ROBBERY IN NY Bangladeshi woman hurt

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi woman suffered minor injuries when a robber forcibly entered her house at Jamaica of New York on Monday morning.

Shameem Ahsan, consul general at the Bangladesh Consulate General in New York, yesterday said an elderly Bangladeshi named Fatema Jinnat was slightly hurt when the robber forcibly entered her house apparently to hide there after committing a robbery in an apartment occupied by a Guyanese family.

The robber was trying to escape police who later arrested him with arms, he told The Daily Star. The injured received treatment at a nearby hospital on Monday.

"I sent our Deputy Consul General Shahedul Islam to the neighbourhood to enquire about the well-being of the Bangladeshis living there and to have first-hand knowledge of the incident," mentioned Shameem.

The Bangladesh mission is in contact with the authorities concerned and Bangladeshis there following the incident, he added.

Some Bangladeshi media, however, reported that a Bangladeshi family might have been held hostage in Jamaica by a group of criminals.

Cyclone-hit Vanuatu faces food shortages

AFP, Port Vila

Vanuatu warned Tuesday it faces imminent food shortages as accounts emerged of huge damage to a large outer island, days after one of the fiercest cyclones on record pummelled the Pacific archipelago.

Relief agencies say conditions are among the most challenging they have faced, with mounting concerns about disease.

Solar solution

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commissioned on January 15 after they were handed over to the HKUS.

Farmers said they would have to pay irrigation bills to the NGO in three instalments under the project rules. During irrigation in the IRRI season, they will pay the NGO Tk 1,000 in advance, before harvesting another Tk 1,000 and after harvesting Tk 3,000 for each bigha of land.

But during the Boro season they will have to spend only Tk 1,400 and during the Robi season Tk 600 for irrigation. Earlier, they had to spend Tk 8,000 for irrigating each bigha of land by shallow tube wells run on diesel.

Farmer Sujan Biwas, who is growing IRRI on three bighas of land, said he expects a bumper yield this year as there was adequate supply of water from the solar pumps.

Another farmer Rafiqul Islam said they would be able to produce three crops a year under the new irrigation system at much lower costs.

Udoy Shankar Biswas, secretary of Hardevpur Krishi Unnayan Samity, said local framers had long been deprived of proper irrigation. With the success of the solar pumps, the samity is now planning to set up a mini solar grid project to supply electricity to the village households.

He hoped the new project would

turn the village into an ideal one.

Reckless truck

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from Uttara hit them around 2:45am, leaving the two policemen critically injured, said Nazrul Islam, officer-incharge of the police station.

They were taken to Kurmitola General Hospital. As Al Amin's condition deteriorated, he was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead,

Nazrul said. Police seized the truck and

detained its driver and his deputy. Al Amin, father of a three-and-half year old daughter, joined Bangladesh Police in 2006 as a constable and was promoted to assistant sub-inspector

in 2012, said the police official. Al Amin hailed from Sreebordi upazila of Sherpur.

On March 10, he was transferred to Khilkhet Police Station from the

capital's Kotwali Police Station. In another accident, a man, aged around 50, was killed as a bus hit

him while he was crossing a road at Gulistan.

Deceased Abdul Gaffar, an employee of a textile mill at Savar, along with his two sons was going to his daughter's home in Munshiganj, said Sentu Chandra Das, assistant sub-inspector of DMCH police out-

They arrived at Gulistan around 1:00pm by bus from Savar and were crossing the road to catch a Munshiganj-bound bus. Suddenly a bus hit Gaffar, hurting him seriously. Gaffar was rushed to the hospital where doctors declared him dead, the police official added.

Uproar in Lok Sabha over communal incidents

THE HINDU ONLINE

The Lok Sabha witnessed noisy scenes during Zero Hour on Tuesday when the Congress and the AIADMK raised the issue of desecration of a church in Hisar, the rape of a nun in West Bengal and a communally objectionable statement made by senior BJP leader Subramanian Swamy in Assam.

Raising the issue, Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi said, "I want to draw the attention of my colleagues to the growing fear among people and rising incidents of religious intolerance. A church was desecrated in Hisar in Haryana, and the state government said legal papers were not available. Can that be a reason (for destroying a church)?"

Mr. Gogoi also pointed out that a national executive member from the BJP had visited Assam and made objectionable statements. "Does God only reside in temples, not in mosques and churches," he asked.

He was referring to a statement made by senior BJP leader Subramanian Swamy in Assam: he reportedly said mosques and churches are mere "buildings" to offer prayers, and therefore there was "no problem in demolishing them."

The AIADMK's P.B. Venugopal, echoing Mr. Gogoi on the issue, said, "India is a secular country and all politicians must avoid glorifying any one religion."

Immediately, after that, as chaos continued in the Lok Sabha, the Congress' Adhir Ranjan Choudhury and the CPI(M)'s Mohammad Salim raised the issue of the rape of a nun in West Bengal's Ranaghat district. Mr. Salim stressed that communal incidents was not confined to one state or one religion, hitting out at the BJP, the ruling party, accusing it of "creating a

communal situation in the country."

Immediately, the BJP's S.S. Ahluwalia who represents West Bengal's Darjeeling constituency, jumped to his feet at this point and addressed the house in Bengali, attacked the Trinamool Congress government in the state. This saw the Trinamool's Saugata Roy joining issue with Mr. Ahluwalia, stressing that Chief Minister Mamata Bannerjee had visited the traumatised nun in Ranaghat and promised stern action against the culprits.

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister M. Venkaiah Naidu, then rose to his feet to support the Trinamool Congress, but went on to dissociate his government from the communal episodes in Haryana and West Bengal, and his party from Dr. Swamy's statement in Assam. Having done that, Mr. Naidu went

them of playing vote bank politics. Later, as agitated MPs continued to highlight the issue, he delivered his final lines: "This government under the leadership of Narendra Modi believes in justice for all, appearement of none. This government is perfect."

on to attack the opposition, accusing

There was uproar in the Rajya Sabha over comments by Mr. Swamy in Assam where he reportedly said mosques are not religious places.

"Secularism is the biggest strength of a

democracy. If there is no secular character, there will be no democracy," Congress leader Pramod Tiwari said, raising the issue soon after the house met. "They are talking about breaking

mosques," Mr. Tiwari said as several opposition members joined him and created uproar.

The members remained unrelenting even as Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said the members could discuss

ISIS victim Foley gave up escape for friend: Report

AFP, Madrid

The US journalist killed by the ISIS militant group, James Foley, might have escaped but gave up the attempt so as not to abandon his friend, a former fellow hostage said Monday. In a serialised account of his own

captivity at the hands of the Islamist group in 2013-2014, Spanish reporter Javier Espinosa revealed that Foley made two escape attempts with another hostage, British photographer John Cantlie. IS militants decapitated James Foley

in August 2014, five months after Espinosa and another Spaniard, photographer Ricardo Garcia Vilanova, were freed

The two Spaniards were held along with 21 others including Foley and Cantlie in an industrial complex north of Aleppo.

"Foley and Cantlie tried to escape twice. The first time was a resounding failure before it even started," Espinosa wrote in El Mundo newspaper.

room where we were held prisoner, clutching onto a blanket, he had to wait for Cantlie," who had been caught by a guard "Foley could have tried to flee on his

could not leave John on his own,' he said."

published on Sunday in El Mundo, Espinosa said IS extremists staged mock executions of Western captives.

jihadist answer to the US prison camp in Guantanamo Bay.

Schedule likely today

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to be held on the same day by April 30, said a top EC official, seeking anonym-

On March 12, CEC Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad had said the commission rations in the current month with a view to arranging the polls before Ramadan, which begins in June.

However, Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque on Monday recommended the elections be held by April 30.

The last election to the undivided

DCC was held in April 2002, and tenures of the representatives elected through it expired in May 2007.

But no election could be held after that for various reasons, including the state of emergency between 2007 and 2008, and complicacies regarding demarcation of boundaries of the bifurcated city corporations of Dhaka.

The LGRD ministry last month settled the boundary complications and requested the EC to take necessary steps for holding the polls to the two Dhaka city corporations.

The last election to the Chittagong City Corporation was held in 2010.

Lensman risked life

A few yards away, Avijit Roy was lying on the sidewalk: face down, in a pool of blood "It was about this time Avijit's body

began to shake violently," recalled libon.

Taking his head on her lap, she cried, "Avijit, let's go."

Jibon instantly clicked his camera thrice and rushed, elbowing his way through a more-than-150-strong crowd of onlookers including at least four policemen, to get a transport for taking the couple to a hospital.

or did nothing for the dying couple, perhaps because they didn't want to shoulder any legal harassment or risk their lives by stepping against the attackers.

daily, with whose help outspoken writer Humayun Azad survived a similar attack in February 2004, had to appear before a court in connection with the case even last year.

Probably that was why one of moment very well. Jibon's colleagues called him a "fool" around 10:00pm that night. His decision to help them even sparked a debate on journalists' "ethics" for being personally involved in such a

Nonetheless, Jibon managed to take Avijit and Bonya to Dhaka Medical College Hospital eventually. He stuck to his decision even when Bonya started calling Jibon an attacker and kidnapper on the way to hospital.

"She banged on the grille between the CNG driver and the passengers' seat, and pleaded, 'Please let me go. Don't kill me. Have I ever harmed you?'" Jibon said.

"She would not believe me even after I showed her a cop following the CNG in a motorcycle or the hospital's signboard from distance."

Though humiliated at the DMCH emergency where journalists are not allowed to enter, not even in that condition he had arrived, Jibon is happy that Bonya is alive. News agency Banglar Chokh

appointed Jibon, an HSC graduate, only six months ago. Before that, the youth who hailed from Khulna had spent two years in the Film Development Corporation as a still photographer. And he responded to the call of the

"I told them [journalists] that I

decidedly ceased to consider myself as a journalist while helping the couple.

"I was a journalist while clicking the camera. And then I became an ordinary human being."

Toy bomb kills father, 2 children in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

A father and two of his children were killed in northwest Pakistan Tuesday after a bomb concealed inside a toy went off inside their home. The incident happened in the vil-

lage of Bishigram in the Swat Valley. Salim Khan Marwat, the area's

police chief, said the 35-year-old man's three children and their cousin had found the toy in the streets and brought it home to play with. Once home, the toy exploded. The father, his nine-year-old daugh-

ter and seven-year-old son died on the spot while two other children were wounded," Marwat said, adding those injured were the man's other son and his nephew. Afzal Khan, a police official in

Bishigram village, confirmed the incident. The origin of the bomb was

unclear.

Dozens of children, mostly in insurgency-hit northwest Pakistan, have lost their lives in the past when playing with "toys" that turned out to be bombs.

"Toy" bombs were airdropped in neighbouring Afghanistan by Soviet forces during the 1980s as weapons against those who opposed their invasion.

The Swat Valley was under the de facto control of Pakistani Taliban commander Maulana Fazlullah from 2007 to 2009, where it imposed a harsh brand of Sharia law and carried out public floggings and hangings.

Scientists

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be the first scientific demonstration of using radio commands to control the fine aerial movements of freeflying beetles, the researchers said.

"Beetles are ideal study subjects because they can carry relatively heavy payloads," said Hirotaka Sato of the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, who carried out the research with colleagues at the University of California, Berkeley. "We could easily add a small

microphone and thermal sensors for applications in search-and-rescue missions. With this technology, we could safely explore areas not accessible before, such as the small nooks and crevices in a collapsed building, Dr Sato said. The study, published in the journal

Current Biology, involved the attachment of a tiny microprocessor and a built-in wireless receiver and transmitter to the back of the giant flower beetle, which is six centimetres long and weighs eight grams -- nearly the same as a pound coin. The complete device is powered by

a 3.9 volt lithium battery and is connected to six micro-electrodes implanted into the insect's wingfolding coleopteran muscles, the scientists discovered.

Signals sent to the beetle every thousandth of a second stimulated it to take off, turn left or right, hover in mid-flight and land again. The giant flower beetles were untethered and could fly completely free, they said.

BNP-Jamaat

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Humayun, a member of the AL advisory council, secured 1,587 votes.

Mahbub Uddin Khokon got 1,880 votes and his rival Momtazuddin Ahmed Mehedi, an executive member of the AL, obtained 1,477 votes.

Khandker Mahbub, also vice chair man of Bangladesh Bar Council, has been elected SCBA president for the fourth time, and Mahbub Uddin Khokon has been elected SCBA secretary for the third time.

Last year, the JAOP had won 13 out of 14 executive posts of the SCBA, including those of president and secretary, and the SASP had got one post.

The JAOP has been dominating the SCBA since 2010.

Mahbub Uddin Khokon told The Daily Star that most of the SASP candidates had lost in the SCBA elections as the lawyers of the highest court had cast their votes considering the political situation and the government's action that deprived people of justice and rule of law. AM Aminuddin, former SCBA

secretary from the SASP, said the SASP had lost in the SCBA elections as the JAOP lawyers had made huge new voters who had cast their votes for the JAOP candidates. Other winners from the JAOP are: ASM Mokter Kabir Khan (vice presi-

dent), Shawkat Ara Begum Dulalee (treasurer), Mazedul Islam Patwary Ujjal (assistant secretary) and Mirza Al Mahmood, Anowarul Islam Shaheen, Jasim Sarker and Shamima Sultana Dipti (executive members). The winners from the SASP are Abul Khayer (vice president), Dilower

tant secretary) and AKM Daudur Rahman Mina, Omit Das Gupta and Mohiuddin Shamim (executive members). The two-day polls ended on

Mostafa Chowdhury Modhu (assis-

Monday afternoon and the results were announced early yesterday.

Putin orders huge military exercises

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Russia's entire Northern Fleet is on the move today as part of a show of force involving 40,000 troops, more than 41 warships, 15 submarines and 110 aircraft.

A range of military exercises were personally ordered by Vladimir Putin and coincided with his first public appearance in 10 days. The Russian President met forces to further boost their military

Kyrgyzstan leader Almazbek Atambayev in St Petersburg this morning after more than a week of intense speculation over his sudden disappearance from the public eye. Appearing to be in good health, he did not shed any more light on the

period and said: "It would be boring without gossip."

Today is the start of five days drills in

one of the Kremlin's biggest displays of military power since the Ukraine crisis plunged relations with the West to depths not seen since the Cold War.

The Navy's Northern Fleet stands in full combat readiness in Russia's Arctic north, apparently aimed at dwarfing military drills in neighbouring Norway, a Nato member. "New challenges and threats to

capabilities," Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said. "Special attention must be paid to newly created strategic formations in

military security require the armed

the north. Mr Shoigu said the order came from

the President, who has promised to spend more than 21 trillion roubles (£230 billion) by the end of the decade to overhaul Russia's armed forces.

At least assure

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unhurt and safe, wherever he is," Salahuddin's wife Hasina Ahmed told The Daily Star at her Gulshan residence yesterday morning. Salahuddin, a joint secretary gen-

eral of BNP, was picked up by plainclothes officials from a house in Uttara on March 10, according to the family. "If Salahuddin is arrested on any

charge, please make sure that he is produced before a court," she called upon the PM. Also a former BNP lawmaker from Cox's Bazar, Hasina Ahmed expressed her frustration over the role of law

enforcement agencies as they failed to

provide clues to his whereabouts. She

also alleged the agencies were not cooperating her to find out her husband. "Little does the government realise what we are passing through. We can hardly eat or sleep," she said as tears rolled down her cheeks. "We have reasons to think that the government is

Later in the evening, she along with her two kids met BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at the latter's Gulshan office.

not properly handling the matter."

Khaleda expressed sympathy to the family and called upon the government to "give back" the BNP leader or produce

him before a court immediately if he was arrested in any case, Salahuddin's wife told journalists after the meet.

"It is the law enforcement agencies that have picked up Salahuddin. So the government has to give him back to his family or produce him before a court right away," Hasina quoted the BNP chief as saying. Meanwhile, the BNP-led 20-party

countrywide hartal till 6:00am Friday demanding the government trace Salahuddin and return him to the family. "We have repeatedly demanded that Salahuddin be produced before the court, if arrested," Barkat Ullah Bulu, another joint secretary general of BNP,

alliance yesterday extended its ongoing

said in a statement. "It is unacceptable that an important political leader would vanish without a trace." Talking to the BBC Bangla yesterday, State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said Salahuddin had already in hiding when it was alleged that he was picked up. "He is not in

what exactly happened to him." BNP Vice-Chairman Selima Rahman, on the other, told the BBC they feared whether Salahuddin was

our custody. We too are trying to know

Anything is possible

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got us going. We never looked back from there on. There are so many performers in this year's World Cup whereas you can count two or three performers from the last World Cup. I think this is the change. And it's a good sign for Bangladesh's cricket that so many players are contributing to the team.

Q: Will the 2007 win against India be a source of inspiration?

Shakib: It will be in our memory; but this is a new game and we know it. India have a very good side. They have some world class players. We know that it's going to be hard for us but we are up to the challenge. We are preparing well. It's a one-off game; if we play

our best cricket, anything is possible. Q: In the last World Cup, Virender Sehwag had said that India would beat Bangladesh easily and they ended up winning the match. Do you think

India might take this match lightly? Shakib: I don't think any team can be taken lightly in a World Cup. And this is the quarterfinal; it's a one-off game; no one will take anyone lightly. As I said before, they are the defending champions and they have got some world class players. Our confidence is

very high and we are up for the match. Q: What was the key factor behind your wins against India in the World Cup in 2007 and Asia Cup in 2012?

Shakib: I think we played fearless cricket and we all wanted to play that brand of cricket and so far in this World Cup we are doing it. If we do exactly what we did against England or New Zealand I think we will have a

very good game. Q: Bangladesh have beaten India on their 100th and 150th ODIs. On Thursday Bangladesh will be playing their 300th ODI. Do you think they can repeat that success?

Shakib: I don't know. It depends on the day. I think we need to start well and keep the momentum in our favour. Everything is possible. On pen and paper India is a better team than Bangladesh. No one has any doubt about that, but on the day it's a one-off game. If we have a good day and they have a bad day, you never know. It's a knock-out, both sides will be under

Q: Tell us about the roles you play in the team. Shakib: There are roles on the

ground and off the ground. First of all I need to contribute with the bat, ball and even as a senior player and as a vice-captain I have some leadership roles to play. Hopefully I will be able to do that. If I feel that there is anything that I need to discuss with the captain I'll do that. You also need to motivate players, especially the younger ones and provide senior players with information that can help them.

Bin Mortaza's captaincy been?

Q: How important has Mashrafe

Shakib: It has been very important. He is someone who has always talked to the young players and keeps motivating all the players. He is very close to everyone, very friendly with everyone. Players can come to him and say what-

ever they feel like and they can always discuss it. That's a very good sign. Q: Would you rate this match as the

most important in your career? Shakib: Maybe; you can say that since this is the first time we are playing in the quarterfinals. But at the same time you need to look at this as though

it's just another game of cricket. Q: What all do you need to keep in mind while playing at such a big

ground such as the MCG? Shakib: We played one game here [versus Sri Lanka] so we know what we need to do. You need to be careful about your field placing. That will be the key factor. You need to know who your key fielders are and who have

good arms to throw them in from the boundary.

Q: What do you think will be a good total at the MCG? Shakib: The matches that have taken place here, everyone has scored around 300-plus totals. It's a very good batting wicket. Against Sri Lanka we

played on a very good batting wicket. think 280 to 320 will be a good target. Q: Have the expectations from the fans increased because of Bangladesh's

good performances? Shakib: In the sub-continent people always expect a lot of things from you. Yes; because we are playing well there is some expectation. But we need to focus on the game and how well we can play. That's the key and I think if we do that the result will take care of itself. It doesn't matter if we win or

lose, as long as we play our best cricket. Q: You might be playing in front 80 to 90 thousand fans at Melbourne. Do you know what that is like?

Shakib: I have a bit of an idea; since I played in Kolkata during the IPL. Around 70 to 80 thousand spectators attended those games and most of them were houseful.

Q: Most of the fans will be cheering against your team. How do you think that experience will be? Shakib: I actually haven't experienced that before. So I can't say much

unless I go through that experience. (Laughs) Q: How would you evaluate your performance so far?

Shakib: It's been alright. I could have done better with the bat, but I am happy with the way I bowled. But then again there's no end to improvement.

Q: Do you think the 2019 World Cup should be restricted to 10 teams? Shakib: Well, that's up to the ICC.

They will take a wise decision. If you want my opinion, I think if you want to globalise it you need to play more teams.

would announce election schedules for Dhaka and Chittagong city corpo-

Bonya rushed to her husband.

All but Jibon had either abandoned

Shariful Islam, reporter of a Bangla

matter.

"After managing to escape from the

own but he prepared to turn himself in. 'I In the first of his series of articles

They intended the jail to be the