

Tear gas canisters are fired by Israeli forces towards Palestinian demonstrators during a protest against Israeli settlements and the US President Donald Trump's Middle East peace plan, in Beita town near Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday.

World Bank restores relations with Somalia

AFP, Washington

The World Bank moved Thursday to reestablish relations with Somalia after a 30-year break, paving the way for the country to have access to lowcost development aid.

Contact was severed in 1991 as the country descended into conflict, but recently it has made efforts to rebuild, even as it faces violence from the Al-Shabaab jihadist group.

"Somalia has made important reforms and has demonstrated strong commitment to staying the course," said Hafez Ghanem, World Bank vice president for Africa.

"These reforms lay the foundation for sustained poverty reduction and better lives for the Somali people, and open the door to private sector investment that can create jobs and drive the economy forward," he said in a statement.

This month the African nation has won initial approval from World Bank and IMF to get hundreds of millions in debt relief.

Earth captures

data on minor planets and asteroids, in an announcement said "no link to a known artificial object has been found," implying it was likely an asteroid captured by Earth's gravity.

"Orbit integrations indicate that this object is temporarily bound to

Tech entrepreneur Elon Musk said the car-sized object was not the Telsa Roadster he launched into space in 2018, which is now orbiting the Sun. "It's not mine," he tweeted.

Earth's new neighbour is not in a stable orbit around the planet and is unlikely to be around for very long.

"It is heading away from the Earth moon system as we speak," Grigori Fedorets, research fellow at Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland, told New Scientist magazine, and was likely to escape in April.

The only other asteroid known to orbit Earth, 2006 RH120, rotated the planet from September 2006 to June

Bangladeshi

The quantum of sentence will be pronounced by the court on March 17, they added.

In 2014, the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is investigating the terror angle of the Burdwan incident on October 2, 2014, booked Rahamatullah, Burhan and a few others under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and the Explosive Substances Act.

As per the details of the case, an explosion in a house of Burdwan town in West Bengal killed two people and injured several others.

"It was a result of a larger ongoing conspiracy of the JMB ...," the case record stated.

The Enforcement Directorate filed a criminal case of money laundering in connection with the Burdwan blass incident based on an FIR filed by the NIA. Its Kolkata zone filed a charge sheet with the court in November

This is probably the second case in which a foreign national has been found guilty by a court under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), Enforcement Directorate

officials said. A Pakistani terrorist affiliated with Al-Badr was convicted under the anti-money laundering law by a Bengaluru court in 2017.

Gratitude and goodwill

Soviet Union for their support to the Liberation Struggle of Bangladesh. Most importantly, leaders of both countries will have a person-to-person contact for the first time, which can lead to a greater understanding between the two countries.

Bangladesh Planning Commission will present a substantial brief of the country's aid requirements and to what extent the USSR could assist the country. CHOICE FOR NON-BANGALEES TO LEAD PEACEFUL LIVES

UN Special Envoy Vittorio Guiccardi's report to the UN Secretary General discloses that the Bangladesh prime minister proposed to the UN envoy that arrangements should be made by which the non-Bangalees living in Bangladesh would have an

opportunity to live a peaceful life in the country of their choice. Bangabandhu expressed his immediate agreement to a proposal of the Red Cross to arrange, initially, for one token planeload to fly from Bangladesh to Pakistan carrying some of those who wished to go to Pakistan and a second flight to bring back persons from Pakistan to Bangladesh, says the report. Bangabandhu also told Guiccardi that except the individuals wanted or retained for trial, all those who chose to leave Bangladesh would be free to go to Pakistan or elsewhere without any conditions.

BHUTTO'S MESSAGE TO MUJIB

Pakistan President ZA Bhutto has sent a special message to Bangabandhu offering 10 million tonnes of rice to the new state. The offer was made through the UN representative in Islamabad.

SIX-MILLION DOLLAR SWISS AID Swedish government has contributed \$6 million to the UN relief programme for immediate salvage operations at Chittagong and Chalna ports.

LOCAL BODIES DISSOLVED

The president through an order has dissolved all local councils and municipal committees in Bangladesh. The order declares that all persons holding office as chairman, vicechairman, member and administrator of such local councils and municipal committees will cease to hold office.

SOURCES: March 1, 1972 issues of Ittefaq, The Bangladesh Observer, Azad, Morning News, Dainik Bangla

Alarm after 33 Turkish troops killed

The reprisals killed 16 Syrian soldiers, according to a monitoring group, but there was no immediate confirmation

Adding to the tensions, Moscow Strait in Istanbul in plain sight of the violence.

But in a move to try to defuse the crisis, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke by phone vesterday.

"There is always room for dialogue," said Russian Foreign Minister Sergei

"The conversation was detailed and devoted to the necessity to do everything" to implement a ceasefire deal agreed in 2018 between the two countries to try to bring calm to

Lavrov said Russia was ready to help improve the security of Turkish troops in Syria after the defence ministry said the slain soldiers had been among "terrorist groups" in Idlib.

The UN has repeatedly warned that the fighting in Idlib could potentially create the most serious humanitarian crisis since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011.

But Russian vetoes, often backed by China, have chronically crippled UN

Nato held urgent talks on the crisis a no-fly zone over Idlib, where regime vesterday, and joined the UN and the US in calling for urgent de-escalation.

"There is a risk of sliding into a major open international military confrontation," said EU foreign announced that two of its warships policy chief Josep Borrell, echoing were transiting through the Bosphorus international alarm about the

"It is also causing unbearable humanitarian suffering and putting

civilians in danger. GROWING DISCONTENT

Hours after the strike, Turkey threatened to go back on a deal with the EU and said it would open the way

for refugees to go to Europe. We will no longer keep the doors closed for refugees who want to go to Europe," an official told AFP on

condition of anonymity. Turkey, which is already home to around four million Syrian refugees, fears more people arriving in the country where there is growing popular discontent against their

In response, Greece said it was tightening its border security "to the maximum level possible" and doubling border patrols.

The EU called on Ankara to uphold its side of the migrant pact which was aimed at stemming the flow of refugees and migrants towards Europe.

Turkey also yesterday called on the international community to establish forces have since December clawed back chunks of the region, forcing close to one million people to flee their homes and shelters amid bitter

In a series of tweets, Erdogan's communications director Fahrettin Altun accused Assad of "conducting ethnic cleansing" and seeking to drive millions of Syrians out of Idlib.

Groups of migrants have already moved towards western Turkey seeking to reach Greece, Turkey's private DHA news agency reported.

"Without urgent action, the risk of even greater escalation grows by the hour," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, reiterating Secretary General Antonio Guterres's call for an immediate ceasefire.

The US State Department said Washington stood by Turkey and continues to call "for an immediate end to this despicable offensive by the Assad regime, Russia and Iranianbacked forces'

Elsewhere, jihadists and Turkishbacked rebels on Thursday re-entered Saraqeb, a key Idlib crossroads town they had lost earlier in February, reversing one of the main gains of the government's devastating offensive.

correspondent accompanied the rebels into Saraqeb, where he found a ghost town of bombed out buildings.

Money pit of Ctg customs

not be repaired successfully. The other boat could be serviceable if it was overhauled, he added.

Asked about the last repair works, he said, "I do not know why the ships did not work even after repairing. Only those in charge at that time would be able to say.

Asked. the then customs commissioner Masud Sadiq claimed that there was no irregularity in repairing the boats.

He told The Daily Star "After spending the money on two petrol boats in several steps, the masters of the boats found several defects when they went on a sea trail.

However, due to a lack of budget at that time, no further work could be

WHO DID THE REPAIR WORK?

Chittagong Dry Dock Ltd, a company that is now under Bangladesh Navy but was privately owned during the repair work, received the contract to repair the two boats when the finance ministry allocated the money in 2014-15 fiscal year.

The repair work was conducted between April and June in 2014.

When the boats were handed to

the masters of the boats, they found at least 40 errors, including leakage on the keels and engine malfunction.

Humayun Kabir, master of PB Shomikkha, said it was not possible to buy new boats of the same caliber when the finance ministry allocated Tk 5 crore. Thus, a decision of repairing the boats came.

However, repairing the boats did not make anything better, he added. WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Mohammad Nazmul Karim Kislu, managing director of Chittagong Dry Dock Ltd, said the boats were repaired long ago and the company was not even under Bangladesh Navy back then. However, if the customs authorities

complaint that there were irregularities in the work, they would investigate, he Khondaker Meanwhile,

Muhammad Aminur Rahman, member

Customs Audit, Modernisation and International Trade) of NBR, said they had no information about any irregularities in the boats' repair work. "Actions will be taken if anyone is found involved in any irregularities,"

he added. He also said repairing those boats again would be a wastage of government money. Rather, they would buy at least one patrol boat with the money.

Boats similar to PB Safen and PB Somikkha may cost as much as Tk 15 crore now, he added.

Israeli ex-general takes third jab at ousting Netanyahu

AFP, Jerusalem

Former armed forces chief Benny Gantz will take a fresh shot at unseating Israel's veteran Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday after two previous electoral showdowns ended in deadlock.

The 60-year-old has been in the public eye since first declaring political ambitions and running against Netanyahu in December 2018.

Within months, his centrist Blue and White party shocked Israeli politics by matching Netanyahu's rightwing Likud in polls last April and then edged it in September.

Three killed

injured. The two were sent to Sonagazi Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared them dead.

Police claimed to have recovered two locally-made arms and several bullets from the spot.

Speaking to reporters, Dr Ismail Hossain of the health complex said police brought the duo dead. The bodies bore marks of bullet wounds, he added.

The bodies were sent to Feni General Hospital morgue for autopsies.

At the hospital, Badsha Miah of Char Krisnajoy village in Sonagazi identified one of the two dead as his son Shamsul Huda Nishan, 23.

Talking to newsmen at the hospital, he said Shamsul attended a court hearing in a robbery case on Thursday and later went to Feni's Boro Bazar area for shopping ahead of his sister's wedding, scheduled for

Around 1:00pm on Thursday, another accused in the robbery case, Sujon, called him out of his home. Shamsul had been missing since then.

The other dead was identified as Shariful Islam, 28. His father Obaidul Haque said they couldn't contact Shariful after he attended the court hearing on Thursday.

Both the families said Shamsul and Shariful were falsely implicated in the robbery case.

'SHOÓTOUT' IN JASHORE

was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Monirampur upazila early

yesterday, police said. The dead, Md Nuruzzaman alias Nurul Haque alias Keru, was accused in 12 cases, Towhidul Islam, additional superintendent of Jashore

police, told The Daily Star. According to the first information report (FIR) filed with Monirampur Police Station in this connection, a mob in Keshabpur upazila caught two people, including Nuruzzaman, around 7:00pm on Thursday when they were fleeing with a battery-run easy-bike.

On information, police rescued the two and later learnt from them that Nuruzzaman was a robber.

Taking Nuruzzaman along with them, police carried out a drive in Kotwali and Monirampur areas around 11:45pm on Thursday to recover illegal arms.

The FIR said Nuruzzaman's associates put up barricades on the road to prevent police from moving ahead. They fired shots at the cops and tried to snatch the detainee. The law enforcers fired back in self defence.

At one stage, Nuruzzaman tried to flee, but he was hit by bullets fired by his associates.

He was rushed to a hospital in Monirampur upazila where doctors pronounced him dead around

Our correspondents in Feni and In Jashore, another suspected robber Benapole contributed to this report.

Eskaton fire

FROM PAGE 16 on the building's rooftop on Dilu Road

with other neighbours. Jahangir then helped some of his neighbours escape to the adjacent building's rooftop. Jahangir suffered leg injuries and his wife Umme Kulsum spinal wounds while going to

the rooftop of the adjacent building.

She attended the funeral on a stretcher. "My sister-in-law's spine was broken. But she insisted on going to their village home in the ambulance that carried the body of Juthi," Jahangir's cousin Rabiul Álam Rumel told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We will admit our sister-in-law to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation after she returns to the capital," he added.

Six people were also injured in the

Condition of Shahidul Kirmany Rony and his wife Jannatul Ferdous were unchanged. Rony with 43 percent and Jannat with 95 percent inhalation burns are now fighting for life at the intensive care unit of Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery at Dhaka Medical College

Hospital. Dr Samanta Lal Sen, national coordinator of the burn institute, said the couple were on life support and their condition remained unchanged. "We are doing our level best for their recovery

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Rony's sister Nasrin Akter said they were taking his brother's four-year-old son AKM Rushdi to his village home in

Narsingdi for burial. "We could not exchange a single word with my brother and sister-in-law since Thursday noon. Doctors told us that they were suffering from kidney and urinal complications," said Nasrin.

Burial of another fire victim Abdul Kader Liton, a buying house staff, was completed in his village home in Laxmipur around 8:00am yesterday, said his nephew Md Nurunnabi.

Condition of vegetable trader Monir Hossain, 40, his wife Sumyia Akter, 30, and sons Mahadi Hasan Rifat, 9, and nine-month-old Mahmudul Hasan has improved, said duty doctors at the burn and plastic surgery unit.

Meanwhile, the five-member body, formed by the fire service and civil defence authorities to investigate the incident, visited the building yesterday

Abul Hosen, deputy director of Mymensingh Fire Service and Civil Defence, who leads the probe body, told this newspaper yesterday that they

were primarily suspecting that the fire originated from the electrical board on the ground floor of the building. Although it is a residential building,

there are a buying house and a small garment factory with 10 sewing machines on the second floor. It is totally illegal, said Abul. "We didn't get the building and the buying house owners. We will start recording statements of witnesses and

the owners from tomorrow [Saturday].

After that, we would be able to say clearly what happened in the building, "Inspecting the building, it seems to us that the building has become risky after the fire. But we have suggested taking opinions from the Buet expert

The committee will submit its

eport within two weeks. No one is staying in the building now. Except the victims' families, other residences visited the building yesterday and took their clothes and frozen food to their relatives' houses, said Lutfur Rahman, security guard of the building.

The Daily Star tried to contact the buying house, Classic Fashion International, through the telephone numbers available on its website, but nobody received the calls.

No case was filed with Hatirjheel Police Station till filing of this report

Abul Bashar Mollah, sub-inspector of the police station, said if anyone communicated with them, they would definitely register a case.

Guinea to vote on new charter after months of

unrest

AFP, Conakry Guineans will be called to vote Sunday on whether to adopt a new constitution, after months of protests sparked by charges that it is a trick by President Alpha Conde to stay in

The government says the draft constitution will, among other things, codify gender equality and ban female circumcision and under-age marriage in the West African state.

But critics fear the real motive is to reset presidential term limits, allowing Conde, 81, to run for a third spell in office later this year.

Ten bodies worried

Bangladeshis to be vigilant so that the violence in Delhi does not create any unrest in Bangladesh.

The signatories of the joint statement are: President of Sammilita Sanskritik Jote Golam Kuddus and its General Secretary Hasan Arif; Chairman of Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation Liaquat Ali Lucky and General Secretary Kamal Bayezid; President of Bangladesh Abritti Samannay Parishad Asaduzzaman Noor, MP, and General Secretary Md Ahkam Ullah; President of Jatiya Kabita Utsab Dr Muhammad Samad and General Secretary Tarik Sujat; President of Bangladesh Path Natak Parishad Mannan Hira and its General Secretary Ahammad Gias; Bangladesh Gonosangeet Samannay Parishad President Fakir Alamgir and General Secretary Manzar Choudhury Sweet; President of Bangladesh Nritta Shilpi Sangstha Minu Huq and General Secretary Sheikh Mahfuzur Rahman; President of International Theatre Institute (ITI), Bangladesh Kendra, Nasiruddin Yusuff and its General

Secretary Debprashad Debnath; and Bangladesh Charushilpi Sangsad President Jamal Ahmed and General Secretary Kamal Pasha Chowdhury.

The Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad also expressed concern over the clashes that took place over three days in the Indian capital, a press release issued by the council yesterday said. Its leaders also urged the India

government and its people to come forward to protect those affected by the riots to promote peace, solidarity and amity and uphold the country's secular democracy.

They made the appeal at a meeting organised at its office in Paltan.

Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad President Professor Nim Chandra Bhowmick presided over the meeting where General Secretary Advocate Rana Dasgupata, leaders Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Kazal Debnath, Joyantee Roy, Manindra Kumar Nath, Padmabati Devi and Advocate Kishore Ranjan Mondal, among others, were