

BFA training flights stop in Rajshahi

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 "It [the suspension] is a safety measure as the investigation is still on and we don't know why the plane crashed. May be it was due to some faults in the plane," said Squadron Leader (ret'd) Capt HM Akhter Khan, chief of the four-member investigation team.
 He added all officials and some trainees were called to Dhaka to face the investigation team.
 BFA officials closed its Rajshahi office and left for Dhaka around noon, said Moniruzzaman Rumi,

chief engineer of the BFA.
 Chief investigator Capt HM Akhter Khan said, "We have several possibilities for the crash, but we are yet to come to any conclusion."
 "The engine might have failed, it might be a mechanical failure, it might have been a cockpit error or may be an error in the cockpit due to the plane making a turn from very low altitude. We are considering all these possibilities."
 A primary report, consisting assumptions of the probe team, is likely to be submitted on Sunday, he

said. "We collected various parts from the crashed plane, prepared a sketch too," he said.
 On Tuesday, trainee pilot Tamanna Rahman Rhidi died when her training aircraft Cessna-152 crashed on the runway while taking off at Shah Makhdum Airport in Rajshahi.
 The autopsy on Tamanna's body confirmed that she got burnt alive following the crash, said Abdus Sobhan, civil surgeon of Rajshahi.
 Her instructor Sayeed Kamal, who was badly burnt, is now in Singapore for better treatment.

14-party formally supports Nasir in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
 Awami League-led 14-party alliance has formally announced that it would back AL-favoured mayoral candidate AJM Nasir Uddin in Chittagong City Corporation polls.
 The announcement came after an alliance meeting at the Chittagong city AL office yesterday afternoon.
 After the meeting, AL Publicity Secretary Hasan Mahmud said the decision to support Nasir was taken to relieve the city dwellers of waterlogging and to make Chittagong a clean city.
 "The city became dirty in the last five years," he said, adding that, sometimes, people had to cover their noses with handkerchiefs to avoid the stink of dirt on the city streets.
 Bangladesh Tariqat Federation Chairman Nazibul Bashar Maijbandari, another meeting participant, urged the BNP to withdraw the blockade and hartal.
 President of Chittagong city AL ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, who presided over the meeting, said they had decided to work together to present the city dwellers with a clean, self-dependent and planned city.
 AJM Nasir, general secretary of Chittagong city AL, was also present at the meeting with other leaders of the 14-party combine.

Biman leases 2 planes

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 domestic routes in 2007. The last route -- Dhaka-Cox's Bazar -- was closed in June, 2012.
 Now, the airline carries passengers to and from Sylhet and Chittagong on its international flights.
 When the Dash 8s are in service, Biman would add up to 25 additional flights a week to Chittagong and Sylhet, the Biman release said. It would operate six weekly flights to Cox's Bazar, five to Jessore, three each to Rajshahi and Saidpur and two to Barisal.
 Biman's re-launch of domestic operations comes at a time when the local aviation market is heating up with a number of new players.
 US-Bangla Airlines has already launched domestic flights with Dash 8s and Epic Airways is set to start operations by the end of the year.

Currently, four private local airlines -- United Airways, Regent Airways, Novoir and US-Bangla Airlines -- fly mainly on four domestic routes: Dhaka-Chittagong, Dhaka-Cox's Bazar, Dhaka-Sylhet and Dhaka-Jessore.
 The Dhaka-Chittagong route draws the highest volume of traffic followed by Dhaka-Jessore.
 About 50,000 to 55,000 passengers fly on domestic routes a month and Dhaka-Chittagong accounts for 70 percent of them.
 In 2014, some 680,420 people travelled nationally by air, up 5 percent year-on-year, according to the data of Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh.
 With the two Dash 8-Q400s, Biman's fleet now stands at 12 -- four long-haul Boeing 777-300ERs, two leased Boeing 777-200ERs, two Airbus A310-300s, and two Boeing 737-800s.

Indian part of Sundarbans

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 The Bangladesh delegation included a group of 11 journalists, conservationists, water experts and communications specialists. They were directly taken to a boat at the Millennium Park Jetty, Kolkata from Netaji Subhas Chandra airport to join the Indian team.

Cricket also dominated the discussion at times as it was the day before the Bangladesh-India quarterfinal match in the World Cup 2015.

India put fences all along the bank of the river on the forest part in the Sundarbans so that Tigers could not cross the river to enter locality, said Ratul Saha, coordinator, Sundarbans Landscape, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) India.

Ratul, who worked in a tiger census conducting camera-trapping method, said there were 111 tigers in the Indian part of the Sundarbans.

On the second day, the journalists were discussing conservation of the mangrove forests while our boat was moving through the Thakuron, Ajmolbari, Sundarikati, Matla and Vidya rivers.

A visit to a village on the bank of the Durgaduani river was scheduled for the second day of the journey.

As the journalists met the villagers, Panchu Roy, an elderly fisherman, described how their village was flooded during the cyclone Aila and how crocodiles took away three women when they had gone to catch shrimp fry in the river.

By that afternoon, the result of the cricket match and blatant mistakes of the match officials were known to all. Unsurprisingly, the Indian journalists were not talking much about it.

In two days, a number of barges were seen on the river carrying fly ash for the cement factories in Bangladesh. But not a single species of wildlife except a great egret was spotted by this correspondent all through the journey.

It was time to come back. In the two days, media personnel, conservationists and water experts discussed how to extend cooperation to save the Sundarbans.

It was now time for MV Paramhansa to start its next journey from the Jharkhali jetty towards Kolkata with a group of politicians from Bangladesh and West Bengal who would also discuss how to save the forest.

"Now we will convey the outcomes of our trip to the politicians of Bangladesh and Paschimbanga. We hope the politicians will transform our recommendations into actions and share the efforts to save the Sundarbans," said Jayanta Basu, an environmentalist and also a journalist from the Telegraph.

The Bangladeshi politicians were led by Dr Hasan Mahmud, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on environment and forest, while Biman Banerjee, speaker of Paschimbanga legislative assembly, led the Indian politicians.

Biman Banerjee said the Sundarbans was vulnerable due to climate change and pressure of increasing number of population.

"The water of the Ganges is flowing through two countries. We are also sharing the same ecosystem, the Sundarbans. So, we need to jointly figure out how to save the Sundarbans as the forest is vulnerable due to climate change," Biman observed.

Dr Hasan Mahmud said Bangladesh and India needed to seek global attention towards the Sundarbans and the upcoming Paris summit could be an excellent opportunity to that end.

"Bangladesh and India are sharing the same ecosystem. We need to exchange our experience and work together to save the forest. Today we are sitting under a single umbrella to save the Sundarbans," he said.

Before the politicians came into the scene, the journalists, experts and conservationists had agreed to form a common journalists' group comprising those working on the Sundarbans. They also discussed launching two community radios and initiating exchange programmes so that the community from one country could learn about conservation measures of another.

The discussion was over. Now it is time for the politicians to translate its outcomes to save the Sundarbans.

Foreign ministry officials said the transport secretaries along with senior officials of BBIN at a meeting in Kolkata on February 2 and 3 had finalised the draft agreement.

Once implemented, the deal will allow vehicles to ply designated routes in the four countries and reduce cost and time of unloading and loading of people and goods at the borders, making cross-border trade more efficient.

Diplomatic sources said the initiative would help transform transport corridors linking the four countries into economic corridors and increase people-to-people contact.

This sub-regional move is an initiative parallel to the proposed Saarc Motor Vehicles Agreement and will be open also to other neighbouring countries, according to the sources.

The agreement was expected to be signed at the 18th Saarc Summit held in November last year in Kathmandu, but it got stuck due to opposition by Pakistan.

Saarc leaders on November 27, last year had agreed to hold the meeting of the transport ministers within next three months to ink the deal.

Meanwhile, Nepal, chair of Saarc, has convened a three-day meeting on June 22-24 in Kathmandu to finalise the Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger and Cargo Vehicular Traffic amongst the member states, said the sources.

The transport ministers' meeting on June 24 would be preceded by Saarc Inter Governmental Group Meeting on June 22 and Saarc Transport Secretaries' Meeting on June 23.

It is expected that the eight member countries of Saarc would be able to finalise the negotiations and detailed operating procedures and protocols before the June 24 meeting.

The consignee of the electric fans is Zara International in Dhaka, while the shipper is Global International in Hong Kong, the customs official mentioned.

Previous record shows that gold is being smuggled into the country, usually from Dubai, Malaysia and Singapore. But this incident indicates smugglers have changed their routes.

An investigation was underway to identify those involved with the gold smuggling, Moinul added.

Japan's internet

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 their time playing video games, and then graduating into low paid mindless jobs, which occupied the space in between going back to the cafe.

Eventually they moved permanently into the 24-hour cafes, which have cubicles where the computer user can fall asleep as well as bathrooms where they can freshen up before heading off to work.

One such refugee is 26-year-old Fumiya, who works as a security guard on a construction site in between spending the rest of his time at the internet cafe.

He is spotted in the documentary chain-smoking and using the computer.

He said, "I originally wanted an apartment of course but it was expensive here in the city, so I decided to just live at the Internet cafe."

"I spent most of my time there anyway hanging out, so it wasn't really much of a step to spend the rest of my time there."

Govt to merge

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 The government formed the second tribunal on March 22, 2012, to expedite the trials of war crimes related offences.
 The Tribunal-1 so far disposed off eight cases filed against eight war criminals, while the Tribunal-2 settled nine cases of war crimes offences committed by 10 people.

The convicts are Abdul Quader Mollah, assistant secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami (death sentence), Ghulam Azam, former chief of Jamaat-e-Islami (90-year jail sentence), Abdul Alim, former BNP minister (jail until death), Delawar Hossain Sayeede, nayeb-ameer of Jamaat (death sentence), Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, assistant secretary of Jamaat (death sentence), Abdul Kalam Azad, expelled Jamaat member (death sentence), Chowdhury Mueen Uddin, Islami Chhatra Sangha leader in 1971 (death sentence), Ashrafuzzaman Khan, Islami Chhatra Sangha leader in 1971 (death sentence), MA Zahid Hossain Khokon, a BNP leader from Faridpur (death sentence), Abdul Jabbar, former Jatiya Party lawmaker (jail until

death), Motiur Rahman Nazami, ameer of Jamaat (death sentence), Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, secretary general of Jamaat (death sentence), Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, BNP standing committee member (death sentence), Abdus Subhan, nayeb-ameer of Jamaat, (death sentence), ATM Azharul Islam, assistant secretary of Jamaat (death sentence), Mir Quasem Ali, member of Jamaat's central executive committee (death sentence), Syed Mohammad Qaisar, former Jatiya Party minister (death sentence) and Mobarak Hossain, expelled Awami League leader (death sentence).

Chulam Azam and Abdul Alim died inside jail while Azad, Mueen, Ashrafuzzaman and Khokon are still on the run.

Quader Mollah was executed on December 12, 2013, following a Supreme Court verdict.

The SC has upheld the death penalty of Kamaruzzaman and jailed Sayeede until his death.

The appeals of other convicts, now in custody, are pending with the apex court.

BNP sets up new platform

FROM PAGE 1
 Dhaka University vice-chancellor Emajuddin Ahmed with the slogan "Bash Jogyta Dhaka Chai" (We want a liveable Dhaka).

"We have formed the platform under the directives of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. Prof Emajuddin will lead it and we will provide it with all kinds of support," BNP standing committee member Hannan Shah told The Daily Star yesterday.

The BNP chairperson is expected to formally approve the new platform today, party insiders said.

The platform is likely to be comprised of 1,000 professionals whose names will be announced in two or three days. It will start preparing manifestos for the BNP-backed mayoral candidates soon, they added.

At a discussion at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday, Prof Emajuddin said, "People from all professions should be involved with this [new platform]."

Referring to the formation of a 501-member BNP election conducting committee in Chittagong, he said, "If necessary, we will form a 1,001-member committee in Dhaka."

Criticising Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's speech in Parliament, he said the PM could not understand the meaning of a level playing field.

"The level playing field means one voter can cast his or her vote without any barrier and a candidate can go to his

voters without any obstacles," said Emajuddin.

Meanwhile, different pro-BNP professional bodies have been split over the formation of the new platform. Leaders of Bangladesh Sammilito Peshajibi Parishad, currently led by journalist leader Ruhul Amin Gazi, recently met the BNP chief to inform her of their reservation regarding the leadership of Prof Emajuddin, a BNP source said.

Contacted, Gazi said, "We are not with the new platform."

Hannan Shah, however, said this kind of dispute would not harm the platform's work. He hoped that every pro-BNP professional would join the platform.

Talking to BBC Bangla, Prof Emajuddin, also chief of pro-BNP citizens' group Shoto Nagorik Committee, yesterday said they would request the Election Commission within a day or two to allow the pro-BNP candidates and their supporters to hold meetings and processions for the upcoming city corporation elections.

He said numerous unnamed BNP activists are being shown accused in a case, and they are either in jail or cannot come out on the streets fearing arrest.

The arrested BNP men can be granted bail, or the EC can order the law enforcers not to arrest them during the election period, he said, adding the BNP is not getting equal opportunity in the city polls.

Islam growing faster

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 more than 2,500 censuses, surveys and population registers from all over the world. It also used mortality and fertility rates, age assessments and patterns of migration and religious switching.

Except the Buddhists, the world's major religions will all see an increase in numbers by 2050. The global Buddhist population will be about the same size it was in 2010, while Hindu and Jewish populations will be larger than they are today.

India will remain a Hindu majority but also will have the largest Muslim population in the world, surpassing Indonesia.

Atheists, agnostics and other people who do not affiliate with any religion -- though increasing in countries such as the US and France -- will make up a

declining share of the world's total population, the study says.

The Asia-Pacific region is expected to remain the home of a majority of the world's Muslims. However, the share of the global Muslim population living in several Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, is anticipated to decline between 2010 and 2050.

While 62 percent of the world's Muslims lived in Asia and the Pacific in 2010, 53 percent are projected to live in the region in 2050.

In 2010, Christianity was by far the world's largest religion, with 2.2 billion followers. Islam was the second, with 1.6 billion adherents, or 23 percent of the world's population.

Candidates wait for appeal verdicts

FROM PAGE 1
 challenging returning officers' (RO) decision to disqualify them.

Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Zillar Rahman will arrange the hearing on Mintoo's appeal at 4:00pm and Pintu's at 4:30pm today, and deliver verdict.

Elections to Dhaka and Chittagong city corporations will be held on April 28. The deadline for filing nomination expired on March 29. A total of 47 mayoral and 1,417 councillor aspirants filed nominations in the two Dhaka city corporations.

While scrutinising the nomination papers on April 1 and 2, returning officers cancelled nominations of five mayoral and 203 councillor aspirants on grounds like hiding information, loan default and mistakes in filing procedure.

Until yesterday, all five mayoral and 75 councillor aspirants appealed against the cancellation of their nomi-

nation, said ASM Mahfuzur Rahman, assistant commissioner of the office of Dhaka Divisional Commissioner yesterday.

Verdicts on the appeals of the rest will be delivered tomorrow.

MINTOO'S NOMINATION
 As per the electoral law, one or more persons have to propose and support candidacy for a mayoral aspirant while filing his or her nomination. The proposer, supporter and the aspirant must be from the same electoral area.

Abdur Razzaque, who supported Mintoo's nomination, was a voter of Uttara-13 under Harirampur union parishad, which is not within the DNCC area.

That is why the RO cancelled Mintoo's nomination.

However, a portion of Uttara-13 is included in the DNCC area, according to EC officials and the map of Dhaka City Corporation.

Talking to The Daily Star, former

CEC ATM Shamsul Huda said, "Although it is a silly mistake, the returning officer must follow existing laws."
 Regarding demarcation of the boundary of the DNCC, he said, "If some people of a same area are included in city corporation and some remain outside the city, it is the fault with demarcation. It has nothing to do with voter lists because voter lists are prepared on the basis of the demarcated area."
 After filing the appeal on Thursday, Mintoo's lawyer Mahub Uddin Khokon told reporters that they might move to the High Court if the cancellation of Mintoo's nomination was upheld in the appeal.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Executive Magistrate Sarwar Alam yesterday fined five councillor aspirants Tk 46,000 for violating electoral code of conduct. He also fined one of the supporters of mayor aspirant Anisul Huq Tk 20,000 on similar ground.

Cops hunt for coordinator

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 the police soon after Oyasiqr, 27, was hacked to death in the capital's Tejgaon Industrial area around 9:00am on March 30.

Tayes Rahman, son of the building owner, told The Daily Star that a person introducing himself as Iqbal rented the flat on January 1. "Iqbal told us that four or five students would live here and take tuition on English language."
 "They hardly went outside the flat. I saw Iqbal once or twice," he said, adding, "Iqbal, who is tall, healthy and black, claimed to be a university student."
 They lived their till March 25.

Iqbal, believed to be one of their mentor and financier, used to pay the rent. DB officials learnt that another person, who could be a trainer, often visited the apartment.

Deputy Commissioner of Detective Branch Sheikh Nazmul Alam told this correspondent that they were questioning the arrestees also about the killing of writer-blogger Avijit Roy.

A day after the February 26 murder of Avijit, the group members asked a trainer about it. In reply, the person said it was none of their business and that they need not focus on anything outside their task.

back to the apartment and Iqbal them assigned them to carry out the mission.

Saifullah had given different versions at different times on remand after his arrest since March 24. But when he was brought before Zikrullah and Ariful, he admitted to receiving training with them, said DB officials.

After their arrest, Zikrullah and Ariful told police that they along with Taher, who managed to flee, had hacked Oyasiqr.

Thai junta chief threatens to shut down critical media

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's junta chief Friday vowed to shut down critical media outlets as he faced a growing international backlash against his decision to replace martial law with new powers retaining his absolute authority.

Bemoaning critics of his regime, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha ordered the media to toe the regime's line or face consequences.

Among them, Saifullah had a pistol with six bullets. But police caught him near Jatrabari Ideal High School. Abrar, who saw it from far, ran away from the. The mission failed.

Zikrullah, Ariful and Taher went