



The doctored photo released by the Press Information Department (PID) on Tuesday has two mirrored banners, marked 1 and 2. Also, images of several people in the crowd were copied, flipped, 3, and pasted on the photo.



PID's puzzling photograph

The Awami League's rally at the Suhrawardy Udyan on Tuesday was attended by several lakh people. Like some other newspapers, we published a photo of the rally, supplied digitally by the government's Press Information Department (It is to be noted that The Daily Star correspondents and photographers are not allowed to cover any events of the prime minister or the Awami League). Unfortunately, the picture turned out to be photoshopped. As the rally was mammoth, we did not doubt the authenticity of the photograph. We came to realise it only afterwards. Now this all begs the question: Why was it necessary at all for the PID to photoshop the image and supply it to different media outlets?

North Korean ICBM may not be shot down: US

REUTERS, Washington
The US military might monitor a North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile test and gather intelligence rather than destroy it, as long as the launch did not pose a threat, Defense Secretary Ash Carter said on Tuesday. North Korea declared on Sunday it could test-launch an ICBM at any time from any location set by leader Kim Jong Un, saying a hostile US policy was to blame for its arms development. "If the missile is threatening, it will be intercepted. If it's not threatening, we won't necessarily do so," Carter said in his final news briefing before President Barack Obama's administration leaves office on Jan. 20. "Because it may be more to our advantage to, first of all, save our interceptor inventory, and, second, to gather intelligence from the flight, rather than do that (intercept the ICBM) when it's not threatening."

Scientists

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than a human hair and stronger even than Kevlar, a synthetic fibre used in making bullet-proof vests. Scientists have long strived to copy the unique properties of the threads - essentially long chains of linked protein molecules. When spinning, the spider secretes a protein solution through a narrow duct, along which the acidity changes and pressure increases, causing the molecules to link up and form chains. But spiders are notoriously difficult to farm -- producing small quantities of silk, and with a propensity for eating each other. Now a team from Sweden said they have managed to copy the spider's feat using proteins in E coli bacteria and a "spinning apparatus" which mimics the pH changes that spiders use to make silk. "This allowed us for the first time to spin artificial spider silk without using harsh chemicals," study co-author Jan Johansson of the Swedish University of Agriculture Sciences in Uppsala told AFP on Monday. "The high amounts of proteins produced in bacteria allow us to spin a kilometre of the biomimetic fibres from just one litre of E coli culture." The threads are bio-compatible and may prove useful in regenerative medicine, the team said.

Dhaka to engage

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the import of jute goods from Bangladesh. "Tk 100 crore jute goods, meant for immediate exports to India, have been placed on hold in the ports and warehouses following last week's imposition of anti-dumping duty," Rashedul Karim Munna, convener of Bangladesh Jute Diversified Products Manufacturers and Exporters Association, told The Daily Star yesterday. Najmul Huq, managing director of one of the country's oldest jute mill -- Janata Jute Mills Ltd, feared that many small jute units, which cater to yarn and sacks industries in the Indian market, are badly affected. He said export worth around \$150 million is at stake now and the government should have engaged beforehand as talks of imposition of anti-dumping duty was looming in India for quite some time. Barik Khan, secretary of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA), said "as the ministers [Jute Minister Md Emaj Uddin Pramanique and state minister Mirza Azam] today [yesterday] assured us that the prime minister would take up the jute issue with India during her upcoming visit, we sought an urgent solution of the problem." There were also proposals to impose anti-dumping duty on cheaper Indian clothes being imported in Bangladesh, said Khan. "As our exporters' goods got stranded at land ports, the Indian importers are now proposing to bear the anti-dumping duty sharing 50:50. But many of the jute goods' exporters would not be able to make any profit out of these exports from such deals," said Shahidul Karim, secretary general of Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association (BJSJA).

Based on complaints from Indian stakeholders, the Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD), India had initiated a probe into imports of the products in 2015. After its probing, the DGAD drew a conclusion that there is "dumping of goods" and the imports were "undercutting and suppressing the prices of the domestic industry". The import restrictive levy, imposed for five years, would cover imports of jute yarn/twine, hessian fabric and jute sacks in "all forms and specifications". Nepalese daily The Katmandu Post quoted the Himalayan country's Jute Industry Association President Raj Kumar Golchha as saying, "India's move has put the already struggling Nepali jute industry on the verge of collapse". Nepalese jute producers import 70 percent of raw materials from India and export finished products to its southern neighbour. Nearly 95 percent of Nepalese jute produces are exported to India. In response to the adverse impact that Bangladesh's jute industry would face due to the anti-dumping duty, State Minister for Textiles and Jute Mirza Azam said on Tuesday that prime minister's upcoming India visit would help reversing the Indian duty decision. Besides, he indicated that the government would explore new markets beyond India for Bangladesh's jute products. Convener of Bangladesh Jute Diversified Products Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Rashedul Karim Munna, told The Daily Star yesterday that the government is also contemplating including at least 11 more items under mandatory jute packaging in addition to six essential products -- paddy, rice, wheat, maize,

fertiliser and sugar -- so that more gunnysacks are locally used. Rashedul Karim Munna, also managing director of Creation Private Limited that produces products using jute fibre, told The Daily Star that currently Bangladesh is exporting over 1.5 million tonnes of yarn to India and 40,000 tonnes of hessian fabric, twine and jute sacks and bags. Following the imposition of anti-dumping duty, the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries (DCCI) said Indian market accounts for 20 percent of Bangladesh's jute goods exports, which is equivalent to only 8 percent of entire Indian local market share and "this insignificant percentage can't in anyway dump their local jute market." DCCI argued that there is no clear finding of detriment to Indian finished jute product industry caused by price and volume of jute products exported from Bangladesh. DCCI urged the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Finance, Tariff Commission and other agencies concerned of Bangladesh to immediately take up the issue to reverse the decision of anti dumping duty imposition. Industry sources said, lodging complaints with the WTO remains an option for Bangladesh, only if "diplomatic and political" moves do not yield results. They recalled that when the Indian government imposed anti-dumping duty on lead acid batteries from all Bangladeshi exporters on January 2, 2002, Bangladesh government's petition to the WTO prompted New Delhi to consider withdrawing the duty. Bangladesh government placed the case before the WTO and a consultation was held on February 26-27, 2004 and after certain procedures the Indian authorities lifted the duty eventually in early 2005.

'Yes we did'

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Obama painted the task ahead as a generational challenge. "A faith in reason and enterprise and the primacy of right over might," he said, had allowed the United States to "resist the lure of fascism and tyranny during the Great Depression, and build a post-World War II order with other democracies." "That order is now being challenged," said Obama in comments that resonate as Americans ponder whether Russia helped to put Trump in the White House. "First by violent fanatics who claim to speak for Islam; more recently by autocrats in foreign capitals who see free markets, open democracies, and civil society itself as a threat to their power." "The peril each poses to our democracy is more far-reaching than a car bomb or a missile." Obama's last trip on Air Force One was a pilgrimage to Chicago, where he addressed a sell-out crowd of some 18,000 not far from where he delivered his victory speech eight years ago. Diehard fans -- many African Americans -- braved Chicago's frigid winter to collect free tickets, which were selling for upwards of \$1,000 a piece on Craigslist. They were joined by First Lady Michelle Obama, Vice President Joe

Biden and his wife Jill -- who the president described as "family" in an emotional finale to his speech. Wiping a tear from his eye, Obama paid a poignant tribute to his own family, his daughter Malia who was present and Sasha who stayed in Washington because of an exam, and the first lady who he addressed as his best friend. "You took on a role you didn't ask for and made it your own with grace and grit and style and good humor," he said. "A new generation sets its sights higher because it has you as a role model. You've made me proud. You've made the country proud." Obama also acknowledged that his historic presidency was not a panacea for the country's racist past. "After my election, there was talk of a post-racial America," he said. "Such a vision, however well-intended, was never realistic. Race remains a potent and often divisive force in our society." With an approval rating hovering around 55 percent, according to a Quinnipiac University poll, Obama still carries considerable political weight. Some 51 percent of Americans polled believe that Trump is doing a bad job as president-elect. Trump's unorthodox politics have thrown the 55-year-old Obama's

transition and post-presidency plans into flux. Having vowed a smooth handover of power, Obama has found himself being increasingly critical of Trump as he prepares to leave office on January 20. After that there will still be a holiday and an autobiography, but Obama could find himself dragged back into the political fray if Trump were to enact a Muslim registry or deport adults brought to the United States years ago by their parents. Having vowed to take a backseat in politics, Obama's second act could yet be as politically engaged as Jimmy Carter -- whose post-presidency remade his image as an elder statesman. Many Obama aides who had planned exotic holidays or coffee-replenishing forays into the private sector are also reassessing their future and mulling a return to the political trenches. Obama's foundation is already gearing up for a quasi-political role - funnelling idealistic youngsters into public life. Many aides were in the crowd, having flown into Chicago for celebratory parties. Supporters who had earlier shouted "Four more years! Four more years!" -- lingered in the hall until long after Obama had left.

Five UAE officials

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among the 12 people killed. Raziq blamed Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Taliban-allied Haqqani network for the attack, adding they had long been plotting to eliminate Kandahar's leadership. **TEARFUL FUNERALS** "The terrorist attack happened at a time when the ambassador and a number of UAE diplomats in Afghanistan were on a trip to Kandahar to lay the foundation stone of an orphanage," the Afghan foreign ministry said. UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan ordered three days of mourning "in honour of the martyrs who gave their lives in defence of humanitarian causes". President Ashraf Ghani condemned the bombing and ordered an investigation led by Afghanistan's National Security Council chief Hanif Atmar. The Taliban denied responsibility for the Kandahar attack, but said they were behind the Kabul blasts. In the first explosion, a suicide bomber blew himself up next to a mini-bus transporting government employees. As rescuers reached the scene, a car bomb went off. Among the 38 dead were five policemen who were killed in the second explosion when they rushed to help the victims of the first blast. Afghanistan's health ministry warned that the toll was expected to rise as many of the wounded were battling for their lives in hospital. Relatives of the victims held tearful

funerals in Kabul amid seething anger over rising insecurity. "It is a pity that our youth die in vain every day," said Feraidoon, the relative of a young victim who got married three months ago. "We spend a lifetime to raise our children and terrorists take them away in an instant." **BARBARIC ATTACK** Condemning the Kabul bombings as a "barbaric attack", Ghani lashed out at the Taliban for killing civilians. "Such unprincipled, unlawful and deplorable attacks cause immense human suffering and make the peace that Afghans need and deserve even more difficult to achieve," the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said in a statement. Tuesday's carnage came just ten days before Donald Trump is sworn in as US president. The situation in Afghanistan will be an urgent matter for the new leader, even though America's longest war got scarcely a passing mention in the bitterly contested presidential election. Trump has given few details on his expected foreign policy, with even fewer specifics on how he will tackle the war in Afghanistan. Repeated bids to launch peace negotiations with the Taliban have failed and a fierce new fighting season is expected to kick off in the spring. Afghanistan last week welcomed the Pentagon's decision to deploy some 300 US Marines to Helmand, where American forces engaged in heated combat until they pulled out in 2014.

Polls-time

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control over the Election Commission." The nonpartisan caretaker government system, which had been introduced to the constitution in 1996, provided for an interim administration with limited power to oversee national elections. It could carry out some routine jobs but was constitutionally barred from making any policy decisions. Its main function was to provide the EC with all assistance to hold free and fair polls. But the system was scrapped in 2011, sparking a political turmoil. Presently, the constitution allows the party in power to remain in office during the elections and to exercise full authority. In line with the constitutional amendment, the AL was in power during the January 2014 election, which the BNP-led alliance vehemently opposed, tried to resist and eventually boycotted. The BNP and its allies still seem unwilling to run in any election under a Hasina-led administration and want some sort of a nonpolitical government. The AL insists the system will not return. The AL's proposals for empowering the EC and capping the overwhelming power of a political government come against such a backdrop. And like the BNP and other political parties that held talks with the president over the last three weeks, the AL stayed focused on the formation of the new EC. In the absence of a nonpartisan caretaker government, the role of the EC is crucial for holding free and fair elections, analysts say. At the talks, Hasina said that if possible, a suitable law or an ordinance could be promulgated now for appointing the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners. "If this cannot be done right away due to time constraints, steps need to be taken to make a law for the formation of future election commissions," President's Press Secretary Joyal Abedin quoted Hasina as saying. The PM also said the president would appoint the CEC and other ECs in line with the process he thought fit, Joyal told reporters after the talks. Hasina also said her party had full confidence and trust in the wisdom of the president and that the AL would extend its full support to any right steps the president would take to constitute the EC, according to a Bangladesh press release. The AL does not want any controversies over future commissions, she said, adding that whichever party voted to power by the people will run the country, she said. The ruling party also proposed introducing e-voting in the next general elections due in 2019.

- 11 THINGS AL CONSIDERS KEY TO FREE AND FAIR POLLS**
- An independent and effective Election Commission
 - Responsibilities of respective ministries/agencies under the executive branch during the election period
 - Responsible and impartial behaviour of the election commission secretariat and its field level officials/employees
 - A flawless voter list with photographs and overall security at the election centres on the voting day
 - Appointing only the republic's responsible officials and employees to the posts of polling officials from the presiding officials instead of officers and employees from non-government organisations
 - Impartial and responsible behaviour of the members meant for maintaining law and order
 - Dispassionate activities by everyone from local/foreign observers to the media and civil society members
 - Stopping use of muscle power and money in polls and ensuring that all voters, including the minorities, can cast their votes freely
 - Ensuring overall security of the people, including voters, before, after and on the day of the voting
 - Keeping all the essential organisations needed for holding the elections, including the administration and the law enforcement agencies, under the supervision of the Election Commission
 - Limiting the election-time government's jurisdiction to the essential routine work only

'Robber' killed

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then retaliated, triggering the "gun-fight", the Rab official said. After the gun battle, the Rab members found Anar injured. But others managed to flee the scene, said Sarwar, adding that Anar was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead. Rab also claimed to have recovered three pistols and 14 bullets from the spot. Anar stood accused in seven cases, including four for murder, with Savar Police Station, police said. Minu Begum, wife of late Liakot, alleged that Rab members had picked up their son Tutul Hossain, 29, during the drive. However, Sarwar denied the allegation, saying that Rab did not pick up anyone from the spot. He said Tutul is a member of "Gangchil Bahini", and Rab did not know the whereabouts of Tutul.

For his part, the president said the role of the EC was very important and hoped that it would be possible to form a strong EC with cooperation from all political parties. The president's move to hold talks with political parties came after BNP chief Khaleda Zia's proposal for constituting the new EC through consensus among political parties. The talks opened on December 18 and so far the president held discussions with 23 political parties. The president may form a search committee to constitute the new EC as has been done by his predecessor late Zillur Rahman in 2012. About the AL's proposals, Shahdeen Malik said the role of the administration, law enforcers and other stakeholders during the election should be clarified and their job specified. Sakhawat said the rules of business of the polls-time government must be clearly outlined. Also, the EC can play a supervisory role and keep an eye on government activities.