

ANTI-TORTURE ACT UN official, US envoy hail 'significant' verdict

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Resident Coordinator Mia Seppo has appreciated the first verdict under the Anti-Torture Act, saying it will pave the way for other victims to access justice.

"Significant 1st case under Anti-Torture Act which should pave the way for other victims and their families to access justice, and for further reforms to eradicate torture, extrajudicial killings and disappearances," she said in a tweet.

US Ambassador Earl R Miller, meanwhile, termed the verdict historic and significant.

"Historic and significant verdict with first sentencing under #Bangladesh Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act," he tweeted.

He said accountability for all persons is critical to any rule of law system and urged all saying, "Join UN in calling for end to torture, extrajudicial killings, and disappearances."

The comments came after a Dhaka court on September 9 sentenced three policemen including former sub-inspector of Pallabi Police Station, Jahidur Rahman, to life imprisonment and two other accused to seven years' jail in the case filed over the custodial death of Ishiaque

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People from low-income families crowd the Open Market Sales of essentials by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh in Mohammadpur Dhaka Udyan area of the capital. With many of their incomes taking a hit due to the Covid-19 pandemic and fluctuating market prices, the competition is tough to reach the front of the line, and wearing masks and social distancing practices are all but forgotten.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Sex traffickers active in myriad guises

Choreographers, actress' manager
'involved' in sending girls to Dubai: CID

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Manager of a well-known film actress and at least couple of choreographers are allegedly involved in trafficking girls to Dubai.

They allegedly send girls aged between 18 and 20, who got in touch with them to pursue a dance carrier in the film industry, to Dubai with promise of a lucrative job.

The girls were later forced into sex trade, said officials of the Criminal Investigation Department.

CID claimed to have got the information after a broker, who worked closely with this trafficking racket, gave confessional statement before the court under section 164.

In the confessional statement, the broker -- Md Yeasin (33) -- mentioned that he has been involved in sending female artists abroad since 2015.

Yeasin said he met one Md Azam Khan, leader of the trafficking gang, in 2016 and started sending young female artists to his club in Dubai for Tk 10,000 commission, sources in court told this newspaper quoting Yeasin.

Asked about involvement of people from the film industry, Syeda Jannat Ara, special superintendent of CID, told The Daily Star on Friday, "We got some names from Yeasin's confessional statement. We are now verifying those. We will take action against those involved no matter who they are."

In the statement on August 20, Yeasin told the court that he had two dance academies -- Modern and Nirmal -- in Narayanganj.

From the academies, Yeasin said he used to take artists to different social events such as weddings or birthdays. Many of the girls often requested him to send them abroad, Yeasin told court.

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Intercity tickets at counters till Sept 21 sold out

Railway starts selling 50pc of available train tickets at stations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Railways (BR) started selling half the tickets of intercity trains through station counters from yesterday morning while the rest is being sold online.

However, as all the tickets of intercity trains till September 20 were already sold out via online, many people who came to the station to buy yesterday's tickets, returned with disappointment.

Tickets for September 21 were sold out yesterday, said Shawkat Zamil Mohsi, division commercial officer of BR.

However, they were selling tickets of all local, mail and commuter trains from the station yesterday, as they are not being sold online, he said.

Asked about people's sufferings, Masud Sarwar, Kamalapur Station manager, said as BR sells advance tickets of intercity trains 10

days before the journey date, all the tickets till September 20 were sold out.

After resumption of train services from May 31 on limited scale, BR has been selling all tickets of intercity trains through online and a mobile app.

Although authorities have started selling all tickets of local, mail and commuter trains at the stations from September 5, they started selling 50 percent tickets of the intercity trains from the counters yesterday.

However, BR will continue to operate trains at half capacity to ensure social distancing amid the coronavirus pandemic.

BR is gradually increasing trains in its fleet in a bid to normalise services. A total of 218 trains will come into operation by September 16. The remaining 144 mail and local trains will resume operation gradually.

DHAKA-5, NAOGAON-6 JP selects candidates for two by-elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party

yesterday

nominated Mir

Abdus Sabur Asud

and Kazi Golam

Kabir to contest

the Dhaka-5 and

Naogaon-6 by-

elections. Asud

is a presidium

member of JP while

Kabir is the president

of Raninagar

upazila unit of JP.

JP Nomination Board, with its chairman GM Quader in

the chair, selected the candidates after taking interviews of

prospective candidates for the constituencies.

On September 7, Awami League nominated Monirul

Islam Monu for Dhaka-5 and picked Mohammad Anwar

Hossain Helal for Naogaon -6.

The by-elections to two parliamentary constituencies

-- Dhaka-5 and Naogaon-6 -- will be held on October

17, according to a schedule declared by the Election

Commission on September 3.



Mir Abdus Sabur Kazi Golam Kabir

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BOOKS BRIEFING

New beginnings for Bengal Boi, Charcha



Long-term visitors of Bengal Boi and Charcha are ecstatic that the popular book outlets are reopening and continuing operations online respectively.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

STAR BOOKS DESK

After remaining mostly closed since the lockdown begun in March, popular bookstores Bengal Boi and Charcha have started to continue operations at a new branch and online respectively.

Bengal Boi has moved from its original location in Lalmatia and reopened at Bengal Shilpalay on Dhanmondi (old) Road 27 while Charcha will move to a new location in the city's Bhatara area soon.

BENGAL BOI

Popular for its range of books, the new brand has been stocked with Bengal Book's old collections, with new books on art and architecture on the way.

Visitors of its original location are nostalgic about the shift. In November 2017, Bengal Boi arrived with a unique offering of books, food, open space, and regular cultural events, and patrons of varying age soon started frequenting it for the cosy, spacious environment adjacent to the rush of Dhanmondi's busy main roads.

"It was a necessary change for Dhaka: people were starting to interact with books again, and that hadn't happened in a long time," said Qazi Mustabeen Noor,

a regular visitor.

Poet and essayist Piyash Major said, "The combination of books and stimulating conversations made Bengal Boi a unique institution in Dhaka city."

For Bengal boi, there were some difficulties in organising musical events inside a residential neighbourhood, Bengal Foundation told The Daily Star. With the shift to Bengal Shilpalay, the Foundation hopes to offer art, music, books, and events -- a "complete cultural experience".

The reopening comes with standard safety precautions. Sanitisers and face masks are mandated for all those who visit. Bengal Foundation is hopeful that the large space at the Shilpalay will deter close physical contact between visitors. Workshops, film screenings, and other literary programmes have already been scheduled for when the pandemic situation improves.

CHARCHA

In the meantime, Charcha Publications will continue online before moving on to its new location in Bhatara. Having recently published the graphic novel series "Mujib" based on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the bookstore will not

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AL not a house of cards Quader says replying to Mirza Fakhrul's remarks about party

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League is not a house of cards that it would get destroyed in a tap, said party General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday in reply to the remarks of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir that the power of AL will be ruined like a house of cards.

Quader said AL remains in the hearts of people as it led every democratic movement, struggle, achievement and progress of the nation as well.

The AL leader said his party stayed beside the people in their weal and woe throughout the last seven decades since its inception.

The country's most glorious achievement, the great independence, was attained under the leadership of AL, he said, adding that those, who think that AL's position is as like as a house of cards, are living in a fool's paradise.

Quader, also minister for road transport and bridges, was addressing the inaugural ceremony of a representatives' conference of Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh (IDEB) at the institute at Kakrail, Dhaka.

He joined it through a videoconferencing from his official residence on parliament premises.

Obaidul Quader said his party is deeply rooted in the soil of this country, as people are the source of power of AL.

"Awami League's power does not grow out of the barrel of a gun. Rather, people are the source of its power. Awami League's root is very deep in this soil," he said.

The minister urged the engineers to play a significant role in implementing the government's mega plans in attaining the goal of building a prosperous Bangladesh by 2041.

He expressed his optimism that the engineers would take ahead the

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Govt giving wrong info over Covid-19: BNP

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday alleged the government has been providing wrong information about coronavirus cases and fatalities.

"How many people are dying of coronavirus and what information is being given about it? Many people are dying after getting infected with the virus. As per a report, about 82,000 people have been left out in government data on coronavirus-infected patients," said BNP senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

He made the remarks while distributing relief among victims of riverbank erosion in Dohar-Nawabganj, arranged by the party's Dhaka district unit.

"This means the government is unable to take proper decisions to contain the virus. It has also failed to ensure necessary medicine and other facilities at hospitals for treatment, and work out health safety rules to control the virus. So, people are dying on the streets, on the verandas of hospitals or in ambulances without any treatment."

Rizvi alleged that people infected with coronavirus in rural and remote areas are facing difficulties in receiving treatment due to lack of proper arrangement in this regard.

"Had there been a pro-people government, it would have forced to ensure treatment for people thinking about people's voting power. But they don't need votes and elections as they don't care about people," he alleged.

The BNP leader said the government has resorted to extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and other "repressive and suppressive" acts to retain power and perpetuate it by "eliminating" its political opponents and dissidents.

"Retired Army Major Sinha was killed by a police station OC, but there's no justice and the rule of law... a UNO was hacked in the head, leaving her in a critical condition. The incidents of murder and enforced disappearance are now all around since it is a government programme," Rizvi added.

Mirsarai waterfalls: Tourist spot or death trap?

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Mirsarai upazila in Chattogram is already a sought after place for tourists. It boasts natural waterfalls in at least 10 different spots. Everyday, hundreds of tourists from across the country come to the upazila to visit the waterfalls.

Waterfalls in the upazila include Khayachhara, Napittachhara, Sahasradhara, Rupasi, Baoachhara, Boalia, Harinakunda, Mahamaiya, Sonaichharai and Kamaldaha. Of them, there are 12 that fall on the hills at the Khayachhara spot alone.

However, an increasing number of accidents at the waterfalls over the last couple of years are starting to make tourists feel unsafe.

Since 2017, at least eight tourists were reportedly killed and some 50 were injured in different accidents at the falls, said sources.

The latest accident occurred in Khayachhara falls on September 4. Fayeze Ahmed, a 39-year-old tourist from Feni, died on the spot after falling down the top of the falls. It took fire service personnel around six hours to recover his body.

In another incident on July 12, a group of 15 tourists got stranded in Boalia falls. They were finally rescued by fire service personnel after four hours.

The Khayachhara falls is a hotspot for such incidents. On April 2 last year, tourist Ashraf Hossain died after falling down its slopes, with another three dying there throughout the year.

"I have recently visited the Khayachhara falls. There are 12 falls in the slope of the hills in that spot, but the slopes are too straight to climb up," said Md Abbas, a graduate from Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Chittagong University. "Many tourists slip on their way up or down as there are no staircases."

In Napittachhara and Rupasi falls, two tourists died in 2018, while one died in Napittachhara in 2017.

Concerned citizens and experts identified a few reasons behind the accidents. Firstly, they blamed tourists and their careless attitude regarding safety. Secondly, they said there is no official safety guideline for tourists from the government which is a crucial factor behind these accidents.

Md Tanvir Ahmed, station officer of Mirsarai Fire Service, said they reported 10 accidents in the last three years in different falls in the upazila. "Many tourists climb up the dangerously steep slopes, almost inviting accidents in some cases," he said.

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With verdant of hills and multiple waterfalls, Mirsarai upazila in Chattogram continues to attract visitors from all across the country. However, increasing number of accidents at the waterfalls due to lack of awareness and safety measures taken by the authorities concerned is making it unsafe for people to visit.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Foreign minister set to leave for Turkey today

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen is scheduled to leave for Turkey today to attend the inauguration ceremony of the newly-constructed Bangladesh Chancery Complex, said a senior official of the ministry yesterday.

Dr Momen will join his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu at the ceremony, to be held in Ankara on September 14. He will also attend other bilateral engagements during his visit.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to virtually inaugurate the complex.

After this, the Foreign Minister will hold bilateral talks with his Turkish counterpart on September 15. Issues such as the Rohingya crisis, D-8 summit, trade and investment issues are expected to come up for

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