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**INDOMITABLE MARCH**

**Pak atrocity continues**

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

On March 28, 1971, American Consul General in Dhaka, Archer K Blood, sent a telegram to Islamabad and Washington captioned "selective genocide". He reported that they were "mute and horrified by a reign of terror by the Pakistan military" in East Pakistan. Pointing towards various pieces of evidence, Blood suggested that Awami League supporters and Hindus were being systematically targeted by the martial law administrators.

A situation report sent by the American Consulate in Dhaka on the same day informed that despite Radio Pakistan's announcements, life had not returned to normal in Dhaka. Earlier, Tikka Khan had said in Dhaka that "complete peace has been restored and life is returning to normal in East Pakistan".

Apparently, large-scale looting, pillaging, and murder on the part of non-Bangalee people against Bangalees were taking place, with the Army standing by watching, it wrote.

It was further reported that the curfew was re-imposed at noon but lifted shortly thereafter. Army checkpoints were being set up at several intersections in the city. The tightening of the curfew seemed designed to facilitate Pak military

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The mother of a Palestinian man, who was killed in an Israeli strike, mourns with her face stained with his blood at Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

**Khaleda back home after brief stay at hospital**

**Her jail sentence suspended for six more months**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia returned home hours after she was admitted to a city hospital yesterday.

Her personal physician AZM Hossain said she was brought home from Evercare Hospital as her condition improved.

"She was admitted to the hospital in the evening as her condition deteriorated. The medical board, formed for her treatment, conducted some tests on her," Zahid told reporters in front of Khaleda's residence in Gulshan.

The medical board stated that she would be kept under observation round the clock, the physician added.



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**Kurigram to perk up with Bhutan's economic zone**

S DILIP ROY AND PORIMOL PALMA

Nur Islam, 70, a marginal farmer in Kurigram, one of the most poverty-prone regions of Bangladesh, was overcome with excitement when he learnt on Monday that Bhutan would be setting up a special economic zone in the area.

The SEZ, which will be set up on 190 acres of land in Madhabram village, will see the flourishing of industries and connectivity between India's northeast, Nepal and Bhutan.

And with it, Nur and his two sons' days of venturing out to different places in search of work will come to an end. Like Nur, people in Kurigram, where job opportunities are few and far between, could not be more excited with the forthcoming SEZ.

"We are hard-working people. But we have to remain unemployed for much of the year. Thus, we cannot overcome the cycle of poverty. Now we think that the special economic zone will create jobs. Thus, we can improve our life," Nur said.

The construction work for the SEZ, which is 190 kilometres from the southern Bhutanese city of Gelephu, will begin soon, according to Mohammad Saidul Arif, Kurigram deputy commissioner.

The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority has already gotten possession of most of the 190 acres of land at Madhabram, he said, adding that more land will be acquired if needed.

Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck will visit the site in Kurigram today before travelling back home through the Sonahat landport.

The Sonahat land port, which is connected to India's northeastern state of Assam, is 44 kilometres from the designated site of the

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**Patient dies amid interns' strike at RMCH Family alleges he was deprived of treatment**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A diarrhoea patient died at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital yesterday during the indefinite strike enforced by the interns.

Family alleged that Md Mahmudul, 55, died as he did not get treatment.

Mahmudul, of Pabna Sadar upazila, was hospitalised at 10:30pm on Tuesday and he died at 10:30am yesterday, said hospital staffers.

"No doctor visited my son since we reached the hospital. Only one came in the morning, but my son died after he left," said his mother Nurun Nahar.

Around 210 RMCH interns have been on strike since Sunday as part of the nationwide program to realise their four-point

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People queue up at a butcher's shop in Dhaka's North Shajahanpur to buy beef yesterday. Butcher Khalil draws a huge number of customers every day by selling beef for Tk 595 a kg. Beef is usually Tk 750-780 a kg in kitchen markets of Dhaka. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

SCOURGE OF DOWRY

**Lack of inheritance law worsens it for Hindu brides**

NILIMA JAHAN

Despite the Dowry Prohibition Act-2018 being in force, the demands for dowries are still prevalent in many communities, leaving newlywed women and their families reeling under undue financial pressure.

Due to the absence of inheritance laws, Hindu women are more affected as their dowries are openly negotiated before marriage.

According to locals in the country's north, Hindu brides' families have to provide Tk 5 to 50 lakh as dowry to the grooms' families.

Dowry can be given in any form, including cash, jewelry, vehicles, electronics, furniture or reception expenses and hotel fees.

Meanwhile, many brides' parents do not consider it a crime, even if they have to resort to selling land or taking loans from banks or relatives.

A common trend among dowry seekers is that the more educated they are, the greater the sum they demand.

Manoranjana Karmaker from Dinajpur, in 2020, arranged his post graduate niece's marriage to a first-class government officer, who demanded Tk 8 lakh cash and gold worth

Tk 4 lakh, as part of dowry.

"We spent a total of Tk 18 lakh. We sold our land worth Tk 15 lakh and also had to arrange Tk 50,000 for the groom's family to stay at a hotel during the wedding."

A college peon in Thakurgaon, Nitai Chandra Dhar was preparing to marry off his schoolteacher daughter.

Despite earning Tk 15,000 a month, he agreed to pay Tk 15 lakh for his daughter's wedding. He already used up a portion of his savings and planned to sell around seven kathas of land. He also took a loan from an NGO to cover the remaining expenses.

"It won't be possible to repay the loan with this salary. My only hope is my retirement savings."

Asked why he agreed to taking such a risk, he said, "The groom has a government job."

Satish Chandra Barman, a senior assistant teacher at Madhupur Kakoli High School and a known matchmaker in Thakurgaon, said grooms who are in administrative positions make high demands for dowries.

"Parents are willing to pay even up to Tk 30 lakh to marry their daughters off to government job-holders. For instance, my neighbour spent

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**A common trend among dowry seekers is that the more educated they are, the greater the sum they demand.**

**Plastic 'interceptor' tackles trash in Bangkok river**



AFP, Bangkok

Black flies exploded into the air as plastic waste fell from bamboo conveyor belts into skips on a solar-powered barge attempting to remove rubbish from the main river of Thailand's capital Bangkok.

The Ocean Cleanup project launched on the Chao Phraya river, its so-called "interceptor" -- a boat-like structure trailing a floating barrier -- using the river current to funnel plastic into the barge's waiting jaws.

The global non-profit, founded in 2013 by then-teenager Boyan Slat, aims to remove plastic pollution from the seas in part by preventing synthetic waste from ever reaching the oceans.

"The Chao Phraya is actually the largest, the single largest source, of plastic pollution for the Gulf of Thailand," Slat told AFP.

"The Gulf of Thailand is, of course, very important ecologically, but also economically for tourism and fisheries," he said. "It's very important to us to tackle this plastic pollution here."

The Bangkok project, which has taken roughly two years to launch, is a research collaboration with businesses and local officials and Ocean Cleanup's fifth "interceptor" project researching pollution prevention in Southeast Asia.

**6 Pak HC judges alleges coercion by spy agency**

AFP, Islamabad

Six Pakistan High Court judges have accused the nation's intelligence agency of intimidating and coercing them over "politically consequential" cases in a letter seen by AFP yesterday.

Pakistan's military -- which runs the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) spy agency -- has long been accused of wading into civilian affairs, but the missive is a rare rebuke to their mostly unquestioned power.

In the lead-up to Pakistan's February 8 elections, analysts said the military was leaning on the courts to sideline opposition leader Imran Khan, who was eventually jailed and barred from running.

Some of the nearly 200 cases brought against the former cricket star were heard at Islamabad High Court, where six judges signed the letter to the Supreme Judicial Council watchdog.

The letter, dated Monday, makes numerous allegations including that in March 2023, "considerable pressure was brought to bear" on judges "by operatives of the ISI" over a case facing Khan.

"Fearing for their security, they sought additional protection for their homes," the letter said.

It also alleges a judge's brother-in-law was abducted by "individuals who claimed to be operatives of the ISI" and "tortured into making false allegations".

On another occasion, a judge was said to have found secret cameras in his living room and bedroom.

**PSC seeks more pays and perks for chairman, members**

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**PRAYER TIMING MARCH 28**

|        | Fazr | Zohr  | Asr  | Maghrib | Esha |
|--------|------|-------|------|---------|------|
| AZAN   | 4:39 | 12:45 | 4:45 | 6:16    | 7:45 |
| JAMAAT | 4:49 | 1:15  | 5:00 | 6:26    | 8:15 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING**

| RAMADAN | MARCH | SEHRI | IFTAR |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| 17      | 28    |       | 6:16  |
| 18      | 29    | 4:33  | 6:17  |
| 19      | 30    | 4:31  | 6:17  |