



A HISTORIC HOMECOMING



Clockwise from top left, BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman waves to his supporters before delivering a speech at an event in Dhaka's 300 Feet area marking his homecoming; supporters wait along the route from the airport to the venue, holding party flags, electoral symbols, and banners; Tarique waves from a bus; the BNP leader removes his shoes to step barefoot on Bangladesh soil and scoops up a handful of earth in a symbolic gesture of homecoming; accompanied by his wife and daughter, Tarique greets senior party leaders at the airport. Bottom, Tarique's motorcade slowly moves through the massive crowd gathered to welcome him.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, RASHED SHUMON, PALASH KHAN, PRABIR DAS, BNP MEDIA CELL



MIGRANT CRISIS 12 die as boat sinks off Senegal

AFP, Dakar

At least 12 people died on Wednesday after a boat filled with migrants seeking to reach Europe sank off the coast of Senegal, security sources said.

The coastal west African country is one of the main departure points for the thousands of Africans who for years have been taking the perilous Atlantic route to reach Europe, primarily via the Spanish Canary Islands, aboard overcrowded and often dilapidated boats.

Cold, dense fog

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came out in the morning. Working outdoors in this cold is very difficult," he said.

A similar situation has been prevailing in other northern districts.

"It's unbearably cold, so I opted to stay indoors. If I go out in this weather, I will fall ill. However, now I have to borrow money from others just to buy rice and lentils," said Kandri Bala, a female day labourer from Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Farmer Makbul Hossain, 55, of Phulbari upazila in Kurigram, said it was difficult to work on farmland amid such severe cold.

"Moderate to thick fog may occur at places over the country from midnight till morning and it may continue till noon (Friday) at places," said a bulletin of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

"Air navigation, inland river transport and road communication may be disrupted temporarily due to thick fog," said the BMD forecast for the next 24 hours, issued at 6:00pm yesterday.

"Night temperature may fall slightly, and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged across the country. Due to foggy conditions, cold may be felt more intensely at many places across the country," it added.

[Our correspondents from Rajshahi and Lalmonirhat contributed to the report]

X-mas celebrated amid festivity

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community dressed as Santa Claus to distribute gifts among children, maintaining a long standing tradition, BSS reports.

In Tangail, the main celebration took place at the Jalchhatra Christ Dharmapalli Church in Madhupur. Addressing the gathering, local religious leader Samnom Nakret urged the community to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ by living with mutual love, compassion, and peaceful coexistence. Traditional Pitha festivals were organised in several villages, including Mominpur, Jalchhatra, Idilpur, Pirgachha, Sainamari, and Dharati.

In Sunamganj, the festival was held in at least 25 churches in the district town and surrounding upazilas. Communities in border villages, including Uttar Narayantala, Puratan Gudigaon, Kathalbari, and Paschim Kona Para, celebrated the day with enthusiasm.

In Bandarban and Magura, special prayers were offered seeking happiness, peace, and prosperity for the nation. Families celebrated the festival by sharing traditional food and holding gatherings.

Similar celebrations were reported in Sherpur, Barguna, Natore, Rajshahi, Jhenaidah, and Rangamati.

Law enforcement agencies adopted additional security measures to ensure safety during the festival.

Marking the occasion, President Mohammed Shahabuddin extended

warm greetings to the Christian community at home and abroad on Christmas.

As in every year, the president exchanged greetings with distinguished members of the Christian community at the Bangabhaban.

According to a press release issued by Sabbir Ahmed Akunjee, senior assistant secretary of the Public Division at the President's Office, diplomats, high commissioners, and representatives of international organisations also attended the programme.

The president called for upholding communal harmony among the people of the country, irrespective of religion, race, and creed.

NCP's Ctg-16 nominee

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"I am personally dissatisfied with NCP's alliance with Jamaat. We wanted NCP to pursue an independent political course," he said, adding that the party leadership had failed to uphold the vision of a new political settlement following the July uprising.

A former student of Dhaka University, Arshadul held several key positions within NCP, including joint member secretary at the central level. He hails from Banshkhali upazila in Chattogram.

He termed his resignation symbolic, saying he chose to announce it on the day BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman returned to Bangladesh after 17 years in exile, describing it as a "special day".

Arshadul also said NCP had failed to materialise the aspirations of the July Uprising, despite the sacrifices of more than 1,400 martyrs and thousands of injured protesters.

He criticised what he described as a growing trend of using religion to polarise society and creating controversy around the Liberation War, warning that vested quarters were pushing the country towards uncertainty.

Expressing confidence in Tarique Rahman's leadership, Arshadul said there was no alternative to BNP and its allies forming the next government through victory in the upcoming polls.