



Students of Fine Arts of Dhaka University doing a graffiti on a wall close to the Central Shaheed Minar on the university campus yesterday. The nation today observes Amar Ekushey February which is the International Mother Language Day as well. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Russian

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But the text failed to garner support from key council members with at least six countries including veto-wielding France and the United States rejecting it outright during a closed-door meeting, diplomats said.
US Ambassador Samantha Power accused Moscow of trying to "distract the world" from its air campaign in support of the Syrian regime and urged it to abide by UN resolutions supporting a peace process.
"Russia must understand that its unconditional support to Bashar al-Assad is a dead-end and a dead-end that could be extremely dangerous," French Ambassador Francois Delattre said.
"We are facing a dangerous military escalation that could easily get out of control and lead us to uncharted territory," he said.
Russia yesterday expressed regret that the UNSC rejection and vowed to continue supporting government forces against "terrorists."
Turkey is pressing for a joint ground operation in Syria with its international allies, insisting it is the only way to stop the war.
Earlier, French President Francois Hollande said Ankara's escalating involvement in the conflict was creating a risk of war between Turkey and Russia.
"Turkey is involved in Syria... There, there is a risk of war," Hollande told France Inter radio.
Turkish Ambassador Yasar Halit Cevik said his country was facing "national security threats emanating from Syria" in reference to the Kurdish militias it is targeting in the country's north.
Amid the surge in fighting, UN peace envoy Staffan de Mistura said a new round of peace talks scheduled for February 25 was unlikely.
In his call with Erdogan, Obama stressed that Kurdish YPG forces "should not seek to exploit circumstances in this area to seize additional territory, and urged Turkey to show reciprocal restraint by ceasing artillery strikes in the area," a White House statement said.
Obama, in an apparent reference to Russia, also "urgently called for a halt to actions that heighten tensions with Turkey and with moderate opposition forces in northern Syria, and undermine our collective efforts in northern Syria to degrade and defeat ISIL."

On the ground, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance -- which groups the powerful Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and smaller Arab groups -- seized the northeastern town of Al-Shadadi from IS, with backing from US-led air strikes, a monitor and Kurdish sources said.
Al-Shadadi was the largest town controlled by IS in Hasakeh province, and the defeat extends earlier losses for the jihadists there. SDF forces earlier seized a nearby oilfield from IS and cut the routes from Al-Shadadi to Mosul in neighboring Iraq as well as IS's de facto Syrian capital Raqa.
Its advances in Aleppo have angered Turkey, which says the YPG is the Syrian affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an outlawed group that has waged a decades-long insurgency against Ankara.
Ankara fears the SDF advance in Aleppo province is intended to connect Kurdish-held areas in northern and northeastern Syria, creating an autonomous Kurdish region along much of its southern border.
Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Jubeir meanwhile raised the prospect that Syrian rebels could be supplied with surface-to-air missiles, though he said it was not a decision Riyadh would take alone.
Syria's conflict is now approaching its sixth year, with more than 260,000 people killed and half the population displaced.

Iraq tribesmen battle IS inside Fallujah for second day

AFP, Baghdad

Sunni Arab tribesmen battled militants of the Islamic State group in their Fallujah stronghold for a second day Saturday in a major blow to the jihadists in Iraq, officials said.
Fallujah is one of two Iraqi cities still controlled by IS, but residents -- said to number in the tens of thousands -- vastly outnumber the estimated 300 to 400 jihadists inside it.
IS has had plenty of time to assert its control over the civilian population and has carried out large numbers of arrests and public executions in the city.
"Armed confrontations between the sons of the Fallujah tribes and the Daesh organisation are continuing," an army brigadier general said, using an Arabic acronym for IS.
The clashes are taking place in Al-Jolan in northwest Fallujah and Nazal

in the centre, the officer said, adding that the army was shelling IS positions on the outskirts.
There have been casualties among both the tribesmen and the jihadists, the officer said, without giving a number.
Tribal leader Sheikh Majeed al-Juraiisi said that fighting was continuing in both the centre and north of Fallujah.
The tribesmen "are beginning to run out of supplies and need the support of the government," he added.
There is "fear that they will completely run out and afterwards the Daesh organisation will arrest and massacre them."
In 2014 and 2015, IS executed dozens of members of the Abu Nimr tribe, which opposed the jihadists' seizure of most of Anbar province, including Fallujah.

Mysterious boiling

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until he was completing his PhD project on geothermal energy potential in Peru that he began to question whether the river could actually be real.
According to the experts he spoke to, the answer was a unanimous "no" -- after all, hot rivers do exist, but they're generally associated with volcanoes, and there are no volcanoes in that part of the country.
But when Ruzo went home over the holidays and asked his family where the myth had come from, his mother told him that the river didn't just exist, she and his aunt had actually swum in it before.
It sounded pretty ridiculous, but in 2011, Ruzo took a chance and hiked into the Amazon rainforest with his aunt, and saw the famed river with his own eyes.
Much to his disbelief, it was steaming hot. "When I saw this, I immediately grabbed for my thermometer," said Ruzo in a TED talk back in 2014. "The average temperature in the river was 86 degrees Celsius, not quite boiling but definitely close enough ... It's not a legend."
The most puzzling part was the sheer size of it. Hot springs aren't uncommon, and thermal pools get to these temperatures in other parts of the world, but nothing even comes close to the scope of the river -- it's up to 25 metres wide and six metres deep, and runs burning hot for an incredible 6.24 km.
Add that to the fact that the river is 700 km from the closest volcanic system, and the temperature just didn't make any sense. In fact, it's the only river of its kind anywhere in the world.
With the permission of the Shaman, Ruzo has spent the past five years studying the river, its surrounding ecosystem, and its water in the lab, in the hopes of figuring out what's going on.
To be clear, Ruzo obviously wasn't the first to discover the river, and as suggested by its indigenous name -- Shanay-timpishka, which means "boiled with the heat of the Sun" -- he also wasn't the first to wonder what made it so hot.
But his research -- backed in part by a National Geographic Young Explorers grant -- is finally revealing some of its secrets. It turns out, it's not the Sun that boils the water, but fault-

fed hot springs.
Imagine Earth like a human body, with fault lines and cracks running through it like arteries. These 'Earth arteries' are filled with hot water, and when they come to the surface, we see geothermal manifestations -- like the boiling river.
Chemical analysis has revealed that the water in the river originally fell as rain. Ruzo now hypothesises that this happens far upstream -- perhaps as far away as in the Andes -- and along its journey seeps down into the ground, where it's heated up by Earth's geothermal energy. It eventually emerges in the Amazon, at the boiling river.
This means the system is part of an enormous hydrothermal system, the likes of which haven't been seen anywhere else on the planet.
Of course, as fascinating as the river is, it can also be deadly. The water gets so hot that Ruzo has regularly seen animals fall in and slowly start to boil to death. "The first thing to go is the eyes," he explained in his TED talk.
Eventually, the animals can no longer swim, and water fills their mouths and lungs, causing them to be cooked from the inside out.
Still, people do actually swim in the river, as his mother claimed, but only after heavy rainfalls when it's diluted with cold water. More often, the water is used to make tea and for cooking.

Now improve

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After about 20 years, fares of both passenger and freight services were raised by 50 percent in October, 2012 for the first time.
Railway Secretary Feroz Salah Uddin said they were trying hard to improve the train services.
Bangladesh Railway incurs a loss of around Tk 1,000 crore annually. After the implementation of the new fares, the state-run organisation would earn only an additional Tk 45 crore a year, he mentioned.
Maruf Hossain, programme manager of Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust, an NGO campaigning for improved railway services, said the authorities must curb corruption and ensure proper management of the railway's resources to recoup its losses.

Free footpaths

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month and builders to free footpaths of construction materials by April. "Otherwise, face legal actions."
The mayor gave similar instructions to school, college, university and coaching centre authorities. "Help me fulfil pledges I have made to the prime minister, as she in a way conferred the mayoral position on me with her party support," Anissul said.
Meanwhile, Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon upon unveiling a sculpture in Paribagh said his relentless attempts to free city footpaths of illegal occupations would not succeed without police's cooperation.
Grabbers come back again and again and occupy footpaths with the connivance of a section of police, he said.
As the week-long cleaning drive ended yesterday, Anissul said that except some internal lanes, all major roads in Dhaka north were clean now following the work of nearly 12,000 participants, including volunteers, students, NGO workers, Bangladesh National Cadet Corps members and regular city corporation cleaners.
He called upon city dwellers, particularly shopkeepers, not to throw away solid waste here and there. Instead, put those in a container and dispose through the collection chain, he said.
Construction of 72 secondary waste transfer stations across the north city will be completed in a couple of months, which will facilitate a more organised waste management, he pointed out.
The drive to clean the city's north part formally began on February 14. Such drives will be organised in every three months.
DNCC with nine million populations in 36 wards generates 3,000 tonnes of solid waste every day, said officials. There are more than 3,000 cleaners, including 2,742 employed on regular basis for cleaning the area.

Minor maid

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Unable to bear the torture, Purnima returned home a few weeks ago, they said, adding that Khokon took the girl again to his house 10 days ago.
Around 7:00am on Friday, Popi started beating Purnima up. At one stage, she tried to set fire to the girl with a matchstick. The girl's clothes caught fire and she suffered severe burn injuries, the victim's family members said, quoting the girl.
Instead of taking the injured girl to a hospital, Khokon took her to the warehouse of his tobacco firm, around 15km from his house, on a battery-run auto-rickshaw, Jaheda Begum, a worker of the firm, told The Daily Star.
She said she went to work at 10:00am and saw the girl there.
Jaheda claimed that she requested Khokon to take Purnima to hospital, but he did not listen to her.
On information, police rescued Purnima around 10:00pm and rushed her to the RMCH. They also arrested Khokon at the warehouse.
Maruful Islam, head of the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit at the hospital, said the upper part of the girls' body -- from waist to neck -- and her left hand were burnt.
Abdul Quader Jilani, officer-in-charge of Rangpur Kotwali Police Station, said they arrested Popi and Khokon Friday night for their alleged involvement in the incident.

Militants' den

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On Friday night, two ABT suspects were arrested during a drive at another building in Uttar Badda area, said Monirul.
The arrestees are Kamal alias Shaheen, 26, and Shah Alam alias Salauddin, 28, said sources in the Detective Branch (DB) of police.
Bullets, magazines and six sharp weapons were found there, said DIG Monirul.
On the information gleaned from the duo, the law enforcers carried out an overnight raid in Nobodoy Housing area and recovered the bombs.
However, no one was arrested there.
Detectives described the building as an arsenal of the banned militant outfit.
"The group busted at Badda had been using the Mohammadpur house as their arsenal," said Monirul.
A bomb disposal unit of the DMP defused some of the recovered bombs at a nearby playground yesterday afternoon.
Police also seized "a large quantity" of illegal VoIP equipment from a flat adjacent to the one used for storing explosives, claimed the DIG.
"We are probing whether the militants had any connection with the VoIP business."
He claimed that the detectives raided at least two other places in the city but did not disclose the locations.
The two suspected ABT members, arrested during Badda raid, were being interrogated, he said.
Locals at Nobodoy Housing area said three people, introducing them-

selves as students, had rented the flat barely one and a half months ago.
BADDA 'DEN' MADE OFF-LIMITS TO JOURNOS
Yesterday, this correspondent visited Badda and saw a police team deployed in front of the building for "security reasons".
The cops did not allow him inside the building or talk to any of the building's inhabitants, citing "instructions from senior police officials".
Locals alleged that police had picked up the building owner, Gazi Mohammad Hanif, for questioning.
Bhuiyan, a local, said Hanif and he were saying their Esha prayers together at a nearby mosque on Friday night when they heard some gunshots.
"We rushed outside together and later I heard that Hanif had been picked up by the police," he told The Daily Star.
Meanwhile, DMP Deputy Commissioner (Media) Maruf Hossain Sorder said DB Inspector Baharuddin Faruqui, who was reportedly stabbed by a militant during the Badda raid, is now out of danger.
Cop killed
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around 12:00noon while he was loading it, said Rangamati Superintendent of Police Syed Tariqul Hasan.
He was rushed to Sadar General Hospital with bullet injuries to his waist. He died there around 1:00pm.

Jessore's signature

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Unfortunately, for future generations the sweet delights of the wild date palm might not be such a quintessential marker of winter. Date trees are declining in numbers and few people are interested in taking up date syrup harvesting as a profession now.
"In the first decade of this century wild date palm numbers fell by about 30pc nationwide," says Rofiqul Alam, who worked as director of a Bangladesh Sugarcane Research Institute project covering Palmyra, nipa and wild date palms. He notes the palms grow in about 30 districts where conditions are favourable, including throughout greater Jessore.
While Alam's estimate is based on experience, the exact number of wild date palms in Bangladesh is unknown. One survey from 2010 records that up to 15,000 hectares of the country are covered by either wild date or Palmyra palms.
In Jessore, the Department of Agriculture Extension (the DAE) tallied the number of trees at around 7 lakhs in 2008, falling to 5.41 lakhs by 2013, before rising again to 6.75 lakhs in 2015, a rise they attribute to their own initiatives.
Nonetheless it is commonly observed by Jessore locals that the number of mature palms has decreased, despite strong demand for the tree's syrup.
The deputy director of Jessore DAE Nittyranjan Biswas believes a major reason for the decline is because there are fewer professionals, known as a "gachhi", available nowadays to cut the tree trunks and extract the sap.
"One of my employees," Biswas says, "sold four of his wild date palms

to a brick kiln because he couldn't find any skilled gachhi to extract the sap. Many people are leaving the profession because the season only lasts for the winter months." Demand for firewood from brick kiln is another factor influencing the decline.
Another DAE official in Jessore, Rafiqul, echoed such sentiments. "Due to the short season, few take on sap extraction as a job," he says, "despite the good prices for palmjuice and gur."
Abdul Gani Gazi, 70, of Pantapara village in Jessore's Khajura area worked as a gachhi since he was 16, but even he has sold most of his trees. "I used to have over 100 palms but now there are only 17. Many people are selling their trees because they can't find anyone prepare the trees for the sap collection."
"None of my 7 children were interested in this work," he continues, "They think differently and find the work of a gachhi a painstaking work, even though the income is okay."
"To save the date palm tradition we need to apply modern extraction techniques," says Alam. "Palm syrup and jaggery are valuable products because of their nutritional content. They are better than sugar."
"Besides," he continues, "a wild date palm will produce sap for up to 50 years, with first harvest available after 7 years. It's a good investment that doesn't require much care."
In efforts to save the tradition, Mamunur Rashid, secretary of art school Charupith Jessore, recently organised a date palm festival in Jessore to generate enthusiasm. He believes government initiatives can also help to save the date palm, with its significant economic, cultural and ecological values.

Tender process

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Institute with French Alstom, Bangladeshi Energypac with Chinese Hubei Electric Corporation and Chinese Dongfang Engineering Corporation with Greek JP Avax consortium.
While different Chinese companies unofficially lodged complaints against the PDB's selection of Harbin-Jiangsu as the lowest bidder, Greek company JP Avax complained about the bid categorically to the Prime Minister's Office.
As the complaint had strong argument, the power ministry late last year had almost made up its mind to cancel the tender process. It was at that time the Chinese embassy wrote to the ministry not to cancel the bid and award the contract upon re-evaluating the bids of the bidders.
With these pressures, the ministry sought the decision of the state minister for power whether they would cancel the tender (and go for a fresh one) or award the contract to Harbin-Jiangsu. On February 4, the state minister asked officials to discuss the matter thoroughly.
The discussion followed last Sunday only to conclude that this matter should be left with the purchase committee. Accordingly, the ministry is now preparing a summary of proposal for the purchase committee's approval.
BASIC COMPLAINTS
Greek J&P-AVAX formally complained to the PMO: "We feel that there is an effort within the authority to try to accept and evaluate the consortium of Harbin-Jiangsu and bring them in

the position of the preferred bidder which did not offer the guaranteed data as per tender specifications, and therefore should be immediately rejected."
The letter, signed by Theodoros Arseniou, director of energy of J&P-AVAX SA, said the Harbin-Jiangsu consortium's offered price was \$27 million higher than that of J&P-AVAX SA's.
The company also complained that the PDB wrongly calculated the "heat rate" of Harbin-Jiangsu's power equipment. Other bidders informally echoed the same complaint.
The Harbin-Jiangsu proposed to produce 357MW electricity, but the other bidders followed the tender limit of 300MW. One of the requirements said the tender evaluation committee would not consider the proposal if any company proposed to generate less than 200MW or more than 300MW. The excess power produced would not also be used for evaluation of per kilowatt power cost.
But the PDB calculated Harbin-Jiangsu's per kilowatt-hour power cost on the basis of the "heat rate" of 357MW although it was shown as a 300MW plant. Consequently, the PDB calculated Harbin-Jiangsu plant's heat rate at 6,382 kilojoules per kilowatt-hour, which should have been 7,784 kilojoules.
In power plant technology, a higher heat rate means it is less energy efficient. Therefore, the PDB evaluation showed Harbin-Jiangsu's plant to be more energy efficient and cheaper than it actually was.