

Additional

FROM PAGE 12

Pakistani governments of neglecting such a serious issue. He promises that his government will take all necessary steps for controlling the damage of recurring floods.

The prime minister reiterates that Pakistan will have to free all Bangladeshis stranded in the country, and all the war criminals will be tried on the soil of Bangladesh.

BHUTTO'S TALK PROPOSAL

Pakistani President ZA Bhutto today says that the issue of Bangladesh is an internal matter of Pakistan and leaders of both wings can resolve the issue through discussion. He invites Bangabandhu to Pakistan for a talk. He adds that he is ready to discuss the Bangladesh issue in any place except India. The Pakistani president also praises the role of the Pakistan army during the 1971 War.

Bhutto makes these outrageous comments just a day before the beginning of the Simla Conference between India and Pakistan.

SOURCES: June 28, 1972 issue of *Purbodesh*.

4 more die

FROM PAGE 12

46; and Laksham upazila's Shahanara Begum, 60.

With the four, a total of 90 people have died with Covid-19 symptoms in the district.

Meanwhile, 87 more died of Covid-19 in Cumilla while 2,994 patients tested positive for the virus until yesterday in the district.

A total of 121 patients have been taking treatment at the isolation unit of CMCH. Thirty-four of them have tested positive for the virus and rest were awaiting their test results.

Swathes

FROM PAGE 12

water of Tangon and Kulik rivers have engulfed their villages.

According to the bulletin yesterday issued by the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), areas under Jamuna basin in the northern districts and areas under Meghna basin in Sylhet region will be inundated as water levels of all major rivers in these two basins, including the Jamuna, Teesta, Dharla, Sari and Gowain rivers are increasing.

"Water level of the Jamuna will continue to increase until the first week of July and it will take another week to recede the water," said Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan, executive engineer at FFWC.

The flood situation has been worsened due to the torrential rain in the northern districts and the areas across the border in the last 24 hours.

Assistant Engineer Aminur Rashid of hydrology department at the Water Development Board in Rangpur said, the Teesta was flowing 20 centimetres above the danger mark at Dalia point near Teesta barrage.

People in these areas have taken shelter in high and safe places with their cattle and furniture, he said.

Our correspondents from Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat and Thakurgaon contributed to this report.

Scientists

FROM PAGE 12

At the moment, Fugaku is doing experimental work on Covid-19, including simulating how the virus spreads. Many supercomputers around the world are being put to work on the coronavirus outbreak, allowing researchers to better understand the new virus and how to fight the pandemic.

Aside from that work, Japan hopes to use the computer for its "Society 5.0" technology programme. That could see it used for everything from simulating nuclear blasts to modelling climate change.

"I very much hope that Fugaku will show itself to be highly effective in real-world applications and will help to realise Society 5.0," said Naoki Shinjo, corporate executive officer of Fujitsu, in a statement.

Fugaku was created by research group Riken and technology company Fujitsu, using technology from Arm, which makes semiconductors and software.

Arm designs chips for many of the world's smartphones, including the iPhone, and is rumoured to be coming to Apple's Macs as well.



Locals evacuate Rohingya refugees from a boat at a coast of North Aceh, Indonesia, on Thursday. (Story on page 5)

PHOTO: REUTERS

Pandemic makes more people vulnerable to trafficking

Says annual US report

REUTERS, Washington

The novel coronavirus pandemic had made more people vulnerable to human trafficking, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Thursday as an annual US report added Afghanistan and Nicaragua to a list of worst offenders while Saudi Arabia was upgraded.

"Instability and lack of access to critical services caused by the pandemic mean that the number of people vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers is rapidly growing," Pompeo said in the annual US State Department Trafficking in Persons

report.

The report kept China, a persistent target for criticism by Pompeo, on the lowest rung and again highlighted widespread use of forced labor, including through what the United States and human rights groups say is the mass detention in camps of more than one million minority Muslims.

It said Beijing had expanded this campaign into other provinces and begun implementing it among other religious minorities. China denies mistreatment and says the camps provide vocational training and are needed to fight extremism.

Pompeo, in remarks on the report,

singled out China, "where the Chinese Communist Party and its state-owned enterprises often force citizens to work in horrendous conditions on Belt and Road projects," he said, referring to an infrastructure project to link China with other parts of Asia and Europe.

The report also took aim at Hong Kong, which US President Donald Trump has threatened to strip of economic privileges over China's tightened grip on the former British colony.

Hong Kong, alongside Pakistan, was downgraded to the report's "Tier 2 Watch List," a category denoting those meriting special scrutiny, on

the grounds that it had failed to enact legislation to fully criminalize trafficking.

Saudi Arabia, a major US ally and arms buyer that was last year placed on the list of countries that failed to meet minimum US anti-trafficking standards, was upgraded to the Tier 2 Watch List.

Afghanistan, a US ally in the fight against the Taliban, and Nicaragua were both demoted in this year's report to Tier 3, falling into the lowest category, which can bring restrictions on US non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance, a decision that would be made by the president.

10-bed ICU only hope

FROM PAGE 12

There are no ICU facilities at government hospitals in Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Feni, Noakhali, and Laxmipur. They depend on the 10-bed ICU of Cumilla Medical College Hospital, leading inevitably to people from all these districts being deprived of lifesaving treatment.

All the 10 beds of the unit have been dedicated for Covid-19 treatment.

The six districts have no private ICU facilities that admit coronavirus patients.

Dr Mojibur Rahman, director of the Cumilla Medical College Hospital, said five more beds will be set up at the hospital soon. The work is ongoing, he added.

"Besides, we are trying to collect some high-flow nasal cannulas for the ICU, in order to provide oxygen

directly into lungs. It will improve our treatment at the ICU."

High-flow nasal cannulas can give oxygen at a rate of 60 litres per minute to critical Covid-19 patients.

For Cumilla as a whole, there are 90 beds in isolation units at upazila health complexes and a 154-bed isolation unit at Cumilla Medical College Hospital, according to the civil surgeon office.

As of Thursday, a total of 2,994 people have tested positive for Covid-19 in Cumilla, with 87 deaths so far, according to data from the civil surgeon's office.

The rate of infection in Cumilla city is high, said Civil Surgeon Dr Neyatzaman, adding the administration will soon enforce lockdown in some areas to control the spread of the virus.

Another cop dies

FROM PAGE 12

His body was sent to his village home. He was buried at his family graveyard after a namaz-e-janaza in the presence of senior district police officials, reads the statement.

As of yesterday, 9,869 police personnel were infected with the virus. Of them, 2,193 are from DMP, according to the PHQ.

Besides, 9,004 officials are in quarantine, and 4,188 in isolation.

Meanwhile, 5,794 members of the force recovered until yesterday, and the recovery rate is around 55.92 percent, say PHQ officials.

The officials attributed the decent recovery rate to proper steps of the police administration.

In another development, 632 members of Bangladesh Ansar and

Village Defence Party got infected till yesterday, says a statement from the force.

Of them, 401 contracted Covid-19 while performing their duties in Dhaka and 231 others while discharging their duties in different districts, said Mehnaz Tabassum Rabin, deputy director of the force.

The first Ansar member tested Covid-19 positive on April 10. So far, three Ansar members have died from coronavirus infections. Apart from that, 358 members recovered.

DD Mehnaz said they already taken adequate measures to provide the infected officials with better treatment. That is why, the recovery rate in the force is good, she said.

Strong will shows way

FROM PAGE 1

tough for them to act on-screen, they can act professionally through voice-over."

But, the 31-year-old pointed out, most of the radio channels and other similar mediums in the country are not interested in working with them.

So he began thinking about directing and producing dramas using WhatsApp. At one point, he started to contact people like him over phone and many of them showed interests.

"It's true that a visually impaired person may not get the proper message of a film or a play as they cannot watch it. But it is also true that they are very attentive. They always try to get the inner meaning of everything. It makes them good performers as they easily understand the situation."

Their first work was Onuvutirao

Nirapode Thakuk, which roughly translates into "Let feelings stay safe too", released on Ganga Padma Shilpigushthi's YouTube channel in May amid the coronavirus pandemic.

He says it was the first WhatsApp-based production in Bangladesh. Taslima Mitu, Mahfuja Chameli and Rony himself from Bangladesh and Raju Majhi from India took part in it.

It is a love story woven in melancholy, depicting the impact of quarantine on a relationship. A misunderstanding takes place between the protagonists -- Sabbir and Keya -- over her isolation at a hospital after she tests Covid-19 positive.

Rony's latest work -- Jonmo Tarikh (Date of Birth) -- was uploaded on June 19 on the same YouTube channel, he said, adding that several other of previous production await to

be uploaded.

Asked how the work is done, Rony, a teacher at Government Teachers' Training College, explains: "WhatsApp is very user friendly as its voice notes feature and group options are fully accessible to us. As we communicate through voice notes anyway, we perform dialogue on the same WhatsApp group."

Rony then settles on his drama's plot and asks others to act accordingly and send the recordings to him online. "Everything, from scripting to characterisation, from acting to editing, is done through voice notes. Everyone works from home."

He says he looks forward to partnering with radio and TV channels and film studios. "From our audio production, anyone can produce dramas or movies in a

visual format. Our drama could be a dummy for them. If they collaborate with us, half their work will be done."

Talking to The Daily Star on the issue, Tanzina Aktari, a voiceover artist and presenter of Bangladesh Betar, said, "Rony's proposal has merit, especially at a time when everybody is expected to stay indoors so that coronavirus does not spread."

Rony completed his bachelors and masters' in English at Dhaka University and did his MPhil from University of Oslo, Norway. He then did a teacher's education foundation courses at Boston College, USA in 2018-19.

He says without his mother and three sisters he wouldn't have come this far. He hopes that with their love, he will be successful in this endeavour as well.

Govt plans

FROM PAGE 12

agricultural universities will be built in Natore. One of those will be named after eminent scientist and husband of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina late Dr MA Wazed Miah.

Besides, two agricultural universities will be established in Meherpur. One of them will be built at the constituency of lawmaker Farhad Hossain, also state minister for public administration, says the letter.

Earlier on June 21, the Secondary and Higher Education Division urged the UGC to formulate a draft law for setting up a university in Naogaon. The bill needs to be passed by parliament to build a university.

The government is trying to establish public universities in the districts, where there are no such universities.

In 2010, there were 33 public universities in the country, and now the number is 46.

Currently, 46 universities are in 23 districts. Of them, nine are in Dhaka, five each in Gazipur and Chattogram, three each in Sylhet, Rajshahi, and Khulna, two in Mymensingh, one is each in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Netrakona, Sirajganj, Jamalpur, Tangail, Pabna, Kushtia, Jashore, Gopalganj, Cumilla, Barishal, Patuakhali, Noakhali, and Rangamati, according to the UGC.

Establishment of permanent campus of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University in Lalmonirhat is going on.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12

full curtailment of non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance.

The report said Bangladesh resolved 25 cases related to human trafficking in 2019, up from only eight a year ago.

It also credited Bangladesh for identifying 585 potential victims during this period, which is 40 percent higher compared to the previous year.

Bangladesh set up seven anti-trafficking tribunals to handle the trafficking cases during this period, the report added.

"If we were ranked Tier 3, we would not have been able to get development assistance, soft loans from the World Bank or International Monetary Fund, exchange of officials for educational and cultural purposes and other problems," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen in a video message yesterday.

STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The TIP report said though Bangladesh has been upgraded, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas, including investigation of law enforcing agencies into trafficking cases and denial of the involvement of government officials even after credible reports.

"Despite widespread reports of child sex trafficking, including in licensed brothels, the government did not make efforts to identify victims or investigate the persistent reports," it said.

The TIP report said the Bureau of Manpower and Employment Training forced some migrant workers to arbitrate labour violations with their exploitative recruitment agencies. The government continued to allow employers to charge high recruitment fees from the migrant workers.

As several government officials and parliamentarians maintained close ties to overseas employment agencies, there were concerns such officials had conflicts of interest in approving migrant-friendly practices including prosecuting abusive recruitment agencies, it also said.

Pompeo to press for action in EU talks on China

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Thursday he would open a dialogue with the European Union on China and voiced hope it would lead to tougher action.

Pompeo said he had accepted a proposal for a dedicated channel on China policy with the 27-nation bloc as recommended by EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell during virtual talks with Pompeo on June 15.

"I'm very hopeful that I'll be able to travel to Europe here in just a handful of weeks to go kick that off," Pompeo, known for his hawkish views on China, told a forum of the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

LITB Ref. No.: LITB-2020-9159402

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Charity ship rescues more than 110 migrants in Med

AFP, On Board The Ocean Viking

More than 110 migrants drifting in the Mediterranean on two makeshift boats were rescued on Thursday in separate operations by a ship chartered by a French charity, an AFP reporter onboard said.

"I love you all!" said one of the migrants when the Ocean Viking -- chartered by French aid group SOS-Mediterranee -- arrived at their boat in the waters around 100 kilometres (62 miles) from the Italian island of Lampedusa.

There were 67 people onboard their grey boat, mainly men and youths from Bangladesh and Morocco.

The boat had been spotted by the plane Moon Bird, of fellow migrant rescue charity Sea-Watch, SOS-Mediterranee said.

Earlier in the day, the ship rescued 51 migrants on a blue wooden boat including one woman and five children, mainly of Pakistani and Eritrean nationality.

They were found huddled together on a boat whose two engines had stopped working, 30 kilometres (19 miles) from Lampedusa, located between Malta and Tunisia.

That rescue operation took place at the crossroads between the Italian and Maltese search and rescue zones, SOS-Mediterranee said, adding: "We have asked the authorities of both countries for a safe place to disembark."

The Ocean Viking set sail again on Monday after three months of inactivity due to the coronavirus crisis.

After both sets of migrants boarded, the ship's crew took their temperatures and gave them a

mask.

One person on the blue boat was running a temperature and was quarantined as a precaution, the AFP reporter said.

The rescued migrants were visibly relieved to leave behind the precarious blue boat. In the midst of a pile of shoes, phone chargers, plastic bags, biscuits and vomit, there was only one lifejacket in sight, the correspondent said.

More than 100,000 migrants tried to cross the Mediterranean last year with more than 1,200 dying in the attempt, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration.

The arrival of summer and more favourable conditions at sea may lead to an increase of attempts to cross the Mediterranean with the hope of arriving in Europe.