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**Shazneen's 18th death anniversary today**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 18th death anniversary of Shazneen Tasnim Rahman. On this day 18 years ago, 15-year-old Shazneen was brutally murdered after rape in a planned way at her house in the capital's Gulshan area.

Shazneen was a class-IX student of Scholastica School when she was murdered on the night of April 23, 1998. People from all walks of life were dumb-founded by the incident.

Four years later, a Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression found contractor Syed Sajjad Mainuddin Hasan, then engaged in renovating Shazneen's house, guilty as the main conspirator and instigator of the incident, and sentenced him and five of his accomplices to death.

The five other convicts are domestic help Shahidul Islam Shahid, Hasan's cohort Badal, housemaids Estema Khatun Minu and Parvin, and carpenter Shaniram Mandal.

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**A diver retrieves small personal items from the Buriganga river bed yesterday. A team of four divers, led by 58-year-old Jahangir, search 40-foot deep in the river for lost items, mostly dropped by launch and boat passengers accidentally, and sell those to make a living. The items fetch them around Tk 2,000 daily. Bottom, the team at work.**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



**STOLEN \$81 MILLION Bangladesh envoy fears delay in recovery**

THE INQUIRER, Manila

Bangladesh is worried that the return of \$81 million stolen by hackers from its central bank -- or at least the initial tranches so far recovered from various parties in the Philippines -- may be delayed.

In a recent interview with the Inquirer, Bangladesh Ambassador to the Philippines John Gomes said he was hoping that by April or May, before the next President would assume office, the money could be returned since most of the funds had already been accounted for.

Bangladesh is also concerned about the transfer of the money so far collected by the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC), which will have to go through the process of forfeiture through the court.

"We don't want delays that can be avoided keeping into consideration the legal process of the 'forfeiture case.' We are in contact with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and grateful to the justice secretary to provide us any legal advice and in this respect we are closely working with the DOJ," Gomes said.

He noted that the Bangladesh Embassy would be submitting papers to formally claim the surrendered and confiscated

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# China, US sign Paris climate deal at UN

*Pledges to ratify treaty this year as record 175 countries join signing ceremony to save planet*

AFP, United Nations

A record 175 countries, including the world's top polluters China and the United States, signed the Paris climate deal yesterday, boosting hopes of quick action on combating global warming.

French President Francois Hollande was the first leader to put his signature to the accord during a ceremony at the United Nations, followed by leaders from island-states hardest hit by climate change.

US Secretary of State John Kerry came to the podium cradling his two-year-old granddaughter Isabelle and triggered warm applause from delegates as he signed the historic deal.

It was the largest ever one-day signing of an international agreement.

Held on Earth Day, the ceremony comes four months after the hard-won deal was clinched in Paris and marks a first step toward binding countries to the promises they made to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

"This is a moment in history," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told leaders gathered at the UN General Assembly.

"Today you are signing a new covenant with the future."

Holdout countries still have a year to sign the deal, but the focus has now turned to swift ratification and entry into force before the target date of 2020.

The Paris agreement will come into force when 55 countries responsible for 55 percent of the world's greenhouse gases have ratified it.

Together the signatories at the UN ceremony account for 93 percent of global greenhouse gases, according to calculations by the World Resource Institute.

France's parliament will give final approval before this summer, Hollande said, urging the 28-nation European Union to "lead by example" and ratify the deal before the end of the year.

Momentum is building to ensure the agreement enters into force quickly.

China and the United States said they will ratify this year and are pushing for others to follow suit so that the

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## Storm kills 2, damage houses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Nor'wester swept through Sylhet and Sunamganj on Thursday night, killing two people and damaging houses.

In Goainghat upazila of Sylhet, a boat carrying seven passengers sank in Darikandi Bhugdar canal during the storm. Five of them managed to swim ashore, but the other two went missing.

A team of Fire Service and Civil Defence in the district launched a rescue drive yesterday. They recovered the body of Gopen Lohar, 28, of Lakkatura Tea Estate in Sylhet Sadar upazila. However, the other person was still missing.

A woman was killed and 10 others were injured in

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## Uzbek bank robbers labour for tiny haul

BBC ONLINE

A bank robbery in Uzbekistan's western Khorezm region appears to have exposed the parlous state of some financial institutions in the country.

While the sum of 16,131,000 Uzbek soms might seem a lot, especially when the criminal gang had to load the cash into their van in 45 sacks, their haul turned out to be worth only \$2,600 (£1,800) on current black market rates, US government-backed Radio Ozodlik reports.

According to local officials, the gang broke a window to gain access to the branch of Mikrocredit Bank in Bog'ot and smashed safes to get hold of

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## Probir appeals for security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist Probir Sikdar has appealed to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to ensure that he does not become a victim of forced disappearance or faces harassment through false cases.

"Honourable prime

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**PRAYER TIMING APRIL 23**

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-25 12-45 4-45 6-27 8-00

JAMAAT 5-00 1-15 5-00 6-31 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



People wait in a queue for new passports at the Department of Immigration and Passports in the capital's Agargaon. The photo was taken around 9:00am on Tuesday.

## AGARGAON PASSPORT OFFICE Bid to improve service ahead of PM's visit

Brokers still active with help of Ansar men, allege service-seekers

BELAL HOSSAIN BIPOB

For the past few days, there has been a rather surprising change in the way things go on at the Agargaon passport office in the capital.

Information is available without much hassle, queues of service-seekers are being properly maintained and there has been less shouting and screaming inside the otherwise chaotic headquarters of the Department of Immigration and Passport (DIP).

This sudden shift in the scenario there is because Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is going to visit the office on Sunday to kick-off the first-ever Passport Week.

"The prime minister is coming. So, we want to keep things in order," a DIP director told The Daily Star on Wednesday. He wished anonymity.

However, brokers -- who, in collusion with some DIP staff, are notorious for fleecing service-seekers at the office -- are still active.

Even on Wednesday, a mobile court caught 20 brokers and sentenced them to different jail terms.

These petty criminals get the scope to run rampant because of the poor service quality of the DIP officials, allege many who go there to seek passport-related services.

"I have come to have my passport re-issued. Someone told me to stand in

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## 10 killed in 3 months

Says quarterly report on attacks on minorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten religious minority people were killed, 366 injured and eight women raped in the country in the first three months of this year, a report by Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad said yesterday.

The incidents of repression of religious minorities include attack, abduction, rape, looting and vandalising households, businesses and temples, land grabbing, extortion, and eviction of minorities from their houses and business establishments.

Of the killing incidents, the brutal murder of Jogeswar Dasadhikari, a Hindu priest at a temple in Debiganj of Panchagarh, got the attention of the international media in February. Criminals slit the throat of the priest just after dawn on February 21 and fled the scene firing shots and exploding crude bombs that left two devotees injured.

In most of the cases, the perpetrators used political power and influence to

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