

Momen

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He added that Bangladesh and India were currently enjoying close friendly relations “that is termed as golden chapter” of bilateral ties and “so, naturally our people expect that India won’t do anything that could create anxiety among them”.

Momen said Bangladesh maintains strong religion harmony and ensures that followers of all faiths enjoy same rights in every area including the job sector.

“Many important decisions of our country are taken by persons belonging to different religions ... we never judge anybody by their religion, we treat all as Bangladesh citizens,” he said expecting the minority community representatives to echo his remarks.

Shah, who also heads India’s ruling BJP, claimed that torture on Hindu communities in Bangladesh alongside Afghanistan and Pakistan were taking place, as a fierce debate was underway for nine hours in Lok Sabha on the bill which eventually was passed amid protests from opposition parties and various groups.

Momen said during his meeting with Miller, the US envoy expressed as well his country’s concern about the Indian bill as they believe in religious freedom.

“They [USA] are being critical about that ... they believe India weakened its position by doing it [passing the bill],” he said.

US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) sought sanctions against Amit Shah and other principal Indian leadership if the bill was passed by both houses of Indian parliament describing the draft law as a “dangerous turn in the wrong direction”.

On this day

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Major General Rao Farman Ali calls the leaders of Al-Badr and Al-Shams at the headquarters. He chairs a meeting and plans the blueprint of intellectual killing. He makes a few lists of intellectuals and provides it to the collaborators.

Fleeing Pakistani troops from Jamalpur and Mymensingh join their compatriots in Tangail and make a strong resistance.

India drops paratroopers in Mirzapur, Kaliyakoir and surrounding areas in Tangail.

Kaderia Bahini led by Abdul Kader Siddiqui assists them. Another ferocious battle started there.

Pakistani PM Ruhul Amin tells India to leave East Pakistan. He says that people of East Pakistan are determined to fight till the end. Nothing would break Pakistan, he added.

Radio Peking in China broadcasts that it was the USSR who wants to attack China by unleashing India on Pakistan. It is the reason for the Soviet Union to support the so-called Bangladesh, it added.

Al-Badr assassins abduct journalist Nizam Uddin, general manager of API, from his home. He was later killed.

Source-Liberation War Museum

Two sisters

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asked for their relatives’ address. Then the woman told the victims to walk in a certain direction for a few minutes to get to their relatives’ house.

The girls started walking forward. Then five youths suddenly appeared before them and forced them onto a boat. The youths took the boat to a remote place and raped the girls.

When the victims started screaming, locals rushed to the spot and rescued the girls. But the youths managed to flee.

Yesterday, one of the victims filed a case against five youths with Tongi West Police Station. Of the accused, three were identified as Sharif Hossain, 22, Nayeem, 22, and Russell, 19.

The girls were sent to Shaheed Taj Uddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital in Gazipur for tests.

The victims knew one of the accused, said Emdadul Haque, officer-in-charge of the police station.

In Narayanganj, Rab arrested a man for raping a four and half-year-old girl in Sonargaon upazila on Tuesday night.

The arrestee is Jibon, 27, a resident of Olipur of the same upazila.

Quoting the victim’s family, Rab said the girl and the accused are relatives and neighbours.

Around 1:00pm on Monday, Jibon took the girl to his room and raped her, said Alep Uddin, senior assistant director of Rab-11, in a press release yesterday.

After returning home, the girl told her father about the incident.

As the girl’s condition was deteriorating, she was admitted to the upazila health complex on Tuesday.

The girl was later moved to Narayanganj General Hospital for better treatment, said the Rab official, adding that the victim’s father filed a rape case against Jibon with Sonargaon Police Station yesterday.

Our Gazipur and Narayanganj correspondents contributed to this report.

Commissioners

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over those.

The CEC had approved the secretariat’s answer that was sent to the commissioners on December 9.

Earlier on November 24, the commissioners sent the unofficial note to the CEC, alleging that they had not been informed of the recent appointments of employees, financial issues, and other activities of the secretariat.

This was a violation of the constitution, the Representation of the People Order 1972, Election Commission Secretariat Act 2009 and related rules, they mentioned in the note.

“We read out our written statements... There will be further discussions on the issue,” Rafiqul told this correspondent after the meeting.

EC Senior Secretary Md Alamgir said they had replied to the unofficial note of the four commissioners. He, however, declined to give details of yesterday’s discussions.

“It is confidential,” he said.

An EC official, who attended the meeting, told this newspaper that the commissioners came down heavily on secretariat officials, alleging that they gave false information in their December 9 answer.

In written statements, two of the commissioners said the EC secretariat officials lied that the CEC and the commissioners had recommended several candidates for appointment as EC employees.

In the answer, secretariat officials mentioned that the recommended candidates were expelled during vivas as they sent proxy examinees to appear for the exam.

“It is an attempt to demean the commissioners and is aimed at hiding the fact that the rules and regulations were not followed properly during recruitment,” read the statement of one of the commissioners.

The Daily Star has obtained copies of the two commissioners’ statements.

Another commissioner said the EC secretariat’s comment that the commissioners had recommended

candidates for appointment was humiliating for the commissioners and raised questions about their authority.

“It will be tough for the commissioners to carry out their responsibilities properly unless the issues of secretariat’s arbitrariness and falsehood were addressed.”

“It is desirable that the Election Commission, a constitutional body, operates in line with the constitution and laws. The chief election commissioner will take the Election Commission forward, maintaining amicable relations with the commissioners,” mentioned the commissioner.

The CEC did not respond to the commissioners’ statements. He said he would sit with them soon to discuss the matters, meeting sources told this correspondent.

Earlier on November 25, Mahubb had locked horns with EC Secretary Md Alamgir over the EC secretariat’s operation and alleged irregularities in the appointment of employees.

The Dhaka MRT system is one of the mega-projects of the current Awami League and is expected to be fully functional by 2030, easing the capital’s two conundrums: congestion and pollution.

The MRT Line-5 would be designed with measures for climate and natural disaster resilience, and integrate features to help women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

It would have automated ticketing and fare collection system.

The government yesterday signed another loan agreement (worth around \$300 million) with the ADB for building 40km of power transmission lines and 4,450 megavolt-ampere (MVA) substations in Dhaka, as well as 368km of transmission lines, 3,070 MVA substations, and 20 bay extensions in the western zone.

It will also establish an enterprise resource planning system and introduce drones to improve the operational efficiency and safety of the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh.

The government and PGCB will contribute \$249.25 million equivalent for the \$750 million project due for completion at the end of June 2024.

“Upgrading and expanding the transmission network is crucial to improve power supply efficiency after significant improvement in power production in Bangladesh,” Parkash said, adding that the project will help achieve the government target of electricity for all by 2021.

Monowar Ahmed, secretary of the Economic Relations Division (ERD), and Parkash signed the agreements on behalf of Bangladesh and the ADB.

Another MRT line in the offing

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MRT Line-5 is one of the three high-priority lines in the capital planned for completion by 2030. The Line-5 is estimated to cost \$2.5 billion and subsequent ADB financing will be sought.

The metro rail line would connect Gabtoli in the West and Dasherbandi in the East. It would enable passengers to transfer to other MRT lines and bus rapid transit connecting the north and the south.

Almost 13km of the line, including 12 stations, would be underground and the rest would be elevated with four stations.

“If the projects are ready and we finance them, they can be contracted as soon as they are approved, signed and committed, and the government does not have to pay unnecessary commitment charges,” said Manmohan Parkash, country director of ADB, during the agreement signing ceremony at the planning ministry.

Executive Committee of the National Economic Council in October approved the northern route of Line-5 -- from Hemayetpur of Savar to Bhataria via Gabtoli, Mirpur, and Gulshan with an estimated cost of Tk 41,238.55 crore.

The 20km line will consist of underground and elevated sections and is expected to be complete by 2028.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency will provide the lion’s share of the costs in soft loans, according to planning ministry officials.

The loans will carry an interest rate of 0.9 percent and must be paid back in 30 years with a grace period of 10

years. This is the lowest interest rate for Bangladesh yet.

The Dhaka Mass Rapid Transit Line 1 from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Kamalapur Railway Station also got the nod in October.

This line, expected to cost Tk 52,561.43 crore, will be the country’s first underground metro line.

The 31.24km route will have an elevated section from Notun Bazar to Purbachal and is expected to be complete by 2026.

Work on MRT Line-6, between Uttara and Motijheel, began in July 2016 and as of September has made 30.05 percent progress. The line is expected to be opened on the golden jubilee of Bangladesh’s Liberation War victory, December 16, 2021.

Once completed, the 20.10km metro rail service with 16 stations will be capable of carrying 60,000 passengers an hour, reducing travel time from Uttara to Motijheel from at least two hours to less than an hour.

The authorities have recently decided to extend the Line-6 from Motijheel to Kamalapur Railway Station to help travellers depart and arrive at the country’s prime railway station.

“Dhaka city deserves a modern communication network to improve living quality, reduce traffic jams and improve productivity and environment,” Parkash said, adding that the MRT system will help raise Dhaka’s share of contribution to the economy from the existing 35 percent.

Metro rail is an essential conduit for a populous city like Dhaka and is a precursor to Bangladesh’s vision of becoming a developed country by 2041, he added.

Khaleda Zia’s report

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to submit a different report on Khaleda’s health by changing the one prepared by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

Speaking at a seminar in the capital yesterday, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said they came to know that steps were being taken to submit “a different medical report in place of the one already given by the BSMMU”.

Khaleda, 73, has been undergoing treatment at the BSMMU since April 1. She is now serving a jail term in the Zia Charitable Trust graft case.

Dr Kanak Kanti Barua, vice chancellor of BSMMU, said they sent the report to the apex court around 3:30pm. The report was prepared by the medical board, headed by Dr Jilan

Mia Sarkar.

Yesterday, Fakhrul further alleged that the government was trying to keep the BNP chief behind bars “illegally” which was a serious violation of human rights.

He said the BSMMU medical board in its November 30 report stated that Khaleda needed a much better treatment.

On December 5, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court deferred until December 12 the hearing on Khaleda’s bail petition. It also asked the BSMMU medical board to submit a report on her health within December 12.

The apex court issued the order after the medical board failed to produce the report on December 5 as per its previous directive issued on

At least 1 killed, 33 others hurt

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Patent Plastic Limited. Around 150 people, including many women, were working when the fire started, said Zakir, who has been working there for the last four years for a monthly salary of Tk 12,000.

Hospital authorities said the injured were all men. They were aged between 19 and 55.

Zakir suffered burn injuries in his arms and legs.

“We were trying to douse the fire using extinguishers and hosepipes inside the factory when we heard an explosion and there were flames all around us. Most of the workers got injured instantly,” he told The Daily Star at the DMCH.

Another worker Akash, who took his injured brother to DMCH, said, “After the explosion, me and my brother Mehedi Hasan ran for safety. But a fireball fell on him.”

He added that Mehedi, 20, who is also a student, was supposed to sit for admission tests today to one of the seven colleges affiliated with Dhaka University.

With burn injuries on most of his body, Mehedi was repeatedly asking his sister whether he would be able to sit for the exams.

State Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul Hamid visited the

DMCH and told reporters that the factory had no approval from the authorities.

The DMCH director said additional doctors, nurses, and medical supplies have been made available to tackle the situation.

Anxious family members, many of them in tears, thronged the burn unit of DMCH yesterday evening.

Police said the fire broke out around 4:15pm and engulfed the large tin shack quickly.

The factory used to manufacture single-use plastic glasses and plates.

After around one and a half hours of relentless effort, 10 fire engines from Fire Service Headquarters, Postagola and Keraniganj doused the fire around 6:10pm, officials said.

Shah Jaman, officer-in-charge of South Keraniganj Police Station, said police found the charred body around 5:45pm.

After the fire broke out, several hundred locals started pouring water on the burning factory with buckets. They also helped the injured workers who came out of the factory.

They first took the injured workers to local hospitals for primary treatment. The ambulances with the injured started arriving at DMCH after sunset.

Hijoltola resident Intiaz Ali told

November 28.

Khaleda has been behind bars since February 8 last year after a special court jailed her in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. Later, she was found guilty of graft in another case.

However, her party claims those are politically motivated cases.

During the hearing on December 5, a group of pro-BNP lawyers created an unprecedented chaos at the Supreme Court, forcing the chief justice and five other judges to leave the courtroom.

The lawyers shouted at the apex court judges, “Shame, Shame”, “We want justice”, “Khaleda Zia has the right to get bail”. The pandemonium hampered judicial proceedings for more than an hour.

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain termed the incident “unprecedented”.

Okayed in Rajya Sabha

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It is the third key election promise that Modi’s government has delivered since he was re-elected in August, re-energising his nationalist, Hindu support base and drawing attention away from a slackening economy.

For the opposition and rights groups, this is part of Modi’s Hindu-nationalist agenda to marginalise India’s 200 million Muslims -- something he denies.

The strongest reaction came from the India’s ethnically diverse and culturally unique northeastern states.

In a third day of protests in the far-flung region neighboring Bangladesh, several hundred troops, besides paramilitary forces, were deployed in Tripura state and in Guwahati, Assam’s biggest city, reported our New Delhi correspondent quoting a senior army official.

The violence also forced authorities to impose indefinite curfew in Guwahati. Internet services have been suspended in 10 districts of Assam, beginning 7:00 pm local time yesterday to prevent “misuse of social media”.

Internet services remained suspended for the entire state of Tripura since Tuesday noon. An order issued by the Tripura government also suspended SMS services of all mobile service providers. Gatherings of more than four people were banned for 24 hours.

Though no party or student body had called a shutdown in Assam, protesters, a majority of them students, fought pitched battles with security forces. Police fired tear gas shells and baton-charged protesters, who fought back with vandalizing and torching government properties and public vehicles.

Police opened fire in Assam capital Dispur to quell a protest by the agitators after water cannons, baton-charge and tear gas failed to rein them in. Police also fired at Ulubari, barely 500 meters from the state police headquarters.

Defying curfew, tens of thousands of protesters remained on the streets of Guwahati, the ground zero of protests, where most arterial roads were blocked, reported our correspondent.

According to unofficial accounts, hundreds of protesters have been detained in Guwahati and other places like Dibrugarh and Jorhat in Assam. Many protesters were injured, claimed student leaders on national television TV.

Similar incidents were reported from Tripura capital Agartala. The Congress party has, meanwhile, called a shutdown in BJP-ruled Tripura today.

Modi’s government said the Citizenship Bill sought to correct the wrong done by the partition of the country on religious lines.

The government -- re-elected in May and under pressure over a slowing economy -- says Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan are excluded from the legislation because they do not face discrimination in those countries.

Also left out are other minorities

fleeing political or religious persecution elsewhere in the region such as Tamils from Sri Lanka, Rohingyas from Myanmar and Tibetans from China.

Derek O’Brien, an opposition lawmaker in the upper house, said the legislation bore an “eerie similarity” to Nazi laws against Jews in 1930s Germany.

“In 1935 there were citizenship laws to protect people with German blood ... today we have a faulty bill that wants to define who true Indian citizens are,” he said.

Many Muslims in India say they have been made to feel like second-class citizens since Modi stormed to power in 2014. Several cities perceived to have Islamic-sounding names have been renamed, while some school textbooks have been altered to downplay Muslims’ contributions to India.

In August, Modi’s administration rescinded the partial autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, India’s only Muslim-majority state, and split it into two.

A citizens’ register in Assam finalised this year left 1.9 million people, many of them Muslims, facing possible statelessness, detention camps and even deportation.

Modi’s government has said it intends to replicate the register nationwide with the aim of removing all “infiltrators” by 2024.

Amit Shah, Modi’s right-hand-man and home minister, has likened illegal immigrants to “termites”.

“The Indian government is creating legal grounds to strip millions of Muslims of the fundamental right of equal access to citizenship,” Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom on Monday termed the bill as a “dangerous turn in the wrong direction”.

India’s foreign ministry retorted that the remarks were “neither accurate nor warranted” and “guided by their prejudices and biases”.

Train kills two elephants in India

AFP, Kolkata

Two elephants were hit and killed by a passenger train in eastern India yesterday, officials said, with the animals’ bodies decorated with flowers before being cremated at the spot.

In the past five years, at least 26 elephants have been killed and scores more injured by trains on this stretch of track near the Nepal border, according to wildlife officials.

The animals -- one of which was pregnant -- were hit at 4:30 am (2300 GMT) while crossing the railway line, said North Frontier Railway spokesman Subhanan Chanda.

“We think that the accident took place due to poor visibility in the area caused by the dense fog,” Chanda added.

UK votes to break Brexit

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deadlock since a 2016 referendum which saw a majority opt to leave the EU.

Parliament repeatedly refused to accept divorce terms that former prime minister Theresa May agreed with Brussels, forcing her out and bringing Johnson into the fray with a vow to deliver.

The former London mayor and foreign minister has been hammering home his “Get Brexit Done” message, to win a majority which would enable him to get the deal approved.

He has vowed to take Britain out of the bloc by January 31.

But a closely watched poll released late Tuesday showed his Conservative party’s lead over the main opposition Labour party led by Jeremy Corbyn had narrowed.

The YouGov study said the Tories were on course for a 28-seat majority in the 650-seat House of Commons under Britain’s first-past-the-post system.

On November 27, it forecast a 68-seat majority.

“The margin of error here could put the final number of Conservative seats from 311 to 367,” YouGov said.

The lower end of that range would leave Britain with another hung parliament, where the biggest party does not have a majority, and the very real possibility of Brexit being delayed for years or even cancelled in a second referendum.

Chinese man murdered

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Investigation Department of police were also informed. Police exhumed the body in presence of embassy officials around 12:30pm.

Gao’s wife and two children often used to visit him in Dhaka, officials said.

The DC said Gao took his wife and children to China 20 days ago and came back to Bangladesh on December 7. His family was supposed to come to Bangladesh today.

Employees of the building told police that they last saw Gao on Tuesday evening.

“He was wearing shorts and a shirt; there were blood on his nose and

injury marks on his throat,” Sudip said.

“There was evidence of scuffle near the door. There were blood stains on a sandal. But other things inside the house seemed fine,” he added.

Police took six persons, including security guards, the caretaker and a domestic help, in custody.

The detective branch, Rab and PBI are investigating the matter, said Deputy Commissioner (DB North) Mashiur Rahman.

He added that there were CCTV cameras in the building, but they were not working.

“We will see if he had any enemies,” he added.