



**Iraqi forces, supported by members of the Hashed al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilisation units), advance through the Salaheddin province in the western desert bordering Syria after leaving the town of Baiji yesterday, as they attempt to flush out remaining Islamic State (IS) group fighters in the Al-Jazeera region.**

PHOTO: AFP

## Bari Siddiqui

FROM PAGE 16

kidneys. According to family sources, he had been undergoing dialysis treatment since last year.

The singer of popular songs like "Shua Chan Pakhi" and "Amar Gaye Joto Dukkho Shoy" left behind his wife, two sons, a daughter, and a host of relatives, friends, well-wishers and followers to mourn his death.

Siddiqui, born to a musical family in Netrokona on November 15, 1954, trained in music from a young age under Ustad Gopal Dutt, Ustad Aminur Rahman, Babir Khan and Pannalal Ghosh during the formative years of his life.

He also began playing the bansuri (bamboo flute) and trained under noted classical flautist VG Karnad in India.

Siddiqui came to mainstream attention in 2000 with the release of Humayun Ahmed's film "Shrabon Megher Din". However, his music career began much earlier, back in the 70s.

He continued to sing in films and tele-films as well after that, along with performing at concerts and on TV. He further released several music albums.

He has worked extensively with lyricist Shahidullah Farayazi and has performed and conducted workshops in France, Switzerland, Malaysia, Pakistan, Iran and Singapore.

PM mourns death of folksinger Bari Siddiqui

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today expressed deep shock at the death of eminent folksinger, lyricist and flautist Bari Siddiqui.

In a condolence message, the prime minister recalled his outstanding contributions to enrich the country's folk songs, reports BSS.

"The people of the country have lost a popular folk singer... as long as folk songs exist in the country, he will remain alive," she said.

Sheikh Hasina also prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed her heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family.

## PM's statement

FROM PAGE 16

the incidents of enforced disappearances.

Responding to another question, Fakhru said the BNP would not call for any hartal, protesting the power tariff hike.

Criticising the government for increasing the electricity price, the BNP leader said the hike would make the sufferings of the people worse as prices of daily essentials would go up subsequently, which would have put an adverse impact on the country's economy.

## Ex-UP member

FROM PAGE 2

He said there was a feud between Sabuj and his rivals over establishing supremacy in the area.

Police are investigating the incident, the OC added.

Police sent the body to Pabna General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

## Riyadh hosts

FROM PAGE 2

by the Arab-US-Islamic Summit in Riyadh in May this year announced that the alliance member-states were ready to deploy 34,000 troops with a view to supporting operations against terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere.

The IMCTC, which has set up a joint operations centre in Riyadh, was established to serve as a platform for security cooperation, including the provision of training, equipment and troops, and the involvement of religious scholars to offer advice on how to deal with extremism.

On January 6, Pakistan's former army chief Gen (ret'd) Raheel Sharif was named as the Islamic Military Alliance's first commander-in-chief.

## Egypt mosque attack

FROM PAGE 1

US President Donald Trump condemned the attack as "horrible and cowardly".

"The world cannot tolerate terrorism, we must defeat them militarily and discredit the extremist ideology that forms the basis of their existence!" he wrote on Twitter.

UK foreign minister Boris Johnson condemned the "barbaric attack" in a post on Twitter, while his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian expressed his condolences to the families of victims of the "despicable attack".

Ahmed AbulGheit, head of the Arab League, which is based in Cairo, condemned the "terrifying crime which again shows that Islam is innocent of those who follow extremist terrorist ideology," his spokesman said in a statement.

The Islamic State group's Egypt branch has killed hundreds of policemen and soldiers, and also civilians accused of working with the authorities, in attacks in the north of the Sinai peninsula.

They have also targeted followers of the mystical Sufi branch of Sunni Islam as well as Christians.

The victims of yesterday's attack included civilians and conscripts praying at the mosque.

A tribal leader and head of a Bedouin militia that fights IS told AFP that the mosque is known as a place of gathering for Sufis.

The Islamic State group shares the puritan Salafi view of Sufis as heretics for seeking the intercession of saints.

The jihadists had previously kidnapped and beheaded an elderly Sufi leader, accusing him of practising magic which Islam forbids, and abduc-

ted Sufi practitioners later released after "repenting."

An IS propaganda outlet had published an interview earlier with the commander of its "morality police" in Sinai who said their "first priority was to combat the manifestations of polytheism including Sufism."

The group has killed more than 100 Christians in church bombings and shootings in Sinai and other parts of Egypt, forcing many to flee the peninsula.

The military has struggled to quell jihadists who pledged allegiance to IS in November 2014.

IS regularly conducts attacks against soldiers and policemen in the peninsula bordering Israel and the Palestinian Gaza Strip, although the frequency and scale of such attacks has diminished over the past year.

The jihadists have since increasingly turned to civilian targets, attacking not only Christians and Sufis but also Bedouin Sinai inhabitants accused of working with the army.

Aside from IS, Egypt also faces a threat from al-Qaeda-aligned jihadists who operate out of neighbouring Libya.

A group calling itself Ansar al-Islam -- Supporters of Islam in Arabic -- claimed an October ambush in Egypt's Western Desert that killed at least 16 policemen.

Many of those killed belonged to the interior ministry's secretive National Security Service.

The military later conducted air strikes on the attackers, killing their leader Emad al-Din Abdel Hamid, a most wanted jihadist who was a military officer before joining an al-Qaeda-affiliated group in Libya's militant stronghold of Derna.

## Nationwide celebration

FROM PAGE 1

upazilas and the capital.

Bangladesh missions abroad will also hold the similar programmes.

"The government has decided to celebrate the programme as the Unesco recognised Bangabandhu's historic March 7 speech as a world documentary heritage, which is a great achievement for the entire nation," said the cabinet secretary.

In the capital, the celebration will begin at noon through placing wreaths at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi Road-32.

Later, a procession from there will move towards Suhrawardy Udyan where Bangabandhu had delivered the landmark speech in a mammoth gathering on March 7, 1971.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to address a grand rally as the chief guest at the same venue at 3:00pm.

Following the PM's address, a cultural function and a laser show will also be held, the cabinet secretary added.

Besides, programmes in districts and upazilas will begin at 10:00am through placing wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu.

Apart from this, educational institutions across the country will organise essay, quiz and general knowledge competitions.

Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and private TV channels will air the programmes live while newspapers will publish special supplements on the day.

The historic March 7 speech has been included in the Memory of World International Register, a list of world's important documentary heritage maintained by the Unesco.

### ROUTE MAP FOR PROCESSION

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police fixed the route map for today's procession.

The procession will be brought out from Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at noon. It will end at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan after marching through Russell Square on Mirpur Road, Kalabagan, Science Laboratory intersection, Bata Signal-Katabon crossing, Shahbagh and Sabir Hat in front of Dhaka University Fine

Arts Faculty, said a DMP press release.

Suhrawardy Udyan gates at Sabir Hat, Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of DU, opposite to Bangla Academy, Ramna Kali Mandir and Teen Natar Mazar will be used as entry points.

The DMP requested the intending participants of the procession to follow the route map and cooperate with the traffic division.

## Nepal readies

FROM PAGE 16

away from a top-heavy central government to seven newly created provinces.

The constitution, adopted in 2015, is aimed at cementing Nepal's transformation from a feudal monarchy to a federal democratic state and giving historically marginalised groups greater access to power.

It followed a 10-year civil war between Maoist insurgents and the state that led to the downfall of a deeply unpopular monarch, but also ushered in a long period of political instability that has hampered development.

"It really signals the end of a post conflict transition that was so elongated that we forgot where we were heading," said George Varughese of the Asia Foundation think tank.

"These elections remind us that we are heading towards stability."

The vote will be carried out in two phases and most seats are expected to go to the three parties that have dominated the political stage for the last decade, regularly swapping power in a series of short-lived coalitions.

But some hope the devolution of power to the provinces will diminish their influence and alleviate the political impact of frequent changes of government.

"There is the chance, that although the musical chairs will continue, the effect it will have on national progress will be reduced," said Varughese.

The Maoist Party, formed by the ex-guerrillas after the war ended in 2006, has entered an electoral alliance with the communist CNP-UML party, creating a political behemoth that will be tough to beat.

## Class-II girl 'raped' in Faridpur

### Rapist on the run

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A girl of class-II was allegedly raped by a 28-year-old man in Shimulbazar area of Bhanga upazila Thursday afternoon.

Quoting the victim, neighbours said suspect Don Matabbor gained the girl's trust by offering her some biscuits. He then took her to a lemon orchard and raped her.

Hearing her screams for help, neighbours rushed to the spot and rescued the girl. She was admitted to a hospital.

Her father filed a case under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with Bhanga Police Station.

Gazi Robiul Islam, additional superintendent of police, said the suspect was on the run.

Khalilur Rhman, health and family planning officer of the upazila, said the girl's injuries were not life threatening.

## Robber killed

FROM PAGE 16

He was declared dead upon arriving at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the DC said at a press conference at his office.

Since 2004, law enforcers have been giving similar accounts of events leading to deaths of around 800 suspects in custody, according to rights body Ain o Salish Kendra.

Around 1,900 people were shot and killed during the corresponding period in what the law enforcers claimed were incidents of crossfire, shootout or gunfight, it added.

Rights activists say when an arrested suspect is taken out for a "raid" he gets killed almost every time. The law enforcers should know that they would "come under attack" and should protect the suspect as such incidents keep continuing.

Asked about security measures for Billal when he was taken in the raid, the DC said, "We usually take security measures and will be more careful in future."

Shiblee Noman, additional deputy commissioner, who was present at the briefing, claimed that police had no idea that such incident would take place.

The incident took place suddenly and he was killed, he claimed.

The officers claimed to have recovered a firearm and five bullets from the spot after Billal's "cohorts" had fled.

Three policemen were slightly injured, they claimed.

According to police, Billal was once a car-lifter but later formed a robbery gang. He along with his accomplices allegedly robbed a house in Nagdarpara in Khilgaon in October.

Some of the accused arrested in the case in their confessional statements said Billal had led the robbery, they added.

## Myanmar army

FROM PAGE 2

by senior United Nations officials.

According to a statement on the Facebook page of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, he and the Chinese leader yesterday discussed the "promotion of cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries, the situation of China standing on Myanmar's side at the forefront of the international community regarding the Rakhine issue," and other issues.

Min Aung Hlaing arrived in China on Tuesday and has largely met Chinese military officers during his visit.

The statement also said they discussed ongoing talks between Myanmar's government and myriad ethnic insurgent groups, some of whom are based along Myanmar's shared border with China.

According to Chinese state news agency Xinhua, Xi said China was closely watching the peace process and was "willing to play a constructive role... for security and stability in their border areas."

The Xinhua account did not mention Rakhine, but cited Xi saying that China "always respects Myanmar's sovereignty and territorial integrity".

## John Lennon

FROM PAGE 16

recovered items could be returned to Lennon's estate.

The diaries are on display at Berlin police headquarters with two pairs of his iconic round spectacles, a recording of a Beatles concert on tape, sheet music, and a cigarette case.

Beatles memorabilia often fetches huge prices at auction. In February this year, a leather jacket believed to have been worn by Lennon, sold for £10,400, while in September, a handwritten, original score for "Eleanor Rigby" was removed from auction over claims it had been stolen. It was set to be sold with a guide price of £20,000.

In 2011, one of Lennon's molars sold for £19,500 to a Canadian cosmetic dentist.

## Blindness not an obstacle

FROM PAGE 16

Born with normal eyesight into a middle class family, as the son of Dhaka jute mill worker Sudhir and his wife Sunity Chakrabarty, Sanjit at just 8 months old had the misfortune of losing his father, who was murdered during the 1947 riots. Yet Sudhir already had a plan for his infant son: he hoped Sanjit might be a teacher.

Following her husband's death, Sunity brought her son to live at his maternal uncle's house in Madhapasa village in Srimangal of Moulvibazar, where Sanjit attended school. It was then Sanjit noticed problems with his eyesight, finding it difficult to study in class and unable to read at night. Nonetheless in 1968 he completed his secondary school exam.

Sadly, Sanjit's eyesight worsened. For lack of proper treatment he became fully blind.

The setback did not stop him. In 1969, Sanjit took a teaching job at Huglichara tea garden primary school, where he worked for five years until he was forced to quit due to his blindness.

After liberation in 1971, Sanjit and his mother moved to another relative's house in Ganganagar village near Sayestaganj. There, Sanjit wondered how to occupy himself. He started to teach his cousin who subsequently achieved respectable exam results. From that, Sanjit's reputation grew; more and more students found their way to his door. And when word of his efforts reached the ear of the local landlord from Laskarpur, the landlord donated a small parcel of land where Sanjit, now married, could live.

From 1980 he taught regularly, from a tin shed in front of their home.

Sanjit never set fees; parents paid as they could afford and sometimes, when students achieved noteworthy results, parents paid more. Sanjit earns up to Tk 6,000 per month.

"I have profound respect for my husband," says Sanjit's wife Shukla. "The man's eyes do not see but for many years we've lived happily. Blind people can do anything." The couple has two daughters.

The Daily Star found Sanjit one afternoon, surrounded by twelve students. Sanjit was calling upon each to explain their lessons. "Normally with my students we first read a lesson together," Sanjit says. "Then I explain the detail. Later I ask the students to teach the lesson back to me. In this way we cover each lesson three times. It's a good way to study." Currently, Sanjit teaches primary and secondary level of Bengali, English and Maths.

"When I heard a blind man was teaching I wanted to bring flowers," says Amatul kibria Keya Chowdhury, the Member of Parliament from Habiganj. "I saw his home is dilapidated, that water leaks inside and students sometimes sit on sand-filled gunny sacks to avoid getting wet. I could not believe he's run tuition like this for 37 years! I thought he should have more than flowers." Subsequently the MP provided Tk 25,000 from government funds to improve Sanjit's home.

But Sanjit is more focused on teaching. "I think the key," he says, "is to encourage students systematically. When they can teach me their own lessons with self-confidence, it not only delights me but gives them such positive feelings about their studies."

## Green technology

FROM PAGE 16

Experts and stakeholders said the demand for such environment-friendly and cost-effective items is on the rise but the producers are facing several challenges, including poor sale due to people's tendency towards using the traditional bricks and their lack of awareness about the new products.

Favourable government policies and financial support are required to boost the sector, they said.

Mohammad Abu Sadeque, director of Housing and Building Research Institute (HBRI) that conducts research on housing issues and innovation in construction materials, technology and planning, said the 20 companies are coming forward with the alternative materials as their demand is increasing gradually.

The autonomous body under the housing and public works ministry has prepared an alternative brick made from river-dredged soil and cement. It is implementing a project under SWITCH-Asia programme of European Union, to make the brick popular among consumers and producers.

Concord Group is one of the major companies producing eco-friendly building materials.

Its General Manager Samir Uddin Ahmed said they have been producing hollow blocks, concrete bricks, and pavement blocks with cement, sand and pea gravel, instead of fire bricks, since 1998.

"We have made this decision considering the adverse side of fire brick on the environment and farm land. Now, we don't use a single fire brick in any of our projects," he told The Daily Star on November 13.

He said the government has to take several steps to promote the idea.

"The government can encourage those producing alternative building materials by providing them with soft loans and impose restrictions on the use of fire brick in phases," he said.

Master Concrete Block Manufacturing, a Narsingdi-based firm, has been producing both building and road construction materials without using fire brick for the last four and a half years.

"We do not use soil and none of the

ingredients [Sylhet sand, stone dust and chips and cements] which are harmful to the environment," TM Shaohabul Islam, quality control engineer of the company, said. He also said the government must have a policy regarding the alternative building materials.

The government also should make alternative bricks and other green materials mandatory for the projects implemented by different government agencies like Public Works Department, Education Engineering Department and Local Government Engineering Department, he said.

"Promotion of such products is not possible without the government's policy support," he added.

Mir Concrete Products Limited another private company, is now producing 23 types of green building materials, said Mohammad Salim, head of its marketing.

Structures made of hollow concrete blocks or solid concrete bricks are 20 percent cost saving, and they last longer compared to that made of fire bricks, he said.

Salim further said the government should waive VAT on these products, as currently they have to pay 15 percent VAT on all such materials except hollow blocks.

Architect Iqbal Habib, also joint secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said the government should give incentives to private investors producing the alternative construction items.

Leading environmental activist Syeda Rizwana Hasan said the government should provide financial support to the owners of the brick kilns through Bangladesh Bank's green financing fund, so that they can go for alternative bricks instead of fire bricks.

"Financial support also should be given to the producers of environment-friendly building materials through the fund," said Rezwana, also the chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (Bela).

Import duty on the raw materials and equipment should be withdrawn to encourage production of green materials, she added.

## Mnangagwa sworn in

FROM PAGE 16

After reciting the oath of office, he was given a ceremonial chain and sash of office flanked by his wife Auxilia, receiving salutes and pledges of allegiance from the country's military and security chiefs.

Mnangagwa also used his speech to pay tribute to Mugabe.

"Let me at this stage pay tribute to one of the, and the only surviving, founding fathers of our nation, comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe," Mnangagwa said in front of a crowd of tens of thousands at his inauguration ceremony.

"Let us all accept and acknowledge his immense contribution to the building of our nation."

The 93-year-old former president, who ruled Zimbabwe with an iron fist for 37 years since its liberation from Britain, was ousted after the military intervened over his sacking of Mnangagwa as vice president on November 6.

Two days later, Mnangagwa fled the country, only returning on Wednesday when he said Zimbabwe was entering an era of "full democracy".

But critics have warned Mnangagwa -- whose ruthlessness won him the nickname "The Crocodile" and who has been accused of overseeing violence and ethnic massacres -- could prove just as authoritarian as his mentor.

Yesterday's 21-gun salute marked Mnangagwa's transformation from a sacked enemy of the state to president of a nation of 16 million people.

"We thank you, our soldier," read one banner at the stadium.

"The people have spoken," said another.

"Mnangagwa came at the right time when the economy was showing signs of going back to 2008 when... people were starving," said Nozithelo Mhlana, a 27-year-old accountant.

"Mugabe has left no legacy at all except that of ruin, poverty and corruption."

Mugabe, who is in increasingly frail health, had been positioning his wife Grace as his successor but the army chiefs stepped in to halt the plan.

Mugabe did not attend the inauguration ceremony.

Mnangagwa promised the Mugabes "maximum security and welfare" in talks on Thursday.

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who heads the Movement for Democratic Change received rapturous applause as he arrived at the packed stadium.

Also at the ceremony were Zambian President Edgar Lungu, Botswana's President Ian Khama and Zambian independence leader Kenneth Kaunda -- known as "Africa's Gandhi" -- all of whom were cheered.

Jacob Zuma, president of regional heavyweight South Africa, did not attend as he was hosting a visit by Angola's new head of state.