

Classical Music Fest

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travel facilities and audience gathering, the BCMF 2019 has been cancelled, it said.

Rezwanul Kamal Chowdhury, manager of communications at the Bengal Foundation, yesterday told The Daily Star that they always prefer to hold their program in Army Stadium for security reason.

But the authorities denied the permission, citing “security concerns”, he said.

The BCMF had been held in the Army Stadium since 2012.

In 2017, it was initially cancelled due to venue permission issues but was rescheduled and eventually held in Abahani field in the capital’s Dhanmondi area.

Last year, the festival was cancelled due to security reasons ahead of the general election.

Asked why the Abahani field was not an option this year, Rezwanul said that it would not be possible as the field was undergoing as a renovation work, adding that they could not find any other venue apt to hold the festival as big as the BCMF, which accommodates around 50-60,000 people as an audience every year.

Muslim couple

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vandalised 12 more belonging to the Hindu community.

“When the attacks were being carried out, none but the couple came out and tried to douse the fire,” said Sujit Chandra Dey, a victim of the attack.

“They have shown their courage and proved how good neighbours they are,” Sujit said, adding that the couple also snatched a sharp weapon from an attacker.

“All of our houses would have been destroyed if the couple had not come forward,” said Smriti Rani Dey, a university student and a victim of the vandalism.

Farzana said, “I have never seen such attack in my life, but I didn’t lose courage to stand beside my neighbours, whatever be their religious identity.”

“All I thought was I have to protect my neighbours with whom we have been living with harmony for years,” she also said.

Her husband Helal, an executive member of Borhanuddin upazila unit Awami League, said, “My forefathers have always stood beside their Hindu neighbours during a time of crisis.

Besides, standing beside neighbours in time of their crisis has been made mandatory in Islam, Helal said.

Bhola Hindus

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guardians did not allow children to get out of their homes.

Hindu businessmen were opening their shops only in emergency, he added.

Sunday’s attack on the Hindu houses is not the first such case in Borhanuddin. The upazila had witnessed violence in 1992 after the demolition of Babri Mosque in India. Many temples and houses belonging to the Hindu community were razed to the ground and looted then.

The Hindus also came under attack after the national polls in 2001. Apart from vandalising and looting of the houses, many Hindu women were also raped that year.

Abinash Nandi said that there were approximately 2.8 lakh to 3 lakh Hindus in Bhola.

He said some unidentified goons set fire to fences of Hindu houses in Kachia and Kunjueh areas. The criminals also burned stacked betel-nut leaves of a house in Manikerhat area on Monday night.

“Such incidents made us even more worried,” he said.

Borhanuddin Puja Udjapan Parishad President Anil Das said they were in tension as Hindus of the upazila had faced several attacks in the past.

Although police and other law enforcers are patrolling the upazila, members of the Hindu community are still in tension because of their previous experiences, he said.

Contacted, Mohammed Masud Alam Siddique, deputy commissioner of Bhola, said there were no reason for Hindus to be worried.

Security has been beefed up in the entire district, especially in Borhanuddin. Four platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh, additional Rab and police members have been deployed to maintain law and order in the upazila, he said.

Beside plainclothes police are also keeping an watch on everything, he added.

US wins ownership of seized North Korean vessel

AFP, Washington

The United States was awarded ownership of a North Korean cargo ship that was seized for violating international sanctions, the US Justice Department said.

The Wise Honest -- the first North Korean vessel to be seized by the US for sanctions violation -- was caught carrying a \$3 million shipment of coal in Indonesian waters last year and later handed over to the US.



A handout picture, released by the official Facebook page for the Syrian Presidency yesterday, shows Syrian President Bashar al-Assad listening to army soldiers in al-Habit on the southern edges of the Idlib province. Assad visited government troops on the front line with jihadists in Idlib, his first visit to the northwestern province since the start of the conflict.

PHOTO: AFP

MPs reject Brexit deal

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“We need now to watch events in Westminster very closely,” Juncker said. “It’s not possible, not imaginable that this (European) parliament will ratify the agreement before Westminster will have ratified the agreement.”

Tusk told the European Parliament that “the situation is quite complex” and he was consulting EU leaders on how to react.

“It is obvious that the result of these consultations will very much depend on what the British parliament decides, or doesn’t decide. We should be ready for every scenario,” he said.

The UK is entering a cliffhanger finale to a drama that has divided families and embittered politics ever since voters backed a split from

Britain’s 27 EU allies and trading partners in 2016.

Johnson has set himself a very high bar by promising that he will get Brexit done -- “do or die” -- by the twice-delayed October 31 departure date.

The Conservative leader had hoped that the parliament would give initial support to a Brexit bill that translates the revised withdrawal agreement he struck with Brussels last week into UK law.

He also hoped that the lower House of Commons commits to passing the entire legislation in three days -- a heavy lift for a 110-page text designed to unwind 46 years of intricate EU-UK ties. Yesterday’s failure is a devastating blow to Johnson.

Parliament has already forced

Johnson to request a three-month extension that European leaders will consider once they get a clearer picture of how the battles in parliament play out.

The extra time might allow opposition lawmakers to try and secure much closer future trade relations with the bloc than the firmer break envisioned by Johnson.

Pro-European Britons have also held massive rallies in London demanding a second Brexit referendum, which could allow for the result of the first to be overturned.

But the delay gives Johnson a fresh stab at an early election designed to give him the parliamentary majority needed to avoid these scenarios and get his legislation through.

FICCI worried

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handled.

Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar said, “We know the multinational companies have that capacity to send concern letters by using different

international organisations, and we are quite ready to accept it.”

On October 17, the High Court issued an ad-interim injunction for two months against the realisation of Tk 12,579.95 crore from Grameenphone.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister’s ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy asked the authorities concerned to settle the dispute over the telecom regulator’s claim. He also said he would prefer an out-of-court settlement if possible.

Japan emperor ascends throne

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The solemn ceremony was conducted almost entirely in silence, with royal family members gliding wordlessly into the room and standing throughout.

Only the sounds of a gong and drum signalled the stages of the ritual, with a low, loud beat indicating to guests representing around 180 countries and institutions that it was time to stand and hear the proclamation.

And it was over almost as soon as it had begun, with attendants closing the purple curtains and the royals quietly moving out of the room.

Outside, a small crowd of well-wishers gathered despite driving rain that forced the palace to move some of the guests inside.

They watched the ceremony on their phones outside and listened as a gun salute was sounded when it was complete.

“I feel as a Japanese person that

this is such a historic moment,” said Kyoko Tanaka, 51.

“I want the royal couple to be a good example for Japanese people, like their predecessors were,” she added.

Others too said they had felt compelled to come to the palace, despite the parade being postponed until November 10.

“I know we can’t see the ceremony, but I wanted to feel the atmosphere in front of the palace,” Shoko Koeda said, watching the proceedings on her phone.

“This is a historic moment. I feel special.”

The Japanese royal family commands relatively broad support, although polls suggest the younger generation is less interested in the monarchy.

A poll released by national broadcaster NHK on the eve of

the ceremony found 70 percent of voters in the country hold “friendly or favourable” views towards the imperial family.

But despite the support, the monarchy that is sometimes described as the world’s oldest faces other concerns, particularly succession.

Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako have one child, a 17-year-old daughter named Aiko. But imperial rules allow only a man to ascend the throne, and royal women lose their titles if they marry a commoner.

With Naruhito’s ascension, his brother Akishino is now crown prince. And Akishino’s son -- 13-year-old Hisahito -- is currently the only other remaining successor.

The question of altering the succession rules has been raised -- NHK found 74 percent support the shift -- but no formal moves have yet been made to make the changes.

Trudeau wins second term

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the party could exercise significant influence over Trudeau’s next government.

“I think a Liberal government supported by the NDP is likely going to lean farther left,” said John Manley, a former Liberal finance minister who now works in the private sector.

“It raises a series of issues about what are the demands that an NDP party would make. What’s the price of governing going to be? I think businesses are going to be reluctant to make any moves until they get some satisfaction around that.”

NDP leader Jagmeet Singh said he had spoken with Trudeau and told him his party would be “working hard to deliver on making sure we deliver the priorities that Canadians have.”

Minority governments in Canada rarely last more than 2-1/2 years.

Ahead of the vote, opinion polls showed a tight race between Trudeau

and his main rival, Conservative leader Andrew Scheer.

“Tonight we have put him on notice,” Scheer said in Regina, Saskatchewan, of Trudeau. “His leadership is damaged and his government will end soon and when that time comes, we will be ready and we will win. “We are the government in waiting,” added Scheer, 40, whose party won 122 seats.

Trudeau, 47, who has championed diversity as prime minister, was endorsed by former US President Barack Obama in the final stretch of the campaign and is viewed as one of the last remaining progressive leaders among the world’s major democracies.

But the son of the late Liberal Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau also had to overcome a sense of fatigue with his government.

US President Donald Trump, whose relationship with Trudeau has

been testy at times, congratulated him “on a wonderful and hard fought victory” via Twitter.

The Bloc Quebecois saw its support jump in Quebec, the only place where the separatist party contests elections. It was elected or ahead in 32 seats, more than three times what the party won in 2015.

“Dear Quebecers, I heard your message tonight,” said Trudeau, who also addressed voters in two western provinces where Liberals were shut out of seats.

“To Canadians in Alberta and Saskatchewan, know that you are an essential part of our great country. I’ve heard your frustration and I want to be there to support you. Let us all work hard to bring our country together,” he said.

The Greens, who have assailed Trudeau for not doing enough to combat climate change, also made gains on Monday.

Teenage girl gang-raped

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further said, adding that the girl was sent to Laxmipur General Hospital.

No case was filed in this regard as of 8:47pm yesterday.

Meanwhile, a garment worker was allegedly gang-raped by two men in Narayanganj’s Bandar upazila on Monday. Police detained the accused -- Sagir, 22, and Arman Ali, 20 -- in Kuripara area of the upazila on Monday night, said Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Bandar Police Station.

Later, the accused were shown arrested yesterday morning after the victim’s mother filed a case with the police station, he added.

According to the police official, the duo picked up the 18-year-old girl on her way back to home from factory. They forcibly took her to an abandoned room and raped her.

The criminals fled the scene as the victim fell sick, he said, adding that the victim was sent to Narayanganj General Hospital for treatment.

A Narayanganj court yesterday sent Sagar and Arman to jail.

Meanwhile, A Laxmipur court yesterday sent a youth to jail for his alleged involvement in the rape of a fourth grader in the district’s Ramganj upazila.

The accused -- Rubel Hossain, 25 -- forcibly took the girl to a betel nut garden and raped her on Sunday, said Ramganj OC Anwar.

The victim’s mother filed a case with the police station on Monday.

Hover-taxi whizzes

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Volocopter has already tested the aircraft in Dubai, Helsinki, Germany and Las Vegas but the Singapore trial is the first in the heart of a city.

The orderly metropolis is likely to be among the first to get the service, with a commercial rollout expected in two to four years, and Volocopter then hopes to introduce the vehicles in traffic-clogged Asian cities.

Prices for a trip in the aircraft have not yet been determined but Volocopter is aiming for just above the fare of a taxi ride.

“We generally consider Asia to be a huge opportunity to benefit from this new technology, and we intend to have a strong presence in Asia starting here in Singapore,” Volocopter chief executive Florian Reuter told AFP.

The company wants to bring the service to sprawling cities like Jakarta, Manila and Bangkok, as well as parts of India and China, he said.

Many Asian mega-cities are notorious for monster traffic jams, which leave millions of commuters facing long journeys, and can delay executives trying to dash to airports or

reach important meetings on time.

In China, Volocopter plans to partner with automaker Geely, which owns a stake in the German aviation company, to mass-produce flying taxis for the Chinese market, Reuter said.

The flying taxi will be used in Singapore to provide quick travel on routes such as from Marina Bay to Sentosa island, home to several tourist attractions and luxury hotels, or to ferry people from ships anchored offshore to port.

Earlier this week in the city-state, Volocopter unveiled the “VoloPort”, a flying taxi port at the water’s edge with a landing and take-off pad as well as a passenger terminal.

The port was not used for yesterday’s test flight because it has not been certified yet.

Volocopter faces some competition, including from Uber and Kitty Hawk, a firm backed by Google co-founder Larry Page.

“We feel we are at the humble beginnings of a new mode of transportation that ultimately will transform the way we see mobility in cities,” Reuter said.

Workers Party

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“one-sided”parliamentary elections will end on January 5, 2014.

Recently, Menon has started giving statements against the government as part of his desperate attempt to prevent another split in the left-leaning political organisation, said party insiders.

The party president’s pro-government role and the party’s failure to raise voice on different crucial national issues over the years made the leaders and activists at different tiers frustrated, the insiders said.

A section of the party members was also unhappy with Menon alleging that he was busy achieving personal gains and abusing his party and Jatiya Sangsad posts.

For instance, they said Menon made his wife Lutfun Nessa Khan a lawmaker from the reserved seats for women.

Allegations of Menon’s corruption have also been brought forward in recent times.

Law enforcers are currently launching a drive against illegal

gambling and casinos, with the first one being carried at Fakirerpool Young Men’s Club in the capital on September 18.

Menon is the chairman of the club’s governing body.

Sources also said some recent remarks by Menon made the ruling Awami League aggrieved.

At a programme in Gazipur on October 14, he alleged that around Tk 9 lakh crore had been siphoned off abroad.

Later at programme in Barishal on October 20, he alleged that people could not vote in the December 30 parliamentary polls in 2018.

Meanwhile, AL leader Mohammed Nasim, also spokesperson of the AL-led 14-party alliance, yesterday said Menon’s comments embarrassed the combine of which Workers Party is a component.

Nasim’s comment came at a roundtable meeting on the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Bangladesh and India during PM Sheikh Hasina’s visit to the neighboring country.

Cancel jobs

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But the company was yet to complete the work.

Like this project, almost all the government projects need frequent time extension, resulting in a rise in construction costs and other complexities, officials say.

The planning ministry official said the PM came down heavily on GK Builders and other controversial contractors who grabbed a large number of government projects and repeatedly missed deadlines.

Expressing her dissatisfaction, Hasina asked how a company could get such a large number of government work and directed the authorities concerned to award the rest of the work of controversial contractors to second-placed bidders.

Officials present in the meeting told the PM that it was not legally possible.

The PM then suggested fresh tenders

or assigning sub-contractors.

On the lack of experience of some companies, the PM asked for assigning new contractors so that they could get the experience.

Shamim’s company is listed with the Public Works Division. The company is implementing 13 large government projects, according to media reports.

As the government has frozen his bank accounts, completion of the projects has become uncertain.

Except the 13 projects, the company is also co-contractors in 42 more projects across the country, the reports say.

The contract value of the projects is Tk 4642.20 crore. Of the amount, the company has already withdrawn Tk 1,301 crore.

Meanwhile, the Ecneec yesterday approved five other projects, including new and amended ones, worth Tk 4636.8 crore.

19m children face risks

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of malnutrition and hunger because of the poor quality of their diets.

The report was prepared based on data from “Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey-2014,” says Unicef Bangladesh, adding that the next report is due next month.

“The latest report of the country’s multiple indicator cluster survey is due next month and it will provide the updated situation of children nutrition.”

The report said a total of 58.7 million children under 5 were stunted and almost 25.9 million were wasted in South Asia. Now, more children and young people are surviving, but far too few are thriving, it said.

Extreme climatic events such as drought and flash floods cause severe agricultural losses, it said.

In a country like Bangladesh where 60 percent of the population counts on agriculture for their livelihood, this means children from the poorest families are most likely to go hungry, said the report.

The reduced production also leads to an increase in food prices, hitting the poorest families the hardest.

Besides, a rise in communicable and non-communicable diseases linked to changing climate conditions and unplanned urbanisation also threatens children and their families, Unicef said in the report.

These diseases include diarrhoea, hepatitis A, cholera, dysentery, typhoid, dengue and chikungunya fever.

The report mentions the story

of Ruma, a woman living in the Chalandika slum in the capital Dhaka along with her husband and two children Sunjida, 3, and Shahaun, 9. They moved to the city after their home was repeatedly flooded by the Meghna river.

“At least we can stand on dry ground here even if we struggle with the cost of living,” the report quoted Ruma as saying.

“My husband earns about Tk 7,000 a month. By the time we’ve paid our rent and bought our groceries there is very little left over. But at least we’re able to earn here, which we often weren’t able to do when we lived in the countryside.”

Ruma shares a small kitchen -- a few planks of wood atop bamboo poles set in a swamp -- with at least 10 other families.

Her family eats rice and lentils most days, she says, and can occasionally afford meat or fish. Her son, Shahaun, is showing signs of malnourishment.

In addition to the arduous challenge of trying to provide her family with healthy food, Ruma describes an unhealthy environment with no access to safe water, basic toilets or adequate hygiene.

Electricity in the slum is irregular, and rodents and insects in their single room “make our lives an absolute misery,” the report says while depicting the sorry state of their living conditions.

The report blames the flooding that forced the family to move to the city on climate change.