



From left, DLF director Ahsan Akbar, Bangla Academy Director Habibullah Sirazi, State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid, British-Bangladeshi author Monica Ali, and festival directors Kazi Anis Ahmed and Sadaf Saaz formally inaugurate Dhaka Lit Fest 2019. The photo was taken yesterday at Bangla Academy. PHOTO: COLLECTED

# 3 syndicates smuggling arms through Jashore: DB

Arrestee gives confessional statement to court

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Three trans-border syndicates have been smuggling arms into Bangladesh from India using the Putkhali border point of Jashore for last five years, the Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday claimed to have unearthed.

Each syndicate has at least five members -- three in Bangladesh and two in India -- and they supplied firearms to criminals and political goons on demand, they said, adding that a public representative, narcotics dealers and cattle traders were found working as members of the syndicates.

DB claimed to have made the breakthrough from the confessional statement of Hafizur Rahman, an alleged syndicate member who was arrested early on Tuesday with four firearms from the capital's Mirpur.

Hafizur gave the statement under section 164 to a Dhaka court yesterday, after end of his two-day police remand. The court later sent him to jail.

"We have come to know that three syndicates are involved in narcotics and

arms smuggling via the Jashore border," Muharram Ali, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of DB police, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Police are now verifying the names and activities, he added.

Habibur Rahman, a union parishad member of ward-2 of Putkhali in Jashore's Sharsha upazila was named one of the syndicate members, claimed detectives. He was elected three years back, and is leading one of the syndicates, they added.

Hafizur gave details about syndicate's activities and said he came to Dhaka to deliver four firearms to a person on instruction of Habibur, said Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner (north) of DB police.

Habibur could not be reached over phone for comment.

Md Hadiuzzaman, chairman of Putkhali union parishad, said Habibur is an "outsider" who joined Awami League and was involved with BNP-Jamaat politics earlier, and he did not know much about Habibur's activities.

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# 'Govt barred Khoka from returning'

Fakhrul says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday alleged that the government barred freedom fighter Sadeque Hossain Khoka from entering the country when he was alive.

"The government always talks about the spirit of Liberation War, but it does not allow a valiant freedom fighter like Sadeque Hossain Khoka to enter the country when he was alive. We hope such incident will not recur," he told journalists after placing a wreath at party founder Ziaur Rahman's grave at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital.

He called upon party leaders and activists to be imbued with the spirit of

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# DEATH OF TEEN ON FERRY

## Hearing on probe reports Nov 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday set November 14 for holding a hearing on probe reports over the incident of a ferry delay, which led to the death of Titash Ghosh, 13, in an ambulance on its way to Dhaka on July 25.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader set the date, after Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Abdullah-Al-Mahmud Bashar submitted a probe report -- prepared by a shipping ministry-formed body -- during hearing of a writ petition.

The committee formed by the ministry said Joint Secretary Abdus Sabur Mondal cannot avoid responsibility for the ferry delay.

Mondal talked to ghat (terminal) manager Salam Hossain over cellphone several times, reached the ferry terminal after a long delay and was liable for keeping the ferry waiting for a long time, and therefore, cannot avoid the responsibility for the delay of the ferry, according to the report.

DAG Bashar received the report on Wednesday.

Earlier, a probe body of the cabinet division had said it did not find any logical

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# Myanmar's IORA membership bid rejected

Bangladesh cites neighbour's non-cooperation in repatriating Rohingyas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Myanmar's membership at the Indian Ocean Rim Association was declined as Bangladesh opposed it, citing Myanmar's non-cooperation and lack of commitment to repatriate Rohingyas.

A Bangladesh delegation expressed its objection to Myanmar's membership at the senior officials' meet of the Association, mentioning that "the ground reality of Myanmar's non-cooperation and lack of commitment to repatriate Rohingya refugees have not changed since the last meeting."

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) -- a dynamic inter-governmental organisation aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the region -- held its 21st Council of Senior Officials in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on November 5-6, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

The statement comes at a time when repatriation of the Rohingyas has not been possible though Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation deal in November 2017, after some 7,50,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military crackdown and took shelter in camps in Cox's Bazar. They joined some 3,00,000 others, who had fled earlier waves of violence in Myanmar.

The 2017 violence was termed ethnic cleansing, having elements of genocide. Rohingyas say conditions in Rakhine were not conducive for safe and sustainable return. There is also no guarantee of citizenship.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has been facing financial, social and environmental challenges due to the arrival of Rohingyas in large numbers.

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

A woman stands beside her damaged house that was rebuilt after a devastating blaze engulfed everything in Chalantika slum on August 16. Locals claim that police dismantled several such structures to vacate the area. The slum dwellers have been trying to rebuild their homes since the fire, inset. The photos were taken yesterday.

# DHANMONDI MURDERS

## I alone killed both women: prime accused

COURT CORRESPONDENT

House help Surovi Akhter Nahida yesterday confessed to a magistrate that she alone killed the elderly woman and another domestic worker as they did not allow her to leave.

Afroza Begum, deputy managing director of Creative Group, and her domestic help Bithi were found dead in a flat on the fourth floor of a building on Road 28 in Dhanmondi last Friday.

"I was appointed as a house help in Afroza's residence by Atikul Haque Bachchu -- bodyguard of Afroza's son-in-law Kazi Monir Uddin -- on the day of the incident," Surovi said in her confessional statement.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Sarafuzzaman Ansary recorded her statement at his chamber after DB Inspector Md Robiul Alam, also the investigation officer of the case, produced the accused.

Surovi in her statement said Bachchu took her to Afroza's house and went out for work. After a while, Afroza and Bithi locked the door from inside which made her nervous. She tried to leave the flat but in vain.

"I took a knife from the kitchen and slit Bithi's throat in the guest room, and stabbed her in the chest. Later, I also slit Afroza's throat in another room and stabbed her several times. After the murders, I took a mobile phone from the house and left," she added in the statement.

Following the murders, Dilruba Sultana, daughter of Afroza, filed the case with Dhanmondi Police Station against five people, including Bachchu and Surovi.

Police arrested Surovi from Agargaon on November 4.

# APPEAL FOR WRITER IN EXAM

## HC drops visually impaired candidate's petition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to direct the Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission (BJSC) to allow a visually impaired candidate a writer at the time of examination for the post of an assistant judge.

The bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader dropped the writ petition filed by visually impaired Sudip Das, seeking its directive on BJSC, from its hearing list.

The preliminary test of the BJSC examinations will be held today.

The HC bench passed the order after hearing arguments from Additional Attorney General Murad Reza and petitioner's lawyer Cumar Debul Dey. Murad opposed the petition, saying there is no law for allowing any candidate a writer during BJSC examinations. Besides, Sudip Das will not qualify in the vision test, he argued.

Cumar said BJSC issued an admit card to Sudip, and had not mentioned in its circular that visually impaired candidates cannot sit for exam. He prayed to the HC to order BJSC to allow Sudip a writer for the exams.

Advocate Debul told The Daily Star that Sudip will go to the exam hall in order to attend the preliminary test today, even though he may not be able to write answers to the questions without a writer.

Sudip Das, who completed LLB and LLM from Chittagong University, submitted the writ petition to the HC on November 6, saying that he has become a candidate for the post of assistant judge in the 13th BJSC examinations, as he wants to serve the nation as a judge.

He said he had already applied to BJSC on November 5 to allow him a writer, as the preliminary test will be held today.

Sudip, from Pahartali in Chattogram city, said BJSC had not responded to his application. Earlier, BJSC verbally refused his applications twice, he added.

In the writ petition, Sudip also challenged the refusals.

# LABOUR RECRUITMENT

## Expat minister meets Mahathir

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad yesterday met Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and discussed in detail the issues concerning labour recruitment and welfare.

During the courtesy call at Malaysian Prime Minister's Office in Kuala Lumpur, the minister also conveyed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's greetings to Mahathir.

"The minister mentioned the good relations between the two brotherly nations and thanked Mahathir Mohamad for his strong position beside Bangladesh on various issues," said a statement issued by the expatriates' welfare ministry.

The minister had a fruitful discussion on recruitment of Bangladeshis

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# BRIEFING OF FOREIGN DIPLOMATS

## Momen seeks global support for dev goals

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday sought global support through "close partnership and collaboration" to achieve Bangladesh's development goals by addressing challenges ahead, including a solution to the Rohingya crisis.

"I believe in partnership... I believe in collaboration. We need your help and support to achieve our goals," he told foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka at a function titled "Special Briefing on Contemporary Political Issues" at a city hotel.

The international affairs sub-committee of Bangladesh Awami League arranged the briefing for diplomats.

Committee secretary Dr Shammi Ahmed delivered the welcome address, ahead of a question-answer session. Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni, president of the committee, former ambassador M Zamir and Prime Minister's Special Assistant Shah Ali Farhad were present, among others.

Momen described challenges ahead for Bangladesh -- including climate change -- and sought the international community's support to address those.

He said Bangladesh seeks close partnership and collaboration from the global community, as its resources are not adequate.

On the Rohingya issue, he urged the international community to put more pressure on Myanmar and use their leverage so that the country takes back its nationals from Bangladesh.

He said the longer stay of Rohingyas in Bangladesh might create pockets of radicalism, posing threats to Bangladesh and beyond.

Dr Momen laid emphasis on the voluntary return of Rohingyas to their homes in Rakhine state with safety, security and dignity, terming it the

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# No country for indigenous people

Bangladesh still lags behind in ensuring their rights: Prof Robaet Ferdous

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities are increasing day by day; and if such a situation persists, the country will not have any such group of people left, said Dhaka University Prof Robaet Ferdous yesterday.

Bengalis and the indigenous communities fought side by side during the Liberation War to get rid of the age-long oppression and misrule, but fate of these communities remains almost unchanged even after 48 years of independence, he added.

The noted academician made the observations while presenting a keynote paper on the ethnic minorities' rights situation at a discussion in the capital.

Indigenous Peoples Development Services (IPDS), a non-government organisation, in association with



Discussants at the roundtable held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

British High Commission Dhaka, organised the event titled "Enhancing Political Participation of Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh" at The Daily Star Centre.

Prof Ferdous said many countries -- including Australia, India and even Pakistan -- progressed significantly in terms of ensuring rights of minority communities, but Bangladesh -- on the other hand -- is lagging far behind.

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