

# 'Only two ways to escape'

FROM PAGE 1  
near the building.  
Although he escaped the fire that broke out on the 6th floor of the building yesterday around 12:30pm, he was trying to figure out if his colleagues and friends had made it out alive.  
"We heard people screaming and saw smoke coming up through the staircase," he said.  
Saifur and some of his colleagues ran towards the rooftop as it was impossible to go down through the stairs. After reaching the rooftop, they jumped to the neighbouring building, Awal Tower.  
"Just within 10 minutes, the smoke spread throughout the whole building. I helped around 50 people go to the next building. But a little later, it was impossible to stay there because of the smoke. I had to leave," he said.  
Saifur saw some people fall to the rooftop. "Too late to make it to the rooftop for an easier escape, they tried to get out from the windows of the building."  
He said people used two ways to escape -- some tried to go to the rooftop while some others broke the windows and glass walls to get to Awal Tower.  
"Till 1:00pm, people were able to make it to the rooftop. But after that, the staircase had become too smoky for people to make it through," he said, adding, "I saw four people jumping down after breaking the glass wall."  
He said there were 65 employees on their floor but he could not immediately say how many of them were able to come out of the building.  
People working on the lower floors were also not able to make it to the roof, he said.  
As the firefighters were not being able to rescue those trapped inside for a long period of time, many of them

were seen trying to climb down holding telephone or satellite television cables and the grille of the building. Some people fell to their deaths during the attempt.  
Another survivor, Emran Hossain, a worker of a commercial office on the 12nd floor of the building, was seen going to the next building after breaking a glass wall and climbing down.  
"I don't know how the fire broke out. It was not possible to see anything as there was a dark wall of smoke everywhere," said Emran.  
Most of the women employees were stuck inside and waiting to be rescued.  
Aparajita Barua is a worker in the DIRD group office, a global conglomerate of garment, textile, engineering, software and agriculture companies, situated on the 12th floor.  
Her mother came to the scene to look for her around 3:30pm when firefighters began rescuing people from the building using crane ladders.  
"I spoke to my daughter over the phone a while ago. She was stuck on the 12th floor and she said it was hard to breathe because of the smoke," she said.  
Until 10:00pm yesterday, it was still unknown whether Aparajita made it out alive.  
Atiqur Rahman, who had been working in the building for last 15 years, called his wife around 1:30pm just to say goodbye. "I may not live. Please forgive me."  
"Smoke everywhere. I can't see anything. I'm suffocating," these were his last words, said Atiqur's cousin Abu Alam, quoting the deceased wife Poly Begum.  
Seven bodies including Atiqur's were kept at the Dhaka Medical College morgue.  
The dead are Amir Hossain Rabbi,

29, Sheikh Jabin Tasnim Bristi, 27, Anjir Abir Siddiqui, 26, Fazle Rabbi, 27, and Monjurul Hasan, 45. The Daily Star could not get identification of another body.  
Of the dead, Anjir was an executive trader of Micro Security Ltd.  
His colleague Mizanur Rahman said about 28 people were at the office on the 15th floor of the building at that time.  
"Everything was going normal. Suddenly we saw fire," he said.  
All but Anjir went to the rooftop and left to next building," said Mizan adding Anjir called them around 1:30pm.  
"He told that he was stranded on the 10th floor," said Mizan.  
Another dead Monjurul, a physically challenged person, was an accounts officer at Kashem Industries Ltd on the 20th floor.  
His colleague Sumon Karmakar went to morgue last night.  
Sumon said, there were 60 employees and staffs in the office at the time of the fire. "Of them, 58 escaped the fire through rooftop."  
Shejiti Daulah, finance director of DIRD Group, who managed to survive narrowly from the fire incident, said she was on the 13th floor of the FR Tower during the fire and one of their staff informed her about the fire.  
"We could not proceed while trying to get down due to smoke. We then went to the roof covering our faces and jumped to adjoining under-construction building -- Awal Tower -- through a window as the building had no window glass," she said.  
They then came down through stairs of the building, said Shejiti, adding that they had their offices at five floors of the building.  
"We heard that short circuit on the seventh floor might be the reasons of the fire," she said.

# 'Pack of wolves' gets death

FROM PAGE 20  
All of them were involved either with the Muslim League or the Nezam-e-Islami, two anti-liberation parties, and joined the Razakar Bahini during the war.  
After independence, Majid got involved with the Jamaat-e-Islami while Kabir, Salam and Nur Uddin with the BNP.  
Khalek first joined the BNP, and subsequently moved to the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat before joining the Awami League in 1996. Later, he became a member of Purbodhola Thana AL Committee.  
Yesterday, the tribunal asked the Home Secretary and Inspector General of Police to take necessary measures to ensure their arrest.  
Tribunal's Chairman Justice Md Shahinur Islam and members Justice Amir Hossain and Justice Md Abu Ahmed Jamadar read out the summary of the 240-page verdict in presence of the prosecution, investigators, defence and journalists.  
Prosecutor Mukhlesur Rahman Badal expressed satisfaction as they have been able to prove all seven charges.  
Gazi MH Tamim, state-appointed defence counsel, however, said he was aggrieved with the verdict as all the accused were implicated in the case out of political rivalry.  
The defence said his clients took stance for a local Awami League candidate in 2008 general election when one official of the investigating agency too contested the election as an independent candidate from the same constituency.  
Abdul Hannan Khan, the chief of the investigation agency, however, denied the allegations saying that he, as the chief, would have resigned from the agency if the allegation was proved during the trial.  
With the latest verdict, the war crimes tribunals have so far delivered 36 judgments against 85 people. Of them, 59 have been sentenced to death.  
According to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, a war crimes convict can file an appeal with the Supreme Court within 30 days from the date when the verdict is pronounced.  
CRIMES AND PUNISHMENT  
The tribunal found Majid, Khalek and Kabir guilty of abduction, looting and murder of three Hindu men, including one Hem Sundar Bagchi, in Rajpara village on May 1, 1971 and awarded them jail until death.  
The court found Majid and Khalek guilty of abduction, confinement and torture of Abdul Gani Sarker alias Charu Miah in Barha village and sentenced 10 years in prison.  
Majid and Khalek were found guilty of abduction, torture and murder of one Abdul Khalek of Barha village on August 21 and given death penalty.  
Majid, Khalek, Salam and Nur Uddin were found guilty of abduction, torture and killing of one Mohir Uddin of the same village on August 27, and given death penalty.  
All the accused were found guilty of abduction, torture and killing of

four pro-liberation people in between November 12 and 16 in different parts of Purbodhala and given death penalty  
They were given death penalty after finding them guilty of abduction, torture and murder of one Siraj Mondol of Purbo Moudam village on November 20.  
Majid, Khalek and Kabir were found guilty of raping a woman in Purbobudi village.  
However, the jail term would naturally be merged into the death sentence, the tribunal said.  
"IT SHOCKS THE HUMANKIND TOO"  
While giving observations on rape charge, the tribunal noted that rapes committed during the war were rather a tactic of war to dehumanize people and instill terror in the civilians and also intended to destabilize the community.  
"Rape thus not only devastates victim's supreme worth but it stamps extreme trauma and stigma to victim which she carries till rest of her life. It shocks the humankind too," the tribunal said.  
"When rape is used as a weapon instead of a bullet, the weapon continues to exert its effect beyond the primary victim and it eventually outrages the civility," it added.  
"Victim's sacrifice added a lot to the war of liberation and thus she deserves appropriate recognition and honour which may reduce her trauma and pain," it added.

# Meeting a Mehhobiral family

FROM PAGE 20  
At first, I saw a little shadow moved out of a low clump of Mat Grass plant, which soon disappeared. With my monocular vision (I lost my left vision in 2004 due to wrong treatment by my doctors in Dubai, Dhaka, Chennai and my own negligence) I was failing to spot the shadow properly. As I focused my 500mm tele-lens on it I could not believe my eye!  
It was like an Animal Planet or Nat Geo Wild HD nature film unfolding right in front of me where a Mehhobiral, or a Fishing Cat, was slowly appearing with her kittens, getting inside the pond and playing in the water a few minutes before disappearing silently.  
The mild early winter sun was tilting towards the horizon as I walked on with my guide and companion Anik behind me. We reached an isolated clump of houses sitting on the bank of a large pond known as Mansurer Chhoto Pukur. The pond is as big as 2-hectares and was possibly formed out of dying segments of the nearby Charol Beel.  
The pond is bordered with thick shrubby vegetation with some reeds, strangling fig and tall grasses, and pure formation of Motmoti or

kitten looked very bold as he or she slowly and very silently walked towards the pond. It didn't stop there. It kept walking and then swimming, almost 2 metres from the bank into the shallow waters. The worried mother came to the shoreline and was hesitant to get inside the water as the sun would soon be going down. But her kitten's determined swimming forced her to go.  
As a second kitten approached to join the first, the confused mother looked rather helpless and nervous as her two kittens kept swimming and jumping over her. They walked to the shore only when they became tired. Once they were back on the shore, they disappeared back into the bush.  
I was sure they were all bound to come out in the sun and dry their bodies as it was close to sundown. They did but, possibly sensing my presence from the clicking of the camera, but just for a few minutes.  
I never encountered such a scene unfolding in front of my very eyes. Nat Geo film makers take days, if not months, to come across such events. I saw almost a full episode of a fishing cat in a matter of an hour or so. It was an experience I will never forget.

# Conductor

FROM PAGE 20  
Metropolitan Magistrate Sadbir Yasir Ahsan Chowdhury recorded the confessional statement of Suprobhat Paribahan's driver Mohammad Sirajul Islam after Detective Branch Inspector Kazi Shariful Islam placed him before the court.  
After recording the statement, the magistrate ordered police to send the driver to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.  
The driver said that the conductor was steering the bus following instruction of the owner.  
The driver also told the magistrate that passengers caught him and handed him over to the police after he had hit and injured a college girl in Banshtala area of Shahjadpur the same day. To skip mass beating and arson, the conductor Yasin was steering the bus.  
Later police confirmed that Synthia Islam Mukta, 20, a student of Mirpur Ideal Girls' Laboratory Institute, was hit by the driver.  
STATEMENT OF WITNESS  
Shamim Sardar, maternal cousin of conductor Yasin, yesterday gave a judicial statement before the same magistrate narrating what he knew about the incident.  
Shamim told the magistrate that on March 19 Yasin went to a brick kiln in Chandpur where Shamim worked. Yasin told him that he had caused an accident that killed a man.  
As a result, he fled the scene to avoid arrest. Yasin also asked Shamim to provide him with a job to survive. Shamim managed a work at the brick kiln where he worked. Later on Tuesday, police arrested Yasin from there.  
Another accused in the case, helper Mohammad Ibrahim, was also arrested in the capital's Madhya Badda on Wednesday.  
Both of them are now placed on seven-day remands each.

# JS body

FROM PAGE 20  
Asked, Prof Nazrul Islam, Chairman of Centre for Urban Studies (CUS), said the Jatiya Sangsad committee's recommendation was a positive initiative. "But it has to be established in a coordinated manner."  
He also said Rajuk and fire department would have to be included in the process of determining the number of fire hydrants and where it should be constructed.  
Prof Nazrul also said the nature of fire hydrant would have to be determined on the basis of the types of houses and buildings in any particular place.  
Iqbal Habib, joint secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said fire hydrant would not yield any good if it was set up in an unplanned manner like dustbins in Dhaka.

# Two killed

FROM PAGE 20  
policemen from inside the microbus, forcing them to fire back that triggered a gunfight," the official said.  
The two were injured during the "shootout" and declared dead after being taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, he said.  
The DB police also detained two others -- the microbus driver Chhoto Manir and Shahadat -- and claimed to have recovered four pistols, 12 rounds of bullet and two sacks of cannabis from inside the microbus.  
In Khulna, an alleged drug trader was killed in what police said was an "internal rift" between drug dealers in Batiaghata upazila early yesterday.  
Rabiul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Batiaghata Police Station, said on information that some drug traders had locked in a "clash", police rushed to the spot and recovered Mithul with bullet injuries.  
He was later taken to Batiaghata Health Complex where doctors pronounced him dead, he added.  
Police also recovered a firearm, three rounds of bullet and some explosive materials from the spot.  
Mithul was accused in eight criminal cases filed with different police stations in Khulna, the OC added.

# Mostly

FROM PAGE 2  
ambulances to get close to the spot.  
Dilip Kumar Ghosh, deputy director (operation) of Fire Service, said onlookers hindered their rescue operation.  
"In such a situation, it is good if the community members help the rescue operation. But the Banani crowd caused troubles to the fire engines and ambulances. People have to show more maturity in such cases," he told The Daily Star.

# FB bans white

FROM PAGE 20  
as part of its prohibition against spewing hate at people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity or religion.  
The ban had not applied to some postings because it was reasoned they were expressions of broader concepts of nationalism or political independence, according to the social network.  
Facebook said that conversations with academics and "members of civil society" in recent months led it to view white nationalism and separatism as linked to organised hate groups.  
"Going forward, while people will still be able to demonstrate pride in their ethnic heritage, we will not tolerate praise or support for white nationalism and separatism," Facebook said.  
People who enter search terms associated with white supremacy will get results referring them to resources such as Life After Hate which focus on helping people turn their backs on such groups, according to the social network.  
Amid pressure from governments around the world, Facebook has ramped up machine learning and artificial intelligence tools for finding and removing hateful content while remaining open to free expression.  
"Unfortunately, there will always be people who try to game our systems to spread hate," Facebook said.  
"Our challenge is to stay ahead by continuing to improve our technologies, evolve our policies and work with experts who can bolster our own efforts."  
Facebook said the new ban would not apply to topics such as American pride and Basque separatism, which "are an important part of people's identity," according to the statement.  
DIFFICULT TO ENFORCE  
Mark Potok, a senior fellow at the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, believed Facebook's new ban could limit the spread of white nationalist rhetoric but doubted it would rid the world of the ideology.  
"We'll see if they are able to enforce this," Potok said.  
"There are thousands of white nationalists posts on Facebook every

# Make sure

FROM PAGE 2  
involved in the smuggling, production, peddling or supply of drugs," she said.  
Describing militancy a global problem, she said Bangladesh had gained a huge success in curbing militancy. "The success of law enforcement agencies in containing militancy is acclaimed throughout the world."  
The prime minister thanked Rab for playing a significant role in curbing militancy and asked law enforcement agencies to create social awareness alongside intercepting the criminals so that no one gets engaged in crimes.  
Focusing on the successes of Rab in different areas, the premier said public confidence and trust had been created in Rab members and people now respect the elite force.  
She thanked the Rab members for making the Sundarbans free from forest robbers and pirates.  
Hasina said if any robber or pirate wanted to return to normal life, the government would arrange his livelihood as it did for 328 members of 32 pirate gangs of the Sundarbans region, who laid down their weapons and returned to normal life.  
"If those who are engaged in anti-social activities return to normal life, we will take adequate measures for ensuring their livelihood," she said.  
Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan also spoke on the occasion, while Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed delivered the welcome speech.

# 'World's longest salt cave'

FROM PAGE 20  
Pale salt stalactites hang from the ceilings, and some of the walls sparkle with salt crystals. Drops of salty water are visible at the tips of some of the stalactites.  
Malham became known to researchers through the work of Amos Frumkin, founder and director of the Hebrew University's Cave Research Centre, who in the 1980s mapped around five kilometres of it.  
But in 2006, researchers mapped over six kilometres of the N3 cave in southern Iran's Qeshm island, granting it the widely recognised status of the world's longest salt cave.  
Two years ago, Israeli spelunker Yoav Negev decided to complete Frumkin's work, reaching out to Bulgarian cave explorers for reinforcements with the promise of a warm winter adventure.  
Negev, founder of the Israel Cave Explorers Club, joined forces with Boaz Langford, a researcher at the university's research centre, to organise a delegation of eight European spelunkers and another 20 locals.  
They spent some 10 days mapping the cave in 2018.  
A second 10-day expedition this year with 80 local and international spelunkers completed the measuring and mapping of the cave with lasers,

day. They weren't able to stop the Christchurch video so it will be challenging to do this" he said, referring to the stream of the deadly attacks at New Zealand mosques earlier this month.  
The New Zealand massacre demonstrated the global reach of a white nationalist movement that preaches an imagined "European" ideal, rejects immigration and shares often vicious threats over the internet.  
Some analysts say it is a cohesive movement bound together online that stretches across Europe into Russia, has a deep following in the US and Canada.  
They say it poses as much of an international threat as Islamic extremism, and even more so in the United States where white nationalist attacks have outpaced those by jihadists for years.  
New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern yesterday welcomed Facebook's move to curb support for white nationalism on its platforms but said more needed to be done in the wake of the Christchurch mosque attacks.  
According to some researchers, white nationalists have been emboldened by the rise of politicians espousing traditionalist views and a tough line on immigration -- from Marine Le Pen in France and Viktor Orban in Hungary to Russian President Vladimir Putin; and the UKIP party in Britain.

## 19 killed

FROM PAGE 20  
upazila around 12:30pm, killing eight people and injuring 30 others, reports our Faridpur correspondent.  
The deceased are Habib Hawlader, 50, Sajib Hawlader, 15, Ambia Begum, 60, Hasia Begum, 50, Ranu Begum, 55, Nayan Hawlader, 30, Abbas Khan, 32, and Sayem, 25, of Kalkini upazila in the district.  
Quoting locals, Md Kamruzzaman, assistant sub-inspector of Madaripur Sadar Police Station, said the accident happened when the Madaripur-bound bus returning from a religious programme at Chandrapar in Faridpur's Sadarpur upazila plunged into a roadside ditch while trying to avoid a collision with a truck.  
Akhil Sarker, medical officer of Madaripur General Hospital, said four people died on the spot and the others on the way to the hospital.  
At least 20 people were undergoing treatment at the hospital. Some others were shifted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital, he added.  
Subrata Kumar Hawlader, superintendent of Madaripur police, said police and firefighters rushed to the spot and rescued the injured. Police seized the bus, but its driver fled.  
Mahafuzar Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bhanga Highway Police Station, said some passengers alleged that the driver was talking over mobile phone at the wheel.  
After the accident, vehicular movement on the highway was halted for around three hours, he said.  
In another incident, three people lost their lives and 19 others were wounded when a truck hit a human haulier, locally known as leguna, on the Jashore-Khulna highway at Chawlia in Jashore Sadar upazila around 11:00am, adds our Benapole correspondent.  
The dead are Subrata Bairagi, 25, of Gabbkhali village in Manirampur upazila, and Sushil Das, 26, of Kuda village in the upazila. The identity of the other could not be known immediately.  
Deputy Commissioner of Jashore Abdul Awal said condition of two injured was critical. They would be shifted to other hospitals from Jashore General Hospital if their condition deteriorated.