

ACCESS DENIED
Covid-19 pandemic complicates journalists' work around the globe
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The Daily Star

www.thedailystar.net

REGD. No. DA 781

Vol. XXX No. 237

ASHWIN 4, 1427 BS

Your Right to Know

MUHARRAM 30, 1442 HJRI

12 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

"It is alarming that an academic is facing life imprisonment only for exercising his right to freedom of expression."
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ABOUT A SEDITION CASE AGAINST AN EX-DHAKA UNIVERSITY TEACHER **PAGE 3**



"I think I'm still up in the clouds right now. It's a surreal, super crazy feeling."
SWEDISH POLE VAULT STAR ARMAND DUPLANTIS AFTER ECLIPSING SERGEY BUBKA'S 26-YEAR MARK **PAGE 11**



"The idea that there's going to be a vaccine and everything's gonna be fine tomorrow -- it's just not rational."
JOE BIDEN DISMISSES TRUMP'S CLAIM THAT A VACCINE IS WEEKS AWAY **PAGE 12**



LAND OF FORTUNE!

Local clique feasting on land acquisition for 21 development projects in Cox's Bazar, fleecing govt and land owners; ACC investigation, diaries seized by Rab reveal who got what

SO EASY TO MAKE MONEY!

- » Govt is acquiring **28,000 acres** of land in Cox's Bazar district with a total budget of **Tk 3.5 lakh crore**
- » A nexus of district land officials, politicians, journalists and touts raked in a fortune from the land acquisition process
- » ACC froze 11 accounts and seized **Tk 17.48 lakh** from Mujibor Rahman, mayor of Cox's Bazar municipality, also general secretary of Cox's Bazar district AL



- » ACC also froze the account of former councillor Javed Md Kaiser Novel where they found around **Tk 10 crore**

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Chattogram

In August 2018, Sabiha Begum (not her real name) was approached by a group of locally influential men who wanted to buy her homestead.

"They told me the government needed the land and that one way or another, they would get it. I was scared of the men and their threats, but I turned down

the offer because this land is all I have. A few days later, they came in a bigger group and evicted me from my homestead," said Sabiha.

They handed her just Tk 30,000 in cash though the market price of her four-decimal land would be approximately Tk 2 lakh.

Had Sabiha sold the land
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Ramp up efforts to get vaccine

National advisory committee on Covid-19 response asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the country still trailing behind in the race to get the potential Covid-19 vaccines, a high-powered technical body advised the government to make payments in advance for the vaccines.

The National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC), formed to advise the government on its coronavirus response, recommended yesterday that the efforts to communicate with multiple potential vaccine sources should continue.

There are apprehensions that getting the vaccine from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations would take time, it said, adding that the government should boost its efforts.

"Some countries have already made advance payments because all the countries of the world are in a race to collect the vaccine... In this circumstance, Bangladesh needs to book the vaccine by making payments in advance," the committee said in a statement.

The countries where governments are involved in vaccine development should be contacted, the NTAC stressed.

The recommendations, made at the 19th online meeting of the committee yesterday with its chairperson Prof Mohammad Shahidullah presiding over it, came at a time when the country recorded 1,541 new

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Refugees settle down far away from camps

Rohingya families even get NID, become voters in Bandarban

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

Amir Ali, his wife Amina Khatun, and their five children came to Bangladesh from Myanmar's Maungdaw around five years ago.

The family is now settled in Bandarban's Kaichtoli.

Recently, this correspondent visited the area and found Amir's family constructing a two-storey house on the land they settled on. He admitted that he didn't buy these 10 decimals of land.

In such rural, hilly areas, it is not uncommon for locals and others to claim empty patches of land and make a home there.

But the case of Amir is different.

He is one of the Rohingya refugees who crossed the border before the 2017 influx, and have started a new life in Bangladesh outside the refugee camps. And he doesn't deny this.

"Not just Amir's family, there are around 200 Rohingya families living in Haludia to Prantik

Lake," said Md Siraj, a long-time local of the area, which falls under Bandarban Sadar upazila.

"Most of the Rohingya families who settled in the area managed local representatives and got their names included in the voter list," he said.

"The Rohingya families regularly get different government allowances, including that under the widow allowance programme and VGD [Vulnerable Group Development] and VGF [Vulnerable Group Feeding] programmes."

For those with the money necessary, it doesn't seem to be a problem to even get NIDs made.

Amir claimed, "My four sons and daughter have NIDs though my wife and I haven't got a national identity card yet."

Nur Nahar Begum, who came over from Myanmar's Buthidaung area several years ago, too, is now settled in Harin Mara para of Sualok union.

"We pay Tk 4,000 yearly as house rent to a local," she said.

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Hefajat leader Shafi dies

His death comes a day after unrest at his Ctg bastion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shah Ahmad Shafi, the supreme leader of Hefajat-e Islam who often drew controversy for opposing women's empowerment and education, passed away yesterday evening.

His demise came a day after he resigned as the director general of Al Jameyatul Ahlia Darul Ulum Moinul Islam Madrasa, popularly known as Hathazari madrasa, following two days of student unrest.

Ahmad Shafi, the top guardian figure of Qawmi madrasa education in Bangladesh, was undergoing treatment at a hospital in the capital, suffering from old-age complications.

Soon after stepping down from the post he held for more than three decades, the centenarian was taken to Chattogram Medical College Hospital on Thursday night as his condition deteriorated. He was put on life support.

He was flown to the capital's Asgor Ali Hospital by an air ambulance around 4:30pm yesterday, said ANM

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PATURIA GHAT

Disruption in ferry service triggers chaos

Several hundred vehicles stuck

ZAHANGIR SHAH

Commuters from south and south-western districts of the country traveling through the Paturia ferry terminal have been suffering long tailback.

As Shimulia-Kathalbari ferry route has been disrupted, people have come to Paturia-Daulatdia instead, increasing the queues of vehicles.

More than six hundred vehicles, including goods laden trucks, were seen stranded at the Paturia terminal around 3:00pm yesterday.

Three hundred trucks were stuck on Paturia's two truck terminals, 100 trucks had been kept on the Dhaka-Aricha highway, six kilometers away from the Paturia terminal. Around 50 trucks, along with 50 buses, were seen waiting to boarding the ferry.

Khandoker Tanvir

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Flouting social distancing rules, people crowd Patenga sea beach in Chattogram city on the weekend yesterday. Locals say the number of people visiting the area increases significantly on weekends. Experts have expressed concern that such gatherings could fuel the spread of novel coronavirus in the country.

PHOTO:
RAJIB RAIHAN

HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASE

Kuwait court denies bail to MP Shahid

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A Kuwait court has rejected the plea of Bangladeshi MP Shahid Islam Papul and other defendants for their release in a case involving human trafficking, money laundering, bribing and threatening state security.

After the first hearing of the case on Thursday night, Kuwait's Criminal Court, headed by Counselor Abdullah Al-Othman, decided to summon the Kuwaiti officials involved and postpone the hearing until October 1, reported Kuwait's Arabic newspaper Al Qabas.

The court also decided to detain three other Bangladeshis accused, who were previously released from the prosecution.

Two Kuwaiti MPs -- Saadoun Hammad and Salah Khorshid, accused of taking bribes to facilitate Papul's businesses, -- did not attend the hearing. Papul told the court that he did not know MPs Saadoun Hammad and Salah Khorshid, nor did he have any relationship with them.

At the hearing that began at 3:18pm Kuwait time, Papul said he also did not have any relationship with Sheikh Mazen al-Jarrah, Kuwait's assistant under-secretary, accused of helping Papul in visa trading.

A total of 13 people were accused in the case but four were later exempted during the investigation.

Kuwait's Criminal Investigation Department detained Shahid Islam Papul, an MP from Laxmipur-2 constituency and also the managing director and CEO of Marafie Kuwaitia Group, a conglomerate in Kuwait.

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