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INDIAN CABINET

# Religion-based citizenship bill approved

Minorities, except Muslims, from other countries to get nationality

India's cabinet yesterday approved a bill to give citizenship to religious minorities persecuted in neighbouring Muslim countries -- the first time that the country is seeking to grant nationality on the basis of religion.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), re-elected in a landslide in May, has long been accused of following a "Hindutva" agenda favouring officially secular India's majority Hindus.

The amendments to the six-decade-old Indian Citizenship Act, approved by Modi's cabinet yesterday, could go before the lower house of parliament as soon as this week.

The bill would grant nationality to Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, Jains and Parsis fleeing persecution in Muslim-majority nations even without any documentation. Modi's party has said that Muslims are not included because they are able to take refuge in Islamic nations across the globe.

Senior minister Prakash Javadekar yesterday told reporters that the legislation would follow the principles of "natural justice" and is "not against anyone".

Modi government tried to get similar legislation passed in its first term but failed to garner enough support in the

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**Abdur Rashid, 60, on his modified electric van. Rashid contracted polio when he was 11 and lost the use of his limbs, except his right hand. The father of five had set up a convenience store but after that failed he was forced to beg for a living, which he has been doing for 25 years. Rashid bought four solar panels on installments, so that he could have lights on at night and he has designed the van in such a way so that he can even sleep in it. Bangladesh has more than 16 lakh people with disabilities.**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

**On this day in 1971**

DECEMBER 5

The skies of Bangladesh were freed on the third day of the relentless war. Almost all of the Pakistani aircrafts were destroyed or distressed. Indian fighter jets bombed Pakistani bases all day long, stopping activities at the airports.

According to the Indian Air Force, almost 50 tonnes of bombs were dropped within 12 hours on Pak airbases in Tejgaon and Kurmitola. A Pakistan army convoy of 90 vehicles was destroyed in the airborne attack. A few Pakistani steamers and launches, carrying

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EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

## Bangladesh 7th worst-hit nation

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Bangladesh is seventh among the 10 countries worst hit by extreme weather events, says a global climate report.

Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti top the list, which has three South Asian countries and seven Asian nations, said the Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2020 that analysed data from 1999 to 2018.

Germanwatch, a Berlin based non-profit environmental research organisation, released the report yesterday on the sidelines of The Conference of the Parties (COP-25) meet in Madrid, Spain.

In the previous report that examined data between 1998 and 2017, Bangladesh was at the ninth position.

The study looked at four indicators -- death toll, number of events, loss of property of each person and loss of gross domestic product. The CRI 2020 is based on the loss figures of 181 countries, it said.

The report also said Japan, the Philippines and Germany were the most affected countries last year followed by Madagascar, India and Sri Lanka.

Japan was hit by three exceptionally extreme weather events last year while Typhoon Mangkhut ploughed through the northern part of the Philippines in September. Germany experienced the

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## Key commitments remain unfulfilled

Dialogue on CHT Peace Accord told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even 22 years after the signing of the CHT peace accord, indigenous people in the Chattogram Hill Tracts still have to demand its full implementation.

Their frustrations over the issue dominated a dialogue at the capital's Cirdap auditorium yesterday. The discussion was organised by the Association for Land Reform and Development and the CHT Commission.

The then Awami League government and the Parbatya Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) had inked the peace accord on December 2, 1997. The agreement was aimed at ending violence in the CHT region, which had witnessed two decades of bush wars between indigenous guerrillas and law enforcers.

But even after all these years, many key commitments in the agreement have not been kept, said speakers at the dialogue, titled "Current Situation of the Chattogram Hill Tracts and the Role of the Civil Society".

"The government says 48 out of the 52 provisions have been implemented, but the indigenous communities don't agree with it. The way they see it, only 25 provisions have been fully implemented," commented Raja Devasish Roy, the Chakma chief.

He echoed statements various indigenous groups have made over the past few days across different spheres.

Noted rights activist Sultana Kamal said, "While we sometimes hear statements of reassurance from the agencies responsible for implementing the peace accord, the promises never materialise."

A statement drafted by the dialogue organisers said some of the key provisions have not yet been implemented. Those include handing control of land, law enforcement and forests to the three hill district councils; solving land disputes between the indigenous community and

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## BRI driven by Chinese interest

Says top US official about Belt and Road Initiative

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) doesn't support free and open Indo-Pacific region or ensure protection of the nations' sovereignty and international law, a top US defense official has said.

In fact, many of the BRI initiatives lead to the erosion of some principles which are promoted by the US, said Randall G Schriver, US assistant secretary of defense for Indo-Pacific security affairs.

He was talking to journalists at a hotel in the capital, wrapping up his two-day visit to Bangladesh.

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## Artificial neurons built to fight disease

YAHOO NEWS ONLINE

Scientists have found a way to attach artificial neurons onto silicon chips which they believe could be used to help cure a number of chronic diseases.

The artificial neurons have been developed to mimic the neurons in our nervous system, crucially copying their electrical properties.

Making artificial neurons that respond to electrical signals from the nervous system has been a long-time goal in medicine but it is challenging because of complex biology and difficulty in predicting the way neurons respond.

Researchers hope their work could be used in medical implants to treat conditions such as heart failure and Alzheimer's as it requires so little power -- only about one billionth the power required for a microprocessor.

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## Banker sued for sexually assaulting 3 minor girls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A banker has been sued for sexually assaulting three minor girls in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila.

The father of one of the victims filed the case with Kaliganj Police Station against Mobarak Hossain, 56, a senior officer of a state-run bank's branch in the district town, on Tuesday night.

Citing from the case statement, Sajjad Hossain,

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## GRAFT CASE ACC okays charge sheet against ex-CJ Sinha

BSS, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday approved the charge sheet in a graft case against former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha and 10 others.

"The commission at its regular meeting today [yesterday] approved the charge sheet, which will be submitted to a court soon," ACC Director General Sayeed Mahbub Khan told reporters at its Segunbagicha headquarters in the capital.

Earlier on July 10, ACC Director Syed Iqbal Hossain filed the case with its Dhaka integrated district office-1 over plundering of about Tk 4 crore from Farmers Bank, later renamed Padma Bank. The amount was plundered

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**Two boats cross the Buriganga behind a launch and ignoring the swirl created by the propeller. Such risky crossings often cause capsizing of small vessels and cost lives. The photo was taken at Sadarghat Launch Terminal this week.**

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Buet, JU finally set to reopen

Academic activities were suspended for months due to student protests

STAR REPORT

Buet and Jahangirnagar University are soon going to resume academic activities after remaining shut down for months due to student protests.

Agitating Buet students yesterday announced they will return to classes as the university authorities met their three-point demand, including the expulsion of 26 students for their involvement in the Abar murder.

"Buet authorities accepted our three-point demand within the stipulated time and thus, we are announcing the end of our movement," Mahmudur Rahman Sayem, spokesperson for the student protesters, said at a press conference on the university's Shaheed Minar premises.

Abar, a second-year student of the electrical and electronic engineering department, was beaten to death by a group of Chattra League men at the university's Sher-e-Bangla Hall between the night of October 6 and early hours of October 7.

Protesting the murder, Buet students had been demonstrating with a 10-point demand, including the expulsion of all the accused.

The agitating students later merged their demands into three points and announced they would return to their academic activities only if the demands are met.

Their two other demands include punishment of the students involved in previous cases of ragging; and enacting rules that prohibit ragging and organisation-based politics on the campus.

"At a meeting with the vice-chancellor, provosts and the Directorate of Students' Welfare, we said we would accept the exam schedule if the authorities meet our first two

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