

Govt working to expand the Sundarbans

Says PM; measures taken to ensure dev projects don't harm the mangrove forest



The PM while opening the Tree Fair 2017 yesterday.

UNB, Dhaka

Acknowledging the importance of the Sundarbans for the country's existence, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government took development projects keeping in mind that the mangrove forest should not be affected in any way.

The Sundarbans is not only a heritage for Bangladesh, it is also important for the country's existence, Hasina said at a function organised on the occasion of World Environment Day.

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Brac's nanosat reaches ISS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac Onnesha, the first nano-satellite made by a Bangladeshi university, was launched into space from the Kennedy Space Center, US in the early hours of yesterday.

Mozammel Haque, a Brac University student and leader at the ground station, told The Daily Star by phone that the SpaceX FALCON 9 rocket carrying the nanosat was launched from the space centre around 3:00am Bangladesh time.

It is expected to be deployed into the earth's orbit by International Space Station (ISS) astronauts by the end of June, said Brac University authorities.

Through the launch, Bangladesh entered space for the first time, they said.

Earlier, the rocket carrying the nanosat was scheduled for launch on June 2. According to a Brac University handout, it was postponed due to bad weather.

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SPACEX LAUNCHES 1ST RECYCLED CARGO SHIP - PAGE 12



Police officers and members of the emergency services attend to a person injured in the terror attack on London Bridge in central London. Armed police fired shots after reports of stabbings and a van hitting pedestrians on London Bridge in an incident reminiscent of a terror attack in March just days ahead of a general election.

PHOTO: AFP

7 dead in London attack

Police gun down 3 militant suspects within 8 minutes of the incident; 12 arrested

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Theresa May blamed "evil" Islamist ideology yesterday for an attack by knife-wielding men who mowed down and stabbed revellers in London, killing seven, as police said they had arrested 12 suspects.

Saturday night's rampage at a popular nightlife hub around London Bridge by three men wearing fake suicide vests was the third deadly terror attack in Britain in less than three months and came only days before snap elections.

National campaigning for Thursday's general election was

suspended for the day out of respect for the victims, who included 48 people treated in hospital for injuries.

Of those, 36 remained in hospital, with 21 in a critical condition.

One Canadian national and one Frenchman were among the fatalities and seven French citizens were injured.

No details have been released about the suspects, who were shot dead within minutes by police.

Eight officers fired an "unprecedented" 50 rounds at the three attackers, according to Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley,

adding that a member of the public also suffered a gunshot wound.

Detectives were still investigating whether the assailants acted alone, but Rowley said he was "increasingly confident that this attack was conducted by three individuals".

The 12 arrests were made in the ethnically diverse east London suburb of Barking, with Sky News reporting that a property raided by police belonged to one of the killers.

May said the attack was driven by the same "evil ideology of Islamist extremism" behind last week's Manchester suicide bomb-

ing that left 22 people dead, and the Westminster attack in March, which killed five.

"The recent attacks are not connected but we believe we are experiencing a new trend in the threat we face," she said after chairing a meeting of the government's emergency Cobra committee.

She warned that perpetrators are inspired to attack "by copying one another".

The assailants wore fake suicide vests in a bid to increase the sense of panic as they ran people over on London Bridge before lunging seemingly at random at the crowds

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Kiron Chakma had bought this motorcycle just two days before Bangalee settlers set fire to houses of indigenous people in Longadu upazila of Rangamati on Friday. The vehicle is now burnt wreckage. Inset, an Adivasi man is walking towards a hilltop with whatever he has left after the arson attack.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

3 days on, fear still runs deep among hill people

MINHAJ UDDIN and ANVIL CHAKMA, Longadu, Rangamati

Despite living in dire straits, in deep hilly jungles, majority of the indigenous people who lost everything in Friday's arson attacks were yet to come out yesterday.

The fear of further attack was keeping them from going back to their villages -- Tintila, Manikjhorchhora

and Baittapa -- where Bangalee settlers wreaked mayhem, looting, torching and vandalising indigenous community houses.

During a visit yesterday, these correspondents found the affected neighbourhoods wearing a deserted look with many houses and shops razed to the ground.

Around 30 people, mostly men and youths, were seen in a school

across a small canal from Tintila village.

"We, youths and men, are keeping surveillance to save the handful of houses that were not destroyed," said Onagoto Chakma, a resident of Manikjhorchhora village.

Kiran Chakma, 38, a contractor, said, "I have been living without food for two days. My 250 maunds of rice

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Excise hike to pile up woes for middle class

REAZ AHMAD and REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Halima Khatun, a 55-year-old widow, has to rely on income from fixed deposit receipt (FDR).

A couple of years back, she had to sell the family's mortgaged land to repay the loans her husband had taken to start a business that ended in failure. She was left with Tk 5 lakh, which she kept as FDR with a private bank.

Halima, a mother of three, has been on her own since her husband died several years back. She doesn't get any financial support from her daughter and two sons who can barely make ends meet.

Her financial woes are likely to get worse, as the new budget proposes raising the excise duty on bank deposits.

Thousands of people, who have some savings in the form of bank deposits for their uncertain future, would have to pay the government Tk 800 per Tk 1 lakh from the next fiscal year, instead of Tk 500 now.

Seeking anonymity, an NBR official said excise duty has been there for many years under the Excise and Salt Act of 1944. But after the introduction of VAT in 1991, the government started phasing out excise duties.

It, however, retained excise duty on two things -- air tickets and bank deposits.

Bank officials say there is no such duty on deposits anywhere in the world.

The burden of excise duty on deposits adds to the financial constraints of people like Moklesur Rahman (not his real name).

Being a petty private job holder with no post-retirement pension benefits, Moklesur saved some money in the form of bank deposit schemes. He is now worried about the future of his two children with the government desperate to earn more revenues from even small deposits.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, however, has his own logic.

"It is very difficult to define the rich. People with deposits of Tk 1 lakh or more are affluent enough. They have the ability to bear the additional burden of the increased excise duty," he said.

According to the proposed budget, a bank account with balance of up to Tk 1 lakh would be exempted from excise duty.

An excise duty of Tk 800, up from the existing Tk 500, will be imposed on an account with debit or credit balance

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TOP!
QUOTE

"We have discussed excise tax on Bank deposits. We have some observations about the proposed budget. Some proposals of the budget have failed to meet people's expectations."

14-PARTY ALLIANCE SPOKESPERSON AND HEALTH MINISTER
MOHAMMED NASIM
AT THE DHANMONDI OFFICE AL PRESIDENT

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