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9 ministers dropped from AL committee

Cabinet reshuffle likely soon

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Nine ministers have been dropped from the central working committee of the ruling Awami League as it continues efforts to separate itself from the government.

Yesterday, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader announced the names of the leaders who were elected to the party's highest decision-making body.

Seven posts on the 81-member committee still remain vacant. They are an organising secretary, religious affairs secretary, industries and commerce secretary, treasurer and three executive members.

On December 21, the second day of AL's 21st triannual council, the party elected 42 office-bearers of the central working committee.

At the council, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was re-elected as the party president for the ninth consecutive time. Besides, Quader was elected general secretary for a second straight term. The two were elected unopposed.

After holding a meeting with AL chief Hasina, Quader yesterday announced the names of the new leaders at a press conference at the party president's Dhanmondi office in the capital.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



A rare solar eclipse as seen from the capital's Farmgate area at 10:56am yesterday. People in many places of Asia witnessed an annular solar eclipse, which is also known as a "ring of fire", yesterday. In an annular eclipse, the moon covers the centre of the Sun, giving it the appearance of a bright ring.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

MAYOR CANDIDATES IN DCC POLLS

AL may opt for a new face in south

Party in dilemma over north

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The ruling Awami League is likely to pick a new face as its candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation mayoral polls, but it appears to be in a dilemma about choosing its mayor aspirant for Dhaka North City Corporation.

Fazle Noor Taposh, party lawmaker from Dhaka-10, is being considered to be a frontrunner for the AL ticket in the DSCC mayor election.

For the DNCC mayor polls, the AL may name either incumbent Mayor M Atiqul Islam or its presidium member Jahangir Kabir Nanak as its candidate, said party sources.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BNP to bank on young candidates

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Keeping in mind the party's future leadership, the BNP wants to bank on young faces for the Dhaka north and south city elections scheduled to be held on January 30.

BNP leaders have been saying for a long time that young leadership will emerge and take the party's helm.

Party leaders, however, are sceptical

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Nur, his men now sued for murder attempt

DU CORRESPONDENT

Ducusu VP Nurul Haque Nur and 28 other activists of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad have now been accused in an attempted murder case.

DM Sabbir Hossain, former vice president of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall unit Chhatra League, filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station yesterday. Some 15 to 20 unidentified people were also accused in the case, said police.

The development comes four days after Nur and his supporters came under attack from a faction of Muktiyuddho Moncho, mostly comprised of Chhatra League men, at his office at Ducusu building of Dhaka University.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

FLAWED RAZAKARS' LIST Foolish to publish it without verification

Says Liberation War affairs minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque yesterday said it was foolish of his ministry to publish the Razakars' list without verification.

"We have acted like fools when we took the Razakars' list from the home ministry and published it without cross-checking. I have apologised for this mistake. But that doesn't mean that the list won't be published. The Razakars' list will surely be made," he said in Naogaon, reports Prothom Alo.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

"They that love beyond the world cannot be separated."

You are always with us, your memories lighting up our hearts today and always.

Aaron H. Chowdhury (Danny)
29th June 1981 - 27th December 2002

Anita Chowdhury (Dida), Bula & Tapan Chowdhury (Parents), Anika Chowdhury (Sister) and all loving members of the family

CITIZENSHIP LAW, NRC

Fresh protests rock India after RSS rally

AFP, New Delhi

Indians took to the streets again yesterday in yet more protests against a citizenship law, a day after pro-government Hindu hardliners staged a show of force complete with horses, drums and batons.

Two weeks of at times violent demonstrations have killed at least 27 people as anti-government protesters have vented their anger nationwide in the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi since he stormed to power in 2014.

Modi denies accusations that the law, which eases naturalisation procedures for non-Muslim minorities from three nations, is part of a master plan to reshape India as a purely Hindu nation.

But coupled with plans for a national register of citizens, it has stoked fears at home and abroad, including in Washington and at the UN rights office, about the marginalisation of India's 200 million Muslims.

On Wednesday several thousand baton-wielding volunteers from a Hindu hardline group -- of which Modi is a lifelong member -- held a rally in the southern city of Hyderabad, in a show of support for the government.

Members of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a militaristic group that has long espoused "Hindutva" or Hindu hegemony, marched through the streets beating drums and blowing horns.

The parade, organised before the protests began, saw volunteers ride horses, sing songs, and perform group exercises using lathis -- bamboo batons deployed by Indian riot police.

The protests against the citizenship law meanwhile show no signs of going away, although in recent days numbers have been smaller.

Around 2,500 people rallied against the government in the financial capital Mumbai on Thursday, police told AFP, with demonstrators waving flags and carrying banners calling for a boycott of the citizenship law.

Protesters also took to the streets in the eastern city of Kolkata while hundreds of Muslim women demonstrated in the southern state of Karnataka where two people were shot dead by police in protests last week.

While many of the protests have been peaceful, demonstrations have sometimes turned violent with police also accused of a disproportionate response.

In India's most populous state Uttar Pradesh -- where 19 people have been killed -- the authorities have arrested thousands and sought damages from more than 100 people accused of rioting and destroying public property.

Around 130 people have been ordered to pay nearly 5 million rupees (\$70,000) within a week, with officials warning that their properties will be confiscated and auctioned to recover the amount if necessary.

Authorities were bracing for further protests today in Uttar Pradesh, home to a large Islamic minority, and in parts of New Delhi following Muslim prayers.

Mobile internet, which was cut across large parts of Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere last week, has been restored, although the cities of Agra -- home to the Taj Mahal -- and Bulandshahr remain offline.

AL may opt for a new face

FROM PAGE 1

On December 22, the Election Commission announced that the DNCC and the DSCC elections would be held on January 30. December 31 is the last date for submitting nomination papers, while January 9 is the deadline for the withdrawal of candidacy. The EC will scrutinise nomination papers on January 2.

AL insiders said the party's top leaders think current DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokon could not bring positive changes in areas under the city corporation's jurisdiction. He also could not act properly to prevent and tackle the dengue outbreak earlier this year.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, the mayor's protocol officer Habibul Islam Sumon, however, claimed AL chief Sheikh Hasina told Khokon to start election-related activities. He said Khokon met Hasina at the Gono Bhaban around 8:30pm.

The AL's top leadership, however, was not blaming incumbent DNCC Mayor Atiql for not properly tackling the dengue situation as he was new to the post when the outbreak hit the city, said party sources.

Atiql was elected mayor in a by-election in February.

Talking about Taposh, a top AL leader, wishing not to be named, said, "There are strong possibilities that the party high-ups would nominate him as the DSCC mayor candidate."

According to AL insiders, Taposh bought nomination form with the consent of party chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

They said Taposh may get the party ticket for the mayor polls and if he contests the election, he will have to resign as Dhaka-10 MP.

If Taposh steps down, his brother Prof Sheikh Fazle Shams Parash, the newly-elected Jubo League chairman, would seek AL nomination to become lawmaker from the constituency, the sources said.

Taposh and Parash are two sons of Jubo League's founding chairman Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni. Moni and his pregnant wife Arzoo Moni were assassinated along with the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members on August 15, 1975.

Amid speculations over who would get the AL nomination for the DSCC mayor polls, Khokon yesterday collected his nomination form from

the party chief's Dhanmondi office in the capital.

While talking to reporters outside the office, Khokon, son of late AL leader and former mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mohammad Hanif, broke down in tears and said "I joined politics holding the hand of my father. In his absence, Sheikh Hasina is my guardian. She will do whatever she thinks is better."

Taposh and Haji Mohammad Selim, MP from Dhaka-7, bought nomination forms for the DSCC mayor election on Wednesday, the first day of the sale of the forms.

Atiql Islam bought his the same day.

AL Office Secretary Biplab Barua said 17 leaders collected nomination forms for contesting polls for the mayoral posts in the two city corporations. The number of ward councillor aspirants was 700 till yesterday.

Party insiders said Nanak has expressed his desire to run for the DNCC mayor. A former lawmaker from Dhaka-13, Nanak was not given party ticket from the parliamentary seat in the last general election on December 30 last year.

"Nanak's desire has created a dilemma for the party about its mayor candidate," an AL leader said.

Nanak, however, was yet to collect his nomination form.

The party would conclude the sale of nomination forms today and finalise its candidates tomorrow.

AL-backed Sayeed Khokon and Annisul Huq won the previous mayoral polls to the DSCC and DNCC, held on April 28, 2015.

The party nominated businessperson Atiql Islam for a mayoral by-polls held in February this year after the post fell vacant with the death of Annisul Huq on November 30, 2017.

Except the ones in Sylhet and Cumilla, the ruling party candidates won all the mayoral elections in 10 city corporations out of the 12.

The party conducted several surveys on its possible candidates and the survey reports were with Hasina, according to the party's General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

Candidates with acceptance among party's rank and file would get nominations, he said yesterday while talking to reporters in Narayanganj.

Quader, also minister for Road Transport and Bridges, said the party would not nominate anyone controversial.



Wrapped up in plastic sacks and whatever else they could find, day labourers sleep on a pavement in the capital's Karwan Bazar last night. The cold wave has hit hard the poor, especially the homeless, across the country.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

9 ministers dropped from AL committee

FROM PAGE 1

MINISTERS LEFT OUT

Seven ministers of the Hasina-led 47-member cabinet have been dropped from the central executive committee. They are Housing and Public Works Minister SM Rezaul Karim, former legal affairs secretary of AL; Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, former finance secretary; State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Deputy Minister for Water Resources AKM Enamul Haque Shamim and Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury -- former organising secretaries; State Minister for Religious Affairs Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, former religious affairs secretary; and State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Fazilatun Nessa Indira, former women affairs secretary.

Besides, Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun and State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Monnujan Sufian, both

executive members of the previous AL central working committee (ALCWC), were also left out of the new committee.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Quader, Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque, Education Minister Dipu Moni and Information Minister Hasan Mahmud were elected to the new AL central committee during the party council.

Apart from the ministers, Rajshahi city Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton and the Gazipur Zilla Parishad chairman, both members of the previous ALCWC, were not included in the new committee.

Speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a central AL leader yesterday said party high-ups had long been hoping to separate the organisation from the government to make the party stronger.

"Some efforts have already been made in this regard. Further actions would be visible as the cabinet is likely

to be reshuffled in the first week of next month," he said.

Among the leaders declared elected yesterday, 13 secured posts in the party's highest decision-making committee for the first time.

They are Shafiqul Alam Chowdhury from Sylhet (organising secretary), reserved seat MP Waseqa Ayesha Khan (finance secretary), Saem Khan (deputy office secretary); and Mostofa Jalal Mohiuddin, AKM Jahangir, Akter Jahan, Dr Musfique, Hosney Ara Lutfia Dalia, Safura Khatun, Sanjida Khanam, Anisur Rahman, Shahabuddin Farazi and Gloria Jharna Sarkar (members).

Afzal Hossain, information and research secretary of the immediate past ALCWC, was promoted to organising secretary while Habibur Rahman Siraj and Aminul Islam Amin were retained in their posts of labour and manpower affairs secretary and deputy publicity affairs secretary for a second straight term.

BNP to bank on young

FROM PAGE 1

about the voting atmosphere and allege that free and fair election is not possible under the Awami League government.

The party has been participating in different elections as part of its strategy to expose how far the situation is from what can be called free and fair, BNP leaders said.

The BNP also wants to prove that the electronic voting machines (EVM) are "faulty".

The party has already given the go-ahead to Tabitha Awal to run for Dhaka north and Ishraq Hossain for Dhaka south city corporations.

Top leaders said the candidates are young, well-educated, energetic, and have clean image that would attract young voters.

"We are focusing on the candidates who are acceptable to all and loyal to the party," BNP standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday.

Tabitha and Ishraq will be officially endorsed soon, a senior leader said.

"The party has been talking about changes in leadership for a long time. These two nominations will be the beginning of it," he said.

The BNP started selling nomination forms yesterday and will continue until this evening. It would make the official endorsement after interviewing the hopefuls tomorrow.

Tabitha and Ishraq collected the forms from the party's Nayapaltan headquarters yesterday.

"The party has decided to participate in the election as part of our greater struggle of restoring democracy in the country and to release BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail. If the party nominates me, I will try to reach out to the people and send our message to them," said Ishraq,

who has a post-graduate degree from University of Hertfordshire.

Son of former mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Ishraq was born in 1987. If nominated, this would be his first time running for mayor.

On the other hand, Tabitha, son of BNP leader Abdul Awal Mintoo, ran for mayor the last time but the BNP boycotted the election halfway through the polling day, making allegations of widespread vote rigging and ballot stuffing. Born in 1979, he has a post graduate degree from George Washington University.

"There are two reasons [for me to run]. The moral cause for participating in the election is to make the city liveable. And secondly, from a political perspective, it is an opportunity to unite the people of the city for the greater cause of ensuring people's rights and restoring democracy," Tabitha said.

After it boycotted the January 5, 2014 general election, the BNP participated in Dhaka city polls in 2015.

The BNP joined the general election in December last year but rejected the results, alleging vote rigging. The party shunned the by-election at Dhaka North City Corporation in March this year.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir has already expressed doubts over fair polls, saying free and fair election was not possible under this government.

Fakhru also alleged that the use of EVMs would not help reflect the mandate of the electorate.

With the Awami League in power, it is impossible for the current election commission to hold a free and fair election, he said. "Despite this, we are contesting in the elections because we believe in democracy."

Foolish to publish

FROM PAGE 1

The minister was addressing a discussion at an auditorium in the town as he inaugurated Muktijoddha Complexes in 11 upazilas of Naogaon.

"The list taken from the home ministry won't be published again. After an intense investigation, the upazila-based list of Razakars will be published. We have made a mistake. We have also retracted [the list]. There will be no mistake this time," said the minister.

The government on December 15 published what it said was a list of 10,789 Razakars, Al-Badr, Al-Shams and anti-liberation individuals who collaborated with the Pakistan army in 1971.

The list caused widespread outrage as it contained the names of many freedom fighters.

Amid angry protests, the Liberation War ministry on December 18 retracted the list.

The minister yesterday announced that a list of freedom fighters will be published in January next year.

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder also spoke at the event.

Australian, French academics held in Iran go on hunger strike

AFP, Paris

Two French and Australian academics held in Iran over espionage charges have gone on an indefinite hunger strike as of Christmas Eve, France's Sciences Po University confirmed.

"The Ceri confirms the hunger strike started by Fariba Adelkhah and her cellmate Kylie Moore-Gilbert," the Centre for International Studies and Research at Sciences Po University said in a Wednesday tweet.

"On this Christmas day, our solidarity and thoughts of hope go to Fariba, Roland and all the other prisoners in arbitrary detention. #FreeFariba #FreeRoland," it added.

A specialist in Shia Islam and a research director at the university, Adelkhah's arrest over "espionage" was confirmed by Iran in July.

Melbourne University Academic Kylie Moore-Gilbert's detention was confirmed in September as charged with "spying for another country", but her family said at the time that she had been detained for months before that.

In an open letter, the two women said they were subjected to "psychological torture" and called for international solidarity in the name of "academic freedom".

Nur, his men

FROM PAGE 1

Nur, along with at least 26 of his supporters, was injured in the December 22 attack. Eight of them are still undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Talking to The Daily Star, SM Shamim, assistant commissioner (Ramna zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said Sabbir lodged a complaint with the police station on Wednesday night and it was turned into a lawsuit.

According to the case statement, Nur and his 20-25 followers attacked BCL men in front of Ducsu building with sharp weapons and sticks in an attempt to kill them.

Nur, Tuhin Farabi, APM Suhel, Arifur Rahman, Mehedi Hasan, Faruk Hasan, Aminul Islam, now undergoing treatment at the DMCH, were named in the case.

The plaintiff alleged that he, along with eight others, were injured in the attack. He also accused the attackers of stealing cellphones, wallets, and wristwatches.

Speaking to this correspondent yesterday, Nur said the case was filed to harass them and it could not have been done without the government's instigation.

On Wednesday, the Ducsu vice president had filed another attempted murder case, accusing the DU BCL president, general secretary and 35 others over the attack.

He also accused the attackers of snatching mobile phones and money.

Talking to this newspaper on that day, Shahbagh OC Abul Hasan said the case filed by Nur would be merged with the one lodged by police on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the DU authorities yesterday urged the witnesses and students to submit information with documents on the December 22 incident.

"Those who witnessed the incident and are interested in providing information have been asked to submit information, along with valid documents, available with them to the office of the dean of the Arts Faculty and probe body convenor Prof Abu Md Delwar Hossain," said a press release.

The witnesses and students will have to submit their written statements along with their names, phone numbers and addresses before 2:00pm today.

The names of the information providers would be kept secret for the sake of the investigation, the press release added.

In another development, a Supreme Court lawyer yesterday sent a legal notice to the government and the DU authorities, requesting them to provide adequate security for Ducsu Vice President Nur in seven days.

Advocate Md Moniruzzaman served the legal notice to the home secretary, DU vice chancellor and proctor.

Mexico calls meeting to protest Bolivian 'harassment'

REUTERS, Mexico City

Mexico's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday requested a meeting with Bolivia's charge d'affaires to protest the "harassment and intimidation" of its diplomatic personnel in the Bolivian city La Paz.

Since Monday, Mexico has accused Bolivia of ramping up police presence outside its embassy and intimidating diplomats.

The spat follows a chill in relations after Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador last month gave political asylum to former Bolivian president Evo Morales, a fellow leftist.

Mexico's Foreign Ministry said it called a meeting for yesterday so that the Bolivian charge d'affaires can "explain the behavior of Bolivian authorities," the ministry said in a statement.



Sayeed Khokon, left, after he bought DSCC mayor polls nomination form yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Tabitha Awal, left, collects the BNP's nomination form at the party's Nayapaltan headquarters to run for DNCC mayor.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Dhaka woke up to another chilly winter morning yesterday. This photo was taken at Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Lower court to get 200 new assistant judges

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The government has taken an initiative to appoint 100 assistant judges to lower courts, in addition to another 100 whose appointments are now under process.

After the appointments of the 200 new assistant judges, the rate of case disposal by lower courts will improve, and the huge backlog of pending cases -- and the sufferings it brings to litigants -- will ease, Supreme Court Spokesman Md Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star.

He said there are now a total of 1,822 judges discharging duties at the lower courts across the country, and they are burdened with around 31 lakh cases.

The law ministry -- through a requisition letter -- recently asked Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission (BJSC) authorities to select qualified candidates for the appointment of 100 assistant judges, through holding necessary examinations, BJSC sources told this correspondent.

When this correspondent tried to

contact secretary to the BJSC Syed Zahed Mansur over this issue on December 23, one of his staffers said the secretary was not interested to talk to the media.

Meanwhile, the judicial service commission is now holding written tests of 1,473 candidates -- who have qualified in the preliminary test -- for 100 posts of the assistant judges as per the previous requisition from the government.

The written test will be finished on December 29. After the result is published, viva voce and medical tests of the qualified candidates will be held.

After selecting the qualified candidates, the commission will recommend the government to appoint them to the post of assistant judges.

Then the government will conduct police verification of selected candidates, after which the president will give appointments to the final qualified candidates, BJSC sources said.

The sources, however, could not

say specifically how much time will be required to complete these processes.

BJSC will decide when to start examinations for selecting qualified candidates for the posts of the new 100 assistant judges, after completion of oral and medical tests of candidates who would qualify in the ongoing written test, according to sources.

Sources said judicial officials are appointed only at the entry level to the post of assistant judges, while the other tiers of lower court judges are filled through promotions.

A total of 1,742 candidates have been qualified so far in the BJSC tests since its formation in 2007.

Previously, executive magistrates who qualified in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BSC) examinations had discharged the judicial functions.

These executive magistrates were absorbed into administrative posts after the separation of magistracy through the separation of judiciary from the executive on November 1, 2007, sources added.

Oikyafront announces

FROM PAGE 3

Earlier, Jatiya Oikyafront -- led by Dr Kamal Hossain -- held an emergency meeting at his office to work out the alliance's programmes to mark the anniversary of the December 30 national polls.

The rally will be held in front of the National Press Club around 2pm on the

day, Rob said.

Responding to a query, Oikyafront leader Mahmudur Rahman Manna cautioned, "We will go for more programmes if the rally on Monday faces any opposition."

Addressing the press conference, Dr Kamal said they would strengthen their unity to ensure people's voting rights and to make the country's elections meaningful.

Increase profit margin

FROM PAGE 5

the success, farmers are deprived of benefits reaped through growth," said Biswas.

He urged the government to stop neglecting farmers and to build a strong stockpiling system at the union level.

He also recommended that the government introduce crop insurance and

monitoring system to stop harassment of farmers when taking loans.

In his proposal, Biswas said the government should initiate coordinated programmes to encourage youths to get involved in agriculture.

Among others, former lawmaker Chhabi Biswas also spoke.

City polls coinciding

FROM PAGE 5

the goddess of learning, to mark the advent of spring.

Traditionally, children are introduced to lessons on Saraswati Puja. This ritual is called "haatekhor". Toddlers are usually given a slate and chalk to scribble with.

This year, the Hindu community will observe Saraswati Puja across the country on January 30 amid much enthusiasm and

festivity.

"Hindu voters as well as those assigned in duties at the polling centres will be deprived of the celebration," the press release said, adding that the celebration arrangement will also be hampered in schools and colleges as those would be used as polling centres.

Considering the situation, they demanded rescheduling of the election date.

Dhaka, Beijing discuss ways

FROM PAGE 3

repatriation, Myanmar has been spreading propaganda and falsehood claiming that Bangladesh is "unwilling" to cooperate, said an official in Dhaka, wishing to remain unnamed.

Bangladesh, China and Myanmar are in discussion to encourage the commencement of the Rohingya repatriation process. One is the establishment of a tripartite joint working mechanism, directly led by the ambassadors of China and Myanmar to Bangladesh and DG of Myanmar Wing of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh. The joint working mechanism is aimed at delving into technical and operational difficulties in the repatriation process through "candid and frequent" discussions, said the Chinese embassy in Dhaka.

It said a common ground has been successfully identified during the first meeting of the joint working mechanism.

Bangladesh has been hosting over 1.1 million Rohingyas, most of whom entered Cox's Bazar since August 25, 2017 amid military crackdown on Rohingyas in Rakhine State.

Not a single Rohingya was repatriated over the last two years due to Myanmar's "failure" to build confidence among Rohingyas and lack of a conducive environment in Rakhine State, officials in Dhaka said.

Bangladesh has so far handed over names of over 1 lakh Rohingyas to Myanmar authorities for verification and subsequently is expediting their repatriation efforts, but Myanmar is yet to take back its nationals from Bangladesh, according to the foreign ministry.

The 3,450 Rohingyas who have been verified by Bangladesh and Myanmar, Hindu Rohingyas and those living along the "zero-line" are prioritised groups for early repatriation, the Chinese embassy said.

'Winter BBQ Carnival' at The Raintree Dhaka



CITY DESK

This winter, The Raintree Dhaka brings a range of barbecue items for everyone to enjoy under their recently launched "Winter BBQ Carnival" offer, says a press release.

Guests will be able to avail the all-you-can-eat offer from Thursday to Saturday. The Raintree is located at Plot 9, Road 27, Block K, Banani.

Further information can be availed by calling 029859104.

EC Mahbub's

FROM PAGE 3

list with photographs. In line with that, the list was updated and many reforms were made in the election process," he said.

Hasan Mahmud said the reform in the election procedure is an ongoing process. "The reform can take place at any moment as per the need of time. Once people used to vote by raising their hands. Later, ballot papers were introduced. Now people are casting votes through electronic voting machines (EVMs)," he added.

Replying to a query, he said, "I don't think his [Talukdar] comments could hamper normalcy at the Election Commission. But I think he had tried to draw attention by making such comments at different times."

Welcoming BNP's decision to participate in the two Dhaka city corporation polls, the minister said all the city corporation elections were held neutrally and transparently under the AL government.

He said many BNP candidates were elected in city corporation polls, defeating [candidates of] AL and other parties. "It was only possible as the Election Commission is performing their duties neutrally and freely," he added.

The minister said BNP's allegations are nothing new. "They make such allegations before all elections. But I firmly believe that the two city corporation polls will be held in a free, fair and peaceful manner," said Hasan Mahmud, the newly-elected joint general secretary of AL.

Replying to a query about the programmes of Jatiya Oikyafront, he said the alliance took part in the last general election and some of their candidates were elected. "The lawmakers also took oath and joined the parliament. They are enjoying all facilities as lawmakers. I think they are deceiving themselves by raising questions about the election," he said.

The December 30 election strengthened democracy in the country, he added.

Speakers for taking initiatives to foster blue economy

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a seminar have emphasised national and international initiatives and cooperation of development partners to foster the blue economy plan of Bangladesh.

The seminar on "Coastal communities in fostering the sectors of blue economy in the south-western region of Bangladesh" was held at Khulna Naval Base on Tuesday.

Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Development (BIMRAD) arranged the seminar where livelihood of the coastal communities, economic dimensions of the coastal region, ecosystem of the Sundarbans and prospects of Sundarbans-centric tourism and initiatives to foster the blue economy plan of Bangladesh were discussed.

During the daylong event, three professors of Khulna University -- Dr Selina Ahmed of Sociology discipline, Dr Md Wasiul Islam and Dr Nazmus Sadath of Forestry and Wood Technology discipline -- and executive director of "An Organization for Socio Economic Development" (AOSED) participated as keynote speakers.

Stakeholders of different sectors of blue economy, officers of Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard, academicians

and maritime scholars, representatives of government and private organisations, business community, coastal and forest communities, entrepreneurs, journalists as well as students participated in the seminar.

The participants gathered information concerning coastal livelihood, constraints and prospects of economic activities in the region from the keynote speeches and discussion sessions among the participants.

Two different sessions were conducted during the seminar to exchange views and learn about the challenges of the coastal community from journalists and concerned stakeholders in the south-western region of Bangladesh.

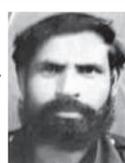
In the afternoon session of the seminar, former Chief of the Naval Staff, Bangladesh Navy and Chairman of BIMRAD Admiral Nizamuddin Ahmed (ret'd) gave a vote of thanks to the chief guest, keynote speakers, naval officers and distinguished guests for their participation.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between Khulna University and BIMRAD at the end of the seminar to establish cooperation, conduct research and capacity building activities for the development of blue economy initiatives and Delta Plan 2100 of Bangladesh.

Death anniversary of Habibur Rahman Bir Bikram today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Today is the 21st death anniversary of Habibur Rahman Bir Bikram, alias



Jahajmara Habib.

Freedom fighters of Kaderia Bahini led by Habibur destroyed two Pakistani warships near the confluence of Jamuna and Dhaleswari rivers at Sirajkandi in Bhuapur on August 10, 1971. They also seized a huge amount of arms and ammunition from the enemy vessels before destroying those.

The operation brought him the name Jahajmara Habib. He died on December 27, 1998.

'Stand by people'

FROM PAGE 5

timely manner to increase their efficiency.

Sheikh Hasina said with modern training facilities and well-trained officials, the present air force is not like it was a decade ago; it is now totally different in terms of infrastructural, strategic and technological capabilities.

On occasion of the passing-out parade, the prime minister handed over the "Sword of Honour" award, trophies and badges among the graduating officer cadets for their outstanding performance and successful completion of the training course.

A total of 104 cadets were commissioned to the air force yesterday.

Road accidents

FROM PAGE 5

He died on the spot from the force of the collision, Ataur Added.

In Cumilla, two different road accidents killed two people, reports our Cumilla correspondent.

At Debidwar on Cumilla-Sylhet highway, a young man named Abul Hossain was killed after being hit by a speeding bus yesterday evening, Debidwar Police Station confirmed.

At Thomson Bridge area, Amir Hossain (45) was killed by a motorcycle. Critically injured, he was taken to a local hospital, which referred him to Dhaka for better treatment. He succumbed to his injuries on the way to Dhaka, Cumilla Sadar South Police Station said.

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PKSF has been implementing "The World Bank" funded project titled 'Sustainable Enterprise Project (SEP)' since August 2018. The objective of the project is to increase adaptation of environmentally sustainable practices by targeted microenterprises following business cluster development approach.

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Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. PKSF is an equal opportunity employer. PKSF reserves the right to cancel this recruitment process without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Golam Touhid
Deputy Managing Director

Sylhet's archaeological heritage about to find new home



Officials from the Department of Archaeology yesterday visited "Jitu Miah'r Bari" -- a hundred-year-old house. It is one of the proposed sites for Sylhet Divisional Archaeological Museum.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

To promote the heritage of the region, the Department of Archaeology is planning to establish the Sylhet Divisional Archaeological Museum.

With this goal, Department of Archaeology Director General (DG) Md Hannan Mia visited Sylhet yesterday to look for a suitable site for the museum.

The regional office of the department for Chattogram and Sylhet divisions filed a memorandum to the DG on November 5 proposing three prospective sites for the museum.

These sites are: Jaintia Rajbari under Jaintiapur upazila; Sylhet Central Jail-2 (popularly known as "Old Jail"); and "Jitu Miah'r Bari" --

a hundred-year-old house originally owned by Khan Bahadur Abu Nasar Mohammad Ahia alias Jitu Miah.

DG Hannan Mia said, "To boost tourism in the area, we are planning to develop archaeological sites in Sylhet city, Jaintiapur upazila in Sylhet, and Laurer Garh of Sunamganj."

"I have visited the proposed sites for the museum and will select the most suitable location. Considering everything, Jitu Miah'r Bari seems to be the best choice so far," he said about the possible site for the establishment.

The DG added, "We are going to work on the legal issues necessary to get the museum started. A gazette will be published after all legal procedures are completed."

Md Ataur Rahman, regional director of the department, said, "Sylhet is brimming with archaeological sites. The museum will showcase the region's culture. Archaeological collections and artefacts from collectors will be gathered in the museum for younger generations to learn from."

Abdul Hye Al-Hadi, coordinator of Save the Heritage and Environment, said, "Sylhet's archaeological heritage is scattered all across the region. Important cultural artefacts can be found at personal museums or in private collections. If the museum is established, it will prove to be helpful in conserving the region's cultural heritage."

'Stand by people'

PM to new air force cadets

UNB, Jashore

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said everyone expects the newly-commissioned officer cadets of Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) to serve the country and stand beside citizens selflessly.

"You'll stand beside the people selflessly and serve the country...this is everyone's expectation," she said while speaking at this year's President's Parade at BAF Academy in Jashore.

From now on, the sacred responsibility of protecting the country's independence and sovereignty is in the hands of the new officer cadets, she said. "You always have to be vigilant and ready to discharge your duties," she added.

"You've to obey senior officials and maintain the chain of command, so that BAF can be a force strong in discipline," the PM said.

Hasina said the life of a soldier is a tough one due to the constant moral struggle of being dutiful and ready to sacrifice for the country.

"You must not stray from the right path," she told the new officers.

Sheikh Hasina directed the newly-commissioned officer cadets to develop themselves by working hard and being honest, sincere and virtuous.

She elaborated on various steps of the government for modernising and strengthening the air force. She said the government wants to establish BAF as a modern force.

Referring to the Forces Goal 2030, which was formulated in light of the defence policy of the Father of the Nation, she said the government has been implementing the forces goal in phases.

Putting emphasis on imparting proper training to air force members, she said the government has given priority to providing appropriate training in a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

CTG-8 BY-POLLS

Campaign gaining momentum

ARUN BIKASH DEY, CTG

Campaign for Chattogram-8 by-polls is gaining momentum with the election getting closer.

In their relentless efforts to garner people's support, candidates are going door to door.

In the constituency (Boalkhali-Chandgaon), a total of six candidates -- including an independent -- are competing in the polls scheduled for January 13.

Locals said there will be a fight between ruling Awami League and BNP candidates although contestants from other parties -- including Bangladesh Nationalist Front, Islamic Front Bangladesh and National Awami Party -- are also in the race.

AL-nominated Moslem Uddin Ahmed, in his campaign, is pledging for a road bridge over the river Karnaphuli.

Moslem, also president of Chattogram south district unit of AL, yesterday organised a views-exchange meeting with journalists at Chattogram Press Club where he said he is in touch with the pulse of locals as he was born in Chattogram.

On the other hand, BNP candidate Abu Sufian is not familiar with this as he is "an outsider", Moslem added.

Moslem said, if he is elected, works on a road bridge in Kalurghat will start in a year.

Moslem said he wants to be elected with people's support in a participatory polls. "I do not want violence. I want a fair election," he said at the meeting.

Meanwhile, BNP candidate Abu Sufian is campaigning for people's rights to vote. "We want to free our leader Begum Khaleda Zia from jail," he said while talking to The Daily Star.

"My appeal to voters is to give me mandate to stand against the government's wrongdoings," he said.

Abu Sufian from Chokoria in Cox's Bazar has been permanently living in Chattogram's Chandgaon for years.

Talking about the outsider issue, he said, "It is an obtuse weapon in the modern age... when Bangladeshi origins Tuilp and Rushanara are elected lawmakers in British parliament."

About the bridge, Sufian said, "As far as I know, the government is planning to build a rail bridge in Kalurghat but people's demand is for a road-rail bridge... what Moslem is pledging is sheer deception with voters."

"If I am elected, I will try my best to realise people's demand for a rail-road bridge in Kalurghat," he said.

A total of 4,75,988 voters are expected to cast their votes through electronic voting machine in the polls, said election commission officials.

City polls coinciding with Saraswati Puja

Hindu leaders demand rescheduling of election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Hindu community yesterday protested Election Commission's decision to hold the two Dhaka city corporation polls on the day of Saraswati Puja (January 30).

They expressed their dissatisfaction at a joint meeting of Bangladesh Puja Uddjapan Parishad and Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee, said a press release.

Saraswati Puja falls on the fifth day of the Bengali month of Magh, when Hindus worship Saraswati,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

GOVT-SET RICE PRICE

Increase profit margin up to 25pc: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called upon the government to increase the profit margin up to 25 percent while setting the price of rice, and create a framework to ensure direct procurement from farmers.

They also urged the government to take necessary steps to reduce Haor area farmers' dependence on single crop to minimise financial loss.

The seminar, titled "Fair price of rice: Crisis and proposal in the context of Haor", was organised jointly by Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba) and Bangladesh Resource Center for Indigenous Knowledge (BARCIK) at the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka.

Poba Chairman Abu Naser Khan said fair price of rice is directly related to food security.

"If the farmers do not get fair price, they

would be reluctant to cultivate paddy. This would, in turn, push the country towards a serious food crisis," he said.

Naser said farmers' livelihood is correlated to education, health and other sectors.

"When farmers have money, they spend on better education and medical treatment. Thus, more investment flows to rural areas for improvement of infrastructure," he said.

Quoting a report of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Director of BARCIK Syed Ali Biswas said Bangladesh has earned the top position in rice production.

In 2018, the growth rate was 5.67 per cent and according to forecast the pace of growth will remain stable in future, he further added.

"Though farmers, the government and other organisations have contributed to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



CARE Bangladesh signed an MoU with The Daily Star yesterday to co-create content and explore multiple media avenues. Editor and Publisher of the newspaper Mahfuz Anam was present on the occasion. Zia Choudhury, country director of CARE Bangladesh, said, "In collaboration with The Daily Star, CARE Bangladesh hopes to shed light on the work, progress and future endeavours that we will work towards." He hoped this partnership would initiate a movement for tolerance, opportunity, social justice, dignity and security for all.

PHOTO: STAR



United Hospital Managing Director Faridur Rahman Khan presented a 2020 calendar, designed with photographs of boat, to Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque at his Secretariat office yesterday, to pay tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, marking Father of the Nation's birth centenary. Dr Shagufa Anwar, hospital's chief of communication and business development; Brig Gen (retd) Shahidul Islam, chief of operation and administration; and Dr Mahbub Uddin Ahmed, chief of clinical services, were also present.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

2 JMB suspects held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-14) arrested two suspected members of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from an under-construction house in Mymensingh city's Digarkanda area early yesterday.

The arrestees are Ayatullah Al Kabir (19), from Kalmakanda upazila in Netrakona; and Abu Abdullah Md Soyaeb (25), from Lohagara upazila in Chattogram, Rab sources said.

Kabir is a pathology student at a medical institute while Soyaeb is an employee at a company that deals with machineries in Mymensingh city, they added.

At a press conference yesterday, Rab-14 Commander Lt Col Iftekhar Uddin said a group were holding a clandestine meeting to plan subversive activities in the area.

On information, a Rab team raided the area around 12:30am, he added.

Law enforcers caught the two from the spot but the others managed to escape.

The team also seized books promoting extremism, two laptops, two mobile phones and leaflets from their possession.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees confessed that they are active members of JMB since 2017, Rab claimed. After interrogation, they were handed over to Kotwali Police Station.

'Will keep memory of Jibananda Das alive'

Says state minister for cultural affairs in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

To preserve the memory of Jibananda Das, a sculpture and a memorial complex will be constructed at his ancestral place in Barishal, KM Khalid, state minister of cultural affairs, promised local cultural activists yesterday.

Besides, construction work of Barishal district Shilpakala Academy Complex will be completed on February 27 next year, he said.

District-level programmes related to the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be conducted there, the state minister said while visiting the construction site on Bandar Road.

He said, "We will take steps to preserve the memories of renowned locals who have greatly contributed to the society."

"Funds will not be an obstacle for cultural activities, and the cultural ministry

will extend all kinds of support in this regard," he added.

Barishal Deputy Commissioner SM Ajjor Rahman presided over a meeting held on the site.

Construction work of Shilpakala Academy Complex started in 2016 with an initial budge of Tk 17 crore, which was later extended to Tk 28 crore.

The Shilpakala complex will have four floors with a total space of 16,600 square feet. It will have a 500-seat auditorium, open stage, art gallery and library, said Oliver Guda, executive engineer of Public Works Department, Barishal.

Jibananda Das, one of the greatest poets of the Bangla language, was born on February 17, 1899 in Barishal of erstwhile East Bengal, and completed his matriculation from Brajamohan School in the district in 1915.

WATERAID BANGLADESH

Hasin Jahan new country director

CITY DESK

WaterAid has appointed Hasin Jahan as the new country director of Bangladesh, said a press release.

Hasin has been pursuing her progressive career in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector for the last 25 years, holding key positions at prominent organisations.

Prior to joining WaterAid Bangladesh, Hasin worked as country director of Practical Action.

Hasin is a civil engineer who graduated from Buet. She completed her master's degree in water and environmental management from Loughborough University of Technology in the UK. She is a popular blog writer, and is a member of different national and international committees.

On the occasion, Hasin said she looks forward to working with WaterAid again, and she will focus on transforming lives of the most marginalised people by ensuring water, sanitation and hygiene for all by 2030.

WaterAid is a UK-based international charity promoting safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in over 28 countries and has been working in Bangladesh since 1986.

Road accidents claim 6 lives

STAR REPORT

The last two days have seen six more people die in separate road accidents across three districts, our correspondents report.

In Sripur upazila in Gazipur, two people were killed and three others were injured in separate road accidents yesterday, reports our Gazipur correspondent. Police suspect the ongoing spell of heavy fog contributed to both the accidents.

In an accident at Master Bari on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in front of the Pushpadum resort, driver Shahinur (30) was killed when his covered van lost control and hit a pick-up truck parked by the road.

He was killed on the spot, Mawna Highway Police Station sub-inspector Abul Hashem said.

Police recovered his body and handed it over to family members.

Meanwhile, Burju Mia (60), a fish trader from Kishoreganj, died in an accident on the Kawraid-Barmi road at Sohadia village. Three of his children were injured in the accident.

Burju Mia was critically injured following a collision between a truck and an auto-rickshaw

and was taken to Sripur Upazila Health Complex, police said.

However, his condition deteriorated gradually and he died before he could reach the hospital.

In Gopalganj, two people were killed in two separate road accidents in the last two days, reports our Faridpur correspondent.

In Raghunath village under Sadar upazila, Amit Sheikh (25), son of Kuddus Sheikh, died after crashing his motorcycle by the road on Wednesday evening, witnesses said.

Critically injured, he was rushed to Gopalganj General Hospital.

As his condition worsened, he was referred to Khulna Medical College Hospital. He died on the way to Khulna.

Meanwhile in Garakhola area under Mukshudpur upazila of the district, truck-driver Rajon Sheikh (25), son of Kamrul Sheikh, died after losing control of his vehicle and crashing it into a roadside tree, said Bhangra Highway Police Station OC Ataur Rahman.

The accident happened on the Dhaka-Khulna highway.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

DEFAMATION CASE AGAINST BARRISTER MAINUL

Next hearing on April 12

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed April 12 for hearing on the charge framing against Barrister Mainul Hosen in connection with a defamation case filed last year.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Kaisarul Islam set the date after Mainul's lawyer submitted a petition seeking adjournment of the hearing. Mainul was not present during this time.

Complainant Masuda Bhatti, acting editor of Dainik Amader Notun Shomoy, sought time for charge hearing in the case.

On October 16 last year, Mainul hurled abusive words at Masuda Bhatti and termed her "characterless" on a talk show.

Following the incident, Masuda Bhatti filed a case with the Court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Muhammad Asaduzzaman Noor in Dhaka on October 21.

Another case was filed by the convener of Jamalpur Jubo Mohila League Farzana Yasmin Lita with the Court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Soleiman Kabir the same day.

On October 23, Detective Branch of police arrested Mainul from the capital's Uttara in a case filed against him in Rangpur. The next day, a Dhaka court sent him to jail after detectives produced him before it. As many as 23 cases were filed against him across the country over the incident.

The HC on different dates granted him bail in 13 cases. On January 27, he was released on bail, before being sent to jail again on September 3.



Railway workers take a look at the cracks that developed in one of the piers of the century-old Bheramara rail bridge, inset, over the Ghaghot river near Gaibandha rail station. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: STAR

Two rail bridges in Gaibandha need urgent repair

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

At least two century-old rail bridges on Santahar-Lalmonirhat rail tracks, which connects the capital with cities in northern districts, continue to be in service despite their ramshackle state.

On the same tracks, there are six other run-down bridges, also built during the British era, that require immediate attention of the authorities.

Among the two risky bridges, one is located in Bheramara over the Ghaghot river near Gaibandha rail station's south outer signal. The other one is at Badiakhali rail station. The last one sustained heavy

damage during the recent flood.

As many as 14 trains including four intercity express trains pass the bridges every day at an exceedingly reduced speed as a cautionary measure.

Abul Kashem, station master of Gaibandha rail station, told this correspondent that the rail authorities deployed a watchman at the Bheramara bridge to ensure the trains slow down while crossing it due to its appalling shape.

The bridge near Badiakhali rail station in Gaibandha is also in a deplorable condition. A section of it was washed away during last flood, suspending rail

communications for three weeks.

The bridges were built with lime and brick dust during the British rule, nearly 120 years ago. Cracks have developed in a number of bridge piers and many of the wooden slippers and metal parts on the bridges have worn out, the station master also said.

A frequent train traveller and a private firm employee, Monwara Begum, said train passengers spend nervous time in their seats while the train moves on the bridges at a snail's pace.

Atwar Hossain, a signal man at the Bheramara bridge, said before an approaching train gets on the bridge,

he stops it by waving a red flag. He then gets signature of the train driver before allowing the train to cross the bridge at a speed of 10 miles per hour.

Bangladesh Railway's Sub-Assistant Engineer Afzal Hossain at Bamondanga rail station said there are eight large and small bridges along the route and out of those, the ones in Bheramara and Badiakhali need immediate repair as those are in a vulnerable state.

Anwar Hossain, divisional railway engineer in Lalmonirhat Division, said they already floated tender for complete overhaul of the bridges and the works will start soon.

Video on torturing mentally challenged youth goes viral

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

An appalling video of a mentally challenged youth being tortured by a union level leader of Awami League (AL) in front of his mother went viral on social media.

The shocking incident took place at Kaziatal Purbopara village in Muradnagar upazila of Cumilla.

The tortured victim, Rajib Chandra Biswas, 18, is son of Rakkhal Chandra Biswas of the village.

Sajal Chandra Biswas, elder brother of the victim, filed a case against the alleged culprit Abu Taher with Muradnagar Police Station over the incident yesterday.

"My brother was working as a goldsmith at Tatibazar of Dhaka. Recently his mental health deteriorated so we brought him back at our village home. On Wednesday, Rajib ransacked our home and broke the showcases, so we tied him at our house yard. He was shouting at random towards the passer by and one of them happened to be Taher," Sajal said.

Hearing Rajib's racket Taher came to our yard and tortured him by kicking in the face, chest and back despite repeated plea from my mother."

Mentionable, Taher is a union level leader of the ruling AL, also an ameer of the same union unit of Islami Sashontantra Andolan (ISA).

Officer in Charge of Muradnagar Police Station AKM Manjur Alam said Taher has gone into hiding after the incident and drives are underway to arrest him.

Elderly woman burnt alive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A 70-year-old woman was burnt to death as a fire broke out at her house in Senua Bazar area in Pirganj upazila of the district on Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified as Rojina Bewa, wife of late Sirajul Islam of the area.

Quoting deceased's family members, Officer in Charge of Pirganj Police Station Prodip Kumar Roy told this correspondent over phone that Rojina kept some burning coal in an earthen pot underneath her bed in a bid to keep her room warm.

At one stage, the mosquito net, set around her bed, caught fire and soon engulfed the entire room.

Rojina was burnt alive as she could not come out of the house due to her old age complications.

On information, fire fighters went to the spot and doused the fire after an hour of frantic effort.

Woman murdered by son

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

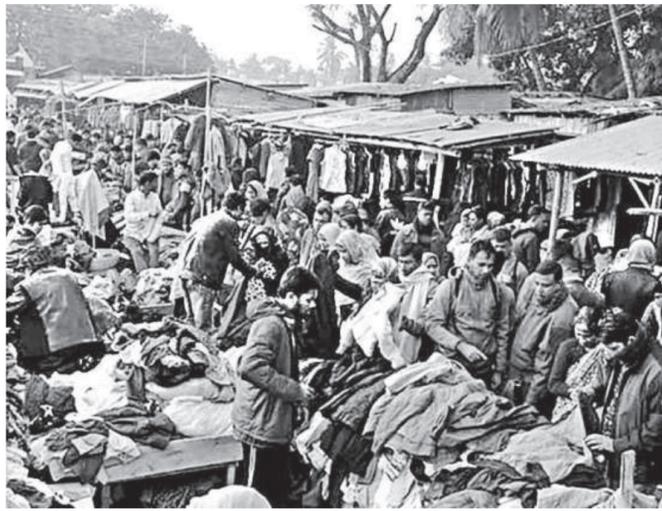
An elderly woman was killed by her son allegedly over a family feud in Sarishabari Upazila of the district on Thursday morning.

The deceased, Saleha Begum, 62, wife of late Hatem Ali, was a resident of Doail Purbopara village in the upazila.

Quoting the deceased's family members, Officer in Charge of Sarishabari Police Station Majedur Rahman said Saleha's younger son Masudur Rahman, 25, had an altercation with his mother over different family issues on Wednesday evening.

As a sequel, angry Masudur swooped on Saleha and slit her throat with a knife at her room around 7:00am, leaving her dead on the spot, the OC added.

Being informed by locals, police went to the spot and detained Masudur soon after the murder, the OC said, adding that the body sent to Jamalpur General Hospital for autopsy.



Low income group people through roadside shops in Jashore to buy warm clothes. PHOTO: STAR

CHILLING WEATHER

Sale of warm clothes gets momentum in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Sale of second-hand warm clothes peaked at different roadside makeshift shops and Nixon Market in Jashore amid the biting cold sweeping over the district.

The temperature ranged between 8 to 9 degrees Celsius in Jashore in the last few days while it was 15 degrees yesterday, said an official of the Met Office in the district.

The cold wave may continue for a week, said the official.

A large number of cold-hit poor people have been suffering immensely due to shortage of warm clothes.

Especially children and elderly people are the worst sufferers of the chilling weather, said locals.

Many low-income group people from different areas in Jashore have thronged the makeshift shops to buy second-hand warm clothes like sweater, coat, trouser, jacket, muffler and old blanket.

The areas include Benapole, Navaron, Jhikorgacha, Keshabpur, Bagharpara,

Monirampur and Avainagar.

The roadside shops and the market remain busy from morning to night with the presence of customers of low-income group.

On the other hand, solvent people are gathering at different shopping malls to buy warm clothes, said townspeople.

Prices of the second-hand warm clothes at the makeshift shops and market are much higher compared to the last year's, said traders and buyers.

Mamun Mia, a trader of second-hand warm clothes in Nixon Market, said sale of winter clothes has increased in the last few days due to the chilling weather.

Demand for used warm clothes is much higher than the new ones, said Mamun.

Bokul Hossain, a day labourer of Natun Haat area in Jashore, said he has no ability to buy new warm clothes due to his poverty.

Sharsha Upazila Nirbahi Officer Pulok Kumar Mandal said they are distributing warm clothes among the cold-hit poor people.

Injured rare great bittern rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Eurasian great bittern, locally known as Bagha Bogla, is currently undergoing treatment after it was rescued in a critical condition on Tuesday night in Sreemangal upazila.

Members of Bangladesh Wildlife Service Foundation (BWSF) rescued the injured rare bird from local fishermen in Atghar area of Pachaun haor under Mirzapur union.

Swapan Deb Sajal, director of BWSF, said "We rescued the bird from them on Tuesday night. It's now undergoing medical treatment as a fishing hook was found stuck in its neck."

BWSF rescued another injured



great bittern in 2010 and released it in Hail haor after it made recovery, he added. Bangladesh Bird Club founder

and renowned bird researcher Enam Ul Haque told this correspondent that great bittern, scientific name *Botaurus stellaris*, is a nocturnal bird.

In Bangladesh there are four species of the bird -- black, cinnamon, yellow and Eurasian bittern. The last one among the four is very rare, he added.

The secretive bird, seldom seen in the open, prefers to skulk in reed beds and thick vegetation near water bodies. Its presence is apparent in the spring, when the booming call of the male during the breeding season can be heard. It feeds on fish, small mammals, fledgling birds, amphibians, crustaceans and insects.



Many locals, including women and children, are seen collecting dead fish after a section of unscrupulous people killed different species of fish in Matamuhuri river in Bandarban's Lama upazila recently. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Customs office runs in rented building

Importers need to travel 50 kilometres to get done with paying duties in Patuakhali town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Since inception in 2016, the Payra port authorities have been running their custom house at a rented house in Patuakhali town, some 50 kilometres off the port, much to the inconvenience of importers and exporters.

The land ministry is yet to take step on an application seeking land for construction of a custom house that the port authorities had submitted almost four years ago, said Md Habibur Rahman, assistant commissioner of the custom house.

"In a letter sent in February 2016, we sought 40 acres of land to build a custom house that would accommodate not only the office but also residential facilities, warehouse and laboratory. But it was never approved.

"To make the port more dynamic, a permanent office needs to be set up in vicinity of the port. That will spare the businessmen from unnecessary hassle," Habibur added.

The port these days remain busy with

loading and unloading of coal as a coal power plant is currently under construction nearby. A 660-megawatt unit of the plant is scheduled to be inaugurated in January 2020.

Coal importers have expressed annoyance as they need to travel 50 kilometres to Patuakhali town to get done with paying duties through banks.

"Custom house and banking facilities should be arranged in vicinity of the port to serve the interest of businessmen and port users," said Mohiuddin Ahmed, president, Patuakhali Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "The Chattoogram and Mongla port have already launched online duty paying systems," he added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid foundation of the Payra sea port in November 2013 at Tiakhali in Kalapara upazila. Its operation kick-started in August 2016.

Until November this year, 43 foreign ships have been loaded and unloaded at the port and the custom house have collected over Tk133.28 crore as revenues.



Patuakhali customs office runs its activities in this rented building in the town.

PHOTO: STAR



A delegation team from Bapa visits a water body in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila yesterday. Its water has been badly polluted by toxic waste of a nearby factory.

PHOTO: STAR

Stop dumping of industrial waste in Habiganj water bodies

Bapa urges authorities concerned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) demanded to stop dumping of industrial waste in water bodies, canals and rivers.

A delegation team from Bapa led by its central committee general secretary Sharif Jamil made the demand on a visit to Bangaduba area in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila yesterday.

The other members of the team were Khwai River Water Keeper Tofazzal Sohel, Prof Nasreen Haque and Dr Ali Ahsan Chowdhury.

During the visit, the delegation found that the toxic waste of factories was being dumped in the surrounding canals and rivers. The industrial pollution has plagued the area for years but it seems there is none to see this as no effective measures have been taken to control the pollution.

Actually, it is imperative for the government to carry out more stringent and competent anti-pollution actions to control industrial pollution in the area. Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of



Bapa in Habiganj unit, said they are extremely concerned over the ongoing industrial pollution.

"We urge the administration and other responsible institutions and officials to take effective steps to control industrial pollution immediately," he said.

Manwar Ali, 70, a resident of Bangaduba village, said the water of Bangaduba canal has been badly polluted by toxic waste of factory. But none take any initiative to save

this canal.

Sharif Jamil said he is so shocked to see the disposal of ongoing industrial waste in the water bodies of Madhabpur. They are repeatedly urging the government to pay attention to this issue.

The entire industrialization around Habiganj should be brought under a comprehensive plan and monitoring system in a credible, transparent and inclusive manner immediately, he added.

Risking 600 lives, school continues in unsafe building for 4 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

The L-shaped two-storey building of the school, in the heart of Kotchandpur upazila town, appears to have been maintained well, with fairly new paintjob on the outside and lush green trees in the front.

But Education Engineering Department (EED) in Jhenidah declared this older building, built in 1960 on the northern corner of Kotchandpur Secondary Girls' School, unsafe in 2015 for its deplorable condition.

Iron rods are exposed in almost all its twelve rooms as plasters keep falling off from the ceilings and cracks continue to be visible on walls of many of its rooms and the outer hallway.

Nearly 600 students of eighth, ninth and tenth grades still attend classes in the building risking their

lives as the authorities, till date, were unable to arrange any substitute classrooms for them.

About 500 other students of the renowned school, established in 1953, attend their classes in a newer building on the southern side of the school compound, situated on 2.09 acres of land that was donated by local philanthropists.

Jannatul Ferdous, a ninth grader at the school, said attending classes in the north building is a nightmare as both students and teachers, 35 in total, cannot keep their eyes off the ceilings of the classrooms, worrying about possible fatalities due to falling plasters.

Ishaque Ali, the school's headteacher, said following a visit by an assistant engineer of EED in Jhenidah, the north building of the school was declared risky and unfit for use by the department on

February 3, 2015.

The building was damaged further in an earthquake in 2017 and the upazila administration in a letter urged the higher authorities to take necessary steps in this regard on November 13 the same year. With the higher authorities paying no heed to the matter, classes continued in the building.

On July 24, 2018, five of his students were admitted to a local hospital after they sustained injuries from falling plasters, the teacher said adding that he cannot stop worrying about the worst when classes are taken in the building.

Upazila Secondary Education Officer Ratan Mia said while awaiting response from the authorities, they were continuing their efforts in getting necessary funds for the repair of the building.



Visitors from home and abroad crowd at the historic Shat Gombuj Mosque premises in Bagerhat Sadar upazila. The 650-year-old mosque, also known as the Sixty Dome Mosque, usually buzz with visitors in the winter season. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PARTHACHAKRABORTTY



A portion of damaged ceiling in the hallway of the northern building of Kotchandpur Secondary Girls' School, inset, in Kotchandpur upazila town. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

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OUR PROJECTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ @ DHANMONDI R/A SALVIA LA MANDARIN MAHMUDA VILLA ▶ @ MOHAMMADPUR SULTAN'S LEGACY HAYE HERITAGE ▶ @ NORTH BADDA KHALIL GARDEN ▶ @ ASHKONA SHARNALI ▶ @ NIKUNJA ASIAN TOWER (COMMERCIAL SPACE) ▶ @ MOHAKHALI MS CENTER (COMMERCIAL SPACE) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ @ BARIDHARA ASSURANCE MARZUQ ▶ @ IQBAL ROAD ASSURANCE BAROKOT ▶ @ LALMATIA MASUKA LODGE MUTTALIB VILLA ▶ @ BANANI MEHERUNNESSA VILLA ▶ @ UTTARA BANANI KUNJA BADHON ▶ @ AGARGAON ABEDIN'S DREAM ▶ @ BANGSHAL AZHAR MARKET (COMMERCIAL SHOP)
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NEWS IN
briefJapan executes first
foreigner in years

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japan yesterday executed a 40-year-old Chinese man convicted of murdering a family of four, in the country's first execution of a foreigner since the disclosure of details on sentences carried out began in 2007, the justice ministry said. The man, Wei Wei, had committed the murders in mid-2003 with two accomplices who were also Chinese nationals, media reported. The other two fled to China and were arrested there. One was executed in China in 2005 and the other received a life sentence, media said.

China sails aircraft
carrier in Taiwan Strait

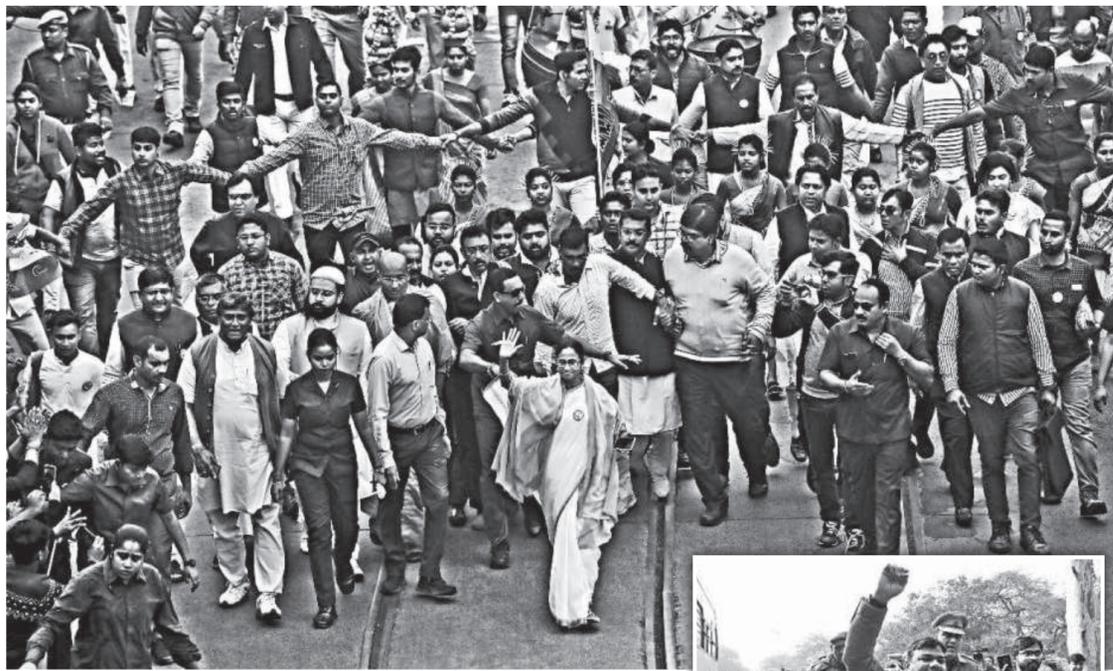
REUTERS, Taipei

China has sailed its new aircraft carrier into the Taiwan Strait, Taiwan's defence ministry said yesterday, weeks ahead of presidential election on the island. Democratic Taiwan is claimed by China as a wayward province and is the Communist Party's most sensitive and important territorial issue. China has threatened to attack if Taiwan moves toward formal independence. The Chinese carrier group sailed north through the Strait, the defence ministry said in a short statement.

Syria strike kills 5
pro-Iran fighters

AFP, Beirut

Five pro-Iranian fighters were killed by unidentified missiles on Wednesday evening in Syria's eastern province of Deir Ezzor, a war monitor said. "Missiles of unidentified origin targeted the headquarters of the 47th Brigade of pro-Iranian militias in the town of Albu Kamal, in the east of Deir Ezzor province, killing five fighters," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Observatory chief Rami Abdul Rahman said drones may have been responsible for the strikes, which caused "loud blasts".



Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, and her party supporters attend a protest march against a new citizenship law, in Kolkata, India yesterday. **Inset, A protester shouts slogans after being detained outside the Uttar Pradesh Bhawan during a demonstration against the crackdown on protesters over the citizenship law.**

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

Myanmar official
killed in fighting

Say Rakhine rebels

REUTERS, Yangon

Rebels in Myanmar's Rakhine region said a captured official from Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party has died, two weeks after being taken for organising protests against genocide accusations faced by Myanmar at the World Court.

The Arakan Army rebels said Buthidaung National League for Democracy (NLD) Chairman Ye Thein, the most senior civilian official to die in the growing insurgency, was killed on Monday in an attack on the rebels by Myanmar's army. There was no independent confirmation.

The incident underscored the increasing loss of government control in a region which came to world attention when 700,000 Rohingya Muslims fled to Bangladesh to escape an army crackdown on a different rebel group in 2017.

The Arakan Army said its positions had come under attack from Myanmar's army.

"Due to big explosions, some detainees died and some were wounded. The NLD chairman from Buthidaung, Ye Thein, died on scene," the Arakan Army said in the statement. It said he had been taken prisoner on Dec. 11.

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced in Rakhine since clashes between the Arakan Army and the army began around a year ago.

The insurgents, whose forces are from the largely Buddhist Rakhine people, are fighting for greater autonomy.

The say they have no links to the Rohingya rebel group whose attacks sparked the 2017 army crackdown that led to the accusations of genocide brought against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice by The Gambia.

The Arakan Army is among several ethnic armed factions that have said they support the case against Myanmar.

Leading crowds to arson,
violence not leadership

Says Indian army chief on anti-CAA protests

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

In his first public remarks on the violent anti-Citizenship Amendment Act, the Indian Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat yesterday said it is not leadership if leaders guide masses, comprising university and college students, to carry out arson and violence in cities.

"Leaders emerge from crowds but are not those who lead people in inappropriate directions" he told a function here adding "leaders are those who lead people in the right direction."

The army chief's remarks were seen as his comments on the recent widespread violence seen during the pan-India protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act and proposed NRC. More than 20 protesters have died in these protests, especially in Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka.

"What is so complex about leadership if it is all about leading? Because when you move forward, everybody follows. It is not that simple. It appears simple, but it is a complex phenomenon," Rawat said in his speech.

"Even amongst the crowd, you find that

the leaders emerge. But leaders are those who lead people in the right direction. Leaders are not those who lead people in inappropriate directions," he added.

Giving the example of ongoing protests by a large number of university and college students, the Army Chief said the way masses of crowds were being led to carry out arson and violence in cities and towns is not leadership.

Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh Shia Central Waqf Board yesterday favoured implementation of NRC.

"Hindustani Muslims do not have any threat from NRC. It should be implemented in the country. The real matter is of identification of intruders who are real threat to the country," Board Chairman Waseem Rizvi told reporters in Lucknow.

"The intruders are vote bank for the Trinamool Congress and the Samajwadi Party. The Congress is making voter identity cards of intruders from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. If NRC is implemented, their real face will come to the fore," he said.



UP demands damages

Threatens to confiscate property over protests

REUTERS, Lucknow

India's northern Uttar Pradesh state is demanding millions of rupees from over 200 people and threatening to confiscate their property as a penalty for damage done to public property during protests against the country's new citizenship law.

Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, has suffered some of the most violent protests against India's Citizenship Amendment Act, which gives minorities who have migrated from three neighbouring countries a path to citizenship but doesn't make the same concessions for Muslims.

At least 15 of the 21 people killed in the protests have been in Uttar Pradesh, a state that has been a tinder box for tensions between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

At least 230 such notices have been issued, and most of the people they had been issued to were Muslims, state government officials said on Thursday. The claims are likely to run into tens of millions of rupees, they said.

It was unclear how many of them have been charged with rioting or

other crimes, and none have been convicted. State officials have blamed much of the violence on Muslim mobs protesting against the law.

In the town of Rampur, the family of Mohammad Faheem, whose brother-in-law Mohammad Mehmood is in police custody, has received one such notice.

ANTI-CAA PROTESTS

At least 230 notices have been issued demanding millions of rupees

The claims are likely to run into tens of millions of rupees

"Mehmood did not participate in a protest and was at home that day but police still arrested him," Faheem told Reuters.

Mehmood, sells spices on a cart and cannot even afford a lawyer to get bail, Faheem said.

"How will we pay the fine?" he asked.

Authorities have followed the legal procedure in assessing damage to public property as well as in issuing the notices, said Mrityunjay Kumar, a spokesman for the Uttar Pradesh government.

Critics, however, said such notices are premature.

"You cannot be the complainant and the judge yourself," Vikram Singh, a former head of police in Uttar Pradesh, told Reuters.

"Sending notices to 100, pursuing 50 and succeeding in two will do more harm than good."

Hundreds of thousands of people across India, including university students, have joined protests against the law, posing the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi since he took office in 2014.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party controls the state government in Uttar Pradesh, and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu priest, is one of the leading lights in the Hindu nationalist party.

Students in several Indian cities have led the protests, making use of social media to wage a parallel battle online and teach people how to organise demonstrations.

'I'm still scared'

Communities across Asia remembers
tsunami that killed 230,000

REUTERS, Phang Nga

Communities across Asia commemorated the more than 230,000 victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami on Thursday, the 15th anniversary of one of the world's most deadly disasters.

On the morning after Christmas Day in 2004, a 9.1 magnitude quake off northern Sumatra island triggered a tsunami with waves as high as 17.4 meters (57 feet) that swept over vulnerable coastal areas of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and nine other countries.

"It still haunts me ... I can remember it all the time," said Suwannee Maliwan, 28, who lost both parents and five other relatives when the tsunami hit the Thai province of Phang Nga.

"Sometimes I dream that a wave is coming. I'm still scared," she said. "Sometimes I want to move somewhere else, but it's not possible because I was born here, my mom and dad passed away here."

Memorials were scheduled in the Indonesian province of Aceh, where

entire villages were flattened and more than 125,000 people perished in the giant waves. Since then, the area has been largely rebuilt, with some 25,600 residential, commercial, government and school buildings constructed inside a high-risk zone, that had suffered virtually total devastation in 2004.

In Thailand, where more than 5,300 people were killed, including tourists visiting resort islands in the Andaman Sea, officials held a memorial ceremony and called for more awareness and preparedness for disasters.

"The government wants to lift safety standards... and build awareness across all sectors in preparing and protecting people against disasters," Deputy Interior Minister, Nipon Bunyamanee, said at an opening ceremony. He said Dec. 26 had been designated national accident prevention day.

Officials later laid wreaths at a memorial center in Phang Nga province to pay tribute to King Maha Vajiralongkorn's nephew, Bhumij Jensen, who was last seen jet-skiing off the coast when the tsunami hit.



Riot police question a man (R) in the Tai Po district in Hong Kong yesterday. Hong Kong endured a third straight day of political unrest over the Christmas period on December 26 as police and pro-democracy protesters clashed inside shopping malls.

PHOTO: AFP

BJP hits back at
Rahul on 'liar
PM' comment

ANI, New Delhi

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hit back at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his "Prime Minister of RSS lies to mother India" comment, calling him the "chieftain of liars" and accused the Congress of spreading misinformation on the construction of detention centres.

Earlier yesterday, Gandhi tweeted a video which shows a road in Assam's Matia leading to a purported detention centre, and a part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech wherein he said that rumours of detention centres raised by Congress and urban Naxals were a "lie".

"The Prime Minister of RSS lies to Bharat Mata," he captioned the post with the hashtag lies, lies, lies.

Speaking at a press conference here, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said that Gandhi was wrong in calling the Prime Minister a 'liar'.

Seeking to clarify Modi's comments, Patra said: "He said that no detention centre has been made to detain any Indian Muslims under NRC under the BJP government rule. What is the lie in it?"

"Rahul Gandhi is spreading lies regarding detention centres. He and his Congress party have been spreading rumours that Muslims will be detained and deported. This is a pure lie," he said. Calling Gandhi, the BJP leader said that three detention centres were constructed in Assam on directions of previous UPA government.

Blindspot to backlash

India's Modi, BJP did not anticipate protests against citizenship law

REUTERS, Mumbai

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government did not anticipate the protests against a new citizenship law that have raged across the country and is now scrambling to control the damage, members of his ruling party said.

In Modi's biggest challenge since taking office in 2014, hundreds of thousands have protested against the law offering citizenship to immigrants from non-Muslim minorities who have fled Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

At least 21 people have died in clashes with police. Ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders were taken aback by the backlash, some party members told Reuters. They said they had been prepared for some anger from Muslims, but not the widespread protests that have convulsed most major cities for two weeks.

Now the party and the government are reaching out for help in defusing the crisis to allies and opponents sidelined when the bill passed earlier this month, the sources said.

"I really did not see the protests coming ... not just me, other BJP lawmakers were also unable

to predict this kind of anger," Sanjeev Balyan, a ruling party legislator and junior federal minister, told Reuters.

While there is no threat to his big parliamentary majority, the 69-year-old Modi's reputation as a master strategist with his finger



on the pulse of the people has taken a hit.

Publicly, his government has prioritised development, seeking to make India a \$5 trillion economy by 2025.

But Modi's muscular pro-Hindu platform has also gone down well in a nation that is over 80% Hindu: he won back-to-back national elections

with thumping majorities.

Outrage at the citizenship law has been fanned by resentment against the government for following a majoritarian agenda instead of addressing an economic slowdown and loss of jobs.

In a nation with a history pocked with sectarian bloodshed, many Muslims fear the new law - and a planned national citizenship register - could make the minority second-class citizens.

Students, politicians and rights activists, both Hindus and Muslims, have also taken to the streets, saying Modi is jeopardising India's secular constitution.

The government denies the citizenship register is imminent and says none of the changes will affect existing citizens.

Three other BJP lawmakers and two federal ministers, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they were mobilising party supporters from all walks of life to start community dialogues and dispel discontent over the law and the register.

"I believe that the political math behind the clearance of this law was not taken into account," said one of the federal ministers, an apparent reference to lack of consultation with allies and opposition parties.

17 killed in attack on
Yemen market: UN

AFP, Sanaa

Seventeen civilians were killed in an attack in a market in Yemen's northern Saada governorate, the United Nations said, the third deadly assault on the same location in just over a month.

The attacks come despite relative calm in Yemen, where large-scale combat between government troops -- backed by a Saudi-led military coalition -- and the Iran-aligned Huthi rebels has largely subsided.

The UN said 12 Ethiopian migrants were among the 17 civilians killed in the incident on Tuesday at the Al-Raqw market in Saada governorate, a Huthi rebel stronghold.

At least 12 people were wounded, it said, without saying who was responsible or what weaponry was used.

The Saudi-led coalition yesterday acknowledged it had carried out an operation in Monabbih, a Saada district where the market is located.

The Joint Incident Assessment Team (JIAT) -- which the coalition established but says operates independently -- will investigate "the possibility of collateral damage", coalition spokesman Turki al-Maliki said in a statement.

The coalition did not provide further details.

An attack on Al-Raqw market on November 22 killed 10 civilians, again including Ethiopian nationals, and just days later, at least another 10 civilians were killed and 22 wounded in a second such incident.

WHAT'S ON

Star Melodies' Musical Evening
 Title: Bijoyer Ronge Aka Bela Shesher Gaan
 Venue: The Daily Star Centre, Kazi Nazrul Islam Ave
 Date: Today
 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 Jhorna Tolay
 Organiser: Bengal Foundation
 Venue: Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi
 Date: December 26-28
 Time: 6 pm

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

Recitation Programme
 Title: 71 poem recitations by Shimul Mustapha
 Venue: Rabindra Shorobor
 Date: Today
 Time: 4:30 pm - 9:30 pm

'His Dream World' opens at Shilpangan today

ZAHANGIR ALOM

Shilpangan, the contemporary art gallery, has organised *His Dream World*, an exclusive exhibition, featuring the works of 50 great artists of Bangladesh and India. The 110 artworks at the exhibition are selected from the private collection of legendary Bangladeshi photographer, Nasir Ali Mamun. Renowned business personality and poet Rubana Huq, the first elected female President of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, will inaugurate the exhibition as the chief guest at 5 pm today. Art critic Moinuddin Khaled will also be in attendance. Eminent artist Hamiduzzaman Khan will preside over the event.

His Dream World is based on drawings collected by Mamun throughout different points of his career, as he visited numerous artists to take their portrait photographs. Works of several renowned artists, including Quamrul Hassan, S M Sultan, Aminul Islam, Murtaja Baseer, Abdur Razzaque, Kazi Abdul



(From Left) 'Revenge' by Rokeya Sultana, 'Dream' by Samarjit Roy Choudhury and 'Young Girl' by Chandra Shekhar Dey.

Baset, Qayyum Chowdhury, Syed Jahangir, Rafiqun Nabi, Monirul Islam, Shahabuddin Ahmed, K G Subramanyan, Paritosh Sen, Ganesh Pyne, Lalu Shaw, Wasim R Kapoor, Robin Mondal and Jogen Chowdhury among others, are on display at the exhibition.

Eminent artist Syed Jahangir depicted Tagore on paper, while renowned sculptor Ferdousi Priyabhashini, portrayed Gurudev on acrylic. Her work uncannily resembles the Tagorean style. Sheikh Afzal's work on Tagore has drawings mingled with minimal watercolours. The magical black lines will easily attract the viewers. The exhibition sheds light on self-portraits by many artists like Abdur Razzaque, Murtaja Baseer and Shahabuddin Ahmed. Several visages of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, depicted by Shahabuddin Ahmed, are also on exhibit.

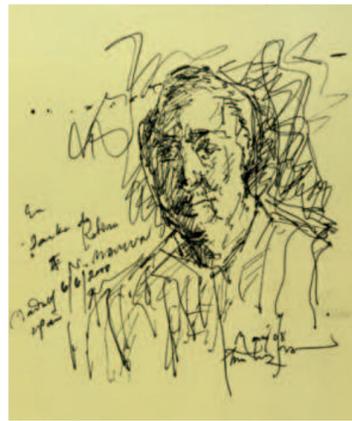
Murtaja Baseer's meticulous drawings of his self-portrait and other drawings, enrich the exhibition. Some of his line-based

drawings depict visually stunning realistic portraits. Internationally renowned artist Monirul Islam's application of paint is intense and his lines are more minimised. The colours in his paintings are bold and vivacious. Islam's masterful paintings and a portrait of Nasir Ali Mamun enhance the standard of the show. New York based renowned Bangladeshi artist Anwar Hossain's artwork of Frida Kahlo (charcoal) is outstanding.

Some seasoned Indian painters' drawings add to the significance of the group show. Punendu Pattrea's lyrical drawings, K G Subramanyan and Jogen Chowdhury's drawings and serigraphs, Dhiraj Chowdhury's work on the Liberation War are renowned for their individual styles and techniques. Noted Indian artist Jogen Chowdhury is well known among Bangladeshi artists and critics. At the exhibition, the audience will see his depiction of organic forms and magical unbroken lines. Mamun, who is referred to as the 'The

Poet of Camera', has been photographing renowned creative personalities for nearly five decades. He was the first artist to introduce the concept of portrait photography in Bangladesh in 1972. Since then, he has been collecting autographs of famous poets and writers. As of now, Mamun has 10,000 artworks in his collection. He has built great friendships with every artist he met over the years.

"I am deeply indebted to the artists, poets and writers. Patua Quamrul Hassan did my portrait twice, while S M Sultan sketched my visage eight times. These presents, I think, are as special as winning National Awards, said Mamun. "31 artworks from the 110 that will be on display, are already sold out, which is inspiring. This is the third time that I am hosting an exhibition of this kind. Previously, I exhibited my collection of artworks at Bengal Shilpalay in 2012 and 2014." *His Dream World*, opening from 3 pm to 8 pm every day, will conclude on January 11, 2020.



Nasir Ali Mamun's portrait by Monirul Islam

Tasmit Rafiyat Arny on making Miss Universe Bangladesh's 'national costume'

SHARMIN JOYA

Miss Universe Bangladesh, Shirin Akter Shela was appreciated for her national costume in the final round of the contest. She looked stunning in a red jamdani saree, complete with a model hood of the iconic Bangladeshi rickshaws, and jewellery made to imitate Bengali letters. The person behind the unique costume is Tasmit Afiyat Arny, who started her career in 2011. She studied Graphics Design at University of Dhaka, worked as an intern at the fashion house, YELLOW, and went on to participate in many reality shows, including Style Guru and AXN Amazing Race. She also participated on the show, LUX Channel i Superstar, and made it to the Top 15. We caught up with Tasmit to learn more about her work.

Share your experience of being involved in designing Miss Universe Bangladesh's national costume.
 Just two days before Shela was flying to Georgia, Rizwan Bin Farouq, Chairman, Miss Universe Bangladesh, requested me to make the costumes for Shela, as I had also worked on the costumes for Miss World Bangladesh, Jessia Islam, in 2017. I didn't know whether it will be practically possible to make Shela's costume in such a short time! However, I took it as a challenge and with lots of sleepless nights and effort, I completed the whole concept.

How did you come up with the idea of the national



PHOTO: COURTESY

costume for Miss Universe Bangladesh, which was appreciated worldwide?
 I had to create something that signifies the culture and heritage of Bangladesh. Jamdani is a handloom

woven fabric made of cotton, an age-old Bengali tradition that has been celebrated across the world. The rickshaw hood had vibrant colours depicting local nature and pop culture, Rickshaw paint has been considered an archetypal form of contemporary Bangladeshi folk art. Moreover, the rickshaw and jamdani are environmentally friendly products as well.

Along with that, the hood also showcased the ritual of making masks. Masks are a vital part of the celebration of the Bengali New Year. They symbolised kings and queens, indicating the vast history of Bengali culture. The Royal Bengal Tiger is our national animal, while the Owl is seen as a symbol of prosperity. The masks together conveyed the history of our culture. The jewellery pieces imitating Bengali letters, expressed our pride in our mother tongue. The green background of the rickshaw hood and Shela's red saree represented the colours of our national flag.

Besides a fashion designer, you have also worked as an art designer and assistant director. Do you want to work as director?

I prefer working as a fashion designer. I am a visualiser at Asiatic. Currently, I am also running a fashion house, Stride, which has two outlets in Dhaka. Apart from designing, I have worked on Rubaiyat Hossain's *Under Construction*, as an assistant director, and in quite a few television commercials. I might think of directing in the future, but for now, I



Star Melodies to host 'Bijoyer Ronge Aka Bela Shesher Gaan' today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Star Melodies, an initiative of *The Daily Star* to promote Bangla music, will host a musical evening, titled *Bijoyer Ronge Aka Bela Shesher Gaan*, featuring songs on the Victory of Bangladesh. The programme is sponsored by Dhaka Bank Limited.

Students of East West University will present songs of our Liberation War. Ekushey Padak awardee Kaderi Kibria, along with popular singers Afsana Runa, Bornali Sarkar and Salauddin Khan will perform at the show. The event will be held today at The Daily Star Centre, at 5:30 pm.

Sadya Afsan Mallick, Chief, Culture Initiatives, *The Daily Star*, will host and coordinate the programme. The event is open for all. Seats are limited, and available on a first-come first-serve basis.



Elita and Friends



Arjan



Riad and Salekin

SANJEEB UTSHAB HELD IN DU

The 8th Sanjeeb Utsab, dedicated to the great musician Sanjeeb Chowdhury, was held at the TSC Swimming Pool on December 25. Renowned musicians and bands from DU performed at the event, which commemorated the 55th birthday of Sanjeeb Chowdhury.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Boishakhi Television celebrates 15 years today



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Marking their 15th anniversary, Boishakhi Television has arranged a day-long celebration at their office premises today. The programme will be telecasted live. The celebration will consist of musical shows, fictions, movies and many other entertaining programmes. Honourable speaker of the National Parliament, Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, will inaugurate the event.



A busy year ahead for BAPPY

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Popular actor Bappy Chowdhury, who was last seen in Shah Alam Mondal's *Dongiri* (2019), has signed two new films, Safiuddin Safi's *Secret Agent* and Rumman Rony's untitled project. "I will be playing completely different roles in these films, which is exciting. As always, my aim is to offer something new to my audience with every project," said Bappy, who hopes to start working on these two films in 2020.

Currently, the actor is shooting for Dipankar Dipon's *Dhaka 2040* and awaiting the release of Debasish Biswas' *Shoshurbari Zindabaad 2*.

The Unmaad among us

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Line-up:
Sabbir Hossain Farukh: Vocals
Tanvir Sarwar Khan: Guitar
Muhit Rahman: Guitar
Mong Sai: Bass
Showrov Dewan: Drums

One of the bands to perform at the phenomenal *20 Years of Artcellism*, Unmaad showed why they are considered one of the most promising upcoming bands with their rendition of *Bhul Jonmo*. The Chittagonians, having recently released their debut album *Run to Bahaddarhat*, talk to *The Daily Star* about their insurgency, future plans, and more.

You recently performed at the biggest stage in your career yet, *20 Years of Artcellism*. Tell us about the experience.

Mong: It was absolutely overwhelming. As soon as we reached the event, we were stunned by the sheer size of the venue! It took us a while to process the platform we had just been given, and we are grateful to Artcell for believing in us.

Sabbir: It was our biggest performance till date. I was very nervous before the performance, and more so when the flare, which is a part of our act, did not light up. Thankfully, we pulled everything off in the end. It was the experience of a lifetime.

I'd like to call your debut album, *Run to Bahaddarhat*, a runaway success. When did you start recording for it?

Muhit: The compositions for the nine songs in the album were essentially done by

2016, and we finished the recording soon after that. However, we were very nitpicky about getting the sound right, and this is why the release took this long.

Tanvir: We started out as a pseudo-metal band who were adept at all genres, and gradually switched to hard rock. Even though we are inspired by bands like AC/DC, we were successful in finding our own sound.

Tell us about the music scene in Chattogram.

Muhit: In our city, there used to be a very vibrant underground scene. However, with time, those concerts started decreasing in number, as the venues started to decrease. However, we still have many shows in the form of rag days and other events, which serve as a platform for new bands and musicians to emerge.

Sabbir: Honestly, an 'underground' scene is not as essential as it used

to be. There are a lot of platforms from which musicians can earn fame, provided that they can differentiate themselves from the crowd. We spent a lot of time familiarising our audience with the type of music that we do, to get to where we are today.

What should an upcoming band do to stand out?

Muhit: Shows, shows and shows. Nothing beats the experience of performing live. That should be mixed with a good presence on social media. Musicians today should be adept at promoting themselves, both offline and online.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSEH

Suchanda and Rafi Hossain to receive the Fazlul Haque Memorial Award 2019 today



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Actor Kohinoor Akhter Suchanda and journalist Rafi Hossain will be honoured with the 16th Fazlul Haque Memorial Award 2019

for direction and cine-journalism, respectively. The programme will be held today, at 6pm, at Westin, Dhaka. Both winners will receive prize money of BDT 25,000, crests and certificates of honour.

The Fazlul Haque Memorial Committee has organised this event since 2004, in honour of the late photo-journalist Fazlul Haque. Eminent novelist Rabeya Khatun initiated this award.

Filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak's family objects to BJP's use of his films to promote CAA

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, from New Delhi

The West Bengal unit of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has decided to use legendary director Ritwik Ghatak's partition trilogy films, which depict the tragic consequences of largescale human displacement, caused by the vivisection of the Indian subcontinent, to defend the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The BJP said that the CAA is aimed at benefitting the refugees who have come from across the border to India over the years, but the law's opponents claimed that it is discriminatory to Muslims.

Ghatak's *Subarnarekha*, *Meghe Dhaka Tara* and *Komol Gandhar*

protests from family members of the director, known for his Leftist political views. They claimed that Ghatak was "secular to the bone" and his works should not be used for a "discriminatory" legislation. Among them is well-known actor Parambrata Chattopadhyay, Ghatak's grandson. Chattopadhyay said that as a family, they do not want Ghatak's name and work to be used for anything which violated the fundamental principles that he stood for.

Moreover, West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress took a dig at the BJP for turning to Ghatak in desperation. "Those who insult Amartya Sen, make oblique comments about Abhijit Banerjee

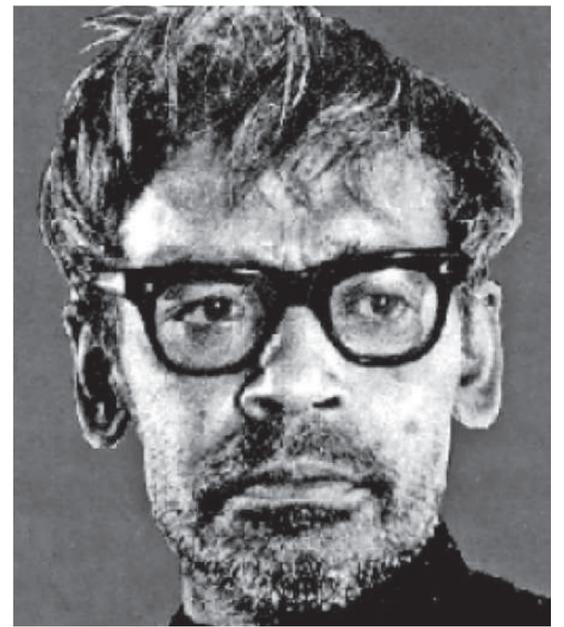


PHOTO: COLLECTED

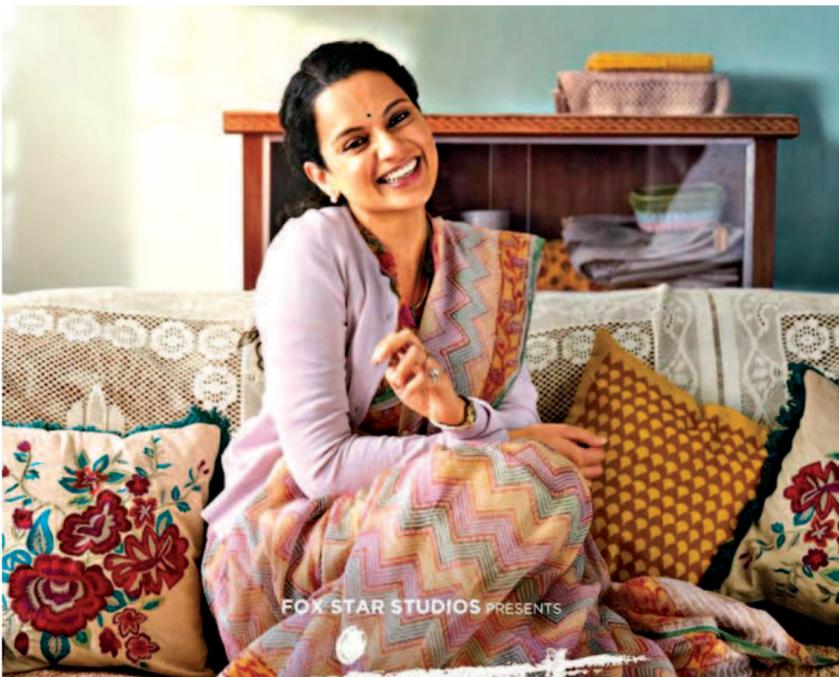
poignantly recreate the plight of people who were forced to migrate to India after the partition in 1947. The BJP's youth wing, Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), has made a six-minute video using footages from these three films of Ghatak, with an objective to showcase the trauma of post-partition years and make people understand the need for the CAA. According to BJP leader Shamik Bhattacharya, the video begins from the Great Calcutta Killings of 1946 and stretches into the present times, up to the granting of citizenships to the uprooted people now.

However, the move has triggered

winning the Nobel Prize, are now turning to such a personality. This is the biggest example of political bankruptcy," said Trinamool Secretary General Partha Chatterjee. On the other hand, Bhattacharya added that Ghatak's political identity is not important in the present context. "The pain of people during the partition has come up repeatedly in his films. This is what we are highlighting," he said.

In a statement, relatives of Ghatak, including his nieces and nephews, objected to the use of video footages from his films, divorced from context, to support the CAA.

First look of Kangana Ranaut starrer 'Panga' out



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The first-look poster of *Panga*, Kangana Ranaut's upcoming film with director Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, is out. The film is a light-hearted story about a national-level kabaddi player.

Produced by Fox Stars Studios, the film also stars Jassi Gill, Neena Gupta, and Mukesh Tiwari. The songs of *Panga* are composed by Shankar, Ehsaan and Loy.

After playing an edgy and volatile role in her last film, *Judgemental Hai Kya*, Kangana will be seen as a mother in Ashwiny Tiwari's film.

Meanwhile, Kangana is also part of the multilingual biopic on the Tamil Nadu CM J Jayalalithaa, which is titled *Thalavai*.

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Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-1)
Soydabad, Sirajganj.

Ref: 27.28.8878.105.07.001.19.662

Ref: 27.28.8878.105.07.001.19.663

Ref: 27.28.8878.104.07.001.19.654

Ref: 27.28.8878.105.07.001.19.670

Date: 26/12/2019

e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Publication Date	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date
1	398235	Spare Parts for Generator Protection System.	22-Dec-2019	12-Jan-2020 15:45 hrs	13-Jan-2020 10:00 hrs
2	398238	Spare Parts for Transformer and Switch-yard Protection System.	22-Dec-2019	12-Jan-2020 15:45 hrs	13-Jan-2020 11:00 hrs
3	398124	Spare parts of Field Instrumentation for Water Treatment Plant.	18-Dec-2019	07-Jan-2020 15:45 hrs	08-Jan-2020 10:00 hrs
4	398239	Spare Parts for ST UPS System	26-Dec-2019	19-Jan-2020 15:45 hrs	20-Jan-2020 11:00 hrs

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 System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). For further details the below mentioned links could be checked.

<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd/resources/common/ViewTender.jsp?id=398235>

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Shafiqul Islam

Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)(Addl. Charge)

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GD-2127



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Chattogram City Corporation

Tigerpass, Chattogram

www.ccc.org.bd

উন্নয়নের গণতন্ত্র
শেখ হাসিনার মূলমন্ত্র

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Sl No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tender ID	Last date & Time of selling Documents	Last date & Time of submission Documents
1	CCC/W-17/Lot-4	Development of Khalirchara retaining wall adjacent road at 9 No. ward	400691	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
2	CCC/W18/Lot-3	Development of Azim Talukdar Bari Road Hazi Ahamedur Rahman Road, Mukim Talukdar Bari by lane CDA R/A 3 No. road, Natunpara Assubabughor to Abul Hossainghor road and Colonel Jones Road to Beribadh road at ward No. 10	384003	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
3	CCC/W34	Construction of police bit bridge at 10 No. ward	400687	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
4	CCC/W23/Lot-3	Construction of retaining wall with road of Goinar Chorakhal at 13 No. ward Lot-3	400748	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
5	CCC/W22/Lot-3	Construction of retaining wall with road at Flora Pass 13 No. ward Lot-3	400742	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
6	CCC/W-22/ Lot-1	Construction of retaining wall with road at Flora Pass 13 No. ward Lot-1	400731	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
7	CCC/W-22 /Lot-4	Construction of retaining wall with road at Flora Pass 13 No. ward	400725	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
8	CCC/W-23 /Lot-1	Construction of retaining wall with road of Goinar Chorakhal at 13 No. ward (Lot-1)	400744	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
9	CCC/W-23/ Lot-2	Construction of retaining wall with road of Goinar Chorakhal at 13 No. ward (Lot-2)	400746	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
10	CCC/W-36/ Lot-1	Development Road of Halishohor R/A A and I block lane at ward No. 11	400677	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
11	CCC/W-36/ Lot-4	Development Road of Halishohor R/A A and I block lane at ward No. 11 (Lot-4)	400680	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
12	CCC/W-36/ Lot-2	Development Road of Halishohor R/A A and I block lane at ward No. 11 (Lot-2)	400678	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00
13	CCC/W-36/ Lot-3	Development Road of Halishohor R/A A and I block lane at ward No. 11 (Lot-3)	400681	26-01-20 12 : 00	26-01-20 14 : 00

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Mohammed Abu Saleh
PD & Superintending Engineer
Chattogram City Corporation

CCC/PRD/290/2019

GD-2126



Institute of Modern Languages

University of Dhaka

Appointment Notice

University of Dhaka: Applications in prescribed form, obtainable on working days at the office of the Registrar, University of Dhaka, are invited from Bangladeshi nationals for the following posts:

1. Assistant Professor in English Language: 1 (Permanent Post)

National Pay scale 2015: Tk. 35,500-67,010/- plus allowances as admissible under the University rules.

Minimum Qualifications: Candidates must have first class or in case of CGPA, 3.50 out of 4.00 both in Honours in English and in Master's degree in English Language Teaching/Applied Linguistics/TESOL or an equivalent degree from a foreign university with minimum first division or in case of GPA/CGPA 4.25 out of 5.00 both in SSC and HSC or equivalent Examinations. They must have at least 3 (three) years teaching experience in a University and research publications in standard journals. Experience and performance as a teacher as well as significant contribution to different areas of University activities, especially in guiding the overall educational and co-curricular activities of the student, will also be treated as an additional qualification. Other qualifications being equal, preference may be given to those who have higher degree.

2. Lecturer in Chinese Language: 1 (Permanent Post)

National Pay scale 2015: Tk. 22,000-53,060/- plus allowances as admissible under the University rules.

Minimum Qualifications: Candidates must have first class or in case of CGPA, 3.50 out of 4.00 both in Honours and in Master's degree in Chinese Language with minimum GPA/CGPA 4.25 out of 5.00 both in SSC and HSC or equivalent Examinations. Preference may be given to those who have experience of teaching Chinese in a recognized Institution.

If candidates with abovementioned qualifications are not available, the conditions may be relaxed. Other qualifications being equal, preference may be given to those who have higher degree.

3. Lecturer in German Language: 1 (Permanent Post)

National Pay scale 2015: Tk. 22,000-53,060/- plus allowances as admissible under the University rules.

Minimum Qualifications: Candidates must have first class or in case of CGPA, 3.50 out of 4.00 both in Honours and in Master's degree in German Language with minimum GPA/CGPA 4.25 out of 5.00 both in SSC and HSC or equivalent Examinations. Preference will be given to those who have teaching experience of German Language in a recognized institution.

If candidates with the abovementioned qualifications are not available, the conditions may be relaxed. Other qualifications being equal, preference may be given to those who have higher degree.

Eight copies of application together with attested copies of certificates, testimonials, mark-sheets along with a Bank Draft/Pay Order of the value of Tk. 750/- (seven hundred fifty) (non-refundable) payable to the Registrar, University of Dhaka should be submitted to the Director, Institute of Modern Languages, University of Dhaka on or before 20 January 2020. Candidates currently in service must apply through proper channel.

GD-2123

Director

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA FRIDAY DECEMBER 27, 2019, POUISH 12, 1426 BS

The forthcoming Dhaka City elections

Another chance for EC to redeem itself

WHILE the leading opposition parties, particularly the BNP, have expressed their reservations on the conduct of the DCC elections, that they have started selling nomination forms, indicates that they intend to participate in the elections. That notwithstanding, we feel the EC would do well to take cognizance of the reservation of the oppositions parties and address the concerns with diligence.

Needless to say, there are reservations in people's minds regarding quality of the elections held recently, including the national elections and some of the local elections before that. And in this regard the comments of one of the election commissioners on the election process deserve attention of the CEC, because those convey much more than what he said. He was referring to the three local elections held in Ghazipur, Khulna and Barisal last year. It is no secret that those three elections were far from being free and fair. And that it reflects the ability or indeed the preparedness of the commission to exercise its writ on the political parties in so far as elections are concerned.

We may not be remiss in thinking that to some of us election means the date of polling only, and the commission may be suffering from the same misperception. The electioneering process starts with the allotment of poll symbols and that is from when the EC must gear up its wherewithal to ensure that the level playing field it talks about so much applies to all the candidates. And it must take stern and timely action against the violators and not merely warn them. It is not that the commission is incapable of giving us free and fair elections. And one only has to look back to Sylhet, Cumilla and Narayanganj mayoral elections. It may not be a coincidence that in two of the three, opposition nominees carried the day. We believe this is another chance for the EC to redeem its image which it cannot afford to lose.

Implement SC verdict on Jhilanja Mouza

Ecological integrity of Cox's Bazar must be preserved

AT a time when experts are struggling to find an answer to the environmental degradation in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf caused by vast swathes of forests and hills being cut down to make facilities and cooking fuel for the Rohingya refugees, it is heartening to know the apex court of the country is equally worried about the ongoing trend of deforestation and defilement. In the full text of a verdict released recently, the Supreme Court has urged the government to "adhere to the policy of preservation of the ecological balance and protection of the natural resources of our country." In particular, it instructed the government to cancel leases of plots in Jhilanja Mouza, an Ecologically Critical Area in Cox's Bazar, and demolish the structures built there. It also ordered the authorities not to grant any further lease within Jhilanja or any other area classified as ECAs. "Certainly, this much we owe to our progeny," the verdict reads.

The Cox's Bazar beach was declared an Ecologically Critical Area on April 19, 1999. The Jhilanja case follows the leasing out of 55 plots in the mouza in the ensuing decade which was subsequently cancelled, and a High Court judgement on July 22, 2010 declared valid the government decision in this regard. The Supreme Court ruling puts the legal battle to rest. However, despite the commendable effort by the government to go through with the cancellation decision, we must point out to the origin of all this: why were the plots leased out in the first place? Why was the special status of the place not considered before allowing hotels, motels and other commercial structures to be built in the area? Why did no one bother to weigh the environmental cost of such irresponsible decisions?

The sloppiness that led to the case in the first place is also symptomatic of the disregard and neglect with which Ecologically Critical Areas are often treated, resulting in mindless deforestation and devastation. For a country with fast-depleting natural resources, we cannot afford to be careless. We urge the government to take the SC verdict on Jhilanja Mouza as a lesson in doing the right thing at the right moment. We also hope the SC directives will be implemented without any delay.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Good old BTV

Bangladesh Television (BTV) recently celebrated their 55th founding anniversary. Growing up, BTV was the sole source of entertainment



and news for us 80s kids. Compared to current standards, its broadcast might have been limited, but whenever the oblong box in our living room was switched on, it had the magical power to gather members of our family into a circle creating a cozy atmosphere. Oh how I miss those days. Programmes like "Ityadi", "Alif Laila", "Kothao Keu Nei", and "MacGyver" to name a few, will forever serve as a means of nostalgia.

Over time, many private satellite channels have been introduced and the content too, changed accordingly; so did the shape and size of televisions. But that somewhat antique TV (in a wooden box with shutters) is still kept at my grandma's home as my family has a special bond with it. No matter how modern we become information and entertainment wise, our state-run BTV shall forever hold a special place in the hearts of the viewers of an era when life used to be simple and programmes used to be memorable.

Asiea Khan, Dhaka

Two decades after Y2K

BLOWN' IN
THE WIND



SHAMSAD MORTUZA

I was explaining the apocalyptic fear in Blake's poetry to my students. To offer a contemporary example, I mentioned the Y2K software problem that led to global panic responses, almost creating a doomsday scenario at the turn of the century. Most of my millennial students, however, gave me a blank look as they had no clue about the "millennium bug" that almost brought the world to a supposed end. It took me quite some time to realise that the entire generation was born in or around Y2K. They were too close to the problem to either remember or realise the full effect of what has now become a non-issue. The phones that they carry now probably have more access to a data-pool than a mainframe would have had 20 years ago. The idea that hard-disk-memory shortage could lead to a global crisis to an extent that computer programmes worldwide would fail to distinguish one millennium from the other is beyond comprehensible for most of my students.

My generation was born in or around 1971. We were too close to the birth pangs of a country. We benefitted from the sacrifices of the millions; then again, we grew up taking the independence of the country for granted. Our apathy to the plight of the selfless freedom fighters has been driven by our selfish pursuits. Our concerns have mostly been with the political promises that our politicians have made or albeit failed to deliver in the last five decades. We have seen presidential assassinations, rise and fall of dictators, birth-anesthetising-rebirth of democracy before the recent growth of economy that promises us a lift out of the LDC pit and a place by the Middle-Income-Country banks. As we approach the New Year, a ring of fire wreaths the sun for one last time—reminding us that no dark phases are permanent, and they are there to be either witnessed or participated in.

No one in the right sense of mind today would equate the celestial darkness with the national flow of events—as one would have done in the bygone days. Movies such as *Indiana Jones* and *Tarzan* cashed in on such possibilities to construct spectacular thrills. Now we are in a better position to compute the cause of such astronomical events and assess their consequences. They become part of our stories that recount events that are beyond our control. They are reminders of our previous stories that used to consume and engulf us with momentary darkness and fear. But humanity (like the metaphorical sun) has always shone through. The challenge always has been to brace against any dark design, analyse its course, and charter a plan of action analogous to the way we deal with cyclones or flood. We know that the onrush of neighbours or the twister of twisted ideas/foreign threats

may (im)pose a temporary ring of fire. But the body (i.e. biological/social/political) knows how to act and react, and wriggle out of any potential danger. Our DNA is a storehouse of memory that offers us instinctual or habitual guidance in moments like these. At the same time, the rotten bodies within our body that are spreading like cancer need to be arrested—whether with chemo or radioactive ray is a Stately matter. In a democratic state, the energy of the body determines the method. Student politics, for instance, can shine in its full glory if some hostile and malign bodies are removed or taken care of as has been desired by the public. This is equally true for any situation where we have malpractices and corruption. With an

into the line of gods hoping for a drop of the divine elixir. By the time Vishnu beheaded Rahu, the ambrosia had already immortalised the severed head, which from then onwards continued to hold grudges against the celestial orbs. According to this myth, eclipses happen when Rahu manages to eat up the sun and the moon before they slip out of its neck. Many mythical stories have been told by our ancestors to rationalise and explain natural phenomena. Different tribes, different races hold out their respective prisms to come up with their own stories.

Sky-watchers today have one story—the one that tells of all orbital movements, of lights and shadows, of umbra and penumbra to explain an eclipse. As Yuval

reductive version as another dark phase that needs to be defeated.

For Harari, the naught narrative that humans are about to experience, involves the exponential growth in biotech and infotech. The algorithm to analyse many complex human issues, the Big Data, including voting behaviours, now require the aid of the non-human AI. For too long we have been focusing on the external body. We ignored the fact that some of the stories are digging into our selves at a neuronal level. So far we have managed to kill the mosquitoes that buzzed outside our existence, but we have not been able to kill the buzzing thoughts that keep us awake. Consequently, while we sleep, our phones pursue our digital footprints and



The solar eclipse in Indian mythology was once considered the act of Rahu, a demon whose head was snapped off while trying to swallow ambrosia that would have made him immortal.

PHOTO: REUTERS/DONALD CHAN

optimistic viewing lens, it is possible to think beyond the darkness that shrouded us yesterday. We can even think of it as a fiery ring through which tigers would jump through and stun a global audience with all the successes it wants to attain before its silver jubilee.

Back in my school days, we would store X-ray films for months, wash the aluminium basin tubs to hold water as reflectors, or borrow sunglasses in preparation for the sighting of an eclipse. Little did we have the privilege of virtual viewing! Our approach to events are changing, so is the way we narrate them. Yesterday I followed online the fate of the sun during the solar eclipse, which in Indian mythology was once considered the act of Rahu, a demon whose head was snapped off while trying to swallow ambrosia that would have made him immortal. It was the timely spotting of the sun and the moon that alerted Lord Vishnu about Rahu's attempt of sneaking

Noah Harari reminds us in his 21 lessons for the 21st Century, "Humans think in stories rather than in facts, numbers or equations, and the simpler the story, the better." The solar eclipse story thus sounds better when we think it in terms of an eternal Tom-and-Jerry episode involving Rahu and the orbs.

Harari offers a simpler story to explain the current affairs by depicting history as a battleground of stories. "In 1938 humans were offered three global stories to choose from, in 1968 just two, in 1998 a single story seemed to prevail; in 2018 we are down to zero." The demise of Soviet Union allowed western liberalism to appear as the only surviving story that received a final blow once the global finance took a nosedive, and gave birth to Trump- and Brexit-mania. The West needed the immigrants to become the scapegoats. This is the nadir of liberal ideas; the dark demonic force that has eaten up the source of light. I find this

convert us—their owners—into analytical data bytes. Unknowingly, we are becoming a character in someone else's story over which we have no control.

As we prepare for the New Year, we must be ready for a new story. A story whose threads are many and they are integrated into our capillary veins. A story whose characters are ingrained in a distant cloud. We do not know how this story will define our mortal or immortal selves as long as we stay under the dark cloud. We do not know if a utopian or a dystopian world awaits us once this dark cloud disappears! For now, let us seize the moment to celebrate the ring of fire and the New Year, and use it as an opportunity to cleanse the darkness that is both inside and outside. Let us reflect on Blake, and recite: Tyger, Tyger burning bright!

Shamsad Mortuza is Professor of English, University of Dhaka (now on leave). Currently, he is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of ULAB. Email: shamsad71@hotmail.com

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Argentina's bright young hope



JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

JUDGING by his appointment of a first-rate economist to his cabinet as Minister of Economy, Argentina's new president, Alberto Fernández, is off to a good start in confronting his country's economic problems. Martin Guzmán, with whom I have frequently collaborated in recent years, is among the world's leading experts on sovereign debt and the problems it can cause, making him the right person in the right place at the right time.

After completing his PhD at Brown University under Peter Howitt (co-author with Philippe Aghion of seminal work in modern growth theory), Guzmán obtained a coveted position at Columbia University, where he forged an academic career and became an influential expert on crucial policy debates at the domestic and global level. He has testified before the US Congress on Puerto Rico's debt crisis and spoken at the United Nations about the need for a better international system for resolving sovereign debt crises. In recent years, he has divided his time between New York and Argentina, where he is a professor of macroeconomics at the University of Buenos Aires.

When former President Mauricio Macri took office, his economic team openly admitted that while they had inherited many problems, they started with one major advantage: a low level of debt. They gambled on a set of policies—making, for instance, untimely and unnecessarily large cuts in export taxes, paying off old, defaulted debt to so-called vulture funds with unconscionably high returns, and taking on new high-interest, long-term, dollar-denominated debt, all in the hope that market-friendly signals would lead to a rush of growth-spurring foreign investment. Even at the time I thought it was a foolhardy gamble.

The rest is history. It didn't work out,

and as matters went from bad to worse, Macri compounded the mistakes. More borrowing, including a USD 57 billion programme with the International Monetary Fund. Austerity. Misguided sterilisation efforts to prevent inflation, which built up a debt overhang. The worst of all possible worlds was soon at hand: more inflation (reaching almost 60 percent in the current year), higher unemployment (already at double digits and rising), and the re-imposition of the exchange controls, the removal of which Macri had hailed at the outset of his

with a wisdom well beyond his 37 years.

Given the mess that Macri has handed Fernández, there are no magic bullets. It is easier to say what not to do. As Fernández has put it, one doesn't solve a problem of excessive debt by taking on more debt. Nor does one solve a problem of recession and unemployment by imposing more austerity, which in every recession always leads to more economic contraction. The reality is that there will be no substantial private-sector flows in the immediate future, no matter what policies the government enacts.



Argentina's new economy minister, Martin Guzmán, has announced a raft of measures aimed at reviving growth.

PHOTO: AFP PHOTO/HO

administration as the cornerstone of his economic policy.

As a result, Fernández inherits a far worse economic situation than Macri confronted: higher inflation, higher unemployment, and now, a debt beyond Argentina's ability to service. Doubling down on a failed policy won't work; nor will returning to what preceded it. That's why it's so important that Fernández has appointed a knowledgeable, brilliant economist who combines youthful energy

But Argentina must husband its limited resources, devoting them to reigniting the economy. One hopes that the multilateral development banks will provide countercyclical lending for investment projects that spur growth and poverty alleviation (under Macri, poverty has once again grown enormously, to more than 35 percent of the population). There is enormous potential. Tourism, for example, boomed after the last major devaluation. Argentina has first-rate

universities and large numbers of highly educated, entrepreneurial people.

Bondholders won't necessarily be thinking, however, of Argentina's people or of the country's long-run potential. Many of them will be thinking only of the short-run gains from squeezing Argentina into more austerity. They will spin a story about a profligate country that lived beyond its means once again, even though they encouraged Macri in his misconceived policies and gave him the money that led Argentina into its current debt crisis. Presumably, they knew there was a risk: that's why they demanded and received such high interest rates. Some may be more thoughtful and understand that restoring Argentina's debt-service capacity depends on economic recovery.

In recent months, many other countries in the region have confronted political instability and economic turmoil. It is in no one's interest that Argentina be added to that list. We should celebrate the orderly transfer of power, and the commitment on all sides to maintain and defend democracy. We should also celebrate the shared vision that any effective economic programme must involve not only shared sacrifice but also shared prosperity when the fruits of that programme are achieved.

Fernández, with Guzmán, appears to be formulating a programme of moderation, avoiding the extremes of the past. Unlike Macri's agenda, the Fernández programme is not based on big gambles and wishful thinking. It is based on the hard realities of the situation that he has inherited. It represents Argentina's best chance to achieve gradual restoration of growth. Obviously, the more assistance the international community can provide, the faster and more robust the recovery will be.

Joseph E Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics, is University Professor at Columbia University and Chief Economist at the Roosevelt Institute. His most recent book is *People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent*.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

Where is thy freedom on the internet?

FAHMIDA ZAMAN

SINCE the Indian Parliament approved the Citizenship Amendment Bill on December 11, hundreds of thousands of Indians are protesting against the controversial amendment, which critics claim marginalises Muslim minorities of the country. In the wake of these protests, New Delhi's police department ordered the country's largest telecom carriers to stop voice, text, and internet services on December 18. Similarly, following revoking of the special status of the Indian administrated Kashmir, internet access has been blocked in the region for over 135 days. The consecutive internet shutdown in Kashmir is now being called the longest ever internet shut down in a democracy. Internet shutdown by states, especially during protests, is not unique to India. In Bangladesh, the government has sometimes blocked independent news websites and arrested ordinary citizens for the social media contents deemed critical of the government. During the 2018 road-safety protest, there were allegations of slowing



To that extent, Freedom House estimates that the level of internet freedom globally has declined for the ninth consecutive year in 2019. A few important takeaways from the Washington D.C based think tank's Freedom on the Internet 2019 report, which described the level of internet freedom for the year 2018, are that, first of all, governments are not only limiting freedom of expression online but also taking active legal steps against citizens. Of the 65 countries assessed for the Freedom House report in 2019, that law enforcement agencies in 47 countries arrested people for posting political, social, or religious content online. Secondly, an increased number of countries, 40 of the 65 countries in 2018, are adapting to the new culture of digital authoritarianism by instituting advanced social media surveillance programmes. 15 of 40 countries that are using advanced social media surveillance, it was only in the past year that such programmes were either expanded or newly established. As a result, 89 percent of internet users, close to three billion people, are being monitored on social media. Finally, since 2018, overall internet freedom, measured by a country's obstacles to internet access, content limits, and user rights violations, declined in 33 countries. This indicates, as noted earlier, the rise of digital authoritarianism around the world. The report also revealed that Bangladesh, along with Sudan, Kazakhstan, Brazil, and Zimbabwe, witnessed the biggest decline in internet freedom in 2018.

What does such a continuous decline in internet freedom in Bangladesh and around the world tell us? The diminishing freedom on the internet is indicative of the ongoing democratic backsliding and shirking of freedom of expression around the world. The democratic backsliding has been marked by a global shift towards authoritarianism, diminishing press freedom, limits on freedom of expression, and the rise of right-wing populist ideologies in all corners of the world. Over the past 13 years, democratic norms and values have sharply declined in both long-standing democracies such as the United States and the UK and other regimes such as in Turkey, India, and Bangladesh. All in all, democracy, along with citizen's freedom online and rights to freedom of expression, is in danger.

Furthermore, efforts to control the internet and social media are responsive to concerns

over the government's ability to maintain domestic political control. Governments that perceive their power or legitimacy to be threatened by a mass display of dissatisfaction online or through protests are more likely to enhance restrictive measures online. Such restrictive measures online are aimed to limit the role of the internet and social media in spreading critical discourse or mobilising protests. For example, India has been regularly shutting down the internet. In fact, according to the Software Freedom Law Centre, various levels of authorities in India have shut down the internet 376 times since 2012 including 134 in 2018 and 104 times in 2019.

Deteriorating internet freedom is followed by suppression or co-option of traditional news sources. Populist leaders, for example, in India favoured media outlets that are flattering to the governments while isolating, harassing, or even denying licenses to critical news outlets. In other countries, harassments and killings of journalists have become more common. The 2018 murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a fierce critique of the Saudi government, was the most infamous recent case, but it was hardly unique. Given the shirking press freedom, it is not surprising that repressive governments would like to curb the scope of information dissemination through the internet and social media, particularly when these platforms become an alternative source of information due to the lack of legitimacy of traditional news sources among citizens.

Internet, and social media platforms, and the cyberspace in general, have become the new battleground for democratic norms and values. In 2019, Larry Diamond described social media as a "major threat to democratic stability and human freedom" acknowledging the dismal shift in social media's role in promoting democracy and freedom. Authoritarian and repressive governments are employing tactics and tools of digital authoritarianism to constantly monitor citizens' activities and eliminate any perceived dissents on the internet. Preserving internet freedom, however, cannot be separated from preserving freedom of press and freedom of expression offline as these are intrinsically connected and major components of democracy.

Fahmida Zaman is a PhD student in Political Science in the United States.

Deteriorating internet freedom is followed by suppression or co-option of traditional news sources.

PHOTO: REUTERS/SOE ZEYA TUN

down mobile networks to limit internet usages and there had been cases of arrest of social media users for "spreading fake news." Internet and social media platforms in their early days emerged as a beacon of light so much so that prominent political scientists Larry Diamond hailed them as "liberating technologies." Diamond argued that these technologies "can expand political, social, and economic freedom" and can even be used for "mobilising against authoritarian rule." Of course, one could claim that the Arab Spring in 2011 provided empirical evidence in support of Diamond's argument. The Arab Spring protesters across North Africa and the Middle East used the internet, mobile phones, and various social media platforms to mobilise and overthrow four dictators—Zineel Abadine Ben Ali of Tunisia, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen, and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. In Bangladesh, the Shahbag movement in 2013 used platforms provided by the internet to organise and spread its messages. Most recently, the road-safety movement has relied heavily on social media to mobilise and

disseminate information not only because of the conveniences of quick information spreading but also due to a lack of trust in the traditional news sources. Yet, the increased usages of digital technologies by state apparatus to control cyberspace has not gone unnoticed. Following the lead of China over the last ten years, numerous countries around the world including Bangladesh have used tactics of internet surveillance, particularly in attempts to curb anti-government protests, and imposed legal restrictions to control cyberspace.

This rise in attempts to control the cyberspace and restrict freedom of expression online has been called digital authoritarianism. Digital authoritarianism refers to the means through which authoritarian and repressive governments surveil and repress dissent on the internet. These are done by creating laws, policies, and regulations such as the Digital Security Act in Bangladesh. Governments are also adopting more covert policies to delegitimise criticism, for example, by claiming such opposing opinions as fake-news.

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The 'Londoni' Connection



ISMAIL ALI

IT is said that Sylhet, the northern metropolitan city, is the London of Bangladesh. Nearly 150 people from my native Bangladeshi village of Kewali Para are now proud British citizens. The majority of them living in

London's inner boroughs, Tower Hamlets in particular, have nice but empty houses and own almost half of arable but abandoned land in the village.

Although they experience a range of socio-economic problems in their everyday life in London, they play a pivotal role in the development of the village they left behind, apart from supporting their relatives. When I met the Member of Parliament (MP) for this constituency during his recent London visit and requested him for the completion of an important road, he said it will be built in the next few months with the help of "Londonis" (a popular term for Bangladeshi British).

The same applies to every British of Bangladeshi origin, almost 600,000, according to the 2015 census. Among them, 95 percent come from one particular region: Sylhet. A large number migrated to the United Kingdom (UK) during the 1950s and over a period of say 70 years they have transformed their land of origin, too.

British Bangladeshis have also made their mark in their new home: the UK. As professionals, diplomats and MPs they make significant contributions to this country.

The success story of Bangladeshi restaurants (mainly Sylheti) is well known. It adds 4.5 billion pounds yearly to the British economy and employs 150,000 people. Meghan Markle, the American-born wife of Prince Harry, needs to know that the Chicken Tikka

Masala is Britain's national dish to pass the British citizenship test.

The London-Sylhet connection is historically deep. Brick Lane is a mini Sylhet and many things in Sylhet are reminiscent of London. British schools have included the Sylheti language as a separate subject.

However, the fourth-generation of British-Bangladeshis are detached from the roots of their grandparents. Compared to the first-generation, who left their loved ones behind, the new generation feel Britain is their home. The consequence of this detachment concerns many.

A 2009 study by the University of Surrey found that the financial relationship between Londoni families and those in Bangladesh was "rapidly changing." "In 1995 20 percent of the Bangladeshi families in east London were sending money to Bangladesh whereas in the 60s and 70s, 85 percent were remitting their savings." Today the proportion may be even smaller than 10 percent.

During the 1990s, there was a trend of marriages between Londonis and native-born Bangladeshis. Young men and women would visit Bangladesh to get married. However, this generation is more likely to get married in the UK within the British culture.

This change of heart is apparently an unavoidable reality. For a large number of families in Britain the rising cost of living severely constrains any regular financial commitment towards their relatives back home. The family reunion process has resulted in conflicts over land and property between members of a household divided by migration. Occupying Londonis' land, houses and businesses is a worrying trend in Sylhet. Complaints piled up when Abdul Momen, Bangladesh Foreign Minister, also a Sylheti, visited London recently.

"Is London getting poorer?" asked one of my nephews during a recent telephone conversation. When I enquired why, he



The fourth-generation of British-Bangladeshis are detached from the roots of their grandparents.

PHOTO: REUTERS/MICHAEL DALDER/FILE PHOTO

replied that most of the Londonis he knows talk about selling their Bangladeshi assets these days. 10 or 20 years back the opposite was the case, as my nephew recalled.

Coming back to the point of remittance, it is true that most of the money has been spent on buying land and constructing luxurious mansions even in a rural landscape. As Ayub Korom Ali, a former Labour Party councillor in the London borough of Newham, observes, big Londoni houses in the area of Upshohar are standing vacant and the upper floors of many shopping centres in Sylhet remain unoccupied.

Nevertheless, the flow of remittances (a billion dollars each year) is not only crucial

for Bangladesh's economy, but for many families in Sylhet it is also their lifeline. Sylhet was known to be one of the richest cities in Bangladesh after Dhaka, thanks to the remittances sent back home by the Londonis. But this prosperity may not be sustainable in the long run.

He also highlights, "There are few large industries and agricultural production is low compared to other districts. Where farmers in other regions grow three crops a year, most of Sylhet produces only one."

Thereby, Sylhet and many other townships in the region—Maulvibazar, Beani Bazar, Biswanath, and Goalabazar—will become vulnerable when the London connection

disappears and remittances dry up. Nearby upazila of Jagannathpur and Chhatak in Sunamganj district, enjoying the same London connected lifestyle, will also feel the pain.

Policy makers need to think about this important issue urgently. Setting up a proposed Special Economic Zone in Sylhet (rich in natural resources like gas, stone and minerals) can not only attract British multinational corporations, but also transform the economic landscape of the region. Moreover, investing in Sylhet can open up trade potential for British businesses with neighbouring India.

Perhaps keeping the above in mind, the British High Commissioner in Bangladesh was considering exploring the London-Sylhet connection and establish a long-term commercial relation with Sylhet, when he said, "British Bangladeshis are at the forefront of everything we do."

With a sustained eight percent growth rate, Bangladesh (one among Next-9, after BRIC—Brazil, Russia, India, China, according to American Investment Bank Goldman Sachs) is an attractive investment destination. And Britain, being the largest development partner, second biggest foreign direct investor and third highest export destination for Bangladesh, is a country of the highest importance.

Finally, the fourth generation of highly educated and entrepreneurial British-Bangladeshis can transform the remittance-dependent economic relationship into an investment driven win-win bond with the place from which they originated. Like one of my brothers-in-law, a born-and-brought up Sylheti-British, recently started a Manchester-based (UK) perfume manufacturing company collecting raw materials from Sylhet. But the host must ensure the appropriate environment.

Ismail Ali works for Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, an England based organisation.

QUOTABLE Quote



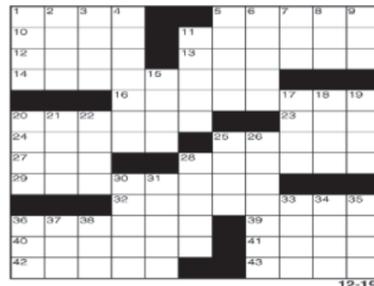
TAMA J KIEVES (Born 1961)

American writer and career coach.

If everyone is speaking caterpillar, don't be afraid to speak butterfly. When it's time to awaken, nothing else will suit you.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| ACROSS | wife | 18 Solitary |
| 1 Surgery souvenir | 40 Cheers | 19 Symbol of grace |
| 5 Straight beater | 41 Greek vowels | 20 Salon sound |
| 10 Superb | 42 Tribal leader | 21 Surrounding glow |
| 11 Skull protectors | 43 Declares | 22 Sketched |
| 12 Got larger | | 25 Shark features |
| 13 Snappy answer | DOWN | 26 Brings into harmony |
| 14 Looked into | 1 Hangs down | 28 New Zealand natives |
| 16 Injustices | 2 "Downton Abbey" countess | 30 China piece |
| 20 Rider's seat | 3 Over again | 31 Less common |
| 23 Fiddling need | 4 Bounties | 33 Greek vowel |
| 24 Clinic worker | 5 Psychoanalysis pioneer | 34 Waiter's aid |
| 25 Animal life | 6 Barista's creation | 35 Pertness |
| 27 Wrath | 7 First número symbol | 36 Bishopric |
| 28 Siamese baby | 8 Polite address | 37 Maximum amount |
| 29 Penn State | 9 Bowler, e.g. | 38 Craze |
| 32 They may be settled | 11 "Gladiator" star | |
| 36 Game quest | 15 Hay unit | |
| 39 Nick Charles's | 17 Touch on | |



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

DASH TENSOR
 UNTIL TENSOR
 CARTA INTRO
 ALI TOP DOGS
 TOPTENS LIE
 GEENSE IDA
 STILLT
 BETRACKS
 SOS TOPHATS
 TOPGUNS RAP
 AGAIN ELATE
 RINSE SATIN
 SEAT SECT

BETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinon@gmail.com.

At least 16 killed

FROM PAGE 20

Boracay, Coron and other holiday destinations that are famed for their white-sand beaches and popular with foreign tourists.

Mobile phone and internet access on Boracay was cut during the storm and the networks remained down on Thursday, making assessment of the damage there difficult.

"Still, communication lines are down. Electricity is still down," Jonathan Pablito, police chief of Malay town in Alkan province, which is on an island neighbouring Boracay, told AFP.

Pablito said ferry services between Boracay and Aklan -- the main way to travel to and from the holiday island -- were still not operating on Thursday, even though the storm had passed.

"We have no news from coast guard if ships were allowed to sail. Since the 24th... all those going to the island and coming from the island weren't able to cross."

The airport at Kalibo town in Aklan, which services Boracay, was badly damaged, according to a Korean tourist who was stranded there and provided images to AFP.

"Roads remain blocked, but some efforts have been made to clear away the damage. It's pretty bad," Jung Byung-joon said via Instagram messenger.

"Everything within 100 meters of the airport looks broken. There are a lot of frustrated people at the airport as flights have been cancelled.

"Taxis are still running but it's

windy and still raining so no one wants to leave the airport, including me."

Another Korean tourist stuck at the damaged airport said she had been unable to make contact with her friend on Boracay on Thursday.

"I tried to call my friend in Boracay today and wasn't able to get through. Maybe something isn't working," Dahae Gong told AFP via Instagram.

"I don't know when I will be able to go home."

Still, there was no indication of any major damage or otherwise on Boracay.

Though much weaker, Phanfone tracked a similar path as Super Typhoon Haiyan -- the country's deadliest storm on record which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

"It's like the younger sibling of Haiyan. It's less destructive, but it followed a similar path," Cindy Ferrer, an information officer at the Western Visayas region's disaster bureau, told AFP.

In San Jose town in Occidental Mindoro, a video uploaded by the local government showed overturned fishing vessels and ruined shanties on the coast due to the storm.

Tens of thousands of people in the mostly Catholic nation were forced to evacuate their homes on Wednesday, ruining Christmas celebrations.

Many others were not able to return to their families, with ferries and plane services suspended.



Indian police detain a demonstrator during a protest against a new citizenship law, in front of Uttar Pradesh state bhawan (building) in New Delhi yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

RHD

FROM PAGE 20

it will hamper boat movement, he said.

"They [RHD] should have considered it when designing the bridge and now they are saying that they will demolish it," he lamented.

Nasrul, also the lawmaker of the constituency concerned, said that the prime minister gave directives not to construct any bridge without the adequate height clearance so that the waterways remain usable. But these pillars will block the waterway.

Abdus Sabur, additional chief engineer (Dhaka Zone) of the RHD, said they stopped the work more than one month ago after receiving a complaint from the local lawmaker.

"We will demolish the pillar soon," Sabur, who is the RHD project director, told The Daily Star on December 22.

"The implementation authority has already submitted a revised drawing to us and work for demolition of the pillars will start as soon as we get approval from the high-ups," he added.

Shahin Ahmed, chairman of Keraniganj Upazila Parishad, said, "We have heard that a decision was made to demolish the pillars. If the pillars remain in the canal it will block the waterway."

THE CANAL
Shuvadya canal connects two rivers -- the Dhaleshwari and the Buriganga.

After a bridge was built in 2004 near Kaliganj, the water flow in the canal dropped and it soon dried up completely.

Around 5,000 small garment factories at Shuvadya union are also responsible for the drying up of the canal as these factories had been dumping their waste in the canal over the years, locals said.

The Water Development Board, with assistance of the armed forces and the district administration, excavated the canal and conducted drives against illegal encroachers in early 2008. The canal was reopened to the public for communication on June 16, 2008.

But people kept on dumping trash into the canal that soon blocked the waterway.

Four years ago, a smaller-scale re-excavation effort was made to revive the waterway.

But now a large portion of the canal's bed near Kadamtali Khalpar area has dried up due to indiscriminate dumping of solid waste. Things turned worse after the three pillars were built blocking the canal, said locals.

Mohammad Shamim, a resident of Jhaubari of Dakkhin Keraniganj, said, "I have seen boat races in the canal after the renovation work around four years ago. But things are back to square one as people started dumping waste in the canal again."

7 migrants die

FROM PAGE 20

Adilcevaz district in Bitlis, which is on the northern shores of Lake Van, the office said in a statement.

The lake is near the border with Iran, from where migrants regularly cross into Turkey, heading west towards Europe, it adds.

It was not clear why the migrants were on the boat in Lake Van, which is completely within Turkey's borders.

Five people were found dead at the scene and two died in hospital, while the 64 people rescued were taken to nearby hospitals and shelters, the governor's office said.

It said gendarmerie forces, emergency response teams and police divers were conducting search operations.

On this day in 1971

FROM PAGE 20

Pakistan army kill 36 wounded Indian troops in Kamalapur. They hoisted white flag to mark Indian army's position, Karanjia says.

General Manekshaw meets President Syed Nazrul Islam, Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad and commander-in-chief Col MAG Osmani individually.

Pakistan President Bhutto meets Bangabandhu in Rawalpindi, but the follow-up of the meeting was unknown, a BBC report says.

Provisional President Syed Nazrul Islam says in a meeting at Awami

League's headquarters in Purana Paltan that diplomatic conversation is underway to free Bangabandhu. Pakistan could not keep the president of a free country for long, he says.

More alleged collaborators arrested: Dr Hasan Zaman, former director of Pakistan Academy, Nasiruddin Ahmad Chowdhury, former minister, Maolana Atahar Ali of Kishoreganj town, Maolana Sayedur Rahman of Mymensingh town, Bahauddin Ahmad, former additional SP of Sylhet, Md SB Doza, CO, Dhaka Kotwali, Nurul Amin, superintendent of Tejaon

Telephone Workshop, Shahabuddin, foreman, Dhaka Electric Supply, Maolana Bazlur Rahman of Cumilla's Doyapur, SM Mujtaba Khurshid, former OC of Lalbagh Police Station, Sub-inspector Yusuf Ali Chowdhury, former OC of Kaliganj Police Station, SI Md Isahaq, former OC of Mohamadpur Police Station, Habildar Nawab Khan, EPCAF, Shami, Mujahid Commander in Mirpur, Md Akil, Mujahid of Mirpur, Md Ali, Mujahid of Mirpur, Abdul Aziz Manna, Mujahid of Mirpur, Shur Mohammad, Mujahid of Mirpur, Shahabuddin, agent of Pakistan army, Abdul Zahir, Razakar,

Noakhali, Anka Ohee, Razakar, CHT, Abul Bashar Md Shahjahan, Al-Badr member, Feni, Syed Md Mohen Kader from Mohamadpur, Anisur Rahman, commander of Al-Badr, Bilal Hossain, commander of Al-Badr, SA Siddiqui, commander of Al-Badr, ABM Khalek Majumder, Al-Badr, Omar Hayat of Mirpur, Sirajuddin, member of Peace Committee, Ashraf Ali, member of Al-Badr, Faridabad, SM Munibul Haq, convener of Peace Committee, Haed Ershad Hossain, Tejaon, Dhaka, Syed Md Mohsin, member of Al-Badr, Mohamadpur and Mohammad Hanif of Mirpur.

16,000 complaints filed in Afghan presidential polls

AFP, Kabul

More than 16,000 complaints have been filed to Afghan election authorities over the handling of this year's presidential polls, officials said yesterday, days after preliminary results put President Ashraf Ghani in place to secure a second term.

Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced earlier this week that Ghani had won a slim 50.64 percent majority in the September 28 poll.

The final results are expected to be announced in the coming weeks after the complaints have been reviewed.

"(Officials) have 15 days to finalise its investigation into the complaints and release the results to the candidates," said Zuhra Bayan Shinwari, head of the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), adding that 16,500 complaints were received in total.

If the numbers hold following these investigations, the result is enough for Ghani to avoid a run-off, after he easily beat his long time rival Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, who scored 39.52 percent.

According to Shinwari, Abdullah's team filed around 8,000 complaints to the ECC and Ghani handed in over

3,000, while the rest were submitted by other candidates.

Preliminary results originally due October 19 were repeatedly delayed for what the IEC said were technical issues. Various candidates, particularly Abdullah, alleged fraud.

Observers and candidates have blasted the IEC over its handling of the count and its repeated disregard of the electoral calendar.

The election was meant to be the cleanest yet in Afghanistan's young democracy.

A German firm supplied biometric machines to stop people from voting more than once.

But allegations of vote stuffing,

illegal balloting and other fraud came almost as soon as the polls had closed.

Nearly one million of the initial 2.7 million votes were purged owing to irregularities, meaning the election saw by far the lowest turnout of any Afghan poll.

Ultimately, only 1.8 million votes were counted -- a tiny number given Afghanistan's estimated population of 37 million and a total of 9.6 million registered voters.

Abdullah lost to Ghani in 2014 in a divisive election that saw the US intervene to broker an awkward power-sharing deal between the two rivals.

UN, Pope voice solidarity with Burkina Faso after jihadist attack

AFP, Ouagadougou

A jihadist attack that left 42 dead in the north of Burkina Faso, the worst assault in the country for five years, plunged the nation into mourning over Christmas and sparked messages of solidarity from the United Nations and Pope Francis.

Thirty-five civilians, including 31 women, and seven soldiers were killed Tuesday in a morning raid which lasted for several hours and targeted both civilians and a military base in the northern town of Arbinda, the army said, adding that 80 assailants were killed.

Around a dozen soldiers also died in a separate night-time ambush 60 kilometres (37 miles) away in Hallele, in the same volatile northern province of Soum, security sources said Wednesday.

Burkina Faso, bordering Mali and

Niger, has seen frequent jihadist attacks which have left hundreds of people dead since the start of 2015 when Islamist extremist violence began to spread across the Sahel region.

"A large group of terrorists simultaneously attacked the military base and the civilian population in Arbinda," the army chief of staff said.

"While the (military) group was under heavy fire, another group of armed individuals attacked the civilian population, mainly women including displaced people who had taken refuge in Arbinda," a security source told AFP.

President Roch Marc Christian Kabore confirmed that 35 civilians were killed in the "barbaric attack" in Arbinda and declared 48 hours of national mourning over Wednesday and yesterday.

Government spokesman Remis

Dandjinou said 31 of the civilian victims were women.

There was worldwide condemnation of the attack, as well as expressions of support for Burkina Faso.

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the Christmas Eve attack and offered his "deep condolences" to the families of the victims, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

"The Secretary-General conveys the solidarity of the United Nations to the government and people of Burkina Faso," he added, emphasising the UN's continued support for the Sahel region in their efforts to fight terrorism and violent extremism.

In his traditional Christmas message, Pope Francis denounced attacks on Christians in Africa and prayed for victims of conflict, natural disasters and disease on the world's

poorest continent.

The pontiff urged "comfort to those who are persecuted for their religious faith, especially missionaries and members of the faithful who have been kidnapped, and to the victims of attacks by extremist groups, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria".

In Brussels, the head of the European Council Charles Michel tweeted: "Inates in Niger yesterday, Arbinda in Burkina Faso today... Martyr towns, victims of a rampant terrorism that threatens us all. The European Union stands by Africa in its battle against terrorism."

Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou also expressed his "solidarity" and, speaking "in the name of the Nigerien people" offered his "condolences for all civilian and military victims."

Russia raids Navalny's offices but Kremlin critic is free

AFP, Moscow

Russian police yesterday conducted fresh searches at Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's anti-corruption foundation, with his team calling the raid a new bid to disrupt their work.

Navalny, 43, said he was not detained, contrary to earlier reports. "I was simply forcibly dragged out of the office (for some reason)," he said on Twitter.

Navalny also said the police were seizing "everything," and suggested the raids took place yesterday because he was to address supporters in a weekly YouTube programme in the evening.

Navalny also linked the searches to his refusal to remove a 2017 report that accused Prime Minister Dmitry

Medvedev of massive corruption and has racked up nearly 33 million views on YouTube.

A picture posted by his staff on Twitter showed Russian President Vladimir Putin's top opponent sitting on the floor with his legs crossed and two men in black uniform looking at him.

A video released by the team showed how law enforcement agents tried to break into the FBK offices using a power saw that sent sparks flying.

"New Year's fireworks," Navalny's ally Nikolai Lyaskin quipped on Twitter. Another video showed men clad in black uniforms, masks and helmets searching the FBK premises.

In a separate development, Russia's top opposition newspaper Novaya

Gazeta said yesterday that authorities had searched the Moscow apartment of its special correspondent Yulia Polukhina.

After the raid, the mother-of-two was taken to "an unknown destination," the award-winning newspaper said in a statement.

"So far this looks like an abduction," Novaya Gazeta said.

It added that the searches were linked to Novaya Gazeta publications including those concerning "illegal armed groups" operating in the war-torn eastern Ukraine where Kiev is battling against pro-Kremlin separatists.

Authorities have been steadily ramping up pressure on Navalny and his allies in recent years with regular searches and short jail terms for the

Kremlin critic and his allies.

The FBK offices were searched several times this year.

The foundation's door, which has been repeatedly broken down, now has its own account on Twitter.

"I am alive and hanging in there," the account said yesterday.

Navalny helped organise major protests against the government this summer that saw tens of thousands march in Moscow to demand fair elections.

A number of people received jail terms for taking part in those protests.

On Wednesday, Navalny said that one of his allies had been forcibly conscripted and sent to serve at a remote Arctic base, a move his supporters also said amounted to kidnapping.

Honest German

FROM PAGE 20

In Germany, anyone who returns a found object is entitled to a finder's fee based on the value of the item.

In this case, the finder would have been 490 euros richer if he had accepted the reward.

The police's Facebook post sharing the feel-good story attracted over a 1,000 likes and nearly 180 comments, although some expressed surprise that anyone would walk around with so much cash.

A Krefeld police spokesman told AFP yesterday that while it was "unusual", the backpack's owner had said "he felt safer" carrying his money on him.

Mentally

FROM PAGE 20

arrest the accused who went into hiding.

A cousin of the victim filed a complaint with Upazila Nirbahi Officer Nusrat Jahan in this regard. The UNO directed the police to take legal action against the accused.

The OC said the victim was in safe custody and they would send her to Jashore General Hospital today for medical examination.

Four killed

FROM PAGE 20

Since February, shelling and mortar fire across the LoC has become more frequent, after a suicide attack in Indian-administered Kashmir killed more than 40 soldiers, prompting India to blame Pakistan.

The resulting military conflict saw India launch air attacks on Pakistani soil, with Pakistan retaliating and shooting down an Indian fighter jet.

Tensions eased when Pakistan returned the pilot of the aircraft days later but violence at the LoC has continued unabated.

It escalated again in August after India revoked a special constitutional status for Indian-administered Kashmir that allowed it limited autonomy, a move accompanied by a widespread security crackdown to quell protests against it.

Large parts of the territory remain under a security lockdown and curfew, including communications blockades.

Cold

FROM PAGE 20

president of Panchagarh Exporters and Importers Association.

Meanwhile, around 130 children and 162 adults were admitted to the Thakurgoan Sadar Hospital with diseases that were related to the weather, said sources at the hospital.

KM Kamruzzaman Selim, deputy commissioner of Thakurgoan, said the district administration already distributed around 35,500 blankets and 200 quilts.

THREE DIED OF BURN
A minor girl and a youth, sustained burn injuries while trying to keep themselves warm by sitting beside fire, died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday.

The dead are Sabiha, 3, of Sundarganj upazila, and Alam Mia, 35, of Sadullahpur upazila in Gaibandha.

In Thakurgoan, one Romija Bewa, 70, was burnt alive at Senua Bazar area in Pirganj upazila on Wednesday night.

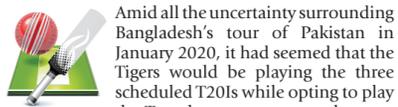
Around 7:00pm on the evening, started burning firewood under her bed to keep her room warm. At one stage, her mosquito net caught fire. She was burnt alive, said Proddip Kurmar Roy, officer-in-charge of Pirganj Police Station.

Our Dinaipur and Thakurgoan correspondents contributed to this report



Pakistan tour T20Is also in doubt?

SPORTS REPORTER



Amid all the uncertainty surrounding Bangladesh's tour of Pakistan in January 2020, it had seemed that the Tigers would be playing the three scheduled T20Is while opting to play the Tests later or at a neutral venue, but Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Nazmul Hassan hinted yesterday that even the T20Is may be in doubt. Hassan spoke to reporters and informed that Bangladesh will only be able to play the T20 series in Pakistan but even that will depend on whether the board can form a good team for the tour given that many of the players and coaching staff are unwilling to travel to Pakistan.

The BCB president said that talks were still ongoing with the players as the board prepares to form the T20 squad. Bangladesh are unwilling to play the Test series in Pakistan at the moment. He also said that there were no doubts about the security system in Pakistan.

"The biggest thing is that there is no room for doubt over the security system being provided by Pakistan. I went there myself and the women's team was there as well and also the U-16 team. The feedback we received from them was that the

do not want to stay that long under such a security environment. Those who have wanted to go, said that they want to go and play the T20s and return inside one week," BCB president informed.

Under such circumstances, the BCB are likely to find it difficult to put together a full-strength side for the T20I series in Pakistan. Hassan said that their decision will rest on whether they can manage to form a good side while also citing that they are waiting for all the security clearance from the government agencies.

International cricket in Pakistan had stalled for six years after the Sri Lankan team bus came under terrorist attack in Lahore in 2009. Since 2015, teams like Zimbabwe, West Indies, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka have played the odd short series in the country. Only recently had Test cricket returned with Sri Lanka completing a two-Test series in Rawalpindi and Karachi earlier this month.

"We have already communicated [to the PCB] that we are trying to send a team for the T20s if the players are willing.

"If the players and the staff are willing and we can manage to form a good team, then we will send our team. Some of our star players have said that they don't even want to play the T20s. We are awaiting government clearances. We have already gotten approval from one

If the players and the staff are willing and we can manage to form a good team, then we will send our team.

NAZMUL HASSAN
BCB PRESIDENT



security system is good," Hassan said.

He also mentioned that many of the players and the foreign coaching staff do not want to go to Pakistan. "Many of the coaching staff has already informed us that they don't want to go. Some of them have said that they do want to go but only for a short period; only a handful though wanted that as most of the foreign staff do not want to go.

"From what I understood from talking to the players, some of them do not want to go. Others were willing to go only for a short period of time. I wanted to know why and understand their mindset.

"One of the factors in their decision was their families. Many in their families are very anxious about the Pakistan series. The second factor is how long they can prevail in such a security environment. It is fully secure and very much a closed-off environment. This is what the majority of the players are saying. They

section and awaiting other instructions. We need clearance from the security agencies.

"One thing is certain, we won't force any player to go," he said.

Question remains on whether the Tests -- part of the ICC Test Championship -- will be forfeited if Bangladesh do not play. "I don't know the whole detail of the procedure which will follow since this kind of situation doesn't arise often. I hope that they [PCB] will understand our situation and try to arrange the Tests at a neutral venue.

"We want cricket to return to Pakistan but our boys are going there for the first time after such a long gap so they should also consider our side. I think the matches can be rescheduled and if that doesn't happen the issue will go to arbitration," he concluded.



Khulna Tigers' cricketers enjoy their warm-up game of football at the Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday before preparing for today's BBPL match against Rangpur Rangers in their bid to move up the table. Before that, the day's first match will see the clash of form teams Dhaka Platoon and Chattogram Challengers, the current table-toppers, with the top spot at stake and the Challengers will be looking to Mehedi Hasan Rana to continue his form with the ball.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Chattogram eye play-off spot

SPORTS REPORTER



After a high-scoring Chattogram phase that ended on December 24, the Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) will resume at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

Table-toppers Chattogram Challengers, who won three of their four home fixtures, will face third-placed Dhaka Platoon in the day game with the top spot at stake. In the evening match, Khulna Tigers will lock horns with bottom-placed Rangpur Rangers.

Chattogram's stand-in captain Imrul Kayes, who has been in fine form, informed that his team would like to win today's fixture and confirm their spot for the play-off.

"The future plan is to win the next game as maybe we will confirm [play-off spot] if we can win six matches, and then we will have four more matches and we will think about it later. But the next target is to win the next game," Imrul told reporters after Chattogram Challengers' practice session at the Academy ground in Mirpur yesterday. Imrul also shed some light on regular

skipper Mahmudullah Riyad's return. Mahmudullah, who missed the last two matches of their Chattogram phase due to a recurring hamstring injury that he originally sustained during Bangladesh's pink-ball Test against India last month, may miss today's game but is expected to return for the next game if the physio declares him fit.

"This actually depends on the physio. But I hope that even if he cannot play tomorrow's [Friday's] game, he will be available for the next matches. But it is still not certain."

De Kock leads SA fightback

REUTERS, Centurion

Quinton de Kock fell five runs short of his century after dragging South Africa out of early trouble to 277 for nine at the close on the opening day of the first Test against England at Centurion Park on Thursday.

England took a wicket with the opening delivery of the four-Test series and had their hosts teetering on 111-5 after lunch but De Kock's belligerent innings brought South Africa back into the match.

James Anderson marked his 150th cap and return to the England attack with the first-ball wicket of opener Dean Elgar, setting the tourists up for early domination of an inexperienced home side seeking to halt a run of five successive Test defeats. Sam Curran's skilful bowling earned him figures of 4-57 and Stuart Broad returned from illness to claim 3-52.

But De Kock wrestled the initiative away from England with an innings that combined early aggression, as he sought to impose himself on the bowlers, with later circumspection.

He reached his 50 off 45 balls with some ferocious hitting before digging in to try to tire out the England bowlers on a hot day.

He fell agonisingly short of a sixth Test century as he feathered an away swinger from Curran through to wicketkeeper Jos Buttler for 95 off 128 balls.

De Kock featured in an 87-run sixth-wicket stand with 30-year-old debutant Dwaine Pretorius, who made 33, and 47 runs for the seventh wicket with Vernon Philander who was 28 not out at the close.

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 277 for 9 (Hamza 39, Du Plessis 29, De Kock 95, Pretorius 33, Philander 28 not out; Broad 3-52, Curran 4-57)



Steve Smith's unbeaten knock of 77 put Australia in a comfortable position on the first day of the second Test against New Zealand in Melbourne yesterday. (Inset) 80,473 fans at MCG, the largest ever crowd for a day, watched the game. PHOTO: AFP/TWITTER

Hosts seize control on Day 1

AFP, Melbourne



Master batsman Steve Smith ground out an unbeaten 77 Thursday as he zeroed in on yet another century, putting Australia in the driving seat after the opening day of the second Test against New Zealand.

In the Black Caps' first Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground since 1987, skipper Kane Williamson won the toss and opted to bowl, and

it looked to be a good decision with Joe Burns out first ball and David Warner just before lunch.

But first Marnus Labuschagne, the world's leading run-scorer for 2019, and then Smith smacked half centuries to seize back control and leave them on 257 for four, frustrating the disciplined New Zealand bowlers.

Along with the fidgety Smith, Travis Head was not out 25, desperate for runs after a lean spell. Labuschagne made 63 with Colin de Grandhomme taking 2-48.

The signs are ominous for New Zealand with superstar Smith scoring centuries in his past four Tests in Melbourne, and a fifth looking likely. "The way they bowled and placed their field, I had to be patient," said Smith. "It's not the kind of wicket you could go after them. I think we did pretty well today."

SCORES IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA: First innings 257 for 4 (Warner 41, Labuschagne 63, Smith 77 not out, Wade 38, Head 25 not out; De Grandhomme 2-48)

'Format-specific teams possible'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan informed that the board will be able to determine over the next year if it can form three different teams for three different formats -- Test, ODI and T20I.

According to Hassan, he had been mulling this move for the past three years.

"I have been saying for the past three years that there should be a different team [for Tests]. Even five years ago, I said that there should be three different teams [for three formats]," Hassan told reporters yesterday.

Hassan also mentioned that the process has been delayed due to the dearth of players but remained positive as more players had emerged in recent times.

"We will be trying for it but we need to have players for that. It seems like that gradually we are getting some players. That was not the case even two years ago. But now we can think of making three different teams. We have some players and we are confident that it is possible," said Hassan.

The BCB president also informed that although the board may face some challenges, it will be able to determine if it can actually form three different teams over the next year.

"But the problem is that we need to think about who we can leave out. We cannot leave someone out of the team all of a sudden. For instance, it is not possible to leave out the senior players who are in good form. We need to think about that too. But by thinking along this line, we can determine over the next year if we can separate players for three formats and which player can play which format."



PHOTO: REUTERS

South Africa's Quinton de Kock struck 95 while the rest of the Proteas batsmen struggled against the England pace attack at Centurion on Day 1 of the first Test.

SHORT CORNER

'We never said that Pakistan players can't be there'

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan reiterated that just like the rest of the cricket boards, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) were also approached to provide players for the two T20 matches in March between Asia XI and World XI to celebrate the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation.

The BCB president confirmed that there was no such process to not involve Pakistan players despite Indian media reporting otherwise. "I haven't told them [BCCI] anything like that. It's going to be Asia vs Rest of the World. The thing is that the players who are available will play," he said during a press conference today.

"We never said that Pakistan players can't be there. When we communicated with the

boards, Pakistan were the only country which said that the time clashed with the PSL," he said before adding that PCB are yet to respond to BCB's request.

Kohli named in Wisden cricketers of the decade list

India captain Virat Kohli has been named in the Cricketers of the decade list alongside four others by the Wisden Cricketers' Almanac. Apart from Kohli, South African duo of Dale Steyn and AB de Villiers, Australia's Steve Smith and women's all-rounder Ellyse Perry also found a place in the list of five cricketers of the decade.

Kohli, who has scored 5,775 more international runs than anyone else in the last 10 years, has arguably been the best batsman over the last decade.

The 31-year-old Indian was named captain

of the Wisden Test team of the decade, while also featuring in the ODI XI. -- AGENCIES

ICC ranking system absolute garbage: Vaughan

Former England captain Michael Vaughan has slammed the International Cricket Council's ranking system, terming it as "absolute garbage". India are currently ranked number one in ICC Test team rankings, followed by New Zealand, South Africa, England and Australia.

The cricketer-turned-commentator feels New Zealand and England don't deserve to get the second and fourth spot in the ICC Test rankings as they haven't won enough Test series in the last two years.

"I will be dead honest about the ICC rankings. I think they are absolute garbage," Vaughan was quoted as saying by the 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

--- P11

What to WATCH

GTV & MAASRANGA
BBPL
Chattogram v Dhaka
Live from 2:00pm
Khulna v Rangpur

Live from 7:00pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
English Premier League
Wolves v Man City
Live from 1:45am (Saturday)

SONY SIX
Australia v New Zealand
Second Test, Day Two
Live from 5:30am
South Africa v England

First Test, Day 2
Live from 2:00pm

DAY'S EVENT

Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Dhaka
Chattogram v Dhaka

Time: 2:00pm
Khulna v Rangpur
Time: 7:00pm

Federation Cup
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka
Ctg Abahani v Bashundhara

Time: 3:30pm
Sheikh Jamal v Saif SC
Time: 6:15pm

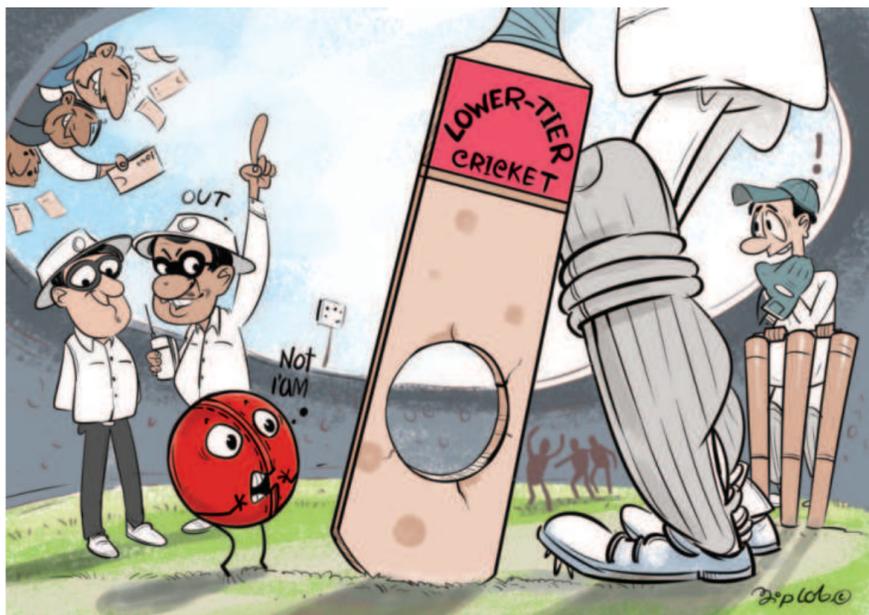
Grassroots slipping through the cracks

BISHWAJIT ROY

Weekend WINDOW

Who cares about the Third Division Cricket League these days, when fans, officials and media are mostly engrossed in international cricket? But this season's domestic lower-tier competition has still gotten plenty of attention. But, alas, the spotlight has been shone for all the wrong reasons.

There were allegations aplenty -- biased umpiring, favouritism, muscle-flexing from powerful quarters during matches and even buying and selling of points. Regarding these issues, different media outlets ran a number of stories and many incidents became viral on social media, which even led to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) banning players, coaches, officials, a team boy and other staff involved on match days from



THE POINTS AND ARGUMENTS FROM VICTIMS AND ACCUSERS:

--There were strong reasons for the few incumbent BCB officials to be involved as they want to ensure councillorship from the club quota.

--Fingers raised towards two powerful BCB directors -- IH Mallick and Khaled Mahmud -- as it was believed that they set the mechanism in motion from top and their few hand-picked umpires executed their plans at the ground.

--Fingers raised towards umpires -- Tariqul Islam Masum, Masud

Rana, Saidur Rahman, Touhidur Rahman, Ashraf Tipu, Jahirul Islam Jewel, Shahinur Rahman Shamim -- whose very presence on the morning of a match gave victims and accusers an idea of how the match was going to pan out (match 'kopano', or sizing up the match, is a very popular term in this regard).

--Those selected umpires got the maximum number of matches -- according to the victims and accusers these umpires conducted

93 out of 124 matches in the just-concluded Third Division League and did not hesitate to raise the finger for leg-before decisions even when the ball hit the arm.

--There is an umpire like Jahirul Islam Jewel, who played the dual role of umpiring and coaching and was also a Purbachol Sporting Club representative at CCDM.

--Vested quarters are now on the brink of grabbing full control of lower-tier cricket, to the point

that even protesting voices may disappear from next season. There are three categories -- clubs that are directly supervised and financed by that vested quarter; clubs that get their blessing in other ways and the few that negotiate with them for survival; and only a few who are not part of them.

--Only a neutral inquiry committee can find who the people are destroying grassroots cricket from behind the scenes and how.

using mobile phones and electronic gadgets in lower-tier cricket tournaments.

The league, where 20 clubs took part, ended with Jatrabari Krira Chakra becoming champions and Gulshan Cricket Club finishing as runners-up. That, however, may not be the end of it as a legal battle may commence following the alleged violation of the league's bylaws.

If the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM) followed their own bylaws, then Dhaka Cricketers, instead of the Narayanganj Cricket Academy, would have played the eight-team Super League of the tournament.

Narayanganj Cricket Academy and Dhaka Cricketers had equal points and the bylaws clearly state that 'in the event of teams finishing on equal points, the higher standing in the competition (First Phase, Super & Relegation League) will be determined as follows: the team with the most number of wins; if still equal, the team with the most number of wins over the other team(s) who are equal on points and have the

same number of wins (head to head); if still equal, the team with the highest net run rate'. Dhaka Cricketers were supposed to play the Super League as they had more wins (4) than Narayanganj (3), who surprisingly got the Super League ticket on head-to-head consideration, which should have only come into play if the number of wins were equal.

The explanation from the CCDM and BCB was that it was a mistake and the matter was 'under investigation'. But those who were victims of the 'mistake' believed that it was intentional to favour 'their' team.

'Their team' and 'our team'; here lies the problem. 'Their team' was also jokingly called the 'Shorkari team'.

To try to shed light on the allegedly corrupt workings and the fissures that have seemingly spread like a cancer in the past few years, 'The Daily Star' spoke with a number of stakeholders. The majority of the respondents preferred to remain anonymous for fear of possible undesired consequences.

THE POINTS AND ARGUMENT FROM THE ACCUSED:

--Board officials patronizing different clubs is nothing new in Bangladesh cricket.

--Wholesale allegations against biased umpiring are baseless.

--A certain quarter always tries to destroy the image of Bangladesh cricket when they fail to perform.

--Things have improved a lot

This has been the scenario for the past few years, leaving grassroots cricket silently crying out for help. Allegations of widespread corruption in the lower-tier circuits of Bangladesh cricket has been a recurring theme over the past few years. It would be hard to say when this will end.

"I have never seen such naked interference earlier. The main objective is to stay at the board and nothing else. And you know there is councillorship. It seems they are chalking out a plot to stay in power forever. As umpires are employees of the board, they obey its orders. What we heard is that Mallick is controlling everything. They are actually destroying cricket. The situation is such that if you exit the race once you can in no way return in cricket under current circumstances. We need to save cricket. You will not get dedicated organisers in future and enthusiastic people in certain areas will not come forward to form teams. That will not help our cricket, neither will it be helpful in creating a healthy sporting atmosphere. Overall, the scenario is very bleak. They flex their muscles in many ways, even creating panic at the ground by threatening many with dire consequences if anybody tries to protest."

MOHAMMAD SARWAR

General Secretary of Kathalbagan Green Crescent

"In cricket one or two decisions can go against you, but four-five? What happened was not cricket. Why should you players feel pressure in the presence of any particular umpire? I can only share my own experience -- a batsman was caught behind after edging an outside-off delivery. . . in that scenario, how can the leg umpire make the decision? Or when a bouncer hits a batsman on his arm, how can he be adjudged leg-before? Whenever we confront them about these hilarious decisions all they say is that they have their family to run and if they don't comply with their bosses' instruction they will not get matches. Sometimes it's also seen that in the middle of a game the umpires rush to the edge of the ground instead of their designated dressing room to get further instructions from club officials. I don't know how long this will continue."

A player speaking on condition of anonymity.

"This matter (violation of bylaws) is under investigation."

NIZAMUDDIN CHOWDHURY, BCB CEO

"We have 50 to 60 active umpires in Dhaka City and there are 100 irregular umpires who conduct matches on and off. We have different categories as 12 to 15 conduct first-class matches and 10 to 15 at this level (third division). We mix old umpires and newcomers on a trial basis. This time seven to eight umpires from outside Dhaka have conducted 20 to 22 matches, so the allegation is baseless. When you don't like someone, you can find everything wrong with them. Those who are complaining have their own agenda. It is also true that I cannot mind everyone on the field, so we have to be more alert in the future and everybody should come forward to get out from this situation."

SHOYLAB HOSSAIN TUTUL

General Secretary of BCUSA since 1987.

"There are 14 directors from clubs and they are patronising almost 60 clubs; why do they point their fingers at me? If it is the issue of councillorship, then I need only one. If there is a question about allotment of umpires or the standard of umpiring, then there is a department (BCUSA) to look into the issue. I think some are trying to portray a wrong impression of our cricket."

IH MALLICK, BCB Director

"I am less bothered with third division cricket and I didn't go there. . . I am not interested to know what is happening there. There are five to seven teams from Beximco and if they ask for players, I provide them. All allegations are baseless. This is our long-standing tradition that those who are in the board take care of different clubs and patronise them. I think CCDM can take a measure to clear the air with video footage. . . about umpiring, it could have happened three-four years ago but it's not possible now."

KHALED MAHMUD, BCB Director

"This was unfortunate (violation of bylaws), but it's a mistake. We already formed a committee to find the reasons behind the mistake and whether it was intentional. We are yet to receive the report. The league has already finished and what has happened, has happened, but what we can do is make sure that we take proper measure so that this kind of mistakes are not repeated. I don't think there is any valid ground to make wholesale allegations of corruption in lower-tier cricket and our president [BCB President Nazmul Hassan] has already assured everybody that he will take stern action against such incidents."

KAZI INAM AHMED

BCB Director and CCDM Chairman



Tottenham's Dele Ali (R) celebrates with teammates after scoring the decisive goal in an English Premier League encounter with Brighton in London yesterday. Earlier, Harry Kane (L) scored as well to help his side secure a 2-1 win.

PHOTO: REUTERS

5-team women's football league from Jan 31

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation has decided to host the long-demanded women's football league from January 31 involving five clubs.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the women's football committee at the BFF house yesterday, with the committee head Mahfuza Akter Kiron in chair.

The league will be held after six years, with the second and last edition of the league held way back in 2013. However, defending champions Abahani will not be a part of the league along with Mohammedan SC. Only five teams -- Sheikh Jamal DC, Sheikh Russel KC, Bashundhara Kings and newcomers

Uttaranga FC and Begum Anwara Sporting Club have registered for the league, which will be held at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in double-leg format.

"Five clubs will take part and this league will help the players get match experience as well as money," said Kiron.

The FIFA member also expressed her disappointment about not getting enough teams on board.

"We tried a lot, but clubs do not show much interest in taking part," Kiron said. "However, we are hopeful we will get more teams when we host the next league in September, 2020."

The registration window for the league will run from January 11 to 26.

Abahani through, Police too

SPORTS REPORTER

Abahani cruised into the quarterfinals of the TVS Federation Cup with a 5-1 win over Arambagh KS at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sunday Chizoba gave the defending champions a ninth-minute lead before four goals from four local players in the second half ensured a big win for the holders, who topped Group A with six points from two matches.

Arambagh were eliminated with two defeats in two matches while Bangladesh Police, who have three points from two matches, went through as runners-up of the group.

The Sky Blues, who had beaten Police 4-0 in their opening game, gave starting eleven berths to four players for the first time and later made three substitutions, all of whom were playing their first game of the competition. Yet the Dhanmondi giants had little trouble dispatching crisis-hit Arambagh, with the reserve-bench players making a strong case by contributing to the victory.

Jewel Rana, one of those players, set up Sunday for a smashing finish for the opening goal in the ninth minute. Abahani failed to increase their lead in the first half, but a couple of tactical switches helped open the floodgates after the break.

Nabib Newaz Jibon doubled Abahani's lead seven minutes after restart with a simple tap-in before veteran centre-back Nasiruddin Chowdhury made it 3-0 with a header five minutes later.

Abahani exploited the width



Arambagh 1 - 5 Abahani

(Murad 85')

(Sunday 9', Jibon 52', Nasir 57'

Mamunul 73', Shitol 79')

Abahani forward Sunday Chizoba (L) celebrates after scoring in a 5-1 win over strugglers Arambagh in a Federation Cup encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

of the pitch in the second half by involving the wingers more in their attacks and continued to reap the rewards, with former captain Mamunul Islam, who was one of the four players getting a rare first-eleven outing, picking the far corner of the net with a powerful left-footed shot in the 73rd minute.

Substitute Faisal Ahmed Shitol made it 5-0 with a glancing header six minutes later before Murad Chowdhury scored a consolation

goal for Arambagh with a volley from inside the box in the 85th minute.

Abahani coach Mario Lemos was satisfied with the team's performance including those who do not get a chance in the starting eleven.

"(Bangladesh) Police was a different team than Arambagh, who are struggling. But a win is always satisfying. We scored five goals and could have scored more," the Portuguese said in his post-match

reaction.

When asked about the performance of the reserve-bench players, Lemos said he would have difficulty choosing his eleven in the next match.

"The reserve bench was good. Now was the chance to look for options that we have this year. The quarterfinals will be much tougher but it's also going to be difficult to choose the starting eleven after this performance," said Lemos.



PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK PROJECT IS BEING BUILT WITH BSRM

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SHUVADYA CANAL

RHD frustrates revival effort

HELEMUL ALAM and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

While the government plans to restore Shuvadya Canal in Keraniganj with a Tk 1,200 crore project, one of its own departments appeared to be a major obstacle.

The Roads and Highway Department (RHD) has built three large pillars in the middle of the canal for a bridge, which block the waterway.

The RHD is building the bridge just beside a narrow bridge at Kadamtali Khalpar area on the Dhaka-Mawa highway under the Dhaka-Padma Bridge-Bhangha Expressway Project. The department is upgrading the 54.23km highway to dual carriageway.

Two pillars of the existing bridge are on the banks of the canal, once considered a lifeline of Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital.

During a recent visit, The Daily Star correspondents found that the contractor blocked the canal with a dam to construct the pillars. Other construction materials were also seen piled up beside the pillars.

State Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul Hamid, at a programme on December 19, blasted RHD officials for building the pillars in the canal.

Talking to The Daily Star over phone after the programme, Nasrul said, "We are going to re-excavate the canal and construct bank protection work under a project."

The water resources ministry has already taken up the project, now awaiting approval of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecneec), he said.

People will be able to use the canal as an alternative route to reach Dhaka from Bikrampur of Munshiganj quicker, once the project is completed.

But the pillars were built in the middle of the canal and

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Construction work for a bridge block the Shuvadya Canal in Dhaka's Keraniganj. The Roads and Highways Department was building the bridge blocking the waterway, but has decided to demolish the under-construction structure following objection from the local lawmaker.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



On this day in 1971

DECEMBER 27
RK Karanjia, an investigative journalist and the founder of Indian weekly tabloid Blitz, writes an article on the Liberation War in Bangladesh. In his article he says that Pakistan army should not be treated as war prisoners but as war criminals. According to the Geneva Convention, they could not get the honour. They were cold-blooded killers who bombed an orphanage with an aircraft and two attack helicopters in Dhaka to blame India in front of China and the US. Many children were killed in that incident, which was approved

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7 migrants die as boat sinks in a Turkey lake

One Bangladeshi could be among them; 64 rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least seven people died after a boat carrying migrants capsized in Turkey's Lake Van yesterday and one of the dead is believed to be a Bangladeshi.

Bangladesh mission there was verifying if there were any Bangladeshi victims, among the dead and the 64 rescued alive.

An official at the Bangladesh embassy in Ankara said they had information that one Bangladeshi was among the dead and another one survived. A Turkish government agency told the embassy that there was a Bangladeshi among the deceased but did not provide details, the official told this newspaper over phone.

"We have asked [Turkish government agency] to provide us with details of the deceased," said the official, seeking anonymity.

The boat carrying migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan sank on Thursday around 3:00am local time, Reuters reported, quoting the governor's office in Bitlis province.

The boat sank as it approached

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

Cold snap sweeps north

Lowest temperature 5.7 degrees Celsius in Tentulia; 3 die in fire lit to keep warm

STAR REPORT

People of lower-income group in the northern region have been immensely suffering for the last few days as a cold wave sweeping over the country.

The lowest temperature was recorded at 5.7 degrees Celsius in Tentulia upazila of Panchagarh yesterday, reported Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

According to the Met office, temperature across the country may fall further in the next 72 hours as light rain is expected in different regions.

"Light rain or drizzle is likely to occur at one or two places over Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram and Dhaka Divisions," read a forecast of the BMD's central office which would remain valid until 9:00am today.

The forecast also read that mild to moderate cold wave was sweeping over Rangpur division and the regions of Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Nogaon and Sirajgonj and it might continue.

Our correspondents in different districts reported on public sufferings because of the weather.

The day labourers in Thakurgaon have remained unemployed, reported our correspondent in the district.

Bidesh Chandra Roy, a farmer of Kochubari village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, said, "We are staying at our homes because of the weather. We cannot work at croplands."

Afajul Islam, a rickshaw puller in the upazila, said, "The number of passengers have reduced due to cold. On the other hand, I cannot even pull rickshaw as my body feels like it's frozen."

Businesses in the district were also hampered as labourers were unwilling to work due to the cold, said Mehedi Hasan Khan Babla,

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CHRISTMAS DAY TYPHOON

At least 16 killed in Philippines

AFP, Manila

A typhoon that swept across remote villages and popular tourist areas of the central Philippines on Christmas day claimed at least 16 lives, authorities said yesterday.

Typhoon Phanfone, with gusts reaching 200 kilometres (125 miles) an hour, tore roofs off houses and toppled electric posts as it ripped through the central Philippines on Wednesday.

Videos from the typhoon's path showed fallen trees and strong winds pummeling flimsy houses. Local disaster officials cut felled trees to clear blocked roads.

At least 16 people were killed in villages and towns in the Visayas, the central third of the Philippines, according to disaster agency officials.

Phanfone also hit

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

Honest German returns bag with 16,000 euros



AFP, Frankfurt Am Main

A 63-year-old man in Germany had a very Merry Christmas indeed after an honest finder returned the backpack he had forgotten under a tree -- filled with presents and 16,000 euros (\$17,700) in cash.

The 51-year-old finder alerted police after stumbling upon the bag near the centre of the western city of Krefeld shortly before midnight on Christmas Eve.

Officers were able to quickly identify the owner and reunite him with the backpack and its precious contents.

The man who found the bag "refused a finder's fee, because it was Christmas," Krefeld police wrote on Facebook.

"There really are people who do good deeds over Christmas," they added.

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Mentally challenged girl raped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A 15-year-old mentally challenged girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour at her home in Jashore's Keshabpur upazila on Wednesday night.

Victim's aunt alleged that Syed, 26, went to their home around midnight that night and raped her niece when she was alone.

Yesterday, the aunt filed a case with Keshabpur Police Station, accusing Syed.

Abu Syed, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they were trying to

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 27

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:30 4:00 5:27 7:00
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:30 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A WINTER TREAT

As winter tightens its grip on the country, gulls swarm the bank of the Karnaphuli river from the Bay looking for food. The stunning white bird in flight is a feast for the eyes of bird-lovers. The photo was taken in Chattogram's Boaila Char area on Wednesday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Four killed in Kashmir skirmishes

One Indian, two Pakistani soldiers among them

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

At least four people, including two Pakistani and an Indian soldier, have been killed in an exchange of fire between Indian and Pakistani troops in the disputed region of Kashmir, officials on both sides said.

The Pakistani soldiers were killed in the Dewa area of the mountainous region, Pakistan's military spokesman Major General Asif Ghafoor said yesterday. He claimed three Indian soldiers were killed in the exchange of fire.

However, Indian army spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia yesterday said one Indian officer and a civilian were killed in firing along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Rampur sector of Indian-administered Kashmir.

LoC is the de facto border that divides the disputed Kashmir region between the two countries.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi condemned the latest ceasefire violation and paid tributes to the two soldiers killed, accusing Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi of looking to disrupt peace in the region, The Associated Press news agency reported yesterday.

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three full-scale wars over the mountainous territory of Kashmir, which both claim in full but administer separate portions of, divided by the LoC.

Since 2003, a ceasefire has been in place along the LoC, but violations by both sides are frequent, particularly at times of high tension between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

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