



THE KANCHPUR-MEGHNA-GUMTI BRIDGES ARE BEING BUILT WITH HIGHLY DUCTILE GRADE 420 BSRM ULTIMA BARS



Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant

Work in progress using Shah Cement



New threat to crops

Scientists detect invasive pest in cabbage, maize fields in 5 dists, say there is no reason to panic

PORIMOL PALMA

Agriculture scientists in Bangladesh have found a new pest -- fall armyworm -- that has destroyed maize and sorghum fields covering millions of square kilometres and devastated the livelihoods of farmers in Africa.

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) last month detected the caterpillar in cabbage fields in Rangpur, Thakurgaon, Bogura and Jashore, while in maize fields in Bogura and Chuadanga, said Dr Syed Nurul Alam, director (planning & evaluation) at BARI.

The insect can damage 80 plant species, but it is a major threat for maize in Bangladesh. Other crops that could be under threat include tomato, cabbage, spinach, other leafy vegetables, sugarcane, lemon and wheat, he said.

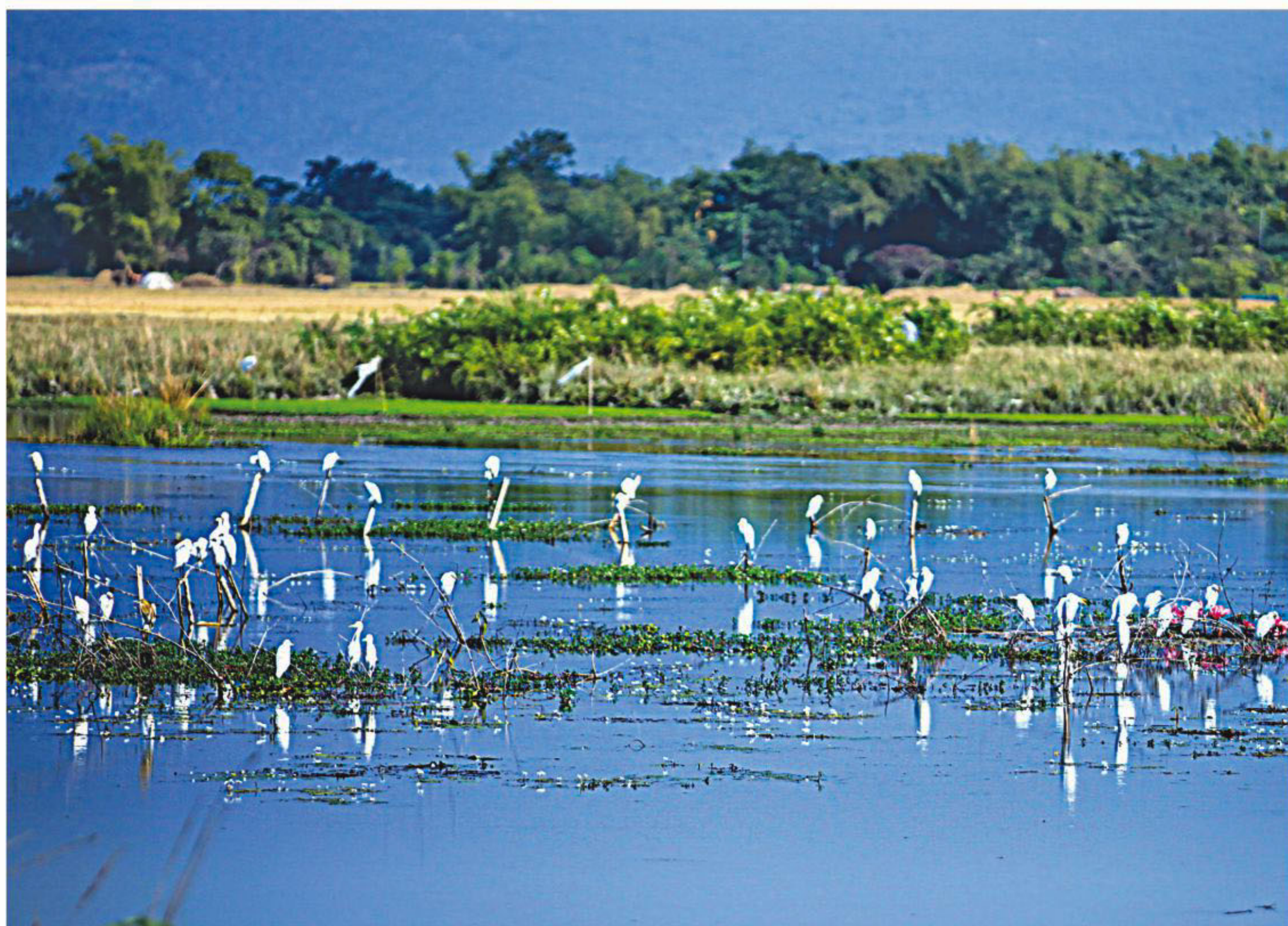
However, crops damaged by the fall armyworms in the districts concerned would be less than one percent, Alam told The Daily Star on the sidelines of a workshop.

Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) and Saarc Agriculture Centre (SAC) jointly organised the programme on the threats of invasive species in Bangladesh in the city's Lakeshore Hotel yesterday.

The caterpillar will be a big threat to the South and Southeast Asian region if effective and immediate measures are not taken.

A native of the Americas, fall armyworm grows in tropical

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5



A flock of egrets in a haor in Rustampur of Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila. With the arrival of winter, the water level of the haor has fallen, drawing hundreds of birds to the site every day to hunt fish. The photo was taken a couple of days ago.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Tigers seek series win

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh team gifted captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza a win in his 200th ODI in the first game against West Indies on Sunday, and today they will be looking to clinch the series by winning the match that will take Mashrafe level with Habibur Bashar as having led the team in the most ODIs.

With the hosts' dominance of the opposition in West Indies' tour of the country so far, a win in the second ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur is a distinct possibility.

The match will also mark the 100th international game that Bangladesh's Big five of Mashrafe, Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad have played together.

The team is expected to be unchanged from the one that won the first match by five wickets, during which Mashrafe put in a player-of-the-match performance with figures of three wickets for 30 runs in 10 overs.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

From mechanic to bomb maker

'Boma Liton' reveals to police his links to 50 attacks in several dists

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

He was involved in at least 50 bomb attacks in the capital and surrounding areas in the last 15 years, officers said after questioning him.

Arrested last week, Golam Hossain Liton, 37, has been accused in over 20 separate cases in the last few years filed with different police stations in the capital, they added.

Sahadat Hossain, assistant commissioner of Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said Liton was a mercenary bomb attacker. It had been difficult to catch him as he didn't use mobile phones in the last couple of years.

Liton was known among his fellows as Boma Liton or Buddha Liton, the officer said, adding that he used to take between Tk 5,000 and 20,000 for exploding bombs.

Sahadat said Liton told these to the interrogators when he was in remand.

He was arrested near the Kafrul Police Station. Another suspected criminal Robin, who was with him at the time,

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

May postpones Brexit deal vote

UK PM's abrupt U-turn comes after EU court offers way out

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday decided to pull a parliamentary vote on her Brexit deal, throwing Britain's plan to leave the European Union up in the air on the eve of the vote after repeated warnings from lawmakers that she would face a rout.

While there was no immediate official announcement, the decision to halt the vote set for today was widely reported and not denied. Two sources told BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg the vote was being pulled. A Financial Times reporter said an official close to the cabinet had confirmed it.

The move thrusts the United Kingdom's divorce from the European Union into chaos, with possible options including a disorderly Brexit with no deal, another referendum on EU membership, or a last minute renegotiation of May's deal.

May's own position could face a swift challenge. Main opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said the United Kingdom no longer had "a functioning government".

A small Northern Irish party which props up May's Conservative minority government called the situation a shambles. Scottish nationalists pledged to support a vote to bring the government down.

Corbyn said: "The government has decided Theresa May's Brexit deal is so disastrous that it has taken the desperate step of delaying its own vote at the eleventh hour."

Sterling skidded to its weakest level since June, 2017, falling to \$1.2622.

The decision to halt the vote came just hours after the EU's top court

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

NEWS SITES

BTRC blocks, unblocks, then blocks again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) unblocked 58 news sites yesterday evening, but blocked 54 of them again at 7:45pm.

Popular websites dhakatimes24.com, priyo.com, risingbd.com and poriborton.com were not included on the new block list, confirmed operators of International Internet Gateway (IIG).

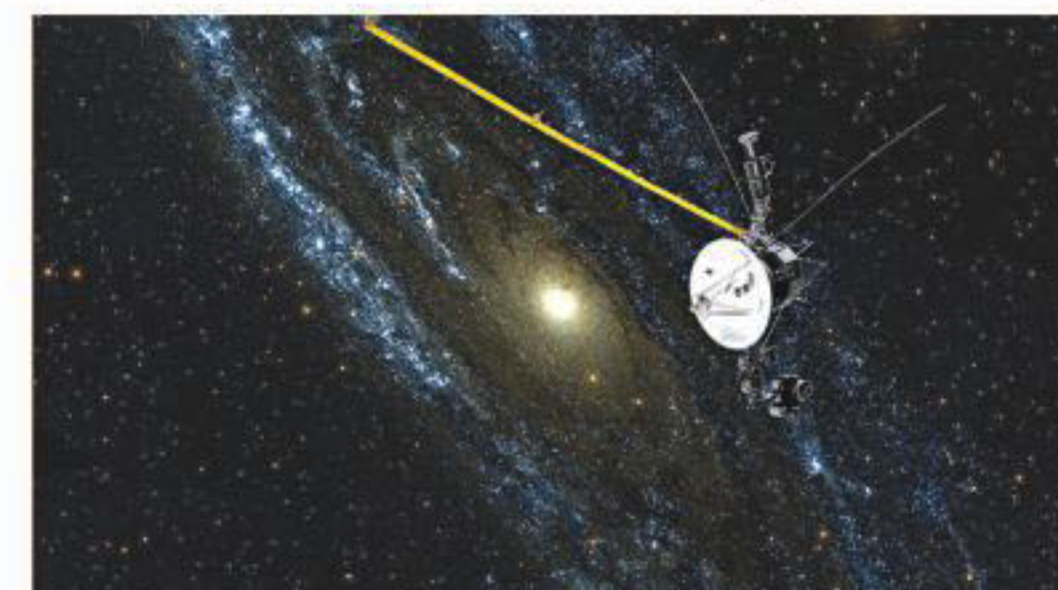
Earlier on Sunday afternoon, the telecom regulator had asked the IIG operators to block the 58 sites.

The move came a day after the BTRC sent a list of 47 news sites to the operators to block them.

With the 54 sites blocked yesterday, the total number of such sites has reached 101, said executives

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Voyager 2 enters interstellar space



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa's pioneering Voyager 2 spacecraft has gone interstellar.

The craft -- which left Earth in 1977 and has been flying through space ever since -- becomes only the second ever man-made object to make it out of our galactic neighbourhood.

It follows Voyager 1 in venturing out into interstellar space, according to Nasa's Ed Stone, who made the announcement at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union.

Voyager 2 takes with it a pioneering instrument that send back observations of this uncharted part of space, beaming them over 11 billion miles to Nasa scientists. Mission operators are still able to communicate with the spacecraft but it takes information -- moving at the speed of light -- a full 16.5 hours to make the long journey.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Stalkers stab schoolgirl in Manikganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A group of stalkers allegedly stabbed a school girl on her way back home from tuition at Raghunathpur village in Manikganj's Shivalaya upazila yesterday.

The victim, Lucky Ghosh, 15, is the daughter of Nanda Ghosh from the same village.

She is now undergoing treatment at 250-bed Manikganj District Hospital with deep stab wounds to her back and the left jaw.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 11

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-15 12-45 3-45 5-19 7-00

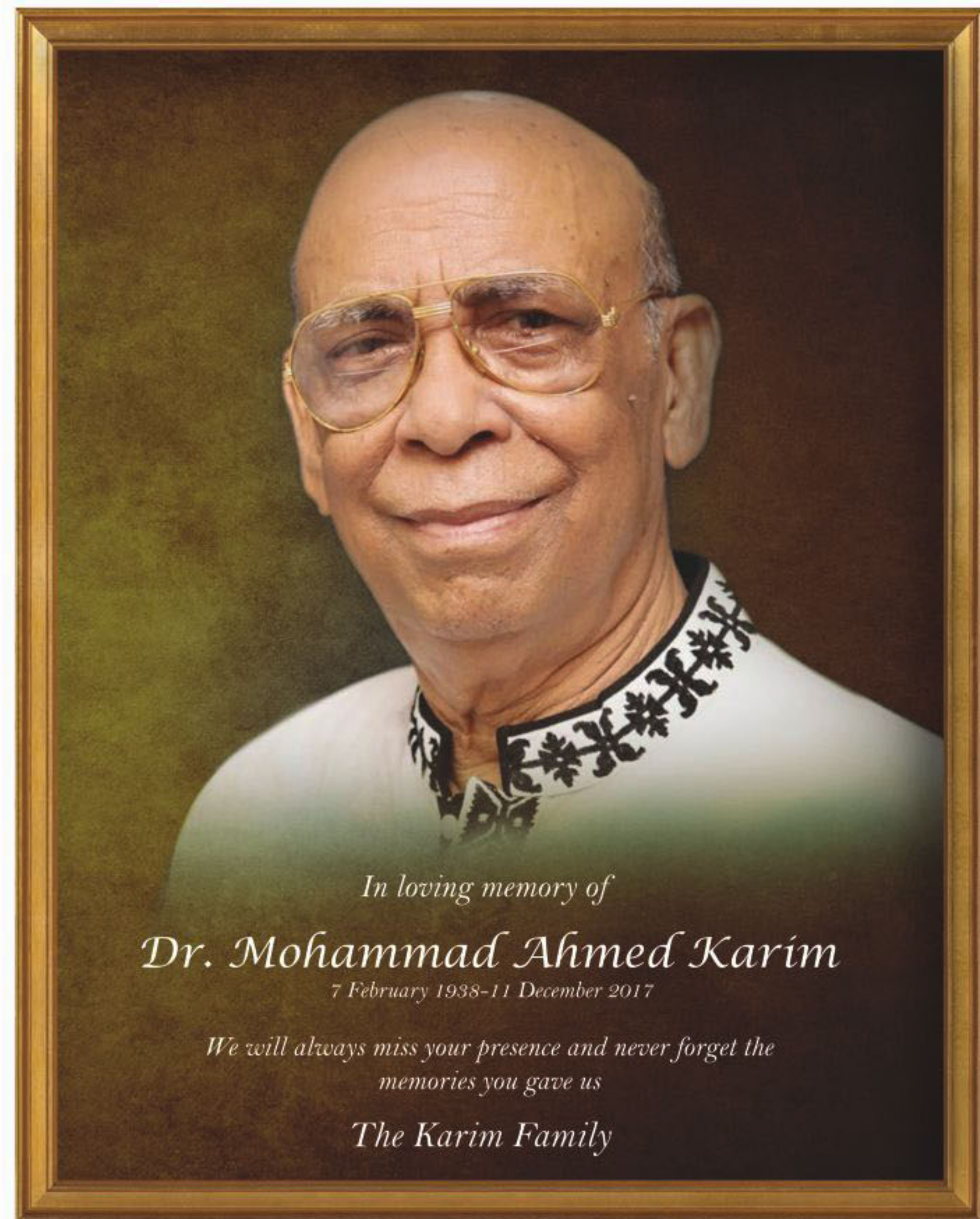
JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-00 5-22 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Locals gather near a mangled car that collided head on with an iron rod-laden truck on Dhaka-Mawa-Shimulia highway in Munshiganj yesterday. The car driver was killed in the accident. Story on page 4.

PHOTO: STAR



In loving memory of

Dr. Mohammad Ahmed Karim

7 February 1938-11 December 2017

We will always miss your presence and never forget the memories you gave us

The Karim Family