FROM PAGE 20

Narendra Modi.

the area.

Bhutan.

Banglabandha

ened. It will help flourish busi-

between the two countries was

leadership of Prime Minister

gration service fulfils a long-

Businesspeople said the

had more potential than the

strengthening by the competent

He also said the brotherhood

Sheikh Hasina and Indian Premier

The inauguration of the immi-

pending demand of the people of

Banglabandha-Phulbari land port

Benapole-Petrapole, as it is very

close to Shiliguri, the gateway to

From Banglabandha, West

Bengal's major commercial city

Siliguri is just eight kilometres;

Nepal's Kakorvita about 58km; the

border of Bhutan is about 130km;

No other port of Bangladesh is

Banglabandha, said Ashraful Alam

Patwary, who led a 32-member

India through the ports on the

inaugural day.

2011.

team of Panchagarh Chamber of

Commerce and Industries to enter

He said they had been eagerly

waiting for this day. The ports would

help establish mills and factories in

the region and create job opportuni-

September 1997, and full trade ser-

Goods transit through

Banglabandha border began in

vices with India and Nepal were

launched at the port in January

West Bengal government's

Department's Minister-in-Charge

Department's Minister-in-Charge

Shringla, High Commissioner of

Muazzem Ali, and Border Guard

Bangladesh Director General Maj

Gen Aziz Ahmed, among others,

Goutam Deb, Municipal Affairs

North Bengal Development

and Urban Development

Commissioner of India to

Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan

Bangladesh to India Syed

were present at the event.

Firhad Hakim, High

and Nathula of China is 200km.

closer to these places than

the north-eastern India, Nepal and

ness, trade and tourism."

### District judge withdrawn

UNB, Dhaka

A judge of a Cox's Bazar court has been withdrawn for attending a feast and fishing at the courtesy of an accused.

Court, Sadiqul Islam Talukder, judge of district and sessions court, was attached to the law ministry yesterday, said Abdulllah Al Shahin, senior information officer of the ministry.

In consultation with the Supreme

He, however, did not elaborate any further.

The ministry sources said the action was taken since the allegation against the judge was preliminarily proved.

### Obama

FROM PAGE 20 meet long-time American nemesis Fidel Castro.

"I wouldn't expect him to meet with Fidel Castro, Raul Castro is the president of Cuba," said deputy

national security advisor Ben Rhodes. Cuba's government hailed the planned visit as a new step towards mending relations between Havana and Washington.

"His visit will represent a step

forward in the improvement of relations between Cuba and the United States," Josefina Vidal, head of US relations in the Cuban foreign ministry, told reporters.

After decades of animosity following Cuba's 1959 revolution, the two countries agreed in 2014 to move to reopen ties.

It was diplomatic feat that is likely to be a highlight of Obama's foreign policy legacy along with the reaching of a nuclear deal with another longtime US foe, Iran.

Although the US economic embargo on Cuba remains in place, a presidential visit carries huge symbolic value and prestige.

"Next month, I'll travel to Cuba to advance our progress and efforts that can improve the lives of the Cuban people," Obama wrote on Twitter. The Havana visit is likely to spark

debate on Cuba policy in the campaign for the Nov 8 US presidential election, particularly in the swing voting state of Florida, where many anti-Castro Cuban-Americans live.

But the announcement drew strong reaction from the Republicans.

"Pitiful that Obama rewards Castros with visit to Cuba while conditions for the Cuban people are getting worse," said Rep Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Cuban-American Republican congresswoman from south Florida.

Two candidates in the Republican race, Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, are conservative sons of Cuban immigrants and have criticised Obama for renewing ties with Cuba.

Obama said that while the United States still has concerns about human rights in Cuba, it has already made significant progress in renewing relationships.

"We still have differences with the Cuban government that I will raise directly. America will always stand for human rights around the world," Obama said.

Obama had previously said he would visit the neighboring Communist-ruled nation if he were able to meet with political dissidents. The last sitting US president to visit Cuba was Calvin Coolidge in 1928.

His administration has taken steps to expand commerce with the island nation, only 90 miles (145 km) from

Tourism has already surged. Airbnb, an online home-rental site, said U.S. rentals of homes in Cuba are booming. The countries have agreed to restore airline flights, and companies ranging from tractor manufacturers to telecommunications firms

are assessing the market. Obama still seeks to pressure US lawmakers to remove the decades-old embargo on Cuba but Republicans control

Congress and are unlikely to act soon. First lady Michelle Obama will also go on the trip, which is taking

place during the president's final year in office.

# Ruling party

and the Institute of Engineers', Bangladesh, for holding the council. Dhaka Metropolitan Police is still

venues, including Suhrawardy Udyan,

mum about granting the permission, BNP sources said.

She said, "People of the country have no right to give any opinion ... the newspapers cannot write properly and no people of any religion are

She said apart from ruling Awami League men, nobody is safe.

"There is no democracy in the country. There will be no development, if there is no democracy ... The farmers are helpless. It is time to wake up."

She lambasted some law enforcers "who are torturing people" for money.

Policemen should remember that

the victims are citizens of this coun-

try, she said.

# Blissfully unaware

FROM PAGE 1

The matter came to the forefront once again when Tanvir Gawhar Topu, a Buet student, died on Wednesday after a train hit him. He was walking along the rail lines whilst talking on his phone at the capital's Moghbazar-Wireless Rail Gate.

Even though the death of a smart student was widely covered by both print and electronic media, this death and a lot more similar deaths seemed to have not woken up the people. When a correspondent of The

Daily Star visited Tejgaon Rail Gate area yesterday, not far from where Topu was killed, he found dozens of people crossing the lines or walking along or even on the lines whilst talking on their phones or listening to music with earphones.

They seemed to be oblivious to the very real risk of being run over by trains.

Prof Azizur Rahman of psychology department at Dhaka University said when people talk on the phone or listen to music with earphones or headphones, their spatial awareness gets reduced significantly. They lose some awareness of what is going on around them. He said talking on the phone or

listening to music with earphones or headphones should be avoided on the streets and places where the slight loss of spatial awareness could be dangerous. Kazi Shifun Newaz, an associate

professor of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) working at the university's Accident Research Institute (ARI), termed it "an utterly risky behaviour". He said when a pedestrian has

earphones on, he or she is less likely to hear the sound of an oncoming train.

"We always stress that the level crossings and areas adjacent to lines should be free of loud noise and visual obstructions so that people can see and hear oncoming trains. But if people put on earphones, they are filtering out all sounds and their

mind remains elsewhere," he told The

Daily Star. Rafiqul Islam, operations officer of Dhaka Railway Police Station, told The Daily Star that as many as 48 people were killed after being hit by trains in their jurisdiction (from Narayanganj to Bangabandhu Bridge

pened when people were walking on the rail lines, usually whilst talking over their phones or using earphones, he said.

director general (operation) of Bangladesh Railway said there is a law that makes it illegal for people to be within 11 feet of rail lines. But people do not follow the rules.

"There is no alternative to raising awareness among people for avoid-

Hoque said rail lines and roads should not be intertwined in the heart of the city.

"As it takes longer to stop a train, such accidents would continue if the lines go through populous areas. That's why, in most planned cities, rail lines are elevated to avert tragedies," he stressed.

## Compensate

FROM PAGE 20

on the government to give Tk 30 lakh to Jihad's family as compensation.

On February 15 last year, the HC issued a rule asking the government why it should not be directed to pay the family the amount as compensation.

Deputy Attorney General Amit Talukder told this correspondent that the government would move an appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the HC rule.

# All they want is justice

Before going to the playground from where the children went missing on Friday, Tajel had told her that he was going out to bring biscuits for his sister Nusrat from a local convenient store and would return soon.

"He told me that we would have lunch together. But now, we would never have that again," said Amina. "I want justice from Allah."

Memories of their sons -- Zakaria Shuvo and Monir Miah -- were haunting Parul Begum and Salema Begum.

"Why did I let my son go out that day," regretted Parul, sobbing uncontrollably.

Monir, Shuvo, and Tajel were cousins and students of class-I, -II and -IV at Sundrateki Govet Primary School. Ismail was studying at a local madrasa.

The entire village was mourning the death of the four children yester-

Not only their parents, but also their neighbours were yet to come to

terms with the brutal murders. "How could anyone be so cruel to commit such a heinous crime?" one

of them said.

They also demanded immediate punishment of the killers.

"The children belonged to very poor families. What was their fault?

said Param Chan, a farmer. After the bodies were recovered, Afjal Miah, father of victim Monir, said there had been a longstanding dispute between two groups of local panchayat -one led by Abdul Ali, now in custody, and

the other led by Abdul Khalique Master. He said their group had clashed with the men loyal to Abdul Ali last month over cutting down of trees in the area. He believed the children were kidnapped and murdered in retaliation.

Monir Uddin, a trader, said clashes between such rivals took place in their area many times in past, but killing children this way was unthinkable.

Locals and victim's family members alleged that the police did not take any effective steps even after a general dairy was filed over the children going missing -- an allegation the police refutes. 2 REMANDED; 2 ARRESTED

### A Habiganj court yesterday placed Abdul Ali and his son Jewel Mia,

arrested Wednesday night, on a 10-day remand each in the case filed for the murders. Officer-in-Charge Moktadir

Hossain of the Detective Branch (DB) of Habiganj produced the suspects with 10-day remand pleas.

Around 1:00pm yesterday, Bahubal police detained Rubel East station). Most of the accidents had hap-

Habibur Rahman, additional

ing such deaths," he said. Former director of ARI Shamsul

Children's Charity Bangladesh Foundation filed the petition on December 28, 2014, seeking directives

Petitioner's lawyer Abdul Halim told The Daily Star that the grounds on which the court came up with the rule yesterday would be known once the full verdict is released.

Miah, another son of Abdul Ali, and

one Habibur Rahman at the village in

connection with their involvement in

the murders, said Muktadir, also the

Abdul Ali's family claimed that Ali

"The allegations are baseless. None

of my family members were involved

in the murders," said Afia Begum,

daughter-in-law of Ali. The other male

members of the family have gone into

Meanwhile, doctors after autop-

"All the bodies bore injury marks

sies said the children could have

too," said Debashish Das, a medical

officer of Habiganj Sadar Hospital,

Yesterday, only a few students went to

Sundrateki Govet Primary School,

where three of the victims used to go.

children on TV. We came to school

but we are scared," said Lubna Akter,

[Tajel] told us to come to school

early on Saturday so that we could

play. But he did not show up," she said.

master of the school, said the par-

ents were not sending their children

to school after the killings.

journos

lodged against Anam.

allowed to be destroyed.

men in different districts.

of all cases against Anam.

Mahmud.

BNA in the capital yesterday.

FROM PAGE 2

of the press.

showed up yesterday," she said.

Nure Jannat Shefa, acting head-

"Only 30 out of 353 students

Meanwhile, many male villagers

have fled fearing police harassment

Women Lawyers' Association and

Human Rights Forum Bangladesh

yesterday issued separate statements,

condemning and expressing deep

concern at the barrage of cases being

Both the rights body said such inci-

dents would hamper the country's

democratic environment and freedom

Barrister Nazmul Huda, chairman of

Bangladesh National Alliance (BNA),

said The Daily Star could in no way be

He was addressing a meeting of the

Shoto Nagorik Committee, a platform

of civil society members, also expressed

concern over the filing of cases against

The Daily Star editor by the ruling party

Salam, managing director of ETV,

Amar Desh acting editor Mahmudur

Rahman and journalist leader Shawkat

and to "avoid" arrest, said locals.

"We saw the news on the four

"On Thursday [February 11], he

investigation officer of the case.

and his sons were innocent.

been strangled to death.

who conducted the autopsy.

classmate of Tajel.

PANIC IN SCHOOL, VILLAGE

hiding.

# Withdraw

few stories based on information provided by a state intelligence agency during the military-backed caretaker government rule in 2007". Instead, he is being harassed

which is sad, unexpected and frustrating, they said, adding that the present scenario would discourage journalists and even others from spontaneously admitting their mistakes in future and would give rise to falsehood in society.

The eminent persons also called for a constructive discussion on what legal and administrative actions should be taken to stop interference of the state intelligence agencies in the functioning of the free media.

"We think the rationale for the news media often publishing unverified confessions apparently given in the custody of intelligence agencies and police should also come under the discussion," the statement read.

The signatories are: M Hafiz Uddin Khan, Akbar Ali Khan, Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, ATM Shamsul Huda, Hamida Hossain, Prof Syed Anwar Husain, Hossain Zillur Rahman, Shahdeen Malik, Zafrullah Chowdhury, Iftekharuzzaman, Brig Gen (retd) M Shakhawat Hussain, Badiul Alam Majumdar, Barrister Manzoor Hasan, Nur Khan, Sadaf Nur, Prof Firdous Azim, Swapan Adnan Masud Khan, Syed Abul Maksud, Dr Tofail Ahmed, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Khushi Kabir, Barrister Sara Hossain, CR Abrar, Shirin Haq, Shahnaz Huda, Ahmed Kamal, Asif Nazrul, Ruby Ghaznavi, Lubna Mariam, Farida Akhter, Maj (retd) Akter Ahmed Bir Pratik, Anusheh Anadil, Naila Zaman Khan, and Zakir Hossain.

They said the defamation cases filed claiming crores of taka in compensation were a glaring example of using the legal and judicial system in narrow, personal interest. They expressed concern over the

"attempt to use the legal and judicial system as a political tool and strategy". Such activities against Mahfuz

Anam will prompt the international community to critically question the freedom of speech in Bangladesh and will cause irreparable damage to the country's image, the citizens noted. The statement was sent by Badiul

Alam Majumdar and sent by Shahdeen Malik. HC for people's

### FROM PAGE 20 on the EC to give him the information.

In July 2014, the Information

The committee demanded withdrawal Commission rejected his plea on similar grounds. It also demanded release of Abdus Sujan leaders Badiul, Syed Abul

LC was a scam." Maksud, M Hafiz Uddin Khan, SM Shahjahan, Tofail Ahmed and Ali Imam filed the writ petition with the HC the following year. House.

# Tk 4.5 lakh crore budget in two years

Muhith tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The size of 2018-19 fiscal year's budget would be in between Tk 4.40 lakh crore and Tk 4.50 lakh crore, and the government is working to make this happen, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday.

below the poverty line when

Bangladesh became independent in 1971. At present, 24.8 percent people live below the poverty line," he told parliament while speaking on the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech. "Some 10 to 14 percent people in the society always remain dependent on the state. They are elderly, physi-

cally challenged and some helpless people. They will always remain dependent on the state. The country is gradually going to reach that stage." People now do not believe that it's

very hard to earn their livelihood. They rather think their standard of living would improve further, he added. Muhith stressed the need for full

implementation of the national bud-

get which could not be achieved in any fiscal year. "For full implementation of the national budget, we will have to reduce dependency on central bureaucracy.... We the politicians failed greatly to

make this happen. But we hope to get

Describing the huge foreign exchange as the country's strong pillar, the minister said the government has taken initiatives to train people through skill improvement

programmes.

Different ministries have taken up programmes to produce skilled manpower which would help the country earn more foreign exchange, he men-

Muhith also advocated for empow-"Seventy percent people lived

> "Surely there will be obstacles along the way. But those obstacles are very much related to individuals' selfinterest. We will have to overcome those obstacles."

> year, he said there would be a special allocation in the budget for mega projects like Padma bridge (around \$3 billion), Rooppur nuclear power plant (around \$12b), Maheshkhali energy centre (around \$3b) and Matarbari power station (around \$3b).

> (ADP), the finance minister said the government's project implementation skills have improved a lot, but it's still not up to the mark.

> year. "We've already made the decision. Nobody will face gas crisis anymore." He said a new structure of the local

"If we want the country's progress to continue and attain 10 percent GDP growth, we've to form very skillful

administrations in 64 districts," the

minister mentioned.

### In quest of the Jewels FROM PAGE 20

time in a year. When the water recedes,

rid of it."

new leaves and buds begin to sprout.

high grounds. In the dry season, these places are overgrown with a myriad of weeds and creepers. Apart from wild roses, there is a

countries like ours. by the side of hurhuri (Cleome spinosa)

I desperately looked for a tree with roses and succeeded after a while. I took photos of them. I found two bushes -- one full of flowers and the other with only one flower.

I got back to my boat. After a while, I reached a dam adjacent to the Golabari camp. I got off the boat and started walking. This part of the haor is pretty quiet with long avenues of Hijol, Koroch (Derris indica) and Borun (Crataeva nurvala). In the nearby slope, there was a thicket.

I kept walking and found three kids who are young cowboys. As they asked

We came across another rare plant after covering some distance. I saw the tree in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden of New York. The fruit is like a patka. Its Bangla name is latafotkari (Cardiospermum halicacabum) and English name is love in a puff.

bushes. We spotted quite a few eye-

## Janata Bank

FROM PAGE 20 House proprietor Tipu Sultan, Senior

Executive Officer of Janata Bank's Dilkusha office Moshiur Rahman, its Assistant General Manager ASM Jahirul Islam, and its Deputy General Manager Shamim Ahmed Khan.

Alam, who filed the case with Motijheel Police Station, said the accused opened a Letter of Credit (LC) for Dhaka Trading but did not import the goods and embezzled the money.

report required to open the LC. Asked for comment, Monjerul

LC. He said the goods, for which the LC

of engagement, to hostile fire coming

tioned.

erment of district councils and zila parishads through decentralisation.

Hinting about bringing changes to the national budget from the next fiscal

About the implementation rate of Annual Development Programme

On gas crisis, Muhith said import of liquefied natural gas will start within a

government will be placed in the budget of 2018-19 fiscal year.

This wild variety grows on relatively

variety of wild strawberry in the Tanguar Haor. So, it can be said that rose and strawberry are not the monopoly of the cold countries; they can grow and survive in hot and humid

I had been to the haor to look for wild rose and strawberry in April last year. I stopped for a while beside a Hijol (Barringtonia acutangula) bush after going one and a half hour on an enginedriven boat. I discovered a rose bush just and ghagra. To my surprise, I found two withered roses in the tree.

me what I was looking for, I showed them a photo of wild strawberry and they readily recognised it. They told us that they liked this wild strawberry a lot and joined us in our search. We found the flowers and the fruits scattered on a vast area.

We could not locate any other latafotkari. In this regard, it can be assumed that the tree is very likely to be an endangered species. This tree, however, is not listed on the checklist of IUCN. We came across a few more rose

ACC Deputy Director Shamsul

He said Monjerul was in a commit-

tee that recommended the credit denied having anything to do with the

was opened, were actually imported. "I have evidence that the goods were

imported. So it is wrong to say that the Monjerul added that when he was working for Janata Bank, he had filed

catching Dudhialata (Oxystelma secamone) in the endangered Nalkhagra (Phragmites karka) bush. We also found the Hurhuri bushes undulating in the erratic breeze. The borun flowers illuminated the whole place. We walked

to gather some more flowers. A few words on wild rose, strawberry and latafatkari.

WILD ROSE

Locally known as Seunti, the wild rose grows in thick bushes. Its branches are straight and the leaves are 5-10cm long. The leaves and branches can be smooth or shaggy. The flowers have five white petals and 1.7-3cm long. The fruits are 1-2cm long. The flowering season is from February to June. This variety of rose is found in a limited scale in India and Myanmar. Its scientific name is Rosa clinophylla.

WILD STRAWBERRY This creeper usually sticks to the ground. They resemble Thankuni (Centella asiatica) a lot in nature. The plant's stem is very long, slender and shaggy. The flowers are yellow, diagonal, and 1.5-2.5cm long. The flowering season lasts from February to June. This strawberry is found in a few South

Asian countries. Its scientific name is Duchesnea indica. LATAFATKARI

This woody creeper is found in the torrid zones of Asia and Africa. They usually grow up to 10 feet. The green and ripe fruits are more attractive than the flowers. The trees in haors are different in shapes and sizes from the ones that grow in plain land. Locally known as kopalfutki, noafutki, kanfutki, their leaves are 2-4cm long and edged. The flowers are 2-3mm long. The flowers are 1.5-4cm wide. There are three black seeds in a mature brown fruit. The flowering season lasts from November to June. The roots and the seed oil of this plant are used for treating rheumatism. The scientific

name is Cardiospermum

halicacabum.

FROM PAGE 20 perpetrator is the YPG and the divisive terrorist organization PKK. All necessary measures will be taken against them," Davutoglu said in a televised

speech. President Tayyip Erdogan also said initial findings suggested the Syrian Kurdish militia and the PKK were behind the bombing and said that 14 people had been detained.

The political arm of the YPG, denied involvement in the bombing, while a senior member of the PKK said he did not know who was responsible.

KURDISH MILITIA DENIAL The co-leader of the YPG's political

perpetrated the Ankara bombing and said Turkey was using the attack to justify an escalation in fighting in northern Syria. "We are completely refuting that. ...Davutoglu is preparing for some-

wing denied that the affiliated YPG

thing else because they are shelling us as you know for the past week," Saleh Muslim told Reuters by telephone. Turkey has said its shelling of YPG positions is a response, within its rules

across the border into Turkey, something Muslim also denied. "I can assure you not even one bullet is

seven cases against Dhaka Trading fired by the YPG into Turkey ... They don't consider Turkey an enemy," he said.