



A pavement in front of Cantonment Railway Station on Airport road lies damaged. Inset, the car, which caused the damage as it veered out of control, has been left on the pavement for over a week, becoming an obstacle for pedestrians. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



## Saudis open

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Qatari pilgrims to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through Salwa border crossing to perform hajj, and to allow all Qatari nationals who wish to enter for hajj without electronic permits", state news agency SPA announced.

He also ordered that private jets belonging to Saudi airlines be sent to Doha airport "to bring all Qatari pilgrims at his expense".

Qatar's foreign minister welcomed the decision but lashed out at Riyadh's ongoing "politicisation" of religious freedoms.

"Regardless of the manner in which pilgrims from Qatar or living in Qatar were banned from the pilgrimage, which was politically motivated, and the manner in which they were subsequently permitted to make the pilgrimage, which was also politicised and which was announced with other goals in mind... the government of Qatar welcomes the decision and will respond positively," Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani told a press conference in Stockholm.

"What matters to us is the bottom line, which is that our citizens now have a way to attend the hajj, and we uphold our demand that hajj be spared politicisation and remain separate from our political issues."

The hajj, a pillar of Islam that capable Muslims must perform at least once, is to take place this year at the start of September and it is expected to draw around two million Muslims from around the world.

RIGHT TO PILGRIMAGE  
On June 5, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates severed diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar in what has emerged as the worst political crisis to grip the region in decades.

The Saudi decision to reopen the frontier for Qatari pilgrims came shortly after the kingdom's powerful Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met with Qatari envoy Sheikh Abdullah bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Jassim al-Thani, a member of Qatar's ruling dynasty.

It was the first public high-level encounter between the nations since the crisis erupted.

The Saudi foreign minister, however, said Sheikh Abdullah had acted on a "personal initiative" by meeting the crown prince on Wednesday in the Saudi city of Jeddah and not on behalf of the Doha government.

The decision also came after SPA reported that Crown Prince Mohammed had received a phone call from US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who has sought repeatedly to defuse the regional crisis.

Saudi Arabia last month said Qatari pilgrims would be allowed to enter the kingdom for hajj this year but imposed several travel restrictions, including flying in only on airlines approved by Riyadh.

Doha has accused Riyadh of jeopardising the pilgrimage to Makkah by refusing to guarantee the safety of Qatari citizens.

"We hope that the Saudi authorities cooperate with our government agencies to ensure the security of the Qatari people," the foreign minister said in Stockholm.

Analysts cautioned yesterday that the diplomatic crisis was far from over.

"This is a goodwill gesture towards the Qatari people and not a breakthrough with the Qatari" government, Ali Shihabi of Washington-based think-tank Arabia Foundation said on Twitter, referring to the border reopening.

## Terror attack kills 13

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more than 50 injured," regional interior minister Joaquim Forn said on Twitter. Belgium said one of its nationals was among the dead.

One of the suspects was named by the police union as Driss Oukabir, but there were no further details and police denied earlier reports a perpetrator was holed up in a bar.

The famous Las Ramblas is one of Barcelona's busiest streets, lined with shops and restaurants and normally packed with with tourists and street performers until well into the night.

Police said there had been a "huge collision" between a van and pedestrians on the thoroughfare and a police source said officers were seeking a total of two suspects.

Spain's royal family condemned the assault in unusually strong terms, vowing that their country would not be "terrorised" by extremists.

"Bodies on the ground" - Witnesses told of scenes of horror, with bodies strewn along the boulevard as others fleeing for their lives.

"When it happened I ran out and saw the damage," local shop worker Xavi Perez told AFP.

"There were bodies on the ground with people crowding round them. People were crying. There were lots of foreigners."

Witness Aamer Anwar told Britain's Sky News television that he was walking down Las Ramblas, which he described as "jam-packed" with tourists.

"All of a sudden, I just sort of heard a crashing noise and the whole street just started to run, screaming. I saw a woman right next to me screaming for her kids."

Spain had so far been spared the kind of extremist violence that rocked nearby France, Belgium and Germany.

But it was hit by what is still Europe's deadliest jihadist attack in March 2004, when bombs exploded on commuter trains in Madrid, killing 191 people in an attack claimed by Al Qaeda-inspired extremists.

Ethan Spibey, a charity director on holiday in the city, said he and several others had locked themselves in a nearby church.

"All of a sudden it was real kind of chaos... people just started running screaming," he told Sky. "There was kind of a mini stampede."

Tom Gueller, who lives on a road next to Las Ramblas said he saw the van speeding along the boulevard.

"It wasn't slowing down at all. It was just going straight through the middle of the crowds in the middle of the Ramblas," he told BBC radio..

A Greek diplomat in the city said three nationals had been wounded -- a woman and her two children.

Yesterday's attack, which followed similar incidents in Britain, Germany

### CONTROVERSIAL REMARKS

## Trump lashes out Republican senator

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump lashed out at fellow Republican Lindsey Graham yesterday after the South Carolina senator criticized his response to last weekend's deadly violence in Charlottesville.

"Publicity seeking Lindsey Graham falsely stated that I said there is moral equivalency between the KKK, neo-Nazis & white supremacists...and people like Ms. Heyer," Trump said on Twitter.

and France, drew widespread condemnation.

"-Revolted attack" - "The United States condemns the terror attack in Barcelona, Spain, and will do whatever is necessary to help," US President Donald Trump tweeted.

France's President Emmanuel Macron -- whose country has witnessed a series of bloody jihadist atrocities including a truck rampage in Nice in July 2016 that killed 86 people -- said his thoughts were with the victims of the "tragic attack".

A spokesman for German Chancellor Angela Merkel condemned the "revolting attack" and British Prime Minister Theresa May said on Twitter that London "stands with Spain against terror".

The Nice carnage and other assaults including the 2015 Paris attacks on nightspots in the city were claimed by the Islamic State.

In another deadly vehicle attack in December, 12 people were killed when a man driving a truck ploughed into a crowd at a Berlin Christmas market.

Spain has emerged as a potential target for jihadists, with extremist websites mentioning it for historical reasons, since much of its territory was once under Muslim rule.

The authorities in Spain -- the world's third biggest tourism destination -- generally remain discreet on the terror threat.

But they publicise every arrest of alleged jihadists, most of them detained for propaganda, recruitment for extremist groups or "glorifying terrorism."

According to the interior ministry, more than 180 "jihadist terrorists" have been arrested since 2015.

## PM informed

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whom to change the Supreme Court verdict?" he questioned referring to the BNP's allegation in this regard.

"Can you make somebody do anything by putting pressure on him who holds the post of the president? The BNP has got over-excited about the issue."

"With the delivery of the verdict, the BNP has been given an issue and the party is trying to take advantage of it after being convinced by its standing committee member Moudud Ahmed," the minister alleged.

He said the BNP secretary general was disappointed as a plot to carry out another attack like the August 21 grenade attack on the National Mourning Day in Dhaka was foiled. "There was a plan to kill at least 500 people, including Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, but it was foiled. This led to Fakhru's dissatisfaction."

The BNP leaders became "reckless drivers" in politics and nobody knows when they would cause an accident, Quader added. He called upon party men to stay alert for the sake of the country's progress and development.

Addressing the discussion at the Jatiya Press Club, Fakhru said they were stunned by the meeting held with President Abdul Hamid over the 16th amendment verdict.

"It was not supposed to be held. It is unprecedented."

He urged party men to be vocal against the government's stance on the SC verdict.

"A plot is being hatched again to destroy democracy. Alongside BNP men, the people from all other political parties, socio-cultural organisations and civil society members should come forward to protect the country, its constitution and democracy," he said.

## Son held

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On Wednesday morning, DC Abdul Awal went to Haripur and took Taslema to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital, where she is now undergoing treatment.

Doctors said Taslema was out of danger but needed care.

Officer-in-Charge of Haripur Police Station Ruhul Quddus said preparation was going on to file a case in this connection.

## Mayor Annisul

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"When doctors inform us something about him, we will let you know," Noor added.

Contacted, Abraul Hasan Mojumder, personal secretary of Mayor Annisul, told The Daily Star yesterday evening that Annisul was under close observation.

He was suffering from cerebral vasculitis, which was not diagnosed in Dhaka. He had been experiencing occasional spells of dizziness for the last two months.

Doctors put him on steroids and other drugs, said Abraul.

Annisul took oath as the DNCC mayor on May 6, 2015.

## The ultimate

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waiting for the day when they will finally be reunited."

Guzmán bought the dog as a pet for son Damian, then 13 years old, back in 2015 before dying suddenly the following year.

The dog's vigil began the day after Guzmán's funeral, when he went missing from the family home in Cordoba.

Guzmán's wife and son launched a search for the dog, eventually locating him a 45 minute drive away in the village where his owner had been taken to be buried.

They say it is a mystery how Capitan found the grave, claiming he had not been taken there before.

Damian tried several times to bring the animal home, but he always escaped and returned to the grave side, and they decided to leave him there.

The cemetery's director Hector Baccaga remembers the day he first saw the dog.

He said: "He turned up here one day, all on his own, and started wandering all around the cemetery until he eventually found the tomb of his master."

"During the day he sometimes has a walk around the cemetery, but always rushes back to the grave. And every day, at six o'clock sharp, he lies down on top of the grave stays there all night."

## Songs

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The birds even attract the elusive large Indian civet. Sumitra and her family though stand as guardians, protecting the creatures. Over a 100 birds call 'Banik Bari' their home with species ranging from herons, Pankouris and even ducks (baliha).

The birds draw many visitors and the villagers steadfastly offer their protection and ensure the birds live in peace. Children are also charmed by the presence of such sweet feathered friends.

"Such wild birds can play a vital role in environment protection which can influence food production," said Abul Kalam, District Forest Officer, Barisal.

## Imported rice

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Flashfloods in six northeastern haor districts and fungal attacks (rice blast) in 19 others during the Boro season damaged about 20 lakh tonnes of rice crop earlier this year.

At least 20 northern districts and some others elsewhere in the country have been hit by flood in the last few days.

Against this backdrop, the cabinet committee meeting at the secretariat on Wednesday approved the government's decision to import 20 lakh tonnes of food grains -- 15 lakh tonnes of rice and 5 lakh tonnes of wheat -- in the current fiscal year. The revised import target is 11 lakh tonnes more than the government's earlier projected food import volume of 9 lakh tonnes.

Yesterday's duty cut was the second this year after the government in June had slashed the rice import duty to 10 percent from 28 percent.

Under the new duty structure, importers will have to pay only Tk 1.56 crore instead of Tk 7.82 crore in tariff for releasing 24,000 tonnes of rice stuck at several ports.

Chitta Majumder said 15 lakh tonnes of rice was being imported by the government. Local importers could bring the rice into Darshana, Khulna at quickest time, he told this correspondent.

The government has so far floated international tenders seeking to buy 3.5 tonnes of rice.

Local importers, said Chitta, had supplied rice to the government in 2009 promptly. If the government floated local tenders, the importers would have been able to import rice from India and reach it to government granaries, he added.

DELIVERY OF RICE BEGINS  
Rice importers started clearing customs at Hili Land Port in Dinajpur's Hakimpur upazila yesterday. They also started unloading rice, imported from India, from trucks that reached the port 12 days ago.

Around 600 trucks carrying 18,000 tonnes of rice had been stranded at the port since August 5 when the importers stopped clearing customs in anticipation of a duty cut.

Rice was unloaded from 400 trucks yesterday, said Moshir Rahman Mondal, assistant commissioner of customs at the port.

## Malala wins

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students across Britain received the results of their A-levels, exams taken at the end of secondary school.

Yousafzai did not reveal her results but said: "Well done to all A-level students -- the hardest year. Best wishes for life ahead!"

She was just 15 years old when she was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman in October 2012 as she travelled by bus home from an exam to her village in the Swat valley.

She was flown to the central English city of Birmingham for treatment, and has lived there with her family ever since, continuing her education and activism.

Yousafzai was granted the Nobel Peace prize aged 17 in 2014 along with India's Kailash Satyarthi for their championing of children's rights.

In July, she opened a new Twitter account on her last day of school, an experience she described as "bittersweet".

"I know that millions of girls around the world are out of school and may never get the opportunity to complete their education," Yousafzai wrote.

But she said she was "excited" about her future and promised to continue "fighting for girls".

PPE is a prestigious course that has produced many British politicians and world leaders, including late Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

## EC won't mediate

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enforcement agencies under the full control of the EC, keeping them free from the influence of the election-time government, keeping biased observers outside the polls and ensuring security of minorities during election.

Replying to the query if the EC would play the role of a mediator, Huda said, "We earlier saw many international mediators come to resolve the crisis but failed.... Why will we waste time!"

"We have taken oath that we will not bow down to any pressure."

The commission has no role in determining how a polls-time government will be. However, everything will be depending on that government.

"As the EC is a technical office, it is obliged to conduct the election within the system determined by the [election-time] government."

Bangladesh sees more complications and problems centring on electoral battle than other nations since it's a young democracy, the CEC said

Expressing firm determination to hold free and fair election, he added, "We do not have weakness and enmity towards anyone."

Regarding army deployment, Huda said army would be deployed if necessary.

After the talks, EC acting secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed briefed the media.

During the talks, Abul Kalam Azad, chief editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, and Mozammel Haque Babu, chief editor of Ekattor TV, said there was no need to deploy army.

## Comilla univ teacher

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On Wednesday morning, the Chhatra League leaders padlocked the three academic buildings and an administrative building.

No classes or exams could be held. Ilias Mia, president of the Chhatra League's university unit, said Mahbulul held a class on August 15 "showing utter disrespect and disregard towards the Father of the Nation".

"As the university authorities took the decision [to punish the teacher], we withdrew our movement," he said.

Mahbulul Huq Bhuiyan said he was not taking any formal class that day. As the students requested him to explain something, he just asked them to go to a classroom near the teachers' room, he added.

"As there were some other guests of other teachers, I told the students to go to a room and was explaining a matter. It was not any formal class. Their semester final exams were going on and we have already taken one exam. There was no scope for taking classes then," Mahbulul said.

He also said forcing him to go on leave without investigating was unjust.

Sources said the decision went against the teacher as the university authorities did not like his firm stance

"The commission has to work neutrally and remain within the constitution.... It has to earn public trust. It is not the duty of the EC to see who is participating [in election] and who is not," Babu said.

He suggested brining all 40,000 polling stations under the watch of the TV stations to prevent irregularities during the next national election. "We all (TV channels) want to monitor the 40,000 polling stations.... We've the capacity."

Bangladesh correspondent of Voice of America, Amir Khasru, however, said, "Army deployment in the general election is important, as we know what the role was of the regular law enforcement agencies in national polls in the past."

Independent TV Executive Editor Khaled Muhiuddin said the EC's job was to earn public confidence. "The EC will decide if the army is needed."

Channel I Director Shykh Seraj pointed out that field-level election officials must be neutral.

## Australia

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September 4, the series is expected to be a close affair after Bangladesh's newfound Test proficiency, especially at home, evidenced by their 1-1 draw with England in October last year.

Like in that series, spin is expected to be a major weapon and Australia have come prepared with three specialist spinners in the battle-hardened Nathan Lyon and the young pair of Matt Renshaw and Mitchell Swepson.

against different irregularities at the institution.

Kazi Mohammad Kamal Uddin, proctor of the university, said the four-member probe body, led by Mosleh Uddin, a senior syndicate member, was asked to submit its report as soon as possible.

The VC could not be reached for comments.

PROTEST AT DU  
Former and current students of Dhaka University Mass Communication and Journalism department yesterday formed a human chain at Aparajeyo Bangla protesting the "false allegations" brought against Mahbulul.

The protest around 11:00am was organised under the banner of former and present students of the department, reports our DU correspondent.

Many teachers and media personalities took part.

The speakers at a rally held afterwards said the allegation of taking a class on the National Mourning Day was "false" as the classes of the students' batch in question had been suspended a long time ago for their final exams.

They said Mahbulul was a victim of conspiracy.