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Your Right to Know

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"India is in an 'extreme economic crisis' and the [Indian] government is trying to divert people's attention from it."
DU PROFESSOR EMERITUS SERAJUL ISLAM CHOUDHURY,
ABOUT CAA AND NRC OF INDIA (PAGE 3)



"We would need to ensure that money and muscle power would no longer serve as the most effective route to elective office."
CENTRE FOR POLICY DIALOGUE CHAIRMAN PROF REHMAN SOBHAN SAID
AT A LECTURE ON TAJUDDIN AHMAD (PAGE 3)



"The path, of course, is not always smooth, and may at times this year have felt quite bumpy, but small steps can make a world of difference."
BRITAIN'S QUEEN ELIZABETH II IN HER CHRISTMAS BROADCAST



Smugglers of zero line

How smuggled bikes from India flood B'baria, nearby dists

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MASUK HRIDOV, back from Kasba

It's a house right on the zero line.

Transnational syndicates have turned its kitchen into a storeroom of smuggled motorcycles. They also use it for assembling bikes, bringing in parts like tanks, wheels, headlights and seats from across the border.

A section of unscrupulous police officials and even some Border Guard Bangladesh men allegedly have links to the syndicates.

The Daily Star came to know about the house during an independent investigation into trafficking through Kasba border in Brahmanbaria.

On October 9, these correspondents, aided by a local police informant, travelled around 54km by road and rail from Brahmanbaria town to Kollapathar area in Kasba upazila. Then it was one-km walk to the border.

Around 10:30am, the informant called a person named Md Momen Miah, living in one of the houses built on the zero line, almost touching the Indian fence.

Momen, who was using a Bangladeshi SIM, was told that two customers have come to buy a bike.

Getting a positive signal, the source then took these correspondents near the house after ten minutes' walk along a trail through dense bushes. There were no border guards around.

Talking about the illegal trade to The Daily Star near the zero line, Momen said he had a brand new TVS Apache RTR bike in his kitchen and it costs Tk 1.20 lakh though its authorised price in Bangladesh is Tk 1.60 lakh.

As these correspondents showed an interest to buy it, he asked them to meet his aide Monir, who was also known to the police informant.

Talking to this paper in Kasba Bazar, Monir said they have to pay border guards on both sides around Tk 2,000 to Tk 5,000 for every bike. "Police officials also get almost

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Marked by a border pillar, the left half of this house is in Indian territory and the right in Bangladesh's Dhajanagar village in Brahmanbaria's Kasba. The Indian fence is about 100 yards away. Houses like these in Kasba upazila are safe houses for people who smuggle Indian motorbikes into the country. BGB men do not have jurisdiction in such houses.

PHOTO:
COLLECTED



Christmas today

UNB, Dhaka

The Christian community is set to celebrate the Christmas Day in the country, as elsewhere across the world, today to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Christmas, the biggest religious festival of Christians, is the celebration of rebirth, new beginning, forgiveness and peace, and renewing relationship with God and human beings.

Decoration of Christmas trees with colourful lights, special prayers, distribution of gifts among children, and exchange of pleasantries are the main features of the day's festivities.

Christmas carols and hymns will be sung before and after the prayer sessions

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'Stunned by DU VC's biased role'

Parents, civil society members say in memo; 3 arrestees on remand

DU CORRESPONDENT

A number of civil society members and parents of several Dhaka University students yesterday submitted a memorandum to the DU Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruazzaman criticising him for his alleged support to the controversial activities of Chhatra League.

"We are stunned by the biased role of the VC," the memorandum reads.

They also accused the VC of supporting the attackers of Ducus Vice President Nurul Haque Nur on Sunday and alleged that the university administration did not take any measures to quell the situation.

In response, the VC assured them that legal action would be taken against the perpetrators.

A group of eminent citizens in a joint statement yesterday also expressed

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It's BCL men in garb of Moncho

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Muktijuddho Moncho, which hit the headlines for attacking Ducus VP Nurul Haque Nur and Chhatra Dal activists in the last couple of months, has current and former Chhatra League leaders at its helm.

The Moncho claims to be comprised of children of freedom fighters. It was formed in October last year to counter quota reform demonstrations and initiate protests for the reinstatement of 30 percent freedom fighters' quota in government jobs.

Before the formation, Dhaka University's sociology professor AKM Jamal Uddin was made the convenor of the platform's nine-member convening committee. Asibur Rahman, son of Awami League leader and the then shipping minister Shajahan Khan, was made member secretary.

Prof Jamal was elected as a member of the DU senate from the Awami league-backed Blue Panel. He was the president of DU Kabi Jasimuddin Hall BCL between 1992 and 1994, and international affairs secretary of BCL central executive committee between 1994 and 1998.

The convening committee made Aminul Islam Bulbul the president and Al Mamun the general secretary of the Moncho's central unit.

Bulbul is a former organising secretary

of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall BCL. He later became a vice-president of the pro-AL student body's central unit.

He is accused in an attempted murder case filed with Gopalganj Police Station on May 3 in 2010 for allegedly hacking one Sheikh Kuddus with a machete, show the case documents.

The Moncho leader was relieved of his post at the central committee after he sought his removal in writing, said BCL sources.

Al Mamun is still the deputy programme and planning affairs secretary of the BCL central unit. Besides, he is a former deputy liberation affairs secretary of the same unit. He also held posts at the Chhatra League unit in the university's Sir A F Rahman Hall, said BCL and Moncho sources.

General Secretary of the Moncho's Dhaka Metropolitan North unit Sohel Miah is a vice-president of the Dhaka Metropolitan North unit BCL.

Moncho leaders Hasanur Rahman Hasu is the deputy social service affairs secretary of BCL central unit, Sonnet Mahmud is a former joint general secretary of Sir A F Rahman Hall BCL, Rabby Hasan Shawon is a member of Dhaka College BCL and Al Amin Masum a former activist of Dhaka University BCL. These four are also joint convenors of the platform.

The other joint convener, Afrina Tuli,

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Affif blitz guides Rajshahi to 7 wicket win

SPORTS REPORTER

Local players dominated the day with a 53-ball 76 from Rajshahi Royals all-rounder Affif Hossain trumping an unbeaten century from Cumilla Warrior batsman Dawid Malan as Rajshahi registered a seven-wicket win in their Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Earlier in the day, it was Tamim Iqbal and Mahedi Hasan who helped guide Dhaka Platoon to an easy eight-wicket victory against Sylhet Thunder in the first game of the day at the same venue.

In the night fixture, Rajshahi got off to a flying start in chase of the challenging 170 for eight

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Coveted promotions only to be short-lived

7 promoted to senior secretary; one of them to serve just for a day, another for a few days

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Raisul Alam Mondal, secretary at the fisheries and livestock ministry, will serve as a senior secretary just for a day.

Strange as it may sound, but that is what a government gazette notification says.

The public administration ministry issued the notification on Monday night, stating that Raisul was promoted to one of the most-coveted administrative posts.

The order said his promotion will take effect on December 30. Interestingly, Raisul will go on post retirement leave (PRL) the following day.

Public Administration Ministry Secretary Faiz Ahmed, who also got promoted that night, will have a few more days to serve.

Faiz was elevated to the rank of senior secretary. But his promotion order came into effect immediately.

Like Raisul, he is going on PRL on the last day of the year. The ministry was quick to change his designation as senior secretary on its website.

Five more secretary-level officials were promoted to senior secretaries that night. They are Md Anwar Hossain, secretary at the science and technology ministry; Mofazzel Hossain, secretary at the railways ministry;

Shahin Ahamed Choudhury, member at the Planning Commission; Sajjadul Hassan, secretary at the Prime Minister's Office; and Mohibul Haque, secretary at the civil aviation and tourism ministry.

The promotion orders of all but three -- Raisul, Faiz and Anwar -- will take effect on December 31.

Mohibul will go on PRL on January 5, Sajjadul on January 10, Mofazzel on May 4, and Shahin on June 1 next year. Anwar's PRL starts on June 30, 2021.

The public administration ministry's move raised eyebrows of many in the bureaucracy.

A number of former bureaucrats say this will result in a significant rise in the top officials' post-retirement benefits though they will not have much time to serve.

M Hafiz Uddin Khan, a former bureaucrat, said, "Giving promotion just days before their retirement was nothing but a move to provide them with more financial benefits."

"They will get the benefits from the taxpayers' money but will not serve the country and the people for long."

"Why should a secretary be promoted to senior secretary? I find no justification here," said Hafiz, also former adviser to a caretaker government.

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7 ATTACKS ON DUCSU VP NURUL HAQUE NUR



JUNE 30, 2018

By BCL men in front of DU Central Library when he was leading quota reform protests

MARCH 11, 2019

By BCL men at Ruqayyah hall, DU during Ducus election

MARCH 12, 2019

By BCL men at Teachers-Students Centre, DU a day after Ducus election

MAY 26, 2019

By BCL men at Bogura, after being barred from joining an Iftar party

AUGUST 14, 2019

By local upazila chairman along with AL men at Ulania Bazar, Galachipa, Patuakhali

DECEMBER 17, 2019

By Muktijuddho Moncho activists near Raju memorial sculpture on DU campus

DECEMBER 22, 2019

By the activists of a faction of Muktijuddho Moncho inside his office at Ducus building

We mourn

We, the members of Bangladesh General Insurance Company Ltd. (BGIC) are deeply shocked to have the news of sad demise of Mrs. Rukhsana Samad, wife of company's chairman Mr. Towhid Samad on Tuesday, the 24 December 2019. (Inna...rajeun). She breathed her last at Apollo Hospital at around 9.00 AM. She was 68. She left behind her 1 son, 3 daughters & many more well-wishers, May Allah bless her departed soul with Zannat-ul-Ferdous for eternal peace. Her Namaz-E-Janaza will be held on Friday 27 December 2019, after jumah prayers at Gulshan Azad Masjid.

-BGIC Family



Rukhsana Samad
1951-2019



BGIC

বাংলাদেশ জেনারেল ইনসিওরেন্স কোং লিমিটেড
Bangladesh General Insurance Company Ltd.

MINISTERS IN AL COMMITTEE

Presidium asks Hasina to decide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly-constituted Awami League presidium, the highest policy-making body of the party, yesterday left it to AL President Sheikh Hasina to decide whether seven ministers would be included in the 81-member central executive committee.

The seven, among the 12 ministers who were in the previous committee, do not feature in the partially-formed Awami League Central Working Committee, which was announced during the AL's triannual council held between December 20-21.

Party insiders, at the time, said they viewed the move as an effort to separate the party from the government, although four ministers were selected in the central committee.

Presidium members yesterday discussed the issue of the seven minister's at their first meeting held at the Gono Bhavan in the capital yesterday night with Hasina in the chair, said sources.

The members gave Hasina the responsibility to take the decision in this regard.

The seven ministers of the Hasina-led 47-member cabinet, who were not named in the committee yet, are Housing and Public Works Minister SM Rezaul Karim, its former legal affairs secretary;

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, former finance secretary of the party; three former organising secretaries in the previous committee: State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Deputy Minister for Water Resources AKM Enamul Haque Shamim and Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury; State Minister for Religious Affairs Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, former religious affair secretary; and State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Fazilatun Nessa Indira, former women affairs secretary.

Four ministers -- Obaidul Quader, road transport and bridges minister; Adbur Razzaque, agriculture minister; Dipu Moni, education minister; and Hasan Mahmud, information minister -- were elected in the central executive committee.

Hasina was elected AL president for the ninth consecutive time, while Quader was elected her deputy for his second term.

After the meeting, Quader told reporters at Gono Bhavan gate that the full committee would be announced on Thursday.

Following the council, AL elected 42 office bearers in the 81-member central working committee, while names of the other 11 office bearers and 28 members are yet to be announced.

‘Stunned by DU VC’s biased role’

FROM PAGE 1

deep shock at the brutal attack on Nur and others. They demanded exemplary punishment of the culprits.

Meanwhile, DU students yesterday put forward a three-point demand.

The demands include resignation of DU proctor for his failure to protect the students, recovery of the CCIV footage of the attack, and immediate trial of the attackers.

The demands were declared at a programme organised under the banner of Santrash Birodhi Chhatra Oikya at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture.

A number of teachers, journalists and politicians expressed solidarity with the demands.

Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, associate professor at DU's international relations department, said, "The university authorities and the proctorial team did not take proper steps to stop the attack even though they were informed.

"It is clear that the attack was a play jointly staged by the authorities and the Chhatra League."

Former Ducusu VP ASM Abdur Rob, Mujahidul Islam Selim, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Aman Ullah Aman, renowned Photo Journalist Shahidul Alam, Convener of Gono Samhati Andolon Zonayed Saki and Jahangirnagar University teacher Prof Said Ferdous also spoke at the programme.

3 MONCHO LEADERS ON REMAND

A Dhaka court yesterday placed three leaders of Muktijuddho Moncho on a three-day remand in connection with a case filed over attacking Nur on Sunday.

Al Mamun, general secretary of the platform's central unit, Yeasir Arafat Turjo, general secretary of its Dhaka University unit and Mehedi Hasan Shanto, office secretary of the platform's DU unit, were accused in a case filed with Shahbagh Police Station early yesterday.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Moinul Islam passed the order after law enforcers produced Mamun, Turjo and Mehedi Hasan Shanto, office secretary of the Muktijuddho Moncho faction.

The three was put on remand a day after they were arrested at the capital's Shahbagh.

In another development, Nur yesterday filed a complaint with the Shahbagh Police Station accusing Chhatra League DU unit President Sanjit Chandra Das and General Secretary Saddam Hussain, 27, other BCL leaders and eight Moncho leaders for an "attempt to murder him".

Ducusu Social Service Affairs Secretary Akhtar Hossen filed the complaint on behalf of Nur, said Abul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station.

"We have received the complaint and will add information of this complaint to the previous case," he added.

Coveted promotions

FROM PAGE 1

He pointed out that the post of senior secretary was created only to make bureaucrats happy and increase their financial benefits.

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder too said he didn't find any rationale behind the promotion.

"A promoted official should be given a considerable time to hold his or her new post to serve the people," he said.

Referring to the promotion order which said it was issued in public interest, he asked, "How will they serve the people when they are to retire immediately after getting promotion?"

According to the last pay scale announced in 2015, the basic salary for the highest grade is Tk 78,000 (fixed).

A senior secretary gets Tk 82,000 (fixed). The cabinet secretary and the principal secretary or those in equivalent posts enjoy special grade and get Tk 86,000 (fixed).

Former US adviser warns of 'imminent' N Korea risk

AFP, Washington

Former US national security adviser John Bolton on Monday sharply criticized President Donald Trump's North Korea policy, warning that the Asian country posed an "imminent" threat.

"The risk to US forces & our allies is imminent & more effective policy is required before NK has the technology to threaten the American homeland," tweeted Bolton, who was dismissed in September amid growing disagreements with Trump, particularly regarding his North Korea policy.

The erstwhile advisor, a longtime hawk on North Korea, was openly skeptical of the 2018 summit between

Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and encouraged the US president to be cautious.

The denuclearization process has been largely deadlocked since the collapse of a second summit in Hanoi at the start of this year. North Korea promised an ominous "Christmas gift" earlier this month if Washington does not give ground by the end of December.

In an interview with news site Axios published Monday, Bolton also said he thinks the Trump administration does not really intend to stop Pyongyang from becoming a legitimate nuclear power capable of firing missiles at other countries, otherwise "it would be pursuing a different course."



A baby Jesus is being placed in the nativity scene at a church in Ramna yesterday as preparations are almost complete for the Christmas Day service.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Smugglers of zero line

FROM PAGE 1

the same amount."

A wooden slope is set up on the border fence to push a bike onto Bangladesh side after the border is found secure.

"We used to smuggle around eight to 10 bikes almost daily but the situation is tougher now after police arrested six of our members," he said.

This newspaper talked to some other sources, including syndicate members, and some locals who bought smuggled bikes, to get an insight into the illegal trade.

If any customer wants to get a licence number and registration, the smugglers handover the bike to another group working in Cumilla and Chunarughat in Habiganj, close to Brahmanbaria border.

This group removes the chassis number and replaces it with the number of an officially imported bike that was sold from an authorised shop. For this, they collect sale reports from showrooms.

For the entire process regarding the so-called licence and registration, the smugglers take additional Tk five to seven thousand. The customers would get some forged papers alongside a number.

On Indian side, the syndicates sometimes register a bike using a local's ID card -- known as Aadhar. Then a complaint is filed with a police station claiming that the bike was stolen, said a Bangladeshi youth, who is linked with the syndicate.

"They file the complaint so that they can get their bike back if it is seized by border guards, claiming it to be a lost property," he said, requesting not to be named.

The Daily Star could not independently verify this claim.

Lt Col Iqbal Hossain, commanding officer of BGB-60 Battalion, told The Daily Star that most of the motorbikes that run in the district are smuggled from India.

As the documents are not checked properly, there is an increasing tendency among youths to buy smuggled bikes, he observed.

"We often got information about the smuggled motorbikes but the smugglers kept those in the houses built on zero line. We have no authorisation to conduct drives there," said the commanding officer.

"We often express our concerns to our counterparts at flag meetings."

Sources working for law enforcement agencies say the syndicates mainly use Hakor, Badlia, Madla and Bayek border points to smuggle in the bikes.

According to sources working for law enforcement agencies, one of the rackets is run by Wasim Miah of Ganganagar village and Hosen Miah of Ramchandrapur village in Cumilla. Shipon Miah of Gourangona area in Kasba is working closely with the duo.

Some other syndicate members in Brahmanbaria are Jahir Miah of Gopinathpur village, Billal Member of Dhojanagar, Rubel Mastar and Sadek Sarder of Nayanpur Bazar and Kamal Mia of Madla village.

Apart from police sources, local political leaders confirmed these names but none of the alleged smugglers were available for comments.

Md Lukman Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kasba Police Station, said they were trying their best to identify the syndicate members. "We also warned police officials to work sincerely as stern action will be taken if anyone of them is found guilty."

Replying to a query, Lt Col Iqbal refused the allegation of BGB men being involved in smuggling. He said they always remain active and conduct drives whenever they found information.

THE ARREST

According to police, six people, including four Indian nationals, were arrested on May 11 after they entered

Bangladesh for a bike consignment.

The arrestees were identified as Amzad Hossain Shawon, 22, and Hasibul Hasan Anik, 19, of Bangladesh, and Sanjit Devnath, 23, Nirmolendu Chowdhury, 32, Sankar Sarkar, 31, and Bimol Das, 33, of India.

Police also recovered one pistol, two pipe guns, six magazines, two walkie-talkies with a charger, one reflective vest, three pairs of leg guards and one pair of hand gloves from them.

Abdul Karim, the then assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Kasba circle, said the gang used walkie-talkies as mobile network didn't always work properly at the border.

ASP Karim, who got transferred to Khulna on October 27, in a statement had said Shawon was a professional smuggler accused in two cases including one for murder. The Indian nationals were also professional smugglers.

But, claimed a local source close to law enforcers, police submitted the charge sheet in a hurry on July 26, without explaining these details to save other syndicate members in Bangladesh.

ASP Karim refuted the claim. He told The Daily Star on October 10 that police did not find any other people's involvement, so they submitted the charge sheet against only the six. "We needed to submit the charge sheet within 60 working days as required by the law."

Sources said police arrested the six following a lead they got while investigating a murder that took place on Kasba border on February 26.

Mazharul Islam Tanim, 30, was killed because of internal feud of a smuggling racket, said Sub-Inspector Md Faruk, the investigation officer of the case.

"We have found involvement of nine people behind the killing and three are already in custody," he said.

Biman's 787

'Achin Pakhi'

arrives

UNB, Dhaka

Biman's brand new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner "Achin Pakhi" arrived in Dhaka from Seattle, USA, last night.

The aircraft, which left Boeing Everett Delivery Centre at 2:30pm (local time), landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 8:19pm, said Tasnim Akhtar, public relations manager of Biman.

The Dreamliner was named by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Biman's first and second Dreamliners -- "Akash Beena" and "Hangsabalaka" -- arrived in August and December last year. The third one -- "Gaangchil" arrived in July, "Rajhansa" in September and "Sonar Tori" in December this year.

Hong Kong marks Christmas Eve with clashes and tear gas

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong marked Christmas Eve with tear gas and mall clashes yesterday night as battles between democracy activists and riot police swept through a major shopping district.

The evening's unrest was the most sustained in what has otherwise been a few weeks of comparative calm for a city upended by more than six months of violent protests.

Thousands of black-clad protesters -- some wearing Santa hats and reindeer antlers -- took to the streets of Tsim Sha Tsui, a usually bustling tourist district.

Clashes soon erupted with riot police firing multiple rounds of tear gas to disperse protesters throughout the evening, including outside the famous Peninsula Hotel.

Police said a "large group of rioters" had built barricades, damaged traffic lights and dug up bricks on the area's major thoroughfares.

Meanwhile, flashmob rallies were held in multiple malls across the financial hub, with protesters chanting anti-government slogans.

In Harbour City, a luxury mall, police used pepper spray and batons when a group of plainclothes officers were discovered and surrounded, an AFP reporter on the scene said.

The plainclothes officers made multiple arrests as the crowds threw objects and heckled them.

Riot police quickly arrived at the scene, one aiming a shotgun at protesters as shops quickly shuttered.

Flashmob rallies formed in at least four other locations on Tuesday night with riot police trying to disperse crowds shouting chants and heckling officers.

Footage posted on social media from a mall in Yuen Long district showed a man barging into a police officer and leaping one storey below in a bid to avoid arrest.

In a statement, police said officers were responding to reports protesters were vandalising shops in the mall and that the man who fell was taken to hospital in a conscious state and arrested for assault.

Christmas today

FROM PAGE 1

at the churches.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the occasion.

The president will host a reception at the Bangabhaban on the occasion.

Archbishop of Bangladesh, ambassadors and representatives of different foreign missions, distinguished persons of the Christian community, religious leaders, and professionals will join the reception.

A group of singers will perform the Christmas carol at the reception.

Later, President Hamid will cut a Christmas cake with members of the Christian community.

Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar, different private TV channels, and radio stations will air special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Afif blitz guides

FROM PAGE 1

posted by Cumilla. The two Rajshahi openers, Afif and Liton Das, raced to 60 before the latter was dismissed for a 19-ball 27 off a Mujeeb Ur Rahman delivery in the seventh over. Afif was dismissed in the 16th over but his incredible knock, featuring eight fours and two maximums, made the chase look easy for Rajshahi. Ravi Bopara smashed an unbeaten 23-ball 41 to help Rajshahi reach victory with 13 balls to spare.

Earlier, Cumilla batsman Malan became the second centurion of the tournament when he smashed an unbeaten 54-ball 100 to help his side post a challenging total.

Malan, who opened the innings for Cumilla, carried his bat through the innings as he smashed nine fours and five sixes to get to the three-figure mark. However, Soumya Sarkar's 22-ball 20 was the next best score by a Cumilla player as only two other batsmen were able to cross the double-figure mark. Rajshahi pacer Mohammad Irfan, who was on a hat-trick in the 19th over, returned impressive figures of two for 23.

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apparently has no political affiliation.

The Moncho's Vice-president Mohammad Shamim is an activist of Chattogram University BCL.

Besides, the platform's Office Secretary Mehedi Hasan Shanto is a member of Bijoy Ekattor Hall BCL. Members Al Riad, Imran Sarkar, Touhidul Islam Mahim and Mahbub Hasan Niloy are activists of different BCL hall units at Dhaka University.

At least 20 top leaders of the Moncho's different units have affiliation with Chhatra League's politics, said sources.

In this October, the Moncho was split into two factions following an internal feud. One of the factions is led by Bulbul and Mamun.

The other faction, led by convener Prof Jamal, on October 21 declared a seven-member committee, which also has current and former BCL leaders.

This faction's president, Mizanur Rahman Pikul, is the deputy environment affairs secretary while Vice-president Shariful Hasan Shuvo is the president of the Law Faculty BCL at the university.

CONFLICTS WITHIN MONCHO

After the Prof Jamal-led convening body announced the central committee of the Moncho in October last year, Mehedi Hasan, son of a freedom fighter, brought allegation of financial irregularities against the teacher and claimed to be the convener himself.

Prof Jamal refuted the allegation.

After the platform was split in two this October, one faction announced a separate committee for the Dhaka University. Bulbul and Mamun became the president and general secretary of the faction's DU unit.

On October 10, Prof Jamal expelled Bulbul and Mamun from the organisation due to their anti-organisational activities. On the same day, the two issued a press release declaring that they were still holding the posts of the central committees.

Four days later, the two came up with a new statement saying they expelled Prof Jamal from the Moncho.

On October 20, the faction, led by Bulbul and Mamun, swooped on some Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists at Madhur Canteen on the DU campus, leaving five JCD activists

Russia extends detention of US man in spy case

AFP, Moscow

A Russian court yesterday extended until late March the pre-trial detention of a US man already held in jail for a year despite Western requests for his release.

Paul Whelan, who also has Irish, Canadian and British citizenship, was arrested on December 28 last year for allegedly receiving state secrets.

On Christmas eve the Moscow City Court extended his detention by another three months, to March 29, a court spokesman told AFP.

He risks up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

Whelan, 49, has denounced the case against him and said he is being

held "hostage" for a possible prisoner exchange.

On Monday, US charge d'affaires Bart Gorman and diplomats from Canada, Ireland, and Britain visited Whelan in Moscow's high-security Lefortovo prison, bringing him food and Christmas greetings from family and supporters.

"It's two days before Christmas. A holiday Paul Whelan will spend alone in Lefortovo," the US embassy quoted Gorman as saying.

"In the past 12 months, Paul has not heard his parents' voices. Bring Paul some Christmas cheer and let him call home."

Whelan, a former US marine, maintains he has been framed and

that he took a USB drive from an acquaintance thinking it contained holiday photos.

His lawyer Vladimir Zherebenkov has said the acquaintance that handed over the drive is the only witness against Whelan while the rest of his longtime acquaintances in Russia gave witness statements in his defence.

During a previous court hearing in October, Whelan insisted that he was not a spy.

"Russia thought they caught James Bond on a spy mission, in reality they abducted Mr Bean on holiday," he has said.

Whelan and his supporters claim that the American has been mistreated in jail.



Miles, one of Bangladesh's most prominent bands, celebrated their 40th anniversary by rocking out with their fans at a concert yesterday at International Convention City Bashundhara.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

CHECKING VEHICLE OVERLOADING

Guidelines yet to be implemented

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With overloading causing huge damages to roads and bridges, Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is not sure when it will be able to control axle load following approved guideline and international standards.

Speaking at a public hearing, RHD officials said the government in November 2017 increased the maximum weight limit for goods-laden vehicles for an "interim period" but they do not know when they will start following the original guideline.

Besides overloading, RHD officials including its Chief Engineer Mohammad Jawed Alam faced questions related to poor development project proposals (DPPs), dues of contractors and

several other issues.

RHD organised the hearing at its headquarters in Tejgaon as part of its implementation of National Integrity Strategy.

In May 2005, the then communication ministry (now road transport and bridges ministry) through a gazette notification had set a maximum permissible axle load limit for vehicles for the first time.

It fixed 13 to 15 tonnes for two axles, 22 to 25 tonnes for three axles, 25 to 33 tonnes for four axles and 35 to 38 tonnes for five axles, which were consistent with international standards.

In June 2012, the ministry prepared a guideline on Axle Load Control Centre.

In August 2016, the authorities

tried to impose fines for overloading under the guideline, but transport owners and workers damaged weighbridges in Manikganj and Chattogram on the very first day of their protest.

The government increased the maximum weight limit through a November 2017 order, which states that two-axle vehicle can carry maximum 22 tonnes, three-axle maximum 30 tonnes and four-axle maximum 40 tonnes.

Out of the three axle control centres, two are now in operation. Only five percent overloading can reduce road longevity by 18 percent, said an expert.

Yesterday, Md Amanullah, a superintending engineer (administration and establishment) of RHD, said the "interim decision"

was taken following "consensus of all stakeholders" including transport leaders.

"It was decided that the rate would be reduced after further consultation and finally the guideline would be followed," he said, adding, "Although it [the decision] cannot be termed scientific, it was taken following discussion."

Asked when they will be able to follow the original guideline, Amanullah said a project has been taken to install 21 weighbridges on major highways to check overloading.

"Once those are set up within one and a half years, we hope the [road transport and bridges] ministry and other stakeholders will take the decision," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

5.5 lakh migrant workers deported in last 10 years

Hotline service for them formally launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly 5.5 lakh Bangladeshi migrant workers were deported from different countries in the last 10 years, Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration Programme, said at a workshop yesterday.

Almost all of these migrant workers had become undocumented in those countries and travel passes were required for their return, he added.

He said the data was prepared based on statistics maintained by Prabashi Kalyan Desk -- set up at airports by Wage Earners Welfare Board -- and other government agencies, as accurate data on returning migrant workers is not available.

Shariful said in most cases, migrant workers returned because their visas expired and due to lack of job opportunities, physical and mental abuse, not getting promised job, illness, employing companies shutting down or going bankrupt, and failing to adapt to new environment.

"If we want to make their reintegration in society sustainable, we have to focus on their mental health and the skills that they have accumulated," he said.

Brac Migration Programme and International Organization for Migration (IOM) Bangladesh held the workshop as

part of a project called "Prottasha" at Brac Centre Inn in the capital.

Addressing the programme, IOM Bangladesh official Phineas Jasi said reintegration is an integral part of migration cycle and essential element for migrants returning to Bangladesh after years of absence from their families and society.

Ahmed Munirur Saleheen, additional secretary to Expatriates' Welfare Ministry, said the government with help from IOM Bangladesh is preparing a database on returning migrant workers.

It will enable the government to provide better services to the returnees, he said, adding that they now have data on migrant workers going abroad.

"We don't have information on how many of them returned," he added.

Under the "Prottasha" project, a hotline service for migrant workers was launched at the programme.

Migrant workers will be able to get information by dialing +08000102030 (toll free) and +09610102030 (long code) from 7am to 11pm every day.

The "Prottasha" project is led by the government. IOM Bangladesh is implementing it in partnership with Brac, funded by the European Union.

Indian govt trying to divert attention from economic crisis: Prof Serajul on NRC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) are not just India's "internal issue" any more, and Bangladesh government should take a clear stance regarding them, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

The developing "crisis" in India could badly affect Bangladesh like the Rohingya issue of Myanmar did. Considering this, Bangladesh should take precautionary measures, they said at the roundtable at Dhaka Reporter's Unity.

Ganosamhati Andolon, a left-leaning political party, organised the event titled "CAA and NRC in India: Impact on South Asia and what Bangladesh can do".

"[Bangladesh] government has been saying it [CAA and NRC] is India's internal

issue; this is objectionable. It is a global problem," Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said. "If the neighbour's house catches fire, ours will too at some point," he added.

Explaining the strike on the multi-cultural character of Indian subcontinent through the partition in 1947 under British rule, he said, "India is turning into a jail for communities."

He also said, "India is going through an 'extreme economic crisis' and the [Indian] government is trying to divert people's attention from it."

Terming Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi "second Hitler", Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury predicted that the NRC issue could spark the third world war.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Amend law to stop 'punishment' at schools: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) yesterday demanded an amendment to the Children Act, 2013, incorporating a provision to protect children from physical and mental torture they face -- especially in educational institutions -- in the name of punishment.

"Due to an ambiguity in section 70 of the exiting act, taking legal action against culprits involved in physical and mental torture on children are being obstructed in most cases," claimed advocate Tajul Islam, adviser of advocacy and capacity building of BLAST.

He was presenting a keynote on "Legal protection initiative to end physical and mental torture on children", at a views-exchange meeting at The Daily Star Centre.

Arguing the importance of the amendment to the act, Tajul said 54 countries in the world have already introduced laws or amended their respective children's acts to end mental or physical torture.

"In 2015, the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended



PHOTO: STAR

Discussants at the views-exchange meeting at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

Bangladesh to enact laws to stop physical and mental torture on children in the name of punishment," he added.

In his speech, lawmaker Israfil Alam said many children in remote parts of the country are still being physically or mentally tortured by their parents and teachers.

"Various programmes should be taken

to raise awareness among guardians and teachers, aside from laws, to stop such torture," Israfil, also a member of parliamentary caucus for child rights, recommended.

Priorities should be given to protect children's rights if the government wants to fulfil SDGs, he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Money and muscle cannot be route to elective office'

Says Prof Rehman Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Centre for Policy Dialogue Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan yesterday said in an opposition-free political landscape -- where the government is exposed to little accountability, the quality of governance tends to deteriorate.

"A free media and strong civil society could partially compensate for a weak political opposition," the eminent economist said while delivering a lecture on "Sustaining democracy in Bangladesh: The political legacy of Tajuddin Ahmad," in the capital.

Asiatic Society of Bangladesh organised the lecture.

"A democratic order, which is responsive to the needs of our people over the next half century, would need to ensure that it would be truly representative of all the people," said Rehman Sobhan, a member of the first Planning Commission in Bangladesh.

"We would need to ensure that money and muscle power would no longer serve as the most effective route to elective office," he added.

"We would, at the same time, need to make provisions for ensuring that candidates from similar social backgrounds as Bangabandhu [Sheikh Mujibur Rahman] and Tajuddin, with modest

means, who commanded public respect and were incorruptible, are provided with opportunities to enter the parliament," he said.

He also said it should be ensured that the executive remains fully accountable to such a parliament.

The parliament is, however, only one pillar of democratic process, Prof Sobhan said, adding, "We would need to restore freedom of the media, not just by permitting a proliferation of outlets, but by providing them with freedom to express themselves on all issues without fear of intimidation, legal harassment or incarceration."

He also said civil society organisations should be strengthened and encouraged to express themselves on public issues, once again without fear of harassment or abuse.

Rehman Sobhan said Tajuddin, the first prime minister of Bangladesh, was an unsung hero of Bangladesh's history, who used to practice politics for the interests of people.

Tajuddin was by temperament a worker and an activist; his political intelligence, commitment and organisational skills were exceptional but he never aspired to use those to seek elevation to the highest rank of public office, said Prof Sobhan,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Sixth JS session from Jan 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad will go into the sixth session on January 9.

It will also be the first JS session of the New Year 2020 where the President is scheduled to deliver his speech approved by the cabinet.

The speech consists of the government's development activities, said sources at the parliament secretariat.

President Abdul Hamid yesterday convened the session according to the power bestowed upon him by article 72 (1) of the constitution, according to a press release of the parliament secretariat.

The parliamentary business advisory committee headed by Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury will finalise the duration of the session before the House that will go into sitting around 4pm.

No air polluter will be spared: DNCC mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday fined four contractors -- including a DNCC contractor -- Tk 80,000, for keeping construction materials on footpaths and polluting air at Niketan.

The mobile court, led by executive magistrates Md Abdul Hamid Miah and Mir Nahid Ahsan, also pulled down illegal billboards from road medians at Gulshan-1 and Gulshan-2.

"All development work will have to be done in a compliant manner, otherwise no one will be spared from punishment," said DNCC mayor Atiqul Islam while inaugurating the drive against air pollution at Niketan.

He said many people consider themselves "powerful enough" to do anything they wish, and do not follow rules. "They will have to understand that no one is more powerful than the government," he added.

It is not acceptable that anyone will come and set up billboards, festoons, banners on footpaths, medians or electric poles, the mayor said. There is a provision of taking permission from city corporation

before doing these, and anyone wishing to do so will have to follow the law, he said.

"We are only removing the illegal billboards this time, but we will take legal action against the offenders if anyone does it again," the mayor said.

Atiqul also distributed leaflets to locals to raise awareness about air pollution.

The drive comes at a time when residents of Dhaka city have been facing severe air pollution.

Since the beginning of winter, air pollution levels in Dhaka have turned severe mainly due to brick kilns, vehicles run on fuel with higher level of sulfur, road digging and construction work done without taking necessary steps to spray water, say experts.

Bangladesh, one of the most densely-populated countries in the world, has been struggling with air pollution for a long time. In the last year, Dhaka has regularly found its place among the most polluted cities in the world.

"At a country level, weighted by population, Bangladesh emerges as the most polluted country," said the 2018 World Air Quality Report released on March 5.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Protesting the attack on Ducusu VP Nurul Haque Nur and his supporters, concerned guardians and civil society members formed a human chain in front of Aparajeyo Bangla on Dhaka University campus yesterday. They also criticised the vice chancellor for not taking strict measures against the attackers.

PHOTO: STAR

Guidelines

FROM PAGE 3
As per the project document, which Ecneec passed in September, the authorities will build the axle load control centres for Tk 1,630.28 crore within June 2022.

The chief engineer said the way they are proceeding, overloading will be controlled soon.

Asked about poor DPP that often escalate project cost and time, he said there are several agencies involved in mega projects. Land acquisition, service line relocation and some other works, which are not in RHD's control, are often responsible for the delay and that ultimately escalate cost, he added.

Chandan Kumar Basak, an additional chief engineer of RHD, said the Planning Commission asked them to prepare a three-year project, where foreign investment is also involved.

But it is not often possible to complete a mega project within three years as it takes around a year for the project to be approved at Ecneec. So they have to change the deadline, he added.

Abul Kamal Azad, superintending engineer (maintenance circle) of RHD, said RHD got Tk 2,500 crore against the demand for Tk 10,670 crore in 2019-20 fiscal for maintenance.

He said they have to maintain 40 to 45 percent roads under the network annually and the allocation is not enough. He, however, said there is a shortage of planning too.

Asked about the prime minister's directives to collect toll from four-lane highways, Azad said they have prepared a draft in this regard and will send it to the ministry soon.

Rowshan Ara Begum, additional secretary to Road Transport and Highways Division, and several RHD additional chief engineers also spoke at the programme.

No air

FROM PAGE 3
International environmental organisations Greenpeace and AirVisual prepared the report, based on last year's data collected from public monitoring sources. According to the report, air pollution will cause around 7 million premature deaths globally next year, and has a major economic impact.



Poet Mondira Esh receives Mahbulul Hoque Shakil Award 2019 from National Professor Anisuzzaman. From left, poet and Bangla Academy Director General Habibullah Siraji and Shakil's father Jahirul Haque, and publisher Osman Gani. Shakil Sangsad announced the award to mark Shakil's 51st birth anniversary. The ceremony was held at Bangla Academy in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

BIWTA staffer, wife sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent a computer operator of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and his wife to jail after rejecting a bail petition in connection with a graft case.

The accused are Emdadul Haque Mollah and his wife Naznin Jahan Shilpi.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after the couple surrendered before the court seeking bail.

During yesterday's hearing, their lawyer told the court that the couple had secured bail for an eight-week period from the High Court.

On expiry of this period, the couple were

asked to surrender before the trial court, adding that the trial court will be at liberty to consider the bail petition in accordance with the law, said the HC.

The prosecution, however, opposed the bail petition -- by pointing out that Emdad's huge earnings do not match his salary and asked for the couple to be sent to jail.

On September 11, ACC Deputy Director Md Nur Alam Siddique filed a case against the couple at the Integrated District Council.

According to the prosecution, the couple earned an amount of Tk 23,33,593 between September 2012 and September 2019 through allegedly illegal means.

Tk 58.38CR SCAM

Chisty's spouse, daughter denied bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday rejected bail petitions of wife and daughter of former chairman of Farmers Bank Audit Committee Mahabubul Haque Chisty, better known as Babul Chisty, in two separate corruption cases.

The HC also directed Babul Chisty's wife Rozi Chisty and daughter Rimi Chisty to surrender before the lower court concerned in two weeks in the cases.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Sardar Md

Rashed Jahangir issued the order after hearing two separate petitions filed by Rozi and Rimi seeking anticipatory bail.

Earlier in the day, the petitioners also appeared before the HC bench for bail.

Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) lawyer Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star the commission filed the cases with its coordinated district office in Dhaka on December 15 against Rozi and Rimi on charges of amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 37.38 crore and Tk

21 crore respectively.

Advocate Abdul Matin Khasru appeared for Rozi and Rimi while Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik represented the state.

Meanwhile, the same HC bench yesterday refused to grant bail to Halima Khatun, a deputy director of directorate of social welfare, in a corruption case involving Tk 1.4 crore and ordered her to surrender to the lower court in two weeks.

The bench passed the order in response to a bail petition filed by Halima.

Indian govt trying to divert

FROM PAGE 3

"Impact of the current Indian government's religious bigotry is already evident in cities across the country. The genocidal policy of Bangladesh government will only courage them," he claimed.

Bangladesh in already under terrible pressure over "12 lakh Rohingyas", he said.

"We won't be able to tackle a crisis centring Indian refugees," Dr Zafullah added.

He suggested arranging a march towards the Indian High Commission in Dhaka and rejecting Indian products, as part of a stance against India's NRC.

Prof Sayeed Ferdous of Jahangirnagar University presented a concept note on the CAA and NRC crisis where he said the issue will be catastrophic for India in the long run as well as a big blow for Bangladesh.

Due to Bangladesh government's "subjugated attitude" towards India, statement of Ducus VP Nur makes them uncomfortable and he is being attacked, Prof Sayeed said, criticising the comments of Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed on Nur's activity.

Noted photographer Shahidul Alam urged all to take to streets in protest of India's NRC.

The event was presided over by Chief Coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon Zonayed Saki.

Two crushed under train in Tejgaon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people died in an accident on the rail tracks of Dhaka's Tejgaon area yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as Taslima (38), a housewife, and Nadim (28), helper of a bus driver.

They were crushed under the Brahmanbaria-bound Titas commuter train while crossing the tracks around 10:30am. Both died on the spot, said sub-inspector Aminul Islam of Dhaka Railway Police Station.

The bodies were handed over to their families, he added.

Road crashes claim

FROM PAGE 5

said the accident took place around 11pm on Monday when the motorcycle fell into a small hole, leaving Sajib and his friend Arnab critically injured.

They were taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Sajib died there in the early hours of yesterday.

Meanwhile in Bagerhat, a man was crushed under the wheels of a truck on Khulna-Mawa highway in Fakirhat upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Nur Mohammad Farazi, a cook by profession, reports UNB.

Nur was hit by the truck while he was crossing the road, leaving him critically injured, said ANM Khairul Anam, officer-in-charge of Fakirhat Police Station. He was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

Police seized the truck but its driver and helper managed to flee the scene.

In Kushtia, at least three people, including a minor, were killed when a truck

crashed into an auto-rickshaw on Kushtia-Iswardi highway in Bheramara upazila yesterday afternoon. Two others were injured in the incident, reports UNB. The deceased could not be identified yet. The accident occurred when the truck smashed the three-wheeler in front of Bheramara powerhouse passenger shed around 3pm, leaving the driver of the auto-rickshaw dead on the spot and five passengers injured, police quoted locals as saying.

Later, two of the injured died while being taken to a nearby hospital.

In Rajbari, a seven-year-old was killed in a road accident at Paikar Mor under Pangsha upazila in Rajbari yesterday, reports our Faridpur correspondent.

Quoting locals, Ahsan Ullah, officer-in-charge of Pangsha Police Station, said, "The accident took place when a battery-run three-wheeler hit the child, while he was playing in front of his house. Injured critically, he was rushed to Pangsha Upazila Health Complex where a doctor declared him dead."

Dr Sofia Jahan Ali's 23rd death anniv

CITY DESK

Today is the 23rd death anniversary of Dr Sofia Hasna Jahan Ali, former professor of economics at Dhaka University.

She served as the vice president of Bangladesh Economic Association and was president of Lioness Club of Dhaka East. She was also a renowned sportswoman.

Sofia's children and grandchildren request all to pray for her departed soul.



Vacancy Announcement

help to **learn** skills to **earn!**

Established in 1972 with the motto 'Help to Learn, Skills to Earn', UCEP Bangladesh is a non-governmental organization which provides Second Chance to Education for out-of-school children and Decent Work to youth through Technical Vocational Education & Training (TVET) and Skills Development. It has a special focus on social inclusion and therefore gives priority to females, children and youth from poor and underprivileged families. Currently, we are seeking applications from qualified candidates to fill up the following vacant position:

- a) **Regional Manager, Rangpur & Dhaka (02)**
- b) **Manager, Communications, Branding & Marketing (01 position)**
- c) **Manager, Resource Mobilization, (Programme & Social Enterprise) (01 position)**
- d) **Senior Officer, Governance, Management & Legal Affairs. (01 position)**
- e) **Senior Officer, Software Development, ICT Dept. (01 position)**
- f) **Head of Technical School (03 positions)**
- g) **Executive Secretary to Executive Director (01 position)**

Last date for submitting applications is 31 December, 2019.

For further details, please visit career.ucepbd.org or www.bdjobs.com

Swiss-Bangladesh Expo in Basel next year

CITY DESK

The Switzerland-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SBCCI) is set to organise the first "Swiss-Bangladesh Expo-2020" in Congress Hall of Basel, Switzerland on April 14 and 15, 2020, a press release said.

Switzerland-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry announced the event in a press conference on Sunday at Dhaka University's Faculty of Business Administration Academic Building. SBCCI president Naquib Khan and secretary general Shibli Rubayatul Islam attended the press conference, along with the other executive committee members of SBCCI.

Business entities from different industries of Bangladesh will participate in the expo, exhibiting their products and services in front of the Swiss investors and businessmen, said the press release.

Money and muscle

FROM PAGE 3

also a close aide of Tajuddin Ahmed during and after the Liberation War.

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said Tajuddin's life is a source of inspiration. "He used to think about ways how to change to society and state for the betterment of people," he added.

"It is our failure that we could not portray Tajuddin Ahmad in due manner," Astatic Society of Bangladesh President Mahfuza Khanam said while presiding over the lecture.

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, another close aide of Tajuddin during the Liberation War; Tajuddin's daughters Sharmin Ahmad and Simeen Hussain Rimi; and Asiatic Society of Bangladesh convenor Abdur Rahim -- called on all to uphold the spirit and philosophy of Tajuddin and follow his footsteps.

Eminent historian Professor Sirajul Islam, rights activist Hameeda Hossain, political scientist Rounaq Jahan, CPD executive director Prof Mustafizur Rahman, and a number of Dhaka University teachers were present at the lecture.

Female-friendly toilets

FROM PAGE 5

unhygienic toilets and sanitation facilities found across many educational institutions in the city.

This makes it necessary to provide schools and colleges with adequate and hygienic toilet facilities and safe water, she added. She lauded the role of DSK and other NGOs in raising awareness among people on hygiene related issues.

Among others, Sanjoy Das, unit manager, DSK, Chattogram; CCC councillors in reserved seats for women Farzana Parvin and Anjuman Ara Begum also spoke at the event. CCC ward-32 councillor (Anderkilla) Jaharlal Hazari chaired the session.

BGB-BSF conference begins today

Citizens' safety, trans-border crimes to be discussed

STAR REPORT

Killing, injuring or opening fire on innocent Bangladeshi citizens in the border area will dominate the five-day director general (DG) level conference between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF), scheduled to begin in New Delhi today, said a BGB press release yesterday.

The conference will be held at BSF's Chhawla Complex, and will formally end on December 29.

BGB DG Maj Gen Md Shafeenul Islam will lead an 11-member delegation to the talks, while a 19-member BSF delegation -- headed by its DG Shri Vivek Johri -- will take part in the conference, reports our staff correspondent.

During the conference, smuggling of drugs, alcohol, firearms and ammunition into Bangladesh from India, and border management will also be on the agenda.

Information centring different narcotics,

including Phensedyl factories and storehouses in India, and their smugglers will be shared at the conference.

Illegal trespassing of border by BSF, issues regarding Indian nationals and Myanmar citizens will also be discussed, said the BGB release, signed by its Public Relation Officer Md Shariful Islam.

The BGB DG is likely to meet with India's Home Affairs Minister Amit Shah during the programme. The conference will end formally through signing of a "joint record of discussions" by the two sides on December 29.

The BGB delegation will leave India for Dhaka on December 30, added the press release.

According to a BSF press release, 20 issues, including illegal migration, human trafficking, "preventing attacks on BSF and Indian civilians by Bangladeshi miscreants", and joint efforts to prevent trans-border crimes will be discussed, reports our correspondent in New Delhi.

Search for Executive Dean, Graduate School of Management

BRAC UNIVERSITY Inspiring Excellence

BRAC University was established by BRAC, the world's largest non-governmental organization that has positively impacted the lives of millions. The Graduate School of Management will foster both high impact research and successful knowledge transfer, and offer accredited programs that can improve the global competitiveness of local industries. The university is looking to appoint an Executive Dean for the Graduate School of Management. The medium of instruction at BRAC University is English.

Responsibilities:

Reporting to the Vice Chancellor, the Executive Dean will provide leadership to and administer the Graduate School of Management. She/he will be expected to develop an enduring vision for advancing management scholarship and effective pedagogy in a frontier market. This Executive Dean will be responsible for establishing local and international partnerships, engage in extensive planning exercises, and oversee development of the school.

Requirements:

Successful candidates will have a clear track record of success in administrative leadership positions. The Executive Dean will have to lead by example and be a widely respected scholar in a field of business. The individual will possess a strong entrepreneurial spirit, effective management capacity, and keen business acumen that can help ensure successful growth to steady-state within a reasonable time frame.

Review of applications will begin immediately, and will continue until the position is filled. Prospective candidates are encouraged to submit applications by email to: hrd@bracu.ac.bd on or before **5 January 2020**.

Applications should include a cover letter, a curriculum vitae, and the names and contact information of five professional references.

Foreign nationals are also encouraged to apply.

BRAC University
66 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh

Faculty Search

BRAC Business School

BRAC Business School is the premier business school of BRAC University, which was established by BRAC, the world's largest non-governmental organization that has positively impacted the lives of millions. The school is inviting applications for a Visiting Professor position in the following area:

- Operations Management (with a focus on safety/ergonomics)

Requirements:

Candidates are required to have a Ph.D. in a relevant area. All candidates are expected to have excellent academic records from internationally reputed institutions.

Remuneration offered to the successful candidate will depend on qualification and experience.

Application Procedure:

Candidates are encouraged to submit applications by email to: hrd@bracu.ac.bd on or before **5 January 2020**.

Foreign nationals are also encouraged to apply.

BRAC University
66 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh

GAS SUPPLY TO RANGPUR

Pipeline installation work to start next month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Installation of pipeline to supply gas to Rangpur will start from January next year with an aim to explore the industrial sector in the region.

The around Tk 1,800 crore project is expected to be completed in June 2022.

During her visit in 2011, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina pledged to ensure gas supply to the division through pipeline -- a long standing demand of residents.

Shailaja Nanda Basak, deputy general manager (planning) of Pashchimanchal (western) Gas Company Limited (PGCL), revealed the information at a meeting with industrialists of the region on Monday afternoon at the office of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI).

PGCL is a concern of state-run Petrobangla.

He said the work will start from Bogura then to Rangpur and surrounding areas of Pirganj and Nilphamari.

A supply network will also be built by Gas Transmission Company Limited (GTCL) in consultation with Investment Facilitation Company (IFC).

Mostafa Hossain Ripan, acting president of RCCI, presided over the meeting. He said gas is the prerequisite for promoting industries.

In their speech, industrialists thanked the prime minister for the initiative and said many potential industrialists have purchased plots on both side of Dinaipur-Rangpur Highway in last couple of years to set up factories. But they could not do so for not having gas supply, they added.

They also urged the government to extend the pipeline up to the proposed economic zone in Mohipur (around 1,000 acres) of Gangachhara upazila of Dinaipur.

The deputy general manager said they are assessing the number of functional and potential industries, and the amount of gas needed in this regard.

10 to die for murder of M'singh pharmacy owner

JNU CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced 10 people to death for killing pharmacy owner Mazharul Islam Paltan in Mymensingh's Nandail 12 years ago.

Judge Abu Zafar Md Kamruzzaman of Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 in Dhaka announced the judgement.

The court also acquitted seven accused from the charges, as their involvement in the crime was not proved.

Of the 10 convicts, Eklash Uddin, Abul Kashem Fakir, Kabir Miah, Abul Kashem, Abul Kalam Azad, Chandan, Shukkur Ali and Badal Miah are behind bars, while Faruk Miah and Ruma Akhter are absconding.

According to case documents, drug store owner Mazharul Islam Paltan was killed inside his shop at Shialdhara Bazar in Mymensingh at some point between February 28 and March 1, 2007.

Beauty Akhter, younger sister of Paltan, filed a murder case against unknown persons with Nandail Police Station on March 1 that year.

Police submitted the charge sheet to the court against 18 people in July 2008. As accused Jabbar Mohari died during the proceedings, his name was dropped from

the case.

Thirty prosecution witnesses gave their statements before the court.

Two accused -- Ruma Akhter and Faruk Miah -- gave confessional statements to the court, but later went into hiding after securing bail, said Special Public Prosecutor Abu Abdullah Bhuiyan.

According to the statements, Ruma, a sex worker, engaged in sexual activities with the accused in Paltan's shop on night of the incident.

But when they refused to pay Ruma for her services, she started putting pressure on Paltan for the money, he said.

At one stage, an altercation broke out between Paltan and Ruma when he [Paltan] refused to pay. The accused got involved later and beat Paltan to death, the SPP added.

Meanwhile, the prosecution also expressed satisfaction with the judgement.

However, Sanaul Alam Rifat, younger brother of convict Kabir Miah, told The Daily Star that his brother was not involved with the incident.

"We did not get the justice in the case," he said.

Advocate Muhibbur Rahman Mahboob, a defence lawyer, said that they would appeal to the higher court against the judgement.

Last trace of Ritwik Ghatak in Rajshahi being erased



This is what remains of renowned filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak's home, *right*, as authorities of a homeopathic college are demolishing it for constructing a garage, *bottom left*. This brazen move is being protested by people from all walks of life, who formed a human chain in Rajshahi city yesterday, *top right*.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Authorities of a homeopathic college are gradually demolishing the ancestral home of internationally renowned filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak in Rajshahi city's Miapara area, sparking protests from social and cultural activists across the country.

Several hundred locals under the banner of Ritwik Ghatak Film Society formed a human chain at Shaheb Bazar Zero Point in the city yesterday afternoon, demanding immediate protection of the property bearing the filmmaker's memories.

They called for declaring it a heritage site and establishing a memorial museum on the premises as done with legendary actress Suchitra Sen's ancestral house in Pabna.

They submitted memorandums to the deputy commissioner of Rajshahi, city Mayor AHM Khairuzzman Liton, lawmaker Fazle Hossain Badsha and Cultural Affairs Minister KM Khalid highlighting their demands.

However, the authorities of Rajshahi Homeopathic College and Hospital denied that they are demolishing Ritwik's house.

"The construction materials we found during demolition are modern, but Ritwik lived in Rajshahi in the 1930s or '40s," Anisur Rahman, principal of the college, said.

During a visit to the site yesterday

afternoon, this correspondent saw that the college authorities had already demolished part of the one-storey house and erected a boundary wall in the western side of the site.

The principal said the demolition started as the institute's governing body -- headed by the deputy commissioner of Rajshahi -- decided to build a garage for vehicles there.

He said the property belongs to the college and the authorities needed to demolish the old structure -- making way for new classrooms and academic buildings.

"We couldn't demolish all parts of the building due to financial constraints," the principal said. He said the college was set up at the site on 34-decimal land in 1966.

In 1989, the Ershad government handed over the land -- classified as "enemy property" -- to the college. In 2006, the authorities demolished the northern part of the old building and erected a two-storey building.

On the south and eastern part of the site, the old building still survives.

"The surviving part of the building bears memories of Ritwik Ghatak," Ahsan Kabir Liton, president of Rajshahi Film Society, said.

He said the college authorities destroyed most of Ritwik's ancestral house over the last decade and nothing was done to stop this.

Born in Dhaka on November 4, 1925,

Ritwik had to move to Rajshahi as his father Suresh Chandra Ghatak -- a district magistrate, poet and playwright -- was transferred to the city.

Ritwik's father owned the building. Formative years of the filmmaker's life were spent at the house, as he studied at Rajshahi Collegiate School. During his stay in the city, Ritwik edited a magazine called "Avidhara".

He took part in meetings and cultural gatherings with litterateur Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay at the premises of Miapara Public Library, adjacent to the house.

Renowned fiction writer Mahasweta Devi -- Ritwik's niece -- also stayed at the house, Mahmud Islam Masud, general secretary of Ritwik Ghatak Film Society, said. "On different occasions, we invited Ritwik's sister Protiti Devi and Mahasweta Devi to Rajshahi and they fondly recalled their memories of living in the house," he said.

During the 1947 partition, Ritwik had to migrate to India with his family and the authorities later declared his ancestral home "enemy property" [now vested property].

Yesterday, Md Shariful Haque, additional deputy commissioner of Rajshahi, told journalists that they have instructed the college authorities to stop the work for now. "We'll take a decision in this regard soon."



PHOTO OF THE DAY

RAJIB RAIHAN



A man sets up a surrounding net in Kaptai Lake of Rangamati while others wait by the shore to haul it in. Against the backdrop of lush green hills, the tranquil waters of this largest manmade lake of the country is home to various species of freshwater fish. The photo was taken on Friday afternoon.

Follow alternative resolution system

Law minister urges district judges to reduce backlog of cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All pending cases cannot be disposed of amid the current rush of filing unless those are settled outside courts, said Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday.

In this regard, he urged the district judges to follow alternative dispute resolution (ADR) system in a bid to reduce a huge backlog of pending cases.

The law minister was speaking as chief guest at a conference in Dhaka for the district judges on strengthening the government legal aid service and good governance.

National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO) under the law ministry organised the event at InterContinental hotel.

A total of 19,018 cases were disposed of through ADR in last few years, said the law minister, adding that the rate of such disposal must be increased.

Anisul Huq said the government has been continuing legal aid activities across the country through forming legal aid committees at all the districts to ensure the access to justice for all the citizens by 2030.

He said realisation of the spirit of Liberation War and the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the goal for sustainable development depend on the success of government legal aid functions.

Law Secretary Md Golam Sarwar told the event that NLASO has so far provided legal aid to 4,78,858 justice seekers since 2009 and collected Tk 28.85 crore as compensation through ADR.

Acting director of NLASO AHM Habibur Rahman Bhuiyan presided over the conference where deputy resident representative of UNDP Bangladesh Van Nguyen also spoke.

Dr Sabur Khan board member of WBAF's commission

CITY DESK

Dr Md Sabur Khan -- chairman of Daffodil International University and Daffodil Family, and high commissioner of World Business Angels Investment Forum (WBAF), Bangladesh -- has been appointed as one of the global board members of WBAF's Science, Technology and Innovation Commission.

Dr Nisreen El-Hashemite, founder and president of Women in Science International League, will chair the board consisting of nine board members. WBAF recently made the appointment announcement, said a press release.

The commission aims to connect innovators with smart finance, help inventors commercialise their creations, foster creative thinking through open learning and skill development, and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Kushtia intercity train runs over two

UNB, Kushtia

Two people were crushed under the wheels of a train at Kursha in Mirpur upazila of Kushtia early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Kawsar (35) and Mohibul (40) of Bashinagar village of the district.

The accident occurred as the two were cross the rail track on a trolley. They died when an intercity train hit them from the side, leaving them dead on the spot, Jashim Uddin, officer-in-charge of Poradaha GRP Police Station said.

Upon information, police went to the spot and recovered the bodies, he added.

Road crashes claim nine lives

STAR REPORT

Nine people were killed in separate road accidents across five districts in the last two days, report our correspondents and a news agency.

Two minors, Mintu Biswas (12) and Happy Biswas (10), were killed when an army vehicle lost control after a tyre puncture and hit them on Dhaka-Chattogram highway at Nurmanikchar in Debidwar upazila in Cumilla around 1:30pm yesterday, police told our Cumilla correspondent. Two others were also injured in the accident.

The bodies were handed over to the families, while the injured were admitted to Chandina Upazila Health Complex, said Monirul Islam, in-charge of Elliotganj highway police outpost.

In Chattogram, a local leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was killed and his friend was injured when their motorcycle overturned on Hafez Bazlur Rahman Road in Raozan upazila, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Sajib Mutsuddi (19), a student of Imam Gazzali University College. He was the finance secretary of Pahartali union unit of BCL.

Rokon Uddin, chairman of Pahartali Union Parishad,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PEC, Ebtedayee, JSC, JDC results on Dec 31

UNB, Dhaka

The results of Primary Education Completion (PEC), Ebtedayee, Junior School Certificate (JSC) and Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) examinations will be published on December 31.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will also inaugurate distribution of free textbooks among students for 2020 on the day, said Badrul Hasan Babul, additional secretary to the primary and mass education ministry.

The results will be handed over to the prime minister in the morning.

Later, Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni and State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Md Zakir Hossain will officially announce the results through separate press briefings at their ministry offices, Badrul said.

Female-friendly toilets sought at edu institutions

'Elimination of Inequalities in Sanitation' workshop held in port city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cig

Many schools and colleges in Chattogram don't have female friendly toilets and sanitation facilities. This forces female students to miss classes during their menstruation period, as they don't want to use unhygienic toilets, speakers said at a programme yesterday.

They were speaking at a workshop titled "Elimination of Inequalities in Sanitation" held at the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), Chattogram organised by Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK).

The speakers emphasised the need to set up female friendly toilets in all educational institutions across the port city.

Sumon Roy, executive engineer of DPHE, Chattogram, said, "It is the responsibility of DPHE

to establish toilets in all primary schools of the country located outside city corporations," adding, "We will ensure water sanitation and hygiene in all primary schools of the country by the next five years."

He aligned the workshop's theme with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), saying "ensuring clean water and sanitation is a key focus of the SDGs."

However, government organisations cannot achieve this goal alone, he added, urging social and non-government organisations to come forward and play a vital role.

Abida Azad, a ward councillor of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC), said students don't want to risk infections and other diseases by using the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Is Trump choking off free trade and decimating WTO?



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

TWO recent trade pacts—one between the US and China, and the other among US, Mexico and Canada—have given the economists plenty of reasons to worry. Both of these treaties are meant to promote trade between the signatory countries and accelerate economic growth in each but they have two major flaws. First, they were negotiated under very “surreal” circumstances which I will explain in a moment. Second, the trade pacts have been drawn up to appease the current US administration and to bolster Trump’s election chances. Both pacts also deal a crippling blow to the notion of free trade and signal a further diminished role for World Trade Organization (WTO).

The trade negotiations between the US and its trading partners were being carried out in somewhat extraordinary or unconventional circumstances. US negotiators have an upper hand in both of these parleys because of the sheer economic, political, and military power that the US can, and sometimes does, bring to bear on the other parties. In the theory of international trade, the role of leverage or “force” is never explicitly fully factored in. As we all know, the gains from free trade are mostly discussed in the context of a small country, or trade agreements are conducted by parties of equal size. However, in the case of US-China trade talks, the former has been open about its ability to strike first and impose incrementally higher rates of tariffs on imports of Chinese goods and these could potentially harm Chinese manufacturing and technology sectors.

The just-concluded trade agreement among three big North American countries—the United States, Mexico, and Canada—will

now replace the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As the name NAFTA implies, the trade agreement went into effect in 1994 and was designed to remove tariff barriers among the three countries. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), trade among the three NAFTA countries more than tripled between 1993 and 2007.

During his election campaign, President Trump promised to renegotiate it, and the new agreement to replace NAFTA will be named United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). In an announcement on its website, the office of the US Trade Representative (USTR), which is responsible for all trade negotiations with foreign countries, claims that USMCA will “support mutually beneficial trade leading to freer markets, fairer trade, and robust economic growth in North America.” However, in the very next paragraph, it does not hesitate to imply that some of the provisions will provide support for American jobs.

It is well-known that the intense bargaining leading up to the new treaty was weighted in favour of the US, the party with more clout. It focused largely on auto exports, steel and aluminium tariffs, and the dairy, egg and poultry markets. It gives the United States more access to Canada’s dairy market, imposes a quota for Canadian and Mexican automotive production, and increases the duty-free limit for Canadians who buy US goods online from USD 20 to USD 150.

The agreement also provides updated intellectual property protections in line with the promises made by President Trump during the last election campaign. One provision of USMCA “prevents any party from passing laws that restrict the cross-border flow of data.” Jim Balsillie, co-founder of Research In Motion (RIM), the company that created BlackBerry phones, was openly critical of the data and IP provisions of USMCA. In an op-ed in 2018 in the *Toronto Star*, he lambasted the Canadian policymakers and negotiators



The World Trade Organization (WTO) headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

towards the US.

US Senator Pat Toomey, a Republican, said that USMCA “is the only trade pact ever meant to diminish trade”, and labelled it “protectionist”. He was aghast that the US will pay Mexico up to USD 45 million a year to enforce Mexican labour laws, under the penalty of raised tariffs and embargoes. “I still believe that free trade is far better for my constituents than restrictive, managed trade, and hope USMCA’s protectionism doesn’t become the template for future trade agreements,” Toomey added.

The details of the Phase I agreement with China still remain under wraps. There is uncertainty about the actual provisions and the possible impact on individual products. The US cancelled a planned increase of tariffs on USD 156 billion of goods that it imports annually from China including smart phones,

toys and consumer electronics. In addition, the US will reduce tariffs by 50 percent on USD 120 billion of goods that were affected by increased tariffs on September 1. These will go down from 15 percent to 7.5 percent. However, US tariffs of 25 percent will remain on USD 250 billion of imports from China on diverse products including machinery, electronics, and furniture.

In return, China agreed to increase imports of American agricultural products by USD 32 billion over the next two years, and this could total USD 50 billion. Total imports from the US would be boosted by USD 200 billion during the same period.

In spite of these potential gains by its agriculture and manufacturing industries, diverse segments in the USA have voiced their concerns. Robert B Zoellick, former president of the World Bank and former USTR under George W Bush, has come out with a scathing

editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* against the US negotiating strategy.

The American farmers were hit hard by the trade war as China raised tariffs on imports of soybean and pork. However, the farm lobby has voiced scepticism about the end result of Phase I. “They need US pork, they need US soybeans. Do they need USD 50 billion of agricultural goods? Absolutely not,” according to Dave Marshall, a farm-marketing adviser with First Choice Commodities.

The bottom line is: “investors are still grappling with the winners and losers from trade policy shifts heading into 2020.” There is considerable uncertainty about the next steps in the US-China trade spat.

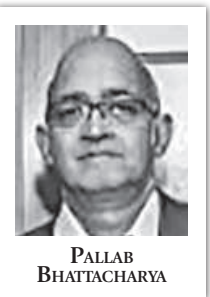
How do all these affect the WTO and its trade court? “President Trump drew concessions from Mexico and China last week while stripping the World Trade Organization of its powers to restrain the tactics he used to secure them, in a series of moves reshaping long-time US trade policy,” according to Jacob Schlesinger, a respected journalist of the WSJ Washington team. The US had blocked the appointment of new nominees to the WTO Appellate Body which no longer has the minimum of three judges required to issue decisions and enforce WTO rules.

In these uncertain times, for the smaller countries which are waiting to see the outcome of the realignment of the global trade map, and the future of unfettered trade, the moral of the story is not very encouraging. Powerful countries can challenge and rewrite the tenets of established practices. One powerful or whimsical ruler can redefine the rules of the game. It is good to be a small country as long as you can escape the wrath of the establishment ensconced in Washington. Who will the US target next? Germany? India? Or Bangladesh?

Dr Abdullah Shibli is an economist and Senior Research Fellow at International Sustainable Development Institute (ISDI), a think-tank based in Boston, USA.

BJP’s DEFEAT IN JHARKHAND

Jharkhand message may resonate across India



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

SOME years ago, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had boasted of a “Congress-mukt” Bharat. It was the result of the party’s victory in a series of assembly elections across India since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power for the first time more than five years ago. That was the time of unprecedented political ascendancy for the BJP in terms of winning elections. The party had earned a formidable reputation for possessing a seemingly unbeatable election-winning machine.

But politics, particularly electoral politics, could often be a highly unpredictable and slippery path. Came 2018, just a year before the last national election, and the BJP ended up losing power in three heartland states—Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh—in one go, after having ruled those states. However, overcoming those defeats, the BJP scored a spectacular triumph in the Lok Sabha polls in April-May this year, securing a greater majority than in 2014. One of the key factors in the BJP’s victory in national polls was its near-sweep in the same three heartland states just a few months after losing power there. Look at Jharkhand. Just seven months ago, the BJP won 11 of the 14 Lok Sabha seats. It is now out of power in the same state, once again underlining the dictum “politics thy name is frailty”.

Just seven months after winning the Lok Sabha election mandate, the BJP now finds itself out of power in Maharashtra, India’s richest state, in the west. It just about managed to rope in the support of a regional party to retain power in Haryana in the north, and was unseated in Jharkhand, one of

India’s most mineral-rich states, in the east. Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said this about BJP after the Jharkhand poll result: “dented in Haryana, denied in Maharashtra and defeated in Jharkhand.” Many view this as Congress’ pushback at the “Congress-mukt Bharat” phrase.

The setback in Jharkhand means that half of the huge Hindi heartland has slipped out of BJP’s control. The party is now in power in two big states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and the small states of Uttarakhand, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh in the Hindi-speaking belt. Will the narrative change when the Delhi assembly elections are held in February next year? The BJP surely faces an uphill task.

The BJP’s defeat in Jharkhand throws up two significant lessons besides the familiar one of anti-incumbency. First, the stability

provided by the party’s government under non-tribal Chief Minister Raghubar Das—which survived a full five-year term in a predominantly tribal state that had earned the notoriety of chief ministers changing quicker than seasons due to the quicksand of shifting political loyalty—did not cut ice with the electorate. Secondly, playing up the polarising narrative to cover up anti-incumbency and governance deficit may have run its course and is less likely to find traction among voters over a time. The results of Maharashtra, Haryana and Jharkhand assembly elections are likely to reinforce the view among anti-BJP forces that bread-and-butter issues can actually neutralise the impact of polarising planks, and that the BJP may not have succeeded in delinking politics from economics, as suggested by some analysts.



Congress-JMM-RJD alliance supporters celebrate in Ranchi, the capital of the Indian state of Jharkhand, after the results of the recent assembly polls were declared.

The BJP had begun the Jharkhand poll campaign on the development narrative but shifted almost midway to the sensitive issues of Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), National Register of Citizens (NRC), abrogation of the special status for Jammu and Kashmir and the Supreme Court order on the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The last two phases of the five-phased polling in Jharkhand were held in the midst of pan-India protests against the new citizenship act and NRC. The Jharkhand poll was also the first state-level electoral exercise after the apex court judgement on the Ayodhya issue. What is more interesting is that Jharkhand is a state with an overwhelmingly non-Muslim population. Most of India’s incidents of lynching of persons on suspicion of being cattle smugglers took place in Jharkhand.

By contrast, the opposition Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-Congress-Rashtriya Janata Dal alliance adopted the strategy of confining their plank to governance and state-specific issues to tap into people’s anger over bread-and-butter issues like economic slowdown, joblessness, agrarian distress and land ownership rights of tribals in Chhota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas areas of Jharkhand. The Raghubar Das government passing the Chhota Nagpur Tenancy and Santhal Parganas Tenancy laws to acquire land from tribals was used to the hilt by the opposition to paint the BJP as anti-tribal, and it led to a huge consolidation of tribal votes against the BJP. The recent election result reflected so tellingly the BJP’s alienation from tribals: the JMM and the Congress won 25 of the 28 assembly seats reserved for tribals. So strong was the anti-incumbency that Das himself lost the election in Jamshedpur East constituency to his senior BJP rebel Saryu Roy, and his party’s state unit chief and the assembly speaker also bit the dust.

Like post-election in Maharashtra, the Jharkhand result once again showed

the BJP’s inability to retain its allies. The squabble in Maharashtra saw the BJP’s oldest Hindutva ally, the Shiv Sena, parting ways and doing what was previously thought unthinkable: aligning with the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party to form government. And a feud over seat-sharing in Jharkhand saw the BJP and its long-standing partner All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) breaking the alliance and contesting the poll separately. The BJP-AJSU break-up in Jharkhand cost both dearly, more the BJP which lost several seats by margins due to the split in votes with the AJSU. The loss of an important tribal and regional ally proved too powerful for the BJP to take on the JMM-Congress alliance. The Congress displayed its readiness to tie up with the JMM, the most dominant tribal party, as a junior alliance partner and benefitted from it. The AJSU has a sub-caste of Other Backward Caste Kurmis who have a significant presence in Jharkhand and their alienation also cost the BJP’s OBC support base.

The Jharkhand mandate is likely to have implications beyond the state’s borders. The snapping of ties between the BJP and the AJSU may have a compounding effect in adjacent Bihar where Janata Dal(U) is the BJP’s partner in the ruling coalition headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who is a Kurmi by caste. In Jharkhand, the Janata Dal(U) failed to win a single seat.

The Jharkhand poll outcome has endorsed 44-year-old Hemant Soren, the JMM’s Working President, as not only the inheritor of his father Shibu Soren’s legacy as the foremost tribal leader of the state but also expressly manifested the electorate’s backing for a tribal at the helm of the state’s affairs, rejecting the BJP’s gamble of propping up a non-tribal leader Raghubar Das as Chief Minister for the first time.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent for The Daily Star. He writes from New Delhi, India.

ON THIS DAY
IN HISTORY

December 25
CHRISTMAS CELEBRATED
WORLDWIDE

Though the precise origin of the date is unclear, Christmas, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, is celebrated on this day, having been first identified as the date of Jesus’ birth by Sextus Julius Africanus in 221.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Kremlin setting

7 Dixieland music

11 Stir up

12 Open space

13 Limit on government borrowing

15 Small error

16 Turn suddenly

18 Free of fat

21 Printed matter

22 Common greetings

24 Termite’s kin

25 Rent out

26 Symbol of wisdom

27 Hushed sound

29 Wharf

30 Go to sea

31 Sean Astin

movie

32 “Wake Up, Little—”

34 Organic woodland layer

40 Teller of tales

41 Refer

42 Swiss peaks

43 Took a breather

DOWN

1 Fuming

2 Smelter supply

3 Cry loudly

4 Veal serving

5 Film prize

6 Cry

7 White of “Family Matters”

8 “Exodus” hero

9 Buddhism branch

10 Turn sharply

14 Spot in the ocean

16 Earth’s neighbor

17 Superfluous

19 Vocally

20 “Forget it!”

21 Scot’s cap

22 That lady

23 Cunning

25 Doozies

28 Greedy ones

29 Suppresses

31 Biathlon need

33 Sirius or Polaris

34 Ga. neighbor

35 Engine need

36 Kanye’s music

37 Ump’s cry

38 Keats poem

39 Checkers side

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BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

NEWSIN
brief

Indonesia bus
tragedy kills 27

AFP, Palembang

At least 27 people have died and more than a dozen were injured after a bus plunged into a ravine in Indonesia, officials said yesterday. The bus careered into a 150-metre ravine in South Sumatra province just before midnight on Monday and ended up in a river. According to a passenger manifest, the regional bus left Bengkulu province for Pagar Alam with 27 on board but some survivors told police there were around 50 people inside when the accident happened.

Pakistan to rejoin
US military training

AFP, Washington

The United States will allow Pakistan to rejoin a military training program suspended two years ago when President Donald Trump froze security aid to the country. Resuming the program, which represents only a part of the halted aid, is one sign of warming relations between Washington and Islamabad. In January 2018, Trump froze the assistance, saying Pakistan was not doing enough to target bases of the Afghan Taliban and its affiliated Haqqani group.

8 killed in Russian
strikes on Idlib

AFP, Beirut

At least eight people, including five children, were killed yesterday in Russian air strikes on a school in northwest Syria sheltering some three million displaced civilians, according to a war monitor. The strikes targeted the village of Jubass near the town of Saraqeb in southern Idlib province, killing civilians sheltering in and near a school. Idlib is dominated by the country's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.



India's federal cabinet yesterday approved funds for a census and population survey to be conducted next year, amid fears that the database could be used to build a controversial citizens register, against which there have been widespread protests.

PHOTO: AFP

'The masterminds walk free'

Khashoggi verdict condemned globally but backed by US

AFP, Riyadh

A Saudi court verdict that exonerated the crown prince's top aides over the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi has been globally condemned as a travesty of justice, but won the backing of ally Washington.

Five unnamed people were sentenced to death on Monday while three others were handed jail terms totalling 24 years over the Washington Post columnist's killing last year in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate.

The verdict underscores Saudi efforts to turn the page on one of its worst diplomatic crises that tarnished Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's global reputation and sparked intense scrutiny of the kingdom's human rights record.

However, the case is still likely to remain a headache for Saudi Arabia even as it seeks to reboot its international image ahead of next year's G20 summit in Riyadh.

A US State Department official hailed the verdict as "an important

step" in holding the perpetrators accountable.

But it was lambasted by Turkey, which called it a "scandalous" outcome that had granted "impunity" to those who had dispatched the killers, in an apparently veiled reference to Prince Mohammed.

Riyadh has described the murder



as a "rogue" operation that did not involve the crown prince.

But both the CIA and UN special envoy Agnes Callamard have directly linked Prince Mohammed to the killing, a charge the kingdom vehemently denies.

"Bottom line: the hit-men are guilty, sentenced to death," Callamard said on

Twitter, calling the verdict a "mockery".

"The masterminds not only walk free. They have barely been touched by the investigation and the trial."

Khashoggi, a 59-year-old Saudi insider-turned-critic, was strangled and his body cut into pieces by a 15-man Saudi squad inside the consulate, according to Turkish officials. His remains have not been found.

Saudi prosecutors had said deputy intelligence chief Ahmed al-Assiri oversaw Khashoggi's killing and the US Treasury had claimed the royal court's media czar Saud al-Qahtani was "part of the planning and execution" of the operation that led to the murder.

Qahtani was investigated but not indicted "due to insufficient evidence" and Assiri was charged but eventually acquitted on the same grounds, the public prosecutor's office said.

Both aides were part of Prince Mohammed's tight-knit inner circle and were formally sacked over the killing, but only Assiri appeared in the court hearings, according to Western sources.

The verdict can be appealed.

US tracking Santa - and any
'Christmas gift' from N Korea

REUTERS, Denver

While the North American Aerospace Defense Command stays alert for any signs of a North Korea missile launch - what officials in Pyongyang have described as a "Christmas gift" - it is also tracking the legendary figure who delivers presents to children across the world, the command said on Monday.

Based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, NORAD is a combined US and Canadian military command whose mission is to issue aerospace and maritime warnings and controls across North America.

For more than six decades, it has also offered real-time animated tracking of Santa Claus, also known as Kris Kringle, as his reindeer-powered sleigh traverses the globe delivering Yuletide gifts to children.

NORAD's Santa tracking website www.noradsanta.org gets nearly 15 million unique visitors from more than 200 countries and territories across the globe.

NORAD in recent years has been tracking North Korean long-range missile tests. Pyongyang warned Washington earlier this month of a possible "Christmas gift". That came after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un gave the United States until the end of the year to propose new concessions in talks over his country's nuclear arsenal and reducing tensions between the two long-time adversaries.

NORAD's Santa-tracking tradition started in 1955 when a Colorado Springs department store misprinted the phone number to the North Pole in a newspaper advertisement, according to its website.

The first call came from a little girl and went to US Air Force Colonel Harry Shoup, director of what was then known as the Continental Air Defense Command.

The colonel assured the girl that Santa was on en route, and when more children called the command center, the military added a new task to its defense mission.



Russia tests 'sovereign' internet
amid fears of online isolation

AFP, Moscow

Russia carried out tests Monday to ensure the "security" of its internet infrastructure in case of a foreign cyberattack as part of measures that rights activists worry could also tighten censorship and lead to online isolation.

A controversial law that allows the country to cut internet traffic from international servers came into force in November, but the communications ministry has denied that the government is gearing up to isolate the Russian segment of the internet and said ordinary users would not notice the tests.

The ministry said that the drills are aimed at ensuring the "integrity" of the internet.

"The results of the tests have shown that on the whole both authorities and service providers are ready to effectively react to emerging risks and threats and ensure the reliable work of both the internet and the single telecommunication network," deputy communications minister Alexei Sokolov told reporters.

Apart from testing the safety of the Russian segment of the internet in case of an attack, authorities also tried to ensure the safety of mobile users and whether it was possible to intercept traffic and text messages, Sokolov said.

"The purpose of the task is to ensure the reliable operation of the internet in Russia in any conditions and under any circumstances," he added, referring to the drills.

The law, which Putin signed in May, requires Russian internet providers to install equipment provided by the authorities to enable centralised control of data traffic.

They will also filter content to prevent access to banned websites.

At his annual news conference last week, Putin defended Russia's internet policies, promising that the country was not "moving towards closing off the internet."

"A free internet and a sovereign internet are two concepts that aren't mutually exclusive," he said.

The new system is set to go online in 2021.



Zografyon Greek High School principal Yani Demircioglu, accompanied by school children and members of Greek Orthodox community, plays an accordion during a Christmas celebration at the main shopping and pedestrian street of Istiklal in Istanbul, Turkey, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

WhatsApp wars divide families

AFP, New Delhi

With their parents bombarding them on WhatsApp with misinformation and even abuse over their stand on India's new citizenship law, young women are hiding their identities on social media to voice outrage and find alternative families.

Young people, particularly women, have been at the forefront of the ongoing wave of protests over the law, but this can be dangerous in a largely conservative and patriarchal society.

When Priya takes part in protests, for example, the fear of the riot police -- 25 people have died in the past almost two weeks -- comes second to the terror of her bigoted Hindu father finding out her whereabouts and halting her education.

"He just has this hatred of Muslims -- every opportunity he has lost in life, he blames them," says Priya, 20, too scared to give her real name in case her New Delhi family find out.

"I have tried so many times to talk to him. But every conversation we have ends with him threatening to pull me out of college and get me married off," the student tells AFP.

Her story is reflected across India's dining tables, FaceTime chats and WhatsApp app groups in what is turning out to be the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi since he rose to power in 2014.

"My father keeps spamming me on WhatsApp with fake news



ANTI-CAA PROTESTS IN INDIA

and videos -- it's really frustrating," says Priya.

She used to hit back with links to fact-checking websites before his threats to end her education forced her to hide her political views from her parents.

Her father, she says, has no idea about her Twitter account, where she uses a handle that shields her identity.

These WhatsApp wars have effectively upended personal relationships, says Anshul Tewari, editor-in-chief of Youth Ki Awaaz, a crowdsourced news website focussing on India's youth.

"Young people today care enormously about having a voice and being heard," Tewari tells AFP, pointing to the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong and climate change marches around the world.

But unlike their global counterparts, young Indians have to find ways to express themselves against the backdrop of a culture which places a huge premium on parental authority.

"In many cases, Indian parents feel entitled to decide who their children should love, how they should live and even how they should think," says Tewari.

That sense of control is particularly pronounced when it comes to the lives of young women, he adds.

Like Priya, the Mumbai-based video editor has been actively involved in the demonstrations against the citizenship law, which she calls "a gross violation of human rights".

INDIA'S CITIZENSHIP LAW

100,000 Sri Lankan
refugees not eligible

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Mumbai

Nearly 100,000 Sri Lankan refugees living in India are not eligible for citizenship under a new law, sparking concerns they may be forced to return to the island nation they fled during a decades-long civil war, many with no homes to return to.

India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) aims to fast-track citizenship for persecuted Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians who arrived in India before December 31, 2014, from Muslim-majority Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The law excludes nearly 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils, an ethnic minority, who live in India, including about 60,000 in camps in southern Tamil Nadu state, according to the home department.

Most of these refugees are Hindu or Christian, whose forefathers were born in India, said S Velayutham, an advocacy officer at the non-profit Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation in the southern city of Chennai.

"Many were sent by the British as indentured labourers on Sri Lankan tea plantations, and hoped for a better life in India when they came here during the war," he said.

"Some 25,000 children were also born in the camps. They do not know any country but India, but now they may have no choice but to go to Sri Lanka," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Taliban kill 15 in attack on
Afghan security checkpoint

Taliban militants ambushed a government checkpoint in Balkh province in Afghanistan's north, killing at least 15 members of the security forces, local officials said yesterday, the latest in an escalating series of insurgent attacks. Mohammad Yousuf, the district governor of Dawlatabad where the incident took place said, said dozens of Taliban insurgents targeted a checkpoint manned jointly by Afghan soldiers and intelligence agents, killing 15. More than 18 years after US-led forces toppled the hardline Taliban regime, Afghan forces are suffering record casualties with Afghan and US officials warning that the toll is not sustainable.

Nepal detains 122 Chinese
for cyber crime, bank fraud

Police in Nepal have detained 122 Chinese men and women in its biggest crackdown on crime by foreigners entering the country on tourist visas, officials said yesterday. The chief of police in the capital Kathmandu said the suspects were rounded up in raids on Monday following information that they were engaged in suspicious activities. The Chinese are suspected of cyber crime and hacking into bank cash machines, the police chief, Uttam Subedi, said. Another senior police officer, Hobindra Bogati, said the Chinese embassy knew about the raids and had supported the detentions. Last week, authorities in the Philippines arrested 342 Chinese workers in a raid on an unlicensed gambling operation.

Queen admits 'bumpy' year
in Christmas message




Queen Elizabeth II called 2019 "quite bumpy" in a Christmas message at the end of a chaotic year which saw Britain bitterly divided over its split from the European Union and her scandal-plagued son Prince Andrew withdraw from public life. The year was filled with disappointments for the queen -- a seminal figure in British public life who assumed the throne in 1952 and is beloved by much of the nation. The queen will point to the life of Jesus as an example of how reconciliation can be achieved and "how small steps taken in faith and in hope can overcome long-held differences and deep-seated divisions" in her speech, which will be broadcast on Christmas Day. The remarks were widely interpreted as a reference to the Brexit debate that has torn Britain apart since it voted to leave the EU in a 2016 referendum.

SOURCE: AFP

WHAT'S ON



Star Melodies' Musical Evening
Title: Bijoyer Ronge Aka Bela Shesher Gaan
Venue: The Daily Star Centre, Kazi Nazrul Islam Ave
Date: December 27
Time: 5:30 pm onwards



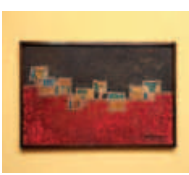
Cartoon Exhibition
Title: People of many colours
Venue: La Galerie, Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhamondi
Date: December 20 – 31
Time: 3 pm – 9 pm (Mon – Thurs); 9 am – 12 noon & 5 pm – 8 pm (Fri – Sat)



Workshop
Title: Kata Kuti - Collage Workshop
Artist: Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo
Venue: Studio 6/6, Mohammadpur
Date: December 28
Time: 11:00 am - 6:00 pm



Musical Programme
Title: Gaaner Jhona Tolay
Organiser: Bengal Foundation
Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, Dhamondi
Date: December 26-28
Time: 6 pm



Group Art Exhibition
Title: Breaking Ground: Modern Art in Transition
Venue: Subir Choudhury Exhibition Hall, Bengal Shilpalay, Dhamondi
Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15
Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)



Je Jibon Jiboner



Frozen in Time

Christmas specials on television

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

As Bangladesh celebrates Christmas through numerous events and traditional festivities, top TV channels of the country are set to air different special programmes today.

The tele-fiction, *Je Jibon Jiboner*, written by Golam Rabbani and directed by Jayanta Rozario, will be aired on Desh TV at 9 pm. It stars Shampa Reza and FS Nayeem among others.

The biopic, *Jishu Eshechhilo, Ashben*, focusing on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, will be aired on My TV from 11:15 am onwards. Directed by Kamrul Hasan Nasim, the film features Rudro Huq and Moutushi Biswas in the roles of Jesus and Mary, respectively. Noted actors Tauhid Islam and Jayanta Chattopadhyay



Jishu Eshechhilo, Ashben

also star in key roles.

The dance show, *Aji Shubhodine*, featuring young artistes of the dance troupe Kolpotoru, will be televised on Duronto Television at 9 pm. The show is produced by Tofail Sarker. On the other hand, the animated film, *Frozen*



Pop Tune

in Time, dubbed in Bangla, will be aired on the channel from 10 pm onwards. In the film, time repeats an endless loop of Christmas Day when young siblings Eric and Patty Purtle break a mysterious clock belonging to their grandfather. The talk show, *Probhu Jishur*

Shubhoagomon, hosted by actor Kalyan Corraya, will be aired on BanglaVision at 6:30 pm. Fr James Shyamol Gomez, CSE, and Chef Victor Gomez will talk about Christmas on the show.

Interestingly, Bangladesh Television will celebrate their 55th birth anniversary on Christmas Day. On the occasion, the musical show, *Pop Tune*, conceptualised by Sumon Saha, will be aired on the channel after the 8 pm Bangla News. Renowned singers Ferdous Wahid, Fakir Alamgir, Mehreen and Sabbir among others will perform on the show. The performing artistes will pay tributes to Azam Khan, Pilu Momtaz, Lucky Akhand, Happy Akhand and Ayub Bachchu. Foad Nasser Babu is the music director of the show.



Aji Shubhodine



Probhu Jishur Shubhoagomon

Tirjak Natyamela 2019 begins today at TIC

To commemorate their 46th founding anniversary, Tirjak Natyadal, a renowned theatre troupe of Chattagram, has organised a five-day (December 25-29) Tirjak Natyamela 2019 at the Theatre Institute Chattagram (TIC) auditorium in the port city.



PHOTO: COURTESY

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Renowned thespians Bibhash Chakraborty and Mamunur Rashid will inaugurate the Tirjak Natyamela and Natya-Smarok Exhibition at 4:30pm today at the venue. Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud will attend the inaugural event as the chief guest, while Chattagram City Corporation Mayor AJM Nasir Uddin will attend the programme as the special guest, among others. Eminent educationalist and sociologist Dr Anupam Sen will preside over the ceremony.

The theatre festival will feature shows of different plays every day at 7pm. Besides, the organisers will screen documentaries on theatre and thespians, along with various programmes like discussions, art competitions, instrumental

recitals and cultural events, shedding light on dance, music, mime and theatre, on every other days at the Open Stage, Gallery and Lecture Theatre of TIC.

On the opening evening, Tirjak Natyadal will stage Syed Waliullah's play, *Tarangabhang*. Natyachakra (Dhaka) will stage their play, *Eka Ek Nari*, on December 26. Members of Tirjak will also stage a Greek tragedy *Oedipus* by Sophocles on December 27 evening. Theatre Factory (Dhaka) will stage a Mohan Rakesh play, *Ashadhasya Prothom Diboshe*, on December 28, while Upstage (Dhaka) will stage a Buddhadeb Basu play, *Raat Bhore Brishti*, on the concluding day of the festival.

Founded in 1974, Tirjak Natyadal, has so far staged 2,786 shows of their 44 theatre productions.



JINGLE BELLS IN SHOWBIZ



Kareena Kapoor brings about the 'Good Newzz' with Akshay Kumar, Diljit Dosanjh and Kiara Advani.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Joining hand in hand with the cold north breezes, arrives celebrations for Christmas and the New Year. Swaying on the tunes of jingles, with wrapped gift boxes, twinkling lights and decorated Christmas trees, many celebrities have taken some time-off from their busy schedules to spend the holidays with their loved ones. Here are a few clicks from their Instagram accounts, sharing the joy and merriment of this festive season.



Chris Hemsworth towing Santa's sled.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED FROM INSTAGRAM



(1) Reese Witherspoon's Christmas and hot coco with her dog, Lou. (2) Mariah Carey has fun in the snow! (3) Hugh Jackman keeps the promise from 2018 to Ryan Reynolds. (4) Mindy Kaling's ornamental tour.

Bethlehem welcomes pilgrims for Christmas celebrations

AFP, Bethlehem

Pilgrims from around the world yesterday gathered in the biblical city of Bethlehem, revered by Christians as the birthplace of Jesus, to celebrate Christmas in the Holy Land.

Palestinians and foreigners began converging on the “little town” in the Israeli-occupied West Bank from early morning, with Christmas Eve festivities taking place in and around the Church of the Nativity.

Tourists queued to visit the grotto inside the church, believed to be the exact site where Jesus was born, with Ola, a Nigerian visitor, saying it was a “special day.”

Outside in the winter sun, hundreds watched as Palestinian scouts paraded to the sound of drums.

“I feel really emotional to be here today, it’s wonderful,” said Germana, an Italian travelling with her husband and two children.

Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, apostolic administrator of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and the most senior Roman Catholic official in the Middle East, was due to travel from Jerusalem to Bethlehem yesterday morning.

He will lead midnight mass in the Church of the Nativity, with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas expected to attend.

Bethlehem is close to Jerusalem, but cut off from the holy city by Israel’s separation barrier.

The first church was built on the site in the fourth century, though it was replaced after a fire in the sixth century.

This year celebrations were bolstered by the return of a wooden fragment believed to be from the manger of Jesus.

Sent as a gift to Pope Theodore I in 640, the piece had been in Europe for more than 1,300 years before being returned last month, Francesco Patton, chief custodian for the Holy Land, said.

Putin drives first

FROM PAGE 16

of Saint Petersburg to the Crimean port city of Sevastopol covers a distance of 2,500 kilometres (1,550 miles).

Putin said the bridge would restore rail links to Crimea severed in 2014 when Moscow annexed the peninsula, sparking an ongoing separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine that has claimed more 13,000 lives.

The company of Putin’s close ally, billionaire businessman Arkady Rotenberg, won the construction contract for the bridge. He sold the company last month.

Putin told workers an anecdote about receiving an emotional call from “your main boss with the simple Russian surname Rotenberg,” after the completion of a key stage of the project.

“He called me at night and spoke in such a voice that I asked him ‘Have you been drinking?’” the Russian leader said.

The coverage of the project has been reminiscent of Soviet infrastructure projects, with a newsreader on state-controlled Rossiya 24 television channel calling the opening “without exaggeration historic.”

Russia says it is the longest railway bridge in Europe.

Ukraine was unhappy about both the rail link and Putin’s presence at the opening.

President Volodymyr Zelensky’s representative office for Crimea said in a statement on Facebook that the rail link and Putin’s visit to Crimea were “a gross breach by the Russian side of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

It showed “disregard by the Kremlin of the universally recognised principles and norms of international law,” the statement said.

Two killed

FROM PAGE 16

According to the officials, members of the elite force conducted raids in the two districts on information.

In both the cases, “criminals” opened fire on Rab members first, forcing them to retaliate.

During the “gunfights”, both the “criminals” sustained bullet injuries and died.

In Cox’s bazar, Rab members rushed Rubel to Cox’s Bazar General Hospital where doctors declared him dead. In Pabna, Amin died on the spot of the “gunfight”.

The bodies were sent to morgues for autopsies.

Rab in Cox’s Bazar recovered 10,000 yaba pills, one locally made gun and three bullets while Rab in Pabna recovered one pistol and two sharp weapons from the scene.

Two cases were filed with Teknaf Police Station and Pabna Sadar Police Station in connection with the “gunfights”.

Our correspondents in Cox’s Bazar and Pabna contributed to this report



PHOTO: REUTERS

An Iraqi student shouts slogans during the ongoing anti-government protests in Basra yesterday. Protesters stepped up their demonstrations with the authorities in Baghdad increasingly paralysed as they seek a way out of a political impasse.

India okays funds for NPR

FROM PAGE 16

a long form. There will be a mobile app for people to upload their details. It’s self-declaration. No document is required. No proof is required. No biometric is required. This is already accepted by all the states. All the states have already notified it,” Javadekar said.

“NPR will be used as NRC we have never said, never meant,” Javadekar replied when a reporter pointed out that Union Minister Kiren Rijiju in July 2014 told parliament that the “government will create the NRC based on information from the NPR by verifying citizenship”.

The NPR is a list of “usual residents” of the country. A “usual resident” is defined for the purpose of NPR as a person who has resided in a local area for the past six months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months or more, home ministry officials said.

The data for NPR was last collected in 2010 along with the house-listing phase of Census of India 2011. The data was updated in 2015 by conducting door-to-door survey. The digitisation of the updated information has been completed.

Now it has been decided to update the NPR along with the house-listing phase of Census 2021 during April to

September next year in all the states and federally-ruled territories except Assam, according to the website of the Office of the Registrar General, and Census Commissioner.

Assam has been excluded because the National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise has already been conducted in the state.

The NPR will be prepared at the local (village/sub-town), sub-district, district, state and national level under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003. It is mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR, according to the officials.

The objective of the NPR is to create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country. The database would contain demographic as well as biometric particulars, officials said.

Meanwhile, Indian authorities yesterday stepped up security and shut down the internet in various places as nationwide protests against citizenship law and NRC were escalating.

An interior ministry official said the government expected all state security officials to be on duty on Christmas Eve and through the holiday week.

As anti-CAA protests continued to roil Kerala yesterday, two senior BJP leaders V Muraliedharan, India’s Minister of State for External Affairs, and Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yeddiyurappa were shown black flags by students.

Hundreds of people, under the banner of Muslim Coordination Committee, took out a protest march to the Raj Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram, the official residence of the state governor.

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi were stopped in the afternoon from entering Meerut by Uttar Pradesh police when they were on their way to meet the families of those killed in violence.

Anti-CAA protesters gathered near Mandi House in central Delhi defying Section 144 which restricts the gathering of more than four people ahead of a planned protest march to Jantar Mantar.

In Kolkata, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee led her fourth street march from Swami Vivekanada statue at Bidhan Sarani in north Kolkata to Gandhi Bhawan in Belegkata in eastern part of the city.

On the other hand, BJP leader and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis led a pro-CAA rally in West Bengal’s Siliguri.

Shouting slogans against CAA and waving black flags, students of Jadavpur University yesterday blocked its Chancellor and West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar’s entry into the campus for the annual convocation, prompting him to return and later denounce the incident as “total collapse of rule of law”.

A note of dissent on CAA came from West Bengal BJP leader Chandra Kumar Bose, a great grand nephew of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Chandra posted tweets questioning the law. India is a country “open to all religions and communities”, said Bose.

Rabeeha Abdurehim, a student of the Pondicherry University who did her Masters course in Mass Communication, refused to accept the gold medal to express solidarity with students protesting against CAA.

Jakob Lindenthal, a German post-graduate student of Physics at Indian Institute of Technology in Chennai, was reportedly ordered to return home after he took part in street protests against CAA and NRC. He reportedly left for Amsterdam on Monday.

In Assam’s Dibrugarh town, thousands turned up at a protest organized by All Assam Students Union against CAA.

This much we owe to our progeny

FROM PAGE 16

In the full verdict, the apex court bench said, “We finally reiterate that the petitioners shall be fully compensated for their loss due to the cancellation of their leases, in accordance with the decision of the High Court Division”.

The top court said there is no ambiguity about the notification issued on April 19, 1999, by which, among others, the sea beach from Cox’s Bazar to Teknaf, including Jhilanja Mouza, was included in the ECA and that was done to protect the natural and ecological balance of the areas in question.

“However, we hope that in the days

and years to come, the government will adhere to the policy of preservation of the ecological balance and protection of the natural resources of our country not only for our future generations, but also to ensure protection of the environment from degradation and the harmful effects of climate change. Certainly, this much we owe to our progeny.

“It would indeed be a travesty of justice if the petitioners having been deprived of their business opportunities, the plots are leased out to others for the purpose of construction and commercial development,” the SC said in the full judgment.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star yesterday that the SC verdict would play an important role in helping the preservation and protection of the environment.

All the leases of plots in Jhilanja Mouza granted April 19, 1999, must be cancelled, and the structures built in the area must be demolished in line with the SC directive, he added.

On July 22, 2010, the HC declared valid a government decision cancelling leases of 55 plots in the mouza. It delivered the verdict after rejecting 39 writ petitions challenging legality of the government decision.

The previous Awami League

government declared the mouza on the seashore an ECA on April 19, 1999.

Ignoring the April 19, 1999, gazette notification in this regard, the BNP-Jamaat alliance government in 2005 leased out 59 plots of around 73 acres in the mouza.

Of the lessees, only four followed the terms of the lease, some sold off their leases, and the others constructed structures defying the lease terms.

On January 12, 2010, the AL-led government cancelled lease of 55 plots. Leaseholders filed 39 writ petitions with the HC in the same month.

Iran arrests family of young man killed in ‘riots’: report

AFP, Tehran

Iran has arrested the family of a young man killed in street violence that flared during last month’s protests against fuel price hikes, Mehr news agency reported yesterday.

The family of Pouya Bakhtiari, who was “killed suspiciously during the recent riots”, had been invited for talks with authorities, Mehr said, citing what it called an informed source.

They were found to have been “carrying out a counter-revolutionary project” and “anti-structural activities”, said the agency, which is close to moderate conservatives in Iran.

“Consequently, these elements were arrested by a judicial order in order to protect the order and the security of the honourable people and others damaged by the rioters,” it said without specifying which family members were taken into custody.

Bakhtiari was reportedly killed in Karaj city, west of Tehran, in street violence that erupted in mid-November during nationwide protests over a shock decision to hike petrol prices by as much as 200 percent. He was 27.

His Instagram account, which is now reportedly run by his father, announced a ceremony marking 40 days since his death would be held at Karaj cemetery on Thursday.

It was still active with more than

18,000 followers yesterday.

Officials in Iran have yet to issue an overall death toll for the unrest, but international human rights group Amnesty International has put the number at more than 300.

An Iranian security official rejected a foreign media report on Monday that the figure was as high as 1,500, saying it was based on “false propaganda”.

“This way of news writing and making accusations is essentially nothing special,” said Alireza Zarifian Yeganeh, head of the information and communications secretariat of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council.

Quoted by the Tasnim news agency, he dismissed the reports as “a series of ludicrous claims”.

“And when you would ask this media about its source, it would refer to some invisible creatures and there is no possibility of verification.”

The days of unrest in Iran from November 15 saw police stations attacked, shops looted and banks and petrol stations torched as authorities imposed a week-long internet blackout.

Videos that have surfaced since purport to show scenes from the crackdown that followed, including footage of security forces firing at unarmed demonstrators or beating them with batons.

The United States, France and Germany have all condemned Iran over the bloodshed.

Prince Philip leaves hospital after four nights

AFP, London

Britain’s Prince Philip left a London hospital yesterday after a four-night stay that renewed concern about the 98-year-old’s health, in time to join the royal family for Christmas.

Queen Elizabeth II’s husband, dressed in a suit, took a few steps before being helped into a dark green Land Rover parked by a side entrance of the King Edward VII hospital, where he was admitted on Friday, an AFP reporter said.

“The Duke of Edinburgh has today left hospital after being discharged by his doctor and is now back at Sandringham,” where the royal family traditionally spends Christmas Day, Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

“His royal highness would like to thank everyone who sent their good wishes.”

Buckingham Palace has released little information about the duke’s health, saying only that he went in for “observation and treatment in relation to a pre-existing condition”.

It stressed that it was a “precautionary measure”.

The duke was reportedly flown there by helicopter from the royal Sandringham estate in eastern England, where he has been based since retiring from public duties in 2017.

The Sun tabloid reported that Philip has suffered a month of ill-health, including a “bad fall” which left him confined to bed for a couple of days.

In recent years, he has been admitted to hospital for abdominal surgery, bladder infections and a blocked coronary artery, while he is also reported to suffer from arthritis in his right wrist.

On this day

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these people (freedom fighters) would know when to hold weapons against the military and when to concentrate on constructive activities. They will be assigned to the national militia and other nation building activities. He also added that the advisory committee made with members from different political parties would remain as it is. That will not hamper the relation between the committee and the cabinet. The entire news has been covered by APB.

Special Indian envoy DP Dhar visits PM Tajuddin at Bangabhaban, APB reports.

A special flight of International Red Cross reaches Dhaka with emergency medicine and relief. This was the first relief-laden flight of the Red Cross that landed on independent Bangladesh.

Police directorate release another list of arrested collaborators: Maolana Mosleh Uddin, vice president of PDB, Dr Mustafizur Rahman of Dhaka University, Fakhruddin, former minister and president of Mymensingh Muslim League, Khorshed Ahmad Khan, secretary of Mymensingh Muslim League, Dr A Hamid, treasurer of Mymensingh Muslim League, Maolana Altaf Hossain, president of Mymensingh PDP, Maolana Fayzur Rahman, president of Mymensingh Nezam-e Islam and Israil, DSP.

2.94 lakh SIMs

FROM PAGE 16

“On the spot we directed that two operators’ representatives to block the signals,” said an official of the inspection team.

The two operators complied at once, so no punishment was recommended for them in the final report on the test drive, which was handed in to the BTRC chairman yesterday.

When the regulator blocks the SIMs there is a possibility that some Bangladeshi users’ might get barred as well. But the numbers will be reopened if the subscriber can authenticate their identities, said officials.

The expert team also detected reception of Myanmar’s state-owned mobile operator MPT: they used an MPT SIM (09889042845) and got network few kilometres inside Bangladesh.

The team could not check whether the other Burmese mobile operators’ SIMs work in Bangladesh too. Myanmar has three other mobile operators: Telenor, Ooredoo and Mytel.


Bangladesh’s law enforcement agencies held Rohingyaas with MPT mobile connections many times before.

Subsequently, the government has decided to send a letter to Myanmar asking them to restrict their networks and at the same time inform the issue to the International Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, a United Nations body that handles issues pertaining to information and communications technology around the globe.

The government thought of installing jammers to block the Burmese SIMs.

But that will be highly costly and at the same time it will not be full proof, Jabbar said.

“And that’s why we have decided to use the diplomatic channels to resolve the problems. Hope we will get a solution from this process.”

<div style="text-align: center;">  AGRANI BANK LIMITED Establishment & Engineering Division Head Office 9/D Dilkusha, Motijheel, Dhaka Invitation for Tenders </div>			
1	Procuring Entity Name	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head office (7th floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.	
2	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka	
3	Invitation for	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of a 3-Phase 20 KVA (Prime) Diesel Generator for Agrani Bank Limited, Hakimpur Branch, Dinajpur	
4	Invitation Ref No	ABU/E&ED/Eng/Mecha-438/2019	
5	Date	24/12/2019	
KEY INFORMATION			
6	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method.	
FUNDING INFORMATION			
7	Budget and Source of Funds	Own fund of Agrani Bank limited.	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION			
8	Tender Publication Date	24/12/2019	
9	Tender Last Selling Date	23/01/2020	
10	Tender Closing Date and Time	23/01/2020	3.00PM
11	Tender Opening Date and Time	23/01/2020	3.30PM
12	Name & Address of the office	Address	
13	Place/Date /Time of Pre-Tender Meeting	Address: DGM Chamber, Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head Office (7th Floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000. Time: 10:00AM to 3:00PM, Date: 23/01/2020	
14	Receiving Tender Document	PRIMARY PLACE: Attention: Md. Nurul Islam, Deputy General Manager Address: Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment and Engineering Division, Head Office (7th Floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000. Time: 10:00AM to 3:00PM, Date: 23/01/2020 SECONDARY PLACE: Attention: Md. Abdus Salam Mollah, General Manager Address: Agrani Bank Limited, Credit Policy and Credit Risk Division, Head Office (4th Floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000. Time: 10:00AM to 3:00PM, Date: 23/01/2020 Tender Opening will take place at the Primary Place	
15	Place of Opening Tender document	Tender Opening will take place at the Primary Place	
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER			
16	Brief Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderer	Tenderers who have: a. Not been prevented by order of any judicial court from entering into and/ or signing contract with the procuring entity. b. Tenderers shall have at least 03 (Three) years of overall business experience in similar works preceding the date of publication of IFT. c. The minimum specific experience as Supplier in supply of similar Goods of at least 2 contract(s) successfully completed within the last 3 years, each with a value of at least Tk. 11,50,000/- Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper. d. Minimum annual average Supply (Turn Over) in the last 03 (three) years preceding the date of submission of Tender is not less than Tk. 13.00 (Thirteen) lac. e. Minimum amount of Liquid asset i.e Working capital/ Credit line(s) of the Tenderer shall be Tk. 13.00 (Thirteen) lac only. f. Bidder must be the sole agent/commercial distributor of the proposed brand generator of the contract and he/she must submit its all supporting documents. g. Certificate by the bidder stating that minimum 5 nos. of generator of proposed brand and proposed country of origin have been used successfully in BANGLADESH. Out of those 5 generators 2 must be installed at Govt/Semi-Govt Autonomous organizations/ Reputed Limited Company. h. ABC class contractor license provided by the electric licensing board.	
17	Tenderer to attach copies of the following documents	i) Up to date valid Trade license ii) Up-to-date income tax paid certificate iii) Valid VAT registration certificate iv) TIN Certificate v) Liquid asset i.e. working capital or line of credit certificate of the Tenderer shall be Tk. 13.00 (Thirteen) lac only. vi) Main Catalogue/ Brochure. vii) Certificate by the bidder stating that minimum 5 nos. of generator of proposed brand and proposed country of origin have been used successfully in BANGLADESH. Out of those 5 generators 2 must be installed at Govt/Semi-Govt Autonomous organizations/ Reputed Limited Company. viii) Statement of account/audited balance sheet showing Annual Average supply of related goods (Turn Over) of minimum value of Tk.13.00 (Thirteen) lacs for the last three years. ix) Certificate of Manufacturer Authorization. x) Affidavit/Declaration of legal ownership/ Certificate of Incorporation. xi) Tender Submission Letter (Form PG3-1) xii) Bio-data of key personnel employed by the contractor to carry out the functions stated in the schedule. xiii) Bidder must be the sole agent/commercial distributor of the proposed brand of the generator and he/she must submit its all supporting documents. xiv) ABC class contractor license provided by the electric licensing board. xvii) International Standard Conformity Certificate and Every other documents mentioned in TDS.	
18	Brief Description of Goods	20 KVA (Prime) Generator with ATS and sound attenuated acoustically treated canopy. (maximum sound level: 75 dbA at 7m distance from the generator in the room.) The generating set shall be assembled and tested in USA/UK/JAPAN/EU countries. The diesel engine of generating set shall be of Perkins (UK)/ Deutz (Germany)/ Cummins (UK)/ Mitsubishi (Japan)/ Volvo (Sweden)/ Kohler (France)/ Yanmar (Japan)/ Cat (USA) brand and alternator shall be of Stamford (UK)/ Mecc Alte Spa (Italy)/ Leroy Somer (Italy)/ Kohler (France)/ Cat (USA) brand. The engine, alternator, ATS, canopy shall also be manufactured and tested as per relevant standards in USA/UK/ JAPAN/ EU countries and approved by the bank.	
19	Brief Description of Related Services	Installation, testing, Commissioning of the above mentioned Generator with necessary electrical and civil works.	
20	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	1000/- (Tk One thousand Only) Non-refundable pay-order from any branch of Agrani Bank Limited in favor of Agrani Bank Limited, Head Office, Dhaka.	
21	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md. Nurul Islam	
22	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy General Manager	
23	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head Office (7th Floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.	
24	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	01552475489 029561674	www.mechanical@agrani.bank.org
25	a) The Tenderer shall furnish Registration certificate and evidence of being managed by Bangladeshi nationals in original and certificates of satisfactory completion of previous work for proposed brand generator of above magnitude from the owner at the time of dropping the Tender documents. b) If communication is disrupted on the date of receiving and opening the Tender(s), the same will be received at the same time on the day after next working day. c) Furnishing of any false, misleading documents may result in rejection of tender and may lead to action under Reg. 127 of PPR 2008. d) The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reasons whatsoever. No claims will be entertained in this regard.		



A good number of boats lie anchored just beside the shoreline near Kuakata Zero Point while many others are kept on the adjacent beach, much to the nuisance of tourists willing to have a walk or bath in the picturesque area.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Tourists suffer as Kuakata beach turns ‘boat landing station’

Separate spot for watercraft demanded as visitors can’t walk and bathe with ease

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Trawlers, speedboats and other small watercrafts are often kept anchored haphazardly in Kuakata sea beach, much to the nuisance for a large number of tourists in the picturesque area.

Tourists coming from different areas of the country as well as from abroad often walk on the beach and most of them like to take bath in the sea.

But they face disturbance as numerous trawlers, water bikes and speedboats, some of them meant for arranging rides for tourists, are anchored in the water beside the beach. Many small fishing boats are also kept on the beach where tourists are supposed to walk freely.

The situation worsens during the tourism season in winter when larger number of fishermen also go for fishing in the sea.



The unscrupulous anchoring of boats affects around a two-kilometre area on both sides of the Zero Point at Kuakata, said locals and visitors.

A section of traders keep boats in the water to carry tourists from

Kuakata to Fatrarban, a reserve forest about 10 km to the west.

Rakibul Hasan, a tourist from Khulna, said he with his five-member family came to enjoy natural beauty of the Kuakata beach but they are feel disturbed due to

keeping of a large number of boats there.

“We cannot walk on the beach and take bath in the water smoothly. Natural beauty of the spot is also affected due to scattering of the boats,” he said.

“Sea water is polluted by fuel waste falling from these boats. Wastes from fishing boats including pieces of fishing nets also lie on the beach,” said Sabiha Muntasir of Faridpur.

The authorities concerned should arrange a separate station for anchoring of these water vehicles, keeping in view the interest of tourists, said Kamal Maruf, a tourist from Dhaka.

Kalapara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Munibur Rahman, also member secretary of Kuakata beach management committee, said, “We have already asked the tourist police to take necessary steps in this regard. We will take required measures to keep the beach neat and clean.”

KILLING OF 3 SANTALS IN GAIBANDHA Court orders further probe by CID

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A court in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha on Monday ordered Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to conduct investigation of the case filed over the killing of three Santal people, and torching and looting their houses in Bagda Farm area of Gobindaganj on November 6 in 2016.

Judge Partha Bhadra of Gobindaganj Senior Judicial Magistrate’s Court passed the order after accepting a naraji (no-confidence) petition of filed on behalf of Santals on September 4, against the Police Bureau of Investigation’s (PBI) charge sheet.

“Gaibandha PBI in their final charge sheet submitted on July 28 this year dropped the names of 11 main accused of the November 6, 2016 incident,” said Advocate Sirajul Islam Babu, one of the lawyers who were present on behalf of the Santal community during the third hearing of the naraji petition on Monday.

“Through our naraji petition we urged the court to include the main accused including former MP Abul Kalam Azad, Abdul Awal, former managing director of Rangpur Sugar Mill, its former general manager Abdul Mazid, Abdul Hannan, former UNO of Gobindaganj, Shubrata Kumar Sarkar, former OC of Gobindaganj Police Station, Mahbubur Rahman, sub-inspector of DB police, constable Sajjad Hossain and Rezaul Karim Rafik, chairman of Katabari Union Parishad.

“The court accepted our naraji petition and ordered the CID to conduct further investigation in the case that Thomas Hembrom filed on November 26, 2016 against 33 named and 500/600 unknown people who allegedly attacked the Santal Palli, set fire on their makeshift houses, looted their properties and killed three Santal men on November 6, 2016,” said Sirajul Islam Babu.

On that day, more than 2,000 Santal and Bangalee families were ousted from the “disputed” Sahebganj-Bagda farmland under Gaibandha’s Gobindaganj upazila, where Rangpur Sugar Mill was established during the Pakistan period.

The eviction took place following a violent clash between the dweller families, mill employees and police. Three Santal men were killed and 20 others, including nine policemen, injured in the incident.

On behalf of the Santal and Bangalee communities, Thomas Hembrom filed a case with Gobindaganj Police Station against 33 named and 500-600 unnamed accused on November 26, 2016.

But the charge sheet submitted by Gaibandha PBI on July 28 this year dropped the names of 11 prime accused in the case, said Santal leaders, adding that the charge sheet did not include name of any police officials although a video footage of the attack showed their involvement and two cops were suspended in 2017, following a police investigation.

“Through our naraji petition we appealed to the court to include the 11 prime accused in the PBI charge sheet, but the court ordered the CID to do further investigation. We are afraid that verdict of the case will now take much longer time,” Zafur Islam Proddhan, secretary of Sahebganj-Bagda farm Bhumi Uddhar Sangram Committee, told The Daily Star after Monday’s court order.

Wild elephants kill one

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

An elderly man was trampled to death by a herd of wild elephants in Bandarban’s Naikhyangchhari upazila early yesterday.

The deceased is Siddique Ahmed, 85, of Sonaichhari area.

Naikhyangchhari Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sadia Afrin Kochi said wild elephants broke into the mud house of Siddique and trampled him to death on the spot around 3:00am.

During the winter every year, elephants from nearby forest often come down in different areas of the upazila in search of food, the UNO added.

Mentionable, two people, including a woman, were killed in separate elephant attacks on Friday and Sunday.



Boro seedlings turn yellowish at a field of Sakoya village in Lalmonirhat’s Aditmari upazila as cold wave coupled with fog persists in the country’s northern area. The photo was taken on Monday.

PHOTO: STAR

Fog, cold harm Boro seedbeds

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Boro seedbeds in many areas of Lalmonirhat district are turning yellowish under the impact of the ongoing cold wave and dense fog.

Farmers are now worried about rise in the production cost as many of them will have to sow seeds again to cultivate the paddy due to damage of seedlings caused by the adverse weather.

Several farmers said they are covering their seedbeds with polythene sheets but it does not help much to prevent the damage due to lack of sunlight.

Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Enamul Haque said Boro seedbeds in some areas of the district are affected due to severe cold and fog but seedlings won’t be damaged if the weather improves shortly.

“We suggest the farmers to water seedbeds at night, cover them with polythene sheets and use proper fertiliser to save seedlings from the harmful effects of cold and fog. Our officials are visiting the fields and sharing views with farmers

on ways to save the seedlings,” he said.

Afzal Hossain, 65, a farmer at Sakoya village in Aditmari upazila said cold and fog has caused damaged to two-week-old seedlings on his 25 decimals of land.

“Boro seedlings on many seedbeds here have already turned yellowish due to lack of sunlight for the last few days. It will not be possible for me to cultivate the crop this year if seedlings on my 20 decimals of land are completely damaged,” said Nayeab Ali, 55, another farmer of the village.

“If the cold and fog continues for more several days, our Boro seedlings will be badly damaged and we will face seedling crisis during Boro transplantation in January,” said Delowar Hossain, 58, a farmer at Rajpur village in a Teesta river basin area of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

The Department of Agriculture Extension in Lalmonirhat has set a target of Boro cultivation on 70,000 hectares of land, including high yielding varieties on 48,000 hectares, in five upazilas of the district.

Illegal sand trade poses threat to Titas bridge

MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

At a time when the government is conducting drives against river encroachment, an influential sand trader is not only constricting flow of the Titas river in Banchharampur upazila by occupying its bank, but also endangering Sheikh Hasina Titas Setu over the river.

Ignoring the risk posed to the Tk 94-crore bridge that the prime minister herself inaugurated last year, the sand trader, Saidul Islam, has taken up several bridge piers that he is using to make an enclosure where he stockpiles sand for sale.

Moreover, the sand stockpiled in the enclosure is being lifted from the river right below the bridge -- another violation of the law.

Sheikh Hasina Titas Setu, the first Y-shaped bridge in the country, connects three upazilas -- Banchharampur in Brahmanbaria and Muradnagar and Homna in Cumilla. The eye-pleasing structure, 771.20 metres in length, has become a popular site to visit among locals and is an alternative route option for travellers going

to Chittagong from Dhaka and vice versa.

Such an asset of the country is under threat, but the authorities concerned seem to be indifferent to their duties, alleged many locals.

Saidul has been conducting sand trade for a year in a similar fashion by occupying the bank of the Titas in Charlohanian area under Fardabad union of the same upazila as well, they also said.

While visiting the bridge, this correspondent found a wide area below the bridge, alongside the bridge piers on the south side of the river, filled with sand, while a large number of heavy vehicles including trucks were being loaded with sand.

Workers there said the sand business belongs to Saidul Islam of Charlohanian village.

Requesting not to be named, a school teacher from Charlohanian village said, “We see activity of hundreds of trucks and power tillers beside the piers every day. Although selling and lifting of sand from the river near the bridge are prohibited, no one came forward to put a stop to the illegal business.”

Boatman Solaiman Mia said the sand enclosure has choked the river’s flow below the bridge, causing hindrance to two-way movement of river vessels.

Accidents between vessels are quite frequent in the area since the business sprung up there, he added.

When reached for his comment, Saidul Islam claimed that he pays rent to conduct his sand trade below the bridge. “Not just me, many others in the area are occupying land below the bridge as well as the river bank,” he said.

Engineer Jahangir Hossain of Local Government Engineering Department in Banchharampur upazila said he was not aware of any sand trade next to the bridge. “If that’s the case, I will take action.”

Nafisa Naz Neera, assistant commissioner (land) in the upazila, said she asked land officer in Fardabad union to find out about the allegations of encroachment on the Titas river.

Necessary action would be taken once the allegations of encroachment are found to be true, she added.



An influential local has been extracting sand from the Titas river, right below Sheikh Hasina bridge in Brahmanbaria’s Banchharampur upazila. Several piers of the bridge have been made part of an enclosure for selling and stockpiling sand. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR



Students of Bidyaneer, a school for poor kids, in Kishoreganj town perform at a cultural programme at their school compound.

PHOT: STAR

Bidyaneer, a school for underprivileged children

Ritu and her classmate Shakila started teaching the poor kids at Gurudayal Government College compound 3 years ago

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Three years ago, on November 7, a street child came to Mousumi Ritu seeking alms. Little did the five-year-old now that her approach would melt the heart of Ritu, a master's student at Gurudayal Government College in Kishoreganj town.

Ritu, who was doing BA in Bangla back then, started teaching the kid right away. She used to sit with the girl on the college field after class. Seeing that, her classmate Shakila Ishrat joined in and they both started teaching underprivileged children inside campus.

"We found many children both inside and outside campus who worked in tea-stalls, restaurants and wanted to study, but could not do so because of poverty," recalled Ritu. "We started collecting them and within a month there were 17 children taking lessons from us."

Ritu and Shakila managed a land in Harua Pagla mosque area where they set up their school, Bidyaneer. The number of students rose

to 65 within two months.

"People used to give us suspicious looks as if we were kidnappers. But nothing could stop us as we took it as our mission to help the destitute children," Ritu told this paper.

But soon they faced financial crisis as the students started asking for education materials. "I gave a post on Facebook seeking donations. A good soul Tannoy Sheikh Raj stepped forward and arranged education materials like books, writing pads and bags," said Ritu.

Now Bidyaneer offers classes in two shifts: 8:30am to 10:00am and 3:00pm to 5:00pm, six days a week.

There are 170 children in pre-primary and primary sections up to grade four under the supervision of eight teachers, who are mostly university students providing voluntary services, according to Shakila Ishrat.

"We regularly arrange cultural events and sports ceremonies to make learning joyful for the children," she said.

Three months ago, President of district Chhatra League Shafiqul Gani Dhali Limon and his friends constructed a tin-shed building on five-decimal land in Harua where the school activities are currently on.

But the children have to sit on the floor as the school has no furniture.

"We are getting support from various sectors but still there is no toilet or tube-well in the school. There is no source of drinking water," said Mosharrar Ahmed, a teacher.

Priti Akhter, an orphan who is in the pre-primary section, said she wanted to be a doctor to serve poor patients. Another orphan Junayed Hossain of class one expressed his desire to pursue higher education in future.

"It feels wonderful when we hear about these big dreams. They want to be doctors, engineers, police officials and so on," said Shakila.

Chhatra League's Limon said, "This school has motivated us to do more for the society and the poor section of people in particular."

Air of gloom over 100 indigenous families this Christmas

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Christmas is the biggest annual festival for about a hundred indigenous families of Khasi and Garo communities that live in Jhimai Punji of Kulaura upazila.

But this year, the event is unlikely to bring any joy to their hearts as they have been living in fear of being evicted from their dwellings since last month.

While visiting the neighbourhood, called punji, headman of the punji Rana Surong said the frightened communities started guarding their properties since November 15.

On that day, at least three members of Khasi community were hospitalised due to serious injuries sustained in an attack while transporting construction materials on a truck for an under-construction church in the punji.

People belonging to Kedarpur Tea Company launched the attack on them while the truck was entering the punji through a gate installed by the firm authorities.

Concealing the fact that both the Khasi and Garo communities had been living on 406 acres of hilly land in the area for over a hundred years, the tea garden authorities leased the area from the government, said the headman. "It's our home. It's where we belong. We don't want to lose it."

Punji resident Dorina Dhar said, "Ever since the attack, we are feeling highly insecure as the tea garden authorities might evict us any moment. We are passing each day in fear and the male members of our families have been standing guard around the punji."

This Christmas will not make any difference to them because she, like many others in the punji, already lost all her savings to cover the expenses of the legal battle over the land ownership, she added.

Father Joseph Gomes, a member of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) central unit, said without settling the claim of the Khasi and Garo communities over the land, where they had been living for over one hundred years, the government leased out 661.55 acres of land to Kedarpur Tea Company.

In addition to that, Jhimai Tea Garden, an affiliated company of Kedarpur Tea

Company, illegally occupied over 200 acres of land that is also home to many Khasis and Garos.

The tea garden authorities once tried felling 2,096 trees in and around the punji. They are still making attempts to expand their garden by clearing the woodlands.

They have been causing obstructions in the movement of the two communities by making a gate at the main entrance of the punji and sometimes they do not even allow any ambulance through the gate, he alleged.

Flora Bably Talang, general secretary of KUBORAZ (Kulaura, Juri, Barlekha and Rajnagar upazilas), an association of Khasis for development of punjis, said it would be impossible for the communities to survive without the land as many jobless Khasi family's live on betel leaf cultivation on the land.

"If necessary, we will stage mass protests against the eviction plan." She added.

Rebutting the land ownership claim of the Khasis and Garos, Jhimai Tea Garden manager Moniruzzaman said the indigenous people encroached on 371 acres of land, on which the tea garden authorities have lawful occupancy claim.

Claiming that they do not create any obstruction to the indigenous communities while passing through the gate, he said they sometimes restrict use of trucks in the punji to protect properties of the tea garden.

Meanwhile, on December 11, five non-government rights organisations, led by Bapa President Sultana Kamal, visited the area.

Sultana Kamal said about 100 indigenous families have been confined to their village as Jhimai Tea Garden authorities seek to expand the garden by illegally occupying the land that belongs to the indigenous communities.

The role of indigenous population in conserving forest, biodiversity and the environment is undeniable and a threat to their existence could easily be defined as a threat to natural forest and the wildlife, she also said.

Contacted, Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Kulaura upazila Nazratun Nayeem said, "I joined the office three months ago. I'm not fully aware of the situation."



A group of men stand guard with sticks and slingshots to protect their village, Jhimai Punji in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Indian Deputy High Commissioner Bishwadip Dey (second from left) hands over benches to the authorities of Udayan High School in Habiganj's Chunarughat. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Tea worker-run school gets help after Star report

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Udayan High School run by tea workers in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila finally got furniture, computers and materials for making toilets, thanks to the initiative of Indian High Commission.

"Our high commission decided to give support to the school following a Daily Star report headlined "Tea workers' venture to educate future generation" published on October 4," said L. Krishnamurthy, Indian assistant high commissioner in Sylhet.

Swapan Munda, headmaster of the school, said recently, Indian Deputy High Commissioner Bishwadip Dey handed over 150 sets of benches, two computers and materials for making two toilets to them.

"We are grateful to Indian High Commission for the great help," said Swapan.

In a rare example of altruism, workers of Amo Tea Garden in Chunarughat upazila are running the school with their paltry income to save their children from discrimination that they commonly face in schools outside garden area.



রসায়ন বিভাগ
ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
ঢাকা-১০০০

তারিখঃ ২৩/১২/২০১৯

স্মারক নং-১৪২৬/২০১৯

জিডি-২১১৬

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি


রসায়ন বিভাগের জন্য বৈজ্ঞানিক যন্ত্রপাতি স্থানীয় মুদ্রায় ক্রয়ের নিমিত্ত প্রকৃত সরবরাহকারী/ব্যবসায়ী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে PPR-২০০৮-এর প্রবিধান অনুযায়ী সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাইতেছে। জনতা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড, ঢাকার শাখায় চলতি হিসাব নম্বর ৩৬০০০৩৯২ তে ৩,০০০.০০ (তিন হাজার মাত্র) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য) জমার রশিদ প্রদান সাপেক্ষে দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী সম্বলিত সিডিউল আগামী ১৩-০১-২০২০ তারিখ পর্যন্ত নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তর হইতে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ের মধ্যে ক্রয় করা যাইবে। দরপত্র আগামী ১৪-০১-২০২০ তারিখ বেলা ১১.০০টা পর্যন্ত বিভাগীয় দপ্তরে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার বাক্সে জমা দেওয়া যাইবে। একই দিন বেলা ১১.৩০টার উপস্থিত দরদাতাদের সম্মুখে (যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকেন) দরপত্রসমূহ খোলা হইবে।

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ড. মোঃ আজিজুর রহমান
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রসায়ন বিভাগ, ঢাকা



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e-Tenders Notice

This is to notify all concerned that the following tender is invited in the national e-GP portal:

Sl No	Tender ID No	Name of work	Publishing Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
1	401860	Supply of Computer /Laptop Printer and Accessories	22/12/2019 11:30	07/01/2020 11:30
2	401826	Supply of Online Certificate Verification System	22/12/2019 12:00	07/01/2020 11:00

This is an online Tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-tender, registration in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Swe min zaw
Director
Department of Shipping



Anti-Corruption Commission
Dhaka, Bangladesh

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

Memo No:00.01.0000.103.60.050.19- 49726 Date: ২৭/১২/২০১৯

e-tenders are invited in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of Supplying of Monohari (Fancy) goods stationary items for ACC (Invitation Reference No: 00.01.0000.103.99.053.19-49083, Date- 19/12/2019).

Package No	Package Description	Tender ID	Type Method	Publishing Date & Time	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
e-Tender/acc/revenue/02	Supplying of Fancy goods stationary items for Acc	400624	NCT, OTM	26/12/2019 10.00	13/01/2020 17.00	14/01/2020 12.00	14/01/2020 12.00

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Mohammad Abdul Awal
Director (Finance)
Phone- 02-9360275
Email: d.finance@acc.org.bd

GD- 2118

SPORT

Mahedi stars again for Dhaka

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



All-rounder Mahedi Hasan once again shone bright with the bat alongside Tamim Iqbal to guide Dhaka Platoon to a comfortable eight-wicket win over Sylhet Thunder in the days' first encounter of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

In chase of a 175-run target, Mahedi started from where he left in the previous game against Cumilla Warriors and struck a second blistering fifty on the trot, this time with Tamim Iqbal joining him as Dhaka won with nine balls to spare.

It was Dhaka's fourth win in six games, while Sylhet crumbled to their fifth loss in six matches after notching their first win of the tournament in the previous game.

Dhaka made a steady start as openers Tamim and Anamul Haque added 58 runs before the latter departed for 32. It was then that Mahedi took on Sylhet's bowlers as he added 87 runs for the second wicket along with Tamim to set the stage for an easy win.

Mahedi played the role of the aggressor and reached his second fifty of the tournament off just 23 balls before being

dismissed for 56 off 28 balls, which featured three sixes and five fours.

At the other end, Tamim looked composed and took Dhaka home with an unbeaten 60 off 49 deliveries, which included five fours and two sixes.

In the process Tamim became the first batsman to reach 2,000 runs in the BPL, ending on 2,029 runs in 63 innings. Mushfiqur Rahim is in second place with 1,937 runs.

Sylhet used seven bowlers but surprisingly skipper Mosaddek Hossain did not introduce left-arm spinner Nazmul Islam until the 13th over of the innings. Mosaddek later said he had delayed Nazmul's introduction because the left-handed Tamim was at the wicket, despite the fact that the other bowlers proved ineffective.

Earlier, Sylhet opted to bat after winning the toss and had a shaky start that saw them lose opener Andre Fletcher for a golden duck and Abdul Mazid for just eight runs. However, the innings was stabilised with a 45-ball 73 from Johnson Charles and an unbeaten 49 by Mohammad Mithun as Sylhet posted 174 for four.

Dhaka's Pakistani legend Shahid Afridi bagged two while his countryman and fellow leg-spinner Shadab Khan and Mahedi picked up a wicket each.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SYLHET THUNDER: 174 for 4 in 20 overs (Charles 73, Mithun 49 not out; Afridi 2-26)

Dhaka Platoon: 175 for 2 in 18.3 overs (Tamim 60 not out, Mahedi 56; Ebadot 1-24)

Result: Platoon won by 8 wickets

Player-of-the-match: Mahedi Hasan

SCORES IN BRIEF

CUMILLA WARRIORS: 170 for eight in 20 overs (Malan 100 not out; Irfan 2-23)

RAJSHAH ROYALS: 171 for three in 17.5 overs (Afif 76, Bopara 41 not out; Mujeeb 1-17)

Result: Royals won by 7 wickets

Players-of-the-match: Afif Hossain and Dawid Malan



Cumilla Warriors' in-form batsman Dawid Malan hammered the second century of the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League yesterday, scoring 100 off 54 balls against Rajshahi Royals at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram. It proved to be in vain as Afif Hossain hit a 53-ball 76 to power a seven-wicket win for Rajshahi.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'BCB standing firm on Pak tour'

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury yesterday said that the board were standing firm on its stance of playing the two Tests of a scheduled Pakistan tour next month at a neutral venue, a day after Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ehsan Mani declared that there was 'absolutely no doubt' Pakistan would play all home series in the country going forward.

"We stand firm on our ground. We only want to play T20Is in Pakistan. The stakeholders related to the series do not want us to play longer-version cricket in Pakistan," Nizamuddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Actually, we have no other option here. We can play the T20Is but if we are to play Tests then it should be in a neutral venue."

Another BCB source revealed that the decision of playing Tests in Pakistan also depended on how the players find the situation when on tour for a short T20I series.

"It also depends on how the players take it. I think they need to see for themselves how it goes for a T20I series and then they need to



Actually, we have no other option here. We can play the T20Is but if we are to play Tests then it should be in a neutral venue.

NIZAMUDDIN CHOWDHURY
CEO, BCB

want to stay for a longer period. Even Sri Lanka and West Indies had toured Pakistan for T20I series first before Sri Lanka decided to play Tests," said the BCB source.

Before the recent two-Test series

between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, there has not been any Test cricket in Pakistan since a Sri Lanka team bus was attacked by terrorists in 2009 in Lahore.

The PCB Chairman Mani had also said that he would not hesitate to go to International Cricket Council (ICC) if a team refuses to travel without proper reason.

"We would absolutely have the right to dispute such a decision with the ICC. I don't want to say too much, because our discussions with the BCB are ongoing. When they formally tell us what decision they've taken, we'll see what we need to do," Mani said.

However, countering that, the BCB source also mentioned that when it comes to bilateral series discussions, the ICC actually has very little influence over the matter.

"We were a bit surprised with the BCB chairman's comments because in any bilateral series, the ICC have very little to do in terms of involvement. Since communications are ongoing with the PCB, it would be better if he would abstain from making such comments," a BCB official, seeking anonymity said.

However, the official also added that they have strong reasons not to consider the Test this time around.

Ireland to host Tigers for 3 ODIs

STAR SPORT DESK

After cancelling the scheduled one-off Test match against Bangladesh, Cricket Ireland yesterday announced the dates and venues for a three-match ODI series against Bangladesh to take place in Stormont in May next year.

Ireland will play three ODIs against Bangladesh before New Zealand visit the following month.

The three ODIs will take place in Stormont on 14, 16 and 19 May.

Ireland are also set to play four T20Is against Bangladesh in late May after the two sides' ODI series, but venues for those matches will be confirmed in January, with neutral grounds in England a possible option. On December 16, Cricket Ireland had decided against playing a Test against Bangladesh, citing financial constraints.

The Bangladesh fixture would have been just Ireland's second home Test following a defeat to Pakistan in summer 2018.



All-rounder Mahedi Hasan proved himself to be Dhaka Platoon's most valuable player in the BBPL's Chattogram leg, hitting a second consecutive fifty to help defeat Sylhet Thunder by eight wickets yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Stokes's father in hospital

REUTERS, Pretoria

England all-rounder Ben Stokes will spend Tuesday at the bedside of his father Ged, who is in a critical condition in hospital in Johannesburg.

The England and Wales Cricket Board said Ged Stokes, a former New Zealand rugby league player, had suffered a "serious illness" on Monday.

The first Test of the four-match series with South Africa starts in Centurion near Pretoria on Thursday.

Stokes, this month named BBC Sports Personality of the Year after his heroics in helping England lift the Cricket World Cup, is a vital member of the team, providing balance to the line-up as both a front-line batsman and bowler.

His potential absence from the Test would be a major blow for an England side that has battled with illness in the camp in the build-up to the series, with bowlers Jofra Archer and Stuart Broad missing both warm-up fixtures with flu.

They are in a race to be fit for the first Test, but have come through net sessions on Sunday and Monday.

NZ looking to Boult in rare Boxing Day Test

AFP, Melbourne



New Zealand are hopeful of having pace spearhead Trent Boult back to help halt a rampant Australia in the Black Caps' first Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in more than 30 years.

The veteran, suffering a side strain, was badly missed during the opening Test in Perth, when the visitors were thrashed by 296 runs in stifling conditions.

But he has been toiling in the nets and expects to be ready for a rare appearance by his country on one of the best-known dates of the cricket calendar.

"I want to really embrace it and appreciate that stage for what it is," the left-arm fast bowler told reporters of the special atmosphere that comes with a Boxing Day Test in the 100,000-capacity arena.

"This is the stage that a lot of people dream of being on so to get this opportunity in my career, it's definitely something that I'm looking forward to.

"If I can tick all the right boxes with my body and get myself fit, then I can't wait to get out there," he added.

A big crowd is expected with New Zealand fans snapping up thousands of tickets to witness the December 26 appearance by their team at one of cricket's most famous grounds.

Extra flights were reportedly scheduled between Auckland and Melbourne to cater for demand.

The last time New Zealand faced Australia in a Boxing Day Test was 1987, before many of the current squad were born, with the home side holding on for a draw despite blistering bowling from legendary quick Richard Hadlee.

What sort of wicket they find on Thursday is the great unknown.

Only a fortnight ago, play was abandoned during a domestic Sheffield Shield game at the ground due to a dangerous pitch, with erratic bounce seeing balls rise sharply and unexpectedly to pummel the batsmen.

Ground curator Matt Page has since been working to prepare a new pitch.

Australia go into the second of three Tests without bowling kingpin Josh Hazlewood who was injured in Perth. James Pattinson is set to replace him as the third quick alongside Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc, who has been lethal this summer.



PHOTO: AFP FILE

Jimmy back in the nick of time for 150th cap

REUTERS, Pretoria



James Anderson's return from injury could not be more timely for England, who are still unsure about the make-up of their bowling attack as they head into the first Test against South Africa.

But while Jofra Archer and Stuart Broad are still not sure of playing in the match, which starts on Boxing Day, after being laid low with flu, Anderson will be back on the frontline for what will be his 150th Test.

England are expected to field a five-man seam attack, foregoing spin, if all their pacemen are fully fit. However, that situation may need to be reassessed based on the availability of Ben Stokes.

The all-rounder's father was admitted to hospital in Johannesburg his condition was described as being "critical" on Tuesday in a statement from the England and Wales Cricket Board.

The 37-year-old Anderson will be the ninth cricketer to reach the 150-Yest milestone - joining the likes of Sachin Tendulkar, Steve Waugh and Jacques Kallis - when he makes his return to the England attack for the first time since limping off with a calf injury at the start of the Ashes in August.

"He's looking as good as I've ever seen him," said captain Joe Root.

Anderson had arrived in the country



PHOTO: AFP FILE

ahead of the majority of the England squad to attend a fast bowlers' camp, underlining his desire to get back into the team.

"It feels like a long time since I've played a competitive game so to get some overs ... was very pleasing," he told reporters.

"There was a bit of rust but that's to be expected having not played for four or five months. I'm just happy to be back out there."

Anderson was only 20 when he made his debut, taking five wickets against Zimbabwe at Lord's in 2003, and last month said he wanted to continue through to the next Ashes series.

PROTEAS SEEK HAPPY END



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AUSTRALIAN OPEN SET FOR BIG PAY-HIKE

Big pay rises are in store for players at January's Australian Open with organisers yesterday announcing a 13.6 percent boost in the total purse to Aus\$71 million (US\$49.1 million). The winners of the men's and women's titles at the first Grand Slam of the year will both take home Aus\$4.12 million, only a small increase from a year ago. But players beaten in earlier rounds do much better. Anyone crashing out in round one will receive Aus\$90,000, up 20 percent, while second round players get a 21.9 percent hike to Aus\$128,000. Tournament director Craig Tiley said every round would enjoy double digit percentage increases, bar the finalists. "This year, as we do every year, we worked with the tours to establish the weighting for prizemoney increases round-by-round, and we pushed to reward players competing early in the tournament in both singles and doubles," he said. "We strongly believe in growing prizemoney at all levels of the game and we will continue to work with the playing group to create viable career paths in the sport."

--AFP



Muktijoddha oust Uttar Baridhara

Mohammedan, Sheikh Russel stay in the hunt despite goalless draw

SPORTS REPORTER



Three former champions -- Mohammedan SC, Sheikh Russel KC and Muktijoddha Sangsad -- kept their Federation Cup's quarterfinal hopes alive after two rounds of matches of Group D at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

10-time champions Mohammedan played out a goalless draw against 2012 champions Sheikh Russel KC after three-time champions Muktijoddha Sangsad came from behind to beat Uttar Baridhara 2-1 in the day's first match.

Muktijoddha Sangsad are on top of the four-team table with four points, ahead on better goal-difference of Sheikh Russel, who have four points too. Mohammedan have two points from two matches while Uttar Baridhara are yet to open their account.

Mohammedan continued their pressing football from their previous match against Muktijoddha Sangsad and cornered Sheikh Russel in the first half, but the latter came out strongly to dominate in the second half.

Both of sides created a couple of goal-scoring chances, but neither could find the back of the net, thanks to some



Muktijoddha Sangsad forward Ismail Boudou blows a kiss after scoring the equaliser against Uttar Baridhara Club in their Federation Cup match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The All Reds won the match 2-1.

PHOTO: BFF

BARIDHARA (Darboe 40')	1 - 2	MUKTIJODDHA (Bangoura 45+2', Norita 73')
MOHAMMEDAN	0 - 0	SHEIKH RUSSEL

brave performances from Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Ashrafur Islam Rana his Mohammedan counterpart Sujon Hossain.

"We are not happy with a draw because a win would have taken us to the quarterfinals," Sheikh Russel's assistant coach Masud Parvez Kaiser said. "Mohammedan were the better side in the first half as they did not allow us to build the game by packing the defence and

midfield."

"Anyone could have won the match. The boys played better than the previous match as they were good in the attacking third even though we could not score a goal. I'm happy with the result and looking forward to the next match to qualify for the quarterfinals," was the impression of Mohammedan coach Sean Lane.

Mohammedan will take on Uttar Baridhara Club while Muktijoddha Sangsad will square up against Sheikh Russel on December 28 to decide the group.

Earlier, Muktijoddha Sangsad kept last-8 chances alive with a 2-1 win against Uttar

Baridhara Club, who were ousted from the group stage with two successive defeats.

Three-time champions Muktijoddha Sangsad, who came into the match on the back of a 1-1 draw against Mohammedan, faced tough challenge from promoted the start and conceded the lead in the 40th minute. with Landing Darboe coolly placing home from inside the box after Arif Hossain had brought down a cross from Noyan Mia.

However, the lead lasted only seven minutes as Guinean forward Ismail Bangoura drove a well-judged cross from substitute Sarwar Zaman Nipu into the

back of the net two minutes into stoppage time of the first half.

After resumption, Muktijoddha Sangsad pressed for the lead and Norito Hashiguchi came close to scoring. However, the Japanese midfielder, after being set up by Bangoura, hit the ball straight at goalkeeper Azad Hossain.

The Japanese player made amends by scoring a brilliant goal in the 73rd minute as he collected a through-pass from Mehdi Hasan and ran into the box before smashing a powerful low shot to the near post, giving the Baridhara goalkeeper no chance to react.

Reds face hungry Foxes

REUTERS, London



Liverpool, newly crowned Club World Cup winners, return to their main task -- fighting for their first league title in 30 years -- when they face their closest challengers Leicester City on Thursday.

The Boxing Day clash of the top-two, at Leicester's King Power stadium, headlines a full programme of festive fixtures and despite Leicester's 3-1 reverse at Manchester City on Saturday, Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp is aware of the dangers that his side face.

Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers, who was replaced by Klopp at Anfield, has built a team that has won as many games as Pep Guardiola's City, 12 out of 18. They have lost just three times and in Jamie Vardy they have the league's top scorer with 17 goals.

"We will try (to stop Vardy). He's a massive striker, an exceptional striker. One of the top three since I've been in England," Klopp said. "He's difficult to defend, always on the shoulder... playing the offside line, really dangerous. The only thing you can do is avoid the passes to him and that's what we'll try."

Jerome faces domestic violence charges

AFP, Berlin

A German court has decided that Bayern Munich's veteran defender Jerome Boateng will face charges of domestic violence, a spokesman confirmed on Monday.

The Munich court ruled that the former international can stand trial on a charge of "slight, intentional bodily injuries", court spokesman Klaus-Peter Juengst told AFP subsidiary SID.

Boateng, 31, is accused of having attacked his ex-partner, with whom he was in relationship for 10 years during which time they had two of his three children together.

Tebas reelected as La Liga boss

AGENCIES, Madrid



Javier Tebas was reelected president of La Liga on Monday with a four-year mandate, after running unopposed.

Tebas has led the Spanish football league since 2013 and resigned earlier in December to trigger new elections.

"Following the presentation of a single candidacy for the presidency ... and this being valid, Javier Tebas is definitively named president of La Liga for a period of four years, without the need to hold an extraordinary general assembly," La Liga said in a statement.

Tebas, 57, previously stood down in 2016 before being reelected unopposed.

He was the only candidate standing for the election originally scheduled for next October.

He explained earlier this month the early poll was to "give the greatest level of



stability" to the LFP with the bidding for La Liga's TV rights for 2022-25 begin "between March and June 2021 ... too close to the original election schedule".

"I don't think it's a very good idea to have dialogue with other actors with a mandate that expires in a few months," he said.

"The person who has to do it should do so with the backing of the clubs at least for four years."

Iachini named as head coach of Fiorentina

AFP, Milan

Giuseppe Iachini has been appointed coach of struggling Fiorentina, the Serie A club confirmed on Monday. Iachini, 55, replaces Vincenzo Montella who was sacked on Saturday with the team trailing in 15th place, three points above the relegation zone.

"The current ranking has forced us to change coach," said Fiorentina owner Rocco Commisso. "We chose Iachini because he is a man of substance, tied to Florence and Fiorentina. Now we have to stay united and get back on the right track as soon as possible."

He added: "I would like to thank Vincenzo Montella for the commitment and professionalism he showed during his time at the club."



A beach marathon titled 'Run Bangladesh' was held at the Kuakata sea beach yesterday. Rapid Action Battalion 12 organised the 10-kilometre run in a bid to promote an anti-drugs campaign. About 2000 students from the Patuakhali and Barguna districts participated in the event.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Russia plans to compete in Tokyo

AFP, Moscow



The Russian Olympic Committee said yesterday it expected that Russian athletes would take part in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Games under the national flag despite a four-year doping ban.

"The Russian Olympic Committee is a rightful member of the Olympic movement," its president Stanislav Pozdnyakov told reporters after a meeting.

"Therefore we have every reason to believe that we will put together a team for Tokyo and do everything in our power for this team to perform under the Russian tricolour." The World Anti-Doping Agency on December 10 banned Russia for four years from major global events, including the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, over manipulated doping data. WADA accused Moscow of falsifying data from a doping testing laboratory that was handed over to investigators earlier this year.

Russia has said it would contest the ban, with President Vladimir Putin slamming the sanctions as politically motivated.

Speaking on Tuesday, Pozdnyakov confirmed that the Russian Olympic Committee would support the decision of its supervisory board to defy the WADA ban.

Last week RUSADA anti-doping agency said it had "made a decision not to agree" with the four-year ban by the World Anti-Doping Agency's decision.

Spurs lose Son appeal

AFP, London

Tottenham Hotspur have failed with their appeal against Son Heung-min's red card, the Football Association announced yesterday.

The South Korean winger saw red in the second half of Spurs' 2-0 loss at home to Chelsea in a spiteful London derby on Sunday after VAR confirmed he had kicked out at Blues defender Antonio Rudiger after being fouled.

Tottenham launched an appeal but the FA upheld his red card, meaning Son will now serve a three-game ban ruling him out of the matches at home to Brighton on Boxing Day, and at Norwich and Southampton on Saturday and New Year's Day respectively.

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho was unhappy with Rudiger's reaction in the build-up to Son's dismissal, saying he should "stand up and play man" but Blues boss Frank Lampard defended his player's conduct on Tuesday.

Problems aplenty for bealeaguered Sylhet

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram



From the start of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL), Sylhet Thunder have been beset by problems on and off the pitch.

It was learned that there was an argument between Sylhet's team sponsors and team director Tanjil Chowdhury, who was appointed by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), over irrelevant player selection during the players' draft.

Then Sylhet's West Indian pacer Krishnar Santokie bowled a huge no-ball against Chattogram Challengers in the opening game, raising concerns about whether there was something underhanded going on.

Tanjil was even quoted in the media as saying that he was not happy after the sponsors roped in Santokie, but later clarified in a social media post that there were no such issues. Exacerbating matters is that Sylhet have lost five and won just one game against Khulna Tigers, that too courtesy of Andre Fletcher's century -- the first of the edition.

Sylhet have national players like Mosaddek Hossain, Mohammad Mithun and Ebadot Hossain, but have so far banked on West Indian recruits like Fletcher and

Johnson Charles. According to Mithun, a lack of opportunities is one of the reasons that locals are yet to perform significantly.

Mithun, who scored an unbeaten 49 against Dhaka Platoon yesterday, hinted at the dissatisfaction and distance between players and team management.

"Look, it's the team management's decision," said Mithun. "The foreign batsmen you mentioned, two of them bat at number two and three. T20 is a short game and you need to have enough opportunity to perform. If I get more overs to bat, naturally the chances are higher for me to score."

Meanwhile, Dhaka's Mahedi Hasan has been a revelation with the bat after being promoted to bat at number three as the right-hander cashed in by smashing consecutive fifties.

"Look, Dhaka's locals are scoring runs. Why? Because those who are batting up the order in their team are all locals. And it's not that our team does not have good batsmen. Obviously, if they get enough chances to bat higher they will also do well," Mithun said.

With the tournament approaching the business end, it will be interesting to see whether Sylhet will be able to make a turnaround, but with the way things are going, it seems unlikely.



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2.94 lakh SIMs to be blocked

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The government is set to block a few lakh mobile connections that are currently being used in Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar as it ramps up its efforts to crack down on criminal activities by a section of the refugee population.

According to the SIM registration process, Rohingyas cannot get mobile connection, for which a national ID card or passport is needed.

The refugees have neither, and yet as many as 2.94 lakh of the total of 11 lakh of them have managed local SIMs, according to tests by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission between November 19 and 21 in the camps in Ukhaia and Teknaf upazilas.

"Our intelligence agencies have noticed that using these mobile connections some Rohingyas are engaging in lots of criminal activities," Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar told The Daily Star on Monday evening.

Earlier in September, the telecom watchdog blocked 3G and 4G services in the camp areas with the view to checking the use of mobile communication applications like WhatsApp, Viber and WeChat by the Rohingyas.

Some of the Rohingyas used the apps to contact people in Myanmar and organise crimes on both sides of the border, said a BTRC official. Later, all services, except voice calls, were blocked in the area to tighten the situation.

Those were preceded by a blanket ban on SIM card sales in the area. A mobile court put five Rohingyas behind bars for setting up shops in Cox's Bazar and selling mobile phones and SIM cards to refugees.

And yet, it appears none of the steps were fully effective in checking the Rohingyas from using mobile services.

The tests conducted by the BTRC technical team, which is comprised of representatives of all mobile operators, last month also found 3G and 4G reception of Banglalink and Teletalk.

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Diggers of BIWTA demolish illegal structures on the Turag in Dhour area of Ashulia on the outskirts of the capital yesterday during an eviction drive. Inset, large drainage pipes, which were being built and sold there, being destroyed.

PHOTO:
PALASH KHAN



On this day in 1971

DECEMBER 25
Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad urges the states of the world to acknowledge Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign state.

"Bangladesh wants to keep a peaceful diplomatic relation with every state," he says in a press conference at Bangabhaban. He assures of making a constitution for Bangladesh and promises that it would reflect the aspiration of Bangladeshis. He says that the prime duty would be reconstructing the economy of the war-torn country and to rehabilitate the Bangladeshi refugees in India. About the disarmament of MuktiBahini, the premier says that

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Raushan may get special post JP chairperson behind move; HC questions legality of party chief appointment

RASHIDUL HASAN

The Jatiya Party may introduce a special post for Raushan Ershad, its senior co-chairperson and opposition leader, at the upcoming council to pacify a section of party leaders who want to see her as the chairperson, party insiders said.

Raushan is likely to be made "chief patron" of the party at its next council scheduled for December 28, the insiders added.

GM Quader, the party chairman, and top leaders loyal to him are apparently behind the move, said a party source.

The JP will have to amend its charter at the council to create the new post, SM Faysal Chisty, a presidium member, told The Daily Star.

The move comes against the backdrop of a High Court ruling yesterday, which questioned the legality of Quader being appointed the party chairperson without holding any council.

The court issued a rule asking Quader and the Election Commission to explain in four weeks why his appointment should not be declared illegal, Deputy Attorney

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This much we owe to our progeny

SC says; directs govt to cancel land leases in ecologically critical Jhilanja area of Cox's Bazar, compensate leaseholders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Stressing the need for formulating a policy to preserve ecological balance and protect natural resources, the Supreme Court has directed the government to cancel leases of plots in Jhilanja Mouza, an "ecologically critical area (ECA)", in Cox's Bazar and to demolish the structures constructed in the area.

In the full text of a verdict released recently, the apex court also ordered the authorities concerned not to grant any further lease within Jhilanja Mouza or any area which has been classified as an ECA.

The SC, however, asked them to compensate the leaseholders for cancelling their leases and knocking down the structures.

"We, therefore, direct that all leases within Jhilanja Mouza granted after April 19, 1999, be cancelled in the same way as those of the writ petitioners, and any constructions made thereon be demolished. Of course, the leaseholders shall be compensated for their loss due to such cancellation/demolition. We further direct that henceforth no lease shall be granted within Jhilanja Mouza or any area which has been classified as an ecologically critical area," the top court said in the full judgment.

A seven-member bench of the SC's Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain had delivered a short verdict on December 9 last year after dismissing five separate review petitions and a leave to appeal one filed by some leaseholders against its 2015 verdict.

In its 2015 verdict, the SC upheld a High Court judgement that on July 22, 2010, had declared valid a government decision to cancel lease of 55 plots in the mouza.

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INDUSTRIAL LOANS

BB okays single-digit interest rate

Bangladesh Bank decides to cap the interest rate, a move that would be a boon for manufacturers as their cost of funds would go down. The decision, which aims at making businesses vibrant, comes at a board meeting of the central bank at the Bangladesh Bank headquarters in the capital.

Businesspeople welcomed the central bank's initiative, saying the measure will give a shot in the arm of the industrial sector, giving them respite from the burden of higher interest rates.

But bankers and experts expressed their concern and said it would have a negative impact on the banking sector as lenders will shy away from disbursing loans to the industrial sector due to the lower interest rate.

STORY ON B1

Putin drives first train across Crimea bridge



AFP, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin on Monday stood in the driver's cabin of a train for the official opening of a railway bridge that links annexed Crimea to southern Russia, with the launch drawing sharp criticism from Ukraine and the EU.

During his ride from Kerch in Crimea in a shortened three-carriage train, Putin also spent time drinking tea with engineers on the 227-billion-ruble (\$3.6-billion) project.

The rail bridge, which Putin praised as "magnificent," is 19 kilometres (12 miles) long. The bridge for car traffic opened in May last year when the president drove a truck across it.

The total rail route from the northwestern city

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Two killed in 'gunfights'

STAR REPORT

Two suspected criminals were killed in "gunfights" with members of Rapid Action Battalion in Cox's Bazar and Pabna early yesterday.

The dead are suspected drug peddler Rubel, 22, of Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar, and suspected robber Amin Sheikh, 40, of Pabna Sadar upazila, said Rab.

Mirza Shahed Mahtab, company commander of Rab-15 in Teknaf, and Aminul Kabir Tarafder, commanding officer of Rab-12 in Pabna, talked to journalists after the "gunfights".

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 25

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
5:25	12:45	3:45	5:24	7:00
JAMAAT	6:00	1:15	4:00	5:27
7:30				

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A man covers a child's nose as they go past large dumpsters with burning trash in the capital's Malibagh Chowdhurypara yesterday. The open dumpsters are not only polluting the environment, but also occupying a lane of the street.

PHOTO:
SK ENAMUL HAQ

India okays funds for NPR

Anti-CAA protests continue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi


Unfazed by continued protests against citizenship law and NRC, the Indian government yesterday decided to carry out a new census and update the National Population Register (NPR) across the country next year.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of federal cabinet which approved over Rs 8,500 crore fund for updating the NPR, officials said.

"There is no link between NPR and NRC. The NPR has nothing to do with NRC," Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar told a press conference after the meeting.

For NPR, "it will not be

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শেখ হাসিনার মূলমন্ত্র

যত্রতত্র ময়লা-আবর্জনা ফেলা হতে বিরত থাকুন
আপনার শহরকে পরিচ্ছন্ন রাখুন

গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা সম্মানিত নগরবাসীর অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে, কিছু ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠান যেখানে-সেখানে ময়লা-আবর্জনা ফেলে ঢাকা শহরের সৌন্দর্য বিনষ্ট করছে, যা মোটেও কাম্য নয়। ঢাকা শহরের কোনো রাস্তায় অথবা কর্পোরেশন কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত নয় এমন কোনো স্থানে ময়লা-আবর্জনা ফেলা স্থানীয় সরকার (সিটি কর্পোরেশন) আইন, ২০০৯ অনুযায়ী শাস্তিযোগ্য অপরাধ। নগরীর সুন্দর ও পরিচ্ছন্ন পরিবেশ বজায় রাখার জন্য যত্রতত্র ময়লা-আবর্জনা ফেলা বিশেষ করে পরিচ্ছন্নতা কাজ সম্পন্ন হওয়ার পর সকাল বেলা কেউ ময়লা ফেললে তার বিরুদ্ধে কঠোর আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

এ অবস্থায়, ঢাকা উত্তর সিটি কর্পোরেশনকে একটি সুন্দর ও পরিচ্ছন্ন শহর হিসেবে গড়ে তোলার জন্য নির্ধারিত স্থান, কন্টেইনার বক্স বা ডাস্টবিনে ময়লা-আবর্জনা ফেলার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

মেয়র
জিডি-২১১৪
ঢাকা উত্তর সিটি কর্পোরেশন