

Child chokes to death playing with ropes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An 11-year-old class V student, Rakin Faiyaz, choked to death on ropes he was playing with in his room while his mother, Hasina Begum, was in the kitchen at his house in the capital's Malibagh Bazar area last night, the victim's cousin Shanto told The Daily Star.

It seems like an unfortunate accident, said Shahjahanpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shafiqul Islam.

Fire guts restaurant in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The kitchen of a Chinese restaurant was gutted in a fire in the capital's Mouchak yesterday afternoon.

The fire originated from an electric short circuit around 4:20pm, said fire service sources.

The items of furniture of the restaurant—Coffee Corner—were destroyed in the fire.

Eight fire fighting units rushed to the spot and doused the fire.

Fakhrul

FROM PAGE 16

Biswas, Barkatullah Bulu and 17 others -- were shown as absconding.

In the second of the cases, SI Vivekananda Debnath of the same police station pressed charges against Fakhrul and 52 others for setting fire to a motorbike of a policeman in front of Hotel Bakshi in Fakirerpool on January 5 last year.

Forty people were accused in both the cases. The charge sheets would be placed before the court on March 2 for the next course of action, court sources said.

SC clears

FROM PAGE 16

case filed by the ACC.

Khaleda could cross-examine Harun and she would not be prejudiced in the case, the HC bench of Justice Md Moinul Islam Chowdhury and Justice IBM Hassan observed.

The ACC had lodged the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case in 2008.

According to the charge sheet in the case, Khaleda, her son Tarique Rahman and four others embezzled Tk 2.1 crore by forming the charity that exists only on paper.

'Robber' killed

FROM PAGE 16

while his other associates managed to flee.

Ratan was admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital where he died later.

Police claimed to have recovered a homemade gun, three sharp weapons and five bullets from the spot.

They also claimed that five policemen, including the OC, were injured during the gun battle.

Two constables were admitted to the same hospital.

Happy birthday

FROM PAGE 16

posts written by the president himself are signed AG.

Given there at least 22.2m Twitter users in India and that Mr Ghani has more than 176,000 followers, the mistake was spotted by plenty of people.

One Twitter user in India, replied to Ghani: "We don't care when you b'day is, if our honourable PM has wished you today, we will celebrate it today."

Another, Richard Rego, said it was "the biggest international joke from someone occupying the biggest chair in the biggest democracy".

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 3

employees to increase their efficiency," he added.

The minister also said an initiative has been taken to receive allegations online to make the public administration transparent and accountable.

Scuffle among

FROM PAGE 4

The scuffle started on Saturday afternoon when a medical officer of the medicine department went to an operation theatre for his wife's checkup before a prior-scheduled surgery, said Professor Debabrata Banik, chairman of the anaesthesia department.

Disappointed that his wife was not prioritised over others and had to wait a long time in the queue, the medical officer started abusing two resident anaesthetists, which turned into a scuffle soon. At one stage, the medical officer, accompanied by several others, assaulted two of the anaesthetists, Banik added.

Protesting the assault, the anaesthetists did not join their work yesterday until the administration assured them of taking actions against those responsible for the incident.

Merkel isolated as EU partners slam door on refugees

AFP, Munich

Abandoned by France, defied by eastern Europe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel cuts a lonely figure in her struggle for EU "solidarity" on the refugee crisis ahead of a Brussels summit.

Merkel is battling for a deal that will see refugees more evenly spread around the European Union after Germany welcomed 1.1 million asylum seekers last year.

But instead, eastern European countries are planning new razor wire fences, and even Paris -- traditionally Berlin's closest EU ally -- has shown little enthusiasm for Merkel's welcome policy.

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said Saturday that the mood in France was "not favourable" to Merkel's call for a permanent quota system.

"Europe cannot take in all the migrants from Syria, Iraq or Africa," Valls told German media. "It has to regain control over its borders, over its migration or asylum policies."

US Secretary of State John Kerry praised Merkel for showing "great courage in helping so many who need so much" amid "the gravest humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II".

But he also told the Munich Security Conference that the mass influx spells a "near existential... threat to the politics and fabric of life in Europe".

Another guest in Munich, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, took a far darker view, charging that

"it's quite simply stupid to open Europe's doors wide and invite in everyone who wants to come to your country".

"European migration policy is a total failure, all that is absolutely frightening," he told the Handelsblatt daily.

A number of EU nations that were once in Russia's Cold War orbit seem to agree.

Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia plan to meet today to discuss how to close down the main refugee route through the Balkans, reported Germany's Spiegel news weekly.

"As long as there is no common European strategy, it is legitimate that the nations along the Balkans route protect their borders," Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak told the magazine.

He also opposed Merkel's plan for an EU quota system, saying "quotas only increase the incentives for migration".

At the other end of the route, Austria's foreign minister warned Macedonia on Friday that it should be ready to close its border to migrants coming up from Greece.

Vienna also plans to impose a cap on refugees and may start turning them away in the coming months.

Merkel, long dubbed the "Queen of Europe", has seen poll numbers drop at home, coalition members rebel and EU allies duck away as the refugee crisis has sparked deep discord and threatened the bloc's system of open borders.

Haiti lawmakers elect Jocelerme Privert as interim president

AFP, Port-au-prince

Haitian lawmakers early yesterday elected Jocelerme Privert as the troubled country's interim president to fill a power vacuum following the departure of Michel Martelly, after a vote to choose his successor was postponed over fears of violence.

Privert, 62, a senator and president of the National Assembly, was chosen on the second round of balloting after a lengthy session that stretched overnight Saturday to yesterday.

The lawmakers chose Privert over two other candidates, Dejan Belizaire and Edgar Leblanc Fils, both former presidents of Haiti's senate. Belizaire was quickly eliminated after receiving just two votes.

Martelly ended his five-year term without a successor on February 7.

Under an agreement signed hours before his departure, the interim president chosen by parliament would serve for up to 120 days, a new election would be held on April 24, and the new president would be installed on

May 14.

After taking the oath, Privert announced that he would form a "consensus government capable of inspiring confidence, and able to create peace for the continuation of the electoral process."

This is the first time since 1946 that a Haitian chief of state is chosen by indirect vote.

The immediate roots of the crisis can be traced to October, when Martelly's favored candidate, Jovenel Moise, won the first round of presidential voting 33 percent to 25 percent over runner-up Jude Celestin.

The opposition politician, however, denounced the results as a "ridiculous farce."

A scheduled January 24 runoff between Moise and Celestin was canceled when Celestin refused to participate unless widespread electoral reforms were enacted, and following violence and protests alleging that Moise won the first round through dirty tricks and with government support.

Successful event

FROM PAGE 1

of the course of the competition.

"Honestly speaking I thought this tournament exceeded expectations. The wickets were very good. It supported both batsmen and bowlers.

"The way these youngsters got a chance to play on these grounds was great and the fact that this was shown on television, all these things would do a lot for their development," Ian Bishop, former West Indies cricketer and current television commentator, said after the game.

"Personally for me, the last one week or so has been the best in my commentary life," he added.

India Under-19 coach Rahul Dravid echoed a similar sentiment.

"I think it's been a great tournament; the way it's been organised and the way it's been conducted, we really enjoyed the cricketing side of things.

"Yes, I must admit that at times the security has been a bit overpowering and we had to stay in our hotel a lot. It's not easy for young kids to be stuck in their hotel rooms all the time for 24 days.

"So that's been the hard part but overall, in terms of the cricket and facilities we got it has been fantastic and superb," Dravid said during the post-match press conference.

"I have also really enjoyed watching so much of young talent from so many countries and to see so many of the associate nations participate and compete well.

"For me that has been the highlight. And obviously to see the success the West Indies have had considering the challenges they face. Obviously it's disappointing for the boys and us but I have to say I feel happy for the fact that the West Indies have gone on to win this match," he added.

From Alzarri Joseph and Chemar Holder, two soft-spoken pacers who

have already begun to remind many of the West Indies of the past to an accomplished leg-spinner in Nepal's Sandeep Lamichhane, from home captain Mehedi Hasan Miraz's brave all-round performances to India batsman Sarfaraz Khan's solidity, on the whole it would be fair to say that the tournament has been lucky to witness something special in every department.

Lord Avebury

FROM PAGE 16

2005, specifically to highlight the human rights situation of minority communities and secular activists.

Keith Porteous Wood, executive director of the National Secular Society, in tribute said Lord Avebury had supported countless human rights campaigns, reports the BBC.

"His knowledge of foreign affairs, particularly of remote parts of the developing world, was second to none. The weak and oppressed in these places have lost a true champion.

"I have lost a very close friend. The nation has lost a human rights champion."

Avebury was educated at Upper Canada college in Toronto and Harrow school, before studying engineering science at Balliol college, Oxford.

He served as a second lieutenant in the Welsh Guards from 1949-51.

Having joined the Liberal Party in 1960, he won a sensational by-election victory at Orpington on March 15, 1962.

Avebury loved his work at the House of Lords and, prior to his ill health, he had one of the best attendance records there. As much as the formal debates, Lord Avebury also enthusiastically dealt with a huge caseload of work mainly espousing various causes for which he was well known.

Abbas thanks

FROM PAGE 16

In response, the Bangladesh foreign minister reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of Bangladesh to the Palestinian people for their struggle for an independent homeland.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is always vocal in the UN, OIC, NAM and other international organisations in support of the Palestinian causes, he said.

Ali then called upon the world leaders to take urgent and meaningful initiatives to resolve the Palestinian crisis.

President Abbas expressed sincere thanks for offering opportunities of higher studies for a good number of students as well as training of armed forces members of Palestine in Bangladesh.

Foreign Minister Ali extended an invitation to Abbas and also to his Palestinian counterpart to pay bilateral visit to Bangladesh to witness the "enormous goodwill of the people of Bangladesh for Palestine".

They exchanged views on different bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest during the meeting.

The Palestinian president was accompanied, among others, by his country's Foreign Minister Reyad Al Malki, President's Spokesman Nahel Abu Rodani, Diplomatic Adviser Majdi Al Khaldi and Economic Adviser Mustafa Abu Al-Rub.

From the Bangladesh side, State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid and senior officials from the foreign ministry were present.

Charge de Affairs of Palestine Embassy in Dhaka Yousef SY Ramadan, ambassadors of the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Charge de Affairs of Oman, Egypt, Iraq and Libya and deputy chief of Mission of Morocco were also present to greet Abbas at the airport.

SC upholds

FROM PAGE 16

the HC order on the grounds that the charge sheet of the case was not submitted before the trial court, but Mahmudur had been in jail for a long time, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star.

He said Mahmudur would be released as soon as the SC order reached the jail authorities.

Mahmudur's lawyer Muhammad Salahuddin told The Daily Star that as far as he was aware, his client had been accused in 70 cases and had obtained bail in all of them.

Sahidur Rahman, a prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal, filed the sedition case against Mahmudur with Tejgaon Police Station on December 13, 2012, under Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006.

In the case, Mahmudur was charged with sedition for publishing alleged Skype conversations between Justice Md Nizamul Huq, then chairman of International Crimes Tribunal-1, and Ahmed Ziauddin, an expatriate Bangladeshi legal expert.

According to the case statement, Mahmudur, by publishing the alleged conversation, created a negative impression of the tribunal at home and abroad and obstructed its proceedings.

Amid controversy, Justice Nizamul Huq, now an Appellate Division judge, resigned from the tribunal on December 11, 2012.

Mahmudur was arrested at his newspaper office in the capital's Karwan Bazar on April 11, 2013.

Following a bail petition filed by Mahmudur, the HC granted bail to him for six months in the case.

The government later on filed a petition with the SC seeking a stay on the HC order.

Beijing pins Hong Kong riot on 'radical separatists'

AFP, Hong Kong

A senior Beijing official yesterday blamed "radical separatists" for a riot that erupted in Hong Kong last week, the worst clashes the city has seen since mass pro-democracy protests.

In unusually blunt remarks on a local Hong Kong matter, Zhang Xiaoming, Beijing's top representative in the semi-autonomous city, told reporters the violence that left dozens of police officers hurt also showed elements of "terror".

"After the riot in Mong Kok, we are feeling very much shocked and saddened," Zhang told reporters.

"We strongly condemn those radical separatists who have become increasingly violent, even (carrying out) activities that showed terror tendencies," the director of China's Liaison Office in Hong Kong said in Chinese.

The clashes erupted when protesters gathered following official attempts to remove illegal hawkers from the busy commercial neighbourhood of Mong Kok during Lunar New Year celebra-

tions late tonight.

Police fired warning shots in the air, while demonstrators hurled bricks levered up from pavements, charged police lines with homemade shields and set rubbish on fire.

About 100 people were injured, including police officers, journalists and protesters, and 65 were arrested in the disorder, rare in Hong Kong.

Some 30 of them have been charged with rioting.

Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying said yesterday most of the protesters were unemployed and did not reflect mainstream views.

"The majority of them are jobless. Quite many of them belong to radical political groups. Their political demands... cannot reflect the majority of society," the chief executive said.

The battles have been dubbed the "fishball revolution" after a favourite Hong Kong street snack and reflect underlying tensions over the erosion of the city's traditions.

Demonstrators included "localist" activists who want to restrict Beijing's influence on the city.

Take action against Ali

FROM PAGE 1

withdrawn Ali from all cases he was dealing with.

None of the prosecutors or the source wanted to be named considering the sensitivity of the matter.

The letter says Ali was appointed and was discharging his duty under the provisions of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act-1973.

But by trying to secure bail for the accused, Ali "breached the discipline and code of conduct" and "committed serious offence of professional misconduct," it adds.

So effective actions should be taken against him "for the sake of public interest" and "for protecting the image of the prosecution", the latter says.

Contacted at 6:07pm yesterday, Law Minister Anisul Huq said, "The letter is yet to reach [me]. I will look into the matter once it reaches [me]."

Mohammad Ali, meanwhile, has denied all the allegations brought against him.

"I did not do anything that warrant actions against me. I did not breach the code of the conduct," he said yesterday.

The prosecutor on February 10 had told The Daily Star, "I have not decided yet but I am thinking of resigning. I will take the decision after talking with the higher authorities."

Ali, however, made a U-turn yesterday and said: "Why should I resign? What have I done that I have to resign?"

"A group of prosecutors have raised the allegations [against me] simply out of professional jealousy," he claimed.

Allegation of misconduct against Ali is not new. In March and June 2014, prosecutor Tureen Afroz filed complaints against Ali in connection with professional misconduct but no action was taken at that time.

Russia will 'fail to save'

FROM PAGE 16

"Now, (Assad) has sought the help of Russia, which will fail to save him," he said, urging Moscow to "end its air operations against the moderate Syrian opposition."

Russia, Assad's closest ally alongside Iran, began conducting airstrikes in September, targeting mainly rebels backed by the West, according to US officials.

Analysts believe that Russia's military intervention in Syria has given Assad a new lease of life and has also deeply alarmed the West.

But Jubeir, whose country is among the main Syrian opposition backers, said that "it is impossible for a man behind the killing of 300,000 innocent people... to remain" in power.

Assad's departure "is a matter of time... sooner or later, this regime will fall, opening the way for building a new Syria without Bashar al-Assad," said Jubeir.

On the ground, the Turkish army shelled Kurdish militia in northern Syria for a second day yesterday, while Russia made clear it would continue bombing Syrian rebel targets, raising doubts that a planned ceasefire would

bring much relief.

Major powers agreed in Munich on Friday to a pause in combat in Syria, but Russia pressed on with bombing in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, its ally. Assad has promised to fight until he regains full control of the country.

US President Barack Obama has ruled out sending US ground troops to Syria. But Turkey said that both Ankara and Riyadh would support a coalition ground operation.

Meanwhile, a senior Iranian commander yesterday warned Saudi Arabia against sending troops to Syria, Iran's state media reported.

"We definitely won't let the situation in Syria to go forward the way rebel countries want... We will take necessary actions in due time," deputy chief of staff Brigadier General Masoud Jazayeri told Iran's Arabic-language Al-Aalam television.

Jazayeri was responding to a question on whether Iran planned to send more military advisors to Syria where Saudi troops are to be deployed, risking a direct confrontation between regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Syria war has killed more than 260,000 people since it began in 2011.

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395-397, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka- 1208

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