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## Prof Tofail Ahmed passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Tofail Ahmed, one of the most prominent advocates for strengthening Bangladesh's local government system and promoting decentralisation, died of heart complications at a city hospital last night.

He was 71.

His career spanned academia, policy reform, and development consultancy, with a strong focus on strengthening democratic and local government institutions.

His son-in-law, Sarowar Jahan, told The Daily Star that Prof Tofail,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

I'm staying in Bangladesh, no exit plans  
**Says Rizwana**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan yesterday said she is not looking for any "exit" and intends to stay in Bangladesh.

"I have always been in the country. I have faced many storms before and will continue to live the rest of my life in Bangladesh," Rizwana told reporters at the Secretariat while responding to a query about whether any advisers are looking for "safe exit".

Her comments came days after National Citizen Party Convenor Nahid Islam claimed that many advisers in the interim government have established ties with political parties and are now thinking about their "safe exits".

He also alleged that the advisers have "secured their own futures" and "betrayed the spirit of the mass uprising".

Asked about the reason behind Nahid's such comments, Rizwana said, "How can I respond to what Nahid Islam has said when he himself did not disclose any names or details of the matter?"

From what I can see,



SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

## DHAKA-SYLHET HIGHWAY Road adviser gets a taste of the ordeal travellers face



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Road Transport and Bridges Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan was stuck for hours in a 15km-long traffic jam in Brahmanbaria while visiting the Dhaka-Sylhet highway yesterday.

The stretch from Ashuganj's Sohagpur to Shahbazpur in Sarail upazila has been facing severe gridlock since late Tuesday night, causing immense suffering for commuters and long-distance travellers.

Five years since its launch, the Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Project has achieved a mere 15 percent of its objectives, leaving the 210-kilometre stretch in disrepair and turning millions' journeys into ordeals.



Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman receives awards at the annual international conference of WAN-IFRA held in Munich, Germany, yesterday.

PHOTO: COURTESY

## Hamas hands over hostage swap list

US envoys, regional leaders set to join negotiations as host Egypt voices 'optimism'

REUTERS, Cairo

Talks to end the war in Gaza were taken up a notch yesterday with the arrival of senior figures from Israel, the US and regional countries, after Hamas handed over its lists of hostages and Palestinian prisoners to be freed in a swap.

With US President Donald Trump's 20 point plan now appearing closer than any previous effort to bringing an end to the fighting, delegations were upgrading their presence at the talks, launched on Monday in an Egyptian Red Sea beach resort.

Trump sent his son-in-law Jared Kushner and special envoy Steve Witkoff, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent his close confidant, Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer. They were expected to join the talks later yesterday, along with the prime minister of longstanding mediator Qatar, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio was meanwhile expected to attend parallel talks in Paris with ministers from European and Arab states, to discuss how to implement Trump's plan.

The plan has broad international support, but crucial details have yet to be spelled out, including the timing, a post-war administration for the Gaza Strip, the fate of Hamas and the prospects for an independent Palestinian state.

Hamas, the militant group that precipitated the war by attacking Israeli

### GAZA PEACE TALKS

- Talks so far focus on three issues: halting conflict, withdrawal of Israeli forces and prisoner swap
- Hamas seeks release of highest profile prisoners held in Israel
- Rubio holds talks with Arabs, European nations in Paris

territory two years ago, said it had handed over its lists of hostages and Palestinian prisoners to be exchanged in a swap, and was optimistic about the talks so far.

The list of Palestinians Hamas wants freed is expected to include some of the most prominent prisoners ever jailed by Israel, whose release had been off limits in previous ceasefires.

According to a Palestinian source close to the talks, the list includes Marwan al-Barghouti, a leader of the Fatah movement, and Ahmed Saadat, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Both are serving multiple life sentences for attacks that killed Israelis.

Delhi's remark on election 'unwarranted'  
**Says Touhid**

STAR REPORT

Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain yesterday described the recent comment made by Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri regarding the upcoming national election of Bangladesh as "completely unwarranted".

"I see that statement as not their matter -- it is entirely an internal issue for Bangladesh, and such comments are completely unwarranted," he told reporters while briefing journalists at the foreign ministry, reports BSS.

During an interaction with a delegation of the Diplomatic Correspondents' Association Bangladesh (DCAB) in New Delhi on Monday, Misri said India firmly supports "free, fair, inclusive, and participatory elections" in Bangladesh at the earliest possible time and will continue to engage with whoever comes to power in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh-India relations have become strained since the fall of the Awami League government last year and India's sheltering of the deposed

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## Trio wins chemistry Nobel for planet-saving research

AFP, Stockholm

Three scientists won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry yesterday for their work developing metal-organic frameworks (MOFs), whose multiple uses include capturing carbon dioxide and harvesting water from desert air.

Japan's Susumu Kitagawa, UK-born Richard Robson and American Jordanian Omar Yaghi were honoured for their groundbreaking discoveries dating from the late 1980s to the early 2000s.

The jury noted that thanks to the trio's discoveries, chemists had been able to build tens of thousands of different MOFs.



Susumu Kitagawa

Omar Yaghi

Richard Robson

"Some of these may contribute to solving some of humankind's greatest challenges," it added.

It listed applications such as "separating PFAS from water, breaking down traces of pharmaceuticals in the environment, capturing carbon dioxide or harvesting water from desert air".

To explain the scale of their achievement, Hans Ellegren, secretary general of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, told reporters: "Imagine that the tools of chemistry could be used to create entirely new materials with unheard-of properties."

In 1989, Robson, 88, tested utilising the properties of atoms in a new way using copper ions.

"When they were combined, they bonded to form a well-ordered,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



IT'S NOT A SWIMMING POOL... Children playing and swimming in the skating rink at Lalmatia Trikon Park yesterday. Due to lack of maintenance and poor drainage, rainwater has turned it into a pool.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## HAKIM MURDER Police arrest four, probe sand trading, political links

FM MIZANUR RAHMAN

Police have yet to identify the armed assailants who shot businessman Md Abdul Hakim to death in Madunaghat in Chattogram's Hathazari upazila on Tuesday.

However, investigators say they are probing possible links to sand trading disputes and political rivalry.

The victim's family claimed that Hakim was a follower of Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury, former vice-chairman of the BNP central committee and younger brother of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, even though he did not hold any official post in the party.

Soon after a footage of the shooting went viral on Facebook, the BNP central office issued a press release saying that Abdul Hakim was not affiliated with the BNP, triggering mixed reactions from local party leaders and supporters.

At Chattogram Medical College Hospital, Hakim's brother Parvez

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4