



Rescuer workers load children onto a truck as they evacuate them to a safe place in Talisay town, Batangas province south of Manila yesterday. Lava and broad columns of ash illuminated by lightning spewed from a volcano south of the Philippine capital, grounding hundreds of flights as authorities warned of a possible "explosive eruption".

PHOTO: AFP

## Relief from cold

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while the highest temperature was at 26.2 degrees Celsius in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar.

As the shivering cold wave is sweeping over the country, people are getting infected with different cold-related diseases.

Around 6,000 people took treatment at different government hospitals across the country in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Meanwhile, flight operations at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) in Dhaka were disrupted for around six hours yesterday due to fog.

The airport authorities halted flight operations around 3:00am and resumed around 9:15am yesterday, SN Wahid Ur Rahman, deputy director of air traffic control at HSIA, told this newspaper.

Two Dhaka-bound flights of Biman had to divert to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata, the official said.

The Kuala Lumpur-Dhaka flight was scheduled to land at 3:00am yesterday but had to divert to Kolkata as did the flight from Dubai which was scheduled to land at 7:30am.

Meanwhile, one flight each of Saudia and Emirates airlines from Dhaka got delayed.

The Dhaka-Jeddah flight of Saudia Airlines was supposed to leave at 2:50am. It was delayed by 21 hours.

The Dhaka-Dubai flight of Emirates was to take off at 1:00am, but it left Dhaka at 9:15am.

A number of flights to and from Dhaka got disrupted in the last few weeks due to poor visibility.

## 'Gunfight'

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tipped off that a group of narcotics were gathering

in Tajpur village for drug dealing, a team of DB police raided the area around 2:00am.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, some 10-12 drug dealers opened fire on them, forcing them to retaliate, which eventually led to a "gunfight", the SP said.

Rahmat and Kashem sustained bullet injuries during the incident and were taken to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur where doctors pronounced them dead.

Both were accused in multiple drug cases, said ATM Golam Rostul, officer-in-charge of DB police in Dinajpur.

Police recovered a firearm, two bullets, 150 bottles of Phensedyl and 50 yaba pills from the spot, the OC said.

## China launches

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telescope.  
The project has also obtained some valuable scientific data over that time and is expected to help lead to some breakthroughs in areas such as low-frequency gravitational wave detection and interstellar molecules in the next three to five years, Xinhua said.

Advancing China's space programme is a priority for Beijing, and the country has set a target to catch up with Russia and the United States and become a major space power by 2030.

Beijing plans to launch construction of its own manned space station next year.

## Pakistan HC annuls death penalty

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and senior officers are often considered immune from prosecution.

It caused a wave of controversy, with Musharraf -- exiled in Dubai -- slamming it as a "vendetta" and the military expressing its disappointment.

A High Court in the eastern city of Lahore ruled it "illegal" yesterday.

"The filing of the complaint, the constitution of the court, the selection of the prosecution team are illegal, declared to be illegal... And at the end of the day the full judgment has been set aside," the prosecutor representing the government, Ishtiaq A Khan, told AFP.

"Yes, he is a free man. Right now there is no judgment against him any longer," Khan added.

Musharraf's lawyer, Azhar Siddique, also told media outside the court in Lahore that it has "nullified everything".

The prosecution now has the

option to file a new case against Musharraf with the approval of the federal Cabinet.

The treason trial -- which began in 2013 and is just one of several involving Musharraf -- centred on his decision to suspend the constitution and impose emergency rule in 2007.

Musharraf first took power after ousting prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a bloodless coup in 1999.

A cigar-smoking, whisky-drinking moderate, the general became a key US ally in the "war on terror" after the September 11 attacks and escaped at least three al-Qaeda assassination attempts during his nine years in office.

His rule faced no serious challenges until he tried to sack the Supreme Court chief justice in March 2007, sparking nationwide protests and months of turmoil that led to the imposition of emergency rule. After the December 2007

assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, the national mood plunged further and Musharraf was left increasingly isolated by the crushing losses suffered by his allies in February 2008 elections.

He finally resigned in August 2008 in the face of impeachment proceedings by the new governing coalition and went into exile.

Musharraf returned to Pakistan in 2013 in an attempt to contest elections, but was barred from taking part in the polls and from leaving the country as a barrage of legal cases mounted.

The travel ban against him was finally lifted in 2016, and he travelled to Dubai for medical treatment, where he has been ever since.

The treason case against him was first launched by his old foe Sharif in 2013.

It went on for years with repeated delays until last year's surprise announcement.

## Shut them all

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appropriate steps should be taken to stop burning of tyres and recycling of vehicles' batteries without the approval from the DoE.

The court asked the government authorities to take steps to ensure that all the market owners or shopkeepers keep their daily garbage in a safe bin or bag or sack. The garbage must be dumped in the designated areas before the closure of shops or markets.

It asked the government to take steps to fix the economic life of different vehicles as per section 36 of the Road Transport Act, 2018. The court banned plying of economic life-expired vehicles on the roads in the capital.

The HC ordered the government to ensure road construction or carpeting or excavation works by strictly complying with the related laws and rules and also with the terms and conditions of tenders to ensure clear air.

The court said the government must ensure that trucks carrying mud or waste on the roads in the capital have those covered. It also instructed the contractors to use bags or sacks for storing or keeping sand or mud at the city's construction sites so that air was not polluted.

It further ordered the authorities to take steps to spray water over the construction areas in the morning and evening every day.

The HC bench ordered the authorities concerned to submit a

report to it on March 1 on the progress of implementing its directives.

**DOE DG SUMMONED**

Yesterday, the HC bench summoned the DoE director general to appear before it on February 2 to explain why air pollution in Dhaka city could not be reduced.

The DG has also been asked to give explanations about the quality of Dhaka air and the manpower of the organisation.

Earlier in the day, petitioner's counsel Advocate Manzill Murshid made some recommendations to the HC bench for reducing the air pollution and prayed to it to issue directives in this regard.

Deputy Attorney General Abdullah-Al-Mahmud Bashar represented the state.

Following the writ petition, the HC on January 28 last year had issued a rule, asking the government to explain why the inaction of the administration to curb air pollution in the capital should not be declared illegal and why it should not be directed to take effective steps to stop air pollution.

The city had the worst air quality in the world on November 25 last year, according to Air Visual, an air quality measuring application.

The situation reportedly prompted the government to draw up immediate measures to give some relief to the city dwellers.

"The level of air pollution is alarming. Just a few days ago, air

quality in Dhaka was the third or fourth worst in the world. But now it's the ranking," said Shahab Uddin, minister for environment, forest and climate change, who presided over an emergency inter-ministerial meeting on Monday.

Last year, Dhaka's air was ranked third most polluted in the world, according to air quality data compiled by the World Health Organisation for megacities with a population of 14 million or more.

## False alarm sets off nuclear scare in Canada

AFP, Montreal

An alert signalling an incident at a major nuclear power plant near Toronto in Canada was sent in error to millions of residents Sunday, causing a scare and prompting calls for an investigation.

The emergency alert went out shortly before 7:30 am (1230 GMT). Though intended for residents living within a 10-kilometer (six-mile) radius of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, it went to all residents in Ontario province.

About an hour later, the Ontario Power Generation company that manages the nuclear plant announced on Twitter that the alert was issued by mistake.

## ROYAL MOTORCADE

# Thailand eases rules to check traffic jam

AFP, Bangkok

Royal motorcades will no longer completely shut down Bangkok's roads, a rare concession by the unassailable Thai king to public opinion.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn, 67, sits at the apex of Thai power and -- alongside senior royals -- is protected by a draconian defamation law, which makes public scrutiny of the family near impossible inside the kingdom.

Police routinely close down major roads when the royal family passes, adding serious delay on the congested streets of Bangkok and heaping frustration onto commuters.

This in recent months have taken to Twitter and Facebook to air their irritation over road closures believed to be linked to the royal family's travels.

The hashtag #Royalmotorcade trended last year on Thai Twitter, drawing tens of thousands of mentions.

Late Sunday government spokeswoman Narumon Pinyosinwat said on Facebook that the king "has acknowledged the traffic problem and is concerned for the people".

Roads will no longer be completely shut down, according to a police video she posted detailing the changes, with officers ordered to use orange cones

instead to designate a pathway for travelling royals.

The other side of the road can also be used by motorists and pedestrians. "Long live the King," she added in her Facebook post.

Police did not respond to requests for comment. The new guidelines are "a good sign" of a monarch responding to public concerns, said political analyst Titipol Phakdeeawanich.

"It could make people feel more connected to the institution of the monarchy and show that the monarchy is not ignoring them," he added.

Vajiralongkorn inherited one of the world's richest monarchies when he ascended the throne in 2016 following the death of his father.

He was officially crowned last May in an elaborate three-day coronation ceremony.

## Arrested baul

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Ahmed told The Daily Star.

"During interrogation, Shariat admitted that he had made a mistake," said Saidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Someone filmed Shariat's comments and showed it to people in the area causing an outrage, the OC added.

# Japan's Abe warns conflict with Iran impacts entire world

AFP, Riyadh

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has warned that military confrontation with Iran will impact global peace and stability, as he visits the Middle East hoping to ease tensions spiked by the US killing of a top Iranian general.

His comments came at the start of a five-day Gulf tour that had been thrown into doubt after Tehran responded to the attack on Qassem Soleimani by launching a barrage of missiles at bases hosting American troops in Iraq, prompting fears of all-out war.

But as those concerns receded, the Japanese premier decided to go

ahead with the visit and on Sunday discussed regional tensions during an hour-long meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in northwestern Al-Ulla province, according to foreign ministry spokesman Masato Ohtaka.

"Any military confrontation in the region that includes a country like Iran will have an impact not only on peace and stability in the region but the peace and stability of the whole world," Abe said, according to Ohtaka.

Abe called "on all relevant countries to engage in diplomatic efforts to defuse tensions", Ohtaka added.

## 'Clerics get lost!'

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Tehran's Azadi Square. Wounded were being carried and security personnel ran gripping rifles. Riot police hit protesters with batons as people shouted "Don't beat them!"

"Death to the dictator," other footage showed protesters shouting, directing their fury directly at Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader since 1989.

Reuters could not authenticate the footage. State-affiliated media has reported protests in Tehran and other cities but has provided few details.

"At protests, police absolutely did not shoot because the capital's police officers have been given orders to show restraint," Tehran police chief Hossein Rahimi said in a statement on state media.

Tehran's showdown with Washington has come at a precarious time for the authorities in Iran and the proxy forces they support to wield influence across the Middle East. Sanctions imposed by Trump have hammered the Iranian economy.

Iran's authorities killed hundreds of protesters in November in what appears to have been the bloodiest crackdown on anti-government unrest since 1979. In Iraq and Lebanon, governments supported by Iran-backed armed groups have faced mass protests.

Adding to international pressure on Tehran, five nations, including Canada, Britain and Ukraine, whose citizens died when the Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737 crashed, meet in London on Thursday to discuss possible legal action, Ukraine's foreign minister told Reuters.

In his latest tweet directed at Iran, Trump wrote on Sunday that "I couldn't care less if they negotiate. Will be totally up to them but, no nuclear weapons and 'don't kill your protesters'."

## ESCALATION

Iran's government spokesman

## Neo-JMB

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month ago had been using it as an IT branch of "Neo-JMB", Maruf said.

Around 4:00pm yesterday, police cordoned off the building owned by Saudi expatriate Akter Hossen. The raid ended around 9:00pm.

A case will be filed in this regard, Maruf said.



Bomb-making materials and sharp weapons found at the militant den in Ashulia of Savar.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Queen agrees

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Canada and the UK.

"These are complex matters for my family to resolve, and there is some more work to be done, but I have asked for final decisions to be reached in the coming days." The queen has previously said she wanted to find "workable solutions" to the crisis, which has dominated the media since the bombshell announcement last week.

Harry and Meghan's effective resignation has thrown up a series of questions, including how they can raise their own finances without compromising the monarchy.