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Up against the wall

Without wages, financial benefits, workers of state-run jute mills in Khulna living in abject poverty

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

"Take our dead bodies, give us our money back", "We want to eat, we want to live", "Give us food or we shall eat the constitution" -- these are the slogans imprinted on banners hanging all over Khalishpur.

This part of Khulna city is host to nine state-run jute mills.

The banners were hoisted by workers of these jute mills during their recent weeks-long protests demanding unpaid wages and other financial benefits. The protesting workers say they have not received wages for at least six weeks, and retired workers of the mills have not received gratuity and provident funds since 2013.

Jute workers protesting for unpaid wages is nothing new in Khalishpur area, SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



A family of five lives in this small dark room in the ramshackle quarters for workers of Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills Limited in Khulna's Khalishpur area. The quarters have been left unrepaired for more than half a century. Top right, due to a lack of space, workers have occupied this half-ruined building which was previously used as an auditorium for screening films. Bottom right, large holes in the ceilings of this building mean its residents have to move between floors using bamboo ladders poking through the holes. The photos were taken last month.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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Alarming rise in violence against kids

902 raped, 342 killed last year, says Manusher Jonno Foundation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Murder, rape, and other forms of violence against children increased significantly last year from the previous one, says a report by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

At least 342 children were killed in violent incidents involving torture, abduction, and rape last year, according to the report.

Besides, some 902 children -- aged up to 18 -- fell victim to rape across the country.

In 2018, at least 272 children were killed in such incidents, and some 356 were raped, says the report.

The MJF, a non-government organisation, prepared the report based on news published in eight national dailies.

The findings were unveiled at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday.

According to the report, some 433 children were killed in road crashes and 252 drowned last year. In 2018, road SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

DISPOSAL OF 35 LAKH PENDING CASES

Cops for joint meet with judges, PPs

Rab DG places proposal at closed-door confce with home boss on 3rd day of Police Week

SHARIFUL ISLAM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Police yesterday suggested a joint meeting between lower court judges, public prosecutors and police to identify ways to dispose of around 35 lakh cases pending trial in the lower courts.

Director General of Rab, Benazir Ahmed, suggested this course of action.

Referring to committees formed in December in all districts to review the law and order situation, prevent various disruptive activities and review cases, he was quoted to have said, "You have made the committees, you will form more such committees, but the problem will not be resolved."

The five-member district committees are headed by a district deputy commissioner or district magistrate.

He was speaking at a closed-door meeting of senior police officers with Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan on the third day of the ongoing Police Week at Rajarbagh Police Lines. Senior Secretary to the home ministry's public security division, Mostafa Kamal Uddin, also attended the meeting chaired by IGP Mohammad Javed Patwary.

"At lower courts, 35 lakh cases have been pending. We have to find out why such a huge number of cases are pending trial for a long time? Who or which system is responsible? Why have the trials of those cases not been completed," queried Benazir, according to sources at the meeting.

The Rab chief requested the home boss and the senior secretary to call up all public prosecutors, judges and police to find ways to solve the problem.

"Forming committees will not resolve the problem," Benazir was SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

If necessary, I will stand at court for Khaleda Zia

Says Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the government will be held responsible if anything untoward happens to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who has been in jail since February 8, 2018.

Expressing concern over Khaleda's health, the convener of Jatiya Oikyafront demanded the former premier's immediate release.

"From media reports, we came to know that the former prime minister has been in jail in critical condition. We, on behalf of Jatiya Oikyafront, are expressing concern as her physical condition has deteriorated," he told journalists after the Oikyafront's steering committee meeting at his Motijheel chamber.

"We want to say clearly SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

Nasa finds new Earth-size planet in habitable zone



AFP, Washington

Nasa said Monday that its planet hunter satellite TESS had discovered an Earth-sized world within the habitable range of its star, which could allow the presence of liquid water.

The planet, named "TOI 700 d", is relatively close to Earth -- only 100 light years away, Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory announced during the annual American Astronomical Society meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii.

"TESS was designed and launched specifically to find Earth-sized planets orbiting nearby stars," said Paul Hertz, Nasa astrophysics division director.

TESS initially misclassified the star, which meant the planets appeared larger and hotter than they actually are. But several amateur astronomers, SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

NIRBHAYA RAPE CASE 4 convicts to be hanged on Jan 22

AFP, New Delhi

An Indian court yesterday ordered the execution on January 22 of four men convicted of the infamous 2012 gang rape and murder of a Delhi university student.

Six people were originally charged with taking part in the brutal attack aboard a city bus, but one was released after a brief detention as a juvenile, while another committed suicide while awaiting trial.

Delhi Court Judge Satish SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 8
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:30 7:00
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:35 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Another cold wave grips the North

STAR REPORT

After around a week-long gap, the country is once again under the spell of a cold wave, which is causing people to suffer.

People, especially in the northern districts, are facing difficulties to get out of home for work amid biting cold coupled with thick fog.

In last week of December, the country witnessed a cold spell and on December 29, the mercury fell to 4.5 degrees Celsius in Tentulia of Panchagrah -- the lowest recorded temperature in 2019.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Meteorological Department officials yesterday said the ongoing cold wave may continue for the next two or three days.

"Furthermore, light rain may occur in some parts of the country, especially in the northern region, on Thursday and Friday," said Abdul Hamid, a meteorologist of the office.

Meanwhile, a Met SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



Defying a ban, CNG- and battery-run three-wheelers ply the Dhaka-Mawa highway in Keraniganj. Such violations of traffic rules often lead to road crashes. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES Israel approves 1,936 new settler homes: watchdog

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel has approved the construction of 1,936 new settler homes on occupied Palestinian territories, watchdog Peace Now said Monday.

The green light was given on Sunday and Monday, Peace Now said, adding that 89 percent of the new homes will be erected in "settlements that Israel may have to evacuate under a future peace agreement with the Palestinians".

The watchdog says settlement building has vastly increased under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ally US President Donald Trump.

Netanyahu has been fighting for his political survival faced with corruption charges and after failing to form a new coalition government following April and September elections.

The premier, who was indicted in November on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, is now facing a third general election in March.

"Despite lacking a clear mandate, for this caretaker government it's business as usual -- continue the massive promotion of harmful and unnecessary construction in occupied territory and in places that Israel will have to evacuate," said Peace Now in a statement.

"Netanyahu continues to sabotage the prospects of peace, dragging Israel into an anti-democratic one-state reality resembling apartheid."

According to Peace Now, 1,150 of the units were approved for "deposit" or phase one of the planning process.

A total of 786 units received final endorsement, including 258 that are to be built in Haresha, an "illegal SEE PAGE 10 COL 1