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BERGER
Weather Coat
ANTIDIRT
SUPREME



President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stand in silence after placing wreaths at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on Dhanmondi Road-32 on National Mourning Day yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Nation pays glowing tribute to its hero

AGENCIES, Dhaka, Gopalganj

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had managed to establish an independent state for the Bangalees through his uncompromising struggle.

Yesterday, the nation paid rich tributes to the Father of the Nation on the occasion of his 44th martyrdom anniversary and the National Mourning Day.

People observed the Day, recalling the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu and renewing the pledge to safeguard the country's independence and sovereignty.

The government, the Awami League, different political and socio-cultural organisations, educational institutions and professional bodies observed the Day by organising various programmes, reports BSS.

The national flag was hoisted half-mast atop the offices of all government, semi-government and autonomous bodies and educational institutions.

In the morning, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid tributes to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at the capital's Dhanmondi Road-32.

After placing the wreaths, the two leaders stood there in solemn silence for some time

showing deep respect to the great leader.

A contingent of Bangladesh Armed Forces gave state salute at that time as the bugle played the last post, reports UNB.

A munajat was offered seeking eternal peace of the departed souls of those who were killed in the August 15 carnage.

After paying tributes to Bangabandhu, the PM visited the historic Dhanmondi residence of Bangabandhu, which has been turned into Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

Following the visits by the president, the PM and other dignitaries, people from all walks of life, wearing black badges, thronged the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum to pay their respects to the Father of the Nation.

Hasina later went to the Banani graveyard and spread flower petals on the graves of the martyrs of the August 15 carnage, offered Fateha and joined a munajat there.

AL advisory council members Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and Rashidul Alam, presidium members Matia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Muhammad Faruk Khan, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, among others, were present.

The president and the PM issued separate messages on the eve of the National Mourning Day.

Bangabandhu, his spouse Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, sons Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, and Sheikh Russell and most of his family members were killed in cold blood on August 15, 1975.

His daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana had been abroad at that time.

HASINA VISITS TUNGIPARA

The prime minister arrived in Tungipara, the ancestral home of Bangabandhu, by a helicopter in the morning. She paid tributes to the Father of the Nation at his grave there.

After placing a wreath, she stood in solemn silence for some time.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, cabinet members, senior AL leaders, chiefs of the three services, and senior civil and military officials were present.

Hasina offered Fateha and munajat seeking eternal peace of the departed souls of the Father of the Nation, and other martyrs of the August 15 massacre.

Later, the PM, along with senior party leaders, placed another wreath at the grave on behalf of the party.

The PM, cabinet members and party leaders,

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Govt plans school meal to cut dropout

Draft policy proposes to bring all primary students under the scheme in phases; ministry to place it before cabinet soon for nod

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is planning to provide daily school meal for all the 1.73 crore primary school students in efforts to increase attendance and reduce dropout.

The primary and mass education ministry has finalised a draft policy in this regard and will soon place it before the cabinet for approval.

The policy -- National School Meal Policy 2019 -- proposes to provide students of all the 1.34 lakh primary schools across the country with 30 percent of their daily required food intake.

"We have finalised the draft.... We will send it to the Cabinet Division for its endorsement shortly," Primary and Mass Education Secretary Akram-Al-Hossain told The Daily Star last week.

The ministry is working to start implementing the policy in phases from next year, beginning with poverty-prone regions, said Gias Uddin Ahmed, additional secretary of the ministry.

Highlighting the importance of school meal and its link to attendance, KM Enamul Hoque, deputy director of Campaign for Popular Education, said, "School meals are necessary as many children across the

country go to school in an empty stomach every day. It makes it hard for them to focus on their studies in class.

"Students will get better nutrition if they get food at schools every day. It is also a strong incentive for families to send their children to school which will help increase attendance and check dropout."

Last year, primary student attendance rate was 88 percent while dropout rate was around 20 percent, according to the Annual Primary School Census 2018.

The World Food Program (WFP) in a statement in April noted that micronutrient deficiencies present a huge challenge to Bangladesh, with economic losses to malnutrition estimated at \$1 billion per year.

Once the policy is implemented, it will minimise students' short-term hunger, create a more positive learning environment and allow students to better concentrate in classrooms, ministry officials said.

WHAT'S IN THE POLICY?

The policy proposes to provide students hot meals five days a week and fortified biscuits one day.

To ensure minimum dietary diversity, meals will be prepared with fortified rice,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Condition of Bhola gang rape victim unchanged

Taken to DMCH for better treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The sixth grader allegedly gangraped in Bhola on Sunday evening has still been bleeding from wounds.

"Her condition remains unchanged and we are providing her treatment....

We will go for forensic exams after her health improves," said Bilkis Begum, coordinator of One Stop Crisis Centre at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The 12-year-old girl was brought to the DMCH early yesterday after doctors at multiple hospitals in Bhola and Barishal failed to stop the bleeding.

Doctors said she needed 22 stitches for wounds to her private parts and there were numerous cuts in her toes and back.

The girl's family

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

8 killed in LoC clashes

Claims Pakistan, says 5 of them Indian soldiers; New Delhi denies

AGENCIES

Eight people died in firing along the de facto border in disputed Kashmir yesterday, the Pakistani military and local officials said, as tensions between nuclear-armed rivals Islamabad and New Delhi soar over the Himalayan region.

Skirmishes are frequent across the so-called Line of Control (LoC), but the latest deaths in two separate incidents come after Pakistan warned it was ready to meet any Indian aggression over Kashmir.

"In efforts to divert attention from precarious situation in IOJ&K (Indian-held Kashmir), Indian Army increases firing along LOC. 3 Pakistani soldiers embraced shahadat. Pakistan Army responded effectively," the Pakistani military said in a statement.

"5 Indian soldiers killed, many injured, bunkers damaged. Intermittent exchange of fire continues," it added, without specifying further where the incident took place.

An Indian army spokesman denied that.

"No casualties. This assertion is wrong," the spokesman told Reuters.

In a statement, the Indian army said that from around 0700 local time Pakistan violated a ceasefire between the two nations.

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No let-up in dengue woes

Number of infected people rising again after slight drop on Eid Day

HELEML ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The number of dengue patients in the capital has begun to show an upward trend in the past two days, following a fall during the Eid vacation.

According to the Director General of Health Services, 1,929 patients were infected in the last 24 hours across the country till 8:00am yesterday. Of them, 811 were in the capital and 1,118 outside Dhaka.

The number was 1,200 on August 13.

Director of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital Uttam Kumar Barua said the number of admitted dengue patients has been on the rise immediately after the vacation period.

Around 383 dengue patients were undergoing treatment at the hospital on August 12, while it was 281 and 448 in August 13 and 14 respectively. Till yesterday, 432 patients were undergoing treatment there.

Barua said the number of people taking dengue tests had not reduced even during Eid.

Some 6,207 people took dengue tests since August 1 to 14, whereas it was 2,873 in July and 997 in June.

A similar situation was found in other hospitals.

"We thought there would be fewer patients yesterday as it was a government holiday, but many people came," said Assistant Director (administration) Nasir Uddin of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

There were 710 dengue patients on August 12, while it was 601 and 640 respectively in August 13 and 14. Till yesterday, 601 patients were undergoing treatment in the hospital.

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Three-year-old Alifa rests in her mother's arms while her seven-month-old brother Arfan lies next to them in the capital's Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital yesterday. The siblings have been suffering from dengue since Monday. Inset, third-grader Rabbi, another dengue patient, cries in pain in the same hospital.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

DENGUE OUTBREAK



NEW CASES IN
LAST 24 HRS
1,929

TOTAL DENGUE
CASES
48,280

OUTSIDE DHAKA
17,644

DEATH
93
(40 OFFICIAL)

UNDERGOING
TREATMENT
7,570

SOURCE: DGHS

Thousands march in Brazil against Bolsonaro

AFP, Brasília

Tens of thousands of women took to the streets of Brazil's capital Wednesday to denounce President Jair Bolsonaro, in the third anti-government protest in the city in two days.

The huge demonstration in Brasilia comes as Bolsonaro faces increasing heat over rampant deforestation in the Amazon rainforest as well as education funding cuts, which have sparked nationwide protests by students and professors in recent months, including one in the capital on Tuesday.

The "March of the Margaridas" is named after Brazilian trade union leader Margarida Maria Alves, who

was murdered in 1983 during the military dictatorship.

Held every four years, the protest demands better rural living conditions and protection of women's rights.

Many of the thousands of tribal women who marched on Tuesday in protest against Bolsonaro's "genocidal policies" joined Wednesday's demonstration, which also condemned Bolsonaro's plan to open up indigenous territory to mining and the government's policy to increase the use of pesticides and weed killers.

"We are living in difficult times with a government that attacks us continuously," Juliana Joucoski, a 43-year-old teacher from the southern city of Curitiba, told AFP.

"We are losing hard-won rights."

Toll from Tanzania fuel truck blast rises to 85: governor

AFP, Nairobi

The death toll from a fuel truck explosion in Tanzania has climbed to 85, a local governor said Wednesday, after 10 more people died from injuries sustained in the horrific blast.

A massive fireball engulfed a crowd thronging to collect petrol from an overturned tanker Saturday near the town of Morogoro, some 200 kilometres (125 miles) west of Dar es Salaam, the financial capital.

The initial explosion killed dozens, with others rushed to hospital with burns and serious injuries in one of the deadliest oil tanker blasts in Africa in recent years.

A spokesman for the National Hospital in Dar es Salaam, Aminiel Aligaesha, said Wednesday that seven more people had died, taking the overall death toll to 82. Another 32 were being treated, including 17 in intensive care, he added.

"We are continuing to fight as best we can to save those still alive," the hospital spokesman, Aminiel Aligaesha, told reporters Wednesday.

But later Wednesday, Morogoro governor Stephen Kebwe told reporters the death toll had risen once again.

"Three more deaths occurred during the day," he said, confirming the new toll of 85.

The flames swept through a large crowd trying to siphon leaking petrol from a truck that overturned as it swerved to avoid a motorcycle.

Officials said the explosion was triggered when a man tried to retrieve the truck's battery, creating sparks that ignited the fuel.

An official inquiry was ordered Sunday into the accident, with a preliminary report expected later this week.

It was the latest in a string of such disasters in Africa and at least the third this year.

Last month, 45 people were killed and more than 100 injured in central Nigeria when a petrol tanker crashed and then exploded as people tried to take the fuel. In May, a similar incident in Niger killed nearly 80 people.

8 killed in LoC clashes

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Separately, two civilians were killed and one injured by the Indian troops along the LoC in Rawalakot district in Pakistani-held Kashmir, a senior local official there told AFP.

The official, Mirza Arshad Jarral, said intermittent exchanges of fire between the two militaries had been going on since morning.

The former princely state of Kashmir was divided between Pakistan and India on their independence from Britain in 1947.

They have fought two of their three wars over the territory -- though none since both countries acquired nuclear weapons.

Tensions skyrocketed following India's shock move to revoke the autonomy of its portion of the disputed Himalayan territory last week.

On Wednesday, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan addressed the local legislative assembly of the Pakistani-administered Kashmir in Muzaffarabad.

He vowed the time had come to teach Delhi a lesson and promised to "fight until the end" against any Indian aggression.

TEXAS MASS SHOOTINGS

US Congress subpoenas 8chan website owner

AFP, Washington

The US Congress subpoenaed the owner of 8chan Wednesday, 11 days after a Texas man posted a racist screed on the website just before massacring 22 people in El Paso.

The House Committee on Homeland Security demanded website owner Jim Watkins testify before it on September 5 as part of work on how to counter extremist content online.

The site has become known for carrying content and discussions from the far right.

So far this year, the manifestos from three mass shooters have been posted on 8chan: the white supremacist who slaughtered 51 at mosques in New Zealand, an anti-Semitic man who attacked a California synagogue, killing one, and the El Paso gunman, who targeted Hispanics.

"In recent years, violent extremist content has proliferated on both large and small social media platforms. At least three acts of deadly white supremacist extremist violence have

been linked to 8chan in the last six months," the committee said in a statement.

"We have questions on what is being done to counter this trend so we can be sure it is being properly addressed."

The subpoena was issued after Watkins indicated to the committee that he would not testify voluntarily in person.

"I am always available to talk to you by telephone," he told the committee in an email posted on 8chan's Twitter account on August 6.

Watkins, a US citizen who lives in the Philippines, defended the website last week, attacking efforts to shut it down by denying it a host online, and insisting it had not broken any laws.

"It is actually sinister behavior. Ours is one of the last independent companies that offer a place you may write down your thoughts free from having to worry about whether they are offensive to one group or another," he said in a video uploaded to YouTube.



A seasonal trader near a pickup carrying rawhide in old Dhaka's Chawkbazar area yesterday morning. The man came all the way from Kishoreganj's Bhairab to sell some 150 pieces of rawhide, but he could not find a buyer till last night.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Govt plans school meal to cut dropout

FROM PAGE 1

vegetable oil and locally-grown fresh vegetables and, if possible, with eggs so that students get enough protein and micronutrients.

The menu will be selected in consultation with the school managing committee, parents and locals. Mothers will also be included in the programme to be overseen by an advisory committee comprising respected locals.

The policy also proposes the formation of a National School Meal Authority under the primary and mass education ministry and creation of a Food and Nutrition Research and Development Centre.

A GIGANTIC TASK

Although the draft has been finalised, the ministry is still in a dilemma as to whether to provide hot meals or fortified biscuits.

To prepare hot meals, each school will require a kitchen as well as manpower, including a cook, said

ministry officials.

If it is vegetable khichuri, it will require about Tk 8,500 crore a year, said Gias Uddin Ahmed, the additional secretary, while presenting a keynote paper on the draft policy in April.

The cost will be half if fortified biscuits are provided instead of hot meals, he said.

But the problem with fortified biscuits is that students cannot eat them at one go. They rather need to eat those at intervals and drink a lot of water after taking each biscuit.

Gias said they would request businesses and banks to spend their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund for the programme.

"We are considering a package comprised of khichuri, biscuit, egg and local fruits for the programme," said Akram, the secretary.

The ministry is now preparing a Development Project Proforma on the school feeding programme, he said,

adding, "Once it is done, we will be able to say exactly how much money will be required."

CURRENT SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES

The country now has two school feeding programmes, said Ruhul Amin Khan, project director of School Feeding Programme.

Under one programme, the government is giving biscuit packets, each weighing 75 grams, to nearly 3 million children at primary schools in 104 upazilas, he said.

The government introduced the programme in 2010, following in the footsteps of the WFP, which ran a project to feed schoolchildren from 2001 to 2009.

Under a separate pilot project since 2013, about 34,000 students are getting hot meals in three upazilas -- Bamna in Barguna, Islampur of Jamalpur and Lama of Bandarban, he said.

Nation pays glowing tribute to its hero

FROM PAGE 1

joined a milad and dua mahfil, organised by the Cabinet Division and the Gopalganj district administration, on the mazar premises.

The AL took elaborate programmes to observe the Day. In the morning, party leaders placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the capital.

They also placed wreaths and offered Fateha at the Banani graveyard for Bangabandhu's family members.

A delegation of the AL Central Executive Committee joined the programmes in Tungipara.

In the afternoon, party leaders distributed foods among the poor and orphans at the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

Besides, Awami Jubo League, Krishak League and Chhatra League organised separate programmes,

marking the Day.

The district and upazila administrations observed the Day through holding doa mahfils and discussions.

Special prayers were offered at mosques and places of worship of other religions across the country seeking eternal peace of the departed souls of Bangabandhu and his deceased family members.

All city corporations, district councils, municipalities and union parishads organised different programmes to observe the Day.

Bangladesh missions abroad arranged discussions and hoisted the national flag half-mast atop their offices.

Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, private TV channels and radio stations aired special programmes marking the National Mourning Day.

The national dailies and local newspapers brought out special supplements yesterday. Besides, specially designed posters were displayed at educational institutions and other public places.

PM JOINS MILAD

Prime Minister Hasina joined a milad and doa mahfil in front of the capital's Bangabandhu Memorial Museum after Asr prayers yesterday.

Bangladesh Mohila Awami League arranged the programme marking the National Mourning Day.

PM's daughter Saima Wazed Hossain and other family members and relatives also attended the milad.

Meanwhile, a discussion will be held at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre at 4:00pm today on the occasion of the National Mourning Day, with the PM in the chair.

No let-up in dengue woes

FROM PAGE 1

On average, 1,000 to 1,500 people come to the hospital to get tested for the dengue virus, but only 10 percent test positive for the mosquito-borne infection, said Nasir.

The huge rush of people going to hospitals to take the tests is also taking a toll on already stretched medical resources.

Eight-year-old Jannat had been waiting in a chair near the queue of a lab of DMCH for the last few hours to do a blood test for dengue.

As around 1,500 people came to the hospital with fever to do NS1 dengue test, Jannat had to wait around three hours in serial after completing all necessary procedures.

"I brought Jannat to the hospital as she has been suffering from fever for the last two days and many neighbours suggested she be taken to hospital immediately," said Rubina Begum, aunty of Jannat.

The child had to wait several hours to give her blood after around three hours' journey from Keraniganj, she said.

Abdur Rahim, 70, and his wife Rabeya Khatun, 60, who came to the Shaheed Suhrawady Medical College Hospital from Uttara sector-14, also had to wait for hours to take the dengue test.

Both of them could stand in

the long queue only for around 20 minutes due to their high fever and eventually they sat on the hospital's floor near the lab and waited for their turn.

"We are very panicked about dengue virus as we have been running a high fever for the last three days," said Rahim.

In the latest tally, the number of dengue patients is 48,280, of whom 7,570 are currently admitted to hospitals across the country.

THREE MORE DIE

A medical assistant of Madaripur Sadar Health Complex, Tapon Kumar Mandal, died of dengue in the city's Bangladesh Medical College Hospital.

He was admitted to the hospital yesterday afternoon and breathed his last around 1:30pm, said a hospital official.

Mandal was diagnosed with dengue around four days ago.

An official of DGHS said Tapan was transferred to zone-10 (Shyampur and Jurain) of Dhaka South City Corporation from Madaripur two weeks back to assist dengue patients.

Meanwhile, at least two other people died of dengue fever in Dhaka yesterday, taking the unofficial death toll to 93.

The official death toll, however, is

still 40.

Raz Chowdhury, an around 3-year-old child, died of dengue at Dhaka Shishu Hospital yesterday.

Raz, son of assistant register of National Institute of Cardio Vascular Disease Nirmol Kanti Chowdhury was admitted to the hospital around 3:30pm, said Abdul Hakim, public relations officer of the hospital.

He was shifted to the Incentive Care Unit immediately but breathed his last around 1:30pm yesterday, Hakim added.

In DMCH, Mousumi, 25, a resident of Agargaon Taltola of Mirpur died of dengue yesterday.

Mousumi was admitted to the hospital around 9:30am yesterday and died around 11:30am, said Nasiruddin Mamun, husband of Mousumi.

In Bagerhat, eight dengue patients were identified yesterday, increasing the number of such patients in the district to 79.

Bagerhat Civil Surgeon Dr GKM Shamsuzzaman said most of the dengue infected people were returned from Dhaka.

Health officials are advising dengue patients to stay in mosquito-nets so that it cannot spread, he said.

Our Bagerhat correspondent contributed to the report.

ASSASSINATION PLOT

Venezuela's Maduro accuses former Colombian president

REUTERS, Caracas

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Wednesday accused former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe of plotting to assassinate him in cohorts with Colombia's US ambassador Francisco Santos, and exiled Venezuelan opposition leader Lester Toledo.

It was not the first time Maduro, a socialist, accused politicians from neighboring Colombia of plotting against him, as relations between the two countries deteriorate amid an economic crisis in Venezuela that has prompted more than one million migrants to settle in Colombia.

During a state television broadcast on Wednesday evening, Maduro gave a detailed account of how the three plotted the attack from "a bunker" in a house belonging to Uribe, a right-wing leader who has been an outspoken critic of Maduro and his predecessor and mentor, the late former President Hugo Chavez.

"It is a plan for 32 mercenaries to enter to try to assassinate me and leaders of the revolution," Maduro said. "But we are here, protected by God."

Colombian Foreign Minister Carlos Holmes denied the allegation in a post on Twitter, saying the government "rejects the delirious and slanderous accusations by the dictator Maduro against two Colombians who have dedicated their lives to serving democracy."

A press advisor to Uribe did not respond to a request for comment. Toledo, who is based in Colombia, has been designated by Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido as his international coordinator for efforts to bring in humanitarian aid. He could not be reached for comment.

Maduro frequently calls current Colombian President Ivan Duque a "lackey" for U.S. interests. Maduro has accused Colombia and the United States of being behind a drone explosion at a military parade last year, which he describes as an assassination attempt.

Condition

FROM PAGE 1

members said she was raped at her neighbour's house when she went there to have mehendi on her arms on the eve of Eid.

As she was waiting at the veranda of the house for her aunt, Al Amin, 27, a tenant of the building, gagged her with a strip of cloth and forced her into his room, police said.

Amin and his associate Manjur Alam, 25, then tied her up and raped her, they added.

Both Al Amin and Manjur were killed in what police said was a gunfight early Wednesday.

Non-profit Coast Trust was assisting the girl's family in bearing the treatment and legal costs.

HOMAGE TO BANGABANDHU



Right, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina showers rose petals on the graves of her family members in Banani graveyard yesterday. Top left, wreaths piled up in front of a portrait of Bangabandhu on Dhanmondi-32 as the nation observes National Mourning Day. Journalist leaders pay homage to the Father of the Nation at Jatiya Press Club.

PHOTO: BSS, ANISUR RAHMAN, PRABIR DAS

THE BONE COLLECTORS

|| SHAHEEN MOLLAH ||



DHAKA VIBE

Shohag collects skulls and jawbones, and puts them in his sack -- after scraping off excess skin and meat, which go into another bag.

PHOTO: STAR

For most people of Rony's age, Eid-ul-Azha is an opportunity to spend some leisurely time with friends and family, and feast on various preparations of beef and mutton. But for the 25-year old resident of Bhashantek slum in Mirpur, it is a day of hard work that can earn him several weeks' worth of income.

Most parts of a sacrificial animal are of use to the general people -- from the tongue to the tail. But one body part that everyone throws away is the skull and jawbones. And that is what Rony, and hundreds of other tokai (scrap collectors) like him, look to collect every Eid-ul-Azha from across the capital.

The bones go to scrap shop owners, which are then sold off to factories and used in production of melamine resin to make kitchen utensils etc.

Rony, who has been an Eid-day "bone collector" for a few years, received a van and Tk

2,000 from a scrap shop owner for the day's work, with a target of collecting 1,000kg of bones. Each kg of bone fetches him Tk 6, although around 20 percent of the weight is subtracted during payment because of attached skin and flesh with the noes that would have to be removed before processing it.

"I targeted large apartment buildings, because you can get seven to eight cow heads at once," Rony told this newspaper at Mirpur-14 on the afternoon of Eid. Each head weighs between three to five kg depending on size, he said, adding that he would collect 200-300kg at once in his sack at once, drop them off at the shop, and head out for more.

By 8pm, Rony's earning for the day rang up to Tk 5,500, he told this newspaper over phone.

While collecting donated meat from door to door and

then selling them is also an option, there is a lot more competition in that as it is the more obvious choice, said some others engaged in collecting bones.

Shohag, another teenager who was collecting bones near Kazipara, was making the best of both. "Many of the 'butchers' working on Eid day are not professionals -- most of them are in fact rickshaw pullers. So often they cannot cleanly remove the meat from the head before throwing it away," he said.

Shohag kept a small blade while collecting the heads, and scraped off additional meat whenever he could. In front of this correspondent, he sold nearly a kilo of that meat for Tk 300. "However, it takes up some time to do this, and maybe I will not be able to collect as many heads as someone else. But that's okay," he told this correspondent.

Rokon Mia, owner of Sabina Enterprise -- a scrap shop owner in Mirpur-14, said he had assigned 12 scrap collectors to collect bones on Eid day, who brought back nearly 3,000kg of bones. "I managed to collect nearly double the amount last year; this year has not been that good," he said.

Some 15 scrap shops on the same road had all contacted scrap collectors beforehand to gather bones, Rokon said, adding that they paid the experienced ones some money in advance, while others get paid after they bring back their haul.

Asked where these go, he said his clients come and take those away in trucks to Mirdha Bari area of Jatrabari, where these are processed in melamine factories.

Do you have a Dhaka Vibe story to share? Email your feature or idea to dhakavibeds@gmail.com.

Efforts on to bring fugitive killers back: Quader

AGENCIES

Road, Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the government has intensified its diplomatic efforts to bring back the fugitive killers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"The government has strengthened its diplomatic efforts to pave the way for bringing back the killers of Bangabandhu who remain fugitive and have taken shelter in different countries," he said.

The minister came up with the remark while talking to journalists after paying homage to Bangabandhu and his family members at Banani graveyard, reports BSS.

Quader urged all to work together for a hunger-and-poverty-free "Sonar Bangla" as dreamt by Bangabandhu.

The general secretary of Awami League also vowed to build a corruption-free country under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, based on Bangabandhu's ideology, UNB adds.

On August 15, 1975, Bangabandhu was brutally assassinated by a group of conspiring army officers. His wife, sons, daughters-in-law and other relatives were also killed in the massacre, one of the most heinous in world history.

Bangabandhu's daughters Sheikh Hasina

and Sheikh Rehana, survived as they were abroad at the time.

The Supreme Court on November 19, 2009 upheld a High Court verdict, confirming capital punishment of 12 people for killing the Father of the Nation and most of his family members in a coup d'état.

Five killers of Bangabandhu -- Syed Farooq Rahman, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Bazlul Huda, AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed and Mohiuddin Ahmed -- were executed on January 27, 2010. Another killer, Aziz Pasha, died of natural causes in Zimbabwe in 2001.

Those who remain fugitives are Col (dismissed) Khandaker Abdur Rashid, Lt Col (relieved) Shariful Haque Dalim, Maj (ret'd) Noor Chowdhury, Maj (ret'd) Rashed Chowdhury, Capt Abdul Majed and Risaldar Moslehuddin Khan.

A taskforce comprised of ministers and high officials of the foreign, law and home ministries was formed in 2010 to locate and bring back the six.

The government had also made global appeals in bilateral, regional and international forums to track down the culprits. However, only two of the six could be traced -- Rashed Chowdhury in the US and Noor Chowdhury in Canada.

Build 'Sonar Bangla' as dreamt by Bangabandhu

Chief justice urges nation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain yesterday suggested all work together to materialise the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for building the country as "Sonar Bangla".

"The Father of the Nation had a dream to turn the country into Sonar Bangla. Our responsibility and target will be working to implement his dream. If it is done, his [Bangabandhu] departed soul will find peace," he said.

He was speaking at a blood donation programme organised by the Supreme Court in association with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University at the SC auditorium, marking National Mourning Day. Judges, officials and staff of SC attended the programme.

The chief justice said August 15 is the most shocking and watershed day in Bangladesh's history, as Bangabandhu and most of his family members were brutally assassinated on the day in 1975. He paid respects to all those who

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NBR to introduce app to check tax evasion

UNB, Dhaka

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has taken an initiative to introduce a mobile application and a software, aiming to check cases of tax evasion and increase the number of taxpayers.

The revenue-collecting authority thinks launching of the app and software will bring dynamism into the revenue administration, and help bring a large number of eligible taxpayers under the tax net, an NBR senior official told the news agency.

According to the existing income tax law, any business entity and service-providing person must hang the taxpayer identification number (TIN) in their offices or business organisations. But it is not practised properly, which causes confusion as to whether the business or service-provider have their TINs or not.

"That's why NBR is planning to make it mandatory to hang tax payment certificate," said the official.

He said using the software, all 649 tax circles will be linked to the mobile app. Through this app, anyone will be able to check whether the tax payment certificate is genuine or effective, or an expired one.

"With the app, it will even be possible to lodge

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DHAKA TODAY

WORKSHOP

Introduction to Astronomy & Astrophysics Research
Organiser: SPSB
Venue: Sheltech Niribili, Elephant Road
Time: 3pm

MUSIC CLASS

Guitar for Beginners
Venue: Studio 6
Time: 3pm

CULTURAL EVENT

Remembering Bangabandhu
Organiser: Bangabandhu Online Archive
Venue: Shilpakala Academy
Time: 12pm

SESSION

Emotional Intelligence
Venue: Mind Mechanics Academy, Road 17A, Banani
Time: 5:30pm



Clockwise from left, two buses that collided in Nowpara area of Faridpur's Bhanga; firefighters gather around a mangled bus that hit two others near Bangabandhu Bridge in Sirajganj; and a Cox's Bazar-bound bus that hit a tree on Dhaka Chattogram highway being hauled off. Road crashes across the country left 18 people dead and 81 injured yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Probe committee

FROM PAGE 5
Assistant Commissioner (Operation) Abdul Halim and Deputy Director (Posta zone) Newton Das.

Around 10:45pm on Wednesday, a fire broke out at the factory on Water Works Road in Posta area.

Sixteen firefighting units brought the blaze under control around 12:45am. No casualty was reported and the cause of fire and extent of damage could not be known yet.

ACC can be a symbol

FROM PAGE 5
the corrupt will get a scope to continue their dishonest activities which in turn will portray ACC in a negative light, Iqbal Mahmud added.

"We have to change our mindset and discharge our responsibilities properly being imbued with the importance and spirit of National Mourning Day," said the ACC chief.

ACC Secretary Muhammad Delwar Bakht, Director General AKM Sohel and directors Syed Iqbal Hossain and Md Akhter Hossain spoke at the discussion, among others.

Fast-tracked Manikganj power plant fails to start operation

UNB, Dhaka

The fast-tracked 162MW Manikganj power plant failed to commence commercial operation as per the schedule.

Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) sources said the plant was scheduled to start operation on January 1 this year. "But it only made 70 percent progress till July 14," said a top BPDB official.

Sources said China's Consortium of Changzhou Hutang Coal Power Co Ltd, and Bangladesh's Icon Enterprise Ltd and Chase Power Ltd obtained the project as an unsolicited offer which the government awarded as a priority project.

The progress of the project was discussed at a review meeting at the Power Division in July. According to a report placed at the meeting, the

letter of intent was issued on April 2 last year with implementation of the project within nine months. This set the date for starting commercial operation by January this year.

A review meeting on November 11 last year noted that the engine of the power plant reached the project site in October and the commercial operation could start in March 2019.

But the sponsors of the project failed to keep commitments about commercial operation, said the BPDB official. They said the project was getting delayed due to complications over land ownership.

However, it was informed at the July meeting that the financial closing of the project has been completed and they have fully progressed in this regard.

Alcohol poisoning leaves 3 dead, one in critical condition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three men died and another -- in critical condition -- was undergoing treatment following alcohol poisoning at Malipara in port city early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Shaon Majumder, 32; Milton Gomez, 30; and Bishwajit Mallick, 35, according to police.

Ujjwal Banik, 35, a friend of the deceased, was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the city.

The four friends had alcohol at the home of Bishwajit on Tuesday night, said Mostafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Akbar Shah Police Station. After drinking, they went to their respective houses at dawn, he added.

All of them were unwell in the morning, around 11am, he said quoting family members.

Initially, family members were taking care of them. As their condition deteriorated, they were rushed to

hospitals in the city.

Bishwajit and Shaon were admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) on Wednesday night. Bishwajit passed away in the hospital around 2:30am while Shaon died around 8am, said Assistant Sub-inspector Alauddin Talukder of CMCH Police Camp.

Milton, who was admitted to Centre for Specialised Care and Research (CSCR) on Wednesday afternoon, died in the hospital around 11:30am yesterday, said OC of Akbar Shah Police Station.

Meanwhile, Ujjwal was undergoing treatment at Max Hospital Limited.

Contacted, Abdullah Al Mamun, medical officer of HDU of Max Hospital, said Ujjwal had been suffering from metabolic disorder due to alcohol overdose.

His condition was critical, said the doctor.

Titu Mallick, Bishwajit's brother, filed an unnatural death case with Akbar Shah Police Station yesterday afternoon.

In the case statement, Titu said his brother came to their home with three friends on Tuesday night, said the OC. They were drinking, Titu said.

The following day, when his brother was feeling unwell, the family members called on a doctor, who found Bishwajit's blood pressure to be very high. The doctor prescribed some medicines and told them if the patient did not feel well, he must be hospitalised.

As his health condition did not improve in the afternoon, they took Bishwajit to hospital, said the OC referring to the case statement.

The bodies were sent to CMCH Morgue for autopsy, said the OC, adding, "We will take statement of Ujjwal after he recovers."



Children play a game of street cricket, take advantage of empty roads. The city is yet to return to its busy self, with this year's extended Eid vacation. The photo was taken from Phoenix Road in Old Dhaka.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Man drowns in waterfall in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man drowned in a waterfall in Mirsarai upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The deceased is Md Mehedi Hasan, 21, a worker of Chattogram Export Processing Zone, said Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defence Headquarters in Agrabad.

The incident occurred at Ruposhi waterfall in Hajalkhain around 10am.

Divers' team leader of Chattogram fire service Akhter Hossain said Mehedi went to the waterfall with his friends to enjoy their holidays. He then suddenly slipped off the top of the stream and fell into the 30-feet deep water-body and drowned.

On information, fire service divers rushed to the spot and recovered Mehedi's body around 1:30pm.

The body was handed over to Mirsarai Police Station.

Rajshahi ticket

FROM PAGE 5

ticket scalping.

"Being a civil authority, how can we challenge someone for just buying tickets?" he said.

When contacted, Rab ASP Anwar Hossain said, the elite forces were monitoring the situation but did not "find anything wrong".

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police's additional deputy commissioner Golam Ruhul Kuddus came up with similar observation.

Country attained remarkable success in dev indicators

Says state minister Shahriar Alam

BSS, Rajshahi

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said Bangladesh has attained remarkable success in various development indicators under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

He mentioned that the country at present is progressing fast in every sector, especially in ICT, food production, education, women empowerment, GDP and per capita income. Now, Bangladesh has become a rice-exporting country instead of an importing one, he added.

The state minister said this while addressing a meeting, marking inauguration of a four-storey academic building of Arpara Government Primary School in Bagha upazila of the district on Wednesday as chief guest. The Local Government Engineering Department constructed the building at a cost of around Tk 86 lakh.

Shahriar Alam said the present government attached highest priority to the education sector for boosting it with skilled human resources as the government pledged to build a science and technology-based education system to take the nation forward.

Mentioning that Bangladesh was moving ahead on all fronts, he renewed the government's vow to turn the country into a prosperous one in the South Asian region.

He said whenever Awami League remains in power, people get the chance to uplift their socio-economic conditions.

Chaired by president of the school managing committee Bellal Uddin, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Upazila Education Officer Sanwar Hossain and headteacher of the school Irene Parveen.

Build 'Sonar Bangla'

FROM PAGE 3

were martyred that day.

Supreme Court Registrar General Dr Md Zakir Hossain also spoke on the occasion, among others. Earlier in the morning, the chief justice paid homage to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at the capital's Dhanmondi.

2nd death anniversary

Today (16 August) is the 2nd death anniversary of Syeda Samshuzzahan (Baby). She is the daughter of Shah Syed Abdur Rahim, Peersaheb of Poribagh, Dhaka and wife of Doctor Late Abdul Khaleq Bhuiyan. To mark the 2nd death anniversary, family members have arranged feeding for destitute and parentless children. All relatives, well-wishers and devotees of Syeda Samshuzzahan (Baby) are requested to pray for salvation for her departed soul.



NBR to introduce app

FROM PAGE 3

complaints with the respective tax circle," he said. The NBR official hoped when businessmen see customers checking whether they have paid taxes or not, they will feel obliged to pay their taxes.

"As a result, revenue collection will be increased and tax evasion cases will come down," he said.

Through the app, it would be possible to check the status of tax payment and the certificate will automatically be cancelled in absence of regular payment. Ineffective certificate means the particular person or organisation does not pay tax.

"There's no need to provide extra information in this regard," the NBR official said.

He also mentioned that NBR is trying hard to increase the number of taxpayers to one crore within

the next two years. As part of the initiative, a tax survey has started.

"Enhancing capability in technology will help us bring more dynamism into tax administration," the official said.

Currently, the number of TIN holders in the country is around 40 lakh, only 20 lakh of whom submit their income tax returns, which is much lower compared to other countries of the world.

For the current fiscal, the revenue target has been fixed at Tk 325,600 crore. Of the amount, Tk 113,912 crore will come from income, profit and capital tax; Tk 123,067 crore will be contributed in the form of Vat; supplementary tax will provide Tk 48,153 crore; Tk 36,498 crore will come from import duty; Tk 54 crore from export duty; Tk 2,239 crore from excise duty and Tk 1,677 crore will be fetched as other taxes.



Fishermen gear up to return to the sea, after a hiatus of a few days due to a depression in Bay. The photos were taken from New Fishery Ghat area of Chattogram's Rajarkhali.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN





A memorial space set up by Sylhet District Administration at the Central Shaheed Minar was covered with wreaths -- paying respect to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, left. Barishal City Corporation Mayor Semiabat Sadiq Abdullah organised a drawing and writing competition on the occasion at Barishal Club yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR, TITU DAS

Rajshahi ticket scalpers active for lack of vigilance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

As holidaymakers started returning to the capital yesterday, ticket scalpers have become active in Rajshahi Railway Station area.

Although law enforcement agencies said they were monitoring ticket sales, commuters alleged they found a lack of vigilance by the authorities.

The station's booking counters and online ticketing service ran out of tickets before Eid, but the scalpers -- well-known faces in the locality -- are still selling tickets secretly.

They are selling the Tk 375 Shovon chair tickets at Tk 800, Tk 570 Snigdha AC chair tickets at Tk 1,200, and Tk 1,070 AC berth tickets at Tk 2,000.

Ticket-seekers said they witnessed a close supervision of ticket sales last year, but alleged that authorities were not vigilant enough regarding black marketing of train tickets this year.

Aynal Haque, a businessman from Horogram area, bought two Shovon chair tickets for Banalata Express from a scalper yesterday.

Each ticket cost him Tk 800 and he saw four others buying five Shovon tickets for different Dhaka-bound trains from the same scalper.

Aynal said, he purchased the tickets for his daughter and son-in-law who were visiting his family on the occasion of Eid.

"I had been trying to buy the tickets

since two days before Eid. The booking counters at the station and online service reported non-availability of the tickets but we desperately needed them," he said.

"I tried my luck at different stalls of the station and asked them directly who sells tickets in the black market. One of them took me to an individual who gave me the tickets, asking me to wait at the station for half an hour," he said.

"Buying tickets from scalpers is easy," he said while looking at the long queue in front of the booking counters where most people were waiting for hours and returning empty-handed.

"Almost everyone at the station knows the scalpers. But they would let you wait and run across the station to be certain that you're not a member of law enforcement agencies," Aynal said.

When contacted, the additional general manager of Bangladesh Railway's west zone, Ashim Talukder, said, the railway authorities this year sent letters to law enforcement and intelligence agencies, asking them to be vigilant and report irregularities.

"We haven't yet received any bad reports," he said.

When notified of Aynal Haque's experience, he said, they witnessed some locals collecting tickets in different queues and suspected they might be engaged in

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INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY BSF greets BGB with sweets at Hili border



UNB, Dinaipur

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Border Security Force (BSF) of India greeted their Bangladesh counterpart, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), with sweets on the occasion of India's 73rd Independence Day yesterday at Hili Land Port in Hakimpur upazila of Dinaipur.

BSF Hili camp's Company Commander DS Sindhu said they greeted BGB members with sweets on their Independence Day with an aim to keep fraternity and solidarity between the two parties.

BGB Hili check post camp's Company Commander Md Altaf Hossain said, "We always exchange greetings on our national days and festivals."

Extending a helping hand Bangladeshi peacekeepers provide free medical services to people of South Sudan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People in South Sudan have lauded free medical care being provided by Bangladeshi peacekeepers in the civil war-torn African country.

"My child was sick with fever and cough and was unable to eat. I also have hemorrhoids and body pain. I have no money to buy medicine but they [Bangladeshi peacekeepers] helped us," said Hawa Daniel, one of the thousands of people displaced by the civil war.

Hawa, who returned to her original residence in Wau, said she was happy to receive free medical care, according to a statement issued by the UN Mission in South Sudan yesterday.

Luis Mungu, another Sudanese, said he was sick for a number of days with cough, but thanks to the peacekeepers, he got medicine. He also got eyeglasses to help with his vision. He said he is grateful to the peacekeepers for their support.

South Sudan's Health Minister Dr James Patrice in Wau acknowledged the support of Bangladeshi peacekeepers and urged for more assistance in treating malaria in the area.

"I wish to express my gratitude... and for standing by the government to support in the health field to provide some medicine and help our people," said the health



minister.

About 300 people mostly women, children and elderly turned up for the free medical service in the city of Wau.

Col Mazharul Haque, commander of Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Wau, said they are part of the Bangladesh battalion running peacekeeping operation and humanitarian assistance programme.

Most patients are suffering from malaria, some from cough, diarrhoea and headache etc, he said. However, they only have some primary medicine and would continue the humanitarian support within their limited capacity, Col Haque added.

Bangladesh is one of the largest contributors to the UN peacekeeping operations.

Hasan for commission to reveal Aug 15 plotters

Bss, Dhaka

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday proposed forming a commission to unmask the behind-the-scene plotters of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination along with most of his family members 44 years ago.

"I firmly believe it is necessary to unmask those who hatched the plot of the August 15 carnage and bring them to justice," he told newsmen after attending a National Mourning Day programme in the capital.

Hasan said he assumed that the people of the country also want constitution of a commission to reveal the conspirators.

Bangladesh Film Archives organised the discussion and a film exhibition marking the 44th martyrdom anniversary of Father of the Nation at its seminar hall.

Hasan said the murder of Bangabandhu was "not just an assassination"; rather it was part of a conspiracy to destroy Bangladesh as an independent nation.

"It is not possible to ensure justice by trying only those who killed Bangabandhu. The masterminds should also be brought to justice," he added.

The minister said the nation wants to

know who were behind the conspiracy and therefore "a commission should be formed to reveal the culprits."

"It is now a public demand," said Hasan, also Awami League's publicity and publication secretary.

He said just after returning home from captivity in Pakistan, Bangabandhu devoted himself to building the nation but "the architect of independent Bangladesh could not materialise his dream."

Hasan said Bangladesh would have become a developed nation like Singapore and Malaysia many years ago if Bangabandhu were alive.

He said now the country is on the track of development under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Information Secretary Abdul Malek, Director General of the National Institute of Mass Communication Begum Shahin Islam, journalists Rafiquzzaman and Shyamol Sarker, and Bangladesh Film Director Association President Mushfiqur Rahman Guljer, among others, addressed the discussion with Bangladesh Film Archive Director General Bidhan Chandra Karmaker in the chair.

Detainee escapes from police custody in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A detainee escaped from police custody in Chalna municipality of Khulna's Dacope upazila.

The fugitive is, Ibrahim Khan, from Achabuya village of the municipality.

OC Shafiqul Islam Chowdhury of Dacope Police Station said Ibrahim was detained from Achabuya bazar for possessing two yaba pills on Wednesday evening.

Later, two police constables were preparing to take him to Khulna court by bus. When Ibrahim was about to get on the vehicle, he fled away, still handcuffed.

Police later arrested Ibrahim near his house while he was trying to break the handcuffs.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

The remains of a plastic factory in Posta of Lalbagh, that caught on fire on Wednesday night. Some 16 units of firefighters doused the blaze after hours of efforts, although no casualty was reported since the factory was closed for Eid. Meanwhile, an electric transformer sits dangerously between two buildings in the narrow alley, inset, which locals say is posing a serious electrical and fire risk. The photos were taken yesterday morning.



Lighter vessels anchor idly at the Chattogram Port, unable to go to the outer anchorage to clear goods due to bad weather and Eid vacation. The photo was taken yesterday from Shah Amanat bridge.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

ACC can be a symbol of trust Says its chief at event marking National Mourning Day

Bss, Dhaka

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Iqbal Mahmud yesterday said corruption must be uprooted from the country to build a "Sonar Bangla" as dreamt by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"We have to build a country free of corruption," Mahmud said. The ACC chief was speaking at a programme in the capital, organised in observance of the National Mourning Day and 44th martyrdom anniversary of Bangabandhu.

Like previous years, along with the government, different political and socio-cultural organisations, educational institutions and professional groups have taken elaborate programmes to pay utmost respect to the Father of the Nation on the

day of his martyrdom.

At yesterday's ACC event, Mahmud said corruption-related investigations should rise above all sorts of greed.

ACC can bring a positive change to the society, and people also believe that, he added.

"Over 31 lakh people lodged complaints through ACC's hotline (206) in the last two years as they have confidence in ACC, he said.

ACC can become a symbol of trust for people if its officials perform their duties properly and sincerely, the ACC chairman said.

All corruption-related investigations must be completed within the stipulated time, he said.

If this procedure is not maintained,

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Probe committee formed

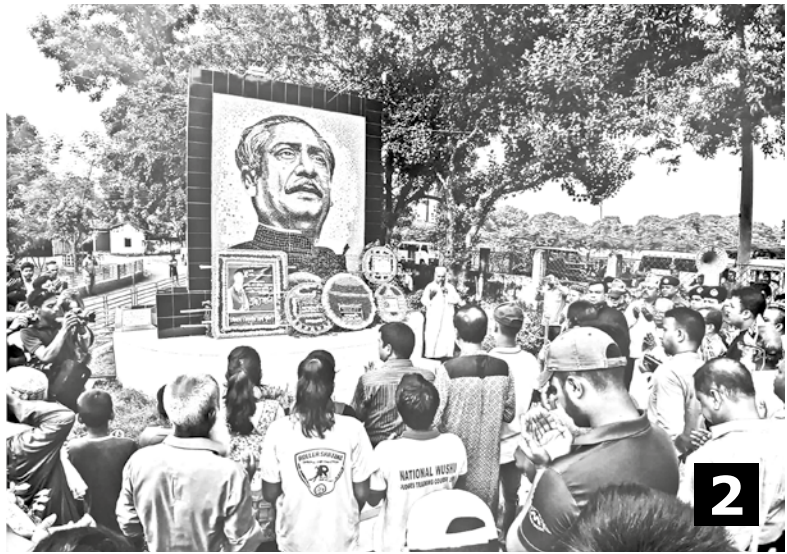
Bss, Dhaka

A three-member committee was formed yesterday to investigate the fire that took place at a polythene factory in Dhaka's Lalbagh on Wednesday night.

The committee headed by Fire Service and Civil Defence Deputy Director (Operation) Dilip Ghosh has been asked to submit its report within seven working days, duty officer Ershad Hossain, Fire Service and Civil Defence headquarters, told the news agency.

The other two members of the committee are

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NATIONAL MOURNING DAY OBSERVANCE IN DISTRICTS:
1) Mymensingh district administration brings out a mourning procession in the city, 2) people pray after placing wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the premises of Thakurgaon Zila Parishad Dak Bungalow, 3) public representatives, officials and political leaders pray after placing wreath at Bangabandhu's portrait at Central Shaheed Minar in Bagerhat, 4) teachers, officials and students of President Prof Dr Iajuddin Ahmed Residential Model School and College in Munshiganj bring out a mourning procession, 5) public representatives, officials and politicians pray in front of Bangabandhu's portrait at Shaheed Smriti Pura Udyan in Tangail, and 6) the local administration and Department of Women Affairs bring out a mourning procession in Juri upazila of Moulvibazar on the 44th anniversary of the martyrdom of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Quality treatment for kids at government hospital

Underprivileged people benefit as Moulvibazar District Hospital arranges special care unit, neatly decorated ward for new mothers, kids

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The 250-bed District Hospital in Moulvibazar is now playing a significant role in providing quality treatment facilities for women in labour, newborn babies and children, thanks to the authorities' special initiative that started in January 2017.

Koloti Robidas, a worker of Baghacherra tea garden in Kamolganj upazila of the district, said her second baby was born at the hospital a few days ago.

"As the baby was facing some problems, doctors took him to special care unit. And he became normal within a few hours," she said.

Ironically, her first baby died shortly after birth at the same hospital three years ago.

"I think my first baby would also remain alive if there was quality treatment at this hospital that time," said Koloti.

Joyal Abedin, a resident of Pachgaon village in Rajnagar upazila, said after knowing from ultrasonogram report that his wife would give birth to twin babies he came to the hospital to know the facilities.

"As I learnt that there are adequate treatment facilities at the children's ward and modern special care unit for newborn babies at the hospital I admitted my wife here on August 8 and the twins were born the next day. Now the mother and babies are okay," he said.

"Unaware of the treatment facilities here, many people go to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital," he added.

Momtaz Begum, 43, a resident of Giasnagar village in Sadar upazila, said she admitted her kid to the 250-bed district hospital five days ago and authorities discharged her after completion of treatment on Thursday.

"My kid was treated at Green zone of the ward as a normal patient. For the first time in life, I have seen such a colourful hospital ward. Earlier I had seen it in movies," she added.

Partho Sarathi Datta Kanungo, superintendent of Moulvibazar district hospital, told this correspondent, "After joining here a few years



A scene of the colourful children's ward of Moulvibazar District Hospital. PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

ago, I saw that many newborn babies, especially premature ones, face problems, including breathing difficulties, feeding problem and low weight."

"It was painful to hear that a few babies died on the way after we referred them to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital for better treatment on different occasions. After long observation and planning, we started a modern special care unit for newborn babies. Simultaneously colourful children's ward was established for providing better treatment to kids. UNICEF supports us to run this programme," he said.

"Considering the health conditions of children, we have made three categories of

arrangement under Red, Orange and Green zones and painted those with respective colours.

"After check-ups, patients in danger are admitted to Red zone where they are under full time supervision of nurses and doctors. When they show considerable improvement they are taken to Orange zone while Green zone is for those who are under care prior to discharging," said the hospital superintendent.

According to the information provided by Moulvibazar district hospital, 99 kids died at the hospital in 2016 while the number came down to 63 and 34 in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

500 tonnes of Bhutanese stones stuck at Chilmari river port

2 Bangladeshi vessels arrived at the port on July 25 through the Brahmaputra river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, DINAJPUR

Two Bangladeshi vessels carrying 500 tonnes of Bhutanese stones have been stuck at Chilmari river port in Kurigram for more than two weeks as the customs authorities refused to let those sail further ahead, citing legal constraints.

The boats arrived at the port on July 25 through the Brahmaputra river, and are supposed to dock at Narayanganj port for unloading.

The importers said they followed due procedure in using the waterway.

The stones were imported after Bangladesh and Bhutan signed a waterway protocol recently. The first waterway load under the instrument came to Bangladesh through the same route on July 18.

The stones were transported by truck from landlocked Bhutan to Assam, from where the vessels received the cargo and sailed back to Bangladesh.

Importer Nasir Khan said he was told that Chilmari River Port was not authorised yet for passing imports from a third country like Bhutan.

He said they followed all rules before sailing for Assam. "If we violated the rules, why did the customs permit the vessels to go to Assam and receive the consignment?"

The vessels left Chilmari port on July 13 after getting approval from Mizanul Haque, a customs official in Kurigram, he said.

The Daily Star tried to contact the official but his phone was switched off.

Nasir claimed that they also took permission from the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

"I opened an LC (letter of credit) for importing the stones, and the customs authorities are aware of everything," he

said. "Why didn't they tell me anything before?"

The market price of the imported stones is Tk 30 lakh, Nasir said. "I'm incurring a loss of Tk 30,000 daily for the delay."

Contacted, Aktar Hossen, second secretary (import and agreement) of Customs in Rangpur, said the goods from third countries like Bhutan can be imported through Burimari (Lalmoirhat) and Banglabandha (Panchagarh) land ports.

But the existing law does not permit any import through Chilmari River Port, he told The Daily Star. The river port lacks manpower and infrastructure, he added.

The official, however, did not answer when asked why the vessels were allowed to sail for Assam in the first place. "We are looking into it," he said.

Meanwhile, a senior official of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) said no cargo vessel from Bhutan is permitted through Chilmari port.

"In absence of permission, there is a legal bar in assessing tax and duties of imported goods and give clearance," he said, seeking anonymity.

The official said Chilmari port was mentioned in the waterway protocol but its infrastructure is not ready yet. That's why this port was not included as a point of entry in a notification NBR issued recently, he said.

"The importers brought cargo through this route without prior discussion. Now we have taken an initiative to give special permission for the vessels."

NBR has submitted a proposal to the finance minister for special permission and amendment of the notification, the official said. "We will take necessary measures after getting the approval."



The ruins of 15th-century Rezakhoda Mosque, a World Heritage Site declared by Unesco in 1985, remains uncared for and covered with moss and undergrowth at Sundorghona village near Bagerhat town. The photos were taken recently.



PHOTO: STAR

REZAKHODA MOSQUE

World Heritage Site on verge of decline

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

Time has not been kind to the Rezakhoda Mosque, one of the historic relics from the group of monuments in Bagerhat, declared as World Heritage by Unesco in 1985. Yet, the apathy of the Department of Archaeology is pushing the historic ruins into further state of decay.

Khoda mosque, situated at Sundorghona village, about five kilometres away from Bagerhat town, was built in the 15th century in the ancient city of Khilafatbad, founded by the Tughlaq ruler Khan Jahan.

Visiting the site in early August, this correspondent found the ruins of Rezakhoda covered in moss and undergrowth. Some portions of the archaeological asset also appeared to be missing.

According to the website of the Department of Archaeology updated on July 13, 2015, the remnants of the ancient mosque include four

walls, three mihrabs and some broken stone pillars.

“Only the four walls and three mihrabs survive upto certain height,” the website states.

However, this correspondent saw only two walls and one mihrab. The brick pilasters and terracotta decorations on the sole mihrab is still visible, a residual reminder of the mosque’s unique architecture.

Within the periphery of the ruins, a tin-roofed building with brick pillars and a cemented floor has been built. Some of the ancient pillars also support a portion of the tin-roof.

The shed, built 50 years ago, is used for prayers by locals. Md Liakat Ali, 68, secretary of the tin- roofed mosque said Muslims from far away come to offer prayer at the Rezakhoda mosque but they get disappointed seeing its dilapidated condition.

The Department of Archaeology had cleared the moss and did some repair work some eight to 10 years ago, he claimed.

“The condition of the tin-shed mosque is not good either. Muslims pray here under bad weather condition such as rain and heat. In this situation, the Rezakhoda mosque should be repaired anyway by the department of the archaeology,” he demanded.

Hashem Beg, 88, from Sundarghona village, said the archaeology department has not been repairing this mosque for a long time.

“Even if we want to renovate and expand the mosque locally, the law will not permit so,” he added.

According to Unesco website, the Department of Archaeology should ensure that activities which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property such as buildings or infrastructure cannot be

constructed within or close to the property, and no one can alter or deface monuments.

When asked if construction within the periphery of a monument is allowed under the country’s law Golam Ferdous, custodian of the Bagerhat Archaeology Department on August 14th, said, “As per the Antiquity Act, this is definitely illegal.”

According to the Act, distortion, destruction, change, augmentation or expansion of any portion of any monument is punishable by law, he observed.

“Considering religious sensitivity and with approval from proper authority, the Masjid committee can apply to the Department of Archaeology for construction of a temporary shed, an alternative to facilitate prayers by local Muslims,” he said.

“I have not heard if they had applied to the authority in writing or orally,” he said about

the tin-roofed shed built by locals.

Regarding the condition of the remnants, he said, “I don’t know if there were supposed to be three mihrabs.”

“I have not heard of any mihrab that broke down,” he added also ascribing the oversight in maintenance to lack of workers.

The custodian claimed that Shait Gambuj Mosque, one of the prominent relics of the World Heritage site, alone requires constant supervision of 28 people.

He also informed that a decision has been taken to renovate and preserve the 18 coastal structures listed in the World Heritage, including the Rezakhoda mosque.

“In France and Japan, historical structures are reconstructed based on similar architectural monuments of the same region from the same era,” he said, adding they will follow that principle during reconstruction.

NATIONAL MOURNING DAY
Programme marred by
Jaldhaka AL factional clash
3 cops, 17 others hospitalised with injuries

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A clash between two factions of Awami League (AL) in Jaldhaka upazila during yesterday’s National Mourning Day programme left at least twenty people including three policemen injured.

Former Nilphamari-3 lawmaker Golam Mostofa was chief guest at the programme organised by Jaldhaka upazila unit of Bangladesh Chhatra league (BCL) in association with AL’s Jaldhaka municipality unit, said Nolini Bikash Roy Joy, president of the BCL unit.

The clash erupted after a rowdy procession led by Ansar Ali Mintu, president of AL’s upazila unit, entered the venue at Bangabandhu Chattar in Jaldhaka Bazar, alleged Nolini Bikash.

The rivals attacked each other with bamboo sticks, iron rods and stones during the clash that continued for around two hours, said police and locals.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Mamunur Rashid of Jaldhaka Police Station and two other members of police were injured when police arrived at the scene and attempted to bring order, said Mostofizur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of the police station.

Police fired eleven tear gas shells and same number of rubber bullets to disperse the clashing activists of the two factions.

All the injured including the police personnel were undergoing treatment at Jaldhaka Upazila Health Complex. SI Mamunur Rashid was later transferred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated, the OC said.

Although the OC said a large number of police personnel were deployed in the area to restore calm, sporadic clashes between the two groups, wielding sticks, continued at various locations of the town till filing of this report around 5:00pm.

Ansar Ali Mintu, the president of AL’s upazila unit, claimed that it was a premeditated attack by Jamaat-Shibir men, who joined different units of AL and its front organisations with the blessing of former lawmaker Golam Mostofa.

Land grabbers ‘trying to
drive elderly man away’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Influential locals, endorsed by a union parishad (UP) member, forcibly took away his land a couple of years back. Now, the same people are threatening the elderly day labourer so he leaves his village home for good.

The allegation was made recently by land owner Dinanath Roy, 60, from Fakirtokeya Balapara village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

In a case filed with Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station on February 2 in 2018, Dinanath alleged that five villagers including Majnu Miah and Sirazul Islam, a member of Panchagram UP in the same upazila; encroached on his seven decimals of land in the village on January 29.

Dinanath said he had a dream of building a house for his family. With that objective in mind, he bought the piece of land on January 26 in 2016 with money sent by his two sons, who also work as day labourers in Dhaka.

While trial of the case had been going on, he was trying to make ends meet by working at agricultural farmlands in the village. But now, after taking possession of the land, the accused have been trying to drive him out of his village by making repeated threats on his family, he also said.

Ever since he bought the land, Majnu Miah had been asking him to sell it to him. As he refused to do so, Majnu and his accomplices, backed by UP member Sirazul, forcibly took possession of the land and sold bamboo groves and other trees on the land.

“We didn’t dare to protest as the land grabber and his men had sharp weapons and sticks,” he said adding that Majnu within a few days built a structure with corrugated iron sheets there.



Day labourer Dinanath Roy lost his land to influential locals in 2018. Now the same people are ‘making threats to him’.

PHOTO: STAR

Now Dinanath and his family members are living in anxiety as the encroachers have been threatening of dire consequences unless they leave the village.

“I don’t know where else to go and don’t know how I will afford the legal battle to get my land back,” he said frustratingly.

Speaking with this correspondent over phone recently, Panchagram UP Member Sirazul said Majnu and his men took over the piece of land as Dinanath did not keep his previous promise of selling it to Majnu.

Asked about threats made on Dinanath,

Sirazul said he was unaware of such incident.

Justifying his actions, Majnu also said he took possession of the land because Dinanath had backtracked on his previous commitment of selling the piece of land to him.

He, however, said he was still willing to pay Dinanath for his land. “If Dinanath comes to me, I will pay according to [running] rate of the land.”

Contacted, Sub-Inspector Mainul Islam of the police station said the case over the land was still pending at the court and he, on various occasions, asked the accused not to threaten the complainant.

7 schoolgirls
saved from
early marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Seven schoolgirls were saved from early marriage in Sirajganj Sadar upazila on Wednesday, thanks to the timely taken initiative by the local administration.

They are eight graders Tanjila Khatun Sima, 14, Moyna Khatun, 14, and Meem Khatun, 14, fifth grader Masuda Khatun, 12, ninth graders Farzana Khatun, 15, Jannati Khatun, 15, and Kabita Khatun, 14. They all hail from different villages in the upazila.

On information, a mobile court led by Sadar Upazila Assistant Commissioner (AC Land) Mohammad Anisur Rahman conducted separate drives in different areas of the upazila on Wednesday and saved the girls from the curse of underage marriage.

During the drive, the court also fined all the guardians a total of Tk 75 thousand for arranging girl’s marriages before legal age.

AC Land Anisur said despite different public awareness programmes and restrictions on arranging early marriages, many people in the rural areas are still doing such deeds.



Led by the chairman of Kochashahor Union Parishad in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha, concerned citizens form a human chain at the union’s hosiery industrial area on Wednesday demanding uninterrupted supply of electricity in the area. Frequent power cuts have been causing extensive damage to the hosiery industry as well as livelihoods of others, speakers said at the event.

PHOTO: STAR

Two die in
Habiganj boat
capsize

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Two women drowned as a passenger boat capsized in the Kasti river in Habiganj’s Madhabpur upazila on Wednesday night.

The deceased are Syeda Banu and Sayera Banu of Nasimagar upazila in Brahmanbaria.

Quoting witnesses, police said a passenger boat capsized in the Kasti river while it was heading for Nasimagar from Madhabpur’s Bulla area around 8:00pm.

Although other passengers of the boat managed to swim ashore, Syeda and Sayera went missing in the river.

On information, fire fighters recovered the bodies after an hour of hectic search, police said.

Robbers kill night
guard, injure another

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An elderly night guard was killed and another injured when a gang of robbers attacked them at Boilor Bazar in Trishal upazila early yesterday.

The deceased, Lal Mia, 60, was son of late Hafez Ali of Sammukh Boilor village in the upazila.

Quoting another guard Jasim Uddin and locals, Officer in Charge (OC) of Trishal Police Station Mohammad Azizur Rahman said a group of some six to seven robbers came to Boilor Bazar on a mini truck and asked night guard Lal about location of a battery shop around 3:30am.

As Lal denied to indicate the shop, the robbers’ gang became furious and started to beat him up with sticks, leaving him critically injured.

At one stage, when two other guards—Tara Mia, 60, and Jasim, 50,—tried to save Lal the gang also swooped on them that left Tara injured, the OC said.

Hearing screams, when locals rushed to the spot the robbers’ gang fled the scene, sensing the presence of the villagers.

Later, locals rescued Lal and Tara and took them to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where Lal succumbed to his injuries around 8:00am.

Injured Tara was referred to a hospital in the capital yesterday as his condition deteriorated, the OC added.



A British mounted police officer sits on his horse between anti-India (L) and pro-India (R) demonstrators as they protest outside of the Indian High Commission in central London, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

UNSC to hold ‘closed door’ J&K meet today

THE STATESMAN/ANN, NDTV

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will hold a “closed door” meeting today to discuss India’s move to revoke Article 370 that had granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

UNSC President Joanna Wronecka told reporters on Wednesday said that they would discuss “the Jammu and Kashmir situation behind closed doors most likely on August 16”, according to media reports.

The development comes after Pakistan wrote a formal letter to the UNSC president calling for an emergency meeting of the UNSC to discuss India’s move to revoke the special status to Jammu and Kashmir. The letter was sent through Permanent Representative Maleha Lodhi to convene the meeting.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said Pakistan considered India’s actions in Kashmir as a threat to the regional peace.

Meanwhile, China had also formally asked for “closed consultations” in the United Nations Security Council to discuss the Kashmir move.

China had earlier “assured Pakistan of its support and commitment” and announced that it supported Islamabad’s decision to approach the UN Security Council in the wake of India’s decision to scrap Article 370 of its Constitution that gave special status

to Jammu and Kashmir.

However, India has categorically told the international community that its move to scrap Article 370 of the Constitution removing the special status to Jammu and Kashmir is an internal matter and has also advised Pakistan to “accept the reality”.

Russia on Wednesday asked Pakistan to bilaterally resolve its dispute with India over Kashmir.

This message was given to Pakistan FM Qureshi when he telephoned his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov. Russia is a permanent member of the Security Council. Although there has lately been improvement in relations between Moscow and Islamabad because of regional developments, Russia still remains a strong Indian ally and had supported Indian position after it annexed Occupied Kashmir last week.

The Russian foreign ministry further noted that its envoy at the UN would be guided by “this consistent position” and will “adhere to it” when the discussion on the Pakistani letter to the Security Council starts.

The Indian Parliament on August 6 revoked Article 370 of the Constitution and approved bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories.

Tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad have heightened following India’s move on Kashmir.

Indian PM warns of ‘population explosion’

Vows to ban single-use plastics

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday warned of the risks of an “unchecked population explosion” in the nation of 1.3 billion people, the first time he has raised the issue, and called for family planning measures.

India is the world’s second-most populous country behind China with 1.4 billion, and its population is set to surpass its East Asian neighbour by 2024, according to the United Nations.

“It is time to accept the challenges up front... population explosion. It will bring a lot of challenges for the future generations of this country,” Modi said in an Independence Day speech in the capital New Delhi.

“We have to think if we can do justice to the aspirations of our children. There is a need to have greater discussion and awareness on population explosion.”

The prime minister hailed an “informed section” of Indians who were already having smaller families as “playing a big role in doing good for the country”.

India introduced forced sterilisations for men in the 1970s to limit its population growth, but was forced to abandon them due to widespread anger. More than 1.9 million people, mostly women, were sterilised across India in 2017 and 2018, according to the government’s National Health Mission.

Modi also vowed to ban single-use plastics. He called on Indians to make an effort to rid their country of plastic waste and raised the possibility of “strong first steps towards bidding adieu to single-use plastic on October 2.”

Modi hails Kashmir move

Slams opposition in I-Day speech; Pakistan observes ‘Black Day’, Imran slams world’s inaction

AGENCIES

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday hailed his “path-breaking” move to strip Kashmir of its autonomy, as his Pakistani counterpart warned of possible “ethnic cleansing”.

Parts of Kashmir that India controls -- it is split with arch-rival Pakistan -- have been under lockdown since August 4, with freedom of movement restricted and phones and the internet cut.

A day later, New Delhi scrapped Article 370 in the Indian constitution that had granted Kashmir special status, splitting the state of Jammu and Kashmir in two and downgrading them to union territories.

In a speech from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort in Delhi for Indian Independence Day, Modi said that the decision was one of several “path-breaking” moves by his newly re-elected administration.

He said “fresh thinking” was needed after seven decades of failure to ensure harmony in the picturesque but tragic former Himalayan kingdom, where tens of thousands have died in the past 30 years.

“The old arrangement in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh encouraged corruption and nepotism, as well as injustice when it came to rights of women, children, (low-caste) Dalits, tribal communities,” said Modi, 68.

“Their dreams get new wings.” With the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, the



Indian PM Modi addresses the nation during Independence Day celebrations at the historic Red Fort in Delhi, yesterday; a Pakistani protester holds a back flag near the Indian High Commission during a protest rally in Islamabad.

dream of “One Nation, One Constitution” has been realized, added Modi.

He also lashed out at the opposition speaking against the move, asking if they felt it was so necessary why didn’t they make it permanent in the past 70 years.

Modi also talked about his aim to turn India into a \$5-trillion economy within five years, by spurring wealth creation, boosting exports and tourism, and spending 100 trillion rupees (\$1.4 trillion) on infrastructure, reported Reuters.

But he did not touch on sagging demand that has hit parts of the economy in recent months, especially the auto sector.

Wearing a flowing bright saffron-coloured turban, Modi also highlighted



his government’s practice of allowing a husband to instantly divorce his wife. Perhaps his most controversial announcement was the creation of a new post of chief of defence staff to ensure better coordination of India’s army, navy and air force, along the lines of Western military forces.

Fearing unrest over India’s latest move, tens of thousands of extra Indian troops have been deployed to Kashmir -- joining 500,000 already there -- turning parts of the main city of Srinagar into a fortress of roadblocks and barbed wire.

Sher-i-Kashmir Cricket Stadium, where the main Independence Day ceremonies

INDIA’S KASHMIR MOVE

Business ties underpin muted Arab response

AGENCIES

Gulf Arab countries have remained mostly silent as India’s government moved to strip the Indian-occupied sector of Kashmir of its limited autonomy, imposing a sweeping military curfew in the disputed Muslim-majority region and cutting off residents from all communication and the internet.

This muted response is underpinned by more than \$100 billion in annual trade with India that makes it one of the Arabian Peninsula’s most prized economic partners.

Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia urged restraint and expressed concern over the brewing crisis. Other Gulf countries — Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman — do not appear to have issued any statements. The United Arab Emirates has gone a step further by apparently siding with India, calling the decision to downgrade occupied Kashmir’s status an internal matter.

Saudi Arabia’s response to the Kashmir situation is complicated by its close ties with both India and Pakistan, which have fought two wars over the disputed Himalayan region, as well as its ideological rivalry with Turkey and Iran for supremacy in the Islamic world.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has reached out to leaders in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in recent days to discuss India’s actions in Kashmir, but it’s unclear whether he would find Arab backing if he took his concerns to the United Nations Security Council.

The brief Saudi statement on the

Kashmir events said the kingdom “is following up on the current situation” and called for a “peaceful settlement” in line with international resolutions.

Gulf Arab states are home to more than 7 million Indian expatriates who help drive the region’s economy and keep its cities teeming with doctors, engineers, teachers, drivers, construction workers and other laborers.

Nowhere in the region is this relationship more pronounced than in the UAE, where Indians outnumber Emiratis three to one. Bilateral trade surpassed \$50 billion in 2018, making India the UAE’s second-largest trade partner.

Indian investments in the UAE amount to \$55 billion and Indians are the largest foreign investors in Dubai’s real estate market, according to India’s Ministry of External Affairs. Meanwhile, DP World, Dubai’s global port operator, has plans to develop a logistics hub in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

The decision by Modi’s Hindu nationalist government carries religious overtones for Muslim residents of the Indian-occupied Kashmir.

The revocation of the region’s constitutional status, which needs the approval of the ruling party-controlled parliament, means Kashmiris lose their hereditary right to jobs, scholarships and land ownership. Government critics see the move, which would allow Indians from outside the region to permanently settle and buy land, as an attempt to alter Kashmir’s culture and demographics with Hindu settlers.



South Korean protesters hold signs reading “No Abe!” during an anti-Japanese rally marking the anniversary of Korea’s liberation from Japan’s 1910-45 colonial rule, in central Seoul, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan emperor speaks of ‘deep remorse’ over WWII

Moon urges Tokyo to contemplate past, calls for dialogue

AFP, Tokyo

Japan’s new emperor spoke of “deep remorse” yesterday over the country’s wartime past in his first speech to commemorate the end of World War II since his enthronement in May.

Emperor Naruhito’s comments were being monitored in Tokyo and throughout Asia for any change in tone, but he closely echoed the language employed by his father Akihito.

“Looking back on the long peaceful years after the war, reflecting on our past, and bearing in mind the feeling of deep remorse, I earnestly hope

that the devastation of war will never be repeated,” said the 59-year-old Naruhito.

“During the 74 years since the end of the war, the peace and prosperity of our country today has been built through the tireless efforts of the people.

“Yet when I think of their past full of suffering, I am truly overcome with deep emotion,” Naruhito told the solemn ceremony in central Tokyo which also featured a minute’s silence for the war dead.

Meanwhile, conservative Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shied away from visiting a controversial shrine that

commemorates war dead, including convicted war criminals, that has become a flashpoint with Japan’s neighbours, especially China and South Korea.

This year’s ceremonies came as Tokyo and South Korea -- one of the countries that suffered most from Japan’s wartime military atrocities -- are embroiled in a war of words over trade and history.

During a speech to mark the anniversary of Korea’s liberation from Japan’s 1910-45 rule, President Moon Jae-in, however, struck a conciliatory tone towards Japan, offering to “join hands” if Tokyo chooses dialogue.

India tops world with most internet shutdowns

DAWN ONLINE

Of the 196 internet shutdowns documented across the world in 2018, India was responsible for the majority (67 per cent) incidents, according to a report released by Access Now.

Access Now is an international non-profit advocacy group dedicated to an open and free internet, and the #KeepItOn coalition has been documenting and verifying instances of internet shutdowns since 2016.

The global coalition noted that governments have been turning to network shutdowns with increasing frequency to quell unrest and suppress the spread of rumours and fake news. In 2018, it documented 196 internet shutdowns which is twice the number it recorded in 2017, and nearly three times the count from 2016.

As per its findings, India witnessed 134 network suspensions last year.

47pc of these have occurred in Indian-held Kashmir, according to a recent study done at Stanford University. Indian-held Kashmir, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra, together imposed more shutdowns in 2018 than the other 22 states in India, the report pointed out.

The current shutdown in Indian-held Kashmir is the 53rd this year. In one instance, mobile internet remained suspended for 133 days in the region in the wake of protests following the killing of popular leader Burhan Wani in 2016.



Indian security force personnel keep guard alongside a road during restrictions after the government scrapped the special constitutional status for Kashmir, in Srinagar, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWSIN
brief

No foul play in Irish girl's death: Malaysia

REUTERS, Seremban

Malaysian police yesterday ruled out abduction as a motive in the disappearance of an Irish girl found dead near a jungle stream after a 10-day search, saying they had found no signs pointing to foul play. The naked body of Nora Anne Quoirin, 15, who suffered from learning difficulties, was found on Tuesday after she went missing from a rainforest resort in Seremban, about 70 km (44 miles) south of the Malaysian capital. Police found no evidence pointing to foul play, they said.

Taiwan sharply boosts defense budget

REUTERS, Taipei

Taiwan yesterday unveiled its largest defence spending increase in more than a decade amid rising military tensions with its giant neighbour China, which considers the self-ruled island its own and has not renounced the use of force against it. President Tsai Ing-wen's cabinet signed off on an 8.3% increase in military spending for the year starting January to T\$411.3 billion (\$13.11 billion), its largest yearly gain since 2008.

UN appoints new HIV/AIDS chief

AFP, United Nations

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres appointed a new HIV/AIDS chief on Wednesday after the previous incumbent left accused of serious mismanagement. Oxfam International executive director Winnie Byanyima of Uganda will lead UNAIDS, a spokesperson for Guterres said in a statement. She succeeds Michel Sidibe who stepped down in May after he was accused of creating "a patriarchal culture tolerating harassment and abuse of authority."



Trucks and armoured personnel carriers are seen outside the Shenzhen Bay stadium in Shenzhen, bordering Hong Kong in China's southern Guangdong province yesterday. Thousands of Chinese military personnel held drills at a sports stadium in southern China, raising the fear of military intervention in Hong Kong, which has seen weeks of civil unrest.

PHOTO: AFP

PHILADELPHIA SHOOTING

6 cops hurt, suspect taken into custody

AFP, Washington

Six police officers were shot and wounded in the US city of Philadelphia on Wednesday during an hours-long incident that began when police tried to execute a narcotics warrant, the Philadelphia Police Department said.

All of the officers were later released from hospital, but police Commissioner Richard Ross Jr said that in 30 years he had never seen so many officers shot over such a long period of time.

The incident comes after two mass shootings in the US earlier this month -- one in Dayton, Ohio and the other in El Paso, Texas -- left a total of 31 people dead.

Two other officers who had been trapped in a house with the suspected shooter -- who had been firing out of the window -- were finally freed later in the evening, Ross said during a press conference.

The suspect was later taken into custody and SWAT personnel were clearing the house, department spokesman Eric Gripp said on Twitter.

Gripp had first tweeted about the incident hours earlier, around 4:40 pm local time (2040 GMT), and continued to advise the public to stay away from the area throughout the evening.

"It is nothing short of astounding that in such a confined space that we didn't have more of a tragedy than we did," Ross said.

The episode began as an attempt to execute a narcotics warrant "that went awry almost immediately," he explained.

Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney praised his city's police department but called out federal and state politicians for their response to gun violence.

Labour vows to delay Brexit

Begins its campaign to bring down UK PM Johnson

REUTERS, London

Britain's opposition Labour Party has vowed to call a vote of no-confidence in Boris Johnson's government as soon as it believes it can win it and seeks to form a temporary government under leader Jeremy Corbyn to delay Brexit.

Prime Minister Johnson has promised to take Britain out of the European Union by October 31, with or without a deal, setting the scene for a showdown in parliament where lawmakers are opposed to a divorce without a transition agreement.

In a letter to party leaders and other senior politicians, Corbyn said his "strictly time-limited temporary government" would delay Britain's departure from the EU beyond October 31 and hold a general election.

He said Labour would campaign in the election to hold a second referendum on the Brexit terms, including an option as to whether the country should remain in the bloc three years after it voted to leave.

"This government has no mandate for No Deal, and the 2016 EU

referendum provided no mandate for No Deal," Corbyn said in the letter to other opposition party leaders, and high profile cross-party politicians.

"I therefore intend to table a vote of no confidence at the earliest opportunity when we can be confident of success."

Lawmakers return from their summer break on September 3, reconvening for a battle over Brexit



that will determine the fortunes of the world's fifth-largest economy.

Johnson, who led the 2016 campaign to leave the EU, has staked his premiership on getting Britain out by October 31, prompting politicians from all sides to try to stop him.

On Wednesday he said those trying to block Brexit were engaged in "a terrible kind of collaboration",

after former finance minister Philip Hammond said parliament would block a no-deal exit, and that the government must respect it.

Were Johnson's government to lose a no-confidence vote, lawmakers would have a 14-day period to try to form a new administration, otherwise a general election would be called which could be held after the October 31 exit date.

"Jeremy Corbyn wants to cancel the referendum and argue about Brexit for years," Johnson said on Twitter. "I am committed to leading our country forward and getting Britain out of the EU by October 31st."

Opponents of a no-deal exit say it would be a disaster for what was one of the West's most stable democracies, shattering supply chains, damaging global growth, and weakening Britain's standing in the world.

Brexit supporters say while there may be short-term disruption, it would provide a clean break from the bloc and allow the economy to thrive.

Parliamentary votes have shown there is a small majority against a no-deal Brexit and Corbyn.

'They hate all Jewish people'

Trump urges Israel to deny entry to two US Muslim lawmakers

AFP, Washington

Israel would "show great weakness" if it allows a visit by two Muslim members of the US Congress who support a boycott of the Jewish state, US President Donald Trump said yesterday.

First-term House Democrats Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib, who are expected to visit Israel and the Palestinian territories at the weekend, are the first Muslim women to serve in Congress -- and have been at the receiving end of Trump's ire before.

They are part of the so-called "squad," a quartet of House Democrats, all women and all ethnic minorities, whom Trump has repeatedly attacked on social media and in campaign speeches.

"It would show great weakness if Israel allowed Rep. Omar and Rep. Tlaib to visit," Trump tweeted.

"They hate Israel & all Jewish people, & there is nothing that can be said or done to change their minds," he said.



"They are a disgrace!"

Omar and Tlaib have been vocal in their criticism of Israel's policies towards Palestinians.

Israeli officials have acknowledged the visit is being discussed at the highest levels, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

holding consultations about the matter Wednesday.

A final decision is being weighed, and Israel may end up barring the two lawmakers, a government official said yesterday despite previous signals that they would be allowed in.

"There is a possibility that Israel will not allow the visit in its current proposed format," the official said.

Trump sparked a firestorm of outrage last month when he said the four "squad" lawmakers, all US citizens, should "go back" to their countries of origin.

Omar is a refugee who fled Somalia as a child, and Tlaib was born in Detroit, Michigan to Palestinian immigrants.

Regime forces inch closer to key jihadist-held town

Turkey won't tolerate US delay over Syria safe zone

AFP, Beirut

Syrian regime forces captured a string of insurgent-held villages in northwest Syria yesterday, inching closer to a key jihadist-run town in the Idlib region, a war monitor said.

Over the past week, pro-regime fighters have advanced on the southern edges of Idlib province, controlled by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

Yesterday, regime loyalists stood just three kilometres (1.8 miles) away from the key town of Khan Sheikhun, after capturing five villages to its northwest overnight, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The town lies on a key highway coveted by the regime.

The road in question runs through Idlib, connecting government-held Damascus with the northern city of Aleppo, which was retaken by loyalists from rebels in

December 2016.

"The aim of the advance is to surround Khan Sheikhun and reach the highway," Observatory head Rami Abdul Rahman told AFP.

Fighting in southern Idlib yesterday killed five regime combatants and 11 jihadists and allied rebels, said the Britain-based monitor.

Regime air strikes also killed one civilian in southern Idlib, the Observatory said.

A day earlier jihadists downed a regime plane near Khan Sheikhun, and took the pilot prisoner.

A video released by HTS yesterday purported to show the captured pilot, who identified himself as Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Ahmad Sleiman of the Syrian air force.

Meanwhile, Turkey's foreign minister said yesterday Ankara will not tolerate any delay from the US over setting up a safe zone in northern Syria.



Yemeni Southern separatist supporters wave flags of the former South Yemen (The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen) as they demonstrate in the Khormaksar district of Yemen's second city of Aden yesterday. Yemen's government ruled out talks with southern separatists until they withdraw from positions they seized last week in Aden.

PHOTO: AFP

Scientists find micro plastic in Arctic ice

REUTERS, London

Tiny pieces of plastic have been found in ice cores drilled in the Arctic by a US-led team of scientists, underscoring the threat the growing form of pollution poses to marine life in even the remotest waters on the planet.

The researchers used a helicopter to land on ice floes and retrieve the samples during an 18-day icebreaker expedition through the Northwest Passage, the hazardous route linking the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

"We had spent weeks looking out at what looks so much like pristine white sea ice floating out on the ocean," said Jacob Strock, a graduate student researcher at the University of Rhode Island, who conducted an initial onboard analysis of the cores.

"When we look at it up close and we see that it's all very, very visibly contaminated when you look at it with the right tools -- it felt a little bit like a punch in the gut," Strock told Reuters by telephone on Wednesday.

Strock and his colleagues found the material trapped in ice taken from Lancaster Sound, an isolated stretch of water in the Canadian Arctic, which they had assumed might be relatively sheltered from drifting plastic pollution.

The team drew 18 ice cores of up to 2 metres (6.5 feet) long from four locations and saw visible plastic beads and filaments of various shapes and sizes.

Norway detects radioactive iodine near Russia border

AFP, Oslo

Norway's nuclear safety authority said yesterday it detected tiny amounts of radioactive iodine in a region bordering Russia after an explosion at a Russian missile testing site.

The sample was collected at an air filter station in Svanhovd, in North Norway near the border with Russia, from August 9-12.

On August 10, Russia's nuclear agency Rosatom said five people were killed in an explosion at the Arkhangelsk site in the far north. It later said they were testing new weapons.

"At present it is not possible to determine if the last iodine detection is linked to the accident in Arkhangelsk last week," the Norwegian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority said in a statement.

It said Norwegian stations detect radioactive iodine about six to eight times a year, and "the source is usually unknown".

Immediately after the accident, Russia's defence ministry said there had been no

radioactive contamination.

Local authorities in Severodvinsk, near the site, last week initially published information about a spike in radiation, but later deleted it and a local official said that radiation levels were not above the norm.

However, radiation levels were up to 16 times the norm in Severodvinsk immediately after the accident, Russia's national weather service Rosgidromet said on Tuesday. The levels returned to normal after 2.5 hours.

Russia's Defense Ministry initially said the blast killed two people and injured six, but the state-controlled nuclear agency, Rosatom, later disclosed that the explosion killed five of its workers and injured three others. Nearly a week after the blast, it's still not clear what the final death toll is.

US defense officials and outside observers believe it was a missile Russia calls the 9M730 Burevestnik that was tested last week.

DEADLY BLAST IN RUSSIA

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mexico rescues 45,000 migrants

AFP, Mexico City

Mexico said Wednesday it has rescued more than 45,000 undocumented migrants from human traffickers since President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador took office last December.

The foreign ministry said Mexican authorities rescued 46,616 migrants from people smugglers between December 1 -- when Lopez Obrador took office -- and August 11.

More than 19,000 of those migrants have been found in the past two months, it said.

That period coincides with a Mexican crackdown on undocumented migration toward the United States, under a deal to avert tariffs that President Donald Trump had threatened to impose if Mexico did not do more to stem a recent surge of Central Americans arriving in the US.

Critics of the deal say Mexico's new anti-migration measures -- including the deployment of 21,000 National Guardsmen to tighten its borders -- will push more migrants to resort to human traffickers.

Apology over NZ mosque accused's 'hateful' letter

Officials in New Zealand yesterday apologised after the alleged Christchurch mosque gunman was allowed to send a letter from prison espousing "hateful" views that a supporter then shared online. Australian Brenton Tarrant is in a maximum-security jail in Auckland awaiting trial for the murder of 51 Muslim worshippers on March 15 in the worst mass shooting in modern New Zealand history. Yet despite the government vowing to deny Tarrant a platform to disseminate hate speech, corrections officials revealed he had been allowed to send mail from his prison cell. One of the letters from the self-avowed white supremacist, addressed to a Russian man named Alan, was posted to the website 4Chan.

Ex-Blackwater guard gets life in prison for 2007 massacre

A former Blackwater private security guard was sentenced Wednesday to life in prison after a retrial on murder charges for his role in the notorious 2007 massacre of unarmed civilians in Baghdad. Nicholas Slatten was convicted in December of first-degree murder by a federal jury in US District Court in Washington, the second time he had been found guilty on the charges. Slatten was convicted of murdering Ahmed Haithem Ahmed Al Rubia'y, 19, an aspiring doctor who was one of more than a dozen civilians killed by guards of the private security group Blackwater in Baghdad's Nisour Square on September 16, 2007.

Russian pilot hailed hero after crash landing



A Russian pilot was being hailed as a hero for landing an Airbus carrying more than 230 people in a Moscow corn field after a bird strike. The Urals Airlines A321 flying to Crimea hit a flock of seagulls shortly after take-off from Moscow's Zhukovsky airport yesterday morning, the Rosaviatsia air transport agency said in a statement. Birds were sucked into the engines and the crew decided to immediately land, bringing the plane down in the corn field about a kilometre from the runway, with the engines off and the landing gear retracted. The aircraft, carrying 226 passengers and seven crew, was evacuated using inflatable ramps. The health ministry said 23 people were sent to hospital but there were no serious injuries.

SOURCE: AFP

WHAT'S ON



RIBUTE TO MAD
Exhibition
Title: Tribute to Mad Cartoon
Exhibition
Venue: Drik Gallery, Dhanmondi
15A (New)
Date: August 23 – 25
Time: 3 pm – 8 pm



Reverie
Exhibition
Title: Reverie
Venue: Drik Gallery, Dhanmondi
Date: August 18 – 20
Time: 3 pm – 9 pm



ProjectDebi: Revolutionary
Photography & Poetry
Exhibition
Title: ProjectDebi: Revolutionary
Photography And Poetry Exhibition
Venue: EMK Center, Dhanmondi
Date: August 26 - 28
Time: 10 am – 7 pm



Legacy of Rock N Roll
Rock Concert
Title: Legacy of Rock N Roll
Venue: ICCB, Hall 04 (Naboratni),
Bashundhara
Date: September 13
Time: 3 pm – 10 pm
Hotline: +8801707975206



Muhurtama
Art Exhibition
Title: Muhurtama solo art exhibition by
Shamset Jabrejee
Venue: Dwip Gallery, Lalmatia
Date: July 27 – August 22 (except
Mondays)
Time: 5 pm – 9 pm

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MAESTRO

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ
“Ekti Kishor Chele, Ekaki Shopno Dekhe
Hashi aar Gaane, Shukher Chobi
Aanke”
Translation: *A teenager he is, he
dreams alone*
Etching a portrait of happiness, with his
laughter and tone.
Today marks the birthday of one of
the greatest musicians to touch Asian
soil, Ayub Bachchu. This is his first
birthday since his untimely demise.
His contribution to the music industry
cannot be understated -- any youngster
who picks up the guitar today is bound
to be directly or indirectly influenced
the maestro who uplifted the status of
the instrument itself in Bangladesh.
When LRB first released its self-titled
double album in 1992, it brought to

the forefront the unsung hero, who
had been weaving magic with his guitar
for a multitude of big-name bands for
years. LRB, or ‘Love Runs Blind’, was his
calling to become a figure that is larger
than life: a maestro, a legend.
To this date, he remains one of
the few musicians whose popularity
refuses to wane, whose lyrics are sung
emotionally by each person who with
minimum idea about Bangla music.
Whether it is with *Cholo Bodley
Jai, Hashtey Dekho Gaite Dekho,
Rupali Guitar, Ekhon Onek Raat* or
any of his blockbuster hits, he will
live on through every guitar solo he
has played, every word he has sung,
and every soul he has touched. Ayub
Bachchu’s name will live one as long
as the Bengali language itself exists.
Happy Birthday, Maestro.



PHOTO: SHAHRAER KABIR HEENEL

1 MINUTE PLEASE Ishfaque Kamal

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ
One of the propellers of team Daekho’s comedic fame,
Ishfaque Kamal is one of the shining young stars in the
Bangladeshi stand up arena. Always quirky and up for a
chat, Ishfaque sits down with *The Daily Star* for a cup of
coffee and a round of One Minute Please!
Your favourite stand up comedian?
Hands down, Ahmad Ashik. If you haven’t checked him
out, go to his shows and you’ll know why.
What made you take up stand up comedy?
Look, there is no shortage of bad and depressing news
if you live here. I wanted to make people smile, and I
hope I’ve been able to do that until now.
Do you listen to music?
Of course I do. I’ve been listening to Prateek Kuhad a lot
lately. He is amazing.
If you weren’t a comedian, what would you be?
I would be a lawyer. In fact, I am going to the UK to
pursue my higher studies in law!
Which video of yours is your favourite?
The one in which I first starred as the character ‘Bablu’.
I had no idea that people would love this character so
much.
Do you have any advice for an upcoming comedian?
The secret is to never give up, and to be in it for yourself.



PHOTO: COURTESY

“The current generation of musicians is extremely talented” – Shahbaz Khan Pilu

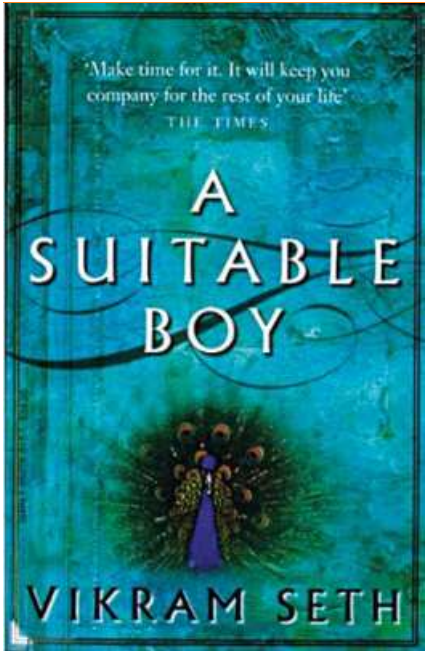
SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ
Shahbaz Khan Pilu, best known as the
drummer of pioneering Bangladeshi
band Renaissance, is also one of the
sharpest musical minds in the industry.
The veteran is set to release his debut solo
album, *Tomra Bhalo Acho To?*, where he
sets out to show his musical flair to the
contemporary audience. The musician
talks to *The Daily Star* about his latest
endeavor.
**Congratulations on your first solo
album, Tomra Bhalo Acho To? Can you
tell us more about the project?**
Tomra Bhalo Acho To? is a joint creation
of lyricist Shahid Mahmud Jangi and me.
All the songs in this album are written by
Shahid Mahmud Jangi, and composed
by me. The music arrangement has been
done by Suman Kallyan, except for the
song *Shob Kotha Shesh Hole* which was
done by Ibrar Tipu. Four of the tracks
have been sung by me, while there are
three duets with Samina Chowdhury and
one with Fahmida Nabi.
**What was your thought process while
recording the album?**
We wanted to arrange this album in a
way that relatable to both older and
younger generations, with a combination
of good lyrics, melodious tunes and
contemporary direction. Even though
I believe that this is not a commercial
album which will have millions of views



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

overnight, the songs will be alive for long
time and good music lovers will like the
songs.
**We have left behind the golden age of
CDs and audio stores behind. How are
you distributing the album now?**
It is true that the golden age of CDs are
not there anymore, everything is done
digitally now. The album has been
produced by Bangla Dhol, and the songs
are being distributed through YouTube
and other digital platforms. Three tracks
of the album have already been released,
and the full album is scheduled to come
out in October.
**Did you experiment with your sound in
Tomra Bhalo Acho To?**
To be honest, there is not much
‘experimentation’ in this album per se.
We stuck to the sound of contemporary
music, which will be relatable to most
listeners.
**What do you have to say about the
current generation of musicians?**
Even though the current generation
of musicians are extremely talented, I
think there are lack of proper platforms
through which they can expose their
creativity. My advice for them would
be to keep up their good work, and try
to create new sounds. I am sure there
would be an opportunity for them
to go global if they can nurture their
creativity.

Tabu, Ishaan Khatter and Tanya Maniktala to star Mira Nair’s adaptation of ‘A Suitable Boy’



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK
The BBC adaptation of Vikram Seth’s
acclaimed novel *A Suitable Boy* will
feature Tabu, Ishaan Khatter, Tanya
Maniktala among others, producer BBC
announced in a press release. Directed
by Mira Nair and adapted by veteran
writer Andrew Davies, this six-part
series takes place in post partition, post-
independence India.
The story revolves around Lata,
a spirited university student who
is rebelling against her mother’s
determination to find her a husband - a
“suitable boy”, to marry. She is pressured
to choose among three suitors Hareesh,
Kabir and Amit. Vikram Seth’s 1349
paged novel takes on social and political
issues like Hindu-Muslim strife, class
struggle, family relations among others.
The filming of the series is set to begin
in September 2019.
A Suitable Boy is expected to be
released on BBC One in 2020.

‘Made in Bangladesh’ at Toronto International Film Festival

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK
Internationally acclaimed Bangladeshi
director, Rubaiyat Hossain, earned a
multitude of accolades for her first two
films *Meherjaan* and *Under Construction*.
Her third feature film, *Made in Bangladesh*,
based on the lives of working women in the
RMG industry in Bangladesh, is now gearing
up for a world premiere at the prestigious
Toronto International Film Festival this
September. The movie stars Rikita Nandini
Shimu, Deepanwita Martin, Mostafa
Monwar, Shatabdi Wadood, Jayraj, Momena
Chowdhury, Wahida Mallik Joly and Samina
Lutfa, amongst others, in lead characters. The
film has been jointly produced by France,
Denmark, Portugal and Bangladesh.





Bangladeshi Gladiators



Ei Shohore

Exciting Eid ul Adha specials on television

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

With multiple channels airing exciting programmes throughout the festive season of Eid ul Adha, *The Daily Star* highlights on a compilation of some of the most delightful upcoming shows on TV. Similar to a feature that was published previously, this too, follows up on some of the best programmes that our channels have to offer to the audience today.

The telefilm, *Ei Shohore*, written and directed by Ashfaq Nipun, will be aired on NTV at 2:30 pm. It stars Mehazabien Chowdhury and Afran Nisho among others.

The game show, *Bangladeshi Gladiators*, produced especially for Eid ul Adha, celebrates young people and their indomitable courage and competitive spirit, as



Alpha



Jomidaar

participants go through several difficult and thrilling challenges. It is produced by Khandaker Shahadat Hossain and hosted by Shafayat Mahmud Fuad. The fifth episode of the show will be aired on SA TV at 5:30 pm.

The Nasiruddin Yousuff directorial *Alpha* will have its television premiere on Channel i at 10:15 pm. *Alpha* stars Doyel, A T M Shamsuzzaman, Mostafizur Noor Imran, and Heera Chowdhury, among others. The film is produced by Faridur Reza Sagar and Esha Yousuff, under the banner of Impress Telefilm. It is edited by Catherine Masud.

The telefilm, *Jomidaar*, written and directed by SA Haque Alik will be aired on Banglavisat at 2:10 pm. It stars Riaz, Salahuddin Lavlu, and Sabnam Faria among others.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Renowned singer Kona has tied the knot with businessperson Golam M Iftekhar, also known as Gohin. Although the couple were officially

married in presence of family on April 21, the news has come out just recently. In response to how it feels to be married, Kona says, "Honestly, I don't feel any different. We have known each other for quite a while now." Even

though there were rumours of the two marrying circulating for a while, Kona's affirmation puts all of them to rest. *The Daily Star* family congratulates the couple and wishes them a beautiful journey ahead.

COURTESY: ISHRAT AMIN



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Little Women

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The first trailer of Greta Gerwig's adaptation of *Little Women* has just released and it looks as promising as ever.

Based on Louisa May Alcott's 1868 novel, this literary classic tells the story of the four March sisters—Jo, Meg, Beth and Amy, as each of them are determined

to live life on her own terms. Set in the aftermath of the American Civil War, this semiautobiographical novel is a tale of love, growth, sacrifice and independence. So far there has been a good number of adaptations of the work including films, stage dramas, TV and anime series etc. This would be the 8th movie adaptation of the novel.

Gerwig crafted the movie that draws

on both the novel and writings by Louisa May Alcott. The movie stars Saoirse Ronan as the author's alter ego—Jo, Emma Watson as Meg, Eliza Scanlen as Beth, Florence Pugh as Amy, Laura Dern as Marmee, Meryl Streep as Aunt March, and Timothee Chalamet as Laurie among others.

The movie is set to be released on 25th December, 2019.

PURNIMA'S upcoming endeavours

Purnima is inarguably one of the most prolific Bangladeshi actors to have graced the silver screen till date. Boasting a career spanning over 20 years, she has entertained the audience with numerous blockbusters, as well as performances as a television actor and an emcee. The Daily Star recently caught up with the veteran actor for a chat about her upcoming films, her latest telefilm, and more.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



SHAH ALAM SHAZU

You recently acted in a telefilm for Eid ul Fitr. Tell us a little bit about it.

Honestly, I only choose to act in telefilms when the story and the character strike a chord with me. The telefilm I did this Eid ul Fitr was no different. The telefilm, titled *Sublet*, co-starring Apurba, was directed by Mizanur Rahman Aryan.

Could you divulge a few details about the character you played in Sublet?

I don't want to divulge much. The title of the telefilm is quite self-explanatory. I play the landlord's character, whereas Apurba plays the role of a tenant. I don't want to say any more than that. The audience can tune in to Bangla Vision on the 5th day of Eid ul Fitr, at 9 pm to watch the telefilm.

Did you act in any other projects this Eid ul Fitr?

No, *Sublet* was the only project I committed myself to. I am really hopeful that the audience will respond well to this telefilm.

According to reports, you are working in two upcoming films. How far along are those projects?

We have completed filming for the movie *Jam*, but are yet to finish dubbing. We are scheduled to resume filming for the other movie, *Gangchil*, after the Eid ul Fitr holidays. I have a few other offers lined up. But, for now, I am committed to these two films.

Where are you spending the Eid ul Fitr holidays?

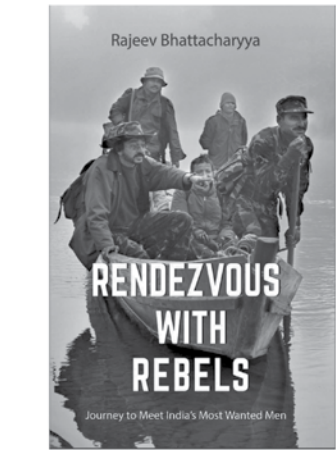
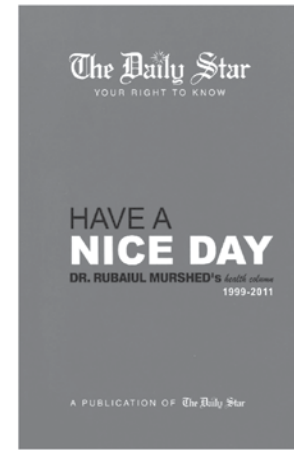
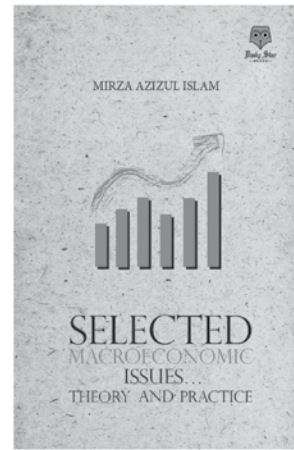
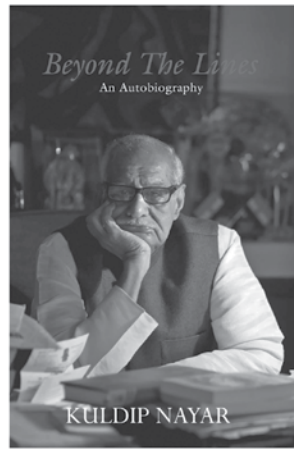
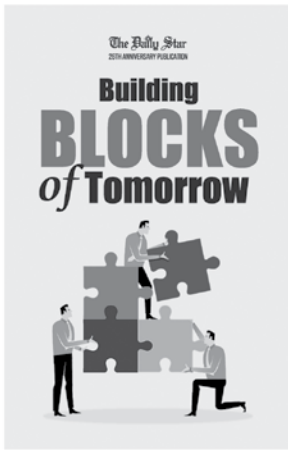
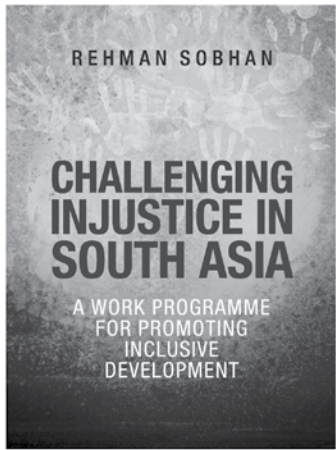
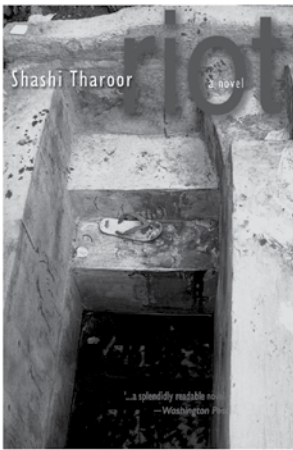
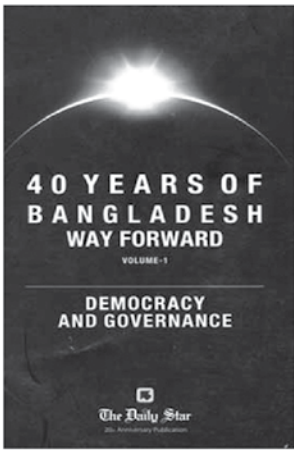
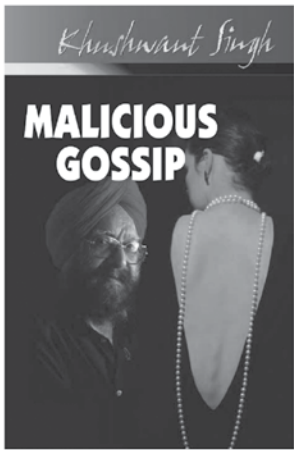
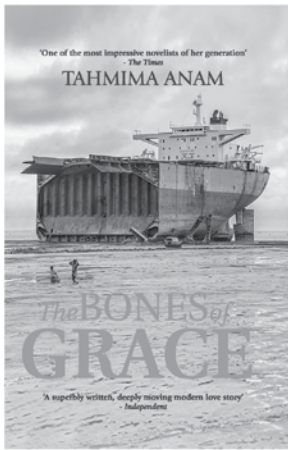
I am staying in Dhaka. Since I don't take up too many projects simultaneously these days, it is easier to manage holidays. I am just focusing on spending time with my family this time around.

What were your Eid celebrations like growing up?

Eid celebrations during my childhood were some of the most wonderful moments in my life, as it is for a lot of people. Eid festivities meant new clothes, delicious food and having fun with family. Those memories will remain etched in my heart forever.

Are you hosting any upcoming shows?

Not at the moment. I have completed the show *Ebong Purnima*. It was quite a success. I have been receiving offers to host new things, but haven't committed to anything yet. Right now, I am only taking up some occasional stage shows now and then.



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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA FRIDAY AUGUST 16, 2019, BHADRA 1, 1426 BS

Why have rawhide prices plummeted suddenly?

Manipulators must be punished

WE know from previous years that about 1 crore animals would be sacrificed during Eid-ul-Azha. So, the collapse of prices came as a big surprise, as the market had anticipated, or should have anticipated, this huge supply of rawhides. The supply chain of rawhides starts with seasonal traders purchasing individual hides. These are then bought by merchants (wholesalers) who in turn supply to the tanners.

According to tanners, they paid merchants between Tk 30 and Tk 35 crore. Tanners pay merchants in phases and we have been told by a representative of the Bangladesh Hide and Skin Merchants' Association that it is owed about Tk 400 crore in arrears as of August 14. This claim has been refuted by the tanners' association which has stated that a total of Tk 150 crore has been paid to merchants. Even if we were to take the tanners' claim to be true, that still leaves a few hundred crores in unpaid dues.

Another reason for tanners' lack of interest in purchasing rawhides this year comes from the fact that the tanneries already had some stock of hide in their inventories. The sudden lack of interest in purchasing hides left seasonal traders at the short end of the stick. It is hardly surprising that Tk 100 crore worth of rawhides has been dumped on the roads because there is no demand for these skins at the fixed rates.

The government should have anticipated all these factors and taken measures prior to Eid. The commerce minister's response about syndicates is nothing more than a vain attempt to avoid responsibility for this debacle. Our question is: how could authorities fix prices at a level which was not followed by any party? The concerned ministry should have sat down with all the stakeholders to ensure smooth operation of the entire supply chain. We blame both tanners and merchants for the sudden collapse of demand and this is where authorities should focus on in their investigation and bring the guilty parties to face the full force of the law. We simply cannot afford a repetition of this situation next year because there is too much at stake.

No lesson was learned

More lives lost in Eid road accidents

WE are deeply saddened to learn that at least 26 people died in road accidents across the country during the three-day Eid vacation. Four more died on Wednesday. Estimates from some other news outlets put the overall number at 35, with the number of the injured running into dozens. Road casualties during Eid festivals are perhaps no longer a surprise. In the past years, we have been consistently bombarded with reminders of the dangers of Eid-time journey, each year mirroring the previous year in terms of deaths and injuries for which a familiar litany of reasons is cited: reckless driving, lack of monitoring on highways that draw a high number of travellers during this time of the year, overcrowding, underage and/or unlicensed drivers, unfit vehicles, etc. But the problem persists like an insoluble puzzle.

According to an estimate by *The Daily Star*, 31 people died during the Eid-ul-Azha holiday in 2018, 29 in 2017, 32 in 2016, 30 in 2015, 26 in 2014, 10 in 2013, and 40 in 2012. Clearly, we have failed to learn from the past. However, the road transport and bridges minister claimed that the numbers of accidents and casualties were comparatively lower this year, but admitted that "there were some mistakes and we will take lessons from those." We find that hardly assuring given the unconvincing track record of the transport authorities. The government has failed to introduce tougher legislation to control the chaotic road transport sector and taken little effective action to ensure road safety.

It is high time the government took serious steps to curb road accidents, not just during Eid vacations but at all times. The government should ensure that all vehicles pass the fitness test, that all drivers are qualified to drive and have valid licenses, and that they respect traffic rules. This Eid, the increasing number of motorcycles and three-wheelers on the highways was cited as an emerging problem. These things should be factored into road safety plans moving forward. In any case, the highways must be monitored and patrolled by the police so that accidents can be prevented more effectively.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Plight of rawhide traders

The price of rawhide has fallen sharply causing immense loss to small and seasonal traders during this Eid-ul-Azha. On average, cowhides were sold at Tk 350 to Tk 400 and those of goats were sold at only Tk 25 to Tk 30. Last year, the prices were around Tk 1,000 and Tk 50 respectively. Many small traders alleged that they were not even able to break even.

Rawhide syndicates were responsible for causing the prices to be lower than the margin set by the government, according to the commerce ministry. Seasonal traders are having to bury or leave the rawhides unsold on the streets due to the sharp fall in prices, the valuation of which has amounted to Tk 100 crore.

Hide merchants and tannery owners are at loggerheads, trading blame for the plunge in prices. Presently, considering the plight of the seasonal businessmen, the government has decided to export the rawhides but this move is facing strong opposition from tannery owners.

Whatever the causes are behind the decline in prices, it is quite unexpected and unfortunate for traders at the grassroots level, and the authorities concerned should delve deep into the matter to find out the reasons behind this and address them.

Md Zillur Rahaman, by email



BLACK, WHITE AND GREY

Ali Riaz

MORE than a week has passed since Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution have been scrapped by the Narendra Modi-led BJP government. The complete communication lockdown in Kashmir, imposed in the wake of the abrogation, is still in place; curfew is yet to be lifted in some places; leaders are still under house arrest or detained; and thousands of soldiers are deployed on the streets of an already highly militarised zone. Kashmiris are protesting and expressed their dismay at the "betrayal of trust". Article 370 granted special status and limited autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir since 1949, and Article 35A provided the state the authority to define "permanent residents" and grant special rights to permanent residents of J&K, including employment and acquisition of immovable property in the State. The J&K is now bifurcated into two states and has been brought under the control of New Delhi. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described the revocation as "unshackling of Kashmiris", Kashmiris are witnessing shackles all around them. The "psychological attachment" of the Kashmiris with India has been severely damaged, perhaps shattered for the foreseeable future. The impact of this will be felt throughout the country and region, and in the years to come.

The legality of the abrogation, especially the process of it, is questionable. It will be tested in the Supreme Court, sooner or later. Changing the requirement of concurrence of the "constituent" assembly to "legislative" assembly, and in the absence of the legislative assembly, using the governor as the proxy, may not be considered legal. Since 1959, at least four times, the courts have said that Article 370 is permanent. The unilateral decision of scrapping the Articles is symptomatic of the authoritarian bent of the Modi government.

The economic rationale for the revocation, that Article 370 was a roadblock to development, does not stand the test of the facts, for there are many other states which perform worse than J&K. In terms of the Human Development Index, 18 states are worse than J&K; in terms of the poverty rate (10.35 percent), it is well below the national average (21.92 percent) and 21 states fare worse. The logic behind singling out restrictions



TOMOO HOZUMI

TWO years after hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees started arriving in the Cox's Bazar district of south-eastern Bangladesh, the need for services remains dire. In spite of huge efforts by humanitarian agencies under the leadership of the government of Bangladesh, substantial gaps exist in health, nutrition, child protection and water, sanitation and hygiene services. Amid all these pressing needs, one above all others has become a clarion call for action: quality education and skills development.

In any encounter with a refugee—child or adult—conversation quickly turns to the absence of a formal learning system, and the deeply troubling implications for the children and adolescents in the refugee camps.

It is not hard to see why: as things stand, a generation of Rohingya refugees is not being given the chance to develop the essential skills they need to guarantee their long-term future, wherever they eventually settle.

When the huge influx of Rohingya refugees into Cox's Bazar took place in 2017, finding a safe space for children to learn was one of the top priorities for the international agencies leading the response.

In the early months of the crisis, numerous learning centres were quickly constructed. Local Bangladeshis were hired to teach alongside Rohingya volunteers.

Given the enormous constraints, this was a considerable achievement. For many children in the camps, the learning centres were their first experience in a classroom. The reassurance of being in a caring, secure environment helped many on the path to recovery from the traumatic experiences that drove them from Myanmar. It also contributed to high rates of school attendance.

REVOKING ARTICLE 370

Why now?

on land ownership for outsiders in J&K as a reason for "underdevelopment" falls flat if one looks at Himachal Pradesh and Bihar—the former has outperformed the other states in economic and social indicators, despite being hostile to outsiders wanting to acquire land there, while Bihar stands exactly on the opposite end of the continuum.

The BJP has never concealed its plan to scrap Articles 370 and 35A. It promised the abolition in its 2014 election manifesto, with a caveat—that it will "discuss this with all stakeholders." In 2019, the caveat disappeared; it was a plain and simple promise of getting rid of Article 370. Modi and his righthand man Amit Shah have made good on their promise. As reported in the *Hindustan*

never been restricted to only rhetoric when it came to the issue of J&K. After the Pulwama attack, in the name of patriotism, the BJP and its fountainhead Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh have drawn the line in the sand. The bifurcation between the "patriot Indians" and the "enemy within" was done by the Sangh Parivar a long time ago, the physical bifurcation of J&K is only the latest addition. Homogenisation of India, which once took credit in its diversity, and changing the demographic makeup of J&K are not hidden agendas of the BJP. Removal of Article 35A will help achieve both, at once. This is a classic case of "settler-colonial project", akin to Israel's long-term approach towards Palestine. This will send a message to the rest of



PHOTO: AFP

The economic rationale for the revocation of Article 370—that it was a roadblock to development in Jammu and Kashmir—does not stand the test of the facts.

Times on August 6, "preparations for scrapping Article 370 began simultaneously with the drafting of the manifesto for the 2019 general elections." That explains the absence of the consultation provision in the manifesto.

Anyone familiar with the ideological position of the BJP will be able to understand that it is about creating a homogenous Hindu India, the mainstay of the Hindutva creed. The Muslim majority state of J&K with special status is a barrier to this agenda. The attacks on Muslims in the name of cow protection over the past years, promotion of the "Jai Sri Ram" chant, exclusionary citizenship in the garb of NRC, and the revocation of Article 370 are not separate events; instead they are intrinsically connected.

The belligerent-exclusionary ultra-nationalist agenda of the BJP has

India too.

There is no denying that the ideology of Hindutva is the principal driver, but what remains to be asked is: why now? What prompted the timing?

There are both domestic and external factors that are likely to have played roles in determining the timing. The dramatic victory in May has given the BJP and Modi the audacity to make a drastic move before their support among Indian citizens begins to decline. The BJP felt that it should make use of the energy of its base supporters to confront the criticisms, and cash in on the saffron patriotism which came to the fore in the wake of the Pulwama attack and Balakot air strike. The move will further galvanise the support base, which may well be needed as soon as the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute case in the Supreme Court

A clarion call for education in Rohingya refugee camps

But even in this initial phase, the shortcomings of the informal classes were soon obvious.

Without proper teaching and study materials, teachers had to improvise. Children gained basic numeracy and reading skills in English and Burmese, but not much else. For children and adolescents older than 14, there were no education opportunities available at all.

Fortunately, the situation is changing. The Learning Competency Framework

contribution to this undertaking of our various partners—especially the national NGOs—has been immense.

The feedback has been positive from students, teachers and parents. But there is still much to improve. We now have the task of refining and expanding the learning process, while making it available to all children and adolescents in the refugee camps.

It is an enormous undertaking for sure. While strengthening the quality

This task can only be achieved and taken to scale with the full backing of a wide range of partners including, most critically, the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Having access to local resources such as teachers with the required language skills, learning materials and student assessment tools will be vital to success.

The international community must also play its part, making available the resources needed for such a large



The reassurance of being in a caring, secure environment helped many Rohingya children on the path to recovery from the traumatic experiences that made them flee Myanmar.

PHOTO: INDRANIL MUKHERJEE/AFP

and Approach (LCFA), a structured set of teaching and learning materials, is being progressively introduced with lessons designed for children aged 4 to 14 in English, Mathematics, and Burmese as well as Life Skills (for Levels 1 and 2) and Science (for Levels 3 and 4). The

of learning for younger children, an entire adolescent curriculum needs to be established, offering foundational skills in literacy and numeracy alongside more practical vocational skills that can translate into opportunities in entrepreneurship.

humanitarian undertaking.

The stakes are high, and time is against us. A generation of children is growing older day by day, and we must make sure they do not lose hope in their futures. We cannot afford to fail them.

Tomoo Hozumi is UNICEF Representative, Bangladesh.

Is RTI Act becoming popular in Bangladesh?

SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

“YOU are really doing a great job,” said the Designated Officer (DO) of the District Social Welfare Office of Dinajpur. He was talking to a member of the public who had gone to his office to submit a Right to Information (RTI) request. “We, government servants,” he continued, “are paid from the public fund, so we must be accountable to the people. You should spread the word about people’s right to information all over the country. Most people do not know what this law is and how to use it.”

Another DO, the Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Charghat, Rajshahi, told an applicant: “I don’t know what my predecessors did in this office, but I am determined to rid it of its reputation of rampant corruption. You can help me do this. It is very important to bring us face to face with people. I am convinced that the more we learn about the law the more transparent government offices shall be.”

Participants at an RTI seminar in Dhaka on August 1 were both surprised and delighted to learn of such positive attitudes of government officials towards the RTI Act, 2009. Since the law came into force 10 years ago, stories abound of the irreverent and negative attitude of such public officials towards the law. Most felt it would cause them trouble and increase their workload unnecessarily. In comparison, these are happy tidings indeed.

The seminar was organised to disseminate the findings of a just-completed study by two leading NGOs of the country. The project was aimed at promoting RTI among different strata of society, increase its users and to bring them into closer contact with public authorities. In other words, building a bridge between the demand side and the supply side of the RTI regime.

There were, of course, many examples of extremely negative DO attitudes towards RTI applicants. Typical among them is the remark of the DO of “One Home, One Farm” project in Kaliganj Upazila, Satkhira District, who told an RTI applicant: “Why should I give you



information, who are you to ask for it?” The Headmaster of Zikra High School, in Rajshahi District, was harsher on an information seeker who had asked for some information on the school. “Who is instigating you to seek such information?” he asked. “Whoever is behind it must be looking to ruin your lives. You may not understand it now, but you will soon.”

RTI users are conversant with such remarks. Government officials seem unable to reconcile with the fact that there is a law now which gives citizens the right to demand from them all non-exempted information at their disposal, without giving any reason. They are unhappy that their earlier power to withhold any pertinent information from the general public has been revoked by the RTI Act. Some still do not know about the law or perhaps do not want to know. To implement RTI under such circumstances is indeed an uphill task.

The project reveals some light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. During the course of the one-year project, around 18,000 RTI applications were submitted to public authorities in four project districts—Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Naogaon and Satkhira. In the context of the annual average of slightly over 7,000 RTI applications throughout the country, it is remarkable that only two NGOs could generate more than double that figure and that too in a limited area. Around 61 percent of the applications got full or partial responses, perhaps indicating that public authorities are beginning to respond to citizens’ RTI requests as routine work. While this augurs well for the future of the regime, it is pertinent to ask if such progress can be sustained without continuous project support in the future and whether citizens would be less fearful to submit RTI requests without help from NGOs.

The report divided the RTI requests into three broad categories: i) those seeking primary information of a personal nature; ii) those seeking institutional accountability; and iii) those seeking transparency.

In the earlier years, RTI requests mostly belonged to the first category. They were made by members of marginalised communities, with assistance from NGOs, seeking to know how the government’s safety-net programmes were managed and how they could benefit from them. Findings under the project, however, showed that such applicants and others have upscaled their information requests by seeking information on matters relating to institutional accountability and transparency in the work of public bodies. They are increasingly asking for information on such matters as expenditure of local authorities on road-building, bridges, culverts, etc. This must be seen as significant progress.

Concerningly, the report reveals that 25 percent of the RTI requests received no response at all; pressure tactics were used to discourage appeals, especially those pertaining to transparency.

An encouraging claim of the report is that around 231 RTI activists emerged in the four project districts during the project period and around 2,200 persons were trained as RTI experts to help others use the law. If only a handful of them exercise their expertise properly, RTI in Bangladesh could be headed for better times.

But not everything was as rosy. The main gripes of many who participated in the project and those attending the seminar, appeared to be directed against the Information Commission (IC). Many felt that the main challenges for RTI users in the country could be minimised if the IC was less bureaucratic and more attentive to their concerns. The key issues identified by them for corrective measures by the IC included the following:

i) The requirement to address RTI requests to specifically named Designated Officers

(DOs) must be removed. Many requests are rejected or returned simply because DOs could not be identified or were not appointed or changed frequently.

ii) The propensity of the IC to grill complainants with personal queries and/or asking for reasons for their requests at complaint hearings is disconcerting.

iii) The readiness of the IC to postpone complaint hearings when the DO is absent repeatedly and its disinclination to do so if an ordinary applicant is absent even once is discriminatory.

iv) The promises of DOs to provide the requested information only after directive of the IC at complaint hearings are often dishonoured. The IC must find a mechanism to stop this practice.

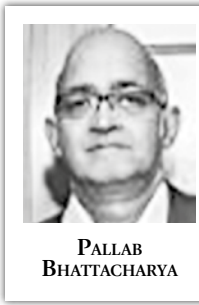
v) It is not uncommon for complainants to receive IC’s summons after the date of the hearings when it has already discharged the matter for non-appearance of complainant. This is most discouraging.

Reverting to positive developments, the project also witnessed a successful application of the law by citizens to seek information on hitherto uncharted areas. Participants were encouraged to focus RTI queries on the government’s implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Five-Year Plans. By asking for progress reports on them, RTI users not only enriched their own knowledge about the government’s development works, but also helped public officials to keep abreast of their status. It was thus mutually beneficial to both the demand and supply sides. It helped to minimise the fear factor which deterred citizens from making use of the law in the past.

The positive developments give rise to hope and underline the importance for all the stakeholders—citizens, public authorities and the IC—to work together to overcome the challenges that remain and reap the harvest of this very important law of the land.

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The second coming of Sonia Gandhi



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

top leadership goes. On December 16, 2017, Sonia Gandhi handed over the baton of party president to her son Rahul Gandhi, after having held the post for a record number of 19 years. It signalled a generational shift in the party’s leadership. One had thought at that time that it was curtains for Sonia as party chief. But fast forward to August 10, 2019, 72-year-old Sonia was appointed as the interim president of the Congress to fill the void left by the resignation of Rahul, 49, in the wake of the party’s searing defeat in this year’s parliamentary elections.

So, has the clock been set back for the party? One thing was certain: the clock was ticking away for the Congress to resolve the top leadership crisis by deciding a replacement for Rahul. Since Rahul’s resignation on May 25, the Congress Working Committee, the party’s apex decision-making forum, huffed and puffed to resolve the leadership issue for the past two and a half months. For much of that time, the party’s rank and file kept pleading in vain to Rahul to reconsider his resignation and many in the party saw this as an exercise in futility.

Finally, on August 4, when the party, ending a prolonged suspense, went public with a date to choose a new chief, it revived almost immediately the tussle between the old guard and the young Turks within the Congress for a successor to Rahul. Names were banded about but what clearly came out from the debate over Rahul’s successor was that it had to be someone from the Gandhi dynasty. And the story was no different on August 10 when the CWC met for 12 hours to pick the party’s new head. The top decision-making body went through the motion of setting up five separate committees

to elicit the views of the chiefs of the party’s units in different states, legislature party leaders, party’s national secretaries and lawmakers.

The feedback that came out of these consultations unambiguously favoured the continuance of Rahul as party chief. Rahul refused to budge from his decision to quit. A few in the CWC had suggested the name of Rahul’s sister Priyanka, but she refused to take on the responsibility. The general consensus emerging from the consultative process was that the party stood the risk of breaking up if anyone other than a Gandhi family member assumes the post of Congress president. It was clear that any name outside the Gandhi family would lead to a stalemate and tear the party apart. The CWC was, therefore, left with no alternative other than requesting Sonia to be the interim president. Sonia’s choice as the party president clearly reflected the Congress’ failure to look for someone from outside the Congress’ first family which continues to remain the unifying force for various factions in the party. Looking back, Rahul Gandhi’s loud proclamation that no member of the family would be the next party head, that came soon after his resignation on May 25,

Sonia Gandhi faces the stern test of pulling Congress back up and reinvigorating it and making it battle-ready for the coming series of state elections. In the two and a half months since Rahul’s resignation, the party has been hit by several desertions in its rank and file.



Interim Congress President Sonia Gandhi with her son Rahul Gandhi, former president of the party.

PHOTO: REUTERS

now rings hollow. It was a proclamation more out of frustration than conviction and went against the reality in the party.

The CWC decided that Sonia will be the interim president till organisational elections are held to find a full-time person for the post. But how long will the “interim” last? The process of party polls may take time and thereby seat Sonia as party chief for more than a year as the Congress may not like to go for the organisational polls anytime soon because of impending elections to legislative assemblies in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana due later this year, and in Delhi due February next year. These are the states which are ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party which has already gained a head-start as far as preparations are concerned. These electoral battles will be among the first major challenges for Sonia upon her return to helm the party.

Sonia’s comeback as party chief may have put a lid on the young versus old debate within the party over party presidency. The

party’s former Mumbai city unit chief Milind Deora had pitched for young leaders like Sachin Pilot, Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister, and Jyotiraditya Scindia, another gen-next leader from Madhya Pradesh. Party veterans like Amarinder Singh, lawmaker Shashi Tharoor and octogenarian Karan Singh had backed Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as the next party chief.

Tharoor stood out for making a strong case of holding elections to pick the new chief. Most of the other members of the party’s old guard were favourably disposed towards the suggestion of maintaining the generational change in their leadership and Sonia Gandhi’s return as president provided them with a big relief as it smothered whatever little chances there were for someone from outside the Gandhi clan to take charge. For instance, Amarinder Singh, Punjab Chief Minister, who was the first to call for a young leader to succeed Rahul, lost no time to welcome Sonia as interim head of the party saying this was

“the best under the circumstances because of the challenges” the Congress faces, particularly an existential crisis since the defeat in the recent national poll.

In the near-term, Sonia Gandhi faces the stern test of pulling Congress back up and reinvigorating it and making it battle-ready for the coming series of state elections. In the two and a half months since Rahul’s resignation, the party has been hit by several desertions in its rank and file including some senior leaders in Maharashtra and Assam, most of whom have joined the BJP. Most damaging for the party was the collapse of the coalition government in Karnataka as a majority of the lawmakers who quit the alliance with the Janata Dal (Secular) and reduced it to a minority were from the Congress. The Congress has been grappling with increasing drift since the electoral loss and Rahul’s resignation. Sonia Gandhi’s return as party chief may help halt that drift and prevent the exit of leaders from the party.

But what Congress needs perhaps more than its president, is a new ideological template to respond to the BJP’s vision of a “new India” being shaped by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his confidante and Home Minister, Amit Shah, with strong underpinnings of nationalism in framing policies. Congress was unable to present a coherent counter to the BJP government’s decision to revoke Article 370 of the Constitution that gave a special status to Jammu and Kashmir. A number of Congress leaders, including Karan Singh, Janardan Dwiwedi, Jyotiraditya Scindia and Deepender Hooda, went against the party’s stand in parliament on abrogation of Article 370 and backed the Modi government’s move and a bill to bifurcate the state. Officially, the Congress has strongly opposed the move and the bill to bifurcate the state into two Union Territories. This reflected the predicament of the Congress Party.

Clearly, there is a need for Congress to find a fresh face to refurbish its fragmented stances on major national issues and bring new blood in its leadership like the BJP had done soon after suffering defeat in the second successive parliamentary elections in 2009.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent for The Daily Star.

DAN BROWN
(b. 1964)

American author best known for his thriller novels, including the Robert Langdon novels

We have plenty of technologies we could use to destroy the planet, and we don't. There's more love on this planet than hate; there's more creativity than destructive power.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Court sport

6 Lisa's dad

11 Spouse's kin

12 Superior to

13 Avoid

14 Scooter's kin

15 What a meow may mean

17 – canto

19 Stocking suffer

20 DC baseballer

23 Slow tempo

25 Be bold

26 Quadrennial event

28 Frozen treats

29 Bit of time

30 French article

31 Airport sight

32 Opposing vote

33 Lady of Spain

35 Piper of rhyme

38 Lennon hit

41 Entry form

42 "Hello" singer

43 Posted speed, in places

44 Stopwatch button

DOWN

1 Concealed

2 Lennon's love

3 Former lovers

4 Book unit

5 Honey

6 Pone to emot-ing

7 Clarinet's kin

8 Janitor's tool

9 Eden name

10 Spectrum color

16 Apartment workers

17 Cook's herb

18 Bring out

20 Get specific

21 Game spot

22 Irritable

24 Baseball team

25 Block

27 Take up arms

31 Beef chew

33 Posted

34 Took the bus

35 "Nova" carrier

36 Inventor

Whitney

37 Receipt line

39 Pub staple

40 Catching aid

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

SUNDAY'S ANSWERS

S	T	O	O	D		P	O	S	H
T	I	N	G	E		D	O	N	H
I	T	A	L	Y		E	M	A	I
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BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott



TAKING A HIDING

Seasonal rawhide traders are counting their losses due to a serious lack of demand. Visiting makeshift rawhide hubs in the capital's Azimpur, Chawk Bazar, City College and New Market areas, the selling price of animal skin was found to be shockingly low. There were offers as low as Tk 10 for rawhide from goats and around Tk 200 for cowhide. The average highest price was around Tk 400. Many frustrated sellers around the country dumped their goods instead of selling it. Traders and merchants put the prices of the dumped rawhide at around Tk 100 crore. While traders were busy salting the hides, sellers were seen carrying their wares away having failed to make a sale. Some sellers said they had procured the hide for around Tk 700, but would now have to sell at almost half that price. Pictures were taken recently.



Photo:
ANISUR RAHMAN



Canada’s Trudeau rebuked on ethics ahead of election

AFP, Ottawa

Canada’s ethics watchdog rapped Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Wednesday, concluding in the lead-up to October elections that he broke rules by arm-twisting his attorney general to settle a criminal case against engineering giant SNC-Lavalin.

The scandal, revealed earlier this year, tarnished the prime minister’s golden boy image, and cost two ministers and two senior officials their jobs, while support plunged for his Liberals before they clawed back some ground. New polls show the party in a dead heat with the opposition Conservatives.

Independent parliamentary ethics commissioner Mario Dion said Trudeau and his officials had wrongly sought to “exert influence over the attorney general in her decision whether to intervene in a matter relating to a criminal prosecution.”

It marks the second time that Trudeau has been found in breach of Canada’s ethics laws, after being rebuked in 2017 for accepting a paid family vacation on the private island in the Bahamas of the Aga Khan, a business magnate and spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims.

Trudeau must pay a small fine of up to Can\$500 (US\$375) for contravening Canada’s conflict of interest act, but with only two months before national elections the political costs could be much steeper.

SNC-Lavalin, one of the world’s major engineering firms, was charged in 2015 with allegedly paying Can\$47 million in bribes between 2001 and

2011 to secure contracts in Libya during the rule of former strongman Moamer Gaddafi, and of defrauding the Libyan government of Can\$130 million.

The charges relate to the world’s largest irrigation scheme -- the Great Man Made River Project -- to provide fresh water to the cities of Tripoli, Benghazi and Sirte.

An opposition party leader, Jagmeet Singh, called the ethics breach “outrageous,” while Conservative Party chief Andrew Scheer said it was “an unforgivable assault on the independence of our justice system.”

“Canadians understand we have to be vigilant against those who want to abuse the power of their office and engage in this type of corrupt behavior and I do believe this will be top of mind in this election,” Scheer added.

Trudeau has steadfastly denied accusations that his inner circle sought to shield SNC-Lavalin from a corruption trial.

On Wednesday, he offered a nuanced mea culpa.

“I disagree with some of (the commissioner’s) conclusions but I fully accept this report and take responsibility for everything that happened,” he said.

“But at the same time, I can’t apologize for standing up for Canadian jobs, because that’s part of what Canadians expect me to do.”

Earlier his office released an independent review of the joint roles of Canada’s attorney general and justice minister, rejecting calls to split the two jobs.

EU water bombers join Greek firemen to douse island wildfire

AFP, Athens

Greece yesterday deployed nearly 400 firefighters backed by EU firebombers to try to put out a massive wildfire on the island of Evia burning through a pristine pine forest for a third day.

“We are more optimistic today because the winds have died down,” Yiorgos Kostopoulos, civil protection supervisor for Evia, told state TV ERT.

Firefighters managed to contain the fire in a ravine near the village of Platana, backed by nearly 100 vehicles, nine helicopters and 12 planes, including two from Italy and one from Spain.

“We are doing whatever we can to create additional fire defences near the village,” Kostopoulos said as an earth mover dug a trench behind him.

The wildfire has caused inestimable damage to the local 550-hectare

mountain wildlife sanctuary of Agrilitsa.

It could take another two days to extinguish the flames, a fire department spokesman told Thema radio.

“My shed was burned, there are no more trees for resin collection, so apart from my house, I have nothing else,” a local resident told state TV ERT.

The EU’s Copernicus emergency management service has calculated that at least 2,300 hectares (nearly 5,700 acres) have been lost to the fire.

Local community head Dimitris Yiannoutsos told web TV Open there was “total destruction” in the forest but admitted that with the fire still active, officials were “unable to fully estimate the extent of the damage.”

Second UK cop

FROM PAGE 20

Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) network said “traces of the nerve agent” were found in blood samples taken from a second police officer who showed signs of exposure at the time.

It said the dose was “very small” and the officer, who has requested anonymity, “continues to receive support” from the Salisbury police.

Detective sergeant Nick Bailey has recovered after receiving a larger dose

of Novichok.

“The investigation remains ongoing, and there are parts of the picture that we are continuing to piece together,” the CTP said.

“In particular, we are keen to hear from anyone who may have seen the counterfeit ‘Nina Ricci’ perfume box or bottle” between the day of the Skripal poisoning and the day Sturgess’s friend Charlie Rowley picked it up in a park in June.

3 factors

FROM PAGE 20

About fixing a minimum rate at the field level, he said he would discuss the matter with other ministries, tanners and merchants soon.

Delwar Hossain, president of Bangladesh Hide and Skin Merchants’ Association, said there was a lack of coordination among the government, merchants and tanners in handling the situation.

Asked, he rejected a government allegation of price manipulation by a section of businessmen by creating a syndicate.

On Tuesday, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi blamed a section of businessmen for manipulating the market prices of rawhide.

Rawhide was sold at significantly low prices over the last 11 years as merchants didn’t buy it at the government-fixed rates, he told journalists at his Rangpur residence, reported Bangla daily Prothom Alo.

Sources in the sector said the syndicate made the move as tanners already had a good stock of rawhide and also due to low prices of leather goods in the international market.

Talking to The Daily Star, Delwar said the crisis over rawhide appeared as tanners did not clear their dues to merchants before Eid.

“Had the tanners disbursed the full amount, merchants could have bought rawhide from small traders,”

he said.

He said tanners cleared some Tk 35 crore of dues of nearly Tk 400 crore before Eid.

This Eid, over 1 crore animals were sacrificed across the country. Of them, some 45 lakhs were cows and buffaloes.

Md Shaheen Ahmed, chairman of Bangladesh Tanners’ Association (BTA), opposed Delwar’s statement on clearing dues.

According to him, tanners were not buying hide from small traders after the tannery hub was shift to Savar from Hazaribagh. He also blamed slack government monitoring and a fall of demand for leather products for the recent crisis.

He said the demand for non-leather products was going up due to changing fashion trends and awareness about animal rights.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute, talked in favour rawhide export for ensuring good price and breaking the syndicate.

“If export of rawhide is allowed, interests of the farmers and other poor people will be protected,” Mansur said.

Meanwhile, many small traders could not sell rawhide to merchants yesterday due to the fund crunch.

Already investing hefty sums, they see bleak days ahead.



Security personnel stands guard along a street during a lockdown in Srinagar, India yesterday, as the country celebrates its 73rd Independence Day, which marks the end of British colonial rule. More on page 8.

PHOTO : AFP

Japan temple

FROM PAGE 20

troubles. It’s changing Buddhism,” added Goto.

The adult-sized robot began service earlier this year and is able to move its torso, arms and head.

But only its hands, face and shoulders are covered in silicone to replicate human skin.

Clasping its hands together in prayer and speaking in soothing tones, the rest of the droid’s mechanical parts are clearly visible.

Wiring and blinking lights fill the cranial cavity of its open-top head and snake around its gender-neutral, aluminium body.

A tiny video camera installed in the left eye completes an eerie, cyborg-like frame seemingly lifted straight out of a dystopian Hollywood sci-fi thriller.

Developed at a cost of almost \$1m in a joint project between the Zen temple and renowned robotics professor Hiroshi Ishiguro at Osaka University, the humanoid -- called Mindar -- teaches about compassion and of the dangers of desire, anger and ego.

“You cling to a sense of selfish ego,” it warns worshippers. “Worldly desires are nothing other than a mind lost at sea.”

With religion’s influence on daily

life flat-lining in Japan, Goto hopes Kodaiji’s robot priest will be able to reach younger generations in a way traditional monks can’t.

“Young people probably think a temple is a place for funerals or weddings,” he said, trying to explain the disconnect with religion.

“It might be difficult to relate to fuddy-duddy priests like me, but hopefully the robot is a fun way to bridge that gap. We want people to see the robot and think about the essence of Buddhism.”

Goto insisted, however, that Mindar was no gimmick to boost income from tourists.

“This robot teaches us ways to

overcome pain,” he said. “It is here to save anyone who seeks help.”

Big losses

FROM PAGE 20

cattle market, made a loss of Tk 1 lakh.

Small scale traders like Sanwar, Jinarul and Milon alleged that ample amount of cattle, a large portion of which was imported, forced them to make loss.

Asked, Mahbubur Rahman, director (production) of Department of Livestock Services, admitted that there was surplus of cattle in the market this year.

He, however, blamed the high price of cattle feed for the loss of small scale traders.

Road crashes claim 18 lives

FROM PAGE 20

Rowshan, the local bus driver, and its passenger Mira died on the spot.

Another victim, who could not be identified, was taken to a local hospital where he was declared dead.

Police seized both buses, said Ataur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Bhanga Highway Police Station.

The second accident took place around 11:30am when a motorbike hit a man, who was standing beside the road in Sadarpur upazila’s Baburchar area.

The victim was identified as Sattar, who was declared dead after being taken to hospital, said Lutfar Rahman, OC of Sadarpur Police Station.

In Kishoreganj, three people were killed and four others injured in a road accident in Katiadi upazila’s Aachmita area.

The dead were identified as Jalal Mia, 30, driver of a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, and its passengers Omar

Faruq, 20, and Tofazzol Hossain, 28.

Quoting locals, police said the accident occurred when a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, heading towards Bhairab from Karimganj with six passengers, collided head-on with a truck around 11:15am.

After the accident, the three victims were taken to a local hospital where on-duty doctors declared them dead.

Police seized the truck but its driver managed to flee, said Md Shafiqul Islam, OC (Investigation) of Katiadi Police Station.

In Sirajganj, at least two people were killed and 20 injured as three buses collided at the Konabari point near the Bangabandhu bridge west-zone highway.

The accident occurred around 2:30pm when a Dhaka-bound Hanif Enterprise bus collided head-on with North Bengal-bound Five Star Paribahan bus at Konabari point,

after which another bus hit the Hanif Enterprise bus, said police quoting witnesses.

The accident left two people dead on the spot, one of whom was the driver of the Five Star Paribahan bus. The other victim could not be identified immediately, said Sayed Shahid Alam, OC of Bangabandhu Bridge West Zone Police Station.

Vehicular movement on the Bangabandhu bridge highway remained suspended for half an hour due to the huge traffic jam after the accident.

In Mymensingh, a madrasa student was killed and four of his family members were injured in a road accident in Phulpur upazila’s Imadpur area.

The dead was identified as Jayed, 6, son of Abdul Malek.

The accident took place around 1:00pm when a CNG-run auto-

rickshaw heading to Sherpur collided head-on with a Mymensingh-bound bus at Imadpur area on the Mymensingh-Sherpur road, leaving Jayed dead on the spot.

The victims were all passengers of the auto-rickshaw. Police seized the bus, but its driver and helpers managed to flee the scene, said Imarat Hossain Gazi, OC of Phulpur Police Station.

In Gopalganj, a motorcyclist was killed while his wife was injured in a road accident at Gopalpur area under Kashiani upazila.

The dead was identified as Tuhin Mollah, 45.

The accident took place when Tuhin lost control and his motorbike overturned in Gopalpur area on the Dhaka-Khulna highway around 2:00pm. Tuhin died on the spot, said Ataur Rahman, OC of Bhanga Highway police Station.

Beijing will not sit by and watch

FROM PAGE 20

were assembling in Shenzhen.

The parade comes as the US president linked a possible trade deal with Beijing to a peaceful resolution to the political unrest that has roiled the semi-autonomous Chinese city for 10 weeks.

Trump has urged China to “humanely” resolve the violent stand-off with pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong.

“Millions of jobs are being lost in China to other non-Tariffed countries. Thousands of companies are leaving. Of course China wants to make a deal. Let them work humanely with Hong Kong first!” Trump wrote on Twitter, in the first clear indication that the trade deal could be threatened by how Beijing reacts to the protests.

“I have ZERO doubt that if President Xi wants to quickly and humanely solve the Hong Kong problem, he can do it,” Trump said in a subsequent tweet, suggesting a “personal meeting” with Chinese

counterpart Xi Jinping.

The Hong Kong protests were sparked by opposition to a plan to allow extraditions to the mainland, but have since morphed into a wider -- sometimes violent -- call for democratic rights.

The movement represents the greatest challenge to Beijing’s authority since the city was handed back by the British in 1997 under a deal that allowed it to keep freedoms that many Hong Kongers feel are being eroded.

WEEKEND RALLIES

Activists are planning another series of mass rallies this weekend in a bid to show their cause still maintains broad public support despite violent scenes during a disruptive occupation of the airport.

On Tuesday, chaos erupted at one of the world’s busiest transport hubs as protesters physically stopped travellers from boarding flights, battled riot police and assaulted two men they accused of being Chinese

infiltrators.

Beijing -- which has refused to grant any concessions to the protest movement -- has seized on the airport violence, with state-media churning out a deluge of condemnatory articles, pictures and videos.

Until the airport protest, hardcore demonstrators had largely focused their anger towards the police, or state institutions such as the city’s parliament and Beijing’s main office in the city.

The chaotic scenes inside the airport have prompted some soul-searching within the largely leaderless movement over whether that violence has undermined their cause.

As some groups sent out apologies, messaging forums used to organise protests have filled with calls to support a planned rally on Sunday organised by the Civil Human Rights Front -- a group that advocates non-violence and has previously managed to get colossal crowds onto the streets.

Myanmar rebels kill at least 15

FROM PAGE 20

they had acted in retaliation.

“The military launched offensives in our area so we are fighting to defend ourselves,” TNLA spokesman Major Mai Aik Kyaw said.

“The Aung San Suu Kyi-led ... government is trying to make peace, but nothing can happen if the military doesn’t participate in it,” he added.

He also confirmed the attacks were coordinated with the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and Arakan Army (AA).

The AA is currently fighting the military, or Tatmadaw, in conflict-

scarred western Rakhine state, but is in a tight alliance with the other rebel groups.

“We assume they carried out the attacks because the Tatmadaw seized tonnes of drugs a few weeks ago,” military spokesman Zaw Min Tun said.

In July, narcotics police were met with heavy artillery fire when they launched a major drugs crackdown in Kutkai township in neighbouring Shan state.

Huge stockpiles of chemicals as well as millions of dollars worth of ice, the highly addictive crystalised

form of meth, were seized in a single raid.

The escalation in hostilities in Myanmar’s fractured north is another setback for civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi’s bid bringing peace to the country amid a stuttering transition from full military rule.

The Nobel laureate came to power following a landslide election win in late 2016, vowing to prioritise peace talks between ethnic armed groups, the military and civilian government. But the conflict has escalated in northern Kachin and Shan states as well as the western Rakhine region on

the border with Bangladesh.

The “Golden Triangle” -- a lawless wedge of land intersecting China, Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos -- has long served as a base for opium and heroin production.

A unilateral ceasefire in Shan state declared by the military in December is officially due to finish in two weeks, even though clashes with armed groups have continued.

China’s plans to invest in major infrastructure projects have added another dimension to the conflict with groups vying for control of increasingly valuable territory.



The Bangladesh women's cricket team, led by Salma Khatun (C), departed for the Netherlands to participate in a 10-day preparation camp ahead of the World T20 qualifiers in Scotland, which begins on August 31, yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Kiwis on level terms after Patel's 5

REUTERS, Galle



New Zealand spinner Ajaz Patel carved through Sri Lanka's top order and took five wickets to even the odds for the visitors after the second day of the opening Test in Galle on Thursday.

New Zealand were bowled out for 249 in the first session but Sri Lanka struggled to get going during Patel's spells and finished on 227-7, trailing by 22 runs.

Openers Dimuth Karunaratne and Lahiru Thirimanne patiently saw off the new ball attack of Trent Boult and Tim Southee before Patel was introduced as early as the 11th

over in spin-friendly conditions.

The Indian-born left-armer, who finished with 5-76, struck in his first over to have Thirimanne stumped. Karunaratne was next to go with a similar delivery that trapped him leg before with the score on 66-2.

Kusal Mendis and Angelo Mathews built a 77-run partnership for the third wicket before Mendis (53) was dismissed the very next ball after bringing up his 10th half-century just before tea.

After a middle-order collapse, where three batsmen added only six runs, wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella (39 not out) and Suranga Lakmal (28 not out) wrested back control with an unbeaten 66-run



AJAZ PATEL... 5 for 76

partnership to keep the test evenly poised.

Earlier Ross Taylor, unbeaten on 86 at stumps on Wednesday, fell to the very first delivery he faced, missing out on his 19th century

after edging fast bowler Lakmal to the wicketkeeper.

After Akila Dananjaya picked up five wickets on the first day, Lakmal (4-29) quickly cleaned up the tail.

The two-Test series, with the second match set for Colombo, is the first for both teams in the newly launched World Test Championship.

SCORES IN BRIEF
NEW ZEALAND: First innings 249 (Raval 33, Latham 30, Taylor 86, Nicholls 42; Lakmal 4-29, Dananjaya 5-80)

SRI LANKA: First innings 227 for 7 (Karunaratne 39, Mendis 53, Mathews 50, Dickwella 39 not out, Lakmal 28 not out; Patel 5-76)

Hazlewood double rocks England

AFP, London



Australia's Josh Hazlewood marked his entry into this season's Ashes with two early wickets before England held firm as the second Test finally got under way at Lord's on Thursday.

England were 76-2 at lunch on the second day, having been 26-2 after Hazlewood captured the wickets of Jason Roy and captain Joe Root.

But Rory Burns (34 not out) and Joe Denly (27 not out) prevented further collapse, with Hazlewood having the excellent figures of two wickets for 14 runs in 10 overs at lunch.

Australia, 1-0 up in the five-match series after a 251-run win in the first Test at Edgbaston last week, saw captain Tim Paine show faith in his attack by deciding to bowl first after winning the toss following Wednesday's opening day washout.

It took just nine balls for his decision to be rewarded.

After Pat Cummins had bowled a probing maiden to Rory Burns, Hazlewood -- recalled in place of James Pattinson in the only change to Australia's side -- struck with just his third ball when Roy was caught behind for a duck by wicketkeeper Paine after fending loosely outside off stump at a rising delivery.

England had now lost their first wicket without a run on the board.

Although the sun was breaking through the clouds, easing the conditions for batting,

that did not stop Australia's new-ball duo from repeatedly beating the outside edge of Root and left-hander Burns -- who scored his maiden Test century at Edgbaston.

But Root, England's best batsman, did hit the first boundaries of the match in when he cover drove two successive Cummins deliveries for textbook fours in the seventh over.

And when first-change Peter Siddler replaced Cummins, England took 13 runs off his first over including three well-struck boundaries.

But Hazlewood then had Root, aiming across his front pad, lbw for 14 with a ball that nipped back.

Root thought about a review but decided against, with England now 26-2 as the under pressure Denly walked out to bat.

England should have been 40-3 but Burns, on 16, saw Usman Khawaja drop a routine gully chance from an edge drive off Siddler.

It is 18 years since Australia last won an Ashes series in England.

Wednesday's washout saw play extended to 98 overs per day, with the follow-on reduced to within 150 runs rather than 200 now this is a four-day match.

On the last two occasions that an entire day's play has been lost in a Lord's Test (first day, 2001 v Pakistan and first day, 2018 v India), the match was still over within four days.

SCORES IN BRIEF
ENGLAND: First innings 76 for 2 at lunch (Burns 34 not out, Denly 27 not out; Hazlewood 2-14)

Aleem equals Bucknor's record

AGENCIES, London

Aleem Dar on Thursday equalled Steve Bucknor's record of officiating in the highest number Test matches after taking the field for the 128th time during the second Ashes Test between England and Australia at Lord's.

"It's a great honour to equal the number of Test matches of my role model, umpire Steve Bucknor," Dar, 51, was quoted as saying by the International Cricket Council in a tweet.

Dar made his Test debut in a match between Bangladesh and England in Dhaka in October 2003. He has since then taken charge of 376 matches across all formats.

Besides Dar and Bucknor, South Africa's Rudi Koertzen is the only other umpire to have reached the three-figure mark in Tests, having stood in 108 Tests before calling it a day in 2010.

Experience counts: Kohli

ICC



India captain Virat Kohli took pride in his 43th one-day international hundred, which sealed a 2-0 series win for his side against West Indies.

Kohli's 114* off 99 balls helped India chase down a DLS-adjusted target of 255 off 35 overs after West Indies posted 240/7 in their 35 overs. It was his second hundred in a row, and an incredible 26th while chasing.

"I've been around for a while," the captain explained. "Experience counts in pressure situations, understanding where the team is heading and what I need to do for the tempo of the game."

"You want to take pride in stepping up for the team as much as you can, and I definitely take a lot of pride in that. So yes, two good games with the bat from me, but, more importantly, we got the result because of my contribution. That feels much better."

Kohli admitted to some nerves in the camp when the match was interrupted by rain. Chris Gayle and Evin Lewis had given the West Indies a blazing start, reminding the Indians why they were rated as "two of the most dangerous players in the world in white-ball cricket". "We tried literally everything, we bowled every ball possible," said Kohli. "That was tremendous batting by them."



Being 92/3 in their reply did little to steady the team's nerves. However, Shreyas Iyer then came together with Kohli to add 120 for the fourth wicket. It was Iyer's second half-century in the series, doing his case to be a regular in the side no harm -- and Kohli said as much.

"Shreyas has come along really well," he said, all praise for the 24-year-old. "He's stepped in and played with confidence. That augers well for the team. He's presented a strong case for himself ... to be a regular feature in the middle order."

"He wasn't intimidated at all, he was confident, very sure of his game."

That's great to see, and hopefully he builds on to this and keeps performing for the team."

In what will come as high praise indeed, Kohli said the youngster's attitude reminded him of himself when he was starting out. "You need to stack up performances and play well under pressure," Kohli said. "I was exactly the same when I came in -- any opportunity I got I wanted to win games for my team. You have taken risks. He was brave under pressure. You need to reveal your game, you need to realise who you are, what your game is, what kind of player you are, so he's heading in the right direction."



Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood celebrates after taking the wicket of England captain Joe Root during the second day of the second Ashes Test at Lord's in London yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



The third one-day international between West Indies and India felt like a farewell for Chris Gayle, but the star opener suggested after the game that he wasn't quite done yet.

Gayle played the match at Port of Spain on Tuesday, with a special '301' jersey -- the shirt number indicating the number of ODIs he has featured in throughout his career, a record for any cricketer from the West Indies.

In the previous match, he had gone past Brian Lara's record ODI runs for West Indies, but had tallied just a scratchy 15 in the first two matches of the series. On Tuesday too, he began with a maiden over, before going on to entertain the crowd with vintage Gayle striking. He launched into Mohammed Shami



with a six in the second over off a free hit and went on to post 114 in 10 overs with Evin Lewis.

Gayle's contribution was 72 in 41 balls, with 62 of those coming in boundaries. Caught by Virat Kohli off the bowling of Khaleel Ahmed, the Jamaican was applauded by the opposition players as he walked off.

He raised his bat, helmet perched on top of it in his now typical style, and the crowd continued to cheer, wondering if it was the last time they'd see him in an ODI.

But, Gayle dismissed suggestions that this was a farewell game. "I didn't announce any retirement," he said in a short video posted by Cricket West Indies, insisting that he would be around "until further notice".

"To my knowledge, he hasn't retired," added Jason Holder, the captain, after the game. "But today was an example of his career. The knock he played was outstanding. He got us off to a really good start. He was entertaining, he showed presence, and that's just what people have come to expect of Chris Gayle over the years."

Kohli, unaware of Gayle's plans, paid tribute to his long-time

teammate at the Indian Premier League. "I would like to congratulate him for a great, great career playing for West Indies," the Indian captain said. "He has done so much for West Indies cricket, and he is an icon all over the world."

"[He is] one of the nicest human beings around. That to me is his nicest quality. Everyone knows about his cricket, but I think the kind of person he is, so helpful with youngsters and so fun-loving and always smiling -- even in the most [high] pressure situations he is always smiling."

"For me, Chris Gayle the person is the best part of him. The cricket everyone knows, [but] I have been fortunate enough to spend a lot of time with him as a friend and get to know him as a person. He is a gem of a human being. I think he can be really proud of that, firstly."

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

Bundesliga

Bayern Munich v Hertha Berlin

Live from 12:30am (Saturday)

SONY SIX

The Ashes

England v Australia

Second Test, Day Three

Live from 4:00pm

SONY ESPN

Sri Lanka v New Zealand

First Test, Day Three

Live from 10:30am

BALOTELLI MOVING BACK TO ITALY

Mario Balotelli is poised for a return to Italy with newly-promoted home town team Brescia, according to multiple reports on Wednesday. Balotelli, who was born in Sicily but adopted and raised just outside the northern city, is set to sign a three-year deal with the Serie B champions after being released by Marseille in June, Gazzetta della Sport and Sky Sport Italia reported. Gazzetta said the deal was worth roughly of three million euros (\$3.3 million) including bonuses a season to the Italian international. The 29-year-old has reportedly rejected a move to Brazilian club Flamengo as he pushes for a place in the national team as Euro 2020 approaches.



--AFP



Liverpool players celebrate with the UEFA Super Cup trophy after winning the final against Chelsea at the Besiktas Park Stadium in Istanbul on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

L’pool win Super Cup on penalties

AFP, Istanbul

Stand-in goalkeeper Adrian capped a “crazy week” as his save from Tammy Abraham allowed Liverpool to beat Chelsea 5-4 on penalties and win the UEFA Super Cup on Wednesday after a richly entertaining match in Istanbul finished 2-2 at the end of extra time.

Every penalty in the shoot-out had been successful before Mohamed Salah converted Liverpool’s fifth kick at the home of Besiktas. Substitute Abraham then had his effort saved by Adrian, the new signing only playing in the absence of the injured Allison Becker.

“Welcome to Liverpool! It’s been a crazy week. I’m really happy for the team, I’m happy to play for Liverpool and happy for the fans,” Adrian, who signed 10 days ago, told BT Sport.

It was Liverpool’s fourth Super Cup victory, with their last coming in 2005 on the back of their memorable Champions League triumph in Istanbul.

They have now won 13 European trophies overall, and how their supporters would love to come back to the banks of the Bosphorus for the final of this season’s Champions League.

“It was a very difficult game for both teams. It was all about winning it and we did that in the end,” admitted manager Jurgen Klopp.

Sadio Mane had earlier been Liverpool’s star, cancelling out Olivier Giroud’s first-half strike to ensure the match ended 1-1 in 90 minutes, and then putting Klopp’s team in front on 95 minutes.

PAST WINNER	
YEAR	CHAMPIONS
2019:	Liverpool
2018:	Atletico Madrid
2017:	Real Madrid
2016:	Real Madrid
2015:	Barcelona
2014:	Real Madrid

But it was perhaps inevitable that French referee Stephanie Frappart would play a role in the outcome of the game.

The first woman to take charge of a major men’s match in European competition, Frappart gave Chelsea a penalty when Abraham went down under contact from Adrian. Jorginho netted the spot-kick.

He also scored in the shoot-out, but there would be no first trophy as Chelsea coach for Frank Lampard, who lost the Super Cup twice with the club as a player. “To lose the game was

disappointing but if it means Chelsea’s season can be something like how we played today, we’ll be ok,” he insisted.

Lampard has stated a willingness to give youth a chance this season, although here he left Mason Mount and Abraham -- aged just 20 and 21 respectively -- on the bench.

N’Golo Kante played after a summer plagued by injury problems, while Giroud started and Christian Pulisic made his full debut.

Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain made his first start for Liverpool in 16 months after injury. The England midfielder released Salah for an early chance only for the Egyptian’s effort to be saved by Kepa Arrizabalaga. However, he generally struggled to make an impact and was replaced at half-time by Roberto Firmino.

Chelsea had enjoyed the better of the opening 45 minutes, with Pedro Rodriguez striking the bar midway through the first half before Adrian saved from Mateo Kovacic.

The opener arrived in the 36th minute, with Kante finding Pulisic and the American drawing several red shirts towards him before releasing Giroud to score.

Shortly after, Pulisic thought he had made it 2-0, but his fine finish was disallowed for offside.

The introduction of Firmino helped change things at the start of the second half, though, with Liverpool needing little more than two minutes to draw level.

The Brazilian knocked the ball into the path of Mane, who scrambled home from close range despite Kepa getting a glove to it.

Kepa fared far better in the 75th minute, blocking a Salah shot and then reacting brilliantly to turn Virgil van Dijk’s follow-up onto the woodwork.

Brought on from the bench along with Abraham, Mount briefly thought he had restored Chelsea’s lead late on but his crisp low strike was disallowed.

On into extra time they went and, to the delight of the crowd, who were mostly supporting the European champions, Liverpool went 2-1 up thanks to that same combination.

Mane found Firmino and then latched onto the Brazilian’s cutback and fired home off the underside of the bar.

But, in the 101st minute, Jorginho converted from the spot to bring back the possibility of a penalty shoot-out.

Having conceded that spot-kick, Adrian later produced a firm hand to deny Mount and was at it again as he denied Abraham to secure the trophy.

City aim to banish memories of exit

REUTERS, Manchester



Tottenham Hotspur ended Manchester City’s European ambitions last season and they will be looking to dent Pep Guardiola’s side’s hopes of winning a third successive Premier League title when they meet at the Etihad Stadium on Saturday.

A rare setback in a near impeccable season from City came in April with a dramatic exit to Spurs in the Champions League quarterfinal.

City won the second-leg 4-3 but went out on away goals after a late goal from Raheem Sterling, which would have sent City through, was dramatically ruled out for offside following a VAR video review.

Just three days later the pair met again in the league as Guardiola’s side kept their title run on track with a 1-0 victory.

Both teams began their Premier League campaigns in winning fashion with City sweeping aside West Ham United with a 5-0 win at London Stadium while Spurs struggled before emerging as 3-1 victors at home to promoted Aston Villa.

City will be relieved that Spurs’ South Korean winger Son Heung-min will miss the game while he serves a three-game

suspension.

Son scored the only goal of the Champions League first leg and struck twice in the second-leg but Harry Kane, who missed the last two meetings, has begun the season in form with a double against Villa.

Liverpool will need to recover quickly from their penalty shootout win over Chelsea in the Super Cup in Istanbul on Wednesday as they face a trip to Southampton on Saturday.

Juergen Klopp’s side began the season well with a 4-1 win over Norwich City but are without their first choice keeper Alisson Becker who picked up a calf injury in that opener.

Frank Lampard’s Chelsea suffered a 4-0 loss at Manchester United in their first outing but showed plenty of promise in Istanbul and have an extra day to recover before taking on Leicester City at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

Manchester United have a tricky trip to Wolverhampton Wanderers on Monday, returning to the venue where they were beaten 2-1 in the FA Cup quarterfinal in March.

Arsenal will look to follow-up their win at Newcastle United with another three points against Sean Dyche’s Burnley at the Emirates on Saturday.



Juventus forward Paulo Dybala (R) celebrates one of his two goals with teammate Miralem Pjanic during their friendly match against Juventus B in Villar Perosa on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Kyrgios loses his cool

AFP, Cincinnati



Nick Kyrgios stepped off court to smash two racquets and toss his shoes to spectators Wednesday in a meltdown during a second-round ATP Cincinnati Masters loss to Russia’s Karen Khachanov.

Eighth-seeded Khachanov rallied for a 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/4) 6-2 victory over the volatile Australian, but the final set was close to farce, with Kyrgios engaged in a running dialogue with Irish chair umpire Fergus Murphy.

“He has a really great talent but sometimes the head not in the right place,” Khachanov said.

“It was a really difficult match for me -- I had to really work it out, how to get the win.

“It’s really tough (playing Kyrgios), not only for me but for everybody. You have to try and handle it, then you can have chances to win the match. Always try to stay in there.”

Kyrgios, who won his sixth career ATP singles crown two weeks ago in Washington, also complained last week in Toronto in an apparent dispute as to why he could not have a white towel during a match.

World number 27 Kyrgios, rarely far from controversy, was defaulted three months ago after throwing a chair as he quit a match in Rome.

The latest iteration of the Kyrgios saga erupted after he lost the second set to Khachanov.

Sitting in his chair at the pause, Kyrgios suddenly announced he was going on a bathroom break, with Murphy telling him there was no time.



The Aussie walked anyway, carrying two racquets with him. Television showed him going through a stadium door partly made of glass and smashing his racquets before collecting them and walking back onto court.

All the while, he was nagging and occasionally cursing at Murphy.

Kyrgios calmly held his own at the start of the final set, producing a hold which featured three aces.

But it was the ice-calm Khachanov who took advantage, breaking for 4-2 and running out to a 5-2 margin.

Kyrgios, by now hardly in the match, double-faulted to hand over two match points and served up another double after saving a first match point.

He refused to shake Murphy’s hand on the way off court and tossed his shoes and other soft articles into the crowd and handing his broken racquets to young fans before walking off.

At one point in the drama, Kyrgios stood at the back of the court, wrapping his racquet grip, which Murphy kept telling him he was not ready.

Kyrgios told Khachanov to go ahead and serve, but the Russian declined until all was in place on the Kyrgios side of the net.

Tournament supervisor Gerry Armstrong sat near the court, observing, but was not called upon to make any ruling during the bizarre closing stages of the evening.

UEFA PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Van Dijk, Messi, CR7 in shortlist

REUTERS, Nyon

Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Virgil Van Dijk have been shortlisted for the UEFA Player of the Year award, the sport’s European governing body said on Thursday.

While Ronaldo, a three-time winner, has been ever-present in the final three since the award was created in 2011, centre back Van Dijk makes his first appearance after helping Liverpool win the Champions League title last season.

Van Dijk was voted both the Premier League Player of the Season and the Players’ Player of the Year, and was instrumental in the Merseyside club’s sixth European Cup triumph.

Two-time award winner Messi was the leading scorer in both La Liga (36 goals) and the Champions League (12 goals) last season but his Barcelona side fell in the semifinal stage to Liverpool, who overcame a three-goal deficit in the second leg to advance.

Ronaldo did not fare too well in Europe in his debut season with Juventus, the Italian side losing in the quarterfinals to Ajax.

Dybala stars in alpine opener

AFP, Villar Perosa



Paulo Dybala brushed aside speculation over his future with a double for Juventus as Cristiano Ronaldo and new signings Aaron Ramsey and Matthijs de Ligt sat out the club’s traditional alpine curtain raiser on Wednesday.

Nearly 5,000 fans crammed into the “Gaetano Scirea” stadium in Villar Perosa at the foot of the Italian Alps, for the annual friendly between the Juventus first team and youth B side, won 3-1 by the senior players.

Dybala has been linked with a move to Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur and Paris Saint-Germain, but with banners saying “Stay with us Paolo” the 25-year-old slotted in the first goal from the penalty spot after 14 minutes.

The youth team drew level in the 38th minute when Juventus’s newly-signed Turkish defender Merih Demiral turned into his own net.

But Dybala added his second with the game approaching half-time and Juan Cuadrado scored third from close range before the game ended in the 51st minute with a traditional pitch invasion by fans.

“He is a Juve player, he is a great Juventus player,” sporting director Fabio Paratici said of Dybala.

“What is happening with Dybala is what happens with all the players during a transfer window.

“There are rumours, there are discussions, there are negotiations ... The market is open and there is interest, but there are no names who are closer to sale.”

Gianluigi Buffon returned to the Juve goal after his underwhelming season at Paris Saint-Germain, with Gonzalo Higuain also back after his loan to Chelsea last season and coach Maurizio Sarri on the bench after also arriving from London.

Ronaldo was sidelined with a slight thigh problem, along with De Ligt and Welsh international Ramsey.

Five-time Ballon d’Or winner Ronaldo happily signed autographs amid a party atmosphere on what was also captain Giorgio Chiellini’s 35th birthday.

On the sidelines were club president Andrea Agnelli and his cousin John Elkann, chairman of Fiat Chrysler.

Angry Korean fan confronts Ronaldo

AFP, Seoul

An angry South Korean fan flew to Sweden to confront Juventus superstar Cristiano Ronaldo for sitting out a friendly in Seoul, the latest in a bizarre row that has prompted a police investigation.

In an 11-minute clip posted on his Youtube channel, which has racked up nearly 3,000,000 views, Kwak Ji-hyuk approaches the Portuguese striker at a hotel in Stockholm.


As Ronaldo appears in the lobby of the hotel, Kwak shouts in English, “Why didn’t you play in Korea?” only to be ignored.

Ronaldo remained on the bench throughout last month’s exhibition game in the Korean capital, enraging fans who threatened a class action lawsuit and prompting a police probe into alleged fraud.

Kwak films himself making several more attempts to grab the star’s attention, including waving a sign written in Portuguese.

“Even when I put the sign right in front of his eyes, I was utterly ignored,” Kwak says in the video.

“You are so nice to your fans here but why did you do that to us?” he adds bitterly.



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Road crashes claim 18 lives

81 injured in six districts

STAR REPORT

At least 18 people were killed and 81 others were injured in separate road accidents in six districts yesterday.

Of the 18 dead, seven were killed in Feni, four in Faridpur, three in Kishoreganj, two Sirajganj and one each in Gopalganj and Mymensingh.

Of the 81 injured, 32 were in Faridpur, 20 each in Feni and Sirajganj, four in Mymensingh, four Kishoreganj and one in Gopalganj.

The injured were admitted in different hospitals in these districts and Dhaka, reports our correspondents.

In Feni, the accident took place when the driver of a Cox's Bazar-bound bus lost his control over the steering on the Dhaka-Chattagram highway and hit a roadside tree near the Lemua Bridge area in Sadar upazila around 6:00am.

The passengers started their journey from the capital's Pallabi.

The accident left two passengers dead on the spot, two died on their way to a local hospital and three others died while undergoing treatment, said police.

Of the dead, two were identified -- Shadat Hossain, 30, from Feni; and Sujan Miah, 40, from Munshiganj.

In Faridpur, at least four people were killed and 32 injured in two separate road accidents at Bhanga and Sadarpur upazilas.

Three of the dead were identified as Rowsan Fakir, 35, Mira Kundu, 60, and Sattar Mollah, 40, police said.

The first accident took place at around 8:30am when a Tuhin Paribahan bus took off from Faridpur and was on its way to Nilphamari's Saidpur and collided head-on with a local bus in Bhanga upazila's Nowpara area.

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A rickshaw with passengers falls on its side after hitting a pothole on Mitford Road in old Dhaka yesterday. The busy road has been in a poor condition for months, but the authorities seem to have done nothing to repair it.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

ATTACKS ON MILITARY Myanmar rebels kill at least 15

AGENCIES

At least 15 people have been killed yesterday in ongoing fighting between Myanmar's military and rebels who mounted a series of attacks, including an unprecedented strike on an army academy, apparently in retaliation for massive drug seizures.

Ethnic armed rebel groups have for decades fought against the military -- and often between themselves -- for land and resources in Myanmar's east.

Experts say the area is now the world's largest meth-producing region, funding the complex web of conflicts.

Yesterday's brazen assault targeted Pyn Oo Lwin, a tourist town near Mandalay, which is also home to barracks teeming with soldiers receiving training.

An AFP reporter at a police post, the site of one of the attacks, counted the bodies of seven soldiers and four policemen.

Military spokesman Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun told AFP three more people, two soldiers and one civilian, had been killed and that fighting was "still ongoing".

This brings the death toll to at least 14. Reuters put the death toll at 15.

One of the five attacks targeted the town's Defence Service Technology Academy, where military engineers are trained, the first-ever time the training centre has been hit.

The military said rebels had fired 107mm rockets at the academy from a nearby hillside. Images from local media showing burned out cars and damaged buildings showered in debris.

The Taaung National Liberation Army (TNLA) claimed the attacks, saying

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SACRIFICIAL CATTLE SALE Big losses for small traders

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The small scale cattle traders, who came to Dhaka with sacrificial animals expecting those to be sold at a better price ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, incurred huge loss this year.

The Daily Star spoke to 10 such traders of different cattle markets in Dhaka and eight of them faced loss. Although the rest of the two did not incur loss, they failed get their expected profit.

Sanwar Mandal, a cattle trader who took his sacrificial animals to Dhupkhola cattle market from Pabna's Ishwardi upazila, said he took a loan of Tk 4 lakh from a local NGO and invested a total of Tk 9 lakh.

He said, "I brought 15 cattle and returned home with three. I had to make a loss of Tk 3 lakh.

"I would never go to Dhaka again. Even if I prepare cattle for the next Eid I will sell those at local markets."

Jinarul Haque, another trader who tried his luck with 13 cattle at Kauartek cattle market, said he made a loss of Tk 1.65 lakh.

"I am completely destroyed. I cannot express in words how my family and I spent the Eid," he said.

Another cattle trader Milon Reza, who brought 13 sacrificial animals to Kamlapur

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3 factors behind rawhide mess

Lack of market monitoring, syndication of tanners and traders, cash crunch of merchants led to drastic fall in demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 35 percent of over 1 crore pieces of rawhide were thrown away after this Eid, mainly due to slack market monitoring by the government, a syndication of tanners and merchants, and a lack of capital to buy rawhide, said sources in the sector.

With the damage put at nearly Tk 100 crore, tanners and merchants suggested the government fixes a minimum price rate for unsalted rawhide to ensure better prices.

Before this Eid, the commerce ministry fixed the prices of salt-applied rawhide of cows and buffaloes at Tk 45-50 per square foot in the capital and Tk 35-40 elsewhere. The price of rawhide of castrated goats was fixed at Tk 18-20 per square foot, while it was Tk 13-15 for that of uncastrated goats.

The rate was fixed for rawhide merchants and tanners. There was, however, no fixed rate for small traders who collect rawhide at the field level.

After the Eid, seasonal traders across the country threw away thousands of pieces of rawhide, failing to sell those for a drastic fall in demand.

In such a situation, the government has decided to export rawhide.

On the slack monitoring by the government, Md Mofizul Islam, senior secretary to the commerce ministry, said there was no such monitoring in the rawhide market.

"So, we could not predict that such a situation will come," he said.

Mofizul, however, hoped that rawhide merchants would get fair prices as tanners agreed to buy hide from Saturday.

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Second UK cop exposed to Novichok

AFP, London

A second UK police officer was exposed to a Soviet-era nerve agent used in last year's attack on a former Russian spy in the English city Salisbury, British detectives said yesterday.

Former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia fell into comas after coming into contact with a banned chemical called Novichok in March 2018.

They both survived but a local resident named Dawn Sturgess died after picking up a perfume bottle UK police believe was used to transport it from Russia.

The UK government is seeking the extradition of two suspected members of Russia's military intelligence service that London believes carried out the attack on Kremlin orders.

Moscow denies its involvement.

Detectives from Britain's

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

Japan temple puts faith in robot priest



AFP, Kyoto

A 400-year-old temple in Japan is attempting to hot-wire interest in Buddhism with a robotic priest it believes will change the face of the religion -- despite critics comparing the android to "Frankenstein's monster."

The android Kannon, based on the Buddhist deity of mercy, preaches sermons at Kodaiji temple in Kyoto, and its human colleagues predict that with artificial intelligence it could one day acquire unlimited wisdom.

"This robot will never die, it will just keep updating itself and evolving," priest Tensho Goto told AFP.

"That's the beauty of a robot. It can store knowledge forever and limitlessly.

"With AI we hope it will grow in wisdom to help people overcome even the most difficult

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PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 16

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:25 12:30 4:45 6:38 8:00
JAMAAT 5:00 1:15 5:00 6:41 8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



NATURE QUEST

THE BEE HUNTER

A blue-tailed bee-eater sits on a bamboo pole in Chapainawabganj Sadar's Babu Dyeing area. The richly coloured, slender bird mainly eats insects, especially bees, which it catches during flight. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN



HK PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTS Beijing will not sit by and watch

Warns Chinese envoy in London; Trump urges Xi to resolve crisis

AFP, London

China will not "sit by and watch" and is ready to "quell the unrest swiftly" if the crisis in Hong Kong becomes "uncontrollable", China's ambassador in London said yesterday.

"If the situation deteriorates further into unrest uncontrollable by the SAR (Special Administrative Region) government, then the central government will not sit by and watch," Liu Xiaoming said in a televised press conference.

"We have enough solutions and enough power to quell the unrest swiftly," he said.

Images taken by AFP earlier yesterday showed thousands of Chinese military personnel waving red flags and parading at a sports stadium in the city of Shenzhen, just across the border from Hong Kong.

Dozens of armoured personnel carriers and supply trucks were also parked nearby.

"We hope this will end in an orderly way. In the meantime we are fully prepared for the worst," Liu said.

He also protested against "foreign interference" in the Hong Kong protests and urged British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government to handle the issue with "great caution".

"I think some politicians in this country... still regard Hong Kong as part of the British empire," he said.

Chinese state-run media reported this week that the elements of the People's Armed Police (PAP), which is under the command of the Central Military Commission,

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