

AFP names first woman as global news chief

AFP, Paris

Agence France-Presse yesterday for the first time named a woman to head its global operations after news director Philippe Massonnet announced he was stepping down.

Michele Leridon, who joined the news agency in 1981 and has been Rome bureau chief since 2009, will replace Massonnet from August 1 after he resigned citing "personal reasons".

AFP CEO Emmanuel Hoog praised Massonnet as a "passionate, inventive and committed" news chief since taking up the post in 2009.

He described Leridon as "a great news professional" and said she would work on AFP projects including developing the agency's video service and strengthening its sports and cultural coverage.

Torrential

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had been inundated in Moghbazar, Mouchak, Malibagh and Shantinagar for around six hours from 10:00am.

With sewage and earth piled for the flyover construction work, traffic movement was disrupted in the areas as potholes and manholes under water became dangerous to them.

At around 12:00 noon, schoolchildren in the areas became the worst victims as most of them were compelled to wade through water due to gridlock.

"I walked the distance from Bailey Road to Malibagh intersection -- around a quarter km, to collect my daughter from school," said a woman, expressing her fear that anytime they might have fallen victim to the deep holes dug for the construction work.

"We failed to avail any rickshaw all the way as vehicular movement came to a standstill," she added.

Met office recorded 38 mm rainfall in the capital in six hours till 12:00 noon yesterday while it was 34 mm in Chittagong. The highest rainfall of the country was recorded in Kutubdia, which was 96 mm till 12:00 noon.

According to the Met office, all the divisions of the country may face moderate rainfall with thunderstorm in the next 24 hours from 6:00pm yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Chittagong city remained inundated for the fourth consecutive day, with a handful of vehicles plying the streets.

The non-stop rain on Sunday prompted the government to issue a warning about the possibility of landslides in the hilly regions of Chittagong and Sylhet divisions.

No dialogue

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The ruling party observed the day with the slogan 'Only Sheikh Hasina can deliver and she does'.

The city unit of AL organised the procession in which hundreds of leaders, workers and supporters of the party and its front organisations took part.

Though the procession started at 4:30pm, leaders and activists of the party thronged the streets before noon from Bangabandhu Avenue to Shahbagh intersection.

The participants carried posters featuring portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Hasina.

The party's election symbol 'boat', banners depicting the AL-led government's successes, colourful festoons, placards and national flags were seen at the hands of the party workers.

The procession marched forward to the beats of drums and music. Many in the procession sang patriotic and folk songs. The historic 7th March speech of Bangabandhu was played over loudspeakers from different trucks.

Addressing the rally, Awami League presidium member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim dismissed the possibility of dialogue with the BNP.

"It is absurd to hold talks with the party which is involved in killing people, believes in fundamentalism and maintains ties with war criminals," he said.

He urged the partymen to remain united and said conspiracies were being hatched against the party.

If the partymen remain united, none can damage its image, Selim said, adding that the AL was ready to resist any agitation programme of the BNP.

Like Selim, almost all the leaders, who addressed the rally, pledged to counter the possible agitation programme of the BNP after the Eid.

Marking the day, AL leaders including Sheikh Hasina paid tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing wreaths at his portrait in front of the Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi.

A question that numbs

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asked our correspondent.

The question remained unanswered even in the judgment, for the convicts did not know either any of the 10 people killed in the bomb attack on the Pahela Baishakh celebration at Ramna Batamul on April 14, 2001.

The Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in Dhaka yesterday sent eight Huji men to the gallows and six to prison for life in the Ramna Batamul killing case.

Mamun, a 23-year-old tailor, along with his cousins Reazul, 22, who used to work at his family-run drugstore, and Shilpi, a 20-year-old college student, were visiting a relative in Dhaka at that time. The three had gone to join the New Year celebration organised by Chhayanaut, representing Bengali culture and heritage.

"Now that the judgement is given, we want quick execution of the verdict," said Kasem Gazi, Mamun's father.

Putul Rani was widowed within less than a year of her marriage with Ashim Kumar Sarker, 27, who too had fallen prey to the attack, carried out by banned Islamist militant outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Huji).

"We did not go there to join any

Dhaka to allow Delhi

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under a special transit facility in the first phase.

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) will send rice and wheat from Andhra Pradesh to Tripura using the Ashuganj river port in eastern Bangladesh and the roadways leading to the state.

According to BBC, the transportation is likely to take two weeks and if the "experiment works well", the process will continue for eight months. The first consignment is expected reach at Agartala via Bangladesh in the second week of July.

Two barges carrying the grains will move from Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh by sea route and arrive at the Ashuganj river port. From there, the supplies will be loaded on trucks which then will go to Agartala through the Akhaura border checkpoint.

In 2012, Bangladesh allowed India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation to ferry heavy machinery, turbines and cargo through Ashuganj for the 726MW Palatana power project in southern Tripura.

Bangladesh government gave the transit free of charges as a goodwill gesture.

Indian media quoting Saumitra Bandopadhyaya, special secretary and

Spain judge wraps up royal corruption probe

AFP, Madrid

A Spanish judge says he will wrap up a corruption probe into King Felipe VI's sister Princess Cristina and her husband Inaki Urdangarin tomorrow, opening up the prospect of a historic criminal trial.

Less than a week after 46-year-old Felipe VI took the crown from his father Juan Carlos promising an "honest and transparent" monarchy, the judge's decision threatens to put damaging royal corruption allegations back in the headlines.

The investigating judge in Palma de Mallorca, Jose Castro, will issue the results of his probe tomorrow, the court said in a brief statement sent to reporters by text message.

Under the Spanish legal system, the judge will recommend any suspects to be charged, details of the charges they

Brazil, Mexico ease

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already eliminated Cameroon, Fred nodded home at the start of the second and substitute Fernandinho scored a late fourth.

The sparkling performance meant Brazil went some way to dispelling doubts about their title credentials following last week's goalless draw with Mexico.

Mexico finished level on seven points with Brazil thanks to their 3-1 victory against Croatia and went through in second place due to an inferior goal difference. They will play Group A winners the Netherlands, who beat Chile 2-0 earlier on Monday.

Mexico took a 3-0 lead with late goals in Recife, rattling Brazilian nerves until Croatia scored and Fernandinho, who was introduced at halftime, made it 4-1 in Brasilia.

Brazil were ahead after 17 minutes when Luiz Gustavo won the ball on the left and his low cross was perfectly weighted for Neymar, in space in the centre of the penalty area, to deftly guide the ball into the far corner of the net.

Cameroon refused to capitulate and were level nine minutes later when Allan Nyom squared for Joel Matip to sidefoot into an empty net and

political meeting or procession. We were innocent, ordinary people," said Putul, recalling that morning when she had gone to the celebration along with her newlywed husband and her brother Sajib Howlader.

"Leaving me near the stage, Ashim and Sajib went to talk with an artiste they knew. He said to me, 'You sit here; I am coming,' but he never did," Putul said in a choking voice.

Unlike Mamun's mother, Putul realised that her wait for justice was not over yet.

"I am not happy with the verdict because the convicts would appeal to the High Court," she said, demanding maximum punishment for all the 14 convicts.

With some of the convicts still at large and their followers believed to be hiding among common people, she did not initially want to reveal her identity, fearing retribution.

"I want to meet the prime minister and tell her the pains and trouble I have been through for the last 13 years. I am sure she would understand as she herself has lost her family," added Putul, who has been living with her parents after her parents-in-law died of grief a few years after their son's death.

director of food and civil supplies in the Tripura government, said the external affairs ministry has already worked out the formalities with Bangladesh to carry out smooth movement of the first consignment of food grains.

"Once this experiment works well, we will be able to move our requirement through Bangladesh till the Lumding-Badarpur broad-gauge conversion work is completed by March-April 2015," he told The Indian Express.

The distance from Ashuganj to Tripura's capital Agartala is only 45km whereas it's 1,650km from Kolkata via Guwahati and 2,637km from New Delhi. The distance between Agartala and Kolkata via Bangladesh is just about 350km.

Tripura, which requires 33,000 tonnes of food grains every month, has to transport the entire bulk from the FCI storehouses in Guwahati and Lumding through the metre-gauge Lumding-Agartala rail link.

The Lumding-Badarpur section, built in the mid-19th century by the British, and popularly called the Hill Section, is the most treacherous, particularly when monsoon rain causes landslides. The Hill Section is being relaid and converted into broad-gauge.

may face and the names of those he may want to be sent for trial.

A final decision, however, is taken by the Palma de Mallorca provincial court after considering any appeals.

Anti-corruption prosecutors have previously opposed the judge's decision to name Cristina, 49, as a criminal suspect for complicity in the allegedly dodgy business dealings of her husband, a former Olympic handball player.

Long thought of as untouchable, the smiling, blonde-haired Cristina, would be the first direct relation of the Spanish monarch in history to stand in the dock as a criminal defendant.

The judge has spent more than two years probing allegations that Urdangarin, 46, and a former business partner creamed off money from government contracts awarded to Noos, a charitable foundation he chaired.

momentarily silence the home fans. Shouts of "Brazil! Brazil!" then rang out around the vast arena and the hosts were back in front in the 35th minute when Neymar ran at the defence and clipped a low shot past a wrongfooted Charles Itandje in the Cameroon goal.

Brazil made a similarly brisk start to the second period and David Luiz popped up on the left wing in the 49th to chip the ball to the far post for Fred to head home.

Neymar came off to a rapturous reception and was replaced by Willian in the 71st minute before Fernandinho clipped the ball into the corner after a well-worked move six minutes from time to complete an impressive win for the tournament favourites.

Mexico, meanwhile, rode on second-half goals from Rafael Marquez, Andres Guardado and Javier Hernandez for a 3-1 win over Croatia.

Skipper Marquez broke the deadlock with a thundering header in the 72nd minute before Andres Guardado finished off a swift counter-attack.

Hernandez made it 3-0 with a back post header from a corner and although Croatia pulled a goal back in the 87th minute through Ivan Perisic they had Ante Rebic sent-off for an awful challenge two minutes later.

BANGLADESH-INDIA Sea boundary verdict July 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Netherlands court is likely to deliver the verdict in the maritime boundary arbitration between Bangladesh and India on July 2, navy chief Vice Admiral M Farid Habib said yesterday.

He was talking to journalists after attending the Summer President Parade 2014 of the newly commissioned officers of Bangladesh Navy at Chittagong naval academy.

Once the verdict is made, Bangladesh will be able to explore natural resources in its sea territory without any dispute with India, noted the navy chief.

Bangladesh, he said, has already won a court's verdict on the maritime boundary dispute with Myanmar and established its rights on a vast area of the Bay of Bengal. So it is the navy's responsibility to safeguard the area and its resources, added Farid.

Highlighting the development and modernisation of the force in recent years, he said it is only a matter of time when submarines would be included in the navy to ensure security in the Bay.

Imran Hossain and Wali Mehruz received the Navy Chief Award and Sword of Honour for their outstanding performances, while Zinat Raihan and Jamiul Huda Jeson won the BN Osmani Gold Award and BN Navy Chief Gold Award.

Bangladesh won a landmark verdict against Myanmar at the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea on March 14, 2012.

Through this verdict, the country sustained its claims to a full 200 nautical miles exclusive economic zone in the Bay, and also to a substantial share of the outer continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam on February 5 told parliament that Bangladesh expects to sustain its claim to 25,000 square kilometres of exclusive economic and territorial waters in the Bay of Bengal.

Bangladesh on October 8, 2009 had moved for an arbitration concerning its maritime boundary dispute with India and served an arbitration notice on the neighbouring country in this regard.

Efforts were made to settle the dispute through the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the capital of the Netherlands. The hearing in the arbitration ended in December last year when both the countries argued their cases before the court.

No allocation

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TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said it was necessary for the government to allocate fund for the BCCTF as per the National Action Plan of Adaptation.

The government proved its willingness to battle the climate change by forming BCCTF in 2009, and allocated an amount of Tk 2,700 crore to it for four consecutive years.

This fund logically established the demand of Bangladesh to get compensation from developed countries.

But suddenly, the government stopped allotting money to the fund without any explanation which surprised many, he said.

He also urged the developed countries to provide the due grants to the Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) as per their commitments.

Govt orders

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Haji pilgrims. Scientists suspect camels to be the likely source of the virus.

Last week the Saudi government sent a letter to the foreign ministry asking it to take necessary steps, including special preventive measures, against the MERS virus.

Muggers

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Billal withdrew the money from Islampur branch of Al-Arafah Islami bank. He was going to deposit the sum with another branch of the same bank in the area around 3:45pm, said the victim's friend Shahidul Islam.

Three muggers stopped Billal, shot him in the leg and snatched the money, said Shahidul.

Sub-inspector Azizul Haque of Babubazar police camp said they were investigating the incident.

Billal has been undergoing treatment at Mitford Hospital.

Late; a consolation

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people and injuring many more.

"It is not important to us what verdict was delivered. It is a consolation that justice followed its own course," said Sanjida as she was speaking to reporters at the Chhayanaut Bhaban in Dhanmondi yesterday following a court verdict that sentenced eight Islamist militants to death and six more to life imprisonment for the attack.

She, however, appreciated the fact that the verdict in the case has finally been delivered.

"We never considered the attack as being targeted towards any particular organisation or individual," she said adding that it was an attack on the Bengali culture as a whole.

The Pahela Baishakh celebration, which Chhayanaut began at Dhaka's Ramna Park on a quiet April morning of 1967 as a protest against a carefully designed cultural aggression by the then hostile West Pakistani rulers, never faced such an onslaught even from the Pakistanis.

Eminent Nazrul artiste Khairul Anam Shakil, who was present on the stage during the attack, said, "Thousands of people irrespective of their ethnicity, religion and class, gather at Ramna Batamul every year to celebrate the [Bengali] New Year. Why would anyone want to hurt them?"

"A question kept on ringing in my mind all these years -- our culture does not have any conflict with religion. Why then would such a thing happen?" he questioned, referring to the banned Islamist outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami which carried out the attack.

"The sooner people realise that religion and culture are not in conflict at all, the better it would be for our country," hoped Shakil, general

Commuters suffer

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the streets," she said during the proposed budget discussion in parliament.

The mass procession began from Shikha Chironton near the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh around 4:30pm and then went through Shahbagh, Elephant Road, Science Laboratory, Mirpur Road, Kalabagan and Russell Square before ending at Bangabandhu Bhaban in Dhanmondi.

Vehicular movements in those areas and their adjacent areas came to a standstill during the procession.

Besides, public buses and private vehicles were barred to ply the road stretching from Matsya Bhaban in Kakrail to Shahbagh ahead of the procession since 3:00pm, observed a DailyStar correspondent.

This put huge pressure on roads from Purana Paltan to Kakrail and Kakrail to Ruposhi Bangla Hotel at Shahbagh.

Vehicles on these roads took more than double the usual time it takes to reach destinations on a regular day in moderate traffic congestion, forcing people to walk miles or wait for hours to catch a vehicle.

Trader Bazlul Haq was found standing at Farmgate in the evening. He was trying to board a bus to go to Mirpur to meet someone for his business purpose.

He waited for over two hours at Shahbagh and then walked to Farmgate.

"I'm waiting here [at Farmgate]

Dirty tricks in campaign

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Like elsewhere in the country, local AL and JP leaders charged residents between Tk 50,000 and Tk 70,000 for giving illegal gas connections.

"The letter puts voters in a dilemma. They fear their gas connections will be cut off if I am elected, and they will lose connections anyway in case he [Selim Osman] is defeated," said Akram.

The alleged signature forgery fuels the growing apprehension of voters that the by-election cannot be won against Selim Osman, a member of the controversial Osman family.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's announcement of being herself the custodian of Osman family has helped create this impression among voters, said local businessman Badiuzzaman Badal.

"The Osman family simply can't afford losing the seat. They [Osman brothers] know once it is lost, it is gone for good," said 65-year-old Shamsul Huq of Bandar thana.

"Whoever you vote for, Selim Osman will be elected anyhow, be it by rigging, violence or casting fake votes," he quoted Osman campaigners as saying.

Akram's campaigners complained that the Election Commission was working in favour of Selim by keeping silent regarding the violation of electoral code

secretary of Chhayanaut.

The issue of religion being put against culture also came up in the remarks of Mofidul Haque, trustee of Liberation War Museum.

"Besides the legal framework, there is a social aspect of this case. We need to think about addressing the issues that caused the attack -- misinterpretation of religion, cultural hatred and creation of killers," he said, commenting that such practices have in place for a long period of time.

Mofidul Haque, who too witnessed the attack, urged the government to take steps to trace and arrest the five absconding death row convicts as soon as possible.

Expressing satisfaction at the verdict, noted cultural connoisseur Kamal Lohani said the trial should have been completed faster.

"If the trials of such cases of public interest are completed and the punishment is meted out quickly, then the probability of recurrence of such incidents may come down. People will acquire the courage to speak up against such militant and terrorist activities," he observed.

Lohani, also the president of progressive cultural platform Udichi, pointed out how the case of militant attack on a programme of his organisation in 1999 has seen no headway till date.

"Such cases should be tried at the speedy trial tribunals," he commented.

Meanwhile, two cultural organisations -- Sammilito Samajik Andolon and Samprodaiyikota-Jongibad Birodhi Mancha -- issued separate press statements welcoming the verdict and hoping that the trials of all militant attacks, including the 21 August grenade attack, would be completed soon.

for one and a half hours as the situation is the same here.

"Political leaders always promise to work for people. But I cannot see any reflection of such promises in their activities," said a distraught Bazlul.

People, who set off from the city's northern parts like Uttara, Banani and Gulshan at different times, needed three to four hours to reach Farmgate and its adjacent areas.

A large number of public buses were used yesterday to take people from different parts of the city to the rally venue. This created a scarcity of buses, making commuters wait at bus stops for hours.

Garment worker Tania Begum was seen lost among hundreds at the Farmgate intersection.

Amid people jostling to get on a Badda-bound bus, she could not even approach the gate.

"That bus arrived here nearly one hour after the previous one left. As a woman, it is hard for me to push through the crowd to board a bus on usual days. Today's situation is even worse," she told The Daily Star.

Sixty-eight-year-old Abdul Mannan went to Islamia Eye Hospital at Khamarbari. After visiting the doctor, he was in a hurry to return to Mohammadpur but failed to make it even in an hour.

When asked about the reason, the elderly man with a gesture of impatience pointed at well-decorated pick-ups heading towards Shahbagh with Awami League activists.

of conduct by the JP candidate.

Returning Officer Mihir Sarwar Morshed confirmed that Selim had to face an inquiry committee on Sunday for violating electoral code.

"People are bent on voting against the tyranny of Osman family. Would they be able to exercise their franchise?" questioned a female voter requesting anonymity.

Of the 141 polling centres, about 90 were identified as "very important" (vulnerable), said Narayanganj SP Khandaker Mahid Uddin.

Anisur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Narayanganj, said around 150 members of Border Guard Bangladesh have been deployed in the electoral area since 5:00pm yesterday.

The Narayanganj-5 seat fell vacant following the death of Nasim Osman, the eldest of Osman brothers, last month.

Contacted, Selim refuted the allegation of signature forgery against him, saying that he had no idea about the newspaper report.

Backed by businessmen, Selim pledged further industrialisation of the city.

"If I wanted to be elected bypassing an election, I wouldn't have laboured so much in reaching voters door to door," he mentioned.