



Visiting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, middle, at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Those shortlisted

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president recently.
According to a gazette issued on this January 25, the panel would recommend two names each for the posts of the EC chief and four election commissioners. The committee would present its recommendations to the president in 10 working days. It will pick 10 names from the shortlist and submit those to the president, who, on the prime minister's advice, would appoint the chief election commissioner (CEC) and four other commissioners this month.

Additional Secretary Wadud said the search panel was scrutinising the names on the shortlist. It would pick the best people for the job.

"The names will be reviewed again and the list will become shorter. Efforts were on to recommend the finest people, considering constitutional provisions, suggestions from the civil society members and other criteria," he told reporters after the fifth panel meeting at the Supreme Court Judge's Lounge yesterday.

Wadud said the committee hopes to submit its recommendation to the president by February 8.

He said yesterday's meeting reviewed the recommendations given by the civil society members.

"The summary of the opinions of the civil society members would be sent to the president. It might also be uploaded in the internet," he added.

Recently, the search committee has held meetings with 16 civil society members to get their views on the formation of the next EC.

Asked, he said no new names were included in the shortlist.

On January 25, President Abdul Hamid formed the six-member search panel, headed by Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, after holding a series of talks on the EC formation with 31 political parties registered with the EC.

The other members of the panel are Justice Obaidul Hassan, an HC judge, Muhammed Sadique, chairman of Bangladesh Public Service Commission Masud Ahmed, comptroller and auditor general of Bangladesh, Prof Syed Manzoarul Islam, trustee board member of Transparency International Bangladesh, and Shireen Akhter, province chancellor of Chittagong University.

The tenure of the incumbent EC expires this month.

Baby crocs

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"An organised syndicate might have been involved in the crime."

Zakir Hossain, a temporary employee of the wildlife sanctuary, has been sacked and a forest department worker, Mahub Hossain suspended in connection with the incident, said Divisional Forest Officer Md Saidul Islam.

Informed of the missing crocodiles, Saidul visited the centre and formed a three-member committee with Mehedizzaman as the head to look into the matter. The committee was asked to submit a report by Sunday.

On submission of the probe report, legal action will be taken against those responsible, and that would include filing of a departmental case, Saidul said.

The wildlife breeding centre was established in 2002 at a cost of about Tk 32 lakh at Karamjol in Chandpai ranges for breeding and preserving salt-water crocodiles.

WALKING OVER 'HUMAN BRIDGE' Donor of school land does the same thing

Haimchar upazila chairman sued

STAR REPORT

Yet another photo surfaced in the social media where a donor of a school land in Jamalpur is seen doing the same thing for what an upazila parishad chairman in Chandpur was sued yesterday.

Balancing his way with the help of others, the land donor, Dildar Hossain Prince, is seen walking over the shoulders of students of Mahmudpur Bohumukhi High School in Melandaha upazila on January 29.

In another incident, a case has been filed against Nur Hossain Patwary, chairman of Haimchar upazila in Chandpur, in connection with walking over a "human bridge" formed by students of Nilkomal Osmania High School during the annual sports event on January 30.

Abdul Kadir Gazi, a student's guardian, lodged the case against five people, including Nur, also general secretary of Haimchar upazila unit Awami League, under the children act. The other accused are president and two members of the school managing committee and headmaster of the institution.

A one-member probe body, formed by the Local Government Division, visited the school yesterday and talked to some teachers, students and guardians present there. Syeda Sarwar Jahan, an additional divisional commissioner of Chittagong, who is probing

the incident, also took written statements from them.

She told journalists that the investigation would start around 10:00am today at Chandpur Circuit House.

A broom procession was brought out in Haimchar yesterday, protesting Nur's walking over the "human bridge". At one stage, supporters of Nur created obstacles to the procession. A tension was prevailing between two groups of AL.

Meanwhile, in a Facebook post yesterday, Nur apologised for the incident.

Like Nur's photo, the image of Dildar went viral in the social media on Wednesday night, triggering outrage and condemnation.

Holding a long bamboo in their left hands, students of class-IX and class-X formed the "human bridge" over which Dildar walked through at a school function organised to bid farewell to this year's SSC examinees.

The headmaster, Mohammad Asaluzzaman, said scout members of his school showed their athletic skills that day, but he did not notice that Dildar had walked over the students' institution.

Dildar could not be reached for his comment as his phone was switched off.

Shahabuddin Khan, deputy commissioner of Jamalpur, said they would take action after investigating the incident.

Trump hangs up

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"As far as the call is concerned I'm very disappointed that there has been a leak of purported details of the call in Washington," he told Sydney radio station 2GB.

"But I want to make one observation about it -- the report that the president hung up is not correct. The call ended courteously."

He added that Canberra had "very, very strong standards in the way we deal with other leaders and we are not about to reveal details of conversations other than in a manner that is agreed".

The Post's account is markedly different from the official read-out of the call provided by both governments, reports AFP.

Turnbull said Monday that Trump had agreed to honor the deal struck with then president Barack Obama to resettle an unspecified number of the 1,600 people Australia holds in offshore processing centers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea.

There were fears the new US president would rescind it after he signed an executive order last week to suspend the arrival of refugees to the US for at least 120 days, and bar entry for three months to people from seven Muslim-majority countries.

After the Post story broke late Wednesday, Trump weighed in on Twitter and threw the agreement into doubt.

"Do you believe it? The Obama Administration agreed to take thousands of illegal immigrants from Australia. Why? I will study this dumb deal!" he wrote.

After seeing the tweet, Turnbull insisted Trump had already agreed it would go ahead.

"The commitment made by the president in that call was made and we announced that and it was confirmed by his spokesman a day or so later," he said.

SENDING TROOPS TO MEXICO

Reports of the Turnbull-Trump conversation came as the US and Mexican governments were denying claims that the former reality TV star had threatened to send troops into Mexico to deal with drug cartels.

Mexican journalist Dolia Estevez, citing "confidential" US and Mexican sources, said Trump made the threat during an hour-long phone call with President Enrique Pena Nieto last Friday.

Trump reportedly threatened to send US troops south of the border if his Mexican counterpart fails to stop "bad hombres" in the country.

"You have a bunch of bad hombres down there. You aren't doing enough to stop them," Trump allegedly told Pena Nieto. "I think your military is scared. Our military isn't, so I just might send them down to take care of it."

However, since details of the phone call surfaced, both the White House and Mexico have denied that the threat was made, reports The Independent.

"The negative statements you refer to did not occur during said telephone call," the Mexican Foreign Relations Department told the press agency. "On the contrary, the tone was constructive."

Relations have plunged into the biggest diplomatic crisis between the two neighbors in decades.

Trump angered Mexicans last week by ordering the construction of a massive border wall and vowing to make their country pay for the wall.

Pena Nieto has pledged that his government will never pay for the barrier and canceled a meeting with Trump scheduled for this week in Washington.

In addition to the row over the wall, Trump wants to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico. Mexican officials expect talks to begin in May.

Khaleda

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The BNP chief appeared before the makeshift court at Bakshibazar in the capital around 11:25am yesterday.

Later, her lawyer Abdur Rezak Khan appealed to the court to dispose of the petition that had sought further investigation into the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

But the court turned down the plea and started reading out the charges brought against her by 32 prosecution witnesses. Following the order, Khaleda's lawyers submitted no-confidence petition and sought adjournment of the hearing.

The judge also asked Khaleda whether she was innocent.

In reply, she expressed no-confidence in the judge, saying that she would place her self-defence statements in the next scheduled date.

On July 3, 2008, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case with Ramna Police Station against Khaleda, her son Tarique Rahman and four others on charges of misappropriating over Tk 2.10 crore that was received as grants for orphans via a foreign bank.

Of the accused, Khaleda, former BNP lawmaker Salimul Haq Kamal and businessman Sharfuddin Ahmed are on bail while the others, including Tarique, are absconding.

Festivity on book

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new book "Duer Hote Dure." INT'L LITERARY CONFERENCE
On the second day of the four-day conference, writers from home and abroad shared their thoughts and recited poetry.

Literature creates a bridge among peoples all over the world, they told the event, at Abdul Karim Sahityabisharad Auditorium of Bangla Academy.

Russian litterateur Victor Alexandrovich Pogade discussed various Bengali writings translated in Russian and English in Moscow. Later, he presented three translations of Bangla writings -- "The Light of the Reborn Hope", "Tales & Legends of Bangladesh" and "Perpetual Diary" to Bangla Academy.

Chinese researcher and translator Prof Dong You Chen sang the national anthem of Bangladesh both in Bangla and Chinese with almost original composition.

Chen, the man who devoted his life in translating and researching Rabindranath Tagore, said, "Sometimes, important aspects of a poem are lost in translation. So, if you translate a poem, you must have to be a poet."

Manfred Chobot of Austria, Jona Burghardt from Argentina, Tobias Burghardt from Germany, Luz Maria Lopez and Maria De Los Angeles Camacho Rivas from Puerto Rico also participated in the session.

In the afternoon, Bangla Academy honoured six eminent personalities of the country for their outstanding contribution in literature and intellectual arena.

National Professor Mustafa Nurul Islam, language veteran Ahmad Rafiq, Prof Burhanuddin Khan Jahangir, Professor Emeritus Rafiqul Islam, Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury and Prof Emeritus Anisuzzaman were honoured with "International Literature Conference Writer's Honour 2017."

Bangla Academy Director General Shamsuzzaman Khan presented flowers, crests, and celebratory scarves to the recipients. Prof Anisuzzaman could not attend due to his illness.

2 officials

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With the help of railway officials, the two representing Power China Ltd then dropped tender documents at the project director's room on the fifth floor.

Around 12:30pm, railway officials opened "the tender box". And Power China Ltd, which the two Chinese officials were representing, won the bid by quoting the lowest price.

Later, the two came out of the building and sought security from the on-duty policemen, who escorted them to Matsya Bhaban intersection, said a police official who was present at the main entrance to the rail ministry.

Railway officials suspect that the two Chinese men were held at gunpoint in a bid to bar them from dropping tender documents.

Talking to The Daily Star, Railway Minister Majibul Haque said he was unaware of the incident. "I will enquire about it and a probe will be carried out."

The lowest bidder would get the contract in line with the rules, and no one would be allowed to interfere, he added.

Details of the two Chinese nationals couldn't be known immediately.

The incident took place despite the fact that a police team led by an assistant sub-inspector of Babupura Police Camp was deployed on the building premises since morning to ward off any untoward incident centring the tender submission.

Sujon Kumar Roy, sub-inspector of Shahbagh Police Station, told this correspondent that a team from the station had also been patrolling the area since morning.

Maruf Hossain Sorder, deputy commissioner of Ramna Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said

additional policemen went to the spot on information that there were troubles at Rail Bhaban.

An investigation would be carried out into the incident, and action would be taken accordingly, he told The Daily Star.

The deadline for collecting tender documents was February 1 and that for submission of those was 12:00noon yesterday. The railway invited tender for construction of a dual-gauge line parallel to the existing metre gauge line from Dhaka to Narayanganj.

A total of five local and Chinese companies took part in the bidding. They are Toma Construction and Company Ltd, CRFG-Infratech JV Max Infrastructure Ltd, Mir Akter Ranken JV and Power China Ltd.

Power China Ltd, which won the bid, quoted Tk 255.12 crore. Its closet bidder, Toma Construction and Company Ltd, quoted Tk 290.03 crore. Mir Akter-Ranken Joint Venture offered Tk 314.75 crore, Max Infrastructure Ltd Tk 318.81 crore and Chinese CRFG-Infratech Joint Venture Tk 357.44 crore.

Wife TV clip

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April behind far-right leader Marine Le Pen and 39-year-old centrist Emmanuel Macron, who is rising fast in the polls.

Facing a judicial investigation over his wife's supposed role, 62-year-old Fillon has flatly denied the accusations and insists the previously low-profile Penelope worked for him.

Two of the couple's children were also employed as his parliamentary assistant at one point, earning an additional 84,000 euros before tax.

Ragib, son get 14-yr

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Kotwali Police Station.

One case was filed on September 25, 2005, for fabricating legal documents. It was lodged after recommendations from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Land.

Another case was filed on November 2, 2005, for grabbing the endowed property of the tea estate. The case is now under trial with the same court.

Ragib's son Hye filed a writ petition with the High Court in 2009, seeking stay on both the cases.

However, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on January 19 last year ordered the lower court to resume both the cases after investigation and to hand the endowed property over to its rightful caretaker.

After getting the SC order, the chief metropolitan magistrate ordered the police to reinvestigate the cases.

On July 10 last year, the Police Bureau of Investigation submitted a charge sheet against Ragib, his son Hye, daughter Rozina Kadir, son-in-law Abdul Kadir, relative Dewan Mostak Majid and caretaker Pankaj Kumar Gupta.

The court on August 10 last year issued arrest warrant against them. Ragib and his son fled to India hours after the arrest warrant was issued.

Ragib was arrested on November 24 last year in Karimganj district of Assam in India and the Indian police handed him over to Bangladesh police the same day. His son was arrested by Zakiganj immigration police on November 12 while trying to enter Bangladesh.

After recording the testimony of 11 witnesses in the case, the court gave the verdict yesterday.

Another case was under trial with the court and it was recording testimony of the witnesses, said APP Mahfuzur Rahman.

Tarapur Tea Estate is an endowment property from 1915. In 1990, Ragib started grabbing the land of the estate after forcing its legal Shebayet (caretaker) Pankaj Kumar Gupta to leave the country, Pankaj had alleged earlier.

After grabbing 422.96 acres of the estate, Ragib built a medical college hospital and also sold 337 plots and established some other structures on the land.

Dating app

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species they are shown on a touch screen.

Biologist Thomas Bionda said Wednesday the screen could help determine an ape's preference between prospective mates as part of a breeding program.

"We want to help our animals and maybe other zoos' animals to make a choice," Bionda said in a telephone interview. "Animals have to like each other."

Bionda hopes that having apes check out images on a computer screen could help determine the compatibility of a prospective pair.

In the meantime, the primate park has another problem - building an orangutan-proof touch screen. The screen in the primates' sleeping area was recently destroyed by a young female called Samboja.

Rare frog spotted

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The name of the species is Gerbilis stream frog.

An explorer team of the River and Life Quest programme, led by Kabir Bin Anwar, team leader and director general at the Prime Minister's Office, recorded the new species of frog from a hill stream of mixed evergreen forest in Barkal reserve forest of Rangamati.

The author of this report along with researchers Rajib, Hossain Sohel, Fazle Rabbi and Shakil Aronnoy located the live and camouflaged specimen from a steep rocky hill stream of Barkal forest on January 16 this year. Detailed features of the specimen, and morphometric and habitat composition were recorded in both video and still forms.

After comprehensive literature review and taxonomic research on the specimen, this writer identified the species as *Anisuzza gerbillis* (Anandale 1912). It belongs to family *Ranidae* of the class *Amphibia*. The common English synonyms are Gerbil stream frog, small-eared torrent frog and Yembung sucker frog. The frog has large and prominent barred discs in forelimbs, smaller in hind toe tips. Its skin is highly granular with dark brick blotches engraved on green back, and the ventral part is white.

This beautiful stream frog is found and distributed in the high gradient, torrent hill streams of Myanmar and India. It is native to northern and north-eastern India, Tibet (China), and Myanmar. This species has been recorded only from Dihang-Dibang Biosphere Reserve and Mouling National Park in India's Arunachal Pradesh. It is associated with streams and riparian vegetation within tropical evergreen forest. It exclusively occurs on boulders and bedrock in and along fast-flowing, clear-water forest streams, from lowlands to highlands. Breeding takes place in streams. There is little available information on egg deposition or larval ecology. After its discovery here, Bangladesh becomes a new geographical range of occurrence of the species. More research is required on the species' taxonomy, population status, life history and ecology.

[Anisuzzaman Khan is the chief consultant of River and Life Quest programme]