

### ROHINGYA CRISIS

## Asean team to visit Cox's Bazar, Rakhine soon

UNB, Dhaka

Indonesia yesterday informed Bangladesh that a comprehensive response team of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) would soon visit Cox's Bazar and Myanmar's Rakhine State to prepare a comprehensive need assessment.

Dhaka and Jakarta agreed to enhance the role of Asean in repatriation of forcibly displaced Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam, now in Jakarta, had a "fruitful" meeting with Indonesian Foreign Minister Rento Marsudi. They discussed the Rohingya crisis, among others issues of mutual interest.

Alam briefed Marsudi about the outcome of the latest Joint Working Group Meeting in Nay Pyi Taw.

Earlier, Bangladesh floated the idea that Myanmar could agree to creating a safe zone under the direct supervision of Asean to ensure safety and security of Rohingyas, to have them return voluntarily.

State Minister Alam is leading a four-member delegation to Jakarta to garner Indonesian support in an initiative called South and South East Asian Cooperation (SEACO).

He handed over a formal letter of invitation to Marsudi for attending the upcoming conference in Dhaka.



Adulterated molasses is being made at the factory in Nature's Gurudaspur upazila. A mobile court fined three local factories, including this one, Tk 9 lakh for producing adulterated molasses and also seized 1,980kg molasses. The photos were taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

### 5-month-old

FROM PAGE 16

a pedestrian dialed 999 and sought police help.

Later, a police team went to the spot and sent the victims to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared Shihab dead, SI Hannan said.

The injured -- Shihab's mother Sharmin, 20, uncle Al Amin, 25, grandmother Moly Begum, 50, and driver of the vehicle Shahadat Hossain, 35 -- were admitted to DMCH.

Doctors claimed Shahadat's condition to be critical as he had sustained injuries in his chest and head.

Police seized the pickup from the spot, but couldn't arrest the driver.

## Buddha Purnima

FROM PAGE 1

day in a befitting manner.

Lord Buddha was born on this day of full moon in 563 BC. Buddha attained enlightenment and passed away on the same day.

On the occasion of the Buddha Purnima, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have issued separate messages and greeted the members of the Buddhist community as well as the countrymen.

Besides, leaders of different political and socio-cultural organisations also greeted the Buddhist community members.

The day is a public holiday.

Newspapers will run different articles while Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private TV channels will broadcast special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

The celebrations will start with lighting of lamps and hoisting of the national and religious flags atop the Mohabihar and chanting of sacred verses from Tripitaka.

## Price woes

FROM PAGE 16

Although the government's buying price is Tk 980-1,040, farmers are not happy.

The government would procure only 1 lakh tonnes in the 10 districts, according to Nitya Ranjan, additional director of Jashore regional agriculture office.

He said most farmers have cultivated high yielding varieties this year, and production is good. Production per hectare averages 6.5 tonnes, he added.

The price remains low because rice mill owners are not showing much interest in buying paddy.

"They are showing a sort of reluctance from the very beginning of harvesting," said Liakat Ali, a middleman who connects farmers and rice mill owners in Khajanagar in Kushtia. "It's a tactic we use to keep the price low," he said.

Khajanagar is a regional rice hub with around 250 rice mills.

Liakat said, "Farmers would never get the benefit if the system is not changed. The government has to compel mill owners to give a fair price to farmers."

Agriculture officials said farmers should not rush. "They should wait for some days after the harvest is complete. Then they should go for sale," said Sushanta Kumar Pramanik, acting deputy director of DAE in Kushtia.

He said 60 percent of the harvest has been done so far.

Local administrative officials said they are setting up one buying centre in each upazila of the 10 districts to procure rice directly from farmers.

## Trump unveils new plan

FROM PAGE 16

lawmakers and Cabinet members.

Currently, about two-thirds of the 1.1 million people allowed to emigrate to the United States each year are given green cards granting permanent residency because of family ties.

Trump proposed keeping the overall numbers steady, but shifting to a "merit-based" system similar to one used in Canada - a plan he said would result in 57% of green cards being based on employment and skills.

He would also end a lottery system used to give applicants from countries with low immigration rates a chance to move to the United States.

"Companies are moving offices to other countries because our immigration rules prevent them from retaining highly skilled and even, if I might, totally brilliant people," Trump said.

The plan left aside the thorny issues of how to deal with the roughly 11 million immigrants living in the country illegally - many for years - and

protections for "Dreamers" brought to the country illegally as children, a top priority for Democratic lawmakers.

It also does not include changes sought by business lobby groups to help farmers and other seasonal employers obtain more guest workers, or reforms for technology visa programs.

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Trump's plan was "dead on arrival" and said it was "not a remotely serious proposal."

The plan also drew concerns from hard-line groups that want to restrict immigration. "The fact that it does not even call for a modest reduction in total immigration, but instead offsets decreases with increases in 'skills-based' immigration, is very concerning," said Mark Krikorian, head of the Center for Immigration Studies.

However, Trump struck an optimistic tone on his new plan. "The Democrats now realise that there is a National Emergency at the Border and that, if we work together, it can be immediately fixed. We need Democrat

votes and all will be well!" Trump tweeted yesterday.

### BEEFING UP BORDER

Trump ran for office in 2016 pledging to build a wall on the southern US border with Mexico to keep migrants out, and has fought Congress to get funding for it.

Trump's plan includes proposals to beef up security at the border to try to prevent people from crossing illegally and legal changes aimed at curbing a rise in Central American migrants seeking asylum.

It would also hike fees charged at the border to pay for improved infrastructure.

But the plan fell short of being the "comprehensive" approach that business, religious and immigration lobby groups alike have said is needed to get a deal that would get enough votes from Democrats and Republicans to clear Congress.

Democratic support would be needed to advance any legislation through the Republican-led Senate -

## 8 killed during

FROM PAGE 1

upazila, died as bricks from his business establishment fell on him at Baneswar Bazar, said Shakil Ahmed, OC of Puthia Police Station.

In Chapainawabganj, two farmers were killed and another was injured by lightning strike in Shreerampur village of Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila. Thunderbolt struck them when they were working at a paddy field in the afternoon.

The victims are Rezaul Hossain, 40, and Mohammad Musa, 35.

In Naogaon, two day labourers were killed as a thunderbolt struck them at Porsha upazila around 4:30pm. They were harvesting paddy in Kanoir Beel.

The victims are Shah Nur, 28, of Porsha upazila, and Md Hasan, 30, of Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj. said Shahinur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Porsha Police Station.

In Thakurgaon, at least 10 people were wounded and around 100 houses were damaged as a tornado lashed Bangroad Mandalpara in Sadar upazila in the evening.

Our correspondents in Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon and Thakurgaon contributed to this report.

## HRW slams

FROM PAGE 16

in a row after an election opposition parties and experts said were flawed and rigged.

Hasina's government, which has been in power since 2009, has been criticised for enacting internet and digital security laws that many fear were being used to crackdown on dissent.

"The Bangladesh government should stop locking up its critics and review the law to ensure it upholds international standards on the right to peaceful expression," said Brad Adams, Asia director of New York-based Human Rights Watch, in a statement.

Swapan, a Christian, was arrested on Wednesday after a Catholic priest filed a case, accusing him of hurting religious sentiments of the country's minority community.

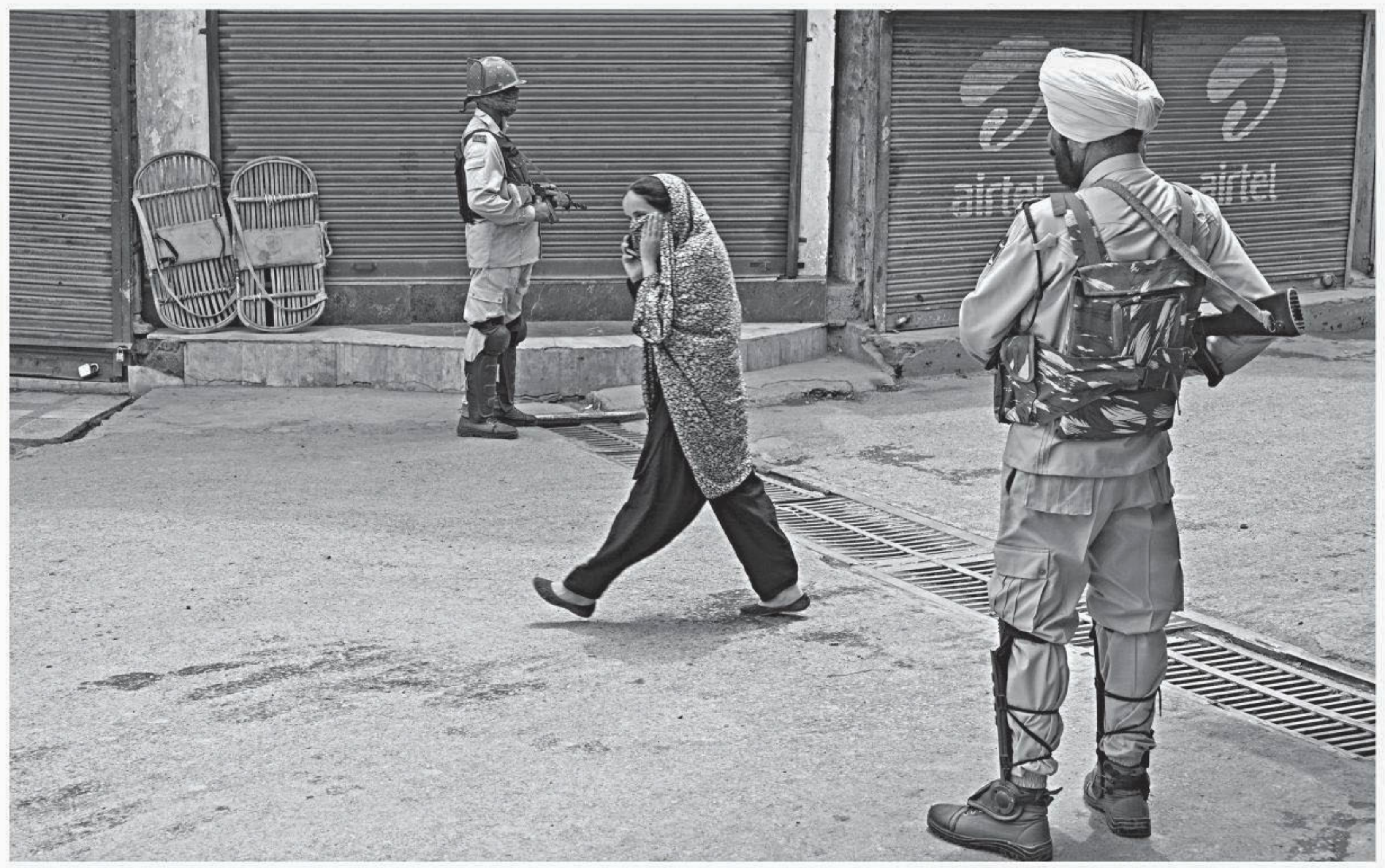
Mahmood, a lawyer and an indigenous rights activist, has used his Facebook page to write about alleged crimes perpetrated against tribal people in the country's Chittagong hill districts.

Kaum is associated with the prominent human rights organisation Odhikar, whose chiefs were charged with "publishing false images and information" and "disrupting the law and order situation of the country."

"This week's arrests show how small the space has become for civil society in Bangladesh," Adams said.

"Sheikh Hasina's government should revise the abusive elements of these laws before the space for peaceful expression disappears entirely."

Last August Bangladesh replaced its internet laws, which were used heavily to arrest scores of opposition activists and dissidents, despite protests by journalists and rights groups.



Indian paramilitary troopers stand in front of closed shops as a woman walks past during a one-day strike in Srinagar yesterday. Kashmiri separatists have called for a one-day strike in response to recent killings of eight people in the region following gun battles between Indian government forces and militants.

PHOTO: AFP

## Clashes hit

FROM PAGE 16

of 4.5 million people during the weekend.

Campaigning for the election was ended a day early in West Bengal because of the troubles and the sale of alcohol in Kolkata is now banned until after voting.

Bars in the Park Street entertainment district were closed on Thursday night.

The final day of voting will also be held in the key states of Uttar Pradesh, including Modi's constituency of Varanasi, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh.

The BJP won 282 seats of the 543 at stake in 2014, in one of the biggest landslides triumphs in India's post-independence history.

Analysts predict Modi's party will lose seats this time and could need a coalition to form a new government.

## Driverless

FROM PAGE 16

Robert Falck.

"It is a step to commercialising autonomous technology on roads," he added. "Since we're a software and operational first company, a partnership with a manufacturing company is something that we see as a core moving forward."

His company hopes to have 200 vehicles in operation by 2020.

Besides Schenker, the company also has orders from German supermarket chain Lidl, Swedish delivery company Svenska Retursystem and five Fortune 500 retail companies.

The T-Pod has permission to make short trips between a warehouse and a terminal on a public road in an industrial area in Jonkoping, central Sweden, at up to 5km/hr (3mph).

Einride would apply for more public route permits next year and was planning to expand in the US.

## Army man

FROM PAGE 16

Bandarban Sadar Hospital.

Jahidul's elder brother Mejbah Uddin told our Bandarban correspondent that Jahidul talked to his mother around 10:00am and said he would come home for the Eid with new clothes for everyone.

Jahidul was the fourth of six siblings, he said.

## Rush for Eid bus tickets

FROM PAGE 16

forthcoming Eid-ul-Fitr began yesterday around 6:30am amid the familiar scenes of long waits, overcharging and non-availability of tickets.

Hundreds of people thronged the bus counters in Gabtoli, Kalyanpur, Shyamoli, Mohakhali, and Kalabagan.

Tickets of AC buses were sold only at a few select counters and online, said sources of different bus counters.

Visiting different bus counters in Gabtoli and Kalyanpur, this correspondent found ticket crisis for May 30 and June 3, as most of the holidaymakers were wanting tickets for the dates.

Long queues were seen in the first

few hours of ticket sale. The crowd lessened after 11:00am. Women had to stand in queues with men as there was no separate line for them. Some were lucky to purchase tickets online.

Many ticket-seekers complained that the bus authorities were charging extra -- Tk 50 to 250 -- per ticket, defying the rates fixed by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

On May 11, Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners' Association instructed the bus operators to follow the price chart fixed by the BRTA.

Abdus Samad and Farhad, who are Kurigram-bound holidaymakers, said operators of Hanif Paribahan took Tk 750 for a ticket for Kurigram instead

of Tk 650.

Some of the ticket-seekers alleged that the operators were just selling tickets for seats in the back. Most of the people who went to the bus counters got tickets, but some did not get tickets for their desired dates.

About the allegation of overcharging, bus owners said throughout the year, they charged passengers less than the rates fixed by the BRTA as they earned enough due to round trips. But during the Eid, they sold tickets at the fixed rate as they had no income from return trips.

Mosharrif Hossain, a manager of Hanif Paribahan, said the AC bus tickets were not sold like those of normal chair coach.

"Those who are regular passengers get preferences. Besides, there are many brands of AC buses. We have Volvo; some others have Scania or Hyundai," he said, claiming that the BRTA did not fix rates for AC bus tickets, as the bus owners fixed the price upon the AC buses' condition.

Romesh Chandra Ghosh, chairman of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners' Association, earlier said there was no scope for charging extra defying the government price chart and if anyone did so, the association would take actions after probe.

But this correspondent could not contact him for comments yesterday.