

বিশ্ব বলেছিলো- পদ্মা সেতু 'সম্ভব না' একজন প্রধানমন্ত্রী আর ১৬ কোটি বাঙালি বলেছিলো- 'কেন না!'

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# Red blinking

## Four large borrowers fail to pay regular instalments, out to have the loans rescheduled again

JEBUN NESA ALO

Four business groups, which got their loans of Tk 3,200 crore restructured under the central bank's special policy around three years ago, have failed to pay regular instalments for most of the loans.

The companies -- SA Group, Ratanpur Group, Keya Group and MR Group -- now owe the money to a dozen state-run and private banks. The amount is 4 percent of the total defaulted loans of Tk 80,307 crore in the banking sector.

These large borrowers have recently applied to Bangladesh Bank for rescheduling the loans again, and are also lobbying with their lenders.

Contacted, SK Sur Chowdhury, deputy governor of the BB, said they are yet to decide on fresh rescheduling of the big loans.

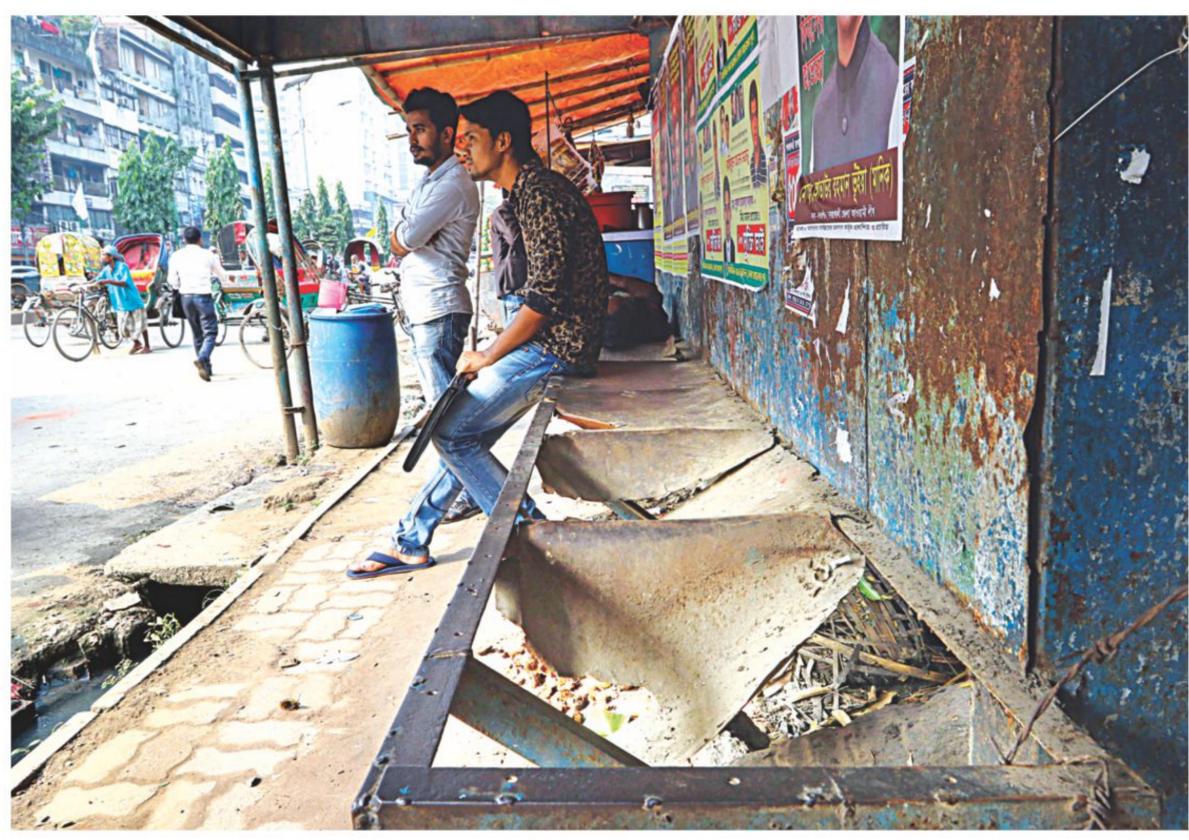
In January 2015, the central bank offered a special package for borrowers who had bank loans of at least Tk 500 crore each. It relaxed the loan rescheduling policy for the borrowers who were required to make a down payment of just 1-2 percent, instead of usual 10-15 percent.

The BB made the move after several companies, including Beximco, Jamuna, Thermax and Sikder groups, asked for the facility, saying they had been affected by political unrest in the country between 2013 and 2015.

Eleven large borrowers availed themselves of the facility and had their loans of Tk 15,000 crore restructured.

Janata Bank alone restructured Tk 5,000 crore loans taken by seven business groups. Of those, three -- SA Group, Ratanpur Group and MR Group -- failed to pay regular instalments for their loans amounting to Tk 1,500.

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This bench for pedestrians opposite the TNT colony gate in the capital's Fakirapool has become almost unusable with more than half of it already gone. Weary citizens somehow find a way to sit on it, but the broken parts pose a hazard with metal bars jutting out. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# May suffers defeat in Brexit bill

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday suffered a damaging parliamentary defeat over Brexit, after her own MPs rebelled to demand parliament have the final say on the divorce deal with Brussels.

Members of May's Conservative party joined with opposition lawmakers to inflict the government's first defeat over the flagship EU (Withdrawal) Bill, sparking huge cheers in the House of Commons.

Ministers had sought to buy off the rebels with a last-minute promise of a parliamentary vote on the separation agreement, but their leader, former attorney general Dominic Grieve, warned: "It's too late."

His amendment demanding a statutory vote on the deal before Britain leaves the EU in March 2019 was passed by 309 votes to 305.

The Brexit ministry said it was "disappointed".

"We will now determine whether further changes are needed to the bill to ensure

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# Minister's son sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Pabna court yesterday sent Shirhan Sharif Tomal, son of Land Minister Shamsur Rahman Sherif, to jail in a case filed in connection with assaulting four journalists in Pabna's Ishwardi on November 29.

Tomal appeared before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court and sought bail. But the court rejected his bail prayer and sent him to jail, said Goutam Kumar, additional superintendent of Pabna police.

Tomal reached the court

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# Trump loses big Alabama bet

REUTERS, Washington

In backing Roy Moore in Alabama's US Senate race even though the candidate faced allegations of sexual misconduct with teenage girls, President Donald Trump made a risky bet - and lost big.

The victory by Democrat Doug Jones over the Republican Moore in the Alabama special election on Tuesday was a catastrophe for Trump, portending a Democratic wave next year that could cost Republicans control of one or both houses of Congress.

The stakes in Alabama were that high. Democrats already were confident they had a strong chance to retake the US House of Representatives in next year's congressional elections. Jones' narrow victory will trim the Republicans' already narrow Senate majority to 51-49, opening the door for Democrats to possibly retake the chamber in next year's congressional elections.

"That Republicans lost in one of the most Republican states in the nation is a wake-up call no matter how flawed their candidate was," said Jesse Ferguson, a Democratic strategist and former aide to Democrat Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign.

Democrats never expected to have a chance in Alabama, where they had not won a US Senate race in 25 years. But the combination of Trump's unpopularity, the sexual misconduct allegations that erupted against Moore in November, and Trump's enthusiastic support of him anyway gave them the opportunity, experts said.

"Trump was the one who got Jones within firing range, and Moore allowed Jones to win," said Kyle Kondik, a political analyst at the University of Virginia.

Even as Democrats lost several special congressional elections this year, they consistently showed higher levels of turnout and engagement, which is attributable to Trump, Kondik said.

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# 262 journo behind bars worldwide

Reports CPJ; Turkey, China, Egypt jail half of them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of journalists incarcerated for their work hit a new record this year and for the second consecutive year more than half of them are in jails of Turkey, China and Egypt, says a special report of the Committee to Protect Journalist.

The CPJ found 262 journalists behind bars around the world, three more than last year's number.

Turkey, China and Egypt combined jailed 134 (51 percent) of them, reveals the report released yesterday.

"The pattern reflects a dismal failure by the international community to address a global crisis in freedom of the press," it read.

According to the report, nearly three-quarters of journalists (194 or 74 percent) were jailed on anti-state charges. The number imprisoned on charges of reporting "false news" rose to a record 21.

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# 'Feminism' is US dictionary's word of the year

AFP, New York



In the year that Donald Trump's inauguration triggered nationwide women's protests and powerful men were toppled by a firestorm of sexual misconduct allegations, the leading US dictionary named "feminism" its word of 2017.

Merriam-Webster bestows the "Word of the Year" honour on the word or term with the sharpest spike in look-ups over the previous year.

This year the dictionary announced a 70 percent increase in online searches for "feminism" compared to 2016, recording multiple spikes corresponding to a string of news reports and events.

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# Love lands youth in foreign jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kolkata

A wrong number resulted in a relationship between an Indian girl and a Bangladeshi boy.

It soon became a classic love story full of passion and obstacles.

One day about a year and a half back, 19-year old Antor Singh of Baro Bari village in Panchagarh district, while

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**SIBL Foundation Hospital & Diagnostic Center**

**PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 14**  
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

**AZAN** 5-15 12-45 3-45 5-19 7-00  
**JAMAAT** 5-50 1-15 4-00 5-22 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

# Ensure refund of extra fees for HSC, SSC examinations

HC asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday ordered the government to make the schools and colleges refund extra fees charged from candidates of Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary Certificate exams for taking their tests within 30 days.

Activities of the existing management committees and governing bodies of those educational institutions would otherwise be suspended, said the HC.

During a hearing on a suo moto rule, the court cautioned that no educational institutions could charge additional fees from the SSC and HSC examinees to let them sit for their exams.

It also said no school and college would refuse to allow any student to fill up their registration forms for taking part in exams if they failed to pay extra fees.

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Azizur Rahman Aziz is busy giving art lessons at his institution at Rautara village in Magura Sadar Upazila. The 80-year-old artist, who fought for the country's liberation in 1971, now teaches students in his village painting, music and dance solely out of passion and without any remuneration.

PHOTO: AZIZUR RAHMAN

# For love of the country, for love of art

## 80-year-old freedom fighter runs own art school for village children

AZIZUR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

None could say that Azizur Rahman, 80, from Rautara village in Magura Sadar upazila hasn't contributed to his country. As a freedom fighter he had an active role in the Liberation War, serving in sector eight. Nor could anyone begrudge him if he chose to live his old age quietly. But Aziz, an experienced artist, contributes still. Of his own initiative and without remuneration he teaches painting, music and dance to village youths, in the process imparting the proud legacy of liberation.

"In 1971 I fought for the people of this country," says Aziz. "Now I fight to make the present generation aware through art and culture about the bloodshed, about the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives."

Aziz, who was born in Rautara in 1938 and passed his Higher School Certificate in 1972, studied art under Mostafa Monoar, son of the poet Golam Mostafa.

Subsequently, in 1985 he founded the Mostafa Aziz Art and Culture Centre on six decimals of his own land. It's hardly the sort of institution one would expect to find in a rustic location like Rautara, fifteen kilometres from the district town.

"It's not only painting, music and dance that I teach to the village children," says Aziz. "I also hope to convey a healthy sense of patriotism, nationalism and humanism."

He admits some of his own paintings and sketches illustrate

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