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## ‘Our target is to retain the trophy’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The eighth edition of the Women’s Asia Cup begins today with defending champions and hosts Bangladesh taking on Thailand at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in Sylhet.

The game is slated to begin at 9:00am before the opening day’s second fixtures sees India take on Sri Lanka from 1:30pm at the same venue.

Fresh off an imperious campaign in the 2023 World Cup Qualifiers in the UAE, the Tigresses will aim to defend the trophy they won by beaten India in a close contest in Kuala Lumpur in 2018. Captain Nigar Sultana Joty said they were not taking any added pressure as hosts,

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The captains of the seven participating teams pose with the trophy of the Women’s Asia Cup, which kicks off in Sylhet today. Bangladesh, the defending champions, will take on Thailand in the day’s first match at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium before six-time champions India square off against Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: ACC

## MATARBARI POWER PLANT

# 2 units to start production in January 2024

Project director tells JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox’s Bazar

The first unit of the Matarbari Coal-Powered Plant in Cox’s Bazar will go into commercial production in January 2024, the project director told the parliamentary standing committee on environment, forest and climate change.

The unit, part of the first phase of the project, has a capacity of generating 1200MW, according to the website of Coal Power Generation Company Bangladesh Ltd, which is implementing the project.

On Thursday, members of the parliamentary committee, led by lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury, visited the power plant to see its progress and the steps it has taken to tackle the projected pollution from the coal-fired plant.

In a meeting later that day between the parliamentary committee members and project authorities, Abul Kalam, director of the project, said measures to contain pollution, like using Ultra Super Critical Technology, have been taken.

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## ‘QURAN DESECRATION’

# Probes in 12 cases at the final stage

UNB, Cumilla

Police are on the verge of completing probes into the 12 cases filed over the alleged desecration of the Holy Quran at a mandap during Durga puja in Cumilla city last year that triggered violence and led to attacks on Hindus.

On October 13 last year, a man, named Iqbal Hossain, allegedly placed the Quran on the lap of an idol at the mandap while another accused, Ikram, called the national emergency helpline -- 999 -- to inform it.

The incident that went viral on various social media platforms led to violence and attacks on temples and vandalisation of houses and shops of the Hindu community in several districts, including Cumilla, Chandpur, Noakhali, Chattogram and Rangpur.

It left at least eight people dead and many others injured.

All the 12 cases were subsequently lodged in Cumilla. They are being probed by different law enforcement agencies, including police, the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) and Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

“Of the six cases under the CID, charge sheets have already been submitted in five,” said Md Zakir Hossain, superintendent of Cumilla CID.

Out of the four cases under its investigation, PBI has submitted a charge sheet against one person in a case. PBI officials said probes in the remaining three cases are also at the final stages.

Abdul Mannan, superintendent of Cumilla police, said they have

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## KABUL EDUCATION CENTRE

# Suicide blast kills 23

Most of them young women; 36 wounded

CNN ONLINE

A suicide bomb attack on an education centre in Kabul has killed at least 23 people, most of whom are believed to be young women, in the latest sign of the deteriorating security situation in the Afghan capital.

The explosion took place yesterday at the Kaaj education centre, in a predominantly Hazara neighborhood -- an ethnic minority group that has long faced oppression.

Students were taking a practice university entrance exam at 7:30am, local time when the blast first took place, Kabul Police Spokesman Khalid Zadran told CNN.

Abdu Ghayas Momand, a doctor from Ali Jinah Hospital, where some of the victims were taken, said 23 people had been killed and 36 more injured. There has been no claim of responsibility for the attack.

Taiba Mehtarkhil, an eyewitness, told CNN many of the casualties were young women. She had gone to the centre to look for her friend after she heard news of the attack and was confronted with scenes of chaos and despair, she said.

“I saw parents, other members of the families of the Kaaj students, screaming and running up and down,” she said. “Some were trying to get emergency medical attention to their loved ones and

some others were looking for their sons and daughters. I saw around 20 killed and many more wounded with my own eyes.”

Mehtarkhil’s friend survived the attack as she was running late and hadn’t reached the classroom when the blast occurred, she said.

Another eyewitness, a 20-year-old who did not want to be named for security

reasons, told CNN she was about 20 steps from the gate when the explosion threw her to the ground.

“When I got inside, I saw many of my classmates in blood. I found out that the explosion had happened inside my classroom,” she said.

“I was in a state of shock. I was just screaming my friends’ names and searching for them. I found some of them alive, but not my closest friend who was

19, and the most intelligent girl in our class,” she said.

Her classroom is the largest in the centre and normally fits about 500 male and female students, she said.

“It is horrible, I am still in shock, it feels like a nightmare. It killed many of my dearest friends and classmates. I want the world not to treat this as another news piece. I want the world to know the pain we are going through right now. I am totally devastated,” she said.

Taliban spokesman Zabullah Mujahid condemned the attack in a tweet yesterday.

In a tweet, Unicef said it was “appalled by the horrific attack”.

“This heinous act claimed the lives of dozens of adolescent girls and boys and severely injured many more,” it said.

“Violence in or around education establishments is never acceptable. Such places must be havens of peace where children can learn, be with friends, and feel safe as they build skills for their futures.”

The United States said it “strongly condemned the attack” in a statement on Twitter.

Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, condemned the attack, tweeting:

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## 12,000-year-old elephant remains discovered in Chile

CNN ONLINE

Gomphotheres, an extinct relative of the modern elephant, roamed southern Chile thousands of years ago and might have been the target of group hunts by inhabitants of the region, Chilean scientists hypothesize after a recent discovery.

Scientists recently uncovered several Gomphotheres remains dating back 12,000 years near Lake Tagua Tagua, a glacial finger lake, in southern Chile.

The large creatures weighed up to four tonnes and could reach three metres (9.8 feet), leading scientists to believe that they were the target of group hunts from inhabitants in the region.

“The hypothesis we’re working with is that it’s about hunting, hunting events,” said Carlos Tornero, an archaeologist working on the site. “We think this because the Gomphotheres is a very large animal and dangerous and it probably required several people (to hunt).”

Scientists say the discovery will also allow them to study the wider human impact on the region and how a changing climate affected animals in the area during that time.

“We can get a lot of information from here, for example with regards to climate change, how it affected animals,” said Elisa Calas, an archaeologist also working on the site.

## 734 women, children raped in last 9 months

### Says Ain o Salish Kendra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the last nine months, 734 women and children were raped across the country, said rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra.

Of them, 34 were killed after rape while seven others died by suicide.

Besides, 209 women and men fell victim to sexual violence, it added.

During the period, 44 boys were raped, while the offender killed a boy after failing to rape, the ASK said in a report yesterday. A total of 1,278 children were murdered and subjected to various forms of torture.

At least 15 people lost their lives at the hands of law enforcers.

Three of them were killed in “gunfights” and seven were tortured to death. One died from heart failure and three after falling sick and another died by suicide in police custody.

Four people were abducted by law enforcers in plainclothes, said the report based on information published in various national dailies.

Meanwhile, 58 people were killed and 5,400 others injured in 387 incidents of political violence, including those during elections to different local government bodies, in the last nine months.

Criminals attacked 12 houses and business establishments of the Hindu community in two

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A worshipper reading a scripture in front of a lavishly adorned puja mandap in the capital’s Khamarbari yesterday. Last-minute preparations were going on to celebrate Durga Puja, the biggest Hindu festival, which will start with Shashthi Puja today.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## CONGRESS PRESIDENT POLLS Kharge, Tharoor, Tripathi file nominations

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The stage was set yesterday for a three-way race for the post of President of India’s main opposition party Congress with senior leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Shashi Tharoor and KN Tripathi filing their nominations for the October 17 elections to decide who will replace Sonia Gandhi.

More than 9,100 Congress delegates are eligible to cast their votes in the October 17 election. The result will be announced on October 19.

As things stand, 80-year-old Kharge appears emerging a favourite as he is thought to be enjoying the tacit blessings of the Gandhi family.

What has further strengthened Kharge’s candidature is that his nomination papers were signed by a number of members from the Group of 23 leaders comprising Anand Sharma, Prithviraj Chavan, Manish Tewari and Bhupinder Hooda who have called for organizational changes.

Kharge is a hardcore loyalist of the Gandhi family. If elected, he will be the second AICC president from Karnataka after S Nijalingappa, and also a Dalit leader to hold the post after Jagjivan Ram.

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