



The Daily Star

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SECOND EDITION

ধুলো ময়লায় সুরক্ষিত অসাধারণ
BERGER
Weather Coat
ANTIDIRT
SUPREME

REGD. No. DA 781

Vol. XXIX No. 353

POUSH 28, 1426 BS

JAMADIUL AWAL 15, 1441 HJRI

20 PAGES PRICE: Tk 12.00

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

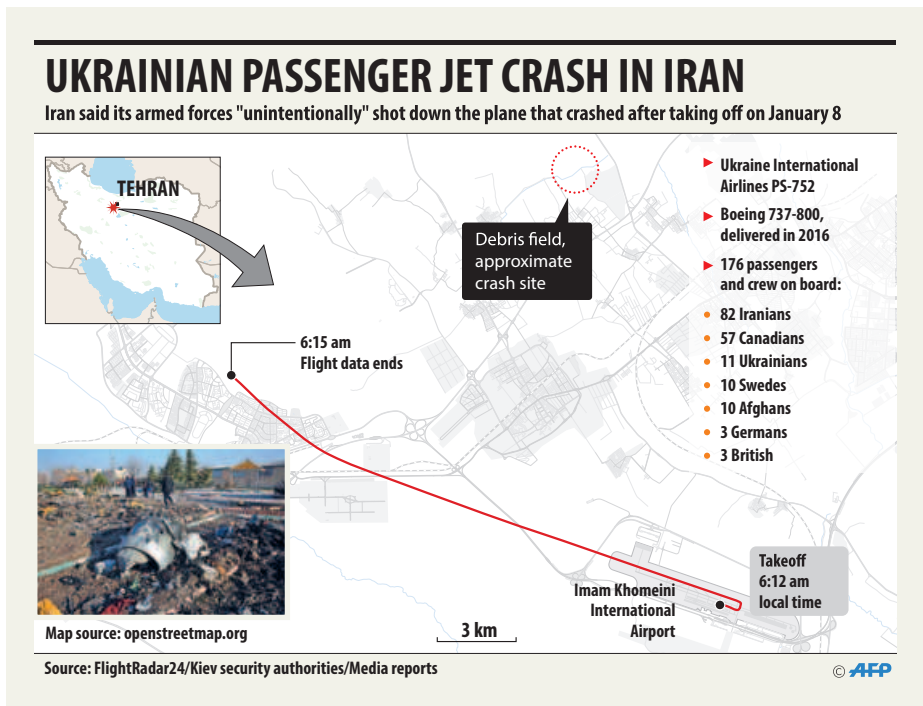
President Abdul Hamid yesterday urged the vice-chancellors of public universities to perform their duties with dedication and honesty and stay away from corruption and irregularities.

"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

