



THE DAILY



ON FRIDAY



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“Myanmar promised on different occasions that they would take steps to stop yaba trafficking, but they haven’t taken any initiative.”
HOME MINISTER ASADUZZAMAN KHAN ON YABA TRADE



“The DG of BSF assured me that they would be more careful and cautious to avoid border killings.”
BGB DG MAJ GEN MD SHAFEENUL ISLAM ON KILLINGS BY BSF (PAGE 20)

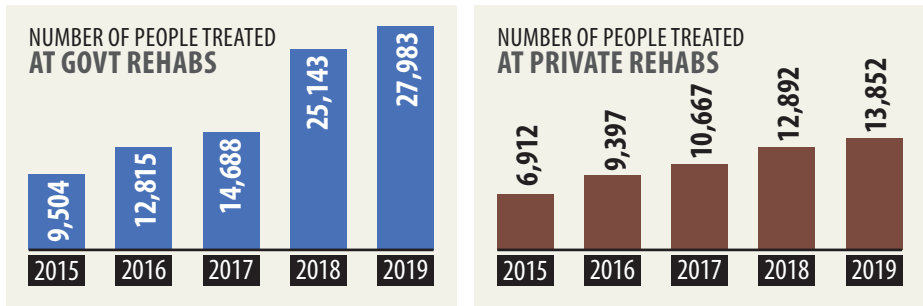


“The provocative behaviour has been out there for months... So do I think they may do something? Yes. And they will likely regret it.”
PENTAGON CHIEF MARK ESPER WARNS PRO-IRAN MILITIA AFTER ATTACK ON US EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD (PAGE 9)



Alarming rise in drug abuse

Number of patients with addiction problems went up to 114 a day last year from 69 in 2017; 1.43 lakh treated at rehabs in 5 yrs



MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The number of drug addicts increased in the country with an average of 114 patients taking treatment every day at public and private rehabilitation centres last year, according to the Department of Narcotics Control.

The number was 104 in 2018, and 69 in 2017.

A total of 90,133 people with addiction underwent treatment at the five government rehabilitation centres and 53,720 at the 324 private ones in the last five years.

The number of female addicts increased four times last year, according to DNC data.

Ninety-one females took treatment at the government centres in 2018. The number was 360 from January to November last year.

“Easy availability of narcotics is the number one reason behind the rise in the number of drug addicts,” Prof Helal Uddin Ahmed of the National Institute of Mental Health told The Daily Star yesterday.

Social unrest, inability to cope with failures, boredom, loneliness, and changing family structure are among the things that lead people towards drugs, he added.

“The social media also makes people lonely,” said Prof Helal, a researcher on addiction.

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Impounded vehicles occupy an entire road parallel to the street near the capital's Airport intersection, blocking traffic movement. Police have been keeping such vehicles there for nearly a year. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Cumilla seal Super Over win

SPORTS REPORTER

After the match between Cumilla Warriors and Sylhet Thunder in the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) ended in the tournament's first draw, a brilliant performance from Mujeeb-Ur-Rahman helped the visiting team seal a Super Over win under lights at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Sylhet, at the bottom of

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‘It’s not possible to do everything overnight’

Says finance minister; executing is harder than he thought, but Kamal is defiant about his thinking and agenda

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ZINA TASREEN

The man with the plan, is the impression one walks away with after an audience with Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal. Later, one is invariably met with the question: was he being a little too optimistic and naive?

Jovial, conversational and clued in with the facts on the ground, Mustafa Kamal seems to delight in the unconventional when it comes to solving some of the problems troubling the country and the economy.

Take the case of the single-digit interest rates that the government set for banks from April 1, which Kamal brokered.

The move is his boldest yet since taking charge of the finance ministry on January 7 last year and has theoretically broken down the market mechanism for funds: it dictated a uniform interest rate for



loans and savings, instead of letting the interplay of demand and supply determine them.

“This will be a turning point for Bangladesh’s manufacturing sector,” he told The Daily Star on the eve of the announcement of this significant government move, in what was his first interview with the media since becoming Bangladesh’s finance czar.

Not only will entrepreneurs be rushing to banks to materialise their longed-for investment plans, which they put in the back burner for the prohibitively high interest rate, the move will also solve the malaise of default loans, he thinks.

Kamal is of the opinion that the root cause of default loans in Bangladesh is not the lax corporate governance, corruption or the absence of enforcing rules and regulations – but the high interest rates.

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HC orders probe into waste of resources

Halts ex-director’s LPR facilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to suspend the retirement facilities of National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH)’s former director Prof Dr Md Moarraf Hossen for negligence in preserving and protecting the hospital’s equipment, including those of the ICLU.

Last Saturday, Md Moarraf Hossen went into leave preparatory retirement.

Issuing a suo moto (voluntary) rule, the HC yesterday ordered

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LONE GOVT CANCER HOSPITAL

X-ray machine lies idle for 2 decades

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

In 1998, the authorities of National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH) bought an X-ray machine imported from Germany.

But it never reached the hospital’s radiology department, where it was supposed to be used.

For nearly two decades, the device has been gathering dust inside a room of the hospital in the capital’s Mohakhali, depriving patients of treatment and wasting resources.

Speaking to The Daily Star, radiology department officials at the NICRH, the country’s lone specialised public hospital for cancer treatment, said a Bangladeshi agent, Natasa Corporation Limited, sold the machine and it was kept in the hospital’s room in 2000.

The firm was supposed to do the machine’s test runs there and hand it to the radiology department on getting its clearance, department head Associate Professor Mushtaque Ahmed Jalali said. “But the machine never arrived at the department.”

On several occasions in the past, the department wrote to the hospital’s director, requesting him to take initiatives for ensuring that the machine is delivered to the department, but to no avail.

He alleged that the Bangladeshi firm took money from the hospital without completing the work.

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DHAKA MAYORAL POLLS

JP aspirant crashes out

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The Election Commission yesterday cancelled the nomination of Jatiya Party mayor aspirant Kamrul Hasan as his name was not on the voter list of Dhaka North City Corporation.

The decision was made during the scrutiny of the nomination papers by the returning officer of the DNCC polls.

After scrutinising the nomination forms of the mayor and councillor hopefuls of two Dhaka city corporations, the EC yesterday declared the candidatures of 993 candidates valid. Of them, 13 will run for mayor and 980 for councillor.

Of the 13 mayor hopefuls, six will join the battle of ballots in Dhaka North City Corporation and the rest in Dhaka South City Corporation on January 30.

The DNCC returning office declared valid the nominations of 359 general and 87 reserved ward councillor hopefuls,

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Demonstrating jute mill workers being administered saline in front of Platinum Jute Mills gate in Khulna yesterday, the fifth consecutive day of their hunger strike to press home their 11-point demand, including timely payment of wages. Their leaders called off the strike last night following assurance from the government.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

JUTE MILLS

Leaders say demo over, workers say not yet

977 fall sick during hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On assurance from the government that the National Wage Board-2015 would be implemented, leaders of jute mill workers called off their strike last night.

However, workers were continuing their strike as of filing this report at 12:20am today, reports our local correspondent.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Mizanur Rahman, a worker of Platinum Jute Mill in Khulna, said they will not call off the strike until their leaders convey the assurance to them.

Last evening, leaders of Bangladesh Jute Mill Workers’ League and State-Owned Jute Mill CBA and Non-CBA Sangram Parishad had talks with Textile and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi and State Minister for Labour and Employment Monnujan Sufian at the Jute Diversification Promotion Centre to discuss the matter, said a press release.

“On the basis of the discussions, it is to be informed that workers will be given slips of the National Wage Scale-2015,” it said.

“Therefore, upon the declaration of leaders regarding the calling off of the strike, all the workers are requested to withdraw their movements and join work,” it added.

Meanwhile, hundreds of workers from eight state-run jute mills in the Khulna and Jashore industrial belts have fallen sick so far, as they continued their fast-unto-death protest for the fifth consecutive day yesterday.

The protest was held to press home an 11-point demand,

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Cumilla seal Super Over

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the table with no realistic chance of making it to the play-offs, equalled the 140 for nine posted by Cumilla when they failed to sneak in a double off the final delivery of the game.

Sylhet could only muster seven runs in the Super Over as Mujeeb kept it tight after being hit for a four off his very first delivery. Cumilla, who had lost Soumya Sarkar, got over the line with the penultimate delivery when David Wiese took a single after smashing a four off the previous delivery.

Before that, Shohag Gazi smashed a 31-ball 52, laced with three fours and four sixes, to help Sylhet recover after a bleak start. Although Gazi fell in the 17th over to a Mujeeb delivery, the match was dragged to the very last ball. With two wickets in hand and 15 required off the last over, Naveen Ul Haq smashed two boundaries off the first two Al- Amin Hossain deliveries before falling to a

run-out off the next ball. The match went into the Super Over when Monir Hossain failed to complete a double, being run-out with the final ball.

Before bowling an excellent Super Over, it was Mujeeb who returned impressive figures of four for 12 to help Cumilla's cause.

Earlier, Cumilla's 42-run opening stand between Stiaan van Zyl and Upul Tharanga ended when the former fell in the fifth over after scoring a 12-ball 10. Tharanga scored a team high 31-ball 45 with the next best contribution coming at the death from Mahidul Islam as the right-hander played an unbeaten 14-ball 19 to help his side post a modest total. Sherfane Rutherford was the pick of the bowlers for Sylhet, returning figures of three for 19. Gazi, who shone with the bat, was also impressive with the ball as the off spinner returned figures of two for 23 in three overs.

JP aspirant crashes out

DNCC AND DSCC ELECTIONS 2020			
Name of posts	Nomination forms collected	Nomination forms submitted	Nominations cancelled
Mayor	18	14	1
General Ward Councillor	1,875	834	41
Women Ward Councillor (reserved)	367	191	4
TOTAL	2,260	1,039	46

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while the DSCC returning office found valid the nominations of 434 general and 100 reserved ward councillor aspirants.

Returning officers Abul Kashem and Abdul Baten of the DSCC and DNCC urged all the candidates to abide by the electoral code of conduct. They also warned that stern action would be taken against any violation of the electoral code.

According to EC statistics, although over 2,200 aspirant candidates collected nomination forms for the city polls, less than half of them submitted those to the commission.

KAMRUL'S NOMINATION CANCELLED

RO Kashem said the nomination of JP candidate Kamrul was cancelled as his name was not on the voter list.

According to the electoral law, a mayor hopeful must be a voter of the city corporation area.

Kamrul in his reaction said he would file an appeal with the Dhaka divisional commissioner seeking a reversal of the RO's decision.

Any candidate can lodge an appeal with the appellate authority against the returning officers' decision by January 5.

Ten DNCC mayor aspirants had collected nomination forms, but seven of them submitted those.

The EC declared valid the nominations of Awami League's Atiul Islam, BNP's Tabith Awal, Communist Party of Bangladesh's (CPB) Sajedul Huq Rubel, Islami Andolan Bangladesh's Sheikh Md Fazle Bari Masud, Progressive Democratic Party's Shahin Khan and National Peoples Party's Anisur Rahman Dewan.

Speaking to reporters later, Tabith Awal said validation of his nomination was a primary victory for the BNP as he came to know that some vested quarters were trying to disqualify him from the polls.

Sajedul Huq said ensuring a level playing field didn't necessarily mean ensuring it only for the AL and the BNP nominees, rather it should be ensured for all candidates.

"The CPB is participating in the polls

as part of its fight to restore democracy in the country," he added.

Meanwhile, RO Kashem said they have cancelled the nominations of 15 general and two reserved women councillor aspirants.

A total of 374 general ward councillor aspirants submitted nominations for 54 posts in the Dhaka North City Corporation and 89 candidates for 18 reserved women councillor posts.

MAYOR HOPEFULS IN DSCC

DSCC RO Baten said they declared valid the nomination papers of all the seven mayor candidates.

They are AL's Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, BNP's Ishraque Hossain, JP's Mohammad Saifuddin, Islami Andolan Bangladesh's Abdur Rahman, Bangladesh Congress' Md Akhtaruzzaman, National People's Party's Bahrane Sultan Bahar and Gonofront's Abdus Samad.

Earlier, eight mayor aspirants had collected nomination forms.

The RO said they cancelled nominations of 26 general ward councillors aspirants and two reserved women councillor hopefuls.

Talking to journalists following the scrutiny of nominations, Taposh and Ishraque called upon the voters to exercise their franchise on January 30.

"There will be a festive mood during the polls. I urge everyone in Dhaka south city area to cast their votes," Taposh said.

Ishraque also urged the voters to go to polling centres. "It's your rights. You should elect your representatives directly."

In Dhaka south, a total of 460 aspirants submitted nominations for 75 general ward councillor posts and 102 aspirants for 25 reserved women councillor posts.

COUNCILLOR CANDIDATE HELD

A BNP-backed councillor hopeful was arrested from the capital's Tikatuli area around 4:30pm yesterday in old cases filed against him, reports UNB.

Bangshal police arrested Tajuddin Ahmed Taju who submitted his nomination to the EC to contest for the ward-32 councillor post in the DSCC polls.

HC orders probe

FROM PAGE 1

the health secretary and the director general of Directorate of Health Services to form a committee and conduct an enquiry into the allegations of negligence of NICRH authorities in using and preserving the equipment for treatment in the hospital.

The committee has been asked to submit a probe report before the court in 30 days.

In the rule, the court asked the authorities concerned of the government to explain why the reported negligence of the NICRH authorities should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman passed the order and issued the suo moto rule following a report titled "ICU on sickbed" published yesterday in The Daily Star.

The retirement facilities of Moarraf Hossen will remain suspended until the HC disposes of the suo moto rule, Deputy Attorney General Amit Talukder told The Daily Star.

SC lawyer Barrister Manoj Kumar Bhowmick placed The Daily Star's report before the HC bench seeking necessary orders.

The report revealed several cases

of irregularities at the country's lone specialised public hospital for cancer treatment.

The report said the NICRH, situated in Mohakhali, is the go-to place for patients in the low-income bracket. According to an International Agency for Research on Cancer report released last year, about 1.08 lakh people die of cancer, while 1.5 lakh people develop the disease every year in Bangladesh.

More than 12 years ago, the NICRH authorities had purchased eight high-end ventilators for its Intensive Care Unit. But the Artificial Respiratory Ventilators (ARVs), the basic device required to properly run an ICU, had never been installed, depriving the critical patients of the services they are supposed to receive at the ICU.

The lifesaving devices -- each bought for Tk 70 lakh at that time -- are now left uncared for in a corner in the ICU.

According to The Daily Star's report, a central oxygen system was set up more than three years ago, but the ventilators were not installed. To make matters worse, the motherboards of the ventilators have been stolen in the meantime, rendering the machines dysfunctional.



People sit atop sacks of waste on a truck in the capital's Gabtoli. The sacks do not seem to be tied properly and may topple any time, taking those sitting on top with them. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

'It's not possible to do everything overnight'

FROM PAGE 1

"Our scheme will save everyone. The outstanding loans will not race ahead. We will know who the genuine businessmen are."

He went on to cite the case of a businessman who took a loan of Tk 97 lakh from a private bank in 2012. In 2014, he repaid Tk 1.10 crore. But, the bank is still demanding Tk 1.73 crore after waiving off Tk 40 lakh of interest.

The businessman does not have the capacity to pay the bank anymore and is now going through health problems because of the anxiety stemming from this outstanding loan with the bank.

"I get very upset when I hear such cases. What is the point of earning and expanding your balance sheet this way? What is the point of increasing assets at inflated rates? It is not good to charge so much."

When asked if it is correct to fix the interest rates for banks in a market economy, Kamal was dismissive. "In the name of quantitative easing, didn't the US, the biggest proponent of free market, print papers?"

But, he feels he has cracked a win-win situation for all.

Sonali, Janata, Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank and their ilk give out loans at 5 percent interest under many schemes, he said.

"They get those funds from the government. If they can, why can't the private banks? We will give them those funds now. If they get money on the cheap, why will they not give out loans at low interest?"

Indeed, in his media briefing the following day, he announced that 50 percent of the government funds, which were almost exclusively in the hands of state banks, will be kept with private banks to provide them a steady supply of funds.

"It's a fool-proof system. Banks had an important role in our development, in halving our poverty rates. They will never face losses -- I will make them stronger."

He also means to help banks recover loans from willful defaulters like Hall-Mark Group and has even thought up a plan.

"We will try to take out their cases from court. Many of them have 3-4 members of the family in jail and their properties are going astray. We will try to bring one of them out on bail -- maybe the women first -- so that they can sell off their assets. From jail, they can't do anything and the government is the eventual loser in all this."

He will sit with the stakeholders soon and work out a scheme for willful defaulters, who might have to pay 25 percent down payment to regularise their loans.

"We are not taking the matter lightly. We might have to look at the issue from a human viewpoint."

Asked for a timeframe for this plan, the youthful-looking 72-year-old was surprisingly candid: "Does anything happen according to timeframe in Bangladesh?"

His sideswipe is not without reason.

When he became the finance minister, he was assured that all tools needed to implement the much-delayed VAT and Supplementary Duty Act 2012 from this fiscal year will be ready.

"I was assured by the finance secretary that we have the allocation and we will get the machines and scanners as and when needed."

But that has not been the case.

"It's one thing to plan and another to execute. I thought it would be so easy. But now I know that is not the case. Those who were working on it never said anything negative or asked me to back out from the July 1 roll-out."

He blames this for the flagging tax collection in the first four months of the fiscal year as the value-added tax is the biggest source of revenue for the exchequer.

"Now that I know what the situation is I will be very hands-on. Hopefully we will see some results over the next six months," he said, adding that he will sit at the National Board of Revenue premises for two days a week from now on.

His plan is to install the 10,000 electronic fiscal devices that have arrived -- out of the requisite 2 lakh -- at places with high sales turnover like in supermarkets to set the ball rolling.

He will also recruit 1,000 to oversee VAT and income tax collection this year.

The initiatives are expected to yield 10-12 percent collection growth of the NBR come the end of the fiscal year.

Over the next four years, he plans to recruit 25,000 in total for the revenue authority. They will assess whether the individuals have the capacity to give income tax and ask them to file returns. At the same time, if people are paying less tax, they will look into it too.

They will try to convince those people but there will not be any harassment, he said, adding that he will assign people up to the upazila level and set up multiple tax offices in the economically flourishing places.

"I'll collect tax from those who have the capacity to pay -- they cannot get away without paying any tax. Even if it's a little they will have to pay. To start off they will pay less and then gradually increase."

These two avenues will have to shoulder the burden for mobilising revenue for the government: customs will be cut some slack as an expansive list of duty waivers has been offered for the mega projects and to spur industrialisation.

"No country in the world gives as much exemptions as us. It was not possible to collect any revenue from them what we imported thus far in the fiscal year."

Were those duty waivers not in place, Bangladesh's tax-GDP ratio

would have been 14 percent and not the existing 9.2 percent, which is one of the lowest in the world, according to Kamal.

Some of the exemptions are necessary but some will be reviewed too, he said, while citing the case of the power sector to further his point. At the onset, the power sector was given a host of exemptions; but they are slowly being withdrawn.

"At the moment, employment generation is more important for us than revenue generation. If we seek applications for 1,000 vacancies, 25,000 show up. If we can't give them employment, what's the point of the government? We would have failed in our responsibilities."

But, a restructuring of the tax administration to get it up to speed with modern times -- and particularly automation -- is definitely on the cards.

"It's not possible to do everything overnight," he said, adding that the reforms he will be ushering in will eventually pay off.

Kamal, who was in the textile business previously, also seems to have devised a plan for garment exporters, who have been crying out for devaluation of the local currency to give them a competitive edge.

He is emphatically against the possibility of devaluation, an idea which has been pushed by economists and exporters alike. "I will not devalue as we are import-dependent. We will die!"

But in keeping with his alternative thinking, he is planning to give garment exporters Tk 5 extra for every dollar of their export receipts.

He has dispatched men to India, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Thailand -- all Bangladesh's competitors in global apparel trade -- to get first-hand knowledge of whether those countries' governments are giving this benefit to their garment exporters to give them a leg up.

"If they are, we will too."

The move will cost the government Tk 4,000 crore extra, but that may be offset by the surge in foreign currency, like his similar initiative for remitters have done.

In his maiden budget, he allocated Tk 3,500 crore to provide 2 percent cash incentive to remitters -- a move the government credits for the record remittance inflow of \$18.32 billion in 2019.

That budget -- which was long on promises but short on specifics and came across as empty rhetoric -- will be the blueprint for his next four budgets.

"I've prepared the budget for 2041 -- it was a comprehensive budget."

What the country needs to become an advanced nation is in there, he said.

"Whichever areas need reforms are in there. All I need is to implement them. I need to work hard. It's a long road ahead -- and we are just getting started."

Dozens of S Korean MPs charged over parliamentary stand-off

AFP, Seoul

South Korean prosecutors yesterday indicted almost 30 MPs and the leader of the main opposition party on assault and other charges over a two-day parliamentary stand-off.

In an attempt to stop legislation being passed, members of the opposition Liberty Korea party (LKP) lay on the floor linking arms to block access to a committee room, and blockaded an MP in his office for five hours.

Scuffles broke out as MPs of the governing Democratic party tried to force their way into the hall in April.

Seoul prosecutors indicted the LKP leader Hwang Kyo-ahn and 23 of his MPs -- including former parliamentary floor leader Na Kyung-won -- on charges including causing a commotion at the national assembly and illegal detention.

Five Democratic party MPs were indicted on accusations of assault.

Among the 29 accused, prosecutors said 18 will face court trials, including Hwang and Na, while the others are likely to be fined without court proceedings as their offences are considered minor.

The indictment comes three months before a legislative election and if any of the MPs are fined five million won (US\$4,300) or more on conviction, they will be stripped of their seats and barred from standing for re-election for five years.

The LKP said the five-to-24 ratio of charges was "unfair" and "unbalanced", while Na -- who is herself a former judge -- condemned the indictment as "politically retaliatory" and claimed it was "top-down ordered" by the administration of President Moon Jae-in.

Score-setting is ingrained in the country's winner-takes-all political system, with every one of the country's living former presidents either currently in prison or convicted of crimes after leaving office.

The dispute broke out when the governing party and its allies sought to fast-track a series of reform bills, among them setting up a body to probe corruption by high-ranking officials.

Alarming rise

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Prof Arup Ratan Choudhury, founder of the Association for the Prevention of Drug Abuse, also blamed the availability of drugs for the problem.

"Anyone can buy drugs now from home by placing an order over phone or online," he claimed.

Contacted, Soheli Rana, assistant inspector general at the Police Headquarters, said narcotics are now less available than before.

"Besides taking action against the traffickers, police ran many awareness campaigns. As a result, many people are now seeking treatment," he said.

Law enforcers launched a crackdown on drug traders in May 2018.

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) yesterday observed its 30th anniversary at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

Addressing the event, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said that the young people were particularly at risk because most of the drug abusers were aged between 18 and 35 years.

"We have to rehabilitate those people by providing them with treatment," he said.

The government has allocated Tk 1 crore to incentivise the private rehabilitation centres this fiscal year, he added.

Shahiduzzaman, secretary of Security Service Division, said there are no rehabilitation centres in 23 districts. "We have taken initiatives to establish facilities in these districts," he added.

Referring to the widespread use of yaba, the home minister said yaba trafficking had not stopped because Myanmar didn't keep its promise. "Myanmar promised on different occasions that they would take steps to stop yaba trafficking [into Bangladesh], but they haven't taken any initiative."

He added that the government was working to keep young people away from yaba.

Prof Ratan, who was the chief guest, said availability of yaba was the reason for the increasing number of addicts.

Regarding driving under influence, he said introducing dope tests for drivers can reduce road crashes.

Former housing and public works minister Mosharraf Hossain, also an Awami League presidium member, said liquor and beer are available even in departmental stores in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Many people would stop taking drugs if those drinks are available in stores, he observed.

DNC DG Jamal Uddin said the Narcotics Control Act 2018 has provisions for introducing dope tests during recruitment in government, semi-government and autonomous organisations.

A victim of govt bodies' friction

Development plans for Railway General Hospital left in the dark

Md FOISAL AHMED

More than four years ago, the government had decided to upgrade the Railway Hospital in Kamalapur, aiming at providing better service for railway staff and expanding its services to general people.

But all that has changed in effect is the name -- "Railway General Hospital".

No other significant progress has been made since Bangladesh Railway (BR) and health ministry signed a memorandum of understanding in 2015, outlining its development.

The rechristened signboard at the entrance of the hospital, located on the Outer Circular Road opposite Motijheel Ideal School, and a worn-out banner advertising that the facility is open to all, are failing to draw patients, apparently due to frictions between the railways and health ministries and dormancy of the managing committee.

Established in 1986, the hospital -- located in a tranquil setting and surrounded by trees -- has been barely functioning due to limited workforce, trivial annual development and maintenance budget from the railway ministry, and dilapidated condition of medical and other equipment.

Visiting the facility multiple times between October and late December 2019, this correspondent found doctors and staffers passing idle time with hardly any patients.

In stark contrast to other public hospitals of the capital, registers of the hospitals showed fewer than 10 inpatients and 50-odd outpatients taking services of the hospital at least twice during the visits.

Asked about the poor flow of patients, Dr Abdul Ahad, member of a joint committee for the development of the hospital, said, "The reason is lack of facilities, including pathological support and insufficient medicine supply."

"We have to send patients to other hospitals or private diagnostic centres for tests. If a patient does not get everything in one place, why would they come here?" Ahad said.

The railway divisional medical officer said they only conduct some basic tests like blood, urine and X-ray, and the hospital has no modern surgery or ICU facilities.

He said the 75-bed hospital has now been reduced to less than 40 beds due to a lack of patients.

Asked about the joint venture, Ahad said it was a good initiative, "But the health ministry has failed to fulfil expectations, by not providing the logistic support."

According to the MoU signed on April 30, 2015, a managing committee involving officials of the two ministries (health and railways) was assigned to run the hospital with a mandate to appoint a director, form a committee to prepare an inventory list of the hospital's movable



The deserted entrance to the hospital's emergency department -- an unimaginable sight at a public hospital -- bears testament to lack of patients' faith in it. The photo was taken yesterday.

and immovable properties, appoint necessary workforce and repair and replace non-functional medical equipment.

But the seven-member managing committee, headed by the additional secretary of Health and Family Welfare Ministry, has failed to make any progress as far as modernisation of the hospital is concerned, mainly due to difference of opinions between officials of the two concerned ministries over the possession of the property.

No inventory committee was formed yet, and the managing committee had not held a single meeting in the last two years.

Md Sherajul Islam, additional secretary of health service division and convenor of the managing committee, said he would convene a meeting as soon as possible to resolve the impasse. He, however, claimed that he was new at the post, and did not know why meetings of the committee was not held.

According to the MoU, moveable property of the hospital was supposed to be handed over to the joint committee for maintenance and development. It has not been done, officials of both ministries said. The stalemate has left the hospital in a poor condition, despite appointment of a director and seven other doctors in deputation from the health ministry.

Dr Firoj Alamgir, director of the hospital, blamed lack of publicity for poor turnout of patients.

He also said the hospital was yet to get any financial support from the health ministry apart from appointment of some doctors, adding that financial code under health ministry is required for disbursement of fund.

He said the committee appointed him to run the hospital without providing him necessary support.

GOVT BODIES AT LOGGERHEADS OVER POSSESSION

Aminul Hasan, director (hospitals and clinics) of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), and also a member of the managing committee, said they attached doctors to the hospital but cannot do more in terms of logistic support, unless the railways ministry gives its nod regarding the handover of property.

Another member of the committee, Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin, director of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said that they had a plan to upgrade the hospital to 500-bed gradually along with developing other facilities, but the plan has been stalled on the property possession issue.

Md Shamsuzzaman, director general of Bangladesh Railway, disputed it.

"As per the MoU, the managing committee will be the authority of the hospital where a secretary of health ministry will act as convenor. But he [convenor] has not called any meeting for a long time."

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WARI SCHOOLGIRL MURDER

Lone accused indicted

JNU CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against the lone accused in a case filed over the rape and murder of Wari schoolgirl Samia Afrin Saima in July last year.

Harun Or Rashid, however, pleaded not guilty after Judge Kazi Abdul Hannan of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-1 in Dhaka read out the charges.

The court also set January 8 for starting the trial, through recording the complainant's testimony.

On July 5 last year, Harun took Saima to an empty flat on the rooftop of an eight-storey building in Wari. He raped the seven-year-old, and then strangled her to death.

Saima and her parents lived on their flat on the fifth floor of the building, while Harun (25) stayed with his cousin Parvez's family on the seventh floor. The nursery student often went to Parvez's flat to play with his son and knew Harun.

Saima's father Abdus Salam filed the case on July 6.

The murder triggered a firestorm of protests across the country. Many took to social media to demand justice for the little girl.

Detectives arrested Harun from his village home in Cumilla's Dabordanga area on July 7. Harun confessed to a Dhaka magistrate that he killed the girl after rape so that she cannot disclose his identity.

Inspector Md Arjun of Detective Branch of police submitted the charge sheet against Harun to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka on November 4 last year.

Syed Ashraf's

first death anniversary



STAR REPORT

The first death anniversary of former general secretary of Awami League and public administration minister Syed Ashrafur Islam will be observed today.

Syed Ashraf was the eldest son of Syed Nazrul Islam, acting president of the 1971 Mujibnagar government in.

Marking the day, the ruling party will pay homage to him by placing

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

ATTACK ON NUR

Protesters issue a week's ultimatum to DU VC

DU CORRESPONDENT

Santrash Birodhi Chhatra Oikya -- a newly formed alliance comprising 12 student organisations -- yesterday issued an ultimatum till January 9 to Dhaka University vice-chancellor to meet their four-point demand, including legal action against and expulsion of those involved in attacks on Ducus Vice President Nur and his associates.

Members of the alliance submitted a memorandum to the VC. They threatened to wage tougher protests if the demands are not met within the timeframe.

Assistant proctors Abdur Rahim and Sima Islam received the memorandum on behalf of VC Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman, as he was not present at his office at the time.

The alliance's three 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 campus.

While reading out the memorandum, Omar Faruk, an activist of Swantantra Jote, said, "The proctor did not come to the spot of the attack immediately on December 22 and evaded his duties even though he was requested repeatedly to intervene. Rather, he is indirectly speaking in favour of the attackers. Such behaviour suggests that he instigated Chhatra League and Muktiuddho Moncho activists to launch the attack."

They also alleged that the disappearance of CCTV footage of Ducus building could not have been possible without the administration's assistance.

Earlier, around 100 protesters under the banner of the alliance brought out a protest procession from the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture and paraded through the campus before stopping in front of the VC's office.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Son burnt to death in front of parents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Moazzem Hossain Nannu and Shahina Hossain were fast asleep in their room when a loud bang jolted their entire house around 5am, followed by bellows of "Fire! Help!" from their son in the next room.

Swapnil Ahmed Piash (24) had come home a few hours ago, handed the car keys to his mother and gone to his room in their 10th-floor flat in Aftabnagar.

"There were smoke all around, as fire engulfed my son's room. We told him to come out from his room, but he could not. Failing to unlock the door, he took shelter in balcony and screamed for help. From the next balcony, I was trying to help my son... but he was trapped," said an inconsolable Nannu at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday after losing his only son.

"Fire had already caught on my son's body. Piash took off his clothes. I tried to break the door of his room, but could not," Nannu said.

He brought three fire extinguishers to the balcony, and sprayed them towards his son's balcony to douse the blaze.

"When I was about to take the fourth extinguisher, the electricity of the building went off... After 10 or 15 minutes, I could not hear Piash's screams anymore," said the sobbing father, adding that he passed out while trying to leave his balcony.

Nannu, a former general secretary of Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh who now works at Global TV, was hurt on his head and fell sick after inhaling smoke.

Half an hour into the incident, five firefighting units rushed to the spot and doused the fire, but all could they recover was Piash's body from the balcony, said Abul Kalam Azad, senior station officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence Station in Baridhara.

"The fire might have originated from a short-circuit," said the fire official.

Piash recently graduated from a private university and started an electronics business, family members said adding that he stored some of those items in the room.

With police permission, the family took his body from the morgue without autopsy. Piash would be buried at their ancestral home in Abhaynagar of Jashore.



Piash

Tk 70,000 stolen from finance minister's home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A house help allegedly stole Tk 70,000 from the residence of Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and went into hiding.

Salma Begum, the house help, reportedly stole the money from the drawer of a wardrobe and fled away on December 13 last year, according to police.

An official of the minister's company filed a case with Gulshan Police Station on December 31 in this connection, said Inspector (Investigation) Aminul Islam of the police station yesterday.

Salma, hailing from Dinajpur, was employed at the minister's house on September 25 last year.

Her cellphone was found switched off, and police are trying their best to arrest her, Aminul Islam said.



A worker loads sacks on a pony-drawn carriage, with a contraption consisting metal chains, rods and rings going through the animal's back, belly, and even neck and head. The worker said they load 600 to 800 kg of goods on one carriage, with a trip from Mugda to Motijheel fetching Tk 400. Article 8 (2) of the Animal Welfare Act, 2019, prohibits carrying of excessive load or passengers by any animal engaged in transportation.

POSSESSING ALCOHOL

Court accepts charges against Asif Akbar

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday accepted a charge sheet against popular singer Asif Akbar in a case filed against him for possessing alcohol.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Masud-Ur-Rahman passed the order in presence of the singer after examining the case summary and other relevant documents.

The magistrate sent the case to Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court for next course of action.

According to the prosecution, a team of Tejgaon police, led by Sub-Inspector Prashanto Kumar Sikder, raided Asif Akbar's office in FDC area of Dhaka's Panthapath area on June 6 last year to arrest him in another case filed against him by lyricist and composer Shafiq Tuhin.

During the drive, the team recovered four bottles of foreign liquor.

Later, a case under the Narcotics Control Act was filed against him with Tejgaon Police Station.

After an investigation, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police submitted a charge sheet against Asif on October 21 of 2018, showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

Earlier on June 6, Asif was arrested from his studio in Dhaka in another case filed against him by Shafiq Tuhin over copyright issues and threats.

He was later released on bail on June 11.



Dhaka Metropolitan Police in a drive yesterday evicted makeshift shops occupying roads and footpaths at Nilkhet book market area. The sellers had paid no heed to previous warnings by authorities to free the spaces.

DHAKA TODAY

LECTURE

Social Science Research: Experience from a Field Survey
Organiser: Reading Club
Venue: Institute of Modern Languages, DU
Time: 4pm

DIALOGUE

Mayoral candidates' thoughts on the sustainable development of Dhaka
Organiser: Nagar Unnayan Sangbadikota Forum-Bangladesh
Venue: KIB, Farmgate
Time: 3:45pm

LECTURE

The Golden Era of Bangladeshi Cinema by Anupam Hayat
Organiser: Bioscope Adda
Venue: Dhaka Kendra, Luxmibazar
Time: 3pm

CAMPAIGN

Car Free Street Uttara

Organiser: Dhaka North City Corporation
Venue: Sonargaon Janapad Road, Uttara
Time: 8am -11am

POETRY SESSION

Mujib Amar Pita
Organiser: Muktaadhara Sanskriti Charcha Kendra
Venue: Central Public Library, Shahbagh
Time: 6pm

FAIR

Rangtaa
Organiser: Meye Network
Venue: Midas Centre, Dhanmondi
Time: 10am





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JU suspends 11 for ragging

STAR REPORT

Jahangirnagar University (JU) authorities have suspended 11 students from all academic activities for a year, as they were found guilty of ragging first-year students.

The university syndicate made the decision on December 19, after an investigation committee submitted its report regarding the ragging incidents, said an office order yesterday.

The suspension is being considered effective from December 19, reports our JU correspondent.

They also expelled the students from their respective dormitories, said the release.

The students are: Harun-Or-Rashid, Enamul Haque Tamim, Raisul Islam Razu, Taosif Abdullah, Salanga Rema, Jakir Hossain Jibon, Mahbubul Alam, Sara Binte Salah, Mahbubul Alam, Saima Lima and Fariha Binte Haque.

The authorities also warned some freshmen who tried to conceal information about ragging, saying such incidents should not be repeated in the future.

On April 15, some first-year students of journalism and media studies department were harassed by some students of the same department at the university's playground.

Meanwhile, protesting teachers and students of JU yesterday announced a fresh programme in a press briefing at the university's Teacher-Student Centre in the afternoon.

They will bring out a protest procession on January 5 at the campus under the banner of Jahangirnagar Against Corruption, demanding removal of JU VC.

PERMANENT EXPULSION FOR RAGGING AT JNU

Authorities of Jagannath University yesterday issued a letter stating if any student is found guilty of ragging, they will be expelled permanently, reports our JnU correspondent. "Though no ragging incident was reported earlier, first-year students are afraid of it," said JnU Registrar Md Ohiduzzaman.

"Ragging is against the code of the university and a punishable offence," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

Narayanganj Mayor Selina Hayat Ivy puts a brushstroke on a 100ft canvas which features the work of 100 artists. This art installation at Narayanganj Charukala Institute is an initiative of the city corporation and Narayanganj Sangskritik Jote, marking the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This photo was taken yesterday.

Fazilatun Nasa Bappy no more



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Awami League MP from reserved seat and Supreme Court lawyer Fazilatun Nasa Bappy passed away yesterday at the age of 49.

Bappy had been suffering from pneumonia, breathing problems and other respiratory diseases and was on life support since December 28 at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMU).

Doctors pronounced her dead at around 8:30am, said sources at BSMMU.

She left behind her husband, relatives, friends and a host of well-wishers.

Bappy was an assistant attorney general for around two years. She was also a prosecutor at the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Road crashes kill 10, injure 30

STAR REPORT

At least 10 people were killed and 30 injured in road accidents across the country in the last two days, report our correspondents and news agencies.

In Laxmipur, four people were killed and 15 injured after a pick-up van carrying them plunged into a roadside ditch near Palli Bidyut area on Dhaka-Laxmipur highway yesterday.

The deceased are Khorshed Alam (35), Rafiqullah (55), Mafizullah (55) and Abdur Nur.

The accident took place around 9am when one of the vehicle's tyres got punctured, leaving three people dead on the spot and 16 injured, said Azizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

The injured were taken to different

hospitals and clinics, and one of them died on the way to Noakhali hospital.

In Cox's Bazar, three people were killed after a Shyamoli Paribahan bus hit their car at Joarianala area in Ramu upazila on Wednesday night.

The deceased are Jan-e-Alam (35), Masud Kibria (40) and Jamal Uddin (35).

Abul Khayer, officer-in-charge of Ramu Police Station, said the accident took place around 10:30pm.

"Two passengers of the car were killed on the spot and the other was injured," he said.

The injured was taken to a local hospital where the doctors pronounced him dead. Police seized the bus but could not arrest its driver.

In Mymensingh, auto-rickshaw driver Forkan Uddin (45) was killed on the spot

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Gas explosion burns three of same family

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Three people from the same family sustained burn injuries after a gas explosion at their flat in CI Khola area under Siddhirganj upazila in Narayanganj early yesterday morning.

The injured are—Kabir Hossain (50), Rekha Begum (40), and their daughter Sufia Akhter (22). They are residents of a six-storey building named "Italy Bhaban". Of them, Kabir Hossain sustained 55 percent burns and is now in critical condition.

Besides Kabir, Rekha and Sufia sustained 20 percent and 5 percent burns respectively. All three are currently undergoing treatment at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Quoting the victims, police said the explosion occurred at the family's kitchen after one of them tried to light a stove around 5:00am.

In an instant, fire engulfed the kitchen and adjacent rooms, leaving the trio injured. Upon hearing the noise, locals put out the fire, rescued the victims and rushed them to DMCH, said Abdul Khan, assistant sub-inspector

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Tk 4.48 CRORE PROCUREMENT GRAFT

Rangpur Medical College doctor sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A doctor of Rangpur Medical College (RMC) was sent to jail on Wednesday after a court rejected his bail prayer in a Tk 4.48 crore corruption case.

Judge Rasheda Sultana of senior special judge's court in Rangpur gave the order after Dr Sarawat Hossain, an assistant professor of community medicine at RMC, surrendered before it in the afternoon, confirmed Harun Ur Rashid, a lawyer for Anti-Corruption Commission in Rangpur.

College Principal Dr Nur Islam, another accused in the case, has been in Rangpur jail since November 26 last year.

ACC Deputy Assistant Director Ferdous Rahman filed the case on September 12, 2019, accusing six persons for embezzling

Tk 4.48 crore by preparing false documents to procure medical equipment for the college in June 2018.

Besides, no approval was taken from the health directorate and the tender process to purchase the machineries was flawed and lightning quick, mentioned Rahman, also the case's investigating officer.

The work order was issued only two days after the bidder was picked and the bill worth Tk 4.48 crore was collected in just 10 days, he added.

ACC lawyer Rashid said Dr Sarawat Hossain was a member of the committees to purchase the equipment and scrutinise the tender documents.

Hossain was also the member secretary of the committee to verify the market rate for the products, he added.



Wearing a protective gear made of plastic sheet, a man with a basket full of fish carefully walks on a makeshift bamboo platform to get off a boat. Like him, many are engaged in this line of work -- unloading fish from trawlers near a fish market in Chattogram's Chaktai area. They make around Tk 500-600 per day. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Three accused of raping eighth grader in Narail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

An eighth grader was allegedly raped on Sunday morning at her village in Lohagora upazila of Narail district. She is now undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital's ICU.

The main accused in the case, Eman Sheikh, was arrested after the victim's father filed a case against three local youths at Lohagora police station on Monday.

Other two accused, Nasir Sheikh and Sajib Sheikh, have been absconding since the incident.

Speaking with The Daily Star, the victim's father Salim said, "My elder daughter passed her JSC examination with a GPA 5.00 on Tuesday, but she was raped just a couple of days before."

"They had been harassing my daughter for the last two years. Several times I informed it to their [harassers] family members but they did not pay heed," said the victim's father.

"On Sunday around 9am, my daughter went to fetch water from a pond near our home. The three men forced her into the

bushes and raped her," he claimed.

"After returning home, my daughter attempted to take her own life. Sensing the incident, family members rescued her and sent her to Lohagara Heath Complex," said Salim. She was later shifted to Narail Sadar Hospital.

"There, the doctors referred her to Khulna Medical College Hospital. She is in critical condition at the ICU now," Salim added.

Dr Sailendranath Biswas, resident medical officer of KMCH confirmed that an injured girl was admitted to their ICU on Sunday.

"After I filed the case, the accused persons' family members cut down some of my mango trees and broke the lights outside my house. They also threatened me, asking me to withdraw the case," said Salim.

Md Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Lohagora Police Station told The Daily Star that police arrested the main accused and sent him to jail.

"We are trying to arrest the other two accused," said the OC.

Families of the accused refused to comment on the incident.

EASTERN UNIVERSITY AGM

Shekh Sydur elected chairman

CITY DESK

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Foundation of Eastern University was held on Tuesday.

At the meeting, renowned entrepreneur Shekh Sydur Rahman was elected chairman of the foundation, according to a press release.

In addition, Enayet Ullah, Imroz Hossain and Moniruzzaman Mollah were elected as vice-chairmen.

Abul Khayer Chowdhury was elected treasurer, added the press release.



Youth burnt to death in warehouse fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

A youth was burnt to death in a fire at a warehouse in port city's Patenga area early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Md Javed (18) of Cumilla, said police.

The fire started around 12:30am at the warehouse which was used to store boats, said Jasim Uddin, assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, Chattogram.

On information, five firefighting vehicles rushed to the spot and managed to douse the blaze around 1:10am, he added.

Firefighters recovered the youth's body from the building and sent it to Chattogram Medical College morgue for autopsy. The origin of the fire could not be known immediately, Jasim said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

31,505 minorities faced persecution last year: report

Bangladesh National Hindu Grand Alliance demands reserved seats at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh National Hindu Grand Alliance in a report yesterday said some 108 people of the minority community were killed and 26 went traceless across the country last year.

During this period, some 31,505 people of the minority community faced persecution while perpetrators -- often belonging to the ruling party -- grabbed around 9,507 acres of land belonging to minorities, the alliance said in its annual report based on data collected from national dailies, social media and their representatives.

Gobinda Chondro Pramanik, secretary general of the alliance, read out the report at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

In total, victims faced a loss of around Tk 433.57 crore last year, the report said.

Some 36 people of the community were listed as Razakars who are freedom fighters, according to the report.

In this context, leaders of the alliance expressed deep concern "as perpetrators are not punished while violence is on the rise."

"Hindus are leaving the country in fear of violence

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Fire at Dhaka Bar Association

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out at Dhaka Bar Association yesterday, which was brought under control after 45 minutes of frantic efforts.

The fire broke out around 9:20am at the conference room of Dhaka Bar Association, said its general secretary Asaduzzaman Rochi.

Two firefighting units rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control in 45 minutes.

The conference room was completely destroyed in the fire which originated from an electric short-circuit, said Senior Station Officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence (Sadarghat) Mohammad Ali.

No one was injured in the incident, but the total loss was of Tk 30 lakh, Rochi said.

Power supply to the building was suspended for about three hours due to the fire.



Logs piled up at an illegal brick kiln in Bandarban’s Lama upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

ILLEGAL BRICK KILNS

Admin ‘helpless’ before owners

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

With the beginning of the brick-making season, around 60 illegal brick kilns have started operation inside the forests, near indigenous paras and many schools in Bandarban, destroying environment in the hills. These kilns use firewood collected from the forests, even from the reserve forest, to burn bricks, posing serious threat to human health and natural environment but the administration concerned never take any noticeable action to stop operation of the kilns as its owners are running the business with the help of the influential ruling party men, said locals. The most affected villages are Shivatoli Puration Para, Shivatoli Naya Para, Mong Ba Ching Para, U Mra Mong Headman Para and Meaung Para of remote Faitong area under Lama upazila. Residents of the villages alleged that the brick kiln owners can run the business as the local administration and CHT Affairs Minister Bir Bahadur U Shwe Sing are in favour of the owners.

“While we have been protesting over the last few years, the illegal brick kiln owners threatened us saying they managed local administration and even the hill minister,” said U Mra Mong, headman of Faitong area. “We went to the local administration and the hill minister several times but they never help us in this regard,” said the headman. “We are facing severe water crisis as the kiln owners have destroyed the water bodies near our Para,” said Mong Hrey Marma karbari (village chief) of Mong Ba Ching Para. “The environment of the area is polluted badly while fertility of farmland around the brickfields is also going down,” said U Chaw Marma, karbari of Shivatoli Puration Para. “In 2017, a minor student of our school met a tragic death when he was crushed under the wheels of a brick-laden truck,” said Suniti Barua, headteacher of Chaingya Government Primary School under Sadar upazila. “We have complained several times to the local administration to remove the brick kiln

which was set up near our school but to no effect yet,” said Suniti Barua. Contacted, Deputy Commissioner Daudul Islam said, “How we will stop operation of the illegal brick kilns if the influential ruling party men help the owners to run the business?” “Despite repeated protest, we failed to stop building a brick kiln near Tazing Dong, the country’s highest peak in remote Thanchi upazila, threatening environment,” said Zumlian Amlai, chairperson (Bandarban chapter) of the Parbatya Chattogram Forest and Land Rights Protection. Local authorities are in favour of the illegal brick kiln owners, he said. Despite repeated calls, this correspondent could not reach the hill minister for his comment on the issue as he did not receive the phone. Local sources said around 60 brick kilns have started operation in Lama, Alikadom, Thanchi, Naikhongchhari and Sadar upazilas defying the environmental laws.

Severe cold hampers Aman harvest in Pirojpur

Farm labourers are not willing to do the job of crop harvest amid the adverse weather

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Farmers in the district are facing serious problem in harvesting Aman paddy due to the severe cold for the last few days. “All the paddy on my 1.5 bighas of land has ripen, but I cannot harvest it due to the persistent cold,” said Abdul Alim at Jhatokathi village under Pirojpur Sadar upazila. “It is hard for us to go to the field for harvesting paddy amid the severe cold and dense fog that also kept the sun invisible for the last few days,” said Nizam Uddin, a farmer of Mulgram village in the upazila. Besides, labourers are not willing to do the job of crop harvest amid the adverse weather, farmers said, adding that many people engaged in manual jobs now like to work in other sectors like construction. If the ripe paddy is not harvested within

several days, it will begin to drop, said farmer Ismail Hossain of Rayerkathi area in the upazila. The region saw good yield of Aman paddy this season, said farmers. Although cyclone Bulbul hit the southern districts early November last year, it did not cause much harm to Aman as the plants were yet to flower, they said. Abu Hena Mohammad Jafar, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, said, “Aman paddy in almost all the fields is mature enough but farmers cannot start harvesting it in full swing due to the cold. Hopefully, the situation will improve within a few days and farmers will be able to collect the crop by mid-January.” This year Aman has been cultivated on over 60,000 acres of land in Pirojpur, he said.



A field with ripe Aman paddy at Jhatokathi village in Pirojpur Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR



Quilt makers pass a busy time at a shop in Pirojpur town as demand of the item sees a sharp rise, especially at the onset of the cold wave during the ongoing winter.

PHOTO: HABIBURRAHMAN



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

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চট্টগ্রাম

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পুনঃ দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিষয়ঃ সিলেট নতুন রেলওয়ে স্টেশন ভবনের নীচ তলায় অবস্থিত ৬৩৪ বর্গফুট পরিমাপের রেস্টুরেন্টটি বেসরকারি ব্যবস্থাপনায় পরিচালনার নিমিত্তে পুনঃ দরপত্র আহ্বান।

সিলেট নতুন রেলওয়ে স্টেশন ভবনের নীচ তলায় অবস্থিত ৬৩৪ বর্গফুট পরিমাপের রেস্টুরেন্ট বেসরকারি ব্যবস্থাপনায় পরিচালনার নিমিত্তে রেস্টুরেন্ট পরিচালনায় অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন এবং আর্থিক সংগতিপূর্ণ বাংলাদেশী প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ীদের নিকট হতে নির্ধারিত সিডিউলে পুনঃ দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। দরপত্রের নির্ধারিত সিডিউল/নির্দেশাবলী চীফ কমার্শিয়াল ম্যানেজার (পূর্ব), বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম অথবা বিভাগীয় বাণিজ্যিক কর্মকর্তা, বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, রেল প্রশাসন ভবন, কমলাপুর, ঢাকা দপ্তর হতে ১৫ জানুয়ারি ২০২০ তারিখ পর্যন্ত প্রতিসেট নগদ ৭০০/- (সাতশত) টাকা মূল্যে (অফেরতযোগ্য) অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে ক্রয় করা যাবে এবং ১৬ জানুয়ারি ২০২০ তারিখ দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে চীফ কমার্শিয়াল ম্যানেজার (পূর্ব), বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম দপ্তরে রক্ষিত বাক্সে ফেলতে হবে। একই দিন দুপুর ১২:১৫ ঘটিকায় দরপত্রদাতাদের সামনে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) দরপত্র বাস্তব খোলা/উন্মুক্ত করা হবে।

উপরোক্ত প্রেক্ষিতে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন প্রকার কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

এস এম মুরাদ হোসেন

চীফ কমার্শিয়াল ম্যানেজার (পূর্ব)

বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, চট্টগ্রাম

এস(২০)(০৩)

জিডি-২৫

Youth killed as harassment of aunt protested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A youth was killed on Wednesday allegedly for protesting sexual harassment of his aunt at Naragati village under Naragati Police Station of Narail. The victim was Jahirul Islam, 22, son of Akbar Mollah of Naragati village under Naragati Police Station of Narail. “Jahid Mollah, 35, son of Tashir Mollah of Naragati village, was sexually harassing a widow at the same village,” Md Alamgir Kabir, officer in charge (OC) of Naragati Police Station, quoted the deceased’s family members as saying. “As the woman told his nephew Jahirul of the matter, Jahirul protested Jahid’s act. Angered by it, Jahid and his accomplice Redoan hit Jahirul on the head on Wednesday afternoon, causing serious injuries to him. “After first aid, the victim was taken to Khulna Medical College Hospital where he died at about 7:30pm. His autopsy has been done. Family members may come to file case after burial of the deceased,” the OC said.



ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED

395-397, Tejgaon Industrial Area

Dhaka-1208, Bangladesh

EDCL/PD-Gopalganj/ Furniture and Fixture/2020/08

Date: 02 January, 2020

Amendment of Tender Notice

(Amendment No -1)

Project Title : Establishment of Essential Drugs Company Limited (3rd Plant), Gopalganj

Package Name : Furniture and Fixture

Ref. No : EDCL/PD-Gopalganj/ Furniture and Fixture/2019/34, Dated: 18 December, 2019

Notice Sl. No	Subject to be Amended	Existing As	Shall be amended As
16.	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	09 January, 2020, Time : 05:00 PM (Local Time)	16 January, 2020, Time : 05:00 PM (Local Time)
17.	Tender Closing Date and Time	12 January, 2020, Time : 03:00 PM (Local Time)	19 January, 2020, Time : 03:00 PM (Local Time)
18.	Tender Opening Date and Time	12 January, 2020, Time : 03:30 PM (Local Time)	19 January, 2020, Time : 03:30 PM (Local Time)
20.	Pre-Tender Meeting	—	Date: 09 January, 2020, Time : 03:00 PM (Local Time)

All other terms & conditions shall remain unchanged.

(Prof. (Dr) Ehsanul Kabir)

Project Director

Establishment of Essential Drugs Company Limited (3rd Plant), Gopalganj



ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED

395-397, Tejgaon Industrial Area

Dhaka-1208.

LOCAL TENDER NOTICE

Tender Ref.: EDCL/Pur/S.S Shoe Rack/PT/2020/02

Dated: 02/01/2020

Well reputed Contractor/Suppliers are invited for submission of best competitive price offer for workshop of S.S Shoe racks at EDCL, Dhaka.

Name of Item	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender Schedule
S.S Shoe Rack ----Qty : 06 Nos. (Details as per tender schedule & Drawing)	Tk. 2.5% of quoted amount	Tk. 1000.00/- set (Non refundable)

Tender schedule will be sold from the Accounts Department of Essential Drugs Company Limited, Dhaka on payment as stated above during office hours on all working days (except Friday, Saturday and Govt. Holidays). No tender schedule will be sold on the opening date of the tender.

The tender will be accompanied by an amount of Earnest Money as mentioned above in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order from any Schedule Bank of Bangladesh in favour of “Essential Drugs Company LTD.” without which the tender will be considered as non-responsive.

The tenderers may drop their offer along with detailed specification (as per tender schedule) to the tender Box kept at the Purchase Departments, EDCL, Dhaka office till 12.00 Noon on 19/01/2020 which will be opened on 19/01/2020 at 12.15 PM in presence of the tenderers/their representatives (if any).

EDCL authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

General Manager

Procurement department

For: Managing Director



Despite the huge expenditure, the municipality bus terminal in Moulvibazar never bring the desired results, instead, it has become a safe haven for many drug users and muggers.

PHOTO: STAR

MOULVIBAZAR MUNICIPALITY BUS TERMINAL

A safe haven for addicts

The Tk 4 crore structure was built on 3 acres of land along the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in 2009

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The ticket counters and passenger rooms at the municipality bus terminal in Moulvibazar have become a safe haven for drug peddlers and muggers as they have been lying unused for about 10 years now.

With a view to free the town of traffic congestions, the terminal was built with Tk 4 crore on three acres of land in Jogidahar along the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in 2009. But despite the huge expenditure, the terminal never brought the desired results, instead, is in shambles now.

According to transport owners, the location is the main reason why neither the passengers nor drivers ever wanted to use the terminal.

“Bus drivers do not prefer picking or dropping passengers at this terminal as it is located on far from the city. It costs one Tk20/30 to reach there from adjacent areas,” said Syed Mosabbir Ali, president, Moulvibazar Road Transport Owners’

Association.

Residents of Kusumbagh and Jogidahar expressed annoyance over the situation.

Passengers do not want to go to the terminal while transport workers pick and drop passengers at different thoroughfares causing traffic jam and public sufferings, they told this paper.

Most Dhaka-bound buses still use the terminal, locally known as the “Dhaka Bus Stand”, on Sreemangal road.

“Locals every day witness heavy traffic on both lanes of the one-way road as buses remain parked haphazardly blocking traffic movement,” said Mahfuz Mia, a resident of the area.

The residents of neighbourhoods nearby the municipality bus terminal are living in cannot move safely due to presence of unruly drug addicts and muggers at the empty ticket counters and waiting room.

“I went to a restaurant for dinner with my

younger brother the other day. While crossing the unused terminal, we saw several drug addicts there. It was so embarrassing, especially with my young brother being around,” said Johirul Islam, a government official and a resident of Jogidahar.

Helal Ahmed, who runs a tea stall at the entrance of the terminal, said that inter-district buses from Dhaka, Sylhet, Habiganj, and Cumilla initially used the terminal after opening.

“But after a few days, buses stopped coming. Counters of different bus companies have been lying unused since then. Vagabonds, drug addicts and muggers roam around here freely as there is no security personnel around,” he said, adding, “Every day I shut down my stall before dark as muggers get active then.”

Bipasha Rahman, a housewife of Jogidahar area, said, “It is frustrating that the municipality terminal is not in use. It has a large space. Buses can park here easily without creating traffic jams.”

During a recent visit to the terminal, this correspondent found cracks on the walls, displaced floor tiles and broken doors and windows. Chairs and tables placed inside the waiting room and ticket counters were also in a rickety condition.

Moulvibazar Road Transport Owners’ Association President Mosabbir said that the municipal authorities had built the bus terminal in an unplanned manner without consulting stakeholders.

Regarding muggers and drug peddlers, Alamgir Hosain, officer-in-charge of Moulvibazar Police Station, said that regular drives would be conducted to clear the terminal area.

When contacted, Moulvibazar Deputy Commissioner Nazia Shirin said, “I am new here but I have heard about the condition of the municipality bus terminal. We have already held several meetings in this regard. I am trying my best to restart the terminal.”

Fake FF Certificates 14 constables sued in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Fourteen police constables have been sued on charge of submitting fake freedom fighters’ (FF) certificates while joining their job in February this year.

Md Mashiur Rahman, officer in charge (Reserve Police), filed three separate cases against the accused with Jashore Kotwali Model Police Station on Wednesday.

The 14 people, who were appointed to the post of constables at Jashore Police Lines on February 23 this year, submitted certificates, stating that they are children of freedom fighters, said sources at the department concerned.

They were later posted to different stations under the police department.

Following a secret report, the authorities concerned conducted an investigation to check whether the certificates submitted by them were genuine.

Finally a report of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs sent to the police headquarters revealed that the 14 FFs’ certificates concerned were fake.

Schoolboy found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Police recovered the hanging body of a student from Quantum Cosmo School and College in Bandarban’s Lama upazila on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Azizul Hakim Abid, a Class IX student of the school. Azizul hailed from Manikganj’s Ghior area.

Shafiu Alam, inspector of Kyaju Para police camp in the area, said on information, they recovered the body from a classroom of the school around 6:30pm.

It was suicide or murder will be known only after getting the autopsy report, said the inspector.

Dr Jewel Tripura, medical officer of Bandarban Sadar Hospital, said injury marks were found in the neck.

Earlier in 2018, a female student of the institution was found dead at the school campus, said locals.



Light vehicles cross the damaged bridge amid risk of accident in Moulvibazar’s Kulaura upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Broken LGED bridge poses risk

The bridge lies unrepaired for six months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A broken bridge in Dhulipara area on Rasulganj-Bhuksimoil road under Kulaura upazila has been lying unrepaired for about six months, posing risk of serious accident anytime.

Especially school and college going students are the worst sufferers due to the awful condition of the bridge.

It is also an important road connecting Kulaura and Rajnagar upazilas. Nearly one thousand people use the road every day to reach the upazila headquarters.

During the last monsoon, a girder on the north side of the bridge caved in and a big hole developed on it, said locals, adding that as the girder caved in, bamboos have been used to support the bridge.

Apart from this, several cracks have developed on one of its approach roads and since then heavy vehicles cannot cross the bridge, said officials of Kulaura

upazila parishad.

If the bridge on a canal is not repaired before the next rainy season, it might get washed away, said Nazmul Islam, a resident of Rasulganj Bazar village.

The officials have blamed torrential rain for the damage of the bridge.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found light vehicles like battery-run easy-bike and motorcycle crossing the damaged bridge amid risk of accident.

Some villagers said the bridge has become so hazardous that they were avoiding even walking on it.

Habibur Rahman Chalam, chairman of Kadipur union parishad, said he has already informed the officials of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) about the matter.

Kulaura upazila engineer Istiaque Hasan said a tender has already been floated to repair the bridge.

The renovation work will start soon, said the engineer.

Human remains from 42 graves stolen in 2 villages

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Human remains or skeletons from at least 42 graves in two graveyards under Dinajpur Sadar upazila were found stolen.

Both the graveyards -- located at Uttar Shibpur and Sadarpur villages in Sundarpur union -- lack boundary fencing and security guards, said locals.

Solaiman Ali of Sadarpur village said the first damaged grave they discovered in the three-acre village graveyard was on Wednesday.

Since then, the villagers scoured the entire graveyard and found a total of 20 damaged graves, including his wife’s, from which criminals stole the remains, he said adding that his wife’s grave was intact till last Friday

when he and his family members visited the grave last time.

Even skeletons of cadavers as young as four-month-olds were stolen, said another villager.

Many villagers speculated that the thefts might have been carried out in the past six weeks.

On Wednesday, residents of Uttar Shibpur village searched their 13.5-acre graveyard and found 22 human remains stolen from there.

The findings sparked an outcry in both villages and the villagers said they would launch a stern agitation unless law enforcers take swift action against the criminals.

Sujan Kumar Sarkar, additional superintendent of police in Dinajpur Sadar Circle, said the crime scenes were visited

on Wednesday and a team of police was investigating the incident.

Such crime is rare in the district and the suspects might be local residents, he added.

Dr Shah Md Ismail Hossain, an assistant professor at M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur, said human skeletons are high in demand with medical students for their anatomy course and criminals might have stolen the human remains from the graves for the skeletons.

Each set of skeletons used to be sold for Tk 12,000 to 15,000 at stores in the country 20 years back, but now the price reached as high as Tk 45,000, he also said.

There are 6,040 graveyards for 22 lakh Muslims in the district of Dinajpur.



Miscreants poisoned to death fish worth around Tk 15 lakh in an enclosure in Aruakandi area of Bagerhat’s Mollahat upazila on Wednesday night.

PHOTO: STAR

NEWSIN
brief

China detains activists
in year-end crackdown

AFP, Beijing

Over a dozen Chinese lawyers and activists were detained or went missing in the final days of 2019 in a crackdown on participants of a private democracy gathering, rights groups said yesterday. The Chinese government has severely reduced the space for civil liberties since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012, rounding up rights lawyers, labour activists and even Marxists students in various sweeps. The crackdown showed how the authorities have “zero tolerance of even just private discussion on issues like democracy and human rights,” Amnesty International said.

French citizen dead
in US custody

AFP, Houston

A French citizen and native of Angola has died in the custody of US immigration agents, they said on Wednesday, the latest in a number of deaths during a US crackdown on illegal immigrants. A statement from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) identified the person only as “a 40-year-old native of Angola and citizen of France.” They said the person died on Sunday at a hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Quake causes limited
damage in Iran

REUTERS, Dubai

An earthquake of shock magnitude 5.8 shook northeastern Iran yesterday, but there was little damage and no casualties, state television reported. The quake was centred on an area near Sangan at a shallow depth of 8 km (5 miles). “Our near-final report is that about 14 villages have had very limited damage,” Morteza Salimi, head of rescue at Iran’s Red Crescent, told the television.



Anti-government protesters take part at a lunchtime protest outside HSBC headquarters in Hong Kong, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YEAR’S DAY PROTESTS

About 400 people
arrested in HK

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Hong Kong police arrested about 400 people in New Year’s Day protests after what started as a peaceful pro-democracy march of tens of thousands spiralled into chaotic scenes with police firing tear gas to disperse the crowds.

The arrests take the total to about 7,000 since protests in the city escalated in June over a now-withdrawn bill that would have allowed extradition to mainland China, and will highlight the apparent absence of any progress towards ending the unrest.

The tension on Wednesday rose after some arrests were made in the Wan Chai bar district near a branch of global banking group HSBC, which has been the target of protester anger in recent weeks.

When scuffles broke out, large numbers of black-clad protesters rushed to the scene while other protesters formed human chains to pass them various supplies including bricks, forcing police to bring in their own reinforcements.

Police then asked organisers to call off the march early and crowds eventually dispersed as a water cannon truck and scores of police in riot gear patrolled the streets late into the evening.

Jimmy Sham, one of the leaders of the Civil Human Rights Front that organised the march, criticised the police decision to get the crowd to disperse at such short notice and said they had arrested protesters indiscriminately.

Police told media yesterday they had arrested 420 people over the New Year holiday, most on New Year’s Day, with 287 of them in one sweep for illegal assembly, including a 12-year old.

Protest against Pakistan’s
atrocities on minorities

Indian PM tells anti-CAA protesters

Pri, Tumakuru

Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday slammed the Congress and its allies opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act, saying they are against giving relief to those who have been brutalised and victimised in Pakistan.

“Pakistan was founded on religious grounds due to which atrocities on minorities such as Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Christians have increased. But Congress and its allies don’t speak against Pakistan,” he said at a function here.

He also said the Congress and its allies take out rallies and stage demonstrations against the efforts to prevent atrocities on religious lines and save women from sexual assaults.

Modi wondered why those opposed to the CAA were not speaking out against Pakistan’s atrocities and asked what stopped them from doing so.

Strongly defending the CAA, he said it was adopted by Parliament in a historic move, but that the Congress and its allies and the ecosystem created by his party’s rival were now against the very institution.



He said India cannot leave the Hindus, Christians and Sikhs apparently fleeing Pakistan to “their fate” and added it was the country’s responsibility to protect them.

Modi pointed out that the efforts are specially to protect the Dalits and tribals in Pakistan.

The Prime Minister also pointed out that the abrogation of Article 370 was a step towards ending terrorism and uncertainty in Jammu and Kashmir.

Modi on December 22 categorically rejected accusations that his government’s new citizenship law was anti-Muslim.

The total number of people killed has reached at least 23 since violence broke out over the Citizenship Amendment Act that was passed in parliament last week, and it shows no sign of abating.

The law makes it easier for religious minorities from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan to get citizenship in India, but it excludes Muslim immigrants.

Protesters reacted angrily, concerned that it threatens India’s secular constitution and Indian-Muslim citizenship.

30 dead, several missing
Thousands fled to temporary shelters in Jakarta

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia’s disaster agency yesterday warned of more deaths after torrential rains pounded the Jakarta region, triggering floods and landslides that killed at least 30 and left vast swaths of the megalopolis underwater.

Tens of thousands fled to temporary shelters across the capital region -- home to some 30 million -- with scores of houses damaged in the deadliest flooding in years, after torrential rains on New Year’s Eve.

Images showed waterlogged homes and cars covered in muddy floodwaters, while some people took to paddling in small rubber lifeboats or tyre inner-tubes to get around.

In Bekasi, on the outskirts of the city, receding waters revealed swampy streets littered with debris and crushed cars lying on top of each other -- with waterline marks reaching as high as buildings’ second floors.

“I saw the water coming and it just kept getting higher and higher,” said Deddy Supriadi, after a local river overflowed on the first day of 2020.

“It swept away 40 or 50 cars that were parked right here,” he told AFP.

Rescuers used inflatable boats to evacuate residents trapped in their homes, including children and seniors.



TV images showed the dramatic rescue of a baby saved by disaster personnel who waded through chin-deep water to the family’s home and carried the infant away to safety in a small plastic tub.

“We’ve been rescuing newborns, mothers who just gave birth and babies trapped in houses without food,” said Yusuf Latif, spokesman for the National Search and Rescue agency.

“In some places, the rescue operation was quite challenging and difficult. The water was deep with a strong current. Some alleyways were so narrow that it was hard for our inflatable boats to pass through,” he added.

Across the city, kids took the opportunity to swim in the floodwaters while some people grabbed fishing rods.

“I saw people were fishing here so I followed them,” said 28-year-old Agung Rosiadi.

“There were lots of fish before and difficult. The water was deep with a strong current. Some alleyways were so narrow that it was hard for our inflatable boats to pass through,” he added.

Police in Lebak said Thursday they were searching for as many as eight people who could still be missing. “We hope the toll won’t keep going up,” Social Affairs Minister Juliani Peter Batubara told reporters earlier yesterday.

UP govt sets deadline for
response to seizure notices

TNN, Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh government has set a 7-day deadline for response to property attachment notices slapped on those accused of damaging public property during citizenship protests.

More than 150 notices have been issued by the Lucknow administration since chief minister Yogi Adityanath declared those who indulged in violence will have to compensate for damages.

Reviewing security arrangements in the aftermath of massive protests across the state during anti-CAA protests, the chief minister had directed police and administration to expedite identification of ‘rioters’ through photographs and video footage and swiftly issue notices.

“In Lucknow, around 150 notices were issued. The accused will be given a week to present their side, but if the committee is not satisfied, proceedings will begin to extract compensation. If they are not in a position to pay, their properties will be attached and auctioned,” said a senior official in the government.

Under fire from National Human Rights Commission for alleged police excesses during the protests, the CM also directed the administration to forward video clips of protestors to NHRC to bolster the government’s position.

The government has taken recourse to a 2010 Allahabad high court order which allows the government to claim damages for public property destroyed during protests or riots from those convicted for violence.

Even though the CM has drawn flak from Opposition parties, Kamataka chief minister BS Yeddiurappa declared he too would take similar action against protesters. Yogi’s model is also being followed by the Railways.

Meanwhile, the chief minister has said since protests were triggered by rumours and misinformation, police should reach out to the people, especially among the minority community, and tell them CAA will not take away citizenship. For this, help should be taken from the intellectual class, media professionals, professors, doctors and religious leaders.

ANTI-CAA PROTESTS



Supporters of India’s main opposition Congress party shout slogans during a protest against price hike in cooking gas and milk in Chandigarh, India yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



REPUBLIC DAY PARADE

Centre rejects
West Bengal’s
tableau
proposal

NDTV ONLINE

In what could spark fresh tensions between West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the BJP-led centre, the Union Ministry of Defence on Wednesday rejected her state’s tableau proposal for the Republic Day parade on January 26.

“The tableau proposal of West Bengal government was examined by the expert committee in two rounds of meetings. The tableau proposal of the West Bengal government was not taken forward for further consideration by the committee after deliberations in the second meeting,” the ministry said in its statement.

Twenty-two proposals comprising 16 states and union territories and six ministries and departments have been shortlisted for the parade. The shortlist was compiled from as many as 56 tableau proposals - 32 from states and union territories and 24 from various ministries and departments - received by the central government.

“The expert committee examines the proposals on the basis of theme, concept, design and visual impact before making its recommendations. Due to time constraints arising out of the overall duration of the parade, only a limited number of tableaux can be shortlisted for participation in the parade,” the statement read, adding that West Bengal was shortlisted for the 2019 Republic Day parade through a similar process.

‘Deeply concerned’

Says UN secretary-general after N Korea said it
could resume nuclear and missile tests

REUTERS, United Nations

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is “deeply concerned” that North Korea has indicated it could resume nuclear and missile tests, a UN spokesman said on Wednesday.

“The Secretary-General very much hopes that the tests will not resume, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions.

Non-proliferation remains a fundamental pillar of global nuclear security and must be preserved,” spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said this week that there were no longer grounds for Pyongyang to be bound by a self-declared moratorium on intercontinental ballistic missile and nuclear bomb testing and that a “new strategic weapon” would be introduced in the near future.

“Diplomatic engagement is the only pathway to sustainable peace,” Dujarric also said.

US President Donald Trump - who in 2018 became the first American leader to meet with a North Korean leader - said after Kim’s remarks that the leader had signed a

denuclearization contract and Trump thought Kim was a “man of his word.”

Trump has repeatedly pointed to the moratorium, in place since 2017, as a sign that his policy of engagement with North Korea was working.

Kim has complained the United States had continued joint military drills with South Korea, adopted cutting-edge weapons and imposed sanctions while making “gangster-like demands.”

Last month, Pyongyang warned Washington of a possible “Christmas gift” after Kim gave the United States until the end of the year to propose new concessions in talks over his country’s nuclear arsenal.

North Korea experts said that Kim’s remarks - made during an hours-long plenum speech - were likely directed at his party, military, and government officials in North Korea, preparing the country for another period of economic hardship as it prepares for a long stalemate with the United States.



Netanyahu asks House for immunity

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday asked parliament for immunity, weeks after the embattled premier was indicted on a range of corruption charges.

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving premier, is fighting for his political survival on two fronts -- the corruption allegations and stiff opposition from a new centrist party.

The immunity request is expected to delay the start of court proceedings for months, as lawmakers are not due to vote on the matter until after March 2 elections.

The request is "in line with the law... (and) with the goal of continuing to serve you, for the future of Israel," Netanyahu told reporters in Jerusalem.

His spokesman Ofer Golan later confirmed the request had been submitted to the speaker of Israel's parliament, the Knesset.

Netanyahu was charged by the attorney general in November with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three separate corruption cases.



The leader of the right-wing Likud party denies the allegations and accuses prosecutors and the media of a witch hunt.

Reacting to the premier's announcement, his rival Benny Gantz, the leader of the centrist Blue and White party, said "Netanyahu knows that he is guilty."

Gantz said his own party will do everything it can to "prevent immunity".

"In Israel, nobody is above the law".

A sitting prime minister is only required to step down once convicted and after all avenues of appeal have been exhausted.



(From top, clockwise) The photo shows burnt out properties in Sarsfield, Victoria; A kangaroo rushes past a burning house in Conjola, New South Wales (photo taken on New Year's Eve); a vast column of smoke rises into the sky in East Gippsland, Victoria; and cars line up to leave the town of Batemans Bay in New South Wales yesterday after an evacuation order.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS, NEW YORK TIMES



RAGING BUSHFIRES IN AUSTRALIA

NSW declares state of emergency

Authorities order evacuation of fire-ravaged towns before another spell of heatwave

AGENCIES

The Australian state of New South Wales has declared a state of emergency and could begin forced evacuations from fire-stricken areas, as emergency crews battle deadly blazes and brace for a dangerous weekend ahead.

State Premier Gladys Berejiklian yesterday said that the emergency declaration would come into effect today morning as weather conditions are expected to deteriorate significantly tomorrow, raising the fire danger even further.

This is the third time NSW has declared a state of emergency in as many months -- the last two times, in November and December, were also for seven days, and granted extraordinary powers to the Rural Fire Service.

Berejiklian said residents could also be subject to forced evacuations,

road closures and any other means necessary to keep people safe.

Thousands of people were already fleeing the state's south coast yesterday, with the Rural Fire Service setting up a "tourist leave zone" from the town of Batemans Bay down to the Victoria border. All visitors were urged to evacuate before tomorrow, when temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), dry conditions and ferocious winds are expected to heighten the risk of further blazes.

"These will be dangerous conditions," the fire service warned. "Do not be in this area on Saturday."

Similar hot, windy weather on Tuesday led to massive fires spreading out of control.

Seven people died from the fires within 24 hours. Tens of thousands of people are estimated to be in the

south coast region, home to seaside towns that swell in population during summer.

Residents yesterday were heeding the warning. Hundreds if not thousands of cars were backed up in small towns south of Nowra, on the southern coast, according to police. Roads away from the tourist area were packed with long lines of cars waiting to leave.

Experts say climate change has worsened the scale and impact of the fires, and many have accused the Prime Minister Scott Morrison administration of doing little to address the climate crisis.

Morrison faced heat from those living in the middle of the bushfire danger zone yesterday on what was supposed to be a visit with victims.

One woman said she would only shake his hand in order to get more

money for the Rural Fire Service while another group yelled out "you're an idiot" and "piss off" as he walked away from them while on a stop in the town of Cobargo.

The Australian fires have been burning for months now, and aren't likely to stop anytime soon -- Australia is still in the early months of summer, and temperatures typically peak in January and February.

A total of 17 people have died across the country so far, with the most damage concentrated in NSW. Across the state, nearly 1,300 homes have been destroyed and another 442 damaged, according to the Rural Fire Service. Fires have consumed entire towns and ripped through bushland; the strong winds frequently change directions, which fan the flames and carry embers far distances.

Lanka orders bus operators to turn down the music

Sri Lanka's government yesterday gave bus operators two weeks to turn down the notoriously loud music in their vehicles following complaints from passengers. Transport minister Mahinda Amaraweera has given bus operators until January 15 to voluntarily turn down the volume or he would bring in legislation, said ministry spokesman Dharma Wanninayake said. There are an estimated 20,000 private buses plying Sri Lankan roads, notorious for playing loud Sinhala, Tamil and Hindi songs, mainly from low-budget movies. Long-distance buses also frequently play high-decibel music videos. Wanninayake said there had been frequent complaints from long-suffering passengers. Many on social media have called for a complete ban on music in buses.

AI beats human in detecting breast cancer: experts

A computer programme can identify breast cancer from routine scans with greater accuracy than human experts, researchers said in what they hoped could prove a breakthrough in the fight against the global killer. Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers in women, and regular screening is vital in detecting the earliest signs of the disease in patients who show no obvious symptoms. Researchers at Google Health have trained an artificial intelligence model to detect cancer in breast scans from thousands of women in Britain and the United States. The team found that their AI model could predict breast cancer from the scans with a similar accuracy level to expert radiographers. Further, the AI showed a reduction in the proportion of cases where cancer was incorrectly identified -- 5.7 percent in the US and 1.2 percent in Britain, respectively. It also reduced the percentage of missed diagnoses by 9.4 percent among US patients and by 2.7 percent in Britain.

Thai retailers ban single-use plastic bags



Thai retailers kicked off 2020 with a ban on single-use plastic bags, joining the battle against throwaway carriers in the Southeast Asian nation where citizens go through an average of eight every day. The move, taken on Wednesday by several major mall operators and the ubiquitous 7/11 convenience stores, will see customers instead paying a small fee for a reusable bag made of a cloth-like fabric. Thailand is one of the largest contributors to ocean pollution. The European Commission estimates some 70 percent of plastic waste clogs the world's oceans, killing a range of species from turtles, seals, whales and seabirds to fish and shellfish.

SOURCE: AFP

Lebanon receives Interpol arrest warrant for Ghosn

REUTERS, Beirut/Tokyo

Lebanon yesterday received an Interpol arrest warrant for fugitive former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn, while Turkey launched an investigation into his daring escape from Japan.

Ghosn has become an international fugitive after he revealed on Tuesday he had fled to Lebanon to escape what he called a "rigged" justice system in Japan.

The Interpol red notice, which calls on authorities to arrest a wanted person, was received by Lebanon's internal security forces and has yet to be referred to the judiciary, a judicial source told Reuters.

Lebanese government officials could not immediately be reached to say what - if any - action would be taken.

Ghosn, who holds French, Lebanese and Brazilian citizenship, was smuggled out of Tokyo by a private security company, a plan that was in the works for three months and involved transit through Turkey, Reuters has reported.



Turkish police yesterday detained seven people, including four pilots, as part of an investigation into Ghosn's passage through the country, a police spokeswoman said.

Flight tracking data suggests Ghosn used two different planes to fly to Istanbul and then to Lebanon.

Sources close to Ghosn said he decided to flee Japan after learning that the second of his two trials had been delayed until April 2021 and also because he had not been allowed to speak to his wife as part of strict bail conditions.

Lebanon has no extradition agreement with Japan and Ghosn enjoys widespread support in the country of his childhood, where he holds extensive investments in banking and real estate.

Japanese public broadcaster NHK said on Thursday Japanese authorities allowed Ghosn to carry a spare French passport in a locked case while out on bail, potentially shedding some light on how he managed to escape despite having passports held by Japanese lawyers.



This photo shows rescuers searching for survivors after a military Black Hawk helicopter smashed into mountains in Yilan county near Taipei, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Taiwan military chief killed in chopper crash

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan's military chief was killed in a helicopter crash yesterday, the defence ministry said, just days before the island goes to polls to elect a new president.

The chief of the general staff, Shen Yi-ming, was among eight senior officers -- including three major-generals -- who died when their Black Hawk helicopter smashed into mountains near Taipei.

The 62-year-old general and his entourage were on a routine mission to visit soldiers in northeast Yilan county for the upcoming Lunar New Year when the incident happened.

Flags at all military units will fly at half-mast for three days as Shen was the highest-ranking military official to die while on official duty, the government said.

Lieutenant-general Tsao Ching-ping, one of five survivors, told rescuers in footage broadcast on local TV: "I am okay... two others are injured and only I can walk."

"There is one more person who's more seriously wounded and two or three people in the cabin ... while two more with no signs of life."

President Tsai Ing-wen's office said that she will cancel all campaign activities for three days after the tragedy. The ruling Democratic Progressive Party will also suspend campaigning for three days.

Tsai is seeking a second term against Kaohsiung city mayor Han Kuoyu of the Kuomintang (KMT) party in the January 11 elections when Taiwan will also elect a new parliament. Han and the KMT also expressed condolences to the victims and announced that they will stop campaigning for two days.

Turkey enters Libya quagmire

House okays troops to support UN-backed govt in Tripoli

AFP, Ankara

Turkey's parliament yesterday passed a bill approving a military deployment to Libya, aimed at shoring up the UN-backed government in Tripoli.

The beleaguered Tripoli government has been under sustained attack since April by military strongman General Khalifa Haftar, who is backed by Turkey's regional rivals -- Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office confirmed last Friday that a request for military support had been received from the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA).

No details have been given on the scale of the potential deployment, and Vice-President Fuat Oktay told state news agency Anadolu that no date had yet been set.

The bill passed easily through Turkey's parliament, by 325 votes to 184.

A UN report in November said

several countries were violating the arms embargo on Libya in place since the overthrow of its long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Jordan and the UAE regularly supply Haftar's forces, it said, while Turkey supports the GNA. Turkish and Emirati drones were spotted in Libyan skies during clashes over the summer.



The Libyan conflict is expected to be a key topic of discussion when Russian President Vladimir Putin visits Turkey next Wednesday.

Erdogan has repeatedly accused Russia of sending private mercenaries to support Haftar's forces, though this has been denied by Moscow.

However, Turkey and Russia have managed to work closely on Syria despite supporting opposing sides in that conflict and are expected to seek a similar balancing act with regards to Libya.

Turkey has used its alliance with the Tripoli government to advance other interests. It signed a military cooperation agreement with the GNA during a visit by its leader, Fayeze al-Sarraj, to Istanbul in November.

But they also signed a maritime jurisdiction agreement giving Turkey rights to large swathes of the Mediterranean where gas reserves have recently been discovered.

Turkey's fierce rivalry with the military government in Egypt is seen as another motivating factor behind the planned deployment.

Egypt yesterday strongly condemned the vote. It said any such deployment could "negatively affect the stability of the Mediterranean region" and called on the international community to urgently respond to the move.

'They'll likely regret it'

Pentagon chief warns pro-Iranian militias; elite Iraqi troops secure US embassy after attack

AFP, Washington

The Pentagon yesterday warned that the Iran-backed Kataeb Hezbollah group that stormed the US embassy in Baghdad would carry out more attacks on US facilities -- and would regret it.

"The provocative behavior has been out there for months... So do I think they may do something? Yes. And they will likely regret it," Defense Secretary Mark Esper told reporters.

"We are prepared to exercise self-defense, and we are prepared to deter further bad behavior from these groups, all of which are sponsored, directed and resourced by Iran."

Several thousand Iraqi protesters attacked the US embassy in Baghdad on Tuesday, breaching its outer wall and chanting "Death to America!" in anger over weekend air strikes that killed pro-Iran fighters.

Elite Iraqi troops were deployed to secure the embassy yesterday.

The unprecedented attack on the

American mission in Baghdad -- in which intruders threw rocks, laid fires and graffitied walls -- sparked fears of a wider proxy war between Iran and the United States, both of them close allies of Iraq.

Supporters of Iraq's powerful Hashed al-Shaabi military force laid siege to the embassy in outrage at US air strikes that killed 25 of their fighters, but pulled back on Wednesday after an order from the group.

The attack sparked comparisons with the 1979 hostage crisis at the US embassy in Tehran and the deadly 2012 attack on the US consulate in Libya's second city Benghazi.

The violence has also troubled Iraqis who have taken to the streets since October in massive rallies denouncing government corruption, a lack of jobs and poor public services.

The largest grassroots protests Iraq in decades has seen tens of thousands flooding the streets across the capital and Shiite-majority south. Nearly 460 people have been killed and around 25,000 wounded in protest-related violence.

Wahid Ibn Reza on ‘Surviving 71’



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

SHABABA IQBAL

Wahid Ibn Reza is the only child of freedom fighter and Former State Minister of Bangladesh Rezaul Karim and Advocate Suraya Karim Munny. He has a BSc in Mechanical Engineering from BUET and BFA in Film Production from The University of British Columbia, Canada. Wahid joined the Bardel Entertainment animation studio after his graduation, and worked there for a few years. He later joined Moving Picture Company as a project coordinator and worked on *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*. He has also worked on Marvel's *Captain America: Civil War* (2016) and *Doctor Strange* (2016) during his tenure in the Method VFX Studios. Wahid worked with the visual effects teams of *Furious 7* (2015), *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015), *Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb* (2014) HBO's *Game of Thrones* and *Angry Birds 2* (2019), among other projects. In 2017, *Doctor Strange* was nominated for the Academy Awards for Best VFX, which made him a part of an Oscar nominated team. Currently, he is a production manager at Atomic Cartoons Inc in Canada. *Surviving 71*, a 2D animated short film about the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh written and directed by Wahid, is currently under production. The teaser of the film was released on March 25, 2019. "We received a hugely positive response for the teaser upon its release, but

now, we want it to cross one million views," says Wahid. "We aim to turn *Surviving 71* into a miniseries or a full length feature film, which is next to impossible without international support. If we manage to garner more views for the teaser, it will be easier to convince sponsors to back the project." The film, which follows a semi-realistic animation style, is about three captured freedom fighters who reminisce about what brought them to the war as they prepare to face their ultimate demise, getting shot in the back and thrown out of a moving



train. The voice cast of the film includes Jaya Ahsan, Meher Afroz Shaon, Tanzir Tuhin, Gousul Alam Shawon, Anik Khan, Samir Ahsan and Wahid himself. "My father was captured by the Pakistani forces during the war, and two men were shot right in front of him. When they were about to shoot him, he jumped out of a train and survived," Wahid says. "I just felt that it would make a cinematic survival story." He also spoke about the themes that the film touches upon. "*Surviving 71* provides a snapshot

of the war, structured into three segments. We have focused on the tortures faced by the minority groups and women and the resilience of our people during the war. There is also a segment about the *Razakars*," explains Wahid. "The film is a figurative piece. In the teaser, we can see that members of the Pakistani Army are depicted as demon-like beings, which is a metaphor for how terribly they treated our people." The team of *Surviving 71* is working very hard at the moment, both in Bangladesh and Canada. Wahid hopes to wrap up the production of the film by this year, and present it in film festivals across the world by the beginning of 2021. A song, written by eminent lyricist Sheikh Rana and composed and sung by popular artiste Minar Rahman, will be released on March 26, 2021, kicking off the promotions for the film. "*Surviving 71* is predominantly for the young audience, to educate them about the history of Bangladesh. We hope that it will spark an interest in people to find out more about the country and the events of 1971," says Wahid, who looks forward to releasing the film on December 16, 2021, across multiple television channels and streaming platforms. Moreover, Wahid is also working on a children's web series and his own feature film. For more updates on *Surviving 71*, visit: <https://www.surviving71.com/>

WHAT'S ON



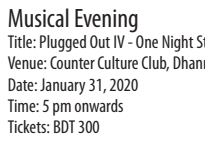
Group Art Exhibition
Title: His Dream World
Venue: Shilpangan, Dhanmondi
Date: December 27 – January 11
Time: 3 pm – 8 pm



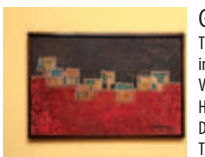
Workshop
Title: Kata Kuti - Collage Workshop
by Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo
Venue: Studio 6/6, Mohammadpur
Date: January 25, 2020
Time: 11 am – 6 pm



Cultural Festival
Title: Bangladesh Shanskritik Utshab 2020
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Date: January 3- 23, 2020
Time: 4 pm - 8 pm



Musical Evening
Title: Plugged Out IV - One Night Stand
Venue: Counter Culture Club, Dhanmondi
Date: January 31, 2020
Time: 5 pm onwards
Tickets: BDT 300



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



Award Ceremony
Title: Kali O Kalam Young Poet & Writer Award 2019
Venue: Bengal Shilpalya, Dhanmondi
Date: January 4
Time: 5pm

Chitta Halder Exhibition concludes at Barishal

SUSHANTA GHOSH, from Barishal

Commemorating renowned sculptor Chitta Halder, a two-day exhibition recently concluded at Ashwini Kumar Hall, Barishal. The exhibition, organised by Chitta Halder Memorial Committee (CHMC), was inaugurated by Rafiqul Islam Khokon, Panel Mayor of Barishal City Corporation, on January 1. A total of 40 artworks were exhibited at the event. An art competition was organised and cultural performances were held. A book, featuring the life and work of the artist was launched at the

concluding day of programme.

S M Ajair Rahman, Deputy Commissioner of Barishal, was present at the closing ceremony as chief guest, among others. Freedom fighter Md Helal Uddin was honoured with the Artist Chitta Halder award for his contribution. Violet Halder, Member Secretary of the CHMC and Chitta Halder's daughter shared her inspiration behind this initiative. "Chitta Halder had not received institutional art education. However, he created exquisite paintings, sculptures and terracotta pieces based on his concepts and creativity," she said.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Bangladesh Sangskritik Utshab 2020 begins today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The 2nd *Bangladesh Sangskritik Utshab 2020* begins at the Nandan Mancha of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA), at 4 pm today. Planning Minister M A Mannan will attend the inaugural ceremony as chief guest, while State Minister for Cultural Affairs K M Khalid will inaugurate the festival. Cultural Affairs Secretary Dr Md Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal will attend the occasion as special guest. Liaquat Ali Lucky, Director General, BSA will preside over the programme. A press conference was held in this regard

at the Seminar Hall of BSA on January 1. Liaquat Ali Lucky and BSA Secretary Badrul Alam Bhuiyan were present, among others. "We organised the first edition of the festival in 2016, and from now on, we are hoping to arrange it on a regular basis. We have tried to include all the segments of culture in this festival. We have also a plan to honour one prominent artiste from each district," said Liaquat Ali Lucky. BSA has organised the 21-day festival with a view to showcasing the colourful Bangladeshi culture. More than 5 thousand artistes from 64 districts of the country

will participate in the festival, featuring traditional folk games, folk-drama, solo and choral rendition of songs, instrumental music, *jatrapala*, Baul songs, dance, acrobatic show, puppet show, recitation and more. The festival also includes performances by the differently-abled children, music and dance performances on Bangabandhu and Liberation War, performances by indigenous artistes and choreography on drama. Artistes from all over the country will perform every day in the festival. The open to all event will be held from 3 pm to 9 pm every day, at the BSA premises.



PHOTO: STAR

Shilpacharya's 105th birth anniversary observed in Mymensingh

AMINUL ISLAM, from Mymensingh

Marking the 105th birth anniversary of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, seven-day programmes throughout Mymensingh began on December 29. Bangladesh National Museum and Mymensingh District Administration jointly organised the programmes at the Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Sangrahashala auditorium in the city. The celebrations also included a painting competition, folk-fair, painting exhibition and cultural shows. Earlier, a colourful rally was brought out in the town marking the occasion, inaugurated by Mymensingh Divisional Commissioner Kondoker Mustafizur Rahman. Deputy Commissioner of Mymensingh Md Mizanur Rahman and Deputy Keeper of the art gallery Mukul Datta joined the rally, among others. An art competition for children was also held on Sunday. Children of different educational institutions from Mymensingh and beyond took part in an art competition. The subjects of the competition included 'Portrait of Shilpacharya',

'Sketches on Zainul's Art Works', 'Winter Morning', and 'Open Choice'. State Minister for Cultural Affairs K M Khalid inaugurated the celebrations as the chief guest. A seminar, titled *Zainuler Shilpa O*

Shilpa Chinta, was held. Artist Zahid Mustafa, Dr Mohammad Emdadur Rashed, a professor of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University addressed the seminar, among others. Art critic Professor Moinuddin

Khaled presented the keynote paper at the seminar, while the Secretary of National Museum, Md Abdul Mazid, delivered the welcome speech. Director General of National Museum Md Reaz Ahmed was the chair.



PHOTO: STAR



Encore releases GRISHSHO

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Formed by a group of friends in 2013, Encore is a young rock band from Dhaka. After earning praise for their first album, *Chinho*, the group has announced their second album, from which the track *Grishsho* was recently released at a restaurant in the capital. The song is available for streaming on Gaan App and YouTube.



MEHAZABIEN reflects on the decade

Popular actor Mehzabien Chowdhury has been entertaining the audience with her remarkable performances for the last ten years. In a recent conversation with The Daily Star, she talks about her New Year's resolutions, upcoming ventures and more.

'Whiny Women' to be inaugurated tomorrow



PHOTO: COURTESY

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Women in Arts Bangladesh, a supportive network for creative women will inaugurate their first ever exhibition, Whiny Women, at Dhaka Gallery tomorrow.

The two-day exhibition aims to focus on the complexity, contexts, and critiques of the representations of the South Asian female form. "The aim is to explore the diversity of representation within the home, workplace and pop culture," says Pracheta Ahana, the founder of the organisation. Whiny Women will inaugurate from 3 pm tomorrow, with eminent politician and actor Tarana Halim as chief guest, and novelist Shazia Omar as special guest.



PHOTO: SHEKH MEHEDI MORSHED

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Happy New Year! How would you look back on 2019?

Happy New Year to you too! 2019 was a great year for me. I got to work on a broad range of projects that were appreciated by the audience. I hope to continue being a part of good projects this year as well.

Tell us about your upcoming projects.

I started shooting for my first project in 2020 yesterday. It is a tele-fiction, titled *Memories*, directed by Mahmudur Rahman Himi.

Congratulations on completing a decade in the industry. How has your journey been so far?

Thank you so much! To be honest, I can't express my happiness in words. It feels as though the ten years just flew by in a flash. I am grateful to the Almighty, my family, my directors, my co-artists and everybody who has been a part of my artistic career. I would also like to give a special shout-out to my fans and well-wishers. Their love and appreciation are what keeps me going.

What are your expectations from this year?

Last year, the industry witnessed many changes. The new rules asserted by the Director's Guild, in association with the Obhinoy Shilpi Shongho, have brought a sense of discipline in this line of work. I hope that everyone in the industry will follow the rules. As far as my career is concerned, I always take up projects that I truly like, keeping my role and the overall story in mind. This year, I would like to experiment with the kind of characters that I will play and also be a part of entertaining stories.

TANVIR MOKAMMEL

to make government-granted documentary on Bangabandhu

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

Ekushey Padak awardee and eminent director Tanvir Mokammel is set to make a documentary about Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Recently, Tanvir told *The Daily Star* that he will start shooting the documentary, funded by the Government of Bangladesh, from next month. Titled *Modhumati Parer Manushti: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*, the documentary will be completed by this year, which marks the birth centenary of Bangabandhu. An agreement about the documentary was signed by the director and the Bangladesh Information and Broadcasting Ministry, in Dhaka.

Modhumati Parer Manushti: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will contain several video footages from Bangabandhu's life, including his famous March 7 speech, his release from Pakistan's prison, his return to an independent Bangladesh and other landmark events related to the liberation of the country. Tanvir said that the documentary will cover the lifespan of Bangabandhu, from his childhood to his assassination. "Although it is a documentary, it will be done on a biopic scale," he added. Shooting for the documentary will begin on the bank of the Modhumati River in Tungipara, Gopalganj, where Bangabandhu spent his childhood years. According to Tanvir, parts of the documentary will also be shot in Kolkata's



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Islamia College and iconic Baker Hostel, where Bangabandhu spent several years as a student leader. Another spot where the documentary will be shot is Shahid Hossain Sohrwardy's house in Park Circus, Kolkata, where Bangabandhu had stayed.

Tanvir's long-time associate Syed Shabab Ali Arzoo will compose the background score for the documentary, while Uttam Guha will be the art director. Sources from the Government of Bangladesh have claimed that some other

filmmakers will be asked to produce more documentaries on the Father of the Nation, in the near future.

Tanvir, who hopes to wrap up the post-production work on his forthcoming feature film, *Rupsha Nadir Baankey* this month, is currently in Karimganj to attend a film festival, which begins today. His documentaries *Seemantarekha* and *1971* will be screened at the event, where he will also give a lecture on the 'Problems of Filming the 1947 Partition'.

Film to be made on 'Friend of Bengalis' Father Marino Rigon

SHARMIN JOYA

Father Marino Rigon was called the 'Friend of Bengalis', for his unconditional love and support towards Bangladesh. He moved to Bangladesh during the 1971 Liberation War, where he gave shelter and cared for the injured.

He was honoured as a freedom fighter of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War for his contributions during the war. He lived in Bangladesh as a missionary for sixty years, preaching the Gospel among Catholics, using the Bengali language and making a tremendous contribution to the Catholic Church of Bangladesh. He breathed his last at the age of 92, and left his well-wishers in October 2017.

The film, *The Father- An Untold Story*, is a joint venture of Bangladesh and Italy. The



PHOTO: COLLECTED

feature film will be directed by Hemanta Sadeeq and scripted by Shahaduzzaman.

The shooting of the movie will take place in Venice and Vicenza, Italy. It will commence from this year.

Father Rigon translated 50 Bangladeshi literary pieces into the Italian language. He also translated 350 songs of Lalou. "His selfless contribution towards Bangladesh and our culture, is the first factor that attracted me to take up this project," says Hemanta Sadeeq. "I believe his story is very relevant to us and our culture. We cannot thank him enough for his unconditional support."

Father Marino Rigon was conferred honorary citizenship of Bangladesh by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for his tireless and exemplary contributions to society, especially in the country, in 2009.



TV WATCH

The Chinese cartoon series, 'Dream Baby Mongwa', dubbed in Bangla, will be aired on Boishakhi Television today and tomorrow at 6:15 pm.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Meet the jute mill workers’ just demands

Pay them their dues, let them live

WE are worried to learn that 20 jute mill workers had to be taken to hospital in Khulna as they fell sick while continuing their fast-unto-death programme while at least 576 others became ill in the last few days as they had to stay on roads in cold temperatures. Workers of the nine state-owned jute mills in Khulna have been demonstrating for the last few months to press home their 11-point demand which include cancellation of public-private ownership of jute mills, payment of provident fund and gratuity for retired workers, regularisation of weekly wages, implementation of the 2015 wage commission and payment of their arrears. The workers had to take to the street several times last year with the same demands because despite repeated assurances from the government, their demands were not met. And now the situation has worsened.

It is shocking to see the children of the workers taking to the streets with their parents, many of whom will have to leave school if their parents are not paid their salaries. While with the meagre salary a jute worker gets, it is not possible to ensure three square meals for their children and bear their educational expenses, when they are not paid for months in a row it will be impossible for them to survive at all.

Needless to say, our jute sector is in a shambles. The state-run jute mills have been running at a loss for decades and so it has become difficult for the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporations (BJMC) to pay its workers regularly. But the question is, what steps has the BJMC taken so far to make this sector profitable again? If the privately-run jute mills can make profit, why can't the state-run ones? Here the issues of corruption, bad planning and poor management come in.

Reportedly, a lot of money is wasted every year in purchasing raw jute because the money is never allocated at the proper time by the government. Efficiency of the mills is also not satisfactory because they are running with old machinery. In addition, no substantial steps have been visible on part of the BJMC for diversifying the jute goods to attract the international market. These are just some of the issues that need to be addressed by the government to revitalise the sector. If that can be done, lakhs of people depending on this sector will be able to live a decent life.

Meanwhile, to solve the present crisis, the BJMC should immediately pay the workers their dues so that the workers and their families do not have to go hungry.

A public cancer hospital crippled by negligence

Waste of public money

A report in this paper regarding the sorry state of the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital has left us aghast at the extent of negligence of those in charge of the institution. Crucial, expensive equipment to treat such a serious disease as cancer, had been purchased but were allowed to sit idle for years. Either an essential component is missing and has not been replaced for years or the machines are rotting in a corner of the storeroom. The result is that many cancer patients, most of them in low income brackets, cannot get the treatment they need to survive. It is literally a matter of life and death which makes such irregularities all the more shocking. How could those in charge of the hospital sit on such serious lapses in management and operations that have rendered the hospital practically dysfunctional in some very important departments?

Our reporter's investigation has found that eight, high-end ventilators for the Intensive Care Unit, bought 12 years ago, have never been installed which means the ICU department has been reduced to a four-bed unit from an eight-bed unit depriving critical patients who need ventilators of such care. Meanwhile the motherboards of the ventilators have been stolen leaving the machines completely useless. The report has also identified other essential equipment required for cancer detection and treatment lying idle or non-functional because some part was missing due to theft.

How can an institution that is the lone specialised public hospital for cancer treatment be riddled with such blatant irregularities? According to the investigation, the ICU in charge had written several letters to the hospital's director requesting him to take initiatives to install the machines but nothing was done. Can the director absolve himself of responsibility by just saying that the machines had been purchased before he took over? What did he do when he did take over and found the state of the equipment? We are quite shocked at his answer regarding how the ICU will function without ventilators—that putting cancer patients on ICU does not really improve their condition, rather just adds to the cost. Such glib and insensitive answers are not befitting of someone in his position.

It goes without saying that the government must demand answers for such gross lapses in management and waste of public money. The health sector is one that is badly in need of reform. One of the most primary measures should be to make sure existing resources and capacities are fully utilised. This will require a stringent system of accountability and internal control within each institution. The media has published innumerable cases of such waste of existing resources in public hospitals. The health ministry should investigate each and every public hospital and healthcare complex to remove such irregularities, address the deficiency in resources and manpower and make these establishments fully functional.

NRC, CAA and Bangladesh

Fallacy of unsuspecting trust



C R ABRAR

FINALLY the tides of uncertainty and insecurity generated by the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in India have begun to strike the shores of Bangladesh. On December 30 under instruction of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the country's mobile phone operators had suspended their network coverage within a kilometre in areas adjacent to Bangladesh-India border. The BTRC instruction issued on Sunday stated that the sanction would remain in operation until further instruction "for the sake of state security". The BTRC in its turn informed that it was imposed "in view of the high-level directives of the government".

Thus far there has not been any clear indication from the administration as to why such a measure became necessary. While the foreign minister and the home minister informed the media that they had no prior knowledge about the directive, the Chair of BTRC stated that the step was taken to stop the circulation of rumours in the region. "There are reports frequently circulating... that Bangladeshi people have been killed here and there in the border area with the potential to cause law and order problem... We have suspended the mobile networks there to control the rumour", he informed a foreign wire agency. Such reasoning does not hold

While the students, trade unions, professional and learned bodies, rights organisations and other civil society organisations have mounted a resolute challenge to the NRC and CAA in almost every nook and corner in India, their counterparts in Bangladesh appear to be content with the official explanation.

water. Although 2019 witnessed a three-fold increase in incidents of border killing over the previous year, linking the telecom ban with such killing is somewhat outlandish. It is believed by some that the prohibition is tied to the likelihood of further influx of Muslims from India in the wake of the adoption of the NRC.

The decision to restrict telecom has resulted in the closure of around 2,000 base transceiver stations in 32 districts that share border with India and Myanmar. It has adversely impacted millions of subscribers. Those people were out of voice, internet and other online services for an indefinite period.



PHOTO: DIBYANGSHU SARKAR/AFP

The citizenship law has sparked days of protests, clashes and riots across India.

"Shutdown to services within one-kilometre area means that people of the additional half-kilometre area will get weak network," observed an industry official. Therefore, for three days the move deprived more than 10 million people out of mobile network causing immeasurable hardship in pursuing their livelihood, accessing services including emergency healthcare and education, and maintaining social relations. On January 2 the decision was revoked.

The restriction came into force after border crossings from the Indian side were reported in the media. In early December the Bangladesh home minister stated that there had been attempts to deport people from India and the border guards of Bangladesh had detained 238 Indian citizens who illegally entered Bangladesh through Jhenaidah district border.

In its effort to make India a Hindu dominated state the BJP leadership pursued a policy of changing the special status of Kashmir and securing the Babri

Such persistent emission of anti-Bangladeshi vitriolic statements of the Indian ruling elite triggered little concern in Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh appeared to be oblivious to the stirring up of anti-Bangladesh sentiments. Until quite recently, the statements of the ministers, advisers and senior functionaries gave the signal that the government was quite comfortable with the Indian assertion that the NRC was indeed an "internal matter" of that country. Dhaka seemed to be satisfied with the "assurances" of "the friendliest state" that Bangladesh would not be adversely affected by the NRC fallout. The high ups in the foreign office found no reason to critically examine, let alone contest such commitment. After all, in its assessment the "very-sweet" Bangladesh-India relationship has now reached "the golden age".

The partisan stance of the mainstream civil society in Bangladesh has precluded it from taking a stand against the NRC and CAA. There is little debate about the

Will the National Human Rights Commission fulfil our expectations?

TAMANNA HOQ RITI and MAIMUNA SYED AHMED

A T recent dialogue between civil society members and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the newly appointed Chairperson, Nasima Begum, ndc, NHRC opined that there exists no legal bar for the Commission to investigate cases of human rights violations committed by law enforcement agencies. This dialogue was organised by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) with the participation of stakeholders at both grassroots, local and national levels.

The Chairperson stressed that there exists no room for any debate regarding the interpretation of Section 18 of the NHRC Act 2009, as she does not believe there to be any barriers to investigate complaints against law enforcing agencies. Rather, she said that since she had taken office, the Commission has been working on investigating such grievances. Coming directly from the Commission Chair, this ray of hope given to civil society members was a positive development. It was interpreted as a significant step to cut short the lengthy periods of time spent waiting for a mere response from the Ministry of Home Affairs, and thus, allow the Commission to commence investigation immediately after a complaint of human rights violations by security forces is lodged.

Unfortunately, this newly kindled hope was extinguished quite abruptly when the Chairperson, on Human Rights Day, was quoted as saying, "There is a specific department allocated to investigate extrajudicial killings. I [Commission] do not have sufficient human resource to do such investigation" (Prothom Alo, December 10, 2019). A similar opinion was expressed again in an interview by the Chairperson in another Bangla newspaper.

However, it must be noted that when an extrajudicial killing takes place at the hands of the law enforcement agencies, and there is nobody to delve into the issue of human rights violation besides the executive department (which only takes departmental disciplinary measures), the check and balance to ensure accountability

of these law enforcement agencies is grossly frustrated. It is due to the lack of confidence the public has on the fairness, independence and neutrality of the inquiries conducted by the executive department which necessitated the involvement of the Commission through its founding Act. The recent review of Bangladesh under Convention against Torture (CAT) also reiterated this.

According to the Chair, the dialogue was her first time attending a civil society event since her appointment in September 2019. Referring to her new appointment, she acknowledged the fact that she preferred knowing the law before delving into its implementation. The Chair also emphasised that she wanted

two Marma sisters in Bandarban, or gang-rape of a woman in Subarnachar during the 11th National Parliamentary Elections in December 2018. Recalling the consequence of these incidents, the independence of the Commission continues to remain questionable. Therefore, after vowing to attempt to strengthen the Commission, the Chair's lack of willingness to not investigate such cases—be it for the scale of importance these incidents received in the eyes of the Commission, or for its lack of human resources—is frankly quite disheartening.

It can be evinced from the Commission's Annual Report of 2018 that it disposed of 589 complaints out of 728, which is a significant



to show positive changes within the area of human rights through her actions and gave her commitment that the new Commission will sincerely work along with civil society to address its existing shortcomings.

There is no denying that the Commission lost the general public's trust significantly due to its inactiveness in investigating violations by law enforcement agencies, as well as controversial investigations in some significant incidents: few cases in point are investigations done on the rape of

improvement when compared to its record from previous years. However, what deserves intensive scrutiny is the nature of complaints addressed by the Commission. Most of the disposed complaints are related to violence against women and children. The disturbing picture of the lack of the Commission's initiative to principally address state violence is evident when a comparison is made with the annual report of the National Human Rights Commission, India; a country whose founding Act of the Commission is similar in text

possible ramification of those exercises for Bangladesh in the public domain. While the students, trade unions, professional and learned bodies, rights organisations and other civil society organisations have mounted a resolute challenge to the NRC and CAA in almost every nook and corner in India, their counterparts in Bangladesh appear to be content with the official explanation. The intellectual luminaries of Bangladesh who have been vocal against the Rohingya influx a couple of years ago appear to have little appetite to engage with an issue that may trigger inflow of a far greater number of aliens to this land. Young activists of Dhaka University under the Vice President of Ducusu and members of left groups who dared to protest the Indian moves were brutally silenced by the goons of the student wing of the ruling establishment and those belonging to Muktiyoddha Moncho (freedom fighters' platform).

Such unsuspecting trust on the neighbour suffered a major setback in the adoption of the CAA in India in early December. The law paves the way for the Indian government to confer citizenship on members of non-Muslim communities fleeing persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. In the law Bangladesh was banded with Afghanistan and Pakistan as a nation that oppresses its religious minority. The Act clearly brought into the open how the BJP government of India views Bangladesh. Such negative depiction has been an affront for the people of Bangladesh. Two ministerial visits to India were cancelled following the adoption of the amendment. Indian news website ThePrint on December 30 noted that Bangladesh had sought a written assurance from the Hindu-nationalist Modi government that it would not expel illegal immigrants across the border.

The rolling out of the NRC and the application of CAA are likely to have grave consequences for Bangladesh. Even if India refrains from officially deporting those who would fail in the NRC test, millions of Muslims who would be unable to prove their claims to Indian citizenship and secure protection under the CAA in all likelihood will cross the border and seek shelter in Bangladesh. They would do so to avoid languishing in detention camps in atrocious conditions. The recent border crossings from the Indian side and the concomitant telecom network suspension in Bangladesh may signal the beginning of a difficult time for the country. It is time for those at the helm of the state to discard the rhetoric, take stock of these developments and collectively develop a national strategy to face the likely challenge.

CR Abrar is an academic and rights worker with an interest in refugees, migrants and the stateless.

and language to that of Bangladesh. According to most human rights activists, this statutory body should not play the role of civil society or the government's social welfare department; but rather, it should act as an independent state institution that raises its voice against human rights violations by security officials.

Such dilly-dallying by the Commission with regards to the complaints brings forth the recent disappointment that the civil society had with the selection process and subsequent appointment of the members of the new commission this year. It should be recalled that even before the process of selection began, human rights organisations urged the selection committee to follow a transparent process while ensuring consultation with CSOs, HRDs and other relevant stakeholders. According to members of the civil society, this process has not been transparent, open and participatory, as per the requirements of the Paris Principles which are the international minimum standards for effective and credible National Human Rights Institutions. Like previous appointments, there was no consultation held with regards to it this time either. Instead, civil society members were quite disturbed to see the appointment of ex-government officials as members of the Commission—who have little to no direct experience of working on issues related to human rights.

Next year, the Commission will have existed for 10 years. Members of civil society and human rights defenders hope that by its 10th anniversary, the Commission will overcome the frustration and disappointment people have in regards to its function, face the challenges it continues to face with regards to its mandate, and revive the trust and confidence the public had in this institution to some extent. Regardless of such frustrations, we want to keep alive a sliver of hope that in protecting human rights, the new Commission may be able to take some visible steps to ensure government accountability.

Tamanna Hoq Riti and Maimuna Syed Ahmed work at Media and International Advocacy Unit, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK).

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed

A tribute to an innovator and implementer

REHMAN SOBHAN

I had my first encounter with Sir Fazle Hasan Abed in 1971 in Oxford. Abed called to inform me on the efforts by him and his group in London in support of Bangladesh’s liberation struggle. He sought my advice on how to further enhance the impact of their struggle. He also looked ahead and discussed what might be done to serve the deprived masses in post-liberation Bangladesh. I was then impressed by his dedication and foresightedness. Unlike many who talk of serving the masses but do little in practice, in the immediate aftermath of liberation Abed put his dedication and foresight to work in the service of the deprived of Bangladesh.

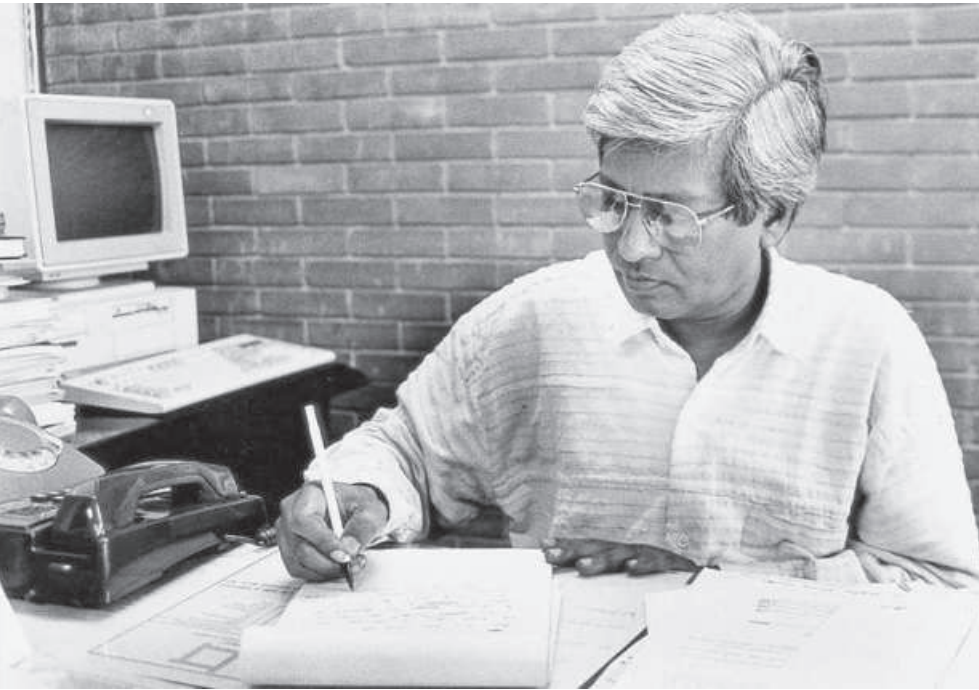
We kept in touch in the post-liberation years but had little interaction. In 1993 when I decided to set up the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Abed was one of the first persons I approached to join me as one of the founding trustees. He remained an active member of the CPD Board ever since where he not only gave us sage advice on issues of governance of the institution, but encouraged institutional interaction between CPD and Brac in a number of programmes and campaigns. As his end approached, as part of his disengagement from his many engagements around the world, he wrote us a formal letter of resignation from the CPD Board.

Just as it is painful for me and CPD to say farewell to one of our most valued colleagues, it is difficult to imagine a Bangladesh without Sir Fazle Hasan Abed. He leaves a larger than life footprint with its imprint visible not just around the country but across the world. I can think of few people who have done more for the world’s deprived population than Abed. His contribution spans Bangladesh where Brac, the organisation founded by him in 1972, services close to 10 million of the country’s underprivileged households. Through Abed’s commitment to serve the deprived, Brac has now extended its reach across the globe. It has invested its experience

in rehabilitating Sidr victims in Sri Lanka and the war-ravaged population in Afghanistan where two of its officials, working in high risk areas, were once held hostage by the Taliban. Brac has now reached out on a large scale to serve the underprivileged of Africa where they have been actively engaged in Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Brac has even extended its reach to Pakistan and across the Atlantic to Haiti.

Abed’s extraordinary engagement with the deprived has transformed Brac into the largest NGO in the world with an annual budget of over a billion dollars and a workforce of around 200,000. Abed’s singular contribution to the world for serving its deprived communities has been his ability to take Brac programmes to scale so that they graduate from micro-welfare projects to the transformation of entire communities. Brac is today more than an NGO. Its scale of operations would suggest that it is now a corporation for the deprived. Abed’s organisational capacity has invested Brac with a market recognition comparable to any of the top international NGOs such as Oxfam and his management contribution has been recognised in case studies in the best business schools.

Abed was a strong believer that Brac should liberate itself from dependence on external donor financing and should become a self-financed facility. To this end, he established a number of programmes which could generate financial surpluses that could be reinvested in other Brac projects. The biggest of such projects was Brac’s flagship micro-finance programme which could recycle its surpluses and expand its clientele of women borrowers to around 8 million so that today it presides over one of the world’s largest microfinance programmes. Abed further drew upon Brac’s brand name and market reach to invest in a variety of other socially oriented income generating investments such as Brac’s stake in Bkash and commercially competitive entities such as Brac Bank which is today one of the best run and most profitable banks in



Sir Fazle Hasan Abed

Bangladesh. These investments generated revenues which have further enhanced Brac’s internal income generating capacity and enabled it to expand its programmes to reach even larger numbers of the disadvantaged.

The remarkable growth and reach of Brac owes in large measure to the herculean endeavours of Fazle Hasan Abed, its founder. Abed combined extraordinary entrepreneurial and management skills with a genuine passion for public service which began with a commitment to the dispossessed of his own country, but has now been extended to the underprivileged across the world. Abed, who began his professional life as a highly paid executive of a multinational company in Bangladesh, went through the life changing experience of direct involvement, first during the cyclone of November 1970, one of history’s most devastating natural calamities, and

then through his response to the genocide inflicted on the Bengalis in 1971. Abed’s exposure to the human consequences of such acts of violence by man and nature persuaded him to invest the rest of his life in helping not just the victims of devastation but those whose entire life is engaged in coping with the uncertainties of nature and the injustices of society.

In responding to the challenge of deprivation, Abed demonstrated a renaissance vision which equipped him to recognise its holistic nature in Bangladesh. He constructed a multi-faceted agenda for change which incorporated credit, women’s empowerment, legal literacy, healthcare, education and skills development so as to empower the excluded to stand on their own feet. His approach of transforming the excluded from victims into masters of their own fate encouraged him to build an organisation which could graduate from aid

dependence to fiscal self-reliance through building up the market competitiveness of its income generating programmes. Today Brac is no longer dependent on the generosity of donors. Its internally generated revenues underwrite around 80 percent of its total budget. The growth and transformation of Brac has made it a role model for other NGOs not just in Bangladesh but across the world. These achievements have been recognised through a plethora of awards and prizes which have been showered on Abed which gave him direct access to global political leaders, heads of international institutions and CEO’s of the corporate world.

Abed invested 47 years of his life in serving the deprived at home and abroad. His humility and understated projection of his remarkable achievements concealed a quiet determination to let his actions speak louder than his words. He was not inclined to self-promotion but such was the weight of his achievements as a champion of the deprived that he and the organisation he built, came to be recognised across the world by those in need as well as among global and business leaders.

At the end of his days on earth, he left the world he inhabited in a better place with millions of people whose lives were improved through his efforts. Few people may depart with such a sense of satisfaction at their life’s work. He knew his work was unfinished but he laid down a path through which it can be continued by his successors.

His final contribution to posterity was manifested in the meticulous effort he invested in preparing for his final departure. Abed was determined to ensure Brac would outlive him and continue the transformative journey he began 47 years ago in the small village of Sallna, in Sylhet. His goal was to end poverty by empowering the deprived and his soul will not rest in peace until such a day dawns, at least in Bangladesh, with Brac playing a vanguard role in this process.

Rehman Sobhan is Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue.

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

Make Europe Relevant Again

SIGMAR GABRIEL *and* CHRISTOPH BORNSCHEIN

IT is increasingly clear that the European Union was not built to be a global actor. The EU is a strictly European idea, designed to bring peace and prosperity to a region ravaged by centuries of incessant war. It was meant to mind its own business, leaving matters of global import to the two permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, Britain and France.

Under this arrangement, the EU achieved stability for its neighbourhood. While other countries have pursued global political and economic strategies, we Europeans have relied on our shared history, democratic traditions, and moral compass in the service of fitful regional integration. But these strengths will not ensure Europe’s continued relevance. Economic change and technological advances (online platforms, artificial intelligence, automation, data monopolies, zero-marginal-cost distribution) are reshaping the global economy, upending longstanding power structures, and fuelling political disruption within many countries.

This is where Europe’s true weakness is exposed. The EU and its member states have no effective response to the techno-political trends of our time. On one hand, the growth of supra-national corporations is reshaping standards across the global economy; on the other, China’s pursuit of technological independence (and then supremacy) is creating a schism in the world’s economic superstructure. These trends are somewhat contradictory, yet they have one thing in common: Europe is on the sideline.

Consider a few recent developments. Facebook has launched an initiative to create a unified global currency—Libra—building on its international user base and accumulated data. Google is working



PHOTO: DANIEL MIHAILESCU/AFP

The pride that we Europeans have in our shared history and values has often clouded our vision, leading us to forget that our global relevance is the result of economic power.

to catalogue every bit of the world’s information, all of which will be used to offer more powerful products and services. And Amazon has turned its cloud-computing service into the backbone of the global Internet.

In each case, Europe is playing the role of a common user. Europol is listed as a business “case study” on the Amazon Web Services page. Police forces across Europe have enlisted the US-based data-analytics firm Palantir to help with predictive policing. Volkswagen—an iconic German corporation if there ever was one—has formed a partnership with Amazon to develop its own

“Industrial Cloud.”

It is only natural that the tech giants would seek to diversify by developing new proprietary services and introducing them into unsuspecting markets. Just as Facebook has Libra and Google has Waymo (self-driving cars), Chinese giants like Tencent and Alibaba have become pioneers in digital business solutions and payments, respectively.

The existence of similar digital service providers in both the United States and China is now a standard feature of the global economy. The root cause of this bifurcation is the conflict between China and the US, which is a battle for technological leadership

between two economic models: China’s state capitalism and the US’s private-sector-led economy.

In August 2019, the Chinese firm Huawei introduced its own operating system, Harmony OS, which is said to be faster and more secure than Google’s Android. Though Harmony OS is predominantly geared toward use in the “Internet of Things” (IoT), it will also be easily adapted to Huawei’s smartphone portfolio. The rollout of Harmony OS shows that China is quickly responding to the new world ushered in by US President Donald Trump’s May 2019 executive order, which effectively banned Huawei from US markets. Though many adjustments have since been made over the course of Sino-American negotiations to soften the ban, the basic message was clear: China’s dependence on American business partners can and will be used against it.

Once again, as the trade and technology war has unfolded, Europe has had precious little to do, other than watch. It has been relegated to the role of a consumer, choosing which payment provider or industrial cloud solution to use. To be sure, there are good services available out there, and there is no shame in opting for a readymade industrial IoT, an American logistics platform, or a Chinese 5G developer. For a company in Volkswagen’s position, tapping into Amazon’s web services is a no-brainer.

But assuming the role of a common user comes at a price: namely, a loss of autonomy, security, and global influence. The pride that we Europeans have in our shared history and values has often clouded our vision, leading us to forget that our global relevance is the result of economic power. By not playing a role in technological or political developments, we now stand to lose that power.


We Europeans believe in achieving peace and prosperity through cooperation and mutual respect, rather than through conflict, intimidation, and terror. We also believe in alliances and treaties. In our day and age, the world faces global challenges that can be tackled only through collective action. There can be no unilateral solution to the climate crisis, epidemics, economic disruption, migration, or the looming global recession.


But herein lies Europe’s core dilemma. To be relevant enough to propose and enforce its view of the world, Europe needs to accept reality. Competition, conflict, and nationalism are defining features of today’s world. Europe must start playing a game that it detests.

To put it another way, Europe needs to become a little more American, and the US needs to rediscover its own European ideals. After all, the fundamental similarities between Europe and America have always been stronger than any superficial differences. With Trump, the US has elected not a president but a CEO—a businessman who focuses only on short-term deals, revenue maximisation, and shareholder value. Such a leader is unable to play the long game, which requires accepting short-term losses and handling externalities responsibly and in close cooperation with one’s competitors.

Trump’s blinkered approach may work for stock markets and corporations, but it is no way to run an international order. Europeans and Americans alike need to reimbrace the transatlantic alliance. That may sound like a platitude, but the US-European relationship really will be the key factor in building a secure and prosperous future.

Sigmar Gabriel is a former vice chancellor and foreign minister of Germany. Christoph Bornschein is CEO of TLGG.
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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

 **QUOTABLE Quote**



ALDOUS HUXLEY (1894–1963)
English novelist and critic gifted with an acute and far-ranging intelligence.

There's only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 School subject
5 Soaking spot
9 Sore spots
11 Seating pro
13 Set off
14 Intent look
15 Stroller user
16 Turns
18 Board riders
20 Plop down
21 Make fun of
22 Chick tenders
23 Bridal title
26 Contrived
28 Like a beanpole
27 Pub orders
29 Take the title
30 Holds protec-

tively
32 Et cetera
34 Important time
35 Trattoria sauce
36 Beginning
38 Recap
39 Paris river
40 Stock holders
41 Greek vowels

DOWN
1 Ship poles
2 Misbehave
3 "Oh, yeah..."
4 Yonder lady
5 Some statutory
6 Hammett pooch
7 "OK, I've decided!"
37 Once called

8 Below, in a contract
10 Emphasis
12 Kicks back
17 Mine material
19 Rural spread
22 Poker round
24 Grands, e.g.
25 Trades
26 Police station event
27 NFL player
28 Venus's sister
30 Poultry holders
31 Fills completely
33 Leave speech-less

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

A	S	T	A	S	T	I	N	G
P	L	O	D	S	H	O	N	O
H	I	N	D	U	O	R	A	T
I	C	I	R	E	T	I	R	E
D	E	C	R	E	E	A	P	T
P	E	T	E	A	B	L	E	G
P	E	T	E	S	P	E	D	
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BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

White House hopeful Sanders raises \$34.5m in fourth quarter

REUTERS, Washington

Bernie Sanders raised more than \$34.5 million in the last quarter of 2019, his presidential campaign said yesterday, the largest three-month haul of any Democrat so far in the contest to take on Republican President Donald Trump in a November election.

The announcement, which brings his total fundraising last year to \$96 million, appears to confirm Sanders' position as the leading fundraiser in the nominating contest, in which states begin caucusing and voting next month. Some candidates have not yet disclosed their fourth-quarter fundraising numbers.

US Senator Sanders of Vermont, a Democrat who wants to reduce the sway of corporate America, has built his campaign on small donations, largely through online fundraising from an ethnically diverse and mostly young coalition of supporters.

Campaign manager Faiz Shakir said Sanders' "grassroots movement" showed he was he best placed candidate to defeat Trump.

"He is proving each and every day that working class Americans are ready and willing to fully fund a campaign that stands up for them and takes on the biggest corporations and the wealthy," Shakir said in a statement.

Sanders, 78, bounced back from a heart attack in early October to win growing support for his platform of expanding government-run healthcare, free college and investment in renewable energy paid for with higher taxes on the wealthy.

Sanders said this week that about 1.3 million Americans had donated to

his campaign.

His campaign said the most common occupation among Sanders' fourth-quarter donors was teacher, and the most common employers were Amazon, Starbucks, Walmart, the U.S. Postal Service and Target.

Sanders is polling second in most national opinion polls behind former Vice President Joe Biden.

Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana - who is polling behind Biden, Sanders and U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts - raised \$24.7 million in the fourth quarter, an increase on previous periods.

Hillary Clinton named Belfast university chancellor

AFP, London

Former US secretary of state and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton was appointed as the new chancellor of Queen's University Belfast yesterday.

Clinton will serve for five years in the largely ceremonial role, the Northern Irish institution announced.

"It is a great privilege to become the chancellor of Queen's University, a place I have great fondness for and have grown a strong relationship with over the years," Clinton said in a statement.

"The university is making waves internationally for its research and impact and I am proud to be an ambassador and help grow its reputation for excellence."

Dui Takar Bank

FROM PAGE 20

rickshaw-pullers, human hauler drivers, and tea-stall workers. They can hardly bear the educational expenses."

According to the headmaster, 61 students dropped out in 2016, 65 in 2017, 53 in 2018 and 15 in 2019 due to poverty. "It has gone down by 80 percent compared to last year. We still have Tk 10,000 left in the bank," he said.

The school, which was established in 1927, charges Tk 250 monthly fee to students of grade III-VII and Tk 240 to the rest.

Nur Islam, father of a sixth grader, said, "It became almost impossible for me to bear educational expenses of my daughter but the bank came as a relief," said Nur, who runs a

tea-stall in Dinajpur town. "Now the students are feeling safe knowing that the school is beside them," he went on.

Recently the school authorities opened a shop on the school premises where handicrafts made by the students are being put on sale. Special classes on handicrafts and cooking are offered to the students of class VI, VII, VIII, IX and X.

"In these classes, they learn to make decorative items using jute and scraps like plastic bottles. They made 60 decorative pieces this year," said Afsana Akhter, a teacher.

"The money earned from the shop also goes to Dui Takar Bank. Therefore, we believe that next year, we will be able to support more students," she added.

Sudan tribal

FROM PAGE 20

launched an investigation into the bloodshed, while a delegation of senior officials visited the area.

The government also deployed troops to El Geneina to restore order.

Residents of El Geneina who spoke to AFP by phone said security forces were patrolling main roads in the city, confirming that the fighting had subsided.

According to Sudanese media, the fighting erupted after a row between two people.

A woman reached by phone said she had fled the Krinding camp for displaced Masalit, a non-Arab ethnic group, near El Geneina after assailants torched tents there.

"Our tents were set on fire. We have no food and only the clothes on our back and there are bodies littering the ground," she told AFP.

In January 2016, six people were killed in unrest in West Darfur following violence involving Masalit tribesmen and members of the Arab Beni Halba tribe.

445 Bangladeshis returned

FROM PAGE 20

trespassing."

The number of returnees from India rose in the last two months after the Indian government published the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam in August, leaving 19 lakh people in the northeastern state virtually stateless.

India also amended its citizenship law sparking violent protests.

The Bangladesh foreign minister and the home minister cancelled their planned visits to India as protests flared.

Yesterday, the BGB chief said there was no discussion over the NRC at the director general-level meeting.

Replying to a query, he said there was no tension between the two border forces.

Shafeenul said the BGB was planning to buy some modern weapons and ammunition to beef up security along borders with Myanmar.

The force also plans to purchase speedboats to patrol the Indo-Bangla border along the Padma and the

Sundarbans, and also the Myanmar-Bangladesh border along the Naf river.

Asked about the rise in border killings, the BGB chief said they had expressed concern over it at the DG-level talks.

"The DG of BSF assured me that they will be more careful and cautious to avoid border killings."

According to the BGB's count, 35 Bangladeshis were killed in the border areas last year, he added.

Boy's body found

FROM PAGE 20



Iraqi counter-terrorism forces stand guard in front of the US embassy in the capital Baghdad yesterday. The US embassy siege by pro-Iran protesters in Baghdad lasted just over a day, but analysts warn it could have lasting implications for Iraq's complex security sector and diplomatic ties.

PHOTO: AFP

Leaders say demo over

FROM PAGE 1

expressed their solidarity and joined the demonstrations at Notunrasta Mor," Tareq said.

Iqbal Hassan, a worker of Crescent Jute Mill, said, "I am in a fix. Should I have left the job or should I wait to get wage commission?"

"My three children joined the demonstrations and took part in the hunger strike even though I forbade them to do so... I would rather die than see my daughter from the seventh grade on the street with us.

"Our children should go to school but they are now in the movement to help their parents," he said.

Around 3:00pm, six-year-old Yasin Sheikh said, "I came to see my father, Rafiqul Islam, who has not been home for the last four days."

Rafiqul is a temporary worker at Platinum Jute Mill.

"Twenty-one leaders of the workers were in Dhaka to attend a meeting with the jute minister at Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation yesterday afternoon," said Sarder Abdul Hamid, convener of CBAs and non-CBA Sangram Parishad.

BNP's Khulna city and district unit formed a human chain in front of its party office at KD Ghosh Road

yesterday noon. There, BNP leaders said the government has made false promises to jute workers several times.

Nazrul Islam Monju, president of Khulna BNP, said the government should immediately implement the wage commission for thousands of jute workers.

Around 31,000 workers went into work abstention and observed fast-unto-death from December 10 to December 13.

Production in nine mills came to a halt due to the demonstrations. Carpeting Jute Mills in Jashore, however, was operating partially.

Later, workers postponed their protest until December 17 upon assurances from State Minister Monnujan Sufian of fulfilling their demands.

On December 27, leaders of "Sangram Parishad" announced they would resume their demonstrations as their demands were not met.

The demands include cancellation of public-private ownership initiative, allocation of necessary funds for the jute sector, insurance for families of dead workers, ensuring payment of provident funds and gratuity accumulations for retired workers, and the job regularisation for temporary workers.

FROM PAGE 20

government and BBC Steel Ltd to explain why the lease agreement should not be declared illegal. It also directed the authorities to stop constructing the shipbreaking yard in the area.

After holding hearings on the rule, the court yesterday delivered the verdict.

Mehedi Hasan Chowdhury, the lawyer for BBC Steel Ltd, told The Daily Star that his client would move an appeal before the Supreme Court's Appellate Division challenging the HC judgment.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan and Minhajul Haque Chowdhury appeared for the petitioner.

Dinosaurs shrank in size, paving the way

FROM PAGE 20

Scientists have previously struggled to explain the origins of endothermy – the state of being warm-blooded – mainly due to the lack of fossil evidence.

However, researchers at the University of Chile say their latest findings shed light on how mammals became warm-blooded. They analysed how animals regulate their body heat, comparing this with different body sizes of theropods – a group of two-

legged, three-toed dinosaurs from which all birds evolved.

Warm-blooded animals must balance how much heat their body makes – known as metabolic production – with how much is lost during physical activity or in cold weather. The new findings suggest metabolic rates rose steadily throughout most of the early to mid-Jurassic period, around 180million years ago.

They also indicate that a warm-

blooded creature would need to shrink nine-fold to have the same energy needs as a cold-blooded creature of the same size.

For instance, a 43kg (6.7 stone) modern-day warm-blooded bird would have the same needs as its 370kg (58 stone) cold-blooded dinosaur ancestor, reports the journal Science Advances. The study says the theropods population rose 30-fold as they profited from growing smaller as endothermy evolved.

'How is it human?'

FROM PAGE 20

to this detention centre will not come back," said Gulam Nabi.

"How is it human to isolate a person from the population, from his family and put him behind these giant walls?" asked Nabi, pointing towards the high walls of the compound.

Besides a hospital, the centre will have a dining area, school, recreational centre, and two separate lodging facilities designated for male and female inmates.

"Male and female inmates will be kept in separate areas divided by a six feet red-coloured wall. There will be 13 male blocks of four storeys each and two female blocks of the same size," Rabindra Das, an engineer with Assam's police housing board and incharge of the construction of the detention facility, told Al Jazeera.

"The entire compound is surrounded by two walls, the inner being 20 feet high, followed by the outer wall six feet high," Das said.

As a security measure, the detention centre has six watchtowers for round-the-clock monitoring, supported by a 100-metre high-beam light.

According to officials at the construction site, the centre was sanctioned by India's federal home ministry in June last year and was supposed to be completed by December. However, the deadline has now been pushed to April this year.

"It is a central government project. We have to finish the entire construction by April," said Das.

While the government has not yet announced a nationwide NRC, a number of detention centres are coming up across the country.

In Assam, which has witnessed a movement against mainly Bangla-speaking migrants for more than four decades, at least six detention centres are already operational.

On December 3, India's Minister

of State for Home Affairs, G Kishan Reddy, in a written response, informed the Parliament that an existing detention centre in Goalpara has 201 inmates, Kokrajhar has 140, Silchar 71, Dibrugarh 40, Jorhat 196, and Tezpur centre holds 322 inmates.

There have been nearly 100 deaths in these centres since 2008, including suicides by the inmates.

In July, another Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai, said all the states have been asked to establish detention centres according to a Model Detention Centre Manual prepared by the government.

On December 22, the southern state of Karnataka opened a centre for undocumented migrants in Nelamangala, some 40km (27 miles) from the capital city of Bengaluru.

An existing government building with six rooms, a kitchen and a security room was turned into a detention centre which can house 24 inmates. Recently, two watchtowers and a compound wall were added to secure the area.

The western state of Goa inaugurated its first detention centre on May 29 last year, while Rajasthan has a centre located inside a federal jail.

Reports said a detention centre in the state of Punjab is expected to be completed by May this year.

In the national capital of New Delhi, a detention centre has been operational since 2006 and is run by the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO).

In the western state of Maharashtra, the previous BJP government identified a piece of land on the outskirts of the financial hub of Mumbai to build a detention centre.

However, current Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who leads a coalition government with the main

opposition Congress and other parties, recently assured the state's Muslims to not worry, indicating that his government may not follow the centre's order on establishing a detention centre.

Reports said the government of West Bengal state also identified two locations - near capital Kolkata and in North 24 Parganas district - to construct detention centres.

But Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, a staunch critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, last week said: "Don't fall for rumours. I am ready to give my life but I will not allow BJP to set up detention camps in [West] Bengal, never."

Kerala, another Indian state governed by a left-wing coalition, also put on hold the identification of land for a proposed detention centre.

Though there are no official figures, India's powerful Home Minister Amit Shah, while addressing an election rally in September 2018, claimed the country has about four million undocumented migrants.

MUSLIMS FEAR NATIONWIDE NRC Among the 1.9 million undocumented migrants who could not make it to the NRC list in Assam, nearly half were Muslims, according to a report by the United Against Hate group.

Now, India's 200 million Muslims fear the process will be implemented across the country by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to marginalise the community.

The passing of the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) last month has aggravated such fears, leading to huge protests across the country and resulting in at least 26 deaths so far.

The CAA grants Indian citizenship to six religious groups, except Muslims, from the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who came to the country

before 2015.

Critics say the law violates India's secular constitution by making religion a basis for citizenship. Muslims, on the other hand, fear the CAA is a precursor to NRC aimed at making their nationality questionable.

Recently, Prime Minister Modi contradicted his home minister by claiming his government never considered a nationwide NRC.

"Since my government has come to power, since 2014 to now, I want to tell [1.3 billion] citizens, there has been no discussion on even the word NRC," Modi said at an election rally in New Delhi.

However, Modi's government has allocated almost \$130bn for creating a National Population Register, which activists say will serve as a database before the NRC is implemented.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused Modi of lying. "The RSS's prime minister is lying to Bharat Mata [Mother India]," Gandhi said in a tweet.

The RSS refers to the far-right Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (or National Association of Volunteers), which draws its inspiration from European Nazis and mentors the ruling BJP.

BJP spokesman Sambit Patra told Al Jazeera that there is "no connection" between setting up of the detention centres and the NRC.

"Don't link it with Muslims. Detention centre is for foreigners who are in India illegally," he said.

But Tanweer Fazal, who teaches political science at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University was not convinced.

"It is an easily understood fact if a non-Muslim gets excluded from NRC, then CAA can be his saviour. So only Muslims are left to go to the detention centres," he told Al Jazeera.



Cumilla Warriors spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman, who returned impressive figures of four for 12 before their game against Sylhet Thunder went into a Super Over, also bowled brilliantly in the tiebreaker to ensure a victory for his side at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

U-19s leave with great expectations

SPORTS REPORTER



With the usual high expectations, the Bangladesh Under-19 team will leave Dhaka today to take part in the ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup, scheduled to begin from January 17 in South Africa. The Akbar Ali-led team will board the flight to Johannesburg at 6:40pm today and are expected to reach their destination on January 4 at 5:30am.

When it comes to the Bangladesh under-19 side, expectations are always high. This time however, expectations are heightened as the young Tigers will head to the sport's biggest age-group event on the back of some impressive performances.

Last year on December 26, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan, who was very optimistic about the squad's strength, said that he would go to South Africa for the first time if the team qualify for the semifinal.

"I think our team can even reach the final. Considering our performance in the recent past and our team combination, I think we have the capability of playing the final. I hope we can oblige and bring the [BCB] president there [South Africa]," said

Akbar during a pre-tour press conference held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

However, both Akbar and coach Naveed Newaz mentioned that they are not thinking so far ahead and will take each match as it comes.

Bangladesh Under-19 have been playing well in the recent past. The young Tigers agonisingly lost by five runs against their Indian counterparts in the final of the Under-19 Asia Cup in September after romping to the final unbeaten.

After that, they recorded a dominant 4-1 series win against hosts New Zealand in September-October. And although Bangladesh drew a two-match youth Test series at home to Sri Lanka in November, they won the five-match youth ODI series 4-0 after the first match was abandoned.

And, given that the team will have time to acclimatise to South African conditions -- a six-day conditioning camp at Potchefstroom, during which time they will play two practice matches before playing two warm-up matches against Australia and New Zealand on January 13 and 15 -- it can be said that a lot will be expected of the young Tigers when they play Zimbabwe in their opening game on January 18 at Senwes Park.

Bopara blitz lifts Rajshahi

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Sylhet



The Sylhet phase was expected to induce more excitement in the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) with more power-hitting on the menu to entertain a larger turnout of fans compared to the Dhaka phase matches.

The first match of the Sylhet leg, between Rajshahi Royals and Rangpur Rangers, did not quite meet expectations with Ravi Bopara later reiterating that it was a difficult pitch to bat on while the turnout was low. There were still a few moments that cheered the crowd in the day game at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

First, it was the Rajshahi opening pair of Afif Hossain and Liton Das who blazed Rajshahi Royals to a fast start before Bopara's unbeaten fifty lifted Rajshahi to a strong 179 for four. In the middle, Shoaib Malik played an important role to set up the 30-run win as Rajshahi restricted Rangpur to 149 for seven, picking up their sixth win in the tournament to take top spot in the seven-team table.

Afif got into his aggressive mould, dominating early on and for some time Liton looked good as well before he once again departed after a bright start, edging a Mustafizur Rahman delivery to the wicket-keeper. Afif followed his opening partner next over, with Mohammad Nabi getting his scalp. Malik came in to steady the innings along with Bopara.

While Malik was removed by Mustafizur, Bopara took charge and picked up the tempo at the end, hitting three consecutive fours in the final over from Mustafizur to remain unbeaten on a 29-ball 50.

Mohammad Naim threatened to cut loose after the exchange but after he was

removed by Malik, the innings slowly withered away in chase of 180, despite a 64-run stand for the fourth wicket between Tom Abell and Fazle Mahmud.

Bopara commended the effort of Malik during a crucial period on what he considered a difficult wicket.

"Some balls were stopping and some were skidding. It was a very difficult pitch to bat on for your first 10 balls. You have to get yourself set and catch up at the back end, but sometimes that can go wrong as well. It was one of those days and I think Shoaib Malik played fantastically to put the innings together and I kept the pressure up," he said at the post-match

SCORES IN BRIEF

RAJSHAHI ROYALS: 179 for 4 in 20 overs (Afif 32, Shoaib 37, Irfan 20, Bopara 50 not out; Mustafizur 2-41)

RANGPUR RANGERS: 149 for 7 in 20 overs (Naim 27, Abell 29, Fazle 34; Nawaz 2-21, Shoaib 2-27, Kamrul 2-32)

Result: Rajshahi won by 30 runs.

Player-of-the-match: Ravi Bopara.

press conference.

Bopara applauded the strong start from Afif and Liton -- 51 runs coming inside five overs -- which allowed him to take his time and explode late.

"If you look at the partnerships they have built, they get to 40-50 runs in the Powerplay and generally we go on to win those games."

He was of the opinion that getting runs in Fizz's last over changed the game.

"We needed a big over at the end and we managed it. It does help the cause if you take the momentum into the second innings so it was a good over," he said.



Ravi Bopara's unbeaten 50 off 29 balls helped Rajshahi Royals reach a 30-run victory against Rangpur Rangers in a BBPL tie at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Looking forward to the BBPL: Amla

Former South Africa batsman Hashim Amla, who announced his retirement from international cricket after a glittering career spanning 15 years, arrived in Bangladesh on Tuesday to play for Khulna Tigers in the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL). Ahead of his maiden foray in the country's domestic circuit, Amla yesterday spoke to reporters in Sylhet about joining Khulna and his international retirement. Amla, regarded as one of the best openers of all time, also said that he looks forward to working with Mushfiquur Rahim, whom he considers to be the most experienced among wicket-keeper around. In addition, the devout Muslim expressed some of his views on Islam. Below are excerpts of the conversation:

SPORTS REPORTER from Sylhet

Question (Q): This will be your first time playing in the BBPL, how did the Khulna deal happen?

Hashim Amla (HA): Obviously, love being here in Bangladesh. Been here a few times over the years and have always loved the atmosphere, especially since the cricket culture is so fantastic that you can feel the electricity on the ground as well. Since my retirement, I have enjoyed playing a few T10 leagues here and there. Then I got the call from Khulna Tigers, asking if I was available. Fortunately, there was a gap in my schedule and so, I'm happy to be here.

Q: You signed for Surrey and then also took over as batting consultant for Cape Town. Are you enjoying this stage of your career, post retirement?

HA: Really enjoying it, every chapter in life is an exciting one. I was fortunate to play international cricket for as long as I did and this is another chapter. Thankfully I got a chance to play in the BBPL this time seeing as due to international commitments, I couldn't be here before, but it's a good time now. I was very keen to be here at the BBPL. The tournament has always been one of those things (of interest) and it is an opportunity to explore a different part of the world. Every country has a unique flavour so the experience playing in the BBPL is something I am really looking forward to.

Q: What does the game of cricket mean to you?

HA: Ever since I was six years old, I have been



with cricket. If you ask someone who is six years old (why they play), the answer would be because they enjoy and love the game. I am blessed to be able to play the game I love. It is very fortunate when someone can do what they love and plus, you get to travel the world. **Q:** You could have played on for longer. What was at the heart of the decision to retire? **HA:** Every international cricketer will tell you, you know yourself when its time. After the World Cup, I took some time and consulted the people close to me. Although there may still be a few years left in my body and I feel fresh and good to go, everything has its time. Everything has to move on and you have to stop at some point. No, I don't miss Test cricket since everyone gets to the stage where you realise you have played enough. I am happy and grateful. Certainly, whatever little value I can add with my experience, I enjoy

sharing it. This is the next chapter and I don't miss international cricket one bit.

Q: How has being a devout Muslim benefited your cricket?

HA: The principles of Islam are very simple. It's hard to explain (how it helped). Everything is not compartmentalized, it's together. I find this question a little repellent, a little weird to be honest. You live your life as best you can and everything else falls into place. It's not about whether it helps your cricket or not but whether you apply yourself based on your faith and do your best in every career that you are in. Whether it helps or not doesn't really cross my mind. I don't want to do something in Islam because it helps my cricket. That would be quite insincere. Practice as best you can and everything falls into place.

Q: What's your evaluation of teammate Mushfiquur Rahim and how would you like to exchange your cricketing knowledge with him?

HA: It comes naturally when you have played against each other for almost 10 years. Mushy has done exceptionally well as a captain and a player. Certainly, one of the best wicket-keeping batsmen around. A handful have been around but he has been there the longest and has the most experience worldwide, I think. He is a fantastic player and to interact with him and share our experience is something I am sure we are both looking forward to.

Q: Which Bangladeshi players do you have the best connection with?

HA: Mushy and Shakib [Al Hasan] and obviously [Mashrafe Bin] Mortaza. In our careers, we have played against each other in the under-19 stage and more.

NZ sweat on ailing Kane and Henry

REUTERS, Sydney

A flu-like bug that has ripped through the New Zealand squad ahead of the third Test against Australia forced captain Kane Williamson and batsman Henry Nicholls to miss training for the second successive day on Thursday.

Tom Latham, who took the captain's news conference in the absence of Williamson, said left-arm spinner Mitch Santner had also been affected by the bug but he was hopeful all three would be fit to play when the Test got underway on Friday.

"It's up in the air at the moment but a couple of the boys are a bit crook unfortunately," Latham told reporters at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

"They're going to have today off as well as yesterday, so fingers crossed tomorrow they'll be right to go.

"I think it's flu-like symptoms, I'm not 100% sure," he added. "It's gone around the team a little bit, which isn't ideal."

Eng look to end age-old drought in Cape Town

Second Test against SA from today

AGENCIES, Cape Town



England will look to end their age-old drought when they take on South Africa in the second Test of four-match series at Newlands in Cape Town on Friday.

"The Three Lions' were thrashed by 107 runs in the opening Test and will be hopeful of a better show in the upcoming contest. However, things aren't going to be easy for them as they are on the wrong side of both form and history.

England last tasted success in Cape Town when there used to be eight deliveries in one over. In the year 1957, Colin Cowdrey starred with the bat in both the innings as England thrashed Proteas by 312 runs. Since then, England haven't come close to tasting success at this picturesque venue.

Not just against England but South Africa hold an impeccable record against almost every Test playing nation at this venue. They have not lost at Newlands since their defeat at the hands of Australia in 1962.

In the last meeting between the two teams in 2016, Ben Stokes thrashed 258 off 198 balls in a brutal display of power hitting, collecting 11 sixes and sharing in a world record sixth wicket partnership

of 399 with Jonny Bairstow (150 off 191 deliveries).

England went into that match 1-0 up in a four-Test series which they went on to win. This time they are the team needing to catch up after losing the opening encounter in Centurion.

South Africa were captained by Hashim Amla, who effectively acknowledged his lack of aptitude for the job by resigning from it after the match despite making a double century of his own to ensure a high-scoring draw.

On this occasion it is England's captain, Joe Root, who is under pressure because of his team's poor recent record away from home.

Newlands in 2016 provided an unusually benign pitch for batsmen, with both teams scoring over 600 in a first innings which only ended late on the fourth day.

It is the only one of the most recent 11 Test matches at Newlands, going back to 2011, to have ended in a draw. South Africa have won nine of the other ten, losing once. Totals over 400 have been rare, with only four instances other than the 2016 run feast.

There is a new groundsman but it seems reasonable to expect a fair contest between bat and ball this time around.



Former cricketer Atik Khan passes away

SPORTS REPORTER

Former national cricketer Abdul Atik Khan breathed his last yesterday at the age of 60 after a cardiac arrest.

Atik had been a member of the Bangladesh squad in the 1986 ICC Trophy in England. He had a distinguished club career, playing for prominent sides like Abahani and Rupali Bank.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) extended its deepest condolences to the family of the former cricketer and prayed for the salvation of his soul through a media release yesterday.

What to WATCH DAY'S EVENT	GTV & MAASRANGA BBPL Dhaka v Khulna Live from 1:30pm Sylhet v Rangpur Live from 6:30pm	BANGLA TV Federation Cup Semifinal Bashundhara v Police Live from 4:00pm	SONY SIX Australia v New Zealand Third Test, Day One Live from 5:30am South Africa v England	Second Test, Day One Live from 2:30pm
	Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National	Stadium, Dhaka Dhaka v Khulna Time: 1:30pm	Sylhet v Rangpur Time: 6:30pm Federation Cup	Semifinal Bashundhara Kings v Bangladesh Police Time: 4:00pm Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium, Dhaka

WHAT NEXT AFTER A DECADE OF SUCCESS?

SABBIR HOSSAIN



In Bangladesh’s sporting landscape over the last decade, female athletes have started to corner a greater portion of the limelight. The age-group successes in women’s football and the significant growth and success of the Bangladesh women’s cricket team on the international stage has been a highlight of the decade if one were to chart the rise of women’s sports in the country over the last 10 years.

There were also names like swimmer Mahfuza Khatun Shila, weightlifter Mabia Akhter Simanta, footballer Sabina Khatun,



After winning the T20 Asia Cup in 2018

woman FIDE master Sharmin Sultana Shirin and archer Ety Khatun, who made our country proud on the international stage with their sporting performances.

Their success and heartwarming stories about how they overcame all barriers to bring laurels for the country have led to a newfound belief among female sporting aspirants. Their rise also reflects the general increase in women’s participation in a wide range of sectors in the country. The girls of Kalsindur Government Primary School were perhaps the first to plant the seed of hope, as they collectively overcame the difficulty of convincing rural parents to let their daughters pursue sport.

On the whole, it has been an encouraging decade in terms of creating a positive vibe in the state of women’s sports in the country, although the road to making sure that there is no discrimination between male and female athletes in terms of pay gaps, facilities and safety at the workplace is still a long one.

While progress made over the last decade is encouraging, a big question remains about whether the existing system encourages females to take up sport as a profession and chase dreams through sport. The last decade’s stories of women’s sport have clearly portrayed

that the successes have come through the athletes’ self-motivation rather than a well-formed system and many impediments seen in earlier decades have remained. Sexual harassment has been a lasting concern in the overall health of women’s sports in the country.

One big positive has been that female athletes, especially cricketers, have started to express their concerns over the huge pay disparity between male and female sportspersons.

It does not sound good when Ritu Moni, an all-rounder of the Bangladesh women’s cricket team, talks about the same old barriers.

“It was not easy for me to become a cricketer from my area. All of my neighbours started to criticise me when they found me playing with male friends. And I had to struggle with poverty, but I am thankful to my brother because he gave me all-out support,” Ritu said, portraying the struggle of female athletes in the country even in the 21st century.



After qualifying for the AFC U-16 Women’s Championship in 2019.

Games... 40 years has passed but we have failed to achieve even that mark... you cannot only judge on the basis of SA Games these days; instead you have to think about where we stand on the Asian stage. We are still relying on individual dedication and sacrifice because the federations are hardly playing a major role.”

Former sportsperson Parvin Nasima Nahar Putul also echoed the sentiment and placed emphasis on a women-friendly infrastructure so that the country could garner more international success through sports.

“How much are we investing in women’s sports? All they achieved, have been through their self-motivation. Why, when women’s sports have done a good job in the last decade, do we not spend more money on them? Financial problems are a major concern and I think the time has come to think about women-friendly infrastructure where female athletes can hone their skills without any barriers. In this new decade we have to think about accommodating more women in managerial capacities,” Putul explained.

Kashfia Feroz, a women’s rights activist who has the experience of working with

IMPEDIMENTS THAT STILL EXIST

- Lack of financial support and investment
- Huge pay gap between male and female athletes
- Lack of women-friendly infrastructure
- Social barriers to freely pursue sport as profession
- Lack of pro-active initiatives from federations
- Reluctance of well-off families to encourage their female child to pursue sport
- Fear of sexual harassment
- Women's sport remains secondary to men's sport

female athletes in the country, appreciated the success of female athletes in the last decade but believed that the country is lagging far behind in terms of gender equality in sport.

“Women have had many successes in sport in the last decade. But have we invested enough, or the amount that they deserve? We are yet to ensure gender equality in sport, which means we are still identifying success



MAHFUZA KHATUN SHILA

on the basis of male and female. We have started to think of sports as a career for male athletes, but is that the case for females? Sport is still considered a hobby for female athletes,” Kashfia said.

“Generally, our female athletes have come from families that are not economically well-off. In my opinion, well-off families or even families in rural areas do not think that sport can be a career for a female child. It’s their power of will that has been pivotal in women proving themselves through sports,” she added.

All of the above comments show that women’s sport has been a major success story over the last 10 years in Bangladesh. But they also ask a pertinent question as we face a new decade: is the success sustainable? Another question is whether the system can catch up to the incredible will the female athletes have displayed. If not, past successes could well be the exception and not the norm.

The successes in 2010s

DHAKA, 2010

Six female athletes won gold medals in single events in Dhaka. The gold medallists were -- Sharmin Akter Ratna in the 10m air rifle category of shooting, Jaw U Pru in the 55kg kata event of karate, Moreom Khatun in 45kg kumite event of karate, Sharmin Farjana Rumi and Shammi Akhter in 46kg and 49kg taekwondo respectively, and Eti Islam in 52kg wushu.

Two gold medals came from team events. The team of Munni Khanom, U Chinu Marma and Jaw U Pru won gold in kata and the team of Syeda Sadia Sultana, Ratna and Tripti Datta won gold in 10m air rifle.

SHILONG-GUWAHATI, 2016

Among the four gold medals Bangladesh won in Shilong-Guwahati SA Games, three of them were won by female athletes. Mahfuza Khatun Shila won two gold medals in 50m and 100m in swimming’s breaststroke category. This was the first time that a Bangladeshi female athlete won two gold medals in the same competition. Mahfuza also became the first female Bangladeshi swimmer to win gold at the SA Games. Weightlifter Mabia Akter Simanta also achieved a historic feat as she became the first female Bangladeshi athlete to win gold in weightlifting.

KATHMANDU-POKHARA, 2019

In 2010, Bangladesh bagged a record 18 gold medals at home. In December last year, a new record was set as they managed to clinch 19 gold medals in Nepal. Six female athletes tasted gold in single events as Bangladesh created history. Mabia once again won gold but this time around, it was in the 76kg category of weightlifting. Fatema Mujib secured gold in the individual sabre in fencing whereas Marzan Akter Priya and Humaira Akhter Antara won gold in the 55kg and 61kg categories respectively in the kumite event of karate. Soma Biswas clinched gold in the single archery compound event while Ety Khatun won gold in the single archery recurve event. In the women’s recurve team event, Ety, Monira Akter and Beauty Roy claimed gold whereas the team consisting of Sushmita Banik, Shyamoli Roy and Soma won gold in the team compound event. Ety and Sushmita also won gold in the mixed recurve and mixed compound events respectively. Ety created history as the 14-year old girl clinched three golds in a single tournament. Apart from these successes, the Bangladesh women’s cricket team, led by Salma Khatun, also won gold.

CRICKET

Almost a year before the men’s team could clinch their first ever international trophy, the women’s team won the T20 Asia Cup in 2018, defeating a strong Indian side in a nail-biting finish in Malaysia.

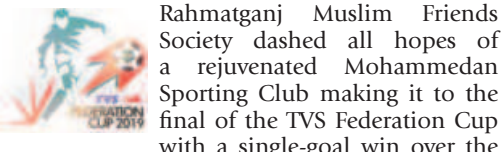
FOOTBALL

Even though the senior team failed, the age-group teams fared brilliantly in the latter parts of the recently ended decade. The U-15 team clinched the SAFF U-15 Championship on home soil in 2017 before the U-18 team won the SAFF U-18 Women’s Championship in Bhutan the next year.

Bangladesh were the hosts of the U-19 Bangamata International Gold Cup in 2019 and the women’s team reached the final. But due to cyclonic storm, the match was postponed and later Bangladesh and the other finalists, Laos, were declared joint champions. Bangladesh also qualified for the 2017 and 2019 AFC U-16 Women’s Championship. Both tournaments were held in Thailand. In the latest edition the women’s team earned their first point in the history of the tournament when they held mighty Australia to a 2-2 draw.

Rahmatganj advance to finals

SPORTS REPORTER



10-time champions in a semifinal encounter at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

In doing so, Rahmatganj penned a piece of history as this will be the first time that the Old Dhaka outfit will feature in the final of the season’s curtain raising tournament since its inception in 1980.

Uzbekistani forward Turaev Akobir separated the sides with a 16th minute header and the solitary goal proved decisive as Rahmatganj held on to the slender lead to secure a win.

With the Black and Whites eliminated, all six former Federation Cup champions have made their exits from the tournament and so, this year’s Federation Cup will see a new champion crowned on Sunday. The second semifinal, to be played today at the same venue, will feature

POLICE TAKE ON KINGS TODAY

On our side we are calm and confident as our players are showing positive signs which makes us think we are on the right track to once again be in the tournament final.

BASHUNDHARA KINGS COACH OSCAR BRUZON

We can’t compare our team with Bashundhara in terms of squad strength. They even have quality players who can change the game on their bench.

BANGLADESH POLICE COACH NICOLAS VITOROVIC



Rahmatganj players celebrate after securing their maiden Federation Cup final berth with a 1-0 win over Mohammedan SC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

favourites Bashundhara Kings and newcomers Bangladesh Police.

Rahmatganj succeeded against a spirited Mohammedan side by executing their existing strategy of high-pressing football, just as Mohammedan had done in their last four matches. Syed Golam Jilani’s charges pressed hard from the outset and took the lead from a puzzled Mohammedan in the 16th minute through Akobir, who scored a glancing header off Shahedul Alam cross from the right flank past goalkeeper Suzan Hossain.

Afterwards, it was the Mohammedan show as the Black and Whites did everything right, other than score an equaliser that is, with the charges of English coach Sean Lane failing to crack a solid Rahmatganj backline marshalled by Acpopob Asrarov, Guinean Camara Younoussa, Mahmudul Hasan Kiran and Nahidul Islam Nahid.

The last time Mohammedan played in the Federation Cup final was in 2009.

“Our target was to reach the final with an outright win and we did it,” coach Jilani said. “We know Mohammedan plays pressing football and today our plan was to press harder them in the first 15 minutes and the boys carried out the plan perfectly and we got the result. Then, we tried to defend the lead and the backline executed the plan really well.”

Mohammedan coach Lane was frustrated with the outcome but is still proud of the performance his charges put up.

“Obviously it is quite disappointing. For the first 15 minutes, we did not turn up. We slept, they scored a goal and then they defended very well. And although we tried to come back in every way, their defence was solid. You can’t win a match at such a level if you sleep for first 15 minutes,” said Lane.

Pogba suffers fresh setback

AFP, London

Paul Pogba will undergo surgery on a recurring ankle injury and is expected to spend another month on the sidelines, Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer confirmed after his side’s 2-0 defeat to Arsenal on Wednesday.

The French World Cup winner made his comeback after nearly three months out in a 2-0 defeat at Watford 10 days ago. and also made an appearance off the bench in a 4-1 thrashing of Newcastle four days later.

“We’ve had scans and it’s nothing major, it’s something that has to be sorted and dealt with. He’s been advised to do it as soon as possible,” said Solskjaer.

Saif SC part ways with Nizam

SPORTS REPORTER

Saif Sporting Club axed Maldivian head coach Mohammad Nizam following the team’s poor performance both on and off the field throughout the ongoing Federation Cup, confirmed Saif SC managing director Nasiruddin Chowdhury yesterday.

Saif SC were eliminated from the quarterfinal stage of the tournament with a massing 3-1 defeat at the hands of newcomers Bangladesh Police FC on December 31.

“The club management is not happy with his [Nizam’s] performance in the Federation Cup. Especially his performance was not good off-the-field in terms the disciplinary ground, which had an impact on the team. That’s why we terminated his contract today,” Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Nizam, who signed on for the current season, is scheduled to fly out from the capital today.

“We have a lot of CVs from coaches from different parts of the world and we are expecting to pick one within the next week,” said Chowdhury, adding that they cleared all their dues with Nizam as per the contract.



PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal secured a 2-0 win over Manchester United in the English Premier League at the Emirates Stadium on Wednesday. Nicolas Pepe opened the scoring in the eighth minute while Sokratis Papastathopoulos added the second just three minutes before half-time.



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SHAH
CEMENT

Dui Takar Bank doing work worth millions

Funds run with Tk 2 from every student at a Dinajpur school slashing dropout rates

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Mehrunnesa, a seventh grader at Sharodeshwari Girls High School in Dinajpur, stopped attending classes as her parents could not buy her a uniform.

She might have dropped out if the “Dui Takar Bank” (Two Taka Bank, if translated into English) was not in place. One of Mehrunnesa’s teachers went to her place with money from the bank and bought her a uniform.

The incident is not an isolated one in Sharodeshwari Girls High School where the Dui Takar Bank is playing a pivotal role in curbing dropout rates.

Launched in the beginning of this year, Dui Takar Bank is a fund where every student donates at least Tk 2 every month. At present there are 710 students studying in grades III to X.

“It was the end of 2018 when an SSC candidate failed to fill up the registration form because he was short of Tk 100. This incident moved me,” said Mosaddek Hossain, a teacher who initiated the system.

“The students have been contributing duly. Tk 30,000 were raised this year of which Tk 20,000 has been spent for buying shoes, uniforms, schoolbags, notebooks, calculators etc for students who are from destitute families,” said Ratan Kumar Roy, headmaster of the school.

So far, 50 students had derived benefits of the bank and the dropout rate had also gone down, he told this paper.

“The dropout rates have been alarmingly high in the previous years as most of the students here are from underprivileged families, like those of

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Students of Sharodeshwari Girls High School in Dinajpur make handicrafts. The money made from those will go into the “Dui Takar Bank”, which is used to provide financial assistance to students who need it for their education.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

‘ATTACK ON COPS’ 600 BNP, JCD men sued, 29 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Police have filed a case against 75 Chhatra Dal, Jubo Dal, and Swachhasebok Dal men over attacking law enforcers in Bogura town’s Khokon Park area on Wednesday.

Some 500-600 unnamed people have also been accused in the case.

Law enforcers picked up 29 people in connection with the case in the last two days.

Yesterday, a Bogura court sent the arrestees to jail after they were produced before it.

At least 11 people, including five policemen, were injured in a clash between Chhatra Dal men and police in Bogura town’s Khokon Park area on Wednesday over walking on the Shaheed Minar wearing shoes.

The JCD men had gathered in the area to join a programme marking the 41th founding anniversary of the organisation.

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ILLEGAL BORDER CROSSINGS 445 Bangladeshis returned from India in 2 months

BGB chief allays concern

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 445 Bangladeshis were detained in the last two months while returning home from India without any travel documents.

Director General of Border Guard Bangladesh Maj Gen Md Shafeenul Islam said this at a press conference at the BGB headquarters yesterday.

He also mentioned that 1,102 people were detained last year while illegally crossing the Indo-Bangla border. They included 258 women and 235 children.

At least 253 cases were filed for trespassing during the period, he added.

Shafeenul was briefing reporters on the December 25-30 director general-level conference between the BGB and India’s Border Security Force in New Delhi.

Asked whether the BGB was concerned over the recent border crossings, he said they were not worried as the intruders were Bangladeshis.

“They are all Bangladeshis and went to India in search of jobs,” said the DG, adding that local union parishad chairmen had verified their identities.

“We are always on guard to prevent

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

No lease if it harms forest

HC directs the govt to preserve, protect all forests of the country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No forest land, reserve or not, can be allocated or leased out if that could damage the country’s forest, the High Court said yesterday.

It also directed the government to protect and preserve all the forests.

Delivering the verdict on a writ petition, the court ordered the authorities concerned not to lease any land of the forest classified under section-4 of the Forest Act-1927 to any shipbreaking yard.

The HC also declared illegal a lease agreement under which the deputy commissioner of Chattogram leased out 7.1 acres of forest land to BBC Steel Ltd, a shipbreaking company, at Uttar Salimpur under Sitakunda Police Station.

On December 26, 2018, the agreement was signed and renewed on March 21 last year.

The HC bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Khandaker Diliruzzaman delivered the judgment after Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) filed a writ petition challenging the agreement.

Details of the HC observation and grounds on which the verdict was delivered could not be known as its full text was not released yesterday.

After getting the lease, BBC Steel Ltd cut some trees there and built a road to establish a shipbreaking yard, Sayeed Ahmed Kabir, a lawyer for Bela, told The Daily Star.

On April 28 last year, Bela filed the petition with the HC seeking necessary order on the government to protect and preserve the forest area at Uttar Salimpur.

The HC on May 13 issued a rule asking the authorities concerned of the

SEE PAGE 17 COL 6

Sudan tribal fighting kills 48

AFF, Khartoum

At least 48 people were killed and more than 200 wounded in tribal fighting in Sudan’s strife-torn Darfur, the Red Crescent said yesterday.

The armed clashes broke out on Sunday night in El Geneina, capital of West Darfur state, and continued until Monday between Arab and African tribes during which several houses were torched, it said.

At least 48 people were killed and their bodies transferred to a morgue in the city and 241 wounded, including 19 in critical condition who were flown to Khartoum for treatment, it said in a statement.

“This morning the situation is calm,” it said, adding that several homes had been torched.

The Khartoum government imposed a curfew across West Darfur on Monday and has

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Dinosaurs shrank in size, paving the way for mammals



MAIL ONLINE

Dinosaurs played a key role in humans’ evolution by paving the way for warm-blooded mammals, researchers believe.

Over millions of years the majestic beasts gradually shrank in size while adapting to have a higher metabolism.

This evolutionary process allowed dinosaurs to burn energy from food at a faster rate and regulate their own body temperature – leading the population to flourish.

Warm-blooded animals need a lot more energy than cold-blooded creatures such as reptiles and fish, which rely on environmental heat sources. However, they can live in a wider geographic range and have greater mobility and brain power.

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Boy’s body found in almirah

Two madrasa teachers held

UNB, Gazipur

Police yesterday arrested two madrasa teachers for their alleged involvement in killing a four-year-old student in Gazipur’s Kaliganj upazila.

The arrestees were Jonayed Ahmed, 30, and Khairul Islam, 25, teachers of Morash Jamiatul Madrasa and Orphanage in the upazila.

Quoting locals, Mizanul Haque, officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station,

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 3

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:30 4:00 5:30 7:00
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:35 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



OF RINGS AND WINGS

A little ringed plover, a common sight during the winter, in Chapainawabganj’s Namorajampur. For some, it appears bespectacled, while it reminds others of old-timey bandits. Either way, its unique appearance is sure to leave a mark. The bird is usually seen in low-lying areas, near waterbodies. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN

‘How is it human?’

India readies detention centres amid anxieties over a nationwide citizens’ count

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Ali, 25, is an electrician working at India’s largest detention centre currently under construction in Assam state’s Goalpara district in northeast India.

As he takes a break from his work to rest in front of the centre’s hospital block, a thought occurs to him.

“Today I am working here. Tomorrow, it could be a jail for my brother-in-law,” he says. “It will ruin my sister’s family.”

Ali’s brother-in-law failed to make it to the National Register of Citizens (NRC), a list published in Assam this year which declared 1.9 million people as “illegal” migrants, who now face either detention in a camp like the one coming up at Goalpara, or deportation.

Spread around nearly 300,000 square feet (28,000 square metres or 2.8 hectares) of land, the detention centre in Goalpara’s Matia village, 126km (78 miles) from state capital Dispur, can house 3,000 people.

The centre is situated in a remote area of Goalpara with open land on its three sides and a road linking it to the main city of Guwahati in the front.

On one side, the road to the detention centre passes through what is known as the “ghost” mountain.

According to local residents, legend has it that ghosts used to rule the mountain centuries ago and no human was allowed to cross it.

“I feel it is the same situation here. Any person who goes

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