

# Raj Punnah fest begins in hills

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA, *Bandarban*

The celebration of Raj Punnah, a traditional festival of the Bohmong Circle, began in Bandarban yesterday.

Seventeenth Bohmong Circle King engineer U Chow Prue inaugurated the three-day festival, ascending a makeshift throne at Puraton Rajar Math around 10:00am.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon was the chief guest at the inaugural programme.

Young indigenous boys and girls greeted the king, showering petals on him and performing traditional cultural programmes.

Raj Punnah is an annual jhum tax collection programme where the Bohmong Circle chief collects taxes from headmen (chief of a mouza) and karbaris (chief of a para).

Thousands of indigenous people from Marma, Chakma, Tangchangya, Tripura, Mro, Khumi, Pankhua, Lusai, Khuyang, Bawm and Chak communities of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari thronged Rajbari compound in Bandarban town to celebrate the festival.

Thousands of tourists from home and abroad have also gathered in the district town to enjoy the festival.

On the opening day, Bohmong Circle chief collects jhum tax and traditional gifts from the headmen of 109

mouzas and around 1,000 karbaris of the district.

Hill people, mostly jhum farmers, give annual jhum tax to their respective headmen and karbaris who formally hand over the money to the king.

Each of the headmen and the karbaris bring a bottle of wine, cocks, goats, and pigs as gift for the king on the day.

A three-day fair also began at Rajar Math on the occasion of Raj Punnah.

Indigenous people will put their traditional food items on display and stage colourful cultural programmes at the fair.

In his speech, Rashed Khan Menon said peace would not be established in the hills till the land dispute is resolved there.

"Despite repeated consensus over the issue [of settling the land dispute], the dillydallying tactic of the government in bringing an amendment to the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act is a manifestation of its lack of political will and sincerity in solving the CHT crisis," he added.

Bir Bahadur Ushwe Sing, state minister for CHT affairs ministry, and Kwe Shwe Hla, chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council, among others, were present at the inauguration function.

The century-old traditional festival began its journey in 1875 in Bandarban, according to sources.



The seventeenth Bohmong king, escorted by guards and dressed in traditional yellow attire, walks beside Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon to ascend a makeshift throne at Puraton Rajar Math area in Bandarban yesterday, marking the celebration of traditional Raj Punnah. PHOTO: STAR

## JMB man involved

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Shot in the back of his head, Parolari narrowly escaped death.

OC Redwanur Rahim, however, did not say whether Shariful, in his deposition, named the two other attackers or say exactly which one of the three fired at the pastor.

The official also did not say if the accused in the statement mentioned any reason behind the attack. But according to police sources, it was found in the probe that the motive was to tarnish the country's image before the international community and create anarchy.

Shariful was taken on a 10 day remand in two phases to interrogate in connection with the attack on ISKCON temple in Kaharole upazila of Dinajpur on December 10. After the gun attack, which left two people injured, locals caught Shariful with crude bombs.

Police said Shariful, son of Sakhawat Hossain of Monoharpur village under Palashbari upazila of Gaibandha, remained out of reach for eight months with family members before his detention.

The next day of the temple attack, locals of Singra Shalbagan area under Birganj upazila of Dinajpur caught Shariful's accomplice Mosabberul Alam with an AK 22 rifle while he was trying to flee the area.

A local of the area was injured as Mosabberul fired gunshots on the villagers during a chase.

Mosabberul is now on a 10 day remand, said police.

Earlier on December 12, Md Humayun Kabir, deputy inspector general of Rangpur Range, at a press briefing said the men who carried out the attacks in Dinajpur since November 18 were involved with JMB.

## US averts govt shutdown

**House passes 2016 spending bill**

AFP, Washington

The US House of Representatives Friday approved a \$1.1 trillion spending package for 2016 which if passed by the Senate as expected would avert a government shutdown before year-end holidays.

The sprawling bipartisan compromise, which also tightens visa requirements, proposes reforms to the International Monetary Fund and lifts a longstanding ban on US crude oil exports, passed easily by a vote of 316 to 113.

The Senate immediately took up the measure and was to vote on it right away, and the White House has said President Barack Obama would sign the measure into law.

Architects of the deal and congressional leaders worked overtime this week cajoling rank-and-file members on both sides into backing the \$1.149 trillion, 2,009-page legislation.

Known as an "omnibus," the fiscal year 2016 spending bill became a year-end catch-all that includes priorities of both parties, and leaves out some pet projects that made it difficult for some lawmakers to sign on.

But ultimately, "the House came together to ensure our government is open and working for the American people," House Speaker Paul Ryan said after the vote.

## Violence, violation

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On Thursday, the EC had served a show cause notice to Kamrul Ahsan Moharaj, AL mayor candidate in Barguna Sadar municipality.

In the notice, Moharaj was asked to explain his "involvement" in a recent attack on a meeting of present mayor Mohammad Sahadat, who is the AL rebel candidate in the municipality.

Meanwhile, on a weekly holiday yesterday, the mayor and councillor aspirants braved chilling cold, dense fog and drizzle, and continued their campaign in full swing.

The electioneering kicked off even before sunrise and continued till late evening in Thakurgaon, Habiganj, Rajshahi, Comilla and Mymensingh, report our correspondents there.

**JESSORE**

In Jessore Sadar municipality, ruling AL men allegedly swooped on Bilkis Maruf, wife of Maruful Islam, the BNP-nominated mayor candidate and the current mayor of the municipality.

The incident happened when Bilkis was running election campaign on behalf of her husband in Jessore town Thursday night, reports our correspondent.

Earlier, AL rebel mayor aspirant Kamruzzaman Chunnu, also a former mayor of Jessore municipality, alleged that supporters of AL mayor candidate attacked his men recently.

**BHOLA**

In Bhola, the house of BNP-backed mayor candidate Moniruzzaman Kabir in Borhanuddin municipality was vandalised by miscreants on Thursday night.

At least two people were reportedly injured in the incident.

Moniruzzaman made the allegation at a press conference at his house yesterday morning.

He said a group of miscreants stormed his house around 11:30pm

Thursday and vandalised the windows and lights with iron rods. During the attack, a piece of a broken glass hit and cut one eye of his wife Ayesha Siddiqua.

**LAXMIPUR**

In Ramgati municipality of Laxmipur, ruling AL men yesterday alleged that Jatiya Party MP Mohammad Noman carried out electioneering in favour of his party candidate Azad Uddin Chowdhury.

Noman, however, refused the allegation, saying he was well aware of the electoral code of conduct.

Supporters of AL mayor candidate Mezbahuddin Mezu barred the lawmaker while he was going to the party office at the Alexander Bazar in Ramgati municipality. They also asked the MP to leave the area, reports a correspondent.

Noman went to the local police station straight from there.

**SYLHET**

In Golapganj municipality in Sylhet, current mayor and AL candidate Zakaria Ahmed Poplu yesterday allegedly carried out election campaign, using a truck owned by the municipality, said witnesses.

Golam Kibria Chowdhury, BNP mayoral hopeful in the municipality, made the same allegation.

**NATORE**

A mobile court of the EC yesterday fined Ruksana Murtaza Lili, AL mayor candidate in Gopalpur municipality of Natore, Tk 20,000 after local MP Abdul Quddus reportedly accompanied her in her electioneering.

In another incident, Abdul Barek, AL mayoral aspirant in Baraigram municipality, was fined Tk 30,000 as he brought out a motor cycle rally during his electioneering.

On Thursday, the EC fined him a penalty of Tk 10,000 as he set up an additional number of election camps in his municipality area.

Breaching electoral rules, a minis-

ter and MPs on Wednesday joined electoral campaigns in some municipalities in the name of Victory Day celebrations, according to media reports.

The whip and lawmaker of Sherpur-1 constituency, Atiur Rahman, Rajshahi-4 lawmaker Enamul Haque, and Mymensingh-9 lawmaker Anwarul Abedin Khan sought vote for AL-backed candidates at Victory Day programmes in their areas, media reports said.

As per the electoral code of conduct, ministers and MPs are not allowed to join any sort of electoral campaign in this election.

The municipal elections are slated for December 30.

## IS declares war

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The video comes after Saudi Arabia announced it had brokered the formation of a 34-state Islamic military coalition to combat terrorism.

Arab countries said to be involved include Egypt, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan and Gulf Arab and African states.

A statement read: "The countries here mentioned have decided on the formation of a military alliance led by Saudi Arabia to fight terrorism, with a joint operations centre based in Riyadh to coordinate and support military operations."

However, some of the countries included on Saudi Arabia's list have expressed surprise at their inclusion.

Lebanon's foreign minister denied any knowledge of an anti-terror coalition, the Lebanon Daily Star reported.

And the Rakyat Post reported Malaysia's defence minister saying his country was in "the same fight" as Saudi Arabia against ISIS, but it was done separately.

## Cut off IS finances

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franks a serious criminal offense.

A Russian-drafted resolution on cutting off the extremists' revenue streams was adopted in February, but countries have been slow to take action to choke off funding channels.

"While we are making progress to financially isolate ISIL, if we are to succeed we all must intensify our efforts, on our own and together at the international level," said Lew.

The latest measure would require all countries to report within 120 days on steps taken to target IS financing.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will be asked to prepare a sweeping report in 45 days on the IS threat and its revenue streams, focusing also on funding for foreign fighters.

A UN sanctions committee made up of the 15 Security Council member states can impose an assets freeze, travel ban and arms ban on individuals and entities linked to IS extremists.

According to the London-based IHS analysis firm, the Islamic State group is

pulling in \$80 million per month, but Russian and US coalition air strikes on oil facilities are putting a strain on its finances.

About half of IS revenues come from extortion and looted property, 43 percent from oil sales and the remainder from drug smuggling, electricity sales and donations, according to IHS.

French Finance Minister Michel Sapin recalled that the gunmen behind the November 13 attacks in Paris resorted to online financial services to make anonymous payments and avoid detection by financial watchdogs.

"It is vital that information be better shared, as completely and rapidly as possible. Sometimes, a few hours can make the difference in preventing an attack," Sapin told the council.

"We must do everything in our power to choke off terrorism," he said.

British finance minister George Osborne called for widening the net, to "target the traders and middle men" involved in oil smuggling, which has generated \$500 million to IS so far.

## Blasts

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One person was detained immediately with some unexploded explosive devices in connection with the incident, and necessary interrogation and investigation were going on, said an ISPR release issued by Research Officer Muhammad Shahadat Hossain on behalf of the director.

The statement mentions that devotees from outside too come to offer prayers at the mosque.

Meanwhile, BBC Bangla reported that grenades were used in the attack, which left at least six injured, one critically.

The mosque is in a restricted area where general people have no access; only those living in the base go to that mosque, it added.

Quoting Harun-ur-Rashid Hazari, a police official in Chittagong, the BBC said the attacks were made soon after the prayers began.

"Two grenades were hurled as soon as the recitation of Surah Fatihah was completed," Hazari said.

Police said they came to know that around 200 people were offering prayers at that time.

One Mizan, a batman of Bangladesh Navy, was detained. Police said when he attempted to hurl the third grenade, devotees captured and handed him over to the police, according to the BBC report.

Harun-ur-Rashid Hazari also said they think the attack was carried out to create panic among the people and destabilise the situation.

Following the blasts, the mosque was sealed off temporarily.

Police said the detainee is a textile engineer and joined the navy by submitting a fake certificate, the BBC reported.

The one critically injured was taken to the Combined Military Hospital in Chittagong in a helicopter, it added.

## Migrants get little help

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failing to provide services to migrants. But the fact is that the officials are not sincere in serving the migrants," said Shipa Hafiza, director (gender, justice, diversity and migration) of Brac.

If migrant workers face any crisis in the destination countries, many staffs at the labour offices there don't help them, she observed.

Syed Saiful Haque, chairman of Farbe Development Foundation, said female migrants are the worst sufferers in the destination countries, but the government officials rarely approach them.

It is essential to appoint more female staffs at labour wings abroad. This will help female migrants get quick services if they face any problem, he said.

Bangladeshi Ovbashi Mohila Sramik Association Director Sumaiya Islam alleged that many officials don't try to understand the workers' problems while some others misbehave with them.

"They [officials] apparently forget that their expenses are met with the hard-earned money of these migrants," she said.

However, officials at the labour wings abroad refuted the allegations.

"We face difficulties regarding undocumented migrant workers. But we try to help them in every way we

can. We issue travel permits for them and also give them legal help," said Sayedul Islam, labour counsellor at Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur.

Contacted, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Nurul Islam said they have been increasing manpower at the labour offices abroad to give migrants better service.

"We have sent officials to serve the migrants, not to exploit them. If anybody complains to us that an official is not providing services, we will take action against the official," he told this correspondent last night.

Meanwhile, many government and non-government organisations held a wide range of programmes -- from rallies to seminars -- to mark the International Migrants Day.

The expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry organised a day-long programme at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

Brac, the world's largest development organisation, was given a special honour there for its mass awareness campaign on safe migration.

LGRD Minister Khandker Mosharruf Hossain, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Nurul Islam and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, among others, were present.

## Clashes, missiles leave Yemen truce in tatters

AFP, Aden

A Yemen ceasefire appeared to have collapsed Friday as government forces captured two towns from rebels and an allied Arab coalition accused insurgents of escalating the conflict by firing ballistic missiles.

The truce has been repeatedly violated and the Saudi-led coalition warned it was close to abandoning the agreement, aimed at helping parallel UN-sponsored peace talks which opened Tuesday in Switzerland.

Delegates at the peace talks being held behind closed doors did not meet Friday as the rebels snubbed a morning meeting.

"Last night, they already expressed reservations," said a member of the government delegation, requesting anonymity.

Forces loyal to President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi and allied tribesmen on Friday captured Hazim, the capital of northern Jawf province, after making significant gains in the neighbouring region of Marib, tribal sources said.

On Thursday, government troops captured the border town of Haradh after crossing over from Saudi Arabia, where they have been trained and equipped, military sources said.

## RAIDS IN DELHI CM OFFICE

### Kejriwal fires fresh salvo

### Claims CBI ordered to target opposition

DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has declared a war against the Centre and Finance Minister Arun Jaitley over the CBI raid on the office of his Principal Secretary Rajendra Kumar in the Delhi Secretariat on Tuesday.

Kejriwal levelled new charges against the NDA government, saying the CBI has orders to target the opposition parties, reports The Hindu.

"A CBI officer told me yesterday that the CBI has been asked to target all opposition parties n finish those who don't fall in line (sic)," Kejriwal tweeted yesterday.

On Tuesday, Kejriwal accused his arch-rival Narendra Modi of waging a political vendetta, branding the Indian premier a "psychopath" after the raid.

News of the raid was broken by Kejriwal himself, who posted on

Twitter that "CBI raids my office" and then accused Modi of being "a coward and a psychopath" who could not "handle me politically".

Although his initial comments sparked an uproar, Kejriwal was unrepentant when he later addressed reporters, reports AFP.

"I have a message for Mr Modi: 'You can't scare me. You have no idea what I'm made of. I won't be afraid even until my last breath'," he said.

Some senior Delhi government officials earlier claimed the raid was "fallout of Mr Kejriwal's decision to take the Centre to task over the Shukur Basti Demolition".

Following this, Kejriwal said: "CBI lying. My own officer raided. Files of CM office are being looked into. Let Modi say which file he wants?"

The Delhi CM also said that the CBI was using Principal Secretary Rajendra Kumar as an excuse to look through all his files.