

Catalan leaders demand talks with Madrid

Separatist Catalan leaders yesterday called on the Spanish government to enter into talks as Barcelona braced for fresh violence after days of clashes between police and protesters. Nearly 200 people were hurt in another night of clashes with radical separatists hurling rocks and fireworks at police who responded with tear gas and rubber bullets. A hardcore movement of young separatists, Arran, called for a new demonstration "against repression" for 1600 GMT in central Barcelona. "We exhort the head of the government to fix today a day and hour to sit with us for unconditional talks," regional president Quim Torra said in a speech.

His demand for "unconditional" negotiations, addressed to Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, appeared to be aimed at ensuring that a referendum on independence, currently a non-starter for Madrid, is up for discussion.

The Spanish government responded by saying it had "always been open to dialogue in the framework of respect for the law". In a statement, it also called on Torra to condemn the violence, "which he has not done so far". Barcelona has been rocked all week by protests against a Spanish court's jailing of nine separatist leaders on sedition charges over a failed independence bid.

A village

FROM PAGE 16 Later, the arbitration was called off. In 2010, Jobor Ali, a relative of Anwar Hossain, died of a heart attack, but family members of the deceased dumped the body in a nearby swamp to implicate their rivals. Jobor's wife filed a murder case against some of their family rivals, but police found that Jobor died naturally. The case ended with the submission of a police report, said the lawenforcers.

In 2015, when the rivalry between Anwar Hossain and Abdul Mosobbir reached a new peak over grabbing government lands and waterbodies, several respected people in the upazila, including late parliamentarian Suranjit Sen Gupta, called for an arbitration between the two groups. The arbitration was scheduled for October 9. And again a day before the arbitration, a woman of Mosobbir's family was killed.

Nilufa Begum, wife of Mosobbir's nephew Gias Uddin, was hacked on a village road. She died at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College two days later. Nilufa's father filed a case accusing Anwar Hossain, Salatul Miah, Suleman Miah and 13 others and the case is still to be disposed of.

There are allegations that Gias Uddin had a quarrel with his wife and hacked her to death in an attempt to incriminate the rivals, according to locals.

Recently, another attempt to settle the rivalry was taken and the arbitration was supposed to take place last week. But Tuhin was brutally murdered right before the arbitration.

Two knives, which were pierced deep inside Tuhin's stomach, had the names of Suleman and Salatul written on their grips.

Talking to The Daily Star on Friday afternoon, Anwar, Suleman and Salatul claimed that Mosobbir tried to frame them once again by writing down their names on the grips of the knives.

Harendra Biswas, a member of the village police, said, "None of the groups ever wanted to reconcile as they don't want to give up their dominance in the village. Establishing control over the committees for fishing in the local water bodies has been the main reason of their dispute for the last several years."

After Tuhin's murder, police arrested his father Abdul Basir, uncles Abdul Mosobbir, Jamshed Ali, Nasir Miah and cousin Mohammad Shahriar on October 14. The next day, Nasir and Shahriar confessed before a Sunamganj court stating that Tuhin was carried out of home by his father before his killing. Basir, Mosobbir and Jamshed were placed on a three-day remand that day and sent to Sunamganj Jail on Friday after the remand.

Mijanur Rahman, acting superintendent of police in Sunamganj, said, "We have found more details of the murder after the remand of the victim's father and two uncles. We are still investigating the matter and the charge sheet will be submitted very soon."

Charge sheet

FROM PAGE 16 ministry, Asaduzzaman said all institutions under the home ministry including police, Border Guard Bangladesh, Coast Guard, Rapid Action Battalion, Ansar Battalion and others are being recast to make the effort successful.



Mourners attend the funeral of civilians and fighters, who died during attacks by Turkish-led forces on the border town of Ras al-Ain, in a cemetery in Tal Tamr, near the Syrian Kurdish town of Ras al-Ain, yesterday.

Ancient 'lost city' found in Cambodia

FROM PAGE 16 Shrouded in mystery for decades, Mahendraparvata has been dubbed the "lost city." Now, scientists say they have identified it for certain.

"Here, we confirm the hypothesis, based on this accumulated body of evidence, that Mahendraparvata -- the eighth- to ninth-century AD capital of the Khmer Empire -- was located on the Phnom Kulen massif," said the report, which was published in the journal *Antiquity*.

The researchers used airborne laser scanning that had a "unique ability to 'see through' vegetation and provide high-resolution models of the forest floor," the report said.

They had to map the area in two separate operations -- first in 2012, covering about 37 square kilometers

(about 9,143 acres), and again in 2015, covering the entire mountain range, an area of 975 square kilometers (240,928 acres).

The results of the aerial mapping, along with information collected by field investigations, were then used to create a map that shows the newly discovered main paths and coordinate axes. The map details the location of features like an unfinished reservoir, several dams, the enclosure walls of temples, and even a palace.

These discoveries open the door to learning more about the Khmer Empire and the Angkor region. The map shows that the city used urban planning, a "sophisticated hydraulic system," and other innovations, the report said.

One striking discovery was that the city was built on linear axes that roughly correspond with the cardinal

directions, the report said -- like an early version of the modern city grid system.

Prior to that period of time, human settlements in the area had no formal grid, no clear boundaries, and seem to have developed organically without planning -- meaning Mahendraparvata is the first known large grid city in the Khmer world.

"The work described here effectively draws to a close 150 years of archaeological mapping work in the Greater Angkor region and sets the stage for more sophisticated spatio-temporal modelling of urban form," the report said.

Angkor was the better-known capital of the Khmer Empire, which once governed much of modern-day Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos as well as parts of southern China and Myanmar, and, of course, Cambodia itself.

Syria truce takes hold

FROM PAGE 16 southern border by establishing a 30 kilometre (20 mile) deep "safe zone" on the Syrian side of the frontier.

A Britain-based war monitor said the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) had yet to start pulling back yesterday.

"The SDF have not withdrawn until now from any point," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

SDF commander Redur Khalil said deadly bombardments by Turkey's forces on Friday were a major breach of the truce and called on Washington to ensure Ankara honoured its side of the deal.

On Friday, Turkish air strikes and mortar fire by allied Syrian fighters killed 14 civilians in and around the village of Bab al-Kheir, the Observatory said.

The Turkish military and its Syrian proxies -- mostly Arab and Turkmen

former rebels used as a ground force -- have so far seized around 120 kilometres (70 miles) of territory along the Syrian-Turkish border.

Syria's Kurds had been a key partner in the US-backed battle against the Islamic State group in Syria, overruling the last remnant of their self-proclaimed "caliphate" in March.

But earlier this month, US President Donald Trump announced he would withdraw US troops from northern Syria, in a move that was seen as green-lighting a Turkish attack.

The move has come under widespread criticism, even from within Trump's own Republican party.

It has sparked concerns that thousands of IS suspects and their family members in Kurdish custody could break out and bring about a resurgence of the extremist group.

US Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell called Trump's decision "a

strategic nightmare".

"Withdrawing US forces from Syria is a grave strategic mistake," McConnell wrote in *The Washington Post*.

"It will leave the American people and homeland less safe, embolden our enemies, and weaken important alliances."

US Vice President Mike Pence brokered the ceasefire deal on a visit to Turkey this week.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who accompanied Pence to Ankara, said in an interview with *Politico* he was "confident" the ceasefire would take hold.

The suspension of hostilities looked designed to help Turkey achieve its main territorial goals without fighting.

But Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned the same day that he would resume a full-out offensive if Kurdish forces did not pull back.

Choking a stream to death

FROM PAGE 16 only about 5 feet.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found multiple structures erected on banks of the stream. Some of the structures were seven to eight years old while others 15 to 16 years.

Experts said these structures changed the course of the water flow and it resulted into floods that hit hard the town during monsoons.

Encroachment, littering, and the authorities' decision to lease out the land were largely responsible for blockage of the flow, locals told this correspondent.

"We have seen how mindlessly they destroyed this water body in a tourist town like Bandarban. But we can't do anything about it," said Buddhajyoti Chakma, a local journalist. "The illegal structures must be removed to save the stream."

Mong Swe Khai Marma, an executive engineer of Bandarban municipality, said, "We are helpless. The encroachers have political links and are erecting permanent structures on the banks."

"The main reason why waterlogging has been frequent in recent years is nothing but filling up of the waterbody."

According to local Mayor Islam Baby, Bandarban Hill District Council Chairman Kwe Shwe Hla, who has been in-charge of a Bazar Fund for the last 12 years, leased out areas near the stream to ruling party men.

Bazar Fund is a self-earning administration in hill districts. It was created under CHT regulation 1900 and is regulated by Bazar Fund Manual.

When contacted, Kwe Shwe Hla said, "We allocated the plots in line with the Bazar Fund Manual Act. But those who were given the plots are illegally occupying land on the banks of the stream."

The district administration did violate the conditions of the Bazar fund lease agreement in this case, he

stressed.

"We gave on lease 1.86-acre land to district administration in 2009 for constructing an officers' club but violating the conditions, they leased out the land to other influential people in 2012," Shwe Hla added.

The National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) recently published 368 names of water body grabbers in Bandarban where there is no mention of those blamed by locals.

According to NRCC Chairman Muzibur Rahman Howlader, no permanent structure can be built within 150-feet land on banks of rivers on which vessels move regularly.

The restricted area is 10 feet for water bodies not used by vessels.

"We are aware that names of influential people, who grabbed the waterbody in Bandarban, were dropped from the list. We have asked the DC to send their names to us," he said.

About that, Bandarban Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Noman Hossain said, "We will include the names upon investigation and send them to the commission again."

He further claimed that Kajal Kanti Das, an advisor to Bandarban AL, filled up portions of the canal to build a convention centre for his hotel.

Kajal rejected the allegation and claimed he bought the land.

Queried on the allegation of his involvement in land grabbing, Amal Das said, "We, including the hill tracts affairs minister, took the land on lease from the local administration a few years ago."

Mahbubur Rahman echoed his statement.

When reached over the phone a few months ago, Minister Ushwe Sing refused to make any comment. This correspondent contacted him several times later, including yesterday, but he did not pick up the calls.

This correspondent visited the office of Bandarban Deputy Commissioner Md Daudul Islam recently, but he did not agree to make any comment.

Former additional deputy commissioner Md Abul Kalam said he did not know why the erstwhile DC gave lease of the land to influential people. "It was an utter violation of law," he added.

Iraqi charged in Australia over deadly trafficking ring

AFP, Sydney

An Iraqi man has been charged in Australia with people trafficking in connection with the drowning deaths of more than 350 asylum seekers in 2001, police said Saturday.

Maythem Radhi, 43, was arrested at Brisbane airport late Friday after being extradited from New Zealand and has been charged with "organising groups of non-citizens into Australia".

He faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

Police claim he was part of a syndicate that charged 421 mostly Iraqi and Afghan refugees for a place aboard an Indonesian fishing boat known by Australian authorities as SIEV-X in 2001.

The vessel sunk in the Indian Ocean while en route to Australia's Christmas Island, leaving 353 people dead, 146 of them children.

"Police will allege in court that the man, then aged 24, took payments from the passengers," the Australian Federal Police said in a statement on Saturday -- exactly 18 years after the disaster.

"It will also be alleged that he helped facilitate the transportation and accommodation of people in Indonesia in preparation for their journey to Australia," they added.

Radhi is the third person to face court for their role in the disaster.

People could not

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the national polls in 2008. "Sheikh Hasina and I jointly waged a movement during the tenure of the Aziz commission [former chief election commissioner MA Aziz], demanding cancellation of a fake voter list which contained names of 1.10 crore false voters. Why again the people of the country couldn't vote in the union parishad, upazila parishad, and Jatiya Sangsad elections?"

Blasting the incumbent government, he said development does not necessarily mean snatching of democracy, curbing freedom of speech, squeezing dissenting voices and reducing the space for democracy.

Referring to the recent drive against illegal casinos, the Workers Party chief said although the government was arresting owners of casinos and corrupt people, the "main areas" of corruption still remained untouched.

Menon, who was the social welfare minister in Hasina's previous cabinet, said he was not aggrieved and that he did not have any regret for not being included in the current cabinet.

"I took part in the previous elections with the Awami League's electoral symbol 'boat' in the interest of the 14-party alliance. But next time I will contest an election with the Workers Party's electoral symbol 'hammer,'" he said.

'DRIVE DAMAGING AL'

Speaking at an extended meeting of Natore district AL at a college in Natore town, Nasim said the ongoing "correction drive" was causing damages to the AL.

"This drive is not bringing anything good for the party. It is rather damaging the Awami League. People are thinking what has happened to Awami League."

The government has been conducting a drive against illegal casinos since September 18 and many termed it a "correction drive".

Nasim said there are some benefits if a political party remain in power for a long time. Many development activities are carried out due to this.

"But there are some negative sides of it also. We are facing it now. People start to feel proud, distrust grows among the party men, and many dishonest people join the party," he said.

Addressing the programme, AL Joint General Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak said leaders who did not support party candidates in elections would face the music.

State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury urged the party men to refrain from creating grouping among the AL and lobbying for party posts.

Our Natore correspondent contributed to this report.

Militants now active

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during the inauguration programme of Dhaka Peace Talk, an awareness raising programme funded by USAID, at DMP Media Centre.

Dhaka Peace Talk would be organised by Center for Social Advocacy and Research Foundation (CSARF) in association with DMP's CTIC unit.

A total of 12 round table meetings would be held during the programme and those would be participated by 36 extremism prevention experts, youths and other stakeholders.

Highlighting the necessity of such programmes, the CTIC boss

not. It [terrorism] is a real threat and persistent," the police official said.

Monirul, however, said the risk of militant attacks in the country was low.

Stressing on youths' engagement in the programme, the CTIC boss said people aged between 15 and 30 were prone to take part in violent extremism.

CSARF Executive Director Shabnam Azim said Dhaka Peace Talk would build a network through which all stakeholders, especially youths, would work as community ambassadors and spread



said programmes against terrorism that started taking place after Holy Artisan attack in 2016 lost its vigour over the years.

A united effort of law enforcers, civil society members, parents and teachers is a must to prevent the peril, he said.

"As terrorist activities are less frequent nowadays, many think that it has gone. But it actually has

awareness.

Founded in 2019 by a group of researchers, university teachers and career journalists; CSARF is a nonprofit think-tank in the country, specialising in social advocacy, research and security threat analysis.

CSARF has a memorandum of understanding with CTIC for preventing violent extremism activities.

Young climate activists in Africa struggle to be heard

AFP, Accra

As Greta Thunberg and the Extinction Rebellion inspire climate protesters across the globe, young African activists say they still struggle to make themselves heard.

"No continent will be struck as severely by the impacts of climate change as Africa," the United Nations Environment Programme said as it warned of increased flooding, widespread food insecurity and major economic losses.

But awareness remains low and a study from research institute Afrobarometer in August said that four in 10 Africans have never heard of climate change.

At the Climate Chance conference in Ghana's capital Accra this week hundreds of campaigners, local government officials and business people from across the continent sought a way forward.

Togolese activist Kevin Ossah, 22, led a mock United Nations debate that pitched participants playing the role of major polluters like the United States against those set to bear the biggest burden of the crisis.

He said he admires the huge crowds taking to the streets from Sydney to Stockholm, but in his West African homeland -- ruled by an authoritarian regime that has cracked down on protests -- that wasn't really an option.

"As youth, we can't be putting our lives in insecurity by entering roads and doing something that Greta is doing," he told AFP.

Instead he plans to focus on more practical steps like planting trees, educating rural communities and writing to leaders calling for action.

"I think the thing we can do is use communication and digital communications skills," he said.

"We have to share information and let other people know about us and share the efforts that we are doing."

Africa produces only a tiny fraction of global greenhouse gas emissions and the fight against climate change can often be seen as an issue more for people living in the developed economies of Europe, America and Asia.

But those attending the conference insisted awareness could grow if local officials and activists focus on the problems Africans confront every day.

Awannuasah Gyimah, municipal chief executive of Asokwa in central Ghana, told AFP he was committed to increasing education about climate change to his constituents.

As a starting point he wants to target the poorly maintained vehicles that belch acrid black fumes into the faces of passersby in his region.

"It is difficult to deal with this situation because the people don't even understand what it means," he said in reference to the environmental impact.

Benin's former environment minister Luc Gnacadja said one problem was the lack of access to information and education on the issue.