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# Govt to guard against Zika

*Surveillance at air, water, land ports to be stepped up; travellers from affected nations to be screened*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will strengthen surveillance at air, water and land ports across the country and screen travellers coming from countries affected by Zika epidemic.

The medical teams working at the ports will be strengthened, said Prof AKM Shamsuzzaman, director of the Centre for Disease Control of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

If needed, blood samples will be collected from travellers from the Zika-affected nations and be tested, he told The Daily Star.

The decisions were taken yesterday at a technical committee meeting chaired by DGHS Director General Deen Mohammad Noorul Haque at Kurmitola General Hospital in the capital.

The move came after the World Health Organisation on Monday declared a global public health emergency on mosquito-borne Zika virus, first discovered in Uganda in 1947.

A Zika virus infection causes symptoms like fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting a week.

However, the virus has been suspected of being responsible for birth defects in Brazil. In South America, panic ran high as infections of pregnant women by the virus were thought to be causing microcephaly meaning the babies were born with a small head and brain.

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A grey peacock-pheasant in the Pablakhali Wildlife Sanctuary in Rangamati.

PHOTO: SAKIB AHMED



## Grey peacock-pheasant of our hill forest

SAKIB AHMED

The Pablakhali Wildlife Sanctuary in Rangamati, rarely visited by tourists or researchers, is beautiful with mighty *garjan* and civit trees and home to hundreds of Hill Mynahs and families of Hoolock Gibbons.

The forest has tranquil streams meandering through large boulder-filled valleys. Deep inside the forest, the presence of a hermit, a Buddhist monk who has made his home there, gives the whole place a surreal and mystical vibe.

We were conducting biodiversity surveys and our

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## TRANS PACIFIC PACT Biggest ever trade deal signed

AGENCIES

The biggest trade deal in history was signed yesterday, yoking 12 Pacific rim countries in a US-led initiative aimed at wresting influence from booming China.

The ambitious Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) deal aims to slash tariffs and trade barriers for an enormous 40 percent of the global economy -- but pointedly does not include Beijing.

"TPP allows America -- and not countries like China -- to write the rules of the road in the 21st century," US President Barack Obama said after the pact was signed in New Zealand.

The deal -- whose birth was fraught by domestic opposition in the US and in other key players, such

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# In search of roots

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chittagong

Poverty compelled Rahima Khatun to pass her granddaughter on to a Dutch NGO in 1979 when Sultana was just four. A Dutch couple took her to the Netherlands and brought her up.

Sultana Ven Der Lest, as she is now called, is now in Bangladesh in search of her roots.

According to the document of the handover, she is from Dohazari in Chandanaish upazila in Chittagong. Back then, the union was under Patiya upazila. It says Sultana's parents died and that it was impossible for her grandmother to bring her up owing to poverty.

The paper does not mention the names of her parents and the village, said Ismail Sharif, a development worker and former official of SLOPB Bangladesh, the organisation that is helping Sultana in her search.

A schoolteacher, Sultana was married to Jorif Jacob who is a designer. The couple came to Bangladesh on February 1 with their 10-year-old son, Noah Abed Nabila Jacob. They plan to fly back to the Netherlands on February 12.

Yesterday, they met the Upazila Nirbahi Officer and local police officials seeking help.

They also held a press conference at the Chittagong Press Club.

Talking to The Daily Star, Sultana said she felt for Bangladesh and her roots. "I have a deep feeling for my roots and so I have been very keen to come to Bangladesh to find out my roots."

Although she has yet to know the details about her village and her parents, she hopes that she will find it out one day.

"If I fail to explore it this time, I will come back again and I will make it happen," she told this newspaper by phone.



Sultana with husband and son.

## 'PAY DISPARITY' Univ teachers' strike to be off till Feb 23

DU CORRESPONDENT

Public university teachers yesterday extended the pause in their indefinite work stoppage over "discrepancies" in the new pay scale until February 23.

Prof ASM Maksud Kamal, secretary general of Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association (FBUTA), made the announcement at a press briefing following a general meeting of FBUTA at teacher's club of Dhaka University.

"We'll sit on that day [February 23] to assess the development. Then we will decide our next course of action if our demands are not met," he told reporters.

"We are heading towards a respectable solution, but it depends on the bureaucrats," he added.

Teachers of all 37 public

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## Moon can affect rainfall: study



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The Moon can affect how heavy the rain is, according to a new study that could help improve weather forecasts and climate models.

Researchers at Washington University in the US discovered that because the Moon causes the Earth's atmosphere to bulge towards it when it is overhead, the air becomes warmer to the extent that it can make rain lighter, The Daily Telegraph reported.

The change is small, accounting for about one per cent of the total variation in rainfall. But while people might not notice the difference, the findings could help weather forecasters improve their predictions and climate scientists understand longer term trends.

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## HC asks EC to go ahead with Tangail by-election

Kader Siddique's candidacy scrapped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday upheld the Election Commission's decision that had cancelled the candidacy of Krishak Sramik Janata League President Abdul Kader Siddique for Tangail-4 by-polls.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Zafar Ahmed rejected a writ petition filed by Kader Siddique challenging the legality of cancelling his candidature on charge of loan default.

The court also directed the EC to proceed with the Tangail-4 by-polls in accordance with the law. The by-election was scheduled to be held on November 10 last year.

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## Court accepts charges against Shahadat, wife

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday accepted charges against suspended Bangladesh cricketer Shahadat Hossain and his wife in a case filed for allegedly torturing their 11-year-old domestic help.

Judge Tanjina Ismail of the Fourth Tribunal for

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US President Barack Obama waves farewell to students after delivering a speech at the Islamic Society of Baltimore mosque in Catonsville, Maryland on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Obama visits US mosque

*Decries anti-Muslim rhetoric, says an attack on Islam is an attack on all faiths*

AFP, Baltimore

US President Barack Obama offered an impassioned rebuttal of "inexcusable" Republican election rhetoric against Muslims Wednesday, on his first trip to an American mosque since becoming president seven years ago.

Obama, whose grandfather converted to Islam, made the short trip to the Islamic Society of Baltimore to call on Americans not to be "bystanders to bigotry."

Invoking the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) and hailing the tolerance shown by American political icons from Thomas Jefferson to Dwight Eisenhower, Obama hit out at anti-Islamic sentiment that is "not who we are."

"We've heard inexcusable political rhetoric against Muslim-Americans that has no place in our country," he said, lauding Muslim-Americans as sports heroes, entrepreneurs and the architect who fashioned Chicago's dizzying skyline.

His comments came as a shrill election debate has sullied America's image abroad, and as jihadist attacks in San Bernardino and Philadelphia threatened to shatter post-9/11 religious solidarity at home.

Six days after the 2001 attacks in New York and Washington, then president George W Bush visited the Islamic Center of Washington, declaring "Islam is peace."

Today, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has wooed conservative voters by demanding a ban on Muslim immigrants, while frontrunner Ted Cruz has

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