

## RISK OF LANDSLIDE

## 19 shelter homes opened for hill slope residents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

District administration in Chattogram has opened 19 shelter homes for people living at slope of hills, in the wake of heavy downpour in the port city.

Authorities urged people through loudspeakers to take shelter at those centres to avert casualties throughout yesterday at Lalkhan Bazar, Koibollodam area, Arefin Nagar, Baizid, Akbar Shah and Firoj Shah Colony areas.

Chattogram has been experiencing moderate to heavy downpour for the last three days.

Thousands of people, mostly from lower income groups, live at makeshift shanties built at the slopes of hill or by razing hills. According to the district administration, 17 hill slopes across the port city are being occupied by such settlements.

In 2007, some 127 people died at Motijhorna area of Lalkhan in a massive landslide, prompting authorities to take cautionary measures to protect people since then.

Touhidul Islam, executive magistrate of Chattogram district administration,

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Chattogram city saw 49mm rain in 24 hours till yesterday afternoon, resulting in the city's commercial hub Agrabad to go under knee-deep water. Due to lack of proper drainage, such events are common in the monsoon season, and residents have no choice but to bear with the problem.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

## Where rainfall is a curse

## Low-lying areas of Ctg inundated again

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Once again residents in port city had to suffer immensely due to waterlogging caused by torrential rain yesterday. Most low-lying areas in the city went under knee-to waist-deep water.

Chattogram Met Office recorded 33.6mm rain in the past 24 hours till 9am yesterday. Rain would continue in the next 24 hours due to active presence of monsoon air, said Dr Shahidul Islam, meteorologist of Chattogram Met Office.

The Chattogram Port was also advised to hoist cautionary signal number 3.

Due to incessant rain, low-lying areas including Bakalia, Chawkbazar, Bahaddarhat, Muradpur, Sholoshahar Gate No 2, Badurtala, Kapasgola, Agrabad, Port Connecting Road, Halihsahar, Shulakbahar, Chandgaon, DC Road, KB Aman Ali Road, and Prabantak Intersection went under water.

A large number of people were seen wading through filthy water to go to their destinations. Some were busy protecting their homes and shops from water while others were trying to drain and scoop out the accumulated water.

Very few vehicles plied the roads and a handful of rickshaws and three-wheelers were seen carrying passengers -- that too for fares no less than exorbitant.

"I have been waiting for a vehicle for around 30 minutes but could not find one," said Rehenuma Khanam, a resident of city's Rahattarpool area.

She said she had to go to the bank. It was around 10:30am and unable to find any vehicle, she started walking towards her destination, wading through filthy water overflowing from roadside drain.

On KB Aman Ali Road, Sudhir Dutta was facing a different problem. Water entered his photo studio and he was trying to scoop it out. "This has become a common issue. Every time it rains, we suffer," he said.

He expressed his frustration at the indifference of the authorities concerned in addressing the issue.

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## DMCH to get bigger, better outpatient unit

Long-awaited expansion work near completion



Once completed, this 7,500 sq ft steel structure will help ease long queues and serve additional patients. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The outdoor department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) is going through an expansion. Hospital authorities expect to start providing service from the expanded outdoor premise within one-and-a-half months.

The DMCH outdoor service, located beside Central Shaheed Minar on Dhaka University campus on the first and second floors of a three-storey building, has been at the same place since the 1960s. The number of patients has increased sharply in the last 20 years, but the outdoor department had seen no expansion, until now.

DMCH Director Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin said the department is being expanded due to its space constraint to host a large number of visitors everyday. To accommodate them, a temporary 7,500 sq ft steel structure is being constructed, where additional patients can also be served.

Hospital sources said the outdoor department was constructed in line with the hospital's initial 700-bed layout. DMCH was established in 1946.

"Around 4,000 to 5,000 visitors come for outdoor service every day during regular times. Due to the shortage of space, treating such a large number of patients

have been difficult for some time now," the hospital director said.

"The insides of the department is crowded, which forces patients and health workers to work under severe heat. Sometimes a patient has to sit all day before obtaining service," he added.

When this correspondent visited the outdoor department last year, he saw it filled to the brim with patients and attendants, with suffocating heat and humidity, as ceiling fans overhead could not keep up with the number of patients. On top of this, counter queues move at a snail's pace, making the environment even more unbearable.

Once outdoor service begins at the expanded premise, the medicine and child departments' outdoor services could be shifted here, as these are the busiest sections with around 1,000 visitors everyday.

The space freed up by shifting these sections could be allocated to expand services of other departments, while departments which previously could not offer outdoor services due to space constraint might be allocated space to operate. There are also plans to transfer the ticket counters here.

Additionally, toilets will be built at the current outdoor premise as there's a longstanding shortage of it for visitors.

## High Court upholds cancellation of GK Shamim's contract

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday upheld a government decision that cancelled an agreement with the company of Golam Kibria Shamim known as GK Shamim, now in jail, for constructing a 20-storey building at Azimpur government colony in Dhaka.

The court rejected a writ petition filed by Shamim, an influential contractor of the Public Works Department and an expelled Jubo League leader, challenging the legality of the government decision.

The bench of Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice SM Kuddus Zaman passed the rejection order considering that the petition was not placed properly.

Barrister Moudud Ahmed and Barrister Abdullah Al Mahmud appeared for the writ petitioner while Additional Attorney General Murad Reza and Deputy Attorney General Amit Dasgupta represented the state during virtual hearing on the petition.

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## Violence against children in workplace shot up in July: MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Incidents of violence against children in the workplace shot up in July after people gradually started to return to work since June.

A telesurvey titled "Violence against Women and Children: Covid-19" conducted by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) found that child abuse in the workplace increased by 137 percent in July compared to the previous month.

A total of 692 children were subjected to violence in the workplace in July, while the number was 292 in June. On the other hand, incidents of domestic violence has decreased.

In addition, incidents of child abduction has also increased -- 69 children were abducted during the pandemic.

Besides, a total of 2,979 children have been tortured, and of them, 1,979 (64 percent) are girls while 1,000 (34 percent) are boys.

According to MJF's findings, violence against children increased after the lockdown, as more and more children have joined work in both formal and informal sectors. Having been away from economic activities for a long period, many people

were instigated to send their children to work. Besides, parents were also in favor of getting some extra money as the children have not been going to school amid the closure.

On the other hand, due to the downfall of the economy, factory owners (especially of the informal sector) took the opportunity to use child labour, which is comparatively cheaper than paying the wages of adult workers.

To understand the extent of violence against women and children in this changed situation, MJF collected data through its 111 partner organisations in 53 districts in July, and interviewed a total of 63,968 people. Of them, 44,875 were women and 19,093 were children.

The total number of victims, including women and children, was 11,471 in July, which was a slight decrease from the 12,740 recorded in June.

A total of 8,492 women were subjected to violence in July while the number was 9,844 in June. Incidents of violence against children increased to 2,969 in July, while the number was 2,896 in June.

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## KILLINGS AT JASHORE JUVENILE CENTRE

## Rights bodies call for judicial probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Child Rights Advocacy Coalition in Bangladesh -- a group of right activists' organisations -- yesterday demanded judicial investigation into the killing of three boys at Jashore Juvenile Development Centre.

They claimed although the incident was reported in many media as an internal clash between two groups of children, the injured hospitalised teenagers complained against the officers and employees of the juvenile centre that they beat the boys till death.

"There are previous allegations that bodies of teenagers have been recovered, beaten and tortured at this centre and the district administration had constituted an inquiry committee earlier. The inquiry committee also made several recommendations for the smooth running of the institution, which were not implemented."

It demanded an inquiry into why the recommendations were not implemented. They said the deaths and serious injuries of these juveniles in custody are unexpected.

The coalition members -- Save the Children Bangladesh, ActionAid Bangladesh, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Educo Bangladesh, Terre des homes, Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Plan International Bangladesh and World Vision Bangladesh -- also expressed grave concern over the incident.

## Expatriate workers in Greece to receive skills training

Bangladesh embassy in Athens signs agreement to help those who lost jobs amid Covid-19 pandemic

JAMIL MAHMUD

Unemployed Bangladeshi migrants in Greece are going to have an opportunity of institutional skills training facilitated by the Bangladesh embassy there that will benefit them getting jobs amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Bangladesh embassy in Athens recently signed a deal with Athens-based training institute IEK Delta for a "basic training programme in culinary arts", said Dr Syeda Farhana Noor Chowdhury, labour welfare counsellor at the embassy.

The initiative is first of its kind undertaken by the mission, she said.

Following this, the embassy in a circular on Wednesday called for applications from eligible Bangladeshi migrants for the enrolment.

As per the programme, Bangladeshi migrants who have valid documents but

currently unemployed will get the training opportunity, reads the circular posted on the embassy's social media page.

The embassy official said the expatriates' welfare ministry will provide financial support for the training and migrants don't have to pay any fee.

The training programme will be in six batches and the first batch is expected to start in September depending on coronavirus situation, she told this newspaper over phone.

Each batch will comprise 15 individuals. The training module will be of 60 credit hours and likely to be expanded for one month, she added.

"After successful completion, each participant will get certificate," she said.

The official said the IEK Delta has its own "career office" through which it is affiliated with several popular restaurants in Greece.

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## Demand for reopening jute mills rings louder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Civil society members, workers and left-leaning party leaders took to the streets in Khulna city yesterday, demanding immediate reopening of jute mills under government arrangement.

Under the banner of "Patkal Rokkhaiy Sommilita Nagorik Parishad" (Citizens' combined platform for protest), they brought out a procession in Khalishpur area. Later, they staged a rally where they criticised "government conspiracy" to close down the state-run jute mills. The participants called upon all to join the movement.

The procession started from Daulatpur Jute Mill Gate in Khalishpur at 10am. Then it marched along BIDC Road passing through Platinum Jute Mill, Crescent Jute Mill, Khalishpur Jute Mill and BL College Gate. It reached People's intersection at noon.

Hundreds of workers and civil society members participated in the meeting.

Md Kudrat-e-Khuda, convener of the Parishad, said when the demand for jute and jute products are high in world market, the government decision to shut down jute mills and handed those over to public-private partnership is really regrettable.

Talking about corruption in jute sector, he said reasons behind loss in jute mills have to be identified.

A total of country's 56 projects in different sectors are being run under PPP but none of those are in good condition, he claimed.

He further said according to mill assessment committee, only Tk 1,200 crore is needed to modernise all jute mills where the government allocated Tk 5,000 crore for workers' arrears and other benefits during the closure.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Gonosamhati Andolon, said the jute mills were shut down during the coronavirus pandemic so that no protests could be staged.

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An array of lightbulb sockets hang on a tangle of wires outside the Muktijoddha Super Market in the capital. Roadside hawkers in front of the market use electricity from inside the market by connecting power cables, paying a daily "fare" of Tk 40-50, locals said. Not only is this practice illegal, but the exposed livewire connections on the sockets poses a constant risk of electrocution, especially in rainy weather.

PHOTO: ANIRAN HOSSAIN

## BASIC BANK SCAM

## Five bail petitions by Iqbal Hossain Bhuiyan denied

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to grant bail to Iqbal Hossain Bhuiyan, a business partner of survey organisation SD Survey, in five separate cases filed in connection with BASIC Bank loan scam.

However, the court issued five separate rules asking the Anti-Corruption Commission and government to explain within four weeks why Iqbal Hossain Bhuiyan should not be granted bail in the cases.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohel came up with the rules after virtually hearing five separate bail petitions filed by Bhuiyan, in connection with cases filed with Paltan Police Station in September 2015.

According to a Bangladesh Bank enquiry, in the four years between 2009 and 2013, Tk 4,500 crore was swindled out of BASIC Bank, once a healthy public bank.

In 2015, the ACC filed 56 cases in connection with the scam, but rather quizzically, neither BASIC Bank's then chairman Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu nor any of the board members were named as the accused.