

Four killed as bus veers off road in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Four people were killed and another was injured as a Dhaka-bound bus fell into a roadside ditch in the district's Chakaria upazila last night.

The bus overturned and fell into the ditch near Chiringa Highway Police outpost on Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway around 10:30pm after the driver lost control, said Habibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Chakaria

Police Station.

The four, including a woman, were killed on the spot.

Police and firefighters recovered the bodies and rescued the injured and other passengers of the bus, the OC said.

The injured was admitted to the local upazila health complex.

The identities of the deceased could not be known immediately.

BNP in a fix

FROM PAGE 1

Many grassroots leaders want to take to the streets right away, but the high-ups have decided to "go slow".

"Since the government is interfering in the legal process, she is not getting bail. But we will eventually wage a movement to release her," Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, the party's standing committee member, said yesterday.

"Now the release of Khaleda is not just the BNP's cause but also that of the citizens," he said.

The BNP believes in peaceful and organised demonstrations, he added.

Khaleda's family members and BNP leaders alleged that her health had declined due to inadequate and improper treatment at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital where she has been admitted since April 1, 2019.

Khaleda's family members may write to the president seeking her release from jail, but they have to talk to Khaleda and her son Tarique Rahman before attempting that.

Several BNP leaders said the joint leadership of acting chairman Tarique Rahman and the standing committee members was struggling to find a way to free the BNP chairperson.

They believe that the party should now involve the leaders from its national executive committee and other leadership tiers in the decision-making process.

The issue came to the fore after the Supreme Court in November

last year rejected Khaleda's bail petition in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case.

The national executive committee should hold an immediate meeting to decide about the BNP's next course of action, party leaders said.

Many party men now believe that staging widespread protests is the only means of releasing Khaleda, they said.

However, many BNP high-ups fear that the party's existence would be at stake if such a movement failed.

Party insiders said it might not be possible for Tarique, now staying in London, to analyse the country's prevailing situation from abroad and make the right decisions.

"Tarique Rahman makes decisions based on what the standing committee members and some other leaders tell him," said an adviser of the party.

On several occasions, several vice-chairmen, advisers, and joint secretaries of the party remained in the dark about its decisions, he added.

As per the BNP charter, the party is supposed to hold a meeting of its national executive committee every three months, but it didn't meet in the last 22 months, said a BNP joint secretary.

The party should organise a new council to pick new leadership to step up its activities, he observed.

He said the BNP's movement for Khaleda's release would not succeed unless the Dhaka city leaders became active.



Bangladeshi expatriates wait in long queues at the Bangladesh embassy in Beirut to register their names to return home. They have been facing troubles for several months as the West Asian country is hit by a political and economic crisis. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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and the ouster of sectarian leaders who have ruled the country since its civil war ended in 1990.

Those protesters brought down the government of prime minister Saad Hariri on October 29.

The crisis has meanwhile hit hard the migrants.

"My factory was shut in October. Now I am living with some Syrian refugees. I hardly find work on three or four days every month. That's how I'm surviving," said Rana Ahmed, who went to Lebanon in August 2016.

Forty-year-old Rana, who used to work as a machine operator at a factory in Nahar Ibrahim area, some 47 kilometres north of the Lebanese capital Beirut, said he became an undocumented worker last year.

On February 2, Rana paid the Lebanese authorities some \$300 in fines for staying illegally in the country for nearly a year.

"I took the money from my family in Brahmanbaria. After paying the fine, I was registered with the Bangladesh embassy to return home. But the Lebanese authorities are now taking a long time to complete the necessary paperwork.

"Whenever I am cleared to go, I will have to bring money from home again to pay for my air ticket," Rana, father of two daughters, told The Daily Star over phone yesterday, adding that some 15,000 Bangladeshis live in Nahar Ibrahim area.

Several other migrant workers in Lebanon echoed Rana's statement and said the situation in the West Asian country was precarious for the Bangladeshi migrants who mainly work at factories and people's homes.

"I sold my ancestral land to come here. I don't know what will I do now,"

said a Bangladeshi migrant, wishing not to be named.

Babu Saha, a Bangladeshi journalist based in Beirut, said, "Many Lebanese employers are not renewing the work permits of their employees. As a result, the workers are becoming undocumented."

With their low or no income, the migrants are not being able to send money home, he said.

Contacted, Abdullah Al Mamun, first secretary at the Bangladesh embassy in Lebanon, said it was true that many migrants were losing jobs while many were being paid low wages.

He said the US dollar went up in value in recent months amid the crisis. "Foreign workers are usually paid in US dollars, but now they are being paid in Lebanese Pound which is highly devalued."

For example, he said, \$100 equaled to 1.5 lakh Lebanese Pound in October last year, but it is now almost 2.2 lakh.

The employers, however, were paying employees in line with the previous rate.

So when the migrants try to send money to Bangladesh, they have to buy dollars at a higher rate. It means they were sending much less than before, Mamun said.

He also said many migrants were not getting salaries regularly. "In such a situation, they are not happy to work here anymore and want to leave for home."

Asked, he said some 600 undocumented workers had returned to Bangladesh since October last year. He, however, could not tell the total number of Bangladeshis who went home since the crisis unfolded.

He said there were some 30,000 undocumented Bangladeshi workers in Lebanon and many of them were

desperate to return home.

Many were visiting the embassy every day for registration. After the registration, the Lebanese authorities investigate the cases and give the workers the green signal to leave the country. "The investigations take some time," said the first secretary.

Currently, the embassy authorities were facing pressure in dealing with the situation.

"After a pause, we resumed the registration on February 2. On that day some 1,600 workers entered the embassy premises and created chaos. Many of them came back again the next day," Mamun told this daily over phone on Wednesday.

He said the landowner of the embassy building issued a legal notice a few days ago, saying he would sue the embassy authorities if it allowed such a crowd to gather again.

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On Wednesday, the embassy authorities held a meeting with the Lebanese interior ministry's general security division and requested them to complete the necessary procedures as quickly as possible.

"The Lebanese officials assured us of looking into the matter," he said.

Speaking on the issue, Shakirul Islam Shakil, executive director of migrant rights body Ovbashi Karmi Kalyan Programme, said despite the crisis, recruiting agencies in Bangladesh continued to send workers to Lebanon.

"I think the government should not allow any more Bangladeshis to go to Lebanon until the crisis is over," Shakil said.

BANGABANDHU'S BIRTH CENTENARY

Mamata likely to visit Bangladesh next month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is likely to visit Bangladesh next month to attend the birth centenary celebration of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Sources close to Mamata said she accepted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's invitation "in principle" to join the event.

They said Mamata would now write to the Indian external affairs ministry for obtaining the clearance for her trip.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also likely to visit Dhaka next month to join the birth centenary celebration of Bangabandhu at the invitation of Hasina.

Hong Kong Airlines to lay off 400 staff

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Airlines said yesterday it has been forced to slash hundreds of jobs and ask remaining staff to take unpaid leave as the coronavirus outbreak compounds problems at the already-struggling firm.

The announcement by the city's number two carrier comes days after Cathay Pacific said it had asked all its 27,000 workforce to take three weeks leave without salary between March and June because of collapsing demand caused by the health crisis.

The virus, which has infected 24 people, one of whom died, comes just as the city was struggling to recover from months of sometimes violent protests that battered the economy and gutted the key tourism sector.

Hong Kong Airlines said in a statement that strict entry and quarantine measures imposed by countries around the world have further impacted travel demand in the city and the firm had to take "vigorous measures" to mitigate the challenges.

The company said it will lay off 400 employees, with the remainder asked to take a minimum of two weeks no-pay leave per month or work three days a week from February 17 until the end of June.

"There has never been a more challenging time in Hong Kong Airlines' history as of now," the company said in an email statement to AFP.

"As uncertainty looms with the evolving nature of this global issue, weak travel demand will likely continue into the summer season and we need to take further action to stay afloat."

The airline is owned by struggling Chinese conglomerate HNA Group, which has been looking to lower its debt burden.

In November it announced it would delay salary payments to some staff as it struggled to find cash, triggering a warning from regulators that its licence might be at risk. While it managed to keep flying thanks to an injection of funds, it continues to struggle.

The coronavirus, which was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year, spread over the Lunar New Year holiday and has now killed more than 600 people in the country, with at least 31,000 infected.

The crisis has seen a number of governments around the world and in Asia block flights to and from Hong Kong, including popular destinations Taiwan and the Philippines.

DMCH

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doctors immediately when patients will be admitted," the DMCH director added.

On January 26, the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) sent a letter to all divisional and district hospitals, asking them to set up such isolation units.

Meanwhile, IEDCR Director Meerjady Sabrina Flora yesterday urged people not to panic over the coronavirus issue, but to remain aware of it, reports BSS.

"Be aware but don't panic over the coronavirus issue as nobody has so far been infected with the virus in our country," she said while addressing a press briefing at the organisation's Mohakhali office.

She also talked about the crew members of the flight that brought the Bangladeshis back to Dhaka from the Wuhan city, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak, and the doctors on that flight.

They are now home quarantine and advised not to go outside home, Flora said.

The IEDCR, the state-run disease monitoring wing, has screened 8,396 returnees from China until yesterday from January 21, and all of them are safe.

The IEDCR chief urged all not to spread any rumour and pay heed to any such rumour about coronavirus. "The hype regarding wearing mask to avoid coronavirus is useless."

The disease monitoring wing is running four hotline numbers 0193710011, 0193700011, 0192771784, and 0192771785 to remove any type of confusion about the virus and create awareness among people.

Whistleblower doctor

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around the globe as more than 240 cases have emerged in two dozen countries.

A quarantined cruise ship in Japan now has 61 confirmed cases.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump, whose countries have tussled over trade and human rights, spoke on the phone about the health emergency.

Xi urged "the US side to respond reasonably to the novel coronavirus outbreak", according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Trump expressed his "confidence" in China's ability to tackle the epidemic, the White House said.

Beijing has been angered by bans on arrivals from China instituted by the United States and other countries.

Li, 34, died early yesterday, Wuhan Central Hospital said in a post on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform, an announcement that triggered deep sadness on social media over a doctor hailed as a hero.

"He is a hero who warned others with his life," a fellow Wuhan doctor wrote on Weibo.

There was also a rare collective bout of anger at the authorities and bold demands, including the hashtag "we demand freedom of speech", which was censored.

"Those fat officials who live on public money, may you die from a snowstorm," wrote another Weibo user in a comment that was later scrubbed.

In a sign that the criticism has shaken the Communist government, its anti-graft agency announced that it was sending a team to Wuhan to "conduct a comprehensive investigation into issues involving Dr Li Wenliang reported by the masses".

The foreign ministry and the National Health Commission expressed condolences for his death.

DEATH CENSORED

Li's death has also highlighted the enormous risks that frontline doctors have taken to treat patients in overwhelmed and under-equipped hospitals in Wuhan, the quarantined city of 11 million people where the virus emerged in December.

Medical staff are overstretched and lack sufficient protective gear, the deputy governor of Hubei province admitted Thursday.

Li sent out a message about the new coronavirus to colleagues on December 30 in Wuhan but was later among a group of people summoned by police for "rumour-mongering".

He later contracted the disease while treating a patient. Censors appeared to struggle with how to deal with his death.

State-run newspaper Global Times and state broadcaster CCTV first reported on Weibo that Li had died late Thursday, only to delete their posts after the death rapidly surged to be among the top topics on the popular platform.

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Analysts have said local authorities played down the extent of the outbreak in early January because they were holding political meetings at the time and wanted to project an aura of stability.

The first fatality was reported on January 11. The death toll has since soared to 636, with 73 more reported yesterday and an additional 3,000 new infections.

GLOBAL SPREAD

To control the spread, authorities have placed some 56 million people in Wuhan and surrounding cities under virtual lockdown.

Authorities in Wuhan are "combing" communities to find people suspected or confirmed to have the virus and place them in quarantine, state media said.

Major airlines have suspended flights to and from the country, while several countries have advised their citizens to leave China.

But cases keep emerging. Two cruise ships carrying thousands of holidaymakers in Hong Kong and Japan have been placed under quarantine as authorities test people for infections.

Another 41 people tested positive aboard the Diamond Princess in Japan yesterday, bringing the total number of infected cases on the ship to 61.

Another cruise ship carrying a passenger suspected of infection with coronavirus will not be allowed to dock in southern Japan, the government said yesterday.

In Hong Kong, 3,600 people are facing a third night confined aboard the World Dream, where eight former passengers have tested positive for the virus.

While global concerns mount, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that that world was facing a "chronic shortage" of masks and other protective equipment.

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Yesterday, the BNP organised doa mahfils in mosques across the country after Juma prayers, seeking immediate recovery of Khaleda from various ailments.

On February 8, 2018, the BNP chief landed in the old Dhaka central jail after a lower court sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. The High Court later doubled her jail term.

Khaleda was found guilty in another corruption case the same year. However, her party claimed that both the cases were politically motivated.

The BNP chief, now facing about 36 cases, has been receiving treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University since April 1 last year.

Trial over but politics isn't

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and may be looking to his own place in history -- defected and voted to convict the President of impeachable crimes.

Ten months from the election, Trump has unified his party around him in Washington and in the heartland at a time when questions are mounting about the Democrats' willingness to unite after what could be a bruising primary race.

Trump is enjoying the best polling of his presidency -- he hit 49% in a Gallup presidential approval poll this week. His State of the Union address on Tuesday night was a ringing statement of intent that he will use every device of his office to ensure he wins a second term.

Yet Trump didn't emerge from the impeachment saga untouched. Polls showed that around half of Americans wanted him removed from office. Taken with the Gallup data, they paint a picture of a nation split down the middle on the president.

It's not only Trump that emerged from the damaging saga more powerful. The presidency itself was enhanced, after the Senate effectively endorsed Trump's use of institutional power for personal political ends and his blanket policy of ignoring a congressional investigation. That will have huge implications for future Presidents but it also provides an immediate arsenal of new power that this one can deploy right away.

Trump's acquittal also factored immediately into the presidential race -- with former vice president Joe Biden seizing on Trump's escape to elaborate on his core theme that the president is unfit for a second term, as he targets a comeback after a weak performance in the Iowa caucuses.

"I can't imagine being president of the United States and having all one party plus someone from your own party vote to say you should be thrown out of office and view that as a victory," Biden said in a CNN town hall on Wednesday in New Hampshire ahead of the Granite State's primary next week.

Democrats have been laying political groundwork for Trump's acquittal for months in the certain knowledge that there would not be a two-thirds majority to convict him in the Senate.

They built a rhetorical argument that Republicans were covering up for the president by refusing to vote for witnesses, like former national security adviser John Bolton, and blocking further investigations.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-New York, rolled out the

oven-ready strategy before the Senate held its final two academic votes -- on articles of impeachment alleging abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

"The verdict of this kangaroo court will be meaningless. By refusing the facts, by refusing witnesses and documents, the Republican majority has placed a giant asterisk, the asterisk of a sham trial, next to the acquittal of President Trump, written in permanent ink," Schumer said.

"Acquittal in an unfair trial with this giant asterisk, the asterisk of a sham trial, is worth nothing at all to President Trump or anybody else."

The "anybody else" Schumer is referring to may include vulnerable Republican senators in swing states, such as Cory Gardner of Colorado and Susan Collins of Maine, who voted to acquit Trump and will now face an avalanche of Democratic attacks meant to anger suburban voters who are worried about his unchained use of power.

But Democrats were not the only senators who faced difficult decisions. The White House believed up until the vote on Wednesday that it might peel a couple of votes from Schumer's ranks to support its talking point about a looming bipartisan acquittal.

That didn't materialize. No one was more aware of the political perils of impeachment than House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who held off pressure for such a step for months over the Mueller report.

Trump's apparent abuse of power over Ukraine, first revealed by an intelligence community whistleblower, made Pelosi's own political position against impeachment unsustainable.

But the speaker is keen to turn the focus back to the strategy and issues that helped her recapture the House in the midterm election.

House Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries was also an impeachment manager in Trump's trial. But he tried to turn attention away from Ukraine during a news conference on Wednesday.

Jeffries announced Democrats would bring legislation to the floor soon on promoting the rights of workers to organize, to lower health care costs and to negotiate more affordable drug prices.

Such goals might actually require the Democrats in the House to work with the president -- who they accuse of coming into the chamber in the State of the Union address and Tuesday

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"Now the release of Khaleda is not just the BNP's cause but also that of the citizens," he said.

The BNP believes in peaceful and organised demonstrations, he added.

Khaleda's family members and BNP leaders alleged that her health had declined due to inadequate and improper treatment at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital where she has been admitted since April 1, 2019.

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Several BNP leaders said the joint leadership of acting chairman Tarique Rahman and the standing committee members was struggling to find a way to free the BNP chairperson.

They believe that the party should now involve the leaders from its national executive committee and other leadership tiers in the decision-making process.

The issue came to the fore after the Supreme Court in November

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It's not only Trump that emerged from the damaging saga more powerful. The presidency itself was enhanced, after the Senate effectively endorsed Trump's use of institutional power for personal political ends and his blanket policy of ignoring a congressional investigation. That will have huge implications for future Presidents but it also provides an immediate arsenal of new power that this one can deploy right away.

Trump's acquittal also factored immediately into the presidential race -- with former vice president Joe Biden seizing on Trump's escape to elaborate on his core theme that the president is unfit for a second term, as he targets a comeback after a weak performance in the Iowa caucuses.

"I can't imagine being president of the United States and having all one party plus someone from your own party vote to say you should be thrown out of office and view that as a victory," Biden said in a CNN town hall on Wednesday in New Hampshire ahead of the Granite State's primary next week.

Democrats have been laying political groundwork for Trump's acquittal for months in the certain knowledge that there would not be a two-thirds majority to convict him in the Senate.

They built a rhetorical argument that Republicans were covering up for the president by refusing to vote for witnesses, like former national security adviser John Bolton, and blocking further investigations.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-New York, rolled out the

oven-ready strategy before the Senate held its final two academic votes -- on articles of impeachment alleging abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.

"The verdict of this kangaroo court will be meaningless. By refusing the facts, by refusing witnesses and documents, the Republican majority has placed a giant asterisk, the asterisk of a sham trial, next to the acquittal of President Trump, written in permanent ink," Schumer said.

"Acquittal in an unfair trial with this giant asterisk, the asterisk of a sham trial, is worth nothing at all to President Trump or anybody else."

The "anybody else" Schumer is referring to may include vulnerable Republican senators in swing states, such as Cory Gardner of Colorado and Susan Collins of Maine, who voted to acquit Trump and will now face an avalanche of Democratic attacks meant to anger suburban voters who are worried about his unchained use of power.

But Democrats were not the only senators who faced difficult decisions. The White House believed up until the vote on Wednesday that it might peel a couple of votes from Schumer's ranks to support its talking point about a looming bipartisan acquittal.

That didn't materialize. No one was more aware of the political perils of impeachment than House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who held off pressure for such a step for months over the Mueller report.

Trump's apparent abuse of power over Ukraine, first revealed by an intelligence community whistleblower, made Pelosi's own political position against impeachment unsustainable.

But the speaker is keen to turn the focus back to the strategy and issues that helped her recapture the House in the midterm election.

House Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries was also an impeachment manager in Trump's trial. But he tried to turn attention away from Ukraine during a news conference on Wednesday.

Jeffries announced Democrats would bring legislation to the floor soon on promoting the rights of workers to organize, to lower health care costs and to negotiate more affordable drug prices.

Such goals might actually require the Democrats in the House to work with the president -- who they accuse of coming into the chamber in the State of the Union address and Tuesday

and firing off a barrage of lies and misinformation.

Three cases will be argued before the Supreme Court on March 31 focusing on Trump's contention that a House of Representatives committee and a New York City prosecutor are powerless to enforce subpoenas to obtain his financial records. Lawyers for Trump argued that the Constitution renders sitting presidents immune from all criminal investigations and that even if he shot someone on New York's Fifth Avenue prosecutors would be powerless to act while he was still in office.

The Supreme Court eventually could be called upon to decide another major case now awaiting a ruling in the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. In that one, the Justice Department argued that senior presidential aides are immune from congressional subpoenas for testimony like one issued by the Democratic-led House Judiciary Committee to former White House Counsel Don McGahn.

The rulings in those cases could set enduring legal precedents.

The Supreme Court previously curbed presidential power in key cases.

In 1997, it ruled that President Bill Clinton could not evade a civil lawsuit brought by Paula Jones, a woman who accused him of making unwanted sexual advances. In 1974, it ruled against President Richard Nixon's bid to avoid handing over audiotapes and other material to a federal judge as part of a criminal investigation into the Watergate corruption scandal.

During the impeachment trial, Trump's legal team argued for an unconstrained presidency. They also said that the charges brought by the House - abuse of power and contempt of Congress - did not cover conduct that amounted to impeachable offenses.

They argued that if a president trying to win re-election believes he is acting in the national interest, any quid pro quo - a Latin term meaning a favor for a favor - arrangement aimed at boosting his election chances cannot be impeachable. They also argued that an impeachable offense must be a violation of a statutory law.

Democrats said this sweeping assessment of presidential power would embolden Trump and future presidents to act with impunity.

It remains to be seen whether such arguments will win favor at the Supreme Court, whose 5-4 conservative majority includes two justices appointed by Trump.

BANGABANDHU'S BIRTH CENTENARY

Mamata likely to visit Bangladesh next month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is likely to visit Bangladesh next month to attend the birth centenary celebration of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Sources close to Mamata said she accepted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's invitation "in principle" to join the event.

They said Mamata would now write to the Indian external affairs ministry for obtaining the clearance for her trip.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also likely to visit Dhaka next month to join the birth centenary celebration of Bangabandhu at the invitation of Hasina.

Hong Kong Airlines to lay off 400 staff

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Airlines said yesterday it has been forced to slash hundreds of jobs and ask remaining staff to take unpaid leave as the coronavirus outbreak compounds problems at the already-struggling firm.

The announcement by the city's number two carrier comes days after Cathay Pacific said it had asked all its 27,000 workforce to take three weeks leave without salary between March and June because of collapsing demand caused by the health crisis.

The virus, which has infected 24 people, one of whom died, comes just as the city was struggling to recover from months of sometimes violent protests that battered the economy and gutted the key tourism sector.

Hong Kong Airlines said in a statement that strict entry and quarantine measures imposed by countries around the world have further impacted travel demand in the city and the firm had to take "vigorous measures" to mitigate the challenges.

The company said it will lay off 400 employees, with the remainder asked to take a minimum of two weeks no-pay leave per month or work three days a week from February 17 until the end of June.

"There has never been a more challenging time in Hong Kong Airlines' history as of now," the company said in an email statement to AFP.

"As uncertainty looms with the evolving nature of this global issue, weak travel demand will likely continue into the summer season and we need to take further action to stay afloat."

The airline is owned by struggling Chinese conglomerate HNA Group, which has been looking to lower its debt burden.

In November it announced it would delay salary payments to some staff as it struggled to find cash, triggering a warning from regulators that its licence might be at risk. While it managed to keep flying thanks to an injection of funds, it continues to struggle.

The coronavirus, which was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year, spread over the Lunar New Year holiday and has now killed more than 600 people in the country, with at least 31,000 infected.

The crisis has seen a number of governments around the world and in Asia block flights to and from Hong Kong, including popular destinations Taiwan and the Philippines.

DMCH

FROM PAGE 1

doctors immediately when patients will be admitted," the DMCH director added.

On January 26, the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) sent a letter to all divisional and district hospitals, asking them to set up such isolation units.

Meanwhile, IEDCR Director Meerjady Sabrina Flora yesterday urged people not to panic over the coronavirus issue, but to remain aware of it, reports BSS.

"Be aware but don't panic over the coronavirus issue as nobody has so far been infected with the virus in our country," she said while addressing a press briefing at the organisation's Mohakhali office.

She also talked about the crew members of the flight that brought the Bangladeshis back to Dhaka from the Wuhan city, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak, and the doctors on that flight.

They are now home quarantine and advised not to go outside home, Flora said.

The IEDCR, the state-run disease monitoring wing, has screened 8,396 returnees from China until yesterday from January 21, and all of them are safe.

The IEDCR chief urged all not to spread any rumour and pay heed to any such rumour about coronavirus. "The hype regarding wearing mask to avoid coronavirus is useless."

The disease monitoring wing is running four hotline numbers 0193710011, 0193700011, 01927711784, and 01927711785 to remove any type of confusion about the virus and create awareness among people.



Children were filled with joy at Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela yesterday, as their favourite characters from Sisimpur performed in front of their very eyes. The show's Halum, Ikri and Tuktuki, among others, put on a wonderful show at the children's corner of Suhrawardy Udyan. Children were also seen huddled in front of stalls catering to them, some trying to reach the books on display, while others climbing on to their parents' lap to get a better look.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Big day for little ones

SAYED MOHMUD ULLAH

Hundreds of children surrounded Sisimpur Mancha at Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela yesterday noon, shouting, "We love to read books!" They were accompanied by mascots of the popular characters from Sesame Street's Bangladeshi adaptation.

Marking the first Shishu Prohor (special hours dedicated to children), Sisimpur's Halum, Ikri and Tuktuki recommended the children to read more books and consequently performed skits, much to their excitement. "I love Halum because he can sing loudly; last year I hugged him but today [yesterday], we are in a huge gathering, so I'm not sure I can do that," said six-year-old Rafan Ahmed, who came with his father Rayhan Ahmed, to the fair.

Seeing his son's excitement, Rayhan himself was smiling, while witnessing characters one would normally only see on TV. Amid strict security measures by law enforcers, their performance continued for 15 minutes.

With Sishu Prohor continuing from 11am to 1pm on every Friday and Saturday, Sisimpur is scheduled for three times slots -- 11:30am, 3:30pm and 6pm -- at the book fair, said Muhaiminul Abir, a stall attendant of Sisimpur. The representative said their stall has over 100 books and toys based on Sisimpur stories. "Children are happy to see their favourite characters, and they are also buying our books," he added.

Not only Sisimpur, other parts of the children's corner -- situated at Suhrawardy Udyan -- also have different stalls selling a variety of books on Bangla cartoons, ghost stories, general knowledge, rhymes and science.

The little ones, donned in colourful outfits, were browsing the stalls and nagging their parents to buy books. "I bought my daughter Raisa a 'Gopal Bhar' comic book because she wanted it," said Al Amin, a private-

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BDR MUTINY CASE

Certified copy of 29,000-page HC verdict in limbo

It would cost Tk 9 lakh to print it in traditional folio paper, says a defence counsel

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Neither the defence nor the state side in the 2009 BDR mutiny case have yet received the certified copy of the High Court verdict, which is necessary for them to move appeals before the Supreme Court's Appellate Division, challenging the HC judgement.

The HC on January 8 released the 29,059-page-full text of its verdict, that confirmed death penalty for 139 accused and upheld life imprisonment of 185 others for their involvement in the atrocities and massacre at the BDR Pilkhana headquarters in 2009.

The verdict is one of the largest in the world, in terms of accused involved -- 846 and numbers of pages.

"We have applied to the 'copy section' of the High Court for the certified copy of its BDR verdict, after the court [HC] announced the verdict in November 2017. We also communicated with the department after the HC released the full text of the verdict on January 8 this year. But we are yet to get any certified copy of the verdict," Advocate Aminul Islam, a defence lawyer for more than 400 accused of the case, told The Daily Star last week.

At the same time, he said a financial complication has arisen over the certified copy of HC verdict, as around Tk 9 lakh would be needed for a single certified copy

if it is made in the folio (court-stamp) paper that is yellow in colour.

"Traditionally, an appeal is filed annexing the certified copy in the yellow folio paper. If the certified copy is made in the normal white paper, it will cost only Tk 30,000 to Tk 40,000," the defence lawyer said.

Aminul said yesterday he has submitted an application to the chief justice on Wednesday for his permission to receive the certified copy in normal white paper and to file appeal using such a certified copy. "The chief justice is yet to give a decision on it," he added.

Advocate Aminul said if the accused don't get permission to receive the certified copy in the normal white paper, it will be difficult for them to file appeals with the apex court challenging the HC verdict.

"Appeals will have to be filed in 30 days after receipt of the certified copies of the High Court judgement. Once the appeals are filed, the Supreme Court may set a date for starting their hearing. The chief justice may constitute a bench for hearing and disposing of the appeals in this particular case," he said, adding that it cannot be said at this moment how much time will be needed for final disposal of this case.

Contacted, Supreme Court Registrar General Md Ali Akbar told this

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'Ensure fair prices for apparel from Bangladesh'

State minister for foreign affairs urges European policymakers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam has urged European policymakers to ensure fair prices for apparel sourced from Bangladesh, to incentivise the ongoing reform initiatives in the country's RMG industry.

The request was made during a meeting with Maria Arena, Member of the European parliament (MEP) from the Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and chair of the parliament's Human Rights Committee at the European Parliament in Brussels on Thursday, the second day of his visit to Brussels.

He briefed the MEP about key developments in the RMG industry in Bangladesh following the Rana Plaza tragedy, following Arena's particular interest in the business and human rights agenda, according to a statement from the foreign ministry.

Shahriar Alam gave a brief account of the measures taken by Bangladesh government to strengthen democracy and human rights.

Arena stressed the importance of following up on the European Union's recommendations for further electoral reforms.

"Every society and country needs to find its own equilibrium through enacting and implementing legislation pursuant to its international human rights obligations," Shahriar told Arena.

Explaining the objective of the Digital Security Act 2018 in Bangladesh, he said the law is aimed at preventing and prosecuting criminal acts in the cyber sphere that could have destabilising consequences for society in general.

He emphasised that there is no scope for undue harassment or restriction against media personnel under the law.

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DNCC to get interim mayor for 3 months

New mayors will have to wait till tenure of current board expires

HELEMIUL ALAM

As the newly-elected mayors of both Dhaka city corporations will have to wait for more than three months to take over duties, seniormost panel mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) will perform duties as mayor of the DNCC in the interim.

Ward-4 councillor Mohammad Zamal Mostafa will take the charge on Sunday, as the seniormost councillor of the current three-member mayoral panel.

A gazette was issued by the government on Thursday in this regard. It said according to section 21 (2) of the Local Government (city corporation) Act 2009, seniormost member of the existing panel mayors will play the duty of mayor until the elected mayor takes office.

"I will take charge as a mayor on Sunday," said Zamal Mostafa, who was reelected in ward-4 of DNCC in the immediate past city corporation election.

As DNCC's immediate past mayor Atiqul Islam took part in the election, he resigned from his mayoral post on December 30, 2019. Since then, DNCC has been running without any mayor.

KHOKON TO CONTINUE IN DSCC

In Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), current mayor Sayeed Khokon will discharge his duties till completing his five-year tenure.

"My five years' tenure will be completed on May 17 as per the first board meeting; until then, I will discharge my duties as

mayor," Khokon said.

MOSTAFA'S SECOND STINT

The government on September 4, 2017 formed a three-member panel to discharge the duties of DNCC Mayor Anisul Huq in his absence, after the mayor was hospitalised at that time.

The mayoral panel was formed as per the Local Government (City Corporation) Amendment Act-2009.

The panel members included ward-21 councillor Osman Gani, ward-4 councillor Mohammad Zamal Mostafa and councillor of reserved seat of ward-31, 32 and 34 Aleya Sarwar Daisy.

But after the death of Osman on September 21, 2018, Zamal, the next senior member of the panel, discharged the duty as mayor until immediate past mayor Atiqul Islam took charge in March last year.

Atiqul took oath after being elected in the by-polls on March 6, 2019. According to officials of DSCC and DNCC, the two newly-elected mayors will have to wait for more than three months as the current tenure of DSCC board will end on May 17, while the current tenure of DNCC board will end on May 13.

The first board meeting of the DNCC was held on May 13, 2015 while the first board meeting of the DSCC was held on May 16, 2015.

Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh has been elected the mayor of DSCC and

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From left, Nadia Samdani, Farooq Sobhan, KM Khalid and Liaquat Ali Lucky at the inauguration of this year's Dhaka Art Summit at a city hotel yesterday. South Asia's biggest art biennale opened in the capital yesterday through the ceremony, where Soma Surovi Jannat was named winner of the Samdani Art Award for her work "Exploring the Santal's Story" while Promiti Hossain was awarded a special jury mention for "Agony 2".

Shringla to visit Dhaka ahead of Modi's trip

UNB, Dhaka

Newly-appointed Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla plans to visit Dhaka to prepare grounds for India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh in March.

The Indian premier is scheduled to attend the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to be held in Dhaka on March 17.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Muhammad Imran met Shringla yesterday at the latter's office in New Delhi and discussed the issue.

"India wants to see the upcoming visit of Modi to become mutually beneficial to both the countries," Shringla said.

During the meeting, the foreign secretary noted the importance India attaches to its relationship with Bangladesh as its immediate neighbour, according to the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi.

Shringla expressed satisfaction over the excellent bilateral relations, and stressed that the neighbours can further promote ties in areas like

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DU student dies of cardiac arrest

UNB, Dhaka

A student of Dhaka University (DU) died of cardiac arrest at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Shaikot Mahmud, of Accounting and Information Systems department. He was a resident student of Bijoy Ekattor Hall.

Hall provost Prof Abdul Bashir said Shaikot felt chest pain and informed his roommates around 10 am. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Doctors at the hospital said he died of cardiac arrest, Prof Bashir said.

After a namaz-e-janaza on DU campus, the body was sent to his village home.

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New campus under construction in Marul Bada

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Belal releases the Kalem he saved.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Saving the Kalem

It happened just after we emerged from the bushes to face a small crescent-shaped lagoon. A thin layer of winter fog covered the shallow water. Grass and bushes grew around the rim. Perhaps fifty Purple Swampheens (*Kalem*) - gorgeous birds that were venerated by ancient Romans - played in the lagoon and its banks. They probed the mud and grass for food and sometimes sparred with each other, often flying short distances to claim empty patches.

Our guide Belal was scanning the site. Suddenly he became agitated. "Oh no, that one is trapped!" He pointed to an area about fifty feet to our right at the far edge of the lagoon where a *Kalem* was hopping from one branch to another. Looking carefully, we realized its feet were caught in a twine that tethered it like a leash as it tried mightily to fly away.

Belal immediately ran to the bird. He caught its wings and, grabbing its feet, gently untangled them from the twine. He brought the bird to us before releasing it.

As he walked back to us, I looked at the glorious expanse of water that lay beyond the lagoon. Tanguar Haor, a Ramsar wetland of global importance, is located in Sunamganj. It encompasses almost 100 square kilometres. (A Haor is a saucer-shaped depression in the land that fills up in monsoon and partially empties in winter.) A place of breathtaking natural beauty year-round, it is a magnet for birders because of the thousands of migratory birds - mostly ducks - that descend here in winter.

Our group of four had arrived here two days earlier from Sylhet. First a microbus had brought us to Sulemanpur, where we had boarded the basic but functional houseboat *Rupaboi*, our home for the next two nights. After an hour's cruising, it had

anchored at Golapara village inside the Haor.

Using the *Rupaboi* as base, we were exploring the Haor - which comprises of numerous smaller *Beels* or lakes - using smaller row boats. Waves upon waves of ducks and water birds cavorted in the waters of Tanguar. We found the most birds in Laichamara *Beel*, but the Haor also had strips of higher land with vegetation, and the canals running between them offered a chance to see birds closer.

That morning, rowing down one of these canals, we had come ashore for a look and walked across the strip to the lagoon when we discovered the trapped *Kalem*.

After Belal had brought the *Kalem* to us, he gently held it, firmly grasping its feet. Every few seconds it flapped its iridescent blue wings, trying to escape. I got a close look at its impossibly long thin toes which enable it to walk on water by tiptoeing across large leaves of Water Lily or Lotus.

Next I examined the trap. An innocuous looking jumble of twine, Belal explained it was hand-crafted and designed to entrap those long-toed feet. The chicken-sized bird was probably trapped by local villagers for their own consumption.

Belal set the bird free and it immediately flew into a dense part of the bush, disappearing instantly. Next he collected some dry twigs, built a small tepee, started a fire and set the trap aflame. We ended our morning adventure by watching it reduce to ashes.

(Tanguar Haor is out of the way but worth the effort. For information on the houseboat see www.facebook.com/Rupaboi).

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Piling up medical waste discarded thoughtlessly at landfills in city corporation areas pose serious threat to public health. Divisional cities, excluding the capital, have around 1,380 healthcare establishments -- public and private -- that produce over 20 tonnes of medical waste every day. To draw attention to this alarming issue, The Daily Star is highlighting medical waste management in major cities across the country. In this instalment, we look at medical waste management in Narayanganj city.

Flagrant defiance behind toxicity

Two N'ganj govt hospitals ignoring incineration service

SANAD SAHA, N'ganj

With proper disposal of medical waste being a significant issue considering public health and environment, two major government hospitals in Narayanganj are ignoring incineration service provided by an NGO.

Moreover, the hospitals are at loggerheads with the city corporation over responsibility of removing garbage from their compounds.

Authorities of the 300-bed hospital and 100-bed General Hospital say removal and disposal are not their concerns. It is Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC) that has to do it.

When asked why they are not taking service from PRISM Bangladesh Foundation - entrusted with incinerating medical waste, authorities of the hospitals said they are already paying tax to NCC to manage garbage. So, another group should not be paid for the

same purpose, they said.

On the other hand, NCC says disposing of general waste is its responsibility; healthcare facilities themselves are compelled to incinerate their medical waste.

Amid the disagreement, wastes -- medical and regular -- are not even relocated from the hospitals' premises properly.

During a recent visit to the 100-bed hospital in Nitaiganj and the 300-bed one in Khanpur, this correspondent found all sorts of garbage left scattered on and outside the premises.

Malodour was coming from stale garbage mixed with bandages, used medicine, syringes and so on.

Talking to The Daily Star, hospitals' authorities alleged that the city corporation does not remove those on time. NCC workers said they mostly found those in an unsorted form. Those have to be segregated, they added.

At the 300-bed hospital, plastic objects are kept in blue, syringes

in yellow and infectious items in red containers at every ward, said a nurse of male medicine ward.

At the end of a day, cleaners pile those together on a dumping ground on its premises, he said wishing not to be named.

Tulshi Das, one of its cleaners, said there is no spots to dump those separately. "We know it is harmful. But, what do we do when there is no designated place?" she said.

Ansar Ali, another cleaner, said around 5-7kg of medical waste and 30-40kg of general waste are produced at the hospital on a daily basis.

Just around one year ago, harmful objects were "traditionally" burnt in pits and amputated body parts and blood were dumped in a dug up hole, he said. Later, the city corporation took those away, said the cleaner.

Now, the process cannot be followed as the hole and pits have been destroyed because of a project work to upgrade the hospital to a 500-bed one, said the worker.

He alleged that NCC trucks transport the garbage sporadically. "Sometimes they come only after phone calls and do not clear the premises properly. As a result, some garbage are left behind."

Dr Abu Zaher, superintendent of the 300-bed hospital, said, "Once the upgradation project is finished, we will look into proper garbage management."

On the other hand, Asaduzzaman, resident medical officer of the 100-bed hospital, said, "There has been no garbage on the premises for several days. Now, wastes are kept outside. From there, NCC workers take those to Shahidpur landfill."

This correspondent found medical waste on a road within 50 yards of the hospital.

Asaduzzaman said medical and general wastes are segregated at every ward, but as the hospital has no disposal plant, those are dumped together. "However, the

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PHOTO: SANAD SAHA



MEDICAL WASTE MANAGEMENT

A woman scavenges medical waste dumped inside the 300-bed hospital compound in Khanpur. Inset, city corporation workers move garbage mixed with clinical waste left on a road, 50 yards off the 100-bed hospital in Nitaiganj. The photos were taken recently.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

Used plastic bottles of drinking water are put in bags bound to a rickshaw, on their way to a farmhouse, where they will be filled with milk and delivered all across the city. This may seem like an appreciable case of plastic reuse, but the hygiene of it all has to come into question. The photo was taken from Chattogram city's CRB area.

5 held over drug peddling

1,480 bottles of Phensedyl, 4,625 litres of locally-brewed liquor seized in Kishoreganj, M'singh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, M'singh

Rab in separate drives early yesterday arrested five alleged drug peddlers in possession of Phensedyl and locally brewed alcohol in Kishoreganj and Mymensingh.

In Kishoreganj, Rab arrested two with Phensedyl from Natal in Bhairab upazila. The arrestees are Belal Ahmed (50), and Yeasin Ahmed Milon (25) from Zakiganj upazila of Sylhet.

Acting on a tip-off, a Rab team, led by Additional Superintendent of Police Rofiuddin Mohammad Jobayer, conducted a drive at the area around 2:30am and stopped a Dhaka-bound truck, said Md Tafiqul Alam, assistant superintendent of police of Rab-14 in Mymensingh.

The team seized a truck carrying 1,480 bottles of Phensedyl, and Tk 5,900 in cash,

Rab sources said. The bottles were kept in 10 sacks and are worth around Tk 45 lakh, said the official.

Later, Rab handed over the arrestees to Bhairab Police Station on the same day.

In Mymensingh city, Rab arrested three with locally brewed alcohol from Station Road area, informed the official.

The arrestees are Monir Sikder (34), Hira Chandra Shil (35) and Masud Quraishy (20), all hailing from different areas of Mymensingh town.

Rab raided the area around 12:30am and seized 4,625 litres of locally brewed alcohol from their possession. They were handed over to Kotwali Police Station on the same day.

Separate cases were lodged with the respective police stations.

Nat'l judicial academy to be set up at Shibchar Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Plans to set up a national judicial academy at Shibchar upazila in Madaripur is underway, Law Minister Anisul Huq said yesterday.

"The judiciary is independent now. To institutionalise this independence, training for judges are essential. A national judicial academy will be set up under the directive of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," the minister said.

He said this while talking to reporters after visiting potential locations for the academy around Shibchar. Among others, Jatiya Sangsad's chief whip and Madaripur-1 lawmaker Noor-e-Alam Chowdhury Liton and Faridpur-1 MP Monjur Hossain Bulbul were present.

The minister said the government will also set up a "Chouki Adalat" (court) at Shibchar in order to ensure general people can access justice.

Later on, the minister attended a view exchange programme organised by Faridpur's Bhangra Upazila Bar Association as chief guest.

Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hospital brings light of hope to patients

BSS, Dhaka

Asha Akhtar Akhi, a resident of Kaliakair upazila of Gazipur, burned her esophagus after drinking a toilet bowl cleaner a year ago. After rushing her from one hospital to another, Akhi's family got her admitted to Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Memorial KPJ Specialized Hospital in Gazipur.

At the hospital, physicians replaced her esophagus with her colon (colonic interposition). A total of six patches were done on her stomach. The operation was successfully performed by the hospital's Medical Director Dr Razeed Hassan and Dr JMH Quasar Alam.

After a long period of treatment, Akhi is now living happily in her in-laws' house.

"Our neighbours and relatives were very surprised when they saw Akhi doing well again, as none had thought she would be able to come

back. We wanted to get her admitted to other hospitals, but Dr Razeed of the specialised hospital assured us that this facility can treat her well," Akhi's father Md Afaz Uddin told BSS.

When Akhi's family was not able to bear her treatment cost, hospital authorities placed the matter before Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who directed them to provide all essential financial support to the patient.

Akhi's father was very grateful for this. "Our prime minister is very kind-hearted. Not only has she established such a modern hospital in our area, but she has also decided to provide financial support for the poor. I pray by heart that she lives long," he said.

His satisfaction went deeper. "Not only is the service good, the hospital's doctors are very caring and loving too," Afaz said.

Named after Bangabandhu's wife Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, the

250-bed world class hospital has been serving people like Akhi since its inception in 2013, becoming something of a light of hope to the people living in Gazipur and adjoining areas.

"Every day, we receive a huge number of patients from all over the country, including Gazipur, Savar, Dhaka, Manikganj and Tangail," in-charge and Assistant Manager of Business Development Services Abul Hasan told BSS.

Established at Kashimpur union under Kaliakair upazila in Gazipur by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust, the state-of-the-art facility is being operated by Kumpulan Perubatan Johor (KPJ) Healthcare Berhad, a renowned Malaysian private healthcare organisation.

KPJ Healthcare Berhad currently

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

5 held over drug peddling

1,480 bottles of Phensedyl, 4,625 litres of locally-brewed liquor seized in Kishoreganj, M'singh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, M'singh

Rab in separate drives early yesterday arrested five alleged drug peddlers in possession of Phensedyl and locally brewed alcohol in Kishoreganj and Mymensingh.

In Kishoreganj, Rab arrested two with Phensedyl from Natal in Bhairab upazila. The arrestees are Belal Ahmed (50), and Yeasin Ahmed Milon (25) from Zakiganj upazila of Sylhet.

Acting on a tip-off, a Rab team, led by Additional Superintendent of Police Rofiuddin Mohammad Jobayer, conducted a drive at the area around 2:30am and stopped a Dhaka-bound truck, said Md Tafiqul Alam, assistant superintendent of police of Rab-14 in Mymensingh.

The team seized a truck carrying 1,480 bottles of Phensedyl, and Tk 5,900 in cash,

Rab sources said. The bottles were kept in 10 sacks and are worth around Tk 45 lakh, said the official.

Later, Rab handed over the arrestees to Bhairab Police Station on the same day.

In Mymensingh city, Rab arrested three with locally brewed alcohol from Station Road area, informed the official.

The arrestees are Monir Sikder (34), Hira Chandra Shil (35) and Masud Quraishy (20), all hailing from different areas of Mymensingh town.

Rab raided the area around 12:30am and seized 4,625 litres of locally brewed alcohol from their possession. They were handed over to Kotwali Police Station on the same day.

Separate cases were lodged with the respective police stations.

Nat'l judicial academy to be set up at Shibchar Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Plans to set up a national judicial academy at Shibchar upazila in Madaripur is underway, Law Minister Anisul Huq said yesterday.

"The judiciary is independent now. To institutionalise this independence, training for judges are essential. A national judicial academy will be set up under the directive of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," the minister said.

He said this while talking to reporters after visiting potential locations for the academy around Shibchar. Among others, Jatiya Sangsad's chief whip and Madaripur-1 lawmaker Noor-e-Alam Chowdhury Liton and Faridpur-1 MP Monjur Hossain Bulbul were present.

The minister said the government will also set up a "Chouki Adalat" (court) at Shibchar in order to ensure general people can access justice.

Later on, the minister attended a view exchange programme organised by Faridpur's Bhangra Upazila Bar Association as chief guest.

'Finding error in everything is BNP's bad habit'

Says Hasan Mahmud at Pabna AL meeting

UNB, Pabna

Finding errors in everything has turned into a bad habit of BNP, said Awami League Joint General Secretary Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday.

He made the remarks at Pabna Government Edward College while speaking at a meeting of grassroots Awami League workers, suggesting BNP to "come out of the habit."

Addressing the workers, Hasan Mahmud said, "Many leaders changed their stance when AL was in danger. There are many intruders in the party."

He also said that those who entered the party seeking favours will not get any post, while being rich will also not guarantee being made leaders of the party.

Asked about low voter turnout in the recently-held Dhaka city elections, Mahmud, also the information minister, said BNP spread confusion over EVM and participated in the city polls as a part of their movement which created fear among voters. "BNP made mistake in polls calculation," he added.

AL's Pabna district unit Senior Vice-President and Pabna Zila Parishad Chairman Rezaul Rahim Lal presided over the meeting where local AL leaders were present.

Elections to the Dhaka south and north city corporations were held on February 1. The turnout was less than 20 percent in 709 centres, shows Election Commission data on all 2,468 centres.

No Birds in the Sky

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2020, MAGH 25, 1426 BS

The land of (dying) rivers

Yet another appeal to save them

THE once-sparkling water of the Buriganga is now a dark, smelly pit of liquid waste. Dark flows the Turag too, which is lined with factories that dump their waste, including plastic materials, polythene and dyes into its water. The waters of Dhaleshwari and Balu are so toxic that those who depend on them contract various kinds of skin and gastrointestinal diseases. The once-mighty Korotoa river is now a ghost of its former self, choking with pollution and a regulator that obstructs natural flow. No one can answer why this regulator—which has not been used even once in the past 15 years—was built, except to say that it was part of a Tk 2,665 crore project to improve the condition of the Korotoa. The Bangshi, too, is a dump, in addition to being a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other insects. The list, sadly, goes on.

More than a hundred rivers have already died since independence. The list of who is responsible for the slow but sure death of our rivers is also a long one—from big corporations to government institutions, everyone seems to have claimed their share of the pie. Industries seem to think it is their right to dump their waste into our rivers; local elites, businessmen and grabbers see no problem in claiming vast areas of waterbodies for their personal and commercial use; politicians and policymakers—whose vested interests lie elsewhere than in protecting the rivers—turn a blind eye towards these irregularities, even as they make promise after promise to save them from pollution and the grabbers.

The High Court issued a 17-point directive in 2019 to save the country's rivers and water bodies, and the Prime Minister herself has, on multiple occasions, directed the ministries to take necessary measures. Yet, our rivers continue to turn into drains. We have written many an editorial with numerous prescriptions of what the government ought to do, but have seen little reflection of our concerns in subsequent government action. What we need more than anything is political goodwill and a serious commitment to revive what remains of the once mighty rivers. Today, we provide no prescription but simply reiterate the appeal we made yesterday—Save Rivers, Save Sonar Bangla.

Combatting TB in Bangladesh

Early diagnosis is the key

IT is unfortunate that even after decades of efforts from the government and non-government organisations to combat tuberculosis (TB) in Bangladesh, a large number of TB patients still remain undiagnosed, mostly due to a lack of awareness among the patients as well as people in general. Although Bangladesh has made some significant progress in controlling the disease, the drug-resistant TB continues to be a public health crisis for us. Sadly, the modern screening facilities for TB are still not available at the upazila level. According to a report by *The Daily Star* in 2019, while 492 upazilas have government health complexes, only around 209 Gene Xpert machines—necessary for detecting TB on a molecular level and its drug resistance—have so far been set up at different medical facilities across the country.

Till today, TB remains the world's deadliest infectious killer. Each day, nearly 4,500 people lose their lives to TB and close to 30,000 people fall ill with this disease worldwide.

Since prevention is a major part of TB control, if the patients cannot be made aware of the disease and diagnosed early, containing the spread of the disease would not be possible. People should go for check-ups immediately when they notice the symptoms: long-term cough, chest pain and fever. Otherwise, the disease will get worse and spread among the people who are in close contact with the patients. Also, people's misconception about TB—that it is a respiratory disease—must be removed. All these need combined efforts from the government and the private organisations working in this area. Besides raising awareness about the disease, the government should also make the screening facilities and necessary medicines available at the upazila level.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

My thoughts on Ekushey Boi Mela

Every year I look forward to the coming of Ekushey Boi Mela, the world's longest book fair spanning an entire month. This is usually my favourite time of the year when I visit the stalls with friends, buy books and sometimes attend the open-air events hosted by Bangla Academy. The festive air of the fair, with visitors dressed in colourful attires and the sound of music and all kinds of announcements filling the air, is an additional attraction. But what I like most about it is the presence of children, who are drawn by the colourful storybooks put on display in the children's corner. A photo published in Friday's *Daily Star* has thus attracted my attention: it showed a young flower-seller, about ten years old, stopping by a stall decked with beautifully illustrated books.

The image stuck me as a potent symbol of a reader in the making. Despite his visible struggle in life which made him sell flowers for a living at such an early age, this boy seemed immersed in reading, totally unaware of what was going on around. It was a beautiful snapshot of juvenile curiosity. And it made me hopeful. We need more readers like him. We need adults to play a supportive role so that children develop a habit of reading, because a society where children read books—not just those prescribed in classroom—and enlighten themselves as they grow up can never stray off its cherished path.

Zahid Hassan, Mirpur



BLOWN' IN THE WIND

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

IN the 80s, one sarcastic comment—for reasons better not stated out of respect for the deceased—was aired every now and then: hurl a stone in Dhaka's air and you are sure to hit either a poet or a crow. On the surface, it was an innocent joke about the sheer number of creatures—those who fly with their wings and those others who dream to do so with their imagination.

A comment from a visitor recently reminded me of the saying, "Have you noticed that there is no bird in your city?" "Seriously, not even a house crow?" We looked out from my office lounge on the fourth floor overlooking Dhanmondi Lake. On any given day, I surely would have caught a glimpse of one or two. There wasn't any, as if the birds had decided to prove our guest scholar from Australia right.

Opposite to my home in Banani, there is a parakeet family that lives in the hollow of an air-conditioner pipe. It is a sheer delight for me to see the avian couple rearing their chicks or being visited by a bunch of relatives every morning. The welcome cacophony adds a soothing touch to our mundane madness.

I remember when we moved to a new apartment in Cantonment, we were awakened by a heavy breathing noise at night. For days, we thought the house was haunted or something. Only days after, we found that there was a pigeon nest in the sanitary pipe on the roof, causing an act of ventriloquism. The almost-human breathing of the birds got transmitted through the pipes, giving an impression that they were coming from elsewhere.

I remember when we moved to a new apartment in Cantonment, we were awakened by a heavy breathing noise at night. For days, we thought the house was haunted or something. Only days after, we found that there was a pigeon nest in the sanitary pipe on the roof, causing an act of ventriloquism.



JOSIAH OSGOOD

THE outcome of the US Senate's trial of Donald Trump, following his impeachment by the House of Representatives, was a foregone conclusion. But it nonetheless laid bare the president's win-at-all-costs approach to governing. The fact that Trump escaped punishment at the hands of the Senate and even saw a bump in his poll numbers suggests that his obsessive concern with image and ruthless treatment of enemies are effective strategies. They are reminiscent of a Roman emperor.

To see this, look no further than Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus's *Lives of the Caesars*, one of the most shocking accounts of bare-knuckled leadership ever written. Presenting the biographies of 12 Roman emperors, Suetonius shows how these men used their extraordinary power to indulge their own passions and peccadillos, no matter how weird or reckless. Suetonius, for his part, mostly deplores the emperors' transgressions—like Nero's singing during the Great Fire or Tiberius's all-night drinking parties. Yet, for all these figures' outrages, Suetonius also seems to appreciate their political instincts.

America's own caesar seems to have taken some of the "leadership" lessons highlighted by Suetonius on board. For starters, you should find a way to hide the fact that you are bald. Julius Caesar, a tall and muscular man who liked to flaunt his good looks, was distressed by nothing more in life than the premature loss of his hair, especially because it gave his opponents something for which to mock him. At first, Caesar relied on a comb-over, before finding a better solution: he convinced the Senate to grant him the right to wear a laurel crown on all occasions. The brutal Caligula took a more drastic approach as his bald spot grew: whenever he ran into a handsome man with a full head of hair, he ordered the offender shaved immediately.

And who hasn't had the experience of saving trapped sparrows from ceiling fans? We often get to hear the cuckoo cooing, see the dust-shower of common *mynas* (shalik) or an odd sighting of a kingfisher. Dhaka still has its birds, but urbanity is encroaching upon their habitat. Most of us take their presence for granted. But my foreign friend made me realise that there was a dearth of birds. And the other thing that he observed involved the level of noise pollution. As a linguist, Dr Ahmar Mahbbob of the University of Sydney maintained that exposure to such high levels of noise would affect the cognitive growth of

domestic fights, dog's barking, children's cry, drunkard's nuisance, and verbal invectives in a cassette recorder. He played the familiar noise all night long to put him to sleep. We too have become so used to such high level of noises that we fail to think of life beyond it. Our drivers honk meaninglessly, yet we remain nonchalant in our back seats.

Laws were passed to stop cars from using hooters or honking in VIP roads. Lawmakers have shown us that those laws are for mere mortals which can be imposed on a whim (as and when necessary). The lawmakers themselves can siren through the city with their

I had a meeting with a group of embassy officials who were a bit late. I blamed the rehearsed excuse: traffic jam, but their response was: forget the traffic, think of the air pollution. They pulled out the app that measured Dhaka's appalling air quality. And there I was thinking it to be fog, and my friends confirmed it was smog. No wonder so many of us are suffering from respiratory diseases.

As Dhakaites, we have grown used to many of its ills. It often takes a fresh pair of eyes to objectively reflect on the reality in which we live. I mention a host of foreigners because through their eyes we could see the dwindling number of birds



PHOTO: MOSFIQUR RAHMAN JOHAN

our children. In other words, children, especially between the ages of two and five, would find it difficult to learn languages and make intelligent verbal expressions.

A 2018 study of the Department of Environment found that the average sound level in the city's commercial areas was around 80-110dB. Experts believe that a routine exposure to 90dB for half an hour can cause hearing loss. Add to that the possibility of the release of stress hormone, diabetes, cardio-vascular disease and even death.

We live in a city where death is our fellow dweller. We can die in 50 different ways. Even if the noise is withdrawn, we will probably die of silence. Remember the 1987 movie *Pushpak*, featuring Kamal Hassan? A job-seeking graduate who used to live in the slum incidentally got to stay in a five-star hotel. The peacefulness of the hotel stopped the man from sleeping at night. He went back to his chaotic slum to record the hullabaloo involving

entourage, encouraging others to join the noise hike. Wasn't it our prophet who left sugar himself before advising a little boy to avoid excessive eating of sweets? We need leaders who will practice what they preach. Don't bother passing any law if you have no intention of following or implementing it yourself.

Once had a friend coming in from India. He was surprised by the battered look of our public buses. He said that he had seen such rickety buses only in the Caribbean. He was shocked by the steel bumpers in private vehicles. I couldn't tell him that our buses make special wooden and tin frames knowing very well that they would get involved in extreme car fights with passengers inside. I couldn't tell him that fencing our cars shows our feudal mindset of posing as the lord of the space that we occupy, even while we are on the public streets. Little do we care that these bumpers could be life-threatening to pedestrians or people on lighter vehicles!

or rising level of different pollutants. This is a realisation that I had while reading a book by an Indian journalist. I was in Grade 7 or 8. This journalist started his travelogue by mentioning our national mosque. He said, the cuboid shape of the mosque built after the Kaaba loses its sanctity by the heavy presence of commercial outlets around. Back then, for every little errand, we would go to Baitul Mukarram: replacing a watch belt, jewellery for wedding gifts, buying audio cassettes, books, comics or utensils. It took a non-Muslim foreigner to understand that our profane visits were compromising the sacredness of the place. On that day, I realised, even as a teenager, that sometimes you need to distance yourself from the truth to understand it.

It's about time we listened to our foreign friends and made Dhaka liveable.

Shamsad Mortuza is Professor of English, University of Dhaka (now on leave). Currently, he is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of ULAB. Email: shamsad71@hotmail.com

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Donald Caesar

A second lesson is to plan your public appearances carefully. Having been fascinated by music and acting since childhood, Nero yearned to perform onstage himself. To ensure that he wasn't a flop, he trained as hard as any professional, avoiding the consumption of fruits that he thought might harm his voice. He even created a squad of more than 5,000 men to cheer him on in the theatre.

The tight-fisted Tiberius, on the other

offered a great opportunity for publicity you could control, similar to cable television appearances or advertisements today. Even Tiberius allowed statues to be put up in his honour, so long as he didn't have to pay for them; and some caesars went further. Caligula, for example, ordered the most famous statues of Greek gods to be brought to Rome with their heads removed so that he could attach his own. And Nero erected a statue of himself that was 120 feet tall.



President Donald Trump launches a post-impeachment victory lap by brandishing a newspaper with the giant headline "ACQUITTED", on February 6, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

hand, dreaded nothing more than public shows. Not only were they expensive to stage, but the crowds—like pesky journalists today—would sometimes ask him hard questions. Tiberius avoided the games as much as possible, until it occurred to him that he should move permanently to the isle of Capri, his own Mar-a-Lago in the Gulf of Naples.

Third, never pass up a chance to commission a statue of yourself. Statues

Fourth, promote your accomplishments. If you don't really have any, make some up. In Nero's own mind, his greatest accomplishment was his yearlong tour of Greece, where he competed in all the festivals, including the Olympics. Not surprisingly, he always took first place. He celebrated with the Roman equivalent of a State of the Union address: a triumphal parade, riding into Rome on a chariot once used by Augustus.

The floats bore all the crowns he had won, and he arranged for placards to announce the names of everyone he had defeated.

Caligula, by contrast, compensated for a failed military expedition to Germany by hiring local students to stage a fake attack on him and his troops. For his self-awarded triumph, he rounded up the tallest Gauls he could find, dyed their hair blonde, and taught them to grunt a few words in German so that he would have some impressive captives to display back in Rome.

The last lesson is to keep your friends close, but your enemies closer. All the caesars lived by the first half of this Corleone family code. Julius Caesar, for example, put his own household slaves in charge of the mint and state revenues. And Caligula even toyed with making his favourite horse consul of the republic. Tiberius was more cunning. After realising that the head of his security forces was plotting against him, he promoted the man to the consulship and dangled the hope of marriage into the imperial family—until it was safe to discard him. Trump has done something similar with numerous GOP figures.

In the end, these emperors' misdeeds caught up with them. Julius Caesar was stabbed to death in the Senate by irate colleagues, and Caligula was murdered by an officer whom he had taunted one too many times. Nero, after losing all support, took his own life with the help of his secretary. Only Tiberius seems to have died naturally. Or perhaps not: Suetonius cannot help reporting a rumour that Tiberius might have been poisoned by his successor, Caligula.

Trump survived impeachment. Will he make it through November's elections? And, looking further ahead, are there already new caesars in the making? These are questions that all Americans must now ask themselves.

Josiah Osgood, Professor and Chair of Classics at Georgetown University, is the author, most recently, of "How to Be a Bad Emperor: An Ancient Guide to Truly Terrible Leaders".

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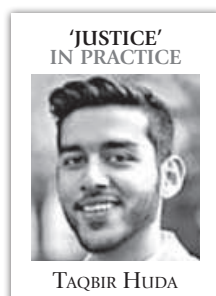
(Exclusive to *The Daily Star*)

Why do rape cases stay out of court?



All Shatabdi could think about was protecting her granddaughter's "honour" and family reputation.

PHOTOS
TAQBIR HUDA



'JUSTICE'
IN PRACTICE

TAQBIR HUDA

DESPITE the frequent media reports of rape in Bangladesh, existing studies suggest that most rape survivors do not take legal action. A 2015 UN multi-country study on male violence (which surveyed perpetrators of rape)

found that 95 percent of urban respondents and 88 percent of rural respondents in Bangladesh reported facing no legal consequences for raping a woman or girl. Additionally, data from the One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC) show that out of the 16,804 rape survivors who sought treatment between 2001 and 2013, only 3,747 took legal action, meaning 78 percent chose not to pursue legal action even after taking the initial step of seeking medical treatment. As statistics on rape incidents and rape prosecutions are not publicly or holistically available in Bangladesh, we have to rely on these two (now dated) reports from the UN and OCC. Nevertheless, these figures starkly demonstrate that the vast majority of rape victims and survivors are precluded, for one reason or another, from accessing justice in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is important to identify and understand the precise obstacles faced by rape victims and survivors which work to prevent most of them from reaching the court.

To this end, a colleague and I had undertaken some research in 2018, as part of which we interviewed three female paralegals working for Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST): Ananya Chakroborty, Nafija Akter and Rahima Khatun. All three of them were placed in the various one-stop legal aid clinics (known as "hubs") established inside several urban slums in Dhaka as part of Shokhi, a consortium project implemented between 2013 and 2017.

Through these hubs, paralegals would provide frontline legal services to women and girls facing violence and rights violations inside the slums and build legal awareness. The paralegals also conducted capacity building programmes to train young women as "change makers" who would act as first responders to violence against women and girls in their communities. Below are two cases discussed during the interviews which might help shed light on why, despite legal aid being offered at their doorsteps, two rape survivors were unable to take legal action.

MUNIA CANNOT SPEAK

Munia, aged between nine and 12 years, looked utterly lost in a busy Beribadh marketplace when Ananya, a paralegal working for BLAST, spotted her. Suspecting the child to be lost, Ananya approached her and offered to take her to the nearest police station so she could be safely returned to her parents or guardians. Together, they boarded a rickshaw.

While on the rickshaw, the child slowly began opening up to Ananya and mentioned that she had recently come to Dhaka from her village to work as a domestic help in a nearby apartment complex. She confessed to having escaped from the apartment earlier that day and expressed deep reluctance to go back there. Between the child's incoherent murmurs, Ananya noticed that Munia was quite visibly and deeply traumatised as she faced great difficulty in responding to some basic questions that were posed to her.

Upon being pressed on why she did not want to return to her employer's apartment, Munia said, "Amar mama amar shathe kharap kaj kore" (My uncle does bad things to me). This insinuation hardly came as a surprise to Ananya as she knew from her experience in the legal aid sector that sexual abuse of

domestic workers was quite rampant in Dhaka, especially for minor girls.

After arriving at the police station, the on-duty officer was very cooperative and receptive to Ananya's concerns about Munia possibly being a victim of sexual violence. However, in spite of Ananya's best efforts and requests, Munia found herself unable to relay her story to the police officer and incapable of responding to his preliminary queries.

Ananya requested the officer to be gentler and more patient with Munia, explaining that the child was still in shock. Eventually, after the officer was largely unsuccessful in extracting a statement from Munia, Ananya briefed him about what had happened in light of her earlier conversation in the rickshaw, explaining why it would be dangerous to return the child to her workplace in Dhaka and that she should directly be sent to her parents instead.



The paralegal tried to stop the grandmother from washing the clothes Marium was wearing, a key piece of evidence of sexual violence.

However, within moments, the employer's family arrived at the station and put on what seemed to Ananya an ostentatious show of concern towards Munia. Farida Begum (Munia's employer) exclaimed: "O kothae gesila, tomake toh amra khujite khujite hoiran. Tumi na kaj korte chaile bolba amader ke, palay javar ki dorkar?" (Where have you been? We have been so worried and tired looking for you! If you do not wish to work, you can just tell us, why run away?)

Farida then called the child's parents to scold them and scathingly asked why they had sent over a girl who did not want to work and instead had the audacity to run away. She commanded Munia's parents to come and collect their daughter at once, since it was clear that she was unfit to be a domestic help, and then abruptly hung up the phone.

Turning to the police officer and Ananya, Farida candidly accepted that occasionally they would scold Munia but that could be no reason for her to run away. "Amra tomake ki kom disi? Amra tomake koto ador kori. Tao tumi ebhabe na bole palae gela, shudhu ektu bokar jomo?" (What didn't we provide you with? We cared so much for you but you still ran away for a little scolding?) Farida's theatrics—which appeared rehearsed—led Ananya to suspect that she was trying to conceal the real reason for Munia's escape.

Afterwards, Farida and her family spotted a vacant room in the station and sought to speak privately with the police officer and Munia there. Despite Ananya's repeated insistence on being there, the police officer refused to allow her to be a part of the

meeting. Ananya did not know what exactly took place inside the confines of the closed room but after the meeting ended and they stepped out, Munia's behaviour and the police officer's attitude completely changed.

Munia no longer expressed any reluctance to go back to the apartment with Farida and the police officer, too, became sceptical of anything Ananya had previously said. Ananya tried to discreetly request him to speak to Munia in private, so she would have an opportunity to open up without the pressure of being in the presence of Farida and her family. However, the police officer did not seem to think this was necessary and was convinced that the matter had been adequately resolved.

Ananya then tried to convince Munia to reiterate the story but to no avail. The moment of trust and confidence which had transpired between the two in the rickshaw, seemed to

hub. However, seeking legal aid and filing a case was the last thing on Shahjadi's mind. All she could think about was protecting her granddaughter's "honour" and family reputation. It would be difficult enough to secure a "good marriage" for Marium, a girl from the slums, but if word got out that she was also a rape victim, that would almost eradicate any chances of her ever being able to get married, thought Shahjadi.

She had made up her mind: not a word about this incident was to go outside that shanty. She pleaded with the women in the room to forget what they had just heard and to refrain from telling anybody, for Marium's sake. At the same time, she was hastily arranging for a bucket of water, so that Marium could be bathed and the dress she was wearing during the unfortunate incident could be washed and stashed away at once.

Jorina knew from her training sessions about the importance of preserving evidence such as articles of clothing to seek justice for sexual violence. She tried to stop Shahjadi and kept on insisting that she at least visit the nearby legal hub once before deciding to destroy the key piece of evidence once and for all. Upon realising that Shahjadi could not be convinced, Jorina informed Nafija, the paralegal posted in the legal aid hub, about the incident right away. Nafija then duly informed the police about what had happened and was on her way to Shahjadi's shanty to speak to her. In the meantime, Jorina continued stalling Shahjadi from bathing Marium and having the dress washed.

A few moments later, Nafija arrived and joined Jorina in trying to convince Shahjadi to take legal action. Meanwhile, word about the incident had spread throughout the heavily populated slum. Influential members of the community appeared and were lending support to Shahjadi's decision against taking legal action.

Soon after, a police officer arrived at the scene and tried to quash the commotion. The community elders and Shahjadi assured the police that nothing untoward had happened



Munia, who came to Dhaka to work as a domestic help, confessed to having escaped from her employers' home. When asked why, she said, "My uncle does bad things to me."

and that a petty incident had been needlessly and disingenuously blown out of proportion by the paralegals. Nafija could hear members of the crowd murmur that "ei NGO kormi gula amago majhe oshanti srishti korte ashche" (these NGO workers have come here to create unrest among us). Nafija tried to explain to the police officer what had actually happened. However, the disinterested police officer made it clear that if the guardian of the alleged rape victim did not show any interest in filing a complaint, then there was nothing he could do. When Nafija kept on persisting, the police officer lost his temper and accused Nafija of pushing Shahjadi to file a complaint against her will.

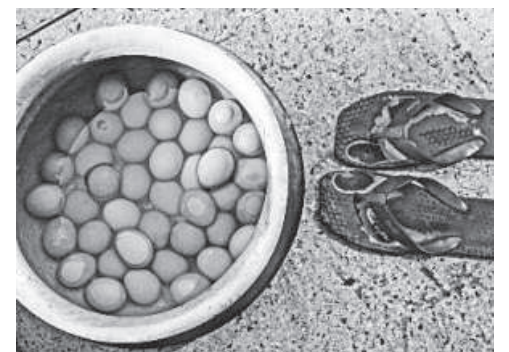
Shahjadi, too, took this opportunity to scold Nafija and accused her of trying to impose her "NGO agenda" on them and asked to be left alone. As the police officer began to walk away, and Shahjadi proceeded towards the bucket of water, Nafija felt that the only option she had was to walk away, too.

LESSONS FROM THESE CASES

It is important to bear in mind that paralegals like Ananya and Nafija have in general played a very cardinal role in bringing hundreds of rape cases to court, which would otherwise have remained outside it. The deliberate focus on two stories of failure, rather than success, is not intended in the slightest to undermine the indisputable accomplishments of paralegal intervention. The purpose is to help readers understand why certain rape survivors were pre-empted from bringing their case to court despite legal assistance being offered to them.

From these two case studies (and others like them), we found that the main pre-trial barriers are heavily interlinked and multifaceted and, therefore, work in tandem to keep rape survivors out of court. Firstly, there is family reluctance to take legal action due to the immense, if misplaced, social stigma surrounding victims of sexual violence. Lack of awareness about relevant legal and procedural processes on the part of the rape survivors and their families further reinforces the reluctance to take action. Secondly, even when rape survivors and their families overcome the stigma and wish to take action, they may be met with violent suppression from influential community leaders, usually because the rapist is someone they want to protect. Thirdly, rape survivors may be further hindered from seeking justice due to the failure on the part of law enforcement agencies to properly discharge their duties.

Due to these three factors, *shalish* or out-of-court settlement through informal community mediation becomes particularly operative in rape cases as it provides a convenient alternative to litigation for all parties involved. Due to the stigma attached and the desire to protect the "family honour", families of rape survivors wish to pursue a quick, economic and discrete remedy. Court cases, on the other hand, take years, if not decades, to conclude and entail a lot of costs (even when legal aid is received) and some degree of publicity. The community leaders,



even when uninterested in protecting the rapist involved, consider each incident of rape as an opportunity to make money as mediators of the *shalish* (since they receive a sizable portion of the settlement amount) and therefore have a clear financial interest in keeping the cases out of court.

Munia and Marium's cases should invoke deeper reflections about the range of complex and intertwined factors which work to keep rape survivors out of court, so that we can address these challenges and work towards creating a reality where prosecuting rape becomes the norm, rather than the exception.

This piece is a slightly edited extract from the research report titled "Why Rape Survivors Stay Out of Court: Lessons from Paralegal Interventions" published by BLAST in 2018. Other than the names of the paralegals, pseudonyms have been used for all others mentioned in the case studies.

Taqbir Huda is a Research Specialist at Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), where he leads the Rape Law Reform Now campaign. Email: taqbirhuda@gmail.com

WHAT'S ON	Group Art Exhibition Title: Three Worlds Venue: Shilpakala Gallery, Lalmatia, Dhaka Date: January 31 – February 11 Time: 3 pm – 8 pm	Solo Exhibition Title: Parables of the Womb Artist: Dilara Begum Jolly Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, Dhammondi Date: February 4 – March 28 Time: 2 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)	Book Fair Title: Amar Ekushey Boi Mela Organiser: Bangla Academy Venue: Bangla Academy Premises Date: Feb 2 - 29 Time: 3 pm – 8 pm; 11 am – 9 pm on weekends	Group Art Exhibition Title: Breaking Ground: Modern Art in Transition Venue: Subir Choudhury Exhibition Hall, Bengal Shilpalay, Dhammondi Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15 Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)	Dhaka Art Summit 2020: Seismic Movements সঞ্চারণ 7-15 February 2020	Art Event Title: Dhaka Art Summit 2020 Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Date: February 7 – 15 Time: 10 am – 8 pm
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(L) Visitors at 'Lighting the Fire of Freedom: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman'. (M) An installation on display at the summit. (R) The summit welcomes visitors from all over the world.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

The art extravaganza returns

5th edition of Dhaka Art Summit inaugurated at Shilpakala

ZAHANGIR ALAM

The city has become the epicenter of art, as Dhaka Art Summit 2020: Seismic Movements (DAS 2020) began yesterday at the National Art Gallery of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA).

Visionary duo Rajeeb and Nadia Samdani, the co-founders of the Samdani Art Foundation (SAF), in association with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, have been organising the prestigious art event biennially since 2012, in order to provide art lovers with a rare opportunity to experience multifarious arts from all around the world under one roof.

The open-for-all event convenes a critical mass of artists and thinkers invoking its audience to reconsider histories, movements, borders and fault lines through the lenses of art. More than 500 artists, sculptors, curators, critics, collectors, architects and art professionals from different countries, including Bangladesh, are participating in this grand fiesta of modern and contemporary art. Live events, including provoking artistic performances, panel discussions and puppet shows, among other things, are simultaneously underway at the extravagant event.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs K M Khalid inaugurated the summit as the chief guest. DAS Organising Committee Chairman Farooq Sobhan greeted everyone warmly, while co-founder and president of the Samdani Art Foundation, and the director of



A performance, titled 'Let Me Get You a Nice Cup of Tea', featuring Yasmin Jahan Nupur (R).

Dhaka Art Summit, Nadia Samdani, delivered her welcome address. Director General of BSA Liaquat Ali Lucky presided over the programme.

"We are interested in what will happen through the movement of ideas from inside the BSA to outside in real life," said Diana Campbell Betancourt, Chief Curator of DAS

2020, "this is why the exhibition design of DAS 2020 keeps a porous barrier between the inside and the outside of the venue."

A special exhibition, titled *Lighting the Fire of Freedom: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*, is also underway at DAS. It is an initiative of Centre for Research and Information (CRI), ICT Division, of



Visitors at Soma Surovi Jannat's 'Exploring the Santal's Story'.



Visitors at the special exhibition, 'Roots'.

Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, in collaboration with BSA and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. It pays the richest tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman on his birth centenary. Organised simultaneously with DAS, the exhibition is curated by Ruxmini Reckvana Q Choudhury, Assistant Curator of SAF. It narrates the

journey of the Father of the Nation (1920 – 1975), chronologically, through a rich variety of archival and contemporary materials, including personal photographs, newspapers, videos and artworks. The exhibition treasures historic moments, dating back to the Bengal Presidency under the British Raj, to the East Pakistan regime, and finally, the formation of Bangladesh, a democratic independent nation.

Roots, curated by Dhaka-based artist and educator Bishwajit Goswami, examines the transfer of knowledge by art educators who have been critical in the building of Bangladesh's art history. The interesting educative programme focuses on the role of Bangladeshi artists in building the institutions that support artistic productions in the country. The programme has a key role in founding formal institutions, such as the Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka, the Institute of Fine Arts, University of Chittagong, S M Sultan's Shishu Swarga and Charupith Jashore.

The Samdani Art Award has created an internationally recognised platform to showcase the works of young Bangladeshi artists to an audience, consisting of international art professionals. It aims to support, promote and highlight Bangladeshi contemporary art, and honour talented emerging Bangladeshi artists between the ages of 22 and 40.

The event, opening from 10 am to 8 pm daily, will run until February 15.

EKUSHEY SPOTLIGHT

Md Tajdin Hassan and Rafeed Chowdhury's motivational book on careers out now



PHOTO: COURTESY

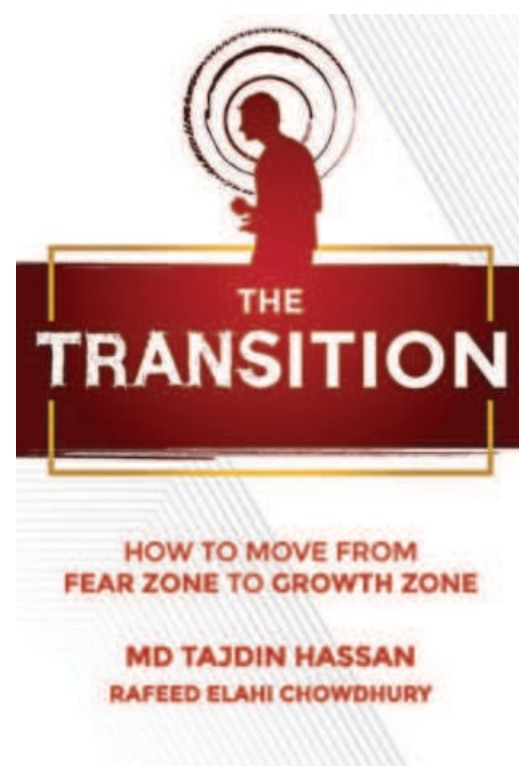
Guiding young adults through their academic and professional journeys, Md Tajdin Hassan and Rafeed Chowdhury made their debuts as authors with 'The Transition: How To Move From Fear Zone to Growth Zone', published by The Daily Star Books, at the Ekushey Boi Mela, this year.

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

The first half of the book, written by Rafeed Elahi Chowdhury, a student of North South University, explains how you can excel at college and get over the fear of settling into university as a new student, by involving yourself in various on-campus activities, including joining various co-curricular clubs. "I want to share the lessons I have garnered from my early university life with other students so that they can make the best out of their comfort zones," shares Rafeed.

The second half of the book, written by Md Tajdin Hassan, Head of Marketing at The Daily Star, aims to help fresh graduates work through their fears while entering the corporate world. "The book is a reflection of fourteen years of my corporate journey. Young professionals have very little time to contribute towards self-grooming, which is why I wrote the book for them. It is more of a guide book that'll help aspiring young professionals to ace their work lives," says Tajdin, who believes that with a bit of guidance, students can excel in their academics and also choose the right careers for themselves. He has previously worked at British American Tobacco, Chevron, Robi Axiata and DHL Express.

Each chapter of the book ends with a certain exercise, marked through a point based system which helps readers find out if they are still in the fear zone or if they have made it to the growth zone. The exercises are followed by two cartoon characters, Excuse Monkey and Benefit Banana, who sum up the essentials of



the chapter.

The Transition: How To Move From Fear Zone to Growth Zone is available from The Daily Star Books in stalls 491 and 492, at BDT 262 (under 25 percent discount).



PHOTOS: STAR

'Ekusher Alope Natya Pradarshani' in Sylhet Theatre in light of history

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, from Sylhet

A 17-day theatre festival, Ekusher Alope Natya Pradarshani, is underway at Kabi Nazrul Auditorium, Sylhet. The annual arrangement, organised by Sammilita Natya Parishad Sylhet, was inaugurated on February 1. The fest opened with the staging of *O Mon Pahia* by Manipuri Theatre.



The fest aims to revive the spirit of the International Language Movement (February 21, 1952) and the Liberation War of Bangladesh (1971) with the tagline, *Ekushe Michil Ekushe Hata, Ekushe Manena Pother Kanta*.

Sylhet Zilla Parishad and Sylhet City Corporation is hosting sixteen theatre troupes of the division, in association with the Cultural Affairs Ministry.

Bhumikanya by Natya Niketan was staged on the third day of the festival.

On the fourth and fifth days, *The Old Man and the Sea* by Theatre Sylhet and *Pejgi* by Diganta Theatre were played respectively.

The other troupes performing in this festival are: Nagamat, Darpan Theatre, Natyalok Sylhet Surma, Theare Murari Chand, Natyamancha Sylhet, Nabisikha Natyadal, and Kathakali.

The festival will conclude on February 17 with the play *Bason* by Nandik Natyadal Sylhet.



Climate activist Greta Thunberg marches beside members of the indigenous Sami community during a Friday for Future protest in Jokkmokk, northern Sweden yesterday.

PHOTO:
AFP

Delhi goes

FROM PAGE 16
the CAA as being against national interest per se.

Modi addressed two rallies while Amit Shah addressed many more and undertook door-to-door campaign. BJP President J P Nadda and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were also in full throttle over the Shaheen Bagh protest.

The campaign plunged to a new low in bitterness when federal minister Anurag Thakur had, at a rally, egged the crowd to say "shoot the traitors", and the party's West Delhi lawmaker Parvesh Verma made a controversial statement on Shaheen Bagh protesters.

Both Thakur and Verma were banned by the Election Commission from campaigning for 72 and 96 hours respectively and ordered by the polls body to be dropped from the party's star campaigner's list. On Wednesday, Verma was barred from campaigning for a second time.

While the BJP focussed on high-pitched campaign stoking nationalistic and Hindutva sentiments, AAP chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, a former revenue service officer who quit government job to join politics six years ago, sought to woo voters projecting his government's achievements in like providing cheap water and power and setting up neighbourhood health centres and improving school education.

The Congress' campaign failed to match the vigour of its opponents and former prime minister Manmohan Singh, Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra addressed just a few public meetings.

The BJP won all seven Lok Sabha seats in the national capital in the 2019 national elections with its overall vote share at an overwhelming 57%. The AAP finished third in terms of vote share. The BJP also controls all the three municipal corporations to which polls were held in 2017.

Girl raped

FROM PAGE 16
disturbed to learn of allegations of a sexual assault of a child on the embassy compound."

"The embassy took prompt action, including reporting the incident to the police and assisting the alleged victim to obtain medical assistance," the statement added.

An investigation has been launched, and a court date has yet to be set.

In the wake of a brutal 2012 Delhi gang rape -- which brought worldwide condemnation and still haunts the collective memory of women in India's capital -- lawmakers passed a series of amendments to the existing rape laws.

The amended law lengthened prison terms and introduced the death penalty in cases in which the victim is younger than 12 years of age.

In 2018, more than 33,000 cases of alleged rape were reported -- roughly 91 cases each day, according to India's National Crime Records Bureau -- but experts say the real number is likely much higher, owing to the shame attached to sexual assault and the social barriers faced by victims.

'Robber' killed

FROM PAGE 16
Police also claimed to have recovered a firearm, several bullets, and cartridge from the spot.

The body of Kashidul was sent to Dinajpur M Abdur Rahim Medical College for an autopsy.

The injured were sent to Dinajpur Police Lines Hospital, the OC added.

On January 13, two alleged drug dealers were killed in a similar incident with police in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

Bangabandhu's nation-building

FROM PAGE 16
statement, issued at the end of Bangabandhu's two-day visit to Kolkata, says: "The task having been completed, the two prime ministers felt that these armed forces should be withdrawn."

The two prime ministers had detailed discussions covering every aspect of the mutual relations between the two countries. They resolved to give a practical shape to the legitimate and deeply felt aspirations of the common people of India and Bangladesh guided by the principles of democracy, socialism, secularism, non-alignment and opposition to racism and colonialism in all forms and manifestations, adds the statement.

DHAKA UNIVERSITY REOPENS
The University of Dhaka reopens finally today. President Justice Abu Sayeed Choudhury declares that there

would be complete freedom for the universities in the country. "Those days of interfering with the university administration is no more. Now students must dedicate themselves to build up a new education system worthy of the new state," says the president.

100 KILLED IN MIRPUR BY PAKISTANI COLLABORATORS
At least 100 men of Bangladesh Force and Police were killed by Pakistani collaborators in Mirpur last week. Confirming the casualties an official spokesperson says that the miscreants, who had received huge quantities of arms and ammunition from Pakistani forces just before their surrender, had launched an unprovoked attack on the personnel of Bangladesh Force and Police.

He adds that the government had no intention to harass innocent persons in Mirpur. Out of about 1500 persons

rounded up on suspicion from Sector 1 and Sector 2 of Mirpur, many were released after interrogation.

ACCREDITATION LETTERS IN BANGLA

Ministry of Foreign Affairs has introduced Bangla letters in accreditation for the envoys posted in foreign countries.

TK 18CR GRANTS TO REHABILITATE DISPLACED PERSONS

In a bid to rehabilitate the millions of returnees from India at a speedy pace and save them from starvation, the government of Bangladesh has allocated more than Tk 18 crore in cash in addition to about 30 lakh maunds of food grains to the district authorities.

Sources: February 9, 1972 issues of Ittefaq, The Bangladesh Observer, Azad, Morning News, Dainik Bangla and Purbodesh.

Europe can't be 'spectators'

FROM PAGE 16
post-Brexit nuclear strategy.

France is now the only nuclear-armed power in the European Union at a time when long-standing accords on limiting the growth of nuclear arsenals appear increasingly at risk.

The US and Russia have abandoned the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty, each blaming the other for breaching its limits, and Washington is threatening to quit the New START arms reduction treaty when it expires next year.

Add to that China's bid for global sway, there is a strong need for Europe to ensure it does not find itself in the middle of a Cold War-style standoff "which could jeopardise the peace obtained after so many tragedies on our continent," Macron said.

He warned of "the possibility of a pure and unrestrained military and nuclear competition, the likes of which we haven't seen since the end of the 1960s."

"The vital interests of France now have a European dimension," Macron said.

"European nations should also insist on being signatories of any

new deal to limit the development of new intermediate-range weapons," he added.

"Let us be clear: if negotiations and a more comprehensive treaty are possible... Europeans must be stakeholders and signatories, because it's our territory" that is most at risk.

NO SHARING
France has already reduced the number of its warheads to under 300, Macron said, giving it "the legitimacy to demand concrete moves from other nuclear powers toward global disarmament that is gradual, credible and can be verified."

But he stopped short of offering to share France's nuclear deterrence capabilities, a pillar of its security strategy since implemented by Charles de Gaulle in the 1960s.

Germany in particular remains strongly opposed to atomic weapons, although a leader in Chancellor Angela Merkel's party, Johann Wadepuhl, said this week that Paris should consider putting its arsenal under the auspices of the EU or Nato.

Macron invited European partners to engage in a "strategic dialogue" on the deterrent role of France's nuclear

capacity as the country embarks on a costly modernisation of its arsenal.

"Our independence in terms of decision-making is fully compatible with our unshakable solidarity with our European partners," Macron said.

Macron also warned of the need for "a greater capacity for autonomous action by Europeans," who must step up their military spending.

"Why are they not ready to make defence a budget priority and make the necessary sacrifices, even as the risks are growing?" Macron asked.

His speech came as a diplomatic freeze between the EU and Russia since Moscow's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine has rekindled fears of fresh conflict along Europe's eastern flank.

France has broken with some EU nations by recently reaching out to restore dialogue with President Vladimir Putin, who controls the world's largest nuclear arsenal.

"There can be no defence and security project for European citizens without a political vision that seeks to progressively restore trust with Russia," Macron said.

Date palm plants

FROM PAGE 16
However, the last remains of the region's date plantations were wiped out by the 19th century, and this particular variety is now extinct, Sallon said.

To grow the trees, the researchers soaked 33 ancient seeds found by archaeologists in water for 24 hours and then treated them with hormones and organic fertiliser to encourage rooting.

After discarding one seed that was damaged, they planted the rest in potting soil and used desalinated water enriched with iron and fertiliser to water them.

Eventually, six of the seeds sprouted: "Some of them took a few weeks but others took months," said Sallon, who gave the plants names.

Three of the plants have now been replanted outside the greenhouse. Sallon is hopeful that Hannah, a female date tree, will flower this year and the plant could be pollinated by Methuselah -- a tree the team grew from a 1,900-year-old Judean date palm seed in 2008.

However, Sallon says it's impossible to know if the female tree will bear fruit.

"We hope that the pollen and the flower are compatible and that she will respond to it. We'll come back to you if she starts producing dates."

These date trees aren't the oldest plants to be brought back to life. Scientists in Russia have grown plants from fruit stored away by squirrels in permafrost 30,000 years ago. However, the seeds from the Silene stenophylla plant weren't grown naturally. Instead, scientists propagated them in lab dishes from fruit tissue.

Youth stabbed

FROM PAGE 16
his friends in Tilagarh area around 9:30pm.

Both Dip and Saikat stabbed each other and were seriously injured during the fight.

Later, the two were taken to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical where Dip succumbed to his injuries, the OC said, adding that Saikat was still receiving treatment at the hospital under police custody.

Dip's family is preparing to file a case, the OC said, adding that they were looking for those who were involved in the clash.

China says UK virus advice to citizens an 'overreaction'

AFP, London

Beijing's ambassador to London on Thursday said Britain's advice to its nationals to leave China because of the novel coronavirus outbreak was an "overreaction" and urged the policy to be reversed.

Liu Xiaoming said Beijing had told the UK the move was not "a good idea" and instead called for a more measured approach.

On Tuesday, the British Foreign Office advised UK nationals to leave China "if they can" to minimise their risk of exposure to the coronavirus, following similar advice by the United States.

"I hope the British government... will take an objective, cool-headed view of what is going on in China," Liu said at a press conference at the Chinese embassy in London.

"We did tell them overreaction is not helpful. We don't think there should be such a panic," he added. "We should support each other, rather than to weaken the other's efforts."

Tigers shot out for 233

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh on the back foot right from the start.

The only fifty of the innings from Mohammad Mithun and a few starts from Nazmul Hossain Shanto, skipper Mominul Haque, Mahmudullah Riyad and Liton Das helped Bangladesh past the 200 mark.

It was however a day for Pakistan's pacers led by Shaheen Shah Afridi, who tested the Tigers' patience and ended up picking four wickets while fellow seamer Mohammad Abbas picked up two wickets for 19 runs from 17 miserly overs.

The day started on the wrong foot as, after Bangladesh were asked to bat first, both openers departed inside the first two overs of the day.

Debutant Saif Hasan departed for a duck while Tamim, coming off a record triple-hundred in the Bangladesh Cricket League, was trapped leg before for three off the bowling of Abbas on review after he was given not out by the umpire initially.

It was then Nazmul and skipper Mominul who repaired some of the damage and tackled the Pakistani bowlers pretty well, adding 59 runs for the third wicket.

Nazmul was compact while Mominul, after surviving a barrage of bouncers and playing out a few maiden overs, finally departed in rather disappointing fashion. The

left-hander chased a ball outside off stump from Afridi and only managed to edge it to the keeper.

Nazmul looked comfortable until he too gifted away his wicket after scoring 44 when the left-hander was caught behind off the bowling of Abbas in the first over after lunch.

Mahmudullah too was guilty of the same error, chasing after a delivery, after scoring 25 but it was Mithun who was arguably the best Bangladesh batsman, displaying the patience and application that his top-order teammates failed to maintain.

Mithun and Liton then started to frustrate the Pakistani bowlers with a quickfire 54-run stand for the sixth wicket before left-arm spinner Harris Sohail gave the all-important breakthrough for the hosts by dismissing Liton for 33 as the Tigers went to tea on 164 for six.

The right-handed Mithun registered his second Test fifty alongside Taijul Islam, who provided great support from the other end in the post tea session.

The pair added a valuable 53-run seventh wicket stand before Taijul became Sohail's second victim after scoring 24.

Top-scorer Mithun was eventually dismissed after scoring 63 off 140 balls, which included seven fours and a six, as Pakistan rattled through the Bangladesh tail with the second new ball to complete the job inside the first day.

Pollution threatens

FROM PAGE 16
As the pollution continues unabated, there is no reason to assume that water quality of the river has improved since then, DoE officials said.

Around 24 launches carrying roughly 50,000 people ply the river every day, according to Ajmol Huda Mithu, deputy director of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

The vessels dump non-degradable plastic bottles, single-use plastic bags, and many other types of waste in the Kirtankhola, said Suvankar Chakrabarty, secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (BAPA).

"We have instructions to clean the launch quickly after anchoring at the port. We usually throw all the garbage, including solid and plastic waste, into the river," said Anwar Miah, crew member of a Dhaka-Barishal launch owned by Sundarban Navigation Company.

Indiscriminate dumping of waste is not only polluting the river but also disrupting dredging activities, said Rejaul Islam, assistant engineer of the dredging department of BIWTA.

"Due to the excessive presence of plastic and polythene on the river bed we have to replace the blade of dredging machines every hour. Normally, we change the blade every four to five hours," said Rejaul.

The government should conduct drives against the polluters and launch awareness programmes, said Kajol Ghosh, a cultural activist in Barishal.

Eighty-year-old Manabendra Batabayal, a resident of the Bandar area, said he has not seen such pollution in the Kirtankhola all his life.

S Korea's #MeToo initiator slams top court

AFP, Seoul

The woman who started South Korea's #MeToo movement yesterday slammed the nation's highest court for quashing her abuser's conviction last month, saying the ruling effectively silenced whistleblowers and victims of sexual violence.

Seo Ji-hyun said she was groped by her superior Ahn Tae-geun at a funeral in 2010, and that he had her transferred from Seoul to a provincial position after she filed an internal complaint, blighting her career as a prosecutor.

She suffered in silence for years until she went public in a 2018 television interview, a rare move in a still conservative society where female victims of sexual assault are often reluctant to come forward for fear of shaming.

It triggered a flood of similar accusations against powerful men in fields ranging from art and literature to politics and religion that grew into a South Korean #MeToo movement.

Some top male South Korean figures including former presidential contender Ahn Hee-jung and once-celebrated theatre director Lee Yoon-taek have since been jailed.

But Seo's abuser, Ahn Tae-geun, walked free last month after his conviction for abuse of power was quashed by the country's top court, which ordered a retrial.

Ahn's release "practically paves the way for any companies or

Saidur Rahman Rintu, owner of Sundarban Navigation Company, said, "Throwing waste into rivers has now decreased to a great extent... We are trying to prevent it. We have talked with BIWTA about installing waste reservoirs at river ports across the country."

Launch owners are ready to pay the city corporations for proper waste management, said Saidur, also vice president of the Launch Owners' Association.

BIWTA Deputy Director Huda said they are constructing waste reservoirs for plastic and solid waste at river ports.

Abdul Halim, director of the Barishal Divisional Office of DoE, said his department would organise a views-exchange programme with the Launch Owners' Association, and would then conduct mobile courts to fine pollution.

The Barishal City Corporation should look after the canals and rivers in its jurisdiction and hold mobile courts or issue directives against pollution, environmentalists said.

But the city corporation has no plans to save the river from pollution, said an official.

PBI clears SI

FROM PAGE 16
raped by Khairul and police informer Quamruzzaman in Laxmanpur area of Sharsha upazila.

The following day, the victim filed a case accusing four people, including the SI.

Police on September 4 picked up Quamrul, Omar Ali, and Abdul Latif over the incident.

organisations to demote or fire internal whistle blowers as they please," Seo told reporters in Seoul yesterday.

It could be used to "discourage any potential... victims of workplace sexual assaults from coming forward and speaking truth", she said.

Seo, who has been on leave since 2018, is to join the justice ministry this year.

"I'm still afraid of retaliation, because my abuser used to be the most powerful figure within the prosecution and those who follow him still remain" influential in the organisation, she said.

Ahn -- who was separately fired for corruption in 2017 -- could not be charged with sex abuse because the one-year statute of limitations had expired.

Originally he had been jailed for two years for abuse of power in January last year, a verdict an appellate court upheld in July.

But the supreme court said it was difficult to conclude one of Ahn's actions -- asking a prosecutor to write a document related to Seo's transfer to a provincial post -- was a form of power abuse.

Some have called Seo a "gold digger" after she went public with her accusation, she said, adding prosecutors who tried to silence her had been promoted to higher posts.

But she had had the support of "many people to sow the seeds of change", she said.

NEWS IN
briefSanders, Buttigieg
in virtual Iowa tie

AFP, Washington

US Democratic presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Pete Buttigieg were in a virtual tie as results from 100 percent of Iowa precincts were called late Thursday, but no winner declared in the state's caucuses after technical problems snarled the process. According to final results from the Monday caucuses Buttigieg, 38, leads with 26.2 percent followed by Sanders, the 78-year-old self-described democratic socialist, with 26.1 percent.

Hitman for Escobar
dies in Colombia

AFP, Bogota

Pablo Escobar's most notorious hitman, known by the nickname Popeye, died on Thursday at age 57 after a life of crime he celebrated on YouTube, Colombia's prison authorities said. Jhon Jairo Velasquez had boasted of killing hundreds of people for his "boss" Escobar, the infamous drug lord killed by Colombian police in 1993 while on the run to avoid extradition to the United States.

Yemen Qaeda chief
killed: Trump

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump confirmed Thursday that the US had killed the leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula -- days after the jihadist group claimed responsibility for a mass shooting at a US naval base. AQAP claimed responsibility on Sunday for a December 6 shooting at US Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida, in which a Saudi Air Force officer killed three American sailors. Washington considers AQAP to be the worldwide jihadist network's most dangerous branch.



A general view shows an empty street in Beijing yesterday. The official Chinese death toll from the coronavirus outbreak rose to 636, with the government saying total infections climbed past 30,000.

PHOTO:
AFP

'Ghost city' with 25m people

REUTERS, Beijing

Snow covers the ground and the trees are bare amid near-freezing temperatures.

Despite this, Beijing would typically be thronged with morning traffic and tourists heading to Tiananmen Square, the Great Hall of the People and the Forbidden City.

Instead, Reuters Greater China Chief video producer Mark Chisholm has spent the last 10 days commuting through a "ghost city" to work amid an extension of the Lunar New Year holidays due to the coronavirus outbreak.

"You see empty walkways, empty streets with very little cars, bicycles or motorbikes," Chisholm said.

The virus, believed to have originated in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, has killed more than 630 people and infected more than 31,000, the vast majority of them in China.

The outbreak is also inflicting a growing toll on businesses and consumers in the world's second-largest economy. Strict transport curbs have been imposed in many parts of the country, and like Beijing, some

cities are in virtual lockdown.

Chisholm exits the diplomatic compound where he lives through double doors, and a guard at the gate wearing a face mask checks his temperature.

Chisholm finds Chang'an Avenue, the capital's main thoroughfare, almost completely deserted, with one or two people standing at bus stops, and roads devoid of traffic.

He then heads down a flight of steps into the underground Yong'anli train station on Line 1, his voice echoing in the vacant stairwell. The

CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC

only people he encounters are the workers operating the thermal scanner at the turnstiles.

A platform normally packed with hundreds of people is eerily empty, the automated announcements reverberating in the otherwise silent station. Passengers sit in small groups on the train, everyone masked and no one making eye contact.

Chisholm gets off and walks into the three-storey Wangfujing shopping mall, filled with shuttered shops and bright red Lunar New Year decorations

featuring oversized rodents to mark the Year of the Rat.

Finally, as Chisholm nears the Reuters offices, he sees a man in a hazard suit spraying disinfectant into dark corridors from a yellow backpack.

"I've lived in Beijing for 15 years and never seen the city so deserted," Chisholm said. "I actually find it rather sad that this usually vibrant place has become a ghost city with 25 million people holed up in their apartments."

Meanwhile, panicky Hong Kong residents scooped noodles, rice, meat and toilet rolls into supermarket trolleys yesterday despite government assurances of ample supplies during an outbreak of a new coronavirus that has killed 637 people in mainland China.

Chinese-ruled Hong Kong has reported 25 cases of the fast-spreading virus and one of only two deaths outside mainland China.

Panic also hit Taiwan the same day, with local media reporting supermarkets having their shelves cleared on rumours that stepped-up production of face masks would lead to a shortage of raw materials to make toilet paper.

Pangolin identified as
potential coronavirus host

AFP, Beijing

The endangered pangolin may be the link that facilitated the spread of the novel coronavirus across China, Chinese scientists said Friday.

Researchers have long suspected that the virus, which has now killed more than 630 people and infected some 31,000, was passed from an animal to a human at a market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

Researchers at the South China Agricultural University have identified the scaly mammal as a "potential intermediate host," the university said in a statement, without providing further details.

The new virus is believed to have originated in bats, but researchers have suggested there could have been an "intermediate host" in the transmission to humans.

After testing more than 1,000 samples from wild animals, scientists from the university found the genome sequences

of viruses found on pangolins to be 99 percent identical to those on coronavirus patients, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

The pangolin is considered the most trafficked animal on the planet and more than one million have been snatched from Asian and African forests in the past decade.

They are destined for markets in China and Vietnam, where their scales are used in traditional medicine -- despite having no medical benefits -- and their meat is bought on the black market.

China in January ordered a temporary ban on the trade in wild animals until the epidemic is under control.

A price list that circulated on China's internet for a business at the Wuhan market showed a menagerie of animals or animal-based products including live foxes, crocodiles, wolf puppies, giant salamanders, snakes, rats, peacocks, porcupines, camel meat and other game -- 112 items in all.



UN must break 'habits'

Says Kushner as he defends Middle East plan

REUTERS, United Nations

Donald Trump's son-in-law and architect of the new US peace plan for the Middle East, Jared Kushner, has called on the UN Security Council to break its "habits" and solve the "hardest problem in the world", in a rare interview.

Kushner on Thursday presented the US peace plan to the UN Security Council, using maps and graphics to illustrate his contention that the parallel developments of Israeli settlements and Palestinian aspirations would lead to a point of no return for the creation of a Palestinian state.

"People want to see fresh thinking and progress," Kushner told reporters from six media outlets, including AFP. "What we are doing is just trying to fight against habits," he said.

The US plan retains a two-state solution and proposes making Abu Dis the capital of a Palestinian state. Palestinians however want all of east Jerusalem to be the capital of any future state.

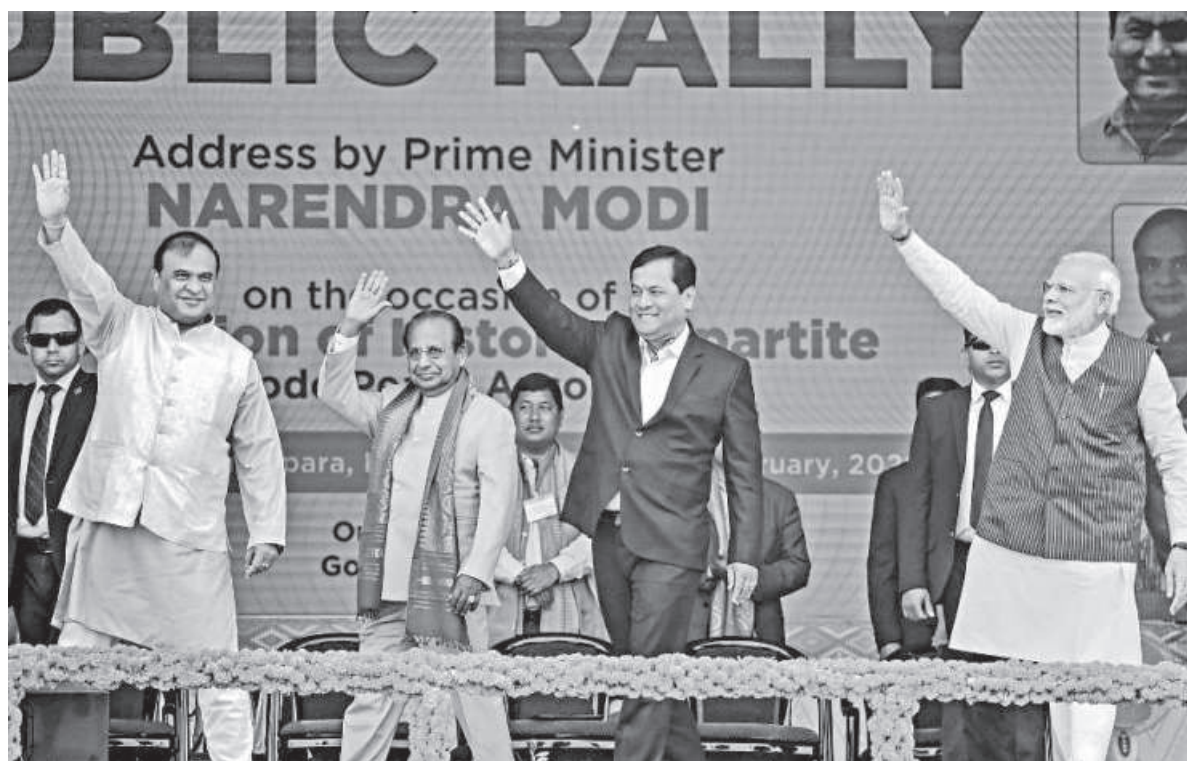
The US proposal also gives consent for Israel to annex Israeli settlements as well as the Jordan Valley, a narrow strip of land much of which is inside the West Bank, a key part of the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

Asked whether Israel could be flexible on the question of east Jerusalem, Kushner said that was up to the two parties themselves to decide.

Kushner also accused Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas of not wanting to reach a peace deal.

"I never felt like he was willing to get into details either because he is not a detail-oriented person or because he didn't know what he wanted to accomplish."

"He liked high level principles, but you can't solve problems with high level principles," he added.



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (R), Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Assam Governor Jagdish Mukhi and Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wave their hands to the public during a public rally on the occasion of celebrations for tripartite Bodo Peace Accord at Khargaon-Tengapara area in Kokrajhar of northeastern state of Assam yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Rains 'breaking the back'
of Australia bushfire crisis

Heavy rain was raising hopes yesterday for an end to Australia's unprecedented bushfire crisis, as downpours douse blazes that have burned out of control for months. The devastating fires, fuelled by prolonged drought and record-high temperatures, have raged since September, burning more than 10 million hectares (25 million acres) and killing 33 people. An estimated billion animals have perished in the fires that destroyed more than 2,500 homes. The rains in New South Wales (NSW), which began earlier in the week in some areas and are forecast to extend into next week, are expected to drench a number of the remaining fires and help contain others. By yesterday afternoon there were no bushfires burning in NSW at the most dangerous emergency or "watch and act" levels -- a situation virtually unseen in almost half a year.

'Malala's shooter escapes'

Ehsanullah Ehsan, the Taliban terrorist responsible for shooting Nobel Peace prize winner Malala Yousafzai in 2012 and carrying out the deadly Peshawar Army school terror attack in 2014 in which 132 students were killed -- has escaped from prison, according to an audio clip released by him. In the audio clip, which surfaced on social media on Thursday, Ehsanullah Ehsan said that he escaped the confinement of Pakistani security agencies on January 11, claiming Pakistani forces failed to keep their promises made to him during his surrender in 2017. "With the help of God, I succeeded to escape on January 11, 2020 from the confinement of the security forces," he is heard saying in the clip. Malala Yousafzai, 22, was shot for campaigning for girls' education in 2012 in Pakistan's Swat Valley.

'Yes, we remember'



Kerala Finance Minister Thomas Isaac delivered a budget speech with sharp political overtones in the state assembly yesterday, declaring that the entire state stands united against the BJP-led centre's Citizenship Amendment Act. Significantly, the cover of the budget document he held in his hand bore a painting that depicted Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Thomas Isaac said that the painting, artist Tom Vattakuzhy's "Death of Gandhi", was meant to send a message to the centre. "The message is: Yes, we remember. That Mahatma was murdered, murdered by Hindu communists who are revered today by the ruling party and the central government," Thomas Isaac told mediapersons. "We are saying: 'We will remember it, people will not forget.'" SOURCE: AFP

India extends detention
of Kashmiri leaders

AFP, Srinagar

Indian authorities have extended the detention of two former Kashmir chief ministers, held for the past six months under a security clampdown, using a law allowing for them to be locked up for two years without charge, police said yesterday.

Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah, despite having long supported Kashmir being part of India, were detained in August when New Delhi rescinded the region's autonomy and imposed a vice-like security and communications lockdown.

Facing international unease, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the move was to bring peace to a region where tens of thousands have died in a three decade old uprising against Indian rule.

Separatist militants have been fighting some 500,000 Indian forces in the territory, demanding independence or to join

Pakistan which also controls part of the Himalayan region.

Mufti and Abdullah's provisional detention expired on Thursday and they were immediately booked under the Public Safety Act (PSA), a police source in Kashmir told AFP.

The legislation was used against a third former chief minister Farooq Abdullah, the father of Omar Abdullah, in September to keep the 82-year-old under house arrest.

Restricted Internet access was allowed in late January after a blackout lasting almost

six months that Modi's government had said was imposed for security reasons, but which has hit hard the economy, healthcare and education. However Kashmir's more than seven million inhabitants can still only access a "whitelist" of 301 government-approved websites that do not include social media.



Who is indigenous?

Millions may be denied land in Assam over definition

REUTERS, Guwahati

Millions of migrants and tribal people in India's northeastern Assam state could be denied land because of a new definition of the term "indigenous", land and human rights experts said.

Assam has a long-simmering movement against immigrants and its 2019 land policy, aimed at overhauling a three-decade old land law, seeks to allocate land to landless indigenous people - but does not specify who is indigenous.

"After we bring the law, an indigenous person can sell his or her land to an indigenous person only, not to anyone else. That means our land will be preserved for our people," health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters at a briefing.

The new land law comes as nearly 1.9 million residents, mostly Muslim, were left off a citizens register in Assam last year, as part of a drive to detect and detain illegal immigrants.

Protests erupted across India in December against a new citizenship law, with demonstrators in Assam fearing it would convert thousands of illegal migrants from neighbouring Muslim-majority Bangladesh into legal residents.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which also governs Assam, says there are hundreds of thousands of

illegal immigrants in Assam from Bangladesh.

To be included on the citizenship register, people had to furnish proof of residence in India going back decades, before March 24, 1971, the year in which hundreds of thousands of people fled Bangladesh, as it split from Pakistan.

Minister Sarma said a committee will define the term "indigenous", and consider various cut-off dates for arrival in the state to determine who belonged there and was entitled to receive land from the government.

Any definition would run counter to India's classification of indigenous people, which is applied to its 104 million tribal population - also known as Adivasis or "original inhabitants" - who make up nearly 10% of the country's 1.3 billion citizens.

Nationally, indigenous people are entitled to special rights and protections, including over land and resources.

Assam's new land policy is set to further marginalise millions of poor tribal people and ethnic minorities, said Walter Fernandes, a senior fellow at the North Eastern Social Research Centre, a think-tank in Guwahati city in Assam.

"In a country where birth certificates, marriage certificates and death certificates are not common, how do you produce these records for yourself, let alone your parents?" he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.



'A little patience would have been good'

SPORTS REPORTER

The key word from Bangladesh top-order batsman Nazmul Hossain Shanto after the first day's play where the visitors were bundled out for just 233 runs against Pakistan in the first Test in Rawalpindi was 'patience.'

Despite losing both openers Tamim Iqbal and Saif Hasan inside the second over of the day, Nazmul, skipper Mominul Haque and Mahmudullah Riyad all got the starts but were unable to convert into a big partnership.

It was Mohammad Mithun who struck the only fifty in the Bangladesh innings as the visitors fell apart against a quality Pakistani bowling attack led by Shaheen Shah Afridi, who bagged four wickets.

I think they bowled well throughout the day. Although the pitch was good, their bowlers showed good patience and kept bowling in one area. I think from that point our batsmen made some mistakes and if we had a little more patience, it would have been good for us.

NAZMUL HOSSAIN SHANTO
BANGLADESH BATSMAN

Nazmul, who was the second highest run-getter with 44, pointed to a lack of patience from the Tigers' batsmen while praising the patience of the Pakistani bowlers, which made the difference.

"I think the score could have been better. I think we managed to come back well after losing a few early wickets. Me, alongside Mominul Haque, had a good partnership. I think we should have converted those partnerships into big ones. What I am saying is if we were able to convert those small partnerships into big ones it would have been good for us.

"I think they bowled well throughout the day. Although the pitch was good, their bowlers showed good patience and kept bowling in one area. I think from that point our batsmen made some mistakes and if we had a little more patience, it would have been good for us," said Nazmul.

The left-hander kept saying that if they are able to bat well in the second innings there would still be a chance for Bangladesh to make a comeback in the Test match. However, that raised the question of what Nazmul was basing his confidence and optimism on. "The starts of the innings from our batters gives the confidence that we will be able to play well in the second innings."

The left-hander was also asked whether the Test match would go till the fifth day and Nazmul said that it was important for Bangladesh to bat well in the second innings. The 21-year-old also added that the Tigers need to bowl well to bundle Pakistan out for a small total.

A defeat in this match would make it six Test losses in a row for Bangladesh, who lost all five Tests in 2019.



BANGLADESH: First innings 233 all out (Nazmul 44, Mominul 30, Mahmudullah 25, Mithun 63, Liton 33, Tajjul 24; Afridi 4-53, Abbas 2-19, Sohail 2-11)



Nazmul Hossain Shanto looked very composed before he was dismissed after a 110-ball 44. Like Shanto, a number of batsmen got starts on the first day of the Rawalpindi Test against Pakistan yesterday. However, they failed to capitalise on the starts as Bangladesh were bowled out for 233 in 82.5 overs. (Inset) Pakistan pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi, who picked four wickets, remained the biggest thorn on the Tigers' path.

PHOTO: AFP

The final step of a long journey

SPORTS REPORTER

It has long been the dream of the fans of a cricket loving country like Bangladesh to see their team playing in a World Cup final. And come February 9, the dream will turn to reality, thanks to the Akbar Ali-led Bangladesh Under-19s, who made history by being the first ever Bangladeshi side to qualify for an ICC event final after they defeated their New Zealand counterparts by six wickets in the ICC Under-19 World Cup semifinal on Thursday.

Akbar and Co have done what the batch of Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan or the one of Mehedi Hasan

Miraz and Mosaddek Hossain were not able to do. The reason behind this batch's success is simple -- togetherness.

"This team and the ones who are managing it have been together for the past one and a half years. We played in England, New Zealand and then played home and away against Sri Lanka and then England came and played against us at home. During this time, you will see that almost 13 players were with the side throughout. So, everyone here, starting from players and management, everyone knows their role very well," said Hannan Sarkar, who has been the under-19 selector for the past two years.

This under-19 side was put together by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) back in September 2018 with the sole aim of

preparing the lot to represent the country in the 2020 U-19 World Cup. Since then, the team played a total of 30 youth ODIs, winning 18 of them and had the second-highest win percentage, just behind India, for youth teams that have played 15 or more games.

For Sarkar, who has seen the batch putting up excellent performances in the last year, it was not a surprise to see Mahmudul Hasan Joy playing a matured need-of-the-hour 127-ball 100 in the semifinal.

"As I said, everyone in this team knows their roles. Joy's is to play the anchor role. And this knock coming from Joy was nothing extraordinary or anything to be surprised by as he has been doing it

Everyone in this team knows their roles. [Mahmudul Hasan] Joy's is to play the anchor role. And this knock coming from Joy was nothing extraordinary or anything to be surprised by as he has been doing it regularly for the side.

HANNAN SARKAR
SELECTOR BANGLADESH U-19

regularly for the side. Joy has scored tons in almost every series. He has scored one in New Zealand, one in England and even in Asia Cup in Sri Lanka. So, it is not a surprise, it was just his continuation," continued Sarkar.

Bangladesh will play defending champions India in the all-important final. Like the national team, the under-19s also have woes against India, especially in tournament finals. And according to Sarkar, playing against India, who have got the better of the young Tigers in two finals and one semifinal previously, it is now time for redemption.

"We lost two finals and one semifinal with India till now. Two of them in the Asia Cup, both very close encounters. In 2019 we lost by just 5 runs in the final while in 2018 we lost by 2 runs in the semifinal. Another one in England during a tri-nation series final. But now is the time to win because we have nothing to lose.

"I talked to Joy and Akbar yesterday [Thursday] and all they said is that 'one more step left'. We have been working hard for the past year and a half and this is the last match for this batch. All that hard work was for this day and this is the final step -- to win the cup," concluded Sarkar.



The Bangladesh Under-19s, who have been playing together with almost an unchanged squad for more than a year, have even got their dance moves synchronised.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Three tons and a Taskin fifer

SPORTS REPORTER

While the national players in Rawalpindi were struggling to score runs, the scenario at the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium Academy Ground in Cox's Bazar yesterday was the opposite. Three of the South Zone batsmen smashed tons against East Zone on the opening day of the second round of the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL).

Powered by centuries from Anamul Haque, Nurul Hasan and Mahedi Hasan, South Zone finished the day on top, scoring 443 for six before the day's play ended prematurely due to bad light. Things however did not look so bright for South Zone at the start. The BCB-run team lost three wickets very early in the innings and were struggling at three for 16 after six overs. Al-Amin and Anamul did start the rebuilding process but Al-Amin's departure in the 15th over after a 30-ball 18 again put South Zone in a spot of bother.

It was then a 190-run fourth wicket stand between Anamul and Nurul followed by another 175-run fifth wicket stand between Nurul and Mahedi that changed the whole complexion of the game. Anamul laced his 155-ball 129 with 14 boundaries and four maximums before falling to a run-out in the 58th over. Mahedi was even more gutsy and aggressive as the 25-year-old, who had made a name for himself for big hitting in the last Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League while playing for Dhaka Platoon, smashed 10 boundaries and eight maximums during his quick-fire 85-ball 112. Meanwhile, Nurul was a bit more calm and collected, evidenced by his unbeaten 155 off 220 balls.

In Sylhet, it was pacer Taskin Ahmed's fifer that helped North Zone bundle out Central Zone for 170 before North Zone went on to score 89 for three at the close. Taskin, who picked up three quick wickets in his opening spell that had Central Zone reeling at four for eight after 5.2 overs, ended with figures of five for 54 in 14 overs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH ZONE: First innings 443 for 6 (Anamul 129, Nurul 155 not out, Mahedi 112; Rejaur 3-79)
EAST ZONE:
CENTRAL ZONE: First innings 170 all out (Rakibul 70, Shuvagata 21, Jaker 19, Arafat 25 not out; Sakil 2-35, Taskin 5-54)
NORTH ZONE: First innings 89 for 3 (Rony 19, Junaid 47, Naeem 18 not out; Arafat 1-8, Shuvagata 1-1)

SHORT CORNER

Rain stops SA-Eng game

Rain interrupted South Africa's innings after just 6.3 overs in the second one-day international against England at Kingsmead in Durban on Friday.

South Africa were 38 for 1 when play was halted as the rain returned. Reeza Hendricks was unbeaten on 24 with Temba Bavuma two not out. --AFP

Sachin likens Marnus to himself

Indian superstar Sachin Tendulkar paid Australian batsman Marnus Labuschagne the ultimate compliment on Friday, singling him out as the player most like himself.

Labuschagne emerged from nowhere to become Test cricket's leading scorer last year with 1,104 runs, including 896 since November -- beating the great Neil Harvey (834) for the most scored by an

Australian in a five-Test summer.

None of this may have happened if Labuschagne had not grabbed his chance as a concussion substitute for Steve Smith during Australia's Ashes campaign in England last August.

He made the most of the opportunity, reeling off four consecutive half-centuries and finishing the Ashes with 353 runs at 50.42, before an incredible summer series against Pakistan and New Zealand.

Tendulkar was at Lord's when Labuschagne came on as Test cricket's first-ever concussion substitute and was immediately impressed.

"I saw Marnus getting hit (on the helmet) off the second ball from Jofra Archer and post that, the 15 minutes he batted, I said 'this player looks special, there is something about him'."

"Footwork is not physical, it's mental," he added. --AFP

Jamieson to make debut for NZ

Second ODI against India today

REUTERS, Wellington

Towering fast bowler Kyle Jamieson will make his international debut for New Zealand against India in the second one-day match in Auckland on Saturday, the team have said.

The 2.03m (6'8") tall Jamieson was called into the national squad for the final two Tests against Australia but did not play and was not in the side for the opening one-day match against India in Hamilton on Wednesday.

Bowling coach Shane Jurgensen, who is temporarily in charge of the team with Gary Stead taking a week off, told reporters on Friday that Scott Kuggeleijn would not be considered due to flu-like symptoms.

Leg-spinner Ish Sodhi's release to play for New Zealand 'A' had also meant Jamieson would make his debut at Eden Park.



"He's obviously a huge man, at 6 foot eight he's quite an imposing sight, so we are looking forward to seeing what he can do," Jurgensen said.

"He's got good skills with the new ball, he's a good athlete and he can bat a bit as well, so has a lot of potential."

Jamieson played three one-day matches for New Zealand 'A' against India 'A' in Christchurch last month where had figures of 0-60, 2-69 and 4-49.

The New Zealand side also received some welcome news on Friday with injured captain Kane Williamson (shoulder) and fast bowler Lockie Ferguson (calf) attending training at Eden Park.

Ferguson's calf strain after bowling just 11 overs in the first test against Australia in Perth last December was the catalyst for Jamieson's surprise elevation to the national squad.

Williamson was ruled out of the first two games of the three-match one-day series because of a shoulder injury he sustained in the Twenty20 matches against India.

New Zealand ended an eight-match losing streak in the first game at Seddon Park with Ross Taylor's 21st one-day century leading them to a four-wicket win.

What to WATCH

SONY ESPN
Pakistan v Bangladesh
First Test, Day 2
Live from 11:00am
STAR SPORTS 3
ICC U-19s World Cup
Third Place Play-off

Pakistan v New Zealand
Live from 2:00pm
STAR SPORTS 1
New Zealand v India
Second ODI
Live from 8:00am

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
English Premier League
Everton v Crystal Palace
Live from 6:20pm
Brighton v Watford
Live from 11:20pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2
Bundesliga
Freiburg v Hoffenheim
Live from 8:15pm
Bayer Leverkusen v Dortmund
Live from 11:15pm

TEN 2
Serie A
Fiorentina v Atalanta
Live from 8:00pm
Verona v Juventus
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Cricket League
Four-day Match, Day 2

East Zone v South Zone
Venue: Cox's Bazar

Central Zone v North Zone
Venue: Sylhet



Lionel Messi cut a forlorn figure after Barcelona were dumped out by Athletic Bilbao in the Copa del Rey quarterfinal at the San Mames Stadium on Thursday. (Bottom) Real Madrid players were equally frustrated as they suffered the same fate following a defeat against Real Sociedad at the Santiago Bernabeu on the same night.

PHOTO: AFP

Messi frustrated

AFP, Madrid

Lionel Messi admitted in December he could soon retire but Barcelona's frenzied attempts to make the most of his final years appear to be having the opposite effect.

As Athletic Bilbao's players celebrated Inaki Williams' 94th-minute winner at San Mames on Thursday night, Messi stood still in the centre circle, hands on his hips and staring down at the ground in front.

He had missed a chance to win it, his shot saved by Unai Simon, just moments before Williams' flicked header crept inside the post to send Barca out of the Copa del Rey before the semi-finals for the first time in 10 years.

Messi has been the inspiration and saviour of this Barcelona team, his finger prints on their string of La Liga titles more than anyone else's.

But as Bilbao proved, when Messi misses, Barca are there to be hit, their insecurities known and ready to be exposed.

The political turmoil now engulfing the club stems in part from desperation, not to waste Messi's final years or at least to be seen to be trying to make the best of them.

He will be 33 in June and said at the Ballon d'Or presentation retirement was "approaching" but a sense of time running out has long lingered at Camp Nou.

When Messi won the Champions League in 2015, aged 27, the assumption was there would be more but instead there has been only disappointment, three quarter-finals and one semi-final, the last two tournaments ending in capitulation.

The fear of a repeat and another year

squandered was instrumental in the decision to sack Ernesto Valverde last month, even if players insisted losses to Roma and Liverpool were not down to their coach.

After the clumsy appointment of Quique Setien, in which Xavi Hernandez was approached but not persuaded, and then a botched January transfer window, when strikers were targeted but not signed, frustration grew.

In an interview with Diario Sport on Tuesday, the club's sporting director Eric Abidal then called out Xavi and shifted responsibility onto the players.

As the most powerful among them, Messi was implicated most.

He hit back, insisting "everyone should take responsibility for their actions" and that not naming names "tarnished all the players".

In the middle of it all, Setien is trying to usher in a new style of play mid-season, more in-keeping with the club's DNA and better suited to Messi.

Setien said on Wednesday his "obligation" was to focus on football but that has been a concern as well, two defeats in his opening six games leaving Barcelona out of the cup and three points behind in the league.

A clause in Messi's contract means he could leave for free at the end of the season but the situation is likely to need to deteriorate further for that to become a realistic possibility.

No club in Europe can offer guaranteed success in the Champions League and Messi said in October he was against uprooting his family and three children from the city he has called home for close to two decades.

Basques dump Real, Barca

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona and Real Madrid both crashed out of the Copa del Rey on Thursday night as Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad pulled off a shock Basque double to reach the semi-finals.

Barca were beaten 1-0 by Bilbao at San Mames, where Inaki Williams headed in a dramatic 93rd-minute winner, after La Real had seen off Madrid 4-3 in a seven-goal thriller at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Two sensational upsets added another layer of excitement to a competition that has been full of surprises this season, with Bilbao and Real Sociedad joining Granada and second division Mirandes in an unfamiliar line-up for the draw on Friday.

"There have been some surprise results," said Williams. "Sometimes you just have to have faith and heart."

Quique Setien has lost two of his opening six games in charge, with a Champions League tie against Napoli fast-approaching. The fall-out from another failure in Europe would prove longer-lasting.

"We deserved to go through," said Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu. "But the ambition and attitude I saw on the field

encourages me for the league and the Champions League. Success can come."

For a rotated Madrid side, who sit top of La Liga, the loss against Real Sociedad was perhaps less damaging, even if they conceded as many goals in 69 minutes as they had in their last 11 matches put together.

Martin Odegaard, on loan at La Real but allowed to face his parent club, found the opener before the superb Alexander Isak hit two to give Real Sociedad a remarkable 3-0 lead.

Marcelo and Rodrygo both scored late in the second half and while

Mikel Merino added a fourth for the visitors, a Nacho Fernandez header set up a wild final three minutes, in which Andoni Gorosabel was also sent off.

Ten-man Real Sociedad held on for a superb win to progress to the last four while Madrid's run without success in Spain's domestic cup extends to six years.

"It hurts, we have to be honest, nobody likes a defeat," said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane.

One consolation might have been the display of the 21-year-old Odegaard, who is beginning to live up to the hype after signing for

Madrid aged 15.

On loan at Sociedad, the plan was for Odegaard to stay one more year at Anoeta but this glittering display, that earned him a standing ovation from the home fans when he went off, may well persuade Madrid to recall him early.

Their 21-game unbeaten streak comes to an end after an uncharacteristically careless performance in which a rotated side highlighted the importance of the likes of Casemiro, Raphael Varane and Thibaut Courtois.

Courtois' replacement Alphonse Areola was at fault for at least one of the goals while Marcelo was typically unpredictable at left-back, a position the more dependable Ferland Mendy has made his own in recent weeks.

Eden Hazard is training again but the wait for his return goes on while Gareth Bale was again left out of the squad completely.

Yet Zidane's changes should take nothing away from Real Sociedad, who showed why they were pushing for a place in La Liga's top four earlier this season, before a dip in form has seen them slip to eighth.

"It is the second time in 32 years we've reached the semis," said their coach Imanol Alguacil. "We were convinced we could do it. But we haven't achieved anything yet."



Bangabandhu GM Chess in April

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Chess Federation (BCF) is set to organise Bangabandhu Grand Master Chess Tournament, the first GM tournament in 11 years, after getting budget approval from the government regarding the tournament which will be held as part of birth centenary celebration of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

BCF plans to host the tournament from April 15 to 23 following the completion of Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games and it is planning to involve 15 to 20 GMs from India, Russia, Hungary, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Malaysia and Indonesia apart from five GMs and rated players from Bangladesh.

"The youth and sports ministry has already approved a budget of Tk 2.35 crore for three tournaments -- two GM tournaments in Dhaka and Chattogram and a youth championship across the country," BCF general secretary Syed Shahabuddin Shamim said yesterday, adding that the GM tournament in Chattogram will be held in October.

"We have already informed FIDE about the GM tournament and we will send them

the final schedule by Feb 15 as we need approval from FIDE," Shamim said, adding that they are yet to confirm the venue of the tournament.

BCF's chief arbiter Haroon-Ur-Rashid informed that they have not started sending invitations to GMs yet but GMs from East European nations are in consideration as those players have less demand regarding participation.

Five GMs and players with 2000+ rating from Bangladesh will be given opportunity to take part in the tournament so that local International Masters and FIDE Masters can get chance to earn norms.

The last GM tournament organised by the BCF was the United Insurance and Leasing GM Chess Tournament in 2009. However, four more GM tournaments were held later by other organisations -- two by Six Seasons and two by Chittagong Jila Krira Sangsha (CJSK).

Due to lack of GM tournaments, Bangladesh has not seen a new GM since Enamul Hossain Razib became the fifth and last one during the 2009 national championship. Players like IM Minhazuddin Ahmed Sagar, IM Abu Sufian Shakil, IM Fahad Rahman, FM Taibur Rahman, FM Mehdi Hasan and FM Sheikh Nasir can get a platform to impress and win norms through GM tournaments.

Taguchi to train swimmers

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Swimming Federation (BSF) is likely to appoint Japanese coach Takahiro Taguchi to prepare swimmers for proposed Bangabandhu Age-Group International Swimming Championships under a project of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Taguchi, who coached Bangladeshi swimmers in late 1980s, worked as an advisor of Bangladesh Swimming team during the 13th South Asian Games in Nepal in December last year where the Bangladeshi swimmers managed only three silver and

eight bronze medals.

"He came here yesterday [Thursday] and we will sit with JICA on February 10 to confirm his appointment even though JICA is interested in assigning Taguchi to conduct training camp every alternative month for a period which hasn't been finalised yet," BSF general secretary BM Saif said, adding that they are also looking for a permanent coach for the swimmers.

BSF's plan is to organise the competition in June with participation of swimmers from India, Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The federation has placed a budget of Tk 2.74 crore for the event, with the budget awaiting government's approval.

18-yard box comes up short

REUTERS, Undated

A Brazilian cup tie between Uniao and Atletico Goianiense was delayed in unusual circumstances when officials were forced to redraw the penalty box after players noted the 18-yard line at one end of the ground was around 2.5 metres short.

Uniao groundsmen used green paint to cover the erroneous line and paint a proper one just few minutes before the game began.

However, seconds after kick-off the game was halted as players complained they were confused by the old and new lines, according to Brazil's globoesporte.com.

Thursday night's game was delayed for a couple of minutes while groundsmen at the fourth division club took the field again with brushes to touch up the proper dimensions.

Atletico won 1-0 to progress to the second round where they will play Santa Cruz.

Ibrahimovic return adds spice to Milan derby

AFP, Milan



Zlatan Ibrahimovic's return to AC Milan will add spice to the city derby against Inter Milan on Sunday with the Swede looking to thwart Antonio Conte's side from keeping pace with Serie A leaders Juventus.

Ibrahimovic played his first Milan derby as an Inter player 13 years ago, while his last was for rivals AC Milan in May 2012, when he scored a double in a 4-2 defeat.

Ibrahimovic was the top scorer that season with 28 goals but Milan lost the Serie A title to Conte's Juventus, the first in the Turin giants' current run of eight Serie A titles.

The 38-year-old's return to Milan -- who he helped to their last Serie A title in 2011 -- has proved a boost with his side now eighth, seven points adrift of the Champions League berths.

Milan were on a three-match winning run with Ibrahimovic on the pitch but were held 1-1 by Hellas Verona last weekend with the Swede out with flu.

AC Milan director Zvonimir Boban praised Ibrahimovic's impact, insisting the Swede was pushing to be ready for "a unique derby".

Ibrahimovic meanwhile posted on Twitter a video of himself roaring,



with the caption: "Lions don't sound like humans."

Stefano Pioli's Milan come up against an Inter who have been transformed since Conte's arrival last summer are just three points behind Juventus, who travel to Hellas Verona.

Milan lost the reverse fixture 2-0 in September under Marco Giampaolo, who was sacked after just seven games.

Last summer Inter signed Romelu Lukaku and Alexis Sanchez, the latter on loan, from Manchester United.

Conte again raided the Premier League during the winter break

bringing in Christian Eriksen, Ashley Young and Victor Moses.

"He'll be more used to this type of game, I'm just starting," said former Tottenham midfielder Eriksen of Ibrahimovic, who said he was relishing his first 'Derby della Madonnina'.

"I've seen it on TV in the past but playing now will be very different," the Dane told Gazzetta Dello Sport.

"Compared to London, I expect a different atmosphere, here the whole stadium sings, there will be so much noise, it will be beautiful."

Bangabandhu Cup Golf to offer \$400k

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open 2020 is poised to become the richest professional golf event in Bangladesh with a total prize purse set to increase to 400,000 dollars, according to Asian Tour.

The sixth edition of the full-fledged Asian Tour event, which was first held in Bangladesh in 2015 when the prize purse was 300,000 dollars, will be held at the Kurmitola Golf Club from March 25 to 28.

General Aziz Ahmed, Chief of Army Staff, Bangladesh Army and the President of Bangladesh Golf Federation told ASiantour.com: "Bangladesh is celebrating the 100th

birthday of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 2020. The whole nation is incredibly excited and as part of that BGF would like to organise the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open 2020 in a befitting manner to show profound respect and love for the Father of the Nation."

Cho Minn Thant, Commissioner and CEO, Asian Tour said: "2020 will be our sixth consecutive year playing in Bangladesh and we are delighted that the prize purse has been elevated to record level. As the richest sporting event in Bangladesh, I'm confident the Bangabandhu Cup Golf Open 2020 will continue to provide unveil more hidden talents in the region while promoting the sport in Bangladesh."



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Pollution threatens Kirtankhola



SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The Kirtankhola river that flows through Barishal faces the grim prospect of becoming heavily polluted, locals and experts fear.

Around 6 lakh people living on the west bank of the river are dumping their solid and liquid waste in drains and canals, which then run to the river, officials said.

Vessels plying the river also discharge their waste, polluting the river at a rapid rate.

The banks, especially near the river port and in Rasulpur area, are also littered with garbage.

In December 2018, the DoE examined water samples taken from 12 points in the river and found dissolved oxygen levels to be between 4.5 and 4.8 milligrams per litre, said the department's Assistant Biochemist Muntasir Rahman, adding that dissolved oxygen should be over 5 milligrams to be safe for aquatic life. Dissolved solid matter levels were found to be 2,100 milligrams/litre, which is also very high, he added.

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A girl walks on the rubble of a five-storey building, illegally built on the Turag river, after a part of the structure was knocked down by Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority during an eviction drive in Tongi's Abdullahpur area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Robber' killed in 'gunfight' with police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A suspected robber was killed in a "gunfight" with police in the district's Hakimpur upazila early yesterday.

Kashidul Islam, 44, of Nashipur village of the upazila, stood accused in 11 robbery cases, said police.

On information that some robbers were preparing to rob a house in Kashidanga village in the upazila, a police team, led by Akhiul Islam, additional SP of (Hakimpur circle), went to the spot around 2:00am, said Abdur Razzak, officer-in-charge of Hakimpur Police Station.

Sensing their presence, the criminals opened fire. Police returned fire, triggering a "gun battle".

At one stage, Kashidul, leader of the robber gang, was shot dead. Others fled the spot, the OC said.

Two police personnel, including Sub-inspector Mahe Alam and constable Fazlul Haque of Hakimpur Police Station, were injured, the police official claimed.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

RAPE OF JASHORE HOUSEWIFE PBI clears SI, 2 others from charges

UNB, Jashore

The Police Bureau of Investigation has pressed charges against a man over raping a housewife in the district's Sharsha upazila about five months ago and recommended acquittal of Sub-Inspector Khairul Alam and two others of the charges.

PBI Inspector Monayem Hossain on Thursday submitted the charge sheet in the rape case against Abdul Latif, an acquaintance of the victim.

According to the PBI, its investigation did not find any proof of the presence of SI Khairul and two other accused, Abdul Quader and Quamruzzaman Quamrul, on the spot during the incident.

On January 22, the PBI said its probe did not find any involvement of SI Khairul in the rape. It also said one of the three arrestees confessed to his crime before the court.

The victim knew the accused who gave the confessional statement, said Additional Superintendent of Police MKH Jahangir Hossain.

On September 2 last year, the woman, a mother of two, was allegedly

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH

Bangabandhu's nation-building challenges



Bangabandhu greeting the people who assembled at Dhaka Airport on his return from Kolkata after a two-day visit (Feb 8, 1972).

FEBRUARY 8, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU RETURNS FROM KOLKATA

Bangabandhu returns to Dhaka today morning after completing his two-day official visit to Kolkata. Bangabandhu on his arrival is given a hearty welcome by his cabinet colleagues, heads of diplomatic missions, MCAs, Awami League party and student leaders and a welcoming crowd.

MUJIB-INDIRA JOINT STATEMENT
 The Indian Armed Forces in Bangladesh are to be withdrawn by March 25, 1972 according to a joint statement by Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Youth stabbed to death in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A youth was stabbed to death during a scuffle between two groups in Tilagarh area of Sylhet city on Thursday night.

Abhishek Dey Dip, 21, was from Sadiapur area in the city and a second-year student at Greenhill State College, said Abdur Quaiyum Chowdhury, officer-in-charge of Shahporan Police Station.

One of his rival, Saikat Roy, 23, was seriously injured during the incident, the OC said.

Quoting witnesses, police said the two groups had an altercation over the fund for organising Saraswati Puja in Gopaltala area on January 30.

Though the issue was settled by locals, Dip was not happy with the arrangement.

On Thursday night, the scuffle ensued when Dip, along with some of his friends, attacked Saikat and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

Date palm plants grown from 2,000-yr-old seeds



CNN ONLINE

Scientists have grown six date palm plants from 2,000-year-old seeds found in ancient palaces and settlements in the Judean Desert in southern Israel.

The seeds are thought to be the oldest ever grown naturally and shed light on one of the world's earliest tree crops.

According to historical documents, the Kingdom of Judea was renowned for its large, sweet dates that could be stored and exported throughout the Roman Empire.

"They were incredibly sought after. They were given as a gift to the Roman Emperor on his birthday, and many ancient historians and geographers wrote about them," said Sarah Sallon, director of the Louis L Borick Natural Medicine Research Center, who led the study published Wednesday in the journal Science Advances.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

NEW ARMS RACE Europe can't be 'spectators': Macron

AFP, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday called for European nations to play a more direct role in halting a new nuclear arms race, saying they "cannot remain spectators" against a threat to the continent's collective security.

"In the absence of a legal framework, they could rapidly face a new race for conventional weapons, even nuclear weapons, on their own soil," Macron told military officers in a speech laying out France's

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 8

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

Girl raped on US embassy premises in New Delhi

CNN ONLINE

A man has been arrested for allegedly raping a 5-year-old girl in the grounds of the US Embassy in New Delhi, according to police.

The girl was playing outside the embassy's staff quarters on Saturday before she "was lured and raped by a neighbor," Eish Singhal, deputy commissioner of Delhi police, told CNN.

The girl, who is the daughter of a housekeeper employed by the embassy, later identified the 25-year-old male suspect, who has been arrested and charged with rape, police said.

"She was able to identify him point blank and there is no doubt over this," Singhal said, adding that the suspect remains in custody.

The incident has appalled embassy staff. In a statement to CNN, a spokesperson said the US embassy "was deeply

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



A Palestinian protester waving a national flag climbs over Israel's controversial security barrier as others burn tyres during a demonstration against a US-brokered peace proposal, in the occupied West Bank village of Bilin near Ramallah yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS Delhi goes to polls today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

An estimated 1.74 crore people of Delhi will be eligible to exercise their franchise when they elect a new 70-member assembly for the city-state today at the end of a high-octane and sharply-polarised campaign over protests against amended citizenship law.

In their final push as the curtains came down on electioneering Thursday evening, the three key parties in the battle -- ruling Aam Aadmi Party and its principal challengers Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress made last-ditch efforts to slug it out over issues ranging from CAA and livelihood issues.

In the previous assembly poll in 2015, AAP had made a clean sweep winning 67 of the 70 assembly seats in Delhi leaving just three for BJP. Congress drew a blank.

During the entire campaign, the three parties had deployed their top leaders for the Delhi assembly polls whose results are important more for their prestige than political heft. Voters of Delhi elect just seven lawmakers to the Lok Sabha and so do not have much of a role to decide which party will rule India.

The BJP began the campaign with a focus on the development work done by the Modi government for the national capital but later changed course and made Shaheen Bagh, the epicentre of anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protest near Jamia Millia University in Muslim-majority Okhla assembly constituency in southeast Delhi, its main poll plank.

The 24-hour sit-in protest lasting for more than a month led by a group of women and their children in the biting cold of Delhi has become the face of countrywide protests against CAA. The BJP has been branding all opposition to

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