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# HARVEST FEST at Chalan Beel

ANWAR ALI with ANDREW EAGLE

One evening, not too many evenings ago, when Sammer Ali from Rajshahi's Charghat set off by a buffalo cart, it was almost empty but hopes were high. Some 50 kilometres ahead are the vast paddy fields of the Chalan Beel wetland. With the Boro paddy harvest underway, Sammer is sure to find work.

"I'll spend three weeks in the fields," says Sammer, an agricultural labourer. "When I'm done, I'll return home with the paddy I earned."

Sammer is not alone in expecting to be paid in paddy. Many of the hundreds of prospective labourers attracted to the Chalan Beel area during the current Boro harvest, and also in November when Aman paddy is harvested, expect the same. Indeed they prefer it.

"The paddy I earn will feed my family for half a year," Sammer says. "I'll also sell some."

The local cash rate for a farm labourer is around Tk 300 per day. Labourers paid in paddy can earn an effective daily rate of up to Tk 1,000.

Harvest has some urgency in the wetlands. With the arrival of monsoon, many parts of Chalan Beel, currently awash with green sheaves, will go under

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Riding buffalo-drawn carts, two labourers are heading towards Chalan Beel to harvest boro paddy. Workers from Natore, Kushtia, Jessore, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, and some other districts travel to the Beel area to harvest paddy as they have little work to do in their localities during this time of the year. Right, labourers are busy harvesting paddy. The photos were taken in Natore last week.



PHOTO: ANWAR ALI

## CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA FB data-harvest firm shut down

AFP, London

Cambridge Analytica, the British marketing analytics firm, announced Wednesday that it was closing and would file for insolvency in Britain and the United States after failing to recover from the Facebook data scandal.

The decision follows weeks of intense pressure on the company, hired by Donald Trump's presidential campaign, after allegations emerged it may have hijacked up to 87 million Facebook users' data.

It claimed it has been "vilified" by the "numerous unfounded accusations" which torpedoed its business and left the firm with "no realistic alternative" but to go into administration.

"Despite Cambridge Analytica's unwavering confidence that its employees have acted ethically and lawfully... the siege of media coverage has driven away virtually all of the company's customers and suppliers," it said in a statement.

"As a result, it has been determined that it is no longer viable to continue operating the business."

An affiliate of British firm Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL), CA has offices in London, New York,

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## DEATH OF THREE IN MIRPUR Mother's 'suicide note' found: cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday recovered a "suicide note" from the office desk of the woman who along with her two daughters was found dead with numerous stab wounds at a government quarter in the capital's Mirpur on Monday.

"Darkness surrounded me from every side. So I took the decision. My terrible misfortune is responsible for my death," Selimuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Darussalam Police Station, told The Daily Star quoting from the note.

Police visited the mother's office at the Department of Agricultural Extension in Khamarbari and recovered the "suicide note". It was sent to the forensic lab of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to determine whether it was written by the woman.

"Our suspicion that Jesmin Akhtar first stabbed her two daughters dead and then killed herself will grow stronger if the hand writing on the note matched with that of Jesmin in the lab test," Jahangir Alam, assistant commissioner (Darussalam Zone of Mirpur Division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star.

Police recovered the bodies of Jesmin, 35, her daughters Adila Tahsin Hani, 4, and Hasiba Tasnim Himi, 9, from their house near Mirpur Bangla College.

Confusion remains over the deaths as three relatives who were in a nearby room claimed that they didn't hear any scream. Besides, questions arose whether an individual can stab herself numerous times to commit suicide.

According to the autopsy report, Jesmin's body bore marks of seven minor or grievous stabs. There were cut marks in her wrists, abdomen and

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## Govt not reluctant

Law minister says on amending proposed digital security act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is not reluctant to amend the proposed Digital Security Act and rid it of any vagueness, Law Minister Anisul Huq said yesterday.

"We are a democratic government. We believe that the law is for the people. We have no hesitation to discuss the law. If it is found that there is any vagueness in the law and it needs to be amended, we will do it," he told reporters at Sonargaon hotel in the capital.

He announced that the parliamentary standing committee on post, telecom and ICT will meet media representatives on May 22 and discuss issues regarding the proposed law.

Representatives of the Editors' Council, Bangladesh Federal Union

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## Universe is finite! States Hawking's final paper

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



Stephen Hawking's final statement on the universe has been revealed: it is more finite and more simple than we might have thought.

The famous physicist's final work, submitted before his death, has been published in the Journal of High Energy Physics. Written with Belgian physicist Thomas Hertog, it delves into how the universe began.

The two worked on the groundbreaking paper towards the very end of Hawking's life, even as that work and communicating about it became very difficult. It uses new thinking - based on the idea that our universe is a very large and complex hologram - to suggest that a popular account of the beginning of our universe is wrong.

The usual theory of the Big Bang says that our

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## Jail official suspended for trying to sell yaba

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A deputy jailer of Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj was suspended yesterday for trying to sell yaba tablets through a person outside the jail.

The deputy jailer is Mominul Islam.

Five months back, 59 yaba pills were recovered from a prison guard and those were kept at the establishment department, Mahbulul Islam, jailer of

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**SIBL Foundation Hospital & Diagnostic Center**  
**PRAYER TIMING MAY 4**  
 Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha  
 AZAN 4-15 12-30 4-45 6-31 8-00  
 JAMAAT 4-50 1-15 5-00 6-35 8-30  
 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



## Into those 'white eyes'

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Habiganj

The magnificence of the Oriental White-eye lies exactly where the name suggests. The round, white iris, looking almost as if an artist has crafted them with absolute compassion, is what first catches an observer's attention.

The bird has numerous names in Bangla like Shetakhi or Babunai.

Being a resident breeder in open woodland in tropical Asia, it occurs in the Indian subcontinent to Southeast Asia, extending to Indonesia and Malaysia.

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An Oriental White-eye foraging at Satchari National Forest in Habiganj. Previously an ever-present fixture of almost every forest in Bangladesh, these birds are now mostly spotted in this forest in Habiganj, as deforestation and poaching have decreased the number of the birds inhabiting the country.

PHOTO: MASUK AHMAD

## HUSH PAYMENT TO PORN STAR Trump admits he repaid his lawyer

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump yesterday confirmed he reimbursed his personal lawyer for a \$130,000 payment to porn star Stormy Daniels to stop what he described as her "false and extortionist" claims of an affair.

Trump's comment contradicted his earlier statements that he had no knowledge of the hush payment by his long-time lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen to Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford.

The payment was made days before the November 2016 US presidential election, which has prompted allegations of a possible violation of campaign financing laws.

In a burst of tweets, Trump denied the funds used to make the payment were connected to his campaign, calling it a "private agreement."

He also said non-disclosure agreements were "very common among celebrities and people of wealth."

"Mr. Cohen, an attorney, received a monthly retainer, not from the campaign and having nothing to do with the campaign, from which he entered into, through reimbursement, a private contract between two parties, known as a non-disclosure agreement, or NDA," Trump said.

"The agreement was used to stop the false and extortionist accusations made by her about an affair, despite already having signed a detailed letter admitting that there was no affair," he said.

"Prior to its violation by Ms Clifford and her attorney, this was a private agreement. Money from the campaign, or campaign contributions, played no roll [sic] in this transaction."

The admission came after former Rudy Giuliani, the

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