## Yemen foes begin direct talks to resolve key issues: UN

AFP, Kuwait City

Yemen's warring partiesyesterday began face-to-face peace talks on "key issues" in a bid to end the conflict in the impoverished Arab country, the United Nations said.

"All delegations are present. Key issues will be addressed," Charbel Raji, spokesman for Yemen's UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, told AFP about the negotiations taking place in Kuwait.

Most of the meetings in talks which began April 21 have so far been confined to encounters between rival delegations and Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

More than 6,800 people have been killed and around 2.8 million displaced in Yemen since a Saudi-led coalition began operations in March 2015 against Iran-backed Huthi rebels, who seized swathes of territory including the capital Sanaa.

Key issues to navigate include the withdrawal of armed groups, a handover of heavy weapons, the resumption of a political transition and the release of prisoners.

The new phase of meetings comes after the government and rebel delegations each submitted a framework for a political and security solution to end the 13-month war. The government delegation said

their proposal is based on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2216, which states that the rebels must withdraw from seized territories and disarm before talks can progress. Meanwhile, the insurgent-

controlled sabanews.net website quoted an unnamed source from the rebel delegation as saying that their proposals include "forming a consensus authority that would oversee (political) transition."

## Business persons

FROM PAGE 16 lodged by the anti-graft watchdog last year, accusing 110 people and organisations of irregularities in disbursing loans of about Tk 4,500 crore from BASIC Bank.

Twenty-seven of the accused were bank officials and the rest were borrowers and surveyors, according to the ACC.

## Illegal houses

Chairman Selim in response wrote to the department claiming that he had nothing to do with the squatters and that there was no problem in evicting the illegal occupiers.

Tuhin said an eviction drive would be conducted at an appropriate time. "We are concerned about the squatting and legal procedures would

be followed," he said. The Ishwardi upazila assistant commissioner (Land) said if the Roads and Highways [Department] did not officially inform the upazila administration

about the squatting, they would not be able to go for an eviction. As to why he wrote the letter to the Roads and Highways Department, chairman Selim reaffirmed that he

had nothing to do with the squatters and the authorities should do what was right. Contacted, Land Minister Shamsur

Rahman Sharif Dilu told The Daily Star he was unaware of any place called Dilunagar and he knew nothing about it.

Building any structure within 10 metres of the highway is illegal, according to the Pabna Roads and Highways executive engineer

Mofazzal Hyder.

## Surplus in capital

FROM PAGE 16 They also urged authorities not to transfer teachers to remote areas as punishment.

Minister Nahid, speaking at the conference held at the International Mother Language Institute, criticised the teachers for lobbying for transfers to Dhaka. Almost 80 percent of the teachers, who visit the ministry, go

there with requests to be transferred to Dhaka, he said.

"Everybody prefers Dhaka. Should the students outside Dhaka stop studying?" he asked.

The teachers show transfer recommendations from political leaders and ministry officials, he said warning the teachers that a negative impression would be formed against

those who lobby for transfer rather than submitting applications online. In 329 college-level institutions, he said, a staggering 3,474 out of over

15,000 posts of teachers were vacant.

At the programme, the principals of colleges also spoke about the lack of classrooms, inadequate academic and administrative buildings and dormitories for students and other problems.

Principals of colleges in Barisal and Manikganj said they were having trouble running their colleges due to student politics. They alleged that student politics at their colleges were being controlled by non-students.

AFGHAN MSF HOSPITAL AIR STRIKE

# Survivors call for US troops to face trial

AFP, Kunduz

Survivors of a US air strike on a hospital in Afghanistan have called for those responsible to go on trial and dismissed an American military investigation that said the bombardment did not amount to a war crime.

The attack on the hospital run by medical charity Doctors Without Borders in the city of Kunduz last October left 42 people dead and sparked global outrage, forcing President Barack Obama to make a rare apology. The Pentagon on Friday published

a report of its investigation into the air strike saying the troops involved in the raid would not face war crimes charges.

"This report is an absolute insult to the victims of MSF hospital in Kunduz," Esmatullah Esmat, who works as a doctor for the charity, told AFP.

if we go to work, we fear the hospital might come under attack another time," Esmat said. "We are very upset and demoral-

"We do not feel safe after this report,

ised... We are not satisfied, and we will not go back to work as long as justice is not ensured to our people," he added. The bombing last October came as

US special forces were deployed to Kunduz alongside Afghan forces in order to recapture the northern city from the Taliban, who had overrun it in one of their dramatic successes of the war. Despite no fire coming from the hospital, an AC-130 gunship turned its

enormous firepower on the target, pummelling it repeatedly over an extended period. Doctors Without Borders branded the strike a war crime, saying the raid

left patients burning in their beds with some victims decapitated and others requiring amputations. Witnesses told MSF that the main central block of the security facility

targeted precisely, with nearby buildings unscathed, and many patients burned to death in their beds. "They should be publicly put on trial," Hamdullah, a 27-year-old who lost his uncle in the attack and worked

housing the intensive care unit was

"This was a deliberate bombardment by the American forces, and we are not satisfied that they have said this was not a war crime. This is unacceptable for us," Hamdullah, who goes by one name, said.

in the laundry at the hospital, told AFP.

General Joseph Votel, the head of US Central Command, said an investigation had found those involved made a series of mistakes and hit the clinic in error, while arguing that the troops were under battle stress.

He said that since the hospital was not deliberately targeted, the bombardment did not amount to a war crime. The 16 personnel found to have failed in their duties would face suspensions or reprimands rather than a court martial. "It's a joke that the US said the inci-

dent was not a war crime," Zahidullah, 24, who worked as a cleaner at the hospital and lost a cousin in the strike, told AFP. "What we saw that night is difficult

for us to express in words," he said,

calling for compensation for victims

and their families as well as adequate medical care. The hospital -- the only health facility in the province -- was forced to close

after the attack. The Afghan government welcomed the publication of the report.

"The Afghan government is satisfied that the investigation was done carefully and comprehensively, and believes measures were taken to ensure accountability," it said in a statement, adding that it "supports measures for preventing such attacks".

## Suicide bomber 'kills five Kurdish police' in Syria

AFP, Qamishli

A suicide bomber killed five Kurdish policemen at a checkpoint in Syria's divided northeastern city of Qamishli yesterday, police said. Four others were wounded in the

attack on the city's demarcation line, according to Jowan Ibrahim, the commander of the Kurdish police known as the Asayish. It was not immediately clear who

carried out the attack, but the Islamic State (IS) group has claimed previous bombings in the mainly Kurdish city. Control of Qamishli is split

regime fighters, who agreed a truce last week after several days of rare clashes. The army and the Kurds have coordinated on security against

between Kurdish militia and pro-

Islamic State group jihadists in surrounding Hasakeh province, but tensions have built up between the sometimes-rival authorities. The army and its militia ally, the

National Defence Forces, control Qamishli airport and parts of the city, as well as areas of the provincial capital Hasakeh to the south.

## New deadline May 31

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Tarana warned of deactivating all unregistered SIMs permanently after the new deadline. No one would be able to sell the SIMs for the next 15 months, she said.

A total of 8.9 crore SIMs were reregistered until yesterday noon, according to the state minister.

She also said the fingerprints of more than 1.2 crore mobile phone users did not match with those on the NID server.

The SIMs, however, would not be blocked for now as "their owners tried to comply with the government instruction".

But, they would have to go to the Election Commission, make the corrections and complete the reregistration within the next month, she said.

Earlier yesterday, Tarana said the NID server slowed down due to high data traffic as a huge number of people rushed to complete the re-registrations at the last moment.

"Mobile phone operators and the NID authorities did not expect such a pressure [on the server]," she said at a programme organised by the Association of Mobile Telecom Operators of Bangladesh at the Krishibid Institute in the capital.

The state minister also said SIMs owned by people with disabilities would not be deactivated after the deadline of April 30.

The number of such SIMs is nearly 16 lakh, according to mobile operators.

The operators would ensure that the people with disabilities are attended on a priority basis on every Saturday, said Tarana. As many as 3.97 crore of 5.62 crore

active Grameenphone SIMs and 2.4 crore of 3.19 crore active Banglalink SIMs were re-registered as of Friday, according to the operators.

Robi and Airtel have 1.57 crore and 48.69 lakh SIMs re-registered so far. The operators have 2.75 crore and 1.02

crore active SIM users. Around 10 lakh of the 42.5 lakh users of state-owned Teletalk have completed the re-registration while one lakh of

total 7.99 lakh Citycell SIMs subscribers

have finished the process.

The operators said they had been facing serious problems in getting connected to the NID server and verifying users' fingerprints since Thursday evening.

They blamed a huge last-minute rush of mobile phone subscribers for failing to complete the re-registration of around 13.09 crore active SIMs by now.

The NID server should take half a second to match a fingerprint with the one on the server. However, yesterday and on Friday, it took around 30 seconds on an average, a senior executive of an operator said.

"...as we need to take four fingerprints [for each SIM], it took at least two minutes for completing the reregistration of a single subscriber,' said the official, wishing not to be named.

Last week, three mobile operators --Grameenphone, Banglalink and Robi - had sought time extension for completing the process of SIM reregistration which had slowed down a little following the filing of a writ petition against it.

However, the process gained momentum after the High Court on April 12 cleared the way for mobile operators to end the re-registrations.

## Sisters 'raped'

duo refused to have the food, Hosne

him.

Ara scolded them. At one stage, the victims drank the juice and became unconscious. Faruk then raped the Locals came to know about the

incident the next morning. On information, the elder sister of the victims rescued them from the house and took them to Kaliakoir Upazila Health Complex. Father of the victims filed a case

with Kaliakoir Police Station yester-

day. Police arrested Hosne Ara. Hosne Ara also tried to cover up the incident, victims' father said.

Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Kaliakair Police Station, said "rapist" Faruk went into hiding. Police were trying to arrest

# to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

An Awami League leader was hacked to death allegedly by his rivals in Gazipur city yesterday. The dead, Mohammad

Shahjahan, 42, was a joint secretary of ward-36 of Gazipur city unit AL. He was also the vice-president of Gachha Govt Primary School managing committee. Mofiz Uddin, brother of the vic-

tim, said 10 people were injured in a

clash between the supporters of

Chhatra League leader Jewel Mondal and Jubo League leader Shafikul Islam Shafik over establishing supremacy in the area a few days ago. Ramjan, a nephew of Shahjahan, was among the wounded. Mofiz alleged that some 20-25 men of Shafik stopped a microbus

near Bangabandhu College intersection around 10:00pm on Friday. Shahjahan along with others in the vehicle was taking Ramjan to Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital. The attackers then started beating

Shahjahan and at one stage, they stabbed him indiscriminately.

Critically injured Shahjahan was taken to the hospital. He was then shifted to a private hospital at Uttara in the capital as his condition deteriorated. He died there around 10:00am yesterday.

Khandaker Rezaul Hasan Reza, officer-in-charge of Joydevpur Police Station, said police were trying to nab the killers.

## Shafik's arrest

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said at a programme in the capital. However, The Daily Star could not verify the claims of the BNP chief.

"What is the source of the money? People want to know how much they got in this way. People think it is their money. Huge assets have been amassed after laundering money earned through plundering and corruption," she said.

Jatiya Gonotantrik Party, a component of the BNP-led 20-party alliance, organised the programme at the capital's Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh, marking its 36th founding anniversary.

The BNP chief said, "An investigation should be launched and the money brought back to the country. But the government is silent over the money. In the written speech, she also

reiterated her call for talks without further delay to resolve the country's "internal crises". "The current government has no mass base as people don't support

them. It wants to keep the country's

people subservient, depending on the

power of others. "I think the current regime won't be able to cling to power in such a way. That's why I want to ask them to count on the country's people. Through discussion, resolve the country's internal crisis you've created. Time is running fast. Don't try to buy

Khaleda also expressed concern over the alarming rise in the incidents of secret killing.

"Statements are being issued in the name of different militant outfits to claim the responsibility for the murders. The government is failing to stop the incidents. Instead they're shifting the blame on the opposition and this is affecting the investigation and hiding the real offenders.

She said, "According to newspaper reports, around 1,500 people were killed over the last three months.

### Computer

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workplace.

time further."

The injectable machine would be put just behind the visible part of the eye, focusing light so that it can correct poor vision.

But it would also include storage, radio and lenses, the patent says. It would power all of that using an energy-gathering antenna. That antenna would allow it to

connect to another device outside of

the eye that would help it process

information and give it power. Google had previously tried to create an eye-linked computer with Google Glass spectacles, but that idea ran into problems and is now being relaunched as a product meant specifically to be used in the

Patents since then have appeared to show that the company is making steps onto the eyeball itself, rather than just its vision. In 2014, it filed another patent but for smart contact lenses that could display information and monitor their wearer's glucose levels. Work on the technology in that

patent appears to be ongoing and the company is collaborating with a healthcare company to develop similar technology. But many technology patents never actually make it to market, and so the injectable computer might not actually be in people's eyes any time soon.

# AL leader hacked Troubles of transport

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After the bus hits the road, he has not a single moment to relax. Till midnight he hollers on the top of his voice, calling passengers and helping the driver. Rain or shine, Shumon is on the bus

doing his job. But he has to face public wrath, and

even physical assaults from passengers over fare, slow movement of the bus and additional passengers.

Shumon gets just Tk 350 to 400 for his 16 to 17-hour workdays. "I don't want to take days off

because the bus owner won't pay me for those days," he said while talking to The Daily Star at the capital's Phulbaria Bus Terminal on the night of April 28. "I have to send a major portion of my earnings to home. So I can neither

take proper food nor afford accommodation," said Shumon, who works for a local bus plying Gulistan-Abdullahpur route. The 20-year-old sleeps in the bus,

takes food from roadside restaurants and uses public toilets at Phulbaria.

Like Shumon, several thousand workers of buses plying the streets in the capital have the same story to tell.

Against such a backdrop, Bangladesh observes May Day today through different programmes organised by the government, labour rights organisations and workers' platforms. The day is a government holiday.

The condition of truck drivers is worse than that of bus drivers as the former are paid on commission for For example, a person or company

hires a truck for Tk 30,000 to carry goods to Chittagong from Dhaka. Usually, workers get 10 percent of the amount, which is Tk 3,000. This money is divided between the driver and the helper. "In many cases, owners do not even want to pay 10 percent commission.

Millat Hossain, a truck driver at the capital's Tejgaon truck terminal. If there is a gridlock on highways, it takes around two or three days to reach the destination, he said. But the wage

remains the same.

They often bargain for 8 percent," said

"We work long hours, but our pay is poor. We even have to sleep in the truck and use public toilets while travelling from one district to another," Jahangir Alam, another truck driver, told The Daily Star.

As per Motor Vehicles Ordinance,

1983, drivers are supposed to drive for a maximum of eight hours a day with 30 minutes break every five hours, said Nurul Islam, director (engineering) of the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). Besides, transport workers' wages have been fixed by the Bangladesh

Paribahan Sramik Federation. But the rules were not followed as there was negligence on the part of transport owners and a lack of monitoring by the authorities concerned,

Labour Law, said Osman Ali, general

secretary of Bangladesh Sarak

alleged Osman Ali. Even, vehicles owners do not issue any appointment letters to the workers, he said.

In response, Faruk Talukder Sohel, chairman of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners' Association, claimed that the workers do not want to take appointment letters because they do not want to follow discipline.

"Rather, they bargain with owners for their wages," said Sohel, also the managing director of Sohag Paribahan Ltd.

About working hours, he said it needs at least two sets of drivers and helpers for an inter-district bus to complete a round trip, which is not possible under the existing passenger

Currently, around 6,000 buses and minibuses ply Dhaka and Chittagong cities, while around 70,000 buses ply different inter-district and long-haul routes. There are 1.27 lakh truck and

lorries, according to transport opera-

Around 40 lakh workers are directly or indirectly involved in the road transport sector in the country, according to the Sramik federation. The last time the government

revised the wages of road transport workers was in 2005. At that time, the minimum wage for drivers was fixed at Tk 12,000; for contractors Tk 8,000 and for helpers Tk

6,000. But the owners do not follow it, alleged Osman Ali. Wages are supposed to be revised every five years. Although 10 years have

passed, the wages of workers have not been revised yet, he said. Contacted, MA Kashem Masud,

joint secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, said that if any worker thinks he is being deprived, he can lodge complaints with the labour court.

About the revision of the wages, he

said the government was working on WATER TRANSPORT WORKERS'

#### WAGE The government on April 26 proposed

to fix Tk 9,000 in minimum wages for water transport workers following a six-day strike enforced by the workers who demanded, among other things, a pay hike. However, vessel owners did not

agree to the proposed wage, and the next day, cargo vessel owners stopped operating their vessels in protest against the hike. "A worker works round the clock no matter whether the vessel is operational or anchored. Moreover, workers

operate vessels in rough weather, risk-

ing their lives. But still, owners do not want to pay their due wages," said Chowdhury Ashiqul Alam, general secretary of Bangladesh Water Transport Workers Federation. Around 1,100 registered passenger vessels and 3,000 cargo vessels operate in the country. Besides, over 15,000 different types of unregistered vessels

### according to vessel workers and owners. Cargo stalemate

also ply the waterways. Around 2 lakh

workers are engaged in these vessels,

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said such queue would slow down the lightering of goods even once the stalemate is over. Meanwhile, leaders of cargo ves-

The ship-handling operators, however,

sel owners' associations will meet in Dhaka today and decide whether to end the non-operation of vessels.

Yesterday, they held a three-hour meeting with the chairman of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) here.

CPA Chairman Rear Admiral M Khaled Iqbal at the urgent meeting requested the owners to withdraw their decision to suspend operation to ease cargo congestion at the outer anchorage. He assured them of considering

their points on pay hike of workers. Talking to journalists after the meeting, Khorshed Alam, senior vicepresident of Bangladesh Cargo Vessel Owners Association (BCVOA), said they had briefed the CPA chairman

about different problems they face. "He assured us he would discuss the issues with the shipping minister. We will now discuss the matter with leaders of other owners' organisations and we hope we will be able to

take a positive decision tomorrow." He said leaders of the BCVOA, Coastal Ship Owners Association of Bangladesh and Tankers Owners

Association would sit today. Sources present at yesterday's meeting said the port chairman urged them to withdraw their decision as long queues of ships were waiting for lightering imported goods at the outer

anchorage. The cargo owners argued that it was difficult for them to pay around 135 percent hiked pay, said a BCVOA

leader preferring anonymity.

# Even a coffin-carrying

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family members, he added.

"I was in the ambulance along with the driver and my mother's body. Another microbus with eight family members was following us," Paritosh, headmaster of Trimohoni High School in Khilgaon, told The Daily Star over the phone. He said when the two vehicles

approached Nandipara around 1:45am through Demra- Khilgaon Notun Rasta, a comparatively deserted place, and reached Tekerjaga near Nandipara, they saw three to four CNG-run auto-rickshaws and two sand-carrying trucks blocking the road. "In the headlight we saw a person

tied by a piece of rope to a CNG autorickshaw and several others held hostages by a group of armed men," said Paritosh. Both the drivers immediately tried

sharp weapons, he added.

to turn their vehicles around but were stopped by the robbers armed with "The robbers forced me out of the

ever they had," he said. "We appealed to the looters to spare us since we would need the money for

ordered everyone to hand over what-

the last rites of my mother," said Paritosh. But, the robbers took Tk 26,000 in cash, more than four tolas of gold ornaments and four mobile phones,

he added. They also attempted to assault the women, but as Joy Sarker resisted, the robbers started to beat him up.

"My brother Sukumar tried to save him and the robbers hit him by a machete in his left arm," said Paritosh, adding that there were around 20 men, aged between 15 to 30, all wearing lungi, tucked like loincloths, and shirts wrapped around their waists.

In about 15 to 20 minutes they escaped on foot through the lowland by the road.

Paritosh said the robbers left their hostages, the CNG auto-rickshaw drivers, who claimed they had been robbed too. Officer-in-Charge of Khilgaon

car and slapped me. They also made police Kazi Mainul Islam said they had the others in the microbus get out and been reported about the incident.