



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: AFP

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 countries.

“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

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structures from around river and restrain polluters.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur 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 river.

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 of the Ichhamati.

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

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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 Ijtima will be held from January 17-19.

Teen with challenges

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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

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

“Apologise and resign,” Iran’s moderate Etemad daily wrote in a 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-for-tat strikes. Many of those on board were Iranians with dual citizenship, while 57 were holders of Canadian passports.

REVENGE
Iran’s president said it was a “disastrous mistake” and apologised. But a top Revolutionary Guards commander added to public fury when he said he had told the authorities on the same day as the crash that an Iranian missile had struck the plane.

The Guards’ top commander, Hossein Salami, said “we are more upset than anyone over the incident”, state media reported.

But others said Iran’s enemies, a term usually used to refer to Washington and its allies, were exploiting the incident.

“Iran’s enemies want to take revenge on the Guards for a military mistake,” said Ali Shirazi, Khamenei’s representative to the Quds Force,

an elite Guards unit, state media reported.

After Saturday’s protests, US President Donald Trump said on Twitter: “There cannot be another massacre of peaceful protesters, nor an internet shutdown. The world is watching.”

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 Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said Iran “can continue its march towards pariah status ... or take steps to de-escalate tensions and engage in a diplomatic path forwards.”

Iran summoned the UK envoy yesterday to complain about his attendance at an “illegal” rally in Tehran, Iranian Foreign Ministry’s website reported.

Iran’s headline Basij militia staged a demonstration outside Britain’s embassy in Tehran yesterday demanding that it be closed, Iranian state media reported.

CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY
On January 3, a US drone strike in Iraq killed prominent Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani, responsible for

building up Iran’s network of regional 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 mistake.

“It is not a human error. This is a 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

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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.

Asked why the UAE was not

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 Sheikhha 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 linked 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 embassy premises, Momen added.

Questions rise

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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 Iqbal.

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.

A shopkeeper of the area said, “We were inside the shop and just heard seven or eight gunshots... We are not allowed to see the footage.”

Meanwhile, Rab officials have 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 married.

A woman at the DMCH named Shamim Ara Sharmin claimed that she was Iqbal’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 Iqbal through banks and other means, Mohiuddin said.

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

Pre-school Picasso

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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 collection, a collaboration with Germany and Bayern Munich football star Manuel Neuer.

One work in the collection was recently sold for 11,000 euros (\$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 style.

The seven-year-old tells AFP that his idols include Pollock, Michael Jackson and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Singer held

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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 law.

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 school.

“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.