

Globally, one in three children missed out on remote learning

Unicef says 463m affected

UNB, Dhaka

For at least 463 million children whose schools closed due to Covid-19, "there was no such thing as remote learning," the head of the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) said yesterday.

Unicef launched a new report outlining the limitations of remote learning and exposing the deep inequalities in accessibility.

"The sheer number of children whose education was completely disrupted for months on end is a global education emergency. The repercussions could be felt in economies and societies for decades to come," said Henrietta Fore, Unicef executive director, in a news release announcing the findings of the report.

At the height of nationwide and local lockdowns, nearly 1.5 billion schoolchildren were affected by school closures.

The report - based on a globally representative analysis on the availability of home-based remote learning technology and tools for children from

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They're usually making wreaths and necklaces out of flowers to sell them around the Central Shaheed Minar, but a game of marbles is hard to pass up during downtime. With the bucket of flowers set aside, inset, the two friends roll marbles in the sand. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Youth involvement in policymaking still low

Speakers tell discussion; recommend introducing civics topics at school level

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Youth's involvement in higher and important policymaking is still unsatisfactory, although they share a large part of the country's population, speakers said during an online discussion yesterday.

Many youths are involved in different sectors, professional bodies, and businesses. However, when it comes to take decisions, elderlies are being preferred for, they said.

They added learning democratic practices and knowing different governance systems for children at schools could help bring a change to such scenario.

ActionAid Bangladesh and The Daily Star jointly organised the discussion on the topic "Youth: Larger share of population, what share in making decisions?"

Referring to Inter-Parliamentary Union's 2018 report of "Youth Participation in National Parliaments", Korban Ali of ActionAid Bangladesh said representation of MPs less than 40 years of age in the Bangladesh National Parliament was lowest among the South Asian countries (5.71 percent).

The scenario of youth participation in decision-making in Bangladesh is that the higher is the level the lower is their participation, Korban said.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganasamhati Andolon, said whenever an individual is being appointed in bureaucracy or any other profession he or she usually starts at the young age.

In that sense, no profession can survive without youth's participation, he said.

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF PLAINS

62pc pushed below poverty line

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The pandemic has critically impacted indigenous people living in plains, and pushed around 62 percent of them below extreme poverty line, said Indigenous People's Development Services (IPDS) at a webinar yesterday.

Since many of these people are informal-sector workers -- like daily wage earners, beauty parlour and RMG workers, who have no job security -- 72 percent of the salaried employees faced job cuts, were promised re-employment in the name of temporary leave, or fired with little to no compensation.

IPDS President Sanjeeb Drong presented the alarming findings of the recent rapid survey titled "Impacts of Covid-19 on the lives of indigenous people living in the plains of Bangladesh" at the webinar "Consultation with the Media on Covid-19 Pandemic and the situation of Indigenous People in the Plain Land, Bangladesh", organised by IPDS.

The rapid survey, conducted by IPDS and supported by Minority Rights Group Europe, also showed that 92 percent of the

indigenous people (18,40,000 of the total 20 lakh population) are struggling with income reduction, while 20 percent said they are receiving partial payment.

Besides, among who live in urban areas for jobs, 60 percent have faced problems in paying rent and dues because of job loss and partial payment, which is why many moved or are preparing to move to villages.

In some cases, landlords did not allow them move without paying rent, forcing those families to sell village land, properties or other valuables to pay dues.

The study also stated that at least 5,00,000 indigenous people have become the "new poor", due to closure of various institutions and loss of private jobs. The crisis has been exacerbated among Garo migrants.

More than 60 percent of respondents said they did not receive any relief or assistance from the government or NGOs at the beginning of the pandemic.

IPDS collected the data from 1,205 indigenous families of 35 ethnic groups in 28 districts via face-to-face interview, phone call and email.

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India proposes resumption of air connectivity

Riva Ganguly calls on State Minister for Civil Aviation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Outgoing Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Riva Ganguly Das yesterday proposed restoration of air connectivity with Bangladesh.

The air services between the neighboring countries have remained cancelled due to Covid-19 outbreak since April.

The Indian envoy came up with the proposal while at a meeting with State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahub Ali at his office in the secretariat.

She also informed Mahub Ali about India's interest in working for the development of the aviation sector in Bangladesh, the civil aviation ministry said in a release.

In reply, the state minister agreed on the need to resume air communication and said steps would be taken soon through mutual communications.

During the meeting, the junior minister said direct flights from Sylhet MAG Osmani International Airport to London will start soon.

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Sujon in the driving seat!

CCC administrator roams city streets on scooter to hear of people's woes

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

It is an unusual scene for port city dwellers to see a city administrator scooter through the city, instead of traveling in a motorcades with police protocol.

So when they saw newly-appointed Chattogram City Corporation administrator Khorshed Alam Sujon on a scooter, rolling through the city learning of the urban difficulties of the citizens, they were elated.

The administrator's efforts include taking firsthand note of city dwellers' woes -- such as their struggles with dilapidated roads, littering, clogged canals etc. -- and sometimes providing instant remedies.

Habib Ullah, a grocer of Agrabad Excess Road, told The Daily Star, "I did not believe when I first saw him pull over near my shop."

"People all of a sudden gathered around him and started placing their complaints," Habib added. "Sujon heard them out and ordered city corporation officials to take note and provide quick solutions."

Sujon kicked off his city-wide scooter

ride on August 24 from Bahaddarhat with plans to visit every ward.

Talking to this correspondent, Sujon said he had noticed moving with protocol negatively affects his connection to the people, who tend to feel uncomfortable faced with such an entourage.

"That's why I decided to move on my scooter, without any protocol, so that people can connect with me easily and convey their needs, sufferings, and suggestions," he said. "After assuming office, I have encountered numerous problems. This made me adopt a pragmatic outlook," he said.

"No one can afford to sit still if they want to resolve the problems of this city. I got just 180 days, so I don't know how far I can go, but I can guarantee I will give my best," Sujon assured.

Sujon plans to visit the wards without any prior notice so that he can see the real picture.

Sujon, also the vice-president of Awami League's city unit, said it won't be possible to roam around on the bike every day but he will try to do so at least twice a week.

House help 'poisons family, loots house'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A house help allegedly looted a house in Dhaka's South Rajarbagh area after poisoning six members of the family.

The victims are Jahanara Begum (70), Rumana (57), Parul Aktar (40), Selina (50), Abir (15) and Nafiz (17).

They fell unconscious after eating food allegedly served by Lima (35) on Wednesday, said Mahub Alam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sabujbagh Police Station, adding that she put something in the food.

The six were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital around midnight where their stomachs had to be pumped. Later they were transferred to Mitford Hospital. They are out of danger now, the OC said.

The accused domestic worker was hired last week to take care of Suraiya Begum, the elderly mother of Parul who had undergone a surgery recently, said a relative of the family, Ismail Hasan.

Suraiya breathed her last on Monday. Relatives visited the house for the funeral, few of whom stayed back, Ismail said.

On Wednesday, two women including Lima's sister visited her at the house. Lima served dinner to the family after guests left.

After the family members fell unconscious, she looted the house and fled, the OC said. The details of how much Lima managed to steal could not be known yet, he added. Lima is on the run.

NINE VIOLENCE CASES

SC upholds stay on trial of six BNP leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld the High Court orders that stayed the trial proceedings against six BNP leaders including its Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir in nine separate vandalism and arson cases filed in 2015.

Other five accused BNP leaders are Khandker Mahub Hossain, Abdul Awal Mintoo, Selima Rahman, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, Aman Ullah Aman and Syeda Asifa Ashrafi Papiya.

The apex court, however, asked the HC to hear and dispose of the rules issued in connection with the cases. A full bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain came up with the orders after virtually hearing nine separate leave to appeal petitions filed by the state seeking a stay on the HC orders.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam appeared for the state while lawyers AM Mahub Uddin Khokon represented the accused BNP leaders during the virtual proceedings of the court.

Mahub Uddin Khokon told The Daily Star that the HC stay orders on the trial proceedings of the cases against the accused BNP leaders will remain in force following the apex court orders.

The HC will hold hearing on the rules for their disposals, he said, adding that the accused BNP leaders are on bail in these cases.

Following four separate petitions filed by the BNP leaders, the HC on different days in 2017 stayed the trial proceedings against them in nine vandalism and arson cases and also issued nine rules asking the state to explain as to why the proceedings of the cases should not be scrapped.

The state then filed separate leave to appeal petitions with the Supreme Court for staying the HC orders. The cases were filed with different police stations in Dhaka during the anti-government agitation enforced by BNP-led alliance in 2015.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

In a country where even physically able pedestrians often do not have proper traffic rights, it may be far-fetched to expect facilities for those with special needs. For every person with some form of disability, navigating through life can be extra arduous, especially in big cities. This photo was taken from Wasa intersection in Chattogram city.



Despite rain, workers of Chattogram City Corporation were seen busy repairing this road at the port city's Khulshi area. However, all their hard work might go to waste, as the Bitumen -- the material used for forming roads -- can be ineffective in holding the surface together if it is exposed to water during application. As a result, it will not be surprising if the potholes return after a few months. The photo was taken on Wednesday. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Shahed indicted in arms case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday framed charges against Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed in an arms case.

Shahed, however, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice for himself, after Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Special Tribunal-1 of Dhaka read out the charges to him.

Earlier in the day, the tribunal rejected a discharge petition submitted by his lawyer and fixed September 10 to start trial of the case.

Shahed was arrested on July 15 from Sathkira when he was trying to leave the country on a boat.

On July 19, a team of DB found Shahed's private car in front of a house in Sector-11, in the city's Uttara Paschim area.

They seized a pistol with a round of bullets from the car and later a case under the Arms Act was filed against him.

DB Inspector Md Sairul Islam on July 30 submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka, showing 13 people as prosecution witnesses.

Develop in-home learning for Rohingya children

Recommends child rights org Educo

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Developing a new in-home learning strategy for the Rohingya children will help them overcome the education challenges faced by the coronavirus pandemic, recommended global child rights organisation Educo.

"We need to adapt our assistance to children during this critical period by providing effective in-home learning strategies and exploring opportunities for children to learn through radio and the internet to enrich their learning," said Matiur Rahman, Educo Cox's Bazar Emergency Response Head of Mission, in a statement as the Rohingya influx stepped into fourth year on August 25.

He said they fear that the reduction of informal education services and limited child protection services in the camps put children at greater risk of forced early marriage, child labour, and physical and sexual violence during the pandemic.

A survey conducted by a local NGO -- SKUS -- with support from Educo found Rohingya children are facing an extremely uncertain future as schools and learning facilities remain closed indefinitely amid the global pandemic.

Majority of the 860,000 Rohingyas in the camps in Cox's Bazar are children. They have so far education facilities for up to class V.

It said majority of children have been coping with school closures by learning on their own without adequate learning materials or very little guidance from educators as to how they can continue learning at home.

Matiur said despite the ordeal that the Rohingyas went through three years ago, Rohingya children and their families have endured the hardships to start anew in the refugee camps.

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