

# Saudi strikes hit homes, markets in Yemen: rights group

AFP, United Nations

Saudi-led coalition air strikes on a rebel stronghold in Yemen have destroyed houses, markets and a school, killing dozens of people in what could amount to war crimes, Human Rights Watch said Tuesday.

The US-based rights group said it had investigated the attacks on the northern city of Saada and found that at least 59 people had died in a month, from April 6 to May 11, including 14 women and 35 children.

Satellite imagery showed over 210 strike sites in the city, a stronghold of the Shiite Huthi rebels, damaging or destroying hundreds of buildings, said the report.

Six houses were hit in Saada, as were an empty school, a cultural center, five markets and a petrol station crowded with motorists, according to the report.

## Teenager stabbed

FROM PAGE 16

Around 10:30pm, Akbar was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead on arrival, said hospital sources.

Anik told The Daily Star they had slapped some of the attackers in Sutikhalpar area following an altercation on Tuesday night. The attackers left the area afterwards.

The altercation broke out as both the groups were claiming to be superior to each other.

A similar incident happened last night. But this time, they returned to the area with more boys and carried out the attack, killing Akbar, added Anik.

Aboni Sankar, officer-in-charge of Jatrabari Police Station, said they were investigating the incident.

## Bangladesh goes

FROM PAGE 1

On July 1 each year, the WB revises the income classification of world's economies based on estimates of GNI per capita for the previous year.

Bangladesh's per capita income was \$1,080 in 2014 in line with the World Bank's gross national income (GNI) -- higher than the Washington-based lender's set threshold of \$1,045.

Myanmar, Kenya and Tajikistan also graduated to the LMIC status this year.

"This is a milestone in the progress on the journey towards reaching a comfortable middle income status," said Zahid Hussain, lead economist of the World Bank in Dhaka.

He said the country could be proud that it was no longer a low income nation.

"But the journey on the road to middle income status has just begun. Moving into the LMIC category is a formal recognition of the start," he told The Daily Star last night.

The government has targeted to be a middle income nation by 2021, when the country celebrates its 50th anniversary of independence.

Bangladesh's per capita income rose to \$1,314 in the fiscal year which ended on June 30, according to provisional figures of the government. It was \$1,190 in 2013-14 and \$1,154 in 2012-13.

At present, the WB recognises a country as a middle income nation if it achieves at least an average per capita income of \$1,045 for three consecutive years.

The WB currently divides economies into four income groups: low, lower middle, upper middle and high.

A country is categorised as a low income one if its GNI is less than \$1,045, lower middle income country if the GNI is \$1,046-\$4,125, higher middle income when the GNI is \$4,126-\$12,735 and higher income country if the GNI is more than \$12,735.

The WB uses the Atlas conversion factor instead of simple exchange rates in calculating GNI in US dollars. The purpose of the Atlas conversion factor is to reduce the impact of exchange rate fluctuations in the cross-country comparison of national incomes.

The Atlas conversion factor for any year is the average of a country's exchange rate for that year and its exchange rates for the two preceding years, adjusted for the difference between the rate of inflation in the country and international inflation, according to the WB.

The objective of the adjustment is to reduce any changes to the exchange rate caused by inflation.

## 38 killed

FROM PAGE 16

15 people were reported missing in 8 Mile and 11 Mile areas in Kalimpong, the sources said.

Border Roads Organisation (BRO) men were engaged in clearing the blocked roads.

# Kurdish victory in Syria worries Turkish govt

AP, Ankara

As Kurdish rebels in northern Syria rack up wins against the Islamic State group, Turkish media is abuzz with talk of a long-debated military intervention to push the Islamic militants back from the Turkish border — a move that will also outflank any Kurdish attempts to create a state along Turkey's southern frontier.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan chaired a National Security Council meeting on Monday which covered developments in Syria and pro-government newspapers were rife with purported proposals, ranging from loosening the rules of engagement to give Turkish troops a freer hand to fire into Syria, to a tanks-and-troops invasion aimed at occupying a 110-kilometer (70-mile) long, 33-kilometer (20-mile) wide buffer zone.

## Govt wants media

FROM PAGE 1

The PM made the remarks while speaking at an Iftar party organised by Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) on the Jatiya Press Club premises.

Talking about misreporting by a section of the media, Hasina said, "You need to keep in mind that your reporting doesn't pollute society in anyway."

The Awami League always thinks about the welfare of journalists. "But, journalists always criticise the Awami League," she told her audience.

In this connection, she mentioned that criticisms are always good as constructive criticisms open the eyes of a government.

But the journalists should be careful so that their criticisms do not hamper the country's fundamentals based on which Bangladesh achieved its independence, the PM said.

About constructing the Padma Bridge, she said it was a challenge for her government to build the bridge with its own fund. "By the grace of Allah, we have been able to start the construction with our own resources."

Citing some examples of development activities done by her government for the welfare of the journalists' community, Hasina said the government had changed the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and formed the Journalists' Trust Fund providing Tk 1 crore seed money.

The burst of tough talk has analysts "scratching their heads about what to make of all of this," Aaron Stein, an associate fellow at the London-based RUSI think tank, said in a Twitter message.

In a telephone interview, Stein said the new talk of action was due in part to dramatic Kurdish gains in Syria, where rebels have scored a series of victories against ISIS, most notably in the border town of Tal Abyad.

That key transit point is not far from the ISIS's Syrian power base of Raqqa. The capture of Tal Abyad opened ways for Kurds to connect their stronghold in Syria's northeast to the once-badly isolated border town of Kobani — which famously resisted a months-long Islamic State siege — and perhaps even the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in Syria's northwest.

She asked the journalists and the owners of the media houses to contribute to this Trust Fund. "You donate to this fund and the government will do its part," she said.

The government has formed the Broadcast Policy Commission, while the strengthening of the Press Council is under consideration, Hasina told her audience.

About the eighth wage board award, the PM said some media houses had implemented it while some others were yet to do it.

"We're thinking to declare another wage board in near future," she said.

In this connection, the PM said this time the inclusion of the electronic media in the new wage board is under consideration.

Responding to some demands of journalist leaders, Hasina said the government would extend its all-out cooperation in making the Jatiya Press Club a world-class one by ensuring modern facilities, including multi-storied buildings.

On solving the housing problem of journalists, she said the government, in the future, would provide flats to journalists instead of plots.

PM's Media Adviser Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, BFUJ President Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, DUJ President Altaf Mahmud, Jatiya Press Club President Shafiqur Rahman and BFUJ Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan also spoke on the occasion.

## Faulty vessels given

FROM PAGE 16

around 160 million people and a large number of them, if not most, go to their native areas outside the city to celebrate the biggest Muslim festival with their near ones.

"As the home rush gets momentum ahead of Eid, some owners engage in underhand dealings with [BIWTA] traffic inspectors to get clearance to operate unregistered and unfit vessels," said a DoS official.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, believes most of these unfit vessels ply on different inter-district routes outside Dhaka as Sadarghat, the key launch terminal of the country, in the capital remains under strict monitoring of both the government and the media.

Prof Mir Tareque Ali of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology said the process of examining vessels' fitness is faulty and most of the times, vessels are not even properly inspected.

As a result, numerous lives are put at risk, especially during this time of the year as the vessels are mostly overcrowded.

For example, Pinak-6 capsized in the Padma river in August last year, just couple of days after the Eid-ul-Azha, claiming at least 48 lives. Sixty-two others still remain missing and are feared dead.

The launch had no valid fitness certificate and was carrying passengers more than twice its capacity.

In May last year, 55 lives perished after MV Miraj-4 sank in the Meghna during a storm. Later, a probe found the launch's faulty design as being a key reason behind the tragedy.

At least 147 lives were lost after MV Shariatpur-1 sank in the Meghna in March 2012 due to overcrowding and structural faults in the vessel.

According to DoS data, 180 people on an average die every year in accidents in waterways.

However, the average was put at 326 by National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSRR) -- a non-government organisation.

So, what are the authorities doing to ensure safety of the passengers?

"We are very much cautious about passengers' safety. No unregistered vessels will be allowed to ply. Stern actions will be taken against any traffic inspector, if found involved in corruption," said Bholanath Dey, member

(planning and operation) of the BIWTA.

Badiuzzaman Badal, senior vice-chairman of Bangladesh Inland Waterways (Passenger Carriers) Association said, "We can assure you that no unfit vessel will operate during the Eid rush."

"We have given strict directives to all the launch owners not to operate any unregistered or unfit vessel," he told The Daily Star.

According to DoS statistics, there are over 750 registered passenger vessels in Bangladesh.

However, the DoS officials could not say anything on the number of unregistered ones. The NCPSRR claims at least 9,000 unregistered vessels operate on different inter-district routes of the country.

## Red Zeppelin

FROM PAGE 16

The futuristic craft is equipped with sophisticated high-precision computer technology, with Russian officials saying the \$15million aircraft will be used by the Defence Ministry.

No further details on how it will be put into service have been released, but the company behind the 21st century blimp, Augur RosAeroSystems, has announced Putin's new toy will be ready for use by the army as early as 2018, reported The Siberian Times.

Mikhail Talesnikov, the vice-president of the firm, said all development work in the first phase of the project would be completed by December. Further work will then be undertaken by the technical team before test flights with a prototype begin.

He added that it would not use the same kind of ballast controls used by traditional airships, such as those dating back to the days of the ill-fated Hindenburg.

Designers say it will 'combine the best properties of an airship, plane, helicopter and hovercraft' but give no further details on how this hybrid will be created.

It is also being created to withstand outside temperatures of -40 Celsius, which are typical in the midst of Russian winters.

There is speculation the Russian military aims to use the blimp at border points, such as to control drug trafficking.

However, it can also be used to move mass numbers of personnel around the country, or into combat zones, more efficiently.

## Boy injured

FROM PAGE 16

adding that at one stage the bomb exploded in his hands.

Robiul's mother Ankhi Begum, a garment factory worker, said she was at work when the incident took place. She had left Robiul and her younger sister home when she left for work.

His father Faruk Hossain, who is a driver, was also out at work.

Faruk told The Daily Star that the doctors had to amputate one of his fingers and that they would let Faruk know today about the condition of Robiul's injured eye.

Robiul was playing with another boy named Sharif when the bomb exploded.

Sharif sustained minor injuries.

## Narcotics dept

FROM PAGE 16

followed the guideline set by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to develop the drug testing kits.

Each kit costs around Tk 5,000 to Tk 7,000. Chemicals used as reagents in the kits are imported from abroad, he added.

Customs Intelligence in Chittagong had sent samples of the seized liquid to two government laboratories in Dhaka for retesting. The tests found the liquid to be positive for cocaine.

The DNC's failure in detecting the liquid cocaine has raised worries whether it is capable of fighting drug smuggling.

The cocaine was found mixed in 185 kg liquid inside a barrel. It arrived at the port from Bolivia via Uruguay along with 106 barrels of sunflower oil on May 8. The container carrying the consignment was seized on June 7, said Customs Intelligence sources.

Talking with The Daily Star yesterday, Pranab Kumar Neogi, director of operations and intelligence of DNC, admitted the limitations in their field-level tests.

"We learnt about liquid cocaine only after the seizure of the barrel at Chittagong Port," he said.

Law enforcers from different agencies said this was the first haul of liquid cocaine in the country.

According to media reports, international drug cartels have been using innovative tactics to smuggle illegal drugs into different countries.

Smugglers use some chemicals in liquid drugs so that it is not detected at field level, said Zakir Hossain, deputy commissioner of Customs Intelligence in Chittagong.

Customs Intelligence officials said they learnt about liquid cocaine a few months ago when the Canadian customs seized 310-kg of cocaine aboard a ship from Bolivia.

Four people have been arrested so far in connection with the seizure of the liquid cocaine. The four were involved in either re-exporting or sending the consignment back to Uruguay after failing to release it at Chittagong Port, added the officials.

## Go-between

FROM PAGE 16

their promotion.

"Zillur admitted to have raised the fund. He said he already bribed some officials in three ministries concerned Tk 7 lakh to help create posts and then ensure the promotion," a top police official told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

The official added that Zillur admitted that he still had Tk 50 lakh of the money, but could not say where the rest 3 lakh was.

The 230 BMP cops, who passed the promotion test in October 2014, were desperate for elevation because they would have to take the test again if they were not promoted by December 31 this year.

Last year, 15,000 cops of different levels were handed down different punishments for breaking service codes and committing criminal offence. The number was 14,500 the previous year, records at the police HQ show.

In the six months this year, over 5,500 police members have been punished.

The punishments include work without pay for a certain time, forced retirement, work without promotion and firing, said an official.

"We maintain a zero-tolerance strategy for criminals. If any police official commits any criminal act or corruption, he will not be considered as police... Departmental actions will be taken against those breaking discipline," said Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque.

Meanwhile, BMP Commissioner Shaibal Kanti Chowdhury refuted parts of his Tuesday's remarks published in The Daily Star yesterday.

Talking to our Barisal correspondent yesterday, he said the accused collected money which was wrong and that everything would be clear after the investigation.

"But I did not tell anything about ministries during my conversation with the correspondent in this regard," he said.

## HSC admission

FROM PAGE 1

Education Board took this year in selecting colleges for students, leaving them as well as their guardians at the end of their tether.

Then there are those whose names simply have not appeared in the first merit list.

Classes began at colleges across the country yesterday amid this situation with many students suffering from such problems and most of the institutions not being able to complete the admission process yet.

Like on Tuesday, many students gathered before the Dhaka Education Board office in the capital's Bakshibazar yesterday. Accompanied by their parents, they lodged complaints to the board officials who assured them of a solution.

Many of them said they were not sure if they wanted to get admitted into the college as selected by the board.

Some even claimed they were selected for institutions that they did not put in their choices.

"I gave BAF Shaheen College as my first choice. But to my utter surprise, I was selected for Abdul Jabbar College. I came here to complain," said Limon, a student.

Contacted, the board officials said they are trying to solve the problems as soon as possible.

The government for the first time this year initiated online admission to all colleges. It also decided that the boards would publish a list of the students, specifying the colleges where they are to be enrolled.

But due to a lack of preparation on the government's part, the entire system turned out to be nightmare for more than 11 lakh students and their parents.

Finally, the ministry early Monday published the first merit list with names of over 10.93 lakh students for admission into class XI at different colleges.

In the first list, the ministry failed to incorporate over 62,000 students for any college.

Mohammad Jahangir, whose son's name did not appear in the list, rushed to the board office for two consecutive days, but is yet to get any solution.

"The officials said that another merit list would be published on July 6, but they could not assure whether my son's name would be there in that list," he told The Daily Star.

"My son studied at Adamjee Cantonment Public School and we want him to continue his studies there. But his name was not in the list," Jahangir said.

He feared his son might be selected

for a college far away from their house.

With every passing day, new complexities are surfacing prolonging students' sufferings further.

Take, for example, the case of the 200 students of commerce group that the board has selected for Government Science College in Tejgaon, a college which is well-known for science education.

There are no specific teachers for the commerce faculty in this college, said teachers of the college.

The college, however, admitted the commerce students yesterday, complying with the board order.

Contacted, Habibur Rahman, principal of the college, said it would not be a big problem for them.

"Commerce students were enrolled here till 2009. Over the last two or three years, however, none sought admission here in this faculty. The government this time thought commerce students should also study here," he said.

Sources, however, said the college enrolled the students only after its authorities were assured by the board that they would get commerce teachers soon.

Like many other institutions, this college too has started its classes though it is yet to complete the admission process. "We hope to complete the admission process tomorrow [today]," said the principal.

## Court to hear

FROM PAGE 16

documents in connivance with some bank officials.

Later, the central bank handed the matter over to the Anti-Corruption Commission for investigation. In October 2012, the anti-graft body filed 11 cases against 27 top officials of Sonali Bank and Hall-Mark Group on charges of misappropriation of the money.

In 2013, the ACC pressed charges against 25 of them.

Six accused, including Tanvir, are now in jail while Jasmine is on bail. The rest are absconding.

## 39 more

FROM PAGE 16

Some 470 self-claimed Bangladeshis are now in the pipeline to be sent back from Thailand, she said, adding that the embassy had been working round-the-clock to expedite the return of all the remaining stranded Bangladesh nationals in Thailand at the shortest possible time. This would be done after verifying their nationality.

## Police asked

FROM PAGE 1

a representative of the civil society and a city corporation official nominated by the LGRD ministry.

On the HC directives on the police, Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque told The Daily Star, "If we get any complaint from tenants, we will look into the matter seriously as we must comply with the High Court order."

He said they would have to carry out the order even though it would be an additional duty.

Terming the HC verdict epoch-making, petitioner's counsel Manzill Murshid said it opened a door for tenants to get remedy from their homeowners' illegal and arbitrary acts.

Following the judgment, the number of house rent-related disputes would come down considerably, he told The Daily Star.

Deputy Attorney General Goutam Kumar Roy, who opposed the petition during the final hearing in 2013, said he had no idea whether the government would challenge the HC judgment in the Supreme Court.

The HC bench of Justice Mohammad Bazlur Rahman and Justice Md Ruhul Quddus gave the verdict following a writ petition by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

The rights body filed the petition in April 2010, seeking court directives on the government for strict enforcement of the House Rent Control Act to prevent the capital's house owners from raising rents arbitrarily.

During the final hearing of the petition in April 2013, Manzill appealed to the HC for directing the government to ensure that house rents are transacted through banks and mobile courts settle disputes over rents.

He argued that house owners in the capital arbitrarily increased rents and evicted tenants without any notice, defying the law.

Deputy Attorney General Goutam opposed the petition, saying there were several rent controllers for disposing of complaints over house rent.

### REACTIONS

The HC order has caused mixed reactions among tenants and homeowners.

In a statement, Bharatia Parishad, an organisation of tenants, hailed the HC verdict saying it would pave the way for a good relationship between house owners and tenants.

Sharmila Sarkar, a tenant of a house on RK Mission Road, welcomed the

HC order.

"Most of the landlords we had in the last 10 years raised house rent arbitrarily without showing any reason. They didn't serve any notice before forcing us to leave."

"We are now hopeful that tenants would be able to approach police for remedy against such illegal actions by house owners," she said.

However, Farida Khan Tania, a landlord in Dhanmondi area, was sceptical about the implementation of the court directives. "There are so many laws in the country but we don't see any enforcement."

### HC OBSERVATIONS

Yesterday, the HC bench observed that habitation, like food and clothing, is a basic necessity of people under article-15 of the constitution.

The issues regarding house rent should be brought under legal framework of the state so that it is not left to the free market economy, and a black market cannot be created centring on this issue.

The HC said it was not provided with any specific data on how many people reside in their own houses or in rented houses.

Citing media reports, it said most city dwellers reside in rented houses and they have to spend major portions of incomes on house rent. Renting out houses is a profitable business, as their owners increase rents when the demand for houses goes up.

The court said the House Rent Control Act 1991 is tenant-friendly. But this law has no effectiveness, as it cannot protect tenants.

Most of the cases filed under the law involved issues of commercial tenants, not that of residential tenants.

If the state does not control house rent, it is not possible to protect the tenants from such uncontrolled and disgraceful practices, it said.

If a landlord is found guilty of arbitrary activities, the maximum punishment for him is a fine under this law. Besides, in most cases, tenants don't approach the controller due to time constraints.

An assistant judge is supposed to act as a rent controller in every ward of a city for resolving rent-related issues, but these judges are overburdened with civil cases, said the HC.

It said the petition would be treated as "continuous mandamus" so that the petitioner could move it to this court later for further orders.