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New era in Myanmar

Suu Kyi's party in parliament after decades-long struggle for democracy

Myanmar entered a new political era yesterday as Aung San Suu Kyi's pro-democracy MPs took their seats in parliament, bearing the hopes of a nation subjugated for decades by the military.

Wearing pastel orange uniforms, lawmakers from the National League for Democracy (NLD) arrived for their first day of work in the capital Naypyidaw, buoyed by a massive popular mandate from November's election.

That poll saw the NLD wrest a majority from the army establishment and has spurred hopes of a new political dawn in the long-repressed nation.

Suu Kyi, the centerpiece of Myanmar's struggle for democracy, entered the cavernous parliament building without comment.

She took a seat alone for the short opening session which saw the lawmakers sworn in and the appointment of a close ally, Win Myint, as lower house speaker.

"Today is a day to be proud of in Myanmar's political history and for the democratic transition," Win Myint said in an acceptance speech.

The new government faces a daunting rebuilding task in one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries, whose economy was crushed by almost half a century of junta rule.



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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with, from left, Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor, Prof Emeritus Dr Anisuzzaman and Bangla Academy Director General Shamsuzzaman Khan visits a bookstall on the academy premises yesterday. The PM earlier inaugurated the month-long Amar Ekushey Bôi Mela.

PHOTO: PID

Take Bangla literature to the world

PM urges writers, publishers, opens Ekushey book fair

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated her call for extensive and quality translation of classical and popular books of Bengali literature into other languages to reach out to world readers.

"I always put emphasis on translation of Bengali literary works into other languages and vice versa so that we can taste the treasure of literature of other languages," she told the inaugural function of the month-long Ekushey Granthamela (book fair) on the Bangla Academy premises.

She stressed the need for publishing more books on children's literature.

Hasina said her government was giving incentives for creative publications. Last year, Bangladesh became associated with world famous Frankfurt Book Fair which helped the

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Honour or insult for martyrs?

SHAKHAWAT LITON

BNP policymaker Nazrul Islam Khan's announcement that this party would prepare a list of martyrs of our Liberation War in 1971 appeared as a retaliatory step which brought out once again the party's long held dubious stance over the spirit of the Liberation War.

His party has always been cosy with anti-liberation leaders and forces. On the one hand, it boasts of the party founder General Ziaur Rahman's role in 1971. On the other hand, it has been maintaining ties with anti-liberation elements and rehabilitating them in the post-1975 politics.

The BNP leader's announcement seems to be an electoral

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Malaysia slaps levy on migrant workers

Employers used to pay the sum; Bangladesh high commission working towards exemption for Bangladeshi workers

BELAL HOSSAIN BIPOB

Around 3 lakh registered Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia would have to pay the levy previously paid by their employers as the country yesterday imposed a new levy on foreign workers.

"The Malaysian employers usually used to pay the levy on behalf of the workers. But the government has imposed it on the workers in the new system," Sayedul Islam, labour counsellor at Bangladesh High

Commission in Kuala Lumpur, told The Daily Star over phone.

He however said they were negotiating with the Malaysian government to exclude the Bangladeshi workers.

"We are now negotiating to sign a new MoU [memorandum of understanding] with the Malaysian government for recruiting fresh workers from Bangladesh. We have requested them to exclude the Bangladeshis from the new levy," Sayedul added.

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UNO in trouble

When mayor's illogical demand not met

A CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

He wanted to enter the exam hall where his son was taking the SSC tests. But the UNO didn't allow this and asked him to leave the exam centre.

The man, father of the examinee, is not your everyday guy. Being a municipality mayor and a local ruling party leader, he commands a diehard

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ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX Bangladesh slips to 137th place

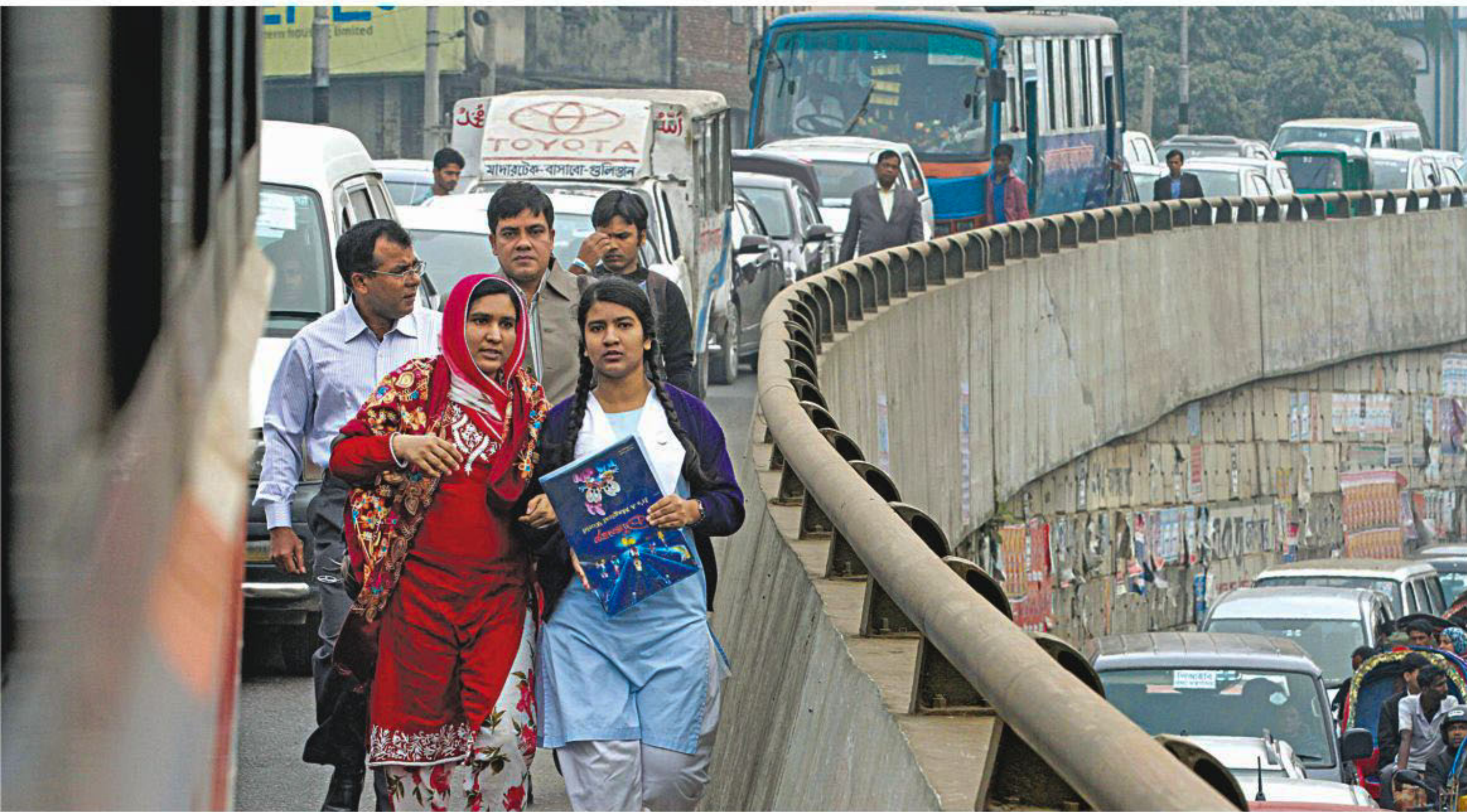
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh slipped six places in terms of economic freedom to 137th position in an international ranking with a fall in scores in the areas of corruption, business and labour.

With its economic freedom score of 53.3, Bangladesh became the 137th freest nation among 186 countries in the world, according to the 2016 Index of Economic Freedom, an annual publication by The Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal.

The country is still stuck in the category of "mostly unfree" countries despite the facts that it showed remarkable macroeconomic resilience and its economy grew steadily over the last five years, says the report.

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An SSC examinee and her mother rush to an exam centre on foot getting down from a bus, as vehicles both on and under the flyover at the city's Khilgaon remain stuck in traffic jam. The photo was taken about 40 minutes before the exams began yesterday morning. PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

U-19s face high-flying Namibia today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's Young Tigers will take on a spirited Namibia at the Sheikh Kamal International Stadium in Cox's Bazar today in the last Group A fixture of the ICC Under-19 World Cup.

While both teams have already made it through to the quarterfinals, the winner will finish the group on top. The winner of Group A will face Nepal in the quarterfinals, while the team that loses the match at Cox's Bazar today will face India.

While Namibia did beat defending champions South Africa in their last game and are on a high having qualified for their

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UK okays embryo 'gene editing'

BBC ONLINE

UK scientists have been given the go-ahead by the fertility regulator to genetically modify human embryos.

It is the first time a country has considered the DNA-altering technique in embryos and approved it.

The research will take place at the Francis Crick Institute in London and aims to provide a deeper understanding of the earliest moments of human life.

It will be illegal for the scientists to implant the modified embryos into a woman. But the field is attracting controversy over concerns it is opening the door to designer- or GM- babies.

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PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 2
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-15 5-52 7-15
JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-30 5-56 7-45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Low Zika risk for Bangladesh

Says public health expert; 'only a few travel here from affected countries, posing little threat'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Risk of Zika virus infection in Bangladesh is low as the countries affected by the mosquito-borne disease are far away, an expert said here yesterday.

"If the virus has to spread in Bangladesh, active case of Zika infection has to come here. Not many people are coming here

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 8

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JP MINISTERS IN GOVT

Ershad group softens its tone on quitting

RASHIDUL HASAN

Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad and his followers have softened their stance on the resignation of three JP ministers from the Sheikh Hasina-led cabinet, party insiders said.

Ershad had repeatedly said the leaders should leave the cabinet so that their party could play the role of a real opposition party.

The latest stance comes amid a strong opposition by the Raushan-led faction over the matter.

The insiders also said that the two groups have unofficially reached a consensus that Ershad would continue to act as the key person in the party's organisational activities while Raushan would be the leader in taking decisions on its activities in parliament and in the cabinet.

To tighten his grip on the party, Ershad yesterday made his younger brother GM Quader and JP Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader the spokespersons for the party.

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Civil Aviation Authority
Bangladesh