

## Jashore ready for PM’s rally today

UNB, Jashore

Leaders and activists of the Awami League are preparing to hold the party’s rally in Jashore today where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to be present as the chief guest.

A boat-shaped stage has been made at the Jashore stadium.

Alongside other precautions, Rab’s dog squad has been there since Tuesday to ensure security as around “10 lakh” people are expected to join the rally.

Abdul Majid, senior vice-president of Jashore district unit AL and convener of stage decoration sub-committee, said they were ready to make the rally successful.

President of Jashore AL Shahidul Islam Milon said people of the district and the southern region were eagerly waiting for the prime minister’s speech.

He said additional preparations have also been made to hold the rally in a festive atmosphere.

“The prime minister’s rally in Jashore will prove that the Awami League is against anarchy and chaos. And the party is determined to take the country forward in line with the spirit of the Liberation War.”

Sukhen Majumdar, relief and social welfare affairs secretary of Jashore AL and convener of discipline and volunteer sub-committee, said a team of 400 volunteers has been formed to assist those coming to the rally.

Zahid Parvez, executive engineer of the district’s Public Health Engineering Directorate, said facilities for drinking water and sanitation have also been completed.

Repairs of the damaged roads have already been done.

Jashore Sadar Traffic Inspector Subhendu Kumar Munshi said 12 specific routes have been allowed for the rally participants to reach the venue. No vehicles will enter the town on the day of the rally.

Around 20 parking areas have been selected, he added.

## Armenia PM criticises Moscow-led security bloc

AFP, Yerevan

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan yesterday accused a Moscow-led security group of failing to give protection to his country in the face of aggression from arch-foe Azerbaijan.

Yerevan had accused Azerbaijan of occupying a pocket of its land seized in September in fierce clashes between the neighbours, which left more than 280 people dead.



Rescuers clear debris of the destroyed two-storey maternity building in the town of Vilnyansk, southern Zaporizhzhia region, yesterday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

## Russia fires missiles across Ukraine

Targets power, heating infrastructure as winter looms; EU parliament declares Moscow a ‘state sponsor of terrorism’

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia rained down volleys of missiles across Ukraine yesterday, hitting infrastructure in the capital Kyiv and other cities as Moscow pursued its campaign to knock out Ukraine’s power ahead of the looming winter.

Air raid sirens blared in a countrywide alert. Explosions could be heard on the outskirts of Kyiv, where the mayor said infrastructure had been hit. Blasts were also reported in other cities.

At least one person was killed and 20 wounded in the Kyiv region, where water supplies were also badly disrupted after critical infrastructure was hit, local officials said.

The missile strikes also caused blackouts across all of the Chernihiv region in northern Ukraine and emergency outages were imposed in Iviv in Western Ukraine and most other regions.

Ukraine’s nuclear energy firm Energoatom said units were shut down at the Pivdennoukrainsk in southern Ukraine because of a loss of power after the air strikes but added: “Everything is fine with the station.”

A local official said units were also not operating at the Khmelnytskyi nuclear

power plant in western Ukraine.

Ukrainian officials said a newborn baby had also been killed in a Russian that hit a maternity hospital in the city of Vilniansk in southeastern Ukraine earlier yesterday.

Since October, Russia has repeatedly targeted electric power and heating infrastructure. Moscow says the aim is to reduce Ukraine’s ability to fight; Kyiv says the intentional strikes on civilian infrastructure constitute a war crime.

In an overnight video address, President Volodymyr Zelensky announced special “invincibility centres” would be set up around Ukraine to provide electricity, heat, water, internet, mobile phone connections and a pharmacy, free of charge and around the clock.

Russian attacks have knocked out power for long periods for up to 10 million consumers at a time. Ukraine’s national power grid operator said before yesterday’s attacks that more blackouts were necessary across the country.

“If massive Russian strikes happen again and it’s clear power will not be restored for hours, the ‘invincibility centres’ will go into action with all key services,” Zelensky said.

With the first snow of the winter falling,

authorities have warned of power cuts that could affect millions of people.

Meanwhile, the European Parliament passed a resolution yesterday declaring Russia a “state sponsor of terrorism”, although the move is largely symbolic as the EU does not have a framework to take practical action in response.

“The deliberate attacks and atrocities committed by Russian forces and their proxies against civilians in Ukraine, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and other serious violations of international and humanitarian law amount to acts of terror and constitute war crimes,” the Parliament said.

The BBC reported Britain is sending three helicopters to Ukraine, the first piloted aircraft it has sent since the war began. Ukraine will deploy them with Ukrainian crews trained in Britain, it said.

In addition to the three former British military Sea King helicopters, the first of which has already arrived, the UK will also supply an additional 10,000 artillery rounds.

“Our support for Ukraine is unwavering. These additional artillery rounds will help Ukraine to secure the land it has reclaimed from Russia in recent weeks,” Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said.

## Madrasa teacher arrested for raping student

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested a madrasa teacher for allegedly raping a 12-year-old boy in Chattogram city’s Joynab colony.

Jobair Hossen, 28, of Chattogram’s Rangunia upazila, was arrested from a madrasa after the victim’s mother filed a case on Tuesday, accusing him of raping her son several times, said Jahidul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

“The accused has confessed during primary investigation,” he added.

## 5-yr-old boy killed by father

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A five-year-old boy died yesterday while trying to stop an altercation between his parents in Dinaipur’s Parbatipur upazila.

The dead was identified as Zakaria Zakir, son of Delwar Hossain of Salandar village in the upazila, said Abul Hasnat, officer-in-charge of Parbatipur Police Station.

“Zakir and his mother had asked his father to pay for their breakfast in a hotel. Denying their request, Delwar started arguing with his wife and ended up beating her at one point. He then hit his son on the chest very hard, causing him to die on the spot.”

Zakir’s body was sent to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

His grandfather filed a case against Delwar, who fled after the incident.

## Timber trader run over by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A timber trader died after a train hit his motorbike while crossing an unprotected railway level crossing near Aditmari railway station in Lalmonirhat on Tuesday night.

Abdul Wahab, 33, of Aditmari upazila, died on the spot, said Moktarul Islam, officer-in-charge of Aditmari Police Station.

“A train, bound for Lalmonirhat station from Burimari land port station, hit Abdul’s motorbike around 7:30pm,” he added.

The body was handed over to the family members without an autopsy upon their request. An unnatural death case was also filed with Lalmonirhat Railway Police Station on Tuesday.

## Portugal arrests 35 over migrant trafficking

AFP, Lisbon

Portuguese authorities have arrested 35 people in the south of the country for alleged human trafficking, money laundering and falsifying documents, police announced yesterday.

“The suspects are part of a criminal structure dedicated to the exploitation of migrant workers, most of whom have been lured from their home countries to work on farms” in the Alentejo region, police said.

## Govt to import 1.4 lakh tonnes of fertiliser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday approved import of 1.4 lakh tonnes of fertilisers to meet domestic demand for uninterrupted agricultural production.

The decision was made at a virtual meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase, with Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal in the chair.

Last week, the government approved import of another 1.8 lakh tonnes of fertilisers to meet the local demand.

The government has been making decisions on buying fertilisers for weeks to provide the vital agricultural input to farmers at subsidised prices amid economic uncertainty.

According to agriculture ministry officials, the government focuses on domestic food production because the Russia-Ukraine war has created concerns over food security. That’s why the government will continue boosting the stock of fertilisers.

The officials said the recent approvals of fertiliser imports are aimed at meeting domestic requirements in the Boro and Aush seasons.

Yesterday’s meeting decided that of the 1.4 lakh tonnes of fertilisers, the government will import 50,000 tonnes of Muriate of Potash (MOP) from Canada.

It will also import urea from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates – 30,000 tonnes from each of the countries.

Another 30,000 tonnes of urea will be bought from Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Limited.

Additional Secretary Sayeed Mahbub Khan of the Cabinet Division last week told reporters that import of urea from Saudi Arabia and the UAE would cost \$594.17 per tonne.

Earlier, the government imported urea at \$625.83 per tonne.

The latest purchase prices of MOP will be \$788 per tonne and DAP \$725.25 per tonne, down from the previous import prices of \$821 and \$826.50 per tonne respectively, said the additional secretary.

## They knew they’d break free soon

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A prison official allegedly knew about the smartphones, but didn’t do anything as he had received bribes, according to investigators.

In another development, the home ministry on Tuesday transferred five prison officials. Deputy inspectors general Tohidul Islam was transferred from Dhaka division to Rangpur division, AKM Fazlul Hoque was transferred from Chattogram division to Dhaka division, Md Altab Hossain was transferred from Rangpur division to Chattogram division, and senior jail superintendents Abdul Jalil was transferred from Kashimpur High Security Jail to Rajshahi Central Jail and Subrata Kumar Bala was transferred from Rajshahi Central Jail to Kashimpur High Security Jail.

Contacted, Additional Secretary (prison) Habibur Rahman of the home ministry, who is the head of a four-member committee probing Sunday’s incident, said, “We visited the crime scene, collected information and documents, and would visit the prison.”

Finding out how the convicts communicated from jail is a major focus of the probe, he said when asked about the use of smartphones inside the prison.

Investigators said six members of Ansar al Islam’s military wing members with four motorcycles directly participated in the mission to snatch the convicts.

The date to snatch them was fixed when the fugitives were taken to the court for a hearing on November 1, said an officer involved in the investigation.

Two of them were standing in front of the court gate and four others were waiting with the motorcycles, the officer said, requesting anonymity.

After the hearing, Arafat, who was caught while attempting to flee, gave the signal to the two militants standing at the gate to attack the police. Then, the latter attacked the police constable with pepper spray and cut the rope tied to the handcuffs.

Arafat and Sabur tried to open the handcuffs with the master key but faced difficulties. Then they ran to one of the motorcycles and jumped on it.

As the biker tried to speed away, releasing the clutch too fast, the convicts fell to the ground. The locals then caught them.

Four to six other members of the outfit were present there as a backup team, added the official.

Officials believe that these militants are still hiding somewhere in Dhaka and waiting for a scope to go somewhere safer.

## Upsets continue

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They used to punish opponents with their never-say-die attitude for decades but on Wednesday they were on the receiving end of late goals.

Japan continued to hope and after goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda made a quadruple save to keep them alive, they delivered the double punch for yet another upset in this tournament.

The Germans huffed and puffed but could not find a second goal, with highly rated players like Jamal Musiala and Kai Havertz showing only brief glimpses of their skills and their known weakness in defence once more blatantly obvious, especially in the winner.

At the end the Japanese proved as determined as their own fans who did not stop singing over 90 minutes. The German fans were nowhere to be seen or heard.

Meanwhile, former champions Spain got their World Cup off to the perfect start by hammering Costa Rica 7-0.

Ferran Torres scored in each half while further goals from Dani Olmo, Marco Asensio, Gavi, Carlos Soler and Alvaro Morata ensured Luis Enrique’s side strolled to the top of Group E.

In the first match of the day, Morocco held 2018 World Cup runners-up Croatia to a 0-0 draw as both teams took a point to open their Qatar campaigns.

## 3 binding conditions for IMF loan

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Bangladesh’s loan application in its meeting in the third week of January next year, the first instalment of \$447.8 million would be released the following month without the need for any prior action.

The QPCs will kick in from the second instalment onwards.

When authorising the first instalment, the IMF staff mission will set the targets for the QPCs for the second instalment of \$659.18 million, scheduled for six months later.

If the government fails to meet the QPC targets, the IMF would not approve the second instalment. And if the government meets the targets, the funds would be released and the IMF staff mission would then proceed to set the targets for the next instalment, which would also be \$659.18 million.

The process would repeat for the successive four instalments of \$659.18 million each scheduled every six months.

Closer to home, Pakistan’s \$6 billion loan programme was stalled midway after the country failed to meet two of its six QPCs.

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank’s Dhaka office, is unsure whether the three QPCs set would be practicable and effective.

“In case of reserves, it is possible to set an achievable QPC, and based on that, reforms in exchange rate management can be hoped.”

For revenue, unless the floor is realistic and based on historical performance, it could derail the programme for Bangladesh.

“For budget deficit, since it is a ratio, it will depend on a random factor. If the GDP deficit does not increase, then the question arises of where you would do the correction: numerator or denominator. This is not a good QPC and will create confusion.”

Identifying the corrective actions for failure to meet the budget deficit QPC would be tricky then, Hussain added.

Other than the three QPCs, the IMF loan programme, which would be the 13th for Bangladesh, would

come with a host of indicative targets and 15-16 structural benchmarks. Both the structural benchmarks and indicative targets would have a timeline.

Indicative targets are similar to QPCs in that those are quantitative indicators to assess progress in meeting a programme’s objectives. Sometimes ITs are set instead of QPCs because of uncertainty about economic trends. As uncertainty is reduced, these targets may become QPCs, with appropriate modifications.

Structural benchmarks are reform measures that often are non-quantifiable but are critical for achieving programme goals and are intended as markers to assess programme implementation.

Missed structural benchmarks and indicative targets would not lead to a pause in instalment disbursements. But the country would need to send in a detailed report to the IMF board on why the conditions were not met.

The IMF board would assess it in the context of overall programme performance and then give a fresh timeline to meet those conditions.

The structural benchmarks for Bangladesh would comprise measures to improve governance in the financial sector; amendments to the Bank Company Act; leaving out government staff’s pension and interest on savings certificates from social safety net programmes; implementing the VAT law; automated fuel pricing; setting up an asset management company to dispose of soured loans.

Indicative targets may include bringing down the banking sector’s default loans to within 10 percent and raising the capital adequacy ratio to the BASEL 3 requirement of 12.5 percent and a minimum level for social spending.

In the coming weeks, the IMF staff mission would be preparing a country report including the terms agreed upon by the government.

The report would be sent to the government by the middle of December. Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder

would then sign on the dotted line and send the official proposal to the IMF management, which would be forwarded to the board.

Then in the second week of January, a deputy managing director of the IMF would visit Bangladesh on a fact-finding mission.

The deputy managing director would be placing the proposal to the IMF board and answering all queries the board members might have on the loan proposal when authorising the programme.

## Of stars

FROM PAGE 1

team. Perhaps it is down to all the democracy in France that encourages everyone to politick for their own space.

A bit of autocratic leadership might be in order, however, and based on Tuesday night’s performance, it would seem that Kylian Mbappe might be the one to provide it.

France deserve ample praise for keeping things fun between the seismic events of Tuesday’s first match, and the drama of yesterday’s second offering. From here on, I hope that the African nations find their scoring boots, and some Europeans play with more decisiveness. Otherwise, too many games would end up as dull affairs.

What was not boring, however, was the gut punch to conventional expectation that we witnessed yesterday as Japan added a whole lot of wasabi to Qatar’s football dish.

The Samurai Blue were always going to pose a bigger challenge for the favourites than other underdogs in the tournament, given that many of their players ply their trade in the Bundesliga and other European leagues, but the way Japan went to toe to toe with mighty Germany for most of the game was a soothing sight for cynical eyes.

It is worth mentioning that this edition’s German team appear to be not made of the same ruthless material as some of their predecessors. They break the stereotype of cold efficiency, with a combination of happy flair and sad vulnerability.

Times they are a changin’ in football, and based on what we witnessed in the last two days, that could very well be a beautiful thing.