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ZERO-COST MIGRATION OF WORKERS

Dhaka sits on Malaysian offer

Malaysian minister says they are ready to sign a deal; officials in Dhaka wait for joint working group meeting next month

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh has been sitting on a zero-cost labour recruitment offer that Malaysia made more than a year ago.

According to the offer, Malaysian employers will pay visa fees, airfares, medical screening costs, recruitment agency commissions and levies for Bangladeshi job seekers -- a system that falls under the UN convention on migrant workers.

Following a zero-cost labour recruitment pact with Nepal in October, 2018, Malaysia said it would sign a similar deal with Bangladesh.

But since then, Dhaka has not taken any concrete steps to secure the deal with Malaysia, home to some eight lakh Bangladeshis, several officials of the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry told The Daily Star.

Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur held talks several times since Malaysia suspended labour recruitment from Bangladesh in September 2018. The suspension came following allegations that a syndicate of 10

Bangladeshi agents -- with support from Malaysia -- controlled labour recruitment in 2016-18 when recruitment cost went up to Tk 4 lakh.

But Dhaka did not raise the issue of zero-cost labour recruitment in those talks, according to the ministry officials.

On several occasions, the Malaysian authorities said high recruitment cost was responsible for forced labour and debt bondage of Bangladeshi migrants.

Against this backdrop, Malaysian Human Resources Minister M Kulasegaran on January 15 this year said they would soon finalise a zero-cost labour recruitment deal with Bangladesh.

He also mentioned that Malaysia didn't want to face US sanctions for not doing enough to combat human trafficking.

"I'm sending the Malaysia-Bangladesh Joint Working Group to Dhaka, Bangladesh, soon to iron out the remaining issues on the zero-cost recruitment agreement," Kulasegaran told the Malaysian media.

Seeking anonymity, an official of

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Rickshaws, human hauliers and other vehicles, seized by police, are gathering rust in a field in Kanchpur area of Narayanganj as there is no proper storage facilities. Many of these vehicles are to be used as evidence in different cases. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Pressure mounts on Myanmar

UN chief to notify UNSC about ICJ genocide ruling



PORIMOL PALMA

Myanmar and its ally China will face mounting pressure after the World Court asked Naypyidaw to stop genocidal acts in Rakhine State, analysts said.

The ruling is a slap on Myanmar and its allies, Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, director of the Centre for Genocide Studies at Dhaka University, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The most important aspect of the ruling is that Myanmar has to submit a report to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) within four months on the measures taken to prevent the genocidal acts. Similar reports will have to be submitted every six months, he said.

The Gambia has to approve of the reports that will be submitted by Myanmar, he added.

The ICJ on Thursday ordered Myanmar not to destroy the evidence of crimes committed against the ethnic minority in Rakhine State.

"A big victory in the ruling is that the ICJ has recognised the ethnic community as Rohingya. So, Myanmar cannot deny this identity and say they are illegal migrants from Bangladesh," said Imtiaz.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

War crimes, not genocide

Myanmar govt says after ICJ order

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Myanmar has rejected Rohingya genocide claims after the World Court on Tuesday ordered the country to prevent the genocidal acts in Rakhine State.

In a statement Thursday night, Myanmar Ministry of Foreign Affairs also blamed different human rights bodies, saying they presented a distorted picture of the situation.

It said Myanmar took note of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) decision on provisional measures as requested by The Gambia which lodged the case in November last year accusing Myanmar of genocide against Rohingyas. The hearing was held from December 10-12.

ICJ ordered Myanmar to prevent destruction of evidence of any crimes since August 2017 when some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military crackdown.

UN independent investigators concluded

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Docking bad loans has now become critical

Says former finance minister AMA Muhith in an interview with Star

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and ZINA TASREEN

Age is the price of wisdom, it is often said. And an audience with the immediate past finance minister, AMA Muhith, calls to mind that saying.

Take, for instance, his views on the much-debated government move to impose single-digit bank interest rate from April 1, which effectively breaks down the market mechanism for funds.

Muhith, who turns 86 today, feels the move will not yield any benefit.

"Well, the government can impose and banks will have to oblige, but there will not be any big impact on the banking sector," he told The Daily Star in an interview last week at his home in Dhaka.



MUHITH TURNS 86 TODAY.

The reason being, the move is not addressing the root cause of banking sector's problems: the high defaulted loans.

The need of the hour, in his opinion, is banking sector reforms geared towards reducing the sourced loans.

As per the central bank's latest data, which is until September of last year, defaulted loans in the banking sector stood at a record Tk 116,288 crore, which is 11.99 per cent of total outstanding loans.

"In our to reduce default loans we have increased it enormously. This was wrong."

He was referring to the central bank's most recent loan scheduling package, which allowed defaulters to reschedule loans by footing just 2 per cent down payment.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK IN CHINA

13 cities shut down, death toll hits 26

AFP, Wuhan

Chinese authorities yesterday expanded a mammoth quarantine effort aimed at containing a deadly contagion to 13 cities and a staggering 41 million people, as nervous residents were checked for fevers and the death toll climbed to 26.

While the World Health Organization (WHO) held off on declaring a global emergency despite confirmed cases in half a dozen other countries, China expanded its lockdown to cover an area with a total population greater than Canada's.

A range of Lunar New Year festivities have been cancelled, while temporary

closures of Beijing's Forbidden City, Shanghai's Disneyland and a section of the Great Wall were announced to prevent the disease from spreading further.

The previously unknown virus has caused alarm because of its similarity to SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), which killed hundreds across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

The WHO said China faced a national emergency but stopped short of making a declaration that would have prompted greater global cooperation, including possible trade and travel restrictions.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Rice prices go up by Tk 2-5 a kg in a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although it is the peak season of harvesting rice, prices of the staple food are going up both in the capital's retail and wholesale markets, dealing a blow to the people with limited income who are already struggling to make their ends meet.

Within a week, prices of fine rice have increased by Tk 2 to 5 per kilogram in retail markets and Tk 100 to 150 per sack [50 kg] in wholesale markets.

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Rookie opener Mohammad Naim top-scored with 43 as Bangladesh reached 141 for five, but it was not enough as Pakistan won the first T20I by five wickets at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Tigers lose first T20I by 5 wickets

SPORTS REPORTER

Playing in Pakistan after a gap of 12 years was a historic moment for Bangladesh as cricket finally took centre stage with the first T20I yesterday after

security concerns grabbed headlines before the series.

Despite posting a modest target of 142, Bangladesh managed to take the game till the last over but eventually it was not enough for the Tigers

to avoid a five-wicket defeat to Pakistan at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

The second T20I will take place at the same venue from 3:00pm (Bangladesh time) today.

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CLARIFICATION

We refer to recent media reports about loans given by BRAC Bank Limited to its Directors.

We would like to clarify that all directors of BRAC Bank Limited are either nominated by BRAC or are independent Directors.

The loan amount of Taka 362 Crore reported in the media as 'Loans to Directors of BRAC Bank' comprises of:

- Taka 73 Crore to BRAC EPL Investments Limited, a merchant bank and a wholly owned subsidiary of BRAC Bank Limited.
- Taka 21 Crore to BRAC Saajan Limited, a remittance company registered in United Kingdom, which is owned by BRAC Bank.
- Taka 268 Crore to Sajida Foundation, a NGO registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860, for on lending to micro-finance customers.

All of the above loans were approved by the relevant regulatory authority. BRAC Bank exercises the highest levels of Corporate Governance and Transparency in the Banking Sector.

Company Secretary
BRAC Bank Limited



Follow Bangabandhu’s ideology properly to build Sonar Bangla

Hasina tells AL leaders, activists

UNB, Tungipara

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked Awami League leaders and activists to properly follow Bangabandhu’s ideology to build a developed and prosperous Bangladesh free from hunger and poverty.

“We’re working tirelessly so that the grassroots and rural people get the benefits of our achievements,” she said.

Hasina, also the AL chief, made the comment while addressing a joint meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee and the Advisory Council at her residence at Gopalganj’s Tungipara.

She said the main goal of the government was to change the fate of the countrymen. “Every leader and worker of the party will have to move with the ideology of the Father of the Nation. We’ll build a hunger and poverty free Sonar Bangla as dreamt by Bangabandhu.”

In this connection, she mentioned that Bangladesh has already attained high growth rate and has a strong economy. “... We’ll continue our drives

against terrorism, militancy and corruption,” she said.

Hasina said the party has been in power for three consecutive terms after the 2008 national election. “As a result, the country’s progress is visible and the people’s fate is being changed.”

The PM also said the government had drawn up elaborate programmes to celebrate “Mujib Borsho” nationally. “Besides, other organisations and institutions will celebrate Bangabandhu’s birth centenary in a befitting manner,” she said.

She said the name of the Father of the Nation was once wiped out by assassinating him on August 15, 1975. “But today none could erase his name because he struggled and suffered throughout his life for the people of the country,” she said.

The prime minister also said over 82 percent people lived under the poverty level when Bangabandhu liberated the country. “Our Awami League government has been able to bring down the [poverty] rate to 20.5 percent,” she added.



Flanked by the members of the newly-elected Awami League Central Working Committee and Advisory Council, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina places a wreath at the grave of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Tungipara of Gopalganj yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

13 cities shut down

FROM PAGE 1

The outbreak emerged in late December in Wuhan, an industrial and transport hub of 11 million people in China’s centre, spreading to several other countries including the United States.

China is in the midst of its Lunar New Year holiday, a typically joyous time of family gatherings and public festivities.

But yesterday Wuhan was a ghost town, its streets deserted and stores shuttered.

Hospitals visited by AFP journalists bustled with worried patients being screened by staff wearing full-body protective suits.

At a temperature-check station, a medical staffer in bodysuit, face mask and goggles took a thermometer from a middle-aged woman, pausing to examine the reading before quickly turning back to the patient.

“Have you registered? Then go and see the doctor,” the staffer said.

One 35-year-old man surnamed Li voiced the fears of many.

“I have a fever and cough, so I’m worried that I’m infected,” he said.

“I don’t know the results yet.”

With hundreds of millions of people on the move across China for the holiday, the government has halted all travel out of Wuhan, shut down its public transport and told residents to stay home. Deepening the isolation, there were few flights available to the city.

“This year we have a very scary Chinese New Year. People are not going outside because of the virus,” a taxi driver in the city, who asked not to be named, told AFP.

But he said a prolonged shutdown should not pose food-shortage problems because many Chinese had stocked up for the holiday.

Besides Wuhan, 12 other smaller cities nearby have batted down the hatches, with most of them going public yesterday with various measures ranging from closing public venues and restricting large gatherings to halting public transportation and asking citizens not to leave their cities.

Several of the cities have populations numbering several million, led by Huanggang, which has 7.5 million.

The pathogen -- 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) -- has caused many outlets in Shanghai,

Beijing and other cities to sell out their stocks of face masks.

As reports surfaced of bed shortages in Wuhan hospitals, state media said authorities were rushing to build a new facility devoted to the outbreak in a mind-blowing 10 days.

The Wuhan hospital is targeted to be ready by February 3. Dozens of excavators and trucks were filmed working on the site by state television.

State broadcaster CCTV also reported that 40 medical doctors from the military were being brought in to help with intensive care at the Wuhan Pulmonary Hospital.

To discourage nationwide travel, the government has said all tickets for rail, air, road, or water transport could be exchanged for a refund.

Yesterday, staff in full body protective suits were seen checking the temperatures of people entering a subway station in Beijing.

Thermal cameras scanned passengers arriving at Beijing’s West Railway Station.

Chinese authorities said the number of cases leapt overnight to more than 800, with 177 in serious condition. There were another 1,072 suspected cases.

Officials also said that a virus patient died in Heilongjiang province in China’s far northeast, the second death outside the Wuhan epicentre.

Beijing has been praised for its response in contrast to SARS, when it took months to report the disease and initially denied WHO experts any access.

Gao Fu, head of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, asked China’s people to forego New Year gatherings this year and confine themselves at home until the all-clear.

“If we all work as one, we can contain the virus in Wuhan and add no more cases exported from Wuhan, so as to stem the virus nationwide,” Gao told state TV.

Beijing has cancelled popular New Year public events at temples in the capital, the historic Forbidden City will close from Saturday, and Shanghai Disneyland said it also will shut down for an indefinite period from Saturday to protect visitors and staff.

A number of tourist spots were closed and events cancelled in central Hunan province, which borders Hubei province.

Docking bad loans has now become critical

FROM PAGE 1

“It is not a good policy -- you are just increasing the number of defaulted loans. This was not right. And defaulted loan recovery is not easy anywhere.”

Subsequently, he called for strict steps to bring down the defaulted loans to a reasonable level.

One of the steps he champions is fixing a defaulted loan ceiling for banks. “We should fix a target for bringing down the defaulted loan to a certain per cent. I’m not suggesting any figure -- the ministry has to decide that.”

The banks that fail to lower the defaulted loan ratio to that number will not be allowed to do new business; they will have to work with their existing business, so the banks will collapse.

“So, they will have to do something about it. We have to be strict.”

He, however, admitted that he was indulgent towards banks while as the finance minister from 2009 to 2018.

“I have given too many opportunities to the banking sector. I have indulged them,” he said, while citing the Banking Companies (Amendment) Act 2017 as an example.

The amendment extended the tenure of a private bank’s board of directors to nine years from six and increased the quota for board seats for a family from two to four. The move, effectively, tightened a single family’s hold on a private bank.

“The stage for pampering is over, I feel. If I were in the government now, I would have put a stop to it and asked the banks to behave.”

He also admits that there are too many banks in Bangladesh. Out of 60 banks in operation now, 12 of them came into being after the Awami League came back to power in 2009.

“We have too many banks but I was never worried as I thought they would automatically be forced to merge and there would be a reduction in number.”

When quizzed that he himself had the chance to usher in consolidation in the sector in case of Farmers Bank: “It was my mistake. I should have allowed it to die.”

He said he was not under any pressure to keep alive Farmers Bank, which was rechristened to Padma Bank in January last year as part of the bank management’s effort to sweep the gross irregularities and loan scams under the carpet and get an image makeover.

The bank, which was established in 2013, became a hotbed for financial irregularities in less than three years of operation.

Allegations of corruption against them became deafening and depositors, including different government agencies, started pulling out their money.

This prompted the central bank and the government to step in and rescue the bank. Four state-owned banks -- Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali -- and one public merchant bank, the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh, bailed out Farmers by buying equity shares worth Tk 715 crore in March 2018.

When prodded that another lender, BASIC Bank, became indisposed during his tenure, he became animated.

“BASIC Bank was destroyed by just one man: Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu. The current chairman is a very good banker and I have immense faith in his capabilities. But the state at which Bacchu left BASIC, it’s very difficult to recover from there.”

Bacchu, Muhith asserts, was made the chairman of BASIC Bank on September 2009 -- on political consideration.

“He had good contacts everywhere and he leveraged them fully.”

Muhith, however, insists that no political appointees can now be found in state banks’ boards. “It started from my time.”

The damage though has already been done, with eight state banks now

accounting for more than 50 per cent of the defaulted loans on September 30 last year: Tk 59,622 crore.

The government is now planning to form a public asset management company (PAMC) to take over banks’ toxic loans from them and has already etched a draft act on it.

Muhith is not opposed to the idea. “I think the PAMC can improve the situation. It depends on how the company decides which asset it will take and in what condition.”

If the PAMC does that stringently, there is no chance of banks exploiting it and dumping their bad assets on it.

“At the same time, banks whose assets are being taken over PAMCs, those banks must be punished in another way.”

Asked whether, like his successor AHM Mustafa Kamal, he thinks the country’s double-digit interest rate is the reason behind the high volume of defaulted loans, Muhith begged to differ.

“The interest rate has relation with inflation. Our inflation is high in comparison to international standards.”

The average inflation crept up four basis points to 5.59 per cent in 2019, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. And, it is on an upward trend.

But to organically bring down the interest rates, he suggested narrowing the bank spread, which is the difference between what a lendercharges a borrower and what it pays a depositor.

“It is less than 4 per cent now in most cases. It is a good development and we should take it forward,” said the retiree, who voraciously reads nine newspapers every day to remain informed.

One of the major causes of concern for the economy now is the sliding exports, particularly of the garment sector.

Garment exporters, who have been enjoying cash privileges for long, are now demanding more benefits to prop them up.

Asked whether it was wise to give garment exporters cash incentives all this while, which artificially made them seem competitive and might have made them complacent, Muhith said: “It’s a very good question and I don’t have the answer. Cash subsidy is clearly not having a lasting effect.”

Subsequently, he is lukewarm on the prospect of ceding to garment exporters’ demand for Tk 5 extra for each dollar of their export receipts.

“A simple device in the form of a cash bonus will make everything alright -- is not right. Their [garment exporters’] solution is not good. They are seeking little more cash bonus but no, it’s not that easy.”

The garment exporters will have to bring in qualitative changes.

“I will advise the government to be very cautious about it.”

Muhith, however, praised Kamal’s move to dispatch four finance ministry officials to Vietnam, Thailand, Sri Lanka and India -- all Bangladesh’s competitors in global apparel trade -- to see first-hand whether those countries’ governments are extending such cash benefits to give their garment exporters a leg up.

He though advised giving greater attention to diversification and industry deepening.

“The development on the export front is very bad. We always did well in exports. We have maintained a growth rate of 9-10 per cent -- it is very high. It’s true that it cannot be maintained forever. But the sudden fall is a bit much, which is a matter of concern.”

Another cause of concern for the economy is the underwhelming collections of the National Board of Revenue, which has sent the government to the doors of banks to meet its expenditure needs. The development is poised to crowd out private sector credit.

When asked why collection growth has slowed down so visibly, Muhith’s face turned red with rage. He seemed to indicate that the tax administration had been providing inflated figures over the years.

The practice has now stopped, which is why the growth seems so low in comparison.

“Revenue bureaucracy is to be blamed. They were liars and they have just led us into nowhere. They should be punished, even those who have retired. For three years they have supplied us with false reports. They were deliberate lies, they showed growth when it was declining. Our revenue growth has historically been low.”

Muhith’s proclamation does have weight as for years the actual collection figures provided by the Comptroller Auditor General later on hugely fell short of the figures provided by the NBR.

But to boost collection growth now, he suggested sending university students door-to-door to survey the wealth status of households in suburban areas.

At the end of their visits they should make a list of which households should pay taxes and suggest an amount of tax. And the government should act on it.

“Once you give them a notice, they come under the tax net. They will then come forward and argue about the arbitrary amount of tax. Once you are in the net the arbitrariness will disappear and you will have to discuss with them and give a tax rate.”

The new value-added tax law, which was supposed to boost collections to a certain extent and Muhith supervised for a large part, has not been a success yet.

“It was made with great hopes. We expected that it would be an all-time solution but that hasn’t been the case.”

The reason is that VAT calculation is rather complex.

“The whole theory of VAT is that you pay tax on the value you add, so 4-5 people end up paying tax for the same item. But they were all supposed to pay a little amount. We do not have the bookkeeping and discipline needed for it to work. This is our problem. We do not have the system yet to track value addition. It will take a while to get there.”

One major incident that took place during Muhith’s time as the finance minister is the cyber heist of about \$1 billion from the Bangladesh Bank’s account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York (NY Fed) in February 2016.

A resolution is yet to come through, four years on.

When probed why, Muhith said: “Our mistake was, we should have filed the case against Fed earlier. Because, Fed obviously failed. They have made the mistake. We would have never known were it not for Sri Lanka.”

Of the sum that the hackers made off with, \$20 million was routed to an account with a Sri Lankan bank, which reversed the transfer.

He suggested the government to take on a more aggressive stance now.

“One of our objectives should be to drive Rizal Bank out of the banking system. The entire banking system is based on trust and Rizal Bank is a fraud. In my opinion, Rizal Bank should not exist in the world and we should have taken the appropriate measures for that.”

Asked what achievement he is most proud of as the finance minister, he instantly said: “The growth of the economy.”

“For a finance minister of Bangladesh, the only option is reduction of poverty. If you reduce poverty you will be successful,” said Muhith, who is now occupied with authoring his book titled ‘History of the World’.

Dhaka sits on

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh’s expatriates’ welfare ministry said the Malaysian delegation may visit Dhaka in the middle of next month.

Labour migration experts say it is important for Dhaka to take immediate steps to secure a zero-cost labour recruitment deal with Malaysia and frame policies accordingly.

One of the measures would be the elimination of brokers from the recruitment process, as the brokers, with their strong presence at home and abroad, often cheat and abuse workers and make them pay exorbitant migration cost, they said.

Bangladesh, however, is yet to have a law that eliminates brokers from labour recruitment or brings them under legal jurisdiction so that they can be held accountable in case of fraudulence or abuse.

Ahmed Munirus Saleheen, a senior official at the expatriates’ welfare ministry, said it would be great if Malaysia strikes a zero-cost recruitment deal with Bangladesh.

“There can’t be anything better than this for us.”

Saleheen, however, couldn’t say how the policy would be implemented as brokers and private agencies have strong influence on the recruitment system.

“We will sit and finalise the modus

YEAR	GOVT FIXED COST	ACTUAL MIGRATION COST
2006-2009	Tk 84,000	Tk 2 lakh (private sector)
2012	Tk 60,000	Tk 60,000 (G2G)
2016-18	Tk 40,000	Tk 4 lakh (private sector)

operandi when the Bangladesh-Malaysia joint working group meets in Dhaka,” he told this newspaper.

At a press meet earlier this month, Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Imran Ahmad spoke of a low-cost and transparent recruitment system, admitting that high recruitment cost leads to exploitative practices.

He, however, did not mention the idea of “zero-cost”.

Talking to The Daily Star, Syed Saiful Haque, chairman of migrant rights advocacy body WARBE Development Foundation, said Malaysian labour recruitment from Bangladesh is mired in largescale malpractices and worker abuses.

“High migration cost has been a major problem. As brokers and agencies make hefty profits by sending workers to Malaysia, they focus on recruitment, not on workers’ welfare.”

Many workers were recruited at bogus companies, while many got wages less than that was agreed upon -- factors that forced many migrants to become undocumented and work elsewhere, he noted.

Over the last few years, the Malaysian authorities detained and deported many of the undocumented workers.

Amid such a situation, the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) put Malaysia on the Tier 2 Watch list for the last two consecutive years. This means Malaysia did not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, he pointed out.

In October last year, the US Customs and Border Protection blocked imported goods from five companies, including Malaysia’s glove-maker WRP Asia Pacific Sdn Bhd, which were accused of practising forced labour.

“This is why Malaysia is talking about a zero-cost recruitment deal,” said Saiful.

He said such a deal with Bangladesh is very important as the record of labour relations between Malaysia and Bangladesh is not a very happy one.

Since 1992 when the Southeast Asian country started hiring Bangladeshi workers, it closed its doors on them on multiple occasions, citing anomalies in recruitment and subsequent labour exploitation.

Malaysia imposed the suspension for nearly a decade from 1997, except in 2000 when some 20,000 were granted visas.

The migration resumed in 2006 and continued till early 2009. Though the migration cost at the time was set at Tk 84,000, studies found that each Bangladeshi migrant had to pay almost Tk 2 lakh.

Also, many were found jobless and exploited -- a reality that forced Kuala Lumpur to suspend workers’ recruitment in 2009.

After four years, Malaysia resumed labour recruitment from Bangladesh under a government-to-government (G2G) deal in 2012, when the migration cost was set at Tk 60,000.

But only 8,000 workers could get jobs under the deal, said industry sources, adding that the recruitment could not gather momentum due to opposition from private agencies and brokers.

Later in 2016, the two countries signed a G2G Plus deal, which was suspended in 2018 because of a syndicate’s control over recruitment and high labour migration costs.

SHARING HERITAGE OVER A MEAL

|| HELEMUL ALAM and HASAN MEER ||



PHOTO: HASAN MEER

**DHAKA
VIBE**

Good food is personal and far reaching at the same time. It creates a bond, sheds light on values that are important to us, and reveals the perspective and way of life.

And what better way to relish that than in Old Dhaka, where history is held together not only in labyrinthine alleys or century-old architectures, but also in food and hospitality.

Food is and always will be a pivotal part of a rich tradition ingrained in the spirit of old town.

Being true to that spirit, an over 200-year-old zamindar house on Noor Baksh Lane at Becharam Dewri has opened its doors to guests, offering a scrumptious "lunch at Heritage Home".

The two-storey house was built in the nineteenth century by Maulvi Abul Khairat Muhammad, a third generation zamindar of Dhaka and Sonargaon. AM Emran, the sixth-generation descendant of

his family, now carries on the tradition of hospitality.

These correspondents visited the house, situated on over six-bigha land on a weekday afternoon -- that too unannounced. But Emran was

A spacious garden, now divided by a boundary wall, welcomed us. This house named "Yousuf Castle" is divided in three parts -- one where Emran holds onto the past glory (around 1.5-bigha land),

Noor Baksh Lane and Abul Hasnat Road are named after his ancestors.

The house may be old, but it is looked after with care, which becomes apparent amid the intricate designs on pillars and side railings. In the course of the day stained glass windows are often animated by changing light, while their patterns wander across the floor, inviting one's thoughts to step back in time.

"Our home used to be famous for hospitality. Many eminent personalities either visited or stayed here," said Emran, who worked in the aviation sector for decades.

He started the heritage meal from September 18, 2018 with the help of Urban Study Group (USG), an organisation campaigning for the conservation of architectural and urban heritage of Old Dhaka.

Lunch at Emran's gradually became popular among people,



least bothered. True to the tradition, he opened the door himself and greeted us.

another where his relatives live while the other is being turned into a multi-storey building.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Lofty promises but no manifesto yet

Most councillor candidates making verbal pledges

HELEMUL ALAM and MATHEWS CHIRAN

With election to the Dhaka city corporations around a week away, ward councillor candidates are campaigning in full swing. However, most of them do not have any specific vision to develop their wards, if elected.

While some are making promises to woo voters, others have been saying that they do not have any manifesto as their scope to work independently is very limited.

Once elected, they will convince the new mayor to resolve ward-based problems, they assured.

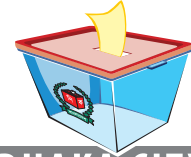
Experts, however, said ward councillors' work is limited to issuing birth and death certificates.

"In the existing system, a councillor has no executive power," local government expert Tofail Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday. "To make the city corporations functional and vibrant, councillors, not the mayors, should be put in the driving seat," he said.

A parliamentary system will have to be

"To make the city corporations functional and vibrant, councillors, not the mayors, should be put in the driving seat."

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPERT TOFAIL AHMED



**DHAKA CITY
POLLS 2020**

making pledges to voters." Selim has been a councillor for around 18 years.

BNP councillor candidate (ward-44) MA Sahed Montu pledged to set up a gymnasium, library and music school in his area. Montu also promised to construct a multi-storey cleaners' colony in Sutrapur.

On the other hand, AL's Mohammad Nizam Uddin (ward-44) said he will work for solving mosquito-related problems and strengthen mosquito control activities.

He also promised to create employment opportunities for youths and set up a training centre for women.

AL's Abul Kalam Azad Mintu (ward-40) aspired to create a social arbitration system against stalking to ensure a safe environment for women. He also promised WiFi facilities and fire hydrants at different points of the ward.

DNCC The verbal promises made by candidates in DNCC are quite similar.

Awami League candidate Kadam Ali Matabbar (ward-2 under Pallabi area) is prioritising safe roads, drives against mosquito and scholarships for poor students. But he did have a written manifesto.

"My ward has 1.25 lakh voters. The area needs attention from the city corporation. If I can maintain a good connection with the mayor and inform him about our problems properly then it is possible to

"Councillors need to provide us with manifestos so that we can hold them accountable after they are elected."

UTTARA RESIDENT MOIN KADIR

develop the area," he said.

Meanwhile, 18 new wards were added to DNCC through a government gazette in 2017. These wards (37-54) got new councillors last year and they had little time to play their roles. Some of them are contesting with their previous manifestos.

Awami League's Nazrul Islam Dhali is the incumbent councillor of ward-40 in Bhatara. It is the second time he is contesting for the post. "I could not fulfil all the pledges I made in last term's manifesto due to a budget crisis. So, I am using that this year with a pledge to implement those."

His priorities are fixing sewerage line, constructing roads, creating playground and community centres. On the other hand, AL's Abdul Matin (ward-41) has no written manifesto.

"When Badda was first included in 2017, I submitted my plan to DNCC to develop this ward. Therefore, I did not prepare any written manifesto this time," he said, adding that his priorities are waste

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

'Will fight for the working class'

CPB mayoral candidate for DNCC promises

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Rakibul Alam, while walking through Mirpur 10, stopped in his tracks to listen to what a bunch of people holding signs and banners were talking about. Right there, a street rally of Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral candidate Sajedul Haq Rubel was taking place.

Around 150 campaigners -- many carrying red flags and sickles, a symbol of the candidate -- were at the rally. "Their campaign seems to centre around the working class, but will they be able to win the polls?" Rakibul asked after taking a sip of his tea at a stall.

Another man at the stall replied, "At least they are talking about the poor, while many have just forgotten about them, as if they don't exist." The chitchat continued alongside Sajedul's speech, in which he said

if he is elected mayor, his focus will be to make the city safe, clean and liveable for all.

Sajedul, running under Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), said representatives of the ruling class who were Dhaka mayors have so far ensured benefits for the rich only, and if elected, he will ensure rights of general people who are continued to be deprived.

"We are positive of the election if it is free from all kinds of illegal influences and irregularities such as that of money and muscle power. State machineries like the Election Commission and even media can help create a level playing field," Sajedul told The Daily Star, when was asked about people's doubts regarding the election.

"We [CPB] are waging movements for causes of the toiling masses, such as fighting against gas and electricity

price hike, and resisting high house rent. I hope people of DNCC will not fail to realise that we are their friends in need," he said.

Sajedul, general secretary of CPB's Dhaka committee and a dentist by profession, said his party is on a continuous mission to make Dhaka a liveable city. "We are taking part in the election as part of that mission. We are also participating to restore democracy," he added.

"People still vividly remember the parliamentary election in December, 2018, where they were not allowed to vote," claimed Sajedul.

He said if the mayoral election is not free and fair, the city's people will not accept it, and they will start a movement against the government.

Sajedul said CPB is a pro-people party that always works for betterment of the working class. "Around

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



DNCC mayoral candidate Sajedul Haq Rubel at his campaign in Mirpur 10 yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

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Will fight for the

FROM PAGE 3
two-thirds of Dhaka residents are members of the working class, so we are focusing on them,” he added.
“This time, people will start a process of change by voting for us. We need clean politics to achieve a clean Dhaka. A different leadership is essential for a liveable city,” he said.
He promised that he will ensure a green city where women and children will be comfortable and safe, and will work to reduce traffic congestion, establish effective waste management system and provide cheap housing facilities for poor people. He will also stand against any kind of illogical price hike of utilities.
His promises also include ensuring kitchen markets with unadulterated items, developing sufficient number of quality educational institutions, establishing hospitals and primary healthcare, and making the city friendly for people with disabilities.
Campaigners, mostly CPB workers and activists, paraded different lanes in and around Mirpur, and held several street meetings. They were also busy with distributing leaflets and handbills among passers-by.
CPB General Secretary M Shah Alam, its leaders MM Aksah and Dibalok Singha, and other local leaders took part in the campaign.

Losing everything

FROM PAGE 5
Firefighters with 15 vehicles rushed to the spot and doused the blaze around 12:30pm, he said.
“The reason behind the fire could not be known immediately,” said the official, adding that they were investigating the incident.
MA Aziz, assistant sub-inspector of Panchlaish Police Station, said firefighters had to struggle to conduct operation as their vehicles could not reach close to the spot due to illegal shops on the road. “So, they had to park on the main road.”



PHOTO: STAR

Protesting the killing of Bangladeshis along the Bangladesh-India border, Chhatra Federation forms a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday. Four Bangladeshis were killed in the Noagaon and Jashore borders on Thursday and two others were shot dead in Lalmonirhat the day before. According to Ain O Salish Kendra, at least 43 Bangladeshi nationals were killed by the Indian Border Security Force in 2019 while it was 14 in 2018.

Make youths skilled in technology: minister

Golden jubilee of DU accounting dept held



PHOTO: COURTESY

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The world is increasingly getting closer to the next technological revolution and Bangladesh has to take advantage of the situation by developing youths to be technologically skilled and knowledgeable.
Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal made the remark yesterday while speaking at a programme, marking the golden jubilee of Dhaka University's (DU) Department of Accounting and Information System.
DU's Accounting Alumni Association and the department jointly organised the programme at the university's gymnasium.
The finance minister, who is also a former student of the department, was given a lifetime achievement award at the event.

BASHUNDHA- BARIDHARA PLOT SALE

বসুন্ধরা বারিধারায় আবাসিক এলাকায় কমাশিয়াল ও রেসিডেন্সিয়াল এবং স্কুলের জন্য বরাদ্দকৃত প্লট। আই-ব্লক ও আই এক্সটেনশন, জে, কে, এন-ব্লকে ৭বিঘা, ৫বিঘা, ৩বিঘা ও ১০কঠার প্লট বিক্রয় হইবে।
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Sharing heritage over a meal

FROM PAGE 3
including foreign dignitaries. They not only partake in a journey of delicious delicacies, but also get a chance to admire the art and antiques preserved there.
Emran also showed us many of his prized possessions -- a gold-plated two-hundred-year-old Quran, chandelier, a rusty sword, rare handwritten books, array of attars (fragrant essential oils), crockeries and many more.
By this time, guests started to arrive. One of them was Nafia Nigar, an MBA student of Jahangirnagar University. She said she read about the heritage home on Facebook.
Her friend, Sohanur Rahman, a businessman by profession, was busy admiring a bed at the corner. “SM Sultan slept on that when he stayed here,” informed Emran.
Another guest, Kishwoer Amin, a chartered accountant, said, “There are many hidden gems in this part of the town. But in this case, visitors can actually step inside a home and relish the experience firsthand.”
The Dhanmondi resident was not even bothered by the heavy traffic she had to face. She also brought along her six-year-old daughter Yoshra Zahira.
Emran announced it was time for lunch -- which is after all highlight of the visit. We sat at the table, dating back to the days of Abul Khairat.
Emran served “jafrani polau” (saffron rice), “dimer shahi korma” (egg curry),

“murgir chop” (fritters made with potato and minced chicken), “morog khana” (chicken roast), “chingri malai” (prawn curry), salad and borhani (traditional yoghurt drink).
To finish off the gastronomic adventure on a high note, there's also “zarda” (a sweet dish made with rice, milk and sugar).
The meal was delicious and aplenty, and most importantly Emran served us himself.
The menu also varies, he said. Guests can pre-order “anarash ilish” (hilsa with pineapple), “dolma” (edible leaf cooked with a filling of ground meat and herbs) or “kofita” (meatballs) as per package they choose.
It's homemade and cooked fresh. Emran's wife and sisters prepare the food themselves. When asked whose cooking he prefers the most, Emran answered right away, “They are all excellent cooks.”
“This is our way of preserving our tradition,” said the father of three. “Heritage is more important than anything else. If you damage it, you will never get it back.”
To visit the house and enjoy a meal there, a guest will have to book two-three days ahead by visiting his Facebook page -- “Lunch at Emran's Heritage Home”.
He said the money he makes from hosting the meals, he spends on maintenance of the house.
“This is not a restaurant. When you are here you're family,” said Emran, a man proud of his ancestry, his neighbourhood and the city he fondly calls home.

‘HERITAGE MAGNET’
Taimur Islam, founder and chief executive of USC, said they regularly organise “Heritage Walk” to raise awareness for the conservation of old buildings and showcase the beauty of Old Dhaka.
“But what if you could step inside a house, talk to owners, spend time with them and witness how their ancestors lived while enjoying a homemade meal,” said the leading heritage activist of the country.
“Our goal is to create such ‘heritage magnets’. We are planning to introduce exhibitions and cultural activities along with meals to make the experience more enjoyable,” he added. But it was not that simple, Taimur continued. “Residents of Old Dhaka are proud. They were not comfortable with the idea that guests would pay for hospitality. We had to convince them the earnings generated from this would help preserve their heritage.”
“We have taken a similar initiative at another home in Rokonpur. It's called Qazi Bari. If we can start this in at least 10-15 places, people will be eager to spend a day in Old Dhaka with their families without any inhibition,” he hoped.
QAZI BARI
Steeped in heritage, the around 200-year-old Qazi Bari is a remnant of the city's rich architectural legacy.
The family opened its doors to guests in 2019, offering not just traditional breakfast

and lunch but also a peek into the past. Visitors can revel at the structure's elegance and how it withstood the test of time.
The house is owned by Qazi Saad Ullah Hill Alim, a descendant of Mirza Elahi Baksh who built the house in the early 1800s. There is also a mosque inside the property, which is much older than the house itself, said Saad.
He said around three to four months back he got to know of USC. “They told me their plans regarding Old Dhaka and how they want to bring forward its heritage and history,” Saad said.
Many foreign and local guests have visited the place already, informed Saad. “We share our family history with them. We speak of our 400-500 years of attachment to this place and the history of this neighbourhood.”
They also get to relish the arts and antiques preserved at the house along with its architectural features.
Over the past 60 years, Qazi Bari has made a lot of contributions to the country's sports. Saad's father Qazi Abdul Alim was not only a legendary athlete but also an expert in the field of physical training and a writer.
He received numerous accolades for his achievements as well as contributions to sports. He also received a Unesco award and holds the title of being the first person to receive such an accolade in the south-east Asia and Pacific region.

6 die in road

FROM PAGE 5
Medical College, he said.
In Savar, a man was killed in a road accident on the Dhaka-Tangail highway in Ashulia's Unique area yesterday, reports our Savar correspondent.
The deceased was identified as Ujjal Hossain (32), a construction worker who lived in Azhulia's Baipail area.
His co-worker Rezaul Karim told The Daily Star that he and Ujjal were on their way to work on a passenger bus.
The accident occurred when Ujjal was getting off the bus, he added.
Just as he stepped out, another passenger bus hit him from behind, killing him on the spot.
Police are trying to identify the bus and detain the driver, said Rafiqul Islam, sub-inspector of Ashulia Police Station.
Meanwhile in Thakurgaon, a bicyclist was killed and two others were injured in a road accident on Boda-Debiganj road in Boda Upazila on Thursday night.
The victim was identified as Asharu Barman (40), reports our Thakurgaon correspondent.
The accident occurred when a picnic bus collided with a tractor while overtaking a trolley. This injured bus passenger Shimu (14) seriously. Meanwhile, the sand-laden trolley lost control and smashed a bicycle.
Bicyclist Asharu died on the spot while trolley driver Mostafa was critically injured, said Boda Police Station OC Abu Haydar Md Ashrafuzzaman.
On information, fire-fighters and police went to the spot and rescued injured Mostafa and Shimu. They were taken to Boda Upazila Health Complex.
Later, the duo were shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital after their condition deteriorated.

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স্মারক নং-বিসিসি/হিডি/১৪৭/২০		তারিখঃ ২৩/০১/২০২০খ্রিঃ		
১। মহালায়/বিভাগ	২। স্থানীয় সরকার, পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মহালায়।			
৩। সংস্থার নাম	৪। বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশন, বরিশাল।			
৫। দরপত্র আবেদনকারী	৬। নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, অঞ্চল-১, বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশন, বরিশাল।			
৬। সংগ্রহ পদ্ধতি	৭। উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (ওটিএম)।			
৭। তহবিল ও খাত	৮। বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশনের রাজস্ব ও বাণিক উন্নয়ন সহায়তা তহবিল (খোক বরাদ্দ)।			
৮। দরপত্র আবেদন নং ও তারিখ	৯। বিসিসি/হিডি/১৪৭/২০ তারিখঃ ২৩/০১/২০২০খ্রিঃ।			
৯। দরপত্র যোগ্যতা	১০। পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন ২০০৬ ও তদবীন প্রণীত বিধিমালা ২০০৮ অনুসারে সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের জন্য প্রণীত দলিলের বর্ণনা ও শর্তাবলী, মালামাল সরবরাহের ক্ষেত্রে প্রকৃত সরবরাহকারী।			
১০। দরপত্র তফসিল প্রদানের স্থান	১১। বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশন, নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী-এলজিইডি, বরিশাল এবং বিভাগীয় কর্মিন্দার, বরিশাল এর দপ্তর।			
১১। দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	১২। ২৩/০১/২০২০খ্রিঃ।			
১২। দরপত্র বিক্রয় আরম্ভের তারিখ ও সময়	১৩। ২৬/০১/২০২০খ্রিঃ (অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে)।			
১৩। দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান	১৪। নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, অঞ্চল-১, বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশন, বরিশাল।			
১৪। দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	১৫। নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, অঞ্চল-১, বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশন, বরিশাল।			
১৫। দরপত্র জয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৬। তারিখঃ ১৮/০২/২০২০খ্রিঃ সময়ঃ অফিস চলাকালী সময়।			
১৬। দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৭। তারিখঃ ১৯/০২/২০২০খ্রিঃ সময়ঃ ২-০৩টা			
১৭। দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	১৮। তারিখঃ ১৯/০২/২০২০খ্রিঃ সময়ঃ ৩-০০টা			
১৮। কাজের সূচনাকাল	১৯। কাজের সূচনাকাল			
ক্রমিক নং	কাজের নাম	দরপত্রের তফসিলের মূল্য (টাকা)	দরপত্র নিরাপত্তা জামানত (টাকা)	কার্য সমাপ্তির সময়সীমা (দিন)
০১।	৯নং ওয়ার্ডস্থ রঙ্গপুর কলোনীর প্রধান সড়কে বিসি দ্বারা নির্মাণ কাজ।	১,০০০/-	৮৩,০০০/-	১৫০ দিন
০২।	২৩নং ওয়ার্ডস্থ দক্ষিণ সাগরদী রাজবিহারী সড়ক বিসি দ্বারা নির্মাণ কাজ।	২,০০০/-	১,২৫,০০০/-	১৮০ দিন
০৩।	২৩নং ওয়ার্ডস্থ রাজবিহারী সড়ক থেকে পুটিয়াখালী বাল পর্যন্ত বিসি দ্বারা নির্মাণ কাজ। (ডেইনাজ ৫৪০মিঃ+১১৭০মিঃ)	৩,০০০/-	২,৩০,০০০/-	১৮০ দিন
১৭। শর্তাবলীঃ				
ক) পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন ২০০৬ ও তদবীন প্রণীত বিধিমালা ২০০৮ অনুসরণ করা হবে। উল্লেখ্য, স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগের ১৬/০৮/২০১৬খ্রিঃ তারিখের ৪৬.০৩৯.০১৮.০০.০০.০১৫.২০১৫-১৪০৩নং স্মারকের পত্রের নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন, ২০০৬ সনের ২৪নং আইনের ধারা ৩১ এর সংশোধিত/সংশোধিত উপ-ধারা (৩) ও (৪) অনুসরণে “(৩) উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতির অধীন অভ্যন্তরীণ কার্য ক্রয়ের ক্ষেত্রে কোন দরদাতা কর্তৃক দরপত্রে দাপ্তরিক প্রাক্কলিত ব্যয় ১০% (শতকরা দশভাগ) এর অধিক কম বা অধিক বেশি দর উদ্ধৃত করা হইবে। উক্ত দরপত্র বাতিল বলিয়া গণ্য হইবে, কিন্তু লটারির মাধ্যমে কর্তৃকার্য দরদাতা নির্বাচন করা যাবে না।”				
খ) দরপত্রের তফসিলের নির্ধারিত মূল্য সিডি/বিডি/পিও মেঘের, বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশনের অনুকূলে জমা দিয়ে নির্ধারিত অফিস থেকে ক্রয় করতে হবে।				
গ) টেন্ডার সজ্জা যাবতীয় তথ্য অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে নিম্নাঙ্কনকারীর দপ্তর থেকে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।				
ঘ) দরপত্রের সহিত সংযুক্ত অতিরিক্ত শর্তাবলী যথাযথভাবে অনুসরণ করতে হবে।				
ঙ) দরপত্র খোলার সময় দরদাতা/প্রতিনিধিগণ উপস্থিত থাকতে পারবেন।				
চ) নির্বাচিত প্রতিদানকে চূড়ান্ত হওয়ার পূর্বেই যে কোন তফসিলী ব্যাংক থেকে উদ্ধৃত দরের শতকরা ৫ (পাঁচ) ভাগ হারে পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক গ্যারান্টি কার্য- সম্পাদন গ্যারান্টি (Performance Guarantee) হিসেবে (চলতিভাবে কাজ সমাপ্ত না হওয়া পর্যন্ত অস্ত্রত্যাহারযোগ্য) নিম্নাঙ্কনকারীর দপ্তরে জমা দিতে হবে।				
ছ) কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।				
জ) তহবিল প্রাপ্তি সাপেক্ষে বিল পরিশোধ করা হবে।				
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী অঞ্চল-১ বরিশাল সিটি কর্পোরেশন বরিশাল				
জিডি-১৭৯				

উন্নয়নের অঙ্গিভেদ রাজস্ব

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, রংপুর

৪৫০, জিএল রায় রোড, পূর্ব কামালকাছনা, রংপুর

সাধারণ শাখা

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তারিখঃ ২৩/০১/২০২০খ্রিঃ।

অকেজো গাড়ির নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি

কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, রংপুর-এর নিম্নবর্ণিত অকেজো যোথিত ০২ (দুই)টি গাড়ি বিক্রয়ের নিমিত্ত আজমী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্রম নং	গাড়ির রেজিষ্ট্র নম্বর	গাড়ির বিবরণ	গাড়ি মজুদের স্থান	সিডিউলের মূল্য (অফেরতযোগ্য)	দরপত্র জামানত
০১	০২	০৩	০৪	০৫	০৬
০১	ঢাকা মেট্রো-ভ-৩১১৯	জীপ, মিটসুবিশি এম কো.লি., প্রস্তুতকাল-১৯৮৫	যেখানে যে অবস্থায় আছে সে ভিত্তিতে	প্রতিটি গাড়ির জন্য আলাদাভাবে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক, রংপুর শাখা/সোনালী ব্যাংক লিমি., কর্পোরেট শাখা, রংপুর এর ১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা ট্রেজারী চালান কোড নং-১-১১৩৩-০০৪৫-২৩৬৬ তে জমা দিয়ে চালানের মূলকপি দাখিলের মাধ্যমে সিডিউল সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।	প্রস্তাবিত মূল্যের ২৫% (পঁচিশ শতাংশ)
০২	রাজ-মেট্রো-ক-০২-০১১১	কার, টয়োটা এম. ক্রপ প্রস্তুতকাল-১৯৯৪			

২. শর্তাবলীঃ

(১) দরদাতার যোগ্যতা

(২) দরপত্র সিডিউল প্রাপ্তির স্থান

(৩) দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের তারিখ

(৪) দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও সময়

(৫) দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান

(৬) দরপত্র খোলার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়

(৭) দরদাতাগণ দরপ্রস্তাব দাখিলের পূর্বে বর্ণিত ০২ (দুই)টি গাড়ি পরিদর্শন করতে পারবেন। পরিদর্শনের তারিখঃ ০২.০২.২০২০খ্রিঃ, বেলা ১১.০০ ঘটিকা, স্থানঃ কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট বিভাগ, রংপুর।

(৮) কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা এ দপ্তর সংরক্ষণ করে।

(৯) দরপত্র তফসিলসহ বিস্তারিত তথ্য এ দপ্তরের ওয়েবসাইটে (www.rangpurvat.gov.bd) পাওয়া যাবে।

মোঃ আব্দুল মান্নান সরদার
অতিরিক্ত কমিশনার

ও

সভাপতি, দরপত্র উন্মুক্তকরণ ও মূল্যায়ন কমিটি

ফোনঃ ০৫২১-৫৫৪১৮

জিডি-১৭৮

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

Kingfishers of Sundarban

Sundarban holds different attractions for different visitors, offering a virtually endless menu of delights. The forest in daytime is bathed in light ranging from the calm stillness of a winter morning to the withering heat of a summer afternoon to thick, moisture laden rays of monsoon to the dramatic shifts of a gathering storm. There is the varied landscape with waterways of all shapes and sizes making their way through land and forest that the tides have shaped. There is the wildlife, including Spotted Deer, Bengal Tigers, Otters, Wild Boars, Crocodiles, Monitor Lizards, Snakes and marine creatures. There is the marvel of its plants – the colours of *Golpata* and *Gewa* leaves, the willowy sensuality of the *Keora* trees and the formal elegance of the *Baen* trunks. There is the ecology of adaptation about which we are yet to learn much: how the plants and wildlife live and thrive in harsh conditions, and what it teaches us about surviving in a future of changing climate.

The birder's interest is held by over 350 types of birds found in the forest - half of all the avian species of Bangladesh.

And for me, standing above everything else, are the kingfishers of Sundarban.

Let's start with the Black-capped Kingfisher. Its wings are of rich purple-blue, its breast is orange and its beak is red. So how can it help but look like a dazzling jewel? Fortunately, it is easily seen in winter along the waterways, perched on a branch or pole, scanning the water for a fish to pounce on.

Then there is the Brown-winged Kingfisher. Perhaps not as pretty as its Black-capped counterpart, it is nonetheless a spectacular bird. This is a large kingfisher, almost the size of a crow, and in my experience it has been approachable. If you come across



Brown-winged Kingfisher, Sundarban.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

it perched on a branch as your boat plies a stream in the forest, it will cautiously observe you and then fly ahead to another branch when you come close, playing "catch me if you can."

The turquoise-winged Collared Kingfisher can be readily seen among the Gewa trees in Kotka and Koromjol. I saw the same bird in the mangroves of Queensland, Australia, where it is called Mangrove Kingfisher. It is a shy bird, but I've gotten lucky when it landed on a branch close to me.

It is easier to observe the Ruddy Kingfisher in monsoon. It has a rust-red body and a bright red beak and spends time in dark undergrowth, making an appearance when hunger forces it to search for food.

The Blue-eared Kingfisher looks like our ubiquitous Common

Kingfisher with the exception of the ears. Instead of the latter's yellow ears, its ears are blue. It is harder to find.

Although I have seen the Stork-billed Kingfisher elsewhere, I have not seen it in Sundarban. It is, however, present there and easily identified by its massive bill.

Finally: the White-throated Kingfisher. Although larger than a Common Kingfisher it is more wary of people, perhaps because it retains ancestral memories – from centuries gone by - of being captured and killed by the thousand for its beautiful feathers.

So if you are in Sundarban, keep a special lookout for the kingfishers – they will add colour and drama to your journey.

facebook.com/ikabirphotographs or follow ihtishamkabar on Instagram.

6 die in road crashes

STAR REPORT

Six people died in separate road accidents across the country over the last two days, report our correspondents and a news agency.

In Habiganj, three people were killed and 18 others were injured in an accident at Bahubal upazila yesterday morning, reports our Moulvibazar correspondent.

Mashuk Ali, officer-in-charge of Satgaon Highway Police, said the accident took place after a passenger bus crashed into a roadside tree, lost control and flipped over in Kamaichhara area around 8:30am.

Helper Abu Sayed (30), Kamala Begum (35), and another unidentified woman died on the spot.

On information, law enforcers recovered the bodies and sent them to Habiganj Sadar Hospital. The injured were taken to Bahubal Health Complex and the Sadar hospital, said Kamruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Bahubal Police Station.

In the capital, a woman was killed and her mother injured as a covered van crashed into their rickshaw at Tikatuli of Old Dhaka on Thursday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Sahara Talukder (23) daughter of Nazira Parvin (50), reports UNB.

Mohammad Manjurul Habib, sub-inspector of Wari Police Station, said the covered van hit the rickshaw on Toynbee Circular Road, leaving Sahara dead on the spot and her mother injured.

The body was handed over to the family members after an autopsy at Dhaka

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Losing everything in fire

120 shanties gutted in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Losing all of her belongings to a fire, Lipi Akter was bewailing at the site in Chattogram city's Mirzar Pool yesterday.

The fire broke out in the slum on Decoration Lane around 10:30am, burning more than 100 shanties owned by one Babul Chowdhury, said fire service officials.

Sitting on a wheelchair, Lipi was staring at the spot where her shanty existed. She could not but shed tears as the house was burnt to ashes. "I had saved Tk 5,000 which was inside my house," the 34-year-old grieved.

To save their lives, she and her 12-year-old daughter managed to come out of the shanty leaving all the possessions they had. Panicked by the devastating fire, the girl seemed to be traumatised.

Several years ago, Lipi lost her walking ability to an accident. "Since then, me and my daughter have been trying to make a living by seeking alms," she said.

The woman was among several hundred slum dwellers losing their belongings. Around 30 people sustained injuries while they were coming out of their shanties, according to fire service.

"Many of them sustained cuts and many suffocated," said Istakul Islam, a member of Red Crescent Society. They provided 16 injured with primary treatment, he said.

Like Lipi, another resident, Sumi Akter, was not able to save her belongings, "Hearing hue and cry, I could manage to come out. All my hard-earned valuables have been burnt," said the woman, who works as a domestic help.

Sumi had been living in the slum for four years. "Where will I go now?" she lamented.

Some 120 tin-roofed thatched houses were burnt in the fire, said Taufiqul Islam Bhuiyan, sub-assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, Chattogram.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



A fire burnt almost all the homes of a slum in Chattogram city's Mirzar Pool area yesterday morning.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

A day among avian friends

JU CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of people spent a day among feathery friends at a bird fair at Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday. For the entire day, the sky, the lakes, and the greenery of the campus was abuzz with avian adventurers who bring over their communities to the area around this time every year.

Running since 2001, the fair was organised by the university's zoology department and its Wildlife Rescue Centre. Families, college and university going students, and professionals thronged the event.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Farzana Islam inaugurated the fair around 11:30am on Zahir Raihan auditorium premises.

Among the daylong activities were a bird identification competition -- where participants had to go around the campus and correctly identify birds on seeing them or from their calls --, a photography exhibition, a painting competition for children and a quiz competition.

At the Zahir Raihan Auditorium premises, there were around 8 stalls competing over a stall decoration competition. A discussion was also held there. The fair ended with a tour of JU lakes and a prize-giving ceremony.

To create awareness on avian conservation, along with the greater goal of safeguarding biodiversity, books, posters and calendars were distributed among visitors.



PHOTO: ASADUZZAMAN

‘He acted alone’

Ctg counter terrorism unit submits final report on Biman plane hijack attempt

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

After nearly 11 months of investigation, Counter Terrorism (CT) unit of Chattogram Metropolitan Police has submitted its final report on the much talked-about case of Biman Bangladesh aircraft hijacking bid at Shah Amanat International Airport last year, implicating Polish Ahmed, who was killed in a commando operation.

On the evening of February 24, 2019, Polish apparently tried to hijack a Boeing 737-800 aircraft of Biman, forcing an emergency landing at the port city airport. He also tried to enter the cockpit brandishing a gun.

All 148 passengers and cabin crew were evacuated safely while Polish was killed in an eight-minute operation by members of the army's para-commando unit. A case was filed the next day with Patenga Police Station.

Investigation Officer Rajesh Barua, an inspector of CT, submitted the 308-page report to the court's prosecution office on Tuesday.

"Investigating the case and analysing statements of witnesses, police primarily found evidence that Polish tried to hijack the plane... and brandished a toy gun," the IO told The Daily Star.

He said police recorded statements of 79 witnesses including 22 passengers (flight BG-147).

"Police found that Polish alias Sakib Hossain alone was involved in the incident. The charges against him were found to be true but reason behind the hijacking bid could not be known as Polish was killed during the commando operation," said Inspector Barua.

Among the witnesses, seven were Biman officials and staffers; 19 were family members and relatives of Polish, while 26 were law enforcers.

CT sources said CCIV footage of Dhaka airport and radio conversations between the pilot and control tower were also submitted with the report. Citing ballistic experts, the IO said the gun, seized from the plane, was a toy gun.

The report said Polish showed some plastic pipes, circuits, LED light, battery, clips and a black watch to passengers, claiming that it was a "bomb" and blasted some crackers during the incident.

In 2014, Polish introduced himself as Mahi in Dhaka and married one Meghla without his family's consent. Meghla later divorced him as he often used to torture her.

He went to Malaysia in 2016 and returned after a month. The report said he featured in a short-film in January 2018. During the time, he met film actress Shimla as a producer and developed a relationship with her.

They got married on March 6, 2018. Afterwards, Polish rented a flat in Dhaka's Banani, where they lived together. Shimla divorced him on November 5 that year after learning about his real identity.

In the meantime, Polish was being pressurised by lenders. Unable to repay them, he went into hiding.

In February 2019, he went back to his home in Narayanganj. On February 23, Polish purchased a plane ticket for Chattogram from a travel agency and made the payment through a mobile financial service provider.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

100m to be affected due to Rooppur project

Anu Muhammad tells Natore seminar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

About 100 million people will be affected due to Rooppur nuclear power plant project, said Prof Anu Muhammad at a programme in Natore yesterday.

People living in the area stretching around 100km will be at risk of being in danger, said Anu Muhammad, also member secretary of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Power, Ports and Mineral Resources.

He was addressing a seminar titled "Will the Rampal and Rooppur power plant protect public interest?", organised by Natore unit of the committee, at Victoria Public Library in the district.

These projects will serve foreign interests, said the noted economist. Although the national committee is repeatedly alerting the government of possible danger, they are not paying any heed, he said.

Lokman Hossain Badal, general secretary of Workers Party of Bangladesh; and Ansar Ali Dulal, district unit president of Revolutionary Workers Party, among others, spoke on the occasion.

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দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

২০১৯-২০২০ অর্থ বৎসরে অত্র জেলা পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়ে নিম্নোক্ত কাজের লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশী চিকাদার/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হইতে সীলমোহরকৃত থামে প্রতিযোগিতামূলক রেট কোটেট দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাইতেছে।

১।	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	ঃ	স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়।
২।	সংস্থা/বিভাগ	ঃ	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।
৩।	ক্রয়/সংগ্রহের স্বত্বাধিকারীর নাম ও জেলা	ঃ	পুলিশ সুপার, মাদারীপুর।
৪।	দরপত্রের সূত্র নম্বর ও তারিখ	ঃ	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় মাদারীপুর এর স্মারক নং-২৮৮/ই, তারিখ-২২/০১/২০২০খ্রিঃ।
৫।	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	ঃ	উন্মুক্ত
৬।	বাজেট ও অর্থনৈতিক খাত	ঃ	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ বাজেট।
৭।	দরপত্র জারীর তারিখ	ঃ	২২/০১/২০২০খ্রিঃ।
৮।	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	১২/০২/২০২০খ্রিঃ অফিস চলাকালীন পর্যন্ত।
৯।	দরপত্র দাখিলের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	১৩/০২/২০২০খ্রিঃ ১২.০০ ঘটিকা।
১০।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	১৩/০২/২০২০খ্রিঃ ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা।
১১।	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী অফিস ও ঠিকানা	ঃ	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, মাদারীপুর।
১২।	দরপত্র সিডিউল গ্রাভির স্থান	ঃ	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, মাদারীপুর।
১৩।	দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান	ঃ	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, মাদারীপুর।
১৪।	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	ঃ	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, মাদারীপুর।
১৫।	দরপত্র মূল্যায়নের তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ	১৬/০২/২০২০খ্রিঃ ১৪.৩০ ঘটিকা।
১৬।	দরপত্রাদাতার প্রাথমিক ব্যোপ্যাত বা দরপত্রের সহিত যে সকল তথ্য দাখিল করিতে হইবে	ঃ	হালনাগাদ ট্রেন্ড লাইসেন্স, ভ্যাট নিবন্ধন সনদ, আয়কর সনদ, ব্যাংক স্বচ্ছলতা সনদ, Liquid Asset সনদ, ন্যাশনাল আইডি কার্ডের কপি এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের/সরবরাহ সন্দেশ অতিক্রান্ত সনদ সত্যায়িত কপি দাখিল করিতে হইবে।
১৭।	অর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতা	ঃ	দরপত্র জারীর তারিখ হইতে দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ পর্যন্ত দরপত্রে উদ্ধৃত মোট মূল্যের ২০% এর উর্ধ্বে ব্যাংক স্বচ্ছলতা/ব্যাংক স্থিতি (Liquid Asset) থাকিতে হইবে।
১৮।	দরপত্র মূল্যায়ন কমিটি কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীত যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।		
১৯।	ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বত্বাধিকারীর স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত প্যাডে আবেদনপূর্বক অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত দরপত্র সিডিউল ক্রয় করিতে হইবে।		
২০।	কাজের বিবরণ	জামানতের পরিমাণ	সিডিউলের মূল্য
ক্রমিক নং			কার্যকাল
০১	মাদারীপুর জেলা পুলিশ বিভাগের বাদক দলের পোশাক সামগ্রী সরবরাহ।	১৫,০০০/-	৪০০/-
০২	মাদারীপুর জেলা পুলিশ বিভাগের বাদক দলের বাদ্যযন্ত্র সামগ্রী সরবরাহ	১৫,০০০/-	৪০০/-
মোহাম্মদ মাহবুব হাসান			
বিশি নং-৭৭০৫১০৪৬০২			
পুলিশ সুপার, মাদারীপুর			
ফোনঃ ৬১৪৯৪, ফ্যাক্সঃ ৬১১০৮			
ই-মেইলঃ spmadaripur@police.gov.bd			
জিডি-১৮৩			

Default loans will lead to a weakened economy

Wilful defaulters must be punished

WE commend the finance minister for having the courage and the foresight to make the full list of the loan defaulters public. This will strengthen our constantly eroding culture of transparency and accountability.

From the way the Bangladesh Bank has been changing provisions of the bank loans, extending the repayment time and relaxing the procedure of repayment, one would conclude that protecting the defaulters' interest is more important to our authorities than protecting the economy itself. However, it must be admitted that our state bank wouldn't and couldn't have done so without the direct involvement of the finance ministry. Every global and national institution worth its name have warned us against the menace of rising default loans and urged us to reign them in. Everybody appears to listen except the two bodies most directly concerned.

Let us repeat what we have said hundreds of times before. Loan defaulters should first be divided into two groups—the wilful defaulters and those whose loans became bad because of business and political circumstances beyond their control. All banking facilities within reason should be extended to the latter group and none to the former. In fact, the former group should be shown the sternest face of the law. For their action not only wasted scarce national resource but also put the whole economy at risk. The wilful defaulters are so by choice with the sole purpose of defrauding the government and the public and to syphon of funds from the banks. By allowing it for so long, the finance ministry and especially the Bangladesh Bank gave the worst possible signal that there could be—that loans do not need to be repaid in time. And if you are cleverer enough, never.

The role of bank directors as revealed in the finance minister's statement must also be equally condemned. They seem to think of their directorship as Aladdin's Lamp whose every rub should get them new loans without, literally, any limit. Here again the role of Bangladesh Bank comes into question. Why did it allow this to happen?

All said and done, the default loans are a failure of the regulatory bodies. Time has come for urgent corrective measures, including police and ACC action against the wilful ones.

Chak families driven off their homes

We do not want tourism on stolen lands

THREE years ago, 15 families of Chak, a small ethnic community, were reportedly driven out of their homes in Shui Jaing Chak Para of Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila, after a group of eight to 10 criminals, with firearms and sharp weapons, attacked them, ransacked their homes and threatened them to leave the village immediately. For these three years, the 81 members of the community have been unable to return to their ancestral home and are living in misery. The victims allege that two powerful leaders of the ruling party were involved in the forced eviction, and that their land was grabbed in the name of a tourism project of the government. They were too afraid to file a case because of how powerful the perpetrators were, they claim.

Last October, the State Minister Mahbub Khan, during a trip to the area assured a correspondent of this paper that action would be taken against the perpetrators, no matter how powerful they were, if they really did grab land using the name of the government. He further pledged that "no member of any small ethnic community will be evicted from their land if tourism flourishes there." Meanwhile, the additional deputy commission in Bandarban said that they did not get any letter from the authorities regarding acquisition of land in Naikhongchhari area for tourism purposes. Obviously the land was forcibly grabbed on false pretence. Then, naturally, the question arises: why has no action been taken against those who evicted the 15 families from their ancestral land, especially if they did so in the name of a government tourism project? The allegations of involvement of powerful ruling party members cannot be taken lightly and the government must investigate whether the two accused misused their power in any way. We ask the state minister to intervene in this matter and honour his pledge that no ethnic community members would be driven off their lands for the sake of tourism.

Sadly, these are not the first, nor the last, families of this community to be evicted from their ancestral land for the purpose of building resorts and tourist spots for us to enjoy. Landgrabbing in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and eviction of marginalised communities occur too often given the nexus between the landgrabbers and powerful elites. We want to say in no uncertain terms that we do not want tourism on stolen lands; we do not want helpless communities to be driven to starvation and homelessness so we can enjoy five-star comforts and spectacular views of the plush green hills of the Hill Tracts.

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

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Justice shall prevail

I was delighted to learn that the Gambia's filing of a case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) alleging it was committing "an ongoing genocide against its minority Muslim Rohingya population" finally paying off. The top court of the United Nations ordered Myanmar to take preventive action to ensure Rohingyas are not subjected to persecution.

I, like many others, applaud the court's decision. This goes to show that no matter how hard the evil perpetrators try to cover up their crimes against humanity, justice shall prevail.

Mary D'Souza, by email

What comes after the ICJ ruling?

SHUPROVA TASNEEM

ALL eyes were turned to The Hague on Thursday when the International Court of Justice (ICJ) came back with its momentous decision on emergency provisional measures for the protection of the persecuted Rohingya population of Myanmar's northern Rakhine State. Specifically, the UN's top court ordered the following: i) that Myanmar take all measures according to Article II of the Convention to prevent the genocide of the Rohingya, which includes killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction in whole or in part, and imposing measures intended to prevent births; ii) that Myanmar ensure that its military, and any irregular armed units supported, controlled or influenced by it, do not commit the above acts, and do not engage in conspiracy, incitement, complicity or attempt to commit genocide; iii) that Myanmar shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to the allegations of genocide; and iv) that Myanmar shall submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to the Order within four months and every six months after that.

The Court's decision in favour of the Rohingya has been hailed as a significant step forward in the fight for justice for the world's most persecuted community. International lawyers and rights activists noted the unanimity of the decision despite the presence of a judge ad hoc nominated by Myanmar, although separate opinions were given later, and hailed the recognition of the Rohingya as "a protected group within the meaning of Article II of the Genocide Convention." Given Myanmar's efforts to strip the Rohingya of their identity and erase even the term "Rohingya", first by excluding them from one of the 135 officially recognised ethnic groups that live in Myanmar through the 1982 Citizenship Law and then by forcing them to accept the identity of ethnic Bengalis in order to receive national verification cards, this is nothing short of a moral victory for the now stateless community. When Nobel Laureate Aung Sun Suu Kyi shocked the world by deciding to personally defend her country's military at the international court's hearing last month, even she refused to use the word "Rohingya" once, despite delivering a 3,379-word speech—a telling identification of just how deep the racial divides run in Myanmar.

When the court order was being read out by presiding judge Abdulaqawi Ahmed Yusuf, the strong turn of words being used was difficult to ignore. At the very onset, it was established that "at least some of the acts alleged by the Gambia are capable of falling within the provisions of the Convention" and it is possible to establish, *prima facie*, the existence of a dispute between the two parties. The Court's simple and blunt refusal of Myanmar's request to throw out the case because of a "lack of jurisdiction" is also telling, as is their acknowledgement of the Gambia's right to take legal action against Myanmar, since "all the States Parties to the Genocide Convention have a common interest to ensure that acts of genocide are prevented and that, if they occur, their

authors do not enjoy impunity." The acknowledgement of the fact that a state, no matter how small and far removed from the atrocities being committed in another state, has the right to institute proceedings, that too on the basis of being part of a community of states as well as of specifically being a state party to the Genocide Convention, is noteworthy and may continue to have further impacts on future proceedings at the ICJ.

The frequent referrals in the hearing to resolutions from the UN General Assembly and specifically the fact-finding mission from the UN that spoke of the Myanmar army's "genocidal intent" was also a welcome turn of events for rights activists. Previously, many had expressed their frustrations at this important report being ignored, but the reading of the ICJ order showed that this sort of research

mobilising international condemnation and in creating pressure, especially from friendly nations and trading partners, to change domestic policy and take at least some reasonable steps in creating mechanisms for justice. However, this has not played out as expected. After the ICJ hearings in December, Myanmar set up a so-called Independent Commission of Enquiry, which released a facile report that claimed to have found war crimes that are "now being investigated and prosecuted by Myanmar's national criminal justice system" but failed to even come close to any honest reporting on the devastation unleashed by the Myanmar military on minority communities and, among other things, completely erased women's experiences from the conflict and the use of rape as a tool of war by the military, writing that, "although some

"acts of violence and intimidation (that) were committed with impunity using mechanisms of political power and military might" was released on January 22, many experts argue that Myanmar's current stance may only bolster support for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy in the upcoming elections.

None of the friends of Myanmar seem too concerned about Myanmar's reaction to the trials and their continuing denial. In fact, Chinese President Xi Jinping took this opportunity to kickstart a "new era in relations" between the two countries and sign multibillion-dollar infrastructure deals, including one for a strategically important port in the Indian Ocean that will definitely be a cause of concern for New Delhi. Whether India will react by distancing itself from Myanmar or by further improving ties with Myanmar to



The Court's decision in favour of the Rohingya has been hailed as a significant step forward in the fight for justice for the world's most persecuted community. PHOTO: YE AUNG THU/AFP

interviewees mentioned rape cases, these were all second-hand information heard from someone else."

A day before the ICJ order on provisional measures, Myanmar's State Counsellor Suu Kyi also wrote an opinion piece for the *Financial Times* where she made an embarrassing attempt to make excuses for their military's conduct, saying international condemnation can only further destabilise Rakhine and even going as far as to say that refugees in Bangladesh were providing "inaccurate or exaggerated information" and that the "international justice system may not yet be equipped to filter out misleading information". This blatant disregard for the international justice system is reflected in a Myanmar Ministry of Foreign Affairs press statement released on Thursday, a bit too obviously titled, "There Was No Genocide in Rakhine". While a rare and surprising statement from key civil society groups in Myanmar condemning

limit the Chinese influence is yet to be seen, although their silence so far on the Rohingya issue makes it more likely they will take the latter route. Last month, Japan even became the first country to publicly voice its support for Myanmar, with Japanese ambassador to Myanmar Ichiro Maruyama saying that he does not think there is any possibility of a genocide occurring against the Rohingya. It seems that in this region, Bangladesh is the lone voice speaking out against the atrocities committed against the Rohingya, with Foreign Minister Abdul Momen calling the recent ICJ order "a victory for humanity"—although this sympathetic voice is yet to be translated into policy and our official position still largely focuses on repatriation only. What impact these hearings will have on the fate of the refugees in Bangladesh is still to be seen.

Shuprova Tasneem is a member of the editorial team, The Daily Star.

The Greta Effect

BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

SHAMSAID MORTUZA

I did myself a favour, as pleaded on Facebook by a colleague, and read Greta Thunberg's chapbook, "No one is too small to make a difference." The book is a collection of addresses that this Swedish teenager has made at the UN, World Economic Forum, and British Parliament amid others. She started small with a school strike project to protest against the carbon emissions and mass extinctions that are killing the world, and eventually found a bigger platform to voice out her concerns before a global audience.

Time magazine touted Greta as person of the year in 2019 and placed her among the echelon of young leaders who are making a difference. The gale force with which she has taken the world by storm made one right-wing Austrian newspaper *Die Presse* obliquely compare her to Marx and observe, "A specter is striding through Europe, it's name is the 'Greta effect'."

A section of the conservative press even mocked her illness. Greta is suffering from a type of autism known as Asperger syndrome, named after the Austrian paediatrician, Hans Asperger. Such patients have difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, including difficulties reading body language. They are known for being direct and seeing the world in black and white. Going through the lectures, it is apparent that Greta is annoyed by the way the generation that is running the show (our one) is not doing anything at all. For Greta, most of us pay lip-service that global warming is happening. Hardly any country in the world is actually doing anything to bring down the temperature by 2 degree Celsius as was agreed in the Paris convention, for instance. Greta's no-nonsense attitude and her now famous

exchange of glares in her meeting with POTUS have made her the face of a new breed of leaders.

She can stand before the European Economic and Social Committee and call them "irresponsible spoiled brats" for not doing their homework right on the climate issue. She is constantly reminding everyone of the IPCC report that we are only 12 years away from when the effects of carbon emission will be irreversible. Greta, of course, is not a lone ranger. There are three other young leaders who are bringing the climate issue to the fore: In Castlemaine, Australia, Milou Albrecht, 15, is leading a pressure group to force German corporation Siemens to withdraw from an Australian coal mining project. In New York City, Xiye Bastida, 17, claimed a climate strike at her school last March. Jayden Foytlin and her friends in Louisiana sued the federal government for violating their rights to a liveable planet. Scout Pronto Breslin, 16, founded a group called Hudson Valley Wild to resist chemical encroachment. These young girls are remarkable for their courage and imagination as well as moral clarity. Their dream is to model the world that they want to see. Looking at these girls, one wonders, is the paradigm of leadership shifting? Why are so many girls championing causes that are far from gender specific? Does the eco-anxiety stem from the fact that women and children are probably going to be the first casualty of climate change?

Time magazine points out that the "global under-30 population has been rising since 2012 and today accounts for more than half of the more than 7.5 billion people on the planet. What will the world look like when this new generation leads?"

In contrast, Bangladesh, according to the updated electoral roll, has 110 million voters. Going by the old census, we just have about 50 million people who are under 18. This is the demographic dividend that have been aligned with our development discourse by the economists.

We could be benefitting from the highest number of young people being involved in the workforce. But our youth force needs to be plugged in with the global reality not only of now but also of the future. There are sporadic attempts to sanitise the movements under the hyped-up rubrics of SDGs or MDGs. Jaago Foundation, 10-minute-schools are doing wonderfully well to galvanise the youth movement in Bangladesh. Often, we see some sponsored copy-cat activism. Just imagine the way the Flash Mob that was popularised by Step Up movie series has been hijacked by TV commercials. Now you cannot distinguish a flash mob from an item song. Somehow, convictions

that they do not want any BS. They wanted drivers to have proper license and training, they wanted road rules to be followed, and they wanted to ensure road safety for all. The young ones coordinated through social media and the streets belonged to them. In the beginning, it felt like "as you like it" charade in a school programme that features role reversals. Everyone felt that the children were taking to the streets for the common good of all. And the notion extends beyond the current generation. However, the selfish oldies soon sensed that things were getting out of their hands; the civil disobedience was a bit too much for their old guts to stomach. They decided to "discipline" the little ones who wanted to bring "discipline" to the system.

We, the senior citizens, proved to the little ones that we aren't ready to practice what we preach. It looks good on TV to shower individual figures such as Malala or Greta with accolades, but we are very good at drawing the lines that we think will "protect" our kids. After all, that's the sanitised and controlled culture that we have grown up in where the seniors and juniors always maintain a vertical trajectory. We cannot think of the young ones as our peers or stakeholders of the common good.

In order for us to have a Greta of our own, we need to create a culture where young thoughts and minds are given the required space to grow and flourish. We need to inculcate a sense of mutual respect. Our next generation needs some "adult allies" who can hone the youthful ideas and channel their energies to do greater things for humanity. Greta's parents are great examples. If we cannot move beyond partisan politics and economics that privilege one group over the other, we will never be able to secure a better future for the future generations. Indeed, we owe our future generations a beautiful world.

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Save the environment, not posters



IQRA L QAMARI

WITH the Dhaka City Corporation election ready to roll out next month, the capital is brimming with a palpable air of electoral mood. From door-to-door canvassing to microphones blaring the theme songs of the latest municipal polls of Dhaka, the promotional preparations have left no stone unturned to capture the attention of the residents. The most eye-catching of them all, however, is the festoons of posters all over the city bearing the faces of the candidates, urging the public to vote for them.

This brazen exhibition of such resource wastage not just distorts the aesthetic quality of the areas, but falls heavy on the environment. Tons of paper is wasted during such elections for this publicity stunt, with no one to bear its liability and neither is there any standard practice of recycling them. This time, the question of recyclability does not even arise since the campaign designers have taken it one step further and laminated the papers with a plastic covering to protect them from humidity and rainwater. They have found a way of tweaking the electoral code of conduct for the upcoming municipal polls—which prohibits candidates from sticking their posters, leaflets or handbills on public places such as walls, electric pillars, fences, etc—by hanging the posters on strings and wires across city streets.

“It’s not just paper waste that we are dealing with anymore, it’s also plastic waste. These are also creating a fire hazard. In some areas, they are hung in high density near the electric cables so a safety and security issue arise here as well,” says Nooha Maula, a concerned citizen.

The situation is made dire by the fact that those who the voters are supposed to entrust with the responsibility of protecting the city are the ones violating their duties towards it. “The ones who are supposed to provide the

solution are in fact adding more to the problem,” adds Nowsheen Sharmilla, a resident of Baridhara.

The constituencies want to see responsibility on the part of the candidates—someone who is aware of the environmental repercussions that such paper and plastic wastage would cause. The fact that they are willing to dismiss the environment as a stakeholder even before they are elected reflects their priorities clearly. With the ongoing infrastructural changes that are already putting stress on the environment, all these campaign paraphernalia will only catalyse the damage.

According to Rezwan Ahmed, a student residing in Mohammadpur, “The paper usage here seems redundant. They are constantly using megaphones and other media outlets that involve visual and auditory

means.” He further went on to argue how if these posters are a means to appeal mostly to an illiterate base, then it still does not make sense as most of them cannot read what is written on them.

The only function of the posters is to signal to voters who to vote for—displaying said candidate’s name, picture and the alliance they belong to—but these carry very little to no necessary information about why they are worthy of the vote. Hundreds of thousands of papers have been printed only with this limited information and then laminated with plastic to be hung over the city-streets for weeks leading up to the election, only to ultimately end up in the dumping grounds and yet no one is held accountable for this epic proportion of wastage. The entire democratic process of choosing the candidate you think is worthy of the

particular position gets diminished to just a gimmicky exercise of face recognition and face recall as far as the agenda of the posters go.

They are a promotional tool formulated with the concept of repetition and this city-wide proliferation is an insult to the intelligence of the general public. According to waste management specialists, such traditional campaign materials such as posters and bunting may have been significant in the past, but their usage should now be curbed given how easily the internet, newspapers and mass media can be used to disseminate information. The concept of e-elections might be far-fetched but it is high time that politicians and campaign runners think about better alternatives that involve technology and not paper or plastic wastage, aligning with the principles of

Digital Bangladesh.

The ironic footnote that can be added here is that only a week after the High Court directive of the country-wide ban of single-use plastic products in coastal areas, hotels and restaurants to be implemented within a year was announced, the roads were covered with plastic coated posters of “promising candidates” which fall under the category of single-use plastic according to Wikipedia. In the name of promotion, they are willing to leave behind plastic waste, the lifetime of which would exceed that of the candidates themselves, let alone the length of their office tenure. They need to stop looking at everything through their myopic lenses and hold themselves accountable for the ripple effects of their activities.

Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, a mayoral candidate for the DSCC, when contacted by *The Daily Star*, went on to say that there was no such prohibition on the usage of laminated posters from the Election Commission and further added as some sort of self-justification that he would remove all the posters at his own cost, post-election. The damage, though, that has been caused already is irreparable. All these unrecyclable plastic posters would aggravate waterlogging during the coming monsoon and accumulate in the landfills. Not to mention the amount of greenhouse gas that has already been released during the process of lamination.

As for the latest update on this story, the HC has banned the production and display of these laminated posters which could be seen as a wise step taken too late. Yet it is laudable, given the utter disregard of the candidates for the environment and our own lethargic passivity. It is indeed sardonic that the candidates who have made promises of protecting the environment have ensured a way of further damaging it. Sadly, this time, we had to bear witness to how safeguarding posters from damage takes precedence over safeguarding the environment. Hopefully, things will be different next time.

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Sadly, this time, we had to bear witness to how safeguarding posters from damage takes precedence over safeguarding the environment.

PHOTO: STAR

ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACIES The looming oxymoron



ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

AS the impeachment trial of US President Donald Trump unfolds in the US Senate, something very strange is going on.

The president and his defenders in the Senate are dismissing all charges, saying there’s no evidence. Trump has repeatedly called it a “hoax.” According to him, it is, if you will forgive the pun, a trumped-up charge based on a “perfect” phone call in April 2019 to the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky where he asked for (wink, wink) a favour.

But here’s the odd thing.

For a president and his supporters who so vociferously claim his innocence, you’d think they would be the most enthusiastic about getting everything related to the issue out in the open—documents, testimony of people privy to what actually happened, everything. “Sunlight is the best disinfectant,” US Judge Learned Hand had once intoned.

Yet right from the get go, the Trump administration has done its damndest to close off all possible routes to information. It barred administration officials and bureaucrats from testifying during the House investigation, and refused to comply with any request for documentation.

I think it’s a safe bet that you aren’t the only one who finds it very strange behaviour from people who profess the stoutest faith in the president’s innocence. After all, if somebody

is innocent, all possible evidence should be exculpatory, right?

My intention, however, is not to provide a thumbnail sketch of the current US impeachment saga, which is being covered *ad nauseum* by every known media.

I’m simply bringing up the impeachment to make a broader point.

Democracy has always been messy, but we seem to have entered a new age of intolerance and autocracy which is happy to sheathe itself in the accoutrements of democracy, for which it has scant respect.

It’s the attitude of those in power that is so disturbing. It’s the increasing currency of politics as a brand of virulent tribalism. It’s the notion that political opponents are not just opponents with disagreements, but undeserving of the right to dissent at all. It’s a situation where political divisions are not driven by ideological or political disagreements over which there is the possibility of a give-and-take and compromise, but manifested in purely subjective, implacably opposed, different groups.

Add to this a brazen shamelessness, a remarkable willingness to flat-out lie in the face of contradictory facts, made all the more possible due to the tribal nature of politics. When you’ve got on that slippery slope, the next thing you know is you’re trying to pack the courts, twist the arms of universities, and play fast and loose with the media to erase the last vestiges of a level playing field for the marketplace of ideas.

The likes of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, Prime Minister Victor Orban in Hungary, and the ruling Law and Justice Party of Poland epitomise this intolerance. While their democratic

credentials are genuine, their commitment to democratic values is deeply suspect.

It’s heart-breaking to note that this deadly virus has deeply affected the Indian subcontinent. In Bangladesh, the signs are too many to belabour repetition: Ballot boxes get captured in uncontested elections; people disappear with disquieting frequency; dissenters are viciously beaten up. In India, vigilante teams attack Muslims and broadcast it live on social media. Attacks on secular writers and activists have gotten so bad there—a few have been murdered in the

For the health and sustenance of democracy, political rivalry should not manifest in thuggery and intimidation. It should—and can, with great effect—be played out in the realm of words.

recent past—that many authors have returned national literary awards.

The notion that democracy is too dangerous for a country’s own good is one much favoured by autocrats. It had once landed now-deceased Singapore President Lee Yuan Kew in hot water in international circles. Kew, the architect of modern Singapore, is credited with the astonishing economic success of that nation state.

Always a bare-knuckled pugilist of a politician, he never minced words. He said flatly that the

improvement of the quality of life of citizens was too important a task to be left to the fickle vagaries of democracy. Singapore is effectively a dictatorship with some affectations of democracy—regular elections (where the playing field is ludicrously uneven), an unfree press (*The Strait Times*, the major English-language daily, is state-owned).

Kew had a point, but it’s as spurious as justifying a rape just because it produced an Einstein. The real danger of choosing economic progress over democracy is that you might end up with neither.

For the health and sustenance of democracy, political rivalry should not manifest in thuggery and intimidation. It should—and can, with great effect—be played out in the realm of words. History tells us that in 19th century Britain, there was no love lost between British Tory statesman Benjamin Disraeli and his bitter rival, Liberal statesman William Gladstone. Both served terms as prime minister. Disraeli had said that Gladstone had “not one redeeming defect.” Radical Liberal statesman John Bright, on the other hand, had said that Disraeli is a “self-made man who worships his creator.”

When Disraeli was asked the difference between a misfortune and a calamity, he had deadpanned: “If Gladstone fell into the Thames, that would be a misfortune; and if anybody pulled him out, that, I suppose, would be a calamity.”

Alas, in today’s intolerant age, it’s more likely that someone would actually physically throw Gladstone into the Thames, and prevent all attempts to pull him out.

Ashfaque Swapan is a contributing editor for *Siliconeer*, a digital daily for South Asians in the United States.

QUOTABLE
Quote

MARSHALL MCLUHAN
(1911-1980)
Canadian communications theorist and educator.

The more the data banks record about each one of us, the less we exist.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Symmetry lines
5 Mall businesses
10 Truman's hometown
12 So far
13 Musical set in Argentina
14 "Skyfall" singer
15 Pear-shaped fruit
16 Wallet bill
18 Down
19 Continuing story
21 Lode setting
22 Put right
24 Kind of kitchen
25 Vouched for
29 Honcho
30 Gospel writer

DOWN
1 Hebrew letters
2 "X-Men" professor
3 Asylum seeker
4 Plunked down
5 Sax great Getz
6 Brick carrier
7 Infant outfit

ACROSS
32 Turn bad
33 Bordeaux buddy
34 Day light
35 Burglar's bane
37 Omit
38 Far
39 Crunch kin
40 Long attack
41 Flower parts
42 "—bien!"

DOWN
8 Belarus neighbor
9 Nobel, for one
11 Jackhammer
17 Snobby belief
20 Bakery workers
21 Half note
23 Korean War decade
25 "Relax!"
26 Will topic
27 Less complex
28 Work monotonously
29 Pentagon
31 Patellae places
33 Band boosters
36 Grog base
38 Blotto

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

M	A	D	A	M	P	I	C	A	S
A	D	E	L	E	A	D	O	P	T
T	O	L	L	S	P	O	L	E	R
I	R	A	A	W	E	S	O	M	E
N	E	W	S	I	R	A	W		
G	R	A	B	T	E	X	A	N	
		R	U	M	D	I	D		
S	E	T	U	P	I	O	W	A	
W	A	R	T	U	B	I	R	A	T
A	L	I	B	A	B	A	I	K	E
N	I	V	E	N	L	I	V	I	A
E	V	E	N	T	E	D	E	N	S
D	A	R	T	S	S	A	R	G	E

BEETLE BAILEY
by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES
by Kirkman & Scott

WHAT'S ON



Solo Art Exhibition
Title: Truce
Artist: Ata Mojlish
Venue: Dwip Gallery, Lalmaia
Date: January 25 – February 1
Time: 3 pm – 9 pm (Except Mondays)



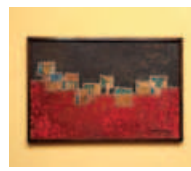
Workshop
Title: Kata Kutu – Collage Workshop
by Kazi Tahsin
Agaz Apurbo
Venue: Studio 6/6, Mohammadpur
Date: February 22, 2020
Time: 11 am – 6 pm



Charity Painting Exhibition
Venue: Abinita Gallery of Fine Arts, Progoti Shoroni
Date: Jan 18 – 27
Time: 11 am – 7 pm



Musical Evening
Title: Tondrahara Raater Gaan
Organiser: Star Melodies
Venue: The Daily Star Centre, Kazi Nazrul Islam Ave
Date: Today
Time: 6 pm onwards



Group Art Exhibition
Title: Breaking Ground: Modern Art in Transition
Venue: Subir Choudhury Exhibition Hall, Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi
Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15
Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)

What lies in Bidya Sinha Mim's PORAN

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National Film Award winning actor Bidya Sinha Mim recently took up some exciting projects – while also being active with stage performances and modeling. Her new movie, *Poran*, will be released in upcoming Valentine's Day. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, the charming actor speaks about her works and more.

Tell us about your upcoming release, 'Poran'.

I feel like *Poran* will be the best film in my career. I have thoroughly enjoyed working in this project, and have given my best performance. I am very excited about it.

You have also worked on a thriller, 'Ittefaq'. What was it like working in this project?

I have always tried to get associated with projects that are different from my previous

work. *Ittefaq*, even though it has elements of thriller, is not completely a thriller. I won't say much about the film now. Also, this is the first time I have paired with Siam Ahmed in this film, and it was a great experience! Siam is very friendly to work with, and undoubtedly has a bright future in the industry.

Besides acting and modeling, you still manage time to perform in stage shows. How do you find time?

I absolutely love performing on the stage. For an artiste, it is very enjoyable to receive appreciation and love from the audience directly.

Apart from your work, what is the one thing you do regularly?

I go to the gym on a regular basis, and it has become my daily routine. There is no other option for me to keep myself fit. Whenever I get leisure time, I like to watch movies.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

STAR MELODIES

to host 'Tondrahara Raater Gaan' today

Star Melodies, an initiative of The Daily Star to promote Bangla music, will host a special evening, titled *Tondrahara Raater Gaan*, featuring evergreen nostalgic romantic songs.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The programme, sponsored by Dhaka Bank Limited, will be held today, at 6 pm in the A S Mahmud Seminar Hall of The Daily Star Centre.

Noted artistes Mahfuzur Rahman, Samarjit Roy, Champa Banik, Tanjina Karim Sharalipi and Shemonty Monjari will perform at the event, hosted by Sadya Afreen Mallick, Chief, Culture Initiatives, *The Daily Star*.

Seats are limited and available on a first-come first-serve basis.



PHOTO: MONON MUNTAKA

Book on Liberation War '1971- Muktijoddhar Boyaan' launched

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

1971 - Muktijoddhar Boyaan is a book written by Quazi Ziaul Islam, a freedom fighter in the Liberation War of Bangladesh. The book follows untold stories and the author's experiences from the war in 1971. The preface of the book was written by Shirajul Islam Chowdhury, Professor, University of Dhaka. The book was launched at WVA, Dhanmondi, yesterday. Journalist, Research Scholar and Columnist Syed Abul Maksud was the chief guest of the event.

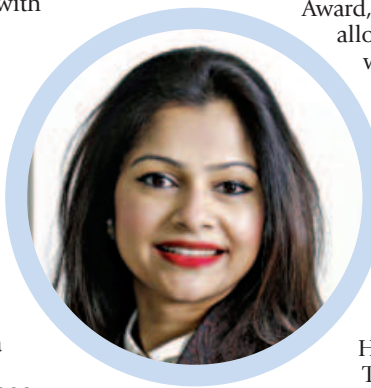


Making moves in Dhaka

NADIA SAMDANI

Bangladesh was born from geological, linguistic, political, independence and artistic movements. The fifth edition of the *Dhaka Art Summit 2020 (DAS)*, aptly named 'Seismic Movement', will provoke us to re-examine these movements, and how they have shaped the histories and borders of Southeast Asia. The open and free for all event will be held from 7–15 February 2020, bringing Dhaka to the epicentre of a radical upheaval of how we think about art. Shilpakala Academy will decorate its four floors with intellectual and curatorial contributions in the city. Built through alliances across Africa, Australia, South and Southeast Asia (and also extending into Europe and the US), this platform will include contributions by 500 artists, scholars, curators and thinkers, in the form of panel discussions, performances and symposia as well as opportunities for participation from the 300,000+ visitors focused on one broad theme: what is a movement and how do we ignite one beyond the confines of an art exhibition?

Some of the most thought-provoking moments will include Argentinian sculptor Adrián Villar Rojas' immersive installation made of 400 million year-old ammonite fossils, which visitors can walk over. Foreshadowing Bangladesh's climate conundrum of potentially being swallowed into the rising seas, it brings viewers into the forefront of the impact of the ever-changing climate and how we must adapt. Visitors will face the colonial movements as they enter



the vicinity through a newly commissioned performative installation by Kamruzzaman Shadhin in collaboration with the artist-led initiative Gidree Bawlee; the work considers the role of the British-era railways in changing Bengal's lands from growing food (rice) to producing cash-crops (jute) through migration stories found in traditional folk songs from Bangladesh.

Dhaka Art Summit 2020 is firmly committed to supporting the artistic development of the country's emerging artists. The fifth edition of the Samdani Art Award, curated by Philippe Piroette,

allows artists to create new work for DAS 2020 and to be supported in a residency at Srihatta. Shortlisted artists are Ariful Kabir, Ashfika Rahman, Faiham Ebna Sharif, Habiba Nowrose, Najmun Nahar Keya, Palash Bhattacharjee, Promoti Hossain, Soma Surovi Jannat, Sounak Das, Sumana Akter, Tahia Farhin Haque and Zihan Karim.

This comes after the success of the 2018 *Dhaka Art Summit 2020* with 368,000 people in attendance throughout the biennial. As the momentum builds for the upcoming *Dhaka Art Summit 2020* in February, the development of Srihatta Sculpture park and its artist residences in Sylhet is underway to open its doors to the public soon after. Bangladesh has already become a budding art scene with thanks to the Samdani Art Foundation at the centre of its success.

Nadia Samdani is the Co-Founder and President of the Samdani Art Foundation and the Director of Dhaka Art Summit 2020.



Nilima Sheikh's 'Weeping Angels' (detail), 2019–20, Casein Tempera on Canvas Scroll, commissioned for DAS 2020.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

TRESemmé Bangladesh Fashion Week 2020 concludes today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Internationally renowned haircare brand TRESemmé's flagship programme, *TRESemmé Bangladesh Fashion Week 2020*, concludes at International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) today.

21 local and 9 foreign designers and hair stylists have been showcasing their work since the opening of the three-day programme. Hairstylist Afroza Parveen from Bangladesh, along with designers Ajay Gurung from Nepal, Rishi Jain and Anjum Sharma from India, Bangladeshi designers Nawshin Khayer, Rima Naaz,

Tanjing Chakma, Rifat Rahman, Tashfia Ahmed, Sadia Hossain Mishu and Afsana Ferdous showcased their work on the first day of the event.

Fashion Design Council of Bangladesh (FDCB) is the event partner, while Le Meridien is the hospitality partner of the event.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Karan Johar turns love guru for Netflix's 'What The Love!'

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Karan Johar is set to help youngsters find love through Netflix's reality show, *What The Love!*

The trailer of the show dropped recently, giving a sneak peek into how Johar and his team will help participants forgo their single status.

According to the trailer, Johar will call upon his friends from the industry like Saif Ali Khan, Sunny Leone, Ali Fazel, Parineeti Chopra and Huma Qureshi as counsellors for the contestants. Johar's team will also include stylist Maneka Harinsinghani and makeup artiste Shaan Muttathil.

The dating makeover show will bring together real people searching for true love and help them overcome self-doubt, past baggage and other mind blocks. Produced by BBC Studios India, *What the Love!* begins streaming on Netflix from January 30, 2020.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Polish PM slams ‘destabilising’ court ruling

AFP, Warsaw

Poland’s prime minister yesterday accused the Supreme Court of “destabilising the legal order” after it ruled that judges chosen by new government-backed institutions were not authorised to issue verdicts.

The Supreme Court decided on Thursday that the judges were not free from outside influence, further inflaming a long-running controversy over reforms by the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party.

The PiS has passed a slew of judicial reforms arguing that they tackle corruption in a system still stuck in the communist era, but critics including top European judicial bodies say they undermine the rule of law and threaten democracy.

Timber trader

FROM PAGE 16

leaving him critically injured, said Rezaul Karim, inspector (investigation) of Sadar Police Station.

Locals took Shahed to TMSS Medical College where he died, the police official said.

On information, police held Rubel and Shanto from the area around 3:00pm, he said, adding that the victim’s body was sent to Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College for an autopsy.

No case was filed in this connection as of 8:30pm.

Family may file

FROM PAGE 16

“Her sugar level was 15 during fasting today [yesterday]. How long she’ll remain in such a condition?”

She said though the BNP chief has been receiving treatment at the BSMMU for nearly a year, her condition is not improving.

“That’s why we want her to be freed for her advanced treatment at any other state-of-the-art hospital.”

About the present condition of Khaleda’s health, Selima said, Khaleda was vomiting and suffering from fever and serious pain.

“Her left hand have got bent and she is suffering from acute pain. Her proper treatment is not possible at this hospital [BSMMU].”

Selima said the treatment given by the BSMMU doctors was not helping improve Khaleda’s condition. “Rather, her condition is deteriorating gradually. Even, she can’t speak properly.”

She said Khaleda urged people to pray for her early recovery.

Along with Selima, her younger brother Shamim Eskandar, his wife Kaniz Fatema and son Ovik Eskandar and her late brother Sayeed Eskandar’s wife Nasrin Eskandar went to meet Khaleda around 3:00pm and had over an hour-long meeting, said BNP chairperson’s media wing member Shamsuddin Didar.

Khaleda has been in jail since she was convicted in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case on February 8, 2018. She was found guilty in another corruption case later the same year, though her party claims both cases are politically motivated.

The BNP chief has been receiving treatment at the BSMMU since April 1 last year.

3 killed

FROM PAGE 16

Cox’s Bazar Sadar Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead, the BGB official said, adding that the body of the deceased had been kept at the hospital morgue.

BGB recovered 1.3 lakh pieces of yaba pills, a locally made firearm and a bullet from the spot.

Two BGB personnel -- Lance Nayek Nurul Amin, 27, and Lance Nayek Shahinur Rahman, 25 -- also got injured in the “gunfight”, he added.

In Magura, an alleged robber was killed in what law enforcers claimed was a gunfight between two robber gangs early yesterday.

The victim is Mintu Gazi, 40, reports our Jhenidah correspondent quoting Saiful Islam, officer-in-charge of Magura Sadar Police Station.

After hearing several gunshots, a police patrol team rushed to Barunatol Bridge area and recovered Mintu with a bullet injury.

They took him to Magura Sadar Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead, the official said.

Police also recovered a gun, two bullets and two machetes from the spot.

In Natore, a “murder accused” was killed in a “gunfight” with police in Gurudaspur upazila early yesterday.

Deceased Abu Hanif Bepari was accused of murder and several other cases, including robbery, said Akramul Hossain, additional superintendent of police in Natore.

Police detained Hanif from Dhaka’s Badda area on Wednesday, SP Akramul said.

The “gunfight” took place when a team of police, along with Hanif, went to Pargurudaspur area and raided a banana orchard to detain his associates, he added.

Two policemen sustained injuries during the incident, he confirmed.

Police seized a pistol, a pipe gun and five bullets from the spot.

No president

FROM PAGE 16

Schiff’s prosecution team detailed how Trump flagrantly undertook last year to force Kiev to help him tarnish his possible 2020 reelection rival, former vice president Joe Biden.

“President Trump used the powers of his office to solicit a foreign nation to interfere in our elections for his own personal benefit,” House Judiciary Committee Chair Jerry Nadler told the chamber.

“Since President George Washington took office in 1789, no president has abused his power in this way,” Nadler said.

“The president has repeatedly, flagrantly, violated his oath... The president’s conduct is wrong. It is illegal. And it is dangerous.”

Over nine hours the Democrats methodically dismantled Republican claims that Trump did nothing wrong.

They left few doubts that Trump’s sole motivation in secretly freezing aid to Ukraine last July was to force Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky to announce one investigation into Biden and a second into an unsupported story that Kiev helped Democrats in the 2016 election.

To puncture a key White House argument that the US constitution requires a specific crime to remove

a president, they played old videos in which two of Trump’s closest defenders, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham and storied criminal defense attorney Alan Dershowitz, said that abuse of power itself is a clear impeachable offense.

And they detailed the extensive role of Trump’s personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani in the scheme to pressure Zelensky, even while US intelligence and diplomatic chiefs disagreed with it.

“Donald Trump chose Rudy Giuliani over his own intelligence agencies. He chose Rudy Giuliani over his own national security advisors... That makes him dangerous to our country,” said Schiff, who leads the House Intelligence Committee.

Yet, three days into arguments into the historic trial, there were few signs that any of the Republican majority that Trump commands in the Senate would buy into the evidence and turn against him.

“What we heard from the managers yesterday, the day before, it is the same thing, day after day after day,” said Republican Senator John Barrasso.

“We’re hearing the same things over and over,” said Trump attorney Jay Sekulow. “We will be putting on vigorous defense of both facts and rebutting what they’ve said.”

BNP’s mayoral aspirants

FROM PAGE 16

member, wishing not to be named.

BNP leaders said Ishraque mulls taking up 60-day priority programmes to resolve the important public issues.

He is also considering launching a 24-hour hotline service at the regional offices of the Dhaka South City Corporation so that people can lodge their complaints and get remedies promptly.

Ishraque, a post graduate from University of Hertfordshire, wants to introduce “One Stop Service” centres for smooth and prompt issuance of birth and death certificates and trade licence.

He mulls discussing the holding tax issue with the city dwellers before reaching a decision in this regard. He also plans to provide safe water and improved sewerage and drainage services to the city residents in close coordination with the Dhaka Wasa and other utility service providers.

Son of former Dhaka mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Ishraque plans to establish community centres, modern gymnasiums, and day-care centres for children in each wards of the south city.

Regarding smooth movement of people, he wants to install elevators or escalators at all footbridges in phases, and introduce bus services on some routes for the freedom fighters, elderly, physically challenged and underprivileged people.

He expects to launch community police in each ward to ensure safety and security of the south city residents.

About dengue and chikungunya diseases, Ishraque would create a city health database and give special attention to protect the people from

such vector-borne diseases.

He wants to set up primary health check-up centres at the parks and gymnasiums of the city corporation.

In the Dhaka north city, Tabith plans to take an initiative to organise night markets or farmers’ markets at the entry points to the city and some other major areas to facilitate the farmers and the consumers.

He has plans to introduce “food courts” at public places and make arrangements for relocating the street food shops.

Son of BNP leader Abdul Awal Mintoo, Tabith wants to provide free treatment to the members of the underprivileged families and set up mobile health care service centres in association with development agencies.

He has a plan to introduce modern school bus service on specific routes for safe transportation of students to and from schools.

Tabith, a post graduate from George Washington University, also wants to award bright students with “city scholarship” each year for their success in primary-, junior- and SSC-level examinations.

To reduce illegal parking, a major cause for traffic congestion in the capital, the BNP mayoral hopeful wants to build multi-storied parking facilities or parking lots in busy areas on a commercial basis.

He also aims to take an initiative to build a circular road around the capital, as planned by Rajuk, to ease traffic congestion.

Like Ishraque, Tabith also plans to introduce “One Stop Service” for providing prompt services, including issuance of birth and death certificates,

At the White House, Trump unleashed a barrage of tweets attacking the process as “loaded with lies and misrepresentations.”

“Most unfair & corrupt hearing in Congressional history!” he tweeted

Democratic prosecutors will complete their arguments Friday with a focus on the second impeachment charge, obstruction of Congress, before Trump’s legal team holds the floor in his defense for three days.

Democrats are hoping their arguments will at least persuade some Republicans, who hold a 53-47 majority in the Senate, to support their call to issue subpoenas next week for four top current and former Trump aides to testify, and for internal White House records about the Ukraine affair.

But all indications were that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, in coordination with the White House, will seek to stifle witness requests and bring the trial to a close with a vote to acquit Trump by the end of next week.

Both Trump and McConnell said early this week that the White House could claim executive privilege to refuse the subpoenas, forcing a court challenge that could prolong the case well into February.

and trade licence.

For the recreation activities of the city residents, he wants to introduce boating, fishing and cable car ride in Hatirjheel area on a limited scale.

To ensure safety of the people, the mayoral hopeful plans to install CCTV cameras on the streets, lanes and by lanes in phases.

Scientists start

FROM PAGE 16

could one day be transported there.

“Having our own facility allows us to focus on oxygen production, measuring it with a mass spectrometer as it is extracted from the regolith simulat,” said Beth Lomax of the University of Glasgow.

“Being able to acquire oxygen from resources found on the Moon would obviously be hugely useful for future lunar settlers, both for breathing and in the local production of rocket fuel.”

Before the technology could be taken to the surface, it will need tweaking to get it ready for use in the harsh environment of the Moon.

“And now we have the facility in operation we can look into fine-tuning it, for instance by reducing the operating temperature, eventually designing a version of this system that could one day fly to the Moon to be operated there,” said ESA research fellow Alexandre Meurisse in a statement.

Oxygen is the most abundant element in moon dust, with experiments on samples delivered back down to earth showing it represents as much as 45 percent of its weight.

Tigers lose

FROM PAGE 1

Yesterday, it was the experienced Shoaib Malik who guided Pakistan to the target with three balls to spare as the 37-year-old remained not out on 58 off 45 balls with five boundaries.

However, Bangladesh did manage to keep the pressure on the Pakistan batsman for much of the chase. Substitute fielder Nazmul Hossain Shanto dropped a rather tough chance at long off with Malik on 47, and Mustafizur Rahman the aggrieved bowler, when the hosts required 17 off 16 balls.

Pakistan got the win off another dropped chance when Mohammad Mithun dropped a simple outfield chance off Mohammad Rizwan, who crossed over for two to complete the win.

However, Bangladesh did make a good start in defence of the target as Shafai Islam removed Pakistan skipper Babar Azam for a duck in the first over.

Mustafizur then removed Mohammad Hafeez with a cutter before Malik and Ahsan Ali held the ship together for Pakistan. Ahsan too departed on 36 but it was a difficult task for the Tigers to defend a small total in the end.

Shafail ended up with two for 27 from his four overs while Aminul

Islam, an expensive Mustafizur and Al Amin Hossain -- who was the best bowler on display, conceding just 18 runs from his fur overs -- took a wicket each for Bangladesh.

Earlier, Bangladesh got off to a stable start after electing to bat. The visiting batsmen were surprised by the slow nature of the pitch. Both openers Tamim Iqbal and Mohammad Naim had to adjust to the surface, which once again raised questions over the slow strike rate from the openers.

When Tamim eventually departed after scoring 39 off 34 balls with five fours Bangladesh were 71 for one after 11 overs. Naim soon followed after scoring a team high of 43 off 41 balls which included three fours and two sixes.

On 100 for two after 15 overs, Bangladesh managed to score just 41 runs in the last five overs as the visitors lost some quick wickets on a sluggish Lahore pitch.

Liton Das, coming in at number three, departed for twelve while young Afif Hossain and Soumya Sarkar -- at number five and six respectively -- could not make an impact.

Skipper Mahmudullah Riyad remained unbeaten on 19 off 14 balls. He later said that they were at least 15 runs short. Bangladesh batsmen conceding a total of 45 dot balls did not help matters.

Pressure mounts

FROM PAGE 1

The 17 judges, including the ones from Myanmar, China and Gambia, unanimously took the decision, which is quite rare, the professor of international relations said.

The provisional measures ordered by the court, are legally-binding. In accordance with the Statute of the Court, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will promptly transmit the notice of the provisional measures to the UN Security Council, according to a statement issued yesterday by a spokesperson of Guterres.

Guterres strongly supported the use of peaceful means to settle international disputes, it said.

He further recalls that, pursuant to the Charter and to the Statute of the Court, decisions of the court are binding and believes that Myanmar will duly comply with the order from the court, it added.

Asked what role China and Russia can play when the orders are sent to the UN Security Council as these veto powers earlier opposed any concrete actions against Myanmar for the atrocities, Imtiaz said, “Even if the Security Council doesn’t work, Myanmar is legally-bound to implement the orders.”

He reckons that China and Russia will not oppose the ICJ orders because they will be then globally described as complicit in genocide.

There were questions as to whether Dhaka was able to truly internationalise the Rohingya crisis, but with the ICJ ruling, it has been ensured that a global body, of which Myanmar is a member, will watch Myanmar’s actions, he said.

If China, Japan and India don’t work effectively to help Myanmar enforce the ICJ orders, Bangladesh will now tell them that they will be complicit in genocidal acts, he added.

This is an opportunity for Bangladesh to strongly negotiate with Myanmar and its allies and put pressure on the country to find a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis which originated in the 1970s.

Some 750,000 Rohingyas fled brutal military campaign and took shelter in Bangladesh, joining some 300,000 others who had fled earlier waves of violence in Rakhine.

They have been denied citizenship, basic rights like education and health, and freedom of movement.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud bin Momen said the challenge for Bangladesh was to use the global pressure created on Myanmar and its allies.

“The World Court will take five to six years to complete the trial. Meanwhile, we will continue to engage bilaterally with Myanmar,” he said at an event in the capital Thursday night.

Masud said the ICJ ruling will create confidence among the Rohingyas for returning to their homeland in Rakhine.

Japan, China and India are with Bangladesh, he said, adding, “They have geo-strategic interests in the region... We have economic and strategic partnership with them and will nurture that and try to solve the problem.”

COMPLY WITH ICJ ORDERS
The UK has encouraged Myanmar to comply with the legally-binding provisional measures.

“The Court was clear that Myanmar must do more to protect the Rohingya,” said Heather Wheeler, UK minister for Asia and the Pacific, in a statement.

Malaysia said the ICJ order is a step in the right direction to address the situation.

“The decision [of ICJ] reflects the serious concern of the international community on the need to address effectively the plight of the Rohingya and establish accountability and justice in respect of alleged serious human rights violations against the Rohingya,” said a Malaysian foreign ministry statement.

“As a fellow state party to the 1948 Genocide Convention, Malaysia calls on Myanmar to fulfil its obligations... to ensure that the crisis is not prolonged.”

Amnesty International said the ICJ decision sends a message to Myanmar’s senior officials that the world will not tolerate their atrocities, and will not blindly accept their empty rhetoric on the reality in Rakhine State today.

An estimated 600,000 Rohingya people who remain there are routinely and systematically denied their most basic rights, it said.

“Myanmar must comply with the ICJ’s ruling and take immediate action to cease ongoing violations against the community and to prevent the destruction of evidence,” said its Regional Director Nicholas Bequelin.

In a statement, 103 civil society bodies of Myanmar said political and military policies have always been imposed with violent force and intimidation upon the people of Myanmar on the basis of their political and religious beliefs and ethnic identities.

“Lessons from history have shown that aforementioned acts of violence and intimidation were committed with impunity, using mechanisms of political power and military might. The inability and incapability of Myanmar’s internal justice mechanism enable perpetrators to continue to carry out violent acts with impunity,” it said.

Fire ravages

FROM PAGE 16

said the fire broke out around 4:15am yesterday.

On information, 15 firefighting units rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control around 5:45am, she said.

What caused the fire could not be known till last night.

Lima said a slum dweller, Parveen, 35, suffered burns in the fire and was admitted to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Hospital sources said almost 90 percent of her body was burnt.

Another person, Shahidul, who was injured in his leg, was admitted to a private hospital, Lima said.

Visiting the spot yesterday morning, this correspondent saw a signboard of the Ministry of Housing and Public Works near the slum. According to the board, the land of the slum is designated for a project meant for people from the lower and lower-middle income group.

Talking to The Daily Star, a slum dweller, Abdul Mannan Sheikh, 60, said he woke up to screams of his neighbours.

He said although he, along with six family members, managed to run to safety, the fire razed their home to the ground.

Meanwhile, several slum dwellers suspected that the incident could be an act of sabotage as a quarter was trying to evict them from the slum.

“They want to evict us. That’s why they set the fire,” said a woman.

Asked, Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Rupnagar Police Station, said they were not aware of any act of sabotage in regard to the fire incident.

Two probe committees were working to find out the cause of the fire, said police and fire service officials.

Last night, Hazera was gazing blankly into the distance, sitting on a road adjacent to the slum.

Approached by this correspondent, she said her husband and two daughters live in their village home in Pirojpur’s in Mothbaria and she sends home Tk 5,000-7,000 every month.

“My husband is bedridden. My daughters go to school. How will I manage everything now,?” asked a worried Hazera.

“My husband is suffering from various illnesses. My daughters go to school. How do I meet the expense?” she said.

EU chiefs sign Brexit deal

AFP, Brussels

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was to receive Britain's EU divorce agreement yesterday after Brussels' top two officials signed it at a closed door ceremony in the dead of night.

Officials from both sides accompanied the document across the Channel to London, where Johnson was to add his signature to those of EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel.

Number 10 said that Johnson would sign it later in the day then return it to Brussels, where the EU will make a copy for each party.

On Wednesday next week, the text will go to the European Parliament for ratification and on Thursday diplomats from the EU member states will approve the deal in writing.

Then, on Friday, January 31, Britain spends its last day in the EU before leaving the bloc at 2300 GMT as clocks strike midnight in Brussels.

Meanwhile, EU yesterday named Joao Vale de Almeida, previously Brussels' top diplomat to the UN and to the US, ambassador to post-Brexit Britain, to take up his duties on February 1, the United Kingdom's first day outside the bloc.

British voters backed leaving the European Union in a June 2016 referendum, and after lengthy negotiations and several delays Johnson's new government plans to "get Brexit done" next week.

Queen Elizabeth II gave her formal assent to the British withdrawal legislation on Thursday and the European Union is now expected to complete the final formalities in the coming days.

Britain will leave the institutions of the union, reducing it to 27 member states, but the withdrawal agreement provides for an 11-month transition period until the end of the year.



Protesters carry a caricature of US President Donald Trump as supporters of Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr gather in the capital Baghdad for a "million-strong" march to demand an end to the presence of US forces in their country, yesterday. The march has rattled the separate, months-old protest movement that has gripped Baghdad and the Shia-majority south since October, demanding a government overhaul, early elections and more accountability.

PHOTO: AFP

'No America, No Israel'

Thousands of Iraqi protesters demand US troops pull-out

REUTERS, Baghdad

Tens of thousands of Iraqis rallied in central Baghdad yesterday calling for the expulsion of US troops, but the protest mostly dissipated after a few hours despite fears of violence following a cleric's call for a "million strong" turnout.

Populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr convened the march after the US killing of an Iranian general and an Iraqi paramilitary chief in Baghdad this month. His eventual decision to hold it away from a separate anti-government protest camp, and away from the US embassy, looked pivotal in keeping the march peaceful.

Thronges started gathering early yesterday at al-Hurriya Square near Baghdad's main university. They avoided Tahrir Square, symbol of mass protests against Iraq's ruling elites.

Marchers wore Iraqi flags and symbolic white robes indicating they were willing to die for Iraq while others sat looking out over the square from half-finished buildings, holding signs reading "No America, no Israel,

no colonialists".

"We want them all out - America, Israel, and the corrupt politicians in government," said Raed Abu Zahra, a health worker from southern Samawa, who had come by bus to Baghdad and stayed in Sadr City.

"We support the anti-government protests in Tahrir Square as well, but understand why Sadr held this protest

Protest called after US killing of Iran general

Shia cleric Sistani calls for respect of Iraqi sovereignty

here so it doesn't take attention from theirs," he added.

The protests have shattered nearly two years of relative calm following the 2017 defeat of Islamic State and threaten to send the country back into major civil strife.

Unrest erupted in October with protests against a corrupt ruling elite, including Iran-backed politicians,

that have met deadly force from government security forces and pro-Iran paramilitaries that dominate the state.

Washington's killing this month of Iranian military mastermind Qassem Soleimani added a new dimension to the crisis.

The demonstrations have since taken aim at all groups and figures that are part of the post-2003 system including Sadr, who although often considered an outsider is part of that system, commanding one of the two largest blocs in parliament.

Iraq's top Shia Muslim cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, called in his weekly sermon for political groups to form a government as soon as possible to bring stability to the country and enact reforms to improve Iraqis' lives.

"Iraq's sovereignty must be respected ... and citizens should have the right to peaceful protest," said the cleric, who comments on politics only in times of crisis and wields great influence over Iraq's Shia majority.

'DOOMSDAY CLOCK'

100 SECONDS TO MIDNIGHT

AFP, Washington

The Doomsday Clock on Thursday ticked down to 100 seconds to midnight, symbolizing the greatest level of peril to humanity since its creation in 1947 as the threat posed by climate change and a growing nuclear race loomed large.

The danger level was compounded by information warfare and disruptive technologies ranging from deepfake video and audio to the militarization of space and the development of hypersonic weapons.

"We are now expressing how close the world is to catastrophe in seconds - not hours, or even minutes," said Rachel Bronson, president of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, in announcing the change. The decision on the clock is taken by panels of experts, including 13 Nobel laureates.

It was originally set at seven minutes to midnight, and the previous worst - two minutes to midnight - held from 2018 to 2019 as well as 1953. The furthest it has ever been is 17 minutes, following the end of the Cold War in 1991.

On the nuclear front, the arms control boundaries that helped prevent catastrophe over the last half century are being dismantled and may be gone by next year, said expert Sharon Squassoni.

This includes the demise in 2019 of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, with the US and Russia entering a new competition to deploy once banned weapons. The US has suggested it won't extend New START, an arms reduction treaty signed in 2010. And despite initial hopes, North Korea and Iran crises are escalating.

On climate, two major UN summits fell dismally short of the action required to limit long-term warming.

"We ask world leaders to join us in 2020 as we work to pull humanity back from the brink," said Mary Robinson, chair of The Elders leadership group and former president of Ireland.

"Now is the time to come together -- to unite and to act."

SARS-LIKE VIRUS AFFECTED COUNTRIES

A SARS-like virus has claimed 26 lives since emerging on December 31 in a market in the Chinese city of Wuhan. Here is a list of countries that have confirmed cases of the so-called coronavirus.

CHINA: More than 800 people have been infected across China, with 177 in serious condition. Authorities were also examining 1,072 suspected case. The city of Macau and Hong Kong have confirmed two cases each.

JAPAN: Japan's health authorities confirmed a second case yesterday. Kyodo news agency reported, saying the patient was a man in his 40s who was originally from Wuhan and on a trip to Japan.

SINGAPORE: Singapore yesterday announced two more confirmed cases of the new SARS-like virus, bringing the total number to three.

SOUTH KOREA: South Korea yesterday confirmed its second case of the virus. The country reported its first case on January 20 -- a 35-year-old woman who flew in from Wuhan.

TAIWAN: On January 22, authorities confirmed the first case -- a Taiwanese woman in her fifties, living in Wuhan, who returned to the island on Monday.

THAILAND: Thailand has detected four cases so far -- three Chinese nationals from Wuhan and a 73-year-old Thai woman who came back from the Chinese city this month.

UNITED STATES: On January 21, the United States announced its first case -- a man in his 30s living near Seattle. Officials say he is in a good condition.

VIETNAM: Vietnam confirmed two cases of the virus on Thursday. An infected man from Wuhan travelled to Ho Chi Minh City earlier this month and passed the virus onto his son. Both are being treated hospital and are stable, Vietnam health officials said.

SOURCE: AFP

NEW CORONAVIRUS IN CHINA

Hospital in 10 days!

AFP, Beijing

China is rushing to build a new hospital in a staggering 10 days to treat patients at the epicentre of a deadly virus outbreak that has stricken hundreds of people, state media reported yesterday.

The facility in the central city of Wuhan is expected to be in use by February 3 to serve a rising number of patients infected by a coronavirus that has left at least 26 people dead and millions on lockdown in an effort to curb the spread.

Dozens of excavators and trucks were filmed working on the site by state broadcaster CCTV.

It will have a capacity of 1,000 beds spread over 25,000 square metres, the official Xinhua news agency said.

Construction began as reports surfaced of bed shortages in hospitals designated as dealing with the outbreak, which has now infected 830 people across China.

Xinhua said the new facility is aimed at "alleviating the shortage of medical treatment resources and improving the ability to care for patients".

In 2003 China erected a hospital on Beijing's rural outskirts in barely a week to cater to a rapidly rising number of patients suffering from SARS, or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, which killed 349 people in mainland China and 299 in Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

Xiaotangshan Hospital consisted of prefabricated structures and Xinhua reported Friday that Wuhan was building the new facility based on the same model.



PHOTO: AFP

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg (C) marches during a "Friday for future" youth demonstration in a street of Davos yesterday on the sideline of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting. Greta said calls to the corporate elite meeting in Davos to disinvest immediately in fossil fuels had been "completely ignored."

Uighur-like camps in Kashmir!

India's Chief of Defence Staff's 'de-radicalisation' camp comment sparks fear in Kashmiris, draws criticism

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

India's newly recruited Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat has courted controversy after he claimed that so-called "de-radicalisation" camps are operating in India, drawing a comparison with the internment of Uighurs in China.

"Like what we are seeing in Kashmir ... we saw radicalisation happening," Rawat said addressing the media and foreign delegates in New Delhi last week.

"There are people who have completely been radicalised. These people need to be taken out separately, possibly taken into some de-radicalisation camps. We have de-radicalisation camps going on in our country."

Rawat's comments have caused a wave of fear among Kashmiris who claim that India wishes to do what the Chinese are doing in Xinjiang province.



Human rights groups say more than a million Uighurs have been rounded up in internment camps, that Beijing dubs as "re-education camps", to eradicate so-called religious "extremism".

"India should not follow China because India has a claim to constituent democracy," said Professor Noor Ahmad Baba, a political analyst based in Srinagar, the main city in the Muslim-majority region placed under lockdown for the past five months.

On August 5, New Delhi stripped the region of its autonomy after

shutting down its communications. Though mobile phones have largely been revived, the region is still without internet access - the longest internet shutdown in a democracy.

"Kashmir is a political issue, there is nothing like radicalisation. This is not a desirable thing to happen in a democracy. Kashmir is a political problem and needs a political solution," Baba told Al Jazeera.

Meanwhile, confirming Rawat's claims, a senior police official in Kashmir told Al Jazeera that the first "de-radicalisation" centre in Kashmir is on the cards.

"The Jammu and Kashmir police department has conceptualised one de-radicalisation centre for which funds have been granted by the Ministry of Home Affairs but it is yet to be established," the official, who wished to remain anonymous, told Al Jazeera without elaborating on the "de-radicalisation centre".

MOVE TO CURB 'BIRTH TOURISM'

US to limit visas for pregnant women

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump opened a new front in his battle against immigration, barring the issuing of visas to pregnant women seeking to enter the United States for so-called "birth tourism."

In announcing the move, which took effect yesterday, the White House said foreigners were using the visas "to secure automatic and permanent American citizenship for their children by giving birth on American soil."

"The integrity of American citizenship must be protected," White House spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham said in a statement on Thursday.

Temporary B-1 and B-2 visitor visas would no longer be issued to "aliens seeking to enter the United States for 'birth tourism,'" the White House said.

Calling the practice "a glaring immigration loophole," it argued that the crackdown on "birth tourism" was for public safety and national security as well as to maintain the "integrity of our immigration system."

The US Constitution guarantees automatic American citizenship to anyone born on US soil.

Under the new rule, a US consular officer "shall deny a non-immigrant visa to an alien who he or she has reason to believe intends to travel" to the United States for the purpose of giving birth in the country.

First space cookies baked

Astronauts on the International Space Station have baked the first cookies in space, but they took far longer than on Earth. The space station's Italian commander Luca Parmitano acted as baker aided by Nasa astronaut Christina Koch for the chocolate-chip cookie experiment. Cookies take around 15-20 minutes to bake on Earth but the astronauts discovered that their most successful efforts required at least two hours in the oven in space. The prototype oven which can be used in microgravity was designed and built by Nanoracks and Zero G Kitchen while the Double Tree by Hilton hotel chain supplied the raw cookie dough. While the astronauts said they looked and smelled like cookies, no one has tasted them. Three of the cookies returned to Earth on the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft on January 7 and will undergo testing by food scientists to determine if they are edible.

Wildfires aiding C02 rise

Carbon emissions from the wildfires that have ravaged much of southeast Australia are a major driver of what are predicted to be record worldwide atmospheric CO2 levels throughout 2020, Britain's Met Office said Friday. The annual rise of planet-warming CO2 levels is anticipated to be among the largest since measurements began in 1958, it said. CO2 levels, taken at the Mauna Loa observatory in Hawaii, fluctuate throughout the year due to weather patterns in the Northern Hemisphere. But the annual trend is inexorably upwards, with record CO2 levels anticipated in May of 417 parts per million (ppm). And 2020 is predicted to be the first year on record where CO2 levels do not dip below 410 ppm, with the annual average forecast to be 414.2 ppm. That's the highest concentration in at least 800,000 years and possible in as many as three million years.

\$1b fund to help neglected people like Rohingyas: Soros



US financier and philanthropist George Soros on Thursday pledged one billion dollars for a new university network project to battle the erosion of civil society in a world increasingly ruled by "would-be and actual dictators" and beset by climate change. Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Soros said humanity was at a turning point and the coming years would determine the fate of rulers like President Donald Trump and China's Xi Jinping as well as the world itself. He described the plan of the Open Society University Network (OSUN) as "the most important project of my life" and would be an international platform for teaching and research that existing universities all over the world would be able to join. It would seek to reach out to "places in need of high quality education and in serving neglected populations" such as refugees, prisoners, the Roma and other displaced peoples like the Rohingyas, he said.

SOURCE: AFP

NEWSIN brief

Lanka to investigate its war missing

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Sri Lanka's presidency has said that death certificates for thousands of people missing presumed dead from the country's civil war will be given out only after proper investigations. More than 23,500 complaints in respect of missing people had been registered with the authorities after the war ended in 2009. Among those were some 5,000 security personnel.

North Korea appoints new top diplomat

AFP, Seoul

North Korea has appointed Ri Son Gwon, a former army officer with little diplomatic experience, as its new foreign minister, state media confirmed yesterday, reflecting Pyongyang's already declared hard-line policy toward the US. Analysts say his appointment could indicate the country will take a harder line with the US, in line with Pyongyang abandoning its nuclear and missile test moratoriums earlier this year -- and after Washington missed the North's 2019 deadline for nuclear talks.

38,000 flee homes in northwest Syria

AFP, Beirut

Tens of thousands of civilians fled their homes in northwestern Syria last week in the face of intensified bombardment of rebel territory by pro-government forces, the United Nations said yesterday. Between 15 and 19 January, more than 38,000 people fled violence in the rebel-held west of Aleppo province, the UN added in a statement.

SPORT



Soumya Sarkar cuts a dejected figure after losing his stumps during the first T20I against Pakistan in Lahore yesterday. Following a slow-yet-watchful start, Bangladesh's batsmen failed to accelerate the scoring, eventually posting 141 for five, which proved too little in the end. The Tigers will take on Pakistan in the second T20I today.

PHOTO: AFP



‘Stand with Ahsan was turning point’

SPORTS REPORTER



Recalled Pakistan veteran Shoaib Malik turned up with a crucial performance with the bat in the first T20I as the hosts won by five wickets against Bangladesh in Lahore yesterday.

Malik, who starred with a 45-ball 58, heaped praise on a young Pakistan side and said his partnership with debutant opener Ahsan Ali was the turning point in the match.

The win was Pakistan's first in their last eight T20 matches, having lost to England, Sri Lanka and Australia with their last win coming in February 2019.

Chasing a modest total of 142, Malik was ably supported by opener Ahsan, who hit 36 off 32 deliveries. The former Pakistan captain said that his responsibility in the side was to help groom the youngsters.

"Congratulations to the whole Pakistan team for this win and for hosting another match," Malik began during the post-match press conference yesterday. "The responsibility to perform is on those

who have experience but their main responsibility is how they groom the youngsters. When Ahsan was playing in the middle, he showed a lot of confidence. He accompanied me during a turning point of the match and on a pitch that was not easy for batsmen. We had lost some wickets and we needed to consolidate. That the youngsters are performing is a good sign for Pakistan cricket," he said.

The 37-year-old, the only active international cricketer who played in the previous century, was playing his first T20I match since February last year. His dismal form in the World Cup had seen him dropped from the rest of the tournament after just three matches.

"It's tough to be in and out of the team but I have been playing leagues and domestic cricket and that helped me stage a comeback in this match," he reflected on his time away from the T20I side.

"I wasn't answering anyone [with my performance]. I wanted to satisfy my own requirements and my goal is not to see who is upset with me and who is happy," he added.

‘We were 15 runs short’

SPORTS REPORTER



Skipper Mahmudullah Riyad said that Bangladesh's score of 141 for five was 10-15 runs short after the Tigers went down to five-wicket defeat against Pakistan in the first of the three T20Is at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday.

Mahmudullah also defended openers Tamim Iqbal and Mohammad Naim after questions were raised about their slow approach as the pair added 71 runs in eleven overs.

Bangladesh were 100 for two after 15 overs but the visitors managed to score just 41 runs in the last five overs for the loss of three wickets. The 33-year-old said that one of the main reasons for the sluggish finish to the innings was the slow nature of the pitch, which made it difficult for the batsmen to score freely in the latter stages.

"The way we batted in the Powerplay [first six overs] was spot on. Both Tamim and Naim batted really well but as the ball got older the pitch also acted differently. It made it difficult for the later batsmen to go out there and hit big strokes. I think we lagged behind in that situation and ended up 10-15 runs short. I think I should

have also finished better," Mahmudullah, who was unbeaten on 19 off 14 balls, told reporters after the game.

When asked whether the conservative batting from the openers had damaged the Tigers' cause, Mahmudullah said that losing quick wickets in

SCORES IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: 141 for 5 in 20 overs (Tamim 39, Naim 43, Mahmudullah 19; Afridi 1-23, Shadab 1-26)

PAKISTAN: 142 for 5 in 19.3 overs (Ahsan 36, Malik 58 not out; Shafai 2-27)

Result: Pakistan won by 5 wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Shoaib Malik.

the middle of the innings, including that of a set Naim, proved costly for Bangladesh.

"I think they [openers] started brilliantly. We lost two quick wickets in the middle, including a set Naim. If we could get a big over during that period, like 15 to 17 runs, the run rate would have increased. I think we lacked there and

obviously you have to give credit to Pakistan's bowlers. The way they bowled yorkers and varied the pace was incredible. We have to keep those things in mind and try to do well in the next game," Mahmudullah added.

Despite a modest target, Bangladesh did manage to put up a fight and took the game till the last over. Although Mahmudullah praised his bowlers, he also said that the bowlers gave away some easy runs by bowling down the leg side, which was the disappointing aspect for the Tigers.

Bangladesh were also below par in the field. Substitute fielder Nazmul Hossain Shanto dropped a rather tough chance off Shoaib Malik, on 47, off the bowling of Mustafizur Rahman at long off when Pakistan required 17 off 16 balls. Malik went on to register his fifty and remained unbeaten on 58 runs to guide Pakistan to victory.

"We have to give credit to the way our bowlers fought to defend the target. Although the bowlers bowled well, at times they also gave away some easy boundaries, at least six to seven, and we could have done better there. At the same time, if our fielding was better, things could have been different," he added.



Returning Pakistan batsman Shoaib Malik's solid half-century powered the hosts to a five-wicket victory over Bangladesh in the first T20I at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



The winners of the Kool-BSPA Sports Awards pose for photographs at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Sana scoops top award

SPORTS REPORTER

Archer Ruman Sana was yesterday recognised as the Sportsperson of the Year by the Bangladesh Sports Press Association (BSPA), who awarded sportspersons in different disciplines, organisers, coaches and sponsors for their performance and contribution to country's sports in 2019.

Archer Sana, cricketer Shakib Al Hasan and footballer Jamal Bhuiyan were initially selected for marquee award, and out of those three, Sana, who bagged three gold medals in the recent South Asian Games after having become the country's first archer to qualify directly for the Olympic Games, was named as the winner in the Kool-BSPA Award Sports Award at a city hotel yesterday in line with the decision of the jury board.

The 24-year-old archer from Khulna not only bagged the sportsperson of the year

award, but also won the Popular Choice Award based on highest number votes cast by viewers online.

Other athletes of the year are: Shakib (cricket), Jamal (football), Mabiha Akter Simanta (weightlifting), Humaira Akter Antara (karate), Fatema Mujib (fencing), Ety Khatun (emerging archer), Dipu Chakma (taekwondo).

Archery coach Martin Frederick and Bangladesh Archery Federation's general secretary Kazi Rajib Uddin Ahmed Chapal were named as best coach and best organiser respectively while City Group was named as best sponsors of the year.

BSPA also honoured athletics coaches Rafique Ullah Akhter Milon and Tajul Islam and Kabaddi coach Abdul Jalil at the occasion graced by Square Toiletries' managing director Anjan Chowdhury Pintu and AIPS, Asia president Sattam Al Sehali.

Eng 192 for 4 on Day 1

AFP, Johannesburg

Zak Crawley's maiden Test half-century gave England a solid foundation before South Africa struck back on the first day of the fourth and final Test at the Wanderers Stadium on Friday.

Holding an unbeatable 2-1 series lead, England were 192 for four when bad light ended a rain-shortened day.

England's youthful opening pair of Crawley (66) and Dom Sibley (39) shared England's first century opening partnership since 2016 and blunted South Africa's fast bowlers on a pitch which both captains expected to be challenging for batsmen. Crawley, 21, and Sibley, 24, put on 107 before Sibley was caught down the leg side by wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock to give new cap Beuran Hendricks his first Test wicket.

South Africa claimed three more wickets to have England at a slightly precarious 157 for four but captain Joe Root and Ollie Pope took the tourists safely through to the close in deteriorating light.

Rain prevented any play before lunch and the South African bowling was surprisingly unthreatening when it did get under way. England were 100 for no wicket at tea but South Africa changed their tactics after the interval, bowling more short-pitched deliveries.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ENGLAND: First innings 192 for 4 (Crawley 66, Sibley 44, Denly 27, Root 25 not out 25, Pope 22 not out; Philander 1-37, Hendricks 1-43)

U-19s top group after washout

SPORTS REPORTER

The rain in Potchefstroom forced Bangladesh Under-19's last group match of the ICC under-19 World Cup against their Pakistani counterparts to be abandoned, thus helping the young Tigers finish on top of Group C.

Before rain intervened, however, Bangladesh were in deep trouble after being asked to bat first. Akbar Ali's troops were floundering on 106 for nine in 25 overs before the heavens opened. Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir Khan had taken four wickets for 30 runs. For Bangladesh, only opener Tanzid Hasan offered some resistance with a 35-ball 34.

Bangladesh and Pakistan had already qualified for the quarterfinals before the match. Both sides have five points from three games.

India go 1-0 up

AFP, Auckland



India cast aside talk of travel fatigue with half-centuries from Lokesh Rahul and Shreyas Iyer headlining an emphatic run chase to beat New Zealand with an over to spare in the opening Twenty20 match in Auckland Friday.

Player of the match Iyer hit the winning runs with a booming six to be unbeaten on 58 as India reached 204 for four in reply to New Zealand's 203 for five.

Opener Rahul (56) set up the run chase in a 99-run stand off 50 balls for the second wicket with captain Virat Kohli (45).

Although the tourists only arrived in New Zealand on Tuesday, Kohli said they were determined that would not be a factor in how they approached the game.

"We never spoke of the jet lag inside the team. We thought we're not going to take anything for an excuse, we're just going to come out there and back our skills," Kohli said.

"We were just looking forward to going on the park and that's key to doing well at the international level and probably that's

the reason why we put in a performance like that today."

A 200-plus score on most grounds would usually be a formidable target in Twenty20 cricket but it is not so imposing at Auckland's Eden Park with its short boundaries.

New Zealand also did not help their defence of 203 by bowling 10 wides and missing wicket opportunities with sloppy fielding.

Kohli won the first play of the day when he called correctly at the toss and elected to bowl.

Half-centuries by Colin Munro (59), Kane Williamson (51) and Ross Tay-lor (54 not out) formed the basis of the New Zealand innings.

The second match in the series is in Auckland on Sunday.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 203 for 5 in 20 overs (Guptill 30, Munro 59, Williamson 51, Taylor 54 not out; Bumrah 1-31, Dube 1-24, Jadeja 1-18)

INDIA: 204 for 4 in 19 overs (Rahul 56, Kohli 45, Iyer 58 not out; Sodhi 2-36)

Result: India won by six wickets.

Player-of-the-match: Shreyas Iyer.



Shreyas Iyer's unbeaten 58 off 29 balls guided India to a six-wicket victory over New Zealand in the first T20I at Eden Park in Auckland yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

BTV & RTV

Bangabandhu Gold Cup FINAL

Palestine v Burundi

Live from 4:00 pm

SONY ESPN

South Africa v England Fourth Test, Day 2

Live from 2:00pm

Pakistan v Bangladesh Second T20I

Live from 3:00pm

STAR SPORTS 3

ICC U-19s World Cup

South Africa v UAE

Live from 2:00pm

SONY SIX & TEN 2

Australian Open

Live from 6:00 am & 2:30pm

TEN 2

Serie A

Torino v Atalanta

Live from 2:00am (Sunday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

Bundesliga

Eintracht Frankfurt v Leipzig

Live from 8:15pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

Bundesliga

Borussia M'gladbach v Mainz

Live from 8:15pm

Bayern Munich v Schalke

Live from 11:15pm

Bangabandhu Gold Cup FINAL

Palestine v Burundi

Time: 4:00 pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka



Former World Number One Caroline Wozniacki was reduced to tears after her final professional match ended in defeat against Ons Jabeur at the Australian Open yesterday, a day that also saw Serena Williams's (Bottom) bid for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title dashed and defending champion Naomi Osaka ousted.

PHOTO: AFP

Nadal's new friend, Coco's plea

AFP, Melbourne

World number one Rafael Nadal planted a kiss on the cheek of a ballgirl he accidentally hit in the face with a shot on Thursday -- and on Friday, he made it up to her all over again.

"Had the chance to meet her and her family today," the 33-year-old tweeted. "So happy she is well after the scariest moment I've had on a tennis court. Anita is a brave girl!"

Nadal also gave the 13-year-old a cap, according to local media, and signed it, "To my friend, Anita."

"He's very friendly and nice, he's very kind and shows really great sportsmanship," the Herald Sun quoted Anita as saying, adding that she spent about 20 minutes with the tennis ace.

Coco's public plea

Coco Gauff made a very public plea for a selfie with Australian tennis legend Rod Laver -- so she can put it on Instagram.

After defeating reigning champion Naomi Osaka in the Melbourne arena named after Laver, the 15-year-old sensation said in an on-court interview: "I walked past him a couple of times in the hallways, I never really said 'hi' because I'm

a little bit nervous.

"If he sees this, tell him we can set up a meet-up some time. I need a selfie for Instagram."

The 81-year-old was quick to reply on Twitter: "Congratulations on your incredible victory tonight. I would love to meet you too."

It will be quite a comedown when Gauff's run comes to an end in Melbourne -- she has homework to do.

"My teachers are giving me some time considering the circumstances. They're letting me submit some assignments late," she said.

'What are they doing?'

Ons Jabeur was the toast of Tunisia after sending Caroline Wozniacki into retirement by defeating the former world number one -- but she would have preferred it if they'd just gone to bed.

Her match with the Dane was on in the early hours back home and someone showed her a picture of a cafe where fans had stayed up to see her in action on television.

"I was like, 'Wow, what they are doing now?'" she said.

"They should either be in the disco or sleeping."

Federer survives scare as stars fall

AFP, Melbourne

Serena Williams crashed out, 15-year-old Coco Gauff stunned Naomi Osaka and Roger Federer survived a five-set thriller as the form book went flying out of the window at the Australian Open on Friday.

Men's title-holder Novak Djokovic eased into the last 16 but elsewhere there were surprises all over Melbourne Park with Williams the biggest victim and Federer fighting back from 4-8 down in a fifth-set tie-break with John Millman.

Williams' bid for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam was shattered by the unlikely figure of China's Wang Qiang, who triumphed in three tough sets -- after winning just one game when they played at the US Open in September.

Gauff then stepped up her giant-killing Melbourne debut as she ousted Japanese defending champion Osaka, 22, in dismissive style, winning 6-3, 6-4 in just 67 minutes to reach round four.

"Oh my gosh. Two years ago I lost first round in the juniors and now I'm here -- this is crazy," said the teenager, who shocked Venus Williams in the first round.

Federer came within a whisker of repeating his 2018 US Open upset by Millman as he was taken to five punishing sets by the tough Australian.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion was facing defeat in the

super tie-breaker but he clawed back from 4-8 down to clinch his 100th win at the Australian Open.

"Oh God, it was tough," said Federer. "Thank God it was a super tie-breaker (10 points), otherwise I would have lost this one."

"It came down to the wire in the end."

With Williams now 38, 23 years

Margaret Court's 47-year-old record for Grand Slam titles.

"I definitely do believe (I can equal it) or I wouldn't be on tour," said Williams.

Williams was the bookies' favourite to lift the trophy for the eighth time but she came unstuck against a determined Wang, who won 6-4, 6/7 (2/7), 7-5.



older than Gauff, the two players are at opposite ends of their careers.

And with Williams' close friend Caroline Wozniacki retiring on Friday, after defeat to Ons Jabeur, it looked like a changing of the guard in women's tennis.

But Williams, who has now had eight winless Grand Slams since returning from childbirth, said she hadn't given up hope of matching

Her defeat came just minutes after Denmark's Wozniacki was knocked out by Tunisia's Jabeur, bringing a tearful end to the former world number one's final tournament before retiring.

"I had a dream when I was a kid. I wanted to win a Grand Slam. I wanted to be number one in the world," said Wozniacki, the Melbourne winner in 2018.

"People thought that I was crazy being from a small country. But I made it happen."

Williams' exit removes a major hurdle for Australia's world number one Ashleigh Barty, 23, who had been on course to meet her in the semi-finals.

Barty, bidding to become the first Australian champion since 1978, hit form in a 6-3, 6-2 demolition of Elena Rybakina, saying she had played her best tennis so far this year.

Gauff, who trained with Serena Williams in the off-season, had promised she would be less nervous than in her last meeting with Osaka, when she was thrashed in round three of last year's US Open.

And so it proved as the teenager broke once in the first set and twice in the second to floor a rattled Osaka and ramp up a rivalry that could run and run.

In the men's draw, reigning champion Djokovic thrashed Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 to reach the round of 16 at a canter.

But Greek sixth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas was also on the receiving end of an upset as he went down in straight sets to Canada's Milos Raonic, the world number 35.

Former US Open champion Marin Cilic, 31, outlasted Robert Bautista Agut in five tough sets and Tennys Sandgren, under fire during his last deep run in Melbourne over links to right-wing activists, beat fellow American Sam Querrey in straight sets.

Niguez vents frustration after Cup exit

REUTERS, Madrid



Atletico Madrid midfielder Saul Niguez said his team need to take a long hard look at themselves and work out what they are doing wrong after Thursday's humiliating 2-1 loss at third division Cultural Leonesa in the last 32 of the Copa del Rey.

"I hope and want the team to see this loss as a very painful defeat and that it can spur us into action because we cannot allow something like this to happen again," Saul told reporters.

"I won't tire of saying it, this is not what Atletico Madrid should be about, this defeat doesn't represent the team. The fans don't deserve this, the club doesn't deserve this."

Despite fielding a strong side containing Spain international Saul and club-record signing Joao Felix, Atleti could not see off the minnows in 90 minutes as Julien Castaneda cancelled out Angel Correa's opener to force extra time.

The lowly hosts overpowered the Champions League side in the extra period and a strike from Sergio Benito condemned Atletico to their earliest exit from the Copa since losing to Albacete in 2011, before Diego Simeone took charge of the club.

Atletico, who are third in La Liga and into the last 16 of the Champions League, beat Barcelona 3-2 in the Spanish Super Cup earlier this month and held Real Madrid to a draw in the competition's final before losing on penalties.

But Saul expressed concern about his side's recent performances against smaller teams, less than a week after they slumped to a 2-0 defeat at struggling Eibar.

"I've been here for seven years and never seen anything like this," he added.

Real face Zaragoza in last 16

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid were on Friday drawn away to six-time winners Zaragoza while Barcelona take on La Liga rivals Leganes in the last 16 of the Copa del Rey.

Looking to win the Cup for the first time since 2014, Madrid will travel to La Romareda next week to face Zaragoza, who were relegated from the top flight in 2013 and have not been back but did beat Mallorca in the last 32.

Zinedine Zidane's side beat third-tier side Unionistas de Salamanca on Wednesday, while Barcelona needed a late Antoine Griezmann goal to win 2-1 away to Ibiza.

The Catalans, who have won the Copa del Rey more times than any other club and reached the last six finals, will entertain a Leganes side sitting in the relegation zone in La Liga.

Meanwhile, third-tier Cultural Leonesa's reward for eliminating Atletico Madrid on Thursday is a home tie against the holders, Valencia.

Real Sociedad and Osasuna will meet in the only other tie between two top-flight teams.

'Title race not over yet'

REUTERS, Wolverhampton



Pundits have already handed the Premier League title to Liverpool. Their own fans are singing: "Now they're going to believe us!". And the Reds' latest win, 2-1 at Wolverhampton Wanderers on Thursday, put them a massive 16 points clear.

But manager Juergen Klopp is having none of it.

"I don't think about it (winning the title). I just think about winning the next matches ... let's carry on," he said after Liverpool's 22nd victory in 23 league games this season.

"It's over when it's over, not before," added Klopp, saying he had forgotten during the week how many points Liverpool were on and was now purely

focused in their next games at Shrewsbury Town in the FA Cup and West Ham United in the Premier League.

Klopp praised Wolves' fight and spoke of the need for his charges to keep improving, despite their lofty status.

"Wolves are doing so unbelievably well, so different to everything else you face. How (manager) Nuno (Espirito Santo) sets it up, it's really good," he said in admiration of a team who have been taking big scalps at their Molineux fortress.

Klopp was frustrated at Liverpool's fluffed chances, as Mohamed Salah had a rare off day with his finishing.

"The chances we had were incredible. We were at least four or five times in a one-on-one with the goalkeeper, so if we score then it is game over," he said of missed opportunities.



Liverpool midfielder Roberto Firmino (R) celebrates with defender Virgil van Dijk after scoring the second goal in their 2-1 win against Wolverhampton Wanderers at the Molineux Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Burundi out to spoil Palestine's party

SPORTS REPORTER



Since the introduction of the Bangabandhu Gold Cup international football tournament in 1996, only Malaysia had the unique record of winning the trophy twice. Today Palestine can stake a claim to that record when the defending champions take on Burundi in the final of the sixth edition, with the match scheduled to kick off at 4:00pm at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Apart from Malaysia Red and Malaysia under-23 sides, Japan Football League XI, Nepal and Palestine have won the title of this invitational tournament, which was revived in 2015 following a gap of 15 years. The only time hosts Bangladesh reached the final was in 2015 and since then they have been eliminated from the semifinals each time. They will be mere spectators again when Palestine and Burundi, the two top-ranked sides of the tournament, square off in today's final.

While 106th-ranked Palestine had to battle hard for a 1-0 win over Seychelles in the first semifinal, 151st-ranked Burundi had little trouble dispatching Bangladesh 3-0 in the other semifinal.

Palestine have scored five goals and are yet to concede any while Burundi have scored 10 goals despite conceding lead in both group matches. Hence the final is expected to be a battle between Palestine's defence and Burundi's attackers.

"We know the final match will be difficult, but we are ready for it because we have come to Bangladesh to defend the title," Palestine coach Makram Daboub told reporters at the pre-match conference yesterday.

"Burundi are a good and strong team and they have some skilful players. They also have the tournament's best attacking line-up, but they



The coaches and key players of Palestine and Burundi unveil the Bangabandhu Gold Cup trophy, which they would be vying for in today's final, at a pre-final event at the BFF house yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

play individually," Makram said. "But Palestine play as a group. We have also kept clean sheet in last three matches. I believe in my players, who are focused on winning the match."

The Tunisian believes the final will be an even affair and there is no clear favourite. However, Burundi coach Bipfubusa Joslin is keeping Palestine ahead even though he believes the best team will come out triumph.

Joslin's big strength is his attacking pair of Nshimirimana Jospin and Tambwe Amissi, who have together scored nine goals, with the former

bagging seven. However, the coach does not want to dwell in the past.

"You should not count scoring of the previous games. Scoring in the final match depends on how both sides play but we will definitely want to score more like we did in this tournament," said Joslin.

"We want to congratulate Palestine for winning the title last time, but it is another day and another final for them. We have come here to win the tournament and our dream to clinch our maiden international trophy will realise after winning the final," Joslin added.



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‘No president abused power in this way’

Democrats say Trump puts own interest ahead of US’s, urge senate to oust him

AFP, Washington

Lead House impeachment manager Adam Schiff called dramatically for the Senate to remove President Donald Trump from office Thursday, saying the US leader cannot be trusted to put the country’s interests ahead of his own.

“The American people deserve a president they can count on, to put their interest first,” said Schiff.

His impassioned words capped a long day in which Democrats detailed Trump’s illicit scheme to pressure Ukraine to help his 2020 reelection campaign.

“You know, you can’t trust this president to do what is right for this country. You can trust he will do what’s right for Donald Trump,” Schiff added.

“He’ll do it now. He’s done it before. He’ll do it for the next several months. He’ll do it in the election if he’s allowed to. This is why, if you find him guilty, you must find that he should be removed.”

“Because right matters. And truth matters. Otherwise we are lost.”

As the 100 senators sat as jurors and millions of Americans watched on television, House impeachment managers mustered scores of videos, internal documents and extensive witness testimony to lay out a strong case that the US leader abused his powers.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



People look at the charred remains of their homes at Chalantika slum in the capital’s Mirpur yesterday morning, hours after a fire razed the slum. Fifteen fire engines doused the flames. About five months ago, another fire had broken out in a part of the slum which has now been designated for a project. Inset, a signboard of the National Housing Authority reads “Site for flat project; entry prohibited without permission”.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Fire ravages 400 shanties in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After a fire devastated Chalantika slum in the capital’s Mirpur around five months ago, middle-aged Hazera Begum was struggling hard to get back on her feet.

But she was dealt a fresh blow yesterday. Fire broke out again at the slum, reducing around 400 shanties to ashes and leaving two seriously injured.

A cook at a garment factory, Hazera used to live with her son at a shanty at the slum, but she lost everything in the August 16 fire.

“After the incident, we passed several days right under the sky ... We built a new shanty after some NGOs came to our rescue and gave us aid.

“But now, everything is finished again,” she said yesterday, sitting next to the ashes of what used to be her home.

Lima Khanam, an official at the control room of Fire Service and Civil Defence,

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3 killed in ‘gunfights’

STAR REPORT

Three suspected criminals were killed in separate reported incidents of “gunfights” with law enforcers in three districts early yesterday.

In Cox’s Bazar, a “suspected drug smuggler” was killed in a “gunfight” with Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officials in Hnila union of Teknaf upazila around 4:00am, reports our local correspondent, quoting Lt Col Mohammad Faisal Hasan Khan, commanding officer (CO) of BGB 2 Battalion.

He said the person was a Rohingya from Kutupalong camp, however, he could not confirm the identity of the victim.

The incident took place near Jadimura mosque in the union on the bank of Naf River when a BGB special patrol team noticed some people carrying sacks on their head, the official said.

As the BGB team challenged them, they opened fire on the law enforcers in response, triggering the gun battle, the CO said.

BGB later found the victim caught a bullet and took him to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex and later to Cox’s Bazar Sadar Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

He was at first taken to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex and later shifted to

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

DHAKA CITY POLLS 2020 BNP’s mayoral aspirants to push for city govt

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The election manifestos of the two BNP mayor candidates are likely to highlight the introduction of an “effective city government” to build a modern and liveable Dhaka city.

The BNP has nominated Ishraque Hossain and Tabith Awal for mayors of Dhaka south and north city corporations. Party leaders said the two have already finalised their election manifestos which would be unveiled soon.

Urban planners say city government is the only way to rid the capital of its problems. Organisations providing services like housing and infrastructure, water supply, transport, waste management, education, and health care have to come under the city government.

Tabith is likely to propose a 12-point plan to make Dhaka “habitable and free from corruption”. Ishraque may come up with a 16-point plan to build a “world class Dhaka metropolis”.

The two manifestos are almost similar to each other as those have been drafted by a group of top BNP leaders. They finalised the manifestos after identifying the problems of the mega city.

Both the candidates would briefly describe how they would ease the traffic congestion, develop a better sewerage system, set up recreation centres and corruption-free city corporations.

“The BNP candidates are likely to announce their manifestos after the Awami League nominees reveal theirs,” said a BNP standing committee

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RELATED STORIES ON PAGE 3

Timber trader murdered in Bogura

Jubo League leader, his accomplice held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A timber trader was hacked to death allegedly by a Jubo League leader in Bogura Sadar upazila yesterday.

Victim Shahed, 35, was the son of Tozammel Hossain of Purba Ashkona village of the upazila.

Police detained Rubel, 30, president of Jubo League’s Nishindara union unit, and his associate Shanto for their alleged involvement in the murder.

The incident took place in broad daylight in Nungola Eidgah field area, police said quoting locals.

According to witnesses, Rubel and Shanto were beating up a local boy around 12:15pm with pieces of wood over a trifling matter.

As Shahed asked them not to take the pieces from his shop, the two became angry and started hacking him with sharp weapons,

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Scientists start making air out of lunar dust



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A new oxygen plant built to produce oxygen out of Moon dust hopes to lay the foundations for the lunar base of the future.

The European Space Agency (ESA) has opened the plant as part of its plans to send people to live on the Moon in the years to come.

If humans are to live on the lunar surface – a focus of space agencies around the world, and an important step for humanity’s journey to Mars and beyond – they will need access to oxygen to breathe and create rocket fuel for travelling around.

The ESA hopes that the new plant can provide practical ways of creating that using the dust on the Moon’s surface – known as regolith – in a way that

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

16 Jamaat men arrested in C’nawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Police arrested 16 activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and recovered 15 crude bombs and gunpowder from their possession in Chapainawabganj town yesterday morning.

Ziaur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said on information, a police team raided a mango orchard in Charmohanpur area and arrested the Jamaat men when they were holding a secret meeting.

The team also seized 15 crude bombs, 500gm of

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 25

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:35 12:45 4:15 5:46 7:15
JAMAAT 6:10 1:15 4:30 5:50 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Family may file special appeal for Khaleda’s release

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia’s sister Selima Islam yesterday said they were planning to make a special appeal seeking Khaleda’s release from jail as they were worried about her life.

Selima, however, did not make it clear whether they would make the appeal to the government or the apex court.

Talking to reporters after meeting her sister at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), Selima said, “We’re thinking of making a special appeal, but we are yet to take the final decision.

“The way her [Khaleda’s] physical condition has deteriorated, we fear we wouldn’t be able to take her home alive if her stay here prolongs. Any accident can take place anytime.”

Selima said her sister needed advanced treatment immediately as her condition has worsened further.

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Child jockeys race horses at a competition in Padmapara village of Bogura’s Gabtali upazila yesterday. Some 40 jockeys, mostly children, joined the race, organised as part of a three-day village fair. Although using children as jockeys is prohibited, their guardians let them take part in the race to win lucrative prizes.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

SAVING LIFE OF A BABY 2 Bangladeshis awarded in Singapore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Bangladeshi migrant workers have been recognised in Singapore for saving the life of an abandoned child.

The awardees – Shamim Patwari, 24, and Mostafa Kamal, 37 – work as cleaners in the northern part of Bedok Reservoir in the country, reported The New Paper.

Earlier this month, they rescued an abandoned child from a rubbish chute.

Migrant Workers’ Centre (MWC) in Singapore awarded the duo with certificates of recognition.

The Bangladeshis received “MWC Commendation Award” and Fair Price vouchers worth \$500 each.

Yeo Guat Kwang, chairman of MWC, said the migrant workers went out of their way to help others.

“Such deeds should not go unnoticed,” he added.

Shamim, who spoke to The New Paper through a translator, said he did not expect anything of this sort and did not even tell his family members in Bangladesh about the incident.

“We have done something good and saved the life of a baby. We hope that this will encourage more people to help others in need,” he said.

THE WAY THEY SAVED THE BABY

It began with a soft crying sound and ended with the newborn, according to a report of The Straits Times.

It was the morning of January 7.

As Shamim and Mostafa drove a buggy to collect rubbish

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