

Demonstrators shout slogans to protest against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during a demonstration in Kolkata yesterday. Thousands of angry protesters took to the streets to tell India's leader he was unwelcome in Kolkata, in the latest rally against a citizenship law that critics say discriminates against Muslims.

PHOTO:

Boko Haram militants kill four, kidnap four in Chad: officials

AFP, N'djamena

Boko Haram jihadists on Saturday killed at least four villagers and kidnapped four women in western Chad, the local governor and a security official said.

The attack occurred near Lake Chad, a vast area bordering Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon, where small islands and swamps serve as hideouts for Islamist militants to carry out raids on the three

"Around one in the morning, Boko Haram fighters attacked the village of Alom, and there are four dead. When they withdraw they took four women," a senior army source in the region told AFP.

Lake Chad regional governor Nouki Charfadine confirmed four people had been killed by Boko Haram and that four women were also missing.

Make a list

structures from around river and restrain polluters.

The HC bench of Justice M Enavetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Bangladesh **Environmental Lawyers Association** (Bela) on January 5 seeking necessary orders on the government to save the

Writ petitioners' lawyer Sayeed Ahmed Kabir told The Daily Star that a group of "influential people" have reportedly encroached the land of the river and are running businesses by constructing harmful structures there. Therefore, the flow of the river has stopped and the area has become polluted.

Earlier in 2003, the Water Development Board had prepared a list of 285 polluters and encroachers

The authorities concerned have not been taking effective measures against the polluters and encroachers, Kabir said citing writ the petition.

Advocate Minhazul Haque Chowdhury appeared for the petitioner.

Thousands seek FROM PAGE 16

Nine elderly devotees died due to age-related complications and cardiac arrest on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, said Deputy Commissioner of Gazipur Metropolitan Police Manzur Rahman.

A total of 100 couples were married Saturday afternoon.

Police, Rab and intelligence officials have been deployed in the adjacent areas for security. The authorities set up over 400 CCTV cameras, 25 watch towers and 11 check posts.

The second phase of Ijtema will be held from January 17-19.

Teen with challenges

FROM PAGE 16

informed local influentials and later filed the case on Saturday night.

Afterwards, police arrested the 50-year-old from his house, the OC said, adding the other accused has gone into hiding and efforts were

underway to nab him. "The victim was taken to Pabna general hospital for medical examination on Sunday morning," the OC said.

Protesters heap pressure on Iran

the dictator", directing their anger at the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"Apologise and resign," Iran's banner headline yesterday, saying the "people's demand" was for those responsible for mishandling the plane crisis to quit.

The latest upsurge in anger adds to challenges facing the authorities, which launched a bloody crackdown in November to quell protests. The leadership is also struggling to keep the crippled economy afloat under rigorous US sanctions.

The Ukraine International Airlines plane was shot down minutes after taking off from Tehran on Wednesday, when Iranian forces were on alert for US reprisals following tit-fortat strikes. Many of those on board were Iranians with dual citizenship, while 57 were holders of Canadian passports.

Iran's president said it was a "disastrous mistake" and apologised. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said when he said he had told the escalate tensions and engage in a authorities on the same day as the diplomatic path forwards. crash that an Iranian missile had struck the plane.

Hossein Salami, said "we are more Tehran, Iranian Foreign Ministry's upset than anyone over the incident", state media reported.

But others said Iran's enemies, a term usually used to refer to Britain's embassy in Tehran yesterday Washington and its allies, were exploiting the incident.

"Iran's enemies want to take CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY revenge on the Guards for a military

an elite Guards unit, state media building up Iran's network of regional reported.

After Saturday's protests, US President Donald Trump said on Twitter: "There cannot be another moderate Etemad daily wrote in a massacre of peaceful protesters, nor an internet shutdown. The world is

> He warned Iran against killing protesters yesterday. "To the leaders of Iran - DO NOT KILL YOUR PROTESTERS," Trump tweeted, warning the world and "more importantly, the USA is watching."

> In an interview with CBS's "Face the Nation" just before the tweet, US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Trump was still willing to hold talks with Iran's leaders.

> Meanwhile, Britain said its ambassador in Iran had been briefly detained on Saturday night, which Iranian media said was because he was inciting protests. Some lawmakers said the envoy should leave Iran before being ejected, media reported. Condemning the arrest, British

But a top Revolutionary Guards Iran "can continue its march towards commander added to public fury pariah status ... or take steps to de-Iran summoned the UK envoy

yesterday to complain about his The Guards' top commander, attendance at an "illegal" rally in website reported.

Iran's hardline Basij militia staged a demonstration outside demanding that it be closed, Iranian state media reported.

On January 3, a US drone strike in Iraq mistake," said Ali Shirazi, Khamenei's killed prominent Iranian commander representative to the Quds Force, Qassem Soleimani, responsible for

proxy armies in Iraq and beyond. Tehran responded with missile strikes on US targets in Iraq.

No US soldiers were killed, but in the tense hours after that, the Ukrainian Boeing 737 was cleared to take off from Tehran airport and brought down by a missile fired by

"It is not a human error. This is crime against humanity," the son of the toppled shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi, wrote on Twitter. "Khamenei and his regime should go.

In the November protests, demonstrators had chanted slogans supporting him. His father died in exile in 1980

Rallying to the establishment, Iranian lawmakers praised the elite force's commanders for courage in admitting the error, according to Fars, a news agency seen as close to the Guards, a parallel military set up to protect the theocratic system.

Iranian officials sought to portray the plane disaster as a second blow to a mourning nation after Soleimani's death in a US drone strike.

The commander's funeral had prompted huge public gatherings, which the authorities described as a show of national unity. But the displays of emotion have been swiftly overshadowed and protesters on Saturday tore up pictures of the slain general.

Public fury at Iran's authorities had grown as questions about the plane crash mounted. Iranians on social media asked why officials were busy fending off criticism from abroad rather than sympathising with grieving families. Others asked why the plane was allowed to take off at a time of high tension.

Stability, peace for all

top Iranian military leader, Qassem Soleimani, in an US drone strike and Iran's retaliation by firing missiles on US airbases in Iraq last week.

Security analysts say although there are hardly any possibilities of an all-out armed conflict for now, but risks of a long cycle of regional escalation, including substantial Iranian attacks on Gulf energy targets and direct naval clashes between the US and Iran, are real.

The Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq and Lebanon are some of the major destinations of Bangladesh's overseas labour market. More than six million Bangladeshis work and send home more than 60 percent of the \$18 billion migrant remittances annually.

Bangladesh also depends heavily on these countries for oil imports. Besides, it maintains good relations with both the US and Iran. Policymakers say any conflict in the region will have direct impacts on Bangladesh's economy.

"The prime minister will issue directives to the Bangladesh envoys on Dhaka's role amid the tensed situation prevailing in the Middle East," Momen said at the briefing.

He also said Hasina would address the Bangladesh envoys in Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arab and the UAE.

During meetings with the UAE authorities, the PM will discuss energy cooperation, investments, welfare of Bangladeshi migrants and job opportunities, he said

Momen also said the prime minister would give directives to the Bangladeshi envoys on how they could attract more investment in Bangladesh from the Middle East.

She will also discuss the plans of the Bangladesh missions in West Asia on celebrating the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

opening the labour market, which has been restricted for general category workers of Bangladesh since 2012, the foreign minister said the UAE has agreed in principle to open the market but gave some conditions.

"Those who go there should have training. They [the Middle Eastern countries] take actions if anyone violates law," he said without elaborating the conditions, but added that Bangladesh expatriates' welfare ministry was working on those issues.

He said there were some large investment proposals worth several billion dollars on refinery, energy and economic zone.

"The work is going on. It will be sped up with the prime minister's visit," Momen said.

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 chairwoman of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Al Ketbi

At the "Abu Dhabi Sustainable Week", the PM will highlight Dhaka's position in implementing sustainable development goals (SDGs) and apprise the world leaders of the initiatives taken by Bangladesh in achieving the goals.

She will also give a detailed overview about Bangladesh's initiatives in the field of energy, health care, climate change, water and biotechnology to achieve "Vision 2041" to turn Bangladesh into a developed country.

Bangladesh and UAE are likely to sign two agreements – "Addendum to the MoU inked between Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC) and Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Bangladesh', and 'Protocol of Amendment to the Agreement on allotment of land plot in Baridhara Diplomatic Enclave', Dhaka for the construction of Asked why the UAE was not embassy premises, Momen added.

Questions rise

FROM PAGE 1

According to Mohiuddin, Rab officers were waiting there after being tipped off about a man arriving from Cox's Bazar with a yaba haul.

After the bus arrived and the other passengers had left, Iqbal was waiting there with at least 12 bags, Mohiuddin said.

Around 15 minutes later, two cars arrived apparently to pick up As Rafika and Hasan got off the

cars and started to put Iqbal's bags into the cars, Rab members cordoned off the area. Sensing their presence, Iqbal

started to shoot at the Rab members

who then retaliated, the officer added. The suspects were shot in the

resulting "gunfight". They all were taken to the DMCH where doctors declared Iqbal dead.

Mohiuddin claimed that three Rab men were injured. The company commander also

said Rab had collected the footage from the shops for investigation. Rab claimed to have recovered one lakh yaba pills, Tk 1.80 lakh in cash,

and a pistol from the scene.

were inside the shop and just heard seven or eight gunshots... We are not allowed to see the footage." Meanwhile, Rab officials have

A shopkeeper of the area said, "We

kept the injured suspects under strict surveillance at the DMCH. Journalists were not allowed to talk to them. Iqbal's relatives identified him at

the DMCH morgue. They said that they didn't know if Iqbal and Rafika were married because he was already A woman at the DMCH named

Shamim Ara Sharmin claimed that she

was Igbal's wife. But they had broken

up and hardly ever communicated with each other. However, they talked to each other on Thursday. Iqbal's brother said, "I know my

brother ran a business in Chattogram. I do not know what he actually did." Iqbal was accused in at least six

drugs cases, Rab claimed. In the last three weeks, Rafika sent around Tk 1.5 crore to Igbal through banks and other means, Mohiuddin

Later in the day, Rab officials raided Iqbal's flat in Adabar and recovered 10,000 vaba pills and Tk 4 lakh in cash, Mohiuddin said.

Plastic it is not

The thickness of the bags made from corn is 20 micron, which is less than most of the polythene bags available in the market.

"We are now making bags only for garment factories in Bangladesh, and the minimum price of a bag is 5-6 cent [approximately Tk 4-5]. But we are planning mass-scale production, eyeing the local market," he said.

Expo Accessories began manufacturing in 2014, and collects the raw material -- the corn fibre -from India. The bags now come in three colours: white, black and green.

Enamul said, "Our clients are foreign buyers. A total of 30 garment factories in Bangladesh which manufacture for foreign brands are collecting bags from us.

The company also makes shirt clips, collar stays, hang tags, hangers from the corn fibre.

Enamul said the bag is certified by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO 17088), which specifies the requirements for the labelling of plastic products as "compostable" or "biodegradable". The product is also compliant with Restricted Substance List or RSL, which means it does not contain any

heavy metal. The key features of the bags include reduced carbon footprint in comparison to conventional plastics and 100 percent biodegradability and compostability. Its shelf life is around 12-15 months, meaning they would

biodegrade within this period. Enamul said they are planning to export and produce single-use plastics like cup, box, spoon, shopping bag,

garbage bag, and bin bag to chain

One of Expo Accessories' clients is Youngone Corporation, which operates several production facilities, including of garment products, in Bangladesh.

Talking to The Daily Star, Youngone's merchandiser Pearo Zabed said, "We started taking the bags from them in 2014. Our main buyer is world-famous brand Levis. Levis nominated this company as the bags are environment-friendly. The price is high, but buyers always consider the environmental aspects."

Iftekharul Alam Suman, assistant manager (merchandiser) of Opex and Sinha Textile Group, which is another buyer of the bags, said, "We are using biodegradable poly bags as it is the buyers' requirement.

"We take around two million bags from Expo Accessories every year. The cost of the bag varies from five to eight cents. But buyers put emphasis on biodegradable bags because they are environment-friendly," he told The Daily Star.

Every day, about 2 crore polybags are used in Dhaka city alone, according to environmental Poribesh organisation Andolon (Poba). Despite various efforts by the

government to encourage the use

of biodegradable packaging such as

jute bags, polythene bags are still

ubiquitous. Superstores and kitchen-market grocers do not like jute bags because they are costlier, thicker, heavier, and also hard to store. On the other hand, polythene bags, which are made

entirely of artificial materials, are cheap and light.

In Bangladesh, most consumers throw polythene bags away after using them once, and they eventually end up in the garbage dumps, polluting earth and water.

Polythene bags were banned in

Bangladesh in 2002. Quazi Sarwar Imtiaz Hashmi, former additional director general of the Department of Environment, said they have tested the bag in lab, and found that it does not have polythene materials and is

biodegradable and compostable. "It is a positive gesture of the buyers and producers who are using the bag. We are encouraging them to popularise it in the local market.

According to experts, nonbiodegradable bags take a few hundred years to break down, and they remain in nature like a hostile alien, clog sewers, and prevent air from entering soil and water.

Globally, plastic managing waste is increasingly becoming an environmental and economic challenge. Plastic waste is a risk to public health as it enters the food chain, ends up in rivers and oceans depleting ecosystems and marine biodiversity, and makes solid waste management more expensive as landfills and open incineration do not provide an acceptable solution for disposal.

A 2018 report of the World Economic Forum predicts that by 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in the world's oceans due to 13 million tonnes of plastic ending up in the oceans each year.

Pre-school Picasso

fourth birthday. "We had already bought him enough cars and action figures, so we had the idea of getting him a canvas,' Kerem Akar said.

"The first picture looked fantastic, and I thought at first that my wife had painted it.

"I thought maybe it was just coincidence, but by the second and third pictures it was clear he had talent." Akar's talent is visible in his latest

Germany and Bayern Munich football star Manuel Neuer. One work in the collection was recently sold for 11,000 euros

collection, a collaboration with

(\$12,000), with proceeds going to Neuer's children's charity. An explosion of colour reminiscent

of Jackson Pollock, the piece is typical of Akar's abstract expressionist The seven-year-old tells AFP that his idols include Pollock, Michael Jackson and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Singer held

clerics, staged a rally demanding the singer's arrest.

Shariat could face up to 10 years in prison if found guilty at trial.

Journalists and right activists say the Digital Security Act, which was passed in 2018, is a serious threat to freedom of expression in the country.

Under the act, anyone can face a life jail term for "propaganda" against the nation and up to 10 years for digital content that "hurts religious sentiments" or "creates unrest".

Odhikar, a rights group, reported at least 29 arrests last year under the

He has also developed his own techniques, which include applying paint by punching the canvas with his father's boxing gloves.

At a presentation of Akar's new work at a private gallery in Berlin last month, one visitor said she was "speechless" upon discovering that the artist was a child who was just starting primary

"The balance and harmony of the composition -- I wouldn't expect that from a child," Arina Daehnick, a photographer from Berlin, told AFP.

Diana Achtzig, director of the Achtzig Gallery for Contemporary Art in Berlin, said she was impressed by

Akar's "imagination and variation". "As long as he has someone supporting him and not exploiting him, then he has a great future ahead

of him," she said. Qatar emir to visit Iran amid regional crisis

AFP, Doha

Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani will visit Tehran, the government said yesterday, amid soaring tensions following the US killing of an Iranian commander and retaliatory strikes.

Qatar is close to the US and hosts Washington's largest military base in the region, but it also enjoys strong ties with Tehran, with whom it shares the world's largest gas field.

Sheikh Tamim will meet with President Hassan Rouhani and other top Iranian leaders, Qatar-based broadcaster Al Jazeera reported.