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AMAR EKUSHEY-10

This year marks the 73rd anniversary of the 1952 Language Movement. Drawing on research based on various published books, this 21-part series tells the story of the historic struggle for our mother tongue.

Mymensingh resists Urdu as state language

AHMAD ISTIAK

The students and people of Mymensingh observed spontaneous general strikes, processions and rallies in 1948 and 1952, resisting the Pakistan government's bid to declare Urdu as the state language by omitting Bangla.

Despite the strong influence

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A train going past the street stalls lining the Mohakhali level crossing in the capital's Amtoli yesterday. The shops stand dangerously close to the tracks, posing risks to both the shop owners and their customers.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Former CEC
Abdur Rouf
no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chief election commissioner Justice Md Abdur Rouf passed away at a Dhaka hospital yesterday at the age of 91.

The former Appellate Division judge died around 10:00am at Insaf Barakah Kidney and General Hospital, according to a press release.

He had been suffering from heart disease, lung complications and kidney ailments, among other illnesses, for a long time.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held after Asr prayers at Gausul Azam Mosque in Mohakhali.

The second janaza will be held after Zohr prayers today at the National

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India's statement 'unwarranted and unexpected'

Says Dhaka about Delhi's remarks on demolition of Dhanmondi 32

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi's comments on the demolition of Bangabandhu's house on Dhanmondi 32 is uncalled-for and unexpected, said foreign affairs ministry spokesperson Rafiqul Alam yesterday.

The political comments Sheikh Hasina made from her refuge in New Delhi were not taken well by the people of Bangladesh, Rafiqul told reporters.

"On February 5, a situation was created over the statements of the former prime minister. The interim government has already clarified its position," he told reporters.

On February 6, Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said it was regrettable that the historic residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had been destroyed.

"All those who value the freedom struggle that nurtured Bangla identity and pride are aware of the importance of this residence for the national consciousness of Bangladesh. This act of vandalism should be strongly condemned," he said.

Rafiqul yesterday said, "We have seen some situations arise in the neighbouring country. But Bangladesh does not comment on the internal affairs of other countries. Bangladesh expects the same from others."

Bangladesh-India relations have been strained since deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India on August 5 amid a mass uprising.

In December last year, Dhaka requested New Delhi to extradite Hasina, who faces numerous cases of crimes

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

Israel withdraws from strategic Gaza road

Netanyahu orders negotiators to Doha after fifth hostage-prisoner swap

AFP, Gaza City

A Hamas official said Israeli troops completed their withdrawal yesterday from a strategic road cutting through the Gaza Strip, part of a fragile truce deal that Israel said it was implementing.

But diplomatic tensions were high after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to suggest in an interview that a Palestinian state could be established on Saudi territory, drawing the ire of Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations.

As negotiations are set to begin on the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire, which is intended to pave the way for a permanent end to the war, Palestinians yesterday were able to cross the Netzarim Corridor, where an Israeli checkpoint used to stand.

An official from the Hamas-run interior ministry said "Israeli forces have dismantled their positions... and completely withdrawn their tanks from the Netzarim Corridor on Salaheddin Road, allowing vehicles to pass freely in both directions."

AFP journalists saw no troops in the area as cars, buses, pickup trucks and donkey carts travelled along the road from both the north and south.

Gaza resident Mahmoud al-Sarhi told AFP that for him, "arriving at the Netzarim Corridor meant death until this morning."

This is "the first time I saw our destroyed house," he said of his home in the nearby Zeitun area.

"The entire area is in ruins. I cannot live here."

According to a senior Hamas official, the Israeli withdrawal from Netzarim had been scheduled for yesterday under the terms of a truce that took effect on January 19.

Asked about yesterday's withdrawal, an Israeli security official told AFP on condition of anonymity: "We are preparing to implement the ceasefire agreement according to the guidelines of the political echelon."

Gaza rescuers say Israeli forces kill three Palestinians

Israeli forces kill two women in West Bank raid

Thai hostages freed from Gaza arrive in Bangkok

Chance of Earth being hit by asteroid in 2032 grows

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The chances of Earth being hit by an asteroid in 2032 have roughly doubled – though we are almost certainly fine.

On 22 December, 2032, the Earth will be visited by an asteroid discovered last year and named 2024 YR. The rock is up to 90 metres across.

As it does, there is a chance that it will collide with Earth, potentially causing disaster.

That chance has now been revised up by Nasa's Center for Near Earth Object Studies or Cneos. A week ago, predictions had suggested that there was a roughly 1 percent chance we would be hit by the rock – but it now stands at 2.3 percent, or a one-in-43 chance.

Nasa says that it will continue to study the asteroid and that it expects the chance of disaster will be revised down as it learns more about it and its path.

"There have been several objects in the past that have risen on the risk list and eventually dropped off as more data have come in. New observations may result in reassignment of this asteroid to 0 as more data come in," the space agency said in a statement last week.

The asteroid known as 2024 YR was first spotted on 27 December last year. It came to the attention of the world a few days later, when it was added to Nasa's list of asteroids that are near-Earth and are in danger of colliding with our planet.



Manipur CM quits after months of ethnic strife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The chief minister of BJP-ruled northeastern Indian state of Manipur N Biren Singh yesterday resigned after months of ethnic strife that left more than 250 people dead.

"It has been an honour to serve the people of Manipur so far," Singh said in his resignation letter which he handed over to Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal.

Singh's resignation came after a two-hour-long meeting with Indian Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP President JP Nadda in New Delhi yesterday.

On Saturday, Singh had convened a meeting with BJP-led ruling alliance legislators in Imphal in the wake of the opposition Congress seeking to move a no confidence motion against the government led by Singh during the budget session of the state legislature.



Two workers of a dyeing factory wash chemicals off polythene bags in the Shitalakkhya, further contaminating the severely polluted river. The photo was taken near Narayanjanj city's Hajiganj ferry terminal recently.

PHOTO: SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM

Indian forces kill 31 Maoists

Two commandos also killed

AFP, Raipur

Indian security forces yesterday killed at least 31 Maoist rebels in one of the deadliest clashes since the government ramped up efforts to crush the long-running insurgency.

Two Indian commandos were also killed in the battle, and two other security force members were wounded, police said.

More than 10,000 people have been killed in the decades-long insurgency waged by the rebels, who say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised people in India's resource-rich central regions.

"So far 31 dead bodies of the Maoists have been recovered," senior police officer Sundarraj P told AFP.

"Two security personnel are dead and two other security personnel are injured," he added.

Reinforcements have been sent to the area, he said, warning that the toll could rise as the police carry out search operations.

"Additional forces have been rushed to the encounter site," he said.

Police said they had seized assault rifles and grenade launchers from the bodies of the dead rebels.

The gunfight broke in the forested areas of Bijapur district in the state of Chhattisgarh, considered the heartland of the insurgency.

The rebels, also known as Naxalites after the district where their armed campaign began in 1967, were inspired by the Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong.

"This is a big success in the direction of achieving a Naxal-free India," said Amit Shah, India's interior minister, who last year said the government expected to crush the rebellion by 2026.