NEWS IN *brief*

Indian airlines ban comedian for rant

AFP, *New Delhi*

Four Indian airlines have banned a top stand-up comic over a mid-air confrontation with a star political television presenter that has become an internet sensation. Kunal Kamra was banned for six months by Indigo -- the airline carrying him during the incident -- while Air India, GoAir and Spice Jet barred the outspoken comic "until further notice". Kamra said that when he saw Arnab Goswami on the Mumbai-Lucknow flight, he "politely asked" to have a conversation but the presenter "pretended to be on a phone call".

Lassa fever deaths in Nigeria rise to 41

AFP, *Lagos*

The death toll from Lassa fever in Nigeria since the beginning of January has risen to 41 as cases were confirmed in more regions, Nigeria's disease control agency said. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) said Tuesday that from January 1 to January 26 a total of 258 confirmed cases, including five health workers, were reported across 19 states. The latest figures marked an increase from 29 deaths and 195 confirmed cases.

26 killed, 32 hurt in India bus crash

AFP, *Mumbai*

Twenty-six people including a seven-year-old girl were killed after the bus they were travelling in crashed with an autorickshaw and fell into a well in western India, officials said yesterday. Emergency crews worked through the night to rescue survivors and retrieve bodies and used a crane to remove the red-and-white bus from the well, as hundreds thronging to the crash site after the accident late Tuesday.

Can defeat Pak 'in 10 days'

Says Modi; Islamabad swiftly rejects 'belligerent rhetoric'

AGENCIES

India is now capable of making Pakistan "bite the dust" in less than 10 days in any new war with its arch-rival, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

The nuclear-armed neighbours have fought three wars and last February came close to a fourth with tit-for-tat airstrikes sparked by an attack on Indian troops in Kashmir.

Modi is under pressure after weeks of ongoing protests against a new citizenship law, a slowing economy and the prospect of losing the latest in a string of state elections in New Delhi next month.

"Pakistan has already lost three wars. Our armed forces will not take more than 7-10 days to make Pakistan bite the dust," Modi said in a speech to military personnel on Tuesday.

His comments follow last year's incident when an Indian fighter jet was shot down -- and the pilot captured -- by Islamabad after a rare aerial engagement.

Pakistan continues to wage 'proxy war' against India by backing militants in Kashmir

Nuclear-armed neighbours came close to fourth war last February with airstrikes

Pakistan swiftly rejected the "belligerent rhetoric", calling Modi's comments "irresponsible and war-mongering".

A statement from the foreign office said it reflected India's "incurable obsession" with Pakistan".

Wearing a maroon National Cadet Corps baseball cap at the event in the capital, Modi said India's new prowess was thanks to what he called "youthful thinking".

He said that Indian strikes against what New Delhi said were militants in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and inside Pakistan proper in 2016 and last year were evidence of this.

"This is 'youthful thinking'. We carry out surgical strikes and take on terrorists in their homes," Modi said.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars: in 1947, 1965 and 1971, as well as in 1999 during the so-called Kargil Conflict, reports AFP.

Modi said that Pakistan continues to wage a "proxy war" against India by backing militants in Indian-administered Kashmir where tens of thousands of people have died in recent decades.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since Independence from Britain in 1947. In August Modi's government stripped Indian Kashmir of its partial autonomy.

India will mark the first anniversary of the air strikes on February 26. The strikes on terror bases of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) were India's response to last year's Pulwama suicide attack in which 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed, reports Hindustan Times.

On January 11, army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane said if the government ordered his force to seize control of PoK, it would act on those directions. "As far as PoK is concerned, there was a parliamentary resolution many years ago that the whole of erstwhile J&K is a part of India. If Parliament wants that area should be ours at some stage and if we get such orders, we will definitely act on those directions," he said.

AUSTRALIA BUSHFIRE THREAT

PM seeks greater federal powers during disasters

REUTERS, *Sydney*

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said yesterday he wants greater federal powers during natural disasters, as authorities warned bushfires ravaging the country for months were sweeping through a national park near the capital.

Morrison said he wanted to set up a "legal framework that would allow the Commonwealth to declare a national state of emergency" before the next summer bushfire season, adding the chain of command between states and the federal government remained unclear.

Although he gave no details, the plan showed the conservative leader moving to head off criticism he was too slow to act when the seriousness of the country's worst bushfire season in a generation became apparent late last year.

Attacked by political opponents and media commentators for holidaying in Hawaii while the fires raged, Morrison initially said the country's eight state and territory governments had the main oversight during natural disasters.

He later mobilised about 3,000 Australian Defence Force reservists to help regional communities affected by the fires.

"It has long been the case that state and territory governments have primary responsibility for protecting the life and property within their borders," Morrison said.

"The scale of the bushfires this season, not least their simultaneous reach across many borders, has demonstrated to me the limits of these arrangements," Morrison said in a speech in the capital, Canberra.

Just to the south of the city, authorities warned people to stay away from some regional areas due to a 10,000 hectare (25,000 acre) forest fire, although no suburbs of Canberra itself were under threat.

Over the summer, Canberra has regularly been shrouded in bushfire smoke that has put its air quality among the lowest ranked in the world and prompted government agencies to ask employees to stay home.

A week ago, the city's airport was closed briefly when bushfire burned near its edges.

The Bureau of Meteorology has warned Canberra will be at the centre of a heatwave that will put the city's temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) for several days.

Protesters from Shaheen Bagh hold placards as they take part in a demonstration against India's new citizenship law at Jantar Mantar, in New Delhi yesterday. PHOTO: **AFP**

CITIZENSHIP PLAY

India school faces sedition charges

AFP, *New Delhi*

Indian police have launched a sedition investigation against a primary school over a play that allegedly criticised a contentious citizenship law, officials said yesterday.

There have been widespread street demonstrations against the law introduced by the Hindu-nationalist government that grants citizenship to religious groups from three neighbouring countries, but excludes Muslims.

Police said they were laying initial charges under the British colonial-era law against the principal and the management of the school in Bidar district in the southern state of Karnataka.

The probe came after a member of the youth wing of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party filed a complaint against the school.

"We have started an investigation into the complaint by an activist who alleged that the play criticised and disrespected Modi," Bidar police chief T. Sreedhara told AFP.

He added that the young student actors, aged between nine and 10 years old, were also being questioned, but would not be charged.

A school official told AFP they were being "unnecessarily" targeted by the government for expressing their views.

The play, which was performed on Sunday, was part of Shaheen Public School's founding day celebrations.

'A virtual fortress'

India's railways to use facial recognition to fight crime amid privacy fears

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, *New Delhi*

Most major railway stations in India will use facial recognition to fight crime by the end of 2020, a senior official said, in a move that digital rights campaigners on Tuesday warned could breach people's privacy in the absence of stringent laws.

The system is being trialled in the tech hub of Bengaluru, formerly known as Bangalore, where about half a million faces are scanned every day and - using artificial intelligence (AI) - matched against faces stored in a police database of criminals.

Railway network is being used by traffickers to lure millions of women, kids.

The system is being trialled in tech hub of Bengaluru.

"The railways will become like a virtual fortress," a senior railways official told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"Without a physical, brick and mortar boundary wall, we will be able to make the whole system more secure," said the official who declined to be named as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

Stretching from the foothills of the Himalayas to sandy southern beaches, India's railway network is one of the biggest in the world, carrying about 23 million people - or the population of Taiwan - every day.

But it is also used by traffickers to lure millions of women and children to cities with the promise of good jobs, only to sell them into sex slavery or trap them in bonded labour where they are forced to work to repay a debt.

The rise of cloud computing and AI technologies have popularised the use of facial recognition globally, from tracking criminals to counting truant students. While supporters of the software say it promises greater security and efficiency, some technology analysts say the benefits are unclear and come at the cost of privacy losses and greater surveillance.

Kashmiris use VPN apps to skirt social media ban

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Last week, India restored limited internet access in Kashmir after close to six months - the longest in a democracy - but major social media sites remain blocked for seven million residents of the Muslim-majority region.

People have resorted to virtual private network (VPN) apps in a bid to bypass the firewall to access social media websites. VPNs use proxy servers that allow users to change their location to circumvent regional internet blockades.

Widely popular social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram continue to be blocked.

Authorities in India-administered Kashmir resumed slow-speed 2G services on Friday but granted access to only 300 odd "whitelisted" websites, which include tax collection, education, banking and government department websites.

Sheikh Adnan, a film studies scholar based in the Indian capital New Delhi, could video call his parents back home in Kashmir for the first time in almost six months, thanks to VPN.

"It was very overwhelming. I hadn't seen my parents all these months. When I learned about this VPN thing, I asked my friend to rush to my home and fix VPN for my parents. They downloaded half a dozen VPN applications before one eventually helped in connecting a video call through WhatsApp," Adnan told Al Jazeera.

Fearing widespread protests, internet services had been suspended in the conflict-wracked region since August 5, when India revoked the region's partial autonomy and statehood.

On Monday, many of the Kashmiris could be seen announcing their arrival on social media portals like Facebook and Instagram with messages like "Viva La VPN".

JET CRASH SITE IN AFGHANISTAN

US forces recover two bodies near wreckage

AFP, *Ghazni*

US forces on Tuesday recovered two bodies near the wreckage of a military jet that crashed in a Taliban-controlled area of eastern Afghanistan, after Afghan forces trying to reach the scene clashed with insurgents.

The Bombardier E-11A -- used for battlefield communications -- went down in a snowy area on Monday.

"US forces recovered the remains of two personnel from the site," the US military said in a statement.

"The remains were found near the crash site, treated with dignity and respect by the local Afghan community, in accordance with their culture," the statement said.

The remains of the plane were destroyed by US forces, it added, noting that the flight data recorder was recovered for analysis, as the investigation into the crash continues.

"There are no indications the crash was caused by enemy fire," the US military reiterated.

Ghazni police chief Khaled Wardak said US helicopters landed at the site in the late afternoon and were reinforced by Afghan security forces on the ground during the operation.

"Following the removal of the bodies, our forces have moved back to their bases," added Wardak.

Earlier in the day, coalition forces flew sorties over the site of the crashed jet with one aircraft firing flares as a crowd gathered nearby, according to a local reporter at the scene.

EASTERN LUBRICANTS BLENDERS LIMITED
Statement of Financial Position
As at 31 December, 2019
(PROVISIONAL & UN-AUDITED)

	Taka in '000	
	31-Dec-19	30-Jun-19
ASSETS & PROPERTIES		
NON CURRENT ASSETS & PROPERTIES	23,591	9,122
Property, Plant & Equipment	7,610	7,814
Investment-Depreciation Fund (FDR)	15,000	-
Finacnial Assets (Note-5.00)	981	1,308
CURRENT ASSETS & PROPERTIES	306,224	318,771
Inventories	20,080	16,602
Accounts Receivables	14,332	32,302
Advances & Pre-payments	28,816	29,780
Short Term Investments in Fixed Deposits	-	50,000
Cash and Cash Equivalents	242,996	190,087
TOTAL ASSETS & PROPERTIES	329,815	327,893
SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY & LIABILITIES		
SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY	184,243	181,662
Share Capital	9,940	9,940
Retained Earning	173,614	171,314
Depreciation Fund Reserve (Accumulated Surplus)	281	
General Reserve	408	408
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Deferred Tax Liability - (Note-6.00)	1,334	1,014
CURRENT LIABILITIES	144,238	145,216
Creditors & Accruals	132,719	133,807
Unclaimed Dividend	1,900	1,900
Provision for Income Tax	7,784	7,879
Workers' Profit Participation & Welfare Fund	1,835	1,631
TOTAL SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY & LIABILITIES	329,815	327,893
NET ASSETS VALUE PER SHARE- Note-12.00	185.36	182.76

CFO, Company Secretary, CEO & MD, Director, Director
Chattogram
29 January 2020

EASTERN LUBRICANTS BLENDERS LIMITED
STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019
(PROVISIONAL & UN-AUDITED)

	Note	July,19-Dec,19	July,18-Dec,18	Oct,19-Dec,19	Taka in '000 Oct,18-Dec,18
Revenue	2.00	20,216	66,178	18,317	2,474
Direct Expense	3.00	(25,682)	(66,133)	(20,880)	(3,689)
Operating (Loss)/Profit		(5,466)	45	(2,563)	(1,215)
Administrative & General Expenses		(807)	(833)	(544)	(573)
Trading Profit/(Loss)		(6,273)	(788)	(3,107)	(1,788)
Non Operating Income	4.00	10,672	4,843	5,919	3,291
Unrealized Gain/ (Loss) on Market value of Financial Assets		(327)	(33)	(327)	261
Profit before Contribution to WPP & WF and Taxation		4,072	4,022	2,486	1,764
Contribution to Workers' Profit Participation Fund @ 5%		(204)	(201)	(124)	(88)
Profit before taxation		3,868	3,821	2,361	1,676
Provision for Income tax					
Current		(967)	(955)	(590)	(419)
Deffered	6.00	(320)	109	(322)	79
		(1,287)	(846)	(912)	(340)
Profit after Taxation		2,581	2,975	1,448	1,335
Surplus from Investment transfer to Depreciation Fund Reserve		(281)	-	(281)	-
		2,300	2,975	1,167	1,335
Other Comprehensive Income		-	-	-	-
Total Comprehensive Income		2,300	2,975	1,167	1,335
Earning Per Share (EPS) Note- 11.00 - Basic Tk.		2.60	2.99	1.46	1.34

CFO, Company Secretary, CEO & MD, Director, Director
Chattogram
29 January 2020

EASTERN LUBRICANTS BLENDERS LIMITED
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW
FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019
(PROVISIONAL & UN-AUDITED)

	Taka'000	
	July,19-Dec,19	July,18-Dec,18
CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Net Cash (paid)/received from Customers & others	46,345	184,992
Net Cash paid to Suppliers & others	(27,374)	(44,940)
Income Tax paid	(1,062)	(2,847)
Cash Inflow / (Outflow) from Operating Activities-Note-9.00	17,909	137,205
CASH FLOW FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Finacnial Assets	-	-
Short Term Investments in Fixed Deposits	50,000	
Investment-Depreciation Fund (FDR)	(15,000)	-
Cash Inflow / (Outflow) from Investing Activities	35,000	-
CASH FLOW FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Dividend paid	-	(3)
Cash Inflow / (Outflow) from Financing Activities	-	(3)
Net Increase/ (Decrease) in Cash & Cash Equivalents	52,909	137,202
Cash and Cash Equivalents at the beginning of the period	190,087	113,010
Cash and Cash Equivalents at the end of the year period	242,996	250,212
Net Operating Cash Flow per share (Tk.) Note- 10.00	18.02	138.03

CFO, Company Secretary, CEO & MD, Director, Director
Chattogram
29 January 2020

EASTERN LUBRICANTS BLENDERS LIMITED
Statement of Changes In Equity
FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019
(PROVISIONAL & UN-AUDITED)

Taka in '000

Particulars	Share Capital	Retained Earning	Depreciation Fund Reserve	General Reserve	Total
Balance as on 01 July 2018	9,940	157,942		408	168,290
Net Profit after tax for the year 2018-2019 (HY)	-	2,975		-	2,975
Balance as at 31 December 2018	9,940	160,917		408	171,265
Balance as on 01 July 2018	9,940	157,942		408	168,290
Net Profit after tax for the year 2018-2019	-	23,312		-	23,312
Cash dividend paid for the year 2017-2018	-	(9,940)		-	(9,940)
Balance as at 30 June 2019	9,940	171,314		408	181,662
Balance as on 01 July 2019	9,940	171,314		408	181,662
Transfer to Depreciation Fund Reserve			281		281
Net Profit after tax for the year 2019-2020 (HY)	-	2,300		-	2,300
Balance as at 31 December 2019	9,940	173,614	281	408	184,243

CFO, Company Secretary, CEO & MD, Director, Director
Chattogram
29 January 2020

NB: "The details of the Published Half Yearly financial statements can be available in the web-site of the Company. The address of the Web-site is "www.elbl.portal.gov.bd" or "www.elbl.gov.bd"