

Qatar distributes funds to Gaza families

AFP, Gaza City

Qatar distributed \$100 grants to thousands of families in Gaza yesterday, an AFP correspondent reported, part of an understanding with Israel intended to restore calm to the blockaded Palestinian enclave.

The gas-rich Gulf state, which is a longstanding ally of Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas, agreed to provide regular payments to needy families as part of an informal truce agreed between Hamas and Israel in November.

Qatari envoy Mohammed al-Emadi said Wednesday 60,000 families would receive the grants from post offices in the latest disbursement.

Previous disbursements had each involved 100,000 families but Emadi said the \$4 million saved would be allocated to other projects instead.

Several hundred people were waiting at a post office in central Gaza City for their \$100 grants, an AFP journalist said.

Emadi brought \$25 million in cash into Gaza on Sunday night, he told AFP. The rest of the money will be allocated to aid projects including cash-for-work schemes.

Two Canadian naval vessels sail through Taiwan Strait: Taipei

AFP, Taipei

Two Canadian naval vessels sailed through the Taiwan Strait, Taipei's defence ministry said, in the latest naval passage likely to irritate Beijing.

The ships sailed through the narrow waterway separating the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in a "freedom of navigation" operation, the ministry said in a statement issued late Wednesday, without providing any details.

It added that Taiwan's military had closely monitored the "movements of the relevant aircraft and vessels in the region" as the ships passed through the strait.

Relations between China and Canada have deteriorated since December when police in Vancouver detained Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou on a US arrest warrant.

Days later China arrested two Canadians -- former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor -- in what is widely seen as a tit-for-tat move.

China has also blocked Canadian agricultural shipments worth billions of dollars.

It was the latest such naval voyage in the Taiwan Strait in recent months. Beijing lodged a protest with Washington in May after a US destroyer and a supply ship sailed through the strait amid rising tensions between the two powers.

US warships periodically conduct "freedom of navigation" exercises in the waterway, triggering angry responses from Beijing every time.

Van Gogh

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"It is a very emblematic piece," said auctioneer Gregoire Veyres. "The fact that it's a gun, it's an object of death. And if Van Gogh is Van Gogh, it's because of his suicide and this gun is part of it."

Van Gogh suffered bouts of psychosis and deep depression throughout his life, with his torment often infusing his art, whether intensely painted self-portraits or other notable works including The Starry Night and Sunflowers.

He is also notorious for having chopped off part of his own left ear with a razor blade during an argument with fellow artist Paul Gauguin.

Van Gogh died at Auvers-sur-Oise near Paris in July 1890, aged just 37, more than two days after shooting himself in the chest in a wheat field where he had previously painted.

After failing to kill himself instantly, he stumbled back to the inn where he was staying and was looked after by the innkeeper, Arthur Ravoux, and his daughter Adeline, who was 13 at the time and recounted the events more than 60 years later.

"I have tried to kill myself," Van Gogh is reputed to have told Ravoux. The artist had spent more than two months at the inn, producing a whirlwind of some 80 paintings in what would be his final, distraught flurry of creativity.

Searches for the gun began the day after he died but the likely weapon was not found until the 1960s, in the same field, with the correct calibre and showing indications that it had been fired.

It was discovered by a farmer and ended up in the possession of a woman whose child was the seller.

"There are lot of indicators that favour its attribution," said Veyres. Exhaustive efforts to confirm the gun's link to Van Gogh, including tests that established it had been buried for 50 to 80 years, led to a 2012 book.

A similar Lefaucheur revolver used by Paul Verlaine to try to kill his lover and fellow poet Arthur Rimbaud in 1873 was sold at auction in Paris in 2016, fetching 434,500 euros.

Four jailed for life over death of 71 migrants in Hungarian truck

REUTERS, Szeged

A Hungarian court yesterday jailed four human traffickers for life for the deaths of 71 migrants whose decomposing bodies were found crammed inside a truck dumped on an Austrian motorway.

The deaths in August 2015 of 59 men, eight women and four children from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan shocked Europe as it was struggling to cope with an influx of more than one million refugees and migrants that year.

It was the worst incident of its kind on the overland route across the Balkans and into central Europe taken by hundreds of thousands of people fleeing war and poverty in the Middle

East, Africa and Asia.

"The suffering in that truck is beyond imagination, as is the utmost indifference the perpetrators showed toward the deaths of these 71 people. Therefore for those who played a core part, there is no doubt that the only punishment commensurate with their crime is the maximum one, which is life in jail without parole," presiding Judge Erik Mezolaki said.

One of the four defendants received a minimum 30 years in prison - legally a life term in Hungary - but with the possibility of parole afterwards.

The Afghan ringleader of the gang and three Bulgarian accomplices were found guilty of manslaughter for refusing to stop the refrigerated truck

to open the doors and let air in, despite the frantic pleas of those inside.

The passengers realised they were in danger of suffocating, so they banged on the doors, screamed and shouted to get the driver's attention, an investigating judge told an earlier court hearing last year.

Mezolaki said Lahoo Samsooriyamal, the Afghan, had ordered the driver not to open the airtight doors of the truck as it headed from Hungary via Austria towards Germany, the preferred destination of many of the migrants who entered Europe in 2015.

He was in contact with Bulgarians Metodii Georgiev, Vencislav Todorov and Ivaylo Stoyanov by phone during the

journey - one of whom drove the truck while the other two followed in cars.

The temperature inside rose quickly after the truck was abandoned on an Austrian highway and the air began to run out, Mezolaki said. The driver had stopped on the motorway to check the truck's engine coolant, but left the back doors locked.

All the victims - including children and infants - suffocated within two hours after the traffickers departed.

"They stopped first at about 6 a.m., but the victims made so much noise that (Georgiev) instructed (Todorov and Stoyanov) to keep going," Mezolaki said at the trial in Szeged near Hungary's southern border with Serbia.

Schoolgirl killed after rape in B'baria

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21, of Dakshin Meradhar village in Baliadangi upazila on charges of raping a housewife and circulating the footage of the incident on social media.

Quoting the case statement, police said the housewife, aged about 23, of Ratnai Mahatpara village went to a

maize field around 11:30am on May 7 for collecting grass. Dulal Hossain, one of her neighbours, forcibly raped her at knife-point while Saddam recorded the incident on camera.

Later, Sad-dam also violated her and Dulal recorded the scene.

The duo raped the housewife multiple times in the next one month,

threat-ning that they would release the footage on social media, said Saiful Islam, inspector (investigation) of Baliadangi Police Station.

The alleged rapists uploaded the footage on Facebook about four days ago as the victim refused to comply with their demand.

The victim on Tuesday night filed a

case accusing the two. The following day, police arrested Saddam and a local court sent him to jail after he was produced before it.

Another accused Dulal is now on the run.

Our correspondents in Brahmanbaria, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Savar contributed to this report.

Traffickers preying on Rohingyas

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year. Bangladeshis and foreigners create demand for child sex tourism, including exploitation of Rohingya girls near Cox's Bazar."

The report said the Bangladesh government has increased the number of security forces deployed to guard and control access to Rohingya camps, which may have contributed to the prevention of some trafficking crimes.

It said the government allowed significant humanitarian access to the Rohingya camps and cooperated closely with the UN and NGOs in counter-trafficking efforts although there are at least 100 credible reports of forced labor and sex trafficking of Rohingyas within Bangladesh.

The 2019 TIP report assesses the anti-trafficking efforts of 187 governments. The report invites

governments to address all forms of human trafficking with a special emphasis on when it takes place exclusively within the borders of one country.

According to the report, Bangladesh makes good efforts to eliminate trafficking, including adopting a national action plan to combat trafficking, convicting traffickers, initiating an investigation into a police officer accused of child sex trafficking, and continuing to investigate some potential trafficking crimes against Rohingya refugees.

It also said Bangladesh does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

"Because the government has devoted significant resources to a written plan that, if implemented, would constitute significant efforts

to meet the minimum standards, Bangladesh was granted a waiver per the Trafficking Victims Protection Act from an otherwise required downgrade to Tier 3. Therefore, Bangladesh remained on Tier 2 Watch List for the third consecutive year."

The US state department report said the government recorded 592 cases involving 1,324 suspects under Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (PSHTA) during the reporting period, a decrease from 778 cases the previous reporting period.

The government identified 419 potential trafficking victims, including 155 adult males, 172 adult females, and 92 children.

Citing media analysis of police data, the report said conviction rate for trafficking crimes under the PSHTA from 2013-2019 was 0.4 percent.

It said Bangladesh government gave minimum efforts to assist its citizens exploited abroad. "In practice, NGOs reported the Bangladesh government sometimes provided only the necessary travel documents for repatriation."

The report, however, said in few cases, Bangladeshi embassies provided short-term shelter or funded repatriation of a trafficking victim.

The report made 13 recommendations to the Bangladesh government on containing human trafficking, including taking steps to eliminate recruitment fees charged to workers by licensed labour recruiters, ensuring recruitment fees are paid by employers, and increasing investigations and prosecutions of credible allegations of trafficking of Rohingyas.

Tigers fall short after spirited chase

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for the first 35 overs or so, when Bangladesh's bowling retained some discipline and adherence to plans. Warner reached his 100 off 110 balls and scored his next 66 runs in just 37 deliveries before becoming part-time bowler Soumya Sarkar's second victim in the 45th over. The score, at the fall of the second wicket after a 192-run partnership with Usman Khawaja, was 313. Given Bangladesh's strong reply, a win could have been possible if Australia were kept to within 350, but Glenn Maxwell played an electric cameo of 32 off 10 balls as 60 runs came off the last five overs.

The start had been disciplined enough from Bangladesh after they were asked to field first as Mashrafe and Mustafizur Rahman kept Australia to 47 without loss after nine overs, and six runs from Shakib's first over saw them concede a respectable 53 without loss in the first five overs. However, Shakib suffered a rare off day with the ball, which meant that he could not play the vital role of keeping a lid on the scoring in conjunction with Mehedi Hasan Miraz, who bowled his 10 overs on the trot and was Bangladesh's most economical bowler, conceding 59 runs. With little pressure being built from either end,

Warner and skipper Aaron Finch built a 121-run opening stand. Against the run of play, Finch was caught at short third man in the 21st over, Soumya's first, off a ball that bounced more than the right-hander expected. The left-handed Khawaja came in instead of Steven Smith, presumably to negate the left-arm spin of Shakib and, helped by a few long hops, they did exactly that.

Sabbir was again the culprit when he missed a chance to run Warner, then on 72, out as he failed to collect the ball at mid on while the two batsmen were undecided about going for a run.

Still, on a belter of a wicket, Bangladesh managed to stay with the Aussies for much of the innings. The run rate went past the six-per-over mark only in the 38th over, when Rubel Hossain conceded 12 runs. It was then that the carnage started, and was magnified by Maxwell before he was run out with a direct hit from Rubel at short third man. Soumya added the wicket of Khawaja, caught behind off an attempted hook for 89 in the 47th over. There was a 25-minute rain break when Australia were 368 for five after 49 overs, but it did no change anything as Mustafizur's last over was taken for 13 after resumption.

Freeze, attach DIG Mizan's property

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(FDR) of Tk 10 lakh with City Bank Ltd's Dhanmondi branch; three flats located at Uttara, Granubagicha and Bailey road; three plots of five, seven and a half, and five kathas located in Savar and Joar Sahara; and two shops in Gulshan.

Mahmud Hossain Jahangir, special public prosecutor of ACC, told The Daily Star that ACC made an inquiry into the illegal wealth of DIG Mizan and found these movable and immovable properties that have been

amassed through illegal means.

In the ACC's application to the court, the anti-corruption watchdog mentioned that if the court did not allow them to freeze and confiscate DIG Mizan's assets, he might transfer the properties and launder the money.

Hearing the plea, the court ordered the manager of the City Bank Ltd and Inspector General of Registration (IGR) of Dhaka district to freeze DIG Mizan's FDR and flats, plots and shops respectively.

DIG Mizan, who is facing ACC probe over allegation of amassing wealth illegally, recently alleged that ACC's enquiry officer Director Khandaker Enamul Basir took Tk 40 lakh as bribe with a false promise of exonerating him of all charges.

ACC began its probe in May, last year.

DIG Mizan came under the scanner in January last year when he was accused of forcibly marrying and torturing a woman. He was withdrawn from his post at the Dhaka

Metropolitan Police on January 9, last year.

He had also implicated her in a false case in which she was arrested and remained in jail for three weeks.

Earlier on June 18, this year, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said that the process of taking action against DIG Mizan was underway.

"No one is above the law," the minister said while talking to reporters after an event organised by his ministry.

Matia decries proposal for tax rise

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from the savings certificate.

"Why did he interfere in it at a time when he's giving various benefits to businessmen, increasing the salaries and benefits of government employees and teachers and also giving various facilities to different sectors?"

She also said although the finance minister wants to retain the scope for whitening black money, he is not increasing the ceiling on buying

savings certificates.

Currently, a woman can buy family savings certificates of up to Tk 45 lakh.

Matia demanded that Kamal withdraw his proposal in this regard. She sought the prime minister's special attention towards this.

Mentioning that incomes from savings certificates is legal, she said the government shouldn't increase tax at source on it.

She presented various statistics on

how the successive AL governments achieved outstanding successes in different sectors over the last 10 years.

Meanwhile, Gonoforum lawmaker Mukabbir Khan yesterday demanded the government publish a white paper on the alleged widespread corruption and irregularities in the banking sector, bad loan and money laundering.

Participating in the general discussion on the proposed budget,

he also demanded the government form a special tribunal to try the loan defaulters.

Jatiya Party MP Shameem Haider Patwary urged the finance minister to set up a bank commission immediately to stop irregularities in the banking sector.

"If you make delay in forming the bank commission, it might happen that the commission will be there, but there will be no bank," he added.

Test drivers for dope, eyesight

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make sure in six months that buses of different routes are painted in different colours.

The court observed that the doors of all buses should be closed and could be opened only at specific stops.

Only ambulances and fire fighters are allowed to honk near schools, colleges, madrasas, hospitals and residential and restricted areas, the court said.

The HC kept suo moto (voluntary) rule as a continuous mandamus case so that any party can move prayer before it for necessary directives in order to prevent road accidents and to implement yesterday's orders and observations in future.

Alam came up with the directives and observations through declaring absolute the suo moto rule issued by it over the compensation for Rajib's family.

Rajib's brothers Mehedi Hassan Bappi and Abdullah Hridoy expressed satisfaction at the verdict.

"This judgement is very important to us all. The drivers will not run unfit vehicles and the people without licence will not drive after this verdict," Mehedi told reporters.

Ruhul Quddus Kazal, lawyer who moved for the suo moto rule, said, "I will be able to move prayers before the High Court for necessary directives in order to prevent road accidents and to implement its orders and observations later on. I hope Rajib's brothers will get the compensation from the bus

companies."

BRIC lawyer M Moniruzzaman told reporters that his client would move an appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the verdict.

Sajan Paribahan lawyer SM Shafiqul Islam Babul termed the verdict one sided, arbitrary and emotional. An appeal will be moved before the Appellate Division challenging the verdict, he said.

On April 4, the HC issued a suo moto rule asking the bus owners to explain why they should not be directed to give Tk 1 crore in compensation.

In the rule, the court ordered the authorities concerned of the government to show causes as to why

they should not be directed to strictly enforce the relevant laws and rules for free movement of the passengers and to amend the laws and to formulate new rules for preventing such road accidents in future.

On May 8 last year, the HC ordered the two bus companies to pay Tk 1 crore to Rajib's family. The companies filed two petitions with the SC challenging the HC order.

On May 22 last year, the SC stayed the HC order and asked it to form an independent committee to assess the liabilities.

The committee, led by Prof Mizanur Rahman, director of Accident Research Institute at Buet, said reckless driving was the "primary cause of the accident".

9 to die

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Additional District and Sessions Judge Shawkat Ali announced the verdict in the case filed in 2014.

Akhirul Islam, president of Sonamasjid Land Port Clearing and Forwarding Agents Association, and eight others -- Sirajul Islam, Tohurul Islam, Abdul Malek, Sirajul Islam Sentu, Sirajul Islam, Shariful Islam, Md Masud, and Abdus Salam -- were given death penalty.

Each convict was also fined Tk 200,000 by the court.

Those facing life term are Masud alias Lal Chan and Parul Begum, who, for default of fine, will have to spend one more year in jail.

Md Masud, Abdus Salam, and Parul Begum are absconding.

The court acquitted four people -- Selim Reza, Benaul Islam, Khairul Islam, and Obaidur Rahman.

According to the case statement, Monirul Islam, a treasurer of Sonamasjid land port in Shibganj upazila was picked up from his home in Shialmara village on October 24, 2014. Akhirul and his men shot Monirul dead near Shibganj Stadium.

Monirul's wife Rahima Begum filed the case with Shibganj police the next day. Quoting her, police earlier told this paper that Monirul was killed by his rivals over misappropriation of the association's fund.

Motiur Rahman Siddiqui, assistant superintendent of police of Chapainawabganj Sadar circle, pressed charges against 15 people on June 15, 2015.

Latif

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government property. The ACC initiated the legal proceedings against the former minister on October 17, 2018.

ACC Assistant Director Aminul Islam lodged the case with Adamdighi Police Station on October 10, 2017.

Jahanara Rashid, wife of late Harunur Rashid in Kalitala of Adamdighi upazila, was also made accused in the case.

According to the case statement, Jahanara leased a piece of land in Adamdighi, owned by Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation, for three years at Tk 1.2 lakh per year on May 13, 2010.

On November 13, 2011, Jahanara applied to the ministry for purchasing the land.

Later, then textiles and jute minister Latif, without floating any formal tender, awarded the land to Jahanara at Tk 23.94 lakh although its market price was Tk 64.63 lakh, resulting in a loss of Tk 40.69 lakh.

Following the incident, the ACC filed the case against Latif and Jahanara under the Penal Code and section 5(2) of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act 1947.

College Hospital, police added. On information, agitating students, teachers and locals blocked Jashore-Chuknagar highway for almost an hour. Later, police brought the situation under control.

Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Monirampur Police station, said the accident happened at Bijoyrampur Koitala crossing on the highway.

A case was filed with Monirampur Police station in this connection, the OC added.

Ashrafur Rahman, physician of Manirampur Upazila Health Complex, said Ashikur died before he was brought to the health complex.

Dilip Kumar Pal, headmaster of Dholigati Secondary School, said both Ashikur and Al Amin were brilliant students. They mostly obtained first or second positions in their class. We expected them to get GPA-5 in the upcoming SSC exams.

It is very sad to lose them like this, the headmaster added.

Plant trees

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The PM said though the government gave shelter to displaced Rohingyas on humanitarian grounds, but the forests in Cox's Bazar were damaged due to the mass influx.

She said her government has taken massive programmes to protect the Sundarbans, including creation of alternative employment for the local people, expanding the navigability of rivers and channels through dredging and reducing salinity of the water bodies in the world's largest mangrove forest.

About climate changes, Hasina said the government has formulated Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and raised a climate fund to face adverse impacts caused by the climate changes. The government allocated some Tk 3,500 crore for the fund, she said.

Noting that Bangladesh is one of the worst victims of the climate changes, she said the developed countries are largely responsible for the climate change, but Bangladesh is getting very little amount of compensation from the international community.

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Md Shahab Uddin presided over the function while Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the ministry Saber Hossain Chowdhury spoke on the occasion.