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BNP-Jamaat govt involved in August 21 carnage: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Alleging that the then BNP-Jamaat government was involved in the August 21 grenade attack, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said it is not possible to carry out such an attack without the patronage of a government. "Such an incident could not have taken place in broad daylight without the patronage of the then BNP-Jamaat coalition which was in power at that time," she told a discussion at the auditorium of Krishibid Institution Bangladesh in the capital.

The Awami League organised the event marking the 15th anniversary of the grenade attack.

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Flanked by senior Awami League leaders, Prime Ministers Sheikh Hasina stands on stage for a moment of silence to remember those who perished in the August 21, 2004, grenade attack on an AL rally on Bangabandhu Avenue. The photo was taken at a discussion programme held at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh yesterday.

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION ATTEMPT Doomed to failure again?

Refugees not willing to go back unless demands met

PORIMOL PALMA and MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAH

The second attempt to repatriate Rohingyas to Myanmar scheduled for today may be futile, as many of the refugees are unwilling to go back. "We are good here. If we are to go there [to Myanmar], we must have citizenship and the right to freedom of movement," said Lalu Majhi, a Rohingya leader, echoing the views of a number of Rohingyas at Shalban Rohingya camp in Teknaf.

Some Rohingyas, under anonymity, said they had told the UNHCR that they would not go back to Myanmar if their demands were not met.

The Rohingyas' demands are: holding accountable those who killed and tortured Rohingyas and drove them out of their land; ensuring citizenship and security of Rohingyas in Myanmar; giving back their land and properties; and protecting all fundamental rights of Rohingyas in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

They argue that the situation in Rakhine is not safe and they don't have any guarantee of citizenship, freedom of movement and recognition of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

JAHA ALAM FLIGHT HC seeks info on ACC officials

Ashutosh Sarkar and Mahbubur Rahman Khan

Of the 11 investigators, 8 were promoted in January

The High Court yesterday sought to know the names and other particulars of the 11 Anti-Corruption Commission officials whose faulty investigations led to the wrongful imprisonment of Jaha Alam, a jute mill worker, for three years.

The ACC will have to furnish the details and place a report before the court by August 28, the HC said in a suo moto order after the anti-graft body informed the court that departmental proceedings were underway against the 11.

ACC counsel Khurshid Alam Khan later told The Daily Star that the commission had issued show-cause notices to these officials, but their replies were unsatisfactory. This is why the commission has filed departmental cases against them, he said, adding that they can still hold their posts while the proceedings are underway.

The matter came to light in February last year after a private television ran a report on Jaha Alam's plight. He was finally released on February 4 this year following an HC order.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

DENGUE OUTBREAK

NEW CASES IN LAST 24 HRS
1,626

TOTAL DENGUE CASES
57,995

OUTSIDE DHAKA
23,010

DEATH
47 (Unofficially 107)

UNDERGOING TREATMENT
6,278

SOURCE: DGHS

Med students lend a hand

Help doctors, nurses struggling to cope with the deluge of dengue patients at Suhrawardy hospital

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Fifth year medical student Sujit Hossain recovered from dengue just a month ago.

The student of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital saw how much the patients suffered and how doctors and caregivers struggled to cope with the huge number of dengue patients.

These motivated him to do something for the dengue patients, and since Saturday, he has been spending two to three hours every day at the hospital, lending a hand to the



interns and doctors. Like him, around 50 fifth year students of the medical college have been providing assistance to the

doctors of the hospital since last month. The Hospital authorities are allowing the students to assist the doctors in checking the blood pressure, pulse and temperature of patients.

"It took me around a month to be fit and start volunteering," said Sujit. Every day, he spends around seven hours at the college and make time for the voluntary services after evening.

Another student, Abu Ryhan said, "We also motivate the patients to use mosquito nets as many of them are

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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Jaishankar's visit

Vague responses to two crucial issues

THE Indian external affairs minister's maiden visit to Dhaka, was not one that garnered high expectations as it is considered to serve the protocol of formally bringing an invitation to our prime minister from her Indian counterpart and completing the preparatory work for it. Even so, we cannot help but feel disappointed by Mr S Jaishankar's visit if not by what was said but more so by what remained unsaid.

Two issues need to be mentioned here—the case with regard to water sharing agreements and the issue of the NRC—two issues of great concern for Bangladesh. While Mr Jaishankar expressed India's desire to find a "mutually acceptable" formula to share water from 54 upper riparian rivers, he was rather vague regarding the Teesta water sharing treaty. When asked about it he merely said that there was no change in India's commitment to the position it had taken. The last time we checked, the two countries could not sign a deal during former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh in 2011 because West Bengal's Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had vehemently opposed the deal. And in 2015, the then Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said that there would be no deal without the West Bengal government on board. Is this the position Mr Jaishankar is referring to?

His response "it is an internal matter of India" with regard to the National Register of Citizens in Assam that has left out around four million Bangla-speaking people at risk of losing citizenship and facing possible expulsion from India, is rather confusing. What will be the fate of the four million people who are excluded? Will they be pushed into Bangladesh? We raise the question because statements from Indian leaders, including the home minister, all but indirectly hinted so. Also, the cut off year being 1971, leaves little doubt of what may happen.

The Indian external minister's stress on easing the process for people's visits to the countries, assurances to address the border killing issue, readiness to provide assistance to the Rohingyas in Bangladesh and enthusiasm regarding enhancing India's economic partnership with Bangladesh were some of the more positive outcomes of the visit and we thank him for them.

We look forward to our prime minister's visit to India and hope that her meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the contentious issues and result in sustainable solutions that will give a genuine boost to the cordial relations the two countries share. Given our extremely warm relationship with India, we have great expectations from the upcoming summit.

Farmers deprived of fair price

Fingers pointed at officials, middlemen

AGRICULTURE and food security, both of which have been cornerstones of government policy, have resulted in robust crop production in the country. Yet, we find that farmers in Sunamganj's haor areas have not been getting the benefit of the various procurement policies that the state has in place. Allegedly, middlemen have been making use of fake farmer cards to buy paddy. This malpractice, along with others, is apparently depriving genuine farmers of the benefit of selling paddy as listed farmers and getting the government-fixed price of Tk 1,040 per maund.

Although only seven percent of paddy growers are to be enlisted in the government procurement, the enlistment process is handled by representatives of local government bodies like union parishads. The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) then arranges lotteries and selects farmers from whom the paddy will be procured. Farmers allege that there is foul play, i.e. only farmers with party links are shortlisted to be eligible to participate in the lottery. Although this has been denied by the authorities, one cannot rule it out because there is no monitoring mechanism available at present.

Since only 25,000 out of an estimated 384,000 farmers in Sunamganj get enlisted to supply paddy at government rate, the rest are forced to sell their crop in the open market at about Tk 520-650 per maund. What it all boils down to is that a fraction of farmers is benefiting from government procurement of paddy and the rest are left to their own devices. Middlemen, wholesalers and mill owners can, and do, offer prices that are nearly half the rate offered by the authorities, and this means that the price per maund of paddy is worth less than 1 kg of Hilsa.

If we take into account that there is politics in choosing which farmers qualify to sell paddy to the government and the existence of fake farmer cards, it is also possible that farmers will start losing interest in growing paddy next season. That will have serious ramifications for food security in the country, and it is time the DAE looked into these allegations seriously.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Are we really growing?

Despite Bangladesh's high economic growth, both the agricultural and industrial sectors have been unable to create enough jobs, which is raising serious questions about the significance of the country's growth.

Economic growth and economic development are not synonymous. The former is the increase in the production of goods and services within a nation, for a specific period of time.

Economic development emphasises on both qualitative and quantitative growth of the economy. It is denoted by an increase in the per capita income of every citizen, with the quality of living standard being a major indicator of it. Therefore, economic development should be given more focus for Bangladesh to truly progress. Balanced and uniform development is more necessary than just achieving high economic growth. Our experts should come up with policies that would ensure the trickling down of our growth to even the lowest quintile of individuals in our economic pyramid.

Md Zillur Rahaman, by email

Slums: Whose problem is it anyway?



TASNEEM TAYEB

THE recent fire incident at the Chalantika slum in Mirpur has perhaps been the kindest to the victims: claiming no lives, only their life's possessions. The fire that broke out

around 7:20pm on August 16, 2019, engulfed more than a thousand shanties, leaving thousands of people homeless. It took 24 firefighting units hours to reign in the insatiable flames. A lot of the slum dwellers had been away to their native villages to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha, serendipitously escaping the blazing fires. Concerned authorities have also been quick to contain the situation and provide relief to the affected people, with DNCC operating treatment facilities for the victims.

According to a UNDP report, slum dwellers account for more than 33 percent of the capital's population. For these rootless millions, life can be precarious, and rife for exploitation. For instance, despite poverty being their calling card, shanty dwellers actually pay inflated rents for their cramped, fragile and at times fatal accommodations. The report cites a 2017 study by Bangladesh University that reveals that slumlords on average earn Tk 47 per square foot per month for the accommodation provided, almost twice the amount a resident has to pay for a formal, decent accommodation in even upscale areas such as Dhanmondi.

The shanty residents also pay exorbitant amounts to get basic utility services such as electricity, gas and water. Oftentimes, the costs are covered by the governments, the risks—the fatal risks of makeshift infrastructure—are borne by the residents, while the benefits are pocketed by the slumlords.

Take the recent fire incident at Chalantika slum for example. Although the exact cause of fire is yet to be ascertained, it has been suggested that the fire spread fast due to faulty gas supply mechanism. The slumlords had been illegally supplying gas to the residents through plastic pipes. According to a report published in this daily, Rezaul Karim, assistant director of the Fire Service and Civil Defence in Dhaka, has this to say about the incident: "We found illegal gas connections in the slum when we were conducting search operation [on August 17]. The gas was supplied through plastic pipes. The plastic pipes melted in the heat, releasing the gas and helping the fire spread faster to adjacent shanties."



PHOTO: SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Dwellers inspect the remains of their possessions after a fire engulfed Mirpur's Chalantika slum last week.

According to a report published in *Prothom Alo*, the slum dwellers had each been paying Tk 500 for this faulty and illegal gas connection, which amounts to Tk 75 lakh per month. Unfortunately, since the gas was being provided illegally, not a single penny reached the utility providers—Titas Gas in this case.

According to the same report, almost Tk 1.5 crore was being paid every month by the slum dwellers for gas, electricity and water connection. The money was allegedly being collected by the henchmen of two political hotshots of the ruling party, who divided it between themselves.

It wouldn't take too much of a leap of faith to assume this case to be fairly representative of the goings-on of the nearly 3,400 slums of Dhaka. According to a report published by this daily in 2017, there were at least 10,000 illegal gas connections in Korail slum, which were being provided by two syndicates. They collected more than Tk 5 million every month from the shanty residents. Galvanised Iron (GI) and plastic pipes have been used to supply gas to the residents, which increases the possibility of fire hazard manifold. Korail slum has witnessed multiple fire incidents in recent years, with some attributed to gas explosions.

Apart from such obvious risk factors, sanitation and hygiene, security, and unhealthy living conditions are also part of the myriad problems slum dwellers face day in, day out. At all times, their perilous existence hangs in the balance, stuck between a rock—the insatiable hunger of their willing hosts—and a hard place—the threat of eviction in a moment's notice.

In the midst of all these issues, one wonders why successive governments in the last few decades have not taken measures to provide concrete shelter to the slum dwellers. After all, these people form a significant workforce, part of the reason why our economy enjoys its low-cost advantage to this day. If nothing else, these are enfranchised citizens of our country, guaranteed by our constitution to live "free from exploitation", part of "a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens."

Not that the government did not undertake projects to address the plight of slum dwellers. In 1998, the government did initiate the well-intentioned Tk 341 crore Bhashantek Rehabilitation Project in Mirpur, which was meant to provide 7,560 flats for the urban poor. The project was never quite the resounding success

it was hoped to have been. Financial irregularities, mismanagement, and corruption took their toll, and soon the project had to be shelved, and along with it the possibility of a sustainable and affordable housing for the urban poor. As tends to be the case, it is they who would ultimately pay the price.

It is a strangely cyclical life, the boom of the bright city lights and the bust of the bright city lights, followed by the boom of exploitation, eviction and mortality. There are many possible solutions that have been tried, to varying degrees of success, around the world—solutions we could learn from. But looking at them, we see a common thread that holds all such shanties together—a confluence of vested interests that has a built-in machine designed to systematically exploit millions of vulnerable households for the profit of a few, feeding this vicious cycle in perpetuity.

It is a complex problem, but perhaps the solution starts with a simple step: accepting ownership of this challenge as a society, and demanding the requisite will from our public representatives to strike a blow that will not just dent but also shatter this hungry machine.

Tasneem Tayeb is a member of the editorial team at *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is @TayebTasneem.

Rohingya children staring at a bleak future

DAVID SKINNER

13-YEAR-OLD Fatima (not her real name) is acutely aware of the importance of school. She fled Myanmar two years ago with nothing. She now lives in the world's biggest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar with her parents, two sisters and grandfather. She has faced difficulties most children her age never will. She wants to be a teacher, but not just any teacher. She wants to teach girls because when girls are educated, they teach others.

In August 2017, over half a million Rohingya children were forced from

solidarity, the people of Bangladesh gave them sanctuary and a sense of security that they had lacked in Myanmar. The world came together to support the people of Bangladesh: individuals, aid agencies, governments and the UN system mobilised to make sure that child refugees and their carers had somewhere to live and the opportunity to exercise their basic rights.

Because of this mobilisation, the tragedy of a forced exile did not lead to a humanitarian disaster. A large forest area in Cox's Bazar was cleared, makeshift shelters were erected, children were fed and outbreaks of disease were controlled.

But life for Rohingya refugee children like Fatima remains bleak. She is so eager to learn but has no opportunity when it comes to secondary or tertiary education. By only being able to provide a rudimentary primary-level education in the camps, we are failing Rohingya refugee children, robbing them of the chance to serve their communities and indeed the world at large. We are robbing Fatima of her dream to become a teacher. It's not acceptable.

The shelters children live in are temporary, made of bamboo and plastic sheeting. They wouldn't survive a strong wind, let alone a cyclone. One in 10

ago have also had their lives turned upside down. A quiet, rural network of villages and small market towns has had to deal with the arrival of a million people. Homes and villages surrounding the refugee camps are much more susceptible to the impacts of flooding and landslides because of the degradation of the surrounding forest. Healthcare services that were already at full capacity prior to the crisis are now overloaded. Resentment is on the rise. Children from the host community are uncertain about their futures too.

Yet two years on we are no closer to a solution, no way out, no avenue for the 600,000 children living in the camps in Cox's Bazar. The prospect of a safe, voluntary and dignified return to Myanmar is remote. No third country is coming forward to offer resettlement. There is no prospect of a significant, settled relocation within Bangladesh.

Rohingya children are said to be turning into a lost generation—a cliché often associated with long-term refugees. But they are not lost. The world knows where they are. They need support now to ensure they can learn, that they are safe, and they are healthy. They must not be forgotten. To do so would not be acceptable.

Rohingya children must also have a sense of hope: something to suggest that they will one day be able to fulfil their aspirations. The government and people of Bangladesh have done a great global good in sheltering the Rohingya population the last two years. They need continued support from across the world.

But long-term solution to this crisis lies in Myanmar. Conditions must be created to support the Rohingya's safe and voluntary return to their homes. For these conditions to exist, perpetrators of crimes against the Rohingya must be held accountable. Second, the Government of Myanmar must stop the conflict in Rakhine. Third, in line with Article 7 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, Rohingya children should have a clear and unambiguous nationality.

The lives of all children in Cox's Bazar—Rohingya and Bangladeshi—have been affected by this crisis. We owe it to Fatima to give her a chance in life, to support her in realising her dreams; and not become a victim of a conflict she had no part in.

The world must do better.

David Skinner is working as the Team Leader for Rohingya Response at Save the Children in Bangladesh.



Rohingya children stand in a queue at a registration camp in Cox's Bazar.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

their homes. It was the biggest mass displacement of people since the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The Rohingya children told us that they have witnessed rape, torture and killing. Some were raped and tortured themselves; many saw their friends and family getting killed before their eyes. All they could do was run while their homes burned.

With very little, they made their way across the border from Myanmar to Bangladesh. In a remarkable act of

Although a major health emergency was averted, more than a million refugees continue to suffer.

Save the Children has been working in Cox's Bazar providing support to the most vulnerable people, both refugee and Bangladeshi children, in health, nutrition, hygiene, education and—perhaps above all—child protection. To date we have reached more than 400,000 children with our life-saving interventions.

children are still malnourished. Fears of trafficking, drugs and violent crimes in the camps make children feel unsafe. Simple tasks like fetching water or going to the latrine after dark can be dangerous as children navigate through the poorly lit camps with little in the way of security. This is not acceptable either.

But it's not just Rohingya refugee children who need our help. The children in the communities who welcomed the Rohingya two years

Setting standards in the real estate business



MARK NOSWORTHY

ALONG with the rapid development of the country, the real estate sector of Bangladesh is also expanding steadily. The sector is on the rise due to

the growing demands for housing, expanding middle-class and increasing per capita income. But the country lacks real estate benchmarking, which is a standard of measurement for financial characteristics of property.

Real estate benchmarking has been designed to help investors better avoid reckless speculation. Generally, this refers to the comparison of potential real estate investment properties against a predetermined framework of measurement.

According to the regulations of Bangladesh Bank, an individual customer can secure a maximum housing loan of Tk 12 million. The process of getting a home loan has also become more convenient than in previous years. Concerned authorities are now offering housing loans even in the suburbs, districts and upazilas. Now the question is: how can people ensure the maximum utilisation of their home loans?

The performance of the real estate market is difficult to measure in Bangladesh as information is scarce and many transactions are kept confidential. It is important to be able to compare costs within and across markets, which is only possible in a real estate sector that has benchmarking. But people cannot do this in Bangladesh as the country has no specific method for real estate benchmarking. The situation results in



Dusk settling over Dhaka's skyline.

PHOTO: AHNAF SABER/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

the harassment of many people.

In the USA, both at the operational level and at the corporate strategy level, benchmarking of facilities is frequently related to the area of space occupied. The common benchmarks adopted relate the cost of service provision per unit of area occupied; it can also indicate some measure of staff or business productivity per unit of area. The USA also has a number of published methods of measuring property areas that are used to benchmark corporate real estate.

If people have knowledge about a property, including its price and facilities, it becomes easier for them to decide what they want to do with

it. But in most cases, this doesn't happen in Bangladesh. It's natural that prices of assets will vary depending on location. But here, both commercial builders and individual owners demand prices without considering the value of their properties. They take different amounts of money, whatever they can get from different clients, even if the property types are similar and located in the same area. They also take rents from their tenants in a similar fashion. Rent may differ to some extent due to interior designs. But it has been reported that tenants in the same building, with the same facilities of similar apartments, sometimes pay different rents. This

is happening due to the lack of real estate benchmarking.

Real estate benchmarking helps a real estate investor or owner to realise their ideal number for each indicator, which the investor can use to evaluate whether a property is worth investing in. It gives investors precise equations that allow them to judge property value based on how much it's worth right then and what kind of profits it was able to generate in the past. The results of these calculations are known as benchmark indicators. In the same way, benchmarking will enable tenants to decide in which areas they could find their desired residences according to their

affordability.

If there was a real estate benchmarking standard in Bangladesh, many problems could be avoided. By discussing the issue with representatives of private organisations, land owners and related government bodies, concerned authorities can finalise a method of real estate benchmarking in Bangladesh.

Benchmarking of real estate management is required for efficient management of assets to support the core business. Management activities of benchmarked facilities are required to have common measure upon which to base comparisons. Survey reports say that a significant proportion of these measures relates to a property's location. They include better transportation and communication facilities, proximity to educational institutions and workplaces, and the residential environment of the locality. So these things should be considered while finalising a method of benchmarking in an area.

In this situation, players in the real estate sector online services can play an important role in establishing real estate benchmarking in Bangladesh. They can make people realise the advantages of real estate benchmarking and arrange a meeting among all concerned authorities, who can finalise the process and set a method of benchmarking for the sector.

If benchmarking is established here, it would be much easier to develop the real estate sector. It can be a way to establish annual performance goals of the country. Concerned authorities can use benchmarking to set the stage for strategic actions to meet these goals.

Mark Nosworthy is the CEO of Bproperty.com, a Bangladeshi real estate service.

Seeing life anew

SHIFTING IMAGES



MILLA ALI

AS some of you may have noticed, I have been absent from the writing scene for about six months. No, I haven't retired from column writing—rather it has been a forced hiatus. Forced by an eye condition that struck without any prior warning. The affliction that stole part of my right eyesight came

stealthily and silently—a white fog refusing to be dislodged obstructed my vision.

Following a battery of tests and scans of intricate eye vessels it was diagnosed that I had experienced retinal bleeding. The treatment involves a monthly injection in the eye. Is it painful? May be it is, but the trauma of what might happen otherwise, deters me from noticing the pain. Actually, I learned a valuable lesson: the threshold of pain tolerance seems to increase when faced with a serious challenge.

Fortunately, the brain compensates with one eye and I am able to conduct my normal business, including driving and reading. What keeps me awake at night, however, is not what I have already lost but, what I might still lose. Anxious thoughts cloud my mind. Will I be able to see the smile on my grandchildren's faces or enjoy the beautiful sunset by the seaside? What about the two unfinished books lying on my bedside table? Struggling with a hidden resentment familiar to anyone with an illness or disability, I kept asking myself: "Why me?"

My doctor—a retina specialist at Johns Hopkins—is a cut and dried person. I do not get any pep talk from her. But she emanates a sense of confidence and competence that is more important than bedside manners. She tells me that I will probably regain most of my right eye



vision with time. But the outcome still lies in the realm of probability!

My husband who is old school keeps telling me that I must continue to think positive and be thankful that I still have 20/20 vision in my left eye. The question that irked me initially was where should I position my expectations on the spectrum of hope to despair! I finally attained my emotional equilibrium by doing what most people do when groping in the dark (literally and metaphorically). I am praying and meditating. Although not a ritualistically religious person, prayers always provide me spiritual solace. This time it helped me look at

the world with renewed interest. Each morning I wake up and draw the curtains to absorb the scenic view outside my window. The play of light and shade on the trees, the red cardinal birds so special to Virginia and the colorful petunias that my husband has lovingly planted... things that I took for granted now appear special. My granddaughter's happy expression when wearing her ballerina dress and the Marvel characters that my two grandsons draw for me have taken on a new significance.

Interestingly, I am paying more attention to people who have surmounted their difficulties with grace and equanimity. A friend of mine lost

her 31-year-old son to a motorcycle accident, but still laughs and comforts me. Another is tending to a husband who is an Alzheimer patient in his last stages, but continues to take an interest in others' problems. Perhaps the hardest was when a close friend who supported me through the early weeks of my predicament was unexpectedly diagnosed with cancer. Seeing her manage her adversity with calm composure, I have stopped asking: "Why me?"

My condition has also made me more sensitive to the obstacles and challenges that less fortunate people are dealing with. The mother struggling with her autistic child at the grocery store or the young man on crutches limping his way in the mall makes me pause and say a prayer for them. I have started counting my blessings—access to good healthcare and above all being surrounded by supportive family and caring friends.

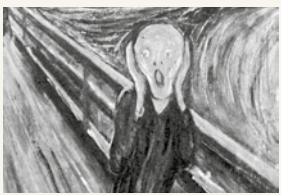
True, there is little possibility of realising my dream of reaching the top of the summit in Machu Picchu, but I can still walk up a modest hillock and gaze at the azure sky dotted with drifting white clouds. And on a clear day while driving down George Washington Parkway the shimmering blue waters of the Potomac still appear as beautiful as before.

As a musician, I have learnt an important lesson from the entire experience. When we lose our best voice due to a calamity and can no longer hit the high notes, perhaps we should figure out a way to sing on a lower octave and use it to our advantage!

So, dear readers, I am staging a comeback—the time has come once again to write about many things ... "shoes and ships and ceiling wax and cabbages and kings"... and Trump, Kashmir and Brexit!!

Milla Ali is a Rabindra Sangeet exponent and a former employee of the World Bank.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



August 22, 2004

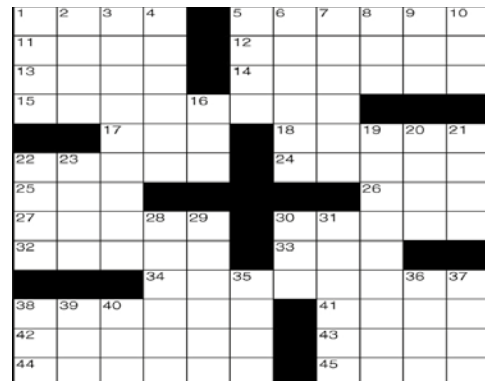
IN OSLO, NORWAY, A VERSION OF EDVARD MUNCH'S "THE SCREAM" AND HIS WORK "MADONNA" GETS STOLEN FROM THE MUNCH MUSEUM

Art thieves stole the paintings at gunpoint and nobody to this day knows why they did it. They were again recovered two years after the incident

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| ACROSS | to | 8 Crew tool |
| 1 Karaoke need | 34 Deserving | 9 Remain unused |
| 5 Select | 38 Singer Newton-John | 10 Hosp. parts |
| 11 The Emerald Isle | 41 Traveled by horse | 16 Possess |
| 12 Fix | 42 Cash in | 19 Crush, maybe |
| 13 Catching need | 43 Chef's need | 20 Cain's brother |
| 14 Tips off | 44 Fans' place | 21 Past due |
| 15 Female hormone | 45 Spring period | 22 "Fernando" group |
| 17 Evergreen shrub | | 23 Before long |
| 18 Sherpa's home | | 28 Late hour |
| 22 Pale | DOWN | 29 Said no to |
| 24 Curacao's neighbor | 1 Viral phenomenon | 30 French friend |
| 25 Frilly wrap | 2 Eye part | 31 Sentry duty |
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WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

TATA SQUABBS
 AJAX TURBOT
 CAKE RENEWS
 OREGELS
 SHAWL MAY
 STRAY SPACE
 POOR OKRA
 ADOPT SNEER
 ROT ROADS
 FAUX RED
 ETHICS OOZE
 VIOLET NORA
 ENTERS OMAN

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott



NEWSIN brief

Kabul wedding blast toll hits 80

AFP, Kabul
The death toll from an Islamic State attack on a Kabul wedding at the weekend has reached at least 80, an official said yesterday, as the Afghan capital still reels from the deadliest blast in more than a year. A suicide bomber targeted a packed Afghan wedding hall in west Kabul Saturday as celebrations were in full swing. Authorities said the initial death toll was at least 63, with more than 180 people wounded.

Saudi eases travel curbs on women

AFP, Riyadh
Saudi Arabia on Tuesday began implementing a landmark reform allowing women over the age of 21 to receive passports and travel abroad without permission from a male "guardian", authorities said. The reform, announced earlier this month, weakens the restrictive guardianship system that has long been a symbol of repression against women. In other changes unveiled earlier this month, Saudi women were also granted the right to officially register childbirth, marriage or divorce and to be recognised as a guardian to children who are minors -- same as men.

Australia to join US in Gulf mission

AFP, Sydney
Australia will join the US-led mission to protect shipping through the Strait of Hormuz amid heightened tensions with Iran, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced yesterday. Morrison said Australia would send a "modest" contribution -- including a frigate, a P8 maritime surveillance aircraft and support staff -- to the mission, which will also involve British and Bahraini forces.



NUCLEAR TALKS

US 'prepared to engage' with N Korea

AFP, Seoul
The United States is ready to sit down with North Korea to resume long-awaited working-level nuclear talks, a US envoy said yesterday. Nuclear discussions between Washington and Pyongyang have stalled since a second summit in Hanoi in February ended without an agreement over differences on the extent of denuclearisation and sanctions relief in return. But anticipation for renewed dialogue has been on the rise after the US and its security ally South Korea wrapped up their two-week joint military drill on Tuesday.

"We are prepared to engage as soon as we hear from our counterparts in North Korea," said Stephen Biegun, the US special representative for North Korea, after his meeting with South Korean counterpart Lee Do-hoon in Seoul. The comments come amid speculation that Americans could meet with North Koreans at the demilitarised zone dividing the North and South to kick start working-level talks during Biegun's three-day stay in Seoul, which began Tuesday. The US envoy denied media reports he would soon take a diplomatic posting in Russia, saying he remained "focused on making progress" with North Koreans and "fully committed" to the goal of the denuclearisation in the North.



Members of the Syrian Civil Defence, also known as the "White Helmets", carry away in a blanket the body of a victim following a reported air strike on a makeshift clinic in the area of Tallmannis in Syria's northern Idlib province, yesterday. Syria government and Russian forces stepped up heavy bombardment on the rebel-held northwest since late April, killing more than 880 civilians.

PHOTO: AFP

Trump scraps visit after Danes say Greenland not for sale

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump Tuesday postponed a planned visit to Denmark after Danish officials insisted its autonomous territory of Greenland was not for sale. Trump's decision confirms just how interested he was in purchasing Greenland, an idea initially dismissed as a joke by some, but which the White House later insisted had a serious purpose because of its strategic location. "Based on Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's comments, that she would have no interest in discussing the purchase of Greenland, I will be postponing our meeting scheduled in two weeks for another time," Trump tweeted. During a Sunday visit to Greenland -- the largest island on Earth -- Frederiksen called Trump's idea "absurd." "The Prime Minister was able to save a great deal of expense and effort for both the United States and Denmark by being so direct," Trump tweeted. "I thank her for that and look forward to rescheduling sometime in the future!"

The president's latest Greenland comments sparked a strong reaction from both sides of the political aisle in Denmark. "Reality transcends imagination... this man is unpredictable," said Morten Ostergaard of the Social Liberal Party, which is part of the ruling coalition. "For no reason Trump assumes that (an autonomous) part of our country is for sale. Then insultingly cancels visit that everybody was preparing for," tweeted Rasmus Jarlov, a member of the opposition Conservative Party. "Are parts of the US for sale? Alaska? Please show more respect." Denmark colonized the 772,000 square-mile (two-million square-kilometer) island in the 18th century. It is home to around 57,000 people, most of the indigenous Inuit community. Greenland's ministry of foreign affairs insisted Friday the island was ready to talk business, but was not for sale.



PLANNED SALE OF 66 US F-16 FIGHTER JETS TO TAIWAN

China threatens sanctions

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday blasted a huge planned US arms shipment to self-ruled Taiwan and threatened to sanction firms involved in the sale of F-16 fighter jets. The US State Department on Tuesday approved the transfer of 66 Lockheed Martin-built F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan in a US\$8 billion deal, following another huge military hardware sale agreed just last month. The deals come as ties between Washington and Beijing are already strained by a punitive multi-billion dollar trade war. "China will take all necessary measures to safeguard our interests including imposing sanctions on the US companies participating in this arms sale to Taiwan," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a news briefing. The sale "is a serious interference in our internal affairs and undermines our sovereignty and security interests", he said. China views Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary. It bristles at any countries that might lend Taiwan diplomatic support or legitimacy. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement Tuesday that President Donald Trump had approved the proposed sale after Congress was notified last week. The F-16s "are deeply consistent with the arrangements,

the historical relationship between the United States and China", Pompeo said. China said it had lodged diplomatic protests against the deal and yesterday urged the US to "cancel this arms sale plan at once, stop selling arms to Taiwan and cut its military contact with Taiwan". Taiwan's plan to upgrade its air defences comes amid increasing Chinese military incursions into its air space and a spokesman for the president said the jets would "substantially enhance our air defence capabilities". Taiwan currently has a fleet of old-model F-16s purchased in 1992, which have undergone several crucial upgrades. Manufacturer Lockheed Martin says the newest version, known as the F-16 Block 70/72, includes many avionics, weapons and radar technologies not in existence when earlier models were created. It is structurally stronger, the company says, so that it "can fly and fight to 2070 and beyond". The approval of the sale comes as Washington and Beijing face off in tough trade negotiations that economists say are hurting both of the superpowers, as well as dragging down the global economy. In a statement, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, which oversees US foreign military sales, said Taiwan's purchase of the F-16s "will not alter the basic military balance in the region".



Sudan swears in ruling council

AFP, Khartoum

Sudan took further steps in its transition towards civilian rule yesterday with the swearing in of a new sovereign council, to be followed by the appointment of a prime minister. The body replaces the Transitional Military Council (TMC) that took charge after months of deadly street protests brought down longtime ruler Omar al-Bashir in April. As a result of Wednesday's move, it was the first time that Sudan was not under full military rule since Bashir's coup d'etat in 1989. The first steps of the transition after the mass celebrations that marked the August 17 adoption of a transitional constitution proved difficult however. The names of the joint civilian-military sovereign council's 11 members were eventually announced late Tuesday after differences within the opposition camp held up the process for two days. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who already headed the TMC, was sworn in as the chairman of the new sovereign council in the morning. He will be Sudan's head of state for the first 21 months of the 39-month transition period, until a civilian takes over for the remainder. The council's 10 other members were sworn shortly afterwards and Abdalla Hamdok, who was chosen by the opposition last week to be prime minister, was to be formally appointed later Wednesday.



Protesters hold posters as they take part in a silent rally at Yuen Long MTR station in Hong Kong, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Record number of fires ravage Brazil rainforest in 2019

Nearly 73,000 incidents recorded; deforestation blamed

AFP, Sao Paulo

The number of forest fires in Brazil surged in the first eight months of 2019, official data show, as President Jair Bolsonaro faces growing criticism over rampant destruction of the Amazon. Nearly 73,000 fires were recorded between January and August, compared with 39,759 in all of 2018, the embattled National Institute for Space Research (INPE) said late Monday. That is the highest number of forest fires for any year since 2013 and follows two years of declines. "What we are seeing is a consequence of the increase in deforestation seen in recent figures," said Ricardo Mello of WWF's Amazon Program. Forest fires tend to intensify during the

dry season, which usually ends in late October or early November, as land is cleared to make way for crops or grazing. The INPE figures show fires have been concentrated in states occupying the Amazon. Thick smoke has blanketed several cities in recent days and even caused a commercial flight to be diverted. The data comes as Bolsonaro faces growing criticism over his anti-environment rhetoric, which activists blame for emboldening loggers, miners and farmers in the Amazon. Norway on Thursday joined Germany in halting Amazon protection subsidies, accusing Brazil of turning its back on the fight against deforestation. The governors of nine states spanning the Amazon also published a statement on Sunday saying they would negotiate directly with the Amazon Fund contributors.



Indonesia deploys more troops after Papua unrest

AFP, Manokwari

Indonesia's Papua was hit by fresh unrest yesterday as more than 1,000 security personnel were sent to the restive region after violent protests that saw buildings torched and street battles between police and demonstrators. Jakarta has called for calm in its easternmost territory -- where an insurgency against Indonesian rule has simmered for decades -- following riots triggered by the detention of dozens of Papuan students in Java at the weekend. Yesterday, about 1,000 people protested in the streets of Timika city, where an AFP reporter saw demonstrators throw rocks at the local parliament building and try to tear down its fence. The crowd, which also reportedly pelted shops and homes with rocks, dispersed as riot police fired warning shots. Indonesian media reported police arrested 45 people, including some they accused of masterminding the protests and damaging buildings. Hundreds also marched through the streets of Sorong city, and hoisted the banned Papuan flag in the town of Fakfak on the western end of the island, which is divided between Indonesia and the nation of Papua New Guinea. Police fired tear gas to disperse crowds in Fakfak after they set fire to a market and destroyed ATMs and shops, local media reported. Several cities in resource-rich Papua were brought to a standstill this week, including Manokwari where businesses and the local parliament building were set ablaze by angry demonstrators. Authorities are hunting for more than 250 inmates who had escaped from a prison in Sorong that was torched during the riots.

Everest region bans single-use plastic

Single-use plastics have been banned in the Everest region to reduce the vast amounts of waste left by trekkers and mountaineers, Nepali authorities said. In addition to seeing a record number of climbers this year, a government-led cleaning initiative on Everest -- the world's highest mountain -- also collected over 10 tonnes of trash. The new ban in Khumbu Pasang Lhamu rural municipality, home to Mount Everest and several other snow-capped mountains, covers all plastic of less than 30 microns in thickness as well as drinks in plastic bottles, and will be effective from January. The local body will work with trekking companies, airlines and the Nepal Mountaineering Association to enforce the ban, though no penalty has yet been decided for violation.

Australia's Cardinal Pell loses child sex abuse appeal

Disgraced Cardinal George Pell lost his appeal against child sex abuse convictions yesterday, prompting relief from victims who fought to bring one of the Catholic Church's most powerful men to justice. A former Vatican treasurer, Pell had been trying to overturn the verdicts and six-year sentence for sexually assaulting two 13-year-old choirboys at a Melbourne cathedral in the 1990s. Following the ruling, Pell's lawyer said they were mulling second and final appeal. During Pell's trial, the Vatican gradually removed him from top Church bodies with little explanation. Shortly after his conviction, Pell was removed from the so-called C9 Council of Cardinals that are effectively the Pope's cabinet and inner circle of advisers. The Vatican later dropped him as the church's finance chief and launched its own probe in February.

2,359 tigers killed and trafficked since 2000



More than 2,300 endangered tigers have been killed and illegally trafficked since the turn of the century, according to a report published Tuesday. With an average of more than 120 illegally trafficked tigers seized each year -- which amounts to over two each week -- since year 2000, conservation group Traffic warned there was little sign of respite for the species. In 1900, more than 100,000 tigers were estimated to roam the planet. But that fell to a record low of 3,200 in 2010. Since then, population numbers have inched upwards, but there are still estimated to be fewer than 3,900 tigers left in the wild. It found that an estimated total of 2,359 individual tigers were seized from 2000 to 2018 across 32 countries and territories. SOURCE: AFP

WHAT'S ON
TRIBUTE TO MAD
 Exhibition
 Title: Tribute to Mad Cartoon
 Exhibition
 Venue: Drik Gallery, Dhanmondi 15A (New)
 Date: August 23 - 25
 Time: 3 pm - 8 pm

Exhibition, Screening & More
 Title: Shilper Aloye Bangabandhu
 Organiser: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
 Venue: BSA Premises
 Date: August 1-31
 Time: 11 am onwards

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

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

Art Exhibition
 Title: Muhurtama solo art exhibition by Shamsat Tabreej
 Venue: Dwpj Gallery, Lalmitia
 Date: July 27 - August 22 (except Mondays)
 Time: 5 pm - 9 pm



Masum Hossain



Masum Hossain in performance with the other artistes at Kathak Yatra in Kolkata. PHOTOS: COURTESY

Tariq Anam Khan to reinvent himself in 'Makeup'

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

An actor who always presents himself in different kinds of roles is Tariq Anam Khan, a household name in Bangladesh. In his latest endeavour, *Makeup*, the actor reinvents himself. The film, which is to be directed by Anonno Mamun, will see the veteran

actor play the role of a superstar in films. *Makeup* will also feature Ziaul Roshan as the lead actor. "If the story and character are interesting, there is a lot of joy in working," says Tariq Anam Khan. Besides *Makeup*, he is acting in the much anticipated *Gangchil*, as well as the soon to be released *Shaap Ludu* and *Peyarar Shubash*.

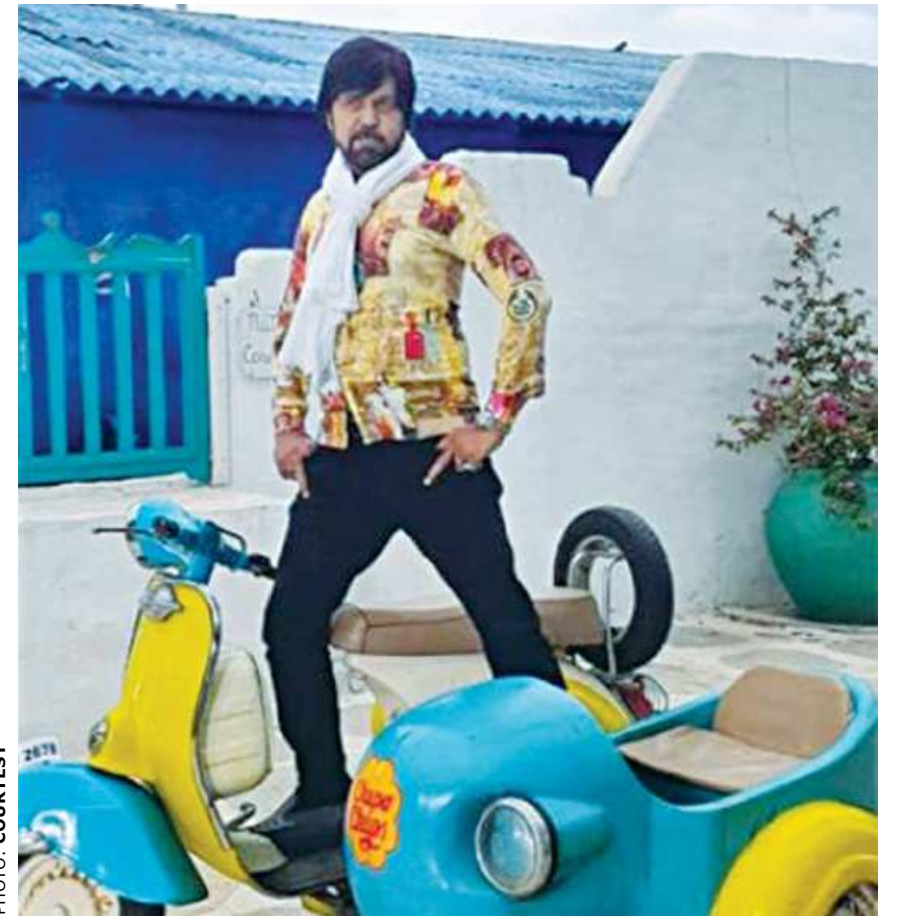


PHOTO: COURTESY

Dreams dwelling in dance

SHABABA IQBAL

Passionate about dancing, Masum Hossain completed his MA in Kathak from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, in 2018. A scholar at Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Kolkata, Masum also did his BA and MA in History from Dhaka College (under National University), Bangladesh.

From a young age, he learned Kathak under the tutelage of renowned dancer Munmun Ahmed. Pandit Krishan Mohan Mishra from Delhi was Masum's guru throughout a three-year specialisation course on Kathak. During his time at Rabindra Bharati University, he did a two-year special course under the guidance of Madhumita Roy in Kolkata. He also completed a certificate course on dance from

Bulbul Academy for Fine Arts (BAFA). He has been working as a dance trainee and assistant to Munmun Ahmed for the last twelve years.

Masum is a dance teacher at BAF Shaheen English Medium School and he also teaches at Dhaka City Cooperation Cultural Center and Bangladesh Shishu Academy. "I would like to extend my gratitude to the authorities of BAF Shaheen English Medium School, Dhaka City Cooperation Cultural Center and Bangladesh Shishu Academy, for supporting and encouraging me, as I went for my education at Rabindra Bharati University," says Masum.

He is hugely inspired by his gurus, all of whom play integral roles in his flourishing career in the field of Kathak. He is also grateful to his family and his

wife, Fahima Akter, for their unwavering support over the years.

Masum won the UNESCO Club Cultural Award-2005, organised by National Association of UNESCO Club in Bangladesh. He also won the gold medal in the Inter-College Cultural Competition 2009, organised by Dhaka College (under National University). He also performed as a Kathak dancer at the Bengal Classical Music Festival in 2016.

Masum opened up about what he values as a professional dancer. "I strongly believe that we must set a foundation for Bangladeshi art and culture to thrive. We can learn so much from Kathak, be it history, music, literature, respect or discipline," he asserts. "We must take it as our responsibility to make sure that our traditions

and values carry on to the future generations of artists."

He was also one of the dancers of Helena Waldmann's *Made in Bangladesh*, a Kathak dance performance about the workers in Bangladeshi garment factories, which created quite a stir across the globe. From Dhaka to India to Europe, the team of *Made in Bangladesh* travelled to many locations.

In addition, Masum enthralled audiences with his spectacular performance titled, *Kathak Yatra*, at ICCR, Kolkata, for the first time this year. The performance was organised under the banner of Masum's own institution, *Parampara Nrityalaya*. He was accompanied by Biswajit Ghosh on vocals, Sandeep Neogi on sitar, Subir Thakur on tabla, Manab Parai on bol pandhant and Shouvik Paul on flute.



The artworks at the exhibition.

PHOTOS: SHAMS ASIF

Young artists make a statement at 'Reverie'

MADIHA ATHAR KHAN

An exhibition titled, *Reverie*, concluded at Drik Gallery on August 20. The exhibition solely focused on empowering young artists and opening doors to those who would typically not get the platforms to showcase their work. It was organised by Ehteshamul Bari and Akash Chowdhury, two A-level students who are also artists. They met at a previous exhibition where both of them were participating artists. Chowdhury and Bari felt that it is really difficult for those without experience to find the platforms they need to grow as artists. With an objective to create more opportunities for budding artists, they brought together 46 participants through word of mouth and social media for *Reverie*.

The artworks on display ranged from pencil and charcoal sketches to paintings in water colour, acrylic and oil. From traditional natural landscapes to bold expressionistic strokes, the artworks may have been created by young people, but their voices were loud in expressing themselves. In each piece, it was palpable what the artist was influenced by. Some works were definite results of living in the

contemporary era with aspects of pop culture incorporated in them while others spoke of an idealistic loyalty to tradition. Several of the artworks indicated an artist daring to break the rules while also learning them.

"The incentive to organise this exhibition grew stronger due to an unfortunate incident that took place last summer," says Bari. "As an A-level student, I had picked art as one of my subjects. Before sitting for the test, we got to know that certain influential artists had approached British Council to discontinue this exam in Bangladesh. Thankfully, since all the examinees protested, we were able to sit for the exam." It is indeed disheartening to see that instead of lifting the youth up, the influential and the established in the field of art are rather focused on closing doors for the talented new generation.

A splendid youthful energy was present both in the atmosphere and the exhibited artworks at the gallery. The age range of the exhibitors was between 15 to 20 years. It is important that organisers like Bari and Chowdhury keep doing what they love, so that a new generation of creators continue the process of enriching the arts and culture of our country.



Discussion on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman held at Central Public Library

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

A discussion on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, titled, *Amogh Mohamanob Er Roktorin Shopho* was organised by Shilpilo on August 20, at the Central Public Library.

The programme was presided over by Prof Dr Rafiqul Islam,

and moderated by poet Osman Goni, Director General, Shilpilo. The session was inaugurated by State Minister of Cultural Affairs, KM Khalid. Freedom fighter and renowned artist Shahabuddin Ahmed attended the event as the chief guest. A moment of silence, in honour of artist Mohosina Ali and novelist Rizia Rahman, was

also held.

Economist Prof Dr Abul Barkat, Abdul Mannan, incumbent Member of Parliament, and linguist and researcher Prof Dr M Maniruzzaman attended the event as special guests.

Prof Abul Barkat and Shahabuddin Ahmed both spoke

about Bangabandhu's glorious leadership.

As a tribute to the Father of the Nation, Syed Ashraf Haque recited his poem on Bangabandhu. Over 80 other renowned artists, poets, politicians, and freedom fighters were in the audience during the programme.



The panellists at the discussion.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSEHD

'Iti, Tomari Dhaka' to participate in three film festivals

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

After making successful rounds at fifteen different international film festivals across the globe, Bangladesh's first anthology film, *Iti, Tomari Dhaka*, is set to participate in three more festivals.

The critically acclaimed film will be screened at Global Cinema Festival Siliguri 2019, which began yesterday. *Iti, Tomari Dhaka* will next be shown at Sakhalin International Film Festival 2019, which will begin on August 23 in Russia. Later, it will be screened at Singapore South Asian International Film Festival, which is set to begin on August 30.

With eleven exceptionally promising young directors from Bangladesh, Impress Telefilm's *Iti, Tomari Dhaka* is an assortment of shorts, with Dhaka as its central theme. The film was last shown at the Durban International Film Festival last month.



A still from 'Iti, Tomari Dhaka'.

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SHAH CEMENT

Indian gangs smuggling yaba into Bangladesh

Claim detectives after arresting an Indian in the capital

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Several Indian syndicates are smuggling yaba pills from Myanmar and then sending them into Bangladesh through their carriers.

The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) revealed this following the first ever arrest of an Indian national for yaba possession in Bangladesh.

DB officials said they unearthed at least two cases in which two Indians were found to have entered Bangladesh and engaged in selling the crazy pills to local dealers.

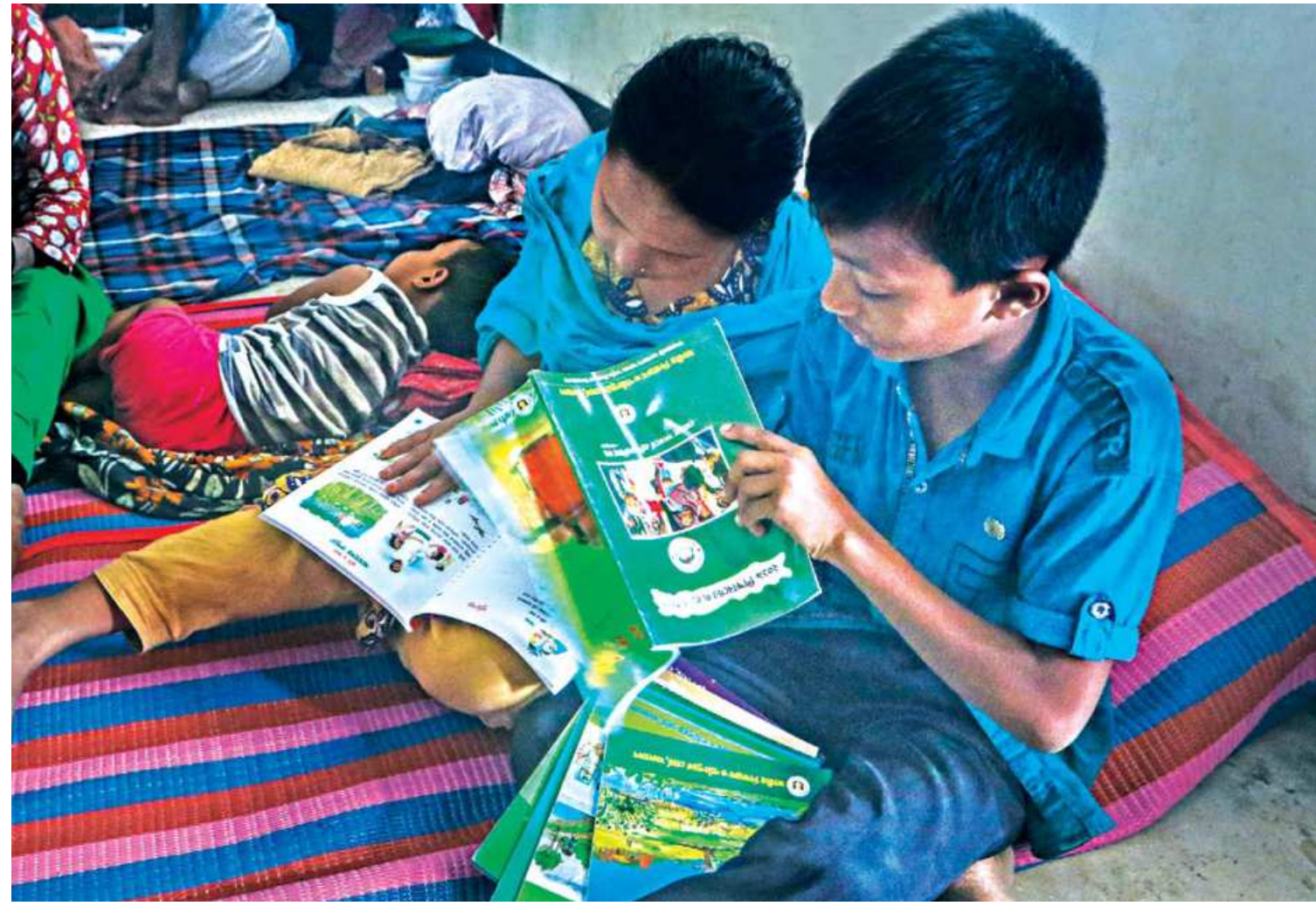
On August 9, a DB team arrested Indian national Md Abdus Sabur, 34, and two Bangladeshi yaba dealers -- Shamsul Alam, 28, and Jakir Hossain, 40 -- at a house in the capital's Rampura. The law enforcers recovered some 10,000 pieces of yaba from their possession, Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (north), told The Daily Star yesterday.

Mashiur also said yaba smugglers changed their route in face of tougher vigilance of law enforcers in Teknaf, known as the gateway of smuggling yaba into the country.

Several Indian syndicates are now using Kurigram's Rowmari border point as a new route to bring yaba into Bangladesh, he said.

"They first collect the pills from Myanmar and then take them to India's Assam via Tripura before pushing them into Bangladesh."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Third graders Ratna, right, and Solayman reading new books at Bangabandhu Bidyaniketan school in Chalandika area of Mirpur in the capital. All of their family's belongings, including their books, were burnt in Friday night's fire in their slum. Some children have taken shelter at the school since the fire.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

MIGRANT TRAGEDY

Over 100 feared dead off Libya

REUTERS, Cairo

More than 100 people are feared dead after a boat carrying them in the Mediterranean Sea sunk off the coast of Libya, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said on Tuesday.

"We have every reason to fear the worst - that over 100 lives were lost and nobody will ever know for sure," MSF said in a statement on Twitter on Tuesday.

The Libyan coast guard was not immediately available for comment.

Libya is a hub for migrants and refugees, many of whom try to reach Europe in unseaworthy boats.

A boat carrying about 250 people, mainly from Eritrea and other sub-Saharan Africa and Arab countries, capsized last month off the coast near Komos, east of the capital Tripoli.

Libyan coast guards and local fishermen rescued

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

BUSINESS

Janata pushes to reschedule loans of a top defaulter

In a baffling move, the central bank is set to allow precarious Janata Bank to reschedule default loans amounting to Tk 1,049 crore of Root Group that ranks 49 out of the top 300 defaulters in Bangladesh. Root Group, a textile and fertiliser producer, will be permitted to regularise its bad loans by providing only 5 percent down payment -- at a time when it is being investigated by two wings of the Bangladesh Bank for charges of money laundering. Not only that, the state bank is preparing to extend fresh import financing worth Tk 750 crore to the group, breaching BB rules. Janata's generosity towards Root Group comes at a time when it is grappling with the biggest provisioning shortfall for a bank in Bangladesh's history.

STORY ON B1

J&K tensions spike

Two killed in cop-militant gunfight; Trump again offers to mediate; cross border firing kills four

AFP, Srinagar

A suspected militant and a policeman were killed in the first gun battle since New Delhi stripped Indian Kashmir of its autonomy, police said yesterday after US President Donald Trump offered to mediate the "explosive" situation.

In a further sign of rising tensions, Pakistan said meanwhile that three of its civilians died in Indian gunfire from across the de-facto border in Kashmir known as the Line of Control (LoC). Pakistan also said its forces later killed six Indian soldiers. But the Indian army rejected this claim as "totally fake," the Press Trust of India said.

PTI quoted officials as saying one Indian soldier died and four were wounded when Pakistani troops opened fire on forward posts and villages along the LoC in the Poonch district on Tuesday.

Both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers and the situation in Kashmir, divided between them since 1947, is further complicated by the fact that China also claims part of the Himalayan region.

Trump -- who has previously spoken of his willingness to mediate -- said he would raise the situation over the weekend with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Both men are expected in France for a summit of the Group of Seven industrialised nations.

"Kashmir is a very complicated place. You have Hindus and you have the Muslims and I wouldn't say they get along so great," Trump told reporters at the White House.

"I will do the best I can to mediate," he added.

At least 4,000 people have been detained in Indian-controlled Kashmir, according to security and government sources, since early August when authorities imposed a communications blackout and restricted freedom of movement in the region.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Ex-Goalanda OC sentenced to 14 years

His wife to serve 2 years in jail for helping him acquire, conceal illegal wealth

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced Saiful Islam, former officer-in-charge of Goalanda Police Station, to fourteen years' rigorous imprisonment in two graft cases.

The court also handed down two years' imprisonment to Saiful's wife Zakia Islam Anu for assisting her husband in acquiring the illegal wealth.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed two cases against the duo in June and September of 2010 with Ramna Police Station, accusing them of acquiring illegal wealth worth over Tk 2.77 crore and concealing wealth statement of Tk 38.55 lakh from the commission.

After cross-examining 23 witnesses placed by the prosecution and a fully-fledged trial, Judge Shaikh Nazmul Alam of the Special Judge Court-4 yesterday pronounced the verdict.

In the verdict, the court also fined Saiful Tk 6.5 lakh, in default of which, he will have to suffer two-and-a-half-year more in prison.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Court sells fugitive's skyscraper online



CNN ONLINE

With its exaggerated crown and bulging upper levels, the 39-floor Pangu Plaza casts an unusual shadow over Beijing.

And now the dragon-inspired skyscraper has an equally odd ownership story: It sold online Tuesday for a bargain \$734 million after being confiscated from a fugitive billionaire.

Located less than half a mile from the iconic Bird's Nest stadium, the 629-foot-tall tower was completed in 2008 in a district built for that year's Beijing Olympics.

But in 2016, authorities seized ownership of the skyscraper from a real estate company controlled by exiled Chinese billionaire Guo Wengui. A Beijing court then put the building up for auction on a website run by e-commerce giant, Alibaba.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

One held for raping fifth grader

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday arrested a man for allegedly raping a fifth grader in Mymensingh, while another was sued for attempted rape in Jashore.

The arrestee is Zilhaj Mia alias Dilu, 30, of Gafargaon upazila in Mymensingh.

The 13-year-old girl was alone at her home on Monday evening. Dilu forcibly entered the house, tied her hands and legs and then raped her, police quoted the victim's family as saying.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 22
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:30 12:45 4:45 6:33 8:00
JAMAAT 5:05 1:15 5:00 6:36 8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A part of the Suhrawardy Udyan shrouded in smoke of burning twigs and litter yesterday. The thick smoke has a strong smell and causes burning eyes.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



35th Death Anniversary of Habibul Kabir (Nizam)

On this Occasion a Milad Mehfil will be held today, 22-08-2019 (Thursday) after Maghrib Prayers at **Union Centre, 68/1 Gulshan Avenue, Gulshan-1, Dhaka.** Relatives, friends and all well-wishers of the deceased are requested to kindly join the Milad Mehfil and pray for the salvation of his departed soul.

Family Members