



Britain's Border Force carrying an intercepted migrant dinghy off the Kent coast, Britain, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Brazil to move embassy to Jerusalem

Says Israeli PM

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Brazil will definitely move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, with only the date of the transfer to be decided, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday during a visit to Rio de Janeiro.

"It's not a question of 'if' but of 'when'," Netanyahu told members of Rio's Jewish community, his office said in a statement.

He said Brazil's president-elect Jair Bolsonaro assured him of the move in a meeting on Friday.

He pointed to US President Donald Trump going through with his promise to move his country's embassy and said "Bolsonaro will also do so."

The issue of the embassy has been hovering over Netanyahu's visit to Brazil, the first-ever by an Israeli prime minister.

He arrived on Friday and went straight into his meeting with far-right Bolsonaro, who is to be sworn-in in a ceremony in Brasilia today, with Netanyahu among the foreign dignitaries attending.

Bolsonaro said in early November he intended to follow Trump's lead in moving his country's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. But then he backtracked, saying "it hasn't been decided yet."

Brazil's important meat producers are worried that an embassy move could threaten \$1 billion in exports to Arab countries.

Those countries, and Palestinians, view east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

But Israel asserts all of Jerusalem is its capital and is keen to see embassies move there to bolster that claim.

Most countries however back Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to settle Jerusalem's status as part of a wider peace deal.

FOLLOWING TRUMP

Trump broke with that consensus a year ago, and in May this year the US embassy was established in Jerusalem. Guatemala followed suit two days later.

Bolsonaro has said he wants closer ties with the US and Israel, breaking with decades of centre-left policies which sought to position Brazil as Latin American power nurturing relations with all countries.

Netanyahu had told reporters as he flew in to Rio that he was going to raise the embassy topic as a priority when he met Bolsonaro.

In their discussion Friday, Bolsonaro and Netanyahu talked up their budding "brotherhood" which they said would boost military, economic, technological and agricultural cooperation.

Neither man raised the embassy issue when they spoke to journalists shortly afterward, however. Nor did they post anything on it on their Twitter accounts, despite Bolsonaro in particular being a fervent social media user.

Instead Netanyahu said he had extended an invitation to Bolsonaro to visit Israel, which was accepted.

In the statement Sunday from his office, Netanyahu said Bolsonaro's trip would happen before March 2019.

10 AL men

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during election-day violence.

The violence in Gazipur took place as supporters of Kawraid Union Parishad's former acting chairman Harun Fakir attacked supporters of Kawraid Union Parishad Chairman Robikul Islam Mondol. A running battle took place between the two groups after Harun's supporters brought out a rally celebrating the victory of an AL candidate.

Harun is a follower of the AL leader who won from Gazipur-3 while the leader who Robikul follow failed to get the party ticket to contest the polls.

In Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj, the house of BNP supporter Jewel and poultry farm of Aminul Islam were torched yesterday. Two more houses were vandalised in Boro Chak area around 11:30am, reports our Chapainawabganj correspondent.

Locals brought the fire under control before fire-fighters reached the spot. No one was injured in the incident.

Meanwhile, alleged supporters of an independent candidate carried out a series of attack targeting those of a defeated AL candidate.

BNP activist Shakhawat Hossain, 20, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital of his injuries he had suffered a day before in Cumilla.

AL activist Ismail Hossain, 50, died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where he had been admitted with injuries from an attack allegedly carried out by BNP men at a Rajshahi polling centre on the election day, reported our Rajshahi correspondent.

Textbook festival

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"We started printing and sending the books three months ago.... keeping the election in mind. The last lot was sent on December 10.

"We knew that we might face some problems in the presses or during distribution if we did not start the work early."

The government has printed 35,21,97,822 copies of textbooks for the students of primary and secondary schools, ebte dai and dakhil madrasas and technical institutes, said officials of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

Over 9.88 crore copies are for primary schools and 18 crore are for secondary ones.

The government has spent Tk 1,082 crore for printing and distributing the books.

The NCTB gave the work order for printing the primary school books among 54 presses, including two in India. A total of 145 organisations were awarded the deal for printing the secondary school books.

"The quality of this year's textbooks is good," NCTB Chairman Prof Narayan Chandra Saha said.

He said the main concern had been to complete the printing and distributing early. "And we have done it well."

For the first time this year, the government has printed 1.24 lakh supplementary textbooks on agriculture for class VI to IX.

On the New Year's Day, the education and primary and mass education

ministries will hold the textbook distribution programmes in different places in the capital.

The education minister would officially launch the festivities at Azimpur Government Girls High School and College at 9:30am. Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman would hold a separate programme at Dhaka University central playground at 10:00am.

Amid persisting textbook crises, the government in 2009 decided to distribute textbooks for free. It has been distributing free books to both primary and secondary students on the first day of the year since 2010.

Since then the government has handed out over 296.07 crore textbooks.

YEAR	STUDENTS	TEXTBOOKS
2010	2,76,62,529	19,90,96,561
2011	3,22,36,321	23,22,21,234
2012	3,12,13,759	22,10,68,333
2013	3,68,86,172	26,28,09,106
2014	4,33,53,201	31,78,12,966
2015	4,44,52,374	32,63,47,923
2016	4,44,16,728	33,37,62,760
2017	4,26,35,929	36,21,82,245
2018	4,37,06,895	35,42,90,162

A total of 296,07,89,172 copies distributed for free since 2010

EC satisfied

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"This election is of course acceptable," said Huda, mentioning that no national or international media reported massive irregularities during Sunday's polls.

There were some unfortunate incidents during voting and the commission will investigate the incidents, he said.

"The commission is expressing sorrow as there are reports of 14 deaths in stray incidents on election day."

Rejecting the allegation of ballot box stuffing the night before, the CEC said, "It is completely untrue."

"There is no scope for holding the national election again," he said while answering a question about Jatiya Oikyafront's demand for fresh polls under a non-partisan interim government.

When his attention was drawn to Oikyafront alliance candidates getting only a few votes in some constituencies, he said it was the reflection of the votes cast. "They got the votes of people who voted for them."

"Gazette notifications for the winning candidates would be issued very soon," he said.

The CEC thanked everyone, including members of the armed forces, law enforcers, and election officials, for their effort in holding a free, fair, and credible election.

"I hope that the new government formed through the election will lead the country towards development and prosperity."

EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed in the wee hours of yesterday said, "The voting in the parliamentary election was held in a very free, fair, and peaceful environment under a political government, this election will remain as a bright example."

Putin scores

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hockey stars, has become a regular event in recent years staged in the week before Orthodox Christmas on January 7.

"It's a good kind of entertainment," Putin told state-owned news channel Russia 24: "I think this is a well-justified reason [to play hockey] ahead of the new year."

Putin had initially told press he hoped he would be joined on the ice by Belarus's authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko, with whom he had held talks in the Russian capital earlier that day.

"[Mr Lukashenko] should be home in Minsk to solve lots of issues, routine issues. There are always loads of them before the new year," he later told state-controlled news agency Tass.

"However, we struck a deal that we would play together and go skiing once we met."

Putin typically makes time once a year to play ice hockey in public. It is Russia's second most popular sport after football.

The 66-year-old president has regularly displayed his prowess in other disciplines during his time in power.

Putin holds a black belt in judo and his martial arts credentials are often lauded in Russian state media, with videos widely circulated of him tossing other skilled judokas to the mat with apparent ease.

In 2009, he was famously photographed shirtless in the Siberian wilderness, taking part in a number of outdoor pursuits such as horse riding, hunting, lake swimming and fishing.

Three years later, Putin donned a white jump suit to take a flight in a hang glider, leading a group of endangered cranes on their winter migration route.

Russian IS fighters' children return home from Iraq

AFP, Moscow

Thirty Russian children whose mothers are in prison in Iraq for belonging to the Islamic State arrived Sunday in Moscow from Baghdad, Russian authorities said.

The fathers of the children, aged three to ten years old, are believed to have been killed in combat during Iraq's three-year war against the jihadists, a Russian diplomatic source told AFP before their plane departed.

"The plane of the Russian emergency situations ministry has landed," Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov said on his Telegram account, adding that it had touched down at Moscow's Zhukovsky airport.

Kadyrov said their arrival was "undeniable proof of the rigorous fulfilment of the mission set out by Russian President Vladimir Putin to save the women and children in Syria and Iraq".

"If we do not bring them home, they

will become the target of the special services of other countries," he added.

The children were taken to hospital on arrival for "thorough examinations", the press service of Russia's health ministry said according to Russia's Interfax news agency.

Kadyrov posted a video clip on the popular Russian network VKontakte of the children's departure from Baghdad, adding that 24 of them were from Dagestan, and another three were from Chechnya.

Several thousand Russians travelled to join the jihadists in their once sprawling "caliphate" straddling Syria and Iraq, according to estimates from the Russian security services.

Some took their families with them.

Since last year, around 100 women and children -- mostly from Russia's Muslim-majority Caucasus -- have returned under a programme championed by Kadyrov.

Jubo League

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He further said, "A gang of 25 to 35 local goons led by Dhakat Shahid swooped on my brother and hacked him with sharp weapons when he and two others reached the area. Samrat was left critically injured."

Later, doctors declared him dead when he was taken to CMCH.

Two Chhatra League men -- Omol Debnath, 26, and Md Sazzad, 27, -- were injured in the incident. They were admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), said Alauddin Talukdar, assistant sub-inspector of CMCH Police Outpost.

Sitakunda upazila Chairman SM Al Mamun told The Daily Star "killer Dakat Shahid" used to run narcotics business and other criminal activities in the area with help from the local lawmaker's men. Samrat used to oppose those.

The criminals killed Samrat as he raised his voice, he added.

Meanwhile, one Mofakharul Alam Chowdhury, 40, was stabbed on the CMCH premises when he came to see Samrat.

Delwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station, said they were conducting drives at different places to arrest the killers.

No case was filed as of 10:15pm when the report was filed.

Suspended Sramik league

FROM PAE 16

The ACC found that Motin amassed wealth worth Tk 2.70 crore legally and the rest illegally.

Aminul said they had committed corruption by concealing information about wealth and also by amassing much of it illegally. These are both punishable offences.

"We have not submitted any false information about our wealth, every file regarding our assets was submitted to the ACC. The allegations are not true," said Motin, who is out on bail in a murder case.

The ACC took the step to enquire into their wealth after Tufan's crimes created a storm in the civil society and media platforms.

On July 17, 2017, Tufan abducted a student from her home, raped her and then asked his party cadres to make sure it was a secret, according to media reports.

In their attempt to silence the victim, they picked up the student and her mother, tortured them for four hours and then shaved their heads, the reports said.

Tufan is now in the Kashimpur jail as an accused in the rape case.

The ACC had issued a notice upon Motin and Tufan to submit their wealth statement before the commission on March 6 and March 7 of last year. Both of them submitted their wealth statement.

In his wealth statement, Tufan, now in jail, stated that his property, both immovable and moveable, was worth Tk 1.29 crore.

However, in its enquiry, the ACC found Tufan's properties to be worth Tk 1.59 crore, which proved that the information of about Tk 30 lakh was concealed from the statement.

It was also found that he acquired the Tk 1.59 crore illegally as there was no valid document in support of where this amount came from.

On the other hand, in his statement Motin said the value of his immovable and moveable properties was Tk 3.58 crore. But the ACC found the actual value to be Tk 5.8 crore. Motin concealed information of about Tk 2.21 crore.

Tense DR Congo counts vote in presidential poll

AFP, Kinshasa

The Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday began counting ballots from a presidential election marked by delays and fears of violence and vote-rigging, straining hopes for its first-ever peaceful transfer of power.

Sunday's elections went ahead after two years of delays and sporadic clashes in the unstable country, but the influential national conference of Catholic bishops declared the vote had been "relatively calm."

Among reported incidents, some electoral observers were harassed and a clash took in the restive eastern province of South Kivu that left four people dead.

Tense DR Congo counts vote in presidential poll

The DRC has never had a peaceful transition of leader since it gained independence from Belgium in 1960.

Worries of a new spiral into violence deepened after President Joseph Kabila, in power since 2001, refused to quit two years ago when his constitutionally-declared limit expired.

Tension and suspicion were further stoked by repeated delays, a bloody crackdown on anti-Kabila protests and accusations that electronic voting machines would help to rig the result.

But Kabila appeared on public television late Sunday to congratulate the Congolese for having voted "in peace and dignity".