

# Selfie may get

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Selfie last night joined previous winners 'chav', 'podcast', 'credit crunch' and 'omnishambles' as the word that has made the biggest impact on the English language in the past 12 months.

Oxford Dictionaries said the frequency of the noun's use had leapt 17,000 per cent in the past year.

Selfie dates back to an Australian online forum in 2002, and is "mainstream shorthand" for a self-portrait photograph.

It was added to more informal Oxford Dictionaries Online in August, along with 'twerking', the raunchy dance move performed by Miley Cyrus.

But the noun - described as "a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website" could be included into the historical Oxford English Dictionary as early as next month.

Judy Pearsall, editorial director, said: "Using the Oxford Dictionaries language research programme we can see a phenomenal trend in the use of selfie in 2013, and this helped to cement its selection as Word of the Year.

"In early examples the word was often speled with a -y, but the -ie form is more common today and has become the accepted spelling.

She added: "The use of the diminutive -ie suffix is notable, as it helps to turn an essentially narcissistic enterprise into something more endearing."

Selfie pipped 'twerk' and other increasing popular words such as 'showrooming', 'binge watch', 'bitcoin', 'bedroom tax', 'schmeat' and 'olinguito' - a small furry mammal discovered in August - to the top prize.



PHOTO: BSS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina exchanges greetings with Malaysian PM Najib Razak and his spouse Rosmah Mansor while seeing them off at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

# US was wrong in boosting Pakistan military

## Says ex-Pak envoy to US

AFP, Washington

Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States called Monday for his country to focus less on defense and said decades of misguided American aid have only enabled the powerful military.

Husain Haqqani, an outspoken academic turned diplomat who was forced to resign in 2011 over charges that he sought US help to curb Pakistan's army, argues in a new book, "Magnificent Delusions," that the two nations have always failed to understand each other.

At a book launch in Washington, Haqqani said Pakistan's military was disproportionately large following the Indian subcontinent's partition in 1947 and that the army has since prioritized US assistance in its goal of reaching parity with New Delhi.

"That is what has caused the internal dysfunction in Pakistan because the military has continued to become stronger. It has helped build

Pakistan's national narrative. Pakistanis never paused to think what is our resource base capable of supporting," Haqqani said at the Hudson Institute, a think tank where he is a senior fellow.

"A nation with nuclear weapons should not behave like a guy who keeps buying guns because he says he needs to defend his family and then stays up all night because he's afraid somebody will come and steal his guns -- and then further down has a heart attack because of high blood pressure that he suffered from staying up," he said.

"The American delusion is if (they) give Pakistan enough assistance, they will not want to pursue their objective -- which is totally upside-down, because what you are doing is encouraging the whole process," he added.

Haqqani said relations could be transformed next year when the United States plans to withdraw combat forces from Afghanistan, ending a war launched after the September 11, 2001 attacks that has tied Pakistan uneasily to the United States.

# EC for all-party polls

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our preparations for holding the election. Our preparations are now at the final stage and we are ready for holding the polls."

The CEC said the commission also informed the president that it has brought many changes in the electoral laws for creating a level playing field.

Queried, he said, "We will announce the schedule for the election in time."

Meeting sources said the president assured the CEC and his colleagues of his cooperation in holding a fair and credible election.

The polls schedule is likely to be announced in the last week of this month, some EC sources said.

Seeking anonymity, an election commissioner said they informed the president about the EC's plan for deployment of army alongside the law enforcers for maintaining law and

order during the election period.

The EC has the jurisdiction to demand transfer of government officials during election period for the sake of a free, fair and credible election, said the commissioner.

"That is why we have requested the president for necessary measures so the commission could have any officials transferred quickly, if necessary," he said.

The CEC along with three election commissioners -- Shah Nawaz, Mohammad Abu Hafiz and Abdul Mubarak -- reached the Bangabhaban around 3:30pm and stayed there for more than an hour.

EC Secretary Muhammed Sadique was with the delegation.

This was the EC's first meeting with the president after it took office in February last year.

# A father's case against son

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Things were different for the father and the son even a few years ago, however.

In 2004, Liakat sold much of his arable land at Suhilpur village in Chandpur for Tk 3 lakh to send his son to Dubai. He did this hoping his son would help the family. And Yasin did indeed, but until before his marriage.

In the case, Liakat also sued Yasin's wife and her parents. The district senior judicial magistrate, however, relieved the three of the charges and summoned Yasin to appear before it on January 14.

Yasin, 30, is the second among his five siblings. His elder sister was married off several years ago. His four other siblings -- two brothers and two sisters -- are all school and college students.

"The family is facing acute hardship as it has

no other income sources. The education of these four young boys and girls is also in peril," said advocate Zahirul Islam, who moved the case on Liakat's behalf.

According to him, the case Liakat filed is not all about money. It is also about a father's pain that his son has forsaken them.

The Parents' Care Act-2013, passed by parliament last month, makes it mandatory for working children to provide their elderly parents with food and shelter.

The law also bars children from sending their parents in old homes against their will.

Violation of this law means one to three years' imprisonment or Tk 1 lakh in fine or both, said Zahirul, also former president of Chandpur Bar Association.

Talking to The Daily Star over the phone, he said he was moving the case for free.

# Consumers forced

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But everyone was not as lucky as she was.

Abdul Mannan wanted to buy 10 kilograms of rice. A salesman named Haider told him he needed to buy five kilograms of flour as well. When Mannan gave up, they charged him Tk 24 per kg instead of Tk 22 for the flour.

Aggrieved, Mannan demanded his money back. After a long negotiation Haider returned him Tk 5 instead of Tk 10.

This correspondent posing as a customer wanted to buy flour. Another salesperson demanded Tk 26 per kilogram. He claimed they had orders from the higher authorities to sell both the commodities together at higher rates.

Fazal Hossain, who claimed to be the dealer of another truck at Dholaipar, said the government had increased the price of flour by Tk 2.

"We have been selling flour at Tk 24 for the

last six to seven months," he claimed. But customers present there trashed his claim.

Asked why they were selling both items together, Fazal said, "The government provides us with high quantity of rice and low quantity of flour. So, we need to sell both to make profit."

Sukumar Chandra Roy, chief controller of Dhaka rationing under the food ministry, said the dealers might have taken the opportunity of supervisors' "momentary" absence.

"Such incidents may occur in some cases. We usually conduct random visits and take action against such incidents," Sukumar said, claiming licence of 100 dealers had been cancelled for irregularities.

Director General of Food Ahmed Hossain Khan said such complaints were new to him. "It could be a stray incident. But we will look into the matter seriously," he said.

# Fukushima operator gives first glimpse of fuel rod removal

AFP, Tokyo

The operator of the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant Tuesday offered the first glimpse of the operation to remove its fuel rods, the most dangerous job since the runaway reactors were brought under control two years ago.

Video footage supplied by the company showed Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO) workers with protective suits inside a reactor building as a crane lowered a huge metal cask into a storage pool filled with uranium and plutonium rods.

The nuclear fuel rods are bundled together in assemblies which must be pulled out of the storage pool where they were being kept when a tsunami smashed into Fukushima in March 2011. There are more than 1,500 such assemblies in the pool.

Removal of the fuel rods is a tricky but essential step in the decommissioning of the complex, which is expected to take decades.

On Monday, the company said it expects to remove 22 assemblies over two days, with the entire operation scheduled to run for more than a year.

The huge crane, with a remote-controlled grabber, is hooked onto the assemblies, placing them inside the fully immersed cask.

The 91-tonne cask will then be hauled from the pool to be loaded onto a trailer and taken to a different storage pool about 100 metres (yards) away

TEPCO said the work was on schedule with the 22 assemblies expected to be placed inside the cask by Tuesday evening.

The reactor which the pool serves -- No. 4 -- was not in operation on March 11, 2011, when a massive earthquake triggered a killer tsunami that swept the Fukushima nuclear plant, triggering meltdown and explosions.

# Unicef worried

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Children should have uninterrupted access to basic social services and be able to enjoy their rights. Those responsible for providing these services, such as teachers and health workers, are accomplishing a noble duty and should themselves be protected from violence, so that they can meet their responsibilities to children without fear and interruption, Pascal added.

Children, who represent country's future, account for 40 percent of the population of Bangladesh.

# Arguments

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tried because of his political ideology.

Chief defence counsel Abdur Razzaq said the tribunal would find Nizami not guilty and exonerate the war crimes accused from the 16 charges pressed against him.

The defence yesterday completed placing arguments in the case against Nizami. The prosecution are expected to give replies to their arguments today.

Saying that the auxiliary forces Al-Badr, Al-Shams and Razakar were under effective control of the Pakistani army, Razzaq said Nizami was a civilian and did not have any control over those forces.

On the incitement charges, he said the prosecution could not prove any of those charges.

In the wake of repeated failure of the defence to appear before the court, the tribunal on November 13 closed the case and kept it waiting for verdict.

Following a review petition, the tribunal gave the defence an opportunity to place their arguments that ended yesterday.

**KHOKON'S CASE**

The war crimes case against fugitive BNP leader MA Zahid Hossain Khokon began yesterday with the opening statement placed by prosecutor Mokhesur Rahman Badal.

"We will be able to prove the charges with the testimony of witnesses," Badal said, adding, 11 war crimes charges were pressed against Khokon.

The tribunal fixed Thursday for recording

# Initiate talks for all-party election

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a role at this critical juncture," said the statement whose copies were later circulated among reporters.

The opposition said it would neither participate in any unilateral election nor accept any initiative that would snatch the people's right to vote.

The 18-party alliance said the formation of the new interim government has only deepened the crisis.

It said there will be no level playing field if the election is not held under a non-party polls-time government.

"This is why we have long been demanding a non-party polls-time government," said the opposition.

Briefing reporters after the meeting at the Bangabhaban, Ihsanul said the president told the 18-party leaders that both sides -- the Awami League and the BNP -- would have to come forward to initiate dialogue.

"A solution will come if negotiations take place. A dialogue will bring good to the nation. But both sides have to take initiatives. I am not in a position to make such move.

"I have to protect and preserve the constitution ... the democratic process must continue," the president was quoted by Ihsanul as saying.

The BNP chief's motorcade arrived in front of the Bangabhaban at 5:45pm. Khaleda waited outside it for nearly half an hour, as she reached there early.

The president received Khaleda after she got off her car at the Bangabhaban at 6:15pm. And the meeting began around 6:30pm.

Hamid entertained the delegation with snacks, fruit juice and sweets.

"He was very courteous. The meeting was held in a cordial and lively atmosphere. He was very patient and sincere in listening to us," acting BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru

Islam Alamgir told reporters outside the Bangabhaban.

The BNP chief later went to her Gulshan office and discussed with the alliance leaders the next course of action.

Despite the latest developments, the possibility of consensus among the two rival camps still looks thin.

Several senior leaders of the Awami League-led alliance once again rejected the opposition's proposal for making a non-partisan person the chief of polls-time government.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will head the polls-time government according to constitutional provisions. It is not possible for the government to ignore the constitution," AL presidium member Kazi Zafarullah told The Daily Star.

Echoing the same view, a newly-inducted minister said the opposition requested the president to act beyond the constitution.

"The opposition knows well that the president cannot take any move beyond the constitution to resolve the crisis. But they met him to get political mileage," said the minister on condition of anonymity.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said, "There can be no talks over any unconstitutional demands. There is no scope for meeting any such demand from the BNP. The election will be held in line with the constitution."

A senior BNP leader said he believes the government would not change its stance on election-time government.

"We met Abdul Hamid so that we can tell people that we even requested the president to resolve the political crisis," said the BNP leader, asking not to be named.

The opposition alliance would resume its agitation programmes, including hartal and blockade, next week, he added.

# Confusion runs high

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Officials could not confirm if the process would be completed today.

Cabinet Division officials and Awami League leaders said the portfolios of the new ministers and the names of the rest of the election-time cabinet members were finalised on Monday night.

Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan had confirmed on Monday night that gazettes would be issued on Tuesday allocating portfolios to the cabinet members.

He also said the PM would hand over the resignation letters of the outgoing ministers to the president.

Speculation ran high among the ministers yesterday as the cabinet secretary had hinted that there was a "surprise" in store for Tuesday.

Behind the scene political developments, possible induction of more members in the polls-time cabinet and strong lobbying by some new ministers for lucrative portfolios were the main reasons for the delay in this regard.

"Everything was finalised on Monday night and the gazettes were supposed to be issued at 3:00pm today [yesterday]. But the matter was delayed due to some changes to the ministers' portfolios and to possible inclusion of new members in the cabinet," a senior Cabinet Division official told The Daily Star last night.

He said instructions were there to issue gazettes in the afternoon so that Dipu Moni could see off the Malaysian prime minister as foreign minister at 2:00pm.

"But no signal in this regard came even after 3:00pm perhaps because of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's meeting with the president at the

Bangabhaban at 6:30pm and its outcome," said another official, requesting anonymity.

There were speculations at the secretariat that the gazettes would be issued once Hasina flew back to the capital from Patuakhali in the evening. Unconfirmed reports also suggested that 10-15 members of the AL-led grand alliance be in the election-time cabinet. Of them, two technocrat ministers -- Law Minister Shafique Ahmed and Industries Minister Dilip Barua -- may also remain, although not as ministers but the PM's advisers.

In another sign of confusion, during the House proceeding yesterday names of ministers were not mentioned in the question-answer papers, which is unprecedented.

"Names of the ministers were not mentioned as portfolios of the election-time cabinet members were supposed to be distributed by the time," said an official at the Parliament Secretariat.

Amid all these confusions, several ministers bade farewell to secretariat officials. They include Food Ministers Abdur Razzaque and Cultural Affairs Minister Abul Kalam Azad.

Sources at the Gono Bhavan said several ministers during the last two days met the PM and sought her blessings to continue in the cabinet.

On Monday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inducted eight new members into her cabinet as she began forming the polls-time government. But none went to the secretariat, as they did not get their portfolios.

Some senior cabinet division officials went to the Gono Bhavan last night, apparently to discuss the matter with the PM and other government policymakers.

# Westgate attackers spent four month's planning in Nairobi: official

AFP, Nairobi

All four gunmen who attacked Kenya's Westgate mall trained in Somalia before crossing into Kenya four months before the September massacre in which they also died, a Western official said Tuesday.

"The four are believed to have crossed together by land into Kenya in June" from Somalia, the official who is familiar with ongoing investigations said, adding that the gunmen then based themselves in Nairobi's largely ethnic-Somali district of Eastleigh.

They then spent time training in a popular gym in the busy district, known as 'Little Mogadishu', as they prepared for the September 21 operation. The attack saw them storm the crowded Westgate complex, firing from the hip and hurling grenades at shoppers and staff.

"We are confident that there were only four attackers," the Western official said, dismissing initial reports that over a dozen gunmen may have been involved in the four-day siege in

which at least 67 died, and adding that all attackers were believed to have been killed.

Somalia's Al-Qaeda-linked Shebab claimed the attack, saying it was a warning to Kenya to pull its troops out of southern Somalia, where they are fighting the extremists as part of an African Union force.

The Red Cross say that at least 20 more people are still missing, with Western officials suggesting as many as 94 could have died in total in the attack, with some victims still potentially remaining under tons of rubble after part of the mall's roof collapsed at the end of the raid.

All four attackers were ethnic Somalis -- and believed to come from Somalia -- with two of the attackers named as Mohammed Abdinur Said and Hassan Abdi Dhuhulow, a 23-year old Somali who spent several years in Norway.

Detectives believe they have identified all four gunmen, but so far only the two names have been released.

All four are understood to have trained together in Somalia.

# Discussion was 'disappointing'

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minister said since the assistant secretary was going to meet BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia a few hours later, Biswal could convey the same message to Khaleda and urge the opposition leader to take part in election to make it inclusive.

Hasina pointed out that elections are held in a festive mood in Bangladesh.

Biswal's second point was that the election has to be credible to the people of Bangladesh.

In reply, Hasina said elections under her government had always been credible and without any interference. So there is no reason to think that the upcoming election will not be credible.

Biswal's third point was peaceful transition of power. But the PM did not say anything about it.

The US official then felt that since the dialogue between Awami League and BNP did

not work out at the highest level, it could start at the secretary general level.

Hasina in reply said the phone number of AL general secretary was given to the BNP's acting secretary general. So, the BNP could contact her second man anytime and start a dialogue.

During the meeting, the prime minister felt that the US embassy in Dhaka was not appreciative of the full gamut of political situation and did not represent the full picture of happening.

However, the US officials present said they were trying to portray the situation from a neutral ground.

Some diplomatic sources told The Daily Star that the dialogue was "disappointing".

Soon after the meeting, Hasina went to Bangabhaban and asked the president to administer oath to the election time government.