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KARTIK 3, 1426 BS



"Repression on children will not be tolerated. People involved in killing and torturing children must face the toughest punishment."
PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA AT A PROGRAMME IN CITY (PAGE 3)



"People need to be united for bringing an end to the autocratic rule."
NOTED JURIST DR KAMAL HOSSAIN AT A DISCUSSION AT THE JATIYA PRESS CLUB (PAGE 3)



"Like two kids in a lot, you have got to let them fight and then you pull them apart."
TRUMP LIKENS TURKEY'S OFFENSIVE IN SYRIA TO PLAYGROUND FIGHT (PAGE 8)

CHINA-FUNDED PROJECTS

RED TAPE holds back progress

DEALS SIGNED OCT 2016 | DURATION OF DEALS 2020 | NUMBER OF PROJECTS 27 | TOTAL AMOUNT \$20 billion

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and JAGARAN CHAKMA

With much pomp and circumstances, Xi Jinping in October 2016 arrived in Bangladesh, the first visit by a Chinese president in 30 years.

He left with a promise to provide about \$20 billion -- the largest amount yet by a single country -- over the next four years for Bangladesh's development, as Beijing looked to one up New Delhi in their contest for geopolitical influence in South Asia.

Three years on, only one-fourth the amount entered the aid pipeline -- an anticlimax of sorts.

Some 27 projects are supposed to be funded with the \$20 billion as per the initial agreement of October 2016.

Until July, loan agreements -- which is the last step before the release of funds -- for seven projects involving \$5.4 billion were signed and \$981.36 million was disbursed.

Red tape on both sides, but particularly in China, is largely to blame for the snail's pace of loan disbursement, according to finance ministry officials involved in talks with Beijing.

In Bangladesh, the projects must get approval from several committees,

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Gas cylinders are installed under the stretchers and benches in ambulances. CNG cylinders have caused fatal accidents in the past. Only two days ago, three people died when a cylinder inside an ambulance exploded in Chattogram's Anwara upazila. The photos were taken at the Dhaka and Chattogram medical college hospitals yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, RAJIB RAIHAN

Border firing 'unfortunate'

Home minister says 'misunderstanding' to be resolved

STAR REPORT

Terming Thursday's firing incident on Rajshahi's Charghat frontier "unfortunate", Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said the misunderstanding would be resolved through talks between the BGB and the BSF.

He made the comment while replying to reporters' queries after a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club.

The minister said there were some issues over Indian fishermen catching hilsa in the Padma and some members of the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) came on Thursday to talk about it.

He said the firing between the BGB and the BSF took place after the Indian border troops started going back without waiting for a flag meeting. In this, a BSF member was killed, he said.

"This was an unexpected incident. The relationship

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Good news for tourists

Dhaka-Darjeeling, Dhaka-Gangtok bus services on the cards; trial run next month

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh and India have decided in principle to launch direct bus services on Dhaka-Gangtok and Dhaka-Darjeeling routes via Siliguri.

Trial runs on the routes may be operated in the middle of November to assess viability, said Nazrul Islam, secretary to Road Transport and Highway Division.

"Final decision will be made after the trial run," he said, adding that exact date of the trial run would be fixed after consulting with the Indian counterpart.

On October 7, officials concerned in Dhaka decided to ask their Indian counterpart for details of the road condition in India, said an official of the ministry seeking anonymity.

Indian authorities also sought information about roads in Bangladesh, he said, adding, "The trial run may take place in the second or the third week of next month."

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62 killed in Afghan mosque blast

33 wounded; Taliban denies responsibility

AFP, Jalalabad

At least 62 people were killed by a blast inside an Afghan mosque during Friday prayers, according to officials, a day after the United Nations said violence in the country had reached "unacceptable" levels.

The explosion, which witnesses said collapsed the mosque's roof, took place in eastern Nangarhar province and also wounded at least 33 people, provincial governor spokesman Attaullah Khogyani told AFP.

A Taliban spokesman called the attack a "major crime", apparently denying responsibility and blaming it on the Islamic State group or government forces.

The attack occurred in Haska Mina district, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the provincial capital Jalalabad.

Witnesses said the roof of the mosque had fallen through after the "loud" explosion, the nature of which was not immediately clear.

Some 350 worshippers were inside at

the time, local resident Omar Ghorzang told AFP.

"Dozens of people were killed and wounded and were taken in several ambulances," Haji Amanat Khan, a 65-year-old local resident, told AFP.

The blast came after the UN released a new report on Thursday saying an "unprecedented" number of civilians were killed or wounded in Afghanistan from July to September.

The report, which also charts violence throughout 2019 so far, underscores how "Afghans have been exposed to extreme levels of violence for many years" despite promises by all sides to "prevent and mitigate harm to civilians".

It also noted the absurdity of the ever-increasing price paid by civilians given the widespread belief that the war in Afghanistan cannot be won by either side.

"Civilian casualties are totally unacceptable," said the UN's special representative in Afghanistan, Tadamichi

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Artist Kalidas Karmakar no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Internationally-acclaimed artist Kalidas Karmakar passed away yesterday. He was 73.

He suffered a cardiac arrest around 1:30pm when he was in the bathroom of his flat in the capital's Eskaton. As there was no response from him, his sister Sanchita Karmakar and other family members broke open the bathroom door.

He was taken to Labaid Specialised Hospital where

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Four killed in 'shootouts' in one night

STAR REPORT

Four suspected criminals, including two Rohingyas, were killed in separate "gunfights" with the law enforcers in Cox's Bazar, Joypurhat and Mymensingh early yesterday.

In Cox's Bazar, two suspected drug peddlers Abul Hashem, 25, and Nur Kamal, 19, were killed in a "gunfight" with Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in Teknaf's Hoaikong area near Naf River, reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent.

Lt Col Foysal Hasan Khan, commanding officer of BGB-2, said the duo were residents of Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp in Ukhyia upazila.

"On information that a big consignment of Yaba pills were coming from Myanmar, BGB men took position near the river," he said.

Noticing a boat, carrying four to five men, was about to enter Bangladesh around 12:30am, BGB men ordered the boatman to stop.

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Spectators witness a boat race in the Koratoa river near the SP Bridge in Bogra town yesterday. The programme was organised to create awareness against pollution and grabbing of the river, now almost in its death throes. According to the Department of Environment, the river water's dissolved oxygen level is poor and it is more polluted than other rivers in Rajshahi division.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUI

Qatar reforms labour rules

Says ILO; kafala system abolished; 4 lakh Bangladeshi workers to enjoy freedom of switching jobs, standardised minimum wage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qatar has announced sweeping reforms to its labour market, with a ruling to end the kafala (sponsorship) system, marking a momentous step forward in upholding the rights of millions of migrant workers, said an ILO press release yesterday.

By reforming the system, migrant workers will now have the freedom to change jobs, no longer rely on exit permits and see minimum wages for both migrant and national workers.

"These reforms will affect approximately 400,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers in Qatar, 75 percent of whom are employed in the construction sector," said Country Director for ILO Bangladesh Tuomo Poutiainen.

"This will improve the protection of migrant workers, as it will not only reduce the wage gap but also the labour rights gap that previously existed between migrant and national workers."

The kafala system emerged in the 1950's to provide temporary, rotating labour that could be rapidly brought into the country during periods of economic boom and expelled during low-growth periods. It remains the routine practice in remaining Gulf Cooperation Council countries as well as Jordan and Lebanon.

On October 16 this year, the Council of Ministers of the State of Qatar unanimously endorsed new legislation allowing workers to change employers freely. Workers in Qatar had required a no-objection certificate (NOC) from

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