

500 evacuated as fire hits hotel in Singapore

AFP, Singapore

About 500 people were evacuated Wednesday after a fire at a luxury hotel in downtown Singapore but there were no injuries, emergency services officials said.

Television footage showed thick black smoke billowing from the Grand Hyatt Hotel near the Orchard Road shopping district, but the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) said the fire was quickly put out.

The blaze involved a kitchen stove and an exhaust duct in a restaurant on the second floor, the SCDF said, adding it was extinguished by water sprinklers before firefighters arrived.

"There were no reported injuries. The cause of the fire is under investigation," it said.

Voters' apathy

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overnight ballot stuffing and other anomalies.

The CEC said the district and police administrations as well as the Election Commission are key to holding any election, but they are not everything. "Voters or people are everything."

"We've to ensure people's participation legally from our respective positions. Or else, the necessity of election will end. There'll be no need of such meetings and discussions."

Deputy Commissioner Tanmoy Das, Police Super Md Ilias Sharif and Senior District Election Officer Md Rabiul Alam were, among others, present.

Submit detailed

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The court then asked the newly elected president of Supreme Court Bar Association AM Aminuddin to comment on the issue.

Aminuddin said action should be taken to bring discipline to roads for public interest and directives could be given to come up with lists of unfit vehicles and drivers without proper licences.

During the hearing, the court said no one was above the law and compliance of law was the pre-condition of a country's development. No country could become developed without respecting the law and everyone must obey laws, the court said before issuing the directives and rules.

It issued a rule asking the authorities concerned of the government to explain why their inaction to stop running of unfit vehicles and unlicensed drivers should not be declared illegal.

The HC also asked why directives should be given to implement the relevant laws, including the Motor Vehicles Ordinance 1983.

Under the Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1983, vehicles must undergo mandatory fitness checks every year. But according to BRTA, a total of 71,218 vehicles have not had their fitness certificates renewed in 10 years, and many of those plying the roads pose serious risks of accidents.

The secretary of the road, transport and bridges ministry, home secretary, IGP, BRTA chairman and director (road safety), and two deputy commissioners (Traffic - North and South) of DMP have to reply to the rule within four weeks.

As of December last year, about 38 lakh vehicles have been registered with the BRTA. Of them, 24.5 lakh are motorcycles that do not require annual fitness certificates.

Of the rest, some 6.5 lakh vehicles obtain fitness certificates every year on average, a BRTA official said.

Plot made

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to journalists during a press conference at the BNP office in the capital's Nayapaltan.

Fakhrul alleged that the jail authorities had been denying required medical attention to Khaleda despite of her deteriorating health condition.

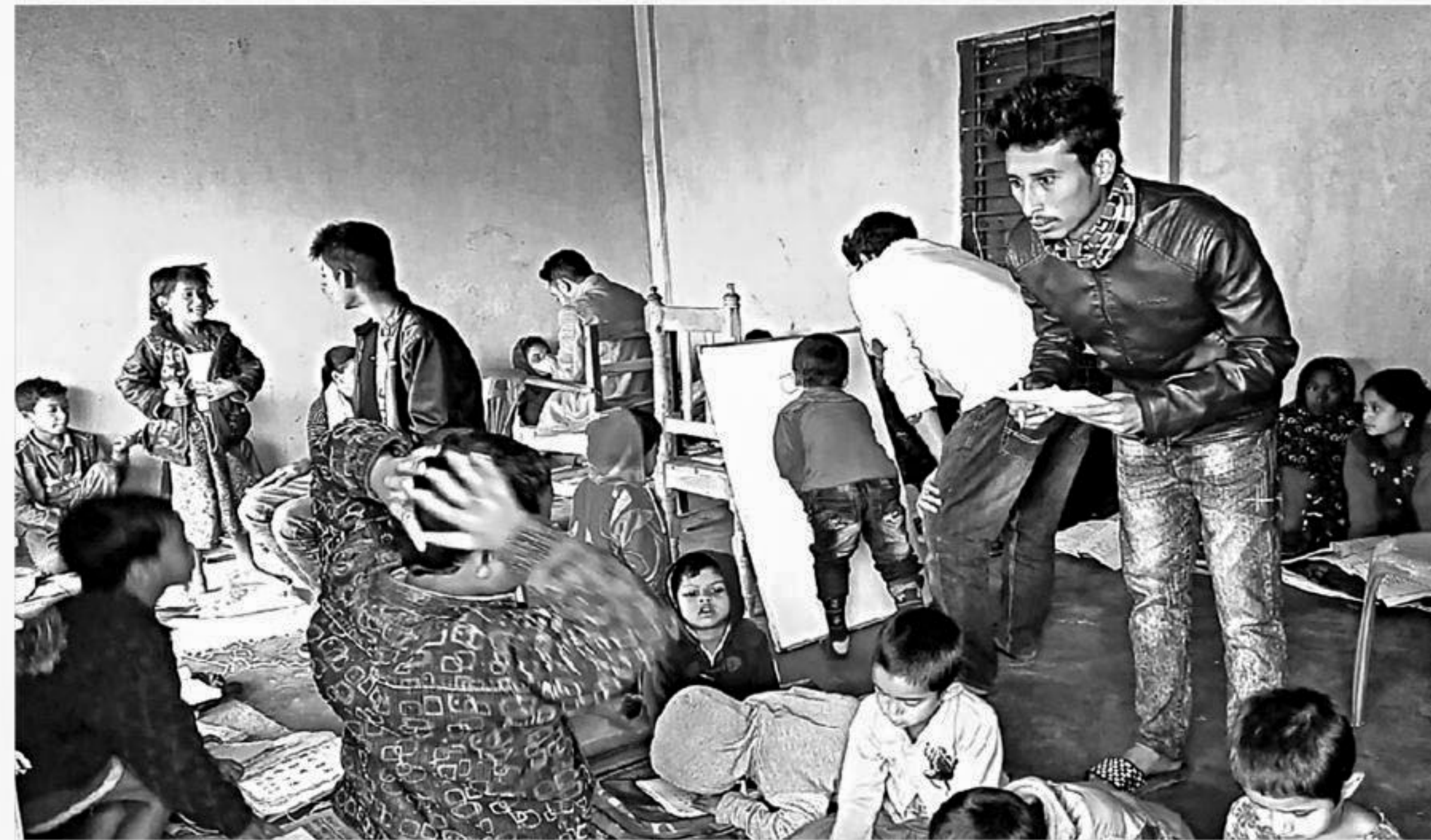
"The relatives of Khaleda Zia went to visit her on Tuesday and they said that her health condition had worsened," he said.

Khaleda, a three-time former prime minister, has been in prison since February 8 last year following a court verdict that convicted her in a corruption case and sentenced her with 10-year imprisonment.

"We have seen a healthy person went to the jail. But now she [Khaleda] is so sick that she cannot even move alone," Fakhrul said, adding, "She is passing her days in unbearable sufferings."

Fakhrul also alleged that the medical board that had been formed following a High Court order was not ensuring proper treatment to Khaleda.

The BNP leader also expressed concerns as the government had not taken any step to shift Khaleda to any specialised hospital even after the BNP's March 4 meeting with the home boss.



University, college, and school-goers teaching primary school dropouts at a learning centre in Kalmakanda upazila of Netrakona.

PHOTO: STAR

Won't relocate Rohingyas India

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hosting around 1.1 to 1.2 million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar.

He said their fear was that there might be landslides during the coming monsoon causing casualties. "That is why we tried to take 23,000 families or around 1 lakh Rohingyas to Bhasan Char."

On March 25, the United Nations (UN) appreciated Bangladesh's efforts to seek alternative locations for Rohingyas but sought clarification about the modalities of potential relocation of Rohingyas to Bhasan Char.

The government of Bangladesh said it planned to relocate Rohingyas from Cox's Bazar to Bhasan Char that could help "decongest" the overcrowded settlements in Cox's Bazar.

Bangladesh is currently hosting over 1.1 million Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar and most of them arrived on August 25, 2017.

"We are seeking clarification about the modalities of any relocation, the living conditions that would be provided and the basic rights and services that refugees would be able to access if they decided to relocate to Bhasan Char," said the UN in Bangladesh in a press statement on Monday.

The UN is also seeking clarification on issues of governance and access that the UN and partners would have to the island.

The UN's position is to "engage

constructively" with the government of Bangladesh on Bhasan Char.

"We are discussing with the government the critical protection and operational issues that should be considered before any relocations take place in order to ensure that refugees would be able to live in safe and sustainable living conditions on Bhasan Char," the statement reads.

The UN said the viability of any Rohingya relocations to Bhasan Char and the possibility of establishing a humanitarian response operation on the island would require thorough assessments, including technical assessments of the island and careful planning.

"We are also examining the potential operational implications of setting up a humanitarian response to Bhasan Char, including the requirements, time frames and costs involved in providing services," reads the UN statement.

The UN considers that any relocation to Bhasan Char "must be on a voluntary basis".

The UN said Rohingyas should have relevant, accurate and timely information on the project from the government, so they can make free and informed decisions.

The views and concerns of the refugees must be heard and addressed as part of the consultative process, reads the statement on the potential relocation of Rohingyas.

US SC backs Sudan over

AFP, Washington

The US Supreme Court overturned Tuesday a ruling ordering Sudan to pay damages to the families of 17 servicemen killed in the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen.

The high court ruled on procedural grounds: under regulations related to the prosecution of foreign states, it said the Sudanese government should have served the complaint in Khartoum instead of via its embassy in Washington.

"In cases with sensitive diplomatic implications, the rule of law demands adherence to strict rules," the justices said in an 8-1 ruling.

On October 12, 2000, a rubber boat loaded with explosives blew up as it rounded the bow of the guided-missile destroyer, which had just pulled into Aden, Yemen, for a refueling stop.

Seventeen American sailors were killed as well as the two perpetrators of the attack claimed by Al-Qaeda, in an early success for the terror group and its founder Osama bin Laden.

A US court then ruled that Sudan, where the two bombers were trained, was responsible for the attack - a claim Khartoum always denied.

In 2012, a Washington judge ordered Sudan to pay more than \$300 million to the victims' families. Other judges went on to order certain banks to make

Sudanese assets available to start paying the sum.

Late on Tuesday Sudan welcomed the US Supreme court's verdict.

"The US Supreme Court's decision is a certificate that shows that Sudan is not supporting terrorism," the Sudanese foreign ministry said in a statement.

"It shows that there is no link between Sudan and terrorist operations."

The US court's verdict comes at a time when Washington and Khartoum are engaged in talks to remove Sudan from the United States' list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Washington has set certain benchmarks that Sudan has to meet in order to be removed from the blacklist that also includes North Korea, Iran and Syria.

The United States had added Sudan to the blacklist in 1993 for Khartoum's alleged support for Islamist militants.

Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden used to reside in Sudan between 1992 to 1996.

In January, President Donald Trump said that one of the architects of the USS Cole attack, Al-Qaeda operative Jamal al-Badawi, was killed in a precision strike in Yemen.

The chief suspect in the attack, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, is held at the US detention camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Global help

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areas of the port city. In the port area, they disarmed Bangladeshi navy men and murdered them.

In Dhaka, freedom fighters and Pakistani occupational forces exchanged gunfire in Jinjira area.

The Pakistan army attempted expelling all foreign journalists from Dhaka, confiscating their notes and tapes to keep the news of the genocide at bay. But as the war deepened, Bangladesh became the focus of the world.

Following the declaration of independence and the arrest of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, freedom fighters kept the fight up against the Pakistan army.

Also on this day, the Pakistan Observer, a newspaper which remained close for two days before the declaration of independence, resumed publication.

American Consul General to Dhaka Archer Blood sent a telegram to Washington about his observations at Dhaka, under the subject heading "Selective genocide".

He reported that they were "mute

and horrified by a reign of terror by the Pakistan military" in East Pakistan. Blood pointed towards surfacing evidence suggesting that Awami League supporters and Hindus were being systematically targeted by the martial law administrators. He also reported that Prof Dev, Prof Fazlul Haque, Prof Abedin, along with many DU teachers and MPA's, have been killed.

On the other hand, in the Memorandum for Dr Henry Kissinger, Situation in Pakistan, NSC official Samuel L Hoskinson told Kissinger that the events in East Pakistan had taken a turn for the worse. It also acknowledged both American recognition of the "reign of terror conducted by West Pakistan" and the need to address new policy issues that have been created "as a result of the terror".

American television broadcasting centres CBS and NBC claimed that "the East Pakistan Rebellion [has been] crushed".

[Source: The Daily Star Archive, The Liberation War Museum Archive and US Department of State Archive]

India

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"I want to assure the world community that the new capability is not against anyone. This is to secure and defend... fast-growing India."

But analysts said the test would not go unnoticed in China and Pakistan, India's chief rivals in the nuclear-armed region, and could be interpreted as a show of New Delhi's advancing military capabilities.

"This is less about shooting down satellites and more about proving high-altitude 'hit-to-kill' proficiency, which is the core competency required to get good at a range of things -- including defence against nuclear-capable ballistic missiles," Ankit Panda, of the Federation of American Scientists, told AFP.

"This is how the message is going to be perceived in Islamabad."

A spokesman for Pakistan's foreign ministry said countries that had "strongly condemned" the demonstration of similar technologies in the past should work towards preventing the militarisation of space.

"Boasting of such capabilities is reminiscent of Don Quixote's tilting against windmills," the spokesman said.

United States and the former Soviet Union carried out their first successful anti-satellite missile tests in 1985, and China in 2007.

All are now said to be working on so-called Star Wars laser weapons to destroy satellites.

Dropouts get

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Family of Imran Hasan, a first-year student of International University of Business and Technology in Dhaka, owns the room.

"Now there are some 88 children from class-I to V, including orphans and those who dropped out. There are also children who do not get to attend classes because they work to earn bread for their families. The school syllabuses are followed at the centre," said Imran.

The centre opens at 7:00am. The seven boys take classes in turns.

"First, we contacted the parents in College Road, Chandpur, Rajapur, and Chakpara neighbourhoods and persuade them to send their children to the centre. They responded well and we started the programme in January this year," he said.

Most of the children are from ultra-poor families and hardly get any support to deal with challenges in this competitive world, he went on.

Babul Hasan, Romjan Miah, Osman Ali, Durjoy Das, Galiv Khan, and Khokon Miah are the other members of the platform. Among them, Khokon studies in class-X at a local school.

The platform had also been campaigning against early marriage and sexual harassment since inception, said Romjan, adding that it also donates blood and supports poor patients.

"We went for the learning centre this year and the elders in the locality had been praising our efforts. They also offered financial support," said Romjan.

"The students manage books from schools and we give them other educational materials," said Babul Hasan.

Weekly cultural events and cleanliness drives were also part of their programme, said Osman Ali.

"I have found a way to continue studies," said Bahar Uddin, 12, who lost his father a few years ago.

"I fish to support my mother and it is difficult to do the daily homework alongside that. Now I have the support," said Bahar, now a fifth grader at a local school.

Class-V student Shimu Akhter, daughter of a brick kiln worker in Chandpur, said since joining the centre she had been able to keep pace with her classmates.

Kalmakanda Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Zakir Hossain praised the seven youths. "I will provide all kinds of support to promote this initiative."

One-fifth of top

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March 31, EC Joint Secretary Farhad Ahmmad Khan told this correspondent yesterday.

Of the 492 upazilas in the country, 480 are going to polls this time in five phases.

The EC is yet to announce the schedule for the fifth phase. Officials say they plan to hold the last phase of the polls on June 18 after the HSC examinations and the Eid-ul-Fitr.

The BNP; the Left Democratic Alliance, a combine of eight left-leaning parties; Islami Andolan Bangladesh; Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan and Bangladesh Muslim League boycotted the polls, saying they did not see any prospect of a free and fair election.

This is the first time political parties have nominated candidates for the posts of chairman, vice-chairman and female vice-chairman in upazila parishads.

EC officials said the number of uncontested winners in the posts of chairman, vice-chairman and female vice-chairman will increase in the fourth phase of polls.

A total of 88 candidates for the posts of chairman, vice-chairman and female vice-chairman are likely to be elected uncontested in the fourth

phase. Of them, 39 are chairman candidates, 22 vice-chairman contestants and 27 female vice-chairman aspirants.

Almost all of them are AL contenders, said EC officials.

Fifty-five candidates for the positions of chairman, vice-chairman and female vice-chairman were elected unopposed in the third phase. The number was 48 in the second phase and 28 in the first phase.

In all three phases, voters appeared to be uninterested in casting ballots with the overall turnout hitting the lowest since 2009.

In the 2009 upazila polls, the voter turnout was 70.57 percent, which fell to 61.23 percent in 2014. It dropped further to 43.31 percent in the first phase of this election and 41.25 percent in the second phase. The turnout stood at 41.41 percent in the third phase.

In the last three phases of the polls, at least 27 upazilas saw less than 30 percent voter turnout while it was below 10 percent in two upazilas.

According to the Upazila Parishad Act 2009, the mayors of municipalities, chairmen of union parishads, and holders of seats reserved for women in municipalities and union parishads automatically become members of an upazila parishad.

Art spy recovers

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"Portrait of Dora Maar" or "Buste de Femme (Dora Maar)," vanished from the yacht of Saudi billionaire Sheikh Abdul Mohsen Abdulmalik Al-Sheikh while it was being refurbished in the town of Antibes in 1999.

The painting previously hung in Picasso's home until his death in 1973 and depicts the artist's muse.

The case baffled French police and it was feared that the artwork had been lost forever, until rumors emerged that the painting had surfaced on the Dutch black market.

Arthur Brand, a renowned Dutch art detective dubbed "the Indiana Jones of the art world," said he first learned that a stolen Picasso painting had emerged in the Netherlands in 2015, but did not know which work it was.

A four-year investigation ensued, which culminated in two intermediaries turning up at Brand's apartment 10 days ago with the missing painting in hand.

"They had the Picasso, now valued at 25 million euros, wrapped in a sheet and black rubbish bags, with them," Brand told Agence France Presse. "I hung the Picasso on my wall for a night, thereby making my apartment

one of the most expensive in Amsterdam for a day," he joked.

Brand discovered that the painting had been circulating the criminal underworld for numerous years, regularly being used as "collateral" and appearing "in a drug deal here, four years later in an arms deal there."

He received his best lead earlier this month, when "two representatives of a Dutch businessman" contacted him, saying that their client had the painting. "He was at his wits' end," Brand said. "He thought the Picasso was part of a legitimate deal. It turns out the deal was legitimate -- the method of payment was not."

The art detective pursued the lead and told the intermediaries that they had to act quickly to secure the painting in case it vanished once again into the criminal underworld.

The intermediaries subsequently delivered the painting to Brand's flat, and Picasso experts from the Pace Gallery in New York flew into Amsterdam to verify it. The painting has since been handed to an insurance company, which is currently determining what to do with it.

Bangladesh 90th among

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energy transition.

According to the report, Sri Lanka has come first among the South Asian countries, ranking 60th, while India secured 76th position. Pakistan has ranked 97th and Nepal 93rd.

Praising Bangladesh's effort on electrification, the report said, "Bangladesh made fast progress towards universal electrification due to strong political commitment, a stable policy regime, use of grid expansion and decentralised generation sources, and a supportive environment for investment in infrastructure."

While Bangladesh has scored low in terms of transition readiness, it ranks considerably higher when it comes to system performance.

The "transition readiness" component of the index has taken into account six individual indicators: capital and investment, regulation and political commitment, institutions and governance, institutions and innovative business environment, human capital and consumer participation, and energy system structure.

Energy system performance measures the ability of countries' current energy architecture to deliver across the three imperatives of the energy triangle: economic development and growth, energy security and access, and environmental sustainability.

According to the index, Sweden remains on the top on this annual list followed by Switzerland and Norway.

The index considers both the current state of the countries' energy system and their structural readiness to adapt to future energy needs.

The WEF said despite the climate pact signed in Paris three years ago, the world's energy systems have become less affordable and are no more environmentally sustainable than they were five years ago.

Limiting global warming depends on a rapid transition from fossil fuels to more sustainable energy sources. Yet many countries continue to rely on coal-fired power to meet rising demand for energy.

The biggest challenge facing attempts to future proof global energy is the lack of readiness among the world's largest emitters. The 10 countries that score the highest in terms of readiness accounted for a mere 2.6 percent of global annual emissions, the study found.

"The world's transition to secure, affordable and sustainable energy has stagnated, with little or no progress achieved in the past five years," it said.

Contacted, Nasrul Hamid, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, told The Daily Star that the

country was still lagging behind reaching the baseload power, the amount of power available to meet fundamental demands by consumers.

"We have undertaken different projects like Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, Matarbari Coal Power Plant and Payra Thermal Power Plant. We hope that we will reach a sustainable position by 2024," he said.

Two Bangladeshi

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Rahman and the third among five siblings. He used to work at a construction company in New Zealand, said the victim's brother-in-law Sanoar Hossain.

He left country for New Zealand a few days after he got married on December 29, 2017. On November 16 last year, he returned to Bangladesh on leave from work and went back to New Zealand in January this year, he added.

His wife Sazida Zaman Niha is currently three months' pregnant, Sanoar said.

Narayanganj City Corporation Mayor Selina Hayat Ivy and other distinguished persons of the area met Faruk's family and expressed their condolences.

In Narsinigi, Zakaria Bhuiyan was buried at his family graveyard in Palash upazila's Joypura village following a namaz-e-janaza around 11:00am.

Talking to The Daily Star, Palash upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Romana Yasmin said Zakaria went to New Zealand in September 2016, just 17 days after he got married to Rina Akhter.

He used to work at a welding farm there, the UNO said, adding that he came to Bangladesh in October last year on a 40-day leave and returned to New Zealand afterwards. He was trying to take his wife to New Zealand, she added.

Dhaka worried

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Arab Peace Initiative and the quartet roadmap," it said.

US President Donald Trump on Monday declared that the Golan Heights belongs to Israel, a move that risks plunging the volatile region into a new crisis.

With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu looking over his shoulder at the White House, Trump signed a proclamation officially granting the US's recognition of the Golan as Israeli territory -- a dramatic shift from decades of US policy.

The move immediately triggered global anger and a sharp response from Syria, which once held the strategic land.