



Two factions of the BNP clash in front of the party's Naya Paltan Office in the capital yesterday. Story on Page 3

PHOTO: STAR

## Ebola-infected Italian doctor 'recovering'

AFP, Rome

An Italian doctor who contracted Ebola in west Africa is recovering but is still in an isolation unit, the specialist clinic in Rome treating him said yesterday.

The Spallanzani institute said on Twitter that the 50-year-old medic -- who has not been named -- was in a "good condition" and was "recovering in isolation".

## Stop gold

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against the officials involved.

"We have told them many times over to take effective measures and ensure close monitoring to stop gold smuggling through the airport. But they have failed to do so," Muhammad Faruk Khan, chief of the committee, told The Daily Star after a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The former civil aviation minister also said the parliamentary watchdog had asked Biman and Caab to ensure exemplary punishment against their employees if found involved in the crime.

Faruk, also a ruling Awami League MP, said he had been informed by Caab Chairman Air Vice-Marshal M Sanaul Huq that one steward had been terminated and three other officials temporarily suspended for their involvement in gold smuggling.

Besides, Caab is also carrying out an investigation against three other officials and action will be taken against them if they are found guilty, said Faruk quoting the Caab chairman.

The JS body asked the civil aviation ministry to submit its probe report on gold smuggling before the committee's next meeting which is likely to be held within the next 15 days.

## Over 5,000

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the WDB, these trees can be felled 20 years after plantation.

Recently the WDB took steps to repair the embankment and a construction firm was selected through a tender for the repair work only. But last week, the contractor's men started felling trees to repair the dam with the help of WDB men.

On Thursday, Sekandar Munshi and Abdus Sattar Musullee of Sekandarkhal village submitted a written complaint to the upazila nirbahi officer of Amtali over the issue.

"A section of local influential people have already looted some trees from the dam," said Abdus Sattar, adding that more than 5,000 trees have already been felled.

Amtali UNO Mizanur Rahman visited the area on Sunday and asked the WDB men and some forest men to stop felling trees.

"Nobody can cut trees without a tender," the UNO said. Certain procedures, including a tender from the forest department, are required for cutting trees, he added.

Abdul Maleque, executive engineer of the WDB in Barguna, said, "I didn't give permission to cut trees."

Forest department can take actions against the persons involved in cutting trees, he said.

Mihir Kanti, divisional forest officer (DFO) said, the WDB men started chopping the trees without obtaining any permission. "We will take action against them who allegedly cut the trees defying rules," he added.

Mir Jahurul Haque, deputy commissioner of Barguna, said, "Steps to stop cutting trees have already been taken by the UNO and I asked to take legal steps against those involved."

## First UAE nuclear plant to start in 2017

AFP, Abu Dhabi

The first of four nuclear reactors being built by the United Arab Emirates will come on line in 2017 and the rest will be fully operational by 2020, an official said yesterday.

"When they are fully operational in 2020, they will generate 25 percent of UAE power needs," the CEO of the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corp (ENEC), Mohammed al-Hammadi, told an energy conference in Abu Dhabi.

Hammadi said that 61 percent of the first reactor has been completed and it is slated to start production in 2017.

Work is underway on the second and third reactors while the site is being prepared for the fourth, he said. The second reactor will come on line in 2018, the third the following year and the last in 2020.

Hammadi said another five percent of UAE electricity needs will be provided by renewable energy sources by

2020, helping the Gulf state to cut 12 million tonnes of carbon emissions.

In 2009, an international consortium led by the state-run Korea Electric Power Corp won a \$20.4 billion (15.8 billion euro) deal to build four nuclear power plants in Baraka, west of Abu Dhabi.

Under the biggest single contract Seoul has ever won abroad, South Korean firms including Samsung, Hyundai and Doosan Heavy Industries are building the four 1,400-megawatt reactors.

Hammadi said ENEC has signed a \$3 billion contract with international firms to provide fuel for the plants over 15 years.

The UAE sits on a large wealth of oil and gas and pumps 2.8 million barrels per day of crude oil.

In March, Abu Dhabi also opened the world's largest operating plant of concentrated solar power, which has the capacity to provide electricity to 20,000 homes.

## Muslim party quits in major blow to Sri Lanka leader

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse suffered a setback to his re-election hopes yesterday when a key minister and his minority Muslim party quit the coalition government.

Industry and Commerce Minister Rishad Bathiudeen said he was switching allegiance to Maithripala Sirisena, the main opposition candidate seeking to topple Rajapakse in a January 8 election.

It is the latest in a series of blows for the 69-year-old president, who was seen as the favourite when he called snap polls last month but has seen his former health minister Sirisena garner significant support.

Bathiudeen accused Rajapakse of failing to restrain a radical Buddhist group accused of attacking mosques, churches and businesses run by religious minorities in the Buddhist-majority country.

"I asked the president to stop these

religious hate attacks, but he failed to take action against offenders," Bathiudeen told reporters in Colombo.

He accused the government of being behind an attack on Muslims in the coastal resort town of Aluthgama in June that left at least four people dead.

And he said some 69 elected representatives from his All Ceylon Makkal (People's) Congress (ACMC) were joining the opposition in a mass defection of Muslims politicians from the government.

Muslims, the second largest minority in the island after Hindu Tamils, account for about 10 percent of the electorate and could emerge as king-makers in January's presidential election if the majority Sinhalese are split down the middle.

Both Rajapakse and Sirisena are members of the majority Sinhala Buddhist community.

## No CSR, if no net profit

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and recreational facilities for the underprivileged, upgrading facilities and life-saving equipment in emergency rescue services like the fire brigades, and infrastructure improvement for disadvantaged communities in remote areas.

In case of CSR assistances to institutions or organisations, the central bank advised the dedicated CSR units or foundations to get into Memorandums of Understanding.

In cases of assistances to individuals, the unit or foundation should collect and file reports or documents sufficient to ascertain proper end use, and withhold the assistance in unsatisfactory cases, said the notice.

The new instructions came as the CSR commitments of banks and financial institutions have increased several-fold since 2008, raising concerns about ensuring allocation of the budgetary resources as well as proper end use monitoring.

## Thai maid to die for drug peddling in Malaysia

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

A Thai woman was sentenced to death yesterday after a Malaysian high court found her guilty of trafficking drugs, Bernama news agency reported.

Duangchit Khonthokhonbari, 33, who had been working in Malaysia as a maid, was caught with 2.81 kilogrammes (6.2 pounds) of methamphetamine at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in March last year.

Anyone with at least 50 grams of methamphetamine is considered a trafficker in Malaysia and subject to the death penalty.

Defence lawyers could not be reached for immediate comment, but Duangchit is expected to appeal against the death sentence, which is carried out by hanging in Malaysia.

The verdict comes just days after an Australian mother-of-four, Maria Elvira Pinto Exposto, was also charged with drug trafficking in Malaysia.

A customs check at the airport on December 7 discovered 1.5 kilogrammes of crystal methamphetamine, or "ice," in a hidden compartment in her bag.

Her lawyers insist she was innocently duped into carrying a bag that appeared to contain only clothing by a stranger in Shanghai.

Exposto is due to appear in court again on January 23, when a chemist's report on the suspected drugs will be submitted.

Hundreds of Malaysians and foreigners are on death row in the Muslim-majority country, many for drug-related offences, though few have been executed in recent years.

Two Australians were hanged in 1986 for heroin trafficking -- the first Westerners executed in Malaysia -- in a case that strained bilateral relations.

Last year Dominic Bird, a truck driver from Perth, was acquitted on drug trafficking charges after he was allegedly caught with 167 grams of crystal methamphetamine.

## Robber killed

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road with logs around 3:00am, said Sudarshan Roy, assistant superintendent of police in Magura Sadar circle.

At that time, a police team was going to Mandartala as part of its regular patrol. Finding the robbers, police chased them. The gang opened fire on the law enforcers, and police also returned fire, triggering a "gun battle" between the law enforcers and robbers, he said.

Uzzal suffered bullet injuries while trying to flee the spot. However, other members of the gang managed to escape, the police official added.

He was declared dead on arrival at Magura Sadar Hospital.

Police also claimed they recovered one pistol, four bullets, two sharp weapons and a saw from the spot.

## 2 fake

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Yahiya while the probe into the eight others is on, said its Director General Mohammad Shahiduzzaman.

In the report submitted to the commission late last month, the probe committee recommended that the government revoke Yahiya's certificate and drop his name from the gazette.

When Yahiya joined the ACC, he declared that he was not a freedom fighter. But later he secured the certificate without maintaining proper procedures, said the DG, declining to elaborate.

To evade departmental action, Yahiya resigned the very day the probe began. While resigning, he promised to return salaries and other benefits of the four months he served using the freedom fighter's certificate.

Another ACC Director Abdul Aziz Bhuiyan submitted a fake Muktijoddha Sangsad certificate to the commission.

The certificate bore a countersignature of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Serial numbered 49,719, the certificate does not bear an issue date.

Sources in the Liberation War Affairs Ministry said the last certificate issued by the Muktijoddha Sangsad is serial numbered 47,931.

"If anyone produces a certificate with a serial number beyond that, it must be a fake certificate," said an official.

Asked, Abdul Aziz said, "The authority that issued the certificate should know what problem it had, not me. They gave me the certificate in 2001."

Under the rules, Muktijoddha Sangsad certificates must be signed by its secretary general and counter-signed by the incumbent prime minister. Interestingly, Hasina was not in office of the prime minister in 2001.

In the past several months, the ACC investigated three secretaries, one ex-secretary and one joint secretary and found they obtained the certificates through irregularities, violating the Muktijoddha Council Act-2002.

## Costly healthcare

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of Excellence for Universal Health Coverage and The Daily Star.

Bangladesh has achieved many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but a stronger commitment is needed to achieve the Universal Health Coverage (UHC), Iqbal said.

The goal of the UHC, as declared by the World Health Organisation, is to ensure that all people obtain the health services they need without suffering financial hardship when paying for those.

Though Bangladesh has performed well in the health sector, achieving the UHC is still a far cry, the experts pointed out.

Life expectancy in Bangladesh is now nearly 70, which is 65 both in India and Pakistan.

Child death per 1,000 live births is 46 in Bangladesh, while it is 61 in India and 72 in Pakistan. And maternal death in Bangladesh is 194 per 100,000 live births against 200 in India and 260 in Pakistan.

However, catastrophic health expenditure in Bangladesh is nearly 16 percent, while it is around 11 percent in India and below 6 percent in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong and Thailand.

In Bangladesh, 64 percent of the total health expenditure comes from people's pockets, while 26 percent comes from public fund and 10 percent from external funding by NGOs and development partners, according to the icddr,b.

Inadequate and inefficient public healthcare and profiteering in the private healthcare sector are two major factors behind such private spending, said the experts.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra Coordinator Manzur Kadir said people in the remote areas and urban slums are heavily deprived of healthcare. Addressing this issue should be given top priority, he said.

Prof Rashid-e-Mahbub, president of the National Committee on Health Rights Movement, said upazila health complexes lack adequate facilities and fail to provide required services to patients.

Government officials and those in the corporate sector enjoy some sort of health coverage, while the poor segment of the population has very little access to healthcare, he said.

Some of the experts suggested introducing social health insurance, while others preferred making effective the existing public health facilities to achieve the UHC.

Bangladesh has done well in primary health coverage. But it might be difficult to attain similar success in the next phases, said Hossain Zillur.

Now more deaths are caused not by infectious diseases, but by non-communicable ones such as heart diseases and cancer, he added.

Achieving the UHC should be high on the government agenda, he said, suggesting that the issues of poor gov-

CHALLENGES IN ENSURING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE
Mobilising more resources
Cutting out-of-pocket health spending
Reducing inefficient use of resources
Improving quality of healthcare
Inadequate public healthcare facilities
Profiteering in pvt healthcare sector

ernance and resource constraints must be addressed immediately.

Kawzar Afzana, director of Health, Nutrition and Population at Brac, said people are already spending a huge amount of money from their pockets for healthcare.

But they are still not getting quality healthcare, and millions of them are getting poorer.

"We are trying to devise a health financing model -- a systematic way of paying money. The poor may not be able to pay, but will come under health coverage. This needs to be discussed," she said.

Jahangir Khan of the icddr,b said Sweden has social health insurance scheme based on tax money. Local governments there maintain a fund and have contracts with private hospitals that provide quality services.

The idea is that the rich pay more and the poor less, he said.

Such arrangements encourage competition among private healthcare providers and improve the quality of service, added Jahangir.

Kelvin Hui, principal adviser to GIZ Bangladesh, said the government is good at regulating, but not at running big hospitals.

Advocating social health insurance, he said a fundamental change is needed in healthcare management to improve the quality of services in Bangladesh.

Sukumar Sarker, senior technical and policy adviser to USAID, said since foreign aid is shrinking, there should be more focus on sustainable approach to healthcare based on domestic resources.

Putting stress on good governance, Liaquat Ali, vice chancellor of Bangladesh University of Health Sciences, said the state has to decide whether it would regard healthcare as a commodity or right.

Acting icddr,b executive director Abbas Bhuiya said disparity in the health sector must be reduced, and vigorous efforts should be made to achieve the UHC.

Salehuddin Ahmed, managing editor of The Daily Star, moderated the discussion.

It was addressed by Brac Vice Chairman Mushtaque Chowdhury, ex-health secretary Humayun Kabir, and Prof Syed Masud Ali and Prof Malabika Sarker of James P Grant School of Public Health at Brac University.

## Victims wait for justice

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him or visited the police station to file cases. "We will lodge the cases if they come and make complaints," he said over the telephone yesterday.

Kamal, whose 1.40 lakh pineapple plants were cut down allegedly by ethnic people, at first refused to say that he had gone to the police to file a case. Later on, he said, "The police told me that a committee was formed to probe the incident. 'So, you wait until the probe is done.'"

Nur Islam, Jamal, Asad, whose pineapple plants were destroyed, and Afsar Master, who lost 20,000 teak saplings, had also gone to the police station with Kamal. Later, they filed a general diary instead.

Supan Chakma, convener of Naniarchhar Bhumi Roksha Committee, and Ananda Chakma, member of Burigati union, also had similar accusations about the police.

Bangalee settlers and the indigenous people said criminals hardly ever get punished in the hilly areas and that was the reason there were so many incidents of abduction, extortion, and killing.

In most cases, no legal action is taken and even if a case goes to trial, witnesses cannot be found, they added.

**PROBE BODY VISIT**

A three-member probe body, formed two days after the incident, visited the Suridaspara and Bogachhari villages yesterday led by Additional Magistrate Saif Uddin Ahmed of Rangamati.

This is the first visible action by the authorities in a week.

They visited the gutted houses of the indigenous people and the pineapple and teak plantations. The committee members also talked to some victims and enquired about the incidents.

While Bangalee victims accused the indigenous people of destroying their pineapple plants and teak saplings, the former blamed the settlers for attacking their homes and burning those down.

Earlier, the Rangamati district administration had formed a 12-member committee, comprising members of Bangalee community and indigenous villagers, to solve the ongoing problem through discussions.

Led by Naniarchhar upazila chair-

## Italy foils neo fascist plot, arrests 14

AFP, Rome

man Shaki Chakma, the committee failed to hold any meeting.

**POLITICS WITH RELIEF**

The victim Chakma families were refusing to take government's help, terming it inadequate. But they are accepting assistance from other organisations.

The day after the attack on the indigenous people, the local administration sent corrugated iron sheets, rice and blankets. The victims were ready to accept those, but the Naniarchhar Bhumi Roksha Committee, which is backed by United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), got in the way and refused the aid.

The Bhumi Roksha Committee was also trying to delay the government's initiative to rebuild the houses, saying the victims would only take help if the authorities made sure the indigenous people would never be attacked again.

Law enforcers alleged that the committee and UPDF wanted to cash in on the situation, showing the torched houses to different local and international organisation and getting aid.

"The government primarily selected 15 victims with a plan to start construction tomorrow [Tuesday]," said Naniarchhar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Nuruzzaman.

"The government will rebuild all the houses in phases," he told The Daily Star over the telephone.

Italian police arrested 14 neo-fascists and placed 44 others under investigation yesterday after uncovering a plot to assassinate politicians and attack police stations over the Christmas period.

Police swooped after wiretaps revealed the gang, an offshoot of the banned far right organisation Ordine Nuovo, had begun stockpiling arms and planned to carry out attacks over the holiday period.