humayun Ahmed, featured Baker Bhai, one of the most beloved characters, played by Asaduzzaman Noor. It marked a revolutionary trend in the industry, as the nation mourned Baker Bhai's execution.

Moreover, *Ei Shob Din Ratri*, one of Humayun Ahmed's most popular contemporary serials, created a new identity for renowned actor Dolly Johur, as people still refer to her as 'Shimu Bhabhi'.

“Chi Chi Mostaan Ra Ato Kharap”, the famous dialogue from Imdadul Haq Milan's *Rupnagar* also became a part of the audience's every-day conversations. Actor Tauquir Ahmed's performance on the show garnered immense praise. Milan's *Baaro Rokomer Manush* was

also well received by television buffs.

*Shokal Shondha*, another timeless show, was produced by Borkutullah and written by Momtaj Begum. *Shomoy Oshomoy*, *Kon Kanoner Phul* and *Shopner Shohor*, produced by Khalilur Abedin Dulal were also popular.

Without the mention of Kobori's performance in *Matir Kole*, produced by Musa Ahmed, Jia Ansari's *Jonaki Jole*, and Khalil Ullah Khan's portrayal of the character Sheraj Talukder in Nasir Uddin Yusuf's *Bhanganer Shobdo Shuni*, this list remains incomplete. These are a few of the many outstanding tele-fictions that entertained the Bangladeshi audience through the years.

## Entries open for 27th International Radio Playwriting Competition

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The script submission for the 27th International Radio Playwriting Competition has begun. The global competition, hosted by BBC World Service and the British Council, offers the unique opportunity for playwrights to use the medium of radio drama to reach an international audience.

Writers around the world, including Bangladesh, are encouraged to submit their scripts. The plays need to be 53 minutes long and can be on any subject. This year, the first two prizes can come from either the English as a first language or the English as a second language category. Both winners will attend an award ceremony in

London and see their plays recorded for broadcast on BBC World Service.

A special commendation for the script with the most outstanding potential from the competition's shortlist will be made in honour of the BBC World Service journalist and writer Georgi Markov (1929-1978).

The shortlisted scripts and judging panel will be announced in due course. The submission lines will close on January 31, 2020. Further details on the competition, including rules and how to enter, are online at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0043kb2>. Social media users can keep up to date with the competition on Facebook and join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #BBCPlay.



## Shelu Barua launches his YouTube channel

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Renowned singer Shelu Barua has recently launched his YouTube channel, *Nazrul Sangeet Adi Sur-e*. The artiste, also a Nazrul Sangeet teacher at the Govt Music College, plans to employ the channel as a global learning platform for enthusiasts who wish to pursue Nazrul Sangeet. “I hope the initiative will prevent the genre from getting distorted with regard to its original tune and lyrics,” said Shelu Barua. “Basically, the channel, first of its kind in Bangladesh, will help those who don't get proper teachers of Nazrul Sangeet both at home and abroad.”

The singer initially uploaded 20 songs, composed by National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, including *Haramo*



PHOTO: STAR

*Hiyar Nikunjo Poth-e, Musafir Mochhrey Aankhi Jol and Amar Jabar Somoy Holo*. He intends to gradually upload around 200 songs with time. Each song will be a 10 to 15-minute track, and will comprise of a rendition of the song, its relevant history and learning instructions.

## Ten-day art and literary fair concludes in Manikganj



PHOTO: STAR

ZAHANGIR SHAH, from Manikganj

A ten-day art and literary fair at Manikganj Government High School concluded with prize distributions and cultural functions, recently.

Manikganj District Administration organised the fair, in observance of *Mujib Barsha*. Health and Family Welfare Minister Jahid Maleaque Sawapam, MP, formally inaugurated the event.

SM Ferdous, Deputy Commissioner, Manikganj, handed over the prizes to the winners of the competitions and the top three stalls.

Team Manikganj Sadar Upazila won the first prize in team category, while Roksana Akter Liza won in the Nazrul and Rabindra Sangeet category. Shahnaj Poly received the prize for modern songs. Other prizes were given to Arobinda Mandal and Sathi Akter from Harirampur Upazila, in the patriotic and folk song categories, respectively. Mustafizur

Rahman Mamun from Manikganj Municipality won in the recitation category. The best three stalls were Department of Agriculture Extension, Department of Public Health and Manikganj Municipality, respectively. Manikganj District Council received a special prize in the stall category.

Chairman of Manikganj Zila Parishad Golam Mohiuddin, Public Prosecutor of Manikganj Judge Court Abdus Salam, Deputy Director of Local Government Fauzia Khan, Former Vice President of Manikganj District Sports Association, General Secretary of Manikganj Diabetic Association Sultanul Azam Khan Apel, along with, Chairman of Manikganj Sadar Upazila Parishad Israfil Hossain, Deputy Commander of Manikganj District Unit of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Momin Uddin Khan and Executive Magistrate of the District Administration Farzana Yasmin were present at the event.



Golpo Sheshe Gumer Deshe

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Marking their 10th season, Duronto Television will introduce three new programmes and four new cartoon serials today.

The channel, along with Save the Children, produced *Shwapnoghuri*, a new series, which will air every Friday and Saturday at 2 pm and 9:30 pm from January 17. The series tells the story of a group of teachers called 'Shwapnoghuri'. It is produced by Monirul Hossain Shipon and written by Rantik Bipu.

The third season of *Golpo Sheshe Gumer Deshe* has a new

look and new tales. Focused on bedtime stories, this series features a star-studded cast, including Asaduzzaman Noor, Jayanta Chattopadhyay, Sarker Apu, Dr Ezaz, Tropa Mazumder, Aparna Ghosh, Manoj Pramanik, Ahsan Habib Nasim, Shatabdi Wadud, Moutushi Biswas, Kazi Nawshaba Ahmed and Momena Chowdhury. Produced by Fahima Ahmed Chaiti, with a screenplay by Alok Basu, the series will air every day at 9 pm.

Halum, Tuktuki, Ikri and Shiku will introduce new stories on *Sisimpur* this season. The immensely popular returning



Shwapnoghuri



The Magic Roundabout



The Garfield Show

show will air every day at 12:30 pm and 5:30 pm, starting from today.

*The Garfield Show*, a cartoon series about a lazy cat, will air from Sunday to Thursday at 9 am, 1:30 pm and 7:30 pm. *Conni*, another cartoon series, focuses on the five-year-old girl, Conni, and her adventures. It will be televised every Friday and Saturday, from January 17, at 9 am, 1:30 pm, and 7:30 pm.

The new cartoon series, *The Magic Roundabout*, tells the story of Florence and her friends on a quest to find three magic diamonds. It will air from Sunday to Thursday

at 8:30 am and 2:30 pm, starting from today. The adventures of some ninjas will be presented in *Mini Ninjas* from January 17, every Friday and Saturday at 8:30 am and 2:30 pm.

*Mastermind Family Bangladesh*, *Nacher Ishkul*, *Khatta Miha*, *Duronto Shomoy*, *Ma Babai Shera*, *Moner Jadukor* and *Shonar Kathi Rupar Kathi* are few of the returning programmes. Moreover, *Sweet Little Monsters*, *Heidi*, *Dragon Hunters*, *Eena Meena Deeka*, *The Jungle Book*, *Crafty Kids Club*, *Guess What*, *Lucas & Emily*, *Ozie Boo!* *Save The Planet* and *Tree Fu Tom* will continue this season.



Mini Ninjas



## Police detain

FROM PAGE 16  
just after midnight, police said.  
The ensuing police chase ended in the city of Thessaloniki, when the vehicle ran a series of red lights and crashed into a passing car.  
Ten men from Bangladesh and two men from Syria were transported to hospital, as was the driver of the car.  
The Syrians were treated and released from hospital and were arrested on suspicion of migrant smuggling.

Thousands of people continue to enter Greece from Turkey, either from the coast to nearby Greek islands or through the land border in far northeastern Greece, despite European efforts to stop migrant flows, according to AP.  
Most hope to make their way to more prosperous northern European countries, it said.

## Gold bar

FROM PAGE 16  
That night -- June 30, 1520 -- the Aztecs, furious over the slaughter of their nobles and priests, drove the Spanish invaders from their capital, Tenochtitlan.  
The conquistadors escaped with as much looted Aztec treasure as they could carry, including, apparently, the gold bar in question.

"The so-called 'Noche Triste' is among the episodes of the conquest that will be remembered this year, and there is only one piece of material evidence from it: a gold bar that sank 500 years ago in the canals of Tenochtitlan, and which recent analysis confirms came from the (Spaniards') flight," INAH said in a statement.

Cortes and his men received a wary welcome from Aztec emperor Moctezuma when they arrived in 1519, but soon became unwanted guests at the palace as they appropriated his treasure and turned him into a virtual hostage.  
In June 1520, Cortes -- who had launched his expedition in Mexico without official authorisation -- learned that the Spanish governor in Cuba had sent a party of soldiers to arrest him.  
He left his lieutenant Pedro de Alvarado in charge at Tenochtitlan and went with part of his army to fight the arriving soldiers, ultimately defeating them.  
While he was gone, however, Alvarado began to fear the Aztecs would attack him, and had their nobles and priests killed.

## Mesmerising

FROM PAGE 16  
school every Friday to hear the children play ek tara, dotara, sarinda, flute, harmonium and dhul.  
Suklal Roy, 40, a local Bhawaiya artiste in the village, said he and other folk artistes in the village take out time for these students upon the request of Uday. "We guide them on how to play these instruments."  
Uday's 66-year-old grandfather Bhupendra Nath Roy, a farmer, said, he is proud of his grandson. "He is a benevolent kid, always helping others. He helps the disabled get their allowances, arranges food, clothes, and even money for orphans and the poor."  
"I help Uday bathe, dress, eat and go to school. Even though he is dependent on others, he never shies from helping others," said his 60-year-old grandmother Nani Bala. "We love our grandson very much. He always has a smile on his face."  
Thirteen-year-old Sufola Rani, who is learning Bhawaiya, said, "We eagerly wait to attend our music lessons every weekend. We are grateful for this opportunity, all thanks to Uday."  
"I am determined to continue such social welfare works my whole life," Uday told The Daily Star recently.

## 21 died

FROM PAGE 16  
injured and 375 went missing in 203 incidents, said the report.  
The road crash victims included 989 drivers, 844 transport workers, 809 students, 115 teachers, 216 law enforcers, 36 journalists, 26 physicians, and 153 political activists, the report said.  
A total of 7,356 vehicles were involved in the road crashes. Of them, 18.99 percent were buses, 29.81 percent trucks and covered vans, and 21.4 percent were motorcycles.  
More than 56 percent of the accidents took place when vehicles ran over the victims while 18.38 involved head-on collisions between vehicles and 18.07 percent involved vehicles falling into roadside ditches.  
The platform said the country witnessed a 4.26 percent decline in accidents involving motorcycles, due to strict monitoring of their operation.  
Of the crashes, 32.38 percent occurred on national highways, 37.51 percent on regional highways, and 21.3 percent on feeder roads, it said.  
According to the report, the highest number of accidents in a single day happened on June 15, when 27 people died and 121 were injured.  
The platform, in its report, also gave 12 recommendations to prevent road accidents. They include proper implementation of Road Transport Act-2018, raising awareness on road safety through the media, reclaiming pavements and parts of highway from illegal occupants and providing training to drivers.



PHOTO: AFP

Activists hold placards and shout slogans against India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi as they participate in a protest against India's new citizenship law, in Kolkata yesterday.

# Libya and Iran top agenda in Merkel-Putin meeting

AFP, Moscow

Confrontation between Washington and Tehran over the US killing of a top general and turmoil in Libya were set to dominate talks in Moscow between the leaders of Russia and Germany yesterday.  
Russia's Vladimir Putin was set to hold talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Moscow yesterday afternoon -- her first visit since May 2018 when the two leaders met at Sochi on the Black Sea.  
Putin visited Syria and Turkey this week and is keen to stress his role as a regional powerbroker.  
German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, who will attend the talks, said a "key reason" for the meeting was the escalating crisis in Libya, where

Germany is acting as a mediator in a conflict he has warned could become a "second Syria".  
"We are involving Europe and those players who are influential there, for that we need Russia," Maas told Germany's NTV television. "For us, it's not too far to fly to Moscow to discuss that with Putin."  
Merkel is to invite Putin to a Berlin conference on Libya later this month, diplomatic sources told AFP.  
Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called for a ceasefire in Libya on Wednesday, although they are seen as supporting opposing sides in the conflict.  
While Turkey has sent troops to support the UN-backed Tripoli government, Moscow is accused of backing mercenaries supporting

strongman Khalifa Haftar in his fight against the government.  
Haftar said he would fight on despite the call for a ceasefire.  
The Kremlin said last week that talks would cover the "escalation of tensions" in the Middle East after the US killed top Iranian commander General Qasem Soleimani in a drone strike close to Baghdad.  
Putin warned the killing could "seriously aggravate the situation in the region".  
Iran, an ally of Moscow, responded with missile attacks on Iraq bases housing American troops.  
While Germany condemned the tit-for-tat violence and urged Tehran to end a "spiral" of conflict, Putin said using force would "not contribute to finding solutions to

the complex problems in the Middle East".  
Tehran has announced a further rollback on its commitment to a 2015 nuclear accord following the United States' unilateral withdrawal in 2018. Russia and Germany are among world powers still backing the deal.  
The talks also come after a Ukrainian airliner crashed in Iran on Wednesday killing all 176 on board. Canada and the US have suggested Iran downed it with a missile, which Tehran denies.  
The Kremlin said the talks would also cover the conflict in Ukraine.  
The war with Moscow-backed separatists broke out after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and has killed more than 13,000 people.

# US turns down Iraqi request

FROM PAGE 16

in place the tools to carry out the parliament's decision," his office said in a statement, adding that the forces used in the killing had entered Iraq or used its airspace without permission.  
The State Department said any US delegation would not discuss the withdrawal of US troops as their presence in Iraq was "appropriate."  
"There does, however, need to be a conversation between the US and Iraqi governments not just regarding security, but about our financial, economic, and diplomatic partnership," spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said in a statement.  
Trump said in the Fox News interview that if Iraq wanted the United States to leave, he would tell them: "You have to pay us for the money we put in."  
He said the United States has \$35 billion of Iraq's money "sitting in an account."  
"I think they'll agree to pay. Otherwise we'll stay there," Trump said.  
Pompeo told reporters a Nato delegation was in Washington on Friday to discuss the future of the Iraq

mission and a plan to "get burden-sharing right in the region".  
Separately, the State Department said Pompeo had discussed Iran with Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne as well as "the opportunity for an expanded Nato force in Iraq and appropriate burden sharing".  
The latest flare-up in the long covert war between Iran and the United States began with the US killing of Soleimani, Iran's top general, in a drone strike on January 3. Iran responded on Wednesday by firing missiles at US forces in Iraq.  
In the aftermath, both sides backed off from intensifying the conflict but the region remains tense.  
Iraq's top Shia Muslim cleric condemned the US-Iranian struggle happening on Iraqi soil, saying it risked plunging his country and the wider Middle East into deeper conflict.  
Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani said it was Iraqis who stood to suffer most from the US-Iranian conflict. In a message delivered through a representative at Friday prayers in the holy city of Kerbala, Sistani said no

foreign powers should be allowed to decide Iraq's fate.  
**CALLS TO LEAVE**  
"The latest dangerous aggressive acts, which are repeated violations of Iraqi sovereignty, are a part of the deteriorating situation" in the region, Sistani said. "Iraq must govern itself and there must be no role for outsiders in its decision-making."  
Iraq has suffered decades of war, sanctions and sectarian conflict, including the US-led invasion of 2003.  
At Friday prayers in Tehran, mid-ranking Iranian cleric Mohammad Javad Haj Aliakbari said US interests across the world were now exposed to threats.  
Since Soleimani's killing, Tehran has stepped up its calls for US forces to leave Iraq, which like Iran is a mainly Shia Muslim nation. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has said the retaliatory strikes were not enough and that ending the US military presence in the region was Tehran's main goal.  
Critics have called Soleimani's killing a reckless action.  
But Pompeo said on Friday Washington had specific information

about an imminent Iranian threat including to US embassies, adding: "American lives were at risk."  
As part of his most recent activities in Iraq, Soleimani had encouraged pro-Iranian Iraqi militias to quash months of protests by Iraqis opposed to the influence in their country of foreign powers such as Iran and the United States.  
In Iraqi cities, demonstrators took to the streets again on Friday, determined to keep up the momentum of their protests despite attention turning to the threat of a US-Iran conflict.  
Gunmen killed two local journalists covering protests in the southern city of Basra, security sources and state media said. Ahmed Abdulsamad, Basra correspondent of Dijla TV station -- owned by senior Sunni politician Mohammed al-Karbouli -- was killed immediately while his camera operator succumbed to his wounds in hospital, a medical source told Reuters.  
"Politicians and clerics...are either with Iran, the US or other countries. Our allegiance is to Iraq only, not to factions and politicians," said Essam Faraj, 54, a demonstrator in Baghdad.

# Historic German island is nursery for North Sea seals

AFP, Helgoland

The birthplace of Germany's national anthem and a practice bombing range for British airmen after World War II, Helgoland island in the North Sea turns cuddly at the turn of the year as grey seals arrive to give birth.  
The Jordsand society, dedicated to preserving North Sea coastal life, has counted more than 520 births since November.  
Dozens of tourists come each day to see the white-furred seal pups hop around the beach during the whelping season that lasts into January.  
"They're so close and so lively. I often watch them on TV, but it's much more exciting to come here," said Karin, who had made a long trip to the island, also spelled Heligoland in English, from Essen in western Germany.  
But two local rangers and Jordsand volunteers must keep the excited fans at a distance of at least 30 metres (100 feet).  
Adult seals can grow as large as 300 kilogrammes (660 pounds) and won't hesitate to bite if they feel threatened.  
"Sometimes, the tourists forget the restrictions and get too close. If the seals get too used to people, that has negative consequences in summer," said ranger Ute Pausch.

"They'll want to play in the water and they can injure swimmers."  
Wooden boardwalks have been set up to corral the tourists during whelping season.  
The challenge has become all the greater as seal numbers have grown in response to rising water temperatures.  
Researchers say climate change is behind waters growing 1.6 degrees Celsius (2.9 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer in the past 45 years.  
Now, "the seals are more and more numerous, I think it's because there's more food around," said Elmar Ballstaedt, who works for the Jordsand society.  
But potential negative effects of global warming could one day outweigh the bonanza for the sea-dwelling mammals, he warned.  
"We're at sea level here. If the water rises, we'll certainly have new challenges to overcome," Ballstaedt said.  
In the nearer term, the seal year is just getting started on Helgoland.  
After three weeks nursing with their mothers, the pups are left to fend for themselves in the North Sea.  
But they return to the island in the spring to moult -- and to take another turn in front of crowds of tourists and photographers.

# Sanders leads close 4-way battle in early voting Iowa: poll

AFP, Washington

Bernie Sanders leads a tight race for the Democratic presidential nomination in Iowa for the first time, according to a key poll released yesterday weeks before the state kicks off the 2020 voting on February 3.  
Four candidates are within five points of one another in the closely watched Des Moines register poll, the main Iowa newspaper's first statewide survey in two months.  
Senator Sanders leads with 20 percent of the vote, a five-point gain since November, followed by fellow liberal Senator Elizabeth Warren at 17 percent, and former South Bend, Indiana mayor Pete Buttigieg, who sits at 16 percent after a nine-point slide from top spot.  
Centrist Joe Biden is at 15 percent in Iowa, but the former vice president is the national frontrunner in the race to see who challenges incumbent President Donald Trump in November.  
Senator Amy Klobuchar, from neighboring Minnesota, is in fifth spot in Iowa, well back at six percent, followed by entrepreneur Andrew Yang at five percent and Senator Cory Booker at three percent.  
The polling is the latest in a series

of good signs for the 78-year-old Sanders, who suffered a heart attack two months ago but has enjoyed a remarkable comeback to cement his status as a top White House contender.  
"There's no denying that this is a good poll for Bernie Sanders. He leads, but it's not an uncontested lead," said pollster J. Ann Selzer, president of Selzer & Co.  
"He's got a firmer grip on his supporters than the rest of his compatriots."  
The poll of 701 likely Democratic caucus goers has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.7 percentage points.  
Sanders is a self-described Democratic socialist who supports universal health care and a massively ambitious policy to arrest climate change -- plans that critics warn will cost tens of trillions of dollars.  
Buoyed by fervent young supporters, he is in second place behind Biden nationally and has solidified his position in recent weeks.  
He is enjoying his largest lead since May over third-place Warren, who surged during the summer but has seen her support slide since October.

## No respite

FROM PAGE 16  
to morning today.  
Yesterday's lowest temperature was recorded at 10.2 degree Celsius in Ishwardi of Pabna, while the highest was 28.6 at Teknaf of Cox's Bazar, said the weather bulletin.  
Meanwhile, some 5,529 people took treatment at different government hospitals across the country after being infected with different cold-related diseases in the 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday, according to the statistics of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).  
Most of the infected persons received treatment at outdoor services of government hospitals, while some others were admitted, said Ayesha Akther, assistant director of Health Emergency Operation Center and Control Room of the DGHS.  
The diseases include acute respiratory infection (ARI), pneumonia, asthma, diarrhoea, fever, skin disease, eye infection and jaundice, he told The Daily Star yesterday evening.  
A few trains were running behind schedule, while road and river communications also faced disruption due to thick fog, said officials and transport operators concerned.

## First Akheri

FROM PAGE 16  
Thousands of devotees from home and abroad will take part in the prayer.  
Tabligh Jamaat, a coalition of Muslim devotees, has been organising the event on the bank of Turag river, near Tongi upazila of Gazipur, every year since 1967.  
The first phase of the Ijtema is mainly allocated for the followers of Maulana Zubair.

The second phase will be held from January 17 to 19. This phase is allocated for the followers of Indian preacher Maulana Saad Kandhalvi.  
**FIVE MORE DIED IN IJTEMA**  
Meanwhile, five more devotees died at the Ijtema venue yesterday, mostly due to heart attack and old-age complications. With them, a total of nine people died so far since Friday.  
The dead are Ali Azgar, 70, from Barisal; Md Yusuf, 45, from Narayanganj; Md Shahjahan, 60, from Brahmanbaria; Tamij Uddin, 65, from Cumilla; and Abdur Razzak, 50, from Rajshahi.  
Manjur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Gazipur Metropolitan Police, said the bodies were handed over to the families after their namaz-e-janaza at the Ijtema ground.

To ensure security of the event, law enforcement agencies have taken up a multi-layered security measures.  
Members of police, Rab and intelligence agencies have been deployed in the adjacent areas.  
Over 400 closed-circuit television cameras, 25 watch towers and 11 checkpoints have been set up to monitor the area, police said.

## Shahriar Alam

FROM PAGE 16  
Delhi on Tuesday.  
The annual multilateral conference addresses the most challenging issues facing the global community. Heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, as well as major private sector executives, members of the media and academics from across the globe will be speaking at the event, according to ORF.

Asked if anyone would represent Shahriar at the dialogue, a Bangladesh foreign ministry official replied in the negative. "He was invited to the event as a speaker, not just as a participant."  
The cancellation of his visit comes just a month after Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan called off their scheduled visits to India amid protests in the neighbouring country over the passage of Citizenship Amendment Bill in parliament.  
The Citizenship Amendment Act grants Indian citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians who faced "persecution" in Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Critics say it discriminates against Muslims and violates Indian constitution's secular tenets.

The act sparked furious protests as lakhs of people took to the streets across India. The demonstrations led to many deaths, including more than 20 in Uttar Pradesh alone.  
On December 12, some people from processions and agitations knocked down two signposts of the Bangladesh mission, approximately 30 yards away from the chancery premises in Guwahati. The security vehicle escorting Bangladesh assistant high commissioner, Shah Mohammad Tanvir Monsur, from the airport to Guwahati city was attacked by mobs protesting adoption of the act.  
Talking about CAB, Foreign Minister Momen had told reporters in Dhaka that the bill could weaken India's "historic position" as a tolerant and secular country.  
There were also concerns over the Indian National Register of Citizens (NRC) which excluded nearly two million people in Assam, raising fears they could be rendered stateless.  
Indian Home Minister Amit Shah on several occasions said the NRC would be implemented across India and all illegal migrants would be expelled.  
Delhi has assured Dhaka that the NRC will not affect Bangladesh as it is an internal issue of India.





A farmer spreads husk ash at his Boro seedbed at Khoyerbari village in Dinajpur's Phulbari upazila in a bid to protect the tender seedlings from the biting cold and fog.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Cold, dense fog affect Boro seedbeds in Dinajpur

KONGKON KARMAKER, *Dinajpur*

The ongoing cold weather accompanied by dense fog has started affecting the Boro seedbeds in the district, much to the worry of farmers.

“If such a weather continues for long, farmers might face shortage of seedlings. They will have to buy seedlings from other sources for Boro cultivation, which will add to the production cost,” said Khatib Uddin, a farmer of Phulbari upazila of Dinajpur.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Dinajpur set a target of Boro paddy cultivation on around 1.71 lakh hectares of land in the district this year and farmers prepared seedbeds on

9,270 hectares for the purpose.

But the persistent cold weather coupled with dense fog, cloudy sky and rain has already affected the growth of the tender seedlings, turning those yellowish at many places.

Visiting different areas of the district during the last few days, this correspondent found that many farmers covered the seedbeds with polythene sheets and sprayed ashes of rice husk in a bid to protect the seedlings from the adverse weather.

Many of the farmers, already hard-pressed after losses from Aman cultivation last season due to low market prices, will have to buy seedlings to cultivate their Boro lands if the damage to seedbeds continues amid the adverse weather, said locals.

“Boro seeds on my one decimal of

seedbed germinated quite healthy, but the seedlings turned yellowish due to the biting cold and foggy weather,” said Khalib Uddin, a farmer of Aladipur village in Phulbari upazila.

“I am concerned as there is no noticeable improvement despite applying the medicine prescribed by the agriculture department,” he said.

Moinul Islam of Chhatianganr village in Khansama upazila said he is upset due to serious damage to his two-decimal seedbed at the beginning of the Boro season.

According to Dinajpur Met office, the mercury saw a serious fall in the district at the end of December last year and since then dense fog and cloudy sky featured

most of the days.

The Met office recorded 6.4mm of rain during the 11 days from January 1.

The DAE officials said they are yet to estimate the extent of damage to seedbeds in the district.

Shamim Ashraf, an officer of Dinajpur DAE, said their sub-assistant agriculture officers are conducting field visits to help the farmers.

“The farmers are suggested to cover the seedbeds with polythene sheets and treat the seedlings with ash and medicines as per instruction of the DAE officials.

Hopefully, there will be no shortage of Boro seedlings this season as there is still enough time to prepare seedbeds,” he added.

## Schoolgirl gang-raped in Jashore

2 rape accused held in Gazipur, Barishal

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A schoolgirl was gang-raped in Jashore’s Abhoynagar upazila on Friday while two people, including a teenager, were arrested yesterday and on Friday for allegedly raping girls in Gazipur and Barishal.

Our Benapole Correspondent reported that: A 13-year-old girl was gang-raped allegedly by her stalkers at Diapara village in Jashore’s Abhoynagar upazila on Friday evening.

The traumatised victim, also a Class VII student at a local high school, in now undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Victim’s mother alleged that, one of their neighbours Riaz Khan, 25, son of Hafiz Khan, and two of his accomplices entered her house when her daughter was staying alone at home on Friday evening.

At one stage, the criminals gagged the victim’s mouth with a scarf and raped her forcibly until she lost her consciousness, she added.

“After returning home around 6:00pm I found my daughter lying unconscious on the floor,” she said, adding that hearing her screams, neighbours rushed in, rescued her daughter and admitted her to Abhoynagar Upazila Health Complex.

The girl’s mother alleged that Riaz and his friends used to stalk her daughter on her way to and from school for long.

When she protest their heinous act the culprits threatened to kill her and set her house on fire, she alleged.

Officer in Charge of Abhoynagar Police Station Tajul Islam said action would be taken against those involved in the incident.

Away in Gazipur, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-1) detained a man yesterday in connection with a case for raping a five-year-old girl on Friday, reports our correspondent.

Rab members arrested Nurul Islam, 59, son of Abdul Mannan, from Salna area around 3:30pm.

According to the case statement, on Friday morning, Nurul took the minor girl behind a grocery shop by luring her with chocolates and raped her.

Rab sources said during primary interrogation, Nurul confessed that he raped the minor girl.

Our Barishal Correspondent added that a teenager was arrested on Friday night in connection with a case for raping a 14-year-old mentally challenged girl in Babuganj upazila the same day.

The arrestee, Sumon, 16, is son of late Ayub Ali of Baherchar village in the upazila.

Victim’s mother said Sumon and his friend Rimon forcibly took the girl to the vacant house of one Noman master violated her there on Friday evening.

The victim was sent to Barishal Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) for medical test after victim’s father lodged a rape case with Babuganj Police Station two people yesterday, Officer in Charge Mizanur Rahman said.

## Schoolboy kills self

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

A schoolboy allegedly took his life in Tangail’s Nagarpur upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Imran Hossain, 16, a class IX student of Noyon Khan Memorial High School and son of Lutfar Rahman of Bekra Purbo Para village in the upazila.

Quoting family members, Alam Chand, officer-in-charge of Nagarpur Police Station, said Imran killed himself by taking poison as his parents denied buying a mobile phone set for him.

An unnatural death case was filed.



With a dredger, sand lifting from the Kapotakkho river in Jhenidah's Kotchandpur upazila has been continuing for the last few months.

PHOTO: STAR

# Illegal sand lifting from Kapotakkho goes unabated

Vacuum created due to the sand extraction posing threat to nearby roads and homesteads

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jhenidah*

A local Swechchhasebok League activist has allegedly continued lifting sand from the Kapotakkho river at Solemanpur village in Kotchandpur upazila of the district, posing erosion threat.

The accused is Sohel Rana, an activist of Kotchandpur upazila unit Swechchhasebok League, and also a resident of Solemanpur in the upazila.

Locals said with a dredger, Sohel has continued illegal sand lifting from the river for the last few months. Sohel dug a pond beside the river where he set up the dredger.

Vacuum in the riverbed, caused by the sand lifting, is posing threat to the nearby roads and homesteads, they said.

But nobody can stop the illegal sand lifter as he is locally very influential person having connection with a powerful politician, said the villagers.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent found that sand lifting with a dredger continued.

If sand lifting from the river flowing through Moheshpur and Kotchandpur upazilas continues this way, large cracks may develop in the nearby areas, said Mizanur Rahman, a resident of Solemanpur village.

Not only Sohel but also a good number of local influential people have grabbed a large portion of the river, said Mizan, adding that those sand lifters also dug ponds there.

Contacted over cellphone, the Swechchhasebok League activist said the pond was not dug in the river area.

It is his own land where the dredger has been set up, he said.

Kotchandpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Naznin Sultan said they will take steps in this regard after investigation.

## ‘Save us from harassment of land grabbers’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

People of different villages in Mirzapur upazila formed a human chain in the upazila headquarters yesterday, demanding steps to save them from harassment of the local land grabbers.

Over a hundred people from Postkamuri, Baimhati, Mirzapur Bazar, Garail villages took part in the hour-long rally held in College Road area.

Speakers at the rally said a syndicate of land grabbers and touts -- like Mizanur Rahman Jewel, Abul Abbas Dhala, Abdus Salam, Ali Hossain and Abdur Razzak of Postkamuri village, and Shakil Miah of Mirzapur Bazar area -- has been harassing locals in different ways, including implicating in false cases, for long.

Seeking justice, although the innocent villagers informed the matter to the local administration and public representatives, no step has been taken in this regard yet, they alleged.

# Meherpur jail serves pitha to inmates

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushitia*

Inmates of Meherpur jail had a chance to escape from their everyday mundane activities inside the prison on Thursday when the authorities arranged a pitha festival for them.

On Thursday night, the prison compound was brimming with aroma of various types of pitha, the rice-made delectable winter delicacies of the country.

ASM Kamrul Huda, superintendent of Meherpur jail, said they arranged the festival for the 227 male and 6 female inmates so they also can join in the pitha-tasting festivities that grip the nation during the winter time.

Professional pitha makers were brought in and some of the inmates along with staff members of the jail took part in preparation, presentation and distribution of the pithas among all.

As a correctional facility, they try to organise these types of activities for inducing humane qualities among the inmates and the pitha festival will continue in years to come, he added.

Tajmid Ali, whose brother has been



Meherpur jail inmates during Thursday's pitha festival.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

in the jail for the last eight years in connection with a murder case, said since there is a restriction on bringing home-cooked meal for a prisoner, it was a laudable initiative of the prison authorities.

Meherpur Deputy Commissioner Ataul Gani said treating inmates with compassion through such programmes can go a long way in facilitating behavioural correction of prison inmates.



Members of government-run children's home in Manikganj perform at the concluding ceremony of the 10-day ‘art and literary fair’ held on the premises of Manikganj Government High School on Friday evening. The district administration organised the programme ahead of Mujib Barsha (Mujib Year), to be observed across the country marking the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from March 17 this year.

PHOTO: ZAHANGIR SHAH



UKRAINE JET DOWNING

## Condolence fails to calm Iranians

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran's statement yesterday that a Ukrainian passenger plane was downed by a missile fired unintentionally followed growing pressure from abroad but also at home, and for some Iranians, the authorities' expressions of condolence were not enough.

Expressions of condolence over the incident from Supreme Leader and President Hassan Rouhani failed to calm angry Iranians, who used social media to express their outrage against the establishment for concealing the truth.

"It is a national tragedy. The way it was handled and it was announced by the authorities was even more tragic," said Ali Ansari, a moderate cleric, according to Iran's semi-official ILNA news agency.

Many Iranians asked why authorities did not close down Tehran's airport and the country's airspace at a time when they would have been on alert for retaliation after the missile strikes.

"They were so careful not to kill any American in their revenge for Soleimani. But they did not close the airport? This shows how much this regime cares for Iranians," said Mira Sedaghati in Tehran by telephone.

An Iranian military statement carried by state media said the Ukrainian plane, which was headed for Kiev, was mistaken for a "hostile target" after it turned toward a sensitive military base of the elite Revolutionary Guards near Tehran, adding that it was a "human error and unintentional".

"Unintentionally? What does it mean? They concealed this huge tragic news for days just to mourn for Soleimani. Shame on you," said Reza Ghadyani, in Tabriz city.

Some Iranians called for resignation of officials, dismissing their apologies.



Panicked residents run following an air strike by pro-regime forces in the northwestern Syrian city of Idlib yesterday. *Inset*, an injured Syrian child is carried by a White Helmets rescue worker. At least 18 civilians were killed in the air strike, a war monitor said, one day before a planned ceasefire is due to take effect.

PHOTO: AFP

## Trump ups Iran accusations

*Says 4 US embassies targeted but still gives few specifics*

AFP, Washington

The United States piled new sanctions on Iran's already crippled economy Friday and defended the killing of a top Iranian leader, saying he had been planning an "imminent" attack on four US embassies.

The sanctions, announced at the White House, marked the latest salvo in a US-Iranian confrontation that risked sliding into war a week ago with the deadly US drone attack on general Qasem Soleimani, by some measures the second most influential person in Iran.

In response, Iran fired volleys of ballistic missiles at Iraqi bases housing US troops, without causing casualties.

While President Donald Trump said he would not respond further militarily, Washington is intent on maintaining pressure.

The sanctions mean "we will cut off billions of dollars of support to the Iranian regime," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told reporters at the White House.

The measures targeting Iran's steel industry and eight state officials came on top of massive sanctions already aimed at bringing the country's economy to its knees.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told reporters that sanctions so far "have deprived the regime of billions in revenue."

Among the senior Iranian officials targeted in the new

measures were Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, the Iranian armed forces deputy chief of staff and Gholamreza Soleimani, the head of the Basij militia, a volunteer force loyal to the regime.

Seventeen Iranian metals producers and mining companies were listed.

Critics are questioning why Trump -- who has been impeached and faces a Senate trial in the coming days -- ordered Soleimani's killing last week.

The administration has pushed back against accusations that Trump acted recklessly, insisting that longtime US foe Soleimani was on the brink of launching an attack and had to be stopped.

On Thursday, Trump said that Soleimani had been planning to blow up the US embassy in Baghdad. However, officials did not

back up that scenario.

On Friday, Trump shifted, saying "probably it was going to be the embassy in Baghdad."

"I can reveal that I believe it would have been four embassies," Trump added in an excerpt of an interview aired on Fox News. Earlier, Pompeo said the US had "specific information" on "imminent" attacks "against American facilities, including American embassies, military bases."

But "we don't know exactly which day it would've been executed," he said.

US piles on sanctions  
pain against Iran

Sanctions so far have  
deprived the regime  
of billions in revenue



## Climate at mercy of politics in 2020, experts warn

AFP, Paris

2020 is the most crucial year yet for humanity's plan to dodge the bullet of catastrophic global warming, experts said yesterday, warning that the narrow path to safety was riddled with pitfalls, from the US election to Brexit.

When nations struck the 2015 Paris agreement, which aims to limit temperature rises under 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit), they agreed on five-year periods in which climate action could be implemented, assessed and boosted.

2020 is the year the landmark deal goes into effect, yet almost three decades of diplomatic wrangling has fallen far short of what science says is needed to avert disastrous climate change.

A crucial UN summit at which leaders will finalise their action plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is set to open in Glasgow on November 9 -- just six days after a US general election that could see President Donald Trump win a second term.

Trump shocked the world in 2017 when

he said the United States -- history's largest emitter -- was withdrawing from the Paris agreement. It is due to leave the deal on November 4.

"Another four years of Trump in the White House would mean that the world's key country in terms of providing global leadership will be sitting the problem out," Michael Oppenheimer, professor of Geosciences and International Affairs at Princeton University, told AFP.

"So that's four years of having a millstone around the neck of the world's efforts to deal with climate change."

After a year of climate-related disasters, from cyclones and flooding in Africa and southeast Asia to devastating wildfires in Australia and California, nations in December failed to make progress during the annual UN Climate Change Conference COP 25.

More than 100 countries have pledged to redouble their efforts to reduce domestic emissions, but the biggest polluters -- China, India, the US and the European Union -- have yet to unveil new plans.



A handout image released yesterday shows a Russian naval ship sails close to the US Navy destroyer USS Farragut during an incident in the northern Arabian Sea on Thursday. The incident is the latest example of a close encounter between US and Russian military forces that American officials have described as unsafe or provocative.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Harry, Meghan believe they are being 'driven out': friend

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex feel they are being "driven out" of the royal family after they were told they would not have major roles in a "slimmed-down monarchy," a friend has claimed.

ITV news anchor Tom Bradby said Prince Harry and Meghan were made aware, while away in Canada for six weeks, that the royal household's focus in the future would be on those at the top of the line of succession.

Buckingham Palace moved quickly to shrug off suggestions it had shown the door to the couple, insisting the Sussexes had been "very much at the heart" of plans for the royal family's future before a shock announcement they were stepping back from public life.

Harry and Meghan's plans were announced in a statement on Wednesday that rocked the royal family and is said to have left the Queen and other senior royals "hurt".

Bradby, who is friends with the couple, told an ITV

news programme: "It had been made clear to them in their absence there was going to be a slimmed-down monarchy and they weren't really a part of it."

He added: "Certainly the rest of the family find Harry and Meghan very difficult and, from Harry and Meghan's point of view, they're just being driven out as they see it."

But The Times reported that palace officials had stressed Harry and Meghan had always been central to the monarchy's plans, with one aide quoted as saying: "It is strongly disputed that the Sussexes are not at the centre of any future slimmed-down monarchy."

The aide added: "I don't think you could point to any evidence of them being forced out, or made to feel unwelcome."

Talks on the Duke and Duchesses' future roles in the royal household began in earnest on Friday at the urging of the Queen -- following reports she had pressed officials to ensure a remedy to the situation was found in days, as opposed to weeks.



TRUMP IMPEACHMENT

## Democrats to send articles to Senate next week: Pelosi

AFP, Washington

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Friday she intends to transmit articles of impeachment against Donald Trump to the Senate next week, moving to end a taut standoff with Republicans over terms of the president's trial.

The top Democrat's announcement virtually assures that a historic trial of Trump on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress begins this month, as anticipated.

But she declined to provide a specific timeline for the next steps and did not announce which House Democrats she will ask to spearhead the case in the Senate, saying lawmakers should be ready to vote to appoint the managers some time next week.

"I have asked Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler to be prepared to bring to the floor next week a resolution to appoint managers and transmit articles of impeachment to the Senate," Pelosi said in a letter to her Democratic caucus.

"I will be consulting with you at our

Tuesday House Democratic Caucus meeting on how we proceed further."

Pelosi has withheld the articles since Trump was impeached by the House of Representatives on December 18 over allegations that he improperly pressured Ukraine to investigate his potential 2020 election rival Joe Biden, and that he obstructed the subsequent congressional probe.

The top Democrat in Congress had hoped Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, of Trump's Republican Party, would provide assurances of what she described as a "fair" trial in which Democrats can subpoena witnesses and documents.

But McConnell -- who, like Pelosi, is seen as a wily political strategist -- refused to budge, announcing this week he had sufficient Republican votes to conduct a trial without acceding to Democratic demands.

"There will be no haggling with the House over Senate procedure," he said on Wednesday.

WUHAN PNEUMONIA

## China reports first death from outbreak

AFP, Shanghai

China yesterday said a 61-year-old man had become the first person to die from a respiratory illness believed caused by a new virus from the same family as SARS, which claimed hundreds of lives more than a decade ago.

Forty-one people with pneumonia-like symptoms have so far been diagnosed with the new virus in Wuhan, with one of the victims dying on Thursday, the central Chinese city's health commission said on its website.

Seven others remained in serious condition, two were discharged from treatment, and the rest were stable, it added.

The episode has caused alarm due to the spectre of SARS, or Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome, which in 2002-2003 killed 349 people in mainland China and another 299 in Hong Kong, whose economy was hit hard by the epidemic's devastating impact on tourism.

Chinese scientists investigating the outbreak said last week they believe the pathogen to be a previously unknown type of coronavirus, a broad family ranging from the common cold to more serious illnesses like SARS.

Scientists in Hong Kong's Department of Health said yesterday that genetic sequencing of the virus found in one of the Wuhan patients and published online by a Chinese expert indicated it was 80 percent similar to SARS found in bats.

Speaking at a news conference in Hong Kong, they said it was too early to conclude definitively that it was a SARS strain, adding that the city needed to stay vigilant.

"We will remain alert as we believe the epidemic will continue to develop," said Wong Ka-hing, director of the department's Health Protection Centre.

## Australia bushfires ease

*Authorities promise to build defences against blazes*

REUTERS, Sydney

Bushfire conditions eased in Australia yesterday after a gruelling night for firefighters, with authorities saying they expect at least a week of milder weather in which to step up defences against the huge blazes still burning.

Cooler temperatures and rainfall had eased conditions after Friday's strong southerly wind change that packed gusts of more than 100 kph (60 mph), whipping some fires on the east coast up to the emergency warning level.

The much needed respite was an opportunity to consolidate and try and get the upper hand over the fires, said Shane Fitzsimmons, commissioner of the New South Wales (NSW) Rural Fire Service.

"It would appear that we have got at least a week," Fitzsimmons told a media briefing. "It will probably be the best seven days we have had without a rise of very dangerous fire ratings."

New South Wales police said in a statement that areas not affected by the

bushfires of the South Coast, a popular holiday destination, are in a position to reopen for business, although national parks remain close until February 1.

Officials have been urging foreign tourists to continue visiting Australia, which depends on income from tourism as the industry accounts for 3.1% of the country's gross domestic product.

South Australian fire officials said the situation on Kangaroo Island has stabilised



after more than 200,000 hectares (494,000 acres) had burnt in blazes described as "hell on earth", by the island's mayor, Michael Pengill, on Twitter.

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

The Sydney Opera House illuminated its sails yesterday evening with a display of images from the last three months of the fire crisis, honouring those affected and those fighting the flames.

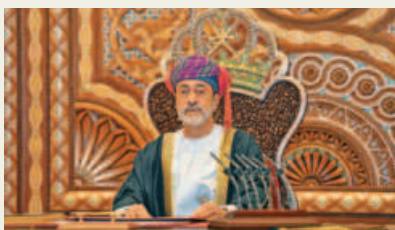
## Tunisian parliament rejects government of Habib Jemli

Tunisia's parliament Friday rejected the government proposed by Prime Minister-designate Habib Jemli after months of negotiations between political parties to fill positions. Jemli, an independent, was nominated by the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party after it came out top in legislative polls in October but failed to win enough seats to form a majority in the 217-seat chamber. Deputies voted 134 to 72 against Jemli's proposed government of independent figures due to "frictions" between the parties over political appointments. President Kais Saied now has 10 days to choose a new prime minister-designate who will attempt to put together a government acceptable to the assembly.

## 12 dead in migrant boat sinking off Greece

At least 12 people died yesterday when a boat loaded with asylum-seekers sank in the Ionian Sea, the Greek coastguard said. "So far 12 bodies have been recovered. The search and rescue operation continues," they said in a statement, adding that they had rescued more than 20 survivors. "Three of them are being flown by helicopter to (the nearest hospital) for emergency treatment," the statement added. There were no immediate details on the identity of those on board. The boat, which was carrying around 50 people, took on water near the island of Paxi during an apparent attempt to reach Italy. At this point someone on board issued a distress call, the authorities said.

## Oman swears in new sultan following death of Qaboos



Oman's new royal ruler yesterday pledged to follow the non-interference policy that made the kingdom a vital regional mediator under his late cousin Sultan Qaboos who reigned for half a century. Haitham bin Tariq, the culture minister, was sworn in shortly after modern Oman's founding father was laid to rest after his death on Friday at the age of 79. "We will follow the path of the late sultan," Haitham, 65, said in his first public speech which was aired live on state television. Qaboos transformed the Arabian Peninsula nation from a backwater into a modern state with a thriving tourism industry.

SOURCE: AFP







# Star SPORT

e-mail: [sports@thedailystar.net](mailto:sports@thedailystar.net)  
DHAKA SUNDAY JANUARY 12, 2020 CUSH 28, 1426 BS



**Khulna Tigers opener Najmul Hossain Shanto jumps into the air in celebration of his century during yesterday's second BBPL match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. The left-hander recorded the first above hundred score (115 not out) by a Bangladeshi batsman in this edition of the BPL as Khulna posted an emphatic eight-wicket victory over Dhaka Platoon with eleven balls remaining. Earlier, Mominul Haque's 91-run innings propelled Dhaka Platoon to 205 runs.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Pak tour, Mash future among agendas

SPORTS REPORTER



There will be quite a few agendas on the table when Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) first meeting of 2020 takes place at the home of cricket in Mirpur today. Bangladesh's tour of Pakistan will be top of the agendas for discussion as BCB and its Pakistan counterpart are yet to finalise the tour scheduled for later this month. There are a few other agendas including a new central contract for the national cricketers and appointment of a new bowling coach. The Daily Star assesses the probable agendas which are expected to be raised today.

### Pakistan tour

As per the ICC FTP [Future Tour Programme], Bangladesh are scheduled to tour Pakistan later this month for three T20Is and two Tests. The tour, however, hit a roadblock when BCB raised concerns over long stay in Pakistan, proposing to play only the T20I series on Pakistan soil and having the Test series take place at a neutral venue. Following a series of communication between the BCB and the PCB, the latter offered Bangladesh to play the Test series and reschedule the T20I matches ahead of the ICC World T20 later this year.

However, the BCB is still planning to play the shortest format in Pakistan and the delay over the decision has left the cricketers ill at ease,

particularly over the length of stay in Pakistan. Majority of the cricketers, who are to be part of the tour, are confused whether to start mental preparation for the tour.

Meanwhile, the recent political crisis involving Iran, a neighbour to Pakistan, has created yet another dilemma for the BCB. To make matters worse, there was a powerful bomb explosion at a mosque in Balochistan province on Friday, killing at least 16 people and leaving 20 others injured, three days after a bomb had claimed two lives in Quetta. BCB was still in a dilemma over the Pakistan tour until yesterday as the board was waiting for a government order.

### National team players' central contract

There have been a lot of talk over a new central contract of the cricketers for the year 2020. It was learned that national team's ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is likely to be handed a new central contract. According to sources, the board may not consider a contract for Shakib Al Hasan, who was banned from all forms of cricket for one year in October last year for his failure to report corrupt approaches from bookies. There are talks that the board could devise two separate type of contracts for the red and white ball cricketers, providing special incentive to those who only play the longest format. However, it will be interesting to see whether the board discusses reform in salary structure of women

cricketers, something which was raised by the male cricketers during their strike last year with an aim to minimise the salary gap between men and women.

### Mashrafe's future

There are a lot of whispers over Mashrafe's future. It has been learnt that the board may consider the veteran pacer as the one-day captain in the coming days despite the inspirational cricketer not been in the best of forms since the World Cup last year. It is understood that had it not been for a ban, Shakib would have been the automatic choice for captaincy in all three formats. In Shakib's absence, the board wants to bank on Mashrafe in ODIs for some more time.

### Appointing a new bowling coach

Since Charl Langeveldt was released by the BCB following a request from Cricket South Africa in December last year, the post for the Tigers' bowling coach has remained vacant. Former West Indies pacer and coach Otis Gibson and former South African pacer Nantie Hayward, both of whom worked in the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League, are in talks with the BCB for the post.

### Other issues

Among other issues, the board is to discuss the upcoming FTP schedules for the year 2020 along with the latest developments regarding the proposed cricket stadium in Purbachal.

## Bangabandhu school cricket from Jan 20

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangabandhu National School Cricket tournament will start from January 20 across 64 districts of the country. The major grassroots tournament, sponsored by the Prime Bank in association with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for the past four years, has this time been named after father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to mark his birth centenary celebrations.

"A number of events are taking place around the country to celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This time, the tournament is named after Bangabandhu. Every year a record number of young cricketers take part in this tournament. I hope that the tournament will be of great excitement and memorable for everyone involved," said Prime Bank CEO Rahel Ahmed at the logo unveiling ceremony at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The tournament will see a total of 11,120

students from 556 schools participate all over the country, the number of teams and players from last year.

BCB director and game development committee chairman Khaled Mahmud explained how this age-level tournament helps youngsters, mentioning the return of lost enthusiasm and excitement surrounding the tournament.

"The school cricket tournament has slowly started to regain its legacy. In the ongoing ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup, there are four players in the Bangladesh squad who have previously played in the Prime Bank National School tournament. In almost every age-level team, there are a number of players who played in school tournament," said Mahmud.

The tournament will be held in three phases -- district round, divisional round and national round. A total of 960 matches will be played in 70 different venues. The national round will be held between the champions of district, seven divisional champions and the best team from Dhaka Metro.



**Dhaka Platoon captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza left the field after suffering an injury while trying to take a catch at cover against Khulna Tigers in yesterday's second BBPL fixture at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. It was later revealed that the Bangladesh ODI skipper needed 14 stitches on his left-hand. Now, it is understood that Mashrafe will be out of action for a significant amount of time and therefore, it is unlikely that he will play in his side's eliminator game against Chattogram Challengers tomorrow at the same venue.**

PHOTO: STAR

## Liton explains his new avatar

SPORTS REPORTER



Rajshahi Royals opener Liton Das has presented a new avatar of himself during this Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL).

The elegant right-handed batsman had never been doubted for his shot-making ability. In fact, he has long been considered one of the brightest prospects in the game, evidenced by tons of runs he scored in first-class and List A matches. However, when it came to more competitive outings – international matches and T20 franchise cricket, his consistency and temperament

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**CHATTOTGRAM CHALLENGERS:** 155-5 in 20 overs (Gayle 23, Junaid 23, Mahmudullah 48 not out, Nurul 30; Irfan 1-24, Jayed 1-12, Malik 1-11, Afif 1-18, Tajjul 1-20)

**RAJSHAHI ROYALS:** 156-2 in 17.4 overs (Liton 75, Afif 32, Malik 43 not out; Nasum 1-33, Ziaur 1-17)

**Result:** Rajshahi Royals won by eight wickets.  
**Player-of-the-match:** Liton Das.

often left a lot to be desired.

But things are changing it seems and the batsman acknowledges that gaining maturity and picking the right shots are two things that are driving this change.

Liton played for Sylhet Sixers in last BPL in January-February last year, managing only 192 in 11 games at a strike rate of 141.7 with a solitary fifty to his name. However, this time around, despite seeing his strike rate drop a wee bit, to 139.73, Liton has scored 422 runs in 12 innings with three fifties.

"I think it is [getting more runs] because of the improvement in my maturity level," Liton said at the post-match press conference after his 48-ball 75 which helped Rajshahi Royals eclipse Chattogram Challengers' 155 with eight wickets in hand and 14 balls to spare in the two sides' last league-stage match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The

win also helped Rajshahi cement their place in the top two of the table, ensuring their berth in the playoff qualifier.

The 25-year-old elaborated on the change in his batting fortunes, attributing the success to his maturity and choice of shots.

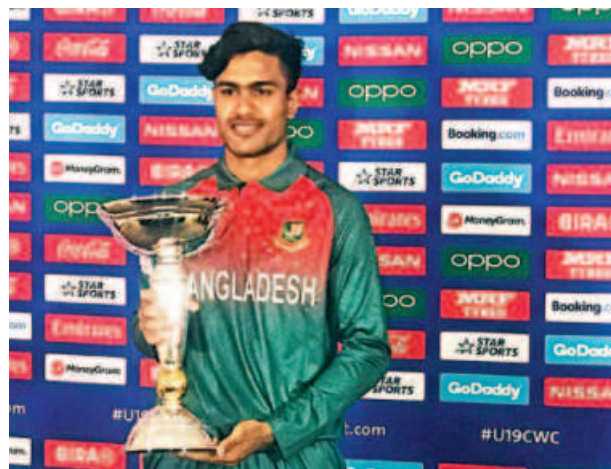
"I think, what changed is that in the past three or four BPL seasons, I had the tendency of keeping on hitting once I struck a few. I can play all types of shots and that's why I tried to play every shot. I think in this BPL I reduced playing few shots. And if you see, in the past BPL seasons I used to score 27 to 30 runs off 15 or 17 balls but then I used to get dismissed. But in this BPL, in maximum games, I scored around 13 or 17 off 15 balls. I am actually playing normal cricket during that phase of my innings. In powerplays when you smash a boundary, the bowler tries to do something different. So I thought that I need to adjust and not play shots on every delivery," said Liton.

Not only change in approach, Liton admitted to have made changes to his stance and head position after working with the national team's batting coach Neil McKenzie.

"I actually did not use to bat like this. I worked with Neil [McKenzie] for a long time and for that there have been some changes in my feet movement. There have been changes in my head position. Even in the last two-three matches my head was getting tilted, so I worked on that," Liton said.

Liton's opening partner Afif Hossain, too, has been fairly successful in this edition of the BPL. The 88-run opening stand by this duo gave Rajshahi a brisk start in yesterday's game, with Afif contributing 32 of those runs. Liton opined that the aggressive batting nature of Afif allowed him to play his natural game.

While it was a happy outing for both the Rajshahi openers, Chattogram batsmen had not much to brag about. Skipper Mahmudullah's unbeaten 33-ball 48 and a quick-fire 17-ball 30 from Nurul Hasan saw them post a modest total, which eventually proved too little to challenge Rajshahi.



**Bangladesh captain Akbar Ali poses with the trophy during an official press conference in Johannesburg yesterday, prior to the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup to be held in South Africa from January 17.**

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## We have a good chance: Akbar

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Under-19 team captain Akbar Ali said yesterday that his team is well prepared to make their mark in the, which begins on January 17 in South Africa.

Akbar, a wicketkeeper-batsman who is one of several potential stars of the future in a side which has set a high standard for the current generation, exuded confidence while he speaking at an official press conference in Johannesburg yesterday.

"It's a great opportunity for us to show our talent. We are well prepared and the boys are excited to perform well in the tournament. To be honest, I think, our squad is a very balanced one and our bowling, batting and fielding are in very good shape," said Akbar.

"The guys are very talented. If we can play to our potential, we have a good chance to qualify," he added.

Akbar had earlier declared that not only can his side progress from a group featuring Pakistan, Scotland and Zimbabwe, but they can also go on to win the entire tournament.

Bangladesh have won 18 of their last 30 games, which includes series wins over New Zealand and Sri Lanka and three victories on English soil. Towhid Hridoy and Mahmudul Hasan Joy went to the tournament with good form and are the only players to score more than 1,000 runs at the U-19 level since the last tournament two years ago.

Bangladesh will play two official warm-up matches against Australia (January 13) and New Zealand (January 15) before their first Group C encounter in the tournament proper on January 18 at the JB Marks Oval in Potchefstroom.

Bangladesh will also play their second group match against Scotland on January 21 at the Witrand Oval and their final group match against Pakistan at the JB Marks Oval.



**Rajshahi Royals opener Liton Das lifts one over long-off during his magnificent 75-run innings against Chattogram Challengers in yesterday's first Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## Former record holder Kipsang banned

AFP, Paris

Former world marathon record holder Wilson Kipsang was on Friday handed a provisional ban for doping by the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU).

The 37-year-old Kenyan was suspended "for whereabouts failures and tampering", both violations of World Athletics' anti-doping rules, the AIU announced on Twitter.

Kipsang claimed the world record when clocking 2hr 3min 23sec in the 2013 Berlin marathon.

He won the London marathon in 2012 and 2014 and claimed bronze at the 2012 London Olympics.

## NATIONAL FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP Swadhin Bangla players made ambassadors

SPORTS REPORTER



Members of the Swadhin Bangla Football Team (SBFT) will travel to all venues of Bangabandhu National Football Championship as ambassador to inspire footballers, confirmed Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday.

The decision was made after BFF president Kazi Salahuddin, who is also a member of SBFT, met with SBFT manager Tanvir Mazhar Tanna, organiser Saidur Rahman Patel, footballers Sheikh Ashraf Ali, Suvash Chandra Saha, KM Nowsheruzzaman, Abdus Sattar and Mohammad Mozammel Haque regarding the National Football Championship, which will get underway across the country from January 17.

"I think making us ambassadors of Bangabandhu National Championship it is a good initiative as we are hardly known to others at present. Due to this effort, people will know us again," Ashraf Ali said. "Our biggest identity, though, is that we are freedom fighters who fought for the country under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

Some 63 districts and 15 teams from different universities, services sides and BKSP are taking part in the championship which is going to be held after 13 years.



# What to WATCH

**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**

English Premier League  
Bournemouth v Watford  
Live from 8:00pm

Aston Villa v Man City  
Live from 10:30pm

**TEN 2**

Serie A  
Torino v Bologna  
Live from 8:00pm


Hellas Verona v Genoa  
Live from 11:00pm

Roma v Juventus  
Live from 1:45am (Monday)

**VARDY 'MADE HIS DECISION'**

Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers doesn't expect Jamie Vardy to end his England retirement despite his prolific form this season. Vardy has been linked with a return to international football after Three Lions captain Harry Kane ruptured a tendon in his left hamstring that requires surgery. With Vardy sitting top of the Premier League's goal charts with 17 this season, it would be natural for England boss Gareth Southgate to consider trying to tempt the Foxes star out of his self-imposed exile. Vardy stepped back from England duty in August 2018, but Southgate recently admitted the 32-year-old is "a ready-made player who could come in if we felt that was the right thing". With Kane absent for the March friendlies with Italy and Denmark, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that Southgate could lure Vardy back. Rodgers, though, does not see that happening and he said. "Jamie has made his decision on that. He has always been clear and I don't see that changing to be honest."

—AFP





Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (R) was distraught after receiving his marching orders in yesterday's English Premier League encounter with Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park. Aubameyang put Arsenal ahead in 12th minute, however, Jordan Ayew's equaliser ensured a 1-1 draw.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Gunners see red as Eagles force draw

AFP, London



Arsenal captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang opened the scoring at Crystal Palace yesterday but was later sent off as the hosts fought back to draw 1-1 at Selhurst Park.

New Gunners boss Mikel Arteta was on course for a third straight win when his skipper made the breakthrough in the first half, but a deflected effort by Jordan Ayew cancelled it out early in the second period.

When Aubameyang received a red card with 23 minutes left, the experienced Roy Hodgson would have fancied his chances of gaining three points but had to settle for a share of the spoils.

Captain Aubameyang was recalled by Arteta after sitting out the FA Cup win over Leeds and opened the scoring at Selhurst Park in the 12th minute.

Mesut Ozil's licence to roam had already caused the hosts problems and he moved inside to combine with Alexandre Lacazette, who played in his fellow forward to curl into the bottom corner for his 16th goal of the season.

It was a breathtaking Arsenal move, which started with a brave through ball between the lines by David Luiz, and Palace struggled to gain possession during the opening 30 minutes.

Arteta introduced Matteo Guendouzi at half-time, with Torreira not returning but Palace continued to win free kicks in dangerous positions after the break.

Eventually they made one count, when Jairo Riedewald found Max Meyer in space down the right. His cross was poor, but Kouyate was first to it and set up Ayew, who saw his strike take a big deflection off Luiz and loop over Leno in the 54th minute.

Arsenal's problems deepened when Aubameyang caught Meyer high on the ankle with a poor challenge by the touchline.

Referee Paul Tierney showed a yellow card but VAR had a look and after a two-and-a-half minute delay, the caution was upgraded to a sending off.

Aubameyang was distraught as he left the pitch in the 67th minute and Meyer had to follow him down the tunnel after failing to recover from the tackle.

James Tomkins almost produced a winner 12 minutes from time, but his header was cleared off the line by Sokratis Papastathopoulos and Arsenal then almost stole it.

Vicente Guaita came to the rescue though, when he superbly tipped Pepe's shot on to the post and saved Lacazette's follow-up in the 83rd minute as it finished all square.

# Defence in focus too

SPORTS REPORTER



Defender Sushanta Tripura believes defence will have to play a key role if Bangladesh are to succeed in the upcoming Bangabandhu Gold Cup, scheduled to take place at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from January 15 to 25.

Tripura, who has staged a comeback to the national team after missing out three World Cup qualifying matches against Qatar, India and Oman due a hamstring injury which he sustained during Bangladesh's 2-0 win over Bhutan in a final friendly in October last year, said this after yesterday's training session at the Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club ground.

"Defence is one of our main strengths and we can rely on it, but it is also important to have a good combination between the defence and midfield if we want to not concede goals. The return of centre-back Tapu Barman is a plus point. The reserve-bench has a good backup in absence of any regular defenders. I think the defence will have to play an important role in order to get a good result in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup," said Tripura.

Since taking over the charge of Bangladesh team in May, 2018, English coach Jamie Day has applied the philosophy of defending well against any opponent and then going for attack to get results. His style has worked well at international level and achieved some praise for good defending against strong sides.

The charges of Day will start their campaign against Palestine on Wednesday. Tripura echoed the sentiment of captain Jamal Bhuiyan, who on Friday said that



SUSHANTA TRIPURA

their target is to earn a point against Palestine before facing Sri Lanka in the group's final match.

"Palestine are a very strong opponent but we don't want to lose our confidence before facing them. The coach has been working on defence for a long time and how we defend against Palestine would be clear to us after watching their video footages in the latter part of training," Tripura said. "We are all ready for the tournament and our target is to win one point against Palestine. They are a really tough team and holding them to a draw will be a good result for us."

Tripura's teammate Biswanath Ghosh is confident too about drawing against Palestine, a team to whom they lost 2-0 in the semifinals of the last edition of this tournament in Cox's Bazar in 2018.

"We have some idea about Palestine and it will help us a bit when playing against them. If we can play in line with the plan, it is possible to hold them to a draw," said left-back.

# Nadal up against Djokovic today

AFP, Sydney



Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic will face each other in the final of the inaugural ATP Cup after winning epic three-set matches yesterday to steer Spain and Serbia into the decider.

World number one Nadal ground down pumped-up Australian Alex de Minaur to guide the Davis Cup champions through their semi-final while Djokovic battled past Russia's Daniil Medvedev.

Under the format of the

innovative team event in Sydney, the top-ranked singles players from each country play each other, ensuring the two legends clash for a 55th time since their first showdown in 2006.

World number two Djokovic leads the head-to-heads 28-26, including beating his arch-rival in the Australian Open final last year.

Nadal outlasted De Minaur 4-6, 7-5, 6-1 after unflappable teammate Roberto Bautista Agut tamed Nick Kyrgios 6-1, 6-4.

Djokovic had an equally tough time against impressive fifth-ranked Medvedev, coming through a top-draw contest 6-1, 5-7, 6-4 on the back of Dusan Lajovic beating

Karen Khachanov 7-5, 7-6 (7/1).

"We know it's going to be a super tough final (against Serbia)," Nadal said. "Novak likes a lot to play here, he's had a lot of great results. So let's see. We have a good team too."

De Minaur had a furious start, breaking Nadal in the opening game of the match and then keeping the pressure on, restricting the Spaniard's trademark forehand to take the first set in 46 minutes.

Full of energy, his serve was on fire and he was winning the baseline rallies, but Nadal weathered the onslaught and finally won a break point, converting to take the

second set.

De Minaur was deflated and the fight went out of him as the 19-time Grand Slam showed him who was boss, racing through the deciding set.

Unassuming world number 10 Bautista Agut was in control and all over the groundstrokes of temperamental Kyrgios, who looked lost as he crashed 6-1 in the first set.

The Australian regained some lustre in the second set. But he was broken in the fifth game, mangling his racquet in frustration, and despite saving two match points with booming aces was outplayed.



RAFAEL NADAL



NOVAK DJOKOVIC



# CLINICAL FLOOR SIX GRAB TDS INTRA-OFFICE TITLE

The Daily Star's intra-office cricket tournament, held at Dhaka University's Jagannath Hall ground yesterday, was nothing less than the full package. The event had it all, from innovat strokeplay to superb bowling and fielding but more importantly, the spirit of the game was ever evident as Floor Six battled past their seventh and fifth floor counterparts to clinch the trophy. Although a man-of-the-match was not officially named, Mazhar Uddin (R) of Floor Six could be the best candidate, having scored a crucial 25 before going to scalp four wickets in the final.

PHOTO: STAR

# National athletics back on grass

SPORTS REPORTER



Chattogram is all set to host the national athletics championships after 14 years as the 43rd edition of the meet will take place at the MA Aziz Stadium in the port city from January 16.

Some 500 athletes from 64 districts, eight divisions, universities, educational boards, BKSP and services team are expected to compete in 36 events -- 22 for male and 14 for female athletes, informed Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) general secretary Abdur Rokib at a press conference yesterday.

With the patronisation of Chattogram Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin and assistance of Chattogram District Sports Association, the BAF is organising the championships in port city in a bid to bring a new hype in athletics even though all the events will take place on grass.

Out of the previous 42 editions, Mymensingh and Jashore hosted the championships once each while Chattogram hosted the premier meet twice, last of which was held in 2005. That was the last time the national athletics meet was held on grass.

"The track and field events may not produce good timing on grass, but we believe other events such as long-jump, high-jump and throw events will not be any impacted by the surface," BAF joint secretary Fariduddin Ahmed said, adding that they chose the Chattogram venue due to the poor condition of athletics tracks at the Bangabandhu National Stadium and the Army Stadium while hosting the meet at BKSP will be too expensive.

"Participating in the national athletics championships in Dhaka has become a bit boring for participants. I believe a lot of affiliated bodies will take part in Chattogram and there will be huge enthusiasm," added Ahmed.

## SHORT CORNER

### Suarez to undergo knee operation

Uruguayan striker Luis Suarez will undergo another knee operation today, Barcelona have announced.

The club issued a press release yesterday saying the surgery was for an "injury to the external meniscus of the right knee".

It will not be his first knee operation.

Last May, Suarez missed the last two league games and the Spanish cup final, which Barcelona lost to Valencia, so he could have an operation on his right knee and recover in time to play for Uruguay in the Copa America in Brazil.

Suarez also underwent knee surgery in May 2014, returning in time to score twice against England at the end of June in the World Cup.

Suarez played on Thursday as Barcelona lost the semi-final of the Spanish Super Cup to Atletico Madrid in Jeddah.

—AFP

### Alexandrova wins maiden WTA title

Ekaterina Alexandrova won her first WTA singles title after the in-form Russian defeated Elena Rybakina in straight sets in the final of the Shenzhen Open yesterday.

The fifth seed won 6-2, 6-4 in 73 minutes to begin her season and her Australian Open preparations with a bang.

The 25-year-old Alexandrova, ranked a career-high 34th in the world, collapsed to her knees after dismissing Rybakina, the seventh seed from Kazakhstan.

Alexandrova, who triumphed in a WTA 125K event in Limoges, France last month, defeated former world number one Garbine Muguruza in the semi-finals in southern China.

—AFP

### Madrid derby in Super Cup final

Lionel Messi has predictably been the star attraction but there will be no Clasico in Saudi Arabia this weekend, as Atletico Madrid's defeat of Barcelona set up a clash with rivals Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup final today.

Messi was cheered by fans at the King Abdullah Sport City Stadium from the moment he jogged out to warm up, yet Atletico were the ones celebrating at the end of Thursday's semi-final in the competition that has been expanded and controversially shipped to a different continent, to a country with a long-condemned record on human rights.

Atletico scored two late goals to beat Barca 3-2, with a derby final now to come against Real Madrid.

When the Spanish Football Federation signed a three-year contract worth 120 million euros (\$133.4 million) to move the tournament to Saudi, a title showdown between Real and Barcelona would very likely have been top of the organisers' wishlist.

—AFP





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# Mesmerising tunes to inspire them

*Student with challenges set up music school in remote Lalmonirhat village*

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

A physically challenged youth in the remote Haziganj Bhatitari village of Aditmari upazila in Lalmonirhat is using music to inspire children in his village.

Udoy Chandra Roy, 19, lacked function in his arms and legs since birth and is dependent on a wheelchair. His father passed away when he was just a toddler. His mother Usa Rani works in a garments factory in Dhaka.

He lives with his grandparents and goes to a local school for the especially abled.

In 2018, when Udoy was a student of class nine, he founded a social welfare organisation – Mayer Anchal Unnayan Sangstha -- at his grandparents' home. There, he runs a free school every Friday with over 20 students, who come to learn and practice folk music, particularly Bhawaiya, on various musical instruments.

Udoy said, "My mother sends me some money every month and I use my disability allowance to run the school. I also collect funds from relatives and donations from locals to operate the school and organisation to help the especially abled, orphans and the poor."

Folk music enthusiasts from nearby areas visit the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Udoy Chandra Roy, right, is singing a folk song with music teachers and students at his music school at Haziganj Bhatitari village in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

## Shahriar Alam cancels India trip

*Decides to go with PM to UAE*

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam has cancelled his visit to India as he will travel to the UAE with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today.

The foreign ministry in a statement yesterday said Shahriar was invited to join the Raisina Dialogue, organised by the Overseas Research Foundation (ORF) in collaboration with the India's external affairs ministry, as a speaker.

However, he will not be able to attend the event as it "coincides with his visit to the UAE to accompany the prime minister of Bangladesh. A regret letter in this regard has already been sent to the ORF, the statement said.

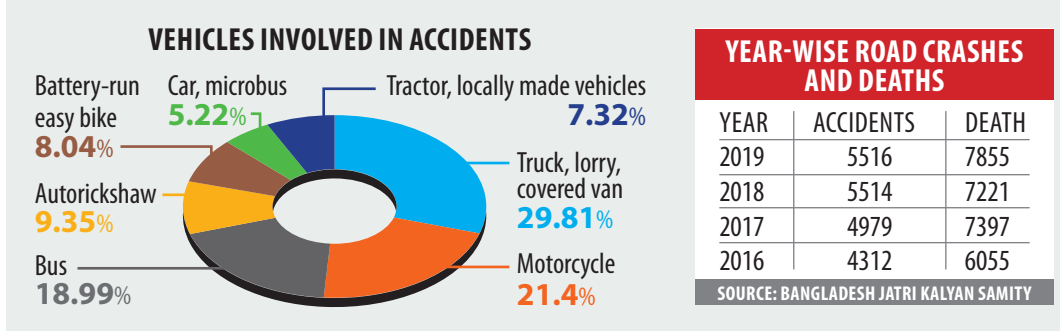
It said no bilateral engagement was scheduled during the visit of Shahriar and that the "inability of his participation had no other connection."

The Raisina Dialogue is scheduled to begin in New

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

# 21 died on roads every day

*Says Jatri Kalyan Samity report on road crashes last year*



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 7,855 people were killed and 13,330 others injured in 5,516 road crashes across the country last year, according to a platform working for passengers' welfare.

It means more than 21 people lost their lives on roads each day.

Although the number of such accidents remained almost the same from the previous year, the death toll increased by 8.07 percent, the platform -- Jatri Kalyan Samity -- said in its annual report released yesterday.

As many as 5,514 road crashes had claimed 7,221 lives and left 15,466 others injured in the country in 2018, said the Samity, which prepared the report based on data from newspapers and online news portals.

Samity's Secretary General Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury unveiled the report at a press

conference at Crime Reporters' Association of Bangladesh auditorium in the capital.

The number of road crashes last year mentioned in the report is, however, significantly higher than the one given by Nirapad Sarak Chai, a platform that pioneered road safety campaign in Bangladesh.

According to Nirapad Sarak Chai, at least 5,227 people were killed while 6,953 injured in 4,702 road accidents across the country in 2019.

Jatri Kalyan Samity's report blamed reckless driving, risky overtaking, fault in road design, unfit vehicles, unskilled drivers, passengers and pedestrians' unawareness, use of mobile phones or headphone while driving vehicles, drunk driving, occupied footpath and poor enforcement of law for the road crashes.

Besides, a total of 469 people died and 706 others were injured in 482 railway-related incidents last year. On waterways, at least 219 died, 282 were

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Police detain 10 Bangladeshis in Greek city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Greek police have detained 10 undocumented Bangladeshis who were involved in a road crash on Friday following a high-speed police chase in the city of Thessaloniki.

The Bangladeshis are in hospital with minor injuries.

Syeda Farhana Noor Chowdhury, counsellor of labour welfare wing at the Bangladesh mission in Athens, yesterday said officials of the General Police Directorate of Thessaloniki told them about the Bangladeshis' detention and the accident.

"We have sought a written report from them to know further details in this regard," she told this newspaper over phone.

Farhana said the injuries were minimal and that the Bangladeshis were in good physical condition.

A vehicle, carrying migrants who had crossed into Greece from neighbouring Turkey, crashed into another following a high-speed chase across the north of Greece early Friday, AP reported, quoting local police.

The vehicle, with 12 people inside, failed to stop for a check on the main highway near the northern town of Kavala

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Gold bar found in Mexico was Aztec treasure



AFP, Mexico City

A gold bar found in a Mexico City park in 1981 was part of the Aztec treasure looted by Hernan Cortes and the Spanish conquistadors 500 years ago, a new study says.

The 1.93-kilogram bar was found by a construction worker during excavations for a new building along the Alameda, a picturesque park in the heart of the Mexican capital.

For 39 years, its origins remained a mystery. But thanks to specialised X-rays, Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) says it has now confirmed where the bar came from: the Spaniards' hasty, though temporary, retreat during the so-called "Noche Triste," or "Sad Night."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## First Akheri Munajat today

*Second phase of Biswa Ijtema to start on Jan 17*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

The first phase of Biswa Ijtema, the world's second largest Muslim congregation after Hajj, will end today through the Akheri Munajat [final prayer].

Maulana Zubair Hassan, the imam of Kakrail Mosque in the capital and leader of a faction of Tablighi Jamaat, will administer the Munajat seeking blessings and well-being for mankind.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



**PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 12**

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:36 7:00  
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:40 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## No respite expected until Wednesday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is no immediate respite from the bone-chilling cold as the ongoing gloomy weather may continue until next Wednesday, says the Met office.

"Temperature may fall slightly tomorrow [Sunday]. There will be no remarkable fluctuation or change of the weather until January 15. So, the severity of cold will be felt until the date," said Hafizur Rahman, meteorologist of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

"However, the ray of sunlight will be seen for few moments tomorrow [Sunday]. The temperature will slightly increase during that time. But temperature may fall again after it disappears," he told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

Meanwhile, a BMD weather bulletin yesterday said moderate to thick fog may occur at places over the country from midnight

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



With no place to take a break in the cold, gloomy afternoon yesterday, a rickshaw puller, wrapping himself in a blanket, takes a nap on the precarious bed he had made on his rickshaw. The photo was taken inside Dhaka University campus.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

## TROOPS WITHDRAWAL US turns down Iraqi request

*Examines possible expansion of Nato's presence in Iraq*

REUTERS, Washington

Washington on Friday spurned an Iraqi request to prepare to pull out its troops, amid heightened US-Iranian tensions after the US killing of an Iranian commander in Baghdad, and said it was exploring a possible expansion of Nato's presence there.

Seeking to tighten pressure on its foe, the United States meanwhile imposed more sanctions on Iran, responding to an attack on US troops in Iraq launched by Tehran in retaliation for the death of General Qassem Soleimani.

Iraq could bear the brunt of any further violence between its neighbour Iran and the United States, its leaders caught in a bind as Washington and Tehran are also the Iraqi government's main allies and vie for influence there.

President Donald Trump said Iran had probably planned to attack the US embassy in Baghdad and was aiming to strike four US embassies when Soleimani was killed in a US drone strike.

"We will tell you probably it was going to be the embassy in Baghdad," Trump said in a clip of an interview with Fox News. "I can reveal that I believe it would have been four embassies."

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi made his request for preparations for a US troop withdrawal in a phone call with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday in line with a vote in Iraq's parliament last week, his office said.

Abdul Mahdi asked Pompeo to "send delegates to put

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2