



Office equipment and electronic devices waiting to be taken elsewhere from the illegal 15-storey BGMEA building yesterday morning. After winning an eight-and-a-half year legal battle, Rajuk on Tuesday sealed off, inset, the building. PHOTO: STAR

PM goes to Brunei

FROM PAGE 16 Bangladesh and Brunei are expected to sign several deals on bilateral economic cooperation during the PM's April 21-23 visit. According to the programme schedule, Hasina will fly on a special Biman aircraft on Sunday morning and reach Brunei International Airport in Bandar Seri Begawan at 2:45pm (local time). Crown Prince of Brunei Darussalam Al-Muhtadee Billah will receive the Bangladesh PM at the airport. On the same day, the PM will attend a community reception, to be hosted by expatriate Bangladeshis in Brunei, at the Empire Hotel and Country Club, where she will be staying during her visit. On Monday, she will have a general audience with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and Royal family members at the Istana Nurul Iman, the official residence of the Sultan. After the audience, the prime minister will hold bilateral talks with the Sultan at Baitul Mesyuarah in Istana Nurul Iman. PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told BSS, adding that the talks would be followed by signing of MoUs. In the afternoon, Hasina will join a meeting between businessmen from Bangladesh, Brunei and Brunei National Chamber of Commerce and Industry at Empire Hotel and Country Club. She will attend an official banquet to be hosted by the Sultan. She will lay the foundation stone of the new Chancery Building of the Bangladesh High Commission at Jalan Kebangsaan in Bandar Seri Begawan on Tuesday morning. Hasina will leave Brunei for home at 5:00pm (local time) on the same day.

Valley

FROM PAGE 16 of scarecrows is tenfold, like 270," the 69-year-old doll maker told AFP in an interview at her home. It all started 16 years ago when the dexterous Ayano created a scarecrow dressed in her father's clothes to prevent birds eating the seeds she had planted in her garden. "A worker who saw it in the garden thought it really was my father... he said hello but it was a scarecrow. It was funny," recalled Ayano. Since then, Ayano has not stopped creating the life-size dolls, made with wooden sticks, newspapers to fill the body, elastic fabrics for skin and knitting wool for hair. The skillful craftsman needs only three days to make an adult-sized doll that are now scattered all around the village. The secret to breathing life into the dolls? Applying pink colour to the lips and cheeks with a make-up brush, revealed Ayano. At the local school, she has placed 12 colourful child-sized dolls at desks, positioned as if part of a lively class poring over their books. The school closed seven years ago as there was no one left to teach, she recalled sadly. "Now there are no children. The youngest person here is 55 years old." Down the street, a "family" of scarecrows lounges in front of an abandoned grocery shop while a doll dressed as an old farmer window-shops next door. Near the bus stop, a group of scarecrows gathers as another "father" doll pulls a cart full of "children." While never humming with people, Ayano remembers as a child that Nagoro was once a well-to-do place with some 300 residents and labourers supported by the forestry industry and dam construction work. "People gradually left... It's lonely now," she said. "I made more dolls as I remembered the time when the village was lively." Nagoro's plight is replicated all around Japan, as the world's third-largest economy battles a declining population, low birth rate and high life expectancy. The country is on the verge of becoming the first "ultra-aged" country in the world, meaning that 28 percent of people are aged 65 or above.

It'll be torn down

FROM PAGE 16 the capital's Hatirjheel, the minister said. The government has already floated a tender calling the qualified companies to participate in the bidding for demolition of the building, he further said, adding, "We will call the foreign companies to demolish the structure if local companies are not found." The interested companies have been asked to submit their tender by April 24 as the government is scheduled to scrutinise and take the decision by April 25. "The government will offer work order to the qualified bidders within one week of the selection of the company," the minister said. Modern equipment and technologies will be used to demolish the structure so that no human casualty or environmental pollution occurs during the demolition, Rezaul said while responding to the queries of journalists at a press conference in his secretariat office. The minister also said the dynamites which would be used for demolition of the BGMEA building are not the explosives used as bombs. The demolition of the BGMEA structure is possible even in one hour as modern technologies are that powerful, he said. The minister also said that his ministry already held talks with the foreign experts regarding the use of technologies for demolition of the building. "We do not want such an illegal structure on a state-owned place. We want to say that nobody is above the

law. We want to bring the people under the law who violate it," the minister said. All utility service lines like electricity and water would be disconnected from the BGMEA building during the demolition process, keeping it into consideration that no other nearby building is affected, the minister added. Meanwhile, a legal notice has been served to Siddiqur Rahman, president of BGMEA, requesting him to withdraw a petition filed with the Supreme Court seeking a one-year time for demolishing the building. Advocate Manzill Murshid, a SC lawyer, sent the notice asking the president of the BGMEA to withdraw their petition within three days. If the BGMEA president does not withdraw the petition in three days, a contempt of court petition will be moved against him, the lawyer mentioned in the legal notice. Manzill Murshid, in the notice, said that BGMEA president on April 2 last year submitted a petition to the Appellate Division of the SC seeking one year's time for vacating the premises and demolition of BGMEA building. Siddiqur Rahman, however, said nobody from his board filed any petition to the court seeking permission for use of the building. He said he was not well aware of filing application seeking time, as his board has already promised to the court that the BGMEA would not apply for further delay in demolition of the structure one year ago.

Nearly 7.5 lakh teenagers

FROM PAGE 16 percent of them spacing their second birth less than the recommended time of three years after the first. "The overall contribution of adolescent fertility to TFR [Total Fertility Rate] is 25 percent, which means approximately 750,000 adolescents are giving birth annually," the report said. Apart from these, the declining rate of child marriage in Bangladesh is slow as the prevalence of child marriage was 59 percent in 2018, the report said. According to it, Bangladesh has made impressive progress on a range of indicators, including education (especially for girls), investments in the working-age population and child mortality. "Concerning several other indicators, there remains much to be done. The prevalence of child marriage, the high adolescent fertility rate, the incompleteness of secondary school education and youth unemployment are especially worthy of mention as areas where increased attention is essential," the report observed. According to the report, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has decreased from 322 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 176 in 2015 and contraceptive prevalence rate has increased to 62 percent in 2014 from around 45 in 1994. Lauding Bangladesh's progress on various demographic variables, Torkelson said, "Bangladesh has many lessons to share from which the world can learn." However, she said the child marriage rate in Bangladesh was still the highest in South Asia, which most likely means that these girls would get pregnant, risking severe injuries and even death. Torkelson said the gender-unequal norms which remain worldwide were among the most significant drags on the progress for women and girls to freely make fundamental decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights. These norms manifested in a range of harmful practices, including GBV (gender-based violence), child marriage, etc. "In Bangladesh, too, there is need to continue efforts to eliminate gender-based violence, including this still-high rate of child marriage, maternal mortality, and unmet family planning needs. These are areas at heart for UNFPA, and

central to our work focus," she said. Mia Seppo, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh, said gender inequality is the key hindrance to achieving SDGs. "Gender equality is an enabler goal that facilitates the achievement of all other goals -- not only in Bangladesh but for this entire region." She also said it was clear that this rapid development is taking place in parallel with lingering inequality. "This seems to be the case for not only Bangladesh but also for many countries in this region and, actually, around the world." State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Murad Hassan said Bangladesh is committed to contributing to the realisation of agendas set by the International Conference on Population and Development. "We are optimistic that, with our continued efforts and multi-sectoral collaboration, we will soon be able to overcome the remaining challenges and build an equal Bangladesh for everyone regardless of their gender identity," he said. Saying that Bangladesh is well ahead of most neighbouring countries in promoting women empowerment, Murad said, "Challenges still remain in achieving gender equality, namely, eradication of violence against women, prevention of child marriage and addressing gender digital divide." **Man strangles wife** FROM PAGE 16 the incident might have taken place over marital dispute. Police recovered the body around 8:30am from the couple's flat on the first floor of a five-storey building on information from their neighbours, he said. Referring to the information given by the suspect during primary interrogation, OC Proloy said Sujon used to keep contact with Hashi to stay in touch with their son. However, Komol did not take the matter lightly, he said, adding that the couple had a fight over the matter that morning. At one point, Komol strangled Hashi to death and then set her body on fire. Police suspect the arson was either to dispose of the body or destroy evidence to steer the case to a different direction. During primary interrogation, Komol confessed to committing the crime, the OC said.

Mother detained after Chinese vaccine protest

AFP, Beijing A Chinese health activist has been detained for more than a month, her husband said yesterday, after she participated in a protest over faulty vaccines -- a re-occurring issue in China. According to police documents posted online by Li Xin, his wife He Fangmei is under "criminal detention" at the Xinxiang detention centre in central Henan province. He, 33, who had said her daughter was diagnosed with a neurological disease after receiving vaccinations for hepatitis A, measles, and other illnesses, participated in a protest against faulty vaccines in Beijing in early March. She was later detained by local police in Henan province on March 5 and charged with "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" -- a broad offense that Chinese authorities often use to arrest activists. She has not been released, said Li. The drawn-out detention has "delayed the recovery" of their daughter, he told AFP. "We hope the authorities can honour their word, release He Fangmei earlier, and let us continue to bring our child to the doctor," he said. The local police in Huixian city did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment. China is regularly hit by scandals involving sub-par or toxic food, drugs and other products, despite repeated promises by the government to address the problem. Over the past year, compromised vaccines have become an incendiary topic infuriating parents whose children may be exposed to potentially unsafe injections. In January, at least 145 children were administered expired polio vaccines in eastern China -- less than a year after a major manufacturer of rabies shots was found to have fabricated records. The pharmaceutical firm responsible for the rabies vaccines, Changchun Changsheng Biotechnology company, was handed a fine and asset seizure totalling 9.1 billion yuan (\$1.36 billion) in October. In February, China's corruption watchdog said it disciplined more than 80 officials linked to the rabies vaccine scandal. But the string of incidents has already rattled the confidence of many Chinese parents, some of whom, like He, have taken to social media or the streets to push for more robust regulation. "The authorities should conduct investigations of any official wrongdoings, but not punish the victims," Patrick Poon, China researcher at Amnesty International, told AFP. "There is no legitimate reason for the authorities to detain them while they just tried to seek redress for their cases," he said.

US President Donald Trump's administration has issued an order that could keep some asylum seekers in jail for months or years as they wait for their cases to be heard, The New York Times reported Tuesday. The order from Attorney General Bill Barr directs immigration judges to no longer allow asylum seekers who are apprehended after entering the country illegally to post bail, the newspaper said. The order -- which will not go into effect for 90 days -- does not affect those who apply for asylum at a legal port of entry, the Times reported. The move was quickly condemned by the American Civil Liberties Union rights organization, which vowed to challenge it in court. "Our Constitution does not allow the government to lock up asylum seekers without basic due process. We'll see the administration in court. Again," the ACLU tweeted. Trump has staked his presidency on his insistence that the United States is being overrun by migrants and asylum seekers. But opponents, mostly in the Democratic Party, say his push for building more walls on the Mexican border and his almost daily denunciations of migrants as dangerous criminals incites racial hatred. The president declared an emergency to bypass Congress and unlock funds for his controversial wall project, and has also deployed troops to the border with Mexico. The White House has also said it is looking into ways to transfer undocumented migrants to so-called sanctuary cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York that limit cooperation with US immigration officials.

US seeks to extend detention of some asylum seekers: report

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Turkish defense minister makes unannounced visit to Pentagon

AFP, Washington Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar held unannounced talks with acting Pentagon chief Patrick Shanahan Tuesday amid tensions over Ankara's plans to buy a Russian missile defense system and its threat to attack Kurdish fighters in Syria. The two "met as strategic partners," Pentagon spokesperson Charles Summers said in a brief statement to the press after the meeting. "They focused their discussion on interests, rather than positions, and on the importance of US-Turkish cooperation bilaterally and as NATO allies in achieving mutual security and economic prosperity for both countries and the region," Summers said. Summers made no mention of the spat over the US threat to halt a joint F-35 fighter jet program with Turkey if it buys Russia's S-400 missile defense system. Washington has already frozen deliveries of aircraft and parts, saying the US aircraft system is too sensitive to be operated in tandem with the Russian equipment.

On April 2, Shanahan said he was confident Turkey would reverse course and buy the US Patriot missile defense system instead, but Ankara has made no such commitment yet. Last week, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the delivery of the S-400 system could be earlier than initially planned, according to the Hurriyet daily. In parallel to tensions over the missile system, the US-Turkey relationship has been strained by Ankara's threat to launch an offensive in north east Syria against the Kurdish-majority Syrian Democratic Forces, which battled the Islamic State group with backing from Western air strikes and other support. Ankara links the SDF to the Kurdish separatist PKK movement at home, which it considers a terrorist organization. Meeting in Washington with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in early April, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned of "devastating consequences" if Turkey strikes Syria.

Widodo

FROM PAGE 16 that - based on internal exit polls and "quick count" numbers - his campaign believed his share of the vote was in a 52-54 percent range. "We have noted several incidents that have harmed the supporters of this ticket," he said, without giving detail. "Our volunteers should focus on safeguarding the ballot boxes because they are key to our victory." Widodo said the results indicated he had regained the presidency of the world's fourth-most populous nation, but urged supporters to wait for the election commission to announce official results. Kevin O'Rourke, a political analyst and author of the Indonesia-focused newsletter Reformasi Weekly, said that Widodo's re-election was now clear but his victory over 67-year-old Prabowo was not resounding. "He failed to attain the psychological 60 percent level that had seemed within reach," O'Rourke said. "Prabowo performed better than expected, which may embolden him to run yet again in 2024, if he is sufficiently fit." Widodo grew up in a riverside slum and was the first national leader to come from outside the political and military elite. Popularly known as Jokowi, his everyman image resonated in 2014 with voters tired of the old guard. The eight-hour vote for both the presidency and legislature seats across a country that stretches more than 5,000 km (3,000 miles) from its western to eastern tips was both a Herculean logistical feat and testimony to the resilience of democracy two decades after authoritarianism was defeated. The poll followed a campaign dominated by economic issues but was also marked by the growing influence of conservative Islam in the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation. A senior government official close to the president said before the election that a win for Widodo with 52-55

percent of the vote would be a "sweet spot", and enough of a mandate to press on with, and even accelerate, reforms. **'NO BURNING'** The official election results will not be published until May. Any disputes can be taken to the Constitutional Court where a nine-judge panel will have 14 days to rule on them. More than 10,000 volunteers crowd-sourced results posted at polling stations in a real-time bid to thwart attempts at fraud. However, even before the election, the opposition alleged voter-list irregularities that it said could affect millions and vowed legal or "people power" action if its concerns were ignored. Ferdinand Hutahaen, a spokesman for the Prabowo campaign, sought to soothe concerns this could mean a violent response. "Don't consider 'people power' as a form of violence," he told reporters. "There will be no burning, killing. We will see what kind of 'people power' and revolution society wants. We don't want conflict in this country." Widodo campaigned on his record of deregulation and improving infrastructure, calling his first term a step to tackling inequality and poverty in Southeast Asia's biggest economy. But religion has also been a factor. Conservative Muslim groups have been increasingly influential. Widodo, a moderate Muslim from Java island, had to burnish his Islamic credentials after smear campaigns and hoax stories accused him of being anti-Islam, a communist or too close to China, all politically damaging in Indonesia. He picked Islamic cleric Ma'ruf Amin, 76, as his running mate. Prabowo, a former special forces commander who has links to some hardline Muslim groups, and his running mate, business entrepreneur Sandiaga Uno, pledged to boost the economy by slashing taxes and cutting food prices.

47 children

FROM PAGE 16 The victim went to the temple to pray. At one stage, the priest took her to his room and "violated" her, said Ansar Uddin, additional superintendent of Jashore police. As the girl started to scream, some devotees rushed to the room and rescued her. They also caught the priest. Police later went to the spot and arrested Prokash. The girl's mother filed a case with Kotwali Police Station accusing the priest, said the ASP. In Feni, a mother of two was allegedly gang-raped in Adarshagram area of Sonagazi upazila on Tuesday night. The woman filed a case with Sonagazi Model Police Station accusing Nur Alam, Md Apel and Mosharrif Hossain. According to the case statement, the victim's husband stays abroad. The trio used to stalk the woman and even proposed to have illegal relationship with them. On Tuesday night, the three accused picked up the woman when she went out of her room for using toilet. They took her to a nearby quiet place and "violated" her. Police have already arrested Nur Alam. Drives are underway to arrest the two other accused. **HEADMASTER HELD IN JHENIDAH** Jhenidah Sadar OC Mizanur Rahman said Abdus Salam, headmaster of Alhera Government Primary School, had been allegedly sexually harassing three students of class-IV for long. Knowing about it, guardians went to the school around 2:00pm and started

beating him up. On information, police rushed to the school and picked up the teacher. A case was filed against him, the OC added. **BUSINESSMAN ACCUSED OF RAPE** In Manikganj, a woman filed a case against local businessman Mohammad Ali Uzzal, 40, for allegedly raping her repeatedly for four years. Both the plaintiff and the accused are from Ghior upazila. According to the case statement, Uzzal used to torture the woman and force her to have physical relationship with other people. The accused also recorded such scenes on camera and later used it to hush her up. He took Tk 8.25 lakh from the woman threatening that he would circulate the footage. The complainant accused that Uzzal also wanted to have sexual relationship with her daughter, a class-eight student. On Tuesday noon, the accused took the woman and her daughter to a four-storey building in Manikganj town's Uttar Sewta area. He raped the woman and tried to violate her daughter. Sensing that there was something wrong, some locals entered the building and chased Uzzal. But he managed to flee, leaving his smart phone. The victim on Tuesday night filed the case against Uzzal and Monira Begum, owner of the building, said Manikganj Sadar OC Rakibuzzaman. Our Benapole, Jhenidah, Feni and Manikganj correspondents contributed to this report.