

'Help us develop our football'  
Hasina tells Argentine Foreign Minister Cafiero

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought Argentina's cooperation in developing Bangladesh as the Latin American country's visiting Minister for Foreign, International Trade and Worship Affairs Santiago Andres Cafiero paid a courtesy call on her.



"Help us develop our football...," PM's speechwriter M Nazrul Islam quoted her as saying in a media briefing after the meeting at her official Gono Bhaban residence.

According to Nazrul Islam, the premier also stressed boosting cooperation between Bangladesh and Argentina on various issues of mutual interests that include trade, commerce, economic, social, cultural and tourism sectors.

Cafiero hoped that the economic, trade and business collaboration between the two countries will be scaled up with reopening Embassy of Argentina in Dhaka. The Argentina Embassy was reopened in Banani on Monday.



A group of people under the banner of "Lama Sarai Bhumi Raksha Sangram Committee" staged a sit-in in front of the High Court yesterday, demanding cancellation of the land lease to a rubber industry in Bandarban's Lama upazila. They said the authorities of the Lama Rubber Industries are planning to grab more land than it had leased and, in the process, trying to evict indigenous families from their ancestral lands. They also alleged that the industry's people have filed a "false" case against some locals belonging to the Mro and Tripura communities, who are protesting the land grabbing, and attacked their homes and farmlands.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

232 women, girls faced violence last month  
Says Mahila Parishad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 232 women and girls faced violence in February this year, found a report prepared by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

Of them, 40 females, including 24 girls, were raped, according to the organisation's media monitoring report.

Seven females, including three girls, were gang-raped, one was killed after rape, and two girls died by suicide after rape during this period.

Attempts have also been made to rape a total of 11 females, including eight girls, as per the report, which is based on information taken from 13 national dailies.

Sixteen females, including nine girls, have faced other forms of sexual violence during this time, while seven women were tortured for dowry, and out of them, three were killed.

A total of 40 females, including 13 girls, were killed due to various reasons, while 10 women died mysteriously during this time.

Twenty-four females, including eight girls, also died by suicide.

Besides, 10 women and girls were abducted in February, while 10 child marriages were reported.

'We're doing better than Sri Lanka, Pakistan'  
Says former BB governor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is in a stronger position when compared with Sri Lanka and Pakistan, in terms of overall economic performance and social values, said former governor Dr Atiur Rahman yesterday.

"Bangladesh can lead Asia in terms of social values, so there is no scope to compare it with those countries," he said while addressing a seminar held at the auditorium of Bangladesh Institute of Law And International Affairs (BILIA) in the capital's Dhanmondi.

BILIA organised the programme titled "The Global Power Balance Shifts Towards Asia: How is Bangladesh Doing?"

Attending as chief guest, Atiur said "Population is not a burden for Bangladesh anymore, but if it can be made efficient,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Below this institute LIES A TORTURE CELL



MINTU DESHWARA

The year was 1971. Odoitto Sen Odhikary was just a tenth-grader preparing for his board exams. A curfew was imposed in Moulvibazar on the morning of March 26, following a night of terror, when the invading Pakistan army launched a full-fledged crackdown across the country.

Odoitto was picked up in an army truck in the morning from Chaumohana area. A teenager at that time, Aditya's crime was his involvement with Bangladesh Chhatra Union, a left-leaning student body.

He was taken to the Primary Teachers Training Institute (PTI) in Banabithi area of Moulvibazar, where hell was waiting.

He was first brought to the dining room (current classroom) of PTI, where he also saw Bomkesh Ghosh alias Tema Babu, late Azizur Rahman, former MP and parliament whip, and few others.

"At night, the army beat us with sticks after tying our hands. They wanted to know the locations of the student leaders from us," Aditya told this correspondent.

At midnight, a Pakistani army major

arrived and freed Odoitto. He told him to run as far as he could without looking back. But others were not so lucky.

"There was an underground bunker in the PTI. That was the main torture cell. Many people, including women, were tortured and killed inside the place," he added.

However, even five decades after independence, no government has ever taken any initiative to preserve the site's history, which, according to Liberation War



researchers and freedom fighters, is a blatant disrespect to all the martyrs who were killed there.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw normal classroom activities going on in the facility.

Unless they have prior knowledge, no one will be able to know that many people were brutally killed under this very facility, because there are no memorial plaques or signs in



place. Many of the youngsters interviewed by this correspondent had no idea about the history.

This correspondent decided to see the bunker for himself even though the officials there said no one enters the place due to its dilapidated condition.

As soon as he descended the stairs and entered the underground bunker through the narrow entrance, this correspondent was surrounded by an eerie atmosphere. There was darkness everywhere, accompanied by an uneasy silence. It felt as if the souls of the martyrs who had been tortured and killed inside were still haunting this place.

During his brief tour inside, this correspondent estimated that the bunker, or whatever remained of it, had two rooms. The entire place was dilapidated, with plaster falling off the roof.

Jamal Uddin, former district commander of Muktiyoddha Sangsad Moulvibazar, said many freedom fighters, including Sudarshan, Mukit, Ranu, Samar and Shahid, had been killed there. Their bodies have never been found.

Bacchu Mia, 78, whose house was near

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Textbooks withdrawn to avoid controversy  
Says NCTB member, claims there were no errors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government withdrew two school textbooks to avoid controversy and maintain an orderly situation in the country, said National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) Member (curriculum) Prof Moshuazzaman.

He, however, claimed that there was no error in the books.

He came up with the remark while speaking at a roundtable organised by Samajik Protirodh Committee, a civic platform, at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

NCTB was faced with a challenging situation at the beginning of the year, as there was ongoing propaganda against the incumbent government ahead of the national elections, said Moshuazzaman.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Traffickers enjoy impunity as victims afraid to speak up: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human traffickers are enjoying impunity as victims and witnesses of trafficking are often afraid to speak up due to safety concerns, which obstructs the judiciary process, said speakers at a consultation meeting yesterday, demanding the government ensure security for victims.

The meeting, titled "Consultation on Victims Witness Protection with Prosecution Related Actors" was organised by Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) at the capital's Cirdap auditorium.

Dr Kamal Uddin Ahmed, chairperson of National Human Rights Commission, who was the chief guest, stressed on implementing laws to catch brokers and human traffickers and ensure security for victims.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Bangladesh, Japan eye strategic partnership

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Japan have agreed to work towards building a strategic relationship, and there may be agreement on this during the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Japan, likely by the end of April this year.

The issues were discussed during the foreign office consultation (FOC) held in Tokyo yesterday. Foreign Secretary Ambassador Masud Bin Momen and Japanese Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Shigeo Yamada led the two sides in the meeting in Tokyo.

They discussed comprehensively the bilateral relations, and regional and global issues. Bangladesh Ambassador Shahabuddin Ahmed and other senior officials from the two countries also attended the meeting.

As part of building

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Cox's Bazar District Administration knocked down around 300 illegal structures on 600 acres of land beside Bakkhali river yesterday. Earlier, the grabbers were warned to remove their establishments within Monday. According to environment officials, names of many ruling party and opposition leaders are on the list of grabbers.

PHOTO: STAR

JS SEAT OF RUMEEN FARHANA  
Inu's wife Rina submits nomination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) vice president Afroza Haque Rina, wife of JSD president Hasanul Haque Inu, yesterday filed her nomination papers for the by-election to the reserved women's seat of Rumeen Farhana, who resigned from parliament.

She submitted the nomination papers to EC Joint Secretary and Returning Officer Md Abdul Baten at the Election Commission office in Agargaon.

JSD General Secretary Shirin Akhter and Office Secretary Sajjad Hossain were present when she submitted the papers.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'27 DU students tortured on campus last year'

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least 27 students of Dhaka University were tortured either physically or mentally at its six halls just last year, with most of the incidents being perpetrated by activists of Chhatra League.

The information was revealed in a report by Students against Torture (SAT), a newly-formed students' rights organisation. The report was presented at a press briefing at the office of Dhaka University Journalists' Association yesterday.

Teaching "manners" for not attending political programmes and breaching "rules" are among the reasons behind their actions, it said.

The administration had taken "so-called" action in only four cases, said the organisation's founder Saleh Uddin Sifat. The organisation made the report based on news published in various newspapers and online portals from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022.

Denying the allegation against DU BCL, Tanbir Hasan Shaikat, its general secretary, said, "Sometimes unexpected incidents occur in dormitories. Some unfamiliar organisations

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

**PRAYER TIMING**  
MARCH 1

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-15	12-45	4-30	6-05	7-30
JAMAAT 5-50	1-15	4-45	6-10	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION