

Rajib Gandhi

FROM PAGE 16

Islamic State claimed responsibility for killing the priest, but local authorities denied the presence of IS in the country.

In yesterday's verdict, three other accused -- Harej Ali, Khalilur Rahman and Md Rana -- were acquitted.

349 Italy

FROM PAGE 1

is that they might be infected during the travel," Prof Sabrina said in her daily briefing.

"If anybody does not follow the rules of home quarantine, we would be forced to bring them under institutional quarantine," she warned.

She said, "If you suspect you're infected, inform us over phone first. We would instruct the next step. But please don't come to IEDCR directly."

If needed, the IEDCR medical team would visit homes of suspected COVID-19 patients and collect samples, the director said.

In the last 24 hours, from 8:00am Saturday to 8:00am yesterday, the IEDCR tested 20 people and found two positive cases.

The IEDCR has tested 231 people so far.

Of the new patients -- both males -- one returned from Italy and another from Germany around two weeks ago.

MINISTER BRIEFING

Meanwhile, Health Minister Zahid Maleque, mentioning several directives issued to different ministries, said they suggested that labour and industries ministries check temperature of workers. "We suggested them that they ask workers to inform their concerned departments about their relatives who have returned to Bangladesh recently."

Briefing the media after an emergency meeting of the inter-ministerial committee on COVID-19, he said, "We're giving more priority to the hygiene factor in public transport. We urged transport owners to let passengers to get into public transport after washing their hands with sanitisers and clean the whole vehicle with disinfectants after a trip."

He also requested the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry to ask expatriates not to come to Bangladesh right now through their relatives. "Because they've brought coronavirus to the country," he added.

The minister said they urged local government and social welfare ministries to run awareness programmes in slums and people living in overcrowded areas.

PATIENT FLEES FROM HOSPITAL
A suspected COVID-19 patient fled from Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital in the capital yesterday.

The 40-year-old, who returned home from Bahrain, was admitted to the hospital's male medicine ward around 8:00am on Saturday.

He was suffering from fever, cough and sneezing and breathing difficulties, the hospital's Director Uttam Kumar Barua told this newspaper.

After examining his health condition, doctors suspected that it might be a case of coronavirus infection. So, they called for an IEDCR team, he said.

When the IEDCR team reached the hospital around 12:30pm yesterday, doctors could not find him and his wife who was attending him, he added.

Uma Rani Saha, a nurse at the hospital, told this paper that the patient was very nervous when he heard that he might be infected with coronavirus.

69 Indians enter country

FROM PAGE 1

reported that 58 Indian citizens entered the country through Benapole land port, while eight entered through the Sonamasjid land port.

Three other Indians came to Bangladesh through Akhaura land port, reported our Brahmanbaria correspondent.

Officials at the Hili and Birol land ports in Dinajpur, however, said they had stopped entry of Indians through the port.

CURBS ON FLIGHTS AND VISAS
The foreign minister yesterday said the government had decided to suspend inbound flights from the countries seriously affected by the coronavirus. The decision came into effect at 12:00am today.

On Saturday, the foreign minister said Bangladesh had suspended on-arrival visas for all countries and stopped receiving travellers from Europe, except the United Kingdom, until March 31.

Momen yesterday said the government wants to protect the over 16 crore people in the country by not allowing anybody with coronavirus in.

He said the government had appealed to the expatriate Bangladeshis not to come home until the situation improves, a plea that he said remains unheeded.

The foreign minister said of the five coronavirus infections confirmed in Bangladesh, three came from Italy and one from Germany. The other was infected while staying with one of the four infected returnees, he said.

Three of the five recovered and were

allowed to go home.

He criticised the Bangladeshi citizens returning from Italy and staging a protest on Saturday at the Ashkona Hajj Camp, demanding that they be allowed to go home.

He said the government is discouraging travellers from European countries, except the UK, and people from infected countries like China, Iran, South Korea and other countries, from visiting Bangladesh.

Those who have not visited any of the affected countries in the last 28 days can come to Bangladesh through the UK, he said.

Meanwhile, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, Air Vice-Marshal M Mafidur Rahman, in a press briefing at his office yesterday said they have asked all airlines not to bring any passengers from European countries other than the UK from today until March 31.

Syria elections postponed over coronavirus

AFP, Damascus

Syria said Saturday its parliamentary elections scheduled for next month would be postponed as part of measures to protect the war-battered country against the coronavirus epidemic.

The president's office said on its official social media accounts that the vote will be pushed back to May 20, from the original date of April 13.

Bangladesh needs urgent relief

FROM PAGE 16

this quantity of food grain is not made available. She hopes that the UN Secretary General will devote all his energies to send to Bangladesh the \$100 million worth of materials, for which she sent a cable to the UN Headquarters yesterday.

INDIAN AID FOR BANGLADESH
Surendra Pal Singh, deputy minister for External Affairs, India states in the Lok Sabha today that while no detailed plan for trade with Bangladesh has yet been negotiated, arrangements have been made to supply food items, agricultural inputs and miscellaneous raw materials in the light of discussion

with the government of Bangladesh. He informs that so far, the following aids have been given to Bangladesh: a foreign exchange loan of five million pounds sterling, commodity aid of Rs 25 crore, a loan of Rs 10 crore for rehabilitation of railways, a loan for purchase of two ships from India, another loan for purchasing two Fokker friendship aircraft, a loan for supply of telecommunication equipment and a loan for the supply of wheat and rice valued at Rs 50 crore, on a grant basis.

US RELIEF FOR BANGLADESH CUT BY 60 PERCENT
The US has cancelled more than

Swiss region shuts down as army prepares to deploy over virus

AFP, Geneva

Switzerland's Ticino region announced Saturday it would broaden already dramatic measures against the spread of COVID-19, while the army said it was prepared to help hospitals fight the virus.

Authorities in Ticino, which borders hard-hit Italy, announced during a news conference that all restaurants, bars and shops with the exception of food stores and pharmacies, closed from yesterday.

The canton, like the rest of Switzerland, already decided on Friday to shut down schools and limit public gatherings in a bid to halt the spread of the deadly new coronavirus.

Entry from Italy, where more than 1,250 people have died from the virus, was also largely limited to Swiss nationals and residents, and Swiss media reported a 60-percent decline in crossings into Ticino Saturday.

Controls at Switzerland's borders with other surrounding countries have also been tightened, but no similar entry limits have been imposed.

The army meanwhile said it was preparing to deploy one of its four hospital battalions to help hospitals across Switzerland cope with the outbreak, which has killed a dozen people and infected more than 1,350 country-wide.

Army chief Thomas Süssli said in a tweet overnight that the battalion,

which counts many with "basic care training", would carry out a "special service towards the security and protection of us all."

Army spokesman Daniel Reist told AFP that the battalion, made up of between 500 and 600 personnel, will be prepared to support work at hospitals across the country if requested, especially taking on logistical tasks.

"There has not yet been a request," he said.

The army in Switzerland is organised as a militia, with conscripts carrying out a short initial training and then being called back in for several weeks of training each year.

It also counts doctors and specialists in its ranks, but they have been asked to remain in their civilian positions.

The army has already deployed 23 people to support two hospitals in Ticino, Reist said.

The army also said Saturday it would halt all recruitment activity until further notice to protect conscripts and military personnel from the virus.

The Swiss government meanwhile warned that cybercriminals had begun sending out emails purportedly from the country's health ministry, playing on people's anxiety over the pandemic to try to infect their computers with malware.

The repatriation of Bangalees from Pakistan and Pakistanis from Bangladesh will commence soon, according to the Bangladesh government's foreign ministry spokesman. In the first phase of repatriation, 1,000 persons will be exchanged between the two countries. Preference will be given to persons who are alone and away from their families. Ailing and injured persons will also be given preference in the first batch.

SOURCES: March 17, 1972 issues of *Dainik Bangla*, *The Daily Ittefaq*, *Azad*, *Morning News*, *The Bangladesh Observer* and *Purbodesh*.

No child left behind

FROM PAGE 16

the Khaspara kids from January this year.

"Since I was in college, I felt an urge to do something for people within my own means. Soon, I heard about the landless people who live in the forest [of Gazipur], 2.5 kilometres away from my home," said Habibunnessa, a Bachelor of Science student at Freedom Fighter Rahmat Ali Government College.

"I shared my idea with my friends and started collecting more information about that community. We found that many of their children do not go to school or drop off before completing the primary level because of the cost of school materials and conveyance," she said.

Thus, the four young women decided to start teaching the children for free in a field next to the forest under the open sky.

Every day, except for Friday, classes of grade I and II are held together while classes of grade III, IV and V are conducted separately from 8:30am to 12:30pm.

Rajlakshmi, a third-year Honours student at Bhawal Badre Alam Government College, and Habibunnessa give more time in the school, as their own undergraduate

classes are held only three days a week.

Mafia and Shimu, both higher secondary students of Mizanur Rahman Khan Degree Mohila College, help out their friends whenever they get time.

Inspired by their effort, others in Bormy, like Mir Mizan, have donated educational materials and books.

"When I saw that poor children from adjacent neighbourhoods are also coming here to take lessons, I joined in by providing some copies and pencils," Mir said.

Bormy Union Parishad Chairman Shamsul Haque Badal Sarker collected old textbooks for the Khaspara children from primary school teachers in the union.

"Because of familial reasons, these children had fallen through the crack of the formal education system. The initiative of these women will bring them back on track," he hoped.

The parents of the Khaspara children are also happy with the Pathshala.

Rowshan Ara, who has two kids, is glad that the school is right beside her home in the forestland. She does not have to worry about sending them to the nearest primary school 2.5 kilometres away.

Another resident of Khaspara Latifa

60 percent of the \$158 million committed for humanitarian relief in Bangladesh, says a State Department official.

Earlier, Senator Edward Kennedy accused the US Administration of misleading the public over the American aid commitment to Bangladesh. He said that only a relatively small amount of the promised aid had been delivered and the administration was using the excuse of poor distribution facilities in Bangladesh to hold up the relief.

1,000 BANGALEES WILL BE BACK HOME SOON

Akhter, said she used to send her son to the local primary school, but could not afford the conveyance, tiffin and educational material costs.

"The trip to and from the school used to cost at least Tk 40 per day," said Latifa, whose husband is a small farmer. Now, her son gets a free education with no additional expense.

Six-year-old Ayesha Akhter said, "My father is physically challenged and my mother works at a farmland. My family cannot afford my educational expenses. So, I have started going to this free school."

Sadly, classes of the school, which now has 50 students, often get cancelled during bad weather.

"Sometimes during bad weather, the locals allow us to take the classes on their verandahs or inside a room or two. But that cannot be a permanent solution," said Habibunnessa.

"It would help if we had two tin-roofed schoolrooms and four blackboards," she said.

A case on the ownership claim of the land, where the school runs, is currently underway in the court between a private individual and the government.

Yet, Habibunnessa is hopeful that even if the private individual wins the case, their school won't face a

problem.

She feels if the authorities concerned want, a school building could be erected in the same land or on adjacent fallow government land.

"We will apply [for it] to authorities concerned," she said.

Her friend Mafia added that they will try to enroll their students to different nearby primary schools so that the students can sit for the public examinations.

The Bormy upazila chairman is helping the young women in this regard.

Upazila Education Officer Kamrul Hasan told *The Daily Star* that they visited the school and assessed its curriculum.

Kamrul said, "They [the young women] will be able to enlist their school with the Upazila Primary Education Office as per the rules."

The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) has supplied them with some new textbooks, he added.

Sreepur's UNO Sk Shamsul Arefin told *The Daily Star* that necessary cooperation will be extended to the young women who are working for the expansion of children's education.

He said a request has been made to look for a piece of khas land to build a permanent structure for the school.

compensation of Tk 50 lakh to Ariful.

During the hearing, the HC asked the state to respond to five questions regarding the incident.

The court wanted to know who conducted the drive and whether the rules about entering someone's house at midnight were followed.

The HC also asked whether the matter was so important as to warrant the involvement of 30-40 people.

Beaten up, threatened

FROM PAGE 1

Ariful, ordered the raid.

However, no action was taken against Nazim and the two magistrates as of last night.

Contacted, Public Administration Secretary Shaikh Yusuf Harun said, "She [the DC] will be withdrawn. But we need some time. We need to follow some formalities."

This correspondent called Nazim around 9:15pm when the official said that he was with the DC and that he would talk later. He did not answer the phone despite repeated attempts an hour later.

Ariful, a correspondent of *Bangla Tribune*, was released on bail yesterday morning. He narrated the gruelling hours of torture to his fellow reporters at Kurigram General Hospital, where he is being treated.

"So, you are a journalist! We will teach you what journalism is. You dared to write against our DC," Ariful quoted Nazim as saying.

Accompanied by police and Ansar men, Nazim and the two magistrates broke into Ariful's home, beat him up, blindfolded him and then dragged him into a vehicle. A mobile court then sentenced him to one year in prison on charges of possessing drugs.

Ariful said he was about to go to bed when the officials entered breaking the door. Nazim immediately started hitting him and swearing at him.

At one point, he asked others to

blindfold Ariful and tie his hands before taking him to the vehicle.

"I was crying and begging for life... Then I told them to have mercy for me as my father had died and I have two young children... But they kept hitting me."

After the vehicle drove for a while, Nazim again threatened to kill him.

"I started praying to the almighty," Ariful said, adding that Nazim then asked someone to call the DC.

"After a brief conversation, they took me somewhere. Nazim asked someone to take me upstairs. My hands were still tied. I could see through the blindfold and saw that it was the DC's office."

He said he was beaten up there again. Some people kicked him while others swore at him.

And then one of them stripped him and started filming him.

"I repeatedly wanted to know what my fault was. I even told them that I would apologise to the DC if I made a mistake."

They later gave him some clothes and took him to the local prison.

Nazim asked the jail authorities not to let anyone meet him in prison for a month and said he should not be provided with any treatment, Ariful alleged.

"My body is aching."

Orthopaedic Senior Consultant Uttam Kumar Roy of Kurigram General hospital said there were multiple

injury marks on Ariful's body.

NAZIM UDDIN'S NOTORIETY
He was widely criticised after a video clip of him torturing an elderly man went viral in November 2018.

He was assistant commissioner (land) in Cox's Bazar at the time. In the footage, recorded in May that year, Nazim was seen pulling the old man by his shirt collar.

The old man, a landless farmer named Nafu Majhi, told reporters that he was attacked by the official for living on a piece of khas land in Cox's Bazar town.

Nazim was transferred to Langadu upazila in Rangamati following various other allegations against him.

The allegations include taking bribe during eviction drives, assaulting people, misbehaving with people coming to his office over land related issues, harassing journalists and human rights activists and letting grabbers build structures on government land.

HC WANTS COPY OF MOBILE COURT VERDICT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know the offence for which Ariful was sentenced to one year in prison.

The HC asked for a copy of the mobile court verdict and ordered the government to inform it by today whether Ariful's arrest and punishment were legal.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashrafur Kamal and Justice Sardar

99-million-yr-old

FROM PAGE 16

"There's over 100 teeth present in the jaws. These weird eyes sticking off looking to the side. There's nothing like this alive today."

While people tend to think of dinosaurs as huge, lumbering creatures, this skull and other recent finds in amber suggest that life in dinosaur times was probably more diverse than we think, with many more tiny dinosaurs and other creatures that haven't yet showed up in the fossil record.

"One of the key messages from this study is that we are probably missing a big chunk of the ecosystem of the dinosaurs," said Lars Schmitz, a biology professor at Scripps College in Claremont, California, who along with O'Connor, authored the paper that published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*. "We don't know a lot about tiny things in the age of the dinosaurs."

The fossilisation of bones in sediments such as clay, silt and sand can crush and destroy the remains of small animals, but amber, which forms from the resin of coniferous trees, allows for their preservation in three dimensions.

"When you have an animal preserved in amber it looks like it just died yesterday -- all the soft tissue in place trapped into this little window into an ancient time," said O'Connor.

The first dinosaur skeleton to be found entombed in amber was detailed in 2016 by Chinese paleontologist Lida Xing, who found the remarkable specimen of a dinosaur tail at an amber market in northern Myanmar.

He has since made more discoveries in amber, traveling to Myanmar and its border with China to every two months to search for new specimens, and he was also an author of this latest study.

"I think the diversity of dinosaurs is beyond our imagination. We previously found a dinosaur footprint of 1 centimetre in length, which I thought was the minimum length of a dinosaur. Until we found *Oculudentavis*," whose name means eye-tooth bird, said Xing.

Ex-BCL leader dies

FROM PAGE 16

"Zahid was taken to the health complex as he felt chest pain while being taken to the police station."

Shakil Arsalan, medical officer at Chuadanga Sadar Hospital, however, told *The Daily Star* that Zahid was brought dead to the hospital and that they had spotted several injury marks on the body.

Zahid's uncle Piyar Ali, claiming to be an eye witness, said police started beating the two immediately after detaining them.

The victim's wife Lipi Khatun told journalists that police detained him "following the instruction" of an influential local. She, however, did not mention any name.

Rezaul Karim, former president of Chuadanga Chhatra League and an eyewitness, said he requested police several times not to detain Zahid as he was a well-behaved person and a dedicated leader of Chhatra League.

But police did not pay any heed to him, he said.

Mohaimen Hasan Joarder, current president of Chuadanga Chhatra League, termed the incident "a killing" and demanded a fair investigation.

Lithuania, Estonia

FROM PAGE 16

115 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Only citizens, individuals with residence permits and foreigners with a family member in Estonia will be allowed in but will have to undergo two weeks of isolation.

Foreigners will still be able to pass through Estonia to get to their country provided they show no symptoms of the virus. The same goes for cargo transporters.

There are no restrictions on leaving the country.

The government had earlier decided to close down all schools, museums, cinemas, leisure centres, sports clubs and banned all public gatherings until May 1.

Fellow Baltic state Lithuania for its part decided to ban foreigners from entering the country of 2.8 million people that started 1000 GMT yesterday, with the exception of individuals with a residence permit, diplomatic workers and Nato troops.

"Our goal is to delay the spread of the virus as long as possible inside the country and to reduce the negative consequences," Lithuanian Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis said Saturday.

Freight transport will not be affected, he added.

Lithuania, which has nine confirmed COVID-19 cases, has been on partial lockdown since Friday after the government shut down all schools, kindergartens and universities and banned large public events.

From tomorrow, the ban will also cover most shops, restaurants and pubs, although food delivery will be allowed. The measure does not concern grocery stores and pharmacies.

Skvernelis said his cabinet will approve an economic stimulus plan today worth "at least one billion euros".

Silicon Valley locks down for virus

AFP, Palo Alto

David Tollner gets text messages telling him when meals are placed outside the door of the family guest room, where he was banished after developing a cough.

His wife Mitra Ahani is talking no chances as the coronavirus pandemic spreads in the United States -- even though she knows her husband may have no more than a common cold.

When Tollner returned to their home near Santa Cruz from a conference in Baltimore, she steered him directly to the shower, leaving doors open so he wouldn't touch them, and wiped down his suitcase with bleach.

When he started coughing, Tollner was relegated to a spare room.

"I locked him in the guest room,"

confirmed Ahani, a chief executive of a center that provides educational support for children with disabilities, who like millions in this tech-savvy region has shifted to remote work in response to the spreading coronavirus.

"He probably caught a little cold out there. But it scared the daylight out of him, and he needed that."

In an interview with AFP, Tollner wryly acknowledged his predicament. "I'm here in the dungeon waiting for food and water," he said Friday. "I have been here for a couple of days now trying not to infect the world with something I don't know I even have."

Tollner relies on his laptop and smartphone to run his law firm in the Silicon Valley city of San Jose.