

## France charges al-Qaeda suspect deported from Pakistan

AFP, Paris

A French-Algerian man suspected of al-Qaeda ties and deported from Pakistan this week has been charged with terror offences, French judicial officials said yesterday.

Intelligence officials believe Naamen Meziche was once connected to al-Qaeda's so-called "Hamburg cell", which planned the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

Deported on Tuesday, he was charged and remanded in custody in Paris on Friday for criminal conspiracy in relation with a terrorist enterprise, with a view to carrying out criminal acts, the source said.

## ALCWC meets

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body of the ruling party, will also discuss the status and size of the cabinet after October 25, when the government is expected to start acting as an interim government, Awami League insiders said.

The committee would meet at Gono Bhaban at 6:30pm with Prime Minister and party President Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Awami League leaders have termed the meeting as one of the most important meetings ahead of the elections.

Issues like the political situation of the country, organisational matters, the role of the cabinet and parliament after October 25 may come up for discussion at the meeting, Awami League Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif told The Daily Star.

"There should be specific guidelines about how the elections would take place under the current government ... Leaders and workers of Awami League would prepare for the next elections using the guidelines expected from this meeting," he said.

Party insiders said the "inactiveness" of Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam also might come up for discussion at the meeting.

## No potholes

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"highways" published on October 12, 2013, said the division.

It said even though some potholes had developed on some roads due to the recent heavy rainfall but those were taken care of.

It said 21 monitoring teams under the Roads Division were continuously monitoring the condition of the highways and conducting instant maintenance work when required.

It claimed that traffic jams intensified not because of potholes, rather due to heavy traffic flow during Eid, malfunctioning of vehicles on roads, roadside cattle markets, road accidents, road blockades by garment workers and also due to sudden processions brought out by different political parties.

## It's a ploy

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However, the tenure of the current parliament expires on January 24, 2014. So there is no legal bar for the government to extend the concluding session of parliament.

"This [plan to continue the session] is a conspiracy not only against the opposition parties but also against the people of the country," alleged Farroque at a press briefing in the Jatiya Sangsad Media Centre.

He said it had been earlier decided that the parliament would be dissolved on October 24, "but now it is unclear why Awami League is trying to extend the concluding session".

Asked whether BNP would resign from the Jatiya Sangsad over this, the opposition chief whip said his party would decide on it later.

On reinstating the caretaker government system, Farroque said if the government wanted that, it would place the bill in the current session.

# Obama against Republican plan on debt ceiling deal

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama yesterday came out against a proposal to extend for just weeks the country's authority to borrow money as crisis talks with Republicans entered the 12th day.

"It wouldn't be wise, as some suggest, to just kick the debt ceiling can down the road for a couple of months, and flirt with a first-ever intentional default right in the middle of the holiday shopping season," Obama said in his weekly radio and video address.

Damage "to America's sterling credit rating wouldn't just cause global markets to go haywire; it would

become more expensive for everyone in America to borrow money."

One Republican idea that was floated to stave off a disastrous US debt default and end a partial government shutdown included a temporary extension to US borrowing authority -- without which Washington could begin to default on its obligations for the first time in history after October 17.

The government, shuttered since October 1, will be fully reopened, possibly on an interim basis, and there will be some kind of commitment from both sides to work towards an elusive deal to tackle the deficit, rein in spending and

possibly reform social programs and some aspects of the tax code.

The White House said earlier in the week that it would be open to a six-week extension of the debt ceiling after October 17.

But, perhaps sensing that it now has the upper hand in the fight, it now appears to be looking for an extension of borrowing authority from the current \$16.7 trillion level for a longer duration.

On Friday, White House spokesman Jay Carney said that a rise in the debt ceiling could not be linked to long-term fiscal talks with Republicans, because it could set up repeated threats of default in the coming months.

## GOVT SHUTDOWN

# Tourist landmarks to reopen in US

AFP, Los Angeles

The Statue of Liberty and the Grand Canyon are to reopen despite the US government shutdown, with US states temporarily paying the running costs of world-famous landmarks shuttered by the standoff.

Mount Rushmore, Rocky Mountain National Park and eight federal sites in Utah will also reopen starting this weekend, officials said Friday, although other world-famous destinations including Yosemite National Park and Alcatraz prison remain closed.

The federal National Park Service announced deals with the states of New York, Arizona, Colorado, Utah and South Dakota, under which the states agree to fund the sites which draw

millions of tourists and in many cases keep local economies afloat.

More than 400 federally managed tourist sites across the nation have been closed since the shutdown started at the start of October due to a budget impasse between Republicans and Democrats.

The stalemate is costing \$152 million a day in lost travel-related activity, affecting up to 450,000 American workers, according to the US Travel Association. Alone some 20,000 park services employees were furloughed.

Friday's New York agreement will allow funding for the Statue of Liberty for six days, beginning Saturday through October 17, with the state donating \$369,300 to keep it running.

Arizona has agreed to

fund the Grand Canyon, visited by millions of tourists from all over the world every year, for seven days beginning Saturday, at a cost of \$651,000.

Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park will be funded for 10 days beginning Friday at a cost of \$362,700, and eight national parks and monuments in Utah will reopen also for 10 days beginning Friday at a cost of \$1.666 million to the western US state.

There is no guarantee that the states will be reimbursed by federal authorities when the shutdown ends. The funding is considered a donation, not a loan, and it would require an act of Congress to authorize any type of reimbursement, according to an official source.

# Onion price shoots up

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Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), prices of onion soared by Tk 30 a kg within a week from Tk 75 on October 4 to Tk 105 yesterday.

The TCB said around this time last year, onion was selling at Tk 22-35 a kg.

"Local onion is available throughout the country. Besides, traders are importing it from different countries. There is no reason why the prices of onion should rise like this overnight," additional commerce secretary Monoj Kumar Roy told The Daily Star yesterday.

The District administration throughout the country has been instructed to watch out for any ulterior move to raise the prices of onion during the Eid, he said.

Official sources noted that the government has become perplexed by the erratic behaviour of traders. "It appears that everyone out in the market is trying to reap maximum benefits out of a crisis," one of them added.

Surprisingly, the latest price hike of onion took place overnight after the traders reassured the government of no more increase in its prices at a stakeholders' meeting on Thursday.

Asked about this, General Secretary of Dhaka Mohanagar Krishiponno Amdanikarok Association Khandaker Babul, said, "Imports are on although there are some problems due to a few days' halt in land port activities on the other side of the border [India] due to [Durga] Puja. But traders of locally grown onion took advantage of this and decreased the supply of onion in the hope of making more profits."

Babul said that efforts were on to enhance supply of "hoarded" onion in the market, and its prices would go down before the Eid.

In July-August, prices of onion started going up following reports that bad weather affected production of onion in India, a main source of Bangladesh's onion import. To offset the price hike in domestic market, the TCB initially started selling onion at fair price (Tk 47 a kg) from trucks at designated places and then again at Tk 55 a kg after further price hike in the international market.

There are, however, allegations of TCB dealers not selling the fair price onion in other divisional headquarters except in Dhaka. The DCs have been also

asked to monitor sale of the TCB-supplied onion.

Last month the Washington-based food policy think-tank -- International Food Policy Research Institute (Ifpri), reported that the steep rise in onion prices was not just the fallout of supply cut from India, but also an artificial supply shortage created by a nexus of traders.

"The market supply of onion in Bangladesh declined not only because of the reduction in imports from India, but also due to local traders taking advantage of the situation by cutting the supplies of their stored onions to the market in order to make extra profits," it said.

Contacted over the phone, Ifpri representative to Bangladesh Akhter U Ahmed said the TCB should have intervened in the market in a big way to tackle the traders' nexus. Commerce ministry official Monoj Kumar Roy agreed, but added in the same breath that the TCB needed to be strengthened to go the extra miles.

Both Akhter and Monoj also said that "panic buying" by consumers also contributed to the price rise of onion.

# Traders wait for sales

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the capital, the two city corporations have also authorised 19 makeshift markets at several designated points in the city.

Although the makeshift markets will officially open today, traders had started to put up their cattle for sale at different places, including the designated ones, for the last several days.

Sentu Mollah, a car mechanic at Shajahanpur, said he had been visiting the market at Kamalapur for the last few days to buy a small-size bull.

"The price is reasonable here but I think it will go down further. So, I will wait for another day," he said.

Moreover, thinking of space constraint at rented

houses and the extra hassle of taking care of the animal, many city dwellers prefer to buy those at the eleventh hour.

"It is really difficult to keep a bull on the narrow alley where I live, while the landlord does not allow keeping the animal at the parking space," said Siddiqur Rahman, a banker from Tejkunipara.

Traders apprehend that they would not be able to sell their bulls and goats without losing some capital, as cattle in truckloads kept arriving throughout the day.

"I have brought 16 bulls worth about Tk 7 lakh but have not sold even one yet. I have a feeling that I may not be able to sell those for over Tk 5 lakh, as there is very

little demand this year," said Hafizul Islam, who came from Pabna to Shajahanpur market on Thursday.

Echoing Hafizul's view, Seikh Sirajuddin, who brought 13 large bulls to Gabtali from Kushtia, said the situation, so far, is worse than the last year.

The prices of his bulls range between Tk 4 and 15 lakh, he added.

Meanwhile, authorities at different markets were collecting Hasil (service tax to be paid by customers) at different rates.

At Gabtali, the rate was Tk 35 (per 1,000) while at Agargaon it was Tk 50.

They have also set up fake currency detectors with the help of several bank officials.

## BSF kills Bangladeshi cattle trader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi cattle trader on Bonchowki border in the district's Hatibandha upazila yesterday morning.

The dead is Shahinul Islam, 27, son of Mohammad Ali of Amjhal village of the upazila.

Sources of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) said the BSF men of Dhumerketu camp of Cooch Behar district in West Bengal opened fire on a group of cattle traders around 8:30am while they were returning home through the border along with some cattle.

Shahinul was hit by bullets in the back, legs and hands. He however managed to reach home.

Later, he died on the way to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Lt Col Mahbubur Rahman, commanding officer of Lalmonirhat 15 BGB Battalion, said the BGB already sent a letter to the BSF, protesting at the killing.

## India braces

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could slam the east coast.

High tidal waves pounded rain-battered beaches and trees were bent and felled by gusty winds ahead of the arrival of the cyclone. Accompanied by a storm surge of up to three metres (10 feet), it was expected to make landfall anytime last night in the eastern state of Odisha.

Around 8:30pm (IST) Cyclone Phailin was about 30 km off Gopalpur in Odisha with winds of between 210 kph and 220 kph.

Even before the landfall, coconut trees in coastal villages were bent and broken in gusty wind. Electrical poles were brought down and roads were littered with debris.

A report from Andhra Pradesh capital Hyderabad said more than one lakh people in low-lying coastal areas of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts have been shifted to safer places.

Talking to reporters after a high-level review meeting in the afternoon, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy said all possible precautions have been taken to ensure that there was no loss of life due to the super cyclone.

"Our preparedness is good. We have taken all precautions required. Beyond that, there is nothing we could do," he mentioned.

The storm was set to hit the same coastal area which was devastated by a cyclone in 1999, killing about 9,000 people.

Authorities evacuated thousands of people from thatched shacks along the coasts of Odisha and its neighbouring state Andhra Pradesh to relief camps and cyclone shelters.

The Odisha government said it was setting a "zero casualty target" in the densely populated state of close to 40 million people and was seeking "100 percent" evacuation of people in areas likely to be hit by the storm.

Satellite photos showed an intimidating cloud mass barreling across the Bay of Bengal as forecasters said the danger zone was about 150 kilometres (90 miles) wide and would hit Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

In Odisha's capital Bhubaneswar, where trees swayed in strong winds, panic buying saw many shops run low on food with memories still strong of the deadly cyclone which had hit the same region 14 years ago.

The army has been called out to help relief efforts. India's air force said two emergency teams had been dispatched to Bhubaneswar while transport planes and helicopters were on standby.

The weather department warned of extensive damage to mud houses, major disruption of power and communication lines, and the flooding of rail tracks and roads.

# Snowden warns of government spying

AFP, Moscow

US intelligence leaker Edward Snowden warned of dangers to democracy in the first video released of the fugitive since Russia granted him temporary asylum in August.

"If we can't understand the policies and programmes of our government we can't grant our consent in regulating them," Snowden said in one of the short video clips posted on the WikiLeaks website Friday night.

Snowden, a former National Security Agency computer administrator, is wanted in the United States for espionage and other charges after leaking details of vast US telephone and Internet surveillance programmes.

Dressed in a black suit and blue shirt with no tie and looking at ease, Snowden reiterated the dangers of NSA surveillance, saying indiscriminate spying was a "far cry" from legitimate programmes.

"It's a sort of dragnet mass surveillance that puts entire populations under a sort of eye that sees everything, even when it's not needed," he said.

"People all over the world are realising that these programmes don't make us more safe, they hurt our economy, they hurt our country, they limit our ability to speak and think and live and be creative, to have relationships, to associate freely."

The videos show Snowden and the four former US government employees chatting and smiling over dinner at a luxurious room in an unidentified location.

During the evening, former ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern gave Snowden an award -- a symbolic candlestick -- that acknowledges integrity in the profession.

"We are confident that others with similar moral fibre will follow his example in illuminating dark corners and exposing crimes that put our civil rights as free citizens in jeopardy," WikiLeaks quoted McGovern as saying.

Also present were a beaming WikiLeaks employee Sarah Harrison, a British national who has accompanied Snowden since he arrived in Russia, and his Russian lawyer Anatoly

Kucherena.

One of the attendees, former Department of Justice ethics advisor Jesselyn Radack, said Snowden looked "very healthy."

"He was funny and engaging, he did not seem worried, he did not seem to have lost weight or appear pale or sick in any kind of way," she said in televised remarks, predicting that more people might follow his example.

"I really think he's had a wonderful effect for the US and for the world," she said. "Courage is contagious."

The 30-year-old spent over a month stuck in transit at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport before being granted asylum on August 1 despite repeated protests from Washington.

Since then his whereabouts have been a mystery. His pro-Kremlin lawyer Kucherena says Snowden is learning Russian, travelling and may soon get a job.

Earlier this week his father Lon Snowden arrived in Moscow and reportedly had an "emotional" meeting with his son.

# Horror strikes family

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was killed by a speeding bus right before her daughter's eyes, also in Kamalapur.

Early in the morning yesterday, Sanjida Begum Shama, 35, and her 12-year-old daughter Sithi were going to Kamalapur Railway Station from their AGB Colony house to catch a train to Bogra.

Near the BRTC counter in Kamalapur, a Hanif Paribahan bus rammed their rickshaw from behind, throwing Sanjida on the right side of the road and Sithi on the left. Before she could move, the bus ran over Sanjida and sped away, said eyewitnesses.

She was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared her dead around 6:45am.

Sanjida's college-going son Sheetal and her brother Shariful Islam were in another rickshaw a little ahead. They did not see the accident but turned back hearing screams, family members said.

Numb with grief, the daughter -- a class-six student

of Motijheel Ideal School -- has lapsed into silence. She had minor injuries from the fall.

Sanjida was excited about the trip to Bogra where she was to meet her parents and mother-in-law after six months. Little did she know that she would go home but not alive.

The family did not allow an autopsy on her body; they took it to Bogra for burial.

Sanjida's husband Abu Sayeed, who has recently joined the Rapid Action Battalion-8 in Barisal as a sub-inspector, could not manage leave, and so she was taking the kids home along with her brother.

The officer-in-charge of Motijheel Police Station said they could not track down the bus yet. No case was filed until filing of this report.

Those responsible for deaths caused by reckless driving face a maximum five years' imprisonment, which is believed to be too lenient a sentence to deter recurrence of such killings.

# Hanif 'removed'

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grassroots meeting on Wednesday. At the meeting, Kushtia's Mirpur upazila Awami League unit General Secretary Kamarul Arefin appealed to Hasina to nominate Hanif from Kushtia-2 [Mirpur-Bheramara] constituency in the next parliamentary polls.

Hasina told Kamarul that Hanif would not be eligible to contest the parliamentary elections, as per the Representation of the People's Order (RPO), since he holds a government post and enjoys salaries and other facilities.

Hanif then told Hasina that he had consulted the Election Commission about

his running for parliament and the EC told him that since he was the special assistant to the prime minister, he could run.

The prime minister then told Hanif that the EC might have said this as he was the special assistant to the prime minister but it would cancel his nomination ahead of the elections due to restrictions imposed by the RPO.

A seemingly irritated Hasina told Hanif that he gets honour and salutes from people for being the special assistant to her. But, he would have to face harsh reality if he quits the position.

Hanif argued with the prime minister and added that he was ready to quit his

post.

Hasina seemed unhappy with this comment.

At this stage, Awami League Deputy Office Secretary Mrinal Kanti Das stood up and said the party's joint general secretary was arguing with the party chief at a grassroots meeting, which was very unfortunate. Hasina then asked Mrinal to stop talking.

The Daily Star learnt about this exchange of words from several central, district, and upazila leaders of Awami League over the last two days.

At the meeting, around 100 grassroots leaders of eight districts, including Kushtia, were present.

# 11-day ban

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consume hilsa during this period.

The restriction aims at saving at least 1.5 crore mother hilsa and ensuring safe environment for laying around 46,800 kilograms of eggs.

AKM Aminul Huq, deputy director of Barisal division fishery directorate, said, "The ban is effective not only on netting hilsa in 7,000 square-kilometre of hilsa breeding ground of seven coastal districts, but also on marketing, selling and transportation of the fish across the country."

To make the ban successful, the divisional fisheries directorate has already carried out massive campaigns, including running advertisements in the media, using posters and banners, and holding dis-

cussions with fishermen and the authorities concerned.

District and upazila administration, the navy, coastguards and law enforcers have been asked to monitor that the restriction is being followed accordingly and to take actions against the violators.

Mobile courts will also operate in rivers and at market places to ensure that no offender can get away with defying the restriction.

As per the fishery ordinance, anyone violating the ban for the first time can be penalised Tk 1,000 as fine with one to six months' imprisonment. The punishment gets double for the second-time offenders, said fishery office sources.

Apart from the seasonal ban, there is a year-round restriction on netting jatka

(Hilsa fry less than 9 inches or 23 centimetres in length).

According to fishermen, the movement of mother hilsa is connected with the lunar calendar.

They said between five days before and after the full moon in the Bangla month of Ashwin, mother hilsas begin their journey from the sea towards the coast, estuary and rivers to lay eggs.

Fishery officials hope that if 50 percent of the eggs survive, a total of 29.93 crore hilsa pollen will be produced and if 10 percent of the pollens are saved, it would make about 2.93 crore fries.

Hilsa fries grow 2-2.5 cm every month and start for the sea when they are 15-17 cm long. They make their return journey to sweet water for laying eggs after getting 25-28 cm long and weighing around 300-450 grams.