A confluence

FROM PAGE 2

The organisers honoured two eminent singers -- Sabina Yasmin (Bangladesh) and Arati Mukherjee (India) -- with Jibon Kriti Samman (Lifetime Achievement Awards) for their lifelong contributions to Bangla music. When the two living legends took the stage, several timeless songs they recorded were played.

Apart from the organisers, the Sports Minister of West Bengal, India Arup Biswas felicitated the awardees "I am extremely elated to receive the award. I am overjoyed to have

received the award with Arati Mukherjee whom I am a fan of," said Sabina Yasmin, who later sang part of the song "Shob Kota Janala Khule Dao Na", written and composed by Nazrul Islam Babu and Ahmed Imtiaj Bulbul respectively.

"This festival, jointly organised by the music lovers of Dhaka and Kolkata, is an outstanding one. I want this festival to take place every year," Sabina added in her speech.

The festival, also aiming to diffuse the distinctive musical heritage of Bangladesh in Kolkata, is offering an array of Bangla Music ranging from Panchokobi'r Gaan (songs of five great poets) to Raga-based classics, Taalbadya, Adhunik Bangla songs, folk songs, film songs and Bangla

Prior to the inauguration of the festival, a colourful Mangal Shobhajatra paraded several streets adjacent to the venue.

band songs.

Renowned Bangladeshi singer Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya performed several lesser-known Tagore songs including "Tobo Doya Diye" and "Pran Chaye Chokkhu Na Chaye".

Shubhamita Banerjee, Nachiketa Chakrabarty, Fahmida Nabi and Bappa Mazumder performed Adhunik Bangla songs at the festival while Anupam Roy rendered film songs on the opening day.

A number of Bangladeshi and Indian singers together with contemporary bands Chirkutt (Bangladesh) and Chandrabindu (India) are set to perform at the festival.

Three women

FROM PAGE 16

unidentified criminals at East Bejgaon village in Sreenagar upazila on Thursday night.

According to locals, Aleya was attacked when her family members were out of home to attend a marriage ceremony of a neighbour.

Returning home, Aleya's son Didar found her bloodstained body and took her to upazila health complex where doctors declared her dead, said police.

Mohammad Younus Ali, officer-incharge of Sreenagar Police Station, said the victim's family claimed she

was killed over land dispute. The victim's elder son Anowar filed a case with Sreenagar Police

Station against four people including his uncle and cousins, the OC said. Police already arrested one of Aleya's

relatives -- Asharful Alam -- and are investigating the incident, he added.

No genuine

FROM PAGE 16 Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. "I am aware that many of you had

to face hardships because of the complicated process of compiling the NRC. The exercise had been stuck for a decade and it's moving forward today only because of your strength, "Modi said while addressing a rally in the town of Silchar in Assam.

"I assure you that no injustice will be done to any genuine Indian citizens," he added.

His statement came just days after the deadline for filing of claims by an estimated 40.7 lakh people who were excluded from the NRC draft final list ended. Of them, about 30.1 lakh people filed claims by December 31 deadline.

Modi said "the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is related to people's lives. It is not for the benefit of anyone but a penance against the injustice and many wrongs done in the past. I hope the bill is passed

soon in parliament," he said. The bill is expected to be placed in the Lok Sabha on January 7 after the joint parliamentary committee finalised its report on the proposed legis-

lation on Thursday. The prime minister also spoke on his government's decision to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord aimed at safeguarding the cultural, social and linguistic identity of the Assamese people and providing them

reservation in certain categories of government jobs.

The Indian cabinet recently approved a proposal to implement Clause 6 of the 1985 Assam Accord that ended years of violent street agitations by All Assam Students Union against "illegal" immigration

from Bangladesh into Assam. "This clause had been hanging for nearly 35 years, but now the road is

clear..." he claimed," Modi said. The BJP swept to power in Assam in 2016 in alliance with the Bodoland Peoples Front and the Asom Gana

Parishad, toppling the Congress

Condolences

FROM PAGE 16 Yesterday, AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah, LGRD Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, Law Minister Anisul Huq and Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid conveyed shock at his death.

the country lost a great heart and a patriot. The country is in dire need of his role in a "confrontational" post-polls political situation, they said in a mes-

In a message, Gonoforum President

Dr Kamal Hossain and its general

secretary Mostafa Mohsin Montu said

sage. He could have played a role in the interest of the nation by rising above

"narrow party interests", it added. Lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon said Ashraf's legacy would remain

alive. Communist Party of Bangladesh conveyed sympathy to his family.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman said Ashraf was a politician with a clean image and he would be remembered as a pro-people leader. Shammilita Samajik Andolon said

he was an "uncompromising politician" in terms of upholding the noncommunal spirit of the Liberation War. The Oikya Nap, Progressive

Nationalist Party, Bangladesh Tanti League, Bangladesh Jubo Moitri, Jubo League, Zaker Party, Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad, Krishibid Institution Bangladesh, Jatiya Muktijoddha Shamannay Committee, Bangladesh Nurses Association, and Imarat Nirman Sramik Union Bangladesh, among others, sent messages. ASHRAF'S BODY ARRIVES TODAY

His body will be flown back home from Bangkok this evening, the AL said in a statement. A Biman Bangladesh flight carrying

his body will reach the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 5:30pm. An AL team led by Obaidul Quader will receive the body. The body will briefly be taken to his

government residence on Bailey Road around 7:00pm. The body will then be taken to the Combined Military Hospital mortuary. On Sunday, Ashraf's first namaz-e-

Sangsad Bhaban's south plaza at 10:00am. The body will be flown to Kishoreganj Old Stadium playground where a second namaz-e-janaza will

janaza will be held at the Jatiya

take place at 12:00pm. A third namaz-e-janaza will be held at the Anjuman Eidgah in Mymensingh at 2:00pm.

He will be buried at Banani Graveyard after the Asr prayers.

Khulna-1

FROM PAGE 1

2,53,669 votes went to "boat" and 28,170 votes to "sheaf of paddy," according to the footage obtained by Germany's public international broadcaster Deutsche Welle. Khulna-1 constituency has

2,59,420 votes in total. But the votes obtained by the AL and BNP candidates, as announced by the RO, stood at 2,81,839, which is 22,419 higher than the total votes. However, when journalists pointed

out the mismatch, the RO looked confused. He then went on to announce results of other constituencies. The RO made a second announce-

ment around an hour later when he

gave revised numbers for Khulna-1,

according to four journalists, including The Daily Star's Khulna correspondent. According to the revised tally, 1,72,059 votes went to "boat" and 28,637 votes to "sheaf of paddy,"

shows the DW video, which The Daily Star could not independently verify. By this time, however, Dhaka Tribune published the report based on the first announcement, but later took

the news down.

Manab Zamin published the report in the print version of its second edition on December 31. On January 1, the paper published the corrected results.

Then on the night of January 1, Batiaghata Upazila Nirbahi Officer Debashish Chowdhury, also the assistant returning officer of the constituency, filed a case against two journalists of the publications for publishing "false" reports.

Dhaka Tribune's Khulna correspondent Hedait Hossain Molla was arrested the next day and was placed on three days' remand. He was released on bail after he fell sick during interrogation.

The other accused is Rashidul Islam, staff reporter of Manab Zamin, is now in hiding, his colleagues said.

Contacted yesterday, RO Helal Hossain said their control room had no knowledge of making any mistake in the announcement of Khulna-1 results.

Asked about the footage obtained by the DW, he said, "I have not seen the video.'

Asked to comment on the initial

confusion about the number of votes, Election Commission Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed said, "It's a matter for the returning office. You should talk to him." About the case against the two

journalists, he said the reporters should have crosschecked before publishing the report.

"They published the news intentionally," he alleged.

PCISS man

FROM PAGE 16 Police Station.

Police also recovered a pipe gun from the spot, he added.

Prashanta Chakma, information and publicity secretary of PCJSS-MN Larma Central Committee, alleged both United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and its rival PCJSS-MN Larma were involved in the murder.

Denying the allegation, UPDF spokesperson Mikel Chakma said the murder might have taken place over PCJSS-MN Larma's internal conflict. But the Information and Publicity

Secretary of PCJSS-MN Larma Doyasindhu Chakma said there was no internal conflict in the party and they were not involved in the killing.

At least 41 people have been killed in last one year due to the inter-party conflicts between UPDF and PCJSS-MN Larma in the district.

AL's victory rally

Hasina is going to form the government for the third consecutive term as the AL-led grand alliance secured 288 out of the 298 seats in the national election. The AL itself bagged 257 seats.

On Tuesday, the Election Commission published the election results and issued a gazette notification in this regard.

According to the polls results, HM Ershad-led Jatiya Party secured 22 seats while Workers Party of Bangladesh bagged three, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal two, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh two and Tarikat Federation one.

The BNP got just five seats and the Gonoforum two. Manju-led Jatiya Party (JP) bagged one seat and independent candidates got three.

Bangladeshi files case

FROM PAGE 2

had produced documents proving his innocence. Abdul Aziz told The Daily Star over

phone that Moajjem's employer had written a letter to the police, requesting his release, but the law enforcers refused. He then helped Moajjem with a lawyer to pursue the case, which led to his release on October 15. The lawyer filed the compensation

case with the Malaysian High Court. It fixed January 15 for the defendant (police) to appear before the court and fix date for trial, according to Aziz. The development came when sev-

eral thousand Bangladeshis, among other nationals, in Malaysia were reportedly detained by the immigration police that began a massive crackdown on September 1 as a two-yearold rehiring programme ended on August 31 last year.

Many Bangladeshi migrants earlier told The Daily Star that they had paid hefty sums and applied to the immi-

gration department for regularisation responsible for the extension or of their work status in vain. According to Abdul Aziz, many migrant workers registered under the rehiring programme, have been Aziz questioned. detained though rights groups demanded a fresh chance for them,

arguing that the rehiring programme

launched by the previous government

was faulty and riddled with corrup-

"They have been detained and arrested, but they have also paid an exorbitant amount to be legalised. Their status is hanging. They have no idea if they will be rehired." More than 700,000 signed up for

the programme, but only slightly more than 110,000 were successfully registered by last August. The number of Bangladeshis, who were legalised, could not be known. An undocumented foreign worker

has to legally pay RM 1,134.52 to apply for registration. Aziz reckons that the total collection is more than RM 845 million. He said it made no sense to declare

someone as an illegal immigrant after taking money from him. "It's daylight robbery," he commented. He said it was wrong to punish

foreign workers who overstayed when the fault lay with their employers. "The employers are the ones

renewal of their [workers] visas. So, why must the workers be punished for a crime they never committed?" Abdul The objective of the case is to tell the

government to stop arresting and detaining migrants who had registered under the rehiring programme.

Pompeo expects Trump-Kim summit soon

AFP, Washington

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday again voiced optimism that a second US-North Korea summit would take place soon but said he doubted it would seal a landmark deal. US President Donald Trump, who

Un in June in Singapore, on Tuesday revealed that he had received a "great letter" from the North Korean leader and boasted of their relationship. "Lots of work that is left to be done, but I am confident that in the

held a historic summit with Kim Jong

next short period of time President Trump and Chairman Kim will get the chance to meet again," Pompeo told Fox News host Sean Hannity, a prominent supporter of Trump. He said the summit would work to "truly create a much better, safer

nuclear weapons being launched at us but nuclear proliferation as well." But asked if the next summit would lead to a lasting deal, Pompeo

America with less threat of not only

said: "I'd be surprised if we get all the way home in this meeting, although it would be fantastic if we did."

Google moved almost 20b euros to Bermuda in 2017

AFP, The Hague

US internet giant Google used a legal mechanism to transfer almost 20 billion euros from the Netherlands to Bermuda in 2017 for tax purposes, a Dutch newspaper report said Friday. Google, which is owned by US

parent company Alphabet, moved 19.9 billion euros (\$22.7 billion) with a tax evasion strategy dubbed "Double Irish, Dutch Sandwich", according to 2018 financial documents cited by the financial daily FD

The technique consists of shifting revenues from an Irish subsidiary to a Dutch shell company, which transfers the funds to another Irish subsidiary based in Bermuda, where it pays no income tax.

Google's transfer for 2017 was about four billion euros more than compared to 2016, based on annual accounts filed by Google Netherlands Holding with the Dutch chamber of commerce at the end of last year.

13 killed

FROM PAGE 1

However, the Arakan Army spokesman denied any connection between the attacks and the anniversary.

"We are not independent yet. Today is not our Independence Day, Khine Thu Kha said. Myanmar military spokesman Zaw

had hit police outposts in a rugged region near the border with Bangladesh. "These police posts are there to protect the national races in the area so [Arakan Army rebels] shouldn't attack them," Zaw Min Tun said,

Min Tun said earlier the insurgents

referring to mostly Buddhist ethnic groups in the area who are, unlike Rohingya Muslims, considered Myanmar citizens. Arakan Army spokesman Khine Thu Kha confirmed the assault and

said rebels later retrieved the corpses of seven "enemies". He said later that rebels had freed

at least 12 members of the security forces it detained in the fighting. The attacks, he added, came in

response to a Myanmar military

recent weeks that had also targeted civilians. The Myanmar military last month announced a four-month halt to fighting in the north and northeast of the country to kick-start peace talks with multiple armed groups seeking

ethnic autonomy, but that announce-

offensive against the Arakan Army in

Friday's violence erupted shortly after the national flag was raised across the Southeast Asian country to mark 71 years since independence from Britain. Last August a UN report accused the

ment excluded Rakhine state.

Myanmar military of mass killings and rapes of Rohingya with "genocidal intent" in 2017 in then operation that drove more than 700,000 of them to flee to Bangladesh, according to UN agencies. Myanmar has denied the charges, saying its military launched a counter-

insurgency operation after attacks on security posts by Muslim militants. Norway

FROM PAGE 2 Hagen added, "Our countries' good

and longstanding relations are based

on mutual respect and the pursuit of common interests. "Norway will continue to work with the government and the opposi-

tion, as well as other stakeholders, to further advance the democratic and economic development of Bangladesh."

Two more held

FROM PAGE 1

sparked protest and condemnation.

Four of them were mentioned in the FIR. Nine people were sued over the incident.

The name of Ruhul, also a former union parishad member, was not included in the FIR.

Talking to reporters, the SP said Bulu was the personal assistant to Ruhul. During investigation, it was revealed that Bulu had hired people for Tk 10,000 to rape the woman.

The police officer also said Bulu had an altercation with the victim at a polling station in Sunday's national election and he also threatened her following the quarrel.

"Whoever is the offender will not be spared," the SP said, adding that they would arrest others involved in the incident soon.

"They will submit a charge sheet of the case and ensure trial of the case at the Speedy Trial Tribunal."

The woman was gang-raped allegedly by 10 to 12 accomplices of Ruhul, who is the publicity affairs secretary of Subarnachar AL, at her home early Monday. Meanwhile, expressing deep con-

cern over the rape, Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said, "This incident put our democratic and fundamental rights, and the freedom of expression under threat." "The incident made us disgraceful



Bulu



Jashim

as a nation. Such an incident is difficult to imagine in any democratic country." He also demanded the perpetrators

be brought to book, said a press release of Gonoforum. A team of Left Democratic Alliance

yesterday visited Noakhali General Hospital where the 35-year-old victim was being treated. It demanded immediate arrest of

the culprits and their punishment through quick trial. Protesting the rape, Chhatra League (JSD-Ambia), student body of a fac-

tion of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal led by Sharif Nurul Ambia, formed a human chain in front of Raju Memorial Sculpture on Dhaka University campus yesterday. In another development, a delega-

tion of 15 senior BNP leaders, led by its Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, will visit Noakhali General Hospital today to enquire about the victim, said a release.

'Genetic hack' FROM PAGE 16

The scientists at the university's Carl R

Woese Institute for Genomic Biology say they have found a way to make the process of photosynthesis, the process by which plants use sunlight to convert carbon dioxide and water into energy, inherently more efficient. An enzyme called Rubisco is key to

the process of converting atmospheric carbon into an organic compound the plant consumes, a process known as "carbon fixation." But the enzyme also acts to "fix" atmospheric oxygen, converting it into

toxic compounds that the plant

expends considerable energy eliminating -- energy that could otherwise be spent in growing. This competing process is known as photorespiration. The Illinois team came up with the idea of implanting bits of algae DNA into the tobacco plant's cells to create a

Lead author Donald Ort told AFP: "If you take a shortcut, when you're driving your car, you travel less distance, and you use less fuel." When a plant uses less energy on

type of biological shortcut that would

speed up photorespiration.

photorespiration, it "is able to take that energy and put it into plant growth and plant productivity, rather than using it to metabolize this toxic compound."

The study is of particular signifi-

is not a redundant function for plants. "Are we going to reinvent photosyn-

thesis? I don't think so, " he said.

More experiments in the fields of

Democrats take charge

FROM PAGE 16

the president.

Homeland Security at current levels through Feb 8, providing \$1.3 billion for border fencing and \$300 million for other border security items including technology and cameras.

unfunded including the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, Transportation, Commerce and Justice, through Sept 30, the end of the current fiscal year. "We're not doing a wall. It has nothing to do with politics. It has to do with a wall is an immorality between coun-

tries. It's an old way of thinking. It isn't

cost effective," Pelosi told reporters late on Thursday. As speaker, Pelosi now is situated to lead Democratic opposition to Trump's agenda and carry out investigations of his administration following two years during which congressional Republicans largely acquiesced to

Trump on Thursday made an unannounced appearance in the White House briefing room to make the case for the border wall, accompanied by members of a union that represents border patrol agents that endorsed him for president in 2016. He congratulated Pelosi on her selection as speaker and said: "Hopefully we're going to work together." "The wall - you can call it a barrier,

you can call it whatever you want - but essentially we need protection in our country," Trump told reporters, without taking questions. Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell signaled that the

Democratic legislation had no future in the Senate, calling it "political theater, not productive lawmaking." "Let's not waste the time," he said on the Senate floor. "Let's not get off on the wrong foot with House Democrats using

their platform to produce political state-

ments rather than serious solutions." McConnell said the Senate would not take up any proposal that did not have a real chance of getting Trump's signature.

Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer urged McConnell to allow the Democratic legislation to come to a vote in the chamber and said there was no

reason to keep parts of the government unrelated to the border security issue shut down because of the wall standoff. Congressional leaders from both parties held unproductive talks with

Trump at the White House on Wednesday and are to return for another round later yesterday, a sign the shutdown is likely to continue at least for the rest of the week.

cance because it is the first time that the

technique, which has been discussed

for several years, resulted in such a

major impact in an open field as

opposed to a laboratory environment.

Other techniques had tried to limit photorespiration, but have often led to negative impacts on the plant's other functions. "What's cool about this is that they've been very clever in targeting the

pathway in a way that doesn't cause

side effects," David Stern, president of

the Boyce Thompson Institute, which

was not a part of the study, told AFP. But it is still far from being ready to be used on an industrial scale. The same team wants to reproduce their results with soybeans, black eyed peas, and potatoes. It is also necessary for the technique to work in diverse climates,

notably Africa and Southeast Asia. Some doubt they will succeed.

University of California at Davis points out that such experiments have been carried out for the past five or six

years, without achieving their goals. He himself has published a study in Nature showing that photorespiration

elections, Republicans have a 53-47 majority in the Senate and Democrats have a 235-199 margin in the House,

with one seat undecided. Trump made the wall - a project estimated to cost about \$23 billion - a The second part would fund the key campaign promise in 2016, saying other federal agencies that are now Mexico would pay for it and arguing it is needed to combat illegal immigration and drug trafficking. Democrats

have called the wall immoral, ineffective and medieval. Credit rating agency Moody's said the shutdown would cause minimal US economic and credit market disruption but there could be a more severe impact

economy if the closure is protracted.

FROM PAGE 16

reliably. The mini-labs collect samples considering the most important risk factors such as top-selling medicines, new and costly products, hard to reach areas and high disease seasons, he added.

can cause treatment failure and have adverse impacts on patients. They can also increase mortality and raise the chance of antibiotic resistance, said Md Mehedi Hasan, national consultant of essential drugs and medicines at WHO Bangladesh.

there is any. "Using a mini-lab is a new idea in Bangladesh. It's a portable lab for field-

Some drug admin staffers have been trained to run mini-labs as well.

Md Shakhawat Hossain Razu, superintendent of drugs in Barishal, said

mini-labs were being used to conduct tests on suspected poor quality medicines. Only the low quality products are sent to NCL for thorough checks.

in the last fiscal year.

Professor Arnold Bloom from the

Illinois will hold the answer.

on financial markets and the broad

Mini-labs

Dr Syed Umar Khyyam, chief of PQM-Bangladesh, said they have been working with DGDA to step up monitoring of medicines and enable labs to test the quality of medicines accurately and

Substandard and fake medicines

Maj Gen Md Mustafizur Rahman, director general of DGDA, said the drug admin carries out surveillance on medicine shops on a regular basis to evaluate the quality of medicines and take proper action against fake ones, if

level testing of medicines and it works Mini-labs have made market surveillance dynamic, the DGDA chief

According to 2017-18 report of the DGDA, it had filed 221 cases, imposed fines of Tk 163,57,000 and seized illegal medicines worth Tk 42,60,170

After the November congressional