

## 24 dead in migrant shipwreck off Senegal

AFP, Saint-Louis

At least 24 people seeking to reach Europe drowned off northern Senegal when their loaded vessel sank, the governor of the Saint-Louis region told AFP yesterday.

Governor Alioune Badara Samb said 24 bodies had been found since Wednesday when the boat got into difficulty in a particularly dangerous part of the northern coast. He added that 21 people had been rescued.

The Saint-Louis estuary, where the Senegal River meets the Atlantic Ocean, is notorious for strong currents and areas of thick mud.

Samb did not say how many people were missing from the vessel, which witnesses said could have been carrying more than 300 people.

A number of survivors managed to reach shore and dispersed among locals on the sea banks.



Displaced Palestinians, who fled their houses due to Israeli strikes, shelter at a tent camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## PRESIDENTIAL IMMUNITY US Supreme Court agrees to hear Trump claim

AFP, Washington

The US Supreme Court agreed on Wednesday to hear Donald Trump's claim that as a former president he is immune from prosecution, further delaying his trial on charges of conspiring to overturn the 2020 election.

The nation's highest court scheduled arguments in the high-stakes case for the week of April 22 and said Trump's federal election interference trial would remain on hold for now.

Trump had been scheduled to go on trial in Washington on March 4 for conspiring to subvert the results of the 2020 election won by Democrat Joe Biden but the proceedings have been frozen as his presidential immunity claim wound its way through the courts.

The 77-year-old Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, welcomed the Supreme Court decision to hear the case.

"Without Presidential Immunity, a President will not be able to properly function, or make decisions, in the best interest of the United States of America," he said in a post on his Truth Social platform. "He must not be guided by the fear of retribution!"

A ruling is expected by the end of the court's current term in June.

## Global freedom drops sharply in 2023: study

AFP, Washington

Democracy faced sharp, widespread setbacks worldwide in 2023 with violence and manipulation marring a series of elections, Freedom House said yesterday.

In its annual report, the US-funded pro-democracy advocacy and research group switched classifications for two countries, downgrading Ecuador from free to partly free and upgrading Thailand from not free to partly free.

Election manipulation, warfare, and attacks on pluralism were the key drivers of this result. Nearly 38 percent of the world's people now live in countries rated "not free," the report summarises.

Overall, political rights and civil liberties declined in 52 countries and only 21 countries saw improvements, the 18th straight year that global freedom has declined and a much more lopsided trend than a year earlier.

"Global freedom took a big step backward in 2023," said Michael J Abramowitz, president of Freedom House.

"Even if you look at it region by region, usually we are able to say that one is an outlier, but every single region registered a decline," said report co-author Yana

Gorokhovskaia.

"The deterioration is pretty widespread," she said.

The report spoke of efforts by incumbents "to control electoral competition, hinder their political opponents or prevent them from taking power" in Cambodia, Turkey and Zimbabwe and — unsuccessfully — in Guatemala and Poland.



Ecuador was downgraded due to election disruption by violent criminal gangs, including the assassination of anti-corruption presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio following a campaign speech.

Thailand was upgraded due to competitive elections even though establishment forces prevented young progressive Pita Limjaroenrat, whose Move Forward Party won the most seats, from becoming prime minister.

"This isn't, I would say, a full-scale victory for democracy or freedom and Thailand," Gorokhovskaia said.

But she saw as progress that the second-place Pheu Thai party of former prime minister and tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra was allowed to take over after years of efforts by the military-backed establishment to suppress it.

The biggest improvement on Freedom House's 100-point scale was posted by Fiji, which gained seven points.

Fiji, listed as partly free, held a tense election in December 2022 in which voters ousted Frank Bainimarama, who had led the Pacific archipelago since staging a bloodless coup in 2006.

Since the election, Fiji has made important progress including by reducing censorship and amending voter registration laws to improve women's participation, Gorokhovskaia said.

Still, the report suggests that democratic forces can still reverse the long decline in global freedom by "drawing strength from diversity, protecting dissent, and building international coalitions to support their own norms and values."

Democratic governments should provide support and funding to those on the front lines of the struggle against tyranny, uphold the rights of people living in disputed territories, and protect human rights activists in exile, Freedom House opines.

## About 20 Indians 'stuck' in Russian army Says New Delhi

AFP, New Delhi

India said yesterday it was working to secure discharges for around 20 of its citizens "stuck" in the Russian army, after reports that several were sent to fight in Ukraine. Two years after Russia's invasion began, tens of thousands of its soldiers have been killed in Ukraine and Moscow is on a global quest for more combatants. Several Indian recruits told AFP this month they were lured into joining up by promises of high salaries and a Russian passport before being shipped to the frontlines. "It is our understanding that 20-odd people are stuck," foreign ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal told reporters in New Delhi. "We are trying our level best for early discharge. We are in regular touch with Russian authorities both here in Delhi and in Moscow." The ministry confirmed last week that an unspecified number of Indian nationals had signed up for "support jobs" in the Russian army. It said several had already been discharged as a result of its interventions with Russian authorities. Neither India nor Russia has explicitly confirmed whether they were deployed to fight the war in Ukraine. Jaiswal said the ministry had "told people not to venture into the war zone". The soldiers who spoke with AFP said they had been promised non-combatant roles but were trained to use Kalashnikov assault rifles and other weapons before being sent to Ukraine.

## Iran launches imaging satellite from Russia

AFP, Tehran

Iran announced yesterday the launch of a remote sensing and imaging satellite into orbit from Russia, according to state media. The launch of "Pars-1" with the Russian Soyuz-2.1b launcher was broadcast live by state television in Iran. The satellite was launched "from Russia's Vostochny launch base", some 8,000 kilometres (5,000 miles) east of Moscow, according to the official IRNA news agency. Iran's telecommunications minister Issa Zareppur said "Pars-1" was "fully domestically developed" in Iran, which he said carried out a dozen satellite launches over the past two years. In January, Iran said it simultaneously launched three satellites into orbit, nearly a week after the launch of a research satellite by its Revolutionary Guards. Western governments including the United States have repeatedly warned Iran against such launches, saying the same technology can be used for ballistic missiles, including ones designed to deliver a nuclear warhead. Iran has countered that it is not seeking nuclear weapons and that its satellite and rocket launches are for civil or defence purposes only. In August 2022, Russia launched Iran's remote sensing Khayyam satellite into orbit from Kazakhstan amid controversy that Moscow might use it to boost its surveillance of military targets in its war in Ukraine. Moscow has sought to strengthen its alliances with other countries ostracised by the West, including Iran, which has been accused of supplying Moscow with armed drones for its offensive in Ukraine. This month, the United States said it would soon impose new sanctions on Iran over its backing for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

### জাতীয় বীমা দিবস ২০২৪

কারবো বীমা গড়বো দেশ স্মার্ট হবে বাংলাদেশ

সর্বকালের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙ্গালী জাতীয় পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের বীমা স্মৃতি বিজড়িত ১ মার্চ জাতীয় বীমা দিবসে বঙ্গবন্ধুর স্মৃতির প্রতি

আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠান বিকাশ অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়

**বীমা শিল্পে ন্যাশনাল লাইফের গৌরবময় অর্জন**

সর্বমোট বিক্রিত বীমা পলিসি ৬৫ লক্ষাধিক

সর্বমোট প্রিমিয়াম আয় ১৬,৮৬৪ কোটি টাকা

লাইফ ফান্ড ৫,২৭৬ কোটি টাকা

বিনিয়োগ ৫,২৯৬ কোটি টাকা

মোট সম্পদ ৬,০৪১ কোটি টাকা

সর্বমোট দাবী প্রদান ৯,৮৭৭ কোটি টাকা

১৯৮৫-২০২৩ পর্যন্ত অর্জন

জাতীয় বীমা দিবসে কোম্পানীর সম্মানিত বীমা গ্রাহক ও শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই প্রাণঢালা অভিনন্দন

কল সেন্টার ১৬৭৪৯

ন্যাশনাল লাইফ ইনস্যুরেন্স

রেটিং স্কোর AAA

## Cops want more power

FROM PAGE 1

At present, only those who retired after 2020 can avail the benefit.

They demanded supernumerary posts for officers of the ranks of ASP, additional SP, and SP; a dedicated cybercrime unit; interest-free loans to buy private vehicles; and posting at Bangladesh missions abroad.

Several officials who attended the meeting said the prime minister promised to form a police medical core even though it was not among the demands they had made.

"You will have a medical college where your children will get the opportunity to study. You will have doctors," said an officer, quoting the PM as saying.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Habibur Rahman said the premier also promised to establish a science university.

Habibur said he demanded police officers be posted in certain government agencies as "police are already involved in some activities of those organisations. If our officers are posted there, we will be able to work in a more coordinated manner."

Presently, a police officer of the rank of deputy inspector general (DIG) works on deputation as the director (operations) at the Department of Narcotics Control.

Besides, a DIG-level officer is now NSI's director (security) and another the counsellor general in India.

Since the BRTA, ACC and BIWTA have enforcement duties, cops should be there, said a top police officer.

The ACC currently has a 24-member police wing that only deals with operational matters. It also has an SP and two additional SP-level officers who work as investigators.

Habibur said police have 32 additional inspectors general, but only three of them and the IGP are on grade-1.

At a police week event several years ago, the PM said police would get 10 grade-1 officers.

Monirul Islam, additional inspector general and chief of the Special Branch (SB) of police, demanded a university for police that would be named after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The quality of policing will improve through research on forensic science and criminology, he added.

DMP Joint Commissioner Biplob Kumar Sarker made the point about metro rail safety while Additional Deputy IG Ayesa Siddika made the demands about ration and car loans.

Pralay Kumar Jourder, SP of Jashore, demanded a separate cybercrime unit and police's own aviation unit.

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ডেল্টা লাইফ

ঘরে বাসে শ্রিমিয়াম দিন খুব সহজে, কোরো চার্জ ছাড়াই

এছাড়াও Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) সুবিধাও চালু রয়েছে

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