

The journey is over...



File photo of Tom Cruise with his wife Nicole Kidman. Photo: AFP
AFP, Los Angeles

Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, one of Hollywood's most famous acting couples, are separating after just more than 10 years of marriage. The big screen superstars have "regrettably decided to separate," their publicist said Monday.

"Citing the difficulties inherent in divergent careers, which constantly keep them apart, they concluded that an amicable separation seemed best for both of them at this time," publicist Pat Kingsley said in a statement.

The two "stressed their great respect for each other, both personally and professionally," the statement said.

It isn't known yet whether or not custody of their two adopted children, Isabella, 8, and Connor, 6, will be shared.

The couple's marriage has made headlines before. Cruise, 38, and Kidman, 33, met on the set of the 1990 movie "Days of Thunder" and later appeared together in "Far and Away" (1992) and Stanley Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut" (1999).

In 1998, London's Daily Express was ordered to pay the stars more than 100,000 pounds (167,000 dollars), as well as legal costs of 150,000 pounds (250,500 dollars), after the tabloid described their marriage as a "hypocritical sham" to hide their homosexuality.

The Express agreed to donate the money to a charity.

Later a Los Angeles photographer was sentenced to six months in jail for intercepting a cellular telephone call between Cruise and Kidman, and trying to sell the information.

In that call according to supermarket tabloid "The Globe" Kidman is heard telling Cruise that their marriage was "hanging by a thread."

"Eyes Wide Shut" Kubrick's last work generated controversy both on and off the set of the steamy, erotic film.

Air pollution kills 15000 a year in Bangladesh

World Bank report says

BSS, Dhaka

As many as 15,000 deaths, a million cases of sickness requiring medical treatment and 850 million cases of minor illness can be avoided annually if pollution levels in the four largest cities of Bangladesh are reduced to match with standards in force in developed countries.

It was observed by Jitendra Shah, a Senior Environment Engineer in the World Bank's South Asia Environment Unit, in a report

made available here yesterday. He said the economic cost of these avoidable deaths and sicknesses was estimated to be US dollars 200 to 800 million per year in Bangladesh, a country with air pollution levels in the four largest cities of Bangladesh are reduced to match with standards in force in developed countries.

WB anti-pollution expert Paul J Martin told newsmen at a briefing session here yesterday that the World Bank had worked with the government to successfully phase out leaded gasoline. "This has in fact helped a lot to improve the air quality and reduce illness related to lead poisoning," he said and lauded the government's active role in this regard.

PM slates use of religion for political gains

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday denounced the use of religion for political gains.

"Islam is a religion of peace and those who are out to destroy peace in the name of religion are the enemies of Islam," she said at a meeting with a delegation of Communist Party of Bangladesh at her office.

The delegation led by CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mozahidul Islam Selim said the use of religion for political purposes is not fair.

They observed that the religious fanatics are in fact destroying the religion through their destructive activities.

Referring to Saturday's killing of a policeman inside a mosque, the CPB leaders said it is contrary to the ideals of Islam.

They discussed the issue of compensation for the victims of bomb blast at CPB rally on January 20. The prime minister assured them of necessary steps in this regard.

Hasina said a vested political group is patronising the communal terrorists to gain their narrow political interest as "they want to hit my party and me."

In view of rapid growth of vehicular traffic in the metropolitan areas over the recent years emitting harmful pollutants, World Bank identified the reduction of urban air pollution and related health impacts as a development objective for Bangladesh. Air pollution levels in Dhaka are considerably higher than in other cities.

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Ransacking of courts Hearing on charge framing against 20 lawyers Mar 1

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The special tribunal for prevention of public safety disturbances and crimes, Dhaka on Monday fixed March 1 for hearing on charge-framing against 20 lawyers accused in a case filed under the Public Safety Act (PSA).

The judge Mohammad Shah Newaz adjourned the hearing following a time prayer from the defence side.

The case was filed against 33 people, including 20 lawyers on August 22 last year for ransacking some courtrooms of Dhaka District and Sessions judge and chief Metropolitan Magistrate on August 20 last year.

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BCL activists at Eden College assembled on the college premises to prevent general students from holding a rally yesterday. Earlier, the BCL activists allegedly attacked a procession brought out by the general students on the campus protesting recent terrorist activities by BCL men and demanding security of resident students.

Clash at Eden College

DU CORRESPONDENT

Several students of Eden College were injured when a group of activists of the ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) allegedly attacked a procession brought out by the general students.

Sources said the general students of the college yesterday were agitating in front of the principal's residence, protesting the recent terrorist activities by the BCL and demanding security of the resident students.

The BCL activists allegedly roughed them up in presence of the college authorities, leaving several injured including Ruhi, Mukta and Rita injured.

Other sources said that a number of students were injured when two rival factions of BCL were locked in a clash yesterday on the college premises. Some windowpanes of the institution were also damaged.

Meanwhile, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF), a left leaning student organisation, protested the incident and demanded punitive actions against those involved in the incident.

Allocate at least 1pc of GDP for IT sector

Experts at workshop in city suggest

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Experts at a day-long workshop on the draft National Information Technology Policy in the city yesterday suggested allocation of at least one per cent of the Gross Domestic Product for the IT sector for its development.

They also suggested creation of facilities by the government for more private sector participation in it.

The workshop also formed a committee to examine the draft policy, prepared by the Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC). It will be submitted to the Ministry of Science and Technology on February 20 and placed before the parliament later.

Participants in the workshop included Prof. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury of BUET, Prof A Sobhan Executive Director of BCC and Dr. Shamsul Alam of the same organi-

sation, SM Kamal, President of Bangladesh Association of Software Information Services (BASIS), its General Secretary Atiq-e-Rabbani and Anwarul Bar Chowdhury, Vice-Chairman of Bangladesh Export Promotion Bureau.

Science and Technology Minister Lt. Gen. Nooruddin Kahn was the chief guest at the inaugural session. BCS organised the workshop at the

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One shot, robbed of Tk one lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers shot an employee of a knitting factory and took away Tk one lakh from him in front of his office in the city's Mohakhali area yesterday.

Mohammad Titu, 28, a bill collector of Kushiari Dyeing and Knitting Factory came under attack in front of his office at 383 DOHS at about 3 pm, hospital sources said.

Titu went to a bank at Motijheel and drew Tk one lakh. He hired an auto-rickshaw to return to his office, sources added.

When Titu reached in front of his office, a gang of three encircled the auto-rickshaw and asked Tipu to hand over the money. As Titu refused to oblige, the gang shot in his chest, and took away the money, hospital sources quoting witnesses said.

In a critical condition, Titu was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Int'l confce on disaster management begins

UNB, Dhaka

A three-day international seminar, the PACRIM DO Conference, began at a local hotel here yesterday.

Chief of the Air Staff air Vice-Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed inaugurated the seminar as chief guest in the morning.

The theme of the seminar is "Command and Control Arrangement for Humanitarian Disaster Management Operations."

Bangladesh Air Force and the Pacific Air Force of the United States have jointly organised the seminar. Twenty-two delegates and 6 observers from 15 countries, including Bangladesh, are taking part in the seminar.

Participating countries are: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United

States of America. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief of Air Staff said the seminar would provide a forum to exchange views in designing and implementing effective regional strategies for mitigating the impact of disaster on economic development.

The participants would pursue greater understanding on the theme of the seminar by sharing their view and knowledge in promoting humanitarian assistance to the people in need, he added.

Director, Air and Space Operations of the Pacific Air Forces of the United States Major General Thomas C Wasko also spoke.

High civil and military officials, including the members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence Ministry, attended the seminar.

IOJ chief was aware of everything, police say

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) Chairman Azizul Haq was aware of everything that took place on the Noor Mosque premises at Mohammadia Housing Estate on Saturday afternoon, police said.

Mohammadpur police, CID personnel and members of different intelligence agencies came to know about the fact yesterday while interrogating the remanded three Humayun Kabir, Hizbullah and Akram Hossain arrested in connection with the murder of Police Constable Badshah Mia, police sources said.

They were produced before the CMM's court and placed on a three-day remand on Sunday. 37 people including IOJ Chief Azizul Haq and his son Mahfuzul Haq have been accused of the murder, while 33 have been arrested so far. Police, however, failed to arrest

the rest four including Mahfuzul Haq and Abul Kalam Azad, principal of the nearby madrasa till last night.

During yesterday's interrogation, the three confessed that the disciples informed the IOJ chief about the incidents, including that of dragging the constable inside the mosque and killing him, sources

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Khaleda postpones London tour

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia has postponed her trip to London in view of the volatile political situation in the country, party sources said.

Khaleda was scheduled to fly for the United Kingdom today on a nine-day trip for medical treatment.



Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh holding a rally on the road in front of Baitul Mukarram in the city yesterday in support of today's hartal. It resulted in a traffic jam there.

Writ seeking ban on 2-stroke engines

UNB, Dhaka

In the High Court yesterday senior lawyer Ml Farooqui pleaded for immediate ban on plying of two-stroke engine autorickshaw and tempo in Dhaka city, which are contributing largely to air pollution that caused serious diseases.

Appearing on behalf of a writ petitioner, the counsel argued that finding it perilous the government has already banned import of two-stroke engines for autorickshaw and tempo. But such vehicles continued plying in the city streets causing serious health hazards to the citizens.

Seeking an order for immediate ban on two-stroke engine

autorickshaws and tempos in the city, the lawyer submitted that these vehicles are one of the main reasons for worsening air quality, causing innumerable diseases and sufferings to the city dwellers.

The petitions were filed by Abdull Mannan Khan on behalf of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) and two others drawing attention to the dangerous air quality of Dhaka City which, according to many reports, is the worst in the world.

The division bench comprising Justice Abu Sayeed Ahmed and Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury will continue hearing when respondents from the government side are expected to make their submission, said a BLAST press release.