



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

A relative of condemned war criminal Kamaruzzaman flashes the "V" sign as a vehicle carrying them leaves Dhaka Central Jail after their final meeting with the Jamaat leader around 5:00pm yesterday.

SHOPLIFTING Foreign ministry set to dismiss cub diplomat

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry is set to dismiss its young diplomat for shoplifting during training in The Hague, the Netherlands, in February. "We have taken appropriate actions under disciplinary rules of the government and a process in this regard is underway for his dismissal from the foreign service," Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque said yesterday. Mahbub Shahid Shishir, an assistant secretary at the foreign ministry who was on probation period, was caught red-handed while shoplifting in an electronic shop during his stay in The Hague. Meanwhile, the foreign secretary told a press conference yesterday the government was sending a team to Bangladesh Mission in Doha to investigate allegations against its officials, including Ambassador Syed Masud Mahmood Khundoker.

No arrest

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The assurance came when a six-member lawyers' delegation, led by Mahbub Uddin Khokon, met DMP Commissioner Mohammad Asaduzzaman Miah at his office. "The DMP commissioner told us that police would not arrest any BNP leader and activist under section 54," Sanaullah Mia, a member of the team, told The Daily Star after the meeting. According to section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, individuals may be arrested under suspicion of criminal activity without any order from a magistrate or a warrant under nine specific reasons. Earlier in the day, the DMP said they would arrest the mayoral and councillor candidates who were accused or charge-sheeted in different criminal cases but did not get bail. "Seven mayoral candidates and around 250 ward councillor candidates in both Dhaka South and North city corporation polls stand accused in criminal cases. Some of them secured bail,

while the rest are wanted," said DMP Joint Commissioner Monirul Islam. Talking to journalists at the DMP media centre yesterday noon, he said an operation of law enforcement agencies was underway in this regard. Police would speed up their initiatives to detain the candidates against whom arrest warrants were issued. Monirul, however, could not name the mayor and councillor hopefuls who were facing criminal cases and yet to be granted bail. At a press conference yesterday morning, the BNP said the party-backed mayor and councillor aspirants, who were accused in cases, couldn't participate in the city polls campaign properly. BNP International Affairs Secretary Asaduzzaman Ripon at the party's Nayapalton office said Mirza Abbas, a mayor candidate in Dhaka South City Corporation, could not even start his campaign. Abbas faces over 60 cases and he did not secure bail in some cases.

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commission in Bangladesh yesterday tweeted that an Indian Naval ship, Tarkash, had evacuated 56 Bangladeshis to Djibouti. Shahidul also said 56 Bangladeshis reached Djibouti from Aden seaport by an Indian ship yesterday. "All the Bangladeshis who are in Djibouti will be brought to Kochi in the Indian state of Kerala by a big ship," he said, adding that they would be taken to Dhaka by a special flight of Biman Bangladesh flight later. The foreign secretary said a ship of the International Organisation for Migration was also ready to carry the Bangladeshis in Yemen to Djibouti. Yemen has been in turmoil for months since the rebels took over the capital, Sanaa, after bursting out of their northern stronghold, according to international media.

Gang reduced

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Zikurullah and Ariful were caught by locals and were handed over to the police. Both madrasa students, they confessed to the killing during primary interrogation, according to police. A Dhaka court on Thursday placed them on a fresh three-day remand. On March 31, the duo were put on an eight-day remand for interrogation over the murder. Apart from the five, there was a "mastermind" who mainly brainwashed the five and made them commit the murder, the DMP official said, adding that the mastermind also provided address and photo of Oyasiqur to the killers. NO PROGRESS IN KRISHNA-MURDER Police are yet to unearth the motive

behind the killing of Krishna Kaberi Biswas, the wife of BRTA official Sitangshu Shekhar Biswas, although 11 days have elapsed. DMP official Monirul said they could not speak to Sitangshu as he was in a critical condition. But they can now quiz him as his condition has improved. "Apart from stock market business, there might be other reasons behind the murder that only the BRTA official can say," he added. On March 31, former college teacher Kaberi was killed and her husband and their two daughters were critically injured in a grisly attack allegedly by Zahirul Islam Zahir, an acquaintance of Sitangshu, in their Mohammadpur home. Zahir is on the run.

Record power

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July 18 last year, he told The Daily Star. After assuming office in 2009, the Awami League-led government rolled out major plans in the power sector. In its first term, it doubled both installed and generation capacities. The authorities are expecting to add as much as 1,500MW of power to the national grid within three months beginning from late April. The government plans to boost electricity generation capacity to 24,000MW by 2021 mainly on the back of fuel diversity and harnessing of renewable energy resources. Despite the huge jump in production in the last six years, more than 40 percent of the population does not have access to grid electricity.

Fake detectives

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press briefing at the DMP media centre after busting a gang of eight fake detectives on Friday. Detectives and Rapid Action Battalion had detained several of them in the past, but securing bail from courts they resumed the criminal acts, Monirul said. "I have no information that any such criminal was convicted in the last six to seven years," he said. The eight -- Siraj Hawlader, Abul Hossain, Sahabuddin, Farhad Gazi, Abdus Samad, Tara Mia, Nannu Mia and Mohammad Arif -- were arrested during separate drives in the city's Nayatola and Tejaoga while they were preparing for a mugging, according to the DMP official. Police seized a pair of handcuffs, two wireless sets, two microbuses pasted with stickers of DB and the home ministry and attires with "DB" written on them from the arrestees. Some of the detainees were putting on clothes written "DB". They had been involved in such criminal acts over the last four to five years, said Monirul. Four of them were arrested before while Samad, a former soldier in the army, was sacked for his alleged illegal activities in 2005, he added. During primary interrogation, they said they snatched around Tk 1.5 lakh from a person in Banani on April 7, claimed Monirul. The gang was led by one Mithu, he mentioned. Law enforcers are trying to learn how many gangs and bank officials are involved with them, he said. Earlier on March last year, criminals posing as detectives duped three staff of Bengal Group of Industries and took away Tk 7 lakh from them in Gulshan. The officials withdrew the money from a local bank in the area to pay salaries of the company employees,

police said. After collecting the money from the bank, the three began walking towards their office on Gulshan Avenue. Suddenly, a microbus intercepted them and a group of four to five plain-clothes men, introducing themselves as detectives, came out of the vehicle. They handcuffed the officials and put them in the microbus. The fake detectives then abandoned them at Matikata in Cantonment area after taking away the money. At yesterday's briefing, Monirul said although it is a tough situation for someone who is picked up by four to five people, but asking them to show identity cards can be a step to stop them. "Detectives have been told to identify themselves whenever they pick up someone," he added.

Mass beaching fuels 'unscientific' Japan quake fears

AFP, Tokyo

The mass beaching of more than 150 melon-headed whales on Japan's shores has fuelled fears of a repeat of a seemingly unrelated event in the country -- the devastating 2011 under-sea earthquake that killed around 19,000 people. Despite a lack of scientific evidence linking the two events, a flurry of online commentators have pointed to the appearance of around 50 melon-headed whales -- a species that is a member of the dolphin family -- on Japan's beaches six days prior to the monster quake, which unleashed a towering tsunami and triggered a nuclear disaster.

Beef prices

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Throughout last year, beef was traded at Tk 270-Tk 280 per kg. The recent political crisis hit the beef traders hard, but the situation got worse after Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh instructed its border forces to stop smuggling of cattle into Bangladesh. Addressing the Border Security Force personnel at a border outpost in West Bengal on April 1, Singh said: "I am told prices of beef in Bangladesh have gone up by 30 per cent recently due to heightened vigil by the BSF against cattle smuggling. "You further intensify the vigil so that the smuggling stops completely and price of beef in Bangladesh escalates 70 to 80 per cent more. The people of Bangladesh would then give up on eating beef." The price of beef has reached all-time high, according to Abdul Motaleb, a beef trader at Karwan Bazar. He has been running the business since 1971. He said three to four butchers already shut down their shops after incurring hefty losses. "If the situation continues for too long, we might have to switch to other trades." Prices of chicken have increased by Tk 10-15 per kg in the last one week as more consumers are turning to it, said traders. The price of mutton has also soared to Tk 450-500 per kg against Tk 400-450 a kg in January. CONSUMERS FEEL THE PINCH Priyanka Habib from Sukrabad bought a kg of beef from a local shop at Tk 400 and mutton at Tk 500 two days ago. Nurul Afsar, a caterer, said he shopped beef for Tk 370 a kg at Karwan Bazar on Tuesday. A week ago, he paid the butcher Tk 50 less per kilo. A restaurant owner at the market said he usually bought around 15 kilo of beef per day for his customers, but now he buys five kilo less. A butcher at Karwan Bazar said he used to slaughter around seven to eight cows a day, but the number came down to one to four early this month. Another trader Abdur Rahman, who is running a shop for 13 years, said he did not see such a steep rise in beef price before. "I used to sell around 200 kg of meat daily, but the sale has halved now." Sale of beef was affected when there was anthrax infection in cattle in 2010. But the situation is even worse now, said a butcher. India does not export cattle as cows are considered sacred in the Hindu-majority country. According to reports by Indian media, around 25 lakh cattle, on average, are smuggled into Bangladesh every year. The figure was 17 lakh last year. The Economic Times in a report said much of the smuggling trade happens allegedly in connivance with the border guards, a charge denied by the BSF. However, sources said the sheer economics of the trade make it near impossible to stop. If beef goes off the menu for most Bangladeshis, their protein intake would take a blow, said experts. Although Bangladesh has the seventh largest cattle population in the world, it has one of the lowest per capita meat consumption, according to World Health Organisation (WHO). The protein intake is already far below in Bangladesh compared to global average. The per capita annual intake of meat is around 80 kg in the world, while it is only 7.3 kg in Bangladesh. Consumers in Bangladesh would not be the only sufferers if the Indian BSF were to implement Rajnath Singh's instructions. India would also be burdened with an additional expenditure in excess of Rs 31,000 crore (Tk 38,769 crore) annually, according to The Economic Times. This would be the cost of sustaining around 1.25 crore cattle in various cowsheds annually till they die naturally.

Lasers can preserve

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anti-aircraft artillery had failed. Sadly, the event was just the first in a series of atrocities that have robbed the world of some of its most prized cultural heritage. But historical architecture is also under threat from calamities which might well escape our control, such as earthquakes and climate change. The thought of losing a piece of our collective history is a bleak one. But if loss can't be avoided, technology can lend a hand. Now CyArk, a non-profit company founded by an Iraqi-born engineer, is using groundbreaking laser scanning to ensure that -- at the very least -- incredibly accurate digital versions of the world's treasures will stay with us forever. TWO EVENTS Ben Kacyra was born in Mosul, Iraq, in 1940. He moved to the United States in 1964, and in the 1990s he was instrumental in the design of the first portable laser scanner. He founded CyArk, a company that specialises in digital preservation of threatened ancient and historical architecture, in 2003. "Two events happened that really influenced me and my wife," he told CNN's Nick Glass, "The Taliban blew up the Buddhas and an earthquake happened in Bam, in Iran. "It demolished a whole mud city. So we looked at each other and we said, you know, sometimes you can't prevent an earthquake, obviously, and it's very expensive to go back and rebuild, but if it had been scanned, our children and grandchildren would get the opportunity to come back and learn the history of that place." Since then, Kacyra has been doing exactly that: in a 2011 TED talk he explained his quest to preserve our "collective treasure", and he has a plan to scan 500 World Heritage sites in five years. So far, the list of completed scans includes Ancient Thebes, Chichen Itza, Fort Laramie, Mesa Verde, Mount Rushmore, Petra, Pompeii, Rapa Nui, the Sydney Opera House, Tikal, and his native Mosul. OUR COLLECTIVE HERITAGE The idea is not just to protect endangered structures, but to offer free educational access to the digital recreations of important monuments via the web. "We have that data, and if something -- God forbid -- happens to these, the data is there," says Kacyra. In fact, current events have already caught up with the project: the Royal Tombs of Kasubi, in Uganda, were destroyed in 2010 by suspected arson. CyArk had mapped them a year earlier, and that could lead to the reconstruction of what was lost. "I'm constantly looking at what's happening in Iraq and Syria. "I'm so glad that we had already started and developed the tools that allowed us to go and be proactive to capture some of these things before these very unfortunate events." 50,000 TIMES PER SECOND

To scan the surroundings, CyArk uses a portable, eye-safe laser device based on a technology called Lidar -- a portmanteau of the words light and radar. It accurately maps a physical area much like a radar, but using lasers instead of radio waves. "We have a very powerful laser that sends a beam of light pulsing 50,000 times per second," explains Kacyra, "which means that it's collecting 50,000 points of everything that's in front of it as it pulses up and down and in a circular fashion, generating the geometry of everything that's in the space around it." In other words, "We gave the world a 3D laser scanner that has revolutionised how reality is captured." Lights, camera, lasers! Although its focus is in providing open access to cultural heritage, CyArk is also attracting interest for alternative uses of the technology. "We are discovering applications way beyond what we had anticipated," says Kacyra. "For example, the Highway Patrol wants to use it in accident reconstruction on the road or in crime scene investigations. Where did the bullets go, trajectories and all that -- this gives you the entire thing in minutes and then you can do all the analysis work." Not even Hollywood is immune from the allure of laser scanning. "Imagine it going all the way to art, the movies, movie sets. My wife got really excited about the first use in the movie field."

BSF kills two

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"We have raised our concern at the appropriate level. Even we did it today [Saturday] as well," Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque said at a press briefing at the ministry yesterday afternoon. In reply to a question, Shahidul hoped that India would take necessary measures to stop killings along the border. The incidence of killing the cattle traders at Indo-Bangla border came hard on the heels of recent instruction to the BSF by Indian Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh to put a complete halt to cattle smuggling into Bangladesh. The minister was addressing the BSF members on April 1 at a border outpost at Angrail in West Bengal, hardly five kilometres off the area where the shooting took place yesterday. Lt Col Md Jahangir Hossain, commanding officer of 26 Border Guard Bangladesh Battalion, said BSF troops of Ghonermath camp in Bongaon opened fire when a group of Bangladeshi cattle traders were returning home from India along with cattle around 5:00am, leaving five of them injured. Two of the injured, Aku and Shanto, died while they were being taken to the Sharsa Upazila Health Complex along with the other injured by their fellow traders, according to the BGB official. Meanwhile, the BGB sent a letter to the BSF in the afternoon, protesting the killing, said Jahangir.

Obama, Castro

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path toward the future," he said. After Obama spoke, the two men stood up and shook hands. Saying he agreed with everything Obama said, Castro said the two governments can still have differences but "with respect of the ideas of the others." "We are willing to discuss everything but we need to be patient, very patient," he said. The two leaders had already made conciliator speeches moments earlier during the summit, sitting in an oval table with some 30 other regional leaders. US-Cuban tensions have vexed Washington's relations with the region for decades. "This shift in US policy represents a turning point for our entire region," Obama said. As the US leader looked on, Castro declared: "President Obama is an honest man." DIFFERENCES REMAIN But both leaders acknowledged that the two countries, as they negotiate to restore diplomatic relations that broke off in 1961, will continue to have disagreements. Obama cited the human rights situation in Cuba, while Castro renewed calls for the US Congress to lift a decades-old embargo. "I think it's no secret, President Castro I'm sure would agree, that there will continue to be significant differences between our two countries," Obama said. It was Cuba's first time participating at the 21-year-old summit. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos summed up the mood, saying "an old obstacle in relations between Latin America and North America is being removed." US and Cuba diplomats have held negotiations to restore embassies since January. Cuba has demanded to be removed from a US list of state sponsors of terrorism before embassies can reopen, noting that this has blocked the country's access to bank credit.

71 Chadian soldiers killed fighting Boko Haram

AFP, N'Djamena

Seventy-one Chadian soldiers have been killed and 416 wounded in less than three months of fighting in the regional campaign to crush the Boko Haram insurgency, Chad's army said Friday. Chad has sent about 5,000 troops to fight alongside soldiers from Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon against the Islamist radicals whose Nigeria-based insurgency has increasingly spilled over into neighbouring nations. The regional fightback, concentrated in border areas south of Lake Chad and in northeast Nigeria, seems to have stopped the militants' advance for now. Chad army chief General Brahim Seid told reporters in his country's capital N'Djamena the "valiant soldiers" had died since February 3 in the "just and noble cause of bringing peace and security" to the region. "They (troops) have liberated 11 communities in Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria from the hands of Boko Haram," said Seid. "Chadian forces will continue to hunt the terrorists of Boko Haram wherever they are found." The stepped-up efforts against Boko Haram came after the Nigerian army was repeatedly criticised as ill-equipped and ineffective against the jihadists.