# US reiterates its concerns over Haas's security

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US has reiterated security concerns for its ambassador to Bangladesh, Peter Haas, with the Bangladesh mission in Washington DC.

"We have raised this matter at the highest levels of the Bangladeshi government, as well as with the Bangladesh embassy in Washington, DC," said a US embassy spokesperson in Dhaka yesterday.

On December 15, Muhammad Imran, Bangladesh's ambassador to the US, was called to the State Department by Donald Lu, the US assistant secretary of state for the bureau of south and central Asian affairs.

The previous day, Haas had called in at the Shaheenbagh home of

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Despite a footbridge, not in frame, being very close by, a man with a baby in his arms carelessly crosses the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Sonargaon area yesterday, putting himself and the infant in danger.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# One killed in AL factional clash

STAR REPORT

A clash between two groups of local Awami League men left an activist dead and five others injured in Raipura upazila of Narsingdi yesterday.

Police said Sifatullah Sabuj, 28, who got killed, was a resident of Chanda Kandi area.

The clash happened between the supporters of Bashgari Union Parishad Chairman Ratul Hasan Jakir and Jubo League activist Ashraful Haque around 5:00pm, locals said.

Sabuj was a supporter of Jakir, said Mir Mahbab, in-charge of Bashgari Police Outpost.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Satyajit Kumar Ghosh said the two groups engaged in chases and counter-chases until police finally brought the situation under control around 8:30pm.

Contacted, Shelly Rani Dam, medical officer at Narsingdi General Hospital, said Sabuj was brought dead at the hospital.

Meanwhile in Hatibandha upazila of Lalmonirhat, four people were injured as 35-40 local supporters of Awami League nominated chairman candidate Nural Amin of Sindurna Union Parishad attacked them for not participating in his election campaign.

The injured are Anukul Chandra Roy, 35, Fulti Rani, 55, Mahesh Chandra Roy, 36, and Babul Mia, 37, of Haldibari village, police said.

The victims said the attackers were supporters of local AL leader Nural Amin.

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### METRO RAIL

# Tickets to go on sale after PM's trip

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Metro rail authorities are planning to start selling single- and multiple-use cards after launching the country's first metro rail on December 28.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who will inaugurate the service, will buy the first ticket, and the authorities will start selling tickets to the public after she leaves the site, according to the plan.

She will travel from Agargaon to Uttara on metro after inaugurating the Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre on December 28.

It was primarily decided that people will be able to commute on the metro from the following day, said MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd, the implementing and operating agency.

DMTCL authorities yesterday held an important meeting with consultants, experts, and the officials of JICA, the financier of the project, to review the

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### ISLAMIC ARABIC UNIVERSITY

# The VC a law unto himself?

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The vice-chancellor of Islamic Arabic University seems to have made a habit of ignoring the law and regulations whenever it comes to appointing officials.

Legally, the VC cannot appoint anyone on his own.

However, Prof Mohammad Ahsan Ullah has recruited more people than stipulated in the university's recruiting advertisements throughout his seven-year tenure so far.

A probe by the University Grants Commission found that many appointment-related papers were "doctored".

The probe committee, in its report sent to the education ministry recently, recommended removing Ahsan Ullah from the post of VC of the university, which oversees graduation and post-graduation courses of madrasas.

It suggested the cancellation of several appointments, terming those "void ab initio", meaning they have no legal effect from the inception of the job.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Prof Biswajit Chanda, UGC member and chief of the probe committee, said, "We have sent our report to the ministry."

He declined to make further comments.

Contacted, Abu Bakr Siddique, secretary of the Secondary and Higher Education Division, "We are analysing the report and will take action in line with the recommendations made."

He too would not elaborate on the matter.

Founded in 2013, the affiliating university oversees over 1,300 fazil and kamil madrasas.

Ahsan Ullah, a Chattogram University professor, was appointed the VC on January 4, 2015, and then reappointed for a second term in January 2019.

The UGC launched its first round of investigations last year, after receiving complaints of irregularities in the university management.

The education ministry then formed a second committee, headed by Biswajit Chanda, for further probe.

According to the probe report, a copy of which was obtained by The Daily Star, "Illegal and unethical activities and corruption of the current vice-chancellor

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### BURI TEESTA IRRIGATION

# 440 people sued for attacking WDB officials

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

A Water Development Board employee sued around 440 people on Saturday after a mob attacked the board officials in Nilphamari's Dimla upazila.

The government has commissioned various initiatives to upgrade and modify the Buri Teesta Irrigation Project, after keeping it inoperative for a decade.

Ekramul Haque, section officer of WDB's Nilphamari division, filed a case with Dimla Police Station against 40 named and 300-400 unnamed persons after a mob attacked WDB employees and the construction firm employees, who were given the contract to dig up a water reservoir to accommodate more surface water for the farmers

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People wait to see a doctor at a makeshift fever clinic at a stadium amid the Covid-19 pandemic in Beijing, China yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

### SURGE IN COVID CASES

# Chinese cities battle first wave

## Streets eerily quiet as people stay at home to protect themselves

REUTERS, *Beijing*

Streets in major Chinese cities were eerily quiet yesterday as people stayed home to protect themselves from a surge in Covid-19 cases that has hit urban centres from north to south.

China is in the first of an expected three waves of Covid cases this winter, according to the country's chief epidemiologist, Wu Zunyou. Further waves will come as people follow the tradition of returning en masse to their home areas for the Lunar New Year holiday next month, he said.

China has not reported any Covid deaths since December 7, when it abruptly ended most restrictions key to a zero-Covid tolerance policy following unprecedented public protests. The strategy had been championed by President Xi Jinping.

As part of the easing of the zero-Covid curbs, mass testing for the virus has ended, casting doubt on whether official case numbers can capture the full scale of the outbreak. China reported some 2,097 new symptomatic Covid infections on December 17.

In Beijing, the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant has already hit services from catering to parcel deliveries. Funeral homes and crematoriums across the city of 22 million are also struggling to keep up with demand amid staff shortages as workers and drivers call in sick.

At Beijing's largest funeral parlour in Babaoshan, also known for handling the bodies of top Chinese

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