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JOINT OPERATION AGAINST IS

Turkey, US 'ready to work' on ousting the global terror outfit from Raqa, says Turkish president

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UPBEAT ON BANGLADESH

StanChart Group CEO says he is impressed by the progress the country has made

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ALERT, SECURITY EERIE EXPERIENCE for school-goers

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and PANKAG KARMAKAR

Getting off a car, she walked into the compound of an English medium school in the capital's Dhanmondi area.

She then stood in a queue of students of the school, equipped with several closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras at different points.

A security guard was checking the bags of the students with a handheld metal detector and then allowing them to enter the school building.

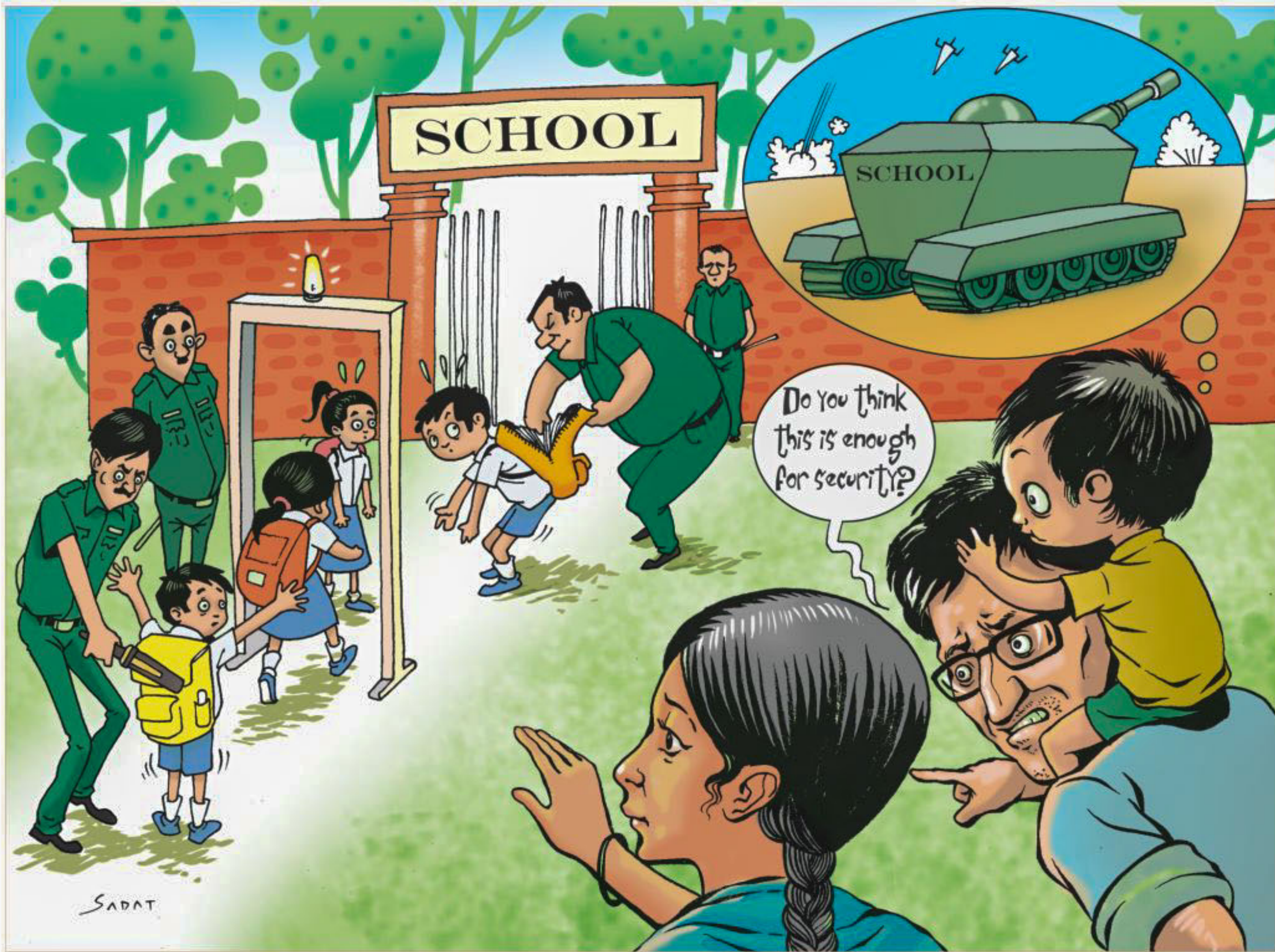
After a while, her turn came. The grade-VI student entered the building finally after the guard completed checking her bag.

"The children are entering the school this way for the last several weeks," said her father as he watched her daughter go inside the school building.

The picture is the same in many other English medium schools in the area as the school authorities took several security measures on their own in the wake of the recent terror attacks.

The Daily Star correspondents visited several schools in Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur and Uttara recently, and

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None would remain poor, hungry: PM

Special programme opens to sell rice at Tk 10 a kg to poor

BSS, Chilmari, Kurigram

Expressing optimism that not a single citizen would remain hungry and poor in Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party does politics for changing people's fortune.

"We want to ensure that not a single person would remain hungry, poor and homeless.... We are pursuing politics for changing people's fortune, not ours," she told a rally at Thanarhat AU Pilot High School ground in Chilmari.

The programme was organised to mark the inauguration of the nationwide "Food-Friendly Programme for the Ultra Poor".

Under the programme, the first of its kind in the country, 50 lakh poor people would get rice at Tk 10 per kilogram during the lean season.

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DEBATE OVER RAMPAL POWER PLANT

The soon to be built \$1.49 billion Rampal coal-fired power plant has generated concern and controversy among the citizens, environmental experts, and government officials in the country and abroad. The main concern being the potential of irreversible damage to the unique eco-system of the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans. Deputy Editor of The Daily Star Sharier Khan talks with State Minister for Power Nasrul Hamid to find out more about the risks and benefits of the plant.

Concern rooted in lack of understanding

State minister for power insists technical people understand Rampal project

The Daily Star: Do you think the government has done enough to earn public confidence on Rampal especially when the Sundarbans is the main concern here?

Nasrul Hamid: When I joined the power ministry about three years back, I had also initially asked why we took the Rampal project that threatened the Sundarbans. As I gained



experience, I realized that I had wrong conceptions. Outsiders see the project in the same way I saw it initially.

One has to understand the project. We have not been able to explain it to people properly. This is why this concern has been created. Proper communication skill is lacking in

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Zia's medal removed from nat'l museum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday removed the Swadhinata Padak (Independence Award) of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman from the National Museum.

Ikram Ahmed, acting director general of the museum, told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon that the crest and accessories were taken away from the museum.

He declined to say where those had been taken.

Yesterday, Ziaur Rahman's name was also struck off the 2003 list of Independence Award recipients on the official website of the Cabinet Division.

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LNG TERMINAL, POWER PLANTS

Summit Group to spend \$2.5b

MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Summit Group has teamed up with international lenders and companies to raise \$2.5 billion in equity and loans for setting up a LNG terminal and a number of power plants with electricity generation capacity of 2,000 megawatts.

The country's largest private sector power producer has already formed a company, Power International Pvt Ltd, for the purpose. The company is based in Singapore.

The International Finance Corporation; the IFC Emerging Asia Fund, an investment fund managed by the IFC Asset Management Company; and Dubai-based EMA Power, a joint venture between Daelim Energy of South Korea and the Islamic Development Bank Infrastructure Fund II, own 50 percent share of the new company.

The three parties have already deposited \$175.5 million in equity.

"We have received the funds," Muhammed Aziz Khan, chairman of Summit Group, told reporters at a programme at Dhaka Club in the capital yesterday.

Of the equity, \$120 million alone is coming from the IFC and the IFC Asset Management Company.

Power International has applied to the Singapore Stock Exchange for listing.

Once listed, the company would be able to raise \$300 million from the market, while Summit Group would mobilise another \$100 million from its own resources, Khan said.

"Then we will be able to borrow another \$2 billion."

Initially, Summit will use the funds to set up a LNG terminal in Moheshkhali and a 750MW LNG-based power plant in Meghnaghat, Narayanganj, said the company in a statement yesterday.

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Stranded for hours on highways

Thousands of passengers suffer as huge traffic creates tailback on Dhaka-Tangail, Dhaka-Ctg highways

HASAN JAHD TUSHER and MIRZA SHAKIL

Long tailbacks on Dhaka-Tangail and Dhaka-Chittagong highways left hundreds of people stranded for hours yesterday causing immense sufferings to them.

On the other hand, home goers faced little trouble at Paturia-Daulatdia ferry ghats as less number of vehicles plied this route to avoid long wait for ferry services.

Many vehicles of the south and south-western districts, which were supposed to

take the Paturia-Daulatdia route, drove down the Dhaka-Tangail highway and as a result there were long lines of vehicles clogging different parts of the road.

The Dhaka-Chittagong four-lane highway witnessed 13 kilometer-long traffic congestion at Munshiganj early yesterday after two fatal accidents had taken place and a goods-laden truck had gotten out of order on the two-lane Meghna bridge.

However, Dhaka-Mawa, Dhaka-

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"It took eight hours to reach Tangail from Dhaka which should not have been more than three hours."

MAZHARUL ISLAM, A BUS PASSENGER, SAID AS THE DHAKA-TANGAIL HIGHWAY EXPERIENCED LONG TAILBACK YESTERDAY



People heading home for the holidays to the north, south, southeast had a horrendous day yesterday. Traffic jams on highways left them stranded for hours. Top, the seemingly endless queue of vehicles on Dhaka-Tangail highway at Gharinda near Tangail town at 3:15pm yesterday. Another queue at Paturia ferry terminal at 4:00pm, bottom.

PHOTO: STAR

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