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'BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOUR'

An intimate love story about two French women wins the top honour at the Cannes Film Festival

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LAST LIFE REQUEST

Woman gets to read love-journal from WW2 marine after 70 years

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US roots against hartal

Visiting top official cancels Khaleda meet, deplores cycle of shutdown;
Powell too did not meet Hasina on similar grounds in 2003

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dismayed at the BNP-led alliance's hartal during her visit to Dhaka, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy R Sherman yesterday criticised such shutdowns and cancelled her meeting with the BNP chairperson scheduled for yesterday afternoon.

"My schedule required me to make some changes... I met the opposition leader the last time I was in Dhaka," Sherman said at a joint press conference at state guesthouse Meghna in the afternoon.

Nearly an hour later, she again talked to reporters after delivering a speech on US-Bangladesh relations organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) at Ruposhi

Bangla Hotel in the capital.

"I was rather surprised when I arrived yesterday... a hartal was underway," said the US under-secretary of state.

On the cancellation of the meeting with Khaleda Zia, US Press and Information Officer Kelly S McCarthy told The Daily Star that the under secretary regretted that a hartal marked the first day of the US-Bangladesh partnership dialogue, and subsequent schedule changes precluded her meeting with the BNP chief.

US embassy officials said the US was always against programmes like hartal as a means of voicing demands. Former US secretary of state Colin Powell cancelled a meeting with the then opposition

leader Sheikh Hasina on June 19, 2003, as the Chhatra League, student wing of the Awami League, did not call off its hartal on the day of the meeting.

Sherman's cancellation of her meeting with the BNP chief is clearly a diplomatic setback for the BNP, as the party had decided to call a hartal on the first day of the US-Bangladesh dialogue on Khaleda's instructions.

US embassy officials had approached Khaleda through BNP leaders and requested her to postpone the

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RELATED STORY ON B1

Stick with Bangladesh

Sherman says US encouraging investors amid setbacks

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Wendy R Sherman, US under secretary of state for political affairs, yesterday urged international investors not to turn their back on Bangladesh, because the solution is reform, not withdrawal.

"Ultimately," she said, "success will depend on the will and commitment of industry, government, civil society, and everyday Bangladeshis to come together to change the culture of workplace safety and worker rights in Bangladesh."

Sherman, in her remarks at a discussion on "A Partnership without Boundaries: US-Bangladesh Relations" at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel, Dhaka, said the responsibility of enforcing robust labour standards was that of the Bangladesh government.

Offering US assistance in facing the challenges, she said, "We are working with American companies that source

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Like city polls, opposition to contest JS elections

PM expresses hope to Sherman

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hoped the opposition political parties would join the next general election as they are now participating in the city corporation polls.

Hasina expressed her hope when visiting US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy R Sherman met her at her Gono Bhavan residence.

PM's Deputy Press Secretary Bijan Lal Dev briefed reporters after the meeting.

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PHOTO ON PAGE 3

\$1.2b WB loan likely for 3 projects

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank is likely to come up with assistance of \$1.2 billion for the country's three projects on social safety net, coastal embankment and construction of modern silos, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday.

"The proposed assistance of the World Bank in the three projects is likely to be approved by the World Bank Board this June," he said.

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Padma to eat up ADP

Proposal for Tk 6,852cr allocation goes for approval today

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Padma bridge as a single project will get the highest allocation of Tk 6,852 crore in the next Annual Development Programme (ADP) as the government has decided to implement it with its own funds.

The new ADP will be placed today at a meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC) for approval. The country's transport sector is going to get the highest 89 percent increase over the current fiscal's because of the Padma bridge project.

In contrast, allocation for the health and education sectors is going to increase by 2 and 4 percent respectively.

According to the planning ministry proposal, the Padma project will receive allocation of 11 percent of the new ADP in the next FY, though there is doubt as to how much of the amount could be spent.

At the NEC meeting the ADP for the next fiscal has been proposed at Tk 65,870 crore.

The Bridges Division has also sent a detailed plan for the Padma bridge financing to the Finance Division and sought its consent for spending foreign currency.

The government has decided to implement the project with its own finance after the World Bank withdrew its funding proposal on graft allegations.

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ALLOCATION

FY-14: Tk 6,852 crore

FY-15: Tk 7,882 crore

FY-16: Tk 5,095 crore

FY-17: Tk 2,663 crore

Make workplace safer

US congressman visits injured from Rana Plaza collapse

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

The world must learn lessons from the deadly Rana Plaza collapse in Savar and ensure the safety of garment workers in Bangladesh and around the globe, said a visiting US Congressman yesterday.

"We can just no longer accept the status quo that continues to put workers' lives in jeopardy. This is the message I will take back to the US Congress and the Obama administration," George Miller told reporters while visiting Savar's Enam Medical College and Hospital, where many injured victims have been taking treatment since their rescue from the wreck-



GEORGE MILLER

age of the nine-storey building.

Rana Plaza, which housed five garment factories, caved in on April 24, drawing global attention once again to workers' safety issues at industrial units in Bangladesh five months after the Tazreen fire killed 112 people.

Miller said he was now in Bangladesh to conduct an investigation to make sure that the latest tragedy that killed at least 1,130 people and injured over 2,500 did not repeat itself.

He called for changes in the laws and practices to make factories safer for workers.

"We know these workers are paid little money and work for long hours to produce

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A bus in flames at the capital's Kamalapur yesterday after pro-BNP activists set it ablaze protesting an arrest warrant against the party's senior vice-chairman, Tarique Rahman.

PHOTO:
COURTESY

ARREST WARRANT AGAINST TARIQUE

BNP burns vehicles, calls more hartals

Nationwide shutdown tomorrow, in 8 districts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led 18-party opposition alliance yesterday called a countrywide daylong hartal for tomorrow, Wednesday, demanding the withdrawal of cases against BNP Senior Vice-President Tarique Rahman.

Hartal is also being observed today in Chittagong, Laxmipur, Feni, Comilla, Tangail, Madaripur, Joypurhat and Faridpur protesting an arrest warrant against Tarique in connection with a money laundering case.

The decision to go for a hartal on Wednesday was made at a meeting of 18-party top leaders with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office last night.

Meeting sources said Khaleda Zia, mother of Tarique, instructed the 18-party leaders to observe a tougher hartal tomorrow by ensuring their presence on the streets.



"Apart from 'siege' and non-cooperation programmes, we have also discussed enforcing a 72- or 96-hour hartal next month to force the government to meet our prime demand, a non-party election-time caretaker government," said Mustafizur Rahman Iran, chief of Bangladesh Labour Party, a

component of the opposition alliance.

Another leader of the alliance after the meeting said they had set mid-July as the target for ousting the government.

On the election-time government issue, the BNP chief at the meeting said they would not accept the Speaker [Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury] or the President [Abdul Hamid] as chief of the caretaker government, let alone Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

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SAJAL KHALED

No trace of body

Searchers climb down from death spot; Sajal's body might have been buried under snow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Having failed to locate Sajal Khaled's body, Sherpas climbed down to Camp 4 from Camp 2 on Mount Everest yesterday morning.

A group of 12 Sherpas searched for Sajal's body on Sunday night and Monday morning, after they climbed to the South summit, said Shamima Chowdhury, first secretary (consular) of Bangladesh embassy in Nepal.

"Sherpas found a bag of Sajal in the death zone, which is 700 feet down the peak of the Everest," Shamima told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

Mountaineer Mohammed Khaled

Hussain, 35 -- better known as Sajal Khaled -- conquered Everest between 10:00am and 11:00am on May 20. He died in his tent during his descent from the summit the same day. The exact cause of his death could not be known.

The embassy arranged for the group of Sherpas to bring Sajal's body back to the base camp from around 28,000 feet above sea level on the South summit.

The embassy had expected the team to bring the body back to Kathmandu by May 30 or 31.

Shamima said that even though the climbing season officially ends on May 31, the

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COMMENTS ON BURNING QURAN

MK Anwar lands in jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected bail prayer of BNP leader MK Anwar and sent him to jail after he surrendered in a case filed in connection with derogatory comments on Swechasebak League leader Debashish Biswas.

The Swechasebak League leader on May 7 filed the case against Anwar, also standing committee member of the BNP, saying that Anwar made a statement against him, which hurt communal harmony.

In his complaint, Debashish mentioned that Anwar at a press conference on May 6 said he [Debashish] burnt the Holy Quran near Baitul Mukarram Mosque during Hefajat's violence on May 5.

Terming Anwar's statement "false, fabricated and



MK ANWAR

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Editor
The Daily Star