



Demonstrators shout slogans and hold placards during a protest against the Indian government's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) at Jaffrabad area in New Delhi, yesterday.

PHOTO:
AFP

Grave of slain Iraq commander, a new anti-US magnet

AFP, Najaf

A minibus stopped outside the world's largest cemetery in the Iraqi Shia holy city of Najaf. Five women got out, telephone cameras filming the scene, and dashed excitedly towards a grave.

Clad in black, they joined wailing women and men beating their chests in grief at Wadi al-Salam (valley of peace), an ever expanding cemetery.

All eyes were on the grave of Iraqi paramilitary commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Killed alongside top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike in Baghdad on January 3, Muhandis is now revered as a martyred icon of anti-American resistance.

His grave has become a magnet for Shiites vowing vengeance against Washington.

Below a life-sized portrait of the deceased commander, a young man knelt before his grave, the wailing of women ringing around him.

"May God avenge us from America," the man screamed.

Located along aisle nine of Wadi al-Salam, the commander's final resting place has gained near-holy status.

It has become a stop for the thousands of Shiite pilgrims who pass through Najaf each day to visit the tomb of Imam Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed.

"It is not just a grave, it has been transformed into a shrine," Abbas Abdul Hussein, a security official at the cemetery, told AFP.

"Men, women and children... flock from Iran, Lebanon and Bahrain daily to visit Abu Mahdi," he said.

MRT won't

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used for roads in 2035, he estimated. "This is a recipe for disaster," he said.

The authorities' priority had always been on flyovers, expressways, and metros. But if more roads were constructed and Bus Revitalisation Programme was implemented, it would have been eight times more cost effective.

Former chief architect at Department of Architecture Kazi Golam Nasir said, "In implementing projects, we give more time in implementation and less on planning. As a result, the projects are revised several times and the cost escalates.... At the end of the day, when the project is implemented, our dreams remain unrealised."

Raising his concern over pedestrian movement, he said, "There will not be enough room on the footpaths."

Professor of Department of Architecture at BUET Zebun Nasreen Ahmed suggested taking steps to decentralise the capital city.

Planning Minister MA Mannan said the government had some shortcomings in implementing different projects.

"We couldn't elevate ourselves to a [satisfactory] level in implementing projects," he said, adding proper decentralisation process would play a vital role in reducing congestion. Executive Director of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority Khandakar Rakibur Rahman said they were working on a bus route rationalisation programme to solve the congestion problem.

Tribunals to try war criminals

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HARASSMENT OF BANGALEES DISCUSSED WITH UN

Following the receipt of a large number of messages of harassment, insult and torture of the Bangalee service personnel and civilians living in Pakistan, Bangabandhu summons the UN representatives in Dhaka and urges them to take immediate action for the repatriation of these Bangalees from Pakistan. Earlier family members of Bangalee officials and civilians stranded in Pakistan called on Bangabandhu and expressed great anxiety over the distressing condition of their relatives. Bangabandhu assured them that he was doing everything possible for the repatriation of the Bangalees.

WAR CRIMES TRIBUNALS TO BE SET UP

The government has decided to set up two tribunals -- genocide tribunal and war crimes tribunal -- under Geneva Convention. The tribunals will try members of the Pakistani army and their collaborators for the commission of mass killings and other war crimes against humanity in Bangladesh during the war. Local collaborators, who indulged in the crimes of murder, loot and rape will be tried by special judges appointed by the Bangladesh government, according to the laws of the country.

MINISTER'S SALARY FIXED AT RS. 1000

Bangladesh ministers have decided to accept Rs. 1000 as their monthly

salary. This is also the ceiling of the monthly emoluments allowed to officials both public and private. In view of the financial problems facing the country during the initial period of independence, the monthly salary of the ministers was fixed at Rs. 1500. As a gesture of their willing recognition of the need for austerity and common participation in the drive for economic upliftment, the ministers now have agreed to Rs. 1000 per month and will forego the balance until the financial position of the government improves.

SOURCES: February 25, 1972 issues of Dainik Bangla, The Daily Ittefaq, Azad, Morning News, The Bangladesh Observer and Purbodesh.

Avoid non-essential foreign trips

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"high" and "very high" for China. "It [avoiding non-mandatory foreign visit] is not any directive; an advice only. We are advising this considering the latest spread pattern across many parts of the world where source of infection is unknown," Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora told The Daily Star yesterday.

So far, five Bangladeshi nationals in Singapore and another in the United Arab Emirates have been infected with the virus and are undergoing treatment. Condition of one Bangladeshi in Singapore is still "critical," according to the IEDCR.

Both in Singapore and UAE, those infected Bangladeshis had close contact with the Chinese people, according to

officials concerned in the respective countries.

Director General of WHO Tedros Adhanom Gebreyesus said of particular concern are "the number of cases with no clear epidemiological link, such as travel history to China or contact with a confirmed case."

The WHO termed such rapid spread of coronavirus from indirect contact and unknown source a complex situation.

"As the countries with close communication with Bangladesh have reported infections from unknown sources, we advise to avoid non-mandatory visits," Prof Flora said.

Experts have also stressed the need for caution to prevent the infection from entering the country.

"We are observing many latest infections are from unknown source. It means we have to be very much cautious, especially in airports," Dr Md Nazrul Islam, a professor of virology, who served as the vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, told The Daily Star.

About the preparedness of the country, he said, "The planning is ok; however, the question is whether it is being implemented properly. Any lacking may bring danger."

According to the IEDCR, 17,253 incoming passengers were screened at all airports, seaports and land ports across the country in 24 hours till 3:00pm yesterday.

None of them had any coronavirus symptoms.

Take steps against

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would be built in Chapainawabganj.

"We have submitted documents to the HC and showed that the prime minister has made the announcement in 2015 and she did not say that the tourist spot would be established on the land of the river," Manzill said, adding that the DC approved the project in 2014, one year before the PM's announcement.

Deputy Attorney General Wayesh Al Haroni, who represented the state,

told this newspaper that he was yet to receive any instruction from the government for moving any appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the HC verdict.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Md Ashrafur Kamal and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil came up with the verdict following an application filed by Rabeya Bhoushri, a resident of Chapainawabganj, last year in continuation of a 2016 writ petition

of the HRPB.

Lawyer Fawzia Karim Firoza appeared for Rabeya.

Following the HRPB's petition, the HC on February 3 last year declared the Turag a "legal person" and a "living entity" and also directed the authorities concerned to free the river from all kinds of encroachments.

The HC issued a 17-point directive to save the country's rivers and waterbodies from grabbers and pollution.

'Fragile' global recovery at risk

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CENTRAL BANK GOVERNORS IN RIYADH.

But the projected recovery was "fragile," she warned, amid global alarm over the spread of the new virus across multiple countries even as Chinese authorities lock down millions of people to prevent its spread, with major knock-on effects for the world economy.

"The COVID-19 virus -- a global health emergency -- has disrupted economic activity in China and could put the recovery at risk," she said in a statement.

The virus has now claimed 2,442 lives in China, cutting off transportation, disrupting trade and fanning investor alarm as businesses are forced to close their doors.

Paris on Friday announced a host of measures to assist French companies affected by the fallout from the epidemic.

"We are ready to take any additional measures if necessary to cope with a possible worsening of the impact on the global economy," said French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, who attended the G20 talks.

"The risk is now confirmed, and so is the impact on the global economy, and it is a real concern for all G20 members." EU economic affairs commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said the G20 was ready to react with "pro-growth policies" to alleviate the downside risks.

"The main risk is the outbreak of the coronavirus and the consequences that this outbreak" could have are tied to the duration of the epidemic, Gentiloni told reporters in Riyadh.

- 'Stark reminder' - At the meeting in Saudi Arabia, the first Arab nation to hold the G20 presidency, financial leaders also discussed ways to achieve consensus on a global taxation system for the digital era.

Several gathered leaders called for an international agreement to tax digital giants -- a key bone of contention between the US and several European nations -- by the end of 2020.

But the impact from the new coronavirus outbreak formed the core of the discussions, along with an action plan to shield the world

economy -- already facing a slowdown.

The gathered financial leaders vowed to "enhance global risk monitoring" of the outbreak, according to the G20 final communiqué.

"We stand ready to take further action to address these risks," it said.

Georgieva told the Riyadh gathering that the outbreak would shave about 0.1 percentage points from global growth and constrain China's growth to 5.6 percent this year, in a baseline scenario.

"I reported to the G20 that even in the case of rapid containment of the virus, growth in China and the rest of the world would be impacted," she said.

The IMF projects a "V-shaped, rapid recovery" for the global economy, but given the uncertainty around the spread of the virus, Georgieva urged the financial leaders to "prepare for more adverse scenarios".

She warned the global economy faced other risks including rising debt levels in some countries as well as climate change, but in particular urged G20 nations to cooperate to contain the spread of the virus.

Tigers in the driving seat

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Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh dominated all three sessions, first with the Test fifty and they bundled out Zimbabwe for 265 runs in the first hour of the day and followed it by a collective approach with the bat.

Skipper Mominul Haque finally found some form with a Test fifty and remained unbeaten on 79 alongside the experienced Mushfiqur Rahim on 32 at the other end. Both players will be eager to score big when they resume on the third day.

However, the Tigers faced an early blow when young opener Saif Hasan departed for eight. Playing only his second Test, Saif was caught at the crease and poked his bat at an away going Victor Nyanchi delivery which kissed the edge on its way to the keeper.

But since then it was all Bangladesh as opener Tamim Iqbal and young Nazmul Hossain Shanto started to open up after being watchful initially.

Nazmul looked in fine touch as he started off with a cracking cover drive after lunch while Tamim also picked up pace soon afterwards with a gorgeous straight drive off Charlton Tshuma.

The pair looked settled and added a 78-run second-wicket stand before Tamim departed for 41 after a delicate inside edge to the keeper while going for a drive against seamer Donald Tshuma, who was bowling from around the wicket.

Nazmul was kept quiet for a certain

period before he reached his maiden Test fifty, while Mominul cut loose with back-to-back boundaries against off-spinner Sikandar Raza.

Things looked all set for the Tigers as Nazmul and Mominul added the second fifty-run stand of the innings before Nazmul, who was looking to score big, was dismissed in disappointing fashion.

The left-hander poked at a Charlton Tshuma delivery outside off stump, which had a bit of extra bounce, to get caught behind after scoring a well-made 71 off 139 balls, which included seven fours.

Mominul, however, remained compact and registered his 14th Test fifty while Mushfiqur was also solid as the duo made sure there were no late drama.

Earlier, Abu Jayed deserved all the plaudits as the right-arm seamer ended up with career-best bowling figures of four for 71 from 21 overs. Jayed, who had taken two wickets on the first day, put on a good display of swing bowling with a relatively new ball and removed Donald Tiripano and Ainsley Ndlovu up front.

Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam finally joined the party as he dismissed Tshuma with an arm ball while Regis Chakabva tried to hang in at the other end with the last batsman.

But Taijul picked up his second wicket after Chakabva went for a slog sweep only to get a top edge after scoring 30 as Zimbabwe managed to add 37 runs to their overnight score.

The lid blown off

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they had seven passports in their possession.

Rab handed over the four arrestees to Bimanbandar Police Station yesterday. It said two cases will be filed against them at Bimanbandar Police Station and Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station.

'FORCED WOMEN INTO SEX WORK' Rab also said Papiya lured poor women of Narsingdi and forced them into sex work.

A presidential suite at a five-star hotel in the capital had been booked in her name for 59 days and paid for. The amount paid was around Tk 81.42 lakh.

Asked, Lt Col Shafi Ullah Bulbul, commanding officer of Rab-1, said they would only conduct a drive at the hotel if there are any specific allegations, adding that they would investigate whether the hotel management had any links to the illicit trade.

Rab said it recovered some photos and videos of some rich and influential people who were regular customers of her service.

In one such clip, Papiya was seen sitting on a sofa with a thick stick in her hand, allegedly used to physically abuse the girls if any of them refused to follow her orders.

ARMS, DRUGS, AND MORE

Apart from running the illicit sex trade, Papiya and Sumon made their fortune by lobbying in the recruitments of various government organisations, supplying illegal gas connections and issuing licence of a CNG pump station, Rab said, adding that they were also involved in arms and drugs trades.

The couple seemed to have made a hefty amount in a short period of time, and Rab said they could not find any proof of legal income.

"They had an investment of Tk one crore at a car showroom in Dhaka's FDC Gate area and Tk 40 lakh in KMC Car Wash and Auto Solution in Narsingdi," Lt Col Shafi Ullah said at the briefing.

In Narsingdi, they have a gang named "Q&C", whose members have tattoos on their hands. The gang is involved in extortion, and arms and drugs trade in the district, the Rab official added.

He also claimed Papiya and Sumon ran a torture cell there.

Sources in the law enforcement agency said Papiya and her husband made a huge amount by lobbying in the recruitment of various government organisations, using their political connections.

"As of now, Rab has found proof of their involvement in embezzling Tk 11 lakh for recruitment of sub-inspectors, Tk 35 lakh for supplying gas connections to a factory and Tk 29 lakh for issuing licence of a CNG pump station," the Rab official added.

Rab said Papiya's husband is a businessman and helped his wife in her illegal activities. He also owns a bar in Thailand and used to be there most of the time.

According to sources in the law enforcement agencies, Sumon was a convener of Narsingdi Chhatra League and later became a bodyguard of a former mayor.

"Sumon was accused in the murder of a pouira commissioner in 2001 and continued his criminal activities there," the Rab official said, adding that Papiya and Sumon later moved to Dhaka where they were "blessed" by a ruling party MP.

"Although her yearly income from the automobile business is Tk 19 lakh, the record says she paid over Tk 2.5 lakh a day only at the bar of a Dhaka hotel," the official said.

Rab also got information about several of their bank accounts.

PAPIA'S POST: GENERAL SECRETARY

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Jubo Mohila League, an affiliated body of the ruling Awami League, has expelled Papiya, who was Narsingdi district unit's general secretary, read a press release signed by the organisation's President Nazma Akhter and General Secretary Apu Ukil.

On social media, her photos with ruling party high-ups and some influential people surfaced after her arrest. Sources said she maintained close relationships with the high-ups of the ruling party and the government.

Lt Col Shafi Ullah said politicians take photos with everyone and these photos don't mean that they were endorsing Papiya's illicit trades.

However, such an incident questions the process of the recruitment in the affiliated bodies of political parties, especially in influential posts like Papiya's.

Fear, isolation cloaks town at centre of Italy's coronavirus outbreak

AFP, Codogno

The streets are silent, shops are shuttered and the few people who venture from their homes shun company in the small Italian town of Codogno under the shadow of a new coronavirus outbreak.

"It's a ghost town, it's horrible for us," a young woman named Paola told AFP as she walked down a deserted street near the station on Saturday night.

"People are locked in their houses, there's nobody in the streets," she added.

The station, like most parts of the town of 15,000 people, was closed. No one was selling tickets, no passengers awaited trains.

Italy became the first European country to report the death of one of its own nationals from the virus on Friday, followed by a second death on Saturday, amid a sudden rise in

confirmed cases of contamination now totalling more than 100.

Codogno in the Lombardy region was labelled by health officials on Saturday as the epicentre of the new wave of cases in Italy's north.

Italian authorities have imposed travel restrictions on about a dozen towns, where special permission will be needed to enter or leave.

The virus which broke out in China in December where more than around 2,400 people have died has now spread to more than 25 countries.

In Codogno's centre, the pharmacy remained open on the orders of the local authorities.

"We're all scared, but we keep our fingers crossed," the pharmacy's owner Rosa Cavalli told AFP.

She said protective masks had long sold out but customers were stocking up on disinfectants, alcohol and bleach.