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Hate campaign on against Shyamal

Local Hefajat, cable TV 'being used' to smear the headmaster, Islamist group's central body says it gave no instruction to its N'ganj unit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Smear campaigns continue in attempts to portray Shyamal Kanti Bhakta as an anti-Islam element though an education ministry probe has found no evidence that the Narayanganj headmaster had made anti-religious comments.

Especially, the Narayanganj chapter of Hefajat-e Islam and a local cable TV network are being used in spreading hatred against Shyamal, sources said.

Under the banner of "Sarbastoror Musalman O Touhidi Janata", the Hefajat unit along with another Islamist group, Tehrik-e-Khatme Nabuwwat, on Friday issued a 72-hour ultimatum to the government to try Shyamal for "hurting Islam".

Some residents of Narayanganj said a cable TV network televised the rally live. Since then, a recorded version of the event is being broadcast constantly on local cable channels.

These arrangements have been made following directives from Salim Osman, Jatiya Party lawmaker from Narayanganj-5, the sources added.

It was also found that a song was posted by "Al Madina Shilpi Gosthi" on YouTube, hailing Salim as a protector of Islam.

Besides, inciting people to kill Shyamal, Facebook group Salauddiner Ghora (The Horse of Salauddin) in a post last night announced that Shyamal's "punishment is death" for making "disparaging remarks about Islam".

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Nur Hossain Kasemi, a central leader of Qawmi madrasa-based organisation Hefajat-e Islam, said neither its central leadership nor the Dhaka committee has given any instruction to its Narayanganj chapter to hold any demonstration on the issue.

"We have no proof that the Hindu teacher made any derogatory comment

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Class-X student Rifat Hossain sitting at the centre of the Hefajat rally stage in Narayanganj on Friday. The local chapter of Hefajat demanded Rifat's teacher Shyamal Kanti Bhakta be hanged for "hurting Muslims' religious sentiments".

PHOTO: TV GRAB

App to give alert on open manholes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

From now on, a new smartphone app will alert Dhaka dwellers to nearby manholes that have no lids and speed bumps that are not marked.

Development organisation Brac and cyclists' community BDcyclists yesterday launched an Android app "Road Safety Dhaka" yesterday.

The app will notify users about nearby unmarked speed bumps and manholes without their lids and the app users would be able to let others know about the dangers.

The two organisations had come up with the initiative as uncovered manholes and unmarked speed bumps cause a high number of accidents in the city. Some 600 accidents happen in the capital every month due to lidless manholes and unmarked speed humps.

Motorbike riders and cyclists were most vulnerable

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3 killed in fire at a textile factory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Three people, including a Pakistani citizen, were killed and 12 others were injured in a devastating fire at a textile factory in Narsingdi yesterday.

Azizul Hakim, assistant manager of Momo Textile Mills, said the factory's production manager Ashiqur Rahman, a Pakistani citizen, designer Ramzan Ali, 40, and an unknown worker were killed on the spot.

Of the injured, Zakir Hossain and Akkas Ali were admitted to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital, while others were taken to Narsingdi District Hospital and Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Mizanur Rahman, deputy assistant director of Narsingdi Fire Service, said they suspect the fire originated from the warehouse, where chemicals for the factory were stored.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

City life disrupted by Roanu rains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was quarter to 10 in the morning yesterday. A wet Abu Hossain, a rickshaw puller, was waiting all alone for passengers in the incessant rain on a deserted street near the capital's Gulshan Club.

The lanky young man's lips were trembling in cold and his wet clothes were sticking to his body.

"Where would you go?" he shouted at this correspondent as he was passing by.

"How much would you charge to take me to the Lake Park?" this correspondent asked.

"Anything you wish to give," said Hossain.

Rickshaw pullers in this posh neighbourhood usually demand high fares. Asked why he was out of home in the rain, he said, "Otherwise I would have to go hungry."

The ceaseless rain that began in the early hours of yesterday submerged many streets and disrupted city life and businesses. The rain, caused by the impact of the cyclone Roanu, swept across the country.

According to the Met Office, Dhaka received 48mm of rain since 6:00am until 12:00noon.

Traffic was thin on the streets as it was the last day of the weekend and city dwellers mostly preferred staying indoors.

However, commuters experienced immense sufferings due to a lack of transport, and many of them had to wade through the water-logged streets.

They complained that rickshaw pullers and CNG-run auto-rickshaw drivers charged them excessive fares, taking advantage of the inclement weather.

The authorities of Pallavi Dance School in Gulshan phoned the parents in the morning and informed them of the cancellation of scheduled classes due to the bad weather.

The low-income people who earn on a daily basis were the worst hit.

Jalil Hawlader, a roadside green coconut vendor at Karwan Bazar kitchen market, said the entire of his Tk 3,000 stock remained unsold as no one came to buy green coconuts from him.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

EgyptAir jet sent smoke alarms

Hunt on for black boxes as cause of crash remains a mystery

AGENCIES

Smoke was detected inside an EgyptAir plane shortly before it plunged into the Mediterranean with 66 people on board, investigators said yesterday, offering clues but no answers about why it crashed.

The Airbus A320 had been flying from Paris to Cairo early Thursday when it plummeted and turned full circle before vanishing from radar screens, without its crew sending a distress signal.

A spokesman for France's BEA air accident investigation agency said the signals did not indicate what caused the smoke or fire on board the plane.

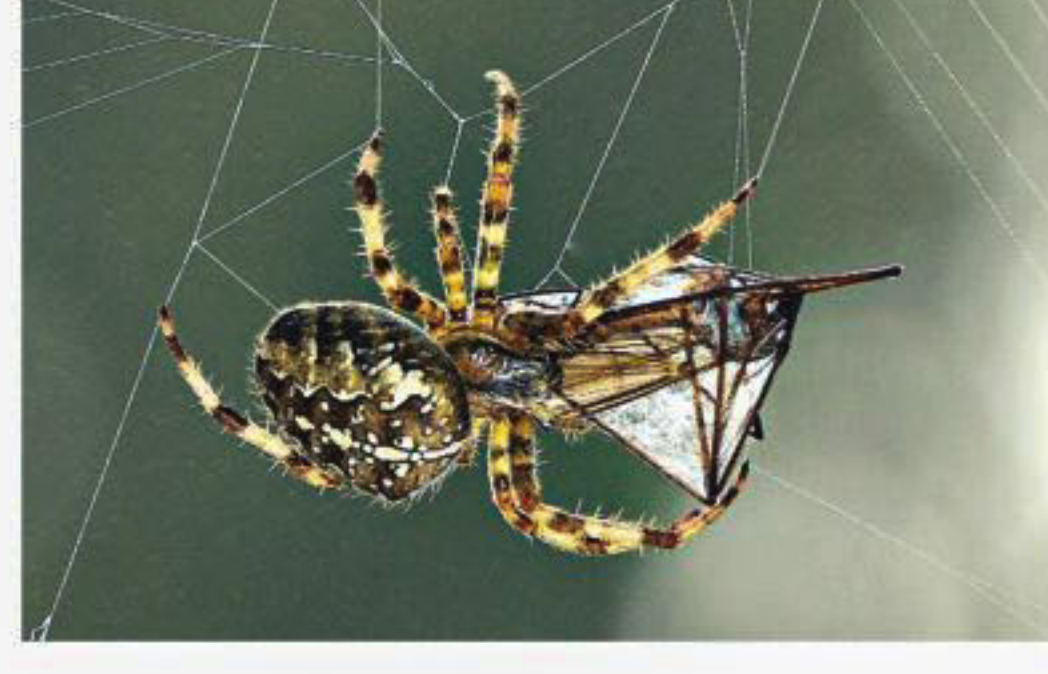
One aviation source said that a fire on board would likely have generated multiple warning signals, while a sudden explosion may not have generated any - though officials stress that no scenario, including explosion, is being ruled out.

While Egypt's aviation minister has pointed to terrorism as more likely than technical failure, French Foreign Minister

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

A deadly affair

Male spiders must give females gift, or die



CNN ONLINE

For some spider species, a gift to their spider lady love can mean life or death.

Scientists have long observed spiders' gift-giving rituals. But the spiders' generosity didn't stem from chivalry or making the right moves to woo a mate.

A study released this week revealed a deeper motive behind some of the male spiders' gift giving: self-preservation.

The study in the journal Biology Letters singled out nursery web spiders Pisaura mirabilis as among the species best known for giving "nuptial gifts" from males to females.

Male spiders present their female love interests with gifts of insects, mostly flies, wrapped up in intricate webs.

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2 foreigners arrested for 'robbery'

A CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Police yesterday arrested two Iranian citizens on charges of robbery at a filling station in Faridpur.

The duo identified as Davod Yar Beigi Darvishand, 36, and Ali Reza alias Fiyouj, 28, are residents of Karaz in Iran. According to the passports recovered from them, they came to Bangladesh on tourist visas on May 4 and the visas will expire on May 29.

Four foreigners, including them, in two silver private cars went to M/s Tofazuddin Filling Station

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PRAYER TIMING MAY 22

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-40 8-00
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-45 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



People wait for buses at Farmgate junction in the capital amid the pouring rain caused by Cyclone Roanu in the Bay. Roanu made landfall yesterday afternoon causing damage and fatalities in the coastal areas.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

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