



Visiting Dhaka to aid the victims of recent petrol bomb attacks, medical experts from Germany and other European countries meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhavan yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Blaze of 'Boisabi' colour

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said Bijoy Ketan Chakma, convener of MN Lama Memorial Foundation and vice president of Adivasi Forum, Rangamati.
People get up early in the morning, bathe in chharas (small streams), float flowers to worship the god of water and pray for a beautiful and holy life like flowers, he said.
According to an article by indigenous researcher Kumar Pritish Bol, young people also bathe the elders with water from the streams as a gesture of respect, as part of the Ful Biju rituals.
"We call the last day of Chaitra Mula Biju and spend it by exchanging greetings, visiting friends and relatives and entertaining guests with food and drinks," said Bijoy.
"Pajon, a dish made with as many vegetables as one can get, is a specialty of the day," he said, adding that sometimes dried sea fish or shark jerky is mixed to add flavour.

among the Chaks.
"We call it Teng Chhoye," said Uching Nue Chak, a young doctor from Bandarban's Chak community. "We clean our houses and decorate them with flowers as part of the ritual."
For the Marma and the Rakhine communities, who follow the Moghi or Burmese calendar, the New Year celebration lasts four days.
Nonagenarian Kyaw Swe Prue Marma of Bandarban's Ujani Para said, "The New Year celebrations started in the early nineteenth century and according to the Burmese calendar, the upcoming year would be 1377."
The popular water festival called Sangrain Poye or Thangrain begins on the second day when men and women splash each other with water, in a symbolic gesture of washing away the sins and sorrows of the past year, he said.
"To the Marma people, rain symbolises respect, prosperity and blessings. By spraying water on each other, they not only mean to shake off the sorrows of the past year, but also pray for peace and prosperity of mankind in the year ahead," Kyaw Swe said.
"On the first day, we bathe statues of the Buddha with sandalwood water, light lanterns in the temples and offer our prayers," said Aung Rakhine, an independent filmmaker.
"People whose birthdates are on the first day of the year are considered special and they have to perform some special prayers with flowers at the temple of Buddha and offer food," said Aung.
Though the Bom follow the Gregorian

calendar, they do not miss out on the merriment.
"Everyone in the neighbourhood joins the celebrations and it is an occasion to meet your friends," said musician Jemson Amlai, while on his way home in Bandarban from Dhaka.
"I have a programme on the 12th. It is the first time the Jumma Underground Band Community is organising a concert at the Khudranrigoshthi Sangsritik Institute auditorium in Rangamati," said the artiste.
Chhoton Tanchangya left for his home in the hill districts a week before the celebrations as he did not want to miss out on their traditional sport Ghila Khela, held on the New Year's day.
"It becomes very hard to get bus tickets to the hill region during this time of the year as most people of the indigenous communities head home to be with their friends and families," he said.
New Year celebration Hongorani of Hajong and Garo, two indigenous communities of the plains, coincide with the Bangla New Year, according to an article by researcher-writer Sanjeeb Drong, also general secretary of Adivasi Forum.
But the Santals and the Oraos celebrate their New Year festival -- Baha or Faguya -- with the advent of spring, wrote indigenous researcher Pritish Bol in his article.
Despite this slight difference in timing, the New Year is one occasion when the joy of celebration takes a universal shape in Bangladesh, transcending religious, ethnic, language and cultural boundaries.

N'GANJ SEVEN-MURDER No bail for Rab official Rana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday denied bail to sacked Rab official Lt Commander MM Rana in two cases filed for sensational seven-murder in Narayanganj.
The bench of Justice Quamrul Islam Siddique and Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore yesterday dropped two separate bail petitions of Rana from the hearing list because Justice Gobinda refused to hear them due to his personal difficulties.
Deputy Attorney General Bashir Ullah told The Daily Star that Rana could move the petitions to another bench for securing bail in the cases.
He said Justice Gobinda might have refused to hear the bail petitions since he was a member of another HC bench, which had earlier issued a suo moto order asking different agencies of the government to conduct separate probes into the seven-murder incident.
On April 27 last year, Narayanganj

panel mayor Nazrul Islam, his four associates, senior lawyer Chandan Sarker and his driver were abducted and killed allegedly by some Rab-11 personnel. Their bodies were later found floating in the Shitalakkhya river.
Two separate cases were filed with Fatullah Police Station in connection with the incidents of the abduction and murder.
Police on April 8 submitted the charge sheet to a Narayanganj court in the cases, naming 35 people, including prime accused Nur Hossain and three sacked Rab officials.
Nur, a councillor of Narayanganj City Corporation, fled to India soon after the gruesome murders and is in prison there for illegal entry.
The three dismissed Rab officials -- Lt Col Tarek Sayeed Mohammad, Maj Arif Hossain and Lt Commander MM Rana -- allegedly executed the killing mission in exchange for money. Now behind bars, the trio have also been named as top accused.

WAR CRIMES TRIAL: APPEALS AT SC Mojahed, SQ Chy cases on hearing list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam yesterday said several appeals against verdicts in the war crimes cases might be disposed of this year and expressed satisfaction over execution of war criminal Muhammad Kamaruzzaman.
Appeals of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury were on the hearing list of the Appellate Division, he said.
Hearing into these appeals might begin within a few weeks, Mahbubey Alam told reporters at his office yesterday afternoon.
He added the SC could not hear more appeals due to its long vacation.
The current pace of hearing and disposal of war crimes related appeals by the Appellate Division was satisfactory, observed the top law officer of the state.
He also regretted that another key Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayeede, who faced allegations of several major wartime offences, was not sentenced to death due to "neglect of investigators and the prosecution".
The SC on September 17 last year commuted death sentence of Sayeede handed down by International Crimes Tribunal-1 on February 28, 2013 and

sentenced him to imprisonment till death for his crimes against humanity.
Law Minister Anisul Huq has meanwhile expressed the hope that a bill of amendment to the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act, 1973 for trial of war crimes suspect organisations would be placed in parliament after the next budget session for its passage.
He told The Daily Star yesterday that the draft of the amendment to the ICT act would be placed in the cabinet soon for its approval before tabling to the House.
Appeals of eight war criminals are now pending with the SC. Apart from Jamaat
Secretary General Mojaheed and BNP standing committee member Salauddin Quader, other appellants are Jamaat chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and its leaders Mir Quasem Ali, ATM Azharul Islam and Abdus Subhan, expelled Awami League leader of Brahmanbaria Mobarak Hossain and former state minister of HM Ershad's regime Syed Mohammad Qaisar.
The two international crimes tribunals on different dates convicted and sentenced them to death for their crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971.
Besides, five other war crimes cases are now under trial at the ICTs.

Driverless train

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driver Mohammad Ali, who was not in the locomotive, sent his assistant Faisal Hossain to check the engine.
Faisal did something wrong that made the train roll backwards on the Rajbari-Paradaha route.
Ali was chewing betel leaf on the platform. "Before I could realise what was happening, the train shot out of the station," the driver later told our Kushtia correspondent.
Failing to control the train, the assistant jumped off the moving train.
"The train ran up to Pangsha Railway Station without any driver on board," Bangladesh Railway Director (Traffic) Zahurul Islam told The Daily Star.
It took quite some time for the passengers to get that something was wrong.
"I didn't understand what was going on. I got frightened when I learned that the train was without the driver," said passenger Azbor Uddin, 52, of Belgachhi in Kalukhali upazila of Rajbari.
As panicked passengers started screaming, ticket checker Anwar asked them to calm down and help him stop the train, Azbor added.
The train was then running around 30km an hour. After some effort, they managed to stop it near Pangsha station around 8:55am. By that time, it had run past three stations -- Sujanager, Belgachhi and Kalukhali, said Kamaruzzaman Khan, Rajbari stationmaster.
He said the incident took place due to some mistake made by the assistant driver.
"I saw the train pass and the passengers were screaming," said Nizam Uddin, headmaster of Gopalpur Collegiate High School.
Driver Ali, his assistant Foysal and guard Subhas Chandra Sharma were suspended in connection with negligence of duty.
The railway has formed a five-member team to probe the incident.

3-month turmoil costs nation \$2.2b

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Bangladesh, launched the report while Dr Zahid Hussain, WB lead economist, made a presentation on the findings of the report.
The report was prepared taking into account the developments, near and medium-term outlook and challenges in the first three months of this year.
The WB said job-friendly growth appeared to be gaining momentum in Bangladesh in 2014 until the resurgence of political turmoil since January 2015. The supply chain across the country was severely disrupted dampening growth prospects.
The report said the unrest this time came soon after the dry winter season began, when the largest and highly input-intensive rice crop (boro) was being planted, tourism was supposed to peak, inter-district transport was in full swing and construction activities reached their height.
"In short, the unrest occurred during the part of the year when the country's within-year business cycle peaks."

On recent developments, the WB said Bangladesh economy's resilience continues to be tested by faltering political stability, weak global markets and structural constraints, which are inhibiting the country's income growth and progress on shared prosperity. Political turmoil in particular is taking a heavy toll on the economy.
According to the report, economic growth in the first half of FY'15 benefited from sustained political stability throughout 2014.
Capacity utilisation improved, and it is evident from sharp recoveries in imports of industrial raw materials and intermediate inputs. Activities in the domestic market-based industries expanded faster than in 2013.
Agricultural growth followed its normal path aided by benign weather, reasonable smooth functioning of input markets and improved farm-gate prices. Remittances also picked up due to worker outflows to the Gulf countries.
A windfall resulting from the declining international oil price is

KEY CHALLENGES

- On again and off again political instability
- Protracted slowdown in European Union
- Falling exchange rate of Euro against the US dollar
- Poor labour and factory safety standards
- Structural constraints
- Inadequate infrastructure and failure to deliver reforms

Bangladesh also performed well in containing inflation due to favourable international commodity price movements and sound macroeconomic management. The 12-monthly-moving average inflation decelerated from 7.6 percent in February 2014 to 6.8 percent in February this year.
However, exports lost momentum because of a limping global economy and transition in the garment industry involving a significant number of factory closures. The depreciation of the euro against the dollar -- over 17 percent in 2014 -- is eating up exporters' price competitiveness. Tax revenue growth has also been weaker than the targets.
Despite the emergence of a \$1.3 billion deficit in the current account in the first seven months of the current fiscal year, the surplus in the overall balance of payments has been sustained, leading to continued accumulation of official foreign exchange reserves to prevent nominal exchange rate appreciation, it said.
Yet, the economy continued to face

several key challenges. Of those, the WB found political uncertainty as the biggest challenge followed by growing infrastructure deficit and a de-facto onerous regulatory regime.
Replying to a query on the need for the government to take \$500 million budgetary support from the WB, Zahid Hussain said it is not only for meeting the financial needs but also for carrying out reforms.
"Moreover, IDA [international development assistance] loan is a very low-cost fund," he said.
Johannes Zutt said the WB's funding depends on Bangladesh's reforms. "We are thinking what we can do."
The WB country director said Bangladesh can tap into regional IDA funds and also try for IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) funds.
The country didn't tap into IBRD loans in the past, added Johannes Zutt.
The interest rate for a low-cost IDA loan is around 1 percent, while for an IBRD loan it is up to 4.5 percent.

benefiting the government by saving its funds meant for subsidising fuel oil imports. Government borrowing from the banking system has not been needed so far because of a steep rise in non-bank borrowing, particularly from savings certificates.

Ensure fair voting

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the law enforcers to remain cautious so that no candidate becomes a victim of harassment.
"Keep vigil so that candidates can conduct campaign fairly ... and the polling centres are protected so that no illegal or untoward incident occur," he said.
The decision on army deployment would be made on April 19 at a meeting on law and order.
Elections to the bifurcated Dhaka city corporations and Chittagong would be held on April 28.
The EC on Saturday held a similar meeting with candidates in Chittagong City Corporation polls, and would hold a meeting with aspirants in Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) polls today.
Speaking at the meeting, Awami League-backed mayor candidate Annisul Huq said, "We all demand a level playing field. I promise to follow all the electoral

laws."
In response to reporters' query after the meeting, Annisul said there was no need to deploy the army.
BNP-backed mayoral candidate Tabith Awal said, "Many leaders and activists of the 20-party alliance, which is backing me, are now either in jail or on the run fearing police harassment."
"I would like to request the Election Commission to intervene and arrange bail for them [party men]," he said.
Tabith demanded that police conduct drives to recover illegal arms and force licensed arms holders to submit their firearms to police stations ahead of the polls.
Tabith demanded deployment of the army claiming that his supporters might would be able to campaign without fear, if the army was on the ground.
Bikolpodhara Bangladesh-backed mayoral candidate Mahi B Chowdhury urged the EC to form "citizen participatory

committee" at every ward so that the committee could oversee electoral campaign expenditure.
Deployment of the army was necessary for gaining public trust and creating a congenial atmosphere for fair polls, he viewed.
Another mayoral candidate Zonayed Saki said the EC must exert its constitutional power to prevent the use of black money and muscle power for the sake of creating a level playing field.
Communist Party of Bangladesh-backed candidate Abdullah Al Kafee said the EC must keep vigil so that no candidate could use the administration, other government machineries, black money, and muscle power.
He urged police not to harass candidates who have no cases filed against them.
Mayor aspirant AYM Kamrul Islam also expressed similar opinions on black money and muscle power.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal-backed mayoral candidate Nader Chowdhury said, "In many cases, I have seen a lack of coordination in the activities of Election Commission. I request this to be solved."
Jatiya Party-backed candidate Bahauddin Ahmed said, "I would like to request the EC to implement what you [the election commissioners] are saying before us to ensure a level playing field."
Mayor hopeful Shamsul Alam Chowdhury alleged that some candidates backed by big political parties frequently violated the electoral code of conduct but the EC did nothing.
A number of mayor contenders criticised the media and said TV channels and newspapers were giving huge coverage to only big shot candidates.
A number of councillor aspirants alleged that some ruling Awami League-backed councillor aspirants were threatening them.
Kafil Uddin, a councillor aspirant of

Ward-18, said, "I have been facing threats since submission of my nomination. Although I am an activist of the Awami League, the party has not supported me. The candidate, who gets the party support, is now publicly saying he will occupy polling centres on Election Day."
CEC Rakibuddin said he had directed the polling officials to hold the election impartially and in a transparent manner. He sought cooperation from all and urged the candidates not to violate the electoral code of conduct.
Over 23 lakh voters are entitled to elect 36 ward councillors and 12 councillors reserved for women in the DNCC.
Meanwhile, executive magistrates of Dhaka metropolitan yesterday issued show cause notices upon a mayor aspirant and five councillor candidates in connection with violating the electoral code of conduct.

Meanwhile, Jamaat Saturday night called a nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal for today (Monday) protesting what it said was the "planned killing" of its leader Kamaruzzaman.
Meanwhile, aggrieved by the execution of Kamaruzzaman, the activists of Jamaat and pro-Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir vandalised at least two buses and exploded two crude bombs at Sobhanbagh in Dhaka around noon yesterday, said a senior police official at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station.
In Chapainawabganj, police arrested alleged Jamaat supporters Mohammad Hanif, 35, and Selim, 28, in Court Bazar area of Shibganj upazila Saturday night in connection with hurling bombs at police.
Officer-in-Charge Moinul Islam of Shibganj Police Station said a police patrol team was attacked with three crude bombs around 11:30pm.