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FIGHT AGAINST IS Iraqi forces break into west Mosul

Retake important military base after airport

Iraqi forces yesterday entered a west Mosul neighbourhood for the first time since the October launch of a massive offensive to retake the city from the Islamic State group. The push on Al-Maamun, a small neighbourhood on the southwestern edge of Mosul, came after government troops retook the airport, which commands access to the city from the south, and a nearby military base.

"We have attacked and fully control Ghazlani base, we have also taken Tal al-Rayyan... and we're attacking Al-Maamun neighbourhood," said Sami al-Aridhi, a lieutenant general in Iraq's elite Counter-Terrorism Service.

He told AFP near the front line that IS jihadists attacked his forces with a suicide car bomb in Tal al-Rayyan, a village just outside Mosul, and that three other car bombs were found there.

Aridhi said the CTS, the most-seasoned force in Iraq, had suffered no losses since the renewed push on west Mosul was launched on Sunday.

He said some fighters had been wounded, however, including by the weaponised drones IS has increasingly resorted to in recent weeks.

AFP reporters south of Mosul said heavy artillery and mortar fire could be heard coming from the southern edge of the city while jets also conducted strikes.

While it was not immediately clear whether CTS forces would seek to push deep into the city or simply set up positions on the edge, the move marks another landmark in the protracted Mosul operation.

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Utility cables are being laid down a trench on Rokeya Sarani in the capital, with workers piling up soil and construction materials on the road, choking traffic. **Bottom**, students and their guardians struggle to cross the road in Kazipara area. The photos were taken in the last two days.

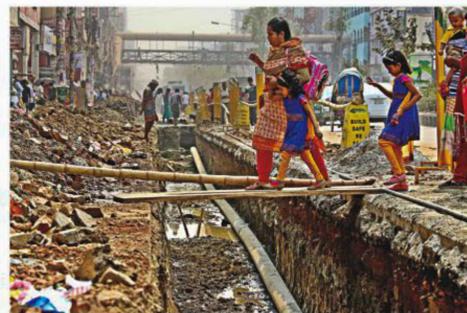


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

UN urged to take steps for journos' safety

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) have urged UN Secretary General António Guterres to take steps to address the safety issue of journalists.

RSF's Secretary General Christophe Deloire and CPJ's Executive Director Joel Simon on Thursday met with the UN secretary general to discuss the #ProtectJournalists campaign to appoint a UN special representative for the safety of journalists, says a RSF press release.

Praising the UN secretary general for his commitment to the safety of journalists and a free and independent press, Deloire said, "We are counting on him to make the UN more efficient so that journalists can be better protected."

Guterres believes that these issues are fundamental to democracy and human rights and has pledged to take action.

"As journalists around the world are increasingly under physical and verbal attack, it is encouraging and gratifying to have this kind

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Khadiza returns home

STAR REPORT

On her return home yesterday after being treated at hospitals in Dhaka and Savar for more than four months, college student Khadiza Begum Nargis has expressed her desire to start her studies again as soon as possible.

Her relatives who had gathered at her house in Sylhet Sadar from faraway villages gave her a warm reception.

Talking to The Daily Star, her father Mashuk Miah said Khadiza's return was significant as she has "beaten all the odds" to make a recovery from her critical wounds.

"People are happy to see Khadiza. Khadiza has told us that she would start her

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Nazis tested nuke?



MAIL ONLINE

Documents unearthed in an American archive suggest that Nazi Germany may have tested an operational nuclear bomb before the end of the Second World War.

Recently declassified file APO 696 from the National Archives in Washington is a detailed survey of how far Third Reich scientists got in the development of an atomic bomb - something Hitler craved.

In the file, obtained by the popular daily newspaper Bild, the task of the academics who prepared the paper between 1944 and 1947 was the 'investigations, research, developments and practical use of the German atomic bomb.'

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LITON MURDER

Is it all about power?

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Col (ret'd) Abdul Kader Khan, a suspect in MP Liton murder case, is neither a popular political figure nor a known face in his Gaibandha-1 constituency, which he lost to Liton in the 2014 election.

This parliamentary seat was once a stronghold of Jatiya Party when HM Ershad was in power, but over the years Jamaat-e-Islami made good grounds there, said political leaders of Gaibandha.

In the ninth parliament (2009-2014), Kader Khan, a medicine specialist, got elected as a JP candidate. However, in the January 5, 2014, election, he was defeated by Manzurul Islam Liton, who was shot dead in his Sundarganj home on December 31.

Local politicians say political rivalry between the two may have led to the killing.

Kader, 65, has not been in politics for long. After retiring from army in 2004, he joined the JP in 2008, just months before



Kader Khan

the December 29 election. He got JP ticket by "managing" party chief Ershad, and eventually went on to win the polls, said Aminul Islam Golap, politburo member of Bangladesh Workers Party.

Liton wanted to run in that election and even collected a party nomination form. In the end, however, Kader was nominated as the candidate of the grand alliance, which included the AL and the JP, said Sajedul Islam, adviser of the district AL.

Local JP leaders, who wanted Waheduzzaman Sarker as their candidate, were aggrieved at Kader's nomination. At the time, local AL leaders, including Liton, gave full support to Kader, in line with the party decision.

But after winning the race, Kader started to avoid Liton and other AL leaders, thus creating a distance between the two, Sajedul told The Daily Star yesterday.

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Nerve agent used for killing Kim

Say Malaysian police

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un's half brother was assassinated with a lethal nerve agent manufactured for chemical warfare and listed by the UN as a weapon of mass destruction, Malaysian police said yesterday.

Releasing a preliminary toxicology report on Kim Jong-Nam's murder at Kuala Lumpur airport, police revealed the poison used by the assassins was the odourless, tasteless and highly toxic VX.

The news brought condemnation from South Korea, which slammed the use of the nerve agent as a "blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and other international norms".

Experts in the South said yesterday that North Korea has up to 5,000 tonnes of chemical weapons stockpiled, including a supply of VX.

Kim died on February 13 after being attacked at Kuala Lumpur International Airport by two women, who are seen on CCTV footage shoving something in his face.

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Papri and Ananya, two sisters with psychiatric issues from Adarvita village in Jamalpur's Madarganj upazila, in a shabby room at their home. Papri, left, is chained to a pole while her younger sibling is too weak to stand on her feet. They have been living in such a condition for about 10 years and their younger brother cannot afford their treatment. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: STAR

Into the abyss of mental illness

Two sisters chained for 10 years

ABM AMINUL ISLAM with ANDREW EAGLE

Mental illness is a significant challenge for any family, but for a struggling rural family it can be truly catastrophic. In circumstances where treatment options are out-of-reach, families are left without any support in care provision. The results can be utterly devastating. In Adarvita village in Jamalpur's Madarganj upazila, mentally ill sisters Papri, 33 and Ananya, 30, have lived in chains for almost a decade.

"Papri first became mentally unwell in 1999, when she was studying in class eight at Adarvita High School," explains neighbour Santeza Khanom, an assistant teacher of the school. "Ananya fell ill in 2001, when she was in class six at the same school. Due to mental instability, neither could continue their schooling."

Although he tried, their father Abdul Mannan was unable to provide adequate psychiatric help for his daughters due to his limited income, from a low-level government job and three bighas of farmland. Moreover, he suffered a stroke in 2002 that plunged the family into an abyss of financial hardship.

From then on, the girls' mother Shahina Parvin single-handedly struggled to support her now-paralysed husband, two mentally ill daughters and two young sons, Samrat and Pathik.

"It was challenge enough for Shahina to put food on the table," says neighbour Nazma Rahman, a primary school teacher. "Treatment was altogether beyond their reach."

Without psychiatric help, the girls' conditions deteriorated until, at one stage, they were entirely unmanageable.

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'Robber' killed in 'gunfight'

UNB, Khulna

An alleged robber was killed in a "gunfight" with police in the city's Khoiyabazar area early yesterday.

The dead is Zia Sana alias Hat Kata Zia alias Bomaru Sana, 45, of Gutudia village in Dumuria.

Acting on information that a gang of robbers was making preparation for committing a robbery, a team of police conducted a drive in Khoiyabazar

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 25
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-15 12-45 4-30 6-05 7-30
JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-45 6-10 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION