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DEV INITIATIVES PM hopes for more help from China



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hoped that China would come forward in a bigger way during the tenure of her new government for implementing development programmes. "China is one of the most important development and strategic partners of Bangladesh. We hope that during the new government's tenure, China will help us more than the previous times to help continue the development journey of

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SAPPHIRE WITH WINGS

A male purple sunbird singing to its heart's content in the Baroiyadhala National Park in Chattogram's Sitakunda. Found mainly in South and Southeast Asia, this stunning bird's range also extends into parts of the Arabian Peninsula and is a resident in most of its range. Even if it does migrate, it would only be due to heavy rain resulting in scarcity of its main source of food – flower nectar. The striking look is only for the males, while the females wear a dull olive colour with a yellow underbelly. Purple sunbirds, like most sunbirds, are not only fast fliers but highly territorial. They join other birds to mob potential predators and aggressively target other species when defending their territories. They are, however, often welcome in gardens and parks and other urban spaces, mostly due to their physical beauty.

PHOTO: KOMOL DAS

Gene therapy restores hearing of kids born deaf



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A breakthrough gene therapy treatment in China has restored hearing in several children born with inherited deafness, an advance that marks a milestone in the treatment of hearing loss.

The clinical trial lasting about 26 weeks involved six kids suffering from a type of inherited deafness caused by a mutation of the gene called OTOF.

Five of six children who underwent the experimental treatment demonstrated hearing recovery and improvements in speech recognition with no reported toxicities, according to the research, published in The Lancet medical journal on Wednesday.

The research represents the first-ever clinical

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GAZA'S KHAN YOUNIS Israeli tanks batter hospital districts

50 Palestinians killed in heavy bombardment

AGENCIES

Israeli tanks bombarded areas around two hospitals in Gaza's main southern city Khan Younis yesterday, forcing displaced people into a new desperate scramble for safe shelter, residents said.

Gaza health officials said at least 50 Palestinians had been killed in Khan Younis in the past 24 hours, including two children in an Israeli air strike that hit a residential home. The city is now encircled by Israeli armoured forces and under almost non-stop aerial and ground fire, residents said.

Palestinian medics said Israeli tanks had cut off and were shelling targets around the city's two main still-functioning hospitals, Nasser and Al-Amal, trapping medical teams, patients and displaced people sheltering inside or nearby.

Most of the Gaza Strip's 2.3 million population is now squeezed into Khan Younis and towns just north and south of it, after being driven out of its northern half earlier in Israel's blitz of the Hamas-ruled territory, now in its fourth month, reports Reuters.

- Large number of people, patients trapped in main hospitals
- Tank shelling kills 12 people at UN shelter
- Ruling in Israel-Gaza genocide case today at ICJ

On Wednesday, the United Nations said Israeli tanks struck a large UN compound in Gaza sheltering displaced Palestinians, killing at least 12 people and wounding 75. But Israel denied its forces were responsible, suggesting Hamas might have launched the shelling. It said it was reviewing the incident.

At least 25,760 people have been killed in Gaza, one of the world's most densely populated and widely impoverished places, Palestinian health officials said, with large

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Bannya wins Padma Shri Award

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

Eminent Rabindra Sangeet singer Rezwana Choudhury Bannya has been chosen for the Indian government's prestigious Padma Shri award for 2024. A former student of Visva-Bharati University in West Bengal's Shantiniketan, Bannya has been declared winner of the award in the category of Art, India's home ministry said last night.

She is among the 134 Padma Shri awardees for this year.

Meanwhile, actor Mithun Chakraborty has been chosen for Padma Bhushan Award for this year, India's third highest civilian award.

Padma Awards, one of the highest civilian awards of India, are conferred in three categories, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma



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A drivers' gang behind abduction of univ student

Says Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After his father passed away four months ago, private university student Kazi Hasibur Rahman Himel, 28, started running the family business.

A criminal gang took this turn of events as an opportunity to abduct Himel and get a significant amount as ransom from his family, Rab said yesterday.

Rab rescued Himel from an area in Sunamganj's Tahirpur upazila close to Bangladesh's border with India's Meghalaya on Wednesday, nearly a month after he was abducted.

The gang, led by Himel's car driver Samidul Islam and his accomplice Abdul Malek, picked up the victim from Gazipur on December 26 and took him to a border area in Tahirpur. The abductors tortured him brutally to get Tk 2 crore ransom from his family, according to investigators.

On Wednesday, the Rab arrested five kidnappers, all professional drivers, from Tahirpur, Dhaka, and Netrokona.

The arrestees – Abdul Malek, 35, Samidul Islam, 30, Roni Nabal, 41, Russell Mia, 34, and Billal Hossain, 24, – were placed on seven-day remand each by a Dhaka court in a case filed by Himel's uncle Nazmul.

The previous day, the Detective Branch of police and



Himel

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668 Dhaka north JP leaders quit

Say they have no confidence in party chief, secretary general

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 668 leaders of Jatiyo Party Dhaka north unit resigned yesterday protesting JP Chairman GM Quader and Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunn's irregularities in nominating party candidates for the January 7 polls.

Shafiqul Islam Sentu and Shunil Suvho Roy, JP presidium members who were recently expelled from the party, came up with the announcement at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

Sentu said leaders and activists of eight thana committees and many ward committees were among those who resigned.

Shunil told The Daily Star that the 668 leaders resigned under the leadership of Jahmagir Alam Pathan, member secretary of JP Dhaka north, as part of their move to show no confidence in GM Quader.

JP leaders who were present at the press conference demanded resignation of GM Quader and Chunn.

On January 14, at a programme in the capital, JP grassroots leaders demanded that the party chairman and secretary general ensure democracy and accountability in the party.

They blamed GM Quader and Chunn for the party's

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People travelling on the roof of a train, putting themselves in harm's way. Many get on the roof of carriages mainly to travel for free. The authorities seem to be doing not enough to stop this. The photo was taken at Dhaka's FDC level crossing yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ROHINGYA CAMP Three 'Arsa men' held in Rab raid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rab yesterday arrested three key members of Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, an insurgent group, at a refugee camp in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar.

Lt Col Sazzad Hossain, commander of Rab-15, said after the arrests, 22 firearms and over 100 bullets were seized during a raid on Camp 20 (Extension).

He said the arrestees were Usman, commander of the armed Arsa members; Nesar, who makes landmines; and Imam Hossain, a firearm user.

Tipped off about the presence of six or seven Arsa members who were behind the recent incidents of fire at the camps, a Rab team began the raid on Lal Pahar before daybreak, said Abu Salam Chowdhury, senior assistant director (media) of Rab-15.

Rab Commander Sajjad told a press briefing that the other Arsa men managed to flee.

They were at Lal Pahar at the instruction of Arsa leaders Ataulah Jununi and Master Khaled, he said.

Sajjad said when Rab arrested Samiuddin a couple of months ago, Arsa appointed Usman as the "gun group commander".

Before becoming an Arsa operative,

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