



US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller looks on as an indigenous woman weaves in Begenachhari village of Rangamati's Barkal upazila on Thursday. The envoy visited the district to review the USAID's work with local communities.

PHOTO: STAR

## China urges India, Pakistan to 'quickly turn the page'

ANI, Beijing

Without taking any stand on Pakistan's support of terrorism, China today said it played a "constructive role" in efforts to "defuse" tensions between India and Pakistan, in the wake of the Pulwama terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, the responsibility for which has been claimed by Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed or JeM.

At a press conference on the sidelines of the second session of the 13th National People's Conference in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China wants to see an improvement of relations and "encouraged" New Delhi and Islamabad to "return to negotiations", hoping that "both sides can transform crisis into opportunity", Chinese state media reported.

Significantly, he made no mention of China's position on asking Pakistan to stop supporting terrorism, even as Pak-based JeM carried out a terror attack in which more than 40 Indian soldiers were killed.

## Just a tap

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is undoubtedly a great initiative but the DGDA lacks the manpower for market surveillance."

"We are running advertisements on social media to promote the app. In March, we will go for television and print media ads to reach all corners of the country," Maj Gen Md Mustafizur Rahman, director general of the DGDA, told this paper.

Regarding manpower crisis, he said, "We are overcoming that. On our request, the Ministry of Public Administration appointed 228 people in several posts. Among them, eight were made directors, 62 assistant directors, 36 deputy directors, and 24 drug superintendents."

Either a third-party IT expert should be appointed or the DGDA officials must be trained to manage the app, he said, adding that a training programme may start in March.

A2i provided Tk 17.55 lakh to the DGDA for making the app, said, Md Mahamudul Hasan Sohag, national consultant (technical) at a2i Service Innovation Fund.

## Rain washes out

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standard 200 for five-day matches.

Play was set to start half an hour early at 3:30am (Bangladesh time) on today's second day, which will effectively be the first day of the match.

There is rain forecast for today as well, and the shortened match is likely to result in a revision of tactics for Bangladesh. The rainfall means that an already green pitch could aid pacers more, and so it is likely that Bangladesh would opt to go in with four seamers, with Mustafizur Rahman coming back into the side to join the rookie pace trio of Khaled Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain and Abu Jayed.

Before the first day, there were indications that Khaled would make way for Mustafizur, while off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz -- who turned in Bangladesh's most expensive innings figures of one for 245 in the first Test in Hamilton -- was set to make way for left-arm spinner Taijul Islam. However, the rain and reduction in days could see a change of plan to an all-pace attack.

The extra day will also benefit opener Tamim Iqbal as he will have one more day to recover from the groin pain he experienced during practice on Wednesday.

## Turkey, Russia patrols begin around Idlib

AFP, Ankara

Turkish and Russian patrols will begin in Syria's northwestern Idlib region on Friday as part of a deal agreed last year, Turkey's defence minister said.

The jihadist-controlled Idlib province has been protected from a major offensive by the Syrian regime following the September agreement between Damascus ally Russia and rebel supporter Turkey, which included setting up a demilitarised zone around the region.

"Today Russian patrols will start outside of Idlib in the border region (and) Turkish armed forces' patrols will begin in the demilitarised zone," Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said.

"There were restrictions on the use

## CEC knows

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a study found that stamping of ballots took place on the night before the general election on December 30 in more than one centres in 33 constituencies out of 50 surveyed.

In 30 constituencies, ballot papers were stamped openly after occupying polling booths on the voting day, said the study titled "Review of Election Process of 11th National Election".

The CEC said the situation regarding polls irregularities has been deteriorating gradually.

"The election irregularities could not be stopped despite strict enforcement of related laws and adoption of the electoral code of conduct. We will have to get rid of the situation."

Huda said the EC would have to take a tough stance on proper enforcement of laws to stop irregularities.

He called upon all election officials to discharge their duties with professionalism.

Referring to the political parties' demand for deployment of army in the elections, the CEC asked, "Which

## Youths have so much

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Bangladesh but also of the world.

"He also talked about the way of freedom from this oppression and suppression in his speech," she said.

The PM said in 1971, not only Bangladesh but also many other countries across the world were under oppression and suppression.

Hasina, also the chairperson of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust, said Bangabandhu had always talked about the sacrifice for any great achievement.

She said by the great sacrifice of Bangabandhu and millions of people, Bangladesh got its independence.

But she regretted that after the assassination of Bangabandhu in 1975, country's independence was put almost on the verge of failure. "It was our good luck that we got the chance to come to power to talk about the Liberation War spirit. The country was under an era of darkness from 1975 to 1996. After that, we started our journey again towards the path of light."

The PM said after the killing of Bangabandhu, there were repeated attempts to erase his name from the history of the country.

"The history of the independence was tampered and someone else was made the proclaimer of the independ-

of Idlib and Afrin regions' airspace but these have been lifted from today," Akar told state news agency Anadolu in an interview.

Idlib is the last major region held by rebels in Syria and is controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a group led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

HTS took administrative control of the whole of the Idlib region in January.

Despite being on opposing sides of the conflict, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have been working closely in a bid to end the war.

An AFP correspondent on Friday morning saw a column of around 10 armoured vehicles on a road in the zone in the western countryside of the Aleppo province.

country in the world deploys army for conducting an election?"

He said political parties would take part in elections, people would cast their votes as owners of the country and the EC would carry out its duties smoothly to hold a trouble-free election.

Huda said conducting an election in a nonpartisan manner would be the main objective of the election officials and the candidates' identities and influence would not be considered under any circumstances.

He asked election officials to be careful about not neglecting their duties.

The CEC said defeated candidates always claim that elections are not acceptable while the winners accept the polls results.

Elections to 482 upazila parishads will be held in five phases from tomorrow.

The second, third, fourth and fifth phases of the fifth upazila elections are scheduled for March 18, 24, 31 and June 18.

In 2014, 487 upazilas went to polls in six phases between February and May.

## UK PM piles pressure on Brussels for Brexit deal

AFP, London

Prime Minister Theresa May was to pile the pressure on Brussels yesterday, saying their willingness to budge could determine whether British MPs finally back a Brexit deal next week.

May was to say the European Union had some choices to make if it wanted to secure a withdrawal agreement and see Britain leave the bloc in an orderly fashion on March 29.

Talks between British and EU officials to break the Brexit deadlock are set to last into the weekend, ahead of a crucial parliamentary vote in London on Tuesday on whether MPs will accept the deal.

With just three weeks to go until the scheduled departure date of March 29, concern is growing about the possibility of Britain crashing out of the bloc after 46 years of membership with no deal in place.

British MPs have so far rejected the withdrawal agreement struck between London and Brussels, chiefly due to concerns over it's "backstop" solution.

Talks since have focused on the "backstop", which is designed to keep the Irish border open but which critics say could indefinitely lock Britain into a customs union with the EU.

May was to address an audience of workers in Grimsby, the North Sea port that is home to one of Britain's biggest fishing fleets.

May will say that the government remains determined to secure legally binding changes to the backstop in advance of Tuesday's vote on the withdrawal agreement.

"Just as MPs will face a big choice next week, the EU has to make a choice too," May will say, according to her Downing Street office.

"We are both participants in this process. It is in the European interest for the UK to leave with a deal.

"We are working with them but the decisions that the European Union makes over the next few days will have a big impact on the outcome of the vote."

## This year's

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directed to stop the fair for the upcoming upazila election."

Raj Punnah is an annual revenue collection programme where the Bohmong circle chief collects taxes from headmen (mouza chief) and karbaris (village chief).

Every year tourists from home and abroad come to celebrate the traditional festival Raj Punnah.

Agriculture Minister Md Abdur Razzaque was present as chief guest of the three-day-long programme.

The chief guest also expressed disappointment in his speech.

Royal family sources said the Bohmong dynasty has been celebrating the festival in Bandarban since 1875.

## 2 killed

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The accident occurred around 5:30am.

The injured were receiving treatment at different hospitals, he added.

Mahtab Uddin, officer-in-charge of Bagerhat Model Police Station, said the bodies would be handed over to families within the earliest possible time.

Laltu, passenger of the bus, said all the victims were residents of Tribeni village at Shailakupa upazila in Jhenidah.

## Ex-Trump campaign chief

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the advisory sentencing guidelines calling for 19 to 24 years behind bars were "excessive" and disproportionate to sentences for similar offenses.

"The government cannot sweep away the history of all these previous sentences," the judge said.

Manafort was convicted by a jury in August of five counts of filing false income tax returns, two counts of bank fraud and one count of failing to report a foreign bank account.

He is one of a half-dozen former Trump associates and senior aides charged by Mueller, who has been investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 election and possible collusion with the Trump campaign.

The charges against Manafort were not connected to his role in the Trump campaign, which he headed for two months in 2016, but were related to lucrative consulting work he did for Russian-backed Ukrainian politicians from 2004 to 2014.

Prosecutors alleged that Manafort used offshore bank accounts to hide more than \$55 million he earned working for the Ukrainians.

The money was used to support a lavish lifestyle which included purchases of luxury homes and cars, antique rugs, and expensive clothes, including an \$18,500 python jacket.

His conviction was a stunning downfall for a man who also worked on the White House bids of Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George HW Bush and Bob Dole.

Speaking from a wheelchair and wearing a green prison jumpsuit with the words "Alexandria Inmate" on the back, Manafort told the court that his "life, professionally and personally, is in a shambles."

"I feel the pain and shame," said Manafort, who the defense says suffers from gout.

Manafort was ordered to pay \$24 million in restitution and a \$50,000 fine.

## Of a farmer

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teaches by rotation. Since it's a specialised school, all the teachers took training for three months. Professionally, they are businessmen and kindergarten school teachers. Some are university students.

The school also has two vans for the students. Solvent parents pay for transporting their children while it is free for the needy ones.

Asked what motivated him to take up the challenge to work with the children with special needs, Rashid said it was primarily need-based.

"Many parents considered their challenged children as burden. Some of them turned to me for advice and at one point, I said to myself if I could to do something for those kids," said Rashid, a proud father of four daughters.

"But it was very challenging when I started," said Rashid, who claimed to have studied up to class X.

"Parents were not interested in exposing their challenged children in public domain. I had to create awareness among the parents and convinced them that their children would only get better through the school," Rashid said while reflecting on those tough days when he took door-to-door campaign at 20-25 villages in five unions of Kaliganj upazila.

Nowadays, parents are willingly to send their children with special needs for learning, he said.

"Many such children are at the primary stage of their illness and proper treatment and support might help them get cured. I can't help in this regard. I'm trying to do what I can do best," he said.

"I purchase books, khatahs, pens and other educational accessories for the children with the money I earn selling hens, ducks, goats and even cows. I also get help in the forms of wood, bamboos, tin from the local people to build the school," said Rashid.

Abdul Hakim, a teacher at the school, said, "We teach some children by Braille system and sign language. Those with physical disabilities are given general teaching."

Rawshana Begum, a guardian from

Manafort still faces sentencing in a money laundering and witness tampering case in Washington next week, where the maximum penalty is 10 years and the judge has appeared more sympathetic to prosecutors.

Trump has dangled the possibility of pardons for some of those indicted by Mueller -- including Manafort, whom he has praised as a "good man" who has been treated unfairly.

Besides Manafort, four other former Trump associates face charges or have pleaded guilty to charges stemming from the Mueller investigation.

Former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with Russian officials and is awaiting sentencing.

Trump's former personal attorney Michael Cohen is to begin serving a three-year prison sentence on May 6 for fraud, tax evasion, illegal campaign contributions and lying to Congress.

George Papadopoulos, a foreign policy advisor to the Trump campaign, pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI and was sentenced to two weeks in prison. Another Trump advisor, Roger Stone, awaits trial.

Meanwhile, Trump's real estate group the Trump Organization was sued Thursday by Cohen for "millions of dollars" in legal fees Cohen says the company was obliged to pay.

Cohen alleges the company stopped paying his legal costs related to Special Counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe and other matters "only after" he began cooperating last year in investigations that have since implicated the president in wrongdoing.

It was the latest chapter in the story of Cohen's break with his former boss. Cohen has implicated Trump and the White House in the charges of campaign finance fraud and lying to Congress that he pleaded guilty to.

the village, said her physically and mentally challenged daughter was very happy now to know how to read and write. Besides, the girl enjoys most when at school with other children.

Another local, Shahjahan Sazu, said Abdur Rashid and his Kaliganj Pratibandhi School showed that children with special needs are not burden and instead can become resources if given proper support.

Rashid applied to the social welfare ministry for registration of his school.

Deputy Director in Lalmonirhat Social Welfare Department Mosharraf Hossain said all the school's all necessary papers were at his office and the ministry concerned and that the school would get the approval soon.

"It's great job by a farmer," he said, as he showered Rashid with praise.

## Quader

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brief on the update of the treatment at 11:30am (local time) today.

The minister was flown to Singapore on Monday for better treatment following the advice of renowned Indian cardiologist Dr Devi Shetty.

He was admitted to the CCU of BSMMU on Sunday following his breathing complications.

Later, doctors found three blockages in his coronary arteries following an angiogram. A five-member medical board was constituted with Dr Philip Koh as its head for the treatment of Quader at Mount Elizabeth Hospital.

Other board members are Dr Sivathasan Kumaraswamy, infectious disease specialist Dr Asok Kurup, urologist Dr Ho Siew Hong and intensive care medicine specialist Sim Kah Ming.

After extensively examining Quader on Tuesday morning, the medical board said they were thinking of conducting a bypass surgery on the minister. But it was delayed due to slight problems in his kidney and infections.

## Bacteria that emit

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future to drive devices.

However, publishing their findings in the Journal of Power Sources, the scientists admitted this could be tricky because of the extreme environments the bacteria live in, which is why they had to test their abilities in the field.

"This was the first time such bacteria were collected in situ in an extreme environment like an alkaline hot spring," said Abdelrhman Mohamed, a PhD student at Washington State University who led the research.

The team stuck electrodes into the water of four hot springs, and left them for a month to be colonised by the bacteria.

"The natural conditions found in geothermal features such as hot springs are difficult to replicate in laboratory settings," said Dr Haluk Beyenal, who supervised the study.

"So, we developed a new strategy to enrich heat-loving bacteria in their