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India offers free access to sat data on natural disasters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India has offered free access to remote sensing data, collected by satellites of Indian Space Research Organisation, to other Saarc countries during major natural disasters in the region.
 A meeting of experts from Saarc countries, held in New Delhi Monday, was told that the modalities for allowing access to satellite data would depend on what exactly each member country opens up and shares, official sources here said.
 The experts agreed that sharing such data would not only help assess the actual damage caused by natural disasters but also improve transparency in relief and rehabilitation in South Asia.
 Inaugurating the meeting, Indian Home Minister Shivraj Patil called on the Saarc countries to use their strength in science and technology to build a sound system of

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MAHANAGAR SHISHU HOSPITAL Services disrupted for bureaucratic tangles

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

The 100-bed Mahanagar Shishu Hospital has failed to provide fully-fledged service even 18 years into operation due to bureaucratic red tape and lack of successive governments' political will.
 Run by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the hospital was launched in 1990 and has since then been providing only indoor service with a capacity for 50 patients at a time.
 However, the hospital has no monetary problems, as it receives full allocation from the government.
 "Currently, 50 patients on an average are receiving indoor services every day. Before 2006, the hospital could not admit more than 10 patients, as it didn't serve food, and supply of medicine was also

irregular," says Director Nurul Islam.
 The hospital began its activities as an outdoor hospital with little manpower and equipment on Gouro Sundar Roy Lane in Lalbagh. Later, the then mayor in 1999 inaugurated the hospital, which gradually began indoor services.
 "Still the hospital can't become fully operational because we don't have the departments of pathology and radiology. If 70 patients turn up, we won't be able to provide them with the available services," says Nurul Islam.
 Against the posts for 39 nurses, the hospital has only 16. Half of them are working on deputation and they might leave any time, he adds.
 "The scope for promotion and transfer is so limited here that very few medical professionals are

interested to come here. Currently, nine medical officers and five consultants are working at the hospital."
 More than 50 posts for health technologists, consultants, anaesthetists and medical officers have long been vacant.
 The city corporation has approved posts for nurses and other medical professionals, but it doesn't have any approved recruitment guidelines.
 "The city corporation has recently prepared a draft recruitment guideline and is going to send it to the LGRD ministry for approval. Then it'll be sent to the establishment ministry within a month," says Secretary of the DCC Golam Mostofa.
 "A draft guideline was prepared before, approval of which was

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The entrance to Dhaka Mahanagar Shishu Hospital at Lalbagh looks almost barren. Set up 18 years ago, the City Corporation-run hospital is yet to provide full-fledged services.

LABAID HOSPITAL Patients allege negligence in treatment

Authorities deny charges
 STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mostari Begum was admitted to the city's high-end Labaid Hospital with severe abdomen and chest pain on September 16 in 2004. The on-duty doctor diagnosed her illness as acidity and referred her to another hospital.
 Physicians there carried out an electrocardiogram (ECG) on her and found she suffered a massive heart attack. Unfortunately for her, Mostari was again whisked to Labaid Cardiac Hospital where doctors attended to her at 12 o'clock next day. Mostari Begum breathed her last breath that night.
 Her son Mushfiq Ahmed blames it on the negligence of doctors. "Despite our financial ability and the hospital's latest equipment for primary angioplasty, my mother had to meet such a death only for the negligence of the hospital authorities," he complained at a

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HASINA'S CASE SC to hear govt petition against HC order today

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court will hear today government petition seeking stay on the High Court order that halted further proceedings of trial of detained former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in a Tk 3-crore extortion case.
 Meanwhile, the rule-hearing on a writ petition challenging the legality of placing the extortion case under Emergency Power Rules (EPR) began yesterday in a High Court division bench.
 Barrister Shafique Ahmed, a counsel for the Awami League president, put forward his arguments before a two-judge bench, comprising Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman and Justice Shahidul Islam.
 The hearing remained inconclusive. It resumes today.
 Earlier, the HC bench turned down Additional Attorney General Mansur Habib's time prayer for preparation for the legal battle from government side.
 On Jan 17, the High Court,

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Close to the footover at Azampur, pedestrians cross the busy main road at Uttara in the capital yesterday risking accidents anytime. A bamboo fence erected to prevent this serves no purpose.

Tight security layers for Biswa Ijtema

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A five-tier security system including helicopter patrol and closed-circuit television (CCTV) monitoring has been set up at and around the Biswa Ijtema ground at Tongi.
 About 12,000 security personnel drawn from the police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), Armed Police Battalion (APBn) and Ansar will be deployed during the three-day Ijtema that begins tomorrow.
 Several hundred members of various intelligence agencies will also be deployed at the venue of the Ijtema venue.
 More than two million devotees from across the country and abroad are expected to attend the Ijtema, the second largest religious congregation of the Muslims next to hajj, that takes place on a five-square kilometre ground along on the bank of the Turag river.
 Police and Rab sources said 9,757 police personnel, 747 Rab men and about 1,000 BDR, APBn and Ansar personnel will be deployed at the venue.
 Commander SMAK Azad, director of Legal and Media Wing of Rab,

told The Daily Star that the law enforcers would check the devotees at five points. There will be patrols on the roads and waterway nearby and choppers will hover to ward off any untoward activities.
 He said, "The entire Ijtema ground has been divided into five sectors and 48 CCTV cameras have been installed there. Besides, three monitoring centres and some observation towers have been set up at different points in the area."
 AKM Kamrul Hossain, information officer at the Police Headquarters, said, "Every individual will have to go through checking at five points before entering the Ijtema ground."
 Sources said there will be an usual checking on the periphery of the venue, checking at different checkpoints and random checking on the way to a Khitta (a block on Ijtema ground).
 Bomb disposal units from the army and Rab will be deployed at the venue and several mobile courts will operate.
 Thirty-five medical camps will provide medical facilities to the devotees, the sources mentioned.

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CRISIS AT DU, RU RU teachers for complete solution

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University Progressive Teachers' Association yesterday urged the caretaker government to solve the crisis regarding the teachers and students of Rajshahi University and Dhaka University without hurting their dignity.
 "A complete and just solution to the crisis is yet to be done as some of the teachers and students were branded as criminals through conviction," said former RU vice-chancellor Saidur Rahman Khan.
 He was reading out a paper at a press conference at the Deans' Complex of the university.
 Expressing resentment over the conviction against the teachers and students, he said the convicts are still aggrieved.
 Association convener Abdus Sobhan, Moloy Kumar Bhowmik, Mizan Uddin, Jalal Uddin, SM Abu Bakkar, Shamsuddin Ilias, Fayekuzzaman, Muhammad Naser, Sujit Kumar Sarker, Muhammad Nurullah, Hasibul Alam Prodhan, Dr Anisur Rahman and Dr Ahsan Kabir, among others, were present.
 The teachers and students were

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West Bengal struggles to tackle bird flu

AFP, Kolkata

India's West Bengal state said yesterday it was falling behind in its attempts to halt the spread of bird flu among poultry as the virus was confirmed in two new areas.
 Despite receiving reinforcements from neighbouring states to help slaughter more than two million birds, at least 1,000 additional veterinarians and doctors are needed to fight the outbreak that began more than a week ago, the state's animal resources minister said.
 "We don't have the infrastructure to battle this epidemic. Bird flu is spreading to new areas. Thousands of chickens are dropping dead every day," the minister, Anisur Rahman, told AFP.
 Rahman said hundreds more culling teams had been sent to 10 districts where bird flu had been confirmed, but not all of them were accompanied by medical staff.
 "We have asked neighbouring states to send at least 1,000 veterinary and human doctors," said Rahman. "We have urged the federal government to send expert teams and doctors to assess the situation and help the culling teams."
 Rahman also said the earlier target of slaughtering two million birds would now have to be raised but did not say by how much.
 "Bird flu has spread to two more

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ABU DHABI MANPOWER TALKS Call to prevent illegal recruitments jointly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asian countries that send and receive labourers along with Malaysia and Singapore yesterday adopted a declaration at the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, recognising joint responsibility in preventing illegal recruitment and promoting transparent policies.
 The two-day dialogue of ministers of the 20 participating nations concluded yesterday, also paving the way for better management of temporary contractual labour mobility to ensure the well-being,

welfare and protection of temporary workers, a press note of International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said.
 The participating countries were Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam and Yemen.
 The declaration defines a new collaborative approach to better

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IRAN NUKE World powers agree on UN resolution

It will be ineffective: Ahmadinejad

AFP, Berlin

World powers reached agreement on Tuesday on a new UN Security Council resolution against Iran over its disputed nuclear programme, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said.
 "We agreed on the content of the next Security Council resolution," Steinmeier said after the meeting in Berlin of foreign ministers from the five permanent members of the

Security Council -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- plus Germany.
 Steinmeier said the resolution would be presented to the Security Council "in the coming weeks."
 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told Russian journalists after the meeting that the new draft resolution envisages direct talks with Tehran that would include the United States.

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Thousands pour into Egypt as Gaza border blasted open

AFP, Cairo

Thousands of Palestinians poured into Egypt yesterday to stock up on goods because of an Israeli blockade, after militants blew up parts of the border with the Gaza Strip.
 Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said he had authorised the crossing of the Palestinians as long as they were unarmed.
 "I told (security forces) to allow them to buy their basic needs and go back to Gaza as long as they are not carrying arms or anything illegal," he told reporters in Cairo.

Egyptian officials told AFP they estimate the number of people who entered Egypt at up to 60,000.
 Egyptian General Ahmed Abdel Hamid ordered a full alert in the area, the official MENA agency reported.
 Parts of the barrier separating Egypt and the Gaza Strip were knocked down by at least 15 explosions and flattened by a bulldozer, allowing people to leave the impoverished territory that has been under Israeli blockade for months.
 US Secretary of State

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AK-47 rifle, bullets seized in Chittagong

CU CORRESPONDENT

Rab members in separate drives yesterday recovered an AK-47 rifle, ammunition and two brass statues at Raoozan and Boalkhali upazila in the port city.
 On information, members of Rab-7 raided Niramish Para of Boalkhali upazila where a group of miscreants gathered at about 6:00am.
 Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the miscreants fled the scene. Rab members recovered the rifle, a magazine and 30 rounds of bullet from the spot.
 In a separate drive, Rab recovered two brass statues at Akulia village of Boalkhali upazila at about 1:00pm, sources said.

Rab captures cheque forgery gang

Cash, forged bank documents seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Rab arrested three members of an inter-district gang who have long swindled depositors out of millions of taka through forged cheques.
 The arrests were made on Monday and Tuesday in Barisal, Madaripur and Dhaka. The law enforcers also recovered Tk 3 lakh and chequebooks and deposit slips of different banks.
 The cheats were identified as ringleader Maznu Khan, 42, Saiful Islam alias Sumon Matubbar, 35, and Bachchu Matubbar, 34. They hail from Ghunsi and Kukrail villages in Madaripur's sadar upazila.
 Disclosing the arrests at a press briefing in Barisal yesterday, Rab officials said they first nabbed

Bachchu as he tried to draw out Tk 3 lakh from an Uttara Bank branch in Barisal through a forged cheque.
 On Bachchu's confession that his accomplices have already drawn Tk 3 lakh from the same bank branch and managed to slip out of the town, Rab raided Sumon's village home in Madaripur early Tuesday, arresting him with the money.
 The ringleader Maznu was arrested Tuesday evening at a Sayedabad restaurant in Dhaka.
 The arrested admitted that their gang have drawn more than ten crore taka through forged cheques in last eight years. Rab said their operation to arrest the other cheaters would continue.



An elderly devotee along with others prepares meals at the Biswa Ijtema venue on the bank of Turag river. Lakhs of devotees of devotees have already arrived at the venue.

IN FOND MEMORY

Mrs Anwara Islam, our mother died on 24 January 2005 - exactly the same day as our father Mr. Sirajul Islam who died twenty four years earlier.
 We pray to the Almighty Allah to grant them eternal peace.
 Akbar, Duree, Anika, Talita, Numair, Amani and Ms Lubna Choudhury
 Founder-Principal, B.I.T. & Chairperson, The Red Brick School