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UK quits EU

Steps into transition twilight zone; Johnson promises broad free trade accord with the bloc

REUTERS, London

The United Kingdom left the European Union yesterday for an uncertain Brexit future, the most significant change to its place in the world since the loss of empire and a blow to 70 years of efforts to forge European unity from the ruins of war.

The country slipped away an hour before midnight from the club it joined in 1973, moving into the no man's land of a transition period that preserves membership in all but name until the end of this year.

At a stroke, the EU will be deprived of 15% of its economy, its biggest military spender and the world's international financial capital of London. The divorce will shape the fate of the United Kingdom -- and determine its wealth -- for generations to come.

"This is the moment when the dawn breaks and the curtain goes up on a new act," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a television address, though he has given few clues about his post-Brexit plans beyond inspirational words.

"This is the dawn of a new era," Johnson, one of the main leaders of the "Leave" campaign in the 2016, said.

Beyond the symbolism of turning its back on 47 years of membership, little will actually change until the end of 2020, by which time Johnson has promised to strike a broad free trade agreement with the EU, the world's biggest trading bloc.

For proponents, Brexit is a dream "independence day" for a United Kingdom escaping what they cast as a doomed German-dominated project that is failing its 500 million population.

Opponents believe Brexit is a folly that will weaken the

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Law enforcers carry polling materials at a distribution centre set up at Dhaka Residential Model College in the city's Mohammadpur yesterday. Voters are exercising their franchise today to elect their representatives in two Dhaka city corporations.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Freedom of expression increasingly restricted

Says Amnesty on rights situation in Bangladesh; lauds it on Rohingya issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh had a mixed record on human rights in 2019 as the country hosted a million refugees and achieved a little progress in realising economic and social rights while some freedoms remained under attack, says a report published by Amnesty International.

The annual report titled "Human Rights in the Asia Pacific: Review of 2019" was published by the global rights group on Thursday.

It is available on AI's website.

"The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were increasingly restricted through draconian laws that actively shrink the space for dissent. People in Bangladesh continued to be harassed and arrested for speaking out," said Sultan Mohammed Zakaria, South Asia researcher at Amnesty International.

SHRINKING SPACE FOR DISSENT Under the repressive Digital Security Act, at least 20 people were arrested and nearly 400 indictments were filed, the report says in its dedicated chapter on Bangladesh.

In February, five journalists were sued, including one who was detained and later released by the police for reporting on police corruption, it says.

Fear of reprisals and intimidation from intelligence forced journalists to self-censor, it adds.

The political opposition was not allowed to organise campaign meetings and political rallies in a

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 1

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:15 5:52 7:15
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:30 5:56 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

7 detectives suspended for extortion

They threatened to kill trader in crossfire unless he paid Tk 4.5 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka District police suspended seven members of its Detective Branch (DB) for their alleged involvement in extorting Tk 4.5 lakh from a trader after 'threatening to kill him in crossfire'.

"We suspended them yesterday [Thursday] upon receiving complaint of harassing a man. We are investigating the allegation," Maruf Hossain Sorder, superintendent of Dhaka District Police, told The Daily Star.

The suspended DB members are Sub-Inspector Syed Mahmudul Hasan, Assistant Sub-Inspector Forhad Ali and constables Mozammel Haque, Abdul Jabbar, Suman, Razib Chandra and Rasel.

The suspension came after a cloth trader Sohel from South Keraniganj complained that some people, identifying themselves as detectives, picked him up near Lalkuthi's kheya ghat in the capital's Sutrapur on Wednesday and demanded Tk 4.5 lakh from his family for his release

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH

Bangabandhu's nation-building challenges



Bangabandhu speaking at a meeting with government officials (February 1, 1972).

FEBRUARY 1, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

NEW GOVERNANCE OUTLOOK

In a meeting with government officials, Bangabandhu urges them to dedicate themselves to the service of the people. He reminds them that they are not masters but servants of the people. Old bureaucratic, time-consuming methods will not just do anymore. He declares that it will be the policy of his government to ensure that the gains of independence go to toiling masses and freedom fighters. Stressing that freedom has been achieved through a revolution he says that revolutionary measures are needed to build up the war-ravaged country. Relief and rehabilitation have to be tackled on a war footing. A relentless war would have to be waged against poverty and illiteracy so that the expectations that have been raised among

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Worker dies in accident at illegal stone quarry

Employers' bid to hide it goes in vain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A teenage quarry worker died in the line of duty as a chunk of stone came crashing down on him at an illegal quarry in Shah Arefin Tila area of Sylhet's Companiganj upazila on Thursday.

The deceased, Tanvir Hossain, 17, was from Mirzapur village in Sunamganj's Derai upazila, said Suman Acharjee, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Companiganj.

The incident took place around noon when Tanvir was working down a pit without any safety gears. Suddenly, a big chunk of stone broke off from one edge and smashed down on the ground, he said.

A critically injured Tanvir was taken to a local quack who declared him dead, the UNO said.

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New kind of northern lights discovered



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Amateur astronomers have helped discover a new kind of northern lights, known as "dunes".

Citizen scientists teamed up with space researchers to find the "new auroral form", which consists of spectacular glowing waves.

The "dunes" are thought to be created when particles released by the sun cause oxygen atoms in our atmosphere to light up and glow.

In a newly published study, researchers tracked down the origin of the dunes to the Earth's upper atmosphere.

The sun pushes out a flow of charged particles, which are known as solar winds. When they arrive at the Earth's ionosphere, they excite the oxygen and nitrogen atoms found in the upper atmosphere, and that energy is released as lights.

While the northern lights are often seen as one phenomenon, they are something like clouds:

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Rohingya 'drug dealer' killed in 'gunfight' with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Rohingya man suspected of drug peddling was killed in what officials said was a gunfight with Rab in Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

Abdul Nasir, 28, of Balukhali refugee camp, was killed on Marine Drive Road at Montalia Puranpara after 1:15am, said Company Commander Sha Alam of Rab-15.

Responding to a tip-off about drug trafficking, a Rab team set up a check-post there, he said.

The officers stopped several men who were carrying some sacks. But the men started shooting at officers, forcing the latter to retaliate, Alam added.

At one stage, Nasir got shot while the others managed to flee the scene, he said, adding that Nasir was taken to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, he said.

Rab recovered 66,915 yaba pills, two firearms, several bullets and Tk 3,000 in cash from the spot, he added.



Rammed by a bus, this car crashed into the median strip of New Airport Road in the capital's Mohakhali area around noon yesterday. The driver of the car was injured in the accident. Police seized both the vehicles.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Senate poised to acquit Trump

Democrats suffer setback as key Republican senator declares further evidence unnecessary in impeachment trial

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump's hopes for a speedy acquittal by the Senate received a boost on Thursday as Democrats suffered a setback in their efforts to introduce new witnesses at his impeachment trial.

Democrats had sought to have Trump's former national security advisor John Bolton testify but a key Republican senator said he would vote "no" when the question of calling further witnesses was set to put to the Senate yesterday.

If the witness motion is rejected, Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a key Trump ally, could conceivably call for a vote to acquit the president of the impeachment charges.

A two-thirds majority -- or 67 senators -- is needed to remove a president from office, and the 53-47 Republican majority in the Senate means Trump is virtually certain to be acquitted.

Democrats were particularly eager to hear from Bolton following reports that he claims in an upcoming book to have been personally told by Trump that military aid to Ukraine was tied to Kiev investigating his Democratic rival Joe Biden.

The charge is at the heart of the December 18 impeachment of the 45th US president for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress by the Democratic-majority House of Representatives.

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