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4.1m await their fate

Security tight as Assam set to release final NRC list

STAR REPORT

More than 4 million people, most of them Muslims, await their fate in Assam as India geared up for the release of a controversial citizens' list today, which could leave them stateless.

For the last four years, residents of Assam have been scrambling to prove their identity in a court-ordered exercise after decades of campaigns by groups complaining about illegal immigrants.

Today, authorities will seal their fate with the release of the final citizenship list. A draft last year left off four million people. Another one lakh people have been added to the list of the excluded in June this year.

Those left off the National Register of Citizens (NRC) face losing their citizenship, being put indefinitely into camps or deported - to the alarm of UN rights experts and activists.

Authorities in Assam in north-eastern India, for decades a hotbed of inter-religious and ethnic tensions, have brought in 19,000 additional security personnel with gatherings banned in some areas including state capital Guwahati. "Cyber units" have been set up to scan social media for dissent.

Assam, an isolated state of 33 million, has long seen large influxes from elsewhere including during British colonial rule and around the 1971 war of independence in neighbouring Bangladesh. Pressure for a lasting solution has been growing for decades from those who see themselves as genuine Assamese.

Critics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu

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The Jamuna devours land at the harbour point near the Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge in Tangail yesterday. Locals see indiscriminate sand extraction from the river bed with powerful dredgers as one of the main reasons for the erosion. Inset, sand bags being dumped in the area to check the erosion.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

Jamuna banks eroding near Bangabandhu bridge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Erosion of the Jamuna has begun near the east end of the Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge in Tangail's Kalihati upazila since Thursday.

Officials of the Bangladesh Bridge Authority's site office in Tangail told The Daily Star yesterday that about 150 metre areas of a char near the bridge's harbour point, some 700 metres south from the bridge, already eroded away.

After visiting the spot yesterday, Tofazzal Hossain, superintendent engineer of BBA, said the erosion could not harm the bridge and its guide embankment.

BBA officials of the site office are conducting a survey on how to protect the area, while geo bags are being dumped in the area to stop the erosion, he said.

Locals said the erosion was threatening a nearby road and several villages, including Gorilabari, Beltia,

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UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY Hasina, Modi likely to meet next month

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi are likely to have a brief meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York next month.

The high-level meetings and the general debate of the 74th session of the UNGA will be held from September 23 to 30 at the UN headquarters. Both Hasina and Modi are scheduled take part in it, said an official.

Bangladesh and India are preparing to sign a number of bilateral documents during Hasina's visit to India in the first week of October.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen discussed the issues with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar during a bilateral meeting in Dhaka recently.

They discussed preparatory measures over the PM's visit to India and exchanged proposals.

Hasina will also attend India Economic Summit of the World Economic Forum, to be held in New Delhi on October 3-4 under the theme "Innovating for India:

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BURDWAN BLAST 4 Bangladeshis jailed for 10 yrs

15 Indians also sentenced to different terms in prison

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kolkata

A total of 19 persons, including four Bangladeshi nationals, were sentenced to different terms in jail yesterday over the 2014 bomb blast in West Bengal's Burdwan district.

The four Bangladeshis were jailed for 10 years, our Kolkata correspondent reports.

Among the Indians, two female convicts were jailed for six years each and others for eight years each, he added.

The convicted four Bangladeshi nationals are: Sheikh Rahmatullah alias Sajid alias Burhan Sheikh alias Surot Ali, Sadiq alias Sumon alias Tarikul Islam alias Raihan Sheikh, Liakot Ali Pramanik alias Rafique alias Rafiqul alias Mohammad Rubel, and Habibur Raman alias Jahidul Islam alias Jabirul Islam alias Zafar.

The Special NIA Court in Kolkata handed down the sentence to the convicts yesterday, two days after it found them guilty in the blast case.

On October 2, 2014, during the Durga Puja celebrations, an improvised explosive device (IED) explosion at a rented two-storey house in Khagragarh in Burdwan town, about 100 km from Kolkata, killed two persons, exposing a network of Bangladeshi jihadi elements running an arms and explosives factory in West Bengal.

The IED had accidentally gone off at the time of its making, NIA said.

The Burdwan blast is significant since it blew the lid off a flourishing network of terror elements belonging to the banned Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in West Bengal, especially in the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum and Nadia.

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BSF detains 4 Bangladesh nationals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Members of Border Security Force in India detained four Bangladesh nationals in the border area of Thakurgaon's Haripur upazila on Thursday afternoon.

The four -- Rubel, 25, Jamal, 22, Masum, 18, and Mahub, 16 -- were held as they were illegally crossing Indo-Bangla border, read a press release of Border Guard Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh nationals intruded into India and had been working there for the last six months. On Thursday, they were returning home. BSF handed them over to India's Goalpukur Police Station after detaining, the press release added.

Mohammad Raj Mamud, assistant director of 50th BGB Battalion, said a company commander-level flag meeting was held at the zero point of the border on Thursday

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Nasa sending a copter to Mars



CNN ONLINE

Before humans make it to Mars, Nasa will send a helicopter to scope out the terrain.

Engineers attached a helicopter to the Mars 2020 rover ahead of its launch next summer. And if it flies successfully, it'll be the first aircraft to fly on another planet, Nasa said.

The solar-powered Mars Helicopter will be safely stowed underneath the rover until it lands at the Jezero Crater, where scientists believe water once flowed.

The craft will detach from the rover and explore Mars from the air while the rover collects samples on the ground, Nasa said.

If all goes well, the autonomous aircraft will snapshot aerial views of Martian cliffs, caves and craters that the land-bound rover can't explore. And even if it doesn't take flight, the rover can still

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CHEQUE FORGERY 2 policemen sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court sent two police officers to jail on Thursday for their alleged attempt to cash a Tk 35 lakh cheque of the home ministry through signature forgery.

Police, however, did not seek to remand them.

The arrestees are Inspector Mir Abdul Kalam Azad, 54, and Assistant Sub-inspector Mostafizur Rahman, 38, of Dhaka range police. They were handed over to Ramna police on Wednesday, said Kazi Mainul Islam, officer-

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PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 31

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-30 12-45 4-45 6-23 8-00
JAMAAT 5-05 1-15 5-00 6-26 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Two killed in 'gunfights'

STAR REPORT

Two men were killed in "gunfights" with law enforcers in Chattogram and Chuadanga yesterday.

In Chattogram, a suspected robber was killed in a "gunfight" with members of Rab around 8:00am.

The dead -- Iran, 35 -- was accused in at least 10 cases filed with Banshkhali Police Station, said Major Mehedi Hasan, deputy director of Rab-7.

According to the Rab official, a patrol team of Rab raided East Chambal area of the district on information that a group of robbers gathered there.

As soon as the law enforcers reached the area, the criminals opened fire, forcing them to retaliate, he claimed.

Iran sustained bullet injuries during the "gunfight" and died on the spot, he added.

The body was sent to Chattogram Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Rab also claimed to have recovered 13 firearms, local

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Evicted from beside the Dhaka-Narayanganj railway track in the city's Jurain area, traders have set up makeshift shops on the roof of a nearby one-storey building. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

HK cops round up key activists

Major demo called off; EU says developments 'extremely worrying'

AFP, Hong Kong

Prominent Hong Kong democracy activists including a lawmaker were arrested yesterday in a protest crackdown -- a move described by rights groups as a well-worn tactic deployed by China to suffocate dissent ahead of key political events.

The sweep comes after a major rally planned for today was banned by police on security grounds, and then called off by the organisers.

The latest protest had been due to mark the fifth anniversary of Beijing's rejection of a call for universal suffrage in the semi-autonomous city, sparking the 79-day Umbrella Movement in 2014.

Hong Kong has been locked in three months of political crisis, with increasingly violent clashes between police and protesters that have prompted an escalating intimidation campaign from China.

Two of the Umbrella Movement's leaders, Joshua Wong and Agnes Chow -- both still well-regarded among the city's youth -- appeared in court accused of "inciting others to take part in unauthorised assembly" among other charges, having been arrested in dawn swoops yesterday.

After receiving bail, they spoke outside the court and Wong vowed to "continue our fight", railing against the "chilling effect" of the arrests on opponents of Hong Kong's Beijing-backed government.

Authorities are "trying to create white terror" to scare people away from participating in the social and democratic movement, he added -- deploying a term used for China's efforts to fragment and harass the protesters.

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