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"Alongside increasing capacity of the government organization, it is necessary to ensure their accountability."
 CONVENER OF THE 19-MEMBER PROBE COMMITTEE ON NARAYANGANJ FIRE JYOTIRMOY BARUA

"We want to have good relations with the US and the world. We welcome good diplomatic relations with them all."
 TALIBAN SPOKESPERSON ZABIHULLAH MUJAHID ON US TROOPS PULL OUT

"The military mission is over; a new diplomatic mission has begun... Any legitimacy and any support will have to be earned."
 US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN ON TALIBAN

XULHAZ-TONROY MURDER

Killers' goal was to gag free speech

Court says handing death penalty to 6 Ansar al Islam operatives

"The accused do not deserve any sympathy. The role of any of the accused cannot be taken lightly."

JUDGE OF ANTI-TERRORISM SPECIAL TRIBUNAL OF DHAKA



CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

The common goal of the Ansar al Islam militants who killed LGBT rights activist Xulhaz Mannan and his friend Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy was to clamp down on people's freedom of expression and independent activities by creating terror in the country.

Judge Md Majibur Rahman of Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal of Dhaka made the observation yesterday while handing down death sentence to six members of the banned militant outfit for killing Xulhaz, a former employee of USAID, and Tonoy on

April 25, 2016.

"The accused do not deserve any sympathy. The role of any of the accused in the murder cannot be taken lightly," the judge said in his observation on the verdict, adding that justice will be served only if they are hanged.

The judge said the accused labelled the victims as associates of homosexuals and brutally murdered them as per a decision of the militant outfit.

Xulhaz and Tonoy had to pay with their lives as they worked to establish the homosexuals in the society, he said.

Those sentenced to death are: Syed

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A STRANGER TO REMORSE ... Asadullah, one of the six found guilty of the murder of Xulhaz Mannan and Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy and sentenced to death, gets off a prison van in front of a Dhaka court before the delivery of the verdict yesterday. The member of banned militant outfit Ansar al Islam was all smiles and showed no sign of repentance.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BNP'S FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY

No direction out of slump

Plagued by leadership crisis, BNP keeps struggling amid govt high-handedness

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

With its ailing Chairperson Khaleda Zia cooped up in her house away from all political activities and acting chairman Tarique Rahman abroad, the BNP is struggling to find its way back to a strong political footing.

The party is actually passing the toughest time since its inception four decades ago.

Some of its leaders said the absence of the two top leaders in active party politics is the main barrier to overcoming the organisational weaknesses and inertia and making a turnaround. Many others, however, blame what they say is the government's strategy to throttle the opposition party.



Amid these bleak circumstances, the BNP is observing its 43rd founding anniversary today.

Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, professor of Government and Politics at Jahangirnagar University, said the party has long been in a slump mainly due to its leadership crisis and failure to work many issues of public interest in its favour.

"It seems it has failed to play its role as a responsible political party in mobilising public opinions. Also, there is no democracy in its organisational structure," he observed.

Nurul Amin Bepari, former chairman of Dhaka University's political science

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Firdausi Qadri honoured with Magsaysay Award



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Firdausi Qadri, a Bangladeshi scientist instrumental in the development of vaccines that have saved millions of lives, has been honoured with the Ramon Magsaysay Award.

She will be conferred with the award at a ceremony on November 28 at the Ramon Magsaysay Center in Manila, said a press release of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation.

The board of trustees of the

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They raced against time and won

148 female Afghan students of a Chattogram university flee Taliban, now in Middle East en route to Bangladesh

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

The story of how 148 Afghan female students of a university in Bangladesh managed to flee the Taliban-controlled Kabul can be used as the plot of a Hollywood thriller.

The students of Chattogram's Asian University for Women AUW had been in Afghanistan amid the pandemic. But as the Taliban took over the country in mid-August, their return to Bangladesh became uncertain.

Students, alumnae members, and donors have been raising funds for their evacuation.

AUW student Sephra Azami led six other students to contact everyone and asked them to be at designated locations from where they could be picked up, said a newsletter of the university.

They also arranged buses that would pick up the students and take them to Hamid Karzai International Airport.

They used WhatsApp to communicate with each other. Each contingent of students were asked to quickly go to the designated locations to board their assigned bus.

A total of seven buses were used. Each bus was staffed by an unarmed security person as well as a driver who was to negotiate at the checkpoints to secure clearance, said AUW sources, adding that the buses were stocked with water and food and power banks.

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Afghanistan now 'a free nation'

Taliban celebrate as US makes 'humiliating' exit

AGENCIES

Celebratory gunfire resounded across the Afghan capital yesterday as the Taliban took control of the airport following the withdrawal of the last US troops, marking the end of a 20-year war that left the Islamist group stronger than it was in 2001.

Shaky video footage distributed by the Taliban showed fighters entering the airport after the last US troops flew out on a C-17 aircraft a minute before midnight, ending a hasty and humiliating exit for Washington and its Nato allies.

"It is a historical day and a historical moment," Taliban spokesman

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Pori Moni granted bail



COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted ad-interim bail to actor Pori Moni in a narcotics case.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka issued the bail order upon a bond of Tk 50,000 with two guarantors.

The court passed the order after holding a long hearing where the prosecutors and her lawyers placed arguments, court sources said.

Pori's lawyer Mojibur Rahman said the court delivered the order taking his client's illness, age and good reputation in the film industry into consideration.

With the order, there is no legal bar to her release, he said.

The bail order will be

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Flouting health safety rules, expatriates from different districts through the Covid-19 vaccination booth at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital in the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar yesterday. Although they registered beforehand, they had to wait at the centre for about an hour to get jabs.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES US congressional body reviews role of law enforcers

2 organisations ask for sanctions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A US congressional body, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, yesterday held a virtual briefing on the role of law enforcement agencies in cases of enforced disappearances in Bangladesh.

The commission is a caucus body of the US House of Representatives whose motive is to "promote, defend and advocate internationally recognised human rights norms in a nonpartisan manner, both in and outside of Congress".

At the briefing, the caucus received formal submissions from Human Rights Watch, Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, Asia Human Rights Commission and Maayer Daak, a platform of family members and relatives of victims of enforced disappearances. Two of the organisations recommended sanctions be imposed on Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Ambassador to the US M Shahidul Islam sent a letter to the chairs of the commission on Monday protesting the briefing.

Angelita Baeyens, vice president of the international advocacy and litigation department at Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, called for Rab officials to be banned from UN peacekeeping missions.

"We want to ask that the vetting policy in the UN is strengthened so that members of the Rab are not allowed in the peacekeeping missions," said Baeyens.

She spoke about the partnership between the US and Bangladesh and said it is possible that this support is used for law enforcement agencies that commit human rights

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