

## ANN holds annual board meeting in Seoul

STAR REPORT

The Asia News Network, an alliance of 23 leading English-language newspapers, held its annual board meeting in Seoul yesterday.

Editors and journalists from 21 Asian countries discussed the ANN charter and the direction it would take in the future.

The meeting, which also marked the 20th anniversary of the ANN, was held at the Lotte Hotel in the South Korean capital.

Chon Shi-yong, chief editorial writer at The Korea Herald and president of ANN for 2019, opened the meeting.

The ANN members are: The Daily Star of Bangladesh, Kuensel of Bhutan, Brunei Press of Brunei, The Phnom Penh Post and Ramsei Kampuchea of Cambodia, China Daily of China, The China Post of Taiwan, Data Leads and The Statesman of India, The Jakarta Post of Indonesia, The Japan News of Japan, Vientiane Times of Laos, Sin Chew Daily and The Star Online of Malaysia, Gogo Mongolia of Mongolia, Eleven Media Group of Myanmar, The Kathmandu Post of Nepal, Dawn of Pakistan, Philippine Daily Inquirer of the Philippines, The Straits Times of Singapore, The Korea Herald of South Korea, The Island of Sri Lanka, The Nation of Thailand and Vietnam News of Vietnam.

The meeting was convened in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Media Programme Asia.

During the three-day visit to South Korea that started on Wednesday, the delegates participated in the ASEAN-Korea Media Forum, which was sponsored by the ANN, and met with President Moon Jae-in.

The board members are slated to visit today the Samsung Innovation Museum in Suwon, Gyeonggi Province, as part of a session on "Technology for Media".

The ANN was founded in 1999 with a vision to deliver news about Asia through Asian eyes. Its motto is "We know Asia better".

## Suprobhat

FROM PAGE 20  
helper Md Ibrahim. All the accused are now in jail.

The DB pressed charges against Yasir and Gopal in the Abrar murder charge, while all the four were charged-sheeted in the attempted murder charge of Synthia. Thirty-two people were made witnesses.

If the murder charges are proved against Yasir and Gopal, they will face the highest punishment of life-term imprisonment. If the attempt-to-murder charges against the four accused are proved, they will get the highest punishment of a term of seven years in jail, according to the provision of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

On March 19, a bus of Suprobhat Paribahan ran over and killed Bangladesh University of Professionals student Abrar near the capital's Bashundhara Residential Area, after it had hit college girl Synthia in Shahjadpur area.

Following the incident, Abrar's father Brig Gen (ret'd) Arif Ahmed Chowdhury filed a murder case with Gulshan Police Station.

All the four accused were arrested from different places on different dates and they have given confessional statements before magistrates.

Police and fellow students of Abrar said he was crossing the road through a zebra crossing to catch a bus for his university when the Suprobhat Paribahan bus hit him, leaving him dead on the spot.

**FACT OF THE INCIDENT**

As per the confessional statements of Gopal and three others, it was learnt that passengers and pedestrians caught bus driver Sirajul and handed him over to police in Shahjadpur on the morning of March 19 after the vehicle had hit college girl Synthia. After the accident, the bus was parked by a road there. Conductor Yasin then informed Gopal of the incident over phone and 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 Bashundhara Residential Area.

## UK dismisses Iran prison swap offer

AFP, London

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt yesterday dismissed the suggestion of a prisoner swap for a British-Iranian mother being held in Tehran, saying it was part of a "vile" diplomatic tactic.

In New York, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Wednesday suggested a swap between Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who is in jail in Tehran for alleged sedition, and Negar Ghodskani, an Iranian woman held in Australia on a US extradition warrant.

## Panic grips Sri Lanka

FROM PAGE 20

town east of the capital but there were no casualties. The cause was not clear but it was not a controlled detonation like other blasts in recent days and was being investigated, he said.

With fears of more bombers ready to strike, police said they had asked people to leave offices early in Colombo's business district to avoid throngs at rush hour. City-centre restaurants were also shutting early.

More people, including foreigners, were swept up for questioning overnight as domestic and international authorities investigated deeper into the bombings, believed to have been the deadliest such attack claimed by Islamic State.

About 500 people were also wounded in the attacks on three churches and four hotels.

Police said 16 people were detained for questioning overnight, taking the number held since Sunday to at least 76.

They include a Syrian national, detained after police got information about him from Sri Lankan suspects.

One of those detained overnight was linked to a terrorist organisation, police said, but gave no details. Another was taken into custody after "hate speech" was discovered on their Facebook page.

"It was related to the spreading and preaching of terrorism," a police spokesman said.

Police later arrested three people and seized 21 locally made grenades and six swords during a raid in Colombo, a spokesman said. He did not give details or suggest that the raid was linked to the suicide bombings.

An Egyptian and several Pakistanis have also been detained in the broader crackdown but there was no suggestion they had any direct links to the attacks.

Defence Secretary Hemasiri Fernando told Reuters yesterday that he had resigned, taking responsibility for the suicide bomber attacks.

He said that while there had been no failure on his own part, he was taking responsibility for failures of some institutions he headed as the secretary of defence.

**HOME-GROWN BOMBERS**  
However, authorities have also focused their investigations on international links to domestic Islamist groups - National Thawheed Jama'at and Jammiyathul Millathu Ibrahim - they believed carried out the attacks.

A picture has emerged of a group of nine well-educated, home-grown Islamist suicide bombers, including a woman, who carried out the attacks in the South Asian nation.

Two of the bombers were brothers, sons of a wealthy spice trader and pillar of the business community, a source close to the family said.

Islamic State released a video on Tuesday that showed eight men, all but one with their faces covered, standing under a black Islamic State flag and declaring their loyalty to its leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

The government said there were nine suicide bombers, eight of whom had been identified, and one was a woman.

The man whose face could be seen in the video has been identified as Mohamed Zahran, a preacher from the east of Sri Lanka known

for his militant views and Facebook posts who officials believe was the mastermind of the attack.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said another of the bombers had lived in Australia with his wife and child on a student visa but left in 2013.

Morrison did not identify the man, although his family have said his name was Abdul Latheef Mohamed Jameel. **PAKISTANIS FLEE**

The bombings shattered the relative calm that has existed in Buddhist-majority Sri Lanka since a civil war against mostly Hindu, ethnic Tamil separatists ended 10 years ago, and raised fears of a return to sectarian violence.

Sri Lanka's 22 million people include minority Christians, Muslims and Hindus. Until now, Christians had largely managed to avoid the worst of the island's conflict and communal tensions.

President Maithripala Sirisena was set to meet representatives of different faiths yesterday to address concerns of a sectarian backlash.

Muslims have fled the Negombo region on Sri Lanka's west coast since scores of worshippers were killed in the bombing of the St. Sebastian church there on Sunday. Communal tensions have since flared.

Hundreds of Pakistani Muslims have left the port city, crammed into buses, after threats of revenge.

"Because of the bomb blasts and explosions that have taken place here, the local Sri Lankan people have attacked our houses," one of them, Adnan Ali, told Reuters on Wednesday as he prepared to board a bus.

## Another young life lost on road

FROM PAGE 20

"No sooner had the girl fell on the road than the speedy vehicle ran over her head while fleeing the scene," Sohel told The Daily Star.

Sub-Inspector Nurul Islam said he checked the footage of the CCTV cameras installed nearby but they did not cover the accident spot.

Nurul took the phone number of Suman from the hospital's register. But his mobile phone was found switched off.

SI Nurul said the ride-sharing companies were providing passengers' helmets only for the sake of traffic rules and to dodge the eyes of the law enforcers.

"The girl was wearing a helmet, but it was too thin to protect her," the police officer said.

Jane Alam Munshi, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, said police were trying to track the motorcyclist to know the details about the incident.

Hearing the news, many of her friends and university mates gathered at the hospital premises and asked how the roads would be made safer for commuters when deaths on road is unstoppable.

"Every time a young life is cut short, we start protesting. Is this how

the things will go on?" asked a Brac University student.

The victim's family demanded exemplary punishment of those involved in the incident.

The accident took place barely a month into the killing of university student Abrar Ahmed in a road crash that triggered massive protests over unsafe roads and poor traffic management.

**ACCIDENTS TAKE MORE LIVES**

In Chattogram, four day labourers were killed and two others were injured as a human hauler, locally known as Chander Gari, flipped over a roadside shanty in Rangunia upazila early yesterday.

The dead are Md Jafor, 35, Mohammad Riyad, 18, Md Nazim, 22, and Md Monaf, 52.

All of them were from Noakhali's Hatiya upazila, said Imtiaz Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Rangunia Police Station.

Quoting locals, the OC said the driver of the wood-laden hauler lost his control over the wheels at around 4:00am and ran over a shanty beside the road where the workers were sleeping.

The victims used to work in a nearby brick kiln, the OC added.

The driver of the vehicle fled the

scene immediately after the incident.

Police seized the vehicle, the OC said, adding that a case would be filed in this regard.

In a separate incident, a 12-year-old madrasa student was killed after being hit by a speedy car at Mirshahrai upazila in Chattogram yesterday evening.

The dead, Tabassum Maria, 12, was daughter of Kamal Uddin from the same upazila, said Assistant Sub-Inspector Alauddin Talukdar at Chattogram Medical College Hospital police outpost.

In Mymensingh, an old woman and her granddaughter were killed in a road accident at Kazir Shimla on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Trishal upazila on Wednesday night.

The victims were identified as Anwara Begum, 65, and her granddaughter Jannat, 7, of Khandakerbari at Kazirshimla in Trishal of Mymensingh.

Quoting locals, Md Azizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Trishal Police Station, said the two died on the spot when a Mymensingh-bound bus hit them while they were crossing the highway around 8:00pm.

The driver fled the scene immediately after the incident, the OC said, adding that a case was lodged in this connection.

## US-led blitz killed 1,600 civilians

FROM PAGE 20

been the de facto Syria capital of the Islamic State group's cross-border "caliphate" for three years and the US-led coalition launched a military campaign to crush the jihadists in their main remaining hub.

The unprecedented investigation, carried out by Amnesty International and the Airwars monitoring group, urged top coalition members to show more transparency and accountability.

"Many of the air bombardments were inaccurate and tens of thousands of artillery strikes were indiscriminate," said Donatella Rovera, crisis response advisor at Amnesty.

The civilian death toll for the coalition campaign, which supported Kurdish-led ground forces in their successful advance against IS, stands at more than 1,600, according to the report.

The coalition has admitted to around 10 percent of those deaths, it said.

"Coalition forces razed Raqa, but they cannot erase the truth," Rovera said.

"Amnesty International and Airwars call upon the Coalition forces to end their denial about the shocking scale of civilian deaths and destruction caused by their offensive in Raqa."

Rovera said a number of reasons explained the high casualty toll among civilians, including failing intelligence and surveillance, and the use of inappropriate weaponry.

In many cases, buildings in Raqa were targeted following insufficient remote surveillance, Rovera said, killing entire families that were still living or sheltering in them.

"If there had been adequate surveillance of these buildings... a civilian pattern of life would have been very detectable," she told AFP.

Rovera, who spent months going to strike sites in Raqa since it was captured by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in October 2017,

also said the coalition's choice of weapons was a problem.

"It may have to do with money," Rovera said.

"There are, more expensive, smaller impact-radius missiles, but the coalition often used... old MK-type bombs that take out entire buildings. Those are much cheaper," she said.

Amnesty also criticised the extensive use of artillery in the battle of Raqa, which one US military official boasted was the US's highest since the Vietnam war.

"With a margin of error of more than 100 metres, unguided artillery is notoriously imprecise and its use in populated areas constitutes indiscriminate attacks," the London-based rights group said.

The investigation into the civilian deaths resulted in an interactive, immersive website that includes pictures and videos of destroyed homes, the names of the families killed and links to data gathered from a variety of sources.

## 2 housewives, 10-year-old girl raped

FROM PAGE 20

30, Rafiq, 28, Abdul Khalek, 26, and Zafar, 30, said the OC.

In Mymensingh, a third grader was allegedly violated by a neighbour in Bhaluka upazila on Wednesday afternoon.

Hemendra Chandra Mondol, 52, took the 10-year-old victim to his house and raped her, said Mazharul Islam, OC (investigation) of Bhaluka Police Station, quoting the victim's family members.

Locals caught Hemendra and handed him over to police.

The victim's mother lodged a case. The accused was produced before a Mymensingh court that sent him to jail yesterday, the OC added.

The victim's medical test was conducted at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said Sub-inspector Roman Khan, also investigation

officer of the case.

In Panchagarh, a 19-year-old housewife was allegedly raped by a youth in Debiganj upazila on Wednesday.

The victim went to Azizul Islam's house in a nearby village around 9:00am for paying installment of loan she took from a non-government organisation. As nobody was in the house at that time, Azizul's neighbour Shaheen, 22, raped her and fled the scene, according to the case statement filed in connection with the incident.

On returning home, she informed her family of the matter and lodged a case with Debiganj Police Station the same night, said Sujit Kumar Kundu, sub-inspector of the police station.

Sujit, also investigation officer of the case, said her medical test was conducted.

Police were trying to arrest Shaheen.

In Sirajganj, a college teacher was held on charges of sexually harassing an HSC examinee in Tarash upazila on Wednesday.

The accused, Mojaharul Islam, teacher of Tarash Mohila Degree College, was sent to jail through a court yesterday, said police.

In another incident, police arrested a youth on charges of raping a schoolgirl in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila the same day.

The arrestee is Anik Hasan Joy, 20, also an HSC examinee, was sent to jail through a court yesterday, said police.

In Faridpur, a youth, Ibrahim Matabbor, 19, was arrested for allegedly attempting to rape a 16-year-old girl in Nagarkanda upazila early yesterday.

Our correspondents in Patuakhali, Mymensingh, Thakurgaon, Pabna and Faridpur contributed to this report.

## Speak your mind

FROM PAGE 20

hundred sentences aloud.

While they stress the technology is in its early stages, it nonetheless has the potential to transpose thoughts of mute patients in real time.

Instead of trying to directly translate the electrical activity to speech, the team behind the study, published in the journal Nature, adopted a three-stage approach.

First, they asked participants to read out sentences as an implant on the brain surface monitored neural activity while the acoustic sound of the words was recorded.

They then transformed those signals to represent the physical movement required for speech -- specific articulations of the jaw, mouth and tongue -- before converting these into synthetic sentences.

Finally, they crowd-sourced volunteers to identify words and sentences from the

computerised speech.

The recordings are uncanny: a little fuzzy, yes, but the simulated sentences mimic those spoken by the volunteers so closely that most words can be clearly understood.

While the experiment was conducted only with people who could speak, the team found that speech could be synthesised from participants even when they only mimed the sentences.

"Very few of us have any idea of what's going in our mouths when we speak," said Edward Chang, lead study author.

"The brain translates those thoughts into movements of the vocal tract and that's what we're trying to decode."

This could potential open the way for an implant that can translate into words the brain activity of patients who know how to speak but have lost the ability to do so.

## Welcoming

FROM PAGE 20

The Rusty-tailed flycatcher is a small bird from the family of Old World flycatchers and chats (Muscicapidae), scientifically known as Ficedula rufigauda.

"The bird breeds in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and live in some parts of southwest India and vagrant in Kazakhstan," said Monirul H Khan, eminent wildlife expert of Jahangirnagar University.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Nayem said, "On Friday morning [April 19], a senior photographer, Abu Kaiyum Khwaja, and I went to the Gandagram bamboo forest to photograph the Asian Paradise flycatcher."

"We were lucky enough for the Asian Paradise to appear just a few minutes after we reached the forest...then I suddenly spotted a small unknown bird and quickly took 4-5 photos of it, not thinking much of it."

Nayem and Khwaja were joined by some more wildlife and bird photographers -- Touhid Parvez Biplob,

Ali Ashraf Bhuiyan, Kamal Ahmed and Mohiul Islam -- at the village.

"I asked Biplob bhai about the bird I saw. He could not identify it but could tell it was a kind of flycatcher. I then posted a photo in a Facebook group called 'Birds Bangladesh', asking to confirm the bird's identity. I got a lot of different responses, but nobody could properly identify it," Nayem said.

The very next morning, Arif Islam, another senior birdwatcher, got in touch with Nayem.

"He called and asked, 'Nayem what have you done? Where did you photograph this bird? It's a new bird! Come to Facebook!'"

Wildlife conservationist Sayam U Chowdhury, on Nayem's Facebook post, identified the bird as a Rusty-tailed flycatcher, which Monirul H Khan then confirmed.

Thus, through Nayem's photograph, the Rusty-tailed flycatcher, a bird native to the coolest parts of the Himalayan countries, was first recorded in Bangladesh.

## Rakhine land grabbed

FROM PAGE 20

same upazila alleged that the power plant company occupied his 5.6 acres.

"They even didn't discuss the matter with me," he said, adding that his land record number was 276 and plot numbers were 503 and 3,442.

About 10 Rakhine landowners were present at the press conference.

Talking to The Daily Star, Chotobogi Union Parishad Chairman Toufiquezzaman Tanu said the power plant authorities grabbed about 100 acres of private land.

He said the company filled up the land with sand and began the construction work.

"We raised our voice in different platforms over the matter, but no steps have been taken yet," added Tanu, also the general secretary of Taltali Awami League.

Visiting the proposed project site of the 307-megawatt Iso Tech Power Plant in the first week of February, this correspondent found that land development work, which had begun

in July last year, was going on.

Asked about the allegations, Project Supervisor Mohammad Murad declined to comment and gave The Daily Star the phone number of the company MD, Moinul Alam.

As this correspondent called the number in early February and introduced himself as a journalist, a person hung up the phone.

Despite making repeated attempts yesterday, this newspaper could not reach Moinul for comments as he did not pick up the phone.

Taltali UNO Deepayan Das Shuvo said he did not receive any complaint over the issue.

Barguna Deputy Commissioner Kabir Mahmud yesterday said he also didn't receive any complaint on land-grabbing.

"If any private land is grabbed, the victims can go to the court and complain."

The DC said he would take necessary actions if any victim filed a specific complaint.

## Dreams incomplete

FROM PAGE 20

neighbours outside his rented house at Birulia in Ashulia around 9:00pm. By the time help arrived, it was too late.

Himu is a familiar face to those who worked during the Rana Plaza disaster.

On that fateful day on April 24, 2013, he rushed to the spot and rescued as many victims and recovered as many bodies he could throughout the 17-day rescue operation. He later worked for the rehabilitation of the injured victims.

All the work he did came at a cost of psychological trauma that manifested in various ways. From 2016, he started showing signs of detachment from his family. He started living on his own, befriending animals instead, said a condolence message released yesterday by Bangladesh Garments Sramik Samhati, with which he worked closely during the 2013 disaster that killed more than 1,100 people.

Sub-inspector Asgar Ali of Savar Model Police Station, who visited the house where Himu was found dead, quoted his family members as saying that he was not in touch with his family recently.

He will be laid to rest in his village home in Barishal today.

Abdul Haque, the owner of the house where Himu lived, said Himu rented a room 15 days ago.

His roommate Rajib Ashraf said Himu had plans to build an animal shelter on a piece of land that his father bought in Birulia, and came to live here for that purpose along with his dog Julie.

Rajib also said Himu used to talk about his trauma from Rana Plaza. Rajib said he was not home that day,

and Himu was alone.

Neighbours said Himu did not really socialise, and spent most of his time with his dog.

They said they did not know of any enemy he might have had. Savar police also suspect Himu died by suicide.

A close friend of Himu, preferring not to be named, said Himu did not share his innermost feelings, but in the cryptic messages he sometimes sent there were signs that he was disturbed.

While it may be a coincidence that Himu passed away on the sixth anniversary of the Rana Plaza collapse, not far from the site of his life-altering incident, it may not be totally unrelated.

Prof Shaheen Islam, who teaches at the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at Dhaka University, says deep-seeded trauma caused by tragedies like Rana Plaza incident can contribute in developing suicidal tendencies, although there could be a multitude of factors that could culminate in it.

However, there is more awareness about post-traumatic stress disorder these days, and people are coming forward more in seeking professional help, she said.

She mentioned of several people who were affected in the Chawkbazar fire seeking help at various places to cope with the trauma.

The disaster management ministry also has an initiative where mental health responders are being trained to address such crises, she added.

Early prevention can help the affected people greatly, Prof Shaheen said.

[Our Savar correspondent Aklaur Rahman Akash contributed to this report.]