



Workers collect clay from the bank of a swamp in Savar yesterday, at the end of the rainy season. This clay is used for making bricks in the countless kilns that surround the capital. The kilns go into full-swing production during the dry season.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# Hollande vows to help Greece

AFP, Athens

French President Francois Hollande yesterday pledged to help Greece carry out tough bailout reforms and to cope with a crisis on its borders where record numbers of migrants are arriving.

Hollande, whose visit was rocked by news of a coach crash that killed at least 42 people in southern France, is backing Athens as it grapples with reform demands from its European Union and IMF creditors.

The socialist French president is one of the few European leaders to have unabashedly lent support to young leftist Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras during months of fraught creditor talks earlier this year.

"France must continue to stand by Greece," Hollande told reporters after signing a strategic partnership with Tsipras, notably offering French economic management expertise, especially to tackle tax evasion.

On his first visit to Athens since 2013, Hollande praised Greece's determination to stay the course of economic reform.

"We must listen to Greek officials when they tell us that they want to go all the way," he said.

The French leader said such efforts had been instrumental in eliminating talk of a Greek exit from the eurozone -- or Grexit -- that dominated headlines earlier in the year.

In contrast, he said, it was now talk of a British exit from the EU -- or Brexit -- that would occupy European leaders in December. Brexit, Hollande said, was a "serious hypothesis" that could not be ignored.

The French leader promised, too, to stand by Greece as it grapples with rising numbers of migrants.

"Greece is our frontier," he added, pledging 60 French experts to reinforce EU border agency Frontex, helping it to staff emergency registration centres across the region.

"We must cooperate to protect our borders," Hollande said, adding that those who did not meet refugee criteria "should be turned back."

The International Organisation for Migration said Greece had 48,000 migrants and refugees landing on its shores in the past five days, the highest number of weekly arrivals so far.

Hollande also vowed to support

Greece in an address to the parliament, becoming the third French president to speak before the chamber after General Charles de Gaulle in 1963 and Nicolas Sarkozy in 2008.

On his arrival in Athens on Thursday, Hollande recalled the "bold decisions" taken by Tsipras, who in July agreed to more public spending cuts in return for a three-year, 86-billion-euro (\$96-billion) EU bailout to prevent Greece crashing out of the eurozone.

"We did everything, France and Greece... for Greece to remain in Europe and that Europe show solidarity with Greece."

"And today, that is the message that I will continue to carry."

Tsipras yesterday acknowledged that Hollande "was among those who persuaded me that I had to accept" the July bailout.

Hollande has also pleaded for a renegotiation via an interest deferral of the soaring Greek public debt, which is equal to around 200 percent of the country's entire annual economic output.

# Indian woman stuck in Pakistan to return home

AFP, New Delhi

A mute and deaf Indian woman who has been stuck in Pakistan for more than a decade because she could not remember where she came from will return home on Monday after apparently identifying her family.

India's foreign ministry said yesterday that the young woman, known only as Geeta, would undergo DNA testing to establish whether she is related to the people claiming to be her family.

The prospect of a long-awaited reunion comes after Geeta indicated earlier this month that she recognised a photograph of a family from the eastern state of Bihar sent to her by Indian authorities.

"Geeta has already identified one family as possibly being that of her parents," foreign ministry spokesman Vikas Swarup said at a media briefing in New Delhi.

"We will be doing DNA tests to establish conclusive proof."

# 43 killed

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smoke from several kilometres away. Many said that part of the road was known to be particularly dangerous.

The lorry driver was killed. The rest of the victims were passengers on the coach, officials said. "I am astonished at the force of the crash. It will take a lot of time to recover all the bodies," said a fireman at the scene.

Eight people, including the coach driver, managed to escape the burning wreckage -- four of whom were seriously injured, according to a local official.

"The bus driver was lightly injured. He had the presence of mind to open the doors to allow as many passengers as possible to leave the bus," said Sublett.

The crash is the deadliest in France since August 1982, when 53 people including 44 children were killed in a motorway pile-up.

"The French government has fully mobilised after this terrible tragedy," President Francois Hollande said from Athens, where he is on an official visit.

"We are plunged into sadness due to this drama."

Some 20 fire engines and 60 firefighters were dispatched to the scene yesterday, supported by helicopters. A trauma counselling unit and an information hotline were also set up.

Prime Minister Manuel Valls, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve and Transport Minister Alain Vidalies travelled to the site, and the National Assembly, or lower house of parliament, observed a minute's silence.

"It's a terrible shock for France," said Valls.

# 39 Jamaat, Shibir

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The police official said they were interrogating the 39 men at the police station.

The detainees include Rajaul Karim Ansari, Jamaat Amir of Bandarban town, and Inranul Haque, president of Bandarban Shibir, said sources.

# Little John set

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News that Big Ben may be silenced prompted an offer from Nottingham council that the BBC could broadcast the live chimes from its Council House while London's set is repaired.

Deputy leader Graham Chapman admitted it was a tongue-in-cheek "gimmick" but it was "the only possible alternative for Big Ben".

"This is an opportunity to have a bit of devolution, devolve the sound. The BBC moved out to Salford, now we can devolve the sound to Nottingham," he said.

Horologist Lyon was bursting with pride at the sound of the bell.

"It is considered to be the best set of clock bells in the country. The main bell here is Little John. It is 10.5 tonnes and on a clear day you can hear it seven-and-a-half miles away down the Trent valley," he said.

"It's got a beautiful tone - far better than Big Ben because Big Ben was cracked when it was put in and has never been altered. It has rather a tinny sound unlike Little John which is mellow."

The BBC and parliament remain firmly tight-lipped on any decision on what could replace the bongs, although it did prompt a discussion on PM on Monday.

# Saudi Arabia tightens

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working hours without pay or making workers work during official weekends or holidays.

Violation also includes forcing workers to work in the heat or in bad weather without precautions. Ignoring safety measures and health standards will bring a fine of SR 25,000.

Companies will be fined SR 50,000 for selling visas to expatriates and SR 45,000 for employing an expatriate without a licence.

The Saudi labour ministry will also fine unlicensed recruitment offices between SR 10,000 and SR 20,000. Recruitment companies will also be fined the same amount if they do not register their services with the ministry.

Meanwhile, summary courts in Jeddah and Makkah have charged 24 people with human trafficking and each of them was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, 1,000 lashes and fines ranging between SR 20,000 and SR 100,000.

A local Saudi daily reports that 10 of the accused -- nine expatriates and a Saudi -- were from Jeddah and the rest were from Makkah.

The courts last year charged the defendants with human trafficking after 14 housemaids had accused them of forcing them into prostitution and other illegal work.

Residents had earlier informed

police that a number of expatriate women living in houses in their neighbourhoods were engaged in illegal activities.

The police later rounded them up after closely monitoring the houses and handed them over to the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution prior to sending them to courts.

The women told the courts that some men promised to find them jobs with Saudi families but forced them into prostitution, drug smuggling and other illegal jobs instead.

Golam Moshi, Bangladesh ambassador to Saudi Arabia, welcomed the new regulations and said these will save the Bangladeshis from cheating and exploitation by agencies and employers.

"The most epoch-making point is that these new regulations will stop trading with visas. This is a very serious problem for the Bangladeshis because they have to spend at least Tk 5 or 10 lakh to get a work visa in Saudi Arabia. Now, this practice will be stopped," he told BBC Bengali Service yesterday.

Hailing the Saudi government's move, Sheepa Hafiza, director of gender, justice and migration at Brac, however, said the benefits will depend on the implementation and regular monitoring of these new regulations.

# 100 bombs recovered in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police have found 100 crude and petrol bombs abandoned at a graveyard in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila.

Mullah Monir Hosain, officer-in-charge of Madhabpur Police Station, told The Daily Star that on information they went to the graveyard and recovered 53 crude bombs, 47 petrol bombs and a locally-made gun around 10:00pm Thursday.7

# Couple found dead at home in Netrakona

UNB, Netrakona

An elderly couple was stabbed dead by some criminals at Madhya Bazar in the district's Durgapur upazila yesterday.

The dead are Arun Saha, 75, a cloth shop owner, and his wife Hena Rani Saha, 65.

Neighbours of the couple found the door of their room closed in the morning. As they didn't get any response from inside till afternoon, they called in the police, said Rezaul Islam, officer-in-charge of Durgapur Police Station.

Reaching the house around 3:30pm, law enforcers broke into the room and found the couple's bodies in a pool of blood.

Police later sent the bodies to Sadar Hospital for autopsies.

The couple used to live in the house and their two sons live in Dhaka, the OC added.

The reason behind the murder could not be known.

# Firm faces

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Narayanganj Palli Bidyut Samity-2 at Arahazarpur upazila, the state minister said engineers from other countries were working in projects in Bangladesh and that they do not raise questions about security.

Even diplomats in Dhaka, including those from Spain, said the security situation in the country was normal, he claimed.

Foreign nationals in the country had expressed their security concerns following the killing of Italian AW worker Cesare Tavella on September 28 and Japanese national Hoshi Kunio on October 3.

Additional security measures were taken by law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety of foreigners working in Bangladesh.

# Cops come

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the ground floor of the building, the OC said.

However, relatives and neighbours during the operation surrounded the DB team and threw petrol at them. No one was hurt in that attack, the OC said.

More DB men joined the team and left the spot with the arrestees, Monirul said.

Later, following information gleaned from Sohel, another 7.65mm pistol and a bullet was recovered from his house, he added.

# Well-equipped

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Savar and Gazipur's Tongi. Another prime goal was to provide teaching and training facilities to students and interns of the adjacent Armed Forces Medical College, hospital sources said.

During a recent visit to the hospital, these correspondents found an almost empty reception area around 8:00 in the evening. The male ward on the fifth floor was comparatively calm with a small number of patients and attendants.

According to the authorities, 260 patients are admitted at the hospital at present. There are eight different units -- medicine, gynaecology, ENT, burn, child, surgery, orthopaedics, dental and cardiology.

The hospital authorities claimed they provide treatment to around 2,000 patients at the outpatient department (OPD) each day.

However, after talking with staffs in different departments and some patients as well, it was learnt that not enough people were aware about the location of a public hospital in a place like this and also about the fact that it provides treatment like all the other public hospitals at a small cost.

"The place where the hospital is located is a matter here," said Rafiqul Islam, whose relative was taking treatment here on Tuesday.

Many people mistook it for an army-run hospital since it is located in the cantonment area. Another reason is that it stands by a busy road with no link road to the hospital, he said.

Director Saidur corroborated that lack of publicity is one of the reasons why it failed to get people's attention.

Ward Master Naharul Islam, also a warrant officer of Bangladesh Army,

said, "A patient gets all the facilities at the hospital, including meals and medicines, at an admission fee of Tk 15.

He added the hospital was in need of around 100 more doctors and nurses and around 400 more staffs.

Two operation theatres including one at the emergency unit were out of service due to lack of doctors and staffs, Naharul said, adding the blood bank was also out of operation due to similar reasons.

The hospital has no mortuary, which is another shortcoming.

Mohammad Alam, a small trader residing in the city's Kalshi area, told The Daily Star that he was very happy with the way doctors here treated his relative who was suffering from kidney ailments.

"We are pleased the way doctors and staffs provide treatment here. There is no hassle, nor any broker and we are getting uninterrupted treatment," he said.

Nazmul, a patient admitted to the hospital on Tuesday, said it took his relatives barely 20 minutes to get him admitted -- from buying ticket to doctors' appointment to finally getting a bed on the hospital's fifth floor.

Ershad, another patient from the city's Mohammadpur, said the food they are provided is very good.

"I was given six pieces of bread, an egg and a banana at breakfast; rice, fish, vegetables and daal during lunch; and chicken, vegetables and daal for dinner," he said.

Reshad, Ershad's brother, said, "There are many hospitals near Mohammadpur, but I brought my brother here as one of my relatives said it was comparatively new with better treatment facilities."