



# Joy after 8 months of ordeal

## 25 Bangladeshi workers finally return from Afghanistan

AKRAM HOSEN

Being locked inside a steel factory in Afghanistan's Herat city for almost a year, Ratan Mia and his 24 fellow Bangladeshi workers had lost all hope of seeing their loved ones again.

"My first child was born a couple of months after I had left. I thought she would never see her father as I was convinced I would die at the factory," said the 30-year-old yesterday.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Bangladesh foreign ministry took initiatives to repatriate the workers after several media organisations published accounts of their ordeal a couple of months ago.

A Flydubai flight carrying the workers touched down at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 10:30am, Shakil Ahmed, an official at the IOM's Dhaka office, told The Daily Star.

The victims used to work at several steel factories on the outskirts of Dhaka. Attracted by the offer of handsome monthly salaries ranging from \$500 to \$800, they left home for Afghanistan on October 10 last year.

They took up the offer from an Indian national from West Bengal and paid him Tk 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh each.

"Stranded at the factory, I regretted my decision every moment. In the mean time, my wife and daughter were

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Ratan Mia showing the photo, that he had shared on Facebook, at a hotel in the capital's Uttara yesterday. The photo helped the repatriation of 25 stranded Bangladeshis, including Ratan, from Afghanistan.

PHOTO: PaLASH KHAN

# Dhaka Lit Fest begins

Global writers in spotlight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The sixth edition of Dhaka Lit Fest was inaugurated yesterday in the capital's Bangla Academy, with expectation that literary knowledge will be shared between a host of local and international authors.

Nobel Prize-winning writer Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul inaugurated the three-day festival formally by cutting a ribbon, an act, he said, he had done only once before in his literary career.

"That was for a local function in a solitary area for a friend of mine," Naipaul, aged 84, shared the anecdote with the audience, sitting on a wheelchair.

Last time he had cut the ribbon very fast and organisers rebuked him, saying he was meant to kill a little time on stage before doing so.

"But I hadn't thought of that. Nobody had told me what to do.

"Now I have done this for Dhaka fest. And I'm very happy to have done so," Naipaul continued.

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# Certificates from 18 pvt universities unacceptable

## Announces UGC, says those institutions have no VCs appointed by the president

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The University Grants Commission (UGC) yesterday said the certificates of the students of 18 private universities would not be acceptable until those were signed by the vice-chancellors appointed by the president.

In an advertisement published in different national dailies, the statutory apex body for higher education said the 18 universities do not have VCs, pro-VCs and treasurers appointed by the president, who is the chancellor of all universities.

"The certificates without the signature of the vice-chancellors appointed by the president will not be acceptable," read the advertisement.

The UGC decision has meanwhile concerned the students of the universities. Contacted, UGC Chairman Prof Abdul Mannan told The Daily Star that it was the certificates not the degrees which have been declared illegal.

"The degrees have not been declared illegal. The certificates will become valid again once those are signed by the vice-chancellors appointed by the

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# BNP to take part in N'ganj city polls

## Decides to boycott zila parishad elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP last night decided to take part in the Narayanganj City Corporation polls slated for December 22.

The party, however, will boycott the zila parishad elections as it thinks the electoral system used for the polls conflicts with the constitution.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the BNP standing committee with party Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair.

"Elections under the current Election Commission and the government became farcical as the ruling party men snatched election results .... Despite that, the BNP decided to take part in the Narayanganj City Corporation polls as the party believes in democracy and change in power only

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# Primary terminal exams begin Nov 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Primary and Ebtedai terminal examinations for class-V students of schools and madrasas will begin across the country on November 20 with over 32 lakh examinees taking part.

The tests, considered as the largest public exam in the country, will end on November 27.

Of the total candidates, 29,30,573 students are from primary schools and 2,99,775 from madrasas, said Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman at a press briefing at the secretariat.

However, the number of examinees decreased by 24,266.

The examinees will take examinations of six subjects in six days with English on the first day at 11:00am.

Asked whether the

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# 'Holy grail' of genetics!

## DNA-editing breakthrough could delay ageing and cure incurable diseases

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have discovered a new way to edit DNA that could fix "broken genes" in the brain, cure previously incurable diseases and potentially even extend the human lifespan.

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PHOTO: ARTEUR RAHMAN

A man hawking migratory birds at Kandirpar Bazar in Kotalipara upazila of Gopalganj last Friday, even though catching or selling such birds is a punishable offence as per the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012. He said the birds were caught from the Shapla Bagdha Beel in Barisal's Wazirpur.



# 5 'JMB leaders' held

## Rab claims they belong to 'Sarwar-Tamim group'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion yesterday claimed to have arrested five leaders of a JMB faction it called "Sarwar-Tamim group".

The five, arrested in the capital's Uttara and Adabor areas on Wednesday night, include a trainer, an explosives expert and a finance coordinator, according to Mufti Mahmud Khan, director of Rab's legal and media wing.

Interestingly, this is the first time Rab

came up with statements about "Sarwar-Tamim group".

Earlier, both police and Rab told the media about "Neo JMB", a JMB offshoot inspired by ideologies of Islamic State (IS).

Asked why it is being called "Sarwar-Tamim group" instead of "Neo-JMB", Mufti Mahmud told this newspaper yesterday, "Because the group was led by Sarwar and Tamim."

Rab earlier said Sarwar, who jumped to

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