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VIOLENCE IN MYANMAR Now Buddhists start to flee

Some 200 of them crossed into Bangladesh; Dhaka summons Myanmar envoy to protest

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA, Bandarban

Around 200 Buddhists from Myanmar's Chin state crossed into a remote hilly region of Bandarban's Ruma on Monday following intensified fighting between Myanmar army and rebel group Arakan Army, officials said.

Shamsul Alam, upazila nirbahi officer in Ruma upazila, said members of around 40 Myanmar families took shelter in Cheih Kaying Para under Remakree Prangsha union.

The fresh arrival of Myanmar nationals takes place at a time when Bangladesh is struggling to cope with the burden of over a million Rohingya Muslims. Of them, some 750,000 have taken shelter in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar since August 2017 following a military crackdown in Rakhine.

Some 1,300 Rohingyas recently fled to the camps from India after allegedly facing abuses and threats in the neighbouring country. Several dozen Rohingyas were also deported from jails in Saudi Arabia in recent weeks.

Talking to The Daily Star, UNO Shamsul yesterday said the newly displaced people from Myanmar include members of ethnic groups Kyang, Khumi and Rakhine. They have set up temporary tents in Cheih Kaying Para with the help of locals.

Jira Bawm, chairman of Remakree Prangsha Union Parishad, said displaced Myanmar nationals from Chin, which borders Ruma upazila, arrived in Cheih Kaying Para

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The arm of an excavator wrecking a building at Islambagh in the capital's Kamrangirchar by the Buriganga river during a drive conducted by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority against encroachers yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Eviction drive on to reclaim river banks

252 more structures along the Buriganga demolished

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday knocked down 252 illegal structures, including 10 multi-storey buildings, at the capital's Kamrangirchar.

The move was a part of the ongoing drives to demolish unauthorised establishments along the Buriganga river.

A mobile court led by BIWTA Joint Director AKM Arif Uddin started the fifth day's drive stretching from Thotar More to Loharpool in Kamrangirchar around 10:30am and continued until 4:00pm.

With the latest demolition, 908 structures have so far been knocked down in the drives, which will continue for eight more workdays.

On the fifth day yesterday, BIWTA demolished two five-storey buildings, three

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21 named for Ekushey Padak

Prof Halima Khatun, Azam Khan awarded posthumously

UNB, Dhaka

Twenty-one eminent personalities will get the country's second-highest civilian award, Ekushey Padak, this year in recognition of their contributions to various fields.

The cultural affairs ministry announced the names of the recipients yesterday.

Prof Halima Khatun (posthumous), advocate Golam Arif Tipu and Prof Monowara Islam have been selected for the award for their role in the Language Movement.

Subir Nandi, Azam Khan (posthumous) and Khairul Anam Shakil are being recognised for their contributions to music while Lucky Enam, Suborna Mustafa and Liaquat Ali Lucky for performing arts.

Sayed Khanam and Jamal Uddin Ahmed have been chosen for their contributions to photography and fine arts respectively while Khitindra Chandra Baishya is getting the Ekushey Padak for his role in the Liberation War.

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HOLEY ARTISAN ATTACK Key witness testifies

Sharmina Parvin, wife of Hasnat Karim, describes the fateful night in court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Sharmina Parvin, one of the eyewitnesses of the Holey Artisan attack, yesterday told a tribunal in Dhaka how she saw innocent people being killed by the militants.

Parvin, wife of Abul Hasnat Reza Karim who was arrested after the attack and exempted from charges later, gave her statement before the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal of Dhaka.

Parvin said she, her husband, and two children went to the Holey Artisan Bakery around 8:30pm on July 1, 2016, to celebrate her daughter's birthday.

"We ordered food and were waiting at the last table of the Bakery. All of a sudden, we saw three to four armed young men enter and start shooting indiscriminately. They asked us if we are Muslims. We said yes. Then they asked us not to be afraid.

"They also asked us to duck. After a while, we saw them shooting at eight or 10 foreigners who were behind us. They asked us to cover the eyes and noses of our children so that they would not have to see what was happening," she told the court.

After a while, the masked militants asked four people, including a boy and two girls, to keep seated beside Parvin's family throughout the night, she said.

The militants put out all the lights except one in a veranda. Around 1:30am, they brought a foreigner before us and shot him dead. They also randomly mutilated the bodies to ensure the deaths, she added.

"They arranged some food for us for sehri since it was the Ramadan. But we could not eat with the dead bodies all around us. They also took my husband and a boy at gun point to the rooftop and after five to six minutes

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FM in India on 3-day visit

To reaffirm Dhaka's commitment to take ties forward

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday left for India on a three-day visit during which he will meet top leaders of that country, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to reiterate Dhaka's firm commitment to taking the diplomatic relationship forward.

Momen, the newly-appointed foreign minister, is the first senior Bangladeshi minister travelling to New Delhi since Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League returned to power for the third consecutive term. He will attend the 5th India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) meeting.

Diplomatic sources said the foreign minister is carrying a special message from Prime Minister

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Magnetic north pole moves towards Russia



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Magnetic north pole is not where it used to be. Instead, our compasses are pointing ever closer to Russia as the pole drifts away from the Canadian Arctic and towards Siberia.

The pole is now travelling about 34 miles (55 kilometres) a year. It crossed the international date line in 2017 in its lurch eastwards.

As a result, scientists have been forced to issue an update on the status of Earth's magnetic field a year ahead of schedule to enable precise navigation by those that depend on compasses rather than GPS navigation.

The constant roaming of the pole is a problem for compasses in smartphones and some consumer electronics. Aeroplanes and boats also rely on magnetic north, usually as backup navigation,

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Trump to meet Kim in Vietnam

Summit to be held on Feb 27-28

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said he would hold his second meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Vietnam on February 27-28, while giving himself credit for averting a major war on the Korean Peninsula.

In his annual State of the Union address to Congress, Trump said much work remained to be done in the

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 7

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-15 5-52 7-15

JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-30 5-56 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Freedom fighter shot and killed in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A freedom fighter was shot dead by two unidentified criminals in Ishwardi upazila of Pabna yesterday.

The victim is 70-year-old Mostafizur Rahman Selim, of Rooppur village in the upazila's Pakshey union. He was also a former secretary of Pakshey union Awami League.

Quoting locals, Md Bahauddin Faruki, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station, said the criminals opened fire on Selim around 9:00pm when he was returning home from a local market.

He was rushed to Ishwardi Upazila Health Complex after the attack. Finding his condition critical, doctors referred him to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Selim died on the way to RMCH, the OC said, adding, "Reason behind the murder is still not clear." Police are investigating

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Leftover leather scraps being dumped by a truck on the side of Beribandh in the capital's Hazaribagh area yesterday. Stacks of tannery waste by the side of the road are a proof that some tanners are still operating in the area defying a government ban.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

'ILLEGAL' BANGLADESHI WORKERS 200 crammed into Indonesia shop house

AFP, Medan

Almost 200 men identified by police as Bangladeshi have been found crammed into a shop house in Indonesia, authorities said yesterday.

Police in the city of Medan on Sumatra island were tipped off to the group by suspicious residents who lived nearby.

When police raided the shop house on Tuesday they found some 192 men, mostly in their twenties, occupying the two-storey building with many complaining about lack of food, authorities said.

Officials said they believed the men had arrived from Bangladesh and were living in the cramped quarters for several months in the hopes of going to neighbouring Malaysia for work.

"We think they arrived here by boat. They don't have any documents," said head of Medan immigration Fery Monang Sihite.

"We're still questioning them and will later decide whether we need to deport them or not."

It was not immediately clear who owned the building or what role they may have played in the affair.

In recent years, Indonesia has seen hundreds of asylum seekers -- mostly Afghans and minority Rohingya from Myanmar -- arrive in the northern part of Sumatra.

In 2015, hundreds of Muslim Rohingya arrived ashore in Aceh, where they were welcomed in the staunchly conservative

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