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**"If inequality continues to rise, our pride of social development would diminish."**  
SALEHUDDIN AHMED, FORMER BANGLADESH BANK GOVERNOR, AT A DIALOGUE IN THE CITY (PAGE B1)



**"All illegal DTH [direct-to-home] connections must be snapped by 15 December."**  
INFORMATION MINISTER HASAN MAHMUD AT HIS SECRETARIAT OFFICE (PAGE 3)



**"Since women's football is not as competitive as men's football, I feel there is opportunity for countries like Bangladesh...to do better."**  
FIFA PRESIDENT GIANNI INFANTINO TELLS REPORTERS AT A CITY HOTEL (PAGE 18)



ROHINGYA SETTLEMENTS

# 8,000 acres of forests razed

Expert team of forest ministry estimates Tk 2,420cr environmental loss

- Bio-diversity in Cox's Bazar severely damaged
- Houses built on 6,164 acres of reserved forests
- 1,837 acres of forest land razed due to firewood collection
- Elephants have stopped coming to the area

**RASHIDUL HASAN**

Rohingya settlements have severely damaged biodiversity and depleted over 8,000 acres of reserved forest in Cox's Bazar.

The damage is equivalent to a loss of over Tk 2,420 crore, said a report of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

The report, containing data updated on October 7, caused grave concern among members of the parliamentary standing committee on environment.

The committee will hold a meeting with local administration officials in Cox's Bazar today to come up with recommendations on how to tackle the crisis.

Members of the committee led by its chief and Awami League MP Saber Hossain Chowdhury visited different affected forests in Kutupalong area of Ukhiya upazila yesterday.

In today's meeting, environment ministry officials will place the report on environmental impact in Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilas

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A police tow truck taking the wreckage of an ambulance in Chatori Chowmuhani area of Chattogram's Anwara upazila. Three people were killed after the gas cylinder of the ambulance exploded yesterday.

## 3 of a family die as cylinder explodes in an ambulance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Three of a family died and three others were injured on their way home from hospital as the gas cylinder of an ambulance exploded in Chattogram's Anwara upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Mafij Uddin, 65, his daughter-in-law Bubul Akter, 33, and Jainab Begum, 38, said Dulal Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Anwara Police Station.

Mafij and Jainab died on the spot while Bubul died while being treated at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), he said.

Mafij's two sons -- Shahabuddin and Ziauddin -- and helper of the ambulance driver Md Munna were injured in the incident, the OC said, adding that the driver was not found on the spot.

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## Tension after border firing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Tension flared up along the Charghat frontier in Rajshahi yesterday morning when the Border Guard Bangladesh tried to stop hilsa catching by some Indian fishermen inside the Bangladeshi side of the Padma.

The Bangladesh border guards said they fired three shots in the air, but the Indian border Security Force claimed one of its jawans was killed and another injured when its members went to rescue an Indian fisherman caught by the BGB.

Later in the afternoon, the BGB and the BSF held a flag meeting, where both sides agreed to launch separate investigations into the incident.

BGB Rajshahi Battalion-1 Director Lt Col Ferdous Mahmud headed the Bangladeshi side while BSF commandant KS Mehta led the Indian team in the hour-long meeting held in Charghat.

Speaking at a press conference last night, Lt Col Ferdous said after the Indian fisherman was caught along with gill nets, four BSF members entered around 650 yards inside Bangladesh territory. One of the BSF members was in uniform while

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## HC stays BTRC bid to make GP pay

Govt to appeal; ministry 'okays' appointment of administrators for GP, Robi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

High Court yesterday issued a two-month injunction on the BTRC's move to realise money it says Grameenphone owes the government.

The order came as a blow to the telecom regulator which was all set to appoint administrators at Grameenphone and Robi to run them and realise Tk 13,447 crore it claimed the carriers owed the government in "taxes, revenue shares, and late fees".

The HC bench of Justice AKM Abdul Hakim and Justice Fatima Nazib yesterday issued the injunction against the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's move to realise nearly Tk 12,580 crore from Grameenphone, the carrier with the largest number of users in Bangladesh.

Grameenphone maintains that the amount claimed by the BTRC is "disputed".

The HC bench fixed November 5 for hearing Grameenphone's appeal regarding the matter.

"Everyone has the right to go to the court and the government anticipated this. We have taken preparations to face the legal battle," Posts and Telecommunication Minister Mustafa Jabbar told The Daily Star yesterday.

Jabbar went on to say that the government would now take the help of the attorney general's office, possibly on Sunday, to have the injunction vacated.

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## ROOPPUR PLANT ACC to probe alleged graft in purchase

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission is going to probe allegations of graft involving Tk 36.4 crore in the purchase of furniture and other household items for the officials of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

"The commission has decided to launch an enquiry into the graft and formed a three-member committee in this regard," ACC Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya told The Daily Star yesterday.

The committee members are ACC Deputy Director Nasir Uddin, Assistant Director Atikur Rahman and Deputy Assistant Director Mohammad Shahjahan Miraz. Nasir

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## MISTAKEN IDENTITY Proved innocent but not before 17yrs of plight

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A man has been cleared of the charges he had to fight for 17 long years in yet another instance of identity mix-up.

In a packed courtroom in Natore yesterday, Additional District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Saifur Rahman Siddiki ordered the release of the man, Bablu Sheikh.

He termed the incident a clear case of mistaken identity like that of "Jaha Alam" and "Joj Mia".

The judge ordered the authorities concerned to take quick steps and arrest the real accused in the case -- Sree Babu.

He also observed Bablu was a victim of negligence by the investigation officers, the lower court judge and the lawyers during his 17-year long ordeal.

Bablu, a 55-year-old day labourer from Ancholkot village in the district's Singra upazila, had been fighting a legal battle ever since he was arrested on November 7, 2002, in a case filed against six people, including Sree

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Bablu Sheikh

## US wants 2 defence deals with Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US wants to sign two defence agreements with Bangladesh as the latter is seeking to buy advanced equipment from the US as part of its goal to modernise the military by 2030.

The agreements are General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA).

US officials termed them "foundational agreements" meant to strengthen defence relationship between two countries.

The move comes as Bangladesh last year sought to buy advanced military equipment, said US officials during a media briefing in the city yesterday.

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## THE FORGOTTEN FIGHT

Santals, along with Bangalees, in Gaibandha's Sahebganj-Bagda farm area stage a protest, demanding the return of their lands. The Santals, who were evicted from their ancestral land in 1916, returned to the farm area recently and set up makeshift homes, but were asked to leave by the current occupant -- Rangpur Sugar Mills. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

## New Brexit deal reached

Agreement set to get EU nod but may fall flat again in UK parliament

AFP, Brussels

Britain and the European Union reached a new divorce deal yesterday that could allow Brexit on October 31, but faced immediate opposition among MPs in London -- who can still block it.

The deal was sealed just hours before a summit of EU leaders that is expected to endorse the text, but it must pass the British parliament when it meets on Saturday.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who has staked his leadership on leaving the EU this month, said he had secured a "great new deal that takes back control".

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said it was a "fair and balanced agreement" -- and both men urged MPs to support it to avoid any further delays.

If Johnson cannot get the deal through by Saturday, he will be forced by law to ask the EU to postpone Brexit, although Juncker said he agreed with Johnson that no postponement should be needed.

"We have a deal, and this deal means there is no need for any kind of prolongation," Juncker said.

It is for EU leaders, not Juncker, to decide whether or not to grant any eventual extension. Several heads of government arriving in Brussels urged British MPs to get behind the deal.

Johnson urged MPs "to come together to get Brexit done, to get this excellent deal over the line and to deliver Brexit without any more delay."

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