

## BNP leader RA Ghani dies

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

BNP standing committee member Dr RA Ghani died at a city hospital early today. He was 89.

He left behind his wife, three daughters, a son and a host of friends, political colleagues and admirers to mourn his death.

Ghani was admitted to Square Hospital on January 6 after he felt sick and complained of respiratory problems.

Since Wednesday night, the renowned scientist was kept on life support.

Doctors declared him dead around 12:15am, Golam Mawla, customer relations officer of the hospital, told The Daily Star around 1:45am.

He had long been suffering from old-age complications. He was the minister for science and technology when BNP founder Ziaur Rahman was in power.

His body would be taken at his Dhanmondi residence in the capital this morning where family members will decide where he would be buried.



**FAREWELL, GENERAL ...** Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Syed Muazzem Ali is paying last tribute to Lt Gen (ret'd) JFR Jacob by placing wreaths in New Delhi yesterday. Later, Jacob was buried at a cemetery on Humayun Road in central Delhi.

PHOTO: COURTESY

## BAIL IN BLAST CASE

# The boy to be in grandma's custody

**COURT CORRESPONDENT**

A Dhaka court allowed grandmother to take custody of a minor boy yesterday, a day after he was granted bail in a bomb blast case.

Police arrested him in October 2013 in the capital's airport area on charges of blasting three crude bombs during a hartal called by the BNP and its allies. Since then the boy, now 16 as per the case documents, had been in jail for two years.

Judge Jesmine Ara Begum of the Juvenile Court, Dhaka gave the custody to his grandmother Kohinur Bagum as she prayed for it.

AM Jamil Haque Faisal, a lawyer of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), who moved the bail petition, traced the woman and brought her to the court.

Faisal said he was relieved after he had found the grandmother of the boy, who was at the Juvenile Development Centre in Tongi.

On receiving the court's order, the centre will hand him over to Kohinur.

Faisal quoted the boy as saying to him that he was arrested when he was going to visit his grandmother's home in the airport area. He also claimed to be of 11 years old now.

## MK Anwar gets bail in 2 cases

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The High Court yesterday granted bail to BNP leader MK Anwar for six months in two vandalism and arson cases, clearing his way to walk out of jail.

The HC bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Ashish Ranjan Das passed the order after hearing two bail petitions filed by Anwar in connection with the cases.

Anwar's lawyer Sagir Hossain Leon told The Daily Star that there is no legal bar to his client's release from jail following the HC order.

Anwar is now in the prison cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, he said.

Leon said the two cases were filed against Anwar with Wari and Bhatara police stations on January 30 and February 4 last year under the Explosive Substances Act and Special Powers Act for vandalising vehicles and blasting cocktails.

## 'IS attacks' Jakarta

**FROM PAGE 1**

militant called Bahrin Naim as the man responsible for plotting it.

Police believe Naim is in the Syrian city of Raqqa.

The drama played out on the streets and on television screens, with at least six explosions and a gunfight in a movie theatre. But the low death toll pointed to the involvement of local militants whose weapons were rudimentary, experts said.

In a sign of public unease, a bang caused by a tire bursting triggered a bomb scare that sent police cars rushing back to the scene hours after the attack.

**ARMORED CARS, HELICOPTERS**

"The Starbucks cafe windows are blown out. I see three dead people on the road. There has been a lull in the shooting but someone is on the roof of the building and police are aiming their guns at him," Reuters photographer Darren Whiteside said as the attack unfolded.

Police responded in force within minutes. Black armored cars screeched to a halt in front of the Starbucks and sniper teams were deployed around the neighborhood as helicopters buzzed overhead.

Jakarta police chief Tito Karnavian said one man entered the Starbucks cafe and blew himself up, wounding several inside.

As people poured out of the cafe, two waiting gunmen opened fire on them. At the same time, two militants attacked a police traffic post nearby, using what he described as hand grenade-like bombs.

After the militants had been overcome, a body still lay on the street, a shoe nearby among the debris. The city centre's notoriously jammed roads were largely deserted.

Indonesia has seen attacks by Islamist militants before, but a coordinated assault by a team of suicide bombers and gunmen is unprecedented and has echoes of the sieges seen in Mumbai seven years ago and in Paris last November.

Australian Attorney-General George Brandis, who was in Jakarta recently to bolster security coordination, told the Australian newspaper he had "no doubt" Islamic State was

seeking to establish a "distant caliphate" in Indonesia.

The last major militant attacks in Jakarta were in July 2009, with bombs at the JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels.

The country had been on edge for weeks over the threat posed by Islamist militants.

Counter-terrorism police had rounded up about 20 people with suspected links to Islamic State, whose battle lines in Syria and Iraq have included nationals from several Asian countries.

**HISTORY OF ATTACKS**

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population, the vast majority of whom practise a moderate form of Islam.

The country saw a spate of militant attacks in the 2000s, the deadliest of which was a nightclub bombing on the holiday island of Bali that killed 202 people, most of them tourists.

Police have been largely successful in destroying domestic militant cells since then, but officials have more recently been worrying about a resurgence inspired by groups such as Islamic State and Indonesians who

## Train fare

**FROM PAGE 1**

From now on, the fares will be adjusted every year in line with fuel prices and by taking other circumstances into consideration, the minister said.

Currently, the fare for *shovan chair* on Dhaka-Chittagong route is Tk 320. The fare would be Tk 345 once the new fare takes effect.

The fare for AC chair on the same route would go up from existing Tk 610 to Tk 656, Railway Secretary Feroz Salah Uddin told The Daily Star.

The fare for 20-foot wagon carrying 15 tonnes of goods between Dhaka and Chittagong Port would be raised to Tk 9,780 from the current Tk 9,000.

Bangladesh Railway incurs a loss of around Tk 900 to 1,000 crore annually. Once the new fares are implemented, it would bring in only an additional Tk 45 crore annually, the secretary said.

"It's not possible to recover all the losses only by raising fares. We are also planning to take some other steps to reduce the loss," Feroz said.

This is the second time the government is raising the fares in four years.

After about 20 years, fares of both passenger and freight were raised by 50 percent in October 2012, to improve services and reduce railway's loss, which was Tk 800 crore a year then.



This year, despite a good yield, tomato farmers are reportedly getting relatively low prices. In the photo, workers of a wholesaler at Naldanga in Natore are seen sorting out tomatoes, bought at Tk 8 per kg, before sending those to the capital.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

## No sign of solution

**FROM PAGE 1**

universities have completed this year's admission procedure but classes are yet to begin.

Like the previous days, teachers under the banner of Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association observed their strike yesterday, refraining from giving classes, including those of evening courses.

They called on the government to take prompt measures for ending the stalemate.

Teachers of all 37 public universities have been protesting the eighth pay scale since May last year and pressing for a four-point charter of demands, including formation of a commission to initiate an independent pay scale for them.

Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed, president of the teachers association, said,

"Teachers all over the country are observing the work stoppage spontaneously, but we want to go back to our classrooms soon after a fruitful solution."

Asked whether students would be caught in session jam, he said, "This [strike] might cause a session jam and hamper students' academic lives, but we know better how to do away with session jams. That is why we urge the government to take prompt measures."

Like on previous occasions, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday said the government was working to come up with an acceptable solution.

The problem that arose after the dissolution of selection grade and time scale can be solved through talks, he said at a launching ceremony of teachers training manual at the

## Tall men's higher calling

**FROM PAGE 1**

The two tall men then weighed in and settled the issue by explaining that the rich boy was to be blamed and so he should apologise to the poor boy.

"The incident prompted us to work harder for justice of the poor. Wherever we went, we looked for tall men to make our members," Hiru goes on to explain how the club has expanded in one and a half years.

Since then, they mobilised over 60 tall men in Tangail, Mymensingh and Jamalpur. Though it does not have any formal structure or a committee, the one who first becomes a member in a village is regarded the head in that area.

Coming together for no financial gain, these people selflessly work for checking child marriage, forced divorce, land grabbing, fraudulence etc. in their respective areas.

Another example, as narrated to this correspondent by Hiru, would better explain how they work.

Locally influential Ariful Islam, 42, from Rasulpur developed an

affair with Ramisa Begum, a married woman, who was then staying in her father's home at Basabaid village. This relationship led to Ramisa's divorce. Meanwhile, Ariful broke the promise of marrying Ramisa.

After hearing of Ramisa's misery, Hiru suggested the girl record the mobile conversation with Ariful. One night, when Ariful came to Ramisa's house, her brother informed the club members who asked him to lock the door. Thus, he was caught.

Arif married Ramisa in early 2015 due to strong interventions by the "Long Man Society".

"If the society members did not help us, our house could be set on fire and we would be driven out of the village," says Ramisa's mother. Now that Ramisa is married, they are having a good family.

"This would not have been possible without 'Long Man Society'," the mother, wishing anonymity, says in admiration.

Abdul Hamid, 45, of village Kazla,

## Only rate cuts won't

**FROM PAGE 1**

He also said factors like business environment and cost of doing business would be critical to gain from the move.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute (PRI), said policy rate cuts would give a stimulus that would let people borrow more at cheaper costs.

But he is not sure whether the move will ensure a lower lending rate.

He said the BB needed to work hard on the spread or the gap between lending and deposit rates.

"If we minus the spread of state banks, the banking industry's average spread will be six percent plus, which is in no way acceptable," said Mansur, also a former top official of the International Monetary Fund.

The BB announced its monetary policy stance (MPS) for January-June period yesterday. It has lowered the broad money and private sector credit growth targets to 15 percent and 14.8 percent accordingly. The MPS set a target of private sector credit growth for June at 14.8 percent, which was 15 percent in the previous MPS announced in July last.

The central bank said the target was slightly lower than that in the last, but higher than the actual outcome. In

November, the private sector credit growth was 13.72 percent on year-on-year basis.

The MPS has set gross domestic product (GDP) growth target at 6.8 to 6.9 percent. Inflation has been projected at 6.1 percent for June this year, slightly down from 6.2 percent in November.

Dr Mustafa K Mujeri, former director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), termed the new monetary policy as usual and said it would not guarantee an investment boost.

"Policy rate cuts are just an indication and it cannot ensure higher investments as there are other factors, such as investment climate and infrastructure constraints," said Mujeri, also a former chief economist at the BB.

"We need a quantum jump in investments, but there is no clear message about it in the MPS," he said.

He also said the BB could have reduced the inflation target below six percent given the global and regional inflation rates.

Zahid Hussain, lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, said the revised stance on policy rates sent a signal to bankers to expand private credit by reducing lending rates.

To avoid the adverse impact on the profits of the BB, this was an opportune time to reduce the reverse repo rate and correspondingly the repo rate, he noted.

However, though there is not much in this than just the signaling aspect, these reductions signal banks to be more proactive in finding bankable projects and to lend in the private sector.

"Even if banks do not pass on the lower interest rates onto customers, they will be able to borrow more which they can pump into the system," he said.

Zaid Bakht, an economist and chairman of Agrani Bank, believed the policy rate cuts would have a positive impact on the commercial lending rates as banks' cost of funds will go down.

"[rate cut] will be helpful to boost private investments," he said.

Anis A Khan, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank and chairman of Association of Bankers, Bangladesh (ABB), said that the already declining lending rates would decrease further.

"The rate cuts signal to the market to increase investment activities," he said.

Khan also hailed the new MPS, saying that it reflected the country's strong macroeconomic fundamentals.

### For Tigers

**FROM PAGE 1**

while Shuvagata Hom also has a chance of making an appearance.

The match will be telecast live on GTV and Star Sports 4 from 3:00PM.