

**SILICA SAND QUERIES**  
 Illegal extraction  
**UNSTOPPABLE**  
 SEE PAGE 12

# The Daily Star

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**BERGER**  
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**BANGLADESH UPDATE** 2,487 New cases in 24hrs | 2,57,600 Total cases | 3,399 Deaths | 1,48,370 Recoveries | **GLOBAL UPDATE** 731,116 Deaths | 19,895,753 Total cases

## 'SHOOTOUT-DEATHS' IN CUSTODY Law enforcers liable only on paper

**RAFIUL ISLAM**

On September 4 last year, Belal Hossain, an accused in several cases, surrendered to Khulshi Police Station under Chattogram Metropolitan Police with intent to return to a normal life.

After he surrendered, police took him in their custody.

Hours later, they claimed he was killed in a gunfight, which allegedly took place when they took him to Jalalabad area to recover firearms.

Law enforcers are by law required to protect people in their custody. However, after arrests, detentions or surrenders, stories of such "shootouts, crossfires or gunfights" have become regular.

Section 328 (a) of the Police Regulation reads: "The officer-in-charge of a police station or post shall be responsible for the safe custody of all prisoners brought to the station or post."

But no officials concerned or team members have so far been held accountable for the deaths of people in their custody in these so-called shootouts.

On the contrary, they have enjoyed impunity after every incident, rights activists alleged.

"The life and safety of anyone taken in custody is the responsibility of the

custodian. Whether taking him [the person in custody] to a raid or weapon recovery, his safety, according to the law, is of utmost importance," said rights activist Nur Khan Lito.

He added, "But what we are seeing now is one arrestee after another being killed in so-called shootouts in the name of raids. Meanwhile, the custodian police officers are enjoying impunity, which too is against the law."

Since 2004, around 1,000 people out of at least 2,850 victims of "shootouts, gunfights or crossfires" were killed after their arrest, detention or surrender, according to rights body Ain o Salish Kendra.

Over the years, many of the victims' families accused police and Rab officials of killing their loved ones in the name of "crossfire". At times, families also claimed their relatives were victims of "contract killing" by law enforcers. Many family members and rights activists alleged that law enforcers killed the people and described the incidents as "shootouts" to cover up the murders - allegations that law enforcers always deny.

Legal experts say law enforcers cannot avoid their failure in protecting people in custody, even if the "gunfights" really took place.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Pedestrians, mostly garment factory employees, go to work treading a single file in ankle-deep floodwater on a side road in Savar's Jirani area early yesterday morning. Persistent rainfall and flooding over the last month has meant that people all over the country have had to get used to such circumstances in their daily lives.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Shipra gets out on bail

Rab keen on probing murder case against Shifat

**STAR REPORT**

Stamford University student Shipra Debnath was released from jail after a Cox's Bazar court granted her bail in a drugs-related case yesterday.

The documentary film crew was accused and arrested after police in Teknaf shot dead the team leader Maj (ret'd) Sinha Md Rashed Khan on July 31.

Another court in the district would hear the bail petition of Shahedul Islam Shifat, the crew member who was present when Sinha got shot.

Lt Col Ashique Billah, director of Rab's legal and media wing, told The Daily Star that they applied to the court to conduct the investigation into Shifat's case.

Rights organisation Ain O Salish Kendra has been

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## SINHA KILLING Rab to quiz 3 cops today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rab officials would start interrogating suspended police officers Pradeep Kumar Das, Liaqat Ali, and Nandadulal Rakhshit from today.

"The three accused placed on remand will be taken in our custody," Lt Col Ashik Billah, director of Rab's media wing, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The suspended police officers were each placed on a 7-day remand on August 6 in the case for shooting dead Major (ret'd) Sinha Md Rashed Khan in Teknaf.

Pradeep was an officer-in-charge, Liaqat an inspector, and Nandadulal a sub-inspector of police. Liaqat is the main accused in the case.

Four other accused, suspended sub-inspectors Litan Miah and Tutul, and constables Mostofa, Safanur Rahman, Kamal and Abdullah Al Mamun were sent to jail.

Meanwhile, the authorities have decided to transfer every staff member from Teknaf Police Station, a senior official of the force told The Daily Star yesterday. There were around 60 to 70 policemen there before Sinha was shot dead at a checkpoint on July 31.

In another event on Saturday around 8:00pm, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) men at a check post on Marine Drive Road found Tk 1.90 lakh in cash in possession of two constables of Teknaf Police Station. They were travelling in a microbus.

The constables reportedly failed to explain the money. The BGB men let them go after high officials of the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## Patients not getting tested for Covid-19

Says health minister; 34 more die, 2,487 test positive

**MOUJID AHMED SUJAN**

At a time when the rate of Covid-19 cases is on the rise in the country, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said the number of new cases and deaths decreased.

"Patients are not coming for tests as they are getting well by taking treatment at home. One kind of confidence has grown among people in fighting coronavirus," the minister said while addressing a programme marking World Breast Feeding Week at the ministry yesterday.

Mentioning there is no crisis of Covid-19 testing kits, he said that the number of tests has decreased a bit due to the flood situation and people's unwillingness to get tested.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## 'DRIVE' AT PVT HOSPITALS Minister contradicts secretary's views

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While the health secretary says the ongoing drives against anomalies at private healthcare institutions will not stop, the health minister finds the word "drive" objectionable.

Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said action would be taken against any private hospital or clinic if it broke the law, but asked why the measure should be dubbed "drive".

"...Why is it a drive? Can any drive be conducted on hospitals? It is enquiry, which is done there. Drives are conducted in Chittagong Hill Tracts area; terrorists stay there and drives are conducted there," he told reporters in reply to a query at a press briefing at the secretariat.

Meanwhile, Health Secretary Abdul Mannan in a separate briefing yesterday said ongoing crackdown against anomalies by different private healthcare institutions would go on.

"The drives will not stop for a day, not even for a minute," he told reporters after a meeting with leaders of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) and representatives from private hospitals and clinics at the ministry.

He also said members of a newly-formed taskforce would immediately conduct drives if they receive any allegation against healthcare organisations.

Last week, the health services division of the health ministry sent a letter to the home ministry, asking it to keep law enforcement agencies away from raiding government and private hospitals.

In case the raid is urgent, the letter, requested the ministry to inform the health ministry about it.

Talking about the issue, the health minister said the health ministry

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



ALAUDDIN ALI (1952 - 2020)

## Of songs and a shining star

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

With over 300 films to his name, he was unparalleled when it came to melody and musical genius.

He will be remembered as one of the finest composers not only of Bangladesh but also the entire sub-continent, for around 5,000 songs and a phenomenal contribution to Bangla cinema.

The legendary music director, Alauddin Ali, passed away yesterday, leaving a never-to-be-filled void in the country's film and cultural industry.

He was 68-year-old when he passed away at the capital's Universal Medical College Hospital at 5:50pm. He had been

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## Road crashes spike during Eid rush

Happens despite fewer public transport on roads

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The number of deaths in road crashes during the Eid holiday rush has increased this time even with reduced public transport operation due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a passengers' welfare platform said yesterday.

At least 242 people died and 331 were injured in 201 accidents across the country over the 13 days of rush to travel home and come back to Dhaka, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity said.

On waterways, 74 people were killed, 39 injured and 17 remained missing in 33 accidents, while one person was killed in four train-related incidents, it also said.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of the organisation, revealed the information at a press briefing held at

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Rupa Mala, a 70-year-old kidney patient, rests on her daughter's lap inside the Mugda General Hospital compound yesterday morning. The Golapbag resident went to another hospital in the capital yesterday for treatment, but was advised to be tested for coronavirus first, which is why she was waiting at Mugda General Hospital since 5:00am before finally being tested around 11:00am. Inset, after a marked lack of interest in being tested for Covid-19 over the last 20 days or so, many were seen turning up at the hospital to be tested yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Internet slows down nationwide

Excavator severs fibre cable in Patuakhali

STAR REPORT

Internet services across the country suffered serious disruption due to damage done by an excavator on the country's second submarine cable line yesterday.

The underground cable line was damaged at Patuakhali's Alipur area around noon when workers were lifting earth with the excavator, said Deputy General Manager of Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Limited (BSCCL) Mohammad Tariqul Islam.

He said the workers pulled out 25 feet of cable line with the excavator from five feet below the surface while lifting earth from a farmland belonging to an upazila parishad chairman.

Tariqul Islam also said the damage was so extensive that it would not be possible for them to immediately repair it.

"We have three metres additional cable in a handhole. Since around 25 feet of cable have been uprooted, it would require technical and equipment support from Dhaka to repair it," Tariqul told our Patuakhali correspondent.

The land where the incident took place, belonged to Latachapl UP chairman Ansaruddin Molla. He told The Daily Star that it was a mistake on the part of the workers. He also said that he was "sorry" for the accident.

The cable line provides nearly 40 percent of the total bandwidth used in the country. And due to the damage, consumers have been experiencing slow internet service.

Earlier, BSCCL Managing Director Moshirur Rahman told Prothom Alo that excavators have damaged the power line and optical fibre of the submarine cable system called South East Asia-Middle East-Western Europe 5 (SEA-ME-5).

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

