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World powers agree Syria ceasefire

Assad defiant; Russia's continuing air campaign puts question marks on deal's implementation

REUTERS, Munich/Amman

Major powers agreed yesterday to a pause in combat in Syria, but Russia pressed on with its relentless bombing in support of its ally President Bashar al-Assad, who vowed to fight on until he regains full control of the country.

Although billed as a potential breakthrough, the "cessation of hostilities" agreement does not take effect for a week, at a time when Assad's government is poised to win its biggest victory of the war with the backing of Russian air power.

If implemented, the deal hammered out at five hours of late night talks in Munich would allow humanitarian aid to reach besieged towns. It was described by the countries that took part as a rare diplomatic success in a conflict that has fractured the Middle East, killed at least 250,000 people, made 11 million homeless and sent hundreds of thousands fleeing into Europe.

But several Western countries said there was no hope for progress without a halt to the Russian bombing, which has decisively turned the balance of power in favour of Assad.

Rebels said the town of Tal Rifaat in northern Aleppo province was the target of intensive bombing by Russian planes yesterday morning. The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitoring body, said warplanes believed to be Russian also attacked towns in northern Homs.

Syria's main opposition alliance cautiously welcomed the plan, but said it would not agree to join political talks unless the agreement proved effective.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2



A week ahead of International Mother Language Day, workers giving a facelift to the Central Shaheed Minar, which has been decorated with artwork featuring language martyrs.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DERAILMENT Dhaka's rail link with 19 dists snapped for 8 hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Disruption in railway communications of Dhaka with 19 northern and southern districts became normal after around eight hours yesterday.

Shawkat Jamil, divisional traffic officer (DTO) of Bangladesh Railway (west zone), said four bogies of Dhaka-bound intercity train, Drutojan Express, derailed when it was entering Chatmohar Railway Station in Pabna around 3:00pm.

He said four other intercity trains were stranded at different stations on Dhaka-Ishwardi route because of the derailment, causing sufferings for passengers.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Serving the orphans

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Faridul Islam Farid would not want others to suffer what he went through.

After his parents died, his brothers tried to force him to give up studies and work at their family store. So, Farid had to leave home and continued studying on his own.

He tutored students and did odd jobs to fend for himself. He had to spend tiring days and sleepless nights, that too without any emotional support from the family or anywhere else. Yet, he did not give up.

"I lost my father in 1994 when I was only 7 years old. But my mother did not let me feel the odds and cares of life," says Farid of Mithapukur upazila in Rangpur.

"When she died in 2009, I got to see the harsher side of life. I had four brothers. They were hell-bent on having me quit education. But I was too determined to give in."

Now that he has been able to overcome all the obstacles and pursue higher education, Farid wants to make sure that the children around him get hassle-free access to education, something he didn't get.

And he focused on orphans especially for "they are the most vulnerable to dropping out from schools," he says.

"While studying, I felt the need to stand beside the orphans. I shared the thought with my friends.

They liked the idea and gave me support."

"I told my friends that if we could save Tk 20-50 a day, we could help the orphans," said Farid, who now is studying masters at Rangpur Carmichael College.

His friends Nazmul Hossain, Firoz Kabir, Golam Kibria Sagor, Rezwanul Islam and Mohammad Tuhin joined the struggle "to establish rights of the orphans".

With the little money they saved, Farid and his friends started campaigns to make the orphans of his locality aware of their rights and encourage them to continue education "no matter what".

In 2013, he gave the initiative a name -- Etim Unnayan Foundation -- and began working on a broader scale by distributing education materials and stipends to 26 orphans of Balua Mashimpur Union in Mithapukur.

"Now no orphans of at least five unions of the upazila feel left out. They are pursuing education with great enthusiasm," says Farid.

His foundation also gives special stipends to the orphans who secure A+ in primary, junior and secondary certificate examinations.

Currently 87 orphans are being supported by the foundation.

Nawsin Nahar Liza is one of them.

The ninth grader of the local Balua High School

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Faridul Islam

Pakistan foils plot to free Pearl's killer

Arrests 97 al-Qaeda, Lashkar militants

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan has arrested 97 al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militants, including three commanders, in the southern city of Karachi and foiled a planned attack to break US journalist Daniel Pearl's killer out of jail, the army said yesterday.

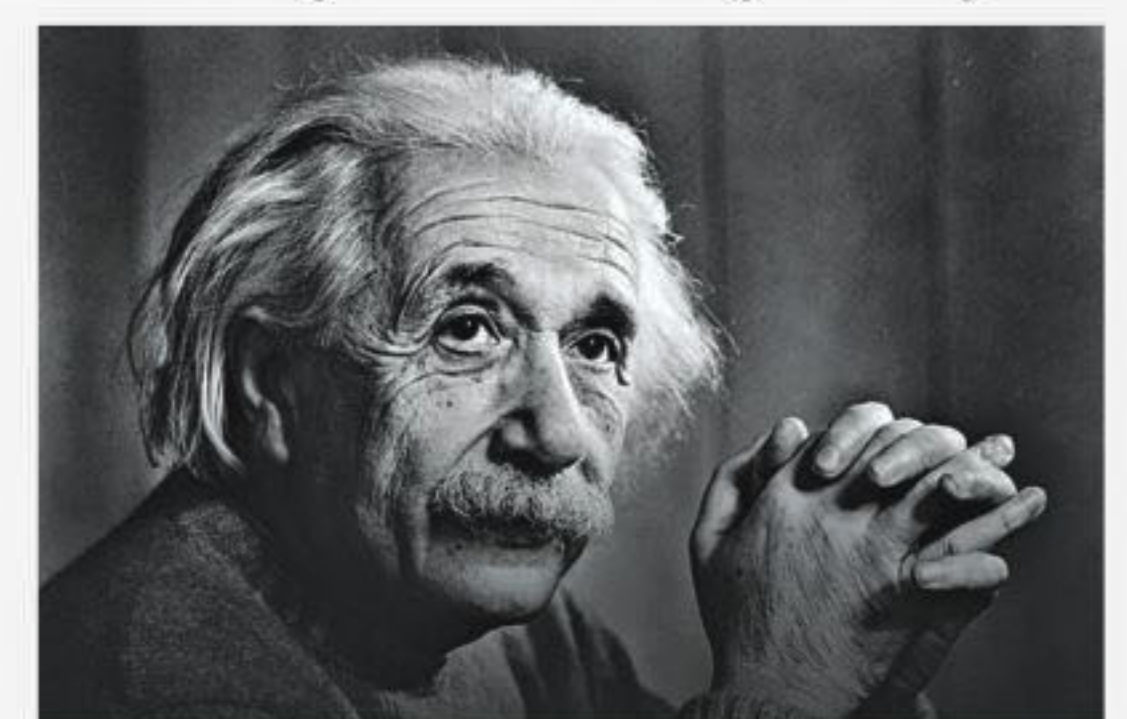
The men are accused of involvement in major attacks on two Pakistani air bases, the Karachi airport, several regional intelligence headquarters and on police installations between 2009 and 2015, the military said.

The LeJ's Naeem Bokhari and Sabir Khan, as well as Farooq Bhatti, deputy chief of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), were captured by Pakistani forces in recent raids, military spokesman Lieutenant General Asim Bajwa said.

"Our conclusion is that all of the terrorist groups are trying to cooperate with

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Einstein's waves: a 100-year odyssey



AFP, Paris

When Albert Einstein forged the bedrock theory of modern physics 100 years ago, he had no computer, no internet, no printer -- ballpoint pens and pocket calculators did not exist and few homes had telephones.

Yet it took one of the most sophisticated science tools ever built, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, to prove an idea the scientist had crafted with little more than paper, a fountain pen, hard work and a mind sharper than most.

On Thursday, physicists announced they had detected gravitational waves -- hitherto a key unproven element of Einstein's general theory of relativity.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5



A team of the Department of Archaeology excavating a Buddhist temple with boundary walls, built 900 years ago, in Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

900-year-old temple found in Nilphamari

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

A Buddhist temple, believed to be built in the 12th century during the Pala period, has been unearthed in Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari.

A team from the Department of Archaeology excavated the temple on a reserved archaeological site in Dharmapalagarh area, named after the 2nd Dharma Pala who had established his capital there.

Mujibur Rahman, leader of the seven-member team that has been working since January 1, said the upper portion of the temple was destroyed and some parts of its basement were still buried.

He said they discovered several broken parts of clay pots, white marble slabs with motifs and a wall with overly burnt large bricks around the structure.

The length of the wall is 25 metres while the thickness 0.85 metres.

Also, the main structure of the temple is encircled by a 1.2-metre wide passage on which devotees used to walk as part of their rituals, said Mujibur, also the custodian of Mahasthangarh Museum in Bogra.

He said his team along with 20 workers arrived in January as part of an annual excavation programme of the government.

In 1987, the government declared Dharmapalagarh with some 30 acres of land and its surrounding Moynamotir Kot, shrine of Kherkathi Pir and Satisher Danga, a nearby place, a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Five burnt in gas explosions

STAR REPORT

Five people were burnt in gas explosions of two separate incidents in the capital and Narayanganj yesterday.

Two youths were injured as fire broke out when they attempted to light a leaky gas stove in the capital's East Rampura around 3:30am, said Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Rampura Police Station.

The injured are Rakib Hossain, 22, a first-year

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



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PRAYER TIMING

FEBRUARY 13

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-25 12-45 4-30 5-57 7-15

JAMAAT 6-00 1-15 4-45 6-01 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION