



This photo shows damage to a road near Mendi in Papua New Guinea's highlands region after a 7.5-magnitude earthquake. Communication blackouts and blocked roads were hampering rescue efforts on February 28 as Papua New Guinea worked to get a better grasp of the damage wrought by a massive earthquake amid fears of its economic impact.

PHOTO: AFP

Nizam Hazari

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two-member HC bench on December 6, 2016, had delivered a split verdict on the prayer. Justice Md Emdadul Huq, senior judge of the HC bench, in the judgment said Nizam can't hold the office of the parliament member as per article 66 (2)(D) of the constitution as he was convicted in an arms case.

Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan, junior judge of the same bench, said the writ petition was not acceptable as there was a question of disputed fact regarding serving jail by Nizam. Shakhawat Hossain Bhuiyan, a Jubo League leader from Feni, had filed the petition as a public interest litigation with the HC on June 8, 2014. He prayed to the court to declare Nizam disqualified for contesting the parliamentary polls and holding the office of lawmaker because of his alleged forgery to get released from jail early in a criminal case.

Quoting a newspaper report, Shakhawat in his petition said a Chittagong court sentenced Nizam to 10 years' imprisonment in an arms case on August 16, 2000. He surrendered to the court on September 14, 2000, and was sent to Chittagong jail.

He walked free from jail on December 1, 2005, through fraudulence, the petitioner said.

Nizam was supposed to be in jail until September 13, 2010, and he, according to the law, was not supposed to be eligible to run in parliamentary polls before September 2015. The AL leader provided false information about serving his jail term to the Election Commission, he added.

Following the writ petition, the HC on the same day issued a rule, asking the government and the EC to explain why his parliament seat should not be declared vacant.

The inspector general of prisons submitted a report to the HC on July 19, 2016 saying that Nizam had been in jail around two and a half years less than he was supposed to.

During hearing on the petition, petitioner's lawyer Quamrul Haque Siddique told the HC court that Nizam cannot hold the post of a lawmaker and he would have to serve in jail if the IG prisons report was correct.

Nizam's lawyers Shafique Ahmed and Nurul Islam Sujan opposed the petition, saying that their client had served the entire term of the jail sentence and therefore, the petition was not filed in public interest.

Six aid workers killed in C Africa

AFP, Bangui

Unknown attackers have killed six humanitarian workers including one from the United Nations children's fund Unicef in the northwest of the Central African Republic, the UN said Wednesday.

The world body's Minusca mission "condemned the attack which led to the death of the six humanitarian workers including one from Unicef," on Sunday at Markounda.

Markounda has been plagued with violence since the end of last year as the National Movement for the Liberation of Central Africa and the Revolution and Justice party battle for domination.

Bangladesh leads

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Of the 67 running green garment factories in Bangladesh, 13 are rated platinum, the highest category in LEED certification. Gold, silver, and normal are the other certifications.

Bangladesh not only has the highest number of green garment factories, but also the highest number of the top scoring green garment factories, according to the USGBC. Seven out of 10 top scorers are in Bangladesh.

A LEED-certified factory building ensures 25-30 percent less water and energy consumption, and fewer industrial accidents, like fires, causing fewer casualties with special architectural design.

Currently, Bangladesh has 650 green buildings registered with the USGBC, said Gopalakrishnan. Of them, 303 were in non-RMG sectors, like commercial, footwear, and leather goods.

In the case of India, one of the major competitors of Bangladesh in global garment trade, only five green factories are in operation and 25 will get the certification soon, Gopalakrishnan said.

India, being one of the biggest countries in the world, should have more green garment factories, he said.

The Washington-based USGBC has 90,000 green projects covering 20 billion square feet of space across the world, he said.

The 13 platinum-rated green garment factories that received awards from USGBC yesterday are: Remi Holdings Ltd, Tarasima Apparels Ltd, Plummy Fashions Ltd, Vintage Denim Studio Ltd, Columbia Washing Plant Ltd, Echotex Ltd, SQ Celsius Unit 2 Ltd, Kaniz Fashions Ltd, Genesis Washing Ltd, Genesis Fashions Ltd, SQ Birichina Ltd, SQ Col Blanc Ltd and Envoy Textiles Ltd.

Managing Director Fazlul Hoque of Plummy Fashions Ltd said

Bangladesh is well ahead of the rest of the garment producing nations.

"However, our positive achievements are not highlighted in the global media," he said.

Miran Ali, chairman of Remi Holdings Ltd, said, "Over the years, we have heard about the green garment factories in Sri Lanka. But a few years ago, some of our entrepreneurs started thinking about it and finally we succeeded. Now we have the highest number of green garment factories in the world."

Anisul Islam Mahmud, minister for environment and forests, said in the beginning, the introduction of the back-to-back letters of credit for garment industries helped a great deal. It paved the way for the success of today.

3 more killed

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The death toll from stone quarry accidents has stood at 20 in the first two months of the year, according to media reports.

Two Biman

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Manager, Public Relation, Biman, Shakil Meraj said departmental actions will be taken if there is substantial proof against the two detained.

According to Saudi rules, possession of drugs is a highly punishable offense.

According to Arif Pathan Rohit's Facebook profile, he studied Electrical and Electronics Engineering at American International University-Bangladesh, and completed his flying course in Bangladesh Flying Academy. Biman sources have confirmed that the profile belongs to Arif.

The Daily Star could not yet contact Saudi law enforcement for a comment.

Govt aims at ensuring

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have invented flood-, drought- and salinity-tolerant rice.

The premier asked the authorities concerned to include agriculture and its practical aspects in curricula to encourage students to know about the cultivation system properly.

"After completing education, many people do not want to go to the farmland for agricultural works. The agriculture minister is here. I think special measures should be taken to make our students curious and sincere about agricultural works.... They should have a subject on agriculture alongside a practical one," she said.

She described agriculture as the lifeline of Bangladesh's economy.

"We will gradually shift our dependence on industry, but not at the expense of agriculture as it will provide raw materials for industries apart from ensuring food security.

"Students should learn this [agricultural work]; there is nothing to be ashamed of if anyone plants a sapling with his own hands."

She said the government wants children to acquire knowledge about agricultural works from their childhood.

The government has been helping all concerned adopt modern technol-

ogy in agriculture and also has been providing equipment to farmers, she told the programme.

Stressing on setting up food-processing industries across the country, Hasina said Bangladesh has huge potentials in this sector as it can help earn foreign currency through export.

She asked the authorities for protecting agricultural land from the onslaught of unplanned urbanisation and industrialisation.

The PM said the government gives "Bangabandhu Jatiya Krishi Purashkar" during every Bengali New Year.

The award is the highest state recognition for contributions to the development of the country's agriculture sector.

Five gold, nine silver and 18 bronze medals in 10 categories are given to different organisations and individuals each year.

The awardees received medals, cash and certificates from the prime minister.

On behalf of the winners, Farhana Yasmin spoke at the programme.

Chaired by Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, the function was addressed, among others, by Fisheries and Livestock Minister Narayan Chandra Chanda.

Myanmar

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Labour MP Stephen Twigg said that it was hard to escape the conclusion that this was a direct consequence of the committee's report on the Rohingyas.

The refusal to allow entry to the committee has also hampered its job of overseeing the projects in Myanmar funded by a £100 million Department for International Development (DFID) aid programme for 2018-19, Twigg said.

The UK MPs were due to visit the health and education projects in Myanmar's Rakhine state and Magway region.

Earlier in January, the committee expressed "grave concern" about the plans to repatriate the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, terming the crisis a "huge human tragedy" caused by Myanmar's actions.

The UK MPs had warned against any repatriation plan for the Rohingyas without guarantees of protection, and called for voluntary return of the refugees, Telegraph added.

The governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar had earlier drawn up an agreement to begin repatriation of the Rohingya refugees from late January. The repatriation process, however, has been postponed for logistical reasons, reports The Telegraph.

The Rohingyas in the refugee camps in Bangladesh were reportedly traumatised by fears of forced return to Myanmar, with their community leaders demanding the Myanmar authorities first guarantee the Rohingyas of their long-denied citizenship and include them in the country's list of recognised ethnic groups.

On Wednesday, February 28, 2018, hundreds of Rohingyas living in the no man's land between Bangladesh and Myanmar abruptly fled into Bangladesh, claiming that Myanmar soldiers had threatened them to leave.

The incident took place after the Myanmar soldiers beefed up patrols along the barbed wire border fence, increasing pressure and causing panic among the around 6,000 people living on the thin strip of land between the two countries.

Driving not 'be all' of Saudi women's rights: princess

AFP, Washington

Saudi Arabia is working to address deeper issues on the path to women's rights after allowing them to drive and attend soccer matches, one of the kingdom's top female officials said Wednesday.

"These are things that are quick wins, we know we can do them, women in stadium, women driving, that's great, but women driving is not the end all, be all of women's rights," Princess Reema bint Bandar al-Saud told the Atlantic Council in Washington.

As part of a wide-ranging social and economic reform initiative in the face of fallen oil revenue, King Salman announced in September that Saudi women would be allowed to drive from June this year.

Russia boasts

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He also praised a new generation of young scientists working on such weaponry, calling them "the heroes of our time".

Putin, who has led Russia for almost two decades and is seeking a historic fourth Kremlin term that would extend his rule to 2024, also laid out a number of social, economic and environmental measures.

In the absence of any programme and with Putin having refused to take part in TV debates with other candidates, the address suggested cutting poverty and improving the environment would be top goals for his expected new six-year term.

The 65-year-old said he aimed to cut the country's "unacceptable" poverty rate in half over the next six years, but said 22 million fewer Russians were now living below the poverty line than when he was first elected president in 2000.

"The well-being of Russia and the well-being of our citizens must be the foundation of everything, and it is in this area that we must make a breakthrough," Putin said.

He also promised further regulations for businesses in order to reduce industrial emissions, as he spoke of

millions of people forced to drink water "that does not meet standards" and "black snow" in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk.

"People in industrial hubs can go for weeks without seeing the sun because of smog," he said.

Putin, who coughed throughout the speech and was forced to pause to drink from a cup, was given an ecstatic reception in the hall during the televised address but some online comments were less enthusiastic.

"The old man only perked up when he was talking about how he can destroy the world. A moment of truth!" said political analyst and former Kremlin advisor Gleb Pavlovsky on social media.

Despite campaign promises when Putin returned to the Kremlin in 2012 after four years as prime minister, his last term was marked by a fall in living standards and Russia's international isolation, critics say.

Boosted by a slavish domestic media and foreign interventions, including the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, his approval rating remains sky-high and official polls suggest he is likely to take 70 percent of the vote.

Trump stuns all

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"He surprised me," Democratic Senator Chris Murphy later told AFP. "He committed very forcefully and very clearly to comprehensive background checks, raising the age on purchase of assault weapons, and protective orders."

With tears, fears and defiance, students also made an emotional return Wednesday to their Florida high school where a former classmate went on a shooting rampage two weeks ago, killing 17 people.

Students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland were greeted by heavy security and scores of well-wishers as they returned to classes.

Dozens of police officers lined the sidewalks saying "Good morning" to each child and retired officers passed out flowers. Former students, neighbors and their children held banners reading "We Love You," "You've Got This" and "We Are With You."

"It's all a little overwhelming," said one 17-year-old student named William, who shared a classroom with two of the young victims, Nicholas Dworet and Meadow Pollack.

"It was just sad to go back there and not have my friends who were in the class with me anymore."

Likewise, by Kimberly Miller, the first day back meant confronting the absence of her geography

teacher, 35-year-old Scott Beigel.

Beigel was one of three staff killed, along with 14 teenagers, when former student Nikolas Cruz entered the school on Valentine's Day and opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle.

"It's pretty upsetting," said the 14-year-old Miller. "But it was also refreshing to talk to everyone because people don't really understand how it feels, no matter how much they try to understand."

While there were few open displays of grief, many students looked somber, speaking in hushed tones with their eyes downcast.

Since the shooting, Stoneman Douglas students have been lobbying politicians for stricter gun controls both in their home state of Florida and in Washington.

Republican lawmakers, with majorities in the US Congress and the Florida state legislature, have been cool on bringing in major reforms on the sales of firearms.

But Trump upped the pressure on lawmakers to get to work, hosting the bipartisan meeting at the White House where he raised eyebrows with his tough stance.

Democrats argued that Trump had power Democratic President Barack Obama never had: trust with the Republican base that he would not infringe on the Second Amendment.

Dockets could be sent

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Orphanage Trust case, in which BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was sentenced to five years in prison.

The HC also stayed the lower court order that fined Khaleda Tk 2.10 crore.

After receiving the case records, the HC will pass an order regarding Khaleda's bail petition.

Khaleda filed an appeal with the HC on February 20, challenging the verdict in Zia Orphanage Trust case.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Shahidul Karim had set February 22 for a hearing on whether the appeal would be accepted.

On February 8, Judge Md Akhtaruzzamn of Special Judge Court-5 delivered verdict in the graft case.

Khaleda was sent to Old Central Jail with the conviction warrant after the verdict.

Khaleda would have been in jail for almost a month by the time the court sends the case dockets to the HC on Wednesday (March 7), court officials said.

The trial court took over 11 days to provide certified copies of the verdict convicting Khaleda.

The court also sentenced Khaleda's son Tarique Rahman and four others to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment and fined them Tk 2.10 crore each in the case.

LEAFLET DISTRIBUTION

BNP leaders including the Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday distributed leaflets at different points in the capital demanding release of Khaleda.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, BNP senior joint secretary general, launched the programme by distributing leaflets among people before the party's Nayapaltna office around 10:15am.

Fakhrul and Abdul Moyeen Khan, BNP standing committee member, distributed leaflets in Purana Paltna and Motijheel areas.

Fakhrul said the leaflets stated how their chairperson has been "subjected to injustice".

A large number of law enforcers were deployed in Nayapaltna area following the leaflet distribution.

BNP SEEKS PERMISSION FOR RALLY

The BNP sought the authorities'

permission to hold a rally in the historic Suhrawardy Udyan on March 11 demanding Khaleda's release, Rizvi said at a press briefing at the party's Nayapaltna office.

The party had applied to Dhaka Metropolitan Police and Department of Public Works yesterday seeking permission for the event.

The BNP was denied permission to hold a rally at the same place last month.

Signal

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window on the early Universe," said Arizona State University astronomer Judd Bowman, the project's lead investigator.

"Telescopes cannot see far enough to directly image such ancient stars, but we've seen when they turned on -- that is, sparked to life -- in radio waves arriving from space."

Fingerprints of the stars, already active 13.6 billion years ago -- a mere 180 million years after the Big Bang gave rise to the Universe -- were picked up by a dining table-sized radio spectrometer in the Australian desert.

Such evidence had been expected, but not for years to come. To everyone's surprise, and delight, the signal contained something curious.

The early Universe, the data showed, appears to have been twice as cold as previously estimated, at minus 270 degrees Celsius (-454 degrees Fahrenheit), according to the study in Nature.

Some suggested a role for dark matter -- the theme of an accompanying science paper published by the same journal.

The author of that study, Rennan Barkana of Tel Aviv University, said the freeze might be explained by ordinary matter interacting with, and losing energy to, dark matter.

"If Barkana's idea is confirmed then we've learnt something new and fundamental about the mysterious dark matter that makes up 85 percent of the matter in the Universe, providing the first glimpse of physics beyond the Standard Model," said Bowman.