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SECRETARIAT FIRE

Restriction on
journo's entry
temporarySays home ministry after
journos express outrage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After journalists expressed outrage over the decision to curb their access to the hub of bureaucracy, the home ministry yesterday stated that restricting journalists' entry to the Secretariat was a temporary measure taken for the sake of ongoing investigations into Thursday's fire.

The journalists expressed their dismay on social media and a faction of Dhaka Union of Journalists termed the restriction "a threat to independent journalism".

A press release of the home ministry said a "positive decision" will be made in this regard upon discussions with the ministry of information.

Meanwhile, the chief adviser's press wing yesterday said access to the secretariat has been restricted "in view of the safety and security of the key point installation."

A devastating fire ravaged parts of

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PLANE CRASH

Putin says sorry to Baku for 'tragic event'
Demands proper probe as fingers point at Russia

AFP, Moscow

Vladimir Putin yesterday admitted Russian air defence was working when an Azerbaijani Airlines plane tried to land in Grozny before crashing, breaking the Kremlin's silence as speculation mounted Russia may have accidentally shot the plane.

The Russian leader called his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev, apologising that the incident took place in Russian airspace while stopping short of saying Russian air defence shot down the plane.

Baku, meanwhile, said Aliyev had "emphasised" to Putin that the plane was hit by outside interference over Russia, saying it wanted those responsible "held accountable."

The phone call between the allies came three days after the Embraer 190 plane flying from Baku to Grozny crashed in Kazakhstan,



Women workers harvesting onions from a farmland in Kushtia's Mirpur upazila. At the time of planting, farmers had to purchase the bulb for Tk 8,000 per maund and around Tk 1 lakh was spent on cultivation per bigha. However, the newly harvested onions are now being sold only for Tk 1,200-1,400 per maund, according to wholesale traders. The farmers have claimed incurring losses of around Tk 60,000-70,000 per bigha this season.

PHOTO: ANIS MONDOL

The youth have
right to form
political party

Says Adviser Sakhawat Hussain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mature political parties should encourage the new political parties formed by the youths, said M Sakhawat Hussain, the labour and employment adviser.

"I personally think that the young people have the right to participate in elections and to form a political party -- none should discourage them," he said yesterday at a session of the two-day-long national dialogue organised by Forum for Bangladesh Studies.

Mature political parties should encourage them.

"They are not your rivals. If you do not nurture them, we will see the same things. We need young blood flowing in politics," he said at the event held at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh.

The Students Against Discrimination movement, which initiated the mass uprising that led to the fall of the Awami League government, and their sister platform Jatiya Nagarik Committee are planning to form a new political party within a month or two, their leaders said.

The interim government will not be in power for a long period, Sakhawat said.

If reforms do not take place now, then it will be difficult to have them in future, he said, while likening the current ails in the system to a cobra's venom.

"You cannot keep a cobra outside and work inside the house. Until you get rid of the venom of cobra you are not safe."

But the reforms will take time, he said.

"You cannot change anything overnight. We need to change the political system of the country. Changes only in the electoral law are not enough. Political culture must be changed."

He, however, acknowledged that Bangladesh needs stability at the moment.

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Scientists measure
exact speed of
human thought

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have finally quantified the brain's speed limit in processing human thought, an advance that reveals why we are able to process only one thought at a time.

The human body's sensory systems, including the eyes, ears, skin, and nose, gather data about our environments at a rate of a billion bits per second.

However, researchers have found that the brain processes these signals at only about 10 bits per second -- a speed millions of times slower than the inputs.

The bit is the basic unit of information in computing with a typical Wi-Fi connection processing about 50 million bits per second.

The brain has over 85 billion neurons with a third of these involved in high-level thinking and located in the more developed cortex region of the outer brain.

Researchers assessed existing scientific literature on human behaviours like reading, writing, playing video games, and solving Rubik's Cubes, and calculated that humans think at a speed of 10 bits per second -- a number that they call "extremely low".



Ambulances transport wounded Palestinians from the Kamal Adwan Hospital to the Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City yesterday after an Israeli raid put the hospital out of service.

MAWA EXPRESSWAY CRASH

Everything
was wrong
with the bus

It had no valid fitness certificate; detained driver's licence expired

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and TANJIL HASAN

Friday's road crash on the Dhaka-Mawa Expressway that claimed the lives of six people and injured four others was inevitable.

The bus of Bepari Paribahan had been in operation without fitness clearance for over a year. The 26-year-old driver involved in the collision had no valid driving licence.

He had recently notified the bus owner about problems with the brakes. But the owner did not pay heed and asked him to "drive slowly".

Things don't end here. The bus, which hit the street Friday after repairs, had no valid route permit or updated tax documents.

In order to have the bus operate under the company, the bus owner "paid off" the owner of Bepari Paribahan, Dablu Bepari, a close associate of Shahjan Khan, a top transport leader and former Awami League lawmaker, now in jail.

Six people from two families were killed when the bus rammed into three other vehicles stationary at the expressway toll plaza in South Keraniganj on Friday morning.

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Police have
no wand to
stop crime
overnight
Says IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam yesterday said the police are taking steps to curb crimes, which have seen a rise after August 5.

"We do not have any magical solution because you know the circumstances and from where we have to come back -- we are taking measures to address these challenges," he told reporters yesterday after the annual general meeting of the Retired Police Officers' Welfare Association at the capital's Rajarbagh Police Lines.

Alam's response came when asked about the rising incidents of theft, robbery and murder in Dhaka and elsewhere since August 5.

"We are working to awaken the police force and regain their confidence. We want to get closer to people and seek their cooperation. We are also calling on representatives of the Anti Discrimination Student Movement to help us strengthen community engagement."

Regarding the attacks and threats to student coordinators in different districts, he said: "We have analysed and resolved each incident and those are not cases of targeted killings."

The incident in Kaliakoir was a

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Suspect held
over murder,
rape of UP
member

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Police early yesterday arrested a man in connection with the rape and murder of 50-year-old union parishad member Basana Mallik in Narail Sadar upazila.

The suspect, Faruk Molla, 50, of Daulatpur in Narail Sadar upazila, was arrested in Harishpur village of Magura's Shalikha upazila, said police.

The main accused, Rajibul, is yet to be arrested.

Narail Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Sajedul Islam confirmed the matter to The Daily Star.

"We are treating the allegations with utmost seriousness. A case has been filed, and we are working to arrest all individuals involved. We are committed to uncovering the truth as quickly as possible."

Basana Mallik was a member of wards 1, 2, and 3 of Maijpara Union Parishad and a resident of Poradanga village.

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