



First woman leader takes charge in Indian Kashmir
Modi tweets his congratulations

AFP, Jammu
Mehbooba Mufti was sworn in yesterday as Indian-administered Kashmir's first woman leader, taking over from her father nearly three months after he died in office. India's only Muslim-majority state had been ruled directly from New Delhi since the death in January of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who formed an uneasy alliance with the nationally ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after a 2015 election. His daughter, who heads the moderate People's Democratic Party (PDP) that he founded in 1999, had initially appeared reluctant to continue the unpopular coalition with the Hindu nationalist BJP.

The PDP's main support base is among Muslims in the Kashmir Valley, the epicentre of a separatist insurgency that broke out in 1989, although the party stops short of calling for independence for the Himalayan region. "Her key task will be to recoup the PDP's credibility among her constituents (Kashmiri Muslims), which is at an all time low, and manage support from Delhi vis-a-vis economic assistance," political historian Siddiq Wahid told AFP. Mehbooba Mufti reached an agreement at a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month, although the terms of their deal have not been disclosed.

Her swearing-in takes the number of female chief ministers in India to five, although she is the first woman to serve in the post in the deeply conservative state of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmir is divided between India and Pakistan, both of which claim the Himalayan territory in its entirety. Several rebel groups have for decades been fighting troops and police deployed on the Indian side of the divided region, seeking independence or a merger of the territory with Pakistan. The fighting has left tens of thousands dead, mostly civilians.

Trial possible

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cannot be investigated and tried under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which was written in 1898, the CJ said on Saturday. At the cabinet meeting, Hasina sought to know from the law minister and the law secretary if the TONU killing case could be tried under the existing law. They responded in the affirmative, and the PM said the government would then try the case under the existing laws. This was the first time that the cabinet discussed the sensational murder of TONU, a student of Comilla Victoria College, who was found dead in Comilla Cantonment area on the night of March 20. The meeting also discussed the CJ's comments that lawmakers showed little interest in studying laws and that they did not discuss new laws and constitutional amendments in parliament. Later, Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star that TONU's case was covered by both the Penal Code and the Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act. "Secondly, I want to say in clear terms that people should not talk about a case which is sub-judice and is under investigation. If any responsible person talks about a sub-judice matter, which is under investigation, then the probe is influenced somehow," he said.



Workers repairing Jankichhora Railway Bridge on Akhaura-Sylhet route in Srimongol. The bridge subsided following heavy rains and flash floods, snapping rail communications between Sylhet and other parts of the country for hours yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Tax leaks expose world leaders

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received the leaked documents said they could provide evidence of funds hidden for tax evasion, money laundering, sanctions busting, drug deals or other crimes. The law firm, Mossack Fonseca, which says it has set up more than 240,000 offshore companies for clients around the globe, denied any wrongdoing and called itself the victim of a campaign against privacy. The Kremlin said the documents contained "nothing concrete and nothing new" while a spokesman for British Prime Minister David Cameron said his late father's reported links to an offshore company were a "private matter". Iceland's Prime Minister Sigmundur Gunnlaugsson could not immediately be reached for comment on the naming of his wife in connection with a secretive company in an offshore haven, which brought opposition calls for him to resign. Pakistan denied any wrongdoing by the family of Prime Minister Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after his daughter and son were linked to offshore companies. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko did not comment on his reported offshore links. Australia, Austria, France, Sweden and the Netherlands were among countries which said they had begun

WHO'RE IN THE PAPERS?

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Argentina President Mauricio Macri; the late father of UK Prime Minister David Cameron and three of the four children of Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

The documents show that Iceland's Prime Minister, Sigmundur Gunnlaugsson, had an undeclared interest linked to his wife's wealth. He is now facing calls for his resignation.

The scandal also touches football's world governing body, Fifa.

Part of the documents suggest that a key member of Fifa's ethics committee, Uruguayan lawyer Juan Pedro Damiani, and his firm provided legal assistance for at least seven offshore companies linked to a former Fifa vice-president arrested last May as part of the US inquiry into football corruption.

investigating the allegations, based on more than 11.5 million documents from Mossack Fonseca. Banks came under the spotlight for allegedly helping clients hide their funds offshore. The documents, covering a period from 1977 until last December, were leaked to more than 100 news organisations around the world, cooperating with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), a Washington, D.C.-based network. "I think the leak will prove to be probably the biggest blow the offshore world has ever taken because of the extent of the documents," ICIJ director Gerard Ryle said. 'MORALLY UNACCEPTABLE' Britain's Guardian newspaper said the documents showed a network of secret offshore deals and loans worth \$2 billion led to associates of Putin, including concert cellist Sergei Roldugin, a childhood friend of the president. Reuters could not confirm those details. Putin's spokesman dismissed the reports, saying they aimed to discredit him ahead of upcoming elections. "This Putinophobia abroad has reached such a point that it is in fact taboo to say something good about Russia, or about any actions by Russia or any Russian achievements. But it's a must to say bad things, a lot of bad things, and when there's nothing to say, it must be concocted, he said. The British government asked for a copy of the leaked data, which could be embarrassing for Prime Minister Cameron, who has spoken out against tax evasion and tax avoidance. His late father, Ian Cameron, a wealthy stockbroker, is mentioned in the files, alongside some members of his Conservative Party, former Conservative lawmakers and party donors, British media said. Jennie Granger, head of enforcement and compliance at HM Revenue and Customs, said the government would examine the information "and act on it swiftly and appropriately." Cameron's spokeswoman declined to comment on whether the leader's family had money invested in offshore funds set up by his father, saying it was a "private matter". The opposition Labour Party's finance spokesman, John McDonnell, tweeted: "Cameron promised and has failed to end tax secrecy and crack down on 'morally unacceptable' offshore schemes, real action is now needed." The Australian Tax Office said it was investigating more than 800 wealthy Mossack Fonseca clients and had linked more than 120 of them to an associate offshore service provider located in Hong Kong, which it did not name. DATABASE 'HACK' The head of Mossack Fonseca, Ramon

Fonseca, has denied any wrongdoing but said his firm had suffered a successful but "limited" hack on its database. He described the hack and leak as "an international campaign against privacy". Fonseca, who was up until March a senior government official in Panama, told Reuters the firm had formed more than 240,000 offshore companies. The papers also showed the use of offshore companies by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's family, including his daughter Mariam and son Hussain. Pakistani Information Minister Pervez Rasheed denied any wrongdoing on their part. "Every man has the right to do what he wants with his assets, to throw them in the sea, to sell them, or to establish a trust for them. There is no crime in this in Pakistani law or in international law," Rasheed said. Media reports also said the leaked data pointed to a link between a member of global soccer body FIFA's ethics committee and a Uruguayan soccer official who was arrested last year as part of a U.S. probe into corruption in the sport. ANGER The revelations drew an angry reaction from some quarters. German Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel questioned the morals of the financial world. "The greed of the super-rich is connected to the lack of conscience in the banking and financial sector. Both damage the trust in the rule of law. We should not tolerate the fact that one section of society works hard and sticks to the rules while another section cheats society," he told Sueddeutsche Zeitung. The British-based Tax Justice Network said too many offshore lawyers, accountants and bankers saw it as their role to shield their clients from financial regulations designed to prevent money laundering, tax evasion and corruption. "Mossack Fonseca has been one of the giants of the offshore world for decades. They had a reputation for extreme secrecy and discretion on their clients' behalf, which needless to say was attractive to many clients engaged in tax evasion, fraud, hiding conflicts of interest, and other white collar crimes," director John Christensen said in a statement. Panama was one of the most secretive havens in the world, but the international community had done little to force improvements there or in many other jurisdictions, including a network of British overseas territories, it said. The Central American country has declined to sign up to global transparency rules. EUROPEAN BANKS PROBED Austria's financial markets regulator FMA is investigating whether lenders Raiffeisen Bank International and Hypo Landesbank Vorarlberg followed rules

THE SECRET FILES

Include 11.5 million records, dating back nearly 40 years – making it the largest leak in offshore history. Contains details on more than 214,000 offshore entities connected to people in more than 200 countries and territories. Company owners in billionaires, sports stars, drug smugglers and fraudsters.

Reveal the offshore holdings 140 politicians and public officials around the world – including 12 current and former world leaders. Among them: the prime ministers of Iceland and Pakistan, the president of Ukraine, and the king of Saudi Arabia.

Document some \$2 billion in transactions secretly shuffled through banks and shadow companies by associates of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Include the names of at least 33 people and companies blacklisted by the U.S. government because of evidence that they'd been involved in wrongdoing, such as doing business with Mexican drug lords, terrorist organizations like Hezbollah or rogue nations like North Korea and Iran.

Show how major banks have driven the creation of hard-to-trace companies in offshore havens. More than 500 banks their subsidiaries and their branches – including HSBC, UBS and Société Générale – created more than 15,000 offshore companies for their customers through Mossack Fonseca.

SOURCE: ICIJ

Rail links

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stopped train services on the route because the tracks had become risky," Rustom Ali Fakir, station master of Bhanugachh Railway Station in Moulvibazar, told this correspondent. Bangladesh Railway (BR) Additional Chief Engineer Abdul Jalil around 6:00pm yesterday said the authorities were repairing the bridge. The railway communications became normal around 9:30pm. Meanwhile, around 100 of total 250 bridges on the 177-kilometre Sylhet-Kulaura-Akhaura rail route have become vulnerable due to lack of maintenance, railway officials said. Kazi Shahidur Rahman, station master of Sylhet Railway Station, said the bridges were constructed over streams and rivers around 60 to 70 years ago. Officials at the engineering department of the BR said none of the bridges had been repaired after their construction. A good number of the bridges have subsided under pressure of the onrush of water and sand extraction from rivers in recent times, said Shahidur. Mujibur Rahman, assistant executive engineer of BR Sylhet division, said they could not repair the vulnerable bridges due to fund shortage.

UNION PARISHAD POLLS

BNP to stay in the race

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
After facing a dilemma over contesting the union parishad elections, the BNP last night decided to stay in the polls race. "We joined the polls for the sake of democracy and as part of our democratic movement. We're in the election race and will contest in the remaining phases of the polls," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said. He was talking to reporters after party chief Khaleda Zia had a meeting with the chiefs of the 20-party alliance. "The one-and-a-half-hour meeting was held at Khaleda's Gulshan office. On Sunday night, the BNP chairperson discussed the issue with the party's standing committee members, vice chairmen, chairperson's advisers, joint secretaries general and organising secretaries. After hearing the opinions of her colleagues, she decided to consult with the alliance leaders, party sources said. Fakhru said although the alliance is taking part in the local body elections under the current government and the EC, it would not do so in the national polls.

Brac officials abducted in Afghanistan released

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Two Brac officials kidnapped in Afghanistan were released yesterday, more than two weeks after their abduction. Engineer Shaukat Ali, 50, and Sirajul Islam Sumon, 37, an accountant at Brac in Afghanistan were released yesterday morning, M Anowar Hossain, country representative for Brac Afghanistan told The Daily Star over the phone. "They are in good health," he said. The Brac officials were later taken to its Kabul office. They will return to Bangladesh after official formalities are completed, he said. Asked whether the officials were rescued or released, he said they were released by their abductors following the combined efforts of the Afghan government and Brac. Shaukat talked to his family on the phone yesterday afternoon. Unidentified kidnappers abducted the duo with two other local Afghan staff of the NGO in Kunduz in the war-torn Afghanistan while they were going to work on March 17. Their abductors, however, released the two Afghan men the same day.

First autopsy found no sign of rape

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However, Superintendent Shah Abid Hossain of Comilla police on March 30 said considering the circumstantial evidence and symptoms found on TONU's body, it seemed she was raped before being killed. The second-year history student of Comilla Victoria Govt College was found dead in Comilla Cantonment area on the night of March 20. Dr Sharmin Sultan conducted the first autopsy on March 21 and submitted the report to the forensic medicine department yesterday afternoon. The autopsy report was prepared on the basis of viscera reports and other medical test reports received from the Chittagong laboratory of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the medical college. The report will be handed over to the CID, the investigating agency of the case. SECOND AUTOPSY

A second autopsy was conducted on March 30, two days after a Comilla court ordered the fresh autopsy following the investigator's appeal. A three-member medical board, led by Dr Saha, was formed for the second post-mortem. The autopsy report will be prepared based on the results of fresh medical tests, said Saha. Talking to The Daily Star, Nazmul Karim Khan, special superintendent of CID (Comilla and Noakhali), said they were probing the murder keeping in mind all probable motives. "It's not a normal death, but a murder. For us, it's not a big issue whether the victim was raped or not," he added. He, however, suspected the evidence of rape might have been destroyed. Prof Habibuzzaman Chowdhury, former head of the forensic medicine department at Dhaka Medical College,

said it was very rare that a second autopsy would determine the cause of the death. The rate of "negative autopsy" is higher in Bangladesh compared to other countries in the world. This is because bodies decompose quickly here, autopsies are delayed, evidence damaged, and inquest reports by law enforcement agencies contain insufficient information, he pointed out. Kotwali police and detectives in Comilla probed the murder before the CID was tasked with the job. Investigators have so far quizzed several people, including the victim's parents, in connection with the murder. PROTESTS CONTINUE Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) observed a daylong students' strike at schools and colleges across the country yesterday. Speaking at a press conference at Madhur Canteen of Dhaka University,

BCU President Lucky Akter said the strike was observed at around 400 educational institutions. She announced that the BCU will stage a demonstration on the DU campus on April 10, demanding immediate arrest of TONU's killer(s). The student body's district units on Thursdays will submit memorandums to the home ministry through the deputy commissioners of 64 districts to press home the demand. Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (Marxist) staged demonstrations in front of the Jatiya Press Club, demanding justice for the killing. Bangladesh Peace Party yesterday in a statement also demanded the immediate arrest of the killer(s). In Sherpur, students and members of socio-cultural organisations formed a human chain at the New Market intersection, protesting the murder.

Peacekeepers

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peacekeeping troops prove just how real the threat is. "We continue to support the UN's efforts to ensure that those deployed on peace operations set the highest standards and do not risk contributing to the instability they're trying to stop. But we should be under no illusions that this is a tough challenge." Katherine Dixon, director of Transparency International Defence and Security Programme, said, "UN peacekeepers operate in some of the most fragile environments in the world, so it is extremely concerning that the majority of defence forces contributing to operations are at such a high risk of corruption. "This does little to instil confidence that troops on the ground are behaving with integrity. And recent allegations of gross misconduct carried out by

peacekeeping troops prove just how real the threat is. "We continue to support the UN's efforts to ensure that those deployed on peace operations set the highest standards and do not risk contributing to the instability they're trying to stop. But we should be under no illusions that this is a tough challenge." Katherine Dixon, director of Transparency International Defence and Security Programme, said, "UN peacekeepers operate in some of the most fragile environments in the world, so it is extremely concerning that the majority of defence forces contributing to operations are at such a high risk of corruption. "This does little to instil confidence that troops on the ground are behaving with integrity. And recent allegations of gross misconduct carried out by