

Shabana Azmi seriously hurt in road crash

STAR REPORT

Veteran Bollywood actress Shabana Azmi has been seriously injured in an accident on the Mumbai-Pune Express in Maharashtra's Raigad district yesterday afternoon. Her husband Javed Akhtar was also in the car but did not suffer injuries, news agency ANI reported. The accident took place around 3:30pm near Khalapur, about 60km from Mumbai, when the Tata Safari SUV the 69-year-old actor was travelling in, rear ended a truck, said NDTV. Photos of the incident show Shabana Azmi being helped out of the rear seats of the SUV, her face and eye swollen. Azmi was "stable", the hospital in Mumbai where she was admitted said, reports our New Delhi correspondent.



Azmi was taken to Kokilaben Ambani hospital in suburban Andheri after initial treatment at MGM Hospital in Navi Mumbai. "She is stable and under observation," said Santosh Shetty, executive director and CEO of Ambani Hospital in a statement late in the evening. Such was the impact of the crash that the front passenger's side of the SUV was completely destroyed. A photo shows the bonnet of the car crumpled and the radiator and bonnet wrecked. Highway police patrol teams rushed to investigate the accident site, news agency IANS reported. Shabana Azmi, who was awarded the Padma Shri in 1998 and the National Film Award five times, is known for her work in several critically-acclaimed movies like Ankur, Arth and Mandi.

Ensure no attack on free speech

FROM PAGE 1 were issued. The opportunity to seek protection from a higher court shrunk as the arrest warrants were issued right before the weekend began, they added. A Dhaka court on Thursday issued the arrest warrants in a case filed by the father of Naimul Abrar Rahat, a ninth-grader of Residential Model College, who was electrocuted during the anniversary programme of Prothom Alo's youth magazine Kishor Alo on November 1 last year. The case was filed with the Fourth Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka on November 6. The charges brought against the accused are under section 304(A) of Bangladesh Penal Code. The section deals with deaths caused by "rash or negligent act". According to the section, a person may face up to five years in jail if charges are proven against him or her. Leaders of different organisations also called upon the authorities not to harass the Prothom Alo editor and others in this regard. **JATIYA OIKYAFRONT** Jatiya Oikyafront in a statement yesterday called upon the authorities concerned to refrain from the efforts to curb freedom of expression and press. Oikyafront, an alliance of six political parties including the BNP, came up with the call a day after a Dhaka court issued arrest warrants. Terming the case "motivated", Oikyafront urged the authorities not to curb freedom of expression by filing such cases. "There is no way to separate this case from the attacks -- one after another -- on the freedom of expression in the country," the statement read. The signatories to the statement are: Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain, JSD President ASM Abdur Rob, BNP Standing Committee Member Dr Abdul Moin Khan, Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh Chairman Prof Nurul Amin Bepary.

Election now on Feb 1

FROM PAGE 1 decided to change the polls date. Speaking at a press briefing after the meeting yesterday, Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda said they shifted the polls date so that no one's religious sentiment is hurt. He said they had earlier decided to hold the elections to Dhaka south and north city corporations on January 30 after being informed that the puja would be celebrated on January 29. The CEC also said they talked to Education Minister Dipu Moni and requested her to take steps for deferring the SSC and its equivalent exams. The EC held the emergency meeting for four hours from 4:00pm with a break for the Maghrib prayers. The meeting was attended by CEC KM Nurul Huda and election commissioners Mahbub Talukdar, Rafiqul Islam, Kabita Khanam and retd brig general Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury. Other top EC officials, and returning officers of the city corporation polls were also present. Talking to reporters later at her residence in the capital, Dipu Moni said her ministry decided that the exams would begin on February 3, instead of February 1, so that the EC could hold the polls on February 1. Ziaul Haque, chief of Inter-Education Board Coordination Subcommittee and also the chairman of Dhaka education board, said they would notify students about the changes in the schedule today. More than two million students are expected to take the exams this year. The EC had announced the polls schedule on December 22. Members of the Hindu community were upset after learning that the voting would take place on the day of Saraswati Puja. As per Loknath Panjika, a traditional annual Bangla calendar

followed by the Hindus, the puja would begin at 9:10am on January 29 and continue till 11:00am the next day. Saraswati Puja is observed at almost all educational institutions where worshippers gather to offer prayers. Usually, polling centres are also set up at schools, colleges and universities. Many took to social media to criticise the EC's decision. Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam, however, said they had fixed the election date keeping in mind that Saraswati Puja, according to the government calendar, falls on January 29. **STRIKE WITHDRAWN** After the EC announced the new polls date, the DU students on fast-unto-death withdrew the strike last night. University Vice-Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman gave them water and juice. Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad also withdrew their weeklong protests, said its General Secretary Rana Dasgupta. He also thanked the EC for changing the polls date. Earlier on January 14 and 15, another group of DU students blocked the busy Shahbagh intersection for nearly one hour, demanding deferral of the election. Dhaka University Teachers Association and Dhaka University Central Students' Union also made the same demand. An appeal was filed with the Supreme Court on Thursday, challenging a High Court ruling that rejected a writ petition for changing the election date. The writ petition was filed by Supreme Court lawyer Ashoke Kumar Ghosh on January 6. Meanwhile, mayor candidates from the AL and the BNP welcomed the EC's decision to change the polls date for Saraswati Puja.



A canopy of election posters shrouds a Dhaka street as two Dhaka city polls approach. The photo was taken on Nurjahan Road in Mohammadpur yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMAN

Envisions an efficient DNCC

FROM PAGE 1 from George Washington University, claims he has well-laid-out plans and strategies to solve the problems of Dhaka north residents, and he has been conducting research and collecting data for the last few years to find out the solutions. The findings will be published in his election manifesto, he added. Talking to The Daily Star recently, Tabith said creating a corruption-free and efficient city corporation will be one of his core areas to focus. He also promised to reinstate democratic values, transparency and accountability in the city corporation to establish the rights of the citizens. Tabith said he would use his management and entrepreneurship skills to make the city corporation financially self-reliant.

He identified a lack of coordination among the service providing organisations as one of the key reasons for citizens' sufferings. "I, as a real peoples' representative and head of the city corporation, will focus on an integrated work plan to manage the waste, reduce traffic congestion and pollution." Regarding the mosquito menace, the mayoral candidate said cleaning up the trashes and stagnant water and using larvacide would be his first steps to reduce the problem. He also has a plan to spray appropriate insecticides throughout the year and planting more mosquito repellent plants like Citronella and Basil in different areas of the capital to reduce mosquito menace. Tabith contested the last city corporation election and boycotted

it halfway raising allegations of vote rigging and illegal stuffing. Asked whether he will do the same this year, he said, "No, I will not. Last time, the situation was different and many lives came under threat all of a sudden. This time we are going to the election knowing everything and with a huge support of people who tried to vote for us on December 30, 2018." Whether it would be a problem to work if he gets elected from the opposition party, Tabith said it would be his strength to serve the people with even more efficiency and vibrancy. "If I get elected, I will be elected with people's vote which the incumbent mayors lacked. When you are a member of the ruling party, you have to maintain its rules and protocol while in office. But with me there is no chance of that happening," he said.

For a digital corporation

FROM PAGE 1 through which waterlogging can be monitored centrally from a cell at the DNCC. "Besides, we have already taken short-, mid- and long-term plans to free the city from waterlogging. For example, as part of our short-term plan, we have recovered Kalshi Khal at Mirpur," he said, adding that it took three to four months to free the canal from grabbers. He emphasised that all canals, especially those inside the city, must be recovered from grabbers to solve Dhaka's waterlogging problem during rains. "After freeing those canals, we will have to dig them." Atiqul admitted that due to pressure from some influential quarters, the city corporation often faces problems to free footpaths of illegal occupants. Yet, he promised to continue the drives. "We must free footpaths." He has a different plan for the people who reside on the city's footpaths. "I have already assigned experts to collect data of people who live on DNCC footpaths," he said. "We will allow each of the poor families to run a small shop for four hours by rotation on footpaths that do not remain busy usually," he added, without giving further details. He also mentioned his plan to construct adequate number of footpaths. Admitting that people often suffer due to frequent digging of roads by different utility service providers, the ex-mayor said people's unwillingness to use foot bridges is a big problem for the city. "We will have to build awareness among the people in this regard," he said.

About controlling traffic congestion, Atiqul said, "We have no alternative to introducing bus route rationalisation which was dreamt by late DNCC mayor Annisul Huq." Annisul had taken the initiative to bring all buses in the capital under certain companies, each to be provided with permits for respective routes and made responsible for a proper public transport management. "Both the city corporations will have to introduce the bus route rationalisation as soon as possible," Atiqul said. "If we can do this, people will not use private cars; they will be interested in travelling on public buses," he said, stressing that completing this work should be the top priority. Regarding the dengue menace, Atiqul said, "We will have to go for an integrated vector management [a comprehensive process to contain the spread of disease-carrying organisms] to control dengue throughout the year." He also stressed the need for destroying the breeding grounds of dengue mosquitos. Atiqul, who is also the president of Bangladesh Volleyball Federation, urged voters to be practical rather than emotional when casting their votes. He said, "Awami League believes in development. People will have to understand who they should cast their votes for and who will actually be able to work for the development of Dhaka city. They will have to think practically." Noting that Sheikh Hasina's Awami League is in power now, the successful businessman and entrepreneur said, "People's expectations will be fulfilled if they vote for me."

China, Myanmar ink raft of deals

FROM PAGE 1 worth billions of dollars, with agreements on railways linking southwestern China to the Indian Ocean, a deep sea-port in conflict-riven Rakhine state, a special economic zone on the border, and a new city project in the commercial capital of Yangon. They did not address a controversial \$3.6 billion Beijing-backed mega dam, where work has been stalled since 2011, reflecting the contentiousness of Chinese investment in Myanmar, where many are uncomfortable with the sway Beijing has over its smaller neighbour. "While a large number of different agreements have been signed, there is no Big Bang here," said Richard Horsey, a Yangon-based analyst with the International Crisis Group. "The overall impression is that Myanmar is being cautious about Chinese investment, especially ahead of elections planned later in the year. "China will be hoping that this is an incremental step towards realising its mega-infrastructure goals, and that further progress can be locked in over the coming months," he said. But widespread suspicion of Beijing's influence in the country persists among those who are sceptical the economic benefits will trickle down to the masses and of ties to rebel

groups fighting the state in border areas, reports AFP. "They believe that China has been taking advantage," said Thu Wai, leader of the Democratic Party, one of the 17 political parties who came to Naypyidaw as part of the visit. The lack of transparency surrounding the 33 deals signed yesterday will lead to a "backlash" as mistrust grows, said political analyst Khin Zaw Win. **DERAILED BY WEST** At a welcoming ceremony on Friday, Xi hailed a "new era" of relations between the countries. "We are drawing a future roadmap that will bring to life bilateral relations based on brotherly and sisterly closeness in order to overcome hardships together and provide assistance to each other," Xi said. He was scheduled to leave later yesterday. Suu Kyi called China "a great country playing an important role in the international affairs and the world economy" but urged for economic projects that avoid environmental degradation and benefit locals. Xi also met leaders from political parties in ethnic areas riven with civil conflict where Chinese infrastructure projects are underway. Sai Kyaw Nyunt, joint-secretary of the Shan Nationalities League

for Democracy, one of the ethnic politicians invited to meet Xi, said it was only a handshake. "Our country is very small and powerless," he said, "So they treat us that way." The two countries have historically had a fraught relationship, but have moved closer since 2017, when Myanmar was internationally condemned for its treatment of minority Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state, reports Reuters. More than 730,000 Rohingya were forced to flee western Myanmar after a military crackdown that the United Nations has said was executed with "genocidal intent". China has defended the country on the global stage and is viewed as the biggest obstacle to a prosecution of its leaders at an international war crimes tribunal. An article in Chinese state media ahead of the state visit said Myanmar had been "derailed" by its engagement with the West and only China was willing to "pull Myanmar from the sludge". "But after some turbulence, Myanmar realized there were double standards in the approach Western countries had taken on human rights issues and began to turn to China for diplomatic and economic help," the article in the Global Times said.

Extrajudicial killings in Bangladesh lower than in US

Says the foreign minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday claimed that the number of extrajudicial killings was much lower in Bangladesh than in a developed country like the United States. He was addressing a workshop on "Right to Information Act, 2009 and Informing about Online Tracking System" at the Sylhet Zilla Parishad. The minister said false information regarding extrajudicial killings was being spread across the country. "The government doesn't even want to see a single extra-judicial killing. Only a handful of extrajudicial killings happen in the country." Momen alleged that many media outlets were spreading false information. "But the government has guaranteed correct information through the Right to Information Act." He said proper implementation of this law was necessary for reaching the goal of Digital Bangladesh. Chief Information Commissioner Mortuza Ahmed, Sylhet Divisional Commissioner Mashiur Rahman and Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet Kazi Emdadul Islam also spoke at the programme, jointly organised by the Sylhet district administration and the Information Commission. According to statistics of Ain o Salish Kendra, a human rights organisation, around 2,700 people were killed in "shootouts" across the country from 2004 to 2019. Of them, more than 900 were killed after being picked up by the law enforcement agencies.

Lawmaker Abdul Mannan passes away

STAR REPORT

Awami League lawmaker of Bogura-1 constituency Abdul Mannan passed away yesterday at LabAid Hospital in Dhaka after suffering a massive cardiac arrest.



He was 67. President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Shirim Sharmin Chaudhury and leaders of different political parties expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of Mannan. In a condolence message, the PM recalled the contribution of the former president of Bangladesh Chhatra League in various democratic movements, reports UNB. "Awami League lost a skilled organiser and a devoted activist," she said. She prayed for the eternal salvation of the departed soul and expressed sympathy to the bereaved family. AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader also expressed his profound shock at the death of Mannan, says a press release. Mannan breathed his last around 8:30am, said T Jaman Niketa, vice-president of Bogura district AL unit. He suffered a cardiac arrest on Thursday afternoon at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan when he went there to join the ongoing parliament session, Niketa said, quoting the lawmaker's personal secretary. Later, he was admitted to LabAid Hospital and kept on life support, Niketa said. Manan left behind his wife, a son, a daughter, and host of relatives to mourn his death, reports our Bogura correspondent. His body would be kept at the Birdem Hospital until tomorrow morning. His first namaj-e-janaza will be at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan tomorrow. Separate namaj-e-janazas will be

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

T20 squad

FROM PAGE 1 scalping 10 wickets in 13 matches to help his side reach the tournament's last four stage. Mahmudullah Riyad, who led the Tigers during their three-match T20I series in India last November, will remain at the helm for the upcoming series. And although the men in red and green will be without the services of stalwart Mushfiqur Rahim, who opted out due to security concerns, veteran batsman Tamim Iqbal is set to make his national return after having last played for Bangladesh during their three-match ODI series in Sri Lanka last July. Tamim had turned down the following tour of India on personal grounds. Although Taijul Islam, Arafat Sunny, Mosaddek Hossain and Abu Hider were all included in the T20 series against India, they were excluded for the Pakistan tour while Rubel Hossain, Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mahadi Hasan were recalled to the side. The Tigers will leave for Lahore on January 22 following a three-day training camp, scheduled to begin today.