



Firefighters at the site where the roof of a one-storey building under construction collapsed in Ashulia on the outskirts of capital yesterday, killing three construction workers.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

3 construction workers killed in Savar

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Rescuers from DEPZ (Dhaka Export Processing Zone) fire service station went to the construction site and searched through the debris to make sure none was trapped under rubble.

Abdul Hamid, senior station officer at the fire service station, said they winded up the rescue operation around 4:00pm.

Sheikh Md Abdullah, a director of the factory, said they were probing the

incident. Action would be taken against the contractor if any negligence in the construction work was found responsible for the accident, he added.

Workers said contractor Sirazul Islam fled the site soon after the accident. This

correspondent could not reach the contractor as his phone was switched off.

Ashulia police sent the three bodies to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsies. Top officials of Dhaka district police visited the spot.

2014 POLLS

AL, BNP to observe Jan 5 differently

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A day after the BNP announced a rally to protest against the January 5, 2014 national elections, the ruling Awami League yesterday declared that it will demonstrate on the election day to mark "the victory of democracy".

The BNP deems the election day to be "a black day when democracy was killed". It has already sought permission from the authorities for holding a rally in protest on January 7 at Suhrawardy Udyana in the capital.

The ruling party, however, has drawn a chart of programmes including demonstrations at two places in Dhaka to celebrate the third anniversary of the elections.

One rally will be held at Russel Square of Dhanmondi and the other near the party's Bangabandhu Avenue

office, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Haque Hanif told The Daily Star.

At a meeting of the ruling party and its front organisations, they decided to organise similar programmes at district- and upazila-levels as well.

"January 5 heralds the continuation of democracy in Bangladesh," Hanif said after the meeting.

Since the one-sided general elections, the opposition BNP has been observing the day every year as a black day.

On Wednesday, its Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed announced that the party would hold several programmes this time including processions, in which party members and leaders would wear black badges and carry black flags.

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China presents

FROM PAGE 20
12,000 yuan (\$1,700) for a 10-metre version.

Trump has captured the Chinese imagination, and riled its authorities, with his threats to talk turkey about massive tariffs on Chinese exports.

With his crowing tweets on Twitter,

including attacks on China's foreign and economic policy, it is no surprise that the Chinese internet wants to give the strutting American leader the bird.

Earlier in the year, Chinese state media circulated a photo of a rooster with a feathered, golden mane that recalled Trump's infamous crest.

Luck by chance

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Awami League leader Md Faruk Hossain Bhuiyan and former Chhatra League member Abu Nayeem Iqbal.

Returning Officer Rabbi Mia with the consent of the contenders arranged the lottery at his office yesterday, under section 41 (6) of district election conducting rules.

Luck favoured Faruk as he won the lottery.

After the lottery, Iqbal said, "Voters showed respect to me but luck just did not favour me. However, I will extend cooperation to the winner."

Faruk said, "I did not win the election; it was Iqbal who made me the winner. I will work in cooperation with him."

Obama hits Russia

FROM PAGE 1
material support to the GRU's operations; and two Russian individuals for using cyber-enabled means to cause misappropriation of funds and personal identifying information.

Obama also said in the statement announcing that the diplomats have been ordered to leave the country, that those individuals and their families were given 72 hours to leave the United States.

"These actions follow repeated private and public warnings that we have issued to the Russian government, and are a necessary and appropriate response to efforts to harm U.S. interests in violation of established international norms of behavior," Obama said in the statement.

President-elect Donald Trump said Wednesday that Americans should "get on with our lives" when he was asked about the expected White House announcement to place sanctions on Russia.

"I think we ought to get on with our lives," he told reporters Wednesday

night at the Mar-a-Lago in West Palm Beach, Florida. "I think that computers have complicated lives very greatly. The whole age of computer has made it where nobody knows exactly what is going on. We have speed, we have a lot of other things, but I'm not sure we have the kind, the security we need."

Trump's statement splits with Republican leaders on Capitol Hill.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, a Republican, called the sanctions "overdue," adding that it is an "appropriate way to end eight years of failed policy with Russia."

"Russia does not share America's interests," he said in a statement Thursday. "In fact, it has consistently sought to undermine them, sowing dangerous instability around the world. While today's action by the administration is overdue, it is an appropriate way to end eight years of failed policy with Russia. And it serves as a prime example of this administration's ineffective foreign policy that has left America weaker in the eyes of the world."

Religious nationalists such as Bennett who see the West Bank as part of Israel, pointing to the Jewish connection to the land from the biblical era, hold heavy sway in Netanyahu's government.

Netanyahu hit back immediately following Kerry's speech, calling it biased against Israel and more focused on settlements than Palestinian violence.

He has lashed out at US President Barack Obama and Kerry in particularly harsh language, blaming them for orchestrating last week's UN Security Council resolution demanding a halt to settlement building.

The United States abstained from the vote in a rare move, with the resolution passing 14-0.

RADICAL SHIFT
"Israelis do not need to be lectured about the importance of peace by foreign leaders," Netanyahu said on Wednesday night.

After Trump tweeted ahead of Kerry's speech "Stay strong Israel, January 20 is fast approaching!" Netanyahu responded with a tweet of his own.

"President-elect Trump, thank you for your warm friendship and your clear-cut support for Israel!" he wrote.

While Kerry's speech broke little new ground, it included unusually stern criticism of Israel from an American leader.

"The Israeli prime minister publicly supports a two-state solution, but his current coalition is the most right-wing in Israeli history, with an agenda driven by the most extreme elements," he said.

He added later that "the settler agenda is defining the future in Israel. And their stated purpose is clear: They believe in one state: greater Israel."

Today is the sixth death anniversary of Dr. Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury. Professor Chowdhury was a prominent educationist who was the first Vice Chancellor of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

Syria ceasefire agreed

FROM PAGE 20

"Several hours ago, the event occurred that we have not only been waiting for but been working so much to hasten," Putin said in a meeting with his defence and foreign ministers.

After the Kremlin announcement, Syria's army said it would halt all military operations from midnight, and the opposition National Coalition also said it backed the truce.

Putin also said he would reduce Moscow's military contingent in Syria, which has been flying a bombing campaign in support of President Bashar al-Assad since last year.

The Kremlin strongman, however, said that Russia would continue to fight "terrorism" in the war-torn country and maintain its support for the government in Damascus.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said that the seven opposition groups, including the powerful Ahrar al-Sham, that have signed up to the agreements after months of talks comprise some 62,000 fighters and control a large portion of territory in central and northern Syria.

He warned that any groups that did not abide by the ceasefire would be considered "terrorists" alongside the Islamic State group and the former al-Qaeda affiliate previously known as Al-Nusra Front, now rebranded the Fatah al-Sham Front.

Putin's announcement of the deal came hours after Turkey's foreign minister said the potential truce could start by New Year.

The nationwide ceasefire follows the deal brokered by Turkey and Russia for Aleppo which allowed the evacuation of tens of thousands of civilians.

ASTANA TALKS
Moscow and Ankara are now pushing for peace talks between Damascus and the rebels to start soon in the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana.

"Now we need to do everything for these agreements to come into force, for

them to work, so that the negotiating teams that have been or are being formed promptly and as soon as possible arrive in Astana," Putin said.

Russia and Turkey have both said that the peace talks they will supervise are meant to supplement UN-backed peace efforts, rather than replace them entirely.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia, Turkey and Iran were currently organising for the talks to begin in Astana and pressing for other key international players to get involved.

Lavrov said Moscow would invite Egypt before trying to attract other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq and Jordan.

In a clear snub to US President Barack Obama, Russia's top diplomat said Moscow would look to get the team of President-elect Donald Trump in the mix when he takes power next month.

FIGHTING CONTINUES

As its cooperation tightened with Moscow, Turkey stood conspicuously quiet as the regime, supported by Russia, took control last week of Aleppo, handing the rebels their biggest defeat in the civil war so far.

The victory was also a boost for Putin, who sent forces to Syria last year to bolster Assad in an unprecedented intervention.

Syria's conflict began with a 2011 uprising against Assad but quickly morphed into a complicated civil war that has now killed more than 310,000 people and forced millions more from their homes.

The conflict continued to rage as civilians were killed in regime strikes yesterday, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told AFP in Beirut.

The observatory said at least 15 civilians, including six children, were killed yesterday in air strikes and artillery fire on rebel-held territory near Syria's capital Damascus.

PRIMARY RESULTS COMPARISON

Boards	Pass Rate 2016	Pass Rate 2015	GPA-5 2016	GPA-5 2015
Dhaka	91.36	90.39	86,350	64,010
Rajshahi	97.68	97.47	40,471	35,083
Comilla	89.68	92.51	19,186	20,747
Jessore	95.35	95.44	22,003	17,831
Chittagong	90.75	85.48	14,135	12,268
Barisal	97.38	97.26	15,570	13,464
Sylhet	93.37	93.59	10,255	4,956
Dinajpur	92.99	91.52	27,089	19,143
Total	92.89	92.31	2,35,059	1,87,502

Pass rate rises

FROM PAGE 1
madrasa students -- 1,30,873 boys and 1,26,627 girls -- sat for the Ebtedai exams this year. Of them, 2,46,818 passed. The pass rates of girls and boys are 96.08 and 95.63 percent respectively.

Among the seven divisions, Rajshahi was at the top position with 98.03 percent pass rate while Sylhet stood in the bottom with 92.04 percent success rate.

Like in previous year, the highest number of examinees, 97.68 percent, passed from Rajshahi board. Chittagong board is at the bottom among the eight boards with 90.75 percent pass rate.

Officials and teachers attributed the success to students' better performance in English and maths.

"Usually it's English or maths that makes the difference in the results. Students have done well in these subjects," said an official of Dhaka board.

Free and on-time textbook distribution, video lectures of best teachers at schools, and use of technology in imparting lessons made it possible, he said.

"Our standards of education have improved, but we still could not achieve the world standards," Nahid said.

Total 3,203 institutions achieved cent percent pass rate. The number of such institution was 8,761 last year.

No students from 20 institutions could pass the exams.

Israel's right wing bins

FROM PAGE 20
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In Loving Memory of our Bapu Dr. Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury (1941-2010)

This poem "Always by my side" has been written by his youngest daughter.

Always by my side
Kishwar M Chowdhury

When you were here I never asked for answers I needed to know.
"It can wait", I'd tell myself, "I'll ask him as I grow".

But the truth is that, you yourself thought you'd always be around. I've searched for you amidst the clouds through the windows of a plane. My first time diving in the deep blue sea, I even searched there in vain.

"The body's gone", I told myself, but he must exist in another form. Haven't found you yet, but I can't let go or admit that I'm wrong.