

King David's palace found near Jerusalem

Archaeologists have unearthed a palace in what they believe is the fortified Judean city of Shaarayim, where the Bible states King David battled the giant Goliath.



The discovery of what is thought to be King David's palace, measuring 1,000 square metres, was made by Hebrew University and the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Over the past seven years the teams have also uncovered a huge storehouse containing pots and artefacts that they believe proves the existence of a ruler in Judah in the tenth century BCE.

"The ruins are the best example to date of the uncovered fortress city of King David," professors Yossi Garfinkel and Saar Ganor of Hebrew University said.

"This is indisputable proof of the existence of a central authority in Judah during the time of King David."

The biblical city of Shaarayim is thought to have become the modern city of Khirbet Qeiyafa, which is

approximately 30 kilometres south west of Jerusalem.

The professors said that the ruins are the two largest known buildings to have existed at the time of King David in Jerusalem.

The archaeologists collected hundreds of artefacts at the site, including religious objects, seals, pottery and tools typical of the time.

The palace is at the centre of the site and is higher than the houses lower in the city. It is believed that much of the palace was destroyed 1,400 years after it was built when a fortified farmhouse was erected in its place during the Byzantine period.

Professors Garfinkel and Ganor said: "The palace that is now being revealed and the fortified city that was uncovered in recent years are another tier in understanding the beginning of the Kingdom of Judah."

"This is unequivocal evidence of a kingdom's existence, which knew to establish administrative centres at strategic points," said Professors Garfinkel and Ganor.

Graft will return

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On the ongoing war crimes trial, Hasina said the war criminals, who had committed looting and arson, and oppressed women and children, are now coming under trial.

"The nation started getting the verdicts one after another, and Bangladesh is coming out of its stigma... we've acted upon our election pledges... Could there be any bigger achievement than this?"

She alleged that the opposition leader had been trying to protect the war criminals and also the Hefajat-e Islam leaders and workers, who had burnt hundreds of copies of the holy Quran.

Hasina criticised the role of the opposition leader again for her 48-hour ultimatum to the government in May.

She also alleged that the BNP-Jamaat-Shibir men

and Hefajat-e Islam activists had burnt the holy Quran, laid siege to the Shapla Chattar and cut down hundreds of trees on road islands.

Hasina, also president of the ruling AL, slammed the opposition for labelling the ruling party and its chief atheist.

She was highly critical of Khaleda Zia for writing an article in The Washington Times with an appeal to the US government for scrapping the GSP facility to Bangladesh.

Listing various development activities taken by her government, the premier said, "We have accomplished many things, many are underway and the rest would be implemented in the future."

To this end, she sought votes from people to reelect Awami League in the next general election so that many unfinished

works of her government could be completed.

"Our politics is to serve the common people and reach the benefits of independence to their doorsteps," Hasina told her audience.

She claimed that her government had been able to contain the price of essentials during the month of Ramadan through strict monitoring.

Hasina also announced that another water treatment plant would be set up in Khilgaon area to meet the growing demands of local people.

Sabujbagh and Khilgaon thana units of Awami League organised the rally.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif, Organising Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim, local lawmaker Sabir Hossain Chowdhury, among others, spoke at the meeting.

Tarique

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Tarique has been living in London since September 11, 2008, since he obtained bail from the Supreme Court on medical grounds in several cases filed by the last military-backed caretaker government. He had been arrested on March 7, 2007.

The senior vice-chairman of the main opposition is now facing at least 15 cases, including that for money laundering, pending with different lower courts.

He came back in news on May 20 this year, after a speech at a party programme where he lambasted the government on several issues, although as per bail condition he was supposed to stay away from politics during his treatment abroad.

This drew a huge criticism from the ruling party.

On May 26, a Dhaka court issued warrant of arrest against him in a money laundering case. The court also directed the authorities to have him back home with the help of the Interpol.

Meanwhile, about his meeting with Tarique, Fakhrul yesterday said they had talks on the ongoing political situation of the country.

He refuted the media report that he had given Tarique a list of party's possible candidates for the next general elections, saying, "This is wrong information. We did not discuss anything like that."

The BNP acting secretary general also declined to make any comments on the recent verdicts of the International Crimes Tribunals.

People fed up

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than that of the people. That's why politicians are now detached from people. This is the last year of the government's tenure. Tougher times lie ahead," he said.

The minister yesterday visited Mierbazar area of Gazipur adjacent to Dhaka-Narsingdi Road. "Project to widen this road will begin in August at a cost of Tk 40 crore," he said.

Housemaids

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decision, but said the law still lacks standards as the housemaids are not allowed to go out of their workplaces.

"It is a timely decision for the housemaids. But the Saudi government must allow the housemaids to go to their own countries embassies on their week-day-off so that they can share their problems [with the embassy officials]," she observed.

According to the new law, employers can put a worker on probation for not more than three months.

"This will help an employer understand whether a worker can do the job and how she behaves," Fakeih said.

Employers should pay the workers' salary at the end of every month without delay, and provide them with suitable accommodation and end-of-service benefits after four years, he added.

If an employer violates the contract rule, he or she will be fined SR2,000 and banned from recruiting workers for a year. For a second-time violator, the fine will increase to SR5,000. The violator will also be banned from recruiting workers for three years. A third-time violator will face a lifetime recruitment ban and a fine of SR10,000.

On the other hand, a worker will be fined SR2,000 and prevented from working in the Kingdom for violating the contract rule. She will have to pay for journey back home, according to the new law.

Detroit files for bankruptcy

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Snyder said he saw no other options for Detroit and approved Orr's request to file for Chapter 9 bankruptcy protection.

"Detroit simply cannot raise enough revenue to meet its current obligations, and that is a situation that is only projected to get worse absent a bankruptcy filing," wrote Snyder, a Republican, in a letter accompanying the filing.

Detroit's creditors are expected to face huge losses, and the future of retiree pension and health benefits for thousands of city workers hangs in the balance.

Anticipating the filing on Thursday, investors drove prices of Detroit

bonds and notes lower, sending their yields to record highs on Thursday.

In some respects, Detroit's legacy as a model for American innovation is at stake as well. Its crippled condition threatens to overwhelm its image as the home of Henry Ford's pioneering assembly line and Motown's 1960s soul-music hit machine. More recently, the city has become an incubator for efforts to repopulate and reinvent an urban relic of a bygone, industrial age.

New York, Cleveland and Philadelphia previously teetered on bankruptcy, but Detroit is the first major US city to go over the edge.

Detroit has lost 25 per-

cent of its population in the last decade, with just 700,000 residents remaining. The ranks of retirees outnumber the city's active workers by more than a 2-1 ratio. With a quarter of its buildings abandoned in some neighbourhoods, no other

American city has borne the brunt of deindustrialisation so heavily.

In his July 16 letter to the governor making the case for a bankruptcy filing, Orr laid bare the scope of the city's decline.

"After decades of fiscal mismanagement; plummeting population, employment and revenues; decaying City infrastructure... Detroit today is a shell of the thriving

metropolis that it once was," Orr wrote.

Snyder named Orr in March to tackle the city's spiralling long-term debt, which is estimated at \$18.5 billion.

A White House spokeswoman said Democratic US President Barack Obama and his senior team were monitoring the situation in Detroit closely. But unlike after the economic collapse of 2008, in which the federal government injected billions in cash into US auto makers General Motors Co and Chrysler as the first step of a quick turn through a managed bankruptcy process, Obama made no promises this time.

Deadly bacteria

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that can become quite expensive when the germ turns out to be resistant to the common antibiotics.

Scientists and doctors say the number of people infected by the bacteria might be higher, but the germ goes undetected because of the ignorance of doctors and microbiologists about the presence of these bacteria.

This germ may silently live in a human body for decades. It manifests its presence through various symptoms when the carrier person's immune system is damaged by diabetes, kidney failure, liver cirrhosis and AIDS.

"We have had patients who were infected by the bacteria. But we could not detect its origin. Now we have found the bacteria in

the soil of Kapasia in Gazipur," said J Ashraf Haq, a professor of microbiology at Ibrahim Medical College.

Statistics on how many people in Bangladesh are infected by the bacteria are not available, said the professor, who has been conducting a research to detect the germ for more than a decade.

The bacteria can invade human body through skin, inhalation and contaminated food, he told The Daily Star.

"Diagnosis of melioidosis is difficult as people react differently to the bacteria. Signs of the disease range from apparently harmless abscess to pneumonia to blood infection," Prof Haq said.

He first detected the bacte-

ria in a diabetic patient in 2001. In the next few years he detected several other cases of melioidosis in diabetic patients -- all coming from Mymensingh and Tangail.

This led him and Shariful Alam Jilani, another professor of the same department, and Prof Chowdhury Rafiqul Ahsan and Jamsedul Alam of Dhaka University to start a research to ascertain the source of the bacteria in the beginning of last year. They finally found it in the soil of Kapasia late last month.

They are looking for the germ in the soil of other parts of the country.

Melioidosis is of public health importance in Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Laos, Myanmar and northern Australia where it is associated with high fatality rates, Haq said.

New Delhi pledges

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agreement of 1974 also came up in the meeting. India said a constitution amendment bill for the implementation of the accord was likely to be introduced in the monsoon session of parliament beginning on August 5.

Through the amendment bill, India wants to ratify the 1974 Indira-Mujib pact for demarcation of boundaries and exchange of 161 adversely-held enclaves with a population of about 50,000 people.

While Bangladesh parliament has already approved the land boundary deal, India needs to introduce a constitution amendment bill because its implementation involves territory swap.

However, for the passage of the bill India's ruling Congress-led UPA government lacks two-thirds majority in parliament and needs the opposition support.

During the talks yesterday, both the sides discussed the modalities for implementing the extradition treaty signed by the two countries early this year. The treaty will pave the way for deportation of Ulfah general secretary Anup Chetia, currently behind bars in Bangladesh.

"We are taking forward the dialogue from where it was left off. Constant cooperation between India and Bangladesh is going on," Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Tariq A Karim, who took part in the meeting, told reporters. Asked when Chetia would be deported, Karim said, "The process is on. It will happen, when it will happen."

Joint Secretary (North-east) in the Indian home ministry Shambhu Singh said the extradition of

Chetia would take some more time.

The Indian side was led in the meeting by Home Secretary Anil Goswami while the Bangladesh delegation by Home Secretary CQK Mustaq Ahmed.

On Thursday, the officials of India and Bangladesh had held a meeting of the Joint Working Group. Findings of the JWG were placed before yesterday's home secretary-level meeting.

The issues of coordinated border management, trafficking of drugs, women and children and illegal movement also came up for discussion in the meeting.

According to officials of both the sides, a joint media briefing by the home secretaries of the two countries and a joint statement on the outcome of yesterday's meeting is expected on Monday.

G20 report warns of global tax chaos

International tax system cannot deal with mobile multinational firms that shift profits to low-tax countries, says OECD thinktank

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Governments risk "global tax chaos" as they chase dwindling revenues from multinational companies unless the international tax regime is radically overhauled, according to a report commissioned by the G20 group of nations.

On Friday, the chancellor, George Osborne, will hail a two-year action plan drawn up by the OECD thinktank to clamp down on questionable international corporate tax practices.

The long-awaited report, prepared for a meeting of the G20 finance ministers in Moscow this weekend, says a "bold move by policymakers" is necessary to prevent a worsening in the position. The OECD calls it "a turning point in the history of international cooperation on tax".

The action plan sets out 15 initiatives

for arming tax authorities around the world with the tools to crack down on some of the areas international leaders agree are among the most widely exploited by multinational tax avoiders. These initiatives are to produce a range of recommendations for changes to the tax treaty rulebook, with deadlines ranging from 12 months to two and a half years.

Among the highlights are additional disclosures multinationals must make to all tax authorities, helping officials know where to look for the worst avoidance. There are proposals to require companies such as Amazon with extensive warehouse networks in a country to pay more local tax; multinationals posting high-value "intangible" assets, such as brands and intellectual property rights, to tax havens will also be targeted, as will tax breaks introduced

by individual countries that are seen as predatory.

The report sets out 15 separate actions the international community needs to take to modernise a tax system established in the 1920s. It argues the tax system is outmoded and unequipped to deal with mobile multinational firms that have found innumerable ways of avoiding tax, often by shifting profits to low-tax countries.

The work follows the proposals set out by David Cameron at the G8 to attack tax havens and increase the sharing of information on companies' tax status between tax authorities. Responding to the report, the prime minister said: "This report shows how taxpayers, governments and businesses all suffer when some companies manipulate the tax system to avoid paying their fair share of taxes."

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MALAYSIA BOAT ACCIDENT Woman dead, 7 people missing

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

An Indonesian woman died and seven people remain missing after a wooden boat believed to be smuggling them out of Malaysia to return home for the end of Ramadan overturned, authorities said Friday.

Twenty-seven people have been saved after the boat heading to Indonesia's Batam island capsized early Thursday off southern Johor state, said Mustapa Kamal Abbas, an official with the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency.

He said those rescued included an eight-month-old boy and two other women.

The 35 people on board were believed to be immigrants living illegally in

Malaysia who were returning home to Indonesia to celebrate the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan next month.

A passing tanker fished 28 of the passengers and crew out of the water on Thursday after spotting them clinging to their boat, 12 hours after it suffered an engine failure and overturned in high waves, Mustapa said.

A woman among those rescued was found unconscious and later pronounced dead.

Maritime authorities have deployed a ship and a speedboat to search for the seven people still missing, Mustapa said.

The boat set sail late Wednesday before suffering the engine failure.