



PHOTO: REUTERS

A member of Misrata forces, under the protection of Tripoli's forces, prepares himself to go to the front line in Tripoli, Libya yesterday. Libyan military strongman Khalifa Haftar pushed on with his assault on Tripoli, defying international calls for a ceasefire days into a battle that has left dozens dead.

## Breaking

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the Synergetic Air-Breathing Rocket Engine (SABRE) and took place at a testing facility at the Colorado Air and Space Port in the United States. At such high speeds, air flowing through the engine can reach incredibly high temperatures, which can potentially cause damage. A pre-cooler reduces the temperature of gases before they enter the core engine itself.

Recent tests prove that the component can cool gases from over 1,000 Celsius to ambient temperature in less than 1/20th of a second, according to a statement from Reaction Engines.

"This is a hugely significant milestone which has seen Reaction Engines' proprietary pre-cooler technology achieve unparalleled heat transfer performance," said Mark Thomas, Reaction Engines' CEO.

"The HTX [precooler] test article met all test objectives and the successful initial tests highlight how our pre-cooler delivers world-leading heat transfer capabilities at low weight and compact size."

Thomas emphasised that the technology could also be used in hybrid electric aviation as well as very high-speed flight.

The SABRE engine is designed to reach speeds above Mach 5 in the Earth's atmosphere, and will then be able to turn into a rocket that can fly through space at up to Mach 25.

It "breathes" air from the atmosphere, allowing greater fuel efficiency and lower weight than existing rocket engines that need to carry their own oxygen supply.

## Abrar's death

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handed him over to police in the capital's Shahjadpur on the morning of March 19 after the vehicle had hit and injured a college girl.

After the accident, the bus was parked by a road there. Informing Gopal about the incident over the phone, conductor Yasin Arafat said agitated locals might torch the bus. Gopal then asked him to drive the vehicle to a safer place.

Yasin, who had no driving licence, took the wheel and the bus ran over and killed 20-year-old Abrar near the entrance to Bashundhara Residential Area. The conductor committed the offence only to flee the scene with the bus, Gopal told Metropolitan Magistrate Sadbir Yasin Ahsan Chowdhury.

According to the bus owner, driver Sirajul started a trip from Sadarghat area around 5:45am on March 19 and hit Synthia Islam Mukta, 20, a student of Mirpur Ideal Girls' Laboratory Institute, at Banshtala in Shahjadpur.

The magistrate recorded Gopal's confessional statement after DB Inspector Kazi Shariful Islam, also the investigation officer of the case, produced him before the court on expiry of his three-day remand.

The magistrate sent him to jail after recording his statement at his chamber.

A DB team picked up Gopal from the capital's Mugda early on April 4. The following day, he was placed on three-day remand.

Earlier, detectives arrested conductor Yasin and bus helper Mohammad Ibrahim from separate places on March 27, a week after Abrar's father Brig Gen (ret'd) Arif Ahmed Chowdhury filed a case with Gulshan Police Station.

Sirajul, Yasin and Ibrahim had given statements before the same magistrate, admitting their guilt.

## Price fall hits Aman

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cost was no less than Tk 700 per maund."

The price of Aman paddy started falling at the end of January, according to farmers in the upazila.

Market insiders have identified two causes for this: an "unplanned" import of rice in fiscal 2017-18 and a bumper yield of Aman this season.

Although the latter one appears to be a blessing, farmers are actually paying the price, said KM Layek Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Auto Major and Husking Mill Owners' Association.

"The imported rice is still dominating the market. Because of these, Aman prices have fallen," he said.

"This season [October to December], the country saw a production of 1.53 crore metric tonnes of Aman rice, which was 13 lakh metric tonnes higher than the target," said Abdul Mueyed, director at the field service unit of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

In fiscal 2017-18, the total rice production in the country was 3.63 crore metric tonnes, according to DAE. As much as 3.52 crore metric tonnes of rice was consumed in the period, the US Department of Agriculture mentioned in its Global Agriculture Information Network report 2019.

According to the food ministry, in the previous and current fiscal year, 39 lakh metric tonne and 1.5 lakh metric tonnes of rice were imported respectively.

Until March last year, there were 13.67 lakh metric tonnes of rice in the

government's warehouse. The amount was sufficient and no sign of food crisis surfaced.

During a recent visit to Gopalganj paddy market in Dinaipur sadar upazila, the district correspondent saw farmers waiting for buyers with sacks of paddy lying by the roads. But they hardly got any that day.

One of them, Mobarak Ali of Borail village, said he had 20 sacks of paddy but had no buyer.

"If I sell paddy at the current market rate which is Tk 600, I will lose Tk 100 per maund. Moreover, we need to pay Tk 100 to each carrier and Tk 20 for one sack. One sack means two maunds of paddy," he said.

Reza Humayun Kabir Chowdhury Shamim, president of Dinaipur Rice Mills Owners Association, said, "Not only the farmers, we, the parties who bought paddy following Aman harvest, are also affected by the fall in price," said.

"We are now incurring a loss of about Tk 200 persack."

Layek Ali said, "Once the boro paddy hits the market, the price of Aman paddy would drop further."

He urged the government to consider limiting export of fine rice as a preventive measure.

Although the farmers are hit by losses, there is no sign of price falling at the retail rice markets in Dhaka. According to the food ministry, the current retail price for coarse rice in the capital is Tk 32/34 per kilogram.

(Dinaipur Correspondent Kongkon Karmaker contributed to this report)

## New Palestinian govt to be formed in days: officials

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian prime minister-designate Mohammad Shtayyeh will announce the make-up of his new government in the coming days, Palestinian officials said yesterday.

Shtayyeh has until April 14 to form a new government which is expected to exclude all supporters of Hamas, longtime rival to the Fatah movement of both Shtayyeh and Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas.

Analysts say real decision-making power remains with 84-year-old Abbas, in power since 2005.

Abbas on March 10 charged Shtayyeh with forming the new government, replacing Rami Hamdallah's technocratic administration which had the nominal backing of Hamas.

The Islamist movement controls the Gaza Strip, while the Palestinian Authority Abbas heads is based in the West Bank, where Israel also maintains a military occupation.

Five smaller factions will also join Fatah in the new government, officials said.

Others, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, refused to take part.

Deputy president Mahmoud Aloul told AFP a meeting was set to be held yesterday evening between Shtayyeh and Abbas to decide on candidates for remaining ministries.

## Boats carrying

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More boats carrying about 200 Rohingya migrants are believed to be at sea, Noor Mushar said.

"If we find them in our waters, we will bring them to shore," he said, adding that it was not clear if this group was travelling from Bangladesh or Myanmar.

More than 700,000 Rohingyas crossed into Bangladesh in 2017 fleeing an army crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state, according to UN agencies.

Myanmar regards Rohingyas as illegal migrants from the Indian subcontinent and has confined tens of thousands to sprawling camps in Rakhine since violence swept the area in 2012.

The unrest prompted tens of thousands of Rohingyas to flee Myanmar by sea. The exodus peaked in 2015, when an estimated 25,000 people crossed the Andaman Sea for Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, many drowning in unsafe and overloaded boats.

The boat that arrived off Perlis yesterday was carrying 47 Rohingyas, all of whom paid a Thai trafficker 4,000 ringgit (\$976.80) each to take them to Malaysia, Noor Mushar said, citing interviews with one of the detainees.

The group had been travelling with hundreds of other Rohingyas on a larger boat before they were trans-ferred to smaller, crowded vessels in Thai waters, he said.

The 47 migrants were dropped about one kilometre offshore and walked for an hour through mud. Forty one were detained and six people are missing, Noor Mushar said.

"Since there was no one to greet them, they made their way in separate groups to the nearby villages, covered in mud," he said, adding they were in good health despite their ordeal.

## BJP for 'easier' trade,

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controversial, and further enhancing border security.

On foreign policy, the poll document said a BJP government would take forward India's "Neighbourhood First" policy by "extensively leveraging forums such as BIMSTEC to accelerate regional coordination and economic co-operation with countries in our neighbourhood."

"Nationalism is our inspiration, empowerment of weaker sections is our vision and good governance is our mantra," Modi said, adding that the manifesto would take India on "one mission, one direction".

The manifesto released at the BJP headquarters here said the party was committed to enactment of the Citizenship Bill for the protection of members of religious minority communities from neighbouring countries who were escaping persecution.

It also said a BJP dispensation "will take effective steps to prevent illegal immigration into the north eastern states. There has been a huge change in the cultural and linguistic identity in some areas due to illegal immigration, resulting in adverse impact on local people's livelihood and employment."

"We will complete the NRC process in these areas on priority basis. In future, the NRC will be implemented in a phased manner in other parts of the country," it added.

## 35 killed as fighting

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destroyed airport, some 30 kilometres south of Tripoli, and the rural area of Wadi Rabi further east.

World powers have expressed alarm at the violence, saying it threatens to further destabilise Libya and derail UN-led efforts to find a political solution to the country's woes.

The US has appealed for an "immediate halt" to combat operations and the UN Security Council has called on Haftar's forces to halt their advance.

On Sunday, Russia blocked proposals for the council to adopt a formal statement, instead insisting that all Libyan forces be urged to stop fighting, diplomats said.

Moscow is a key supporter of Haftar, along with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

But the Kremlin yesterday urged "all sides to reject actions that could provoke bloodshed in battle and the deaths of civilians".

Fierce clashes Sunday near Tripoli saw Haftar's fighters and an array of powerful western Libyan armed groups exchanging fire including air strikes.

Forces backing the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord on Sunday announced a counteroffensive named "Volcano of Anger".

Spokesman Colonel Mohamed Gnounou said it was aimed at "purging all Libyan cities of aggressor and illegitimate forces", in reference to Haftar's fighters.

## Five Bangladeshis

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Of the 34 injured, 13 passengers were sent to the Serdang Hospital, 16 to the Putrajaya Hospital, four to the Banting Hospital and one to the Kajang Hospital.

The country's health director-general Noor Hisham Abdullah yesterday said 11 passengers were in critical condition, 14 other passengers in semi-critical condition. Conditions of eight others are not critical, reports Channel News Asia.

The crash occurred near the MAS Cargo Complex, Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) at Jalan S8 Pekellingin Sepang around 11:10pm.

The bus was ferrying 43 contract workers of the MAS Cargo Complex from their hotel in Nilai, Negri Sembilan to their work place when it skidded and crashed into a 10-metre-deep storm drain, reports New Straits Times.

The Star Online reports Investigations revealed that the bus was going the wrong way before the crash.

Zulkifli Adamshah said the 43-year-old driver should have taken the three o'clock exit at the roundabout near the incident, but took the 12 o'clock exit instead.

He was supposed to take the three o'clock exit which leads to the place, where the workers he was transporting were supposed to go, but he took the wrong exit. The accident took place about 200m from the roundabout.

Zulkifli Adamshah added that the cause of the incident is being investigated.

"The driver does not have any traffic records on his name and his licence is valid. A post-mortem is being conducted currently," he said.

"We are looking at everything, including the state of the bus and the driver to determine the cause of the accident," Zulkifli said.

Fire and Rescue Department personnel took about an hour to reach the victims, as they had to cut through several parts of the bus.

In an apparent reference to the resistance to the Bill among most of the non-Bangla speaking people of the seven north eastern states, the manifesto said the BJP would explain the issue to the people of the area.

The manifesto also promised to secure the country against "internal and external aggression", scrapping a law for special rights to residents of Jammu and Kashmir, and doubling farmers' income by next year.

The document also "reiterated" the promise of a Ram temple at Ayodhya and pledged to "explore all options".

It further promised a "zero tolerance" approach to terrorism.

The party further pledged a permanent house for every family living in temporary houses or without any home by 2022.

The manifesto addressed pension for small and medium farmers, and shopkeepers, days after the Congress manifesto vowed to bring about several welfare measures, including a grant of Rs 72,000 to the poorest 20 percent households in the country if voted to power.

The BJP said it would spend Rs 25 lakh crore in the next five years for rural and agricultural development. The manifesto promised to revise tax brackets to help the middle class, after the Modi government's last budget dished out major tax relief in February.

### CIVIL WAR LOOMS

Unity government health minister A'hmid Omar told Libya's Al-Ahrar television station late Sunday that around 50 people had been wounded along with those killed.

His ministry yesterday put the death toll at 35.

Haftar's forces have said 14 of their fighters have died.

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Libya, Maria Ribeiro, said yesterday the fighting had displaced more than 2,800 people, blocked rescuers from reaching casualties and damaged electricity lines.

She again urged the warring parties to implement a temporary humanitarian ceasefire.

The previous day, fighting raged throughout a two-hour window set by the UN for a pause in hostilities for civilians and the wounded to flee.

Haftar's offensive has threatened to plunge the country into a full-blown civil war and once again thwart diplomatic efforts to find a solution to Libya's woes.

It was launched just days ahead of a planned UN conference aimed at uniting Libya's rivals and paving the way for elections.

Envoy Ghassan Salame has insisted the UN was "determined" to go ahead with the April 14-16 conference.

The UN mission in Libya said on Twitter that Salame met with unity government head Fayez al-Seraj in Tripoli yesterday to discuss how to "assist at this critical and difficult juncture".

Meanwhile, Malaysian Transport Minister Anthony Loke has urged employers of the foreign workers involved in the crash to come forward and take responsibility for their employees, reports Malay Mail.

Despite being foreign nationals, he said it is the government's duty to facilitate the eventual return of the remains.

"The employers should also provide further medical treatment for their injured workers, and for those to be discharged they should be collected and sent back to their hostels."

"The authorities will assist in the repatriation of the bodies to their respective countries, and I understand the various embassies and high commissions have already been notified," Loke told reporters outside the Serdang Hospital emergency ward entrance, after paying a visit to the victims.

"The Road Transport Department and the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research will conduct an audit investigation on the bus' operating company on Tuesday."

"The company, CJ Global Travel and Tour Sdn Bhd, is based in Bandar Baru Nilai, Negri Sembilan, and has the permits to operate five worker buses and four tour buses," he said.

Loke added that if the company is found to have violated any road safety regulations, it could face the suspension of its licence, Loke added.

## 23.4kg gold

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involvement of flight staff in the incident as the boxes were screwed to the cabinets.

A cleaner and a crew member of the aircraft were interrogated by the CIID officials, Shahidul said, adding that nobody was arrested in this connection.

The seized gold bars, worth around Tk12 crore, would be deposited at the Bangladesh Bank, he said, adding that a case was filed with Patenga Police Station.