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# A WELCOME DISRUPTION



A layer of hailstones covers the road in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital, moments after the surprise hailstorm stopped yesterday. Drivers had to turn on the headlights, *top right*, to maintain visibility as a night-like darkness enveloped the capital in the middle of the day with pitch-black clouds hiding the sun completely. People frolicking with hailstones, *middle right*, following the storm that soothed them after a hot and humid spell. A car speckled with dry leaves, *bottom right*, moves along the road after the storm.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



## Archaeologist Zakaria dies

Abul Kalam Muhammed Zakaria, eminent scholar, archaeologist and also a former secretary of the cultural affairs ministry, passed away yesterday. He was 97. He had been undergoing treatment for old-age-related complications at Samorita Hospital in the capital since November. He breathed his last around noon. Zakaria left behind his wife, two sons, and three daughters. His first namaj-e-janaza

## Media, critical of govt, under severe pressure

Amnesty report says on Bangladesh

Bangladesh has been taken to task by Amnesty International for becoming increasingly dangerous for those speaking their minds. "Bangladesh became increasingly dangerous for those speaking their own minds, with a pattern of repression of freedom of expression that included the killing of several secularist bloggers and publishers," said Amnesty's latest global report. The country's independent media outlets critical of the authorities came under severe pressure and freedom of expression was restricted, it added. The London-based human rights watchdog on Tuesday published the 2015-2016 annual report on human rights situation in 160 countries and territories during 2015. According to the report, the government in October last year warned business enterprises that they would be penalised if they advertised in Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, two leading newspapers known for their critical stance.

## CREDIT-DEBIT CARD FRAUD

# 'More money stolen at point-of-sale'

Investigators claim fraudsters made counterfeit cards with data stolen at merchants

Foreign fraudsters in collaboration with local bankers and merchants are believed to have committed more card frauds on point-of-sale (POS) terminals than what they had done with ATMs, experts and investigators said. The issue came to the front after police arrested the City Bank's three officials who had been working with the bank's POS terminals at different merchants. "If the bank officials concerned get involved with merchants, it is very easy to do card frauds at POS terminals," said Mashrur Arefin, additional managing director of the City Bank. Arefin was surprised to see that his bank's three junior officers, who were the supervisors of the bank's POS acquiring team, collaborated with an international gang of card frauds.

According to Bangladesh Bank, there are over 30,000 POS terminals in the country. City Bank is the market leader with 12,000 POS terminals across the country. Transactions through its POS terminals were Tk 2,400 crore last year and it is rising in the current year. Dutch-Bangladesh Bank has 8,000 POS terminals, through which an average Tk 150 crore are transacted per month. Of the other banks, Brac Bank has several thousand POS terminals. Fraudsters make counterfeit cards with data skimmed off cards used at the merchants. According to industry insiders, most of the cards that get counterfeited are foreign. The fraudsters then use the cloned cards to buy goods and services. Bankers said as a side income, merchants

## Students fall victim to Korea tension



Students in South Korea could start the new school year in casual attire after the shutdown of a jointly-run industrial zone in the North left the country with a shortage of uniforms. The academic year begins on 2 March and the weeks leading up to it are traditionally one of the busiest times for uniform suppliers. But manufacturers based at the Kaesong Industrial Complex say they had to abandon thousands of uniforms when North Korea ordered all South Korean workers to leave the site earlier this month.

## BAD WEATHER

# Nepalese plane crash kills 23

Rescuers have found the burnt-out wreckage of a passenger plane that crashed into a mountainside in Nepal yesterday, killing all 23 people on board, officials said. The Twin Otter turboprop aircraft lost contact with air traffic control eight minutes after taking off from the tourist town of Pokhara early yesterday. The army had deployed helicopters and foot soldiers to search Myagdi, a mountainous district around 220 kilometres west of Kathmandu, after locals reported seeing possible wreckage of the Tara Air plane. Chief district officer Sagar Mani Pathak said there was "no possibility of survivors from the crash", the latest in a series of fatal aviation accidents in the impoverished Himalayan nation. "A small team has reached the crash site for an initial investigation," said Pathak. "It looks like the plane crashed into the hillside. The wreckage was still in flames when the team arrived and the bodies were scattered." The airline said the plane was carrying three crew and 20 passengers, one a Chinese and one a Kuwaiti national. All the others were from Nepal and two of them were children. A statement on its website said weather conditions were good when the plane took off for Jomsom, a popular trekking destination in the Himalayas about 20 minutes' flight from Pokhara. Relatives of the victims gathered at Pokhara airport after hearing the news. But Pathak said a full team of rescuers



Families and friends mourn the army officials, who were slain in the BDR carnage on February 25-26 in 2009, at a candlelight vigil at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday to mark the anniversary of the massacre.

## RU TEACHER MURDER

# Death penalty of 2 JMB men commuted

Staff correspondent, Rajshahi. In a retrial, a court in Rajshahi yesterday commuted the death penalties of two Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leaders to life imprisonment in a case filed for killing RU teacher Muhammad Yunus 12 years ago.

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**PRAYER TIMING**  
FEBRUARY 25

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5-15 12-45 4-30 6-05 7-30  
JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-45 6-10 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION