

## Tibetans protest cops 'brutality'

AFP, Beijing

Hundreds of Tibetans demonstrated in northwest China on Tuesday after police beat four people, an exile group and a US broadcaster said, following a recent string of self-immolations in the region.

The UK-based Free Tibet said hundreds of people gathered outside a police headquarters in Qinghai province's Tongren county after police dragged four ethnic Tibetans from a car, beat them and threatened them with guns.

US broadcaster Radio Free Asia quoted witnesses as saying the police appeared to be drunk, and "severely beat" the four men.

The protests followed reports of clashes in the neighbouring province of Sichuan on Monday, where two ethnic Tibetans set themselves on fire on Monday to protest Chinese rule, leading to bloody clashes between residents and police.

Exile groups say nearly 50 ethnic Tibetans, many of them Buddhist monks and nuns, have set themselves on fire since March 2011 to protest restrictions on their religious freedom.

## Solar-powered

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self-contained, sun-powered system that recycles water and breaks down human waste into storable energy.

Gates is focusing on the need for a new type of toilet as an important part of his foundation's push to improve health in the developing world.

Open defecation leads to sanitation problems that cause 1.5 million children under 5 to die each year, Gates said, and Western-style toilets are not the answer as they demand a complex sewer infrastructure and use too much water.

"Imagine what's possible if we continue to collaborate, stimulate new investment in this sector, and apply our ingenuity in the years ahead," The Microsoft Corp co-founder said at his foundation's Seattle headquarters on Tuesday.

"Many of these innovations will not only revolutionise sanitation in the developing world, but also help transform our dependence on traditional flush toilets in wealthy nations," he said.

His foundation announced \$3.4 million in new funding on Tuesday for toilet projects being worked on by various organisations, bringing total investment in its "Reinvent the Toilet Challenge" to about \$6.5 million.

About 2.6 billion people, or 40 percent of world's population -- mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia -- lack access to safe sanitation and are forced to defecate in the open, according to Gates.CREATES ENERGY

Gates presented prizes on Tuesday to the teams that showed the most progress, handing Caltech the first prize of \$1,00,000 for its working model of a solar-powered bathroom, where a solar panel produces power for an electrochemical reactor.

The reactor breaks down faeces and urine into hydrogen gas, which can be stored in hydrogen fuel cells to provide a back-up energy source for night operation or use in low-sunlight conditions.

The workings of the toilet are designed to be buried underground beneath a conventional-looking stall and urinal set-up, which the Caltech team showed in cross-section at the Gates Foundation courtyard.

Water recovered from the continuous process is pumped up again to provide water to flush the toilet.

# US launches sweeping immigration reform

BBC ONLINE

Hundreds of thousands of young undocumented immigrants can apply for the temporary right to live and work openly in the US from yesterday.

President Obama issued the directive, one of the biggest immigration policy reforms in decades, two months ago.

His administration detailed on Tuesday what documents illegal immigrants need to prove eligibility for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

The Hispanic vote could be important in November's presidential election.

Illegal immigrants are getting their records in order as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) starts accepting applications.

In an internal document, (DHS) officials estimated 1.04 million people would apply in the first year.

The Migration Policy Institute and the Pew Hispanic Center have estimated as many as 1.7 million people could be eligible under the programme.

LONG QUEUES

Republican lawmakers say Mr Obama has bypassed Congress with the new programme and is favouring illegal immigrants over unemployed US citizens.

The administration's plan is to stop deporting many illegal immigrants

who were brought to the US as children.

To be eligible, immigrants must prove they arrived in the US before they turned 16, are 30 or younger, have been living here at least five years and are in school or graduated or served in the military.

They also cannot have been convicted of certain crimes.

Under guidelines that the administration announced on Tuesday, proof of identity and eligibility could include a passport or birth certificate, school transcripts, medical and financial records, military service records and in some cases, multiple sworn affidavits.

The paperwork for the programme can be downloaded from the Immigration Services website.

Applicants must pay a \$465 (£300) fee and provide proof of identity and eligibility.

A decision on each application could take several months, and immigrants have been warned not to leave the country while their application is pending.

On Tuesday, long queues formed early outside the Honduran embassy in Washington DC before it had opened for the day.

Starting this week, advocacy groups are planning to run events to help migrants get their paperwork in order.

## Milam urges

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Many thought Prof Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, was imagining the threat but this month the ruling Awami League-led government showed signs of it with its recent move to amend the Grameen Bank Ordinance, he said.

Approving the proposed changes to the ordinance, the cabinet decided to push aside the microlender's elected board of trustees and vest power in the government-appointed chairman to form a committee to choose the new managing director.

Milam, now a senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, added the decision marked a new turn in the campaign to vilify Nobel Laureate Prof Yunus, which began last year when the government removed him as managing director.

"Then it ginned up a controversy that microlenders were 'loan sharks' when the opposite is true: These banks give poor borrowers an alternative to usurious moneylenders," he said.

"This time, the cabinet impugned Yunus's honesty by asking questions about whether he followed bank rules on tapping the bank's credit facilities when he was managing director. It also alleges that he wrongly received tax exemptions on his foreign earnings. Last week, it opened a tax investigation."

Milam visited Dhaka in May last, the month Prof Yunus stepped down from Grameen Bank.

"Many Bangladeshis I respect told me then, and still think today, that the Awami League is out to get Yunus by any means possible. The politicians believe, wrongly, that he is a long-term threat to their interests."

"Most Bangladeshis say that Grameen Bank now provides low-hanging fruit for what is perceived as a corrupt government. Officials can loot the bank's substantial assets at will now. They can also tap its customer base of women borrowers and turn them into a serious vote bank by promises of loan reductions or write-offs."

Grameen Bank has deposits and other funds of over \$1.5 billion, outstanding loans of some \$984 million and more than 25,000 employees.

## Two more Rohingyas held with fake passports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law enforcers arrested two more Rohingyas while they were trying to depart from Shahjalal International Airport on fake Bangladeshi passports early yesterday.

Two Bangladeshi nationals were also arrested by the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) for helping the Rohingyas go abroad.

The arrestees are Nur Haba, 40, of Mong, and Nur Ahmad, 30, of Mongdu in Myanmar, Md Yusuf Uddin alias Mizan, 42, of Chittagong and Md Hasim, 43, of Cox's Bazar.

"Nur Haba appeared at the departure lounge posing as Gulchhar Khatun while Nur Ahmad said he was Mohammad Rowshan," said an APBn official.

"Immigration police found both their passports fake during verification with the machine around 2:30am," he said, adding that in preliminary interrogation, the duo admitted managing each of the machine-readable passports in exchange of Tk 3 lakh.

The arrestees were later handed over to Airport police. A case was filed.

On Saturday, the APBn arrested 10 Rohingyas with Bangladesh passports, all trying to depart through the airport.

Detectives arrested nine Rohingyas from a residential hotel at the capital's Fakirapool on August 2 this year.

During preliminary interrogation, the arrestees confessed that they had been trying to manage Bangladeshi passports and fly to the Middle East.

Immigration and foreign ministry officials said once abroad, the Rohingyas commit different kinds of crime, thus tarnishing the image of Bangladesh.

Last month, the foreign ministry asked the deputy commissioners, especially of Cox's Bazar and Bandarban, to take steps to ensure that no Rohingya got a Bangladeshi passport.

Meanwhile, the Saudi Arabian authorities have arrested around 700 Rohingyas, who have already made their way to the country with Bangladeshi documents.

The Saudis are now pressing Bangladesh to take them back.

## Nepal's Maoists, Madhesi form federal alliance

AGENCIES

In a development with significant implications for the future direction of Nepali politics, the ruling Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), constituents of the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF), and several small Madhesi and Janjati outfits have come together to form a Federal Democratic Republican Alliance (FDRA).

The stated aim of the coalition is to strive for 'a constitution with federalism, and federalism with identity'.

The alliance was announced at an official function in the capital yesterday.

Maoist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' is the coordinator of the alliance.

Explaining the political logic of the alliance, Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum (Democratic) general secretary, Jitendra Dev, said the key aim was to counter the attack on federalism by other forces.

When asked if this could also translate into an electoral alliance, Dev told The Hindu, "The aim right now is to put pressure on the Nepali Congress (NC) and Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) to accept identity based state restructuring before the polls. If that does not happen, we can even consider an electoral partnership."

## 3 trampled

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son of Rashid Ahmed; and Ali Ahmed, 50, of Dochori village in the upazila.

Of the injured, six were admitted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital and Ramu Upazila Health Complex in a critical condition. The other five only needed first aid.

The injured said around ten wild elephants entered Dochori village around 5:00am and damaged 10 houses.

MA Khalek, forest officer of Cox's Bazar division, said the forest department had fired around nine shots in the air and managed to send the herd back to forest; however, four elephants returned 20 minutes later.

The department finally managed to send back the elephants by 2:00pm, he added.

# State-run steamer service

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If the MV Shela starts operation, the total passenger capacity of the company will be 3,205.

Private launch operators, however, carry nearly 10 lakh passengers from Dhaka to other districts over a week before the Eid.

They started special trips from Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday.

The four other vessels -- PS Ostrich, PS Lepcha, PS Masud and PS Turn -- also have faults in engines.

A BIWTC official admitted serious weaknesses in its passenger service. "The number of passengers is much higher than the capacity. But the government does not take any initiative to modernise the service and increase the capacity."

The company, he noted, has been operating its passenger service on Dhaka-

Bagerhat route via Barisal with 70 to 80-year-old steamers, of which some remain under repair all the year round.

Another official said the lower deck of PS Ostrich is vulnerable, while the lower plate of PS Masud has been damaged partially.

"These vessels have been in operation for around 80 years now. Keeping the steamers in a dockyard for around six months at a stretch for repair might make them fit."

Asked about the fitness of the six steamers, the BIWTC chairman said as these vessels are very old, problems with their engines, decks and other parts are very common.

"But we are trying our best to keep these steamers fit through proper repairing," said the chairman.

At least three river ferries out of 37 will not operate

## Passengers suffer

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to Chittagong.

Passengers' sufferings did not end there, as the highways also experienced long tailbacks due to excessive rush of vehicles.

Vehicular movement on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway slowed down all day long as a lorry overturned yesterday morning at Porpai in Burichang upazila in Comilla.

A tailback stretching four to 10 kilometres was created at Mawa ferry ghat in Munshiganj. Traffic movement was very slow at the Tongi to Gazipur intersection.

Bus schedules completely collapsed because of heavy traffic congestion on the highways. Different bus services had to defer their schedules by several hours adding woes to the suffering of passengers.

During visits to Kalyanpur and Gabtoli bus terminals it was noticed that hundreds of passengers were waiting for hours for their buses.

"I came here at 11:30am as my bus was scheduled to arrive at 12:00pm. But now they are saying the bus will arrive at 3:00pm," said Jessore-bound Hakim Mia, who was waiting at Kalyanpur.

In Kamalapur railway station, almost all the trains delayed by around one or one and a half hours.

"My train [Chattala Express] was scheduled to leave the station at 10:40am. But it has not arrived still [around 1:45pm]," said Tauhidul Islam, a student of Notre Dame College.

Sardar Shahdat Ali, divisional railway manager (DRM) of Bangladesh Railway, admitted that most of the trains delayed due to heavy rush of passengers.

Twenty-four trains left Kamalapur for different destinations from morning to 8:00pm last night, he informed.

## Homage paid

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organisations held elaborate programmes marking the day.

On August 15, 1975, Bangabandhu along with most of his family members was assassinated by a section of disgruntled army personnel. His two daughters -- Sheikh Hasina, now the prime minister, and Sheikh Rehana -- escaped the bloodbath as they were abroad then.

Yesterday, ruling Awami League, the party founded by the Father of the Nation, and the prime minister paid tribute to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing wreath at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum on Dhanmondi Road No-32 in the capital.

Sheikh Hasina, also the president of Awami League, stood in solemn silence before her father's portrait for some time and prayed for the eternal peace of her lost family members. She also spent some time and recited from the holy Quran alone inside the museum that once used to be their home

Although Communications and Railways Minister Obaidul Quader strongly directed the authorities to stop travelling on the roof, hundreds of desperate passengers were seen violating the directive.

Passengers heading for southern districts who travel by launches faced severe trouble to reach Sadarghat launch terminal due to traffic gridlock from Gulistan to the terminal.

All the launches anchored at the terminal were seen carrying passengers on the roof that is completely prohibited.

Speaking anonymously, an official of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) said, "We cannot stop people from travelling on the roof because there is a huge rush of passengers. If the law enforces try to force the passenger to get down, clashes will be erupted between them and the passengers."

Passengers at the terminal claimed that almost all the launches intentionally made delays to get more passengers.

Denying the allegation, BIWTA Senior Deputy Director Rafiqul Islam said, "We have forced at least 15 launches to leave the terminal ahead of schedule today to resist overloading."

As many passengers travel on a "first come, first served" basis on the deck, many of them thronged the terminal before sunrise to book their space.

"I have come here after taking Saheri because if I am late, I'll lose my chance to get any space on the deck," said Motahar Hossain, who was going to Bhola to celebrate the Eid.

LONG TAILBACK ON DHAKA-CTG HIGHWAY Commuters got stuck in traffic jam on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, as an overturned lorry slowed down the vehicular move-

during the Eid holidays due to repair work, said AS Ashikuzzaman, assistant general manager of BIWTC.

On the Chittagong-Barisal coastal route, two ships -- MV Baro Awlia and MV Alauddin Ahmed -- out of a total of four remain inoperative for years now.

MV Alauddin has been awaiting renovation since 2009, while MV Baro Awlia has been unfit since last one year.

The two others -- MV Abdul Matin and MV Monirul Haque -- are plying the route. These vessels also often fail to maintain their regular schedule due to engine faults.

Our Barisal correspondent adds, five sea-trucks -- Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni, Sukanto and Khizir-5 -- will not ply different coastal routes as those are undergoing repair.

ments between Comilla Cantonment and Iliotganj of Daudkandi (32 kilometres).

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader also got stuck in the jam for some time around 1:00pm yesterday on his way to Noakhali.

A Chittagong-bound lorry flipped over at Porpai of Comilla around 6:00am the same day, halting the traffic movement for hours on the highway, reports our Comilla correspondent.

Anwar Hossain, a sergeant of Iliotganj Highway Police, said even though police removed the truck using a wrecker around 11:00am, the jam could not be eased until afternoon due to the pressure of the large number of vehicles.

## Passenger crushed between 2 launches

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An elderly passenger was killed at Sadarghat Launch Terminal in Dhaka, yesterday, after being caught between two launches while trying to board one.

The deceased, Saleh Ahmed, 60, was trying to get on MV Panama around 5:00pm when another launch MV Tipu-3 hit him, killing him instantly, said Shawkat Hossain, officer-in-charge of South Keraniganj Police Station.

The passengers called his son from victim's cellphone who rushed over and identified the body, police said.

Saleh, a farmer from Hatia of Noakhali district was heading back home. He had come to Dhaka to meet his son several days ago, police said.

Police, however, could not ascertain how the victim got himself stuck between the two launches.

## 18th Saarc Summit uncertain

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

New Delhi

Nepal's prospect of hosting the next summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) this year is bleak because of political turmoil in the country, according to diplomatic sources.

Nepal is yet to propose a date for the 18th Saarc summit and is to be the chair of Saarc after the Maldives that hosted the 17th summit in November last year.

The Maldives, now the chair of Saarc, is also in political crisis following the alleged ouster of Mohamed Nasheed as president of the country in February this year.

Although Nepalese Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai has called fresh elections in November this year, they are unlikely to be held at that time, the sources said.

The reason for such uncertainty is that political parties in Nepal are divided over the timing of the elections. Further, there is a standoff over the demand that Bhattarai step down, making way for a caretaker government.

If the elections in Nepal are not held by November, it may be difficult for Nepal to host the next summit this year.

Saarc consists of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the Maldives.

## Asian nations

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Only one other country, the Caribbean state of Dominican Republic, falls into this category, and was rated third overall.

The other countries in the top 10 were India, Vietnam, Honduras, Laos, Haiti and Nicaragua.

The "Natural Hazards Risk Atlas" looks at the impact of natural disasters on a country relative to its economy, taking into account preparedness to deal with such events and social ability to rebound.

If a country's infrastructure is weak and its governance is poor, the economic consequences are that much greater.

The report highlighted the impact on the Philippine economy from storms, landslides, volcanoes and floods, including severe flooding that struck the northern island of Luzon last week.

It also noted the consequences of drought in India, which this year is likely to shave 0.5 percent off the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

The analysis's other benchmark is the absolute exposure to natural hazards, meaning the total bill from a disaster. This is different from relative exposure, which means the economic pain that comes from it.

By the "absolute" yardstick, the countries that face the biggest tabs when natural catastrophes occur are Japan, the United States, China, Taiwan and Mexico.

However, they have greater muscle and stronger institutional means to cope, and this limits the hit to the economy.

"As the global influence of emerging economies increases, the importance of their inherent natural hazard exposure will have wider and deeper global implications," said Maplecroft analyst Helen Hodge.

"The test for emerging and developing economies is to build a stronger capacity to meet the challenge of hazard-prone environments. Failure to do so will risk their ambitious economic growth when the inevitable natural hazards strike."

According to the reinsurance giant Munich Re, 2011 was the costliest year ever for natural disasters, inflicting economic losses of \$380 billion. The March 11 2011 earthquake and tsunami accounted for 55 percent of the total.