Border touts minting money

FROM PAGE 1 Yet, desperate to flee persecution, these Myanmar nationals are still finding ways to cross into Bangladesh, even during daytime.

Buddhist-majority Myanmar, which revoked their citizenship through a law in 1982. Md Shakir and Anwarul Islam from

Rohingyas are Muslim minority in

Kumirkhali village are among those who arrived yesterday through Techchi bridge point in Teknaf. Ten days ago, Shakir first brought

his mother, wife, children and and other family members to Jingakata village in Whykang area of Teknaf.

"I then went back to Myanmar to observe the situation. It's comparatively better now. But I came back as my son is sick," he said.

Shakir was carrying a cell phone with a Robi number, with which he communicates with his family members in both countries.

Yesterday, Shakir and Awarul paid the boatman Tk 1,000 to cross the river. But when he brought his family members, Shakir had to pay Tk 3,000 for each.

The broker syndicates are based in at least 17 boat landing stations along the Naf, law enforcers said.

"Every syndicate has four to 10 members. They are taking money from the distressed Rohingya people and helping them to come to Bangladesh," an officer told The Daily Star yesterday,

preferring not to be named.

About 200 brokers are active in Teknaf and Ukhia, he added. Other areas of their operation

include Nayapara, Jaillaghata and Dokkhin Zadipura boat landing stations in Zadimura area; Hnila Ghat and Howangbro, Jhimangkhali, Unchyaprang and Lambabil. Until a couple of days ago, they had

been active in Dumdumia, Leda, Alikhali, Nat Murapara, Moulvibazar, Karangkhali, Kanjarpara, Ulubunia and Whykawng Purbo Para.

After coming to know about a syndicate member working around Leda camp, these correspondents requested a Rohingya man to call the broker and inquire about his charge for bringing in each Rohingya person.

According to the Rohingya man, the broker would charge Tk 10,000 per head.

"And he [the broker] would not make any deal if the group is smaller

than 100," said the Rohingya man. These correspondents were present during the conversation.

With the help of such brokers, several thousand Rohingya people entered into Bangladesh over the last few days.

Nearly 4,500 of them came to Kutupalong unregistered Rohingya camp in the last six days, said Abu Siddique, president of the camp management committee.

"Around 800 families came to our

camp till today [yesterday]," said Abu, himself a Rohingya, who came to Bangladesh about 25 years ago.

Asked about the brokers, Abul Khayer, officer-in-charge of Ukhia Police Station, said the brokers went into hiding and police were looking for them.

"We've started a drive against them, said Afjurul Haque Tutul, additional police superintendent of Cox's Bazar.

Six people have been arrested so far

in this connection, he added.

BGB PRESS BRIEFING

Briefing reporters about the latest, Border Guard Bangladesh Director General Maj Gen Abul Hossain said his force was put on alert to prevent entry of more Rohingya people. "We have already deployed addi-

tional BGB men on the borders," he told the press conference at Maloncho Rest House in Teknaf. "There is no barbed-wire fence

along the 63km Bangladesh-Myanmar border on the Naf river, making it easy for the Rohingya people to cross into Bangladesh illegally," he added. Some areas along the border are

impassable where BGB men cannot patrol. Some Rohingya people entered through these areas. Brokers in both countries are helping these people to enter into Bangladesh, he said.

Also, many Rohingyas have their relatives in Bangladesh. So they too are helping their relatives in Myanmar to come to Bangladesh, added the BGB DG.

Question over BRTA stance

FROM PAGE 1 tap on a smart phone," an Uber spokesregistered (with the BRTA) under sepaperson told The Daily Star yesterday. rate series (Pa/Cha), it read.

Referring to the colonial Motor Vehicle Act, 1940 and outdated Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 1983, the advertisement also said Uber was being operated illegally and that the service was totally against the motor vehicle rules and regulations of the country.

It also requested the owners and the drivers of Uber vehicles not to engage in such "illegal" activities. "Otherwise, stern legal actions will be taken against them."

However, sources in Uber and some experts said the BRTA came up with the advertisement considering Uber a conventional taxi service and due to lack of an understanding of the system.

Uber was gaining popularity among the Dhaka's commuters after its official launching in partnership with the country's leading telecom operator Grameenphone on Tuesday.

It is an online platform that connects people to facilitate transportation through a mobile application.

"Uber is a technology platform that has transformed urban mobility in more than 450 cities across 74 countries by connecting riders with drivers with the Responding to an email, the spokes-

person said, "In line with the government's vision of Digital Bangladesh we want to work with the government and its policymakers to help bring innovation to our cities through constructive dialogue and engagement." On the launching day, Uber issued a

press release where it quoted State Minister for Information and Communication Technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak as saying, "Smart cities are integral parts of the Digital Bangladesh and I'm very excited to have Uber in Dhaka as a part of our efforts to build smart cities.

"In countries across the world, Uber has been a glaring example of sharing economy and bringing efficiency in our urban life. It will also give our community the ease of having rides at the push of a button. Uber has the potential to bring untapped economic opportunity to Bangladesh," he said.

The service of the US-based firm can come as a relief for many in Dhaka where commuters suffer every day due to lack of transport. And Uber came when the existing taxi services failed to

gain popularity due to unavailability and high fare. On the other hand, Uber cars will be

available and cheaper than the existing usual taxis, said a source at Uber. The biggest advantage of Uber is it

does not own any cars. It acts like a middleman between customers and cab drivers. It has made the task of booking a cab easier. Any car owner can become drivers after getting registered with Uber with valid documents, national identity card and a photograph. Sources in Uber and the ICT minis-

try said the service was introduced upon consultation with the ministry.

Contacted, Road Transport and Bridges Division Secretary MAN Siddique said the new service might be good for people but it should be within a system or legal framework. He stressed that Uber is taxicab

service and has to get permission from the BRTA to operate in the city. Urban transport expert Prof

Shamsul Hoque of Buet's civil engineering department considers that Uber is a positive concept, but believes its full advantage can't be tapped due to inadequate road space and traffic

Six killed in 'gunfights'

The other three deceased -- Badsha Miah, 32, Shafikul Islam, 35 and Monjurul Islam, 36, from Mymensingh and Chandpur -- were identified by their wounded associates apprehended by the Rab.

Following the gunbattle, the Rab recovered a pistol, two revolvers, one magazine, six bullets, several sharp weapons, 338 bags of rice and two trucks that the robbers were using for carrying their loot, said Rab.

Teams of Rab from Pabna and Tangail arrived at Badsha Rice Mill at Joynagar area on information of the robbery in progress around 3:00am when nearly 15 to 20 inter-district robbers were loading bags of rice onto the trucks they brought with them, said Bina Rani Das, com-

mander of Rab-12 Pabna camp. "The robbers opened fire as we chased them. We also returned fire for self defence, triggering a half an hourlong gunfight," Bina told The Daily Star, adding that three of the robbers

died on the spot. Another gunfight ensued as the Rab chased and caught up with the rest of the fleeing criminals at Boroichora, around a kilometre away from Joynagar. Four "robbers" including Rustom sustained bullet wounds during the incident, she said.

The regime is hoping to score its most

important victory yet of the five-year

civil war, dealing a potentially decisive

blow to the rebels by recapturing eastern

Civilians in the east have been under

On Thursday alone, 32 civilians

were killed in air strikes and artillery

fire on eastern neighbourhoods,

among them five children, the Syrian

and the increasing bombardment,"

said Abu Raed, a father-of-four living

"I'm terrified by the army's advance

"There's no safe place for me and

The Observatory said the army now

Observatory for Human Rights said.

in Fardos neighbourhood.

cut the rebel-held sector in two.

nied by relentless air and artillery

my family."

was pushing on.

siege by the army since July, with food

and fuel supplies dwindling and inter-

national aid completely exhausted.

neighbourhoods they overran in 2012.

Commanding Officer Shahabuddin Khan of Rab-12 said the inter-district gang of robbers had looted rice from Tangail and Jhenidah over the last couple of days.

Joynagar based on prior information and they were working on to arrest the robbers who escaped arrest, he added.

The owner of Badsha Rice Mill, Alamgir Hossain Badsha, said the robbers tied up the security guard after entering the mill at night and then they started loading the rice until the Rab arrived.

Aminul Islam Rinku, a local, said they assumed it was a drive by law enforcers as they heard gunshots at night, but they did not dare to go out to find out what was going on.

In Faridpur, two people were found shot dead at an abandoned brick kiln at Sokirkandi area of Modhukhali upazila

early yesterday, reports a correspondent. Police said the two were suspected robbers and were killed during "their internal fight".

Locals, however, could not ascertain whether it was an internal fight between members of any gang of robbers as they found out about the incident only after police took them to the

The deceased were identified as Ohidul Joadder, 29, of Modhukhali

upazila, and Kashem Sheikh, 40, of Baliakandi upazila of Rajbari. Rajak Sheikh and Majed Sheikh,

residents of Sokirkandi, said they came out of their houses, around 100 yards The Rab carried out the operation at away from the spot, after hearing gunshots fired around 3:00am when they saw many policemen around their

The policemen then asked them to go with them to the brick kiln where the two men were seen lying on the ground, they added.

Ruhul Amin, officer-in-charge of Modhukhali Police Station, said police found the two individuals with serious bullet wounds in the kiln and sent them to Faridpur Medical College Hospital where doctors declared them dead. "We think the killings are the result of an internal feud of a gang of robbers."

They heard of the gunshot incident from on duty highway police personnel, he said, adding that police recovered a Chinese pistol and two bullets from the crime scene.

The two have a total of twelve cases filed against them with different police stations, the OC said.

Ashish Kumar Saha, medical officer at Faridpur Medical College Hospital, said, the two persons brought to the hospital around 5:10am by the police were already dead.

Civilian toll mounts as army advances bombardment, with medical staff in

barrel bombs filled with chlorine gas. Damascus and its ally Moscow have repeatedly denied any illegal, military use of the chemical.

the east accusing the army of dropping

Retaliatory rocket fire by the rebels has killed at least 18 civilians in the government-held west, 10 of them children, according to the Observatory.

On Thursday night, rescue workers in several parts of the east battled to extricate civilians trapped under the rubble of bombed buildings.

In Bab al-Nayrab, an AFP cameraman saw rescuers battle for more than an hour to pull out a seriously wounded boy.

The lower part of his body was trapped and the back of his head badly gashed. He cried out "father, father," as the

rescuers used pickaxes to break up the concrete surrounding him. The desperate conditions have

controlled more than 60 percent of the strategic Masaken Hanano district and prompted some civilians to flee.

Masaken Hanano is east Aleppo's In recent days, five families have largest district and its capture would crossed to Sheikh Maqsud, a Kurdishcontrolled enclave between the gov-The advances have been accompaernment-held west and rebel-held east,

the Observatory said.

Damascus says residents and surrendering fighters are free to leave, and accuses the rebels of preventing civilians from doing so and using them as "human shields.'

On the ground, residents expressed "Living under these circumstances

is unbearable," said 43-year-old Mohammed Haj Hussein, in Tariq al-Bab district. "There's no work, there's no food,

and the bombing is incessant... I want to get out of here by any means possible." In Bab al-Nayrab district, Abu Hussein said: "I don't know what the UN is wait-

ing for. Why don't they at least evacuate the children and women?" The UN says it has a plan to deliver

aid to Aleppo and evacuate the sick and wounded, which rebel factions have approved.

But Damascus has yet to agree, and additional guarantees are needed from Moscow, UN officials say.

On Thursday, the head of the UNbacked humanitarian taskforce for Syria, Jan Egeland, warned there was no plan B to help civilians in east Aleppo.

No free talking

FROM PAGE 1

increased last year, he noted. Shahjahan said the BTRC was researching relevant rules and regulations of other countries on the issue.

Earlier, the government had blocked different communication applications at different times due to security reasons. The telecom regulator and the Post

jointly arranged the meeting to brief journalists about the present status of illegal international call termination in the country. Some media outlets recently reported that state-owned mobile phone operator Teletalk was involved

and Telecommunications Division

tion or VoIP. Post and Telecommunications Secretary Fairzur Rahman Chowdhury also the chairman of Teletalk Board of Directors, said no mercy was shown to Teletalk as a public company for any

in illegal international call termina-

illegal activity. He said if anyone was found involved in illegal call termination using a SIM of any telecom operator, including Teletalk, the company would be held responsible for the crime. "The BTRC will show no mercy to the operator."

The BTRC had fined Teletalk over Tk 14 lakh for illegal international call termination.

About the unpaid penalty, the secretary said although Teletalk is a stateowned organisation, it has to pay penalties like any other private companies. "But if it fails to do so, it can adjust the financial debt with the government." He said making a profit was not

the Teletalk's main objective, rather it needs to serve the people without incurring losses. BTRC Vice Chairman Ahsan Habib

Khan, its commissioners and high officials were present. Although State Minister for

Telecommunication Tarana Halim

was not present at the press conference, her office staffs were there. Sources said she forced the telecom regulator to organise the press conference on a weekend to protest media reports.

Rahul Sharma

FROM PAGE 16 disciple set on an apt Rabindra Sangeet "Hemonte Oi Boshonter Bani". The two artistes then came together for a duet closing performance -- of a Bhairavi Pallavi along

Students of the Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay then performed a group performance on table, with a crop of young artistes drawing applause from the crowd.

with recitations from the Upanishad.

On either side of Rahul Sharma's performance, two vocalists from Bangladesh -- Priyanka Gope and Mohammad Shoeb performed on the stage. Priyanka gave a soulful performance on Raga Bageshree and finished with a thumri. Mohammad Shoeb's performance, with a chorus line of artistes, was a fusion-style piece set on Raga Darbari Kanada featuring pakhawaj and tabla.

Purbayan Chatterjee, the internationally-renowned sitarist, then returned to the stage after being absent for the last couple of editions and thoroughly entertained the audience.

Revered vocalist Pandit Ulhas Kashalkar performed Khayal next and the night ended with a Carnatic-Hindustani instrumental jugalbandi by Pandit Ronu Majumdar (flute) and U Rajesh (mandolin).

Blues Communications, the company in charge of event management of the festival, deserves a big credit for the smooth operation of the festival -- from efficient audience entry management to managing the amenities.

More coverage on the festival on Arts & Entertainment page (page 9).

Gaibandha FROM PAGE 2

soon, said the mills managing direc-The district administration has

found that there are homeless Santal families in Madarpur and Joypurpara villages. It has also got 14.26 acres of land in Katabri union where four cluster villages would be constructed soon to rehabilitate the homeless Santal families, said Abdus Samad, deputy commissioner of Gaibandha

barbed-wire fence erected on a stretch of two kilometres of the mills land from where they were evicted on November 6, said the DC. Alleging that the 1962 land acqui-

The Santals want the removal of

sition agreement has been breached by cultivating other crops instead of sugarcane, the Santals intensified their movement for returning to their forefather's land in Shahebganj sugarcane farm for the last two years. In July, some 1,500 Santal men

occupied nearly 100 acres of land of the Shahebganj sugarcane farm, which was acquired by the government in 1952 from their forefathers. On November 6, a tripartite clash broke out between the Santals, staff-

ers of Rangpur Sugar Mills and police over the eviction of the indigenous people from the disputed land. The clash left three Santal men dead and 20 others, including nine policemen, injured.

Pain far more than

FROM PAGE 16 for the rest of her life.

ment of the culprits.

City

"The society has put me in this situation ... My father is the lone earning member of our family. I'm a girl. What'll I do now? I can't express how I am going

through such a painful situation." Sharmin said the attackers were threatening and pressing them to withdraw two cases filed in connection with stalking and injuring her father. She demanded exemplary punish-

Talking about Sharmin's self-blaming mentality, rights activist Sultana Kamal, also the chairperson of We Can, said, "As a woman, this mindset has affected her [Sharmin]. What has she done to see her father losing his legs?" "... It's a very painful aspect for

women that they are attacked and tortured. But they are also made to think that the incident happened because of them ... It is one kind of torture." She said law enforcement agencies

could not find the culprits until the High Court directed Jhenidah police to arrest the accused. Mentioning the arrest of 16 people in the two cases, Sultana Kamal said,

reduce the gravity of the offence committed by the prime accused." Rawsan Hossain, father of Suraiya Akter Risha who was stabbed to death by her stalker in broad daylight, was

"Our past experience tells us that

arrests of a number of culprits often

also present. "I want no such incident to happen again to anyone," he said, with tears welling up in his eyes. "I have no words to say. I want quick punishment."

Risha was a class-VIII student of Willes Little Flower School in the city.

Like Sharmin and Risha, there are hundreds of women becoming victims of violence across the country. According to We Can, between

women were gang-raped, 301 were raped, 26 were killed after rape, 149 were killed by their husbands, 111 were injured by stalkers and 26 were acid victims. The statistics were prepared on the basis of media reports and information collected from Ain O Salish

January and September this year, 152

aged between six and 30. Quoting data from the Bangladesh

Kendra (ASK). All the victims were

Bureau of Statistics, the organisation said only 23 percent of women talk about torture and only three percent seek legal aid.

"This means a very poor number of women get justice. We Can urged policymakers, politicians, government and judicial officials

and law enforcers to show zero tolerance towards violence against women. It also demanded speedy trials of culprits.

against Gender-Based Violence Campaign" kicked off yesterday and the campaign would end on the

windows). And two bedrooms, the CM's and that of his son KTR, too have been fitted with the high-quality glass, reports Times of India.

His new home also has an auditorium which seats 250 people and a meeting hall that accommodates 500.

Rao moved into the house on Thursday after a series of religious rituals led by his spiritual guru, Chinna Jeeyar Swamy, reported BBC.

Swamy also sat in Rao's official

was built in close consultation with vaastu (similar to Feng shui) experts. Rao is a great believer in vaastu, which is an ancient Hindu custom

state's secretariat complex because he believes its vaastu is bad for the state. There will be no less than 50 security personnel monitoring the camp office-cum-residence 24x7, many of them armed, including members of the Intelligence Security Wing (ISW) which take cares of VIP security. Their job is to watch over the CM's palace every

metal objects before proceeding. These measures, as it turns out, have been implemented on the recommen-

No change

FROM PAGE 16

elementary knowledge in conducting a case on behalf of the prosecution and also the method of examination-inchief of a witness. There are serious loopholes in the way the case has been conducted and he has not endeavoured to rectify those defects."

The SC said the chief prosecutor also could not avoid the responsibility in this regard.

"If he cannot supervise the cases there is no reason for him to occupy the office," the SC verdict said, adding, "The prosecution team should not gamble with the blood of martyrs." Later on February 23, during hearing

an appeal of (executed) Mir Quasem

Ali, the apex court again expressed dissatisfaction over prosecutors' and investigators' poor performance in dealing with the war crimes cases. It said a huge amount of money is

being spent on the prosecutors and investigators, but they did not handle and investigate the cases properly. Chief Justice SK Sinha told the attorney general that the judges were shocked to note that the prosecutors

appear before the media and make statements immediately after a session of the case proceedings at the tribunal.

The CJ asked the attorney general

the incompetent prosecutors and investigators.

On August 28, during hearing on Quasem Ali's review petition, the apex court further expressed dissatisfaction, as the government did not take any measures against the prosecutors, who dealt with the case against Quasem, for

One of the prosecutors examined some witnesses and another prosecutor examined some others, as if it was a mockery with the trial of the case, The CJ, who

the prosecutors for their negligence and incompetence.

has been seen, the chief justice said.

of the ICT allegedly for breaching discipline and code of conduct, and for serious professional misconduct.

Recently, another prosecutor, Abdur Rahman Hawladar, resigned citing personal reasons. Currently, the prosecution team has

degradation is lack of effective enforce-

ment of various laws relating to

human rights, preservation and pro-

tection of forest, rivers, canals, water

emphasise that problem of environ-

mental degradation can be tackled only

by concerted efforts by every person,

organisation and institution and by

ness, involve and motivate every per-

son in the country to conserve the local

flora and fauna, soil and water

resources and all other gifts of God

of the Supreme Court on environ-

ment protection, saying the SC is

playing a very proactive role against

the degradation of the environment

The CJ highlighted some directives

which are national properties."

"We have to educate, spread aware-

stringent enforcement of the laws".

He also said, "It is necessary to

reservoirs, haors etc," he said.

19 members.

S Asian judiciary

ceremony of the South Asia Judicial Conference on Environment and Climate Change jointly organised by Supreme Court of Bangladesh and Asian Development Bank (ADB) at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden

In line with the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, the world leaders have made their commitment to protect the environment and the earth from the adverse impact of climate change, he said, adding, "Time has come to materialise the decisions and turn commitments into actions."

Bangladesh has consistently endeavored to render meaningful justice to the cases involving conservation and protection of the environment by using tools of innovating and creative interpretation of constitutional provisions. "The Bangladesh judiciary is highly

sity of conservation of the environment and accordingly, playing an important and proactive role in combating activities detrimental to ecological balance and conservation of the environment." The president highlighted initiatives

addressing climate change risks, adding "Bangladesh is one of the first countries that signed and ratified the Paris Agreement and also the first country to set up Climate Change Fund of US\$ 400 million from its own resources." Chief Justice Surendra Kumar

our correspondent.

Of those seeking justice, only 10 percent get justice, said Sultana Kamal.

Also, the "16 Days of Activism

chair to "bless" it.

used in construction. He has also been in the news for trying to demolish the

minute. Those hoping to step inside, as per security norms, will not just be thoroughly frisked but will also need to surrender their phones, watches and other

dations of state intelligence officials.

why action was not being taken against

their poor performance.

led the bench of the apex court, observed. He said the court had earlier asked the government to take steps against

The law minister had told the media that the government would take necessary steps to that end, but no such move

On February 18, the law ministry suspended prosecutor Mohammad Ali

Hotel in the capital.

He said the Supreme Court of

sensitised to the importance and neces-

taken by the Bangladesh government for

Sinha, who presided over the programme, blamed the lack of effec-

Human Rights Day on December 10. Bulletproof FROM PAGE 16 bullet-proof glass (ventilators and

to make it friendly for the people. "It has been playing a very impressive role for its judicial activism either by suo motu or on the basis of PIL [public interest litigation] and progressive interpretation of some constitutional and other legal provisions." The judiciary applied internation-

ally-recognised environmental con-

cepts in various landmark judgements

regarding environment and climate change issues, he said. He said in compliance with a SC directive, the government enacted the National River Saving Commission Act, 2013 for establishing a commission for

saving the rivers which are drying up. Law Minister Anisul Huq, Deputy Minister for Environment and Forest Abdullah Al Islam Jacob and General

tive enforcement of relevant laws for environmental degradation, reports also addressed the programme yesterday. "The main cause of environmental

Counsel of ADB Christopher Stephens

The house, named Pragathi Bhavan,