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PLUS 2 PAGES JACKET ON UNSUNG WOMEN NATION BUILDERS AWARDS

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Your Right to Know

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"Rather than thinking about what is going to trouble us, it's only about being there, enjoying the moment and giving our best."
INDIA CAPTAIN HARMANPREET KAUR AHEAD OF TODAY'S WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP FINAL. (PAGE 12)



"We've been protecting the country but we can't be there for the next – eventually they're going to have to protect themselves."
TRUMP ON AFGHAN CONFLICT. (PAGE 11)



"Coronavirus has created global panic and it might affect foreign guests' presence at Mujib Borsho celebration."
FOREIGN MINISTER DR AK ABUL MOMEN. (PAGE 2)



33PC POSITIONS FOR WOMEN

Most parties nowhere near

ZYMA ISLAM

The Representation of the People Order -- the act that governs the electoral system -- does not ask for much.

It is only asking that in a country where half the population are men and half are women, women should make up a third of any political party. Not half or 50 percent following the natural population ratio, but only a third, a minority.

The law stipulates this requirement be met by 2020, and calls it a pre-requisite for any political party's registration with the Election Commission.

"If any political party wants to be registered, it shall fulfil one of the following conditions, namely -- fixing the goal of reserving at least 33 percent of all committee positions, including that of the central committee, for women, and successively achieving the goal by the year 2020," states the RPO.

This target was set in 2008, when the law was amended to incorporate this provision.

Fast-forward to 2020, and with only nine months for the deadline to end, a majority of the political parties have not managed to meet the requirement. The Daily Star found this talking to leaders of 25 of the country's 41 registered political parties.

Let's start with the ruling Awami League.

The AL, led by its president Sheikh Hasina, is yet to reach the milestone, falling short approximately by 7 percentage points. Nineteen members of its 74-strong central committee are women, meaning women make around 26

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



Women holding a candlelit vigil to mark the International Women's Day. The event was organised by Dhaka University and a non-profit organisation called We Can Bangladesh at the Central Shaheed Minar last night. Story on page 14.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

The girls with clenched fist and courage

NILIMA JAHAN

It was not too long ago that this correspondent reported an incident of violence against her 16-year-old college-going cousin, who was beaten up with sandals by some stalkers in a village market, where hundreds of bystanders watched without protesting.

After that incident, the teenager even attempted to take her own life, unable to tolerate such public humiliation.

Last May, 13-year-old Shamima Akter from Rajshahi's Paba upazila found herself in a similar situation, but with a different twist.

The student of Baya High School and College was on her way home from coaching centre when some local young men started passing lewd comments at her, even though she repeatedly asked them to stop.

What happened next was hardly what the harassers were prepared for.

Shamima, who had

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NARCOTICS, ARMS CASES

GK Shamim got HC bail last month

Says his counsel; attorney general 'kept' in the dark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

GK Shamim secured bail from the High Court in two cases in the first week of February, it has emerged.

Two separate High Court benches granted bail to Shamim for six months in a narcotics case and for one year in an arms case, his lawyer Shawkat Osman confirmed The Daily Star yesterday.

The HC granted the bail as Shamim has been in jail for over five months, whereas the maximum punishment in the cases is six months of imprisonment, he said.

The lawyer said bail bond for Shamim was furnished before the lower court concerned last week.

Osman said Shamim could not be released from jail following the HC order as he is arrested in two other criminal cases.

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Coronavirus cases continue to rise

Italy sees highest deaths in a day; 70 trapped as quarantine hotel collapses in China

AGENCIES

Italy's death toll from coronavirus rose by 36 to 233 yesterday, while the number of infections shot up by a single-day record of 1,247 to hit 5,883.

Italy has recorded the most deaths in any country outside China and the third-most infections after China and South Korea. Official figures showed the number of people receiving intensive care in hospitals jump to 567 from 462 on Friday.

Meanwhile in China, about 70 people were trapped after a hotel being used as a coronavirus quarantine facility in the city of Quanzhou collapsed.

About 40 of the 70 have been pulled from the rubble of the five-storey Xinjia Hotel, state media says.

Back to Italy, the government has been watching closely to see if cases are spreading from the richer north to the poorer south, which has fewer medical resources.

All 22 Italian regions have now registered cases and one new death was reported Friday in the Lazio region that includes Rome and its outskirts.

The main countries affected are mainland China (80,651 cases, 3,070 deaths), South Korea (6,767 cases, 44 deaths), Italy (5,883 cases, 233

TOTAL DEATHS

3,556

1,05,000 confirmed cases

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Avoid public transport

IEDCR to returnees from virus-affected countries; Kuwait slaps travel ban on Bangladeshis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

IEDCR Director Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora yesterday said coronavirus could reach Bangladesh anytime.

"However, there is no reason to panic," the chief of Institute of Epidemiology, Research and Disease Control (IEDCR) told a press conference at her office.

She also urged people arriving from countries with coronavirus cases to avoid public transport and crowded places.

Meanwhile, Kuwait announced a seven-day travel ban for people from Bangladesh and six other countries, Bangladesh's

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India scales up protective measures

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

As the coronavirus outbreak continues to evolve, India has taken various preventive measures in a bid to curb the spread of the virus, including closure of educational institutions in different states.

The number of coronavirus cases in India touched 31 on Friday, and the government announced the cancellation of large gatherings related to the official functions of the Holi festival on March 10, including those involving President Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his official residence on Lok Kalyan Marg, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP President Jagat Prakash Nadda at the party's offices across India.

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal also announced that Holi should not be celebrated, citing the recent violence in north-east Delhi and coronavirus among the reasons.

On Saturday, the Jammu and Kashmir government ordered all primary schools in Jammu and Samba districts to shut down till March 31 with immediate effect as the union territory braced itself for likely coronavirus infections.

On Friday, Bisva Bharati authorities at Santiniketan

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Poverty 'drives' mother to kill 2 daughters

She sets herself on fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"I killed my two daughters and burnt myself too..."

These were the words that Arifunnessa Popy, 35, the mother of two children, screamed to her father Abu Taleb, when he knocked on the door of Popy's Khilgaon flat yesterday morning.

Relatives suspect that the woman murdered her daughters before attempting suicide as she has been struggling financially because her husband could not bear the expenses of the family.

Mozammel Haque Biplab, her husband, who lives in Munshiganj and manages his electrical goods business, claimed that the allegations raised by Popy's family were not true. Mozammel, however,

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Bangabandhu's speech inspires people across the globe: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the followers of Bangabandhu's ideology, particularly the Awami League leaders and workers, to find homeless people in their respective areas and ensure homes for them within the Mujib Borsho to fulfill the desire of Bangabandhu.

"You find how many people remain homeless or landless in your villages and areas. We will arrange homes for them. If you cannot spend money, I will. But we want to give them homes. This is our only desire [in this Mujib Borsho]," she said.

The PM was addressing a discussion, organised by the AL at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, on the occasion of historic March 7.

About the March 7 speech, Hasina said the speech of the Father of the Nation would continue to inspire not only the Bangladeshis, but also the

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with her sister Sheikh Rehana and daughter Saima Wazed Putul and Sheikh Rehana's son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby at Joy Bangla concert in the capital's army stadium yesterday evening.

PHOTO: PID

A leader who will be missed

SAKEB SUBHAN

In 2013, the then Bangladesh coach Shane Jurgensen had said on a tour of Zimbabwe that he was actually thinking of flying Mashrafe Bin Mortaza in. His thought process had nothing to do with bolstering the squad with Bangladesh's best ever fast bowler, who missed the tour due to injury, but it was just about having the most inspirational cricketer in the land among the squad to lift their spirits.

On Thursday, the 36-year-old Mashrafe announced that he would step down from the captaincy after the three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe. Fittingly, the Tigers gifted their captain his 50th win in the third and final ODI the following day.

It is uncertain whether Mashrafe will continue to turn out for the Tigers -- failing form and an injury-ravaged body may rule that out. He has taken Bangladesh to another level in ODI cricket after taking over in chaotic circumstances in late 2014. And it is an unfortunate reality that when he leaves, he will leave a team in chaos as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) -- despite Mashrafe's exit being long in the making -- has not made any clear succession plan.

Reams have been written about his captaincy, and his bowling to a lesser extent.

But only Bangladesh cricketers will truly know how much Mashrafe the man will be missed if Friday's match was indeed his last for the country he has passionately represented since 2001.

During tours, his hotel room doubled as the common room for all team members, including the coaches and the support staff. In South Africa in 2017, Taskin Ahmed used to sleep in Mashrafe's room.

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