

# Dutch build

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operations in Europe", says Donker. Standing on a wooden bridge over a pond in the middle of experimental plots of different kinds of reeds, he says he has been able to see the first signs of increasing biodiversity.

The lake was once part of the Zuiderzee, an engineering wonder of the world completed in 1932, which closed off a huge expanse of water to keep out the North Sea and combat flooding.

Vital in a country where 26 percent of the land is below sea level, the scheme created an inland lake and polders, land reclaimed from the sea, but at a cost to the environment.

Over the subsequent decades, sediment used to create a dyke separating the Markermeer from a neighbouring body of water, the IJsselmeer, washed away and sunk to the bottom of the lake.

That turned the water cloudy, negatively impacting fish and bird populations, plants and molluscs.

"We had to intervene," says Donker, wearing a woollen hat to brave the storms from the North Sea.

The solution was a bold one in keeping with a country whose people like to boast that "God created the world, but the Dutch created the Netherlands".

The islets plan is among many being worked on by the Netherlands, which is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change.

The five islets were built in two and a half years and have already served as a resting place for 30,000 swallows this year. Experts recently counted 127 kinds of plants, most of which have been brought in by wind-borne seeds.

In the water there is an "explosion" of plankton that "guarantees a large amount of food for the birds", says Donker.

Greylag goose, common tern, several species of waders such as the great egret and the night heron have also returned, testifying to the islands' success.

The project, initiated by Natuurmonumenten, a Dutch non-governmental organisation working for the preservation of nature, cost 60 million euros (\$68 million) -- much of it donated by individuals.

True to their reputation as masters of water management, the Dutch used an innovative technique, forming the islets with silt, a sedimentary formation halfway between clay and sand.

"Building an island with sand is not that difficult, we do it all over the world, and what is unique here is that we use silt," says Jeroen van der Klooster, project head at Boskalis, the maritime service provider that built the archipelago.

His team dug a 1,200-metre "corridor" on the main island which allows the silt, led by strong ocean currents, to form marshy areas, fertile soil and reservoirs where migratory birds can eat.

"And that's how this beautiful landscape was born," says van der Klooster from the top of a wooden observation tower, wearing an orange vest and a white helmet.

The four others are exclusively reserved for wildlife and plants -- a once-sterile space now returned to nature.

# Mercury set

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West Indies are reigning world champions in the format and for the first time on tour could be said to be on equal terms with the hosts, or even favourites, although Bangladesh coach Steve Rhodes would not go so far as to say that. Bangladesh, meanwhile, do not have as good a resume in the format as they do in ODIs.

They will however draw a lot of confidence not just from their recent dominance but also from the fact that one of their best results was a 2-1 win against the very same opponents away from home in St. Kitts and Florida in August this year.

It will be the hottest time of the day in an otherwise chilly Sylhet, and the heat will also be on Bangladesh because of the big-hitters West Indies possess in the likes of Evin Lewis -- who has two T20I hundreds -- and skipper Carlos Brathwaite, who famously won the 2016 World Twenty20 by hitting the first four balls of the last over bowled by England's Ben Stokes for six.

Bangladesh have a 4-4 head-to-head record against the world champions and both sides will believe that they can win the series. Bangladesh had a minor scare yesterday as skipper Shakib Al Hasan had to leave practice when he was hit on the toe by a Mohammad Saifuddin yorker, but Rhodes later said that Shakib was fine and that he would be very surprised if there were any issues today.

Six of the top seven -- Tamim Iqbal, Liton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib and Mahmudullah Riyad -- are virtually set in stone. It remains to be seen whether Mohammad Mithun will get a game as the seventh batsman or whether one or both all-rounders Ariful Haque and Saifuddin gets the nod. Mustafizur Rahman and Mehedi Hasan Miraz are certainties in the bowling department, with the last slot expected to be contested between pacer Abu Hider and left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam.

CRIMES IN RAKHINE

# US House calls for additional sanctions

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US House of Representatives has called on the Trump administration to determine whether the Myanmar military's action in the Rakhine State in 2017 can be constituted crime against humanity and genocide, and to impose additional sanctions on senior members of the military and security forces responsible for it.

It said the US president should impose additional sanctions on responsible senior members of the Myanmar military and security forces including Tatmadaw Commander-In-Chief Min Aung Hliang.

The House overwhelmingly passed a resolution declaring that the crimes committed by Myanmar security forces against Rohingyas constitute genocide. The resolution was passed on December 13 with a vote of 394 to 1.

The State Department last week defended its decision to not yet label the crimes -- based on its own reporting which included acts of mass killing, destruction and sexual violence -- as genocide.

That report, released in September, found that violence against the Rohingyas was "extreme, large-scale, widespread, and seemingly geared towards both terrorising the population and driving out the Rohingya residents."

"The United States has a moral obligation to call these crimes genocide. Failing to do so gives the perpetrators cover and hinders efforts to bring those accountable to justice. With this resolution, the House fulfills its part of that duty," House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman

Ed Royce said.

The resolution asked the US Secretary of State to fully support efforts to collect, preserve, and make available evidence related to the commission of these crimes.

Every government and multinational body should call such atrocities by their rightful names of "crimes against humanity", "war crimes" and "genocide", read the directive of the House of Representatives.

The governments of Bangladesh, US, and China, as well as the UNHCR and other actors, should only support safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of Rohingyas, it said.

The resolution said the Myanmar's military and government should provide immediate, unimpeded access to northern Rakhine by UNHCR, UNDP, other humanitarian actors, and journalists, in order to verify that the necessary conditions exist for a voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of displaced Rohingyas in a manner consistent with internationally recognised human rights and principles for refugee protection.

It also asked the Myanmar government to change the laws and policies that have contributed to insecurity in the Rakhine State; and rescind any laws that obstruct the freedom of the press.

The US House of Representatives urged the Myanmar's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint to pardon and immediately release from prison Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, as well as all other journalists and political prisoners.

# The tigress of Sundarbans

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home in Khulna city.

Khurshid recently spoke to The Daily Star as she reminisced her days as a freedom fighter, while being a college student and a mother.

"I was recruited to scrutinise new comers and arrange training for them, especially the women. I took charge of the camp for women freedom fighters who joined the Liberation War from different parts of country," Jahan recollected.

"I was a student of PC College of Bagerhat then and was involved in the political movement of 1969. As I was from a teacher's family, I was aware of the political conflicts in Pakistan. My husband Samsul Alam Talukder was a central leader of NAP [National Awami Party]. My elder brother Shafiqur Rahman was an officer of the Pakistan army. He came to Bangladesh in January of 1971 but did not return to Pakistan."

Her brother's deflection irked the local collaborators of the Pakistan army.

"We were threatened by the local collaborators of Razakar every day...for my absconding brother and my political involvement," she told The Daily Star.

"The founder of the Razakar Bahani Moulana AKM Yusuf would threaten my mother and our relatives. Then my brother and I fled to Bogi camp in the Sundarbans and appeared before Maj Ziauddin, who was in charge of sub-sector-9.

"Veteran commander Ziauddin was the one who trained me. I also received training from my brother and some retired army officers even though I had a chance to go to India for training," the freedom fighter said.

"I took 21 days of training on throwing grenades, fighting with guns, swimming and rowing boats. Then we were moved to the Tatul Bunia base camp."

During the Liberation War, the Sundarbans was the most ultimate place for freedom fighters, where around 24,000 of them trained in 14 camps.

"Because of my child, I was, much to my despair, never allowed to fight in front line despite having the training and skills," she said.

But her thirst for liberation and urge to fight for it made her take matters into her own hands.

One day, the 21-year-old mother and fighter took her boat to the commander's office and stole his trousers and jackets.

"I thought with my height [5'8"] and a pair of trousers and a jacket, I would not be recognised. But I was caught red handed and had to face punishment. I had to sew 10 to 15 mosquito nets in addition to my regular duties," she said.

"Indeed, I had a five-month-old infant with me but to me the wellbeing of the teenage freedom fighters was more important than that of my own child."

Her commander then talked to her about the importance of her position. He told her that she had a well-

trained pair of hands which could be turned into 2,000 hands if she trained and motivated others.

From then on, Jahan would oversee the making of over 1,000 breads, the nursing of injured freedom fighters, and the training of freedom fighters every day.

He son Asaduzzaman Taj, now working abroad as a development worker on disaster management, said he feels proud of what his mother had done during the Liberation War.

"It was a blessing for me that I was taken care of by freedom fighters at the camps of the Sundarbans during the war," he said proudly.

# Govt may try

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concerning is that despite these incidents, no investigation is taking place and no steps are taken, he said.

The Jatiya Oikyafront, a combine of the BNP and several other parties, has been alleging that the ruling party men are attacking them and the law enforcers are arresting the activists en masse.

Kamal, president of the Gonoforum, alleged that the voters are being threatened and the Oikyafront leaders and activists are shot and beaten up.

Legal action should have taken place against the attackers who are trying to ruin the polls atmosphere, he said.

"This [taking action] is a constitutional duty."

He then urged the media to guard the polling centres so that people are not deprived of their voting rights.

The BNP-led alliance will announce its election manifesto today at Hotel Purbani.

In the morning, Kamal paid tributes to the Liberation War martyrs at the National Mausoleum in Savar on the occasion of the Victory Day. He told reporters there that the country was under an oppressive rule. "We will all unite to fight it."

He also said people earned the country's freedom by being united and they will have to unite again to protect their independence.

Addressing the press conference, BNP Vice Chairman Abdul Awal Mintoo alleged that the ruling party had been doing whatever they could to snatch away the people's right to vote.

The Oikyafront will contest the polls overcoming the obstacles as people have already decided whom to vote.

Another leader of alliance, Mahmudur Rahman Manna said, "During the attacks, police are playing the role of mere spectators. When asked for help they said they did not have the permission of the high-ups."

He added that the government and the Election Commission were working against the Oikyafront.

Oikyafront nominee in Dhaka-6 Subrata Chowdhury also spoke.

# Shock waves

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allegations of predatory sexual behaviour against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

The campaign, in which women from a range of professions went public with allegations of harassment, quickly spread to Britain. And some of the most high-profile cases have come from inside the testosterone-fuelled world of business.

Some senior female executives who have already broken the glass ceiling have been instrumental in accelerating the pace of change.

At the beginning of the week, four major British auditing firms -- Deloitte, KPMG, PwC and FY -- announced they had shown the door to members of staff accused of sexual harassment or workplace bullying.

Deloitte alone revealed that it had fired 20 of its partners in Britain over the last four years for bullying and sexual harassment.

# BNP

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parties, in a press statement demanded army deployment by tomorrow to "bring back discipline".

'WITHDRAW SONAIMURI OC' In another development, Mahub Uddin Khokon, BNP candidate for Noakhali-1 constituency, yesterday demanded withdrawal of Sonaimuri Police Station Officer-in-charge Abdul Majid, alleging that the OC himself fired rubber bullets on him and his supporters on Saturday evening.

In a letter to the CEC, Mahub also alleged that Majid attempted to kill him.

Khokon was being treated at a hospital in Noakhali.

Mahub's son Sakib Mahub submitted the letter to the CEC office.

In Sonaimuri, a clash between AL and BNP activists broke out around 4:45pm on Saturday as ruling party men intercepted a procession of BNP men in the bypass area. Both sides got involved in chase and counter-chase, said witnesses.

Khokon was wounded as police fired rubber bullets to quell the clash.

In a separate letter to the CEC, Dhaka-12 BNP contender Abdul Mannan alleged that some criminals were creating obstacles to his electioneering.

# New 'anti-migrant

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"Such proposals should never be placed on the table for discussion as it is a violation of international labour standards," he said, urging the government not to emulate the previous administration in protecting employers who violate international labour standards.

Adrian Pereira, executive director of North-South Initiative, a rights group, described the proposal as "shockingly embarrassing" and "anti-migrant".

"The minister seems oblivious that withholding salaries is an indicator of forced labour and this will never be accepted by the global brands."

He said withholding salaries was against human rights principles.

Tenaganita Executive Director Glorine Das said, "If workers are given a decent wage, decent work environment and a decent life, why would the employers fear their workers might run away? That's a vital question that needs to be answered."

She said the proposal was "worrying" and "very corporate-driven".

Parti Sosialis Malaysia's former Sungai Siput MP Dr Michael Jeyakumar said non-payment of salaries and the lack of a proper channel for foreign workers to seek their rights were reasons many of them fled their employers.

"If they were to complain about a work issue, the management can cancel their work permit and this is scary for other workers. Once they have no permits and are illegal, it is very hard for them to seek justice."

# Schoolgirl

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night and liked the part of Behula Lakkhindor so much.

She was so enamoured with the part that she went to bed earlier on Saturday evening, asking her grandmother to wake her up when her favourite part begins, as she wanted to watch the same performance once again.

Rest of the members of the house went to watch the whole performance leaving her at home alone, the victim's grandmother added.

When she had returned home to wake her up at around 12:30am, she found her unresponsive.

"I found her lying on her bed with her hands and legs spread around and noticed a cloth was loosely tied to her neck," she said.

When she removed the cloth from her neck, her throat was found slit, she said.

OC Selim said her family members could not provide any important information as to the murder.

"We are investigating into the matter", he said, adding that the body was sent to Rajshahi Medical College morgue for autopsy.

# AL dominates

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The ruling party candidates have hit the campaign trail in the capital by making door-to-door visits, bringing out processions, holding meetings and distributing leaflets. Their posters cover most of the capital's streets.

However, an insignificant number of posters of the BNP and Jatiya Oikyafront candidates were found in a few places. The BNP leaders alleged that they were not electioneering to avoid arrests as law enforcing agencies were continuing arrests and filing cases against the party men.

"BNP activists are being arrested every day. Even today, three of my party men were arrested when they were hanging posters. How could we conduct the campaigning?" said Saiful Alam Nirob, a contender for Dhaka-12.

He alleged that police were raiding houses of BNP leaders and activists, forcing many of their party men to remain on the run.

A few BNP candidates, including Mirza Abbas, Afroza Abbas and Salauddin Ahmed, however, are conducting electioneering in full throttle in the capital.

But voters in the capital said they were yet to see the election fever.

"The election of 2014 was an exception; but during the previous elections, we saw our locality used to be covered with posters of all candidates -- be it of the ruling party or the opposition. But that was missing this year," said 60-year old Hamidul Islam, a resident of West Jatrabari.

The second week of campaigning starts today with the candidates and their respective parties expected to gear up for their electoral campaign in the next few days.

After the first round of campaigning, AL President Sheikh Hasina will hold rallies in Sylhet, Dhaka and Rangpur between December 21 and December 24 to drum up public support for the party candidates.

Hasina will address a rally in the city's Gulshan area on December 21, said Biplob Barua, assistant office

secretary of AL.

Then, she will visit two shrines in Sylhet on December 22 and also attend a rally, he added.

On December 23, she will visit Pirganj and Taraganj in Rangpur and hold rallies there. The AL president will address another rally the next day in Kamrangirchar of Dhaka.

Jatiya Oikyafront, an opposition alliance consisting of BNP and several other parties, will start holding public rallies at Cumilla, Feni, Laksham and Noakhali on December 19.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said, "No evil force can foil the upcoming election."

"We will continue working so that we can ensure good governance," he said after paying homage at the Shaheed Muktijuddha Mausoleum in Feni.

Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury, general secretary of Sylhet district unit of AL, said that the electioneering was going on full pace and the candidates were campaigning according to the permitted way.

However, BNP candidate from Sylhet-1 Khandakar Abdul Muktedir alleged that the leaders of the party were being harassed and threatened everyday and their posters were being ripped off.

"Police are raiding our leaders' and activists' houses every night, threatening them and misbehaving with their family members since the schedule of the election has been declared," he said at a press briefing yesterday.

Contacted, noted writer and columnist Syed Manzoorul Islam found both positive and negative sides in the first week of electioneering.

"The positive sign is that violence did not erupt in a large scale and that young voters are discussing politics in social media. But the negative sides are attacks on candidates," said Manzoorul, a retired professor of Dhaka University.

Regrettably, the Election Commission is yet to take any strong step against the violent activities, he said.

# Nations agree

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rules for the monitoring of carbon credits, deferring the bulk of that discussion to next year, but missing an opportunity to send a signal to businesses to speed up their actions.

Still, exhausted ministers managed to bridge a series of divides to produce a 156-page rulebook - which is broken down into themes such as how countries will report and monitor their national pledges to curb greenhouse gas emissions and update their emissions plans.

Not everyone is happy with everything, but the process is still on track and it is something to build on, several ministers said.

"While some rulebook elements still need to be fleshed out, it is a foundation for strengthening the Paris Agreement and could help facilitate US re-entry into the Paris Agreement by a future presidential administration," said Alden Meyer of the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Some countries and green groups criticised the outcome for failing to urge increased ambitions on emissions cuts sufficiently to curb rising temperatures. Poorer nations vulnerable to climate change also wanted more clarity on how an already agreed \$100 billion a year of climate finance by 2020 will be provided and on efforts to build on that amount further from the end of the decade.

A statement by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who left the talks on Thursday, stressed the need for more work.

"From now on, my five priorities will be: ambition, ambition, ambition, ambition and ambition," it said.

"And ambition must guide all member states as they prepare their (emissions cut plans) for 2020 to reverse the present trend in which climate change is still running faster than us."

A UN-commissioned report by the IPCC in October warned that keeping the Earth's temperature rise to 1.5

degrees C would need "unprecedented changes" in every aspect of society.

Last week, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Russia and Kuwait refused to use the word "welcome" in association with the findings of the report.

The decision text now merely expresses gratitude for the work on the report, welcomes its timely completion and invites parties to use the information in it.

For many low-lying states and islands at risk from rising sea levels, this is not strong enough but had to be accepted grudgingly in exchange for other trade-offs.

During the two weeks of talks in Katowice - in the mining region of Silesia, a focus on the fossil fuel industry provided an unwelcome distraction for some countries and environmental groups which want to focus on cleaner energy.

The conference itself has been hosted by coal-reliant Poland, which has sought to protect its mining industry. The US administration's only event in Katowice was seen as trying to rebrand coal as a potentially clean energy source.

# No sight

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carrying Quader's photographs and his party's electoral symbol "boat" have flooded at least 15 important points along the 20km stretch of a road that connect the two upazilas with the rest of the district.

Some posters of other contenders were also seen in places.

Talking to reporters on Saturday, Moudud said there were no posters left in the constituency as AL men had removed all of them. He claimed that his party men came under attack when they tried to paste posters or campaign using loud speakers.

Around 200 BNP men were injured in attacks while police arrested 19 others, he alleged at a press conference in Noakhali town.

Khijir Hayat Khan, president of Comapaniganj unit AL, however, said Moudud's allegation was baseless.

"We do not bar anyone from pasting posters or electioneering. BNP men did not paste posters possibly as part of their strategy to gain people's sympathy," he said, adding that people "were eagerly waiting to vote for 'boat'."

Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Comapaniganj Police Station, said Moudud had printed few posters. "We will take steps if the posters are found to be torn," he said.

Visiting at least five link roads in the district, apart from the main road, Moudud's poster could be seen at only two points.

Talking to over 50 locals in both the upazilas, around 35 told this correspondent that BNP men could not paste posters as AL men guarded the area.

Asked about the lack of BNP posters, a tea stall vendor at Kabirhat upazila laughed out and said BNP men could not even gather in the town since campaigning began.

"Who will paste the posters?" he asked.

Another local, a restaurant worker in Comapaniganj town, said BNP men initially tried to paste posters and campaign but that had not been the case in the past four or five days.