



PHOTO: BSS

Chinese President Xi Jinping taking the guard of honour on the red carpet alongside Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid upon his arrival at Dhaka airport on October 14, 2016.



The evicted Santals: Does anyone care?

PHOTO: STAR

Stories that drove the news

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would be "conditional". After the election results were published, protests broke out in major cities all over the US. Mr. Trump is expected to take office as the 45th President of the United States on January 20, 2017. His country remains deeply divided.

XI'S VISIT

In October, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Bangladesh on a historic two-day visit, the first by a Chinese president in three decades—and one that is expected to usher in a new era of Bangladesh-China relations. Bangladesh received Xi with an exceptionally warm welcome. During Xi's stay Bangladesh and China signed 27 deals and memorandum of understanding (MoUs), totalling \$13.6 billion. They span financing infrastructure, energy, information and communication projects, and the two countries have agreed on enhancing counterterrorism partnership as well. China is Bangladesh's largest trading partner, so the country is eager to increase trade even further. During the two presidents' meeting in Dhaka, Abdul Hamid, the president of Bangladesh sought a tariff-free access for all Bangladeshi products to the Chinese market. Xi has assured to look into this issue, but an immediate outcome is unlikely. Bangladesh needs Chinese capital and know-how to develop the country's

infrastructure, a must for Bangladesh to attract more foreign direct investments and businesses. China sees Bangladesh as an important player in implementing its One Belt, One Road Initiative as well as Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor. Xi's trip is a strategic move to ensure Dhaka does not slip away, given that Bangladesh's close ally, India has already expressed her reservation for the China-led grand project.

MAYHEM IN NASIRNAGAR

On October 30, hundreds of religious zealots launched a synchronised attack on six Hindu villages in Brahmanbaria's Nasirnagar upazila and vandalised 100 houses and 17 temples. They also looted whatever valuables they could find. Before the attack, they spread communal hatred for two days using a Facebook post on the wall of a Hindu fisherman. To instigate and mobilise people, the post was shared among the locals via phone and hard copies. Unidentified criminals set fire to at least six more houses of Hindus at different villages in Nasirnagar upazila on November 5 and torched another Hindu house at Changapur village in the same upazila on November 13. Three government investigations could not find out the motive behind the attack on the Hindus in Nasirnagar and its masterminds. But interestingly, locals seem to know it all. According to a report published in this

newspaper, the attacks were instigated for political gains and the issue of religious sentiment was only secondary. Locals reportedly said that the plan for the October 30 mayhem stemmed from bitter rivalry between two Awami League stalwarts in Brahmanbaria politics.

ATTACK ON SANTALS

In November, a clash between Santals and workers of Rangpur Sugar Mills in Shahebganj broke out which resulted in the death of a Santal. Following the incident 20 houses of the Santals were looted and vandalised by local people. During the Pakistan period the government acquired the land from the Santals for a sugar cane farm. It was agreed that the land would be returned to the original owners if it were used for farming any other crops. However, the agreement was violated and the mill authority leased out the land for farming other crops. According to local upazila land office, only 92-97 acres of 1842.3 acres of the land were being used for farming sugarcane in the 2014-15 fiscal year. The local Santals had complained about this infringement of the contract but no action was taken. The recent clash erupted when the Santals resisted illegal harvesting by mill workers.

BAJRANGI BHAIIJAN

Much like the magnanimous protagonist

played by Salman Khan in Bollywood blockbuster *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* who took a mute six-year-old Pakistani girl back to her homeland to reunite with her family, a middle-aged Bangladeshi man from Barguna named Jamal Ibne Musa sacrificed almost everything he had to reunite an Indian boy, allegedly trafficked, with his family. In December 2015, Musa ran into Sonu on the Barguna court premises. He then took the boy under his custody and brought him to Dhaka, and spoke with police officials and rights activists about sending the boy back home. On their advice, he took the boy to Barguna. There, with the help of the wife of a local lawmaker, he produced Sonu before a court on December 22. But ironically, as he entered the court premises police detained him for "abducting the boy". He was, however, released upon intervention by the court police who were aware of the matter. Later that day, the court sent the boy to Jessore Kishore Unnayan Kendra. Meanwhile, family members filed four cases against Musa and 13 members of his family on charges of abducting Sonu which landed him in jail and caused him to lose his job. On May 14, Musa went to India to trace Sonu's family. The mission was extremely difficult as Sonu had only given him a vague address. Musa somehow managed to track his family in Seema Puri of Delhi. The rest is history. On June 30, Sonu was reunited with his parents followed by a long legal and diplomatic fiasco.



Sonu, an Indian boy, and Bangladeshi man Jamal Ibne Musa, right. Sonu was able to reunite with his parents in New Delhi by Musa who also rescued the boy from "abductors" in Barguna.

PHOTO: STAR



People rush inside a bank to exchange their old high denomination banknotes in Allahabad, India.

PHOTO: REUTE