



The bus heading for Panchagarh from Dhaka flipped over at Jailmor of Birganj in Dinajpur while trying to making a turn at speed early in the morning yesterday. At least 20 people were hurt. PHOTO: COLLECTED

FRUSTRATION OVER HANDLING TERROR GROUPS

US may withhold \$255m aid to Pakistan: report

work's captivity. Also captured alive during the raid was one of the abductors who, the NYT report claims, was never mentioned by Pakistan but the US knows exists.

Citing an unnamed US official, the report further states that the Trump administration has reasons to believe that the said abductor could be key to getting more of its citizens freed from the Haqqani network, but that it suspects Pakistan does not want to disrupt the group's activities for the sake of its own internal security.

Since coming into power, American President Donald Trump has time and again questioned Pakistan's commitment to countering terrorism, telling its non-Nato ally it is obliged to help US.

Through Vice President Mike Pence recently, the White House again warned Islamabad that it has been 'put on notice.'

The report says the latest stand-off

Year of ballots, fear in mind

In the financial sector, fragile governance was exposed with the disclosure of some more shocking scams in the banking sector. Frequent leakage of question papers of public examinations has also become an example of poor governance.

Yet, life must go on in the election year. And people are supposed to feel excited as they will be exercising their right to franchise and elect a new government. But fear of political turmoil is growing because of unresolved issues over the mode of the government during the next parliamentary election. Citing past parliamentary elections, some political analysts termed the present calm as the lull before the storm.

BNP chief Khaleda Zia has recently urged her party men to prepare for the election alongside agitation for a non-partisan election-time government. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has categorically rejected Khaleda's demand and refused to hold any discussion with the BNP to resolve the dispute and her party leaders announced that they would face the BNP politically.

If the BNP takes to the streets with the demand, political situation is feared to be confrontational again as it had happened in the past. The country witnessed severe political turmoil ahead of the parliamentary elections held in 1996, 2008, and 2014 and the people and the country's economy suffered immensely for this. Political crisis over the mode of election-time government contributed to the one-sided parliamentary election twice, once in February 1996 and again on January 5, 2014. Amid grave political unrest, a state of emergency was declared in October 2006 which lasted for around two years.

The first election was held in 1991 after the ouster of the autocratic Ershad regime following a long street agitation by the AL, the BNP and other parties.

The country stepped into 2001 parliamentary election without any

Key suspect held in Bogra

JMB's Rajshahi region as the military wing chief in 2004 and took part in the operational activities along with JMB's then supremo Shaikh Abdur Rahman and his second-in-command Siddiqur Rahman alias Bangla Bhai in Rajshahi's Baghmara.

During the countrywide series bomb blasts on August 17, 2005, Talha was involved in the Naogaon court bomb blast. After the court sentenced him to death, Talha fled to India in 2007.

He later married the daughter of JMB leader Eyadul of West Bengal's Murshidabad district in 2009 and started militant activities there. He stayed there in guise of a honey trader after he was

Chaurasia billed

FROM PAGE 18 was chief guest. Chhayanaut chair Dr Sanjida Khatun was special guest at the programme. Faridur Reza Sagar, managing director of Channel i and Amina Ahmed (on behalf of her son Kazi Nabil Ahmed -- vice chairman of Abahani) and Bengal Foundation chair Abul Khair also spoke. Prof Emeritus Anisuzzaman, to whom this year's festival is dedicated to, chaired the session.

Abul Khair delivered a note of thanks to all individuals, organisations and government bodies who assisted in making this festival possible. He also announced that in partnership with the Indian High Commission, Bengal Foundation will hold classical music soirees at district levels every two months in various parts of Bangladesh.

Dr Sanjida Khatun in her address said, "We first realised the power of culture when there were attempts to make Banglaeas forget their identity." Underlining the power of culture in creating good human beings and fighting evil forces, she urged the government to spread cultural events and practices to reach out to people outside the capital.

Prof Anisuzzaman said, "At a time when classical music was on the wane in the country, Bengal Foundation's efforts have rejuvenated it."

As evening drew into night the venue packed up with people streaming in, with many utilising floor mats kept at the venue to set up their own seating arrangement. Through all the fervor, melancholy of departure hung like a thin December mist over the audience, as the five-night extravaganza that had become Dhaka's biggest social spot, would keep them waiting another year before its return.

The next performance of the night was a presentation of Raga Maru Bihag on the Mohan Veena by Vishwa Mohan Bhatt. At his first performance on this festival's stage, the instrumentalist gave a crowd-pleasing performance of two dhuns along with singing lines in Bangla, and a composition from his Grammy-winning album "A Meeting by the River".

Khyal vocalist Brajeshwar Mukherjee, sitar by Pt Kushal Das and his son Kalyanjit Das, and khyal vocals by Kaivalya Kumar were next on cue.

'Missing' BNP leader

FROM PAGE 18 A laptop, three mobile phones, and some bank documents were in his possession, the police official added.

Family members had alleged that Sadat, a central executive committee member of the BNP and the managing director of ABN Group, was picked up from the Banani Flyover area around 3:00pm on August 22.

The Daily Star could not contact Sadat's family last night.

The arrest of Sadat comes just over a week after Bangladesh Kalyan Party Secretary General MM Aminur Rahman, who had been missing for around four months, was shown arrested in a case filed in 2015 under the Explosive Substances Act.

Since August 22, at least 12 people had gone missing from the capital. Five of them have since returned while police later said to have arrested four others. Those still missing include ex-ambassador Maroof Zaman.

No New Year

FROM PAGE 18 in uniform and plainclothes, along with Special Weapon and Tactic Team officials would be deployed at major points of the capital, while a SWAT team and bomb disposal unit will be on standby at the DMP headquarters, the commissioner told reporters briefing on security measures ahead of the New Year celebrations.

Asked if there are any specific threats behind such strict measures, he said there were no specific threats but they were alert and working round the clock.

The DMP chief said considering the current realities, especially the recent bomb attack by a Bangladeshi citizen in New York, they were issuing the instructions as "preventive measures".

The DMP wants city people to inform it about any indoor programmes so that no untoward incidents can take place and law enforcers can provide safety to the people.

No reckless driving or use of crackers will be allowed on the night of the year end, he said, adding tough measures will be taken against anybody who disobeys these instructions.

The DMP boss also requested city dwellers not to stay at Hatirjheel and Dhanmondi Rabindra Sarobar after 8:00 pm on that night. Dhaka University (DU) campus, Gulshan and Baridhara areas will be restricted for outsiders after 8:00pm.

Checkpoints will be set up in Gulshan and Baridhara areas. Residents are asked to return home by 8:00pm and these two areas will be accessible only through Kamal Ataturk Avenue at Kakoli and Amtoli intersections in Mohakhali.

Residents wishing to enter these areas after 8.00pm will only be allowed to do so after a body check, said the commissioner.

Bars will have to be closed before 6:00pm on December 31 and the licensed firearms cannot be carried for nine hours starting from 8:00pm.

'We will not go home'

FROM PAGE 18 We have done our work. But the money that is needed for the MPO enlistment will have to be allocated by the finance ministry," Nahid said.

"Lawmakers raised the matter in parliament and every time I spoke in favour of the teachers and the lack of funds that halted the process. But unfortunately, the teachers cannot accept the fact that we are fighting for them. Instead, they put pressure on us," he added.

"Please don't stay on the streets which may not yield any result. We have been trying our best. When the finance ministry allocates the money in our budget, we will give MPO instantly," the minister added.

Hours after the minister's call, Golam Mahmudunnabi said, "We have been hearing the same thing from the minister for years. He did not take any step for meeting our demand; rather he made negative remarks about us. This time we will not return home..."

Several hundred teachers from across the country started a sit-in on Tuesday in front of the Jatiya Press Club, demanding enlistment under the government's Monthly Pay Order (MPO) facilities.

MPO is the government's share in the payroll of the non-government educational institutions. Under the scheme, the government gives 100 percent basic salaries to the teachers of non-government schools. The teachers also get a lump sum amount as other allowances from the MPO.

As per rules, the educational institutions first come under MPO facilities and then the government enlists the teachers in the payroll.

According to the leaders of the federation, the number of non-MPO

educational institutions is 5,242, where around 80,000 teachers are working without any pay, some for more than a decade.

This is because the schools do not have the ability to pay the teachers while the government stopped enlisting the institutions for MPO due to "fund crisis".

After a suspension of six years by the then BNP-led alliance government, the Awami League-led government revived the MPO facility in 2010, as per its electoral pledge, and enlisting 1,624 private secondary and higher secondary schools and colleges in the MPO scheme.

The rest of the non-MPO teachers have been staging various protests since then.

Currently, more than four lakh teachers and employees of more than 26,340 secondary schools, colleges, madrasas, and technical institutes are receiving MPO facilities.

Vanishing

FROM PAGE 1 President of People's Voice, a platform for saving hills, told The Daily Star cutting down hills could boomerang on these people in the rainy season like the catastrophe last monsoon.

"The administration and police know who cut the hills and benefit from it. But they act only when a catastrophe strikes," he added.

Asked, the director of the Department of Environment, Chittagong said they were trying their level best to check the menace.

"I was not aware of the recent leveling of hills in Bayezid area. We will look into the matter as soon as possible," he added.

Parents wait hours

FROM PAGE 1 results via SMS and it also uploaded the results on its website along with some other government sites.

Aggrieved parent Al-Amin termed the situation ridiculous. "I have been trying for five hours to get the results of my daughter online. But every time I clicked the 'boards results', it said 'not found' along with some jargons."

Al-Amin said he thought that the education board was testing the nerves of millions by using a system that does not work.

"One of my relatives told me that she had spent Tk 40 online [in data charges and for texts] but failed to get the results," said Al-Amin. He and his family members had spent around Tk 80 for the same.

Another parent Shamim Ahmed said he sent four texts at four different times between 12:30pm and the next two hours but failed to get any response from Teletalk (until 8:20pm).

"My child attended the examination last month and we the guardians also faced another examination today," said Shamim.

Teletalk's preparation was insufficient for handling the traffic, said Kazi Md Golam Quddus, managing director of Teletalk.

He said they had taken additional preparations, compared to previous years, but website's visitors were unexpectedly high and they got millions of

texts in the few hours of the result being published.

"This load created congestion in our network and servers," said Quddus.

Service was hampered for around two hours due to the congestion, said Quddus.

However, parents said they had to wait four to five hours for the results.

More than 51.78 lakh students appeared for the Primary School Certificate examination, Junior Secondary Certificate, and Junior Dakhil Certificate examinations this year and their results were published yesterday noon.

There were three to four texts sent for the result of every student and all of a sudden most of them were trying to visit the Teletalk site, said Quddus.

"Increasing the capacity requires money and we face this type of situation only for a few hours a year."

Quddus said the national data transmission network was also not well prepared to handle this type of rush and it needed upgrade.

Other carriers also deliver exam results via text but they serve their customers taking the results from Teletalk.

"The government does not like to engage other mobile carriers in this process as there are security concerns," said a top official of Teletalk.

Quddus said they were trying to increase their capacity and server strength.

'The world is watching'

FROM PAGE 18 "The United States strongly condemns the arrest of peaceful protesters. We urge all nations to publicly support the Iranian people and their demands for basic rights and an end to corruption," she said in a statement.

Iran said yesterday that US President Donald Trump's support for protests in the country was "deceitful and opportunist".

"The Iranian people see no value in the opportunistic remarks by American officials and Mr Trump," foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said on its website.

He said Iranians remembered Trump's actions in barring them from entry to the United States and "the arrest of many Iranians in that country on baseless pretexts".

"That's why they see the support of these officials for some rallies in recent days in some Iranian cities as opportunistic," he added.

"The constitution of the Islamic republic of Iran has established democratic structures for the legal support of people's civil demands," he said.

PROTESTS AT TEHRAN UNIVERSITY Meanwhile, students protested in Tehran yesterday in a third day of demonstrations sparked by anger over Iran's economic problems, videos on social media showed, but were outnumbered by counter-demonstrators.

The pro-regime students shouted "Death to the seditionists" as they seized back control of the entrance of the University of Tehran, videos published by several local news agencies showed.

It followed a relatively small protest by several dozen students, with videos on social media showing scuffles with police and chants against the regime.

"The opportunists who wanted to benefit from the situation have been dispersed with the arrival of (the other) students," the conservative-linked Tasnim news agency reported.

The numbers appeared to be smaller

than demonstrations seen across other major towns and cities on Thursday and Friday, which had been sparked by high living costs but quickly turned against the Islamic regime as a whole.

The conservative-linked Fars news agency said "harsh chants" were heard at the Tehran protests and that riot police had been dispatched to the scene.

"Unlike other protests in various cities which were against the economic situation and high prices, the one in front of the University of Tehran is political," Fars said.

The students repeated a popular chant of "Not Gaza, not Lebanon, my life for Iran" -- an expression of anger over claims the government is focusing more on regional issues than problems at home.

Focus more

FROM PAGE 2 fell flat when the BNP-Jamaat government came to power in 2001, she told the programme.

"We had increased the literacy rate to 65.5 percent from 45 percent in five years, but the rate dipped again. We got an award from Unesco for enhancing the literacy rate..."

"After forming the government following the 2008 election, we took initiatives again. So, the literacy rate now stands at 72 percent according to official statistics. Actually, the rate is even higher," she said.

Hasina said the dropout rate has declined and students were becoming attentive to their studies due to the government's steps.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid handed over the results of JSC and JDC exams to the PM, while Primary and Mass Education Minister Mustafizur Rahman handed over the PEC and Ebtedayee results.

The chairmen of eight general, madrasa and technical education boards handed over the JSC and JDC exam results of their respective boards to the premier.