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Field test on for 3 more GM crops

Among those, blight resistant potato to be released next year

REAZ AHMAD

Inspired by the success of the country's first commercially released biotech crop -- Bt brinjal -- in 2013, Bangladesh is now field testing three more crops developed through applications of agro-biotechnology.

These are: late blight resistant potato, Bt cotton and vitamin-A enriched Golden Rice.

The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), a non-profit international organisation that keeps watch on production and expansion of biotech crops worldwide, said this in its latest report titled "Global Status of Commercialised Biotech/GM Crops:2015."

Sources at the agriculture ministry and different agro-research institutions confirmed The Daily Star that the new ISAAA report, prepared marking the 20th anniversary of the commercialisation of biotech crops, would be launched at a programme in Dhaka today.

Earlier, the ISAAA had a global launch of this report in Beijing on April 13, showcasing the global increase in biotech acreage from 1.7 million hectares in 1996 to 179.7 million hectares in 2015. This 100-fold increase in just 20 years makes biotechnology the fastest adopted crop

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BNP Joint Secretary General Aslam Chowdhury, centre, with Mendi N Safadi, left, a leader of Israeli Likud Party and chief of International Diplomacy and Public Relations, are greeted by a man in New Delhi earlier this month. The BNP leader's meeting with the Israeli politician has drawn strong criticism from his party men. PHOTO: FACEBOOK PAGE OF MENDI N SAFADI CENTER-FOR INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

I met Israeli accidentally

Claims BNP's Aslam; party lambasts him

RASHIDUL HASAN

Amid swirling controversy, newly appointed BNP Joint Secretary General Aslam Chowdhury has admitted he met an Israeli politician in New Delhi early this month but claimed the meeting was accidental.

Talking to The Daily Star on Tuesday, he also said he didn't know if the Israeli politician had any links with Mossad, the Israeli secret service agency.

"The allegation that I've joined hands with Mossad to unseat the government is totally fictitious and baseless," Aslam said over the phone.

Known to be a trusted lieutenant of BNP's senior vice-chairman Tarique Rahman, Chittagong-based businessman Aslam came under severe criticism at the party's standing committee meeting on Monday. There, he was warned of stern actions.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

EXECUTION OF WAR CRIMINALS Jamaat against legal process

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Motiuur Rahman Nizami enjoyed every opportunity to defend himself against the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Jamaat-e-Islami chief, however, in every step of the way failed to cast doubt over him being guilty.

The highest court of the country upheld his death penalty he was awarded by an international crimes tribunal for committing crimes against humanity and genocide.

And after exhausting all legal process, he was executed early Wednesday.

It took around seven years to complete the legal process, from his arrest to execution. None should say that the trial had been done hurriedly.

Yet, his party Jamaat-e-Islami could not accept the outcome of the trial.

In a statement issued to announce a nationwide hartal for today, the party alleged that the government "killed" him through a conspiracy and it would be marked as a "dark

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HSC exams deferred for Jamaat hartal

Nizami buried in Pabna

STAR REPORT

As the Jamaat-e-Islami enforces a countrywide 24-hour hartal from 5:00am today over the execution of its chief Motiuur Rahman Nizami, the day's HSC and its equivalent exams have been shifted to May 20.

Mahbubur Rahman, chairman of Dhaka Education Board, said the exams on May 20 will begin at 9:00am instead of 10:00am in the first shift while the exams of the second shift will start at 2:30pm, reports UNB.

Nizami, the chief of the infamous Al-Badr Bahini, was executed early yesterday for wartime crimes,

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N Korean, Pakistani hackers involved

Forensic investigators say they found evidence of 3 hacking groups involved in BB fund heist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forensic investigators examining the theft of \$81 million from Bangladesh Bank's account with the New York Fed have uncovered evidence of at least three hacking groups, including two from North Korea and Pakistan, inside the central bank's network.

However FireEye Inc., the company hired by the central bank to conduct the forensic investigation, said it was the other unidentified group that pulled off the heist, according to two people briefed on the progress of the bank's internal investigation, reported Bloomberg yesterday.

FireEye identified digital fingerprints of hacking groups from Pakistan and North Korea, the two people said. It has not found enough data to determine whether the third group, the actual culprit, was a criminal network or the agent of another nation.

During an internal discussion on the findings, the investigators said there were seven or eight hacking groups in the world, who were capable of carrying out cyber attacks of this scale, said a BB official.

One of the groups might have performed the hacking, he said. The US firm was asked to submit its report by April 30, but it has not done so yet, said BB spokesman Subhankar Saha.

He declined to comment on the matter of the hacking groups.

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Could there be another Earth?

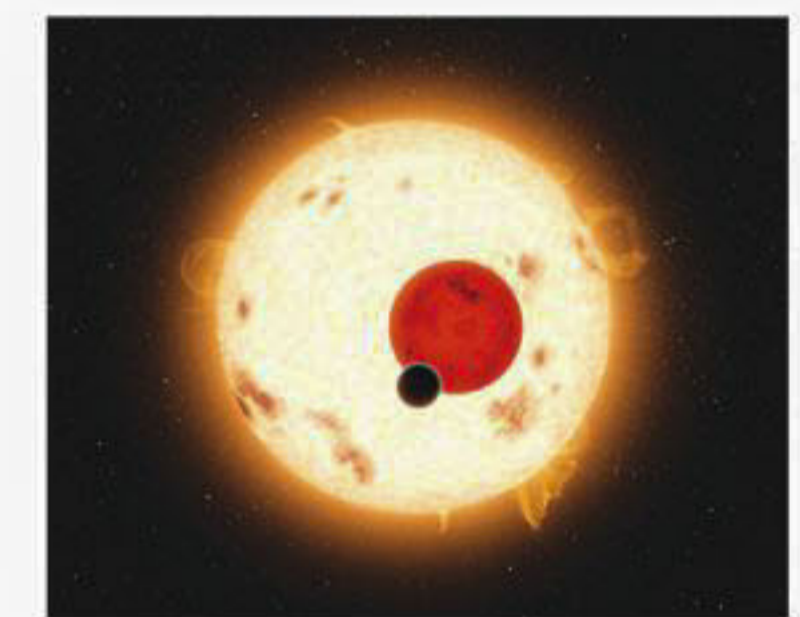
1,284 new planets found

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa has announced its Kepler space telescope has discovered 1,284 new planets, nine of which could theoretically be habitable.

The huge discovery more than doubles the amount of exoplanets which have been discovered by the cutting-edge telescope.

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SHAZNEEN RAPE, MURDER CASE

SC verdict any day

Hearing on appeals of convicts ends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division yesterday concluded hearing of the appeals of five death row convicts in the case over the rape and murder of Shazneen Tasnim Rahman in her Gulshan house about two decades ago. The Supreme Court will deliver the verdict any day now.

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A female patient along with her relatives crossing the Airport Road through oncoming traffic to go to the city's Kurmitola General Hospital, bottom left. A foot-bridge is essential there as people have to risk their lives to cross the busy street, Bottom right. The photos were taken last month.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

ARSON ATTACK LAST YEAR Khaleda, 26 other leaders charged

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday pressed charges against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and 26 leaders and activists of the BNP-led 20-party alliance in two cases filed for arson attacks on buses in the capital's Darussalam and Gabtoli.

The cases were lodged with Darussalam Police Station for the attacks during the alliance's last year countrywide blockade.

This is the third time that Khaleda, also a former prime minister, has been charged in criminal cases. Currently, she stands accused in five corruption cases and three defamation and a sedition cases.

Besides, she is facing four

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BLOODSHED IN BAGHDAD

Triple car bomb attacks kill 94

IS claims responsibility for the suicide blasts

AFP, Baghdad

Three car bombs in Baghdad, including a huge blast at a market in a Shiite area, killed at least 94 people yesterday, the bloodiest day in the Iraqi capital this year.

The attacks, all claimed by the Islamic State group, came with the government locked in a political crisis that some have warned could undermine the fight against the jihadists.

The worst bombing struck the frequently targeted Sadr City area of northern Baghdad at about 10:00am local time (0700 GMT), killing at least 64 people, officials said.

The blast set nearby shops on fire and left debris including the charred, twisted remains of a vehicle in the street.

Dozens of angry people gathered at the scene of the bombing, blaming the government for the carnage.

"The state is in a conflict over (government positions) and the people are the victims," said a man named Abu Ali. "The politicians are behind the explosion."

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