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'We sleep fearing another fire'

Says traumatised Rohingya refugee of Balukhali camp

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, from Cox's Bazar

Five kilometres away from the fire that erupted at Camp-8(E), Meer Kashem was watching the smoke billow on the horizon from his home in Balukhali's West Para in Cox's Bazar on Monday.

He never thought that he or his family, their belongings, were under any danger from that distant blaze.

"That's why I was relaxed. I did not think of taking out our precious possessions from our home. Suddenly, I saw flames rising out of the rice warehouse just a few yards away. Terrified, I immediately left my home with my family," he told The Daily Star.

He said he had no idea how the fire started but later locals handed three people they saw pouring petrol on the fire over to police.

His claim was echoed by Md Rafique, village police of Palongkhali union parishad of Ukhiya upazila.

"All of a sudden, we saw that there were fires in three spots near us. The fire did not come from camp-8 which is kilometres away from our home. It was set ablaze by some miscreants," he said.

Abdul Amin, another local resident of West Para of Balukhali told The Daily Star that the three spots where they saw the fires originate included the western corner of Boli Bazar, the southern corner of the village close to Boli Bazar and the rice warehouse at West Balukhali.

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Rohingyas setting up temporary shelters at Balukhali camp in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya after a massive fire raged through it on Monday, killing 11 people and reducing 10,000 homes to ashes. International aid agencies provide them with materials like bamboo, tarpaulin and corrugated iron sheets to help rebuild their homes. The photo was captured yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA YOUSUF

Mysterious fire destroys 100-acre orchard

People protesting building of 5-star hotel there affected

SANJOY KUMAR BARRUA, Bandarban

A devastating fire yesterday destroyed an 100-acre orchard of the Mro community who have been protesting the construction of a luxury hotel in Naitong area of Bandarban.

People of the underprivileged community said somebody must have deliberately set their farms on fire. However, officials have yet to find out the exact cause.

Of the 59 families in Ramri Para, about 40 have been seriously affected by this fire, locals said.

Chong Mro, a resident of the area, said the 40 families have been participating in the demonstrations against the construction of a five-star hotel in the area.

Chong Mro said, "We are an 11-member family. We live off the orchard. I don't

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GANG RAPE IN BEGUMGANJ 13 accused indicted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A Noakhali court yesterday farmed charges against 13 persons in a case filed over the gang-rape and torture of a woman in the district's Begumganj upazila.

The district's Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-1 Judge Jainal Abedin came up with the verdict yesterday noon after a hearing.

The indicted persons are Noor Hossain Badal, Abdul Rahim, Mohammad Ali alias Abul Kalam, Israfil Hossain Miah, Moyeen Uddin Sazu, Shamsuddin Sumon, Abdul Rob Chowdhury, Mostafizur Rahman Arif, Jamal Uddin, Noor Hossain Russel, Mizanur Rahman Tareq, Anwar Hossain Sohag and Delwar Hossain.

However, another accused Sohag Member was acquitted from the case.

Nine of the indicted persons were present in the court yesterday, while four others were on the run, said the tribunal's public prosecutor (PP) Mamunur Rashid Lavlu.

The tribunal also set the date April 18 for recording deposition, he informed.

A gang of criminals brutally tortured a woman entering her house in the upazila on September 2.

Footage of the incident went viral on social media on October 2 last year.

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ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

The gates of hell cast open

MARCH 25, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU'S LAST PRESS STATEMENT

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in a press statement issued today called for a general strike throughout Bangladesh on March 27 against the army's action in certain places in East Pakistan including Saidpur, Rangpur and Joydebpur.

He also expressed concern over the regrettable delay in resolving the crisis politically and termed it as "unfortunate". He said if a "political solution is desired" by President Yahya Khan and his advisers they should "realise that it was for them to take matters immediately, to a conclusion, and that to delay this would expose the country and its people to grave hazards".

Referring to attempts to divide Bangalees and Mohajirs, Bangabandhu said, "What is more reprehensible is that certain elements have been deployed by the anti-people



forces to foment tension between locals and 'non-locals'."

He added, "I have repeatedly reaffirmed that all those who live in Bangladesh, regardless of their place of origin or the language they speak, are our people, and they should consider themselves as such and take full part in the struggle for emancipation of Bangladesh. Their life, property and honour are our sacred trust."

The statement ended with the call, "Our movement shall go forward. The directives issued on 14th March 1971, shall continue in force, subject to the clarification issued from time to time."

THE DEADLIEST NIGHT 11:00am, March 25. Major General Khadim Hussain's

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Dhaka, Thimpu agree to boost connectivity, trade power

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Bhutan have reached a consensus to enhance connectivity as well as trade in electricity, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said yesterday.

"We have focused on connectivity. Bhutan wants direct flights from Bangladesh," he said at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital, following a meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Bhutanese counterpart Dr Lotay Tshering.

Tshering arrived on Tuesday to join the celebrations of Mujib Borsho and golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence.

Momen said passenger trains on Chilahati-Haldibari route will be starting soon, and that route can be linked to Bhutan via India. "We will make the proposal to

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Largest art canvas sells for \$62m



AFP, Dubai

Work by British artist Sacha Jafri consisting of the world's largest painting on canvas has been sold for \$62 million at an auction in Dubai, organisers said on Tuesday.

The "Journey of Humanity" is split into 70 framed sections spanning 1,595.76 square metres (17,176 square feet) -- equivalent to nearly four basketball courts.

Organisers said in a statement that the work sold for \$62 million, double the amount targeted, with the money going to charities helping children.

Andre Abdoune, a French national residing in Dubai -- one of the seven emirates that make up the UAE -- bought all 70 segments on Monday at

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JOURNO KAJOL Cops press charges in case filed under DSA

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday took into cognisance charges pressed against photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol "for publishing indecent, defamatory, objectionable and fake information" about ministers, lawmakers, and Jubo Mahila League leaders on Facebook.

The Cyber Tribunal will hold a hearing on charge framing against Kajol on April 22, Shamim Al Mamun, bench assistant of the tribunal, told The Daily Star.

Earlier in the day, the tribunal granted Kajol's bail in the case.

Usmin Ara Beli, a member of the central committee of Bangladesh Jubo Mahila League, a wing of the ruling Awami League, had filed the case with

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FB POST ON MINISTER Two BCL leaders sued under DSA in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Two Chhatra League leaders were sued under the Digital Security Act in Narayanganj for spreading "false information and rumour" on Facebook about Textiles and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi.

They are Ashfaqul Islam Tusher, vice president of Kayetpara union BCL unit, and its organising secretary Ashrafal Alam Jemin.

Mozammel Haque, manager (administration) of Gazi Group, filed the case

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To avoid a traffic jam, two people getting a motorcycle to the other side of a road over the central reservation in the capital's Hatirjheel yesterday while some other motorcyclists are seen standing behind to do the same.

PHOTO: PRABIR DA

'Double mutant' Covid variant found in India

Daily deaths at year's high as nations battle new surges

AGENCIES

India has detected a new "double mutant variant" of the novel coronavirus yesterday, as the pandemic has taken a turn for the worse in many nations with known infections worldwide crossing 124 million and death toll passing 2.7 million.

The new variant is an addition to the several "variants of concern" (VOC) that have already been found in at least 18 states in India, the health ministry said.

Genome sequencing and analysis of 206 samples from Maharashtra state found mutations in the new variant of the virus that do not match previously catalogued VOC.

"Though VOCs and a new double mutant variant have been found in India, these have not been detected in numbers sufficient to either establish a direct relationship or explain the rapid increase in cases in some states," the ministry said in a statement.

The new variant was also detected in nine samples in the capital New Delhi, the director of the National Centre for Disease Control, Sujeet Kumar Singh, told a news conference.

India has already reported several cases of a variant first detected in Britain, as well as ones first found in South Africa and Brazil.

Yesterday, the country recorded 47,262 new infections over the previous 24-hour period, the highest since early November, taking its overall tally to 11.7 million. Only the United States and Brazil have higher caseloads.

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PRAYER TIMING MARCH 25

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:45 12:45 4:45 6:20 7:45
JAMAAT 5:20 1:15 5:00 6:25 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION