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Of a dying tradition

MD MIZANUR RAHMAN HIMADRI

While crossing the City Corporation Bazar at the capital's Rayer Bazar, one would be amazed to see a large number of miniature earthen elephants, horses, tigers and monkeys on display in front of shops there.

They are individually crafted and of bright colours. With Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla calendar, just a few days away, potters at Rayer Bazar put up a dazzling display of earthen items like jugs, plates, glasses, vases, toys and statues of animals like tigers, elephants, horses at their shops.

The place, once known as Paul Para or Kumar Para (a neighbourhood of potters), is now abuzz with shoppers.

Goshai Das Paul, owner of a store at Akhra Mandir, said, "Paul Para has a tale of potters to tell. The entire area used to have a festive look ahead of occasions like Eid, Durga Puja and Baishakh."

Even immediately after the Liberation War, he said, potters from West Dhanmondi to Mohammadpur bus stand area used to pass busy days making fancy earthen items. "But now there are only 5-6 pottery shops in the entire area."

"Those days, Paul families used to make the earthen items. They used to collect clay from a river that ran through Rayer Bazar. But now it's all history, as many families have moved away or left the profession. Now we bring the items from Tangail, Gazipur and Barisal..." said the 57-year-old man.

The families left their ancestral profession as it became unprofitable with plastic and aluminium products flooding the markets, he said.

Another trader Goshai Das said, "Although it's an unprofitable trade, I'm still in it out of my love for our roots."

"Nowadays, pottery shops can be seen at different parts of Dhaka city thanks to the people who still care about our cultural heritage," he said.

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With Pahela Baishakh only three days away, shoppers are looking for bargains at decorative clay item shops near the Shishu Academy in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Jails ready to execute Hannan, his aides

STAR REPORT

Jail authorities completed all formalities for the execution of Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) chief Mufti Abdul Hannan and his two associates on orders from the home ministry yesterday.

"We have already received the presidential rejection order on mercy petitions of the three militants and taken necessary preparation for their execution," said Col Iqbal Hassan, additional inspector-general of prisons.

Asked about the probable time of execution, he said everything would take place in accordance with the jail code.

As per the jail code, the jail authorities can execute death sentences between 21st and 28th day from the date of issuance of death warrants.

The Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal issued death warrants for the militants on March 22 and so today is the 21st day.

Mufti Hannan and his

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City building owners will be under tax net

Says finance minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith has said all the building owners in the capital will be brought under tax net.

Tax teams along with students would collect information about the buildings and "signs of wealth visible in the city" and later tax notices would be sent to the building owners, he added.

The minister was briefing reporters after holding a pre-budget discussion with the chairmen of the parliamentary standing committees at the State Guest House Padma yesterday.

"Forget about other cases, just think of Dhaka. I will divide Dhaka in some zones and my income tax teams will visit every zone. I might hire students to be with them [taxmen]. They will make a list of all the buildings. I will issue tax notices to all the building owners," Muhith said.

He also hinted at hiking taxes on

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Who is the owner?

Luxury car found abandoned on street along with a 'letter of surrender'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A tax defaulter left a luxurious Porsche sport utility vehicle in the capital's Hatirjheel with an anonymous letter yesterday.

"The car is very dear to me and I am attached to it. I have been using this car for the last few years. I recently came to know that tax for the car was evaded... I have left this car on my own accord... please don't look for me," read the letter addressed to the director general of Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (CIID).

CIID officials who took the 2005 Porsche Cayenne yesterday morning said they would be looking for the person and take legal steps.

Had all the taxes for the 12-year-old crossover been paid, it would have cost almost Tk 4 crore, claimed CIID Deputy Director HM Shariful Hassan.

"I am a respected person of the society. Many people know me by my name. Concerned about my reputation I have willingly left the car," the letter, found inside the vehicle, said.

The letter also commended CIID for its "raids across the country".

The German vehicle was brought from the UK in 2010 under the Carnet de Passages which let foreigners bring in their vehicles without having to pay customs duties for two months to one year.



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Provision is there, but not discussed

Chief whip on treaties with foreign countries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Whip ASM Feroz yesterday said deals signed with different countries over the years couldn't be discussed in parliament because of "valid reasons".

In this regard, he cited Article 145-Ka of the constitution which stipulated that all treaties signed with foreign countries would be placed before the president and the president would take measures to place those in parliament.

Feroz was reading out a written statement at a media briefing at the Jatiya Sangsad Media Centre.

The briefing was organised a day after

Transparency International

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Cash rewards to find foreign spies



REUTERS, Beijing

China's capital stepped up a campaign against foreign espionage from yesterday, offering rewards ranging from \$1,500 to \$73,000 to citizens who blow the whistle on suspected spies, state media said.

Since taking office in 2013, President Xi Jinping has overseen a raft of laws and campaigns to secure China's national security against both domestic and foreign threats.

The "pressing" need for new measures to guard against foreign spies is an unfortunate side-effect of China's reform and opening up to the world, the official Beijing Daily newspaper said.

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Facebook Fake accounts of MPs to be removed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two government divisions have separately taken initiatives to make sure that the 350 parliament members have verified Facebook accounts and remove all fake accounts.

At a press conference in her office yesterday, State Minister for Posts and Telecommunications Tarana Halim said they already discussed the matter with the regional Facebook authorities during a meeting in Singapore on March 30.

"Now, we will send a letter to the speaker of the House to collect the Facebook IDs of each of its members for sending those to the Facebook authorities..." she said.

"And after verification,

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A police tow truck takes away a row of rickshaws that entered the city's Mirpur Road off limits to the three-wheelers. Some of the rickshaws were without permits. The photo was taken at the Aarong intersection yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Emergency in Egypt after deadly blasts

Trump calls Sisi to offer condolences

AFP, Cairo

Egypt was preparing to impose a state of emergency yesterday after jihadist bombings killed dozens at two churches in the deadliest attacks in recent memory on the country's Coptic Christian minority.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced the three-month period, which will vastly increase the powers of Egypt's security forces, after the Islamic State group claimed the twin bombings that struck worshippers as they celebrated Palm Sunday mass.

In a defiant speech, he warned the war against jihadists "will be long and painful" after he had ordered the army to protect "vital infrastructure" and increase security along Egypt's borders.

The cabinet said yesterday the state of emergency would begin from 1:00 pm, although it was not immediately clear whether it had taken effect. Constitutionally the measure still needed approval from parliament -- a formality given the number of pro-Sisi delegates.

The first Sunday bombing at the Mar Girgis church in Tanta city north of Cairo killed 28 people, the health ministry said.

The second struck outside Saint Mark's church in Alexandria, killing 17 people after a suicide bomber was prevented from entering the building.

Scores more were wounded in the latest in a string of jihadist-linked attacks on Egypt's Coptic community.

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