

Bangladesh close to every country, not a particular one



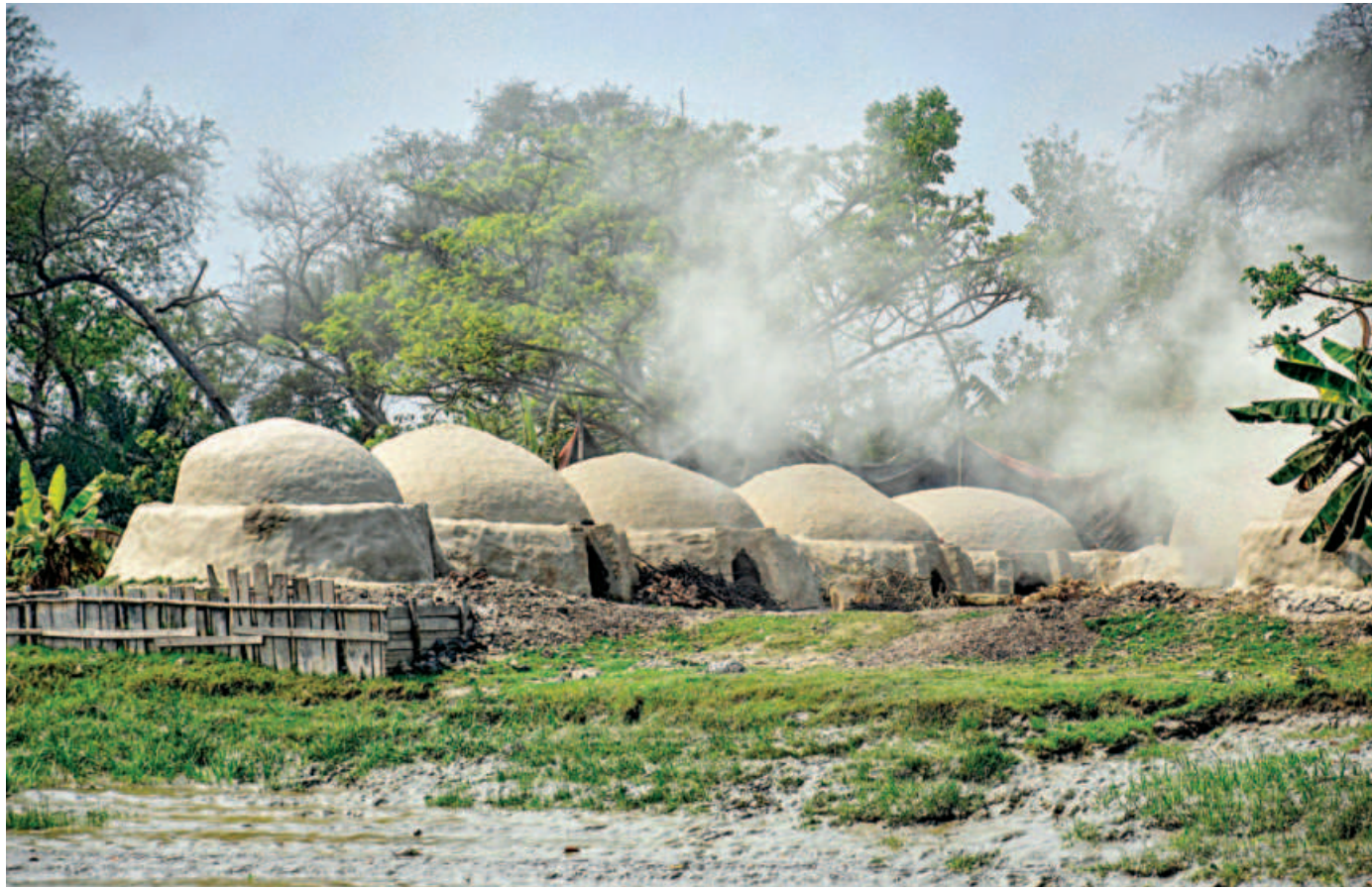
UNB, Dhaka
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh is not close to any particular country, but to all countries.

"We're close to everybody - China, the USA or India. We're with those who support our development," she said in an interview with the CNN.

The interview was aired on the US-based TV channel yesterday.

Hasina made the remark when journalist Richard Quest said the US believes and is concerned that

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Logs being burnt in specially made earthen furnace to produce charcoal in Siddhipasha village of Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila. This charcoal would be used mainly in local brick kilns. This is causing serious damage to the environment as lots of trees are felled in the village and its adjoining areas for the charcoal production. The smoke from the furnace is also polluting the air. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

EID JOURNEY All advance train tickets to be sold online

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Railway is going to sell all of the advance Eid tickets of intercity trains online.

The move aims at reducing the hassles people usually face for train tickets before and after the festival.

Tickets for trains on April 17 will be sold on April 7 and tickets for April 18, 19, 20 and 21 will be sold on April 8, 9, 10 and 11.

The decisions were made at an inter-ministerial meeting at Rail Bhaban with Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan in the chair, three participants of the meeting told The Daily Star.

The minister will brief reporters on the matter today.

Many have pointed out that the sale of all the tickets online is likely to deprive those who have little knowledge of using the internet.

The BR currently sells 50 percent tickets of the 104 intercity trains online and the rest at ticket counters. Tickets to all mail, commuter and local trains are sold at the counters.

Kamalapur Railway Station and several other major stations usually see large crowds waiting at counters for tickets ahead of Eid every year. Many

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Shamim Sikder no more



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After almost 22 years, she came back to Bangladesh with dreams of reconstructing some of her works. Seven months later, she breathed her last in her beloved homeland while her dreams remain unfulfilled.

Shamim Sikder, the leading Bangladeshi sculptor who depicted people's participation during the Liberation War and the struggle of the entire nation, through her

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Chinese proposal could be basis for peace

Says Putin after talks with Xi on Ukraine; both agree nuclear war must 'never be unleashed'

AGENCIES

After talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping yesterday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the Chinese proposals could be used as the basis of a peace settlement in Ukraine but the West and Kyiv were not yet ready.

In a joint statement issued at the end of Xi's state visit to Moscow, the two men cautioned against any steps that might push the Ukraine conflict into an "uncontrollable phase", adding, "There can be no winners in a nuclear war, and it must never be unleashed".

Putin accused Western powers of fighting "to the last Ukrainian", while Xi reiterated China's "neutral position" on Ukraine and called for dialogue.

"We believe that many of the provisions of the peace plan put forward by China are consonant



with Russian approaches and can be taken as the basis for a peaceful settlement when they are ready for that in the West and in Kyiv. However, so far we see no such readiness from their side," Putin said.

China's proposal - a 12 point paper calling for a de-escalation and eventual ceasefire in Ukraine - lacks details on how to end the war.

The United States has been dismissive of the Chinese

proposal, given Beijing's refusal to condemn Russia over Ukraine, and says a ceasefire now would lock in Russian territorial gains and give Putin's army more time to regroup. Kyiv has welcomed China's diplomatic involvement but says Russia must pull its troops out of Ukraine, and underlines the importance of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

The Kremlin talks were intended to cement the "no limits" partnership the two leaders announced last February, less than three weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine.

They signed a series of documents on a "strategic cooperation" after what Putin described as "successful and constructive" talks showing China was clearly now Russia's most

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DSA will be amended Law minister tells UN human rights chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq met United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk in Geneva yesterday and assured him of amending the Digital Security Act.

He iterated his commitment to working closely with the office of the high commissioner and said that because of the steps taken by the government, the abuse of the law has been reduced significantly, read a statement of the law ministry.

He said that the government is alert about stopping the threat of abuse presented by this law and mentioned that they are in conversation with different stakeholders

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6.5-magnitude earthquake hits Afghanistan

At least three reported dead

REUTERS, Kabul

A magnitude 6.5 earthquake struck northern Afghanistan last evening, according to the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre, killing two in the east of the country and one child in neighbouring Pakistan.

The tremor was very deep, 194 km (120.5 miles), and its epicentre was in the Hindu Kush mountain range, near the remote northern Afghan province of Badakhshan.

A 13-year-old girl died when a wall in her home collapsed on her, and 150 people were injured in the northern Pakistani district of Swat where hospitals had declared a state of emergency, police officer Shafiqullah Gandapur told Reuters.

Shafiqullah Rahimi, a spokesperson for Afghanistan's disaster mitigation ministry, said two people had been killed in eastern Laghman province.

Authorities and aid workers said very strong shaking was felt in Badakhshan and across other northern areas. A spokesperson for Red Cross said they had no immediate reports of damages from

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Next budget will be bigger

Says finance minister; editors urge adjustment of fuel prices

STAR REPORT

The government will increase the size of the next fiscal year's budget to give more comfort to the people, said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal.

The minister was speaking at a pre-budget discussion with editors and senior journalists of print and electronic media outlets on a virtual platform yesterday.

He said people ask for reducing VAT and tax at pre-budget discussions, but no one comes up with a plan for increasing the government revenue.

"An economy cannot be one-sided. How will the country be run without increasing the income and decreasing the expenditure? We will have to think in a balanced way to increase both revenue and expenditure."

Many people had suggested cutting expenditure in the current fiscal's budget but the government took a risk, Kamal said, adding that the government would follow the same path in the next fiscal.

Channel i Head of News Shykh Seraj, Editor of the Bangladesh Pratidin Naem Nizam, Financial Express Editor Shamsul Huq Zahid and Editor of the Amader Notun Somoy Nayeemul Islam Khan spoke.

Editors suggested adjusting fuel price as its price has dropped in the international market recently. They said the decision would have a positive impact on the economy.

Editors also asked the government to stop offering special facilities to big businesses and not to give big defaulters the opportunity to reschedule their loans.

Journalists said the media industry would face problems if the government did not pay the arrears bills of its advertisements.

Pointing out that the operational cost of newspapers has increased, editors asked the government to show a more liberal attitude towards

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2 Rohingyas shot dead at Ukhiya camp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two Rohingya men were shot to death and another was injured by masked criminals at a refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila, Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The incident occurred at Camp-13 in Thaingkhali area of Palangkhali union around 1:30pm, said Ukhiya Police Station Officer-in-charge Sheikh Mohammad Ali.

The victims were Rafique, 30, son of Bacha Mia, and Mohammad Rafique, 34, son of Mohammad Hasan.

A group of 15 to 20 armed criminals broke into the house of Rafique, son of Bacha Mia, in the G-4 block of Camp-13 and shot him several times, killing him on the spot.

The criminals then fled the scene after randomly firing in the area to spark panic, during which two people were shot.

Informed, police arrived at the scene and recovered the dead body.

The two injured were taken to the health centre in the Rohingya camp, where the doctor on duty declared the other Rafique dead.

The injured, identified as Md Yasin, 28, was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital with critical wounds.

Over 2500 marginal farmers get 'AB Bank Smart Agri Loan' at Atghoria, Pabna

"The country's modern communications system creates over 7000 new smart farmers till date-Thank you Honorable Prime Minister"

-Tarique Afzal, President and Managing Director, AB Bank Limited

AB Bank Limited Govt. College, Atghoria, guest. Mr. Md. Abdul Upazila, Alhaz Md. Tarique Afzal, President and Managing Director of AB Bank Limited presiding. Local senior leaders of Bangladesh Awami League along with other officials of the bank also attended the program.

AB Bank Limited disbursed agricultural loans to over 2500 small and marginal farmers under own supervision through smart cards at Pabna. The program was organized at Atghoria

Mr. Mohammad Rezaul Rahim Lal, President, Bangladesh Awami League, Pabna Zilla, Former Chairman, Zilla Parishad, Pabna was present as chief

Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Chairman, Chatmohar Upazila, Vice President, Pabna Zilla Awami League, Mr. Md. Shahidul Islam Ratan, Mayor, Atghoria Municipality, President, Awami League, Atghoria

Upazila, Chairman, Pabna Sadar Upazila and Mr. Md. Tanvir Islam, Chairman, Atghoria Upazila, Member, Awami League, Pabna Zilla were present as special guests with Mr.