



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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## THE YEAR IN REVIEW: ECONOMY

# Shrinking revenue a growing worry

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Sometimes things have to go wrong in order to go right, American author Sherrilyn Kenyon once said.

When AHM Mustafa Kamal assumed the role of finance minister on January 7, there were many things that were wrong with the economy. In other words, the stage was set for him to showcase his intellectual elasticity and can-do bravado to correct those wrongs and definitively set the economy on the right track.

"It is not difficult to address the existing problems. You will no longer see the faults that you now see," he said in a press conference on the day he was announced as the new finance minister.

Twelve months on, cold hard data suggests that he sat by idly. When he took over, exports and revenue were on the slow lane, defaulted loans were ballooning and the stock market was sinking. Those ailments still exist and in fact have -- taken a turn for the worse.

2019'S REPORT CARD				
	A+	A	B	C
Remittance	✓			
Exports				✓
Revenue			✓	
Default loans				✓
Credit growth				✓
Inflation		✓		
Balance of payment		✓		
GDP	✓			

Bangladesh's inadequate revenue stream in comparison to the size of the economy and development works is of great concern.

At 9.2 percent, Bangladesh's tax-to-GDP ratio last fiscal year was one of the lowest

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Jebun Nesa, 45, gazes blankly into the distance as she sits amid the charred remains of her shanty at Baunia slum in the capital's Mirpur yesterday, a day after a fire gutted around 87 homes and 17 shops there. Story on page 16.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## DU CAMPUS 12 student fronts unite to combat violence

DU CORRESPONDENT

A new student alliance -- Santrash Birodhi Chhatra Oikya -- was formed yesterday on the Dhaka University campus to combat violence.

It has 12 student organisations.

At a press conference at the Madhur Canteen, Ducus Social Service Affairs Secretary Akhtar Hossen, also a joint convener of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, announced the platform's name.

"To bring an end to the ongoing violence, all the students need to unite. Our alliance, comprising democratic and progressive student organisations, begins its activities today officially. We will protest against communal and autocratic forces," he said while reading out a statement.

The alliance members are: Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Parishad Sangrakkhan, Chhatra Federation (Gana Samhati Andolon), Samajantrik Chhatra Front (Marxist), Samajantrik Chhatra Front (BSD), Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Biplobi Chhatra Moitri, Bangladesh Chhatra Federation (Jatiya Mukti Council), Biplobi Chhatra-Jubo Andolan, Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Pahari Chhatra Parishad, Nagarik Chhatra

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## Khulna coast into 3rd place

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League's (BBPL's) second Dhaka phase kicked off yesterday in Mirpur, with table-toppers Chattogram Challengers winning a low-scoring day match and Khulna Tigers thumping lowly Rangpur Rangers by 52 runs in the night game at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium.

Khulna skipper Mushfiqur Rahim hit a polished 59 off 43 balls as they posted 182 for seven.

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## Terminal to match aspirations

Much-needed expansion work at Shahjalal airport begins today

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and RASHIDUL HASAN

First impressions are the most lasting, it is often said. And in case of cities and countries, it is often airports that provides that.

And Dhaka's dimly, antiquated Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), built about four decades ago and has not gone through any major facelift since, definitely do not do justice to what Dhaka and Bangladesh stand in this day and age.

Which is why, the ground breaking ceremony of HSIA's Terminal 3 today, after a delay of three years, warrants a toast.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the construction works of Terminal 3, which is expected to be modern, world-class and more befitting of the aspiring higher middle-income country that Bangladesh is today.

The terminal will cost Tk 21,399 crore and is expected to be complete in four years' time if the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) can keep a tight grip on the proceedings.

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With its headlights on, a train leaves the fog-shrouded capital around noon yesterday. Road, rail and river communications have been badly disrupted across the country due to a cold wave for the last few days. The photo was taken in the city's Tejgaon area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Wind, rain chill North

Mercury may drop further across the country today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mild cold wave, which is sweeping over the regions of Panchagarh, Dinajpur and Nilphamari, may continue and spread, according to the Met office.

"Temperature across the country will go down by 1 to 2 degrees Celsius Saturday [today]. The intensity of fog will also increase," said Arif Hossain, meteorologist of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

Meanwhile, the number of patients with diseases related to cold has increased in different districts.

According to the BMD, the lowest temperature in the country was recorded yesterday in Tetulia at 9.2 degrees Celsius. In Dinajpur, the temperature was recorded at 9.4 degrees Celsius while in Nilphamari it was 10 degrees Celsius. In Dhaka, the lowest temperature was 15.2 degrees Celsius.

Light rain is likely to occur at a few places in Chattogram and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places in Khulna, Barisal, Dhaka, Mymensingh and Rajshahi divisions as seasonal low lies over the

south Bay, the BMD said.

Weather may remain dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country.

Meanwhile, chilly weather, coupled with rain, disrupted normal life in different regions of the country yesterday.

In Bogura, people suffered because of wind and rain, said Shah Md Sajib, assistant meteorologist of Bogura BMD.

The situation was similar in other northern districts.

The lowest temperature in Bogura town was recorded at 12.4 degrees Celsius yesterday.

Rain may rise the intensity of cold in the town in the next two days, Sajib said.

Abdul Wadud, assistant director of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogura, said, "The number of patients with diseases related to cold is increasing slightly in the last two days. But the situation is under control."

"Fourteen children have been admitted to the hospital with pneumonia and Diarrhoea while 11 adults were admitted with asthma during this time," he said.

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## DCC COUNCILLORS

# AL, BNP grapple with glut of aspirants

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Both the ruling Awami League and the BNP were struggling to pick councillor candidates for the January 30 Dhaka north and south city corporation elections after multiple aspirants collected nomination forms for each post.

Although the councillor polls would

be non-partisan, the parties were giving much importance on backing the deserving candidates, who are expected to join the election campaign for the mayor contenders.

Amid this backdrop, the AL and the BNP are set to announce the names of the mayor and councillor candidates today.

The situation seems to be more

complicated for the AL. On an average, eight aspirants are seeking the party's blessing for each councillor post.

For the BNP, the number is three.

Also, some current councillors from the ruling party have been on the run since allegations surfaced that they were involved in illegal casino business and misusing power.

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## 'Robber' killed in 'gunfight' with cops

UNB, Noakhali

A suspected robber was killed in a "gunfight" with police at Nateswar in Sonaimuri upazila of Noakhali early yesterday.

The dead is Mokhlesur Rahman alias Dacoit Subal, 38, of Durgapur village in Begumganj upazila of the district, said police.

Abdus Samad, officer-in-charge of Sonaimuri Police Station, claimed a patrol team of police encountered a group of robber around 12:45am. Sensing the police presence, the criminals opened fire,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

**WE DEEPLY MOURN THE IMMENSE LOSS OF SIR FAZLE HASAN ABED KCMG**

FOUNDER, BRAC & BRAC BANK  
1936-2019

BRAC SAAJAN FAMILY WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER HIM WITH GREAT RESPECT FOR HIS EMINENT LEADERSHIP. THE DEMISE OF SUCH A GREAT HUMANITARIAN SOUL IS AN IRREPARABLE LOSS OF OUR NATION.

MAY ALLAH (SWT) GRANT HIM ETERNAL PEACE.

**BRAC SAAJAN MoneyTransfer**

**VASELINE HELPS HEAL DRY SKIN**

THE HEALING POWER OF **Vaseline**

## From robber to terrorist

Huji men radicalised 5 in jail, claims counter-terror unit after arresting 6 in the capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They all were dacoits by profession. Once the five men were arrested and sent to jail, but a jailed leader of banned militant outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad Bangladesh (HujiB) recruited them as members of the outfit.

After coming out of jail on bail, they formed a separate group under the leadership of another HujiB leader and got involved in mugging and dacoity. Their purposes were spending most the collected fund to strengthen the outfit by recruiting new members and freeing leaders from jail on bail.

An investigation team of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) revealed this after picking up six members of the outfit from the capital's Badda area on Thursday night. The arrestees include the five.

The arrestees are Md Billal Hossain, 25, Nur Alam, 28, Rafiqul Islam, 29, Abul Miah, 35, Abdur Rahman, 30, and Akter Hossain, 34.

Billal is the leader of the dacoity group of the HujiB.

CTTC chief Monirul Islam said their team also recovered a bottle of chloroform, a machete, three knives, two masks and a toy pistol from their possession.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted that they used to commit robbery to collect fund for the outfit as per instructions of their leader Md Ujjal alias Ratan, Monirul told reporters at Maulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium in the capital's Gulistan yesterday.

Ujjal was convicted by a court in the August 21 grenade attack case. He is now in Kashimpur High Security Jail.

Monirul also said Billal formed the seven-member group after 12 other HujiB members, who were also involved in collecting fund by committing dacoity, were arrested by police on March 4.

The counterterrorism official was talking to journalists during the break of a friendly cricket match between CTTC and Crime Reporters' Association Bangladesh.

Yesterday, a case was filed against the six arrestees and two absconding members of the group with Badda police station.

The CTTC chief said they were conducting drives to arrest the two.

Another top CTTC official, who is involved in the investigation, said the arrestees were members of an inter-district dacoity group. Their only objective was to commit mugging and dacoity.

"But they got in touch with the HujiB leaders in jail," said the official, requesting anonymity.

The HujiB leaders convinced them that it would not be a sin if they spent a portion of the collected money for the welfare of the religion after meeting their needs, the official said, quoting the arrestees as saying during primary interrogation.

Yesterday, a Dhaka court placed the six arrestees on five-day remand each after the law enforcers produced them before it seeking 10-day remand each, said SK Imran Hossain, assistant commissioner of CTTC unit.



People crowd near a truck after it veered off Dhaka-Aricha highway and plunged into a pond in Savar's Jorpur area yesterday. The accident left two people dead.

PHOTO: STAR

## Shrinking revenue a growing worry

FROM PAGE 1

in the world and well below peers in the region. Five years earlier, it was 9.9 percent.

The ratio is likely to shrink further this fiscal year if the collection trend of the first four months and the upward slant of GDP growth are considered. Collections grew just 4.83 percent, down from 6.74 percent registered a year earlier.

Value-added tax, the largest source of revenue, was up just 1.79 percent during the period -- a worrying development particularly because the much-awaited new law that was framed to boost collections was rolled out on July 1.

The VAT and Supplementary Duty Act 2012 that passed muster for all quarters had four different rates instead of just one prescribed by the International Monetary Fund, washing away the spirit of the law.

No wonder then that the VAT collections growth thus far has been lower than a year earlier.

The VAT law was supposed to be supplemented by automation, but that has not come through yet. For instance, 25 types of businesses were supposed to be fitted with electronic fiscal device (EFDs) from this fiscal year.

At the time of writing, 10,000 EFDs have arrived at the Chittagong port out of the requisite 2 lakh, but their software is yet to come through.

"I was assured that EFDs will be installed in shops from July 1. Unfortunately, it did not happen," Kamal told reporters earlier on December 4.

This laissez faire statement sums up

best Kamal's attitude so far in sorting out the most imperative problem of the economy.

And because of the revenue shortfall, the government had to dig into banks' funds this fiscal year. By December 9, it has borrowed 99.5 percent of its target for this fiscal year, choking out private investment along the way.

Already, private sector credit growth hit a nine-year-low of 10.04 percent in October, 3.16 percentage points lower than the central bank's target for the first half of the fiscal year.

Capital machinery and industrial raw material imports have shrunk too, according to Bangladesh Bank's latest data.

Banks' ability to lend had already taken a big hit because of the runaway defaulted loans and then came this new pressure from the latter half of 2019 in the form of heightened government borrowing.

"As of today, what is on the balance sheet will remain the same -- it will not increase in anyway," Kamal told a press briefing on January 10, soon after taking charge of finance ministry. But, the situation of defaulted loans has only gotten worse in 2019.

Another setback arising out of the slowing revenue collection is that the government's budget deficit crossed the sensible perimeter of 5 percent for the first time in 12 years in fiscal 2018-19, and is on course to breaching it again this fiscal year if the root cause is not fixed with urgency.

Thrift is of great revenue, Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero once said, and the government would do

well if it pays heed to this saying, now.

Implementation of development projects continues to come about at snail's pace, leading to cost overruns. And the government's subsidy burden is only getting heavier, and if the duty waiver to certain sectors are factored in, it seems indulgent in times of revenue shortfall.

Another worrying development is the continued slowdown in exports, one of the lifelines of the economy, thanks to a contraction in garment orders on the back of strengthening competitors and the US-China trade war.

This episode is not an eyeopener but just a reconfirmation of what the experts have long been warning: excessive reliance on one item is not wise and neither is complacency.

Moving up the garment value chain has long been advised for Bangladesh's garment sector, but the country's apparel exporters were just happy with the global monopoly for low-value, basic products.

This has opened the floor for upstarts to challenge Bangladesh's second position in global apparel trade. And Vietnam, India, Turkey, Pakistan, Cambodia are not squandering this opening.

Their time to export is much shorter than Bangladesh's: it takes 315 hours, in contrast to 105 hours for Vietnam and 81 hours for India. It takes 180 hours for Cambodia and 130 hours for Pakistan.

Looking ahead, if the problems causing slowing revenue, shrinking exports and runaway defaulted loans are not addressed at the soonest, 2020 looks sets to be a bumpy ride.

## 12 student fronts unite

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Oikya, Swatantra Jote, and Chhatra Moncho.

Speaking at the press conference, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (BSD) President Al Quaderi Joy said Chhatra league and its "shadow organisation" Muktijuddho Moncho attacked Ducus VP Nurul Haque Nur and his men on December 22.

"It could not have been done without the university administration's instigation," he said.

A four-point demand, including legal action and expulsion of those involved in attacks on Nur and his supporters, was also placed at the press conference.

Their other demands include resignation of the DU proctor for his failure to protect students, withdrawal of case against the injured and bearing their medical costs, and ensuring democratic environment and students' security on the campus.

Responding to a query, the alliance leaders said Chhatra League and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal were not included in the association as the two student bodies were either now involved in criminal activities or had been involved in such activities in the past.

"Activists of the ruling party's student body have been carrying out criminal activities on campuses and compelling students to join their political programmes. The aim of our alliance is to ensure that no organisation can run criminal activities," Akhtar said.

Nur and 28 other activists of

Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad were made accused in an attempted murder case on Thursday.

In another programme, Rashed Khan, a joint convener of the parishad, said, "Filing of the case against the injured is an example of misrule."

Police said they would add information of the case (filed by the parishad) to the previous one lodged by police in connection with the December 22 attack.

But they were still in the dark whether police took the case, Rashed said while addressing a protest rally in front of the National Museum at Shahabagh yesterday.

"We were tortured and sent to hospital, yet a case has been filed against us," he said.

Referring to the attack, Rashed alleged that Muktijuddho Moncho activists carried out the attack on them first and then the BCL men joined.

He also demanded withdrawal of the "false case" against Nur and others.

After the rally, the parishad activists brought out a procession which paraded across the campus.

On December 22, Nur and his supporters came under attack from a faction of Muktijuddho Moncho, mostly comprised of BCL men, at his office at the Ducus building.

Nur and at least his 26 supporters were wounded in the attack. Eight of them are still undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

## Khulna coast into 3rd place

FROM PAGE 1

Rangpur were never in the game, being cut down to 97 for seven after 15 overs, before managing to reach 130 for nine in 20 overs.

Rangpur were bolstered by the inclusion of former Australian all-rounder Shane Watson, who arrived in the country the previous day and was immediately made the team's third captain in their sixth game, summing up the sad state of their campaign. The loss continued Rangpur's run at the bottom of the table with five losses from six games. The big win for Khulna, on the other hand, saw them rise to third position with four wins from six games.

Watson's appearance did little to change Rangpur's fortunes as the Australian scored just five runs in his debut BPL innings. Mohammad Naim hit a nine-ball 20 and Lewis Gregory top-scored with 34 off 26 balls, but the rest of the Rangpur scorecard made for sorry reading. Khulna pacer Shahidul Islam became the latest local pacer to grab the spotlight as he cut through

Rangpur's middle order with figures of four for 23 in four excellent overs.

Earlier, Rangpur had won the toss and asked Khulna to bat first, and their strong score was ensured by Mushfiqur's second fifty of the tournament. He stitched together a partnership of 39 runs for the fourth wicket with opener Nazmul Hossain Shanto, before featuring in a match-defining 62-run fifth-wicket stand with Najibullah Zadran, who scored 41 off 26 balls. Mushfiqur was the sixth wicket to fall in the last over, having hit four boundaries and two sixes.

A slight silver lining for Rangpur was that ace left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman continued to show glimpses of form by picking up three wickets for 28 runs in his four overs.

In the day's first game, Dhaka Platoon could only muster a sub-par 124 for nine against leaders Chattogram. In reply, Chattogram's stand-in skipper Imrul Kayes hit a well-paced 53-ball 54 to take the team home with six wickets and eight balls to spare.

## Wind, rain chill North

FROM PAGE 1

The cold has also been affecting farmers who cultivated potatoes and prepared paddy seedbeds recently in Bogura, said Azizar Rahman, assistant agriculture officer of the Bogura regional office.

In Thakurgaon, a retired high school teacher, who received burn injuries while trying to keep himself warm by sitting beside a fire on December 20, died yesterday morning at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The victim is Nazmul Haque, 70, former assistant teacher of Panchagarh

Bisnu Prashad Government High School and an inhabitant of Amkhal Malipara village in Panchagarh Sadar upazila.

Quoting family members, local UP Chairman Golum Musa Kalimullah said the school teacher's clothes caught fire while he was burning straws to keep himself warm. The lower portion of his body suffered severe burn injuries.

His family members first brought him to Rangpur Medical College Hospital on the same day. The following day he was shifted to the DMCH where he breathed his last.

## AL, BNP grapple with glut of aspirants

FROM PAGE 1

Three other councillors are now behind bars and at least eight of the councillors were facing investigation by the Anti-Corruption Commission for various irregularities.

AL insiders said these councillors have embarrassed the party and that was why the party's top leadership was likely to choose candidates with clean records.

"We will try to finalise a single candidate for each ward. The most deserving candidates will be chosen," Mahbubul Alam Hanif, joint general secretary of the AL, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said no controversial person would get the party's blessing.

The Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has 54 wards while the Dhaka South City Corporation has 75.

A total of 1,234 councillor aspirants have bought nomination forms from the AL chief's Dhanmondi office in the capital, while 476 aspirants from the BNP collected theirs from the party's Nayapaltan headquarters.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, said, "We are yet to pick the councillor candidates ... We will try to field a single candidate against each councillor post."

He also said the party may not extend its support to candidates in some wards. "Those may be kept open for all contenders," he said.

Sources in the BNP said three committees, each having seven members, were formed to finalise the

councillor candidates for the two city corporations.

Those committees were working in coordination with the party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman, who is in London now.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday sent letters to the committee members, asking them to finalise the candidates today.

Party's Vice Chairman Mohammad Shahjahan was made chief of the Councillor Scrutiny Committee for the DNCC, while BNP chairperson's adviser Abdus Salam was made chief of the committee for Dhaka south.

The third committee was formed for picking candidates for the reserved seats for women. It is being headed by the party's standing committee member Selima Rahman.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance has already extended its support to the candidates to be picked today.

BNP sources said 280 nomination forms were collected from the party office for the DSCC ward councillor posts and 220 of them were for the general councillor posts. A total of 196 nomination forms were collected for the DNCC councillor posts.

Yesterday was the last date for buying nomination forms, while today is the deadline for submitting them.

Talking about the importance of ward councillors in running city corporations, experts said the public representatives are considered to be "local guardians" of city dwellers.

They opined that councillors should be given more power to ensure better services to the people.

## Philippines bans US senators, mulls visa for Americans

AFP, Manila

The Philippines banned two US senators and threatened to introduce visa restrictions for Americans entering the country, the president's spokesman said Friday, if Washington pushes ahead with sanctions against Filipino officials involved in jailing a leading opposition leader.

Senators Richard Durbin and Patrick Leahy were banned from

entering the country after introducing a provision in the 2020 US budget that would prevent officials involved in the incarceration of Senator Leila de Lima from entering the US, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said.

De Lima, one of the highest-profile critics of Duterte's controversial war on drugs, has been imprisoned since February 2017 over a drug charge -- but has claimed innocence, and accused

him of persecuting political opponents.

"If they will enforce this provision in the US budget, then we will be compelled to require all Americans entering into this country to secure a visa before they can be allowed entry," Panelo said on Friday.

American tourists -- who can enter visa-free for up to 30 days -- account for more than a tenth of arrivals, according to the Philippines tourism department.

## Smuggled clothes worth Tk 4 crore seized in Benapole

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh seized smuggled Indian clothes, worth over Tk 4 crore, from Amrakhali in Benapole on Thursday night.

Lt Col Salim Reja, commanding officer of BGB 49 Battalion, said on information, a BGB team raided the area beside Benapole-Jashore road and recovered a huge quantity of men's and women's wears from an abandoned lorry around 11:30pm.

The clothes were later deposited with Jashore customs warehouse, he said.

A case was filed with Benapole Port Police Station.

## IS claims execution of 11 Christians in Nigeria

AFP, Kano

Jihadists aligned to the Islamic State group have released a video claiming to show the execution of 11 Christians in restive northeast Nigeria.

The footage posted online late Thursday by IS-linked propaganda arm Amaq showed 11 blindfolded men being shot and stabbed by jihadists from the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) at an undisclosed location.

"This is a message to Christians all over the world," said a masked man in the one-minute video.

He claimed the killings were in reprisal for the death of IS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his spokesman.

IS leader Baghdadi committed suicide in October to avoid capture during a US special forces raid on his hideout in the province of Idlib in northwest Syria.

In recent months, ISWAP has intensified its attacks on Christians, security personnel and aid staff, setting up roadblocks on highways and conducting searches.

## Terminal

FROM PAGE 1

Celebrated architect Rohani Baharin designed the terminal. Her other works include Changi International Airport's Terminal 3, Wuhan Tianhe Terminal 2, Guangzhou Baiyun New International Airport, Ahmedabad International Airport, New Islamabad International Airport, Can Tho and Phu Quoc International Airports.

The three-storey terminal building, which will be 2.30 lakh square metres, will be built by Mitsubishi and Fujita of Japan and Samsung of Korea.

It will have 115 check-in counters, 64 departure and 64 arrival immigration desks, 27 baggage scanning machines, 40 scanning machines, 12 boarding bridges, 16 carousels and 11 body scanners.

There will also be new car parking facility for 1,230 vehicles, a new 63,000 square metre import and export cargo complex, a 5.42 lakh square metre apron for 37 aircrafts, among others.

A water supply system, sewerage treatment plant, intake power plant distribution system, equipment of cargo complex, airfield ground lighting system and hydrant fuel system are also included in the project, according to civil aviation ministry officials.

Around two crore passengers will be able to use the HSI following construction of the third terminal, 70 percent of the funding for which is coming from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica).

In its current form, HSI can handle eight million passengers a year. But the number of passengers is expected to reach 14 million by 2025 and 24.8 million by 2035, so the timing of Terminal 3 could not be more crucial.

Around 130 domestic and international flights -- including 26 foreign airlines -- carrying 25,000-30,000 passengers use the HSI every day.

The airport handles about 1.6 crore luggage every year of about 70 lakh passengers with the eight carousels in the two international terminals. In other words, it is already operating at full capacity.

In short, it all sounds good on paper. But, the real challenge starts from today, as it is the execution that matters in the end and never the idea.

Attention must be paid that the project is completed on time and there are no further cost increases.

When the project was first conceived, its outlay was projected at Tk 13,610 crore. But earlier this month, the Executive Committee of approved an additional Tk 7,788.59 crore for the project.

## 'Robber' killed

FROM PAGE 1

forcing the law enforcers to retaliate.

After the robbers fled the scene, the law enforcers recovered bullet-wounded Subal from the spot, he added.

He was then rushed to Noakhali General Hospital where doctors declared him dead, he further said.

According to the OC, Subal was the leader of a notorious robber gang and had 11 cases against him.

Police also claimed to have recovered arms and ammunitions from the spot.



**Aircraft stay grounded as dense fog heavily obscured the lone runway at Dhaka airport yesterday morning. Flight operations were suspended for over an hour due to the condition. The situation eventually improved in the afternoon and planes started taking off and landing while the runway remained lit up as a precautionary measure, inset.** PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# A much needed upgrade

Mosquito Control Department to conduct research on vectors

HELEMUL ALAM

With the aim to curb the mosquito population, the government is set to modernise the Mosquito Control Department.

This department will carry out research on vectors and plans to manage them accordingly. These planning and research outcomes will be provided to all city corporations, districts, upazilas and union parishads, Local Government Division sources said.

It will take around five months to complete the required upgradation, they said.

A meeting -- comprising all stakeholders and experts -- will be held shortly to take the final decision on it, said an official of the LGD.

A taskforce comprising relevant experts will also be formed to provide necessary guidelines on existing works for completing the enhancement of the department, a draft proposal suggests.

According to experts, as dengue fever has already spread across the country, a nationally integrated vector control guideline and research centre have become imperative to bring diseases like dengue under control.

Experts said there is no integrated vector control research centre and guideline in the country to conduct research work on vectors that spread diseases.

There are some guidelines for some vector borne diseases like malaria and kala-azar but integrated vector management guideline is very essential, they said.

"A national vector control guideline and its proper implementation are necessary to control Aedes mosquito population sustainably," said Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist of Jahangirnagar University.

He said a separate institute to curb the spread of mosquitoes is also very important.

Prof Bashar said at the vector control research centre (VCRC) they will conduct research work and regularly share updated information to authorities concerned.

Not only mosquitoes, the VCRC will carry out research on all kinds of vectors like sun fly (which spreads kala-azar) and bed bug, he said.

Prof Bashar said there is no national research centre in Bangladesh to carry out studies on insects that spread different diseases.

"A complete research centre is extremely important considering the current situation," he said.

Mosquito Control Department -- which can play a vital role in research and planning after being modernised -- is currently in a shabby state.

"Dhaka Mosquito Control Scheme was established in order to eradicate malaria at the time. It was a vibrant organisation with a strong workforce and played an effective role in keeping the mosquito population

under control," said Giasuddin, storekeeper of the department.

Some 338 contingency workers, appointed under the mosquito control scheme, were regularised under the ministry of health in 1972, he said. Back then, extensive work -- including conducting drive against mosquitoes, their larvae and breeding grounds, along with research work related to mosquito control activities in Dhaka -- were carried out.

However, once the department was brought under the Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Ministry in 1981-1982, and subsequently under the direct purview of Dhaka City Corporation, it lost the essence it was empowered for.

A recent survey conducted by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) recently has found the presence of Aedes albopictus outside Dhaka.

The IEDCR survey, which was completed last month, was carried out in Barishal, Meherpur and Kushtia. According to the final survey report, in Gangni of Meherpur there were 44.5 percent Aedes albopictus and one percent Aegypti.

In Kushtia's Chatrapara, there was 65 percent albopictus and no Aedes aegypti.

Though normally, Aedes aegypti is responsible for spreading dengue in urban areas, albopictus are spreading dengue outside the cities, experts said.

*According to experts, as dengue fever has already spread across the country, a nationally integrated vector control guideline and research centre have become imperative to bring diseases like dengue under control.*

Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of IEDCR, said, "We have to focus on destroying the breeding sources [of the mosquitoes] across the country and it will have to be done in a sustainable manner."

It is not a one-off issue and Aedes in our country is now endemic -- for which, yearlong efforts will have to be undertaken, she said.

Prevalence of Aedes albopictus is higher in rural areas, though both aegypti and albopictus breed in clean water.

"So, we have to identify places and apply insecticide accordingly to kill mosquitoes and larvae," she added.

# Stories of struggle and success at BYLC Youth Carnival 2019

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to scarcity of information, Osama Bin Noor found it hard to look for opportunities that could match his ambition as a student.

This prompted him to act. In 2012, he opened a Facebook page and started posting links of higher education opportunities available at home and abroad.

His friends also started to contribute by sharing links and soon the page took off.

Gathering courage from the success, he and his friends developed a website and named it "Youth Opportunities".

It is now one of the largest online platforms in the country for seeking opportunities.

Anyone, especially students, can get necessary information regarding higher education, job-related opportunities, competitions, conferences and fellowships from the platform.

Osama said, "What I felt [back then] was that Bangladesh has an overwhelmingly young population and the youth should know what opportunities are out there for them."

He was sharing his thoughts at a plenary session of "BYLC Youth Carnival 2019" yesterday.

The session, titled "Stories of Hope and

Action", gathered young and successful entrepreneurs on one platform to speak.

At the session, BD Assistant co-founder Umma Kulsum said the youth should acquire self-esteem and confidence to be successful.

Consistency and timeliness is key in this regard. Chalking out day-to-day plans and executing them on time is essential for success, she said.

BD Assistant is a Rangpur-based organisation that works for developing skills among school dropouts, she added.

Speaking at the same session, YY Ventures founder and managing director Shazeem M Khairul Islam said trust in co-workers is essential for achieving collective goal. In addition to this, one needs to have a clear understanding of what he or she is going to do.

Young people should discuss their thoughts and ideas with others, especially those who are more experienced, he added.

Wedding Diary Founder and CEO Prito Reza moderated the session.

"BYLC Youth Carnival 2019" is an initiative of Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC). The two-day carnival kicked off yesterday at the capital's Government College of Physical

Education. BYLC organised the carnival with support from Manusher Jonno Foundation and UKaid.

Plenary sessions, workshops, problem-solving sessions, film screenings, and exhibitions are highlights of the carnival. Some 8,000 youths from all over the country have registered for the event.

Addressing the opening ceremony yesterday, BYLC Governing Board Chairperson Akhter Matin Chaudhury said BYLC's main objective is to make the youth aware of the principles of leadership and provide them with training and educate them to this end.

A good leader is one who is able to balance between highest levels of nobility, said Sudipto Mukherjee, UNDP country director in Bangladesh, adding a leader has to be competent and humble.

Speaking at the ceremony, Youth and Sports Ministry Secretary Akhter Hossain said about one third of the country's population are youths. It is a great advantage for Bangladesh. It is thus important to work for the youths because they possess the best potential, he said.

Alongside government initiatives, non-

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

# Chief justice stresses coordination among state organs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is no alternative to coordination of three organs of the state for greater interest of the nation, in making economic progress and for continuation of overall development, said Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain yesterday.

"Friendly relations among the three organs -- legislative, executive and judiciary -- are essential for strengthening and flourishing of democracy and the rule of law," he said.

He made the remarks while speaking as chief guest at the 34th annual conference of Bangladesh Ain Samity at Science Annex Bhaban of Dhaka University.

He said the role of the judiciary is very vital in the democratic government system.

Terming the lawyers "social engineers", CJ Syed Mahmud Hossain said, "Judges, lawyers, and students of law have a very important role in establishing justice."

He said the roles of judges, lawyers, teachers and students of law, human rights groups, civil society, and volunteer organisations are very important in establishing the rule of law and protecting fundamental rights of the people.

The members of Bangladesh Ain Samity are proving themselves in national and international arenas through their professional excellence, he said, adding that they have played a vital role in building the country and its overall progress.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, the CJ's wife Samina Khaleque, Bangladesh Ain Samity's outgoing president Advocate AKM Afzal Ul-Munir and its outgoing general secretary Superintendent of Police Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman Al-Mamun, among others, spoke at the programme.



**Right, Awami League mayoral aspirant Atiqul Islam submits his nomination form for the election to Dhaka North City Corporation at party president's Dhanmondi office yesterday. BNP's Tabith Awal submitted his at the party office in Naya Paltan the same day.**



PHOTO: COLLECTED



**National Professor Anisuzzaman and Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, among many others, attended Sir Fazle Hasan Abed's qulkhwani yesterday.** PHOTO: COURTESY

# A lifetime of lifting people out of poverty

*Noted personalities recall Sir Fazle Hasan Abed's contributions*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Each of the organisations founded by Sir Fazle Hasan Abed is dedicated to the welfare of people, said National Professor Anisuzzaman yesterday.

"His [Sir Abed] immense contribution is launching a philanthropic organisation, and to support that endeavour he founded several others," Prof Anisuzzaman said at the qulkhwani of Sir Abed -- founder of Brac, one of the world's leading development organisations.

While commemorating his great contribution to society, Prof Anisuzzaman further said, "Despite being showered with major honours and recognition at home and abroad, he remained modest till the end."

Sir Abed's qulkhwani was held at Gulshan Central Mosque after Asr prayers, according to a press release.

Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain, former finance minister AMA Muhith, renowned

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

# Don't hold 'manipulated polls'

*Oikya Nap President Pankaj Bhattacharya to govt*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Veteran politician and freedom fighter Pankaj Bhattacharya yesterday asked whether citizens can exercise their voting rights during the tenure of the current government, under which several "controversial" polls have been held.

Speaking at a rally in front of National Museum in the capital, the Oikya Nap president also told the government not to arrange any such election in the future that is "controlled by its administration".

Civic platform Sammito Samajik Andolon (SSA) and Anandan, a cultural organisation, jointly arranged the event as part of their Victory Day celebration.

"We fought the Liberation War to break free from the then communal Pakistan and form a non-communal Bangladesh. But could we stick to that path?" wondered Pankaj.

"We separated from Pakistan to establish people's right to vote, but can people freely

exercise that right at present?" he asked.

"I warn the government not to arrange any manipulated vote in future," he added.

The senior politician also said the country is moving forward fast in terms of economy, but the fact remains that inequality and gap among the rich and poor are also increasing simultaneously -- contradicting the spirit of Liberation War.

"We must now ponder whether this type of development is necessary for the people," he said.

Noted cultural personality Laila Hasan said the anti-liberation and communal forces are trying to rise once again in the country. Youths of the nation will have to remain cautious and resist these forces, she said.

"We tried to build the country imbued with the spirit of Liberation War, but unfortunately we failed. Now it's your turn. We are giving you [youths] the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

# Quality education top priority

Says Dipu Moni at Rajshahi College reunion

BSS, Rajshahi

Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni yesterday said the government is working relentlessly to ensure quality of education along with improving human resources.

"We have adopted diversified measures including infrastructural development, teachers' training and recruitment of quality teachers to ensure quality of education for achieving sustainable development goals," she added.

The minister was addressing the inaugural ceremony of a two-day reunion celebration of the HSC alumnus of Rajshahi College as chief guest.

Established in 1873, the college is hosting this festival for the first time in its 146-year history. More than 10,000 attendees including some 8,400 alumnus are taking part in the celebration.

Dipu Moni said all the 13 century-old colleges in the country, including Rajshahi College, will be transformed into a centre of excellence to enrich the education sector.

She urged all, particularly teachers, to ensure quality education terming it the first and foremost demand of the nation. This should be given the top priority and teachers and other stakeholders must play proactive



Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni inaugurating the event at Rajshahi College yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

roles in this regard, she stressed.

In response to some demands placed before the minister for further improvement of the college, Dipu Moni said a new 10-storey dormitory for female students and an administrative building will be built soon.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, State Minister for ICT Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak, and lawmakers Abdul Quddus, Ayan Uddin and Adiba Anjum Mita

also spoke at the event, chaired by college Principal Prof Habibur Rahman.

The event was told that Rajshahi College has been adjudged as the country's best educational institution for the fourth consecutive year for its outstanding performance in the academic arena since 2016. National University also declared the college as the best, based on its ranking.

It is said to be the third oldest institutions for higher education in Bangladesh after Dhaka College and Chattogram College.

Within a short period after its establishment in 1873, the college became one of the main centres of higher education for people in East Bengal, North Bengal, Bihar and Assam.

Before the opening ceremony, a rally was brought out from the college premises.

# Dhaka, Hanoi to work to double bilateral trade volume by 2021

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh and Vietnam want to work closely to enhance the bilateral trade volume from around US \$1 billion to \$2 billion by 2021.

The two countries held the second meeting of the Joint Trade Committee (JTC) in Hanoi on Thursday and yesterday and discussed ways to double the bilateral trade volume.

Dhaka and Hanoi discussed trade and investment issues and identified 11 priority areas including agricultural trade and pharmaceutical exports from Bangladesh to Vietnam.

Vietnamese investment in Bangladesh's special economic zones, ICT sector cooperation, bilateral cooperation in textile and garments sector, trade in halal products, trade in software services, direct air link, promotion of trade in jute and jute goods, banking sector cooperation and tourism sector cooperation (including Buddhist tourism) were also discussed.

Commerce Secretary Dr Md Jafar Uddin and Vietnam's Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade Cao Quoc Hung led their respective sides at the JTC meeting.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Vietnam Samina Naz and Director General (South-east Asia), Ministry of Foreign Affairs MJH Javed attended the meeting as members of the Bangladesh delegation.

Bangladesh requested Vietnam to send delegations to visit Bangladesh

and gain firsthand experience about the pharmaceutical industry, hi-tech parks and special economic zones in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh also urged Vietnam to assist Bangladeshi potato exporters to enter Vietnamese markets by completing the SPS registration process.

The Vietnamese side responded affirmatively to Bangladesh's request, according to Bangladesh embassy in Hanoi.

Vietnam suggested that in case of future requirement, Bangladesh may import quality rice from Vietnam in fulfillment of the existing MoU on rice import from Vietnam.

Both sides recognised the high potential of tourism sector to flourish and in that respect viewed that direct air link between the two countries can hugely contribute.

They agreed that private sector airlines operators between the two countries would be encouraged to assess the market and introduce flights.

Bangladesh requested Vietnam to ease the visa process for Bangladeshi tourists, especially businesspersons.

To ease business transaction, both sides agreed to encourage commercial banks to open branches in each other's capital.

The commerce secretary also called on vice-president of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) Doan Duy Khuong at the VCCI office and requested for more cooperation at B2B levels and sought interventions of VCCI.

## A lifetime of lifting

FROM PAGE 3

economist Rehman Sobhan, lawmaker AKM Rahmatullah, businessman Abdul Awal Mintoo, media personality Shykh Seraj, among others, were present at the qulhwani.

Foreign Minister Momen said Sir Abed's demise is an irreparable loss for the country.

"His contribution towards educating and helping the underprivileged become self-sufficient around the world will keep him alive," said Momen.

On behalf of family members, Sir Abed's son-in-law and Brac's Executive Director Asif Saleh expressed his gratitude to all.

"He used to listen to everyone attentively. He gave emphasis to personal problems of family members and colleagues and tried to resolve those," said Saleh.

He led by example, Brac's executive director said, adding, "Throughout his life he thought about the development of the people who are lagging behind."

Sir Abed breathed his last on December 20 in Dhaka. He was laid to rest on Sunday at Banani graveyard.

## Stories of struggle

FROM PAGE 3

government platforms play an important role in reducing unemployment in Bangladesh, he added.

NGO Affairs Bureau Director Shahadat Hossain hoped BYLC's role in creating leadership and growing confidence among youths will extend further. He said the organisation should contribute further by creating employment opportunities.

Speaking at a separate session, SBK Tech Ventures Founder and Chairman Sonia Bashir Kabir said it is possible to take technology-based services to the country's rural areas and young people can play a big role in this regard.

Rural people are still deprived of many basic services, said Sonia, also former managing director of Microsoft Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, there are only one lakh physicians for 16 crore people, she said.

"So, if someone can provide [any technology-based] service that enables rural people to speak to a doctor sitting at home then that is creating a value [for the country]," she added.

## Govt to procure food grain directly from farmers thru app

Says food minister

UNB, Dhaka

The government will use a mobile application -- billed as "Krishoker App" -- to collect food grain directly from farmers across the country, said Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder yesterday.

The minister made the announcement while inaugurating the Aman rice collection programme in Naogaon in the morning, reads a handout from the PID.

"As a pilot project, the app will be used in 16 upazilas on an experimental basis during the Aman season. A farmer can apply to the government to sell his paddy and avail all the information through this app," the minister explained.

He said rice is being procured in a transparent manner from the farmers under the supervision of food collection committee in districts and upazilas according to the list provided to the agriculture ministry.

"Instead of organising lottery throughout the country, we want to gradually procure rice using the 'Krishoker App'. More rice will be collected in the next Boro season using this app. One hundred percent rice procurement by the app will be ensured in the next Aman season," the minister said.

He said the mobile app will allow

farmers to know if they have been selected or not and the amount of paddy they can sell. "If the pilot project is successful, this service will be spread all over the country," he added.

Minister Majumder said the government is already taking all the necessary preparations because it will procure more paddy in the next Boro season.

"Procurement of rice began on November 1 across the country. There was a slight delay in the first year due to the registration procedure in the app. Collection of rice will be completed on time next year," he stated.

In the current season, 6,158 tonnes of rice at Tk 36 per kg, 866 tonnes of Atap rice at Tk 35 per kg and 1,000 tonnes of rice at Tk 26 per kg will be procured through the "Krishoker App" at Naogaon Sadar food warehouse.

Besides, 17,114 tonnes of rice at Tk 36 per kg, 2,381 tonnes of Atap rice at Tk 35 per kg and 19,912 tonnes of rice at Tk 26 per kg will be procured directly from farmers this year at 19 food warehouses in Naogaon.

Naogaon Deputy Commissioner Harun Ur Rashid, SP (acting) Rashidul Haque, district controller of food GM Faruk Hossain Patowary were also present.

## Barishal univ

FROM PAGE 5

over 1,440 seats in 24 subjects under six faculties divided into "Ka", "Kha", and "Ga", units. This means 35 candidates will vie for each seat.

Of them, 10,106 candidates sat for 560 "Kha" unit seats; 6,012 candidates sat for 300 "Ga" unit seats; and 20,567 candidates will today sit for 580 "Ka" unit seats.

Detailed information can be found on BU's official website ([www.admission.eis.bu.ac.bd](http://www.admission.eis.bu.ac.bd)).

The exams for the "Kha" and "Ga" units were originally set for October 18 and 19, but were postponed due to the vacancy of vice-chancellor, treasurer, and registrar's posts of the university.

## Gaibandha-3 MP

FROM PAGE 5

senior vice-president of Sadullapur upazila Awami League.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed sorrow and deep shock at the death of AL lawmaker Yunus Ali Sarker, reports BSS.

In a condolence message, the prime minister prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul of Yunus.

At the same time, the premier also conveyed her profound sympathy to the bereaved family, the news agency added.

AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, in a separate message, also condoled the death of the Gaibandha MP.

Besides, Jatitya Sangsad Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury also expressed shock and sorrow at the MP's death.

## Benapole Customs fails to achieve revenue target

UNB, Dhaka

Benapole Customs House has failed to achieve its revenue collection target for the period between July and November.

Uttam Chakma, assistant commissioner of the Customs House, said out of the initial target of Tk 2,427 crore, the house has managed to collect only Tk 1,252 crore in these five months, falling short by Tk 1,175 crore.

He said the decrease of imports due to high tax and strict rules and regulation at the port have played significant roles in preventing the house from achieving its goals.

Commissioner of customs house Mohammad Belal Hossain Chowdhury said, "Some importers avoid the port as it has increased level of transparency and accountability required for clearance of goods and shipments."



Officials of Kurigram administration place a wreath at the grave of the eminent author on the occasion of his birth anniversary yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Don't hold

FROM PAGE 3

responsibility to finish our unfinished task," said Laila Hasan.

Liberation War Museum Trustee and SSA President Ziauddin Tariq Ali also spoke at the programme, among others.

Several artists of Anandan performed a number of songs and recited poems on the occasion.

## Back to back accidents

FROM PAGE 5

The deceased was identified as Sirajul Haque (45), hailing from Toukirpara in Taherpur municipality of Bagmara upazila.

Quoting locals, Kajol Kumar Nandi, in-charge of Shibpur police outpost, said Sirajul died on the spot when a goods-laden truck hit him from behind while trying to overtake a motorcycle.

## BNP fears vote rigging

FROM PAGE 5

Asked, Returning Officer Muhammed Hasanuzzaman said the BNP candidate did not contact him over the issue. "I cannot confirm whether he complained or not," he added.

Lawmaker Nadvi and AL candidate could not be contacted despite repeated attempts.

In the constituency (Boalkhali-Chandgaon), six candidates are contesting the polls. A total of 4,75,988 voters are expected to exercise their franchise through electronic voting machines, said Election Commission officials.

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**BIG AWARDS FOR SHORT FILMS**  
Three young film-makers have won awards in the Short-Film making competition organized by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) keeping the theme in mind - "Breaking the Discrimination Chain, Living with Respect". The award giving ceremony was held on a festive mode at Chayanur auditorium on 10 December, 2019. World Human Rights Day. Sayed Abu Raihan was the winner of this competition with the Short-Film called "Tomu". For "Shonga- The Definition" the 1<sup>st</sup> runner's up was Muhiuddin Alam Bhuiyan and for the short-film called "Shantari 2<sup>nd</sup>" runner's up was Sohel Afiyan. The prize money was awarded 50000, 30000 & 20000 accordingly. Former Chief Justice of the High Court Division A. F. M. Abdur Rahman was present as the chief guest and the guest of honor were the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Senior Advisor in Bangladesh Heike Aelfsen, musician Farzana Wahid Shayan, Professor Dr. Geeta Ara Nazrin and Sarah Hossain, executive director of BLAST. It is important to note that in addition to awarding the best three film makers out of hundreds of films, seven other young makers were awarded certificates as best film makers as well. Filmmaker Zahidur Rahim Anjan, Professor Zakir Hossain Raja, Head of Media and communications at Independent University, Musician Farzana Wahid Shayan and Khushi Kabir Co-ordinator of Nijera Kori were connected to the judging process for an entire month.

**34th Death Anniversary**  
The 34th Death Anniversary of Late Rahimullah Choudhury, a renowned industrialist of the country and former Member, National Assembly (M.N.A.), is being observed on the 28th December, 2019 both at his village home in Matubhuiya, Feni and in Dhaka by The Insnaiyat Society, an N.G.O. founded by him for the education and welfare of the destitute in the society.  
We request all his relatives, friends and well wishers to pray for his departed soul.  
Family Members of Late Rahimullah Choudhury

## Remembering Syed Shamsul Haq

FROM PAGE 5

The district administration organised a daylong programme, including rally, placing wreaths at his grave, book fair, discussion and prayers, reports our correspondent.

A discussion on Haq's life and work was held at Kurigram Primary Teachers' Training

Institute, attended by among others, the deputy commissioner, additional deputy commissioner, vice principal of Kurigram Government College, additional police superintendent, principal of Kurigram Law College, public prosecutor, president of Kurigram Press Club and general secretary of district Shilpakala Academy.

## Missing teen's body found

FROM PAGE 5

rushed there around 5pm on the day and recovered the body.

The body was sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Sahana Begum, victim's mother, said Sumon had been missing since three of his friends called him out of home on

December 17.

AKM Nazmul Quader, officer-in-charge of Haragachh Police Station, said criminals dumped the body in the septic tank after killing the teenager elsewhere.

The reason behind the murder was yet to be ascertained, he added.

**RFP Ref. No.: LRPS- BAN-2019- 9155276**  
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## TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

# Travelling Light

Recently I had a pleasant surprise when checking in for a flight at Dhaka airport. After I placed my suitcase on the weight scale, the ticketing agent looked at me, puzzled. "Sir, your luggage is so light that it is showing a negative weight."

So there it was. Airline weight scales can be erroneous in either direction. I had to abandon my hypothesis that airlines bias their scales towards heavy to extract overweight luggage charges from passengers.

But, more importantly, this was the best compliment that anyone could give me, the traveller.

"Travelling light" - those two words imply mobility and freedom. You can pack quickly and be on the move, without anyone's help, without bothering anyone.

Depending on your mode of travel, though, light travel can mean a lot more. Take, for example, my days of backpacking in the American wilderness. When you go off by foot into the remote back country of Yosemite National Park for several days carrying everything you need on your back - clothes, tent, sleeping bag, food, water, cooking utensils, stove, fuel - the weight of each item becomes crucial. You become keenly tuned to what you really need to survive and function. (Incidentally, during the warm months, a small shovel is among those necessities - for your toilet, so you dug a small hole in the ground and covered up your excreta. In the snow, protocol requires you to carry out your solid waste.)

That's how I learned about Ultralight Backpacking. The goal was to keep the weight of basics under ten pounds; to this you added food and water. I never quite reached that goal but came close by using items made of lightweight material. Some of it came down to money. Lightweight gear was almost always more costly. But there were also skills involved: how to wear a frameless backpack so your back is not in pain after miles of walking, how to seal the seams of a single-wall tent so you are not drenched in your sleep when that midnight shower arrived



A Lighter Footstep.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

(the commonly-used but heavier double-walled tents are more waterproof in rain); how to identify every useless strap that your backpack came with and cut it off.

My backpacking and camping days are largely over. But some of the lessons I learned remain with me. Travelling light can become a way of looking at life, which, after all, is just another journey. Have we stepped lightly on our life's journey? How deep an imprint have we left on this planet? How has our journey impacted others

- now or in the future? Did we deal a heavy hand on our fellow humans by denigrating them or their beliefs? And, in this age of climate emergency, how heavy is our carbon footprint?

As we leave behind an extraordinarily tumultuous year and stand on the verge of a new one, these are thoughts to ponder. Dear Reader, I wish you a happy new year filled with lighter steps.

facebook.com/tangents.ikabir or follow "ihtishamkabir" on Instagram.

## BNP fears vote rigging in Ctg by-polls

Says AL lawmaker's bragging of taking over polling centres in city elections may fuel chaos

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

With Chattogram-8 by-polls around two weeks away, BNP has expressed fears of vote rigging.

Party candidate Abu Sufian filed a complaint with the returning officer on December 26 in this regard after an Awami League lawmaker boasted of taking control of polling centres at an in-house meeting on Wednesday.

The election is slated to be held on January 13. The constituency fell vacant due to death of lawmaker Moin Uddin Khan Badal on November 7. Badal, also executive president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, was elected lawmaker with the "boat" (Awami League) symbol from the constituency in three consecutive polls, between 2008 and 2018.

On Wednesday, Abu Reza Muhammad Nizamuddin Nadvi, lawmaker from Satkania (Chattogram-15), at a meeting organised as part of election preparation at Awami League candidate's residence in city's Lalkhan Bazar bragged that he himself took control of seven polling centres in the 2015 city corporation election, apparently indicating that he

would repeat the same in the upcoming election.

He also said they will ensure that AL candidate wins the election. Awami League nominated Moslem Uddin Ahmed, president of Chattogram district (south) unit of AL, as a candidate for the by-polls.

A video recording of the meeting went viral on social media. This newspaper has also obtained a copy of that.

Meanwhile, Abu Sufian in his written allegation said there could be massive vote rigging as AL activists are planning to flex their muscles to gain control over the voting centres.

"This is inflicting fear among people and raising questions on how fair the voting will be," he said. Sufian urged the returning officer to take steps to ensure a safe environment for voters on election day.

"It's unfortunate that a lawmaker, who is supposed to uphold the law, said something like this," Sufian told The Daily Star yesterday. "Now it's up to the Election Commission to show how true they are to their words and hold an election free of fear and intimidation," he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Gaibandha-3 MP Yunus Ali no more

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Awami League lawmaker

Yunus Ali

Sarker died at a hospital in Dhaka yesterday morning. He was 67.

He breathed his last at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) around 7:30am.

Yunus, who had been suffering from lung cancer for a long time, was admitted to BSMMU five months ago, Awami League sources said.

He was elected an MP from Sadullahpur-Palashbari constituency in Gaibandha for the first time in 2014.

The lawmaker left behind his wife and two sons to mourn his death.

He had also been suffering from respiratory health complications, said Khandker Zillur Rahman,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Weather in Barishal became chillier yesterday after a morning drizzle that continued till noon. Rain also added to winter woes. This photo was taken from Sadar Road in the city.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Back to back accidents on same Kishoreganj road

STAR REPORT

Four people were killed in separate accidents across the country in the last two days, reports our correspondents and a news agency.

At least two people were killed and 20 were injured when a passenger bus fell into a ditch beside Bhairab-Kishoreganj road at Kamaliarchar in Katiadi upzila of Kishoreganj around 4am yesterday. Hours after, another truck plunged into a nearby ditch around the same area, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.

The deceased were identified as Faizul Islam Chowdhury (60) and Zinat Khan (50), a nurse of Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said police.

The accident occurred when a Mymensingh bound bus skidded off the road and fell into a road side ditch. This killed Faizul and Zinat on the spot and injured the others, said DM Johirul Islam, in-charge of Katiadi Highway Police.

On information, police rescued the injured and rushed them to Kishoreganj General Hospital.

During the rescue operation, another truck plunged into the same ditch as its driver lost control over the steering, Johirul said. However, no casualties were reported.

Dense fog and slippery road caused the accidents, he added.

Police have seized all the vehicles involved. Separate cases were lodged in this regard.

In the port city, an engineer was killed after he was run over by a lorry at port city's Ambagan early yesterday, reports our Chattogram correspondent.

The deceased was identified as Emdadul Hasan Shovan (29). He worked as an electrical engineer in a project of Chattogram Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), said Md Kashem, sub-inspector of Khulshi Police Station.

The accident occurred as Emdadul was going to Tiger Pass on his motorbike. Around 12:10am, his bike collided head-on with a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, pushing him off into the road. As soon as he fell, a recklessly driven covered van drove over him, killing him on the spot.

Police chased the covered van but it managed to flee the scene, SI Kashem said.

In Rajshahi, a college teacher was crushed under the wheels of a truck on the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway in Biraldoho Mazar area of Puthia upzila on Thursday afternoon, reports UNB.

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## Barishal univ admission tests being held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

The admission test of "Ka" unit of Barishal University (BU) for the 2019-2020 session will be held on the BU campus and 17 other local venues today. The exam is scheduled to take place between 11am and 12:30pm.

This will follow the exams for "Kha" and "Ga" units held at the same venues yesterday.

Visiting the venues, newly appointed VC of Barishal University Prof Arefin Matin said the first day of admission tests was held under peaceful conditions without any disruption. He hoped for the second day to go the same way.

A total of 49,956 candidates have registered to participate in this ninth intake of BU.

The first year honours candidates will compete

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## Remembering Syed Shamsul Haq

Birth anniversary observed in Kurigram

CITY DESK

Be it verses, plays or stories -- Syed Shamsul Haq depicted a nation's proud history with a mastery that no one else could hope to achieve in one life.

His "Nurulidiner Shara Jibon" (The Life and Times of Nurulidiner) captured the rise of peasants of Bengal in rebellion against the tyranny of the British around the end of eighteenth century in Rangpur, the region he was born in about 200-years later.

1971, the nation's most glorious year in modern history, reemerges as a truthful flashback each time Haq's famous play -- "Payer Awaj Pawa Jay" -- (We Hear the Footsteps) is staged at theatres.

Years later, in the '90s, Haq delivered yet another of his legendary poetic creation -- "Amar Porichoy" (My Identity). It has it all -- from the anthropological history to cultural heredities, from remote ancestry to Bengali nationhood.

Yesterday marked the birth anniversary of Syed Shamsul Haq, one of the most prolific poets, writers and playwrights of the country.



Born in Kurigram on December 27, 1935, he commanded contemporary Bangla literature for over six decades as a literary giant.

Starting from Pakistan days, Haq's fountain of literary creations flowed ceaselessly for decades, inspiring hundreds of thousands of poetry lovers, and connoisseurs of literature at home and abroad.

Haq married Anwara Syed Haq. Together they had two children.

Popularly known as Syed Haq, he wrote innumerable poetry, fiction, plays (mostly in verse), and essays. He wrote several film scripts and penned many patriotic songs. His literary works were included in the curriculum of junior school, secondary, higher secondary, and graduate level Bangla

literature.

Haq is also credited for introducing the Bengali audience to some of the great plays of world literature with his translation work.

He had won every major award there was in the field of literature in the country including Independence Award (2000), Ekushey Padak (1984), Bangla Academy Award (1966), Adamjee Literary Award (1969), Alakta Gold Medal (1982), Alaol Literary Award (1983), Kabitlap Award (1983), Literary Award of the Association of Women Writers, Jebunnessa-Mahbubullah Gold Medal (1985), Padabali Kabita Award (1987), Nasiruddin Gold Medal (1990), National Poetry Award (1997), National Poetry Honour (2001), and TENAS Medal (1990).

Haq passed away at a Dhaka hospital on September 27, 2016, at the age of 81. He was buried next to Kurigram Government College as per his last wish.

PROGRAMME IN KURIGRAM  
Syed Haq's birth anniversary was observed in Kurigram in a befitting manner yesterday.

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Huddling around fire made in public places to stay warm is a common scene in Bangladesh during winter. This photo was taken at Dhaka's Beribadh area.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Boatman's body recovered from Karnaphuli

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police recovered the body of a boatman at Banglabazar Ghat from the Karnaphuli river in the port city yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Nur Ahmed (45), from Ichhanagar under Karnaphuli upzila, said police. He had been missing since Tuesday.

Inspector Jobayer Syed of Karnaphuli Police Station said Nur was returning on an empty boat after dropping off passengers in Sadarghat on Tuesday. Before he could reach land, a lighter vessel hit his boat and it capsized.

Locals found his body in the Banglabazar Ghat area around 8am yesterday.

## Roof collapse in Cumilla kills one, injures ten

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

The roof of an under-construction building collapsed in Cumilla yesterday -- killing one worker and injuring 10, according to fire service.

The victims were working at the building "Rupayan Delowar Tower" in Kandirpar area, said their co-workers.

The deceased was identified as Reza (19), son of Rafikul Islam from Rangpur.

Sabuj, one of the survivors, said, "The incident happened all of a sudden."

The injured were taken to Cumilla Medical College Hospital.

Fire service personnel were deployed at the building to conduct emergency rescue work while police and Rab members were deployed to maintain law and order.

Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of police in Cumilla, said, "We are looking into whether any worker is trapped under the debris."

Abul Fazal Mir, deputy commissioner of Cumilla, visited the site, said officials.

A four-member committee has been formed by the district administration to probe into the incident.

No one from the authorities of the building was found at the construction site.

## Missing teen's body found in septic tank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A teenager was found dead in a septic tank of a mosque in Kaunia upzila of Rangpur yesterday, 10 days after he had gone missing.

The deceased was identified as Suman Mia (18), son of late Rahim Mia from Sarai New Kazipara village in the upzila.

His family members said the boy went missing on December 17.

Police said students of Nurai Hafiza Madrasa in the upzila were playing badminton near the mosque yesterday afternoon. They noticed the body inside the septic tank as its lid was open, said law enforcers.

On information from locals, a team from Haragachh Police Station

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# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 28, 2019, POUISH 13, 1426 BS

## Will the Turag meet Buriganga's fate?

*Industrial effluents being dumped with impunity*

THE Turag river is being contaminated with the untreated liquid industrial waste that is being dumped into the canals, streams and waterbodies around the garments washing plants and textile units located in Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) area. Local inhabitants tell of a time when the Turag canal water was so fresh that people could drink from it. Unfortunately, all that has changed is the untreated liquid waste from industries and the sewage from Tongi municipality area stream into the Turag River on a daily basis.

The problem is that the drives conducted by the Department of Environment (DoE) are not enough to discourage polluters from dumping untreated chemicals. The situation has grown worse over the last two decades as washing and dying plants have mushroomed in the area. What is interesting here is that, the DoE tells us that only 490 units out of 6,500 industrial units in Gazipur discharge liquid waste. While 455 of these units have installed Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs), it is obvious that they are not utilised fully and hence the problem. The other problem, according to a study conducted by Buet is that many factories have expanded whilst their corresponding ETPs have not, and this leads to the extra volume of waste water being dumped into water channels without treatment.

Polluters getting away with contaminating the water supply has a long history in Bangladesh. For years, the Buriganga River was subject to waste water dumping by factories in the Hazaribagh tannery estate. Now, we are seeing a similar situation unfolding in the Turag River where the regulatory body is unable to enforce the Environment Conservation Act, 1995 (amended in 2010) that states textile dyeing factories are legally bound to install and run ETPs. Development is a must for the country, but it must be sustainable development that does not destroy the environment and livelihoods of communities. We need to take heed of the damage being done before the Turag is categorised as a dying river.

## Unsafe school in Jhenaidah

*Children's lives at risk*

WE find it abhorrible that a school built in 1960 and declared unsafe by the Education Engineering Department (EED) in Jhenaidah in 2015 is still in operation. The two-storey building located in Kotchandpur upazila town has exposed iron rods and the plaster keeps falling off the ceilings and yet we find no effort by authorities to repair the structural problems that are putting the lives of some 600 students at risk. Why has such a crucial matter as maintenance of school buildings been treated with such neglect and apathy? We are talking about the lives of children here as well as their education, which is being severely disrupted because of this situation.

The children are in fear of when the plaster of their roofs may come crashing down on their heads and this is hardly panic working. Back in 2018, five students had to be admitted to the hospital due to injuries caused by falling plaster. We are informed that the building had sustained damage in an earthquake in 2017 but higher authorities have paid no heed to the matter and hence hundreds of children continue to go to a school that is considered unsafe. There has been no attempt to make necessary repairs.

It is high time the education ministry took this precarious situation seriously. If it is a question of fund constraint, it is the ministry's responsibility to get those funds from the government and carry out such essential maintenance work. There is just no excuse for such disregard for children's safety. We hope immediate steps will be taken to make sure that repairs will be made as soon as possible so that the children may go back to school without the risk of being injured or killed.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net



### May peace prevail in India

India, the largest democratic country in the world is now in an upheaval. I watch with great disappointment and disbelief how the country is falling apart over issues regarding the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC). According to reports, at least 25 people have died and hundreds have been injured since the demonstrations began to unfold.

It is alarming to learn that in the backdrop of refusal by chief ministers of states like West Bengal, Kerala, Punjab and Chhattisgarh to implement the CAA, Prime Minister Modi has said that no state can block its implementation. Why is the prime minister so adamant? Would it not be wise to come to an understanding for the sake of democracy? I am deeply worried for all the innocent people who are risking their lives to keep India's pluralistic image alive. I earnestly hope good sense will prevail and the disputed issues would be settled amicably.

Nur Jahan, Chattogram

# Despite improvements, journalism remains as precarious as ever



TASNEEM TAYEB

2019 has seen a significant drop in the number of journalists being killed—49 as against the annual average of 80 journalists killed for the past two decades. The annual report by Reporters Without Borders, known better by their French initials RSF (Reporters Sans Frontières), termed this figure "historically low".

2019 also marks three years of the detention of *Al Jazeera* journalist Mahmoud Hussein, who had been picked up and incarcerated since December 20, 2016, by Egypt's el-Sisi regime. And Hussein has been held in sordid conditions—he has suffered a broken arm and has been denied passable treatment—without charges or trial, in gross violation of international laws. The law of Egypt itself sets a maximum of 60 days of pretrial detention for people under investigation for felony. So, by which law is he being held and why?

While the former has no answer, the latter can be attributed to Hussein's courage to shine light on the misdeeds of the el-Sisi administration. And if this can happen to an *Al Jazeera* journalist—an esteemed international broadcaster—one wonders what happens to journalists who work for local newspapers; even worse, what happens to those working as freelancers?

2019 is also the year that witnessed the sentencing of the killers of dissenting Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, in which five people had been awarded the death sentence, with another three sentenced to jail terms, while one of the prime suspects was allowed to go scot-free! Saud al-Qahtani, who along with 16 other Saudis had been sanctioned by the US last year for their alleged role in the killing, is now a free man, acquitted of all charges.

But this should come as no surprise because all the while the international governments had been condemning the Saudis for the gruesome murder of the journalist inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul—CIA suggested the involvement of top Saudi leadership in the murder—the US along with other powerful countries kept selling weapons to the Saudis to pursue the war in Yemen.

And a closer look at the RSF report figures suggest that the decline in the number of journalists killed in 2019 can be, to some extent, attributed to the lesser number of journalists killed while covering war this year. Numbers from Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen suggest that journalist casualties in these three countries combined stood at 17 this year—half of the 34 from 2018.

But is this good news? Perhaps. RSF spokeswoman Juliane Matthey attributed this decline in number to

certain factors, such as better training of journalists who cover war. Regarding the sharp decline in the number of journalists killed in Yemen in particular—from 10 in 2018 to two in 2019—, Matthey said, "But that is partly because many journalists have changed their job because of the unstable situation". According to RSF, a journalist has resorted to working as a server at an eatery in the capital, Sanaa; while another has become an ice-cream vendor.

But what is more alarming is that while the number of journalists killed in warzones had decreased, journalism in "countries at peace" has become more precarious than ever.

leaders" like el-Sisi of Egypt, rough handle journalists and detain them without any charge, simply on the strength of their muscle power; others more tactful, like Russia, detain journalists on flimsy charges and let them perish in jails. And in detention centres in China and Turkey a good number of journalists have been held for their dissenting voices. And in the face of such persecution, journalists like Levent Kenez had to seek shelter in other countries.

The more polished ones like Viktor Orban of Hungary have adopted creative means to manhandle free press—creating a government media monopoly.

including telecom and consumer goods companies to "restrict" their advertising in two of the mainstream newspapers. To this day, the two newspapers are bearing the financial brunt of this government move.

And in the US the very foundation of journalism has been brought into question by the president, who terms any news unflattering to him "fake news". And in a more sinister narrative, the US president has branded journalists "enemy of the people"—a tag that has been previously used by repressors like Stalin and the Third Reich to punish dissent.

And amidst all these, journalism today



PHOTO: STRINGER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

People holding placards and photos of slain journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, stage a protest called by Galizia's family and civic movements, on November 29, 2019 outside the office of the prime minister in Valletta, Malta.

In 2019 more journalists—59 percent—have been killed in these "countries at peace". In Mexico alone 10 journalists had been killed in 2019, the same number as last year. And although Mexico is not a war zone, it is riddled in wars between drug cartels.

And journalists being killed deliberately for their work has gone up by two percent, according to the RSF report. Meaning more journalists are now at risk of being targeted and killed on the account of their profession.

And detention of journalists has also seen an increase in 2019. With 389 journalists currently in held various prisons by suppressive governments a worrying trend is emerging—of incarceration and punishment of journalists for unearthing the unpleasant.

While dictators in the guise of "elected

According to a report by *Freedom House*, an independent watchdog organisation, in Hungary "nearly 80 percent of the media are owned by government allies." The same tactic had also been used by Aleksandar Vucic's of Serbia.

And in other, more democratic countries such as India and Bangladesh, the governments have taken a more free-market approach to stifle journalistic dissent. According to a report by *Al Jazeera's* Sohail Rahman, earlier this year in Kashmir, the Indian government had stopped advertising in two major newspapers without citing any reason. As much as 50 percent of the revenues for these papers came from government advertisement and announcement.

The government in Bangladesh went one step ahead and as early as 2015 had outrightly asked big corporations,

remains as precarious a profession as ever—be it in a democratic "country at peace" or a repressive one like Turkmenistan, which according to the RSF Press Freedom Index, has the most repressive media environment in the world.

And journalists will keep facing persecution until the true killers of Jamal Khashoggi, Daphne Caruana Galizia, Mena Mangal and Jan Kuciak are punished; until Mahmoud Hussein is released from detention; until Levent Kenez is allowed to go back to Turkey and write without fear of repercussions; until Kashmir's Qazi Shibli's whereabouts is made known.

Do world leaders have the courage to reinforce such freedom of press?

Tasneem Tayeb works for *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is: @TayebTasneem

## RMG growth: Battling the challenges



HELAL UDDIN AHMED

EXPORT of Bangladesh ready-made garments (RMG) has been declining since the past four months. There are reasons to believe that Bangladesh's weaknesses compared to rival producers in the area of product development and diversification have contributed to this falling trend in garments exports. Bangladesh is deemed to be a "sellers' market", where the buyers come, place purchase orders and then import garments. But nowadays, the buyers have many viable alternative sources, as the productivity and product diversity of countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Cambodia have been boosted in recent times.

With the exception of a handful, most garments manufacturers in the country lack any research and development (R&D) set-up. But the R&D teams in the factories of competitor countries are usually stronger. The local factories usually take three to four months for product development (from design to sample preparation). But countries like China spend only 15 to 30 days for the purpose. Lack of efficiency and weak productivity have become critical factors, as a result of which average production cost unnecessarily goes up, thereby offsetting the advantage of lower labour costs in Bangladesh.

The comparative standing of countries weak in product development is bound to deteriorate in the coming days. It is however encouraging that the BGMEA has started some work on the issue. The rising wages is another factor relevant for the sector's competitiveness. The average monthly wage of a garments worker in the country was USD 35 a decade ago. But the wage has risen substantially since then. It is likely to rise even further in the coming months, which would entail additional expenses for the entrepreneurs. But the buyers are not interested in paying additional money for their purchases.

Consequently, there is no alternative to improving productivity and product development if the growth trend is to be sustained.

Another element of unpredictability in RMG business has been the recent proliferation of online trading. Many buyers prefer to do business online now instead of undertaking physical visits. Therefore, the nature of business is fast changing and smaller establishments are competing with bigger ones on equal footing through the world wide web for attracting buyers. The shapes and forms of retail marketing are therefore undergoing significant changes. However, the big

establishments is their environment-friendly attribute. They also enjoy good reputation in the area of timely delivery and consistent quality of products. Overall, Bangladesh still remains a lucrative destination for the RMG buyers globally.

However, in the past our entrepreneurs engaged workers after installing garment machineries, and then automatically received purchase orders from the buyers. Their businesses thrived in this way. The entrepreneurs then took it for granted that business would naturally come once machines were installed and workers were deployed. But this premise is not working anymore with respect to the buyers. Now



Bangladesh can improve her share only through constant product development and diversification.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

buyers usually maintain consistency in their sourcing and typically do not make sudden or erratic moves.

Bangladesh's status with respect to safety in factories was precarious a few years ago. But things have improved a lot in this domain. The capacities of factories have also increased substantially, standing at a much higher level now compared to competitor countries. Besides, the local entrepreneurs have demonstrated their resilience time and again in the face of natural and man-made adversities. They do not step back when the buyers ask for anything challenging. Another positive feature of Bangladeshi RMG

it is the turn of the entrepreneurs to make offers to the buyers. Product development and diversification have therefore become crucial as the fashion trends worldwide undergo changes frequently.

There has been much discussion since long regarding RMG diversification. But, shirts, trousers, jackets, t-shirts and sweaters still remain the main items in the export basket of Bangladeshi RMG sector. There has also not been much improvement with regard to value addition. Greater product diversification has therefore become essential for improving the situation. The manufacturers also need to watch

the latest trends in the European and American markets for devising their marketing and production strategies. Many expatriates now work in managerial roles in our RMG factories, which in most cases are unnecessary. Instead, experienced and skilled designers, and product development personnel should be recruited from abroad. Money should also be invested in larger proportion in the area of product development.

Bangladesh's main rival in the RMG arena is still China. But whereas China caters to 33-36 percent of the global market, Bangladeshi exports account for only 6.4 percent of the total. That means, there is a huge gap between the two top exporters. Bangladesh can improve her share only through constant product development and diversification, and concomitant value addition. As for Vietnam, which is now almost at par with Bangladesh, the investors are mostly from China. Many Chinese investors have factories in Vietnam in addition to those they run in mainland China. As a result, the benefits of product development in China also trickle down to Vietnam. This makes the job of sourcing by buyers easier in Vietnam. This is the main reason why Vietnam is doing so well in RMG exports in recent times.

At present around 50 percent of the demand for woven fabric in local RMG factories have to be met through imports. It entails lot of time and money. The lead time for RMG manufacturers would have decreased considerably if the fabric was produced locally through enhanced investments in the sector. The value addition in RMG would also have increased as a result. There is, as a result, a good case for focusing on product development in the textiles sector as well. The local factories will have no option but to continue importing high-end textiles from abroad if appropriate investments are not made for producing high-end textiles locally. This is neither desirable nor cost-effective, and the government as well as textile entrepreneurs should take initiatives on an urgent basis for attracting investments in the sector.

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# Addressing the plight of women migrant workers

K M Ali Reza

In recent time numerous stories have been reported in the media about the unspeakable sufferings and exploitations of Bangladeshi women migrant workers (WMWs) in some Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Many of the victims returned home dead which posed serious questions about the protection of women migrant workers in those countries. The gruesome stories of some of these workers also alerted the policy makers, including civil society organisations (CSOs) and NGOs—who have been working for the welfare of migrant workers—to take appropriate measures. Expert opinion on this issue is also divided: some suggesting imposing restriction on sending WMWs to GCC states, others asking for more protective measures to reduce their vulnerabilities.

Placing restrictions on migration of women workers can be relatively easy but it has far-reaching implications. International norms and practices do not favour imposing restrictions on women migrant workers, rather they encourage creation of more employment opportunities for them both at home and abroad. For example, article 9.4 of the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (known as Trafficking in Persons Protocol) says, "States Parties shall take or strengthen measures, including through bilateral or multilateral cooperation, to alleviate the factors that make persons, especially women and children, vulnerable to trafficking, such as poverty, underdevelopment and lack of equal opportunity".

The terms mentioned in the said article require all governments, who are party to this protocol through ratification, to take positive steps to address the underlying root causes of trafficking. Some of the causative factors that need to be addressed include: violence against women in all of its forms; lack of job opportunities; and restrictive migration policies and poorly planned economic development strategies. It means that policy measures should not be planned



Research shows that restriction on migration of women workers directly curtail their employment opportunities.

PHOTO: MUNIR UZ ZAMAN/AFP

in such a way which would prevent anyone, particularly women, from leaving the country for employment. Furthermore, article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) also indicates that policy measures should not infringe upon the rights of individuals to enter and leave their country lawfully.

But unfortunately, in many cases we have witnessed that some initiatives—often in the name of protecting female migrant workers from exploitation and trafficking—limited their overseas employment opportunities, curtailed mobility rights and made them more vulnerable to exploitations. There is a possibility that restriction on WMWs at the countries of origin may limit legal routes of migration for them and make it more difficult for women to migrate through official channels. If the policy apparatus does not address persistent migration push factors such as lack of employment opportunities, inadequate livelihood options, and gender inequality, it may rather result in unsafe and

irregular migration of women workers with the assistance of exploiters and traffickers.

Almost all the women who are trafficked start out as migrants seeking work to sustain themselves. They are pulled into the migration stream by the demand for labour in destination countries. The demand of labour exists because citizens and residents of destination countries refuse to take low wage jobs. The important point is that the demand for migrant workers in destination countries are met one way or another. The question is whether the demand will be met by regular and documented migrant workers or by trafficked persons recruited and employed illegally.

Research shows that restriction on migration of women workers directly curtail their employment and livelihood opportunities. For example, incidents of exploitation of Nepali women migrant workers have prompted the Nepali government to impose bans on overseas employment of women workers. Similarly,

the Indonesian government banned migrant domestic workers from travelling to work in different Middle Eastern countries. The Philippines has also experimented with placing restrictions on domestic migrant workers to countries that are considered unsafe for their workers. There are arguments against his approach that says such bans further worsen the limited migration options for women migrant workers, and they are forced to seek alternative routes to migrate which very often make them more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and trafficking.

Many consider that effective bilateral agreements (BLAs) or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between origin and destination countries with a specific focus on WMWs can help to protect them from vulnerabilities. For example, the 2013 BLA between Philippines and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for domestic workers, signed in the wake of massive human rights scandal which received wider media attention, is believed to have achieved tangible gains towards protecting the rights of WMWs of Philippines. The BLA covered vital rights issues such as employers shall not withhold the migrant workers' passports, provide suitable accommodation, ensure minimum wage, allow paid leaves, etc. Others argue that such BLA and MoU (which have no legal binding on the involved parties) signed between sending and receiving countries very often fail to comply with international human rights frameworks including Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and ILO Domestic Workers Convention No 189.

There are also conspicuous shortcomings within the international legal instruments in protecting the rights of women migrant workers, especially in the destination countries. For example, ILO convention 189 on domestic workers was not designed to explicitly deal with women migrants. Although the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW) promotes equal treatment of migrant workers, including women and men as well as undocumented migrants, it does

not deal with specific issues of vulnerabilities of WMWs and thus ICRMW is less effective in ensuring their protection. Similarly, the Palermo Trafficking in Persons Protocol does not adequately protect the human rights of women outside of providing aid to victims of trafficking. Likewise, the CEDAW General Recommendations (GR26) do not provide binding articles on the treatment of WMWs. Therefore, there is an increasing demand for creating a new enforceable protocol under CEDAW and ICRMW which specifically addresses rights of women migrant workers in all stages of migration, across all sectors.

To reduce vulnerabilities of WMWs, close cooperation from the destination countries are also essential. For example, the visa conditions of women migrant workers, particularly domestic workers, should not be conditional upon the sponsorship of a specific employer. Strict sponsorship arrangement may excessively restrict the freedom of movement of WMWs at the destination countries, which increases their vulnerabilities. Furthermore, standardised job contracts consistent with ILO guidelines and other international legal instruments can help in providing better protection to WMWs.

There are numerous evidences that restrictive policies for WMWs do not protect them; rather they limit the employment and mobility rights of the female migrant workers. Without addressing the main causes of their vulnerabilities in destination countries, arbitrary bans may create conditions for further exploitations. Any policies that restrict or ban migration because of concerns over exploitation of WMWs also fail to address the problem of unscrupulous recruiters and recruitment practices, unenforced BLAs and MOUs. Unless enhanced access to regular migration is ensured and decent work for women migrant workers are provided, it will not be possible to overcome the systemic patterns of exploitation and discrimination against female migrant workers at the destination countries.

K M Ali Reza has been serving as Programme Coordinator at the Regional Support Office of the Ball Process in Bangkok, Thailand.

## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# Three New Year's Wishes for Britain and the EU



MICHEL BARNIER

THE end of the year is a time for closure and new beginnings. As 2019 winds down, that is certainly the case with Brexit. Following the victory of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the Tories in the general election this month, it is now

clear that the United Kingdom will leave the European Union on January 31, 2020.

For many, including me, the occasion will be tinged with regret. But it also represents an opportunity to forge a new UK-EU partnership. And besides, things could have been much worse. Owing to the withdrawal agreement that was concluded this past October, a destructive "hard" Brexit has been averted.

Since the beginning of the Brexit negotiations, we on the EU side—the 27 member states and the European Parliament—have not strayed from the bloc's core interests nor lost sight of the need for unity and solidarity. Our priority was first and foremost to secure the rights of European citizens, including by finding a solution for the people of Northern Ireland and Ireland, for whom the negotiations were about peace and stability, not just trade and the economy. Throughout the process, we have protected the EU single market and its guarantees for consumers, public and animal health standards, and safeguards against fraud and trafficking. But we also did our utmost to preserve a climate of trust between the EU and the UK, and to lay a solid foundation for a new partnership.

In accordance with its own wishes, the UK will no longer participate in EU institutions as of February 1, 2020. But it will remain in

the single market and the customs union at least until the end of 2020. And the free movement of people between the EU and the UK will continue, which means that it will be business as usual for citizens, consumers, businesses, students, and researchers on both sides of the channel over the next year.

Moreover, with the transition period, there will be time to implement practical measures to guarantee EU and UK citizens' rights, establish the customs and border arrangements agreed in Northern Ireland, and start to negotiate an agreement on the future relationship. But in the absence of a decision by the UK before July 2020 to extend the transition period—which Johnson has ruled out—a deal on the future relationship will have to be concluded in less than 11 months.

That will be immensely challenging, but we will give it our all, even if we won't be able to achieve everything. Never will it be the EU that fails on common ambition.

Since it is the time for New Year's resolutions, we should set three goals to achieve by this time next year. First, the EU and the UK must ensure that we have the means to work together and discuss joint solutions to global challenges. The UK may be leaving the EU, but it is not leaving Europe. As European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen recently put it, "Whatever the future holds, the bond and the friendship between our people are unbreakable." From addressing climate change and promoting effective multilateralism, to defending our homelands and countering those who choose violence over peaceful solutions, we share essential interests and values.

That is why the EU will continue to engage positively with the UK, both bilaterally and in global fora such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, and the G20. Consider climate change. Next year, the UN



British and EU flags flutter outside the Houses of Parliament in London, Britain.

PHOTO: REUTERS/TOBY MELVILLE/FILE PHOTO

Climate Change Conference (COP26) will take place in Glasgow, Scotland. Setting ambitious targets will require a strong common position. If the EU and the UK cannot align on such a critical issue, there is little hope that others around the world will be able to do so.

Second, we need to build a close security relationship. Here, too, the UK's departure from the EU has consequences. The strong security cooperation that EU member states have put in place is linked to the free movement of people. It works because we have common rules, common supervision mechanisms, and a common Court of Justice. Because we trust each other and are assured that our fundamental rights are protected,

we are able to share data extensively and implement integrated solutions.

The same degree of cooperation is simply not possible with a third country that is outside of the Schengen area. But neither the EU nor the UK can guarantee its security without looking beyond its borders and building alliances. Tackling terrorism, cyberattacks, and other attempts to undermine our democracies will require a joint effort. The lives of our citizens depend on our ability to count on each other. That is why there can be no trade-off on our mutual security. This should be an unconditional commitment from both sides. I know that the EU's high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, Josep Borrell, agrees.

Third, by this time next year, we need an economic partnership that reflects our common interests, geographical proximity, and interdependence. In the "political declaration" agreed in October alongside the withdrawal agreement, the UK government made clear that it will pursue a free-trade agreement with the EU, and rejected the idea that it would remain in the EU customs union. That means the UK and the EU will become two separate markets.

The EU—including its trade commissioner, Phil Hogan—will engage in these negotiations in a positive spirit, with the willingness to make the most of the short time available. But, like the UK, we will keep our strategic interests in mind. We know that competing on social and environmental standards—rather than on skills, innovation, and quality—leads only to a race to the bottom that puts workers, consumers, and the planet on the losing side. Thus, any free-trade agreement must provide for a level playing field on standards, state aid, and tax matters.

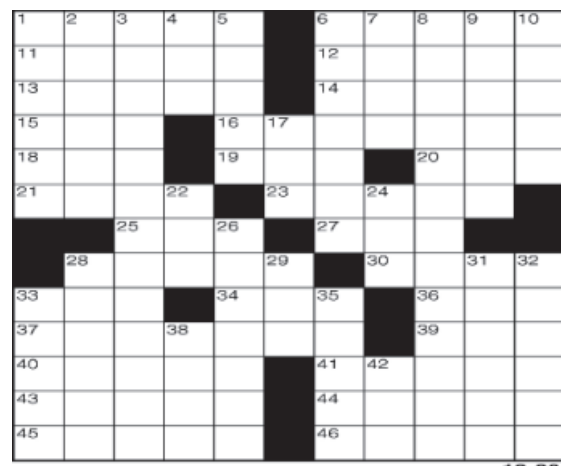
These are our three goals for 2020: to maintain a capacity to cooperate closely at the global level; to forge a strong security partnership; and to negotiate a new economic agreement (which, most likely, will have to be expanded in the years to come). If we achieve these three objectives, we will have made the most of the next year. As soon as we receive our mandate from the 27 EU member states, our team will be ready to negotiate in a constructive spirit with the UK—a country that we will always regard as a friend, ally, and partner.

.....  
Michel Barnier is a former vice president of the European Commission and French foreign minister. He is currently EU chief negotiator for Brexit.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- |                                    |                             |                       |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>                      | 33 Possesses                | 6 Cool cat            |
| 1 Some change                      | 34 Force member             | 7 Give off            |
| 6 Macho sort                       | 36 Piggid out               | 8 Tries to get        |
| 11 Blown away                      | 37 Uncle Sam's home         | 9 FBI employees       |
| 12 Mirror sight                    | 39 "For sure!"              | 10 Bookish            |
| 13 Crooked                         | 40 Do some tailoring        | 17 Say further        |
| 14 Cheapskate                      | 41 Jack Sprat's restriction | 22 Disfigure          |
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| 16 Working class section of London | 44 Gander's mate            | 26 Speaks from memory |
| 18 High trains                     | 45 Stable mothers           | 28 Phone feature      |
| 19 Banned pesticide                |                             | 29 Bashful friend?    |
| 20 Pig's place                     |                             | 31 Comfortable        |
| 21 Paper pack                      |                             | 32 Like Russian dolls |
| 23 "The Rehearsal" painter         | <b>DOWN</b>                 | 33 Women's rooms      |
| 25 Lot buy                         | 1 Nursery item              | 35 Hunger signals     |
| 27 Cardi B specialty               | 2 Sneaker part              | 38 Take the bus       |
| 28 Gave a hoot                     | 3 Tries to justify          | 42 Sound of delight   |
| 30 Scheme                          | 4 Lamb's mother             |                       |
|                                    | 5 Did some tailoring        |                       |



**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

S C A R F L U S H  
A O N E C R A N I A  
G R E W R E T O R T  
S A W A B O U T  
S A D D L E B O W  
N U R S E F A U N A  
I R E K I T T E N  
P A W P R I N T  
L A W S U I T S  
S A F A R I N O R A  
E L A T E S E T A S  
E L D E R S A Y S

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**OUR PROJECTS**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ @ <b>DHANMONDI R/A</b> SALVIA LA MANDARIN MAHMUDA VILLA</li> <li>▶ @ <b>MOHAMMADPUR</b> SULTAN'S LEGACY HAYE HERITAGE</li> <li>▶ @ <b>NORTH BADDA</b> KHILIL GARDEN</li> <li>▶ @ <b>ASHKONA</b> SHARNALI</li> <li>▶ @ <b>NIKUNJA</b> ASIAN TOWER (COMMERCIAL SPACE)</li> <li>▶ @ <b>MOHAKHALI</b> MS CENTER (COMMERCIAL SPACE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ @ <b>BARIDHARA</b> ASSURANCE MARZUQ</li> <li>▶ @ <b>IQBAL ROAD</b> ASSURANCE BAROKOT</li> <li>▶ @ <b>LALMATIA</b> MASUKA LODGE MUTTALIB VILLA</li> <li>▶ @ <b>BANANI</b> MEHERUNNESSA VILLA</li> <li>▶ @ <b>UTTARA</b> BANANI KUNJA BADHON</li> <li>▶ @ <b>AGARGAON</b> ABEDIN'S DREAM</li> <li>▶ @ <b>BANGSHAL</b> AZHAR MARKET (COMMERCIAL SHOP)</li> </ul>
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Algerian protesters carry portraits of late Algeria's revolutionary Abane Ramdane during an anti-government demonstration in the capital Algiers, yesterday.

PHOTO:  
AFP

## Netherlands

FROM PAGE 16 reports Dutch News. It was unveiled last month by Dutch trade minister Sigrid Kaag.

The current tourism site, Holland.com, is still using the slogan "this is Holland" alongside an orange tulip.

Holland is a region of the Netherlands that includes the well-known Dutch cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague.

The new strategy is also understood to be focusing on sustainable tourism by looking at longer-stay visitors to cities beyond capital Amsterdam.

In May, the Dutch tourist board said it would stop actively promoting the Netherlands as a tourist destination because of concerns that its cities and attractions are becoming overcrowded.

The country's tourist numbers are anticipated to grow from 19 million now to 29 million over the next decade – and the country's authorities do not necessarily see that as an entirely good thing.

"To control visitor flow and leverage the opportunities that tourism brings with it, we must act now," the country's tourist board said in a strategy document laying out its plan for the coming decade.

"Instead of destination promotion, it is now time for destination management."

Amsterdam in particular struggles with overtourism. It receives around 17 million visitors a year, compared to just 1 million residents.

Groups combating overtourism, such as Untourist Amsterdam, have been set up – one of its initiatives include marrying an Amsterdammer, designed to bring locals and visitors closer together.

The Independent has contacted Holland.com for further comment.

## On this day

FROM PAGE 16 of Bengali intellectuals. He found similarity between the genocide in Bangladesh with Indonesia, Jordan and Congo genocides which were conducted under the supervision of US intelligence. He alleges against few Pakistan generals including Niazi for the genocide. He says, "The Al-Badr assassins must have to be brought to daylight before they mingle in the general crowd. This country has lost her best intellectuals in their hands. These animals need to be punished." A few journalists proposed to build a monument in the killing grounds in Dhaka.

12 countries will shortly recognise Bangladesh, a report of Akashbani says. Another 20 countries are in the queue. Abu Sayed Chowdhury, representative of Bangladesh, successfully receives the response and assistance from Yugoslavia, Russia, Great Britain, Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and a few others.

More collaborators arrested, a news from APB says: Maolana Nuruzzaman, former chairman of PP, Abdul Wadud, advocate from Siddique Bazar, Firoz Sirazi, a spy from Dhaka, Nayek Subadar Azab Khan, a spy, Intiza Hossain from Mirpur, Sami Ahmad Siddiqui from Sutrapur, Hamid Ali Dewan from Moghbazar, Md Anisur Rahman, member of Al-Badr in Pabna, Md Ezaz Hossain from Mirpur, Mostaq Ahmad from Mirpur and Ezaz Ahmad from Mohammadpur.

A search party is in action to find out the missing intellectuals, a source from Sutrapur Police Station says.

## Tensions rise as rival camps

FROM PAGE 16 Bangladesh are Muslim-dominated?" Modi, facing his biggest challenge since storming to power in 2014, said on Sunday that Muslims whose "ancestors are the children of mother India" had nothing to fear.

But his assurances have failed to ease fears, with the law unleashing a wave of protests involving Muslims and non-Muslims alike across the country.

Several state governments have also said they will refuse to implement the legislation, in a challenge to Modi's authority.

In Delhi, hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside the grand mosque in the capital's old quarter after Friday prayers.

Riot police and paramilitary troops erected steel barricades on roads leading to the mosque, where violent clashes broke out last week following protests.

Yesterday, demonstrators chanted slogans against the government, vowing to keep up the pressure until the law was revoked and plans for the register cancelled.

"They want to drive out the poor, Muslims and those who don't agree with them," protester Muntazir Bashir told AFP.

Heavy-handed police tactics have fuelled anger, with many accusing authorities of arbitrary force against dissenters.

The northern state of Uttar Pradesh, where 20 percent of the population are Muslims, witnessed the worst violence, with 19 people killed, mostly from gunshot wounds.

Officials yesterday said they have suspended mobile internet and SMS services in 21 districts out of 75 including the state capital Lucknow.

Access to data on cellphones was only restored in many areas on Tuesday following a week-long cutoff in a country that activists say is the world leader in snapping internet access.

The protests in Uttar Pradesh, whose chief minister is a Hindu monk from Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party, are among the biggest there in decades.

State police have arrested more than

1,000 people and taken more than 5,000 others into preventive custody, some of them as young as 16 according to media. Around 200 people have been ordered to pay compensation for damage caused to public property during the protests.

More than 100 people have also been booked over social media posts deemed to be objectionable or misleading, with tens of thousands of messages on Twitter, Facebook and other platforms reported.

Authorities are keeping a close eye on foreigners with a Norwegian tourist saying she was told to leave India after participating in a protest in the southern state of Kerala.

This week a German student was also ejected after taking part in demonstrations in the southern city of Chennai, according to media reports.

Photos on social media purportedly of the student, named as Jakob Lindenthal, showed him carrying a placard saying "1933-1945 We have been there", in reference to his country's Nazi past.

## 12 die in Kazakh plane crash

FROM PAGE 16 uninhabited two-storey house near the city's boundary northeast of the airport.

Kazakhstan responded to the crash by grounding the Fokker model, which makes up the whole of the Bek Air fleet, and launched an investigation.

The country's emergencies committee released a list of 12 people who died, including the captain.

The health ministry said 53 people had been injured, nine of them children, adding that 10 of the adults were in critical condition.

Most onboard were Kazakhs but the injured also included citizens of China, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine.

Ukraine's embassy in Kazakhstan said two of its nationals had spinal injuries but their lives were not in danger.

Neighbouring Kyrgyzstan's foreign ministry said its representatives had visited a Kyrgyz woman injured in the crash and her condition was "satisfactory".

China and Russia, Kazakhstan's main political allies, were among those that sent official condolences, along with Pope Francis.

Deputy Prime Minister Roman Sklyar said the plane's tail had touched the runway twice during takeoff.

"Either this is a pilot error, or there were technical reasons," Sklyar said at a press conference in Almaty.

"The aircraft split into two parts. Most of the passengers who died were in the front part."

Russia's pro-Kremlin REN TV channel broadcast what it said was a recording of communications between an air traffic controller at Almaty airport and the Bek Air crew.

Soon after takeoff, the air traffic controller appeared to lose touch with the pilot and warned the next plane to delay its takeoff.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev pledged to provide families of the victims with compensation and tweeted that those responsible "will be severely punished in accordance with the law."

Tokayev also said a government commission had been set up to investigate the circumstances of the crash.

The president's office declared a national day of mourning today.

The interior ministry said it had also launched a criminal investigation into the incident over violations of air transport safety rules.

While the plane was built in 1996, it had passed safety checks in May, Kazakh authorities said.

The industry ministry said in a statement that the Fokker 100 model, which is no longer manufactured, would be grounded until the cause of the accident became clear.

Bek Air describes itself on its website as Kazakhstan's first low-cost airline.

In March 2016, a Bek Air Fokker 100 plane with 116 passengers made an emergency landing in Nur-Sultan after its landing gear failed to deploy but no one was injured.

Swiss regional carrier Helvetic Airways phased out its Dutch-built Fokker-100s earlier this year after 15 years of service.

"I'm alive and well" - The first eight victims died at the scene of the disaster, two then died while being treated at the airport and two in hospital.

Those confirmed dead included the captain Marat Muratbayev, as well as Rustam Kaidarov, a 79-year-old retired general, and 35-year-old Dana Kruglova, a journalist from the private Informburo news agency.

Informburo said Kruglova "had wanted to celebrate the New Year with her parents in Nur-Sultan and decided to take this flight".

A well-known entrepreneur, Aslan Nazariyev, posted on Facebook that he had survived, indicating his seat on a photo of the crashed aircraft, right next to where it had split into two.

"Thanks to Allah, I am alive and well," Nazariyev wrote.

The air route between Almaty and Nur-Sultan became Kazakhstan's most popular after the chilly steppe city replaced the southern financial hub as national capital in 1997.

# China denies detained Uighur academic was sentenced to death

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday denied that detained Uighur academic Tashpolat Tiyp was secretly tried and sentenced to death, after UN experts demanded answers from Beijing.

The foreign ministry said former Xinjiang University president Tiyp's case was still ongoing and his rights had been "protected in accordance with the law".

Tiyp was "suspected of corruption and bribery," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular briefing Friday.

Amnesty International said in September that it feared Tiyp, a prominent geographer, faced imminent execution after being "convicted in a secret and grossly unfair trial".

Tiyp was believed to have been convicted of "separatism" after being "forcibly disappeared" in 2017, although little information was available about his detention, according to Amnesty International.

A group of United Nations special rapporteurs said Thursday in an article published by the UN that they were concerned by the uncertainty surrounding Tiyp's trial and the charges he faced.

The experts said they had asked Beijing for clarification on Tiyp's current location and situation and also

called for his family to be allowed to visit him.

China has faced international condemnation for rounding up an estimated one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim ethnic minorities in internment camps in the northwestern region of Xinjiang.

Beijing initially denied the existence of the Xinjiang camps, but now says they are "vocational training centres" necessary to combat terrorism.

The UN experts said that "incommunicado detention, enforced disappearances and secret trials have no place in a country governed by the rule of law".

Geng on Friday hit back, saying China urges the UN to "avoid interfering in countries' internal affairs, and avoid interfering in countries' judicial sovereignty".

Tiyp is among many Uighur intellectuals who have disappeared from public and whom rights groups fear face persecution from the Chinese government.

In October, the European Parliament awarded a top human rights prize to jailed former economics professor Ilham Tohti.

Tohti's daughter Jewher Ilham, who accepted the prize on his behalf in December, said she did not even know if her father was still alive.

## JP creates new post

FROM PAGE 16

party to be held at the city's Institution of Engineers today.

"Although Raushan madam will hold the party's number one post, it will be an honorary post," a JP presidium member told The Daily Star last night.

The party's existing chairman GM Quader will actually operate the party remaining at its helm, he said.

"Raushan madam will be made the chief patron of the party to give her the highest honour on behalf of the party as she is the wife of our late chairman and the party founder HM Ershad," SM Faysal Chisty, a JP presidium member, told The Daily Star.

The presidium meeting's decision to amend the charter is expected to be approved in today's council, JP insiders said.

According to JP sources, GM Quader and top leaders loyal to him are apparently behind the latest move that was taken to fortify Quader's leadership through incorporating his rivals.

Anisul Islam Mahmud, Mujibul Haque Chunnun, Ruhul Amin Hawlader, Kazi Feroz Rashid, Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, Salma Islam and Abu Hossain Babla have been picked for the posts of seven co-chairmen.

Of them, Anisul, Chunnun and Hawlader are known to be loyal to Raushan.

Leaders for the posts of eight additional secretary generals will be selected later, party sources said.

"Quader wants to tighten his grip on the party through the council. But Raushan madam can throw a strong challenge at the council," said a JP presidium member loyal to Raushan.

Raushan could not be reached for comments after several attempts.

After the demise of HM Ershad on July 14, both Raushan and Quader were at loggerheads over who would become the JP chairman and leader of the opposition.

Later, Quader was declared as the JP chairman, an appointment opposed by Raushan's faction.

Factions of Raushan and GM Quader, after several meetings in September, came to an understanding that Quader would remain the chairperson, while Raushan would be the opposition leader.

Around 12,000 delegates, including 4,000 councillors from 74 organisational districts, are expected to participate in the council where the party's new leadership would be elected.

## 2 killed

FROM PAGE 16

and the trucker are still missing, the fire official said, adding that the accident also killed as much as 210 goats onboard, Liton said.

The truck was heading to Dhaka from Joypurhat. When the truck reached Jorjura area near Hemayetpur bus stand around 3:00am, the driver lost control and ended up in a roadside pond, the fire official said, quoting eyewitnesses.

Rescuers recovered the two bodies and were scouring the pond for the missing people while this report was being filed last night.

The bodies were sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue, Liton said, adding that victims' families were informed.

## NGOs asked

FROM PAGE 16

Tracts, the word adivasi/indigenous is also a threat to the national security," it adds.

Contacted, Naresh Chandra Oran, executive director of Adivasi Samaj Unnayan Sangstha of Natore, said he recently received the letter from the Bureau.

"This is nothing but an insult to the indigenous people. I will not change the word even if my NGO's licence is cancelled," said Naresh.

Nikhil Mitra Chakma, executive director of Society for Integrated Women Progress, said, "We changed the name of our NGO, Society for Indigenous Women Progress, in 2014 under pressure from some government agencies."

Most of the NGOs from Chattogram Hill Tracts, having the word "indigenous" in their titles, dropped the word in 2014 under pressure from government agencies, he alleged.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Anwar Hossain, deputy secretary of NGO Affairs Bureau, yesterday said, "We issued the letter as the word 'indigenous' conflicts with our constitution."

However, eminent lawyer Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua termed the move "total violation of constitutional provisions".

"No government official or ministry can explain the terminology of the constitution. Only the Supreme Court has jurisdiction over interpreting any terminological or constitutional word," he told this newspaper.

## Geopolitical divides

FROM PAGE 16

photographer Shahidul Alam, Nepali writer Kanak Mani Dixit, and Pakistani nuclear physicist Pervez Hoodbhoy.

Other signatories are: Mahesh Maskey, Nayantara Gurung Kakshapati and Pratyoush Onta of Nepal; Arif Hasan, Beena Sarwar, A Rehman, and Mubashir Hasan of Pakistan; and Jayadeva Uyangoda and Sumathy Sivamohan of Sri Lanka.

"The act is discriminatory at the first instance because it targets Muslims beyond the stated intent of the law. It is unacceptable for any country including one with a secular constitution to distinguish between citizens, foreign or domestic, on the basis of religion," the statement said.

They questioned the Indian government's logic behind wanting to offer citizenship to Hindu, Parsi, Sikh,

Buddhist, Jain and Christian migrants who have fled persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan when there are also large numbers of Muslims of different sects enduring intolerance in the "three selected countries".

With its action, the India government has made religious minorities in the three countries more vulnerable than before, they said.

The act has the potential to deepen geopolitical divides among the countries of South Asia at a time when they should be striving for peace and mutual understanding, the statement said.

"The signatories believe that India's plans for growth and equity will be hurt by ill-advised attempts at social engineering, which will in turn also impact the population of the larger South Asian region."



**WHAT'S ON**

**Group Art Exhibition**  
Title: His Dream World  
Venue: Shilpangan, Dhanmondi  
Date: December 27 – January 11  
Time: 3 pm – 8 pm

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

**Workshop**  
Title: Kata Kutu - Collage Workshop  
Artist: Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo  
Venue: Studio 6/6, Mohammadpur  
Date: Today  
Time: 11:00 am - 6:00 pm

**Musical Programme**  
Title: Gaaner Jhorna Tolaay  
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 Choudhury Exhibition Hall, Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi  
Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15  
Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)

# An evening of melodic nostalgia

## Star Melodies hosts 'Bijoyer Rong-e Aanka Bela Shesher Gaan'

ZAHANGIR ALOM

December is the month of victory of our glorious Liberation War in 1971, a month that also bids farewell to the year. To relish victory in the twilight of 2019, a musical celebration like no other took place yesterday.

To revisit the glorious songs of our victory, indulging in the timeless melodies of our life still glowing like a nostalgic twilight -- Star Melodies, The Daily Star initiative to promote Bangla music, hosted a musical evening titled *Bijoyer Rong-e Aanka Bela Shesher Gaan*.

Several students – Anna, Ishan, Nisat, Bulbon, Rizvi, Nuhash and Abir of East West University, first presented several songs on our Liberation War. They started the event with the Tagore classic, *O Amar Desh-er Mati* and rendered songs like *Dhono Dhanno Pushpa Bhora*, *Je Matir Bukey*, *Teer Hara Ei Dheu-er Sagar* and *Purba Digante Surja Uthechhe*.



(Clockwise) Salauddin Khan, Afsana Runa, Kaderi Kibria and Bornali Sarkar share the stage; Kaderi Kibria enchanting the audience with his melody; Students from East West University display their talent.

Prior to starting second half of the soiree, renowned singer of Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra and an Ekushey Padak awardee

Kaderi Kibria shared his fond memories of singing in front of eminent Tagore song exponents Maya Sen and Debabrata Biswas.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

He mesmerised the music lovers the song, *Amar Bela Je Jaay*. Popular singers Afsana Runa, Bornali Sarkar and Salauddin Khan

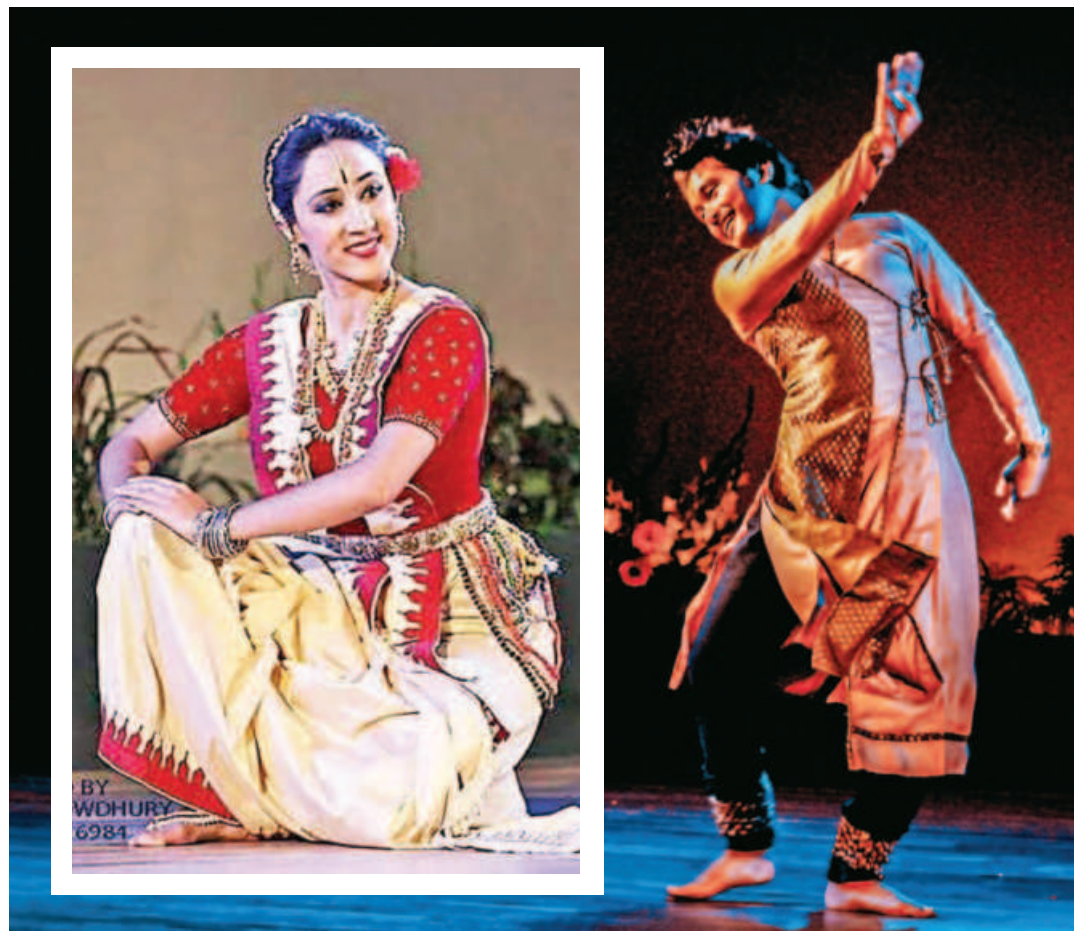
also performed various renditions in the segment.

As the event went on Kaderi Kibria, beautifully performed *Sediner Sonajhora Sondhay* by Shyamal Mitra, and the tagore number *Diner Sheshe Ghumer Deshe*. Afsana Runa started her performance with the Kazi Nazrul Islam song, *Mone Pore Aaj*. She went on to interpret *adhunik* songs *Sanjher Belaay Pakhi*, *Oi Akash Ghirey* and *Prem Jeno Mor*.

Salauddin Khan entertained the audience with Tagore composition *Amar Din Phuralo* and the Rajanikanta Sen number, *Bela je Phuraye Jaay*. Bornali Sarkar's rendition of *Sanjher Pakhira Phirilo Kulaay*, *Ei Sundor Swarnali Sondhay*, *Akasher Ostorag-e* and *Nijhum Sondhay* were brilliant. The soiree came to end with a choral performance of the patriotic song, *Bijoy Nishan Urchhe Oi*.

Sadya Afreen Mallick, Chief, Culture Initiatives, The Daily Star, hosted and coordinated the programme sponsored by Dhaka Bank Limited. The eminent Nazrul Sangeet exponent paid tribute to the martyrs and Freedom Fighters of the Liberation War. She also shared her memories of Maya Sen and Debabrata Biswas with the audience. Renowned singers -- Linu Billah, also a Freedom Fighter, and Yasmin Mushtari, also spoke at the event. At the beginning, observance of a one-minute silence took place in memory of Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, KCMG, the founder and Chair Emeritus of BRAC, one of the world's largest non-governmental organisations.

## Talented dancers to perform in Nritya Nandan's 'Parampara' at Chhayanaut today



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Renowned dance school Nritya Nandan has arranged an evening of classical dance programme, titled *Parampara*, at the main auditorium of Chhayanaut Sangskriti Bhaban today at 6:45pm. The director of the school, eminent dancer and choreographer Sharmila Banerjee, has conceptualised this event.

The featured performers are a bunch of bright, young, talented classical practitioners of Bangladesh who have worked very hard in the past few years to establish themselves as strong classical dancers in Bangladesh.

Sudeshna Swayamprabha will perform Manipuri while Maria Farihi Upama will present Bharatnatyam at the event. Moumita Jaya and Hasan Ishtiaque Imran will perform Kathak in the evening. All the featured dancers, as ICCR scholars, completed their Masters in Dance together from Rabindra Bharati University in Kolkata in 2018.

Beginning their dance education from their teachers in Bangladesh, they went through further training under renowned dancers, both in Bangladesh and India. These young dancers are now carrying forward the tradition of classical dance in Bangladesh. Nritya Nandan strongly feels that it is their responsibility to encourage such young dancers in their journey through such initiatives.

PHOTO: COURTESY



## 'Maya-The Lost Mother' released

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Based on the Liberation War of Bangladesh, National Film Award winner, Masud Pathik's directorial venture, *Maya - The Lost Mother*, released countrywide yesterday. It is a government granted film, produced by Bratyo Creation and featuring noted actor Jyotika Jyoti in the lead role.

The story is inspired by artist Shahbuddin Ahmed's painting, *Woman*, and poet Kamal Chowdhury's *Juddho Shishu*, which portrays the sufferings and uncertain consequences of the life

of a Birangona (war heroine) and a war child during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. "I am honoured to be a part of this project. I hope the audience will connect with the film," said Jyotika Jyoti.

Celebrated actors Syed Hasan Imam and Pran Ray also play key roles in *Maya - The Lost Mother*. Momtaz, Konal, and Oishee among others have sung songs for the film.

The movie was released in eight theatres across Bangladesh, including Dhaka. A special screening of the film was held in Balaka Cinema yesterday.

## 'Sabdabali Drama Festival' underway at Barishal

SUSHANTA GHOSH, from Barishal

With the tagline, 'Theatre develops a lifestyle of values' the *Sabdabali Drama Festival* began in Barishal on December 26, 2019. Theatre artistes from Bangladesh, India and Nepal are participating in the six-day event, which concludes on December 31. K M Khalid, State Minister of Cultural Affairs, inaugurated the festival as the chief guest, alongside Serniabat Sadik Abdullah, Mayor, Barishal City Corporation.

At the festival, Abdur Razzak Murad (Rangpur), and Rajot Kanti Gupta (Sylhet) were presented with the Gias-Milon Memorial Award for 2018 and 2019, respectively.

Among others, Md Sahabuddin Khan, Police Commissioner of Barishal Metropolitan Police (BMP) and S M Ajair Rahman, Deputy Commissioner of BMP, addressed the audience at the event. Syed Dulal, President, Shabdabali Group Theatre, presided over the inaugural ceremony.

The play, *Baisakhani*, was presented at Shabdabali Studio's theatre stage on the opening day. Ujane Mrirtu, by Palakar (Dhaka), was staged yesterday.

Artistes from Notom (Kolkata) will perform in the play, *Makkoman*, while artistes from Balark Theatre will stage *Totar Kahini*. *Deukasi* will be staged by Aadityadi from Nepal.



PHOTO: STAR



PHOTO: COURTESY

## Bengal Foundation's 'Gaaner Jhorna Tolaay' concludes today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Bengal Foundation has organised a three-day musical programme, titled *Gaaner Jhorna Tolaay*, at Bengal Shilpalay, which concludes today.

Both renowned and promising artistes are performing in the event. On the opening day, students of Bengal Parampara Sangeetalay paid homage to the recently deceased music exponent Ustad Mobarak Hossain Khan, with a classical music soiree, titled *Agrahayan-Poush Baithak*. The event started off with

a sarangi recital of *Raga Madhuvanti* by Shounik Debnath. Anjan Sarkar accompanied him on the tabla.

Ilham Phuljhuri Khan and Isra Phuljhuri Khan took the stage to perform a duet sarod recital of *Raga Kirwani*. Ratan Kumar Das was on the tabla. Kaniz Husna Ahmadi rendered a *kheyal* set on *Raga Puria Dhanashree*, accompanied by Prashanta Bhowmik on the tabla and Tinku Shil on the harmonium. The opening day's performances concluded with a solo sitar recital by guest artiste Reenat Fauzia. Prashanta Bhowmik

accompanied her on the tabla.

Renowned Tagore singers Bulbul Islam, Mita Haque and Shrabani Majumdar were the featured artistes of Bengal Foundation's *Praner Khela* yesterday. Today, the event will conclude with the launching of two solo albums, *Je Amaay Kanday* by Mostafizur Rahman Turja and *Chameli Tomari Chand* by Sharmin Sathi Islam, produced by Bengal Foundation. Mafidul Haque, eminent essayist and one of the trustees of the Liberation War Museum, will unveil the albums.



### India ejects second European 'for protesting'

AFP, New Delhi

A Norwegian tourist yesterday said authorities had ordered her to leave India after taking part in protests against a new citizenship law, becoming the second European to be ejected over the demonstrations.

Janne-Mette Johansson, 71, told AFP that police gave her "verbal assurances" that she could take part in peaceful demonstrations against the law that critics say discriminates against India's Muslims.

"Yesterday (Thursday), Indian immigration officials came to my hotel for questioning and I was mentally tortured. Today, they again showed up at my hotel asking me to leave the country or they will take a legal action and deport me," she said.

The woman, who had posted photos from the demonstration in the southern state of Kerala on Facebook, added that she would leave India for Dubai on Friday evening and then fly to Sweden.

The Press Trust of India news agency quoted an official from the Foreigners Regional Registration Office as saying that Johansson "violated visa norms".

Earlier this week a German studying physics in the southern Indian city of Chennai was also asked to leave after taking part in a protest and comparing the law to anti-Jewish Nazi legislation, PTI reported.

Photos on social media purportedly of the student, named as Jakob Lindenthal, showed him carrying a placard saying "1933-1945 We have been there".

The government says that the law easing citizenship rules for religious minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan excludes Muslims because they face no persecution in those countries.

But coupled with a mooted citizens register, it has stoked fears including in Washington and the UN rights office about the marginalisation of Muslims who make up 14 percent of India's 1.3 billion people.

## CAA PROTESTS IN INDIA

Protesters march against India's new citizenship law in Mumbai; A protester displays a placard the demonstration; police detain a protester in New Delhi; and supporters of the new citizenship law rally in Mumbai. All photos were taken yesterday. Thousands protested in rival demonstrations in India yesterday as tensions deepen over the contentious citizenship law seen as anti-Muslim.

PHOTO: AFP



## 2019: a year of anti-establishment rage

AFP, Paris

Angry citizens have swelled the streets of cities across the globe this year, pushing back against a disparate range of policies but often expressing a common grievance -- the establishment's failure to heed their demands for a more equitable future.

While street protests are nothing new, experts say the intense 2019 flare-ups reflect a growing sentiment that the social contract between governments and citizens has broken down, with voters paying the price but unable to affect meaningful change.

"What unites the protests is that all are responding to a sense of exclusion, pessimism about the future, and a feeling of having lost control to unaccountable elites," said Jake Werner, a historian at the University of Chicago.

The financial crisis of 2007-08 in particular, he said, exposed systemic failings and induced

years of austerity and insecurity for millions of people.

It also produced an acute sense of unfairness, in particular among young people who see their prospects of earning a decent living slipping away with every price hike or benefit cut.

"What was previously experienced as proper or natural is now increasingly experienced as a form of domination and injustice," Werner told AFP.

As a result, it often takes only a small move to spark a protest -- in Chile it was a metro ticket increase, in Iran and France it was higher fuel costs, in Lebanon a "WhatsApp tax" -- that balloons into a wider revolt demanding better living standards.

Elsewhere, as in Hong Kong, Algeria and India, calls for greater political freedom have become a potent rallying force.

In Iraq, fury over corruption and unemployment boiled over

into fiery clashes which have left hundreds of people dead and forced the prime minister to resign.

"The belief in democracy's capacity to change people's lives is undoubtedly eroding," said Erik Neveu, a sociologist at the Sciences Po political science university in Rennes, western France.

The impression that big companies and the wealthy seem to get a free pass -- despite calls to force multinationals to pay more taxes -- only further inflames the sense that the game is rigged.

"Society is fed up with paying and paying. They've squeezed us like a lemon," Marcela Paz, a 51-year-old teacher, said during a protest in Santiago, Chile in October.

And if the traditional rungs for climbing the social ladder are out of reach, experts say more people will feel that protests, and potentially violence, are the only recourse.

Even if governments give in to certain demands, they risk facing more protests unless they address the anger that sent people to the streets in the first place.

These are not only "Facebook revolutions", says Geoffrey Pleyers, a sociology professor in Belgium and France. These are profound movements where young people often take the lead, but then become intergenerational, he adds.

The "horizontal" organisation makes it harder for authorities to single out someone to negotiate with, or to arrest, in a bid to quell protesters' anger.

"It's not that the nature of authority changed -- elites are just as unaccountable today as they were ten years ago," Werner said.

"What changed is that elite unaccountability has been exposed, because popular forces are no longer aligned with elites as they once were."

## Iran, China, Russia start naval drills

AFP, Tehran

Iran, China and Russia started four days of joint naval drills in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman yesterday, the commander of Iran's flotilla announced.

The exercise comes at a time of heightened tensions since the United States withdrew from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal with Iran in May last year.

"The message of this exercise is peace, friendship and lasting security through cooperation and unity ... and its effect will be to show that Iran cannot be isolated," Rear Admiral Gholamreza Tahani said on state television.

The United States reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran after quitting the nuclear deal last year, prompting Tehran to hit back with countermeasures by dropping nuclear commitments.

In June, US President Donald Trump authorised a military strike after Iran shot down a US drone, only to call off the retaliation at the last moment. The crisis deepened with September 14 attacks on Saudi oilfields, which halved the kingdom's crude output.

Yemen's Huthi rebels claimed responsibility for the attack but Washington accused Tehran, a charge it has strongly denied. Washington has responded with a military build-up in the Gulf and has launched an operation with its allies to protect navigation in Gulf waters.

## Russia's first hypersonic missiles enter service

AFP, Moscow

Russia's defence minister yesterday told President Vladimir Putin the first Avangard hypersonic missiles had been put into service, in a move hailed as a major coup for Moscow.

Analysts say Russia is the first country to put into combat service intercontinental ballistic missiles armed with hypersonic weapons that Putin said can travel 20 times faster than the speed of sound.

"The first missile regiment equipped with latest strategic missiles with the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle entered service at 10 am Moscow time on December 27", Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told a meeting in televised remarks.

He congratulated the military on what he said was a "landmark event for the country and the armed forces."

Shoigu reported to Putin when the missiles entered service, a defence ministry official told AFP.

Defence officials have earlier said that the first Avangard regiment was placed in the Orenburg region in the Urals.

Putin unveiled the new weapon during his state of the nation address in 2018, saying it would defeat all existing missile defence systems.

He said at the time the missile was highly manoeuvrable and flew at 20 times the speed of sound.

Senior officials later said the intercontinental projectile was considerably faster.

Officials said the missile during tests reached the speed of Mach 27, or roughly 33,000 kilometres (20,500 miles) per hour.

Mach 1 is a unit of measurement equivalent to the speed of sound.



A man dressed as Santa Claus visits displaced children from Ras al-Ain in a camp for internally displaced persons in the mainly Kurdish northeastern Syrian province of Hasakeh, yesterday. The gesture is part of the "We are with you" campaign organised by Kurdish Syrian youths living abroad who decided to send gifts to displaced children as a result of the eight-year-old conflict in Syria.

PHOTO: AFP

### Locust invasion destroys crops in northwest India

A massive locust invasion has destroyed thousands of hectares of crops in northwest India, authorities said, with some experts yesterday terming it the worst such attack in 25 years. While officials have attempted to tackle the swarm with pesticides, farmers have deployed drums to drive away the insects, with videos showing schoolgirls banging on steel plates -- due to local beliefs that loud noise repels locusts. The invasion has damaged crops in half a dozen districts in the northwestern state of Gujarat, local government official Punamchand Parmar said Thursday. More than 5,000 hectares have been devastated in one district alone, Parmar said. The state's agriculture minister R C Faldus said that from Friday onwards, 100 tractors carrying pesticides would be sent to the affected villages to get rid of the insects.

### EU chief doubts securing post-Brexit trade deal in 2020

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen has expressed "serious concern" over whether the bloc could conclude a post-Brexit trade deal with Britain within the 2020 deadline. Britain is due to leave the European Union on January 31, but will remain in a transitional arrangement until the end of next year while negotiators debate future trade ties. Under the withdrawal agreement which Prime Minister Boris Johnson has agreed with Europe but not yet pushed through parliament, the UK could ask for a one or two year extension. But Johnson insists he will not ask for more time and is preparing legislation to forbid such a move. In this case, negotiators will only have 11 months to conclude a trade agreement.

### Musharraf challenges death sentence

Former Pakistan president and army chief Pervez Musharraf has submitted a petition in Lahore High Court challenging the death sentence handed to him in a treason case earlier this month. According to local media, the petition highlighted that the "judgement contained a mix of anomalies and contradictory statements" and that the special court "rapidly and hurriedly wrapped up the trial which was far from conclusion". A special court convicted Musharraf and sentenced him to death on December 17 on charges of high treason and subverting the constitution -- an unprecedented verdict in a country that has been ruled by its powerful military for roughly half of its 72-year history.

SOURCE: AFP

## Netanyahu sweeps party primary in re-election boost

AFP, Jerusalem

Embattled Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday told supporters he would win a March general election after scoring a landslide victory in the leadership primary of his right-wing Likud party.

Israel's longest-serving premier, who faces a corruption indictment as well as a third general election in 12 months, was expected to beat rival Gideon Saar in the leadership primary.

But the convincing margin of victory -- by 72.5 to 27.5 percent -- strengthens his position in the party he has dominated for 20 years.

Netanyahu, 70, called it a "huge win" and pledged to emerge victorious in the March 2 general election.

"Now is the time to unite and bring a tremendous victory for

the Likud and the right in the election," Netanyahu told a press conference.

"Most of the people support the right and support me to lead the government."

In what appeared to be a general election campaign



speech, Netanyahu did not mention the defeated Saar once.

Likud and the centrist Blue and White party were deadlocked after elections in both April and September, with neither able to command a parliamentary majority under Israel's system of proportional representation.

Last month, Israel's attorney general indicted the prime minister for fraud, bribery and breach of trust over a series of corruption allegations he denies.

Blue and White leader Benny Gantz also used yesterday's primary result as a rallying call for the general election.

He said Netanyahu's victory showed Likud members had "elected a leader facing three indictments, who is seeking to unravel the rule of law and secure personal immunity".

"These elections demand that we place a mirror in front of 'the Netanyahu party' and make the choice for unity, dignity and internal reconciliation."

Early polls indicate that the March 2020 election could again result in stalemate. Saar pledged to support Netanyahu in the coming campaign.

## More than 235,000 flee Syria flare-up: UN

AFP, Beirut

More than 235,000 people have fled the Idlib region over the past two weeks, the UN said yesterday, amid heightened regime and Russian attacks on Syria's last major opposition bastion.

The mass displacement between 12 and 25 December has left the violence-plagued Maaret al-Numan region in southern Idlib "almost empty," according to the UN humanitarian agency OCHA.

AFP correspondents in the area have seen people fleeing in droves in recent days.

The main highway connecting southern Idlib to the province's north has been bustling with pick-up trucks ferrying civilians out of the flashpoint region.

Since mid-December, Russian-backed regime forces have pressed with an assault on jihadists in southern Idlib, despite an August ceasefire deal and calls for a de-escalation from Turkey, France and the United Nations.

The increased air strikes came as Damascus loyalists advance on the ground. They have since December 19 seized

dozens of towns and villages from jihadists amid clashes that have killed hundreds on both sides.

The advances have brought them less than four kilometres (two miles) away from Maaret al-Numan, one of Idlib's largest urban centres.

According to OCHA, ongoing battles have amplified displacement from the area and the nearby town of Saraqeb.

"People from Saraqeb and its eastern countryside are now fleeing in anticipation of fighting directly affecting their communities next," it said.

Idlib is dominated by the country's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, whose chief this week urged jihadists and allied rebels to head to the frontlines and battle "the Russian occupiers" and the regime.

The region hosts some three million people, including many displaced by years of violence in other parts of Syria.

The Damascus regime, which now controls 70 percent of Syria, has repeatedly vowed to take back the area.





## Imrul helps Chattogram extend lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Chattogram Challengers moved a step closer to confirming their play-off spot in the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) with a convincing six-wicket victory against Dhaka Platoon at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

With this win, Chattogram have now secured 12 points, with six wins out of eight matches.

It was however a dull contest, especially compared to the recently concluded Chattogram phase where most matches were high-scoring encounters.

Dhaka struggled to get off to a good start on a pitch that seemed to be on the slower side. The overnight rain had added to the sluggish nature of the wicket as the ball stopped a bit, which was later acknowledged by losing team captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza during the post-match press conference.

The innings played by Chattogram's stand-in skipper Imrul Kayes, who had adjusted to the situation of the match, proved to be crucial. Imrul had earlier said that he always tries to play according to the demands of the team and the match situation, and he paced his innings brilliantly. His unbeaten 53-ball 54 was just what the team needed to chase down Dhaka's modest 124 for nine with eight balls to spare.

Imrul, who is now second in the top-scorers' list with 289 runs -- just 11 behind Dawid Malan -- could however consider himself lucky as Dhaka skipper Mashrafe called him back when he was run out. The incident took place in the fourth over when Imrul had wandered out of the crease after playing a defensive shot and Mominul Haque took off the bails. Even though the on-field umpire had ruled him out, Mashrafe -- after talking to Tamim Iqbal -- decided to withdraw the appeal and allow Imrul to bat on as the batsman was not aware that he had left the crease.

After that Imrul was smart, sneaking singles when necessary while punishing bad deliveries

with confidence. The best one from his highlights reel would be the massive six he smashed off pacer Hasan Mahmud in the 18th over. The ball that sailed over midwicket only stopped after striking the walls of the second tier in the gallery.

However, even while chasing the modest total, Chattogram were in a spot of bother initially. The table-toppers lost both of openers inside four overs after adding just 25 runs. Imrul, who saw his team through a difficult situation, said that the mantra behind his batting was not panicking in crunch situations.

"Even in Chattogram we were in a difficult situation while chasing a 124-run total. At that time I thought that if there is a set batsman and he can bat through the innings, it becomes easier to win these type of matches. But it becomes difficult

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**DHAKA PLATOON:** 124 for 9 in 30 overs (Tamim 21, Mominul 32, Wahab 23, Mashrafe 17 not out; Muktar 2-18, Burl 2-1)

**CHATTGRAM CHALLENGERS:** 125 for 4 in 18.4 overs (Imrul 54 not out, Walton 25; Wahab 2-18)

**Result:** Chattogram won by 6 wickets.

**Player-of-the-match:** Imrul Kayes.

if we panic. So, when I walked out there, I did not think about the strike rate. My plan was to finish off the game," Imrul said during the post-match conference.

Earlier, Dhaka Platoon could not build partnerships of note as they kept losing wickets at regular intervals. A team high of a 34-ball 32 came from Mominul Haque in the middle while a 15-ball 23 from Wahab Riaz and another unbeaten 12-ball 17 from Mashrafe at the death helped Dhaka get past the 120-run mark. Chattogram pacer Muktar Ali shone with the ball, returning impressive figures of two for 18.



Chattogram Challengers' stand-in skipper Imrul Kayes hit his third fifty of the ongoing BBPL to help guide his team past Dhaka Platoon's modest 124 for nine at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Khulna Tigers pacer Shahidul Islam (L) made Mushfiqur Rahim (C) a happy skipper with figures of four for 23 against Rangpur Rangers in their BBPL match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Shahidul's bowling ensured a 52-run win as Rangpur could only manage 130 for nine in response to Khulna's 182 for seven.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## 'Expectations not just on me'

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza is still rated as the most successful captain in the history of the Bangladesh Premier League, despite the inspirational cricketer seemingly losing a chunk of his charisma since a dismal performance in the ICC World Cup earlier this year.

The 36-year-old, who took just one wicket in the flagship event, made a comeback to competitive cricket after nearly five months through the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League.

But it has not been a smooth ride for Mashrafe. Even before the tournament started, the pacer's eventual inclusion in the Dhaka Platoon team was not short of drama. He was not drafted until the last moment despite being an A-plus category player and Dhaka eventually picked Mashrafe in the eighth round of the draft. It was learned that an integral member of the team had pushed the management to pick Mashrafe.

Following a six-wicket defeat against Chattogram Challengers yesterday, keeping Dhaka in third place in the points table with four wins in seven games, the four-time BPL-winning captain was asked



MASHRAFE BIN MORTAZA

whether he would be able to live up to the demands of his team owners this time too.

But unlike in the past when an optimistic Mashrafe would respond positively to such questions, it seemed a different person altogether as he replied: "The expectations are not just on me as it's the same for everyone else in the team. I almost remained unsold... so what's the point in expecting from me. If they had that expectation, I would have been sold in the first place. Actually, the owners could answer better. All the teams play with the

same amount of expectation. We will do whatever is required to remain in the hunt. We are in fourth [third] place in the points table and it's not that we are out of the race."

Perhaps Mashrafe's bowling performance against Chattogram yesterday was his best so far in the BBPL as he conceded just 14 runs from his four overs at an economy rate of 3.50, and also picked up a wicket, but the performance was in vain.

The third-highest wicket taker in the history of the BPL with 77 wickets has remained below par in the tournament so far as he picked up just four wickets in seven games at an economy rate of 8.09.

With this underwhelming record and the general impression that his bowling has lacked bite in the ongoing edition, it was only natural that Bangladesh's best pacer would be asked to assess his own performance thus far.

"I am actually not that bothered about my performance as I have returned to the field after a long time and I am trying my best. I am trying to adapt and sometimes it's going good and sometimes bad. I am going through ups and downs and I hope that as the tournament progress... it's difficult to say anything in T20s like whether I will do well in this particular game or not. But I am trying to give my best," said Mashrafe.

### SHORT CORNER

#### 'India is not a safe country'

Former Pakistan captain Javed Miandad launched a scathing attack on India and urged International Cricket Council (ICC) to stop teams from touring the country.

In the wake of nation-wide protests in India against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Miandad asked the international cricket body to suspend all ties with India and hand them similar punishment which was given out to Pakistan.

"People should take note of what is going on in India. I urge the ICC to boycott them," Miandad said in a video uploaded on PakPassion.com. "Not Pakistan but

India is not a safe country for any tourist or anybody (sic). As human beings, we sportspeople should also stand up and condemn them." --AGENCIES

#### PCB puts onus on players in Kaneria issue

The Pakistan Cricket Board on Friday sought to distance itself from Shoaib Akhtar's assertion that his former teammate Danish Kaneria faced discrimination at the hands of fellow players for being a Hindu, saying that the PCB cannot be answerable for the allegation.

Akhtar sparked a furore when he said that Kaneria was humiliated

by some players because he was a Hindu, was not given due credit and some even refused to eat food with him because of his faith.

Kaneria asserted that Akhtar's statement was true and he would soon reveal names of the players who mistreated him because of his religion. The former spinner is serving a life ban for spot-fixing since 2012.

"Look both Akhtar and Kaneria are retired players they are not contracted to us so they can do or say what they want. It is their opinion. And they are making allegations about behaviour of some players not about the entire Pakistan cricket set-up or board," a Board spokesperson said. --PTI

### Three captains in six games

SPORTS REPORTER

Languishing at the bottom of the table with four defeats in five games, a desperate Rangpur Rangers got their third captain in the sixth game of the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) yesterday as former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson made his BPL debut as captain against Khulna Tigers.

It made no difference, however, as Rangpur lost their fifth game by a whopping 52 runs.

Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi led Rangpur in the first four games, all of which were lost. The team management replaced him with another foreign recruit in Tom Abell in the fifth game against Chattogram Challengers and eventually registered their first win of the season.

But despite the win under Abell, Rangpur opted for a new leader in their very next game in the form of Watson.

Rangpur missed out on Watson's considerable batting prowess yesterday as he was dismissed for just five. It will be interesting to see whether they continue with Watson until they lose three more matches or, if the past is a clue, they manage to win one.



Australia's Travis Head celebrates his century on the second day of the second Test against New Zealand in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## SA seize advantage

AFP, Centurion

Vernon Philander led a relentless South African bowling performance before England fought back on the second day of the first Test at Centurion's SuperSport Park on Friday.

Philander took four for 16 in 14.2 overs as South Africa appeared to have taken control by bowling out England for 181, a first innings lead of 103.

But England struck hard at the start of the second innings. South Africa were 72 for four at the close, an overall lead of 175 on a pitch which has proved difficult for batsmen throughout.

Philander, 34, who has announced he will retire from international cricket at the end of the four-Test series, produced a master class of control to complement the strike power of fast bowlers Kagiso Rabada (three for 68) and Anrich Nortje (two for 47).

Wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock equalled the South African Test record by holding six catches, a feat which had been accomplished six times before - on four occasions by new head coach Mark Boucher.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**SOUTH AFRICA:** First innings 284 and second innings 72 for 4 (Elgar 22, Du Plessis 20; Archer 2-37)

**ENGLAND:** First innings 181 all out (Denly 50, Root 29, Stokes 35; Rabada 3-68, Philander 4-16, Nortje 2-47)



PHILANDER... 4 for 16

## Head leads Aus charge

AFP, Melbourne

Australia snatched two early wickets to leave New Zealand facing an uphill battle to stay in the second Test Friday as they chase the home team's 467, built on the back of a gritty 114 from Travis Head.

At the close on day two, the Black Caps were 44 for two with Tom Latham not out nine and Ross Taylor on two as a series defeat looms.

Captain Kane Williamson lasted only 14 balls, skying a James Pattinson delivery to wicketkeeper Tim Paine on nine while Tom Blundell, called up for the out-of-form Jeet Raval, was out to Pat Cummins for 15.

The visitors need to win to square the three-match series after crashing by 296 runs in the opening day-night clash in Perth.

Australia looked in complete control at tea on 431 for five, but they then collapsed to be all out for 467 within nine overs of the restart.

Skipper Paine departed for 79 seven balls after tea, with Mitchell Starc gone soon after for one. Australia started the day at 257 for four with Steve Smith on 77 and Head not out 25.

Head came into the match under pressure after a lean spell, but silenced his critics with only his second Test century, reaching three figures off 222 balls.

"It's very nice to contribute. It's pretty cool to score a Boxing Day hundred, nice to get my opportunity," said Head.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

**AUSTRALIA:** First innings 467 all out (Warner 41, Labuschagne 63, Smith 85, Wade 38, Head 114, Paine 79; De Grandhomme 2-68, Wagner 4-83)

**NEW ZEALAND:** First innings 44 for 2.

# What to WATCH

GTV & MAASRANGA

**BBPL**  
Cumilla v Rajshahi  
Live from 1:30pm  
Khulna v Sylhet  
Live from 6:30pm

SONY SIX

Australia v New Zealand  
Second Test, Day 3  
Live from 5:30am

South Africa v England  
First Test, Day 3  
Live from 2:00pm  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 1**  
English Premier League  
Brighton v Bournemouth

Live from 6:30pm  
Southampton v Crystal  
Palace  
Live from 9:00pm  
West Ham v Leicester City  
Live from 11:30pm

Burnley v Man United  
Live from 1:45am (Sunday)  
**STAR SPORTS SELECT 2**  
English Premier League  
Newcastle v Everton  
Live from 9:00pm

Norwich v Tottenham  
Live from 11:30pm

## DAY'S EVENT

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

Cumilla v Rajshahi  
Time: 1:30pm  
Khulna v Sylhet  
Time: 6:30pm

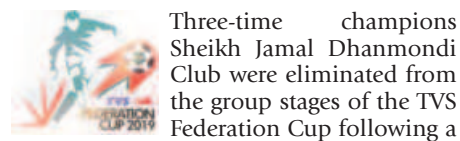
**Federation Cup**  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka  
Mohammedan v Uttar

Baridhara  
Time: 3:30pm  
Sheikh Russel v Muktijodha  
Time: 6:15pm

# Sheikh Jamal pay the penalty

## Ctg Abahani sink 10-man Kings

SPORTS REPORTER



Three-time champions Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club were eliminated from the group stages of the TVS Federation Cup following a 3-1 defeat against Saif Sporting Club at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The Dhanmondi giants had taken a ninth-minute lead through Omar Jobe's fine volley on a cross from Solomon King Kanform, but the lead lasted only six minutes as Saif defender Yeasin Arafat's shot from outside the box took a wicked deflection off Kesto Kumar Bose, wrongfooting Sheikh Jamal keeper Ziaur Rahman.

The three-time champions, though, continued to look the more threatening side, but a penalty in the 82nd minute dashed their hopes. Saif's Tajkik forward Jahongir Ergashev clinically dispatched the spot-kick before Kyrgyz forward Murolimzhon Akhmedov's long-range effort in injury time rubbed salt into the wounds of the Dhanmondi giants.

Sheikh Jamal coach Shafikul Islam Manik was livid with the refereeing and blamed the referee for his side's early exit.

"We are out of the tournament due to poor refereeing. The penalty decision was totally wrong. We can't expect this type of refereeing," the veteran coach said after the match.

Saif coach Mohammad Nizam was happy to emerge group champions and thanked his charges for their performance. "It was not an easy match for us. I'm very happy that my players played according to my plan."

The win helped Saif emerge Group C champions with four points from two matches while Sheikh Jamal missed out on a last-eight berth with a single point. Rahmatganj MFS, who drew against both

**CTG ABAHANI 2 - 0 BASHUNDHARA**  
Rakib 25', Didier 45+2'  
**SHEIKH JAMAL 1 - 3 SAIF SC**  
Omar 9', Arafat 15', Ergashev 82', Akhmedov 90+3'

these teams in their two matches, squeezed into the last eight as runners-up of Group C.

The result also means Saif will face newcomers Bangladesh Police in the third quarterfinal while Rahmatganj will be up against 11-time champions Abahani in the first quarterfinal.

Meanwhile, Chattogram Abahani topped Group B with a 2-0 win over 10-man Bashundhara Kings in the day's first match at the same venue.

Rakib Hossain gave the port city side the lead in the 25th minute before Charles Didier doubled the lead in the injury time of the first half. Bashundhara Kings, last edition's beaten finalists, were down to 10 men after minutes before the second goal when Tajik defender Akhmat Nazarov was booked for the second time.

Bashundhara Kings kept striker Jalal Kdouh in the bench while resting two key players -- Nicolas Delmonte and Daniel Colindres. Even though Kdouh was brought on in the second half, the Lebanese failed to make an impact. It was Chattogram Abahani, instead, who could have scored more goals.

Brazilian forward Nixon Brizolara had an effort saved from the goalline in the 75th minute while Rakib's header from pointblank range was saved by Bashundhara Kings goalkeeper Anisur Rahman four minutes later.

The win saw Chattogram Abahani through to the quarterfinals with six points from two matches while Bashundhara Kings progressed as group runners-up with three points.



Liverpool's James Milner (2nd from L) is swamped by his teammates after scoring a penalty during an English Premier League match against Leicester City at the King Power Stadium on Thursday. With Milner's 71st minute goal supplementing a Roberto Firmino brace and a solitary strike from Trent Alexander-Arnold, The Reds walked away 4-0 winners.

PHOTO: AFP

# Reds thrash Foxes to stretch lead

AFP, London



Liverpool stretched their Premier League lead to 13 points by outclassing second-placed Leicester in a 4-0 win on Boxing Day as Manchester United and Tottenham cut the gap on fourth-placed Chelsea.

Mikel Arteta got off to an underwhelming start as Arsenal manager with a 1-1 draw at Bournemouth, but Carlo Ancelotti had a more positive impact on his Everton bow as Dominic Calvert-Lewin's brilliant diving header earned a 1-0 win over Burnley.

Chelsea beat Tottenham in a big win for Frank Lampard over his former mentor Jose Mourinho on Sunday, but the gap between the two is back down to three points as the Blues lost 2-0 at home to lowly Southampton.

Spurs came from behind to beat Brighton 2-1 thanks to goals from Harry Kane and Dele Alli, while United moved just a point further back in seventh as they too overturned a poor start to thrash Newcastle 4-1 with Anthony Martial scoring twice.

Liverpool's trip to their closest challengers was the top billing of a busy Boxing Day card, but there was no contest as the newly crowned world champions showed their class.

Roberto Firmino's header was scant reward for a dominant first half display as Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah wasted big chances.

However, three goals in seven minutes in the final quarter ensured the scoreline fairly reflected their control.

Milner doubled the visitors' lead before Firmino's classy finish made it 3-0.

Trent Alexander-Arnold helped set up all of his side's first three goals and rounded off a

stunning individual display by drilling home the fourth from outside the box.

"We played our last two games against two of arguably the best teams in the history of the Premier League," said Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers, whose side also lost 3-1 to Manchester City on Saturday.

After the highs of Sunday, Chelsea again struggled when faced with breaking down stubborn defensive opponents in Southampton. The Blues have now lost to West Ham,

### TOP FIVE

	P	W	D	L	G/F	G/A	Pts
Liverpool	18	17	1	0	46	14	52
Leicester	19	12	3	4	41	18	39
Man City	18	12	2	4	50	20	38
Chelsea	19	10	2	7	33	27	32
Tottenham	19	8	5	6	34	27	29

Bournemouth and the Saints in their last four home league games.

Southampton boss Ralph Hasenhuttl's decision to rest in-form talisman Danny Ings paid off as his replacement Michael Obafemi scored just his second Premier League goal with a calm finish into the top corner.

The visitors then secured a second straight win to move up to 14th when Nathan Redmond prodded past the onrushing Kepa Arrizabalaga 17 minutes from time.

Spurs were still feeling the after-effects of that Chelsea defeat with Son Heung-min suspended and confidence low when Adam Webster headed Brighton ahead midway through the

first half.

Kane swept home at the second attempt after his first shot was saved by Mat Ryan before Alli then delivered all three points with a delightful chipped finish from an acute angle.

United were also beaten 2-0 at bottom-of-the-table Watford on Sunday and another frustrating evening seemingly beckoned when Matty Longstaff scored his second Premier League goal -- both of which have come against the Red Devils.

However, unlike when the Magpies beat Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men 1-0 in October, the response from United was emphatic.

Martial fired in at the near post with the help of Newcastle keeper Martin Dubravka before a thundering finish from Mason Greenwood and Marcus Rashford's header made it 3-1 before the break.

Another defensive error then teed up Martial to dink over Dubravka for the fourth early in the second half.

Arteta got an early lesson in the flaws that have blighted Arsenal's season as they were caught out trying to play from the back to concede the opening goal when Dan Gosling put Bournemouth in front.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang again rode to the Gunners' rescue to equalise just after the hour mark, but a point leaves Arsenal still down in 11th.

Sheffield United are sixth, behind Tottenham only on goal difference, as they missed the chance to close to within a point of Chelsea in a 1-1 draw with Watford.

Crystal Palace climbed up to eighth thanks to Jordan Ayew's brilliant individual run and finish a minute from time to beat West Ham 2-1.

# Guardiola hails Agüero

AFP, Manchester



Pep Guardiola believes Sergio Agüero is "irreplaceable" as the Manchester City forward enters the final 18 months of his glorious career in English football.

The record-breaking Argentinian is likely to be on the bench for the reigning Premier League champions visit to Wolves on Friday as he continues his recovery from a thigh problem.

That injury has sidelined the 31-year-old since the end of November and given Guardiola a taste of what life will be like when Agüero's contract ends next year.

The City manager does not expect to be able to talk Agüero into changing his plans to end his career in his homeland and that will leave Guardiola with the thankless task of replacing a man who has, to date, scored 244 times for his club.

"I'd say it will be one of the toughest (tasks). Sergio is irreplaceable," said Guardiola.

"We have an incredible other striker in Gabriel Jesus and maybe another one will come when Sergio leaves. But he is irreplaceable."

Agüero played a pivotal role when City were crowned champions of England for the first time in 44 years when his last-gasp winner against QPR took them to the 2011/12 Premier League title.

"The most important moment of this club, more important than if one day this club wins the Champions League, is the moment when Sergio scored that goal, against QPR to win the first Premier League (2012) after I don't know how many years," said Guardiola.

"That moment is much better than four titles in one season or whatever. And he was THE guy. More than anything, more than the goals he has done at this club."

"But sooner or later it is going to happen (Agüero's departure), he'll decide when."

Agüero's efforts in the three-and-a-half seasons that Guardiola has been in charge at the Etihad have been all the more impressive given many thought the Argentinian international would not fit into the Catalan manager's demanding style of play.

# Russia challenges doping ban

AFP, Moscow

Russia on Friday formally contested a four-year ban from major sporting events over doping violations that President Vladimir Putin has condemned as "unjust," the head of its RUSADA anti-doping agency said.

"In accordance with established procedure, today we have sent a package of documents to the World Anti-Doping Agency. The package contains a notice about disagreement with WADA sanctions," RUSADA director general Yuriy Ganus told reporters in Moscow.

Ganus, who has long argued for a major crackdown by Russia against doping cheats, warned that the legal challenge could backfire, however.

The formal statement of disagreement with WADA will trigger an appeal process against the ban at the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Ganus, whose rigorous stance puts him at odds with his own government and supervisory board, argues that Moscow needs to accept the sanctions and own up to its faults in order to be able to reform.

# Ibra set for Milan return

AFP, Milan



Sweden star Zlatan Ibrahimovic has reached agreement to join AC Milan on an initial six-month contract, according to multiple reports in Italy on Thursday.

Ibrahimovic has accepted Milan's proposal and is ready to sign a deal to return to the former European giants within the next two days, Gazzetta Dello Sport and Sky Sports Italia reported.

Ibrahimovic will reportedly sign a six-month contract worth about three million euros (\$3.3 million) with a renewal option for another year, linked to certain conditions such as goals and appearances.

The 38-year-old striker confirmed his departure from Los Angeles Galaxy last month following the club's elimination from the Major League Soccer playoffs.

The Swede should be available to coach Stefano Pioli as early as December 30, the date of the resumption of training at Milan.

AC Milan are reeling after a 5-0 thrashing against Atalanta last weekend, their worst defeat in 21 years, and are struggling 11th in the Serie A table.

The team's first game after the winter break will be at home against Sampdoria on January 6.

It is hoped that Ibrahimovic will bring some leadership and a winning mentality to the locker room.



Quarter Master General of Bangladesh Army Lt. General Md Shamsul Haque inaugurates the four-day Priyoprangon New Year Cup Golf tournament as chief guest at the Army Golf Club yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Luis Suarez and wife Sofia Balbi renewed their wedding vows in a glitzy ceremony in Uruguay on Thursday. Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi, Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba were present on the occasion.

PHOTO: AFP

# Suarez renews wedding vows

AFP, Maldonado

Barcelona forward Luis Suarez and wife Sofia Balbi have renewed their wedding vows at a star-studded gathering in Uruguay attended by Lionel Messi among others. The celebration to mark 10 years of marriage took place in a luxury tourist complex near the coastal city of Maldonado, about 130 km (80 miles) east of the capital Montevideo. A crowd of football fans, including many wearing the Barcelona strip, gathered near the entrance as Suarez's clubmates Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba arrived along with Ballon d'Or winner Messi and his wife, Antonella Rocuzzo. Brazilian star Neymar was also there, local media said. Uruguay striker Suarez and Balbi exchanged "rings inscribed with their respective names, made from white gold and diamonds", according to a statement. The couple met when Suarez was 14 and started seeing each other soon afterwards. They were married in 2009 and have three children.



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# Left out in the cold

*Around 350 become homeless as fire rips through Baunia slum in the capital's Mirpur*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ash-blackened bare feet and thin, shivering people shuffled about on the premises of Ananda Niketon Model School as a fire blazed through Bauniabandh slum early yesterday. The residents fled with just the clothes on their backs.

The fire, which broke out around 12:45am, gutted 87 homes and 17 shops, and left at least 350 people homeless.

Eleven fire engines doused the flames around 1:50am, said Ershad Hossain, duty officer at Fire Service and Civil Defence Headquarters.

While homes and livelihoods were burnt to a crisp, the people were left freezing as the mercury dipped to 12 degrees Celsius.

Shahana and her brother Ratan Miah waited in line to get their names registered as victims. Both were barefoot. Ratan had a thin military-issue blanket wrapped around him, while Shahana shivered in just her cotton sari.

"We are originally from Kishoreganj. We lived in the same shanty. It had two rooms that housed each of our families," Shahana told The Daily Star.

They both pull garbage carts around the neighbourhood. They have no relative in Dhaka they could seek help from. The cold concrete floor of the school is their only refuge as long as the authorities allow them to stay there.

Beside them, 2-year-old Jannatul, exhausted from the night's happenings, dozed off. She wore just a thin shirt and a pair of cotton shorts. Her grandmother Bokula tried

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**Clad in yellow saris, women prepare pithas (rice cakes) at Nobanno Utshab in Baburghon village of Chapainawabganj's Gomastapur upazila yesterday. The traditional harvest festival is celebrated in rural areas with food, dance and music as new crops bring with them happiness for farmers.**

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN



## On this day in 1971

**DECEMBER 28**  
Awami League decide to commemorate January 9 as "Sheikh Mujib Day" demanding the immediate release of Bangabandhu, a report from ENA says.  
Sheikh Mujib refrained from radio or newspapers during the nine-month long Liberation War, a source from Rawalpindi reports. After he was taken to house arrest, he learned about the war after April 1971.

Eminent author and producer Zahir Raihan, in a press conference, alleges the Al-Badr members were the executors of hundreds

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## JP creates new post for Raushan Amends charter to have 15 more posts; the party to hold council today

RASHIDUL HASAN

In a major change to its charter, main opposition in parliament the Jatiya Party yesterday created a ceremonial post called "chief patron" and picked Raushan Ershad for it.

The party also introduced eight new posts of additional secretary generals and seven new posts of co-chairmen.

The decisions were made at an emergency meeting of the party's presidium held at JP chairman's Banani office in the capital yesterday.

After the meeting, JP Secretary General Moshir Rahman Ranga said Raushan would enjoy the highest honour in all general meetings and other programmes of the party.

Raushan will remain in the post as long as she is alive, he also said.

Ranga, however, said the party's highest power would remain in the hands of GM Quader and he would preside over all the party meetings.

The changes have been brought in allegedly to pacify a section of party leaders who wanted Raushan to become the chairperson at the ninth council of the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

CONTROVERSIAL CITIZENSHIP ACT IN INDIA

## Tensions rise as rival camps take to the streets

AFP, Mumbai

Thousands protested in rival demonstrations in India yesterday as tensions rise over a citizenship law seen as anti-Muslim, with authorities deploying huge numbers of riot police in the country.

Twenty-seven people have died in two weeks of at times violent demonstrations after Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government made it easier for non-Muslims from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh to be naturalised.

Coupled with a mooted citizens register, it has stoked fears -- including in Washington and the UN rights office -- about the marginalisation of Muslims who make up 14 percent of India's 1.3 billion people.

Hundreds of armed policemen patrolled areas of the financial capital Mumbai, where demonstrators rallied both in favour of and against the legislation, underlining the divisions rippling through India.

First-time protester Amanda Castellino said she had joined the demonstrations "to safeguard India's secular ethos".

"At this moment, either we can stay silent and mute for the rest of our lives or speak up", the 27-year-old told AFP on the sidelines of the rally, which was attended by around 5,000 people.

A similar number of protesters showed up at a rival pro-government demonstration in the city, clutching flags and posters in favour of the new law.

"We should welcome persecuted Hindus back home without any restrictions," said Mahindra Shah, an 82-year-old protester.

"Why do Muslims need to come here when Pakistan, Afghanistan and

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

## Geopolitical divides may deepen in SA

14 noted citizens say on new law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fourteen South Asian citizens said India's Citizenship Amendment Act had the potential to deepen geopolitical divides among the countries of the region.

"We independent citizens of countries neighbouring India wish to register our reservations about the Citizenship Amendment Act adopted by India's Parliament, which aims to provide Indian citizenship to non-Muslims who approach from three countries -- Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan," read a joint statement issued on Thursday.

Signatories to the statement include Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury, rights activist Hameeda Hossain,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

## Netherlands isn't Holland anymore



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The Netherlands is gearing up to drop the moniker "Holland" as it rebrands itself in 2020.

Holland is a region of the Netherlands, but the two names are often used interchangeably to describe the northern European country.

From January, the Netherlands will officially drop "Holland" from all literature and marketing materials, so the country will only be referred to be its official name.

The rebrand, which cost €200,000, is part of a wider relaunch of the country's image, reports the Sydney Morning Herald.

It comes before the country is due to host the Eurovision Song Contest and participate in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The orange tulip logo has been axed in favour of the letters NL, which look like a stylised tulip,

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## 2 killed as truck veers off road

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

At least two people were killed yesterday as a truck carrying livestock skidded off the road and plunged into a pond beside Dhaka-Aricha highway in Jorjol area of Savar, on the outskirts of the capital.

The deceased were identified as Jakaria Jakir, 30, a livestock trader from Joypurhat and Hasan, 23, assistant of the trucker, said Liton Ahmed, senior station officer at Savar Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Another businessman

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6  
PHOTO ON PAGE 2



### PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 28

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:27 7:00  
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:30 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## INDIGENOUS/ADIVASI NGOs asked to drop the words from their names

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA, Bandarban

NGO Affairs Bureau has directed all the registered NGOs that have the words "indigenous/adviasi" in their titles to rename themselves by dropping the words.

A December 19 letter, signed by Shilu Ray, assistant director of the Bureau, has asked the NGOs to implement the directive within a month.

The letter says, "According to article 23 (ka) of the constitution of Bangladesh, no community has been identified as Adivasi. Besides, as part of global indigenous politics, a local/international vested quarter is active in realising benefits, mentioned in ILO convention 169 for indigenous people, which the NGO Affairs Bureau considers a threat to non-communal Bangladesh.

"Considering the reality of the Chattogram Hill

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5



Emergency and security personnel are working at the site of a plane crash near Almaty, Kazakhstan, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 12 die in Kazakh plane crash

AFP, Almaty

Twelve people died when a plane carrying 100 passengers and crew crashed shortly after takeoff in Kazakhstan yesterday and collided with a house, but many onboard survived without serious injury.

The 23-year-old plane operated by budget carrier Bek Air was torn apart and its nose crushed on impact with a building that partially collapsed, a video released by the Central Asian country's emergencies committee showed.

The aircraft disappeared from the radar minutes after it took off from Almaty airport at 7:05 am (01:05 GMT) on its way to the capital Nur-Sultan with 95 passengers and five crew members aboard, the airport authority said in a statement.

It hit a concrete barrier and then slammed into an

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

Today is the 22<sup>nd</sup> Death Anniversary of **Engr. Ejabuddin Ahmed**

We request all relatives, friends and well-wishers to remember him in their prayers and to pray for eternal peace of his soul