

700 feared

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 survivors who spoke English and who said that at least 700 people, if not more, were on board. The boat capsized because people moved to one side when another boat approached that they hoped would rescue them," Sami said.
 The latest disaster is likely to fuel calls for a stronger response from Europe after heavy criticism of the Triton border protection operation which replaced a more comprehensive Italian search-and-rescue operation dubbed Mare Nostrum last year.
 The lawless state of Libya following the toppling of former leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 has left criminal gangs of migrant smugglers a free hand to send a stream of boats carrying desperate migrants from Africa and the Middle East.
 Around 20,000 migrants have reached the Italian coast this year, the International Organisation for Migration estimates. That is fewer than in the first four months of last year but the number of deaths has risen almost nine-fold.
 Italy phased out "Mare Nostrum" or "Our Sea" late last year, making way for the European Union border control mission, Triton, which has been criticised by humanitarian groups and Italian authorities as it has a much smaller budget and a narrower remit.

7 Bangladeshis

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 Daud claimed no Bangladeshi was hurt.
 The Bangladesh high commission in Pretoria is in contact with the Bangladeshis in that country and advised them to keep their shops in Durban and Johannesburg closed for the time being, he added.
 Around 60,000 to 70,000 Bangladeshi expatriates now live in South Africa.
 On Saturday, South African President Jacob Zuma visited a refugee camp in Durban after a fresh outbreak of anti-foreigner violence, said BBC.
 In a statement, Zuma said: "These attacks go against everything we believe in. The majority of South Africans love peace and good relations with their brothers and sisters in the continent."
 At least six people were killed in attacks in Durban recently, added BBC.

Shroud of Turin

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 must be booked. One million people have already signed up.
 Some devotees believe the shroud is the burial cloth of Jesus Christ. Sceptics point to carbon dating that suggests it is a medieval forgery from the 1300s.
 Scientists have not agreed on how the image of a man was imprinted on the cloth.
 Pope Francis will be among those to view the shroud, during a visit to the northern Italian city on 21 June.
 The last public viewings were in 2010, when 2.5 million people came to see it.
 The Church has not officially claimed that Christ's body was wrapped in the shroud, preferring instead to focus on what it means to those who see it.
 "Whether you believe or don't believe, there is no doubt it is something special," an Italian man who was among the first visitors yesterday told the AFP news agency.
 Earlier this week, Archbishop of Turin Cesare Nosiglia said: "What counts the most is that this shroud... reflects in a clear and precise manner how the gospels describe the passion and death of Jesus.
 "It is not a profession of faith because it is not an object of faith, nor of devotion, but it can help faith."
 Archbishop Nosiglia said that many of those coming to see the shroud would be returnees.
 "That means there is a fundamental need in people's hearts to renew this incredible experience that they had the first time they saw it," he said.
 "Even non-believers will come. It's an occasion that brings everybody together."
 The shroud is displayed in a climate-controlled case for 12 hours a day in Turin's Cathedral of St John the Baptist.

Ershad asked

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 LETER [to Ershad] which has the directives in it," he said.
 The direction was given after Ershad recently in an election rally in the capital said: "I am above [the] electoral code of conduct. The code of conduct isn't applicable for me."
 As per the electoral code of conduct, parliament speaker, deputy speaker, chief whip, ministers, state ministers, deputy ministers and other individuals holding the equivalent status and enjoying government facilities can not join electoral campaign.
 The status of a special envoy to PM is equivalent to that of ministers, added Mihir.



A street in Katalganj area of Chittagong goes under water following a light shower around dawn. Locals claimed that it usually takes a couple of days for the water to recede. PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

BCL silence irks many Storm kills

Busy in campaign, activists could not hold rally to protest sexual harassment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 Bangladesh Chhatra League has not been able to hold a rally to protest the Pahela Baishakh sexual assault on Dhaka University campus because its activists were "busy with city corporation election campaigns".
 Apart from issuing a statement, BCL has been completely silent over the sexual assault issue, which drew huge criticism from many, including the AL leadership.
 "Every day, we have to work for election campaigns. Holding protest rally is in the back of our minds but we can't ...," BCL President HM Badiuzzaman Sohag told The Daily Star when asked why BCL was silent.
 Sohag said the BCL had issued a statement condemning the incident and demanding punishment of the culprits.
 In the statement, issued on April 16, Sohag and BCL General Secretary Siddiqui Nazmul Islam said 30-35 rowdy youths sexually harassed some women. The pro-ruling party student body demanded the university authorities and the police immediately bring the culprits to justice.
 But issuing a statement only was not enough as BCL is known for being super active to counter opposition activities. On numerous occasions the BCL had quickly organised demon-

strations on campus and elsewhere in the country to protest BNP, pro-BNP Chhatra Dal, Jamaat and pro-Jamaat Islami Chhatra Shibir activities.
 The BCL, which has a stronghold in Dhaka University, had even brought out a flash procession after a cracker went off on the campus during the BNP-Jamaat's three-month-long blockade.
 The BCL inaction has drawn criticism within the Awami League leadership. Asaduzzaman Noor, the minister for cultural affairs who went to Bangla Academy yesterday, asked a senior BCL leader about the matter.
 In response, the BCL leader told the minister that BCL should have held an immediate rally protesting the incident. He claimed that no BCL men were involved in the incident.
 He told the minister that the BCL president and general secretary decide about holding protest programmes.
 The reality is that only some of the BCL leaders and activists were involved in election campaigns. Most of them were on the campus and many of them were yesterday seen watching the Bangladesh-Pakistan cricket match.
 BCL Dhaka University Unit President Mehedy Hasan Mollah said he would keep the matter [about organising a protest rally] in mind. "Our activists are busy with election work since the morning," he said.

Storm kills
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 officer-in-charge of Pakundia Police Station.
 Mannan was critically injured in a similar manner at Kazirchar village. He was taken to Kotiadi Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, said Hedayatul Islam Bhuiyan, OC of Kotiadi Police Station.
 Rima was badly hurt as a branch of a tree fell on her when she was running towards her room at Tatalchar village of Bajitpur. She died on her way to Zohurul Islam Medical College Hospital, according to the hospital sources.
 Shital Chandra Barmon died when a tree collapsed on a CNG-run auto-rickshaw carrying him at Poilanpur in Kuliarchar municipality, said locals.
MYMENSINGH
 The nor'wester swept through Phulbaria, Muktagacha and Trishal upazilas, killing three people and injuring around 15 others, our Mymensingh correspondent adds.
 Abdul Karim, 40, of Radhakana village took shelter in a shop at a local Bazar during the storm. A tree fell on the shop, leaving Karim dead on the spot, said Rifat Khan Rajib, officer-in-charge of Phulbaria Police Station.
 Jalal Ahmed, 32, of Santoshpur village died when a tree collapsed on his tin-shed house, said Kamal Hossain, OC of Muktagacha Police Station.
 In another incident, a day-labourer, Elias Ali, 32, of Trishal upazila was killed as he was struck by lightning during the nor'wester, said OC of the local police station Moniruzzaman.
 Besides the three upazilas, the thunderstorm also hit Gafargaoan and Bhaluka.

Egypt's Morsi faces possible death penalty in first verdict

AFP, Cairo
 Egypt's ex-president Mohamed Morsi faces being sentenced to death Tuesday on charges of inciting the killing of protesters in the first verdict against him nearly two years after his fall from power.
 He also faces the death penalty in two other trials, including one in which he is accused of spying for foreign powers, and escaping from prison during the 2011 anti-Mubarak revolt.
 Separate verdicts in those two cases are due on May 16.
 A death sentence on Tuesday against Egypt's first freely elected president cannot be ruled out, experts say, especially since judges have already passed harsh verdicts against leaders of his blacklisted Muslim Brotherhood.
 Morsi was toppled by the then army chief -- and now president -- Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on July 3, 2013 after mass street protests against his year-long rule.
 The new authorities then launched a sweeping crackdown on his supporters in which more than 1,400 people were killed and thousands jailed.
 Hundreds have been sentenced to death after speedy mass trials which the United Nations called "unprecedented in recent history".
 The authorities have also targeted secular and liberal activists who spearheaded the 2011 uprising against long-time autocrat Hosni Mubarak, Morsi's predecessor.
 In November, a court dropped murder charges against Mubarak in his own trial over the deaths of hundreds of protesters in 2011.
 Sisi's regime is widely popular among Egyptians tired of more than four years of political turmoil, but rights groups say it is more repressive than under Mubarak.
 Tuesday's verdict involves a case in which Morsi and 14 other defendants, seven of whom are on the run, are charged with the killing of three protesters and torturing several more during clashes in front of the presidential palace on December 5, 2012.
 The protesters were demonstrating against a Morsi decree that put him above judicial review when they

clashed with his supporters.
 Defence lawyers say there is no proof Morsi incited the clashes, and that most of those killed were Brotherhood members.
 Even if Morsi escapes the death penalty, he could still face life in jail.
 "Justice is highly politicised and verdicts are rarely based on objective elements," Karim Bitar from the Paris-based Institute of International and Strategic Relations told AFP.
 Morsi's supporters were the target of a government "witch-hunt", he added.
 If a death sentence is passed, it is unlikely to be carried out, said H A Hellyer of the Washington-based Brookings Centre for Middle East Policy.
 "The execution of Morsi would represent an escalation by the Egyptian authorities that they do not appear willing to engage in," said Hellyer.
 "Internationally, it will be received badly that an elected president overthrown via a military incursion into politics, even if that military is popular, is then dealt a harsh judicial sentence."
 The verdict is also open to appeal.
 A harsh sentence will nevertheless be a nail in the coffin of the Brotherhood, as Sisi has vowed to "eradicate" the 85-year-old movement that staged major electoral gains between Mubarak's fall and Morsi's presidential victory in May 2012.
 Almost all of its leaders face harsh sentences, and in December 2013 the movement was designated a "terrorist group," with the authorities blaming it for near daily attacks on the security forces.
 In a country where the army has been in power for decades, Sisi's May 2014 presidential victory crushed hopes raised since the popular anti-Mubarak revolt of a civilian democracy.
 The extent of anti-Brotherhood repression "is unprecedented in the history of the Brotherhood and could push its supporters to extremism", said Mustapha Kamel al-Sayyid, professor of political science at Cairo University.
 Jihadists, mainly the Egyptian affiliate of the Islamic State group, have claimed attacks on security forces in retaliation for the crackdown on Morsi supporters.

PM bashes

FROM PAGE 16
 wearing a red saree came out of her home for an election campaign for a BNP-backed mayoral candidate," said Hasina.
 "But, the media gave her better coverage though she is responsible for killing people, burning vehicles. That means destructive politics got the better coverage in the media. There's no scope for the development activities. Why is this mean attitude?" she asked.
 The prime minister was speaking at the 43rd founding anniversary of Bangladesh Krishak League, an associate body of the ruling Awami League, at Bangladesh Krishibid Institution auditorium.
 Hasina further said, "The person who burned people to death, the person whom people hate, the person who can kill people should only get people's hatred."
 On Statuary, Khaleda along with some party leaders and activists came out of her residence around 4:15pm without any prior announcement. She then carried out nearly a five-hour hectic electioneering in different areas of the Dhaka North City Corporation for her party-blessed mayoral contestant Tabitha Awal.
Palestinian court drops case Dahlan
 AFP, Ramallah
 A Palestinian court on Sunday dismissed a high-profile corruption case against exiled Gaza strongman Mohammed Dahlan, a defence lawyer told AFP.
 Sevag Torossian said the Ramallah-based corruption court had ruled that the charges against Dahlan -- once a leading figure in Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas's Fatah party -- were "inadmissible", in a move the lawyer hailed as a "great victory".

New video shows

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 A masked fighter in black brandishing a pistol makes a statement threatening Christians if they do not convert to Islam.
 The video then switches between footage of one group of about 12 men being beheaded by masked militants on a beach and another group of at least 16 being shot in the head in a desert area.
 It was not immediately clear who the captives were or exactly how many were killed.
 Before the killings, the video shows purported footage of Christians in Syria explaining how they had been given the choice of converting to Islam or paying a special tax, and had decided to pay.
 The video bore the logo of ISIS's media arm and was similar to footage the group released in the past, including of a group of 21 Coptic Christians, mainly Egyptians, beheaded on a Libyan beach in February.
 Several Libyan jihadist groups have pledged allegiance to ISIS, the extremist organisation that seized control of large parts of Syria and Iraq last year and declared an Islamic "caliphate".
 ISIS has carried out widespread atrocities and won the support of jihadist groups across the region.
 Libya has been wracked by unrest since the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi, with two opposing governments and armed groups battling to control its cities and oil wealth.
 UN-backed efforts to form a national unity government have made little progress and officials have warned that Libya -- awash with weapons after Gaddafi's overthrow -- threatens to become a haven for jihadists on

Europe's doorstep.
 ISIS has persecuted minorities including Christians and its executions of the Egyptian Copts prompted retaliatory air strikes from Cairo.
 Egypt called for an international intervention against the jihadists in Libya but Western diplomats expressed reservations, saying a political deal must be the priority.
 A US-led coalition of Western and Arab nations is carrying out an air war against ISIS in Syria and in Iraq, where pro-government forces have managed in recent months to retake some territory seized by the group.
 The group's attacks have raised fears for Christians across the Middle East and been condemned by religious leaders.
 The head of the Church of England Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, was in Egypt yesterday to offer his condolences over the beheadings of the Copts in Libya.
 He was to meet President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, grand imam of Al-Azhar, the highest Sunni Muslim authority, and Coptic Pope Tawadros II.
 Almost two-thirds of Ethiopians are Christians, the majority of those Orthodox Copts -- who say they have been in the Horn of Africa nation since the first century AD -- as well as large numbers of protestants.
 Many Ethiopians leave their country -- Africa's second largest in terms of population with more than 90 million people -- seeking work elsewhere.
 Many travel to Libya and other north African nations for jobs, as well as to use it as a stepping stone before risking the dangerous sea crossing to Europe.

Nightmare over

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 "We were very scared as fighting was going on near our building," said Arman, of Chittagong.
 "We had insufficient food. For the first eight or nine days we could prepare our food. But after that we began to face shortage of food, water and gas," Arman added.
 He and 20 other Bangladeshis took shelter in a small room in a building where they spent about two weeks before they could board an Indian ship.
 Farzana Akter, who had gone to Yemen with her husband from Feni nine months ago, repeatedly implored her husband to find a way home.
 "I kept requesting my husband to get out of Yemen anyhow when the fighting turned severe. But it was really tough to go outside amid the fighting,"

she told The Daily Star.
 Like Farzana, several other returnees faced difficulties to come out of Sana as there is no Bangladesh mission in Yemen.
 They could finally escape the city when the Bangladesh government formed an emergency crisis management cell with officials of its Kuwait mission in Djibouti on April 3.
 The government sought help of the Indian mission, which took steps to evacuate its own citizens from Yemen by ships and air.
 More than 500 Bangladeshis have been evacuated from Yemen with India's help in the last three weeks.
 Of them, 363, including yesterday's 337 returned home. Another 136 Bangladeshis, who are currently in Djibouti, might land in Dhaka tomorrow.

8 Jamalpur 'Al-Badr men'

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 The crimes were committed in between April 22 and December 11, 1971 in Jamalpur, Prosecutor Tapos Kanti Baul told The Daily Star. The charges were brought for the eights' alleged involvement in nine criminal incidents.
 The accused are Ashraf Hossain, 64, Prof Sharif Ahammed, 71, Abdul Mannan, 66, Abdul Bari, 62, Harun, 58, Abul Hashem, 65, Shamsul Haque, 75, and AKM Yusuf Ali, 83. Shamsul and Yusuf are in jail while the rest are absconding.
 The International Crimes Tribunal-2 led by Justice Obaidul Hassan fixed tomorrow to decide whether it would accept the charges.
 Meanwhile, the tribunal yesterday asked the prosecution to submit formal charges, if there is any, on May 21 against three men who allegedly committed war crimes in Maheshkhali of Cox's Bazar in 1971.
 The court came up with the order after Prosecutor Rana Dasgupta submitted a progress report on the matter and sought more time to press formal charges against them.
 The suspects are: Abdur Rashid,

Salamat Ullah Khan and Moulavi Zakaria.
 Rashid and Salamat were top leaders of Maheshkhali Convention Muslim League while Zakaria was a top leader of Nezam-e-Islami there. They were allegedly involved in different types of crimes in 1971, Rana Dasgupta alleged.
 Both Convention Muslim League and Nezam-e-Islami were against the war.
 The tribunal yesterday also allowed three defence witnesses to defend war crimes accused Forkan Mallick, an alleged Razakar of Patuakhali, and fixed April 26 to start recording the witness testimony.
ICT-1
 The prosecution yesterday completed placing arguments before the ICT-1 on "factual aspects" in the case against fugitive war crimes accused Syed Hasan Ali.
 They claimed that they had been able to prove all the six charges against Hasan, who allegedly committed war crimes in Kishoreganj.
 The tribunal fixed today to hear the closing arguments from the state-appointed defence counsel.

Israel PM to request extra time for forming govt

AFP, Jerusalem
 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is to make a formal request for extra time to piece together a new government, the president's office said Sunday.
 After a surprise election victory, Netanyahu was on March 25 tasked by President Reuven Rivlin with forming the next government and given four weeks to do so.
 With the deadline fast approaching, the Israeli leader was to formally request an extension of up to two weeks at a working meeting with Rivlin on Monday morning, the president's office said in a statement.
 "At the conclusion of the meeting, the prime minister will request an extension of the time allocated to him to form the new governing coalition," a statement said.
 "According to the Basic Law: ... the president has the power to extend that

(initial four-week) period for a maximum of a further 14 days."
 If he still cannot form a coalition, Rivlin can assign another party leader to the task - again with a 28-day deadline.
 If that fails, he can select a third person who has just 14 days to complete the task. If that does not work, the president calls a new election.
 Despite nearly four weeks of intensive negotiations, Netanyahu has not yet managed to reach agreement on the government he was hoping to form - which would comprise six rightwing and religious parties and have a majority of 67 in the 120-seat parliament.
 Since the outset, Netanyahu has been expected to form a coalition which would comprise his rightwing Likud (30 seats), the far-right Jewish Home (eight), the hardline anti-Arab Yisrael Beitenu (six), the ultra-Orthodox parties Shas (seven) and United Torah Judaism (UTJ), six) and the centre-right Kulanu (10).