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SHAH CEMENT

Gulf crisis deepens

Arab powers draw up Qatari blacklist; US urges easing of blockade against Doha

REUTERS, Dubai

Arab states that have cut diplomatic and transport ties with Qatar tightened their squeeze yesterday by putting dozens of Qatar-linked people on terrorism blacklists, while Qatar ally Turkey came to its side with plans to send troops, warships and planes.

The developments intensified a confrontation between tiny-but-wealthy Qatar and a group of Arab nations led by Saudi Arabia and Egypt that accuse it of fomenting instability. The dispute has created a major diplomatic test for the United States, which is close allies of the countries on both sides.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson yesterday urged Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to ease their blockade against Qatar, saying it was causing unintended humanitarian consequences and affecting the US-led fight against Islamic State.

"We call on the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt to ease the blockade against Qatar," Tillerson said in a brief statement to reporters. Tillerson said the blockade was causing food shortages, the forced separation of families and children being pulled out of school.

"We believe these are unintended consequences, especially during the holy month of Ramadan," he said.

At the same time, Tillerson said Qatar has a history of

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Workers use sandbags and timber to shore up the approach ramp of the Dhaleswari Bridge-1 on Dhaka-Mawa road yesterday. The Roads and Highways Department started the work under the supervision of Bangladesh Army after the soil had caved in a couple of days ago.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

RAMADAN PRICE HIKE

BNP blames AL-backed syndicate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday alleged that a ruling party-backed syndicate was making money by hiking prices of daily essentials in the month of Ramadan.

"An illegal business syndicate belonging to the ruling party is taking away thousands of crores of taka from people by increasing prices of rice, pulses, salt, oil and fruits in this Ramadan," Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, party's senior joint secretary general, told journalists at a press briefing at party's Nayapaltan central office.

He said it was a big question whether the commerce minister failed to keep his assurance of controlling prices of essentials or mocked people in this regard.

About the coarse rice price, the BNP leader said its price was Tk 48-50 each kg. "Rice is being sold in Bangladesh at the highest price in the world, which causes immense sufferings to the people."

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Twin trouble for housing sector

The flat 15pc VAT to fuel price hikes of construction materials, cut demands

SOHEL PARVEZ

The imposition of a uniform 15 percent VAT would lead to increased prices of building materials and result in a fall in demand, affecting the country's construction sector and related industries that employ around 30 lakh people.

The government has recently announced implementation of the new VAT rate from July 1, ending the two-and-a-half-decade system of multiple VAT rates for different goods.

However, prices of rod have already started going up even before the new rate comes into effect, amid an increased demand from a section of traders and contractors. They are stockpiling them fearing further price hikes, say realtors and industry operators.

Other construction materials such as brick and cement are also expected to become costlier, making it difficult for middle income families to have new homes.

Flat buyers will have to spend extra from their pocket as well once the 15 percent VAT rate is implemented. Currently, VAT on flats ranges from 1.5 to 4.5 percent, depending on their size.

The tax measures come at a time when the construction sector and related industries are growing, buoyed by implementation of infrastructure projects by the government and construction of concrete homes in rural and suburban areas following remittance inflows.

The sector, which accounts for 7.39 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), has grown 9.32 percent in the outgoing fiscal 2016-17 up from an 8.65 percent growth a year ago, according to Bangladesh Bureau

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Call to protect society from radical forces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is facing challenges from fundamentalists and religion-based groups, and the young generation will have to come forward to rebuild the society, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

According to them, a large number of youths still believe the situation can be changed by waging a cultural and progressive movement.

They stressed the need for organising a mass upsurge like the Gonojagoron Mancha.

Sanglaptara, a newly-floated platform of young journalists, writers and rights activists, organised the discussion titled "Kon Pothe Bangladesh?" (Where is Bangladesh heading for?) in the capital's Liberation War Museum.

The call comes at a time when some radical Islamist groups, including the Hefajat-e Islam, are spreading hateful lies against some eminent citizens, including rights activist Sultana Kamal.

Prof Ajoy Roy, father of slain writer Avijit Roy, called upon youths to get united and take to the streets to establish a

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PHOTO ON PAGE 4

Tragic

Mother 'kills three kids, commits suicide'; police suspect financial hardship was the reason



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Relatives at the Dhaka Medical College morgue mourn the deaths of Rehena Parvin and her three children yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mother and her three children were found dead at their house in the capital's Turag area early yesterday.

Police suspected the housewife committed suicide after strangling her children due to financial hardship.

The dead are Rehena Parvin, 35, her daughters Nusrat, 13, and Arisha, 9, and son Saad, aged about nine months.

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Man killed in 'gunfight' with police in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Police shot dead a man as he and others attacked the law enforcers to snatch a listed criminal at Birulia in Savar on the outskirts of the capital on Thursday night.

The dead was identified as Ismail Hossain, 32, son of Shahidul Islam of Shyampur village in Birulia.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police Mahbubur Rahman said four policemen led by Sub-Inspector Toriqlul Islam raided Shyampur area to arrest Al-Amin Hossain, accused in at least 17 cases filed with Savar Model Police Station, around 11:00pm.

The police arrested him at his rest house but came under attack as Al-Amin, who sensed the presence of law enforcers, had already announced in a loudspeaker that robbers entered his house, added Mahbubur.

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SEHRI, IFTAR TIMINGS

Ramadan	June	Sehri	Iftar
14	10		6-49
15	11	3-38	6-50
16	12	3-38	6-50

PRAYER TIMING JUNE 10

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	3-44	12-45	5-00	6-49	8-15
JAMAAT	3-54	1-15	5-15	6-59	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Self-navigating ships 'by 2025'



AGENCIES

Japan's shipbuilders and maritime shippers are teaming up to make self-navigating ships a reality by 2025, hoping to lead global development on a project that should dramatically reduce accidents at sea.

Participants including shippers Mitsui OSK Lines and Nippon Yusen plan to split costs and share expertise. Developing the technology is expected to cost tens of billions of yen, or hundreds of millions of dollars, at a minimum.

The artificial-intelligence-driven steering system would use such technologies as the "internet of things" -- the linking of various devices to the net -- to instantaneously gather and analyze data about weather at sea and dangerous obstacles, as well as shipping information.

The AI would use this data to plot the most fuel-efficient, safest and shortest route, according to the

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ধাপ ৩

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