

Time, like all good things, may come to an end

AFP, Washington

The end of the world as we know it cannot be avoided, but it can be predicted, according to a group of astrophysicists who see a 50 per cent chance of the final countdown ending in 3.7 billion years.

"Time is unlikely to end in our lifetime, but there is a 50 per cent chance that time will end within the next 3.7 billion years," according to the team of US and Japanese scientists, who are challenging a long-standing theory of the universe.

While scientists have long concluded that the universe is expanding, and will do so for an infinite period of time, the researchers say the very rules of physics suggest that "an eternally inflating universe" is far from given.

"The point of this paper is to show that certain methods and assumptions that have been widely used by physicists for years -- most prominently, the use of a time cut off in order to compute probabilities in an eternally inflating universe -- lead to the conclusion that time will end," Raphael Bousso of the University of California, Berkeley told AFP.

"In other words, the time cut off, which we may have thought was just a calculational tool, actually behaves like a physical event, whether we like it or not," said Bousso, lead author of the study published on arXiv.org

Current theories of the universe begin with the "Big Bang," which cast our living space into being some 13.7 billion years ago in a massive explosion.

Since then, theorists have assumed the universe will simply continue to expand forever, but have also used a theoretical expiration date to help calculate the laws and rules of physics.

But Bousso and his colleagues says the discipline simply cannot have it both ways.

He cautioned however that the complex thought experiment and calculations proposed by the research could not be used to draw definitive conclusions.

"It's very important to

Khaleda's house

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Sheikh Hasina to consider the case on humanitarian grounds, showing her broadness," he told BSS.

The SCBA chief argued that the High Court might have delivered the judgment on technical or legal points, while the government had scopes to revise its decision to evade an "unnecessary political issue" which could drag the higher judiciary into controversy.

But the law minister said Khaleda was given the property worth Tk 400 crore in current market price, defying the law by the then government of president Justice Abdus Sattar, while she was already allotted another posh house at Gulshan worth Tk 9 crore.

He also questioned why Khaleda was unwilling to accept the court verdict when she herself preferred a legal battle on the issue.

State lawyers earlier argued at the court that the leasing out of the cantonment residence, earmarked for the deputy army chief, was contrary to the Rule 5 of the Cantonment Land Administration Rule of 1937.

"The land falls under A 1 category, while the rules allowed leasing out of lands of C categories alone," the attorney general argued at the court, which eventually pronounced the verdict validating the government notice served on Khaleda.

The HC bench comprising Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana and Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif pronounced the judgment on a writ by Khaleda Zia, and also asked the government to give her one-month time to vacate the house.

Khaleda's lawyers, however, earlier said they were expecting to file an appeal with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against

understand that we are not saying that we are certain of the conclusion that time will end (though we cannot rule out that it may be correct)," he wrote.

But he said even if the theory was false, discovering why that was the case would help scientists better understand the universe.

"In science, this kind of reasoning is often valuable: you realize that your reasonable-seeming theory predicts something that sounds crazy, so you have to come to grips with that," he told AFP.

"Either you have to abandon the theory, or you have to understand why the crazy-sounding thing may not actually be so crazy."

For astrophysicist Charles Lineweaver, of Australian National University's Mount Stromlo Observatory, Bousso's conclusions are simply incorrect.

"Bousso's average life of a universe is a set time, only because that's what happens when you introduce a cut off to get a reasonable probability," he told ABC Television.

"It's a statistical technique being taken probably too seriously," he added.

But Bousso said he and his team had not invented or introduced anything.

"These cut-off have been used by many leading physicists for years," he told AFP. "We merely pointed out that it's not such an innocent thing to do.

"The cut off on time is inevitably physical and hence requires a physical justification. It cannot be considered a mere mathematical trick."

Durga Puja

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Waizghat in old town before the immersion.

Out of 191 puja mandaps in the capital, some 70 idols are likely to be immersed in the Buriganga river and the rest in other rivers around the city, said Nirmol Chatterjee, joint secretary to the Mahanagar Sarbojann Puja Committee.

According to Hindu belief, Goddess Durga, along with her children, sets on a journey for Kailash, her husband's abode, on Dashami.

the verdict after obtaining consent of their client.

The government last year asked her to vacate the residence on an area of 2.72 acres of land at the Dhaka cantonment, which she was allotted 29 years ago under a controversial lease agreement.

The cabinet on April 8 last year cancelled the lease on grounds that the leasing process had been faulty and she violated lease terms. Subsequent notices furthermore said she was carrying out political activities from the house located in a "protected area".

Khaleda Zia filed the writ petition on May 3, 2009, challenging the notice.

The then government had allocated Khaleda another house in uptown Gulshan area in 1981 while she was again offered the bigger house at the cantonment in 1982 after the assassination of her husband president Ziaur Rahman in an abortive coup in 1981.

The Rajuk rules suggested that nobody would be entitled to a government plot if the or she obtained one earlier.

Meanwhile, Awami League Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif yesterday termed SCBA President Khandaker Mahubub's remark about the HC verdict as "extremely audacious" and amounting to contempt of court.

As a lawyer he cannot make such comments, Hanif told TV journalists.

2 girls drown

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factories at Ashulia and lived at Jamgora.

They entered their bathhouse around 1:00pm.

They had taken leave from workplaces to go their village home in Netrokona to participate in Durga Puja, police said.

Fire Brigade sources recovered the bodies around 6:00pm.

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Mother, son

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Jewel and his father were locked in an argument a few minutes before the incident, the domestic help said.

A local youth, Munna told The Daily Star, Friday night he was chatting with some friends near the house.

Around 8:45pm, they saw Jewel with burn injuries all over his body rush to the main road.

"All Jewel Bhai could utter was 'Ma, ma...', " added Munna. "Some of us entered the house and found his [Jewel's] mother lying on the ground. The other injured family members were crying."

He said, "We took all the four to DMCH."

Munna said they had heard that Jewel's parents were trying to give a major share of the four-storey building to his (Jewel's) elder sister Suma, an American expatriate, causing a row in the family.

Jewel, father of a minor son, was running a phone-call shop in the area.

Suma recently came to Dhaka on a five-day visit.

Sub-inspector ABM Faruque of Khilgaon Police Station said Jewel rented a car for his sister Suma on her arrival and for the car rental he demanded money from his father.

But Abdul Hye refused to give any cash to his son. Instead, he called the car driver and made the payment himself. This might have angered Jewel, added Faruque.

BNP takes

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Khaleda's sons Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko, and put them on farcical trial.

Both Tarique and Koko are now abroad.

Referring to the High Court verdict that upheld the government notice on Wednesday, Delwar alleged this government is trying to use the higher courts to execute its plot to evict Khaleda Zia from her house.

The Supreme Court on the same day stayed for six weeks an HC judgement extending parole for Koko by 20 days.

The BNP rally at Muktangan yesterday protested the "plot" centring Khaleda's house, oppression on opposition leaders and workers, failure to control prices of essentials and government bid to influence the judiciary. Sadeque Hossain Khoka was in the chair.

After the rally, hundreds of leaders and workers of the party and its associate bodies joined a procession that marched through different city streets.

Delwar said at the rally the government has completely failed to run the country. So, it (govt) is out to destroy BNP and the family of its chairperson with the goal of assuming state power again without any competition.

Party leaders who participated in the rally and procession included Rafiqul Islam Mia, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Nazrul Islam Khan, Abdullah Al Noman and Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku and Fazlur Rahman Patal.

Torture

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asking her to bring an end to their marriage.

Although she bore everything quietly, she could not accept Yar having a second wife, and finally sought a divorced in March, she said.

After the divorce, she changed her job and started living at a separate house she rented in Ashulia.

The torture, however, did not stop. Yar used to go to her house from time to time and torture her, she said.

She then started staying with her mother at Natun Bazar, Badda since July.

When Yar's second wife divorced him, only two months into the marriage, Yar approached Salma saying he wants to take her as his wife again.

Rejected, Yar threw acid on Salma Friday around 9:00pm on her way home at Prohati Sarani from work.

"I brought my daughter to my house to save her. But she couldn't be saved," said Keshori Begum, the victim's mother.

She is now worried about the future of her daughter. "I wanted to marry her off somewhere else after the divorce," she cried.

Meanwhile, Badda Police Station Sub-inspector Monirul Islam said they raided at Yar's workplace and his village home in Mymensingh but could not arrest him as of filing this report last night.

Main accused

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might kill him."

Zakir along with 26 activists of AL, Jubo League and Chhatra League was accused in the murder case.

He said people of Bonpara had become angry with Babu for inviting BNP leader and former deputy minister Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu to a programme on October 8.

"The people and AL men were united on that day to resist presence of Dulu who unleashed atrocities in the area during BNP-Jamaat rule," he said.

Zakir along with his two brothers, a few relatives and some AL men went there to prevent any rowdy incident, added the AL leader.

But, he said, Babu was leading a procession of 150-200 people many of whom were carrying firearms, brick-bats and sticks. He added Babu was injured but his death was confirmed on his way to hospital.

"The main reason behind the death will surface if those, who had taken him from one hospital to another, are interrogated," said Zakir, claiming Babu's veins in both legs were cut on his way to hospital.

Locals say AL men first took Babu to Patwary General Hospital, owned by an AL leader. From there, it was the BNP men who took him to Babna and then Rajshahi. Babu died of excessive bleeding.

Zakir said Babu arranged

the programme on October 8 without taking permission from the administration.

On that very day Babu, also president of upazila unit BNP, was murdered.

Asked why Babu was killed, Zakir said "BNP wanted to create a situation in Bonpara to destroy the image of Awami League and local ruling party lawmaker."

Zakir added another reason [behind the killing] was to stop the trial of his father's killing.

Zakir's father Ainal Haq, a freedom fighter, was reportedly abducted by BNP cadres on March 28, 2000 and was tortured to death. They also torched houses of Zakir and other AL leaders and supporters and prevented them from attending janaja of Ainal.

Zakir said his father's killers had roamed openly during the BNP rule.

About the video footage that shows AL men beating Babu, he said they were there to stop the incident.

He declined to say whether he was maintaining contacts with party high-ups.

He had asked his mother and wife not to worry about him, as he would be with them soon.

Zakir said he mourned Babu's death and hope the culprits would be punished. "But police should not harass innocent people."

Police are yet to arrest any of the main accused.

Grim prospect

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oil company Chevron is expected to double its production by then. The government will have to implement several major pipeline projects to deliver the Chevron gas which is now under planning stage.

One of the measures taken by the energy ministry to overcome the gas crisis is to import Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from Qatar through ships. It has taken up a project to build an LNG terminal in Maheshkhali, which would receive the LNG containers and transmit the gas to the national pipeline.

This massive initiative, requiring between one and a half billion dollars, is still far from implementation. A former chairman of Petrobangla is leading the LNG project and has so far prepared bid documents for a tender to build the terminal.

Bangladesh seeks to import 500 million cubic feet per day (mcf/d) expensive LNG so that it could be mixed with the country's cheaper gas. This would ensure energy security to the country's existing gas consumers who are already hit by 400 mcf/d supply shortfall.

Petrobangla Chairman Prof Dr Hossain Mansur said the project will be completed by December 2012. But other officials doubt that because of the present rate of progress, especially when the government would have to construct a 100-kilometre pipeline to transmit the processed LNG to the national grid.

The Petrobangla chairman said production and distribution of gas increased by 200 mcf/d in the last 20 months. He added the supply of gas was 1,800 mcf/d back in January 2009, which now has been raised to 2,000 mcf/d.

According to well-placed Petrobangla sources, the supply hit 2,000 mcf/d in December last year. This has happened because different agencies worked over some old or abandoned gas producing wells to increase gas production by 123 mcf/d. Besides, US oil company Chevron has increased gas production from the large Bibiyana gas field.

In fact, if there were adequate pipelines to transmit the gas that is available with different fields now, the crisis would have been much lower.

Early last year, the Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL) awarded contracts to transmit gas to the country's gas deprived western region. Till now, construction of these pipelines is moving at a snail's pace. But it should have almost been completed by now.

Petrobangla Chairman Prof Dr Mansur noted that Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company (Bapex) has completed a two-dimensional seismic survey in Sunamganj-Netrokona region.

"We are expecting that there is a significant reserve in that area. A new exploration well would be drilled soon to confirm the reserve," he said.

SIRAJGANJ TRAIN FIRE

Probe body records drivers' accounts

A CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

The drivers of inter-city train Drutajan Express yesterday gave witness accounts to the probe committee on last week's train fire at Soidabad near Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge in Sirajganj.

Head driver Asiruddin and assistant driver Raj Govinda Das gave their statements at the additional district magistrate's office.

Besides the two, station master of Bangabandhu bridge west station Mohiul Islam, station master of Jamtoil station Akbar Hossain, gateman of Soyddabad Mulibari rail crossing Hiramon Das, assistant sub-inspector Golam Touhid of Sirajganj railway police station, and sepoy Shahid, Kazem, Toufiqu, Aziz and Shafiqul gave statements, said ADM Dipak Ranjan Adhikari, head of the four-member probe body.

Drutajan Express was set ablaze after it ran over and killed six opposition rallygoers in Sirajganj on Monday.

The witnesses declined to make any comment about their statements to the media.

Speaking in return for anonymity, an official of the probe team said it would take more than seven days to complete the investigation. They would appeal for a time extension, he added.

Ignored village

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pay some money to middlemen hoping to get electricity, which remained a far cry for them over the years.

Abdur Rab Gazi, a villager, said they requested union parishad (UP) Chairman Moharrar Hossain Khan Montu to address these problems. Much to their frustration, they are yet to see any steps to this end.

"If anyone gets sick, we cannot transport the patient to the hospital in due time," said Fatema Begum, a resident of Hundir Beel. She also mentioned that some children have stopped going to school due to this communication difficulties.

Besides, Amjuma Begum, 110, Ayesha Begum, 90, Abul Hossain, 85, Latifa Khatun, 75, and Salam Khan, 85, are among the villagers who are not getting old age allowances, complained Sufiya Khatun, another elderly resident.

The UP chairman said steps would be taken to solve the problems of the Hundir Beel residents with local mediation.

20 killed

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agency it was not clear how far underground they were.

China is heavily reliant on its mining industry, with coal supplying some 70% of its energy needs. Many of those employed in mines are migrant workers with limited training.

The central government has made improving conditions in the country's 25,000 coal mines a priority, and the number of deaths has fallen from nearly 7,000 in 2002 to 2,631 last year.

In April, 115 miners were rescued alive from a flooded mine in Shanxi province after spending more than a week underground.

The National Energy Administration (Nea) closed 1,539 small and dangerous coalmines this year as part of restructuring efforts, said Xinhua.

But safety rules have often been ignored in favour of profit, as the economy has boomed.

Earlier this month, new regulations came into force requiring the managers of coal mines to accompany their miners, as an incentive to improving the conditions underground.

Any mine boss who refused to go into the pit would be given a harsh fine.

The latest accident comes after the successful rescue of 33 miners in Chile, after they were trapped for 69 days by a rock fall.

Many in China have said the country should learn from the incident and improve the training given to miners.

Way out of poverty

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said the actual problem lies in the education sector.

Many primary school-teachers in the country lack qualification. The country is, therefore, falling behind in the sector compared to that of the other countries, he added.

It comes as a major setback, as education is a major tool to reduce social inequality, a key reason behind poverty.

"Instead of imposing taxes to control income disparity, the government should focus on its expenditure," said Mirza Azizul.

Dr MM Akash, a Professor of economics at Dhaka University, said poverty is a multidimensional problem, and focusing on a single element will not help eliminate it.

"Although many people believe that micro credit has played a major role for many to rise above poverty line, I don't believe that micro credit or grant can reduce poverty," he said.

Other speakers at the programme said micro credit has played a role in cutting inequality and fighting poverty to some extent, although there is a debate.

They, however, emphasised that better monitoring and direction are vital to ensure that the poverty-stricken people use the money properly.

"Our people are good workers," said Prof Dr Major General (retd) Shahjahan, adviser of State University of Bangladesh. "All we need is guidance and proper leadership."

Some non-government projects have yielded some results but government intervention is required for a long-term solution to the problem, speakers opined.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury was scheduled to

Sudan objects to UN plans for new border troops

BBC ONLINE

The Sudanese government has said the UN cannot move new troops to its tense North-South border without its consent.

It comes after the UN's peacekeeping chief said troops would be sent to "hotspots" at the request of the semi-autonomous South's president.

There is growing tension in the country in the run-up to a referendum on Southern independence due to be held in January, correspondents say.

The referendum was part of a 2005 peace deal that ended the civil war.

On Friday, UN peacekeeping chief Alain Le Roy said the UN force would increase its presence along the 2,000km (1,250 mile) border.

He said the increase would be limited to "hotspots" and that the UN could not create a full "buffer zone" between the regions.

Officials at the UN said the decision had been made following an appeal from South Sudanese President Salva Kiir, who was concerned the North was preparing for war.

But President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's security adviser, Salah Gosh, rejected the plan, saying troops could not be deployed without the consent of the government.

Ibrahim Ghandour, another leading politician in Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP), said any tension in the region could be sorted out between the two sides, so a buffer zone between North and South was not necessary.

The BBC's James Connall in Khartoum says there has been a surge in inflammatory statements in recent weeks in Sudan, as the referendum approaches.

There is also a huge argument about who can vote in a second referendum, in which the oil-producing region of Abyei will decide on whether to join the North or the South, our correspondent adds.

Sudan is divided between the mainly Muslim and Arab-speaking North, and the South, where most people are Christian or follow traditional religions.

Many in Sudan are concerned the ongoing tensions around the referendum will see the country return to civil war.

The last North-South conflict lasted two decades and left two million people dead.

attend the programme but could not come for "unavoidable reason".

She, however, sent a written message that was read at the programme.

In her message, she underscored poverty as a major problem in the world where "the poor are sinking in the sea of poverty while the rich are making mountains of asset".

Reducing this disparity between poor and rich is crucial in fighting poverty, the message read.

Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, former president of FBCCI Anisul Hoque, Editor of Bhorer Kagoj Shyamal Datta, Joint-editor of the Daily Prothom Alo Abdul Qaium, Deputy Director of Bangladesh Betar Md Arifur Rahman, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Research Associate Ashiqun Nabi, Desh TV's Marketing and Sales Manager Shamset Tabreej and Donor Liaison Officer of Brac Andrew Jenkins, among others, also spoke at the programme.

5th ODI today

FROM PAGE 1 (BTV) will telecast the match live from 9:00am.

In a tense affair, the Tigers beat the Kiwis by 9 runs in the crucial fourth one-day on Thursday. The hosts have won the first and third matches of the series while the second game was washed out.

Coach Jamie Siddons has confirmed that they have no intention to make any changes as they want to bring out consistency from the current playing XI and also because the team is looking to finish the series with a win.

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 16 after he, along with some others, had trespassed on their area on Friday night.

Incensed at the killing of Ramzan and delay in hand-over of his body, villagers from Haribhasha, Hafizabad and Amarkhana unions attacked Garati.

After a long parley, the enclave people handed over the body yesterday morning to a five-member Bangladeshi team, which included Haribhasha Union Parishad Chairman Abul Hossain and officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

Banamali Bhoumik, deputy commissioner of Panchagarh, told The Daily Star that some 50 houses were either ransacked or torched.

Panchagarh Superintendent of Police Shahriar Rahman said as Bangladeshi law enforcers are not allowed to enter the enclave, local leaders were sent to ease the tension.

"The situation is now under control," added the SP.

Over 3m arms 'missing' from Pak Punjab warehouses

ANI, Islamabad

The Pakistan Punjab government's report that 3.12 million sophisticated weapons, including hand-grenades, have gone missing from the official warehouses in the last 10 years is appalling, an editorial in a leading Pakistani newspaper has said.

According to the report, 3,454 grenades, 4,490 Kalashnikovs, 43,954 rifles and 66,695 guns were among the weapons gone missing.

The other armaments include revolvers, pistols, carbines, cartridges and sharp-edged weapons.

The editorial in Dawn said that the details were shocking and gives an idea of the layers of corruption in the law-enforcement structure in the country's most populous province.

"The disappearances could also mean that Punjab warehouses are one of the terrorists' major sources of arms - and not only in Punjab. The meticulous details in the report about the number of weapons deposited with the provincial warehouses show on the whole that some people in the provincial law-enforcement agencies and their overseers do after all care about their job," the editorial said.

"That in spite of this record-keeping the weapons should disappear is indeed ironic. We expect the Punjab government to release the inquiry report, if and when it is ready, and hope this will prompt the other provinces to take stock of what they have and what they have not," it added.

It also commended the Punjab Home Department for preparing the report.