



People take part in a vigil for the victims of Monday's terror attack on concert goers at Manchester Arena, in Trafalgar Square, London. PHOTO: REUTERS

China hails new US envoy's 'positive role'

China yesterday welcomed the US Senate's confirmation of Iowa Governor Terry Branstad as US ambassador to Beijing, praising his "positive role" in Sino-US relations. Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying expressed hope that Branstad will help the relationship "develop in a sound and steady way" after assuming his post. "For a long time, Mr. Branstad has been playing a positive role in promoting bilateral exchanges and friendship," Hua said during a regular press briefing yesterday. The longest-serving governor in US history, the 70-year-old Branstad has known Chinese President Xi Jinping since the mid-1980s, when the Asian leader visited Iowa as a provincial official. His confirmation, by a bipartisan vote of 82 to 13, comes as US President Donald Trump is looking to Beijing, its biggest rival and trading partner, to step up economic pressure on North Korea's irascible regime. Trump repeatedly attacked China's trade policies during last year's presidential election. But his aggressive tone has softened since his inauguration, including doing an about face after months of branding China a currency manipulator.

Japan House passes anti-terror bill

Japan's lower house of parliament yesterday passed a controversial bill to crack down on people planning terrorism and other organised crime, despite concerns it threatens civil rights. The government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe argues the legislation is necessary to prevent terrorism ahead of the 2020 Olympic Games. Officials also say it is a prerequisite for implementing a UN treaty against Transnational Organized Crime which Japan signed in 2000. The more powerful lower house controlled by Abe's coalition passed the bill, which now goes to the upper house, where the government enjoys a comfortable majority. If enacted it would allow investigators to charge an individual or organisation which conspires to engage in terrorism or other serious crimes. But rights groups, the national bar association and numerous academics have strongly opposed the bill, saying it could be abused to allow wiretapping of innocent citizens and punish activities

protected by the constitution. The bill was revised after earlier versions were scrapped three times over the years due to concerns about content. The latest bill, approved by Abe's cabinet in March and sent to lawmakers, reduced the number of targeted crimes to some 270 and narrowed the kinds of groups covered to terrorist and criminal organisations. Criticism had focused on the more than 600 types of crimes unrelated to terrorism or crime syndicates that were targeted under previous versions. But despite the latest revision, the bill remains problematic as investigative authorities can still decide what constitutes a criminal organisation, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations said. The general public can be targeted for conspiracy through monitoring phone and online conversations, it said. "We can't tolerate a surveillance society which can impact civil rights," the association said in a statement before the lower house passed the measure.

Accused

FROM PAGE 2 of Banani Police Station, managing director and general manager of Raintree hotel to appear at its office. They were asked to appear there on May 25, said M Rabiul Islam, member secretary of the committee formed by the commission to investigate into the allegations of rapes. RAIN TREE OWNERS GRILLED The hotel's Managing Director Shah Md Adnan Harun, along with his uncles Mujibul Hoque Kamal and Akbar Hossain Manju and a lawyer Jahangir Kabir, appeared in CIID's Kakrail office around 11:00am. After questioning them, Moynul said it appeared that the hotel dodged VAT. About the wine bottles found in the hotel earlier by CIID, the owners said they recovered the bottles from a room rented by a foreigner, who was there on April 30. The CIID DG added that he would also question General Manager Frank Henry and Food and Beverage Manager Imdadul Amin. He added that the men failed to produce documents to prove that VAT was paid. Adnan Harun, however, claimed they submitted the VAT documents and the CIID officials were satisfied adding that the wine bottles could have been sneaked in there taking advantage of some loopholes in the management. APAN JEWELLERS' SOLD 'SMUGGLED GOLD' Moniul also said they found evidence that the gold and diamonds sold by Apan Jewellers were smuggled into the country. CIID found 13.5 mounds of gold and 427 grammes of diamonds in five outlets of Apan Jewellers without any valid documents.

Rap album

FROM PAGE 16 Canterbury Tales, and focuses on black identity in America. The 20-year-old, originally from Stone Mountain, Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta said he "never thought it would be accepted by Harvard". Undergraduates at the university do not need to submit senior theses, but for those wishing to graduate with honours, it is a requirement. Rather than write an essay, collection of poems or a piece of prose, Shaw decided to try something different. It was Shaw's mother who sparked the initial idea, after noticing her son write raps and perform them at open mic nights on campus. Changing perceptions of rap, pioneered by artists like Kendrick Lamar, have catapulted the genre into literary acclaim. The rapper's album To Pimp A Butterfly, as well as Nas' Illmatic were both added to the Harvard Library in acknowledgement of their cultural significance. In Shaw's first track, Declaration of Independence, he writes: "Behold, what we hold is three-fold—Body and spirit to be thrones for free souls. Self is the evidence, please close the freak shows, And depose the evils, our peoples are equals". Shaw also uses the writings of James Baldwin to talk about slavery and police violence. Harvard English lecturer and Shaw's thesis adviser Josh Bell, was highly impressed with his student's creation, praising the album for its fluidity—both as an academic piece and an artistic creation. The album is available online for free, and Shaw after graduation, Shaw will work as a software engineer at Google.

Trump pushes for peace

FROM PAGE 16 Palestinians are ready to reach for peace," Trump said. "I know you've heard it before. I am telling you -- that's what I do -- they are ready to reach for peace. And my meeting with my very good friend Benjamin -- I can tell you also that he is reaching for peace." Standing alongside Trump, Abbas, 82 and in the 12th year of his original five-year term, said he was determined to deliver an agreement for all Palestinians, although he did not provide any substance on how such an objective could be achieved, reported Reuters. "I would like to reiterate our commitment to cooperate with you in order to make peace and forge an historic peace deal with the Israelis," he said, speaking through an interpreter. "And we would like to reassert our willingness to continue to work with you as partners in fighting terrorism in our region and in the world." While both Netanyahu and Abbas have made positive noises about their readiness to negotiate, both also face domestic constraints on their freedom to manoeuvre and strike a deal. Netanyahu must deal with opposition from rightist elements within his coalition who oppose any steps towards a two-state solution to the decades-long conflict. Abbas's Fatah party is at sharp odds with the Islamist group Hamas, which is in power in Gaza, leaving no unified Palestinian position on peace. NO DETAILS ON PEACE Ahead of his visit to the Middle East, the second leg of a nine-day tour that began in Saudi Arabia and will move on to the Vatican, Italy and Belgium, administration officials indicated that Trump might talk about "Palestinian

self-determination", a nod towards the ultimate objective of statehood. But in his public remarks, Trump steered clear of any such language, and did not mention what has been the goal of US diplomacy for two decades: a state of Israel and an independent Palestinian state co-existing side-by-side. During meetings with Netanyahu on Monday, Trump focused attention on the threat from Iran but also talked about the opportunities for peace in the region and how Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations were shifting their stance, potentially opening a window towards a regional agreement. One of the long-standing regional proposals is a Saudi peace initiative that was first put forward in 2002 and has been re-endorsed several times since. Husam Zumlot, a former adviser to Abbas who is now the Palestinian ambassador in Washington, said the contours of any deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians were well known to both sides. If negotiations were to resume, they needed to be about the core issues, not talks about talks, he said. Dangerous FROM PAGE 16 acquainted. But the boy was fined Tk 850 under Motor Vehicle Ordinance-1983, SI Alamgir said. As the parents knew each other, thereby they resolved the matter mutually, claimed Md Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge (OC) of Dhanmondi Police Station. "They gave a written statement deciding not to lodge any case. Therefore, no case was filed in this connection," the OC said. Earlier in October 2015, a teenage boy lost control of his sports utility vehicle and rammed into two rickshaws, leaving four people injured in the capital's Gulshan area.

EC makes polls roadmap

FROM PAGE 16 "The Election Commission will be able to fine-tune the mechanisms suggested for holding an acceptable and participatory election." On the EC's plan not to use EVM, Hanif said his party would insist on using EVM in the next polls because the traditional system of casting ballots often created confusion infuriating defeated candidates. "Defeated candidates often raise allegations of mistakes in counting votes and casting of false votes in elections. The use of EVM will end such controversy over election results." Welcoming the draft roadmap, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said it was a good move to hold dialogues. "We also welcome the Election Commission's decision not to use EVM." According to the roadmap, dialogues with registered political parties will kick off in mid or late July and will continue until November.

Apart from political parties, the EC will also have talks with civil society members and, if possible, journalists, the CEC said. It may take another 15-20 days to finalise the roadmap. The EC has given priority to seven issues in the roadmap including a reform of electoral laws to free the election from the use of black money and muscle power and to create a level-playing field for all political parties. The other issues are -- making the electoral process easier and time-befitting, delimitation of constituencies, updating the voter list, preparing the list of possible polling stations, registration of new political parties and capacity building of officials for conducting the national election. Asked about the tentative date to hold the next general election, CEC Nurul Huda said it was yet to be fixed. According to the constitution, the election will be held within 90 days after the completion of the tenure of the tenth parliament, he pointed out.

Reliance to set up

FROM PAGE 1 The Reliance had put forward a proposal to the government to set up a 3,000 MW power plant in Bangladesh based on imported LNG. In June 2015, Bangladesh Power Development Board had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Reliance Power Ltd in this regard. The Power Division official said the main equipment of the proposed 750 MW plant would be relocated from India to Bangladesh, but the Reliance would have to submit performance certificates from the equipment manufacturers. The Prime Minister's Office might give permission to Reliance to produce

750 MW on condition that it would use imported LNG for generating power, added the official. According to a power ministry official, the Reliance has to build a floating terminal in Moheshkhali of Cox's Bazar to facilitate import of LNG from the Middle East. The Reliance will have to unload the LNG and convert it into natural gas in Moheshkhali. The company would require a pipeline to supply the gas to Meghnaghat from Moheshkhali. The state-run Petrobangla will install a gas pipeline from Moheshkhali to Bakhrabad. The Gas Transmission Co Ltd (GTCL) will

build another gas pipeline from Kutumbupur of Bakhrabad to Meghnaghat with its own fund to supply gas to the power plant. The Reliance will pay charges to the GTCL for using the pipeline, the ministry official told The Daily Star. A Power Division official said the 750 MW power plant might go into production after 2019. Under the MoU of 2015, the Indian company has also proposed to build three more power plants in Chittagong and Narayanganj to produce another 2,250 MW of electricity. It has estimated a cost of \$2.35 billion for setting up the four power plants and the LNG terminal.

Vice chairman removed

FROM PAGE 1 He alleged that the bank management hired people to make up numbers at the AGM and "make noise against the board members". At the AGM, it was decided that the bank would have one vice chairman, instead of two. This means, Alam will not be replaced. Arastoo said Yousif Abdullah Al-Rajhi, representative of Saudi-based Al-Rajhi Co for Industry & Trading, will retain the other post of vice chairman. One more director representing Al-Rajhi Co was included in the Islami Bank board, taking the number of board members to 20. In recent weeks, there have been disputes among the directors. On May 11, Alam posted on his Facebook page that he was being hassled to resign. More than a week later, a group of seven directors threatened to step down if any of them has to resign under pressure. Some of the directors were also furious that the bank declared 10-percent dividend on April 2 for 2016 against a net profit of Tk 450 crore. They believe that the board announced the "meagre dividend" to see the bank's share price go on a "free fall" so that a Chittagong-based big business group can buy the shares on

the cheap. The business group had allegedly bought shares of the bank in the name of seven companies that got registered with the Registrar of the Joint Stock Companies and Firms last year. At present, the seven companies hold 14.02 percent shares in the bank and have seven directors, including Arastoo, in the board. The Arastoo-led board disbursed loans of over Tk 1,400 crore -- some of which went to subsidiaries of the Chittagong-based business group -- in just three months. Many of the loans were approved without maintaining proper rules and regulations, according to a Bangladesh Bank report. Yesterday, this correspondent went to the AGM and found the hall largely empty. The attendees were mostly bank employees, not shareholders. While the AGM was in progress, the Islamic Development Bank, one of the founding members of Islami Bank, declared it would sell 8.70 crore shares out of its total holding of 12.08 crore shares in Islami Bank at current market price. The company will sell the shares within the next 30 working days, according to the posting on the Dhaka Stock Exchange website. In a parallel development, Excel Dyeing and Printing Limited, one of

the seven companies of the Chittagong-based business group, announced its intent to buy 32.04 crore shares in Islami Bank within the next 30 days. Given the current market rate, Excel Dyeing and Printing will have to put in more than Tk 105 crore to acquire its declared quantity of shares. Following the AGM, Al-Rajhi told reporters that the pace of changes in Islami Bank had left the foreign investors concerned. "But we are no longer worried," he added. Areef Suleman, IDB's representative in Islami Bank, said there has been a misconception that the Saudi-based development lender wants to pull out of Islami Bank entirely. "But it's not true. We are not leaving -- we are only reducing our share holdings with the bank." After disposal of 8.70 crore shares, IDB's holding in Islami Bank will come down to 2.1 percent from 7.5 percent -- the bare minimum for a seat in the board. About the changes in the board, Suleman said, "Everything was done with the consent of the board and following the rules of the country. We stand by the board." Islami Bank's shares closed at Tk 32.80 each yesterday, up by 5.13 percent from the previous day.

Heat wave

FROM PAGE 16 Another popular post suggests Facebook users to put some water on their rooftops so that birds in the city may get drinking water in this concrete jungle. Leena Parvin, an employee of a private firm, put up a status saying, "I did not feel like going home from office as it was too hot outside." Another Facebook user Aminul Sujan wrote that he wanted to lodge a complaint against the sun for inflicting this unbearable heat, but he did not know where to file the complaint. In Dhaka city, day labourers, rickshaw-pullers and traffic police were seen facing difficulties in continuing their work and had to take frequent breaks. City dwellers now prefer to rush to their homes soon after completing their daily work. But the weather has become a boon for the vendors and shops which sell seasonal fruits like litchis, pineapple, green coconut, watermelon, lemon water and sugarcane as consumption of these has increased. Roads, marketplaces and busy places in both rural and urban areas were deserted as people preferred to remain indoors to avoid the weather. Furthermore, the load shedding is like adding salt to the injury, making life even more unbearable. The situation is even worse in rural areas, particularly in northern parts of the country, as people have to spend more time in their farmland during the blistering heat. In one area, people took to the streets and formed a human chain demanding the government arrange continuous supply of electricity. Addressing the programme, speakers alleged that there had been power outages in Pirojpur as many as 15 times a day, causing untold suffering. Some journalists, lawyers and municipality councillors, among others, spoke at the programme.

James Bond star

FROM PAGE 16 entire Unicef family has lost a great friend," the UN agency's executive director Anthony Lake said. Moore's children said he considered the Unicef work -- for which he was given a knighthood in 2003 -- his "greatest achievement". "We know our own love and admiration will be magnified many times over, across the world, by people who knew him for his films, his television shows and his passionate work for Unicef, which he considered to be his greatest achievement," they said. "The affection our father felt whenever he walked on to a stage or in front of a camera buoyed him hugely and kept him busy working into his 90th year, through to his last appearance in November 2016 on stage at London's Royal Festival Hall. "The capacity crowd cheered him on and off stage, shaking the very foundations of the building just a short distance from where he was born." They said their thoughts were with his fourth wife, Kristina, adding that there would be a private funeral in Monaco. "With the passing of Sir Roger Moore, the world has lost one of its great champions for children - and the