

‘Govt can’t avoid liability for rape’

Quader calls for united resistance

UNB, Dhaka

The government cannot avoid the liability for various incidents of violence against women, including rape, said Road, Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday.

“Rape is undoubtedly a heinous crime and a social disorder...,” he said, adding that they will not spare anyone involved in such crimes.

The minister came up with the remarks at a press conference at his ministry, calling upon all to forge a united resistance against incidents of rape and violence against women.

Responding to a question, Quader, also the general secretary of ruling Awami League, said, “There have been reports of rape and violence against women in different parts of the country in recent times. We cannot avoid the responsibility for this. How can the government avoid responsibility when it’s in power?”

Mentioning that the government is bringing those involved in such crimes to justice and they are being punished, he said, “Yet, this crime is happening at some places. Recently, incidents like rape have grown in our neighbouring countries too.”

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Dhaka South City Corporation yesterday began a drive against illegal battery-run three-wheelers within its jurisdiction. A mobile court yesterday towed a number of vehicles on Satmasjid Road near Zigatala, and filed seven cases.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

93pc of healthcare, medical waste left unmanaged: Brac

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 93.4 percent of the generated medical and healthcare waste every day from households and healthcare units across the country is left unmanaged due to lack of a proper management system, causing severe environmental pollution as well as health problems, a study has found.

“Effective Management of Medical Waste amid Covid-19 Pandemic” was conducted by the Climate Change Programme of Brac from July 20 to August 10. Results of the study were shared in a webinar yesterday.

The total volume of waste amid the Covid-19 pandemic generated every day is 530.45 tonnes across the country, of which 282.45 tonnes is healthcare waste and 248 tonnes medical waste, said Dr Md Mostafizur Rahman, a professor of Jahangirnagar University, who presented the outcome of the study.

The study found that of the 530.45 tonnes per day of Covi-19 related waste is generated from households and healthcare establishments, only 6.6 percent is somehow managed formally, while 93.4 percent is not under the current hospital waste management procedure.

“The waste generated from hospitals and other healthcare facilities in Dhaka city has been managed at least partly by a third party (PRISM Bangladesh Foundation), a well-known medical waste manager in Bangladesh. But, the capacity of well-structured third party is very limited and their coverage is only five districts so far, which means about 93 percent area is not covered,” he said.

The 282.45 tonnes of healthcare waste generated every day from protective items used by general people to protect themselves against Covid-19, all of which are mixed with household waste before disposal, he said.

Most of the recommendations from the experts point towards the establishment of a comprehensive medical waste management policy and waste management system, and to ensure the implementation of legal

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An artisan sculpting a Durga idol at the city's Dharmashala Temple. They say the celebration is providing a boost to their livelihood.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Clay artisans in M’singh finally back in business

Orders coming in ahead of Durga Puja

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

After several months, the clay is being moulded, the paintbrushes are running, and idols of deities are on their way to mandaps for the big celebration.

After staying idle due to the pandemic, artisans in Mymensingh city and other districts are busy completing orders ahead of Durga Puja, one of the biggest religious festivals of the Hindu community.

“We were depressed ahead of the festival, but fortunately, we finally got orders and are working under immense pressure to deliver the idols on time,” said Joyonta Kumar Ghosh, a leading artisan in Mymensingh city.

“I got orders for 14 idols from Mymensingh city, and the rate is between Tk 15,000-50,000, which is less than that of last year,” said Joyonta, also proprietor of “Mrityu O Mrityu”.

“Last year, seven workers were busy completing idols for over two months, but this year, I had to engage nine workers for timely delivery,” he said.

“There were also occasions for various pujas -- including Basanti, Ganga, Ganesh and Bipodnashini pujas -- that went away during the pandemic, and we could not work...These religious celebrations give us important financial support throughout the year,” he added.

Shambhu Das, proprietor of “Sajib

Mrityu Shilpalaya”, said he only got six orders, which are almost half that of last year. “But we are under huge pressure, as the orders came in a short time, that too amid worker shortage,” he said.

“Usually, we start getting orders three or four months earlier and work in a relaxed manner, but this year, we got them a month ago. But we’re happy to get them,” he added.

Joy Podder, another artisan at the city’s Daspara area, said he got orders for 11 idols, although it was 14 last year.

“As many of us had used up deposited money during the shutdown, we currently can’t invest money to take more orders,” he said.

“After a break for more than seven months, we’re busy supporting our families. Many workers have engaged themselves in other professions for survival,” said 55-year-old Dinesh Pal, an artisan hailing from Mymensingh’s Phulpur upazila.

“After struggling during the pandemic, we now have the opportunity to make idols, and we’ll go for painting and other related works within the second week of October,” said Nikhil Chandra Pal, the 80-year-old artisan from the city’s Dharmashala Temple.

“Clay artists will see better days in the

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CLIMATE VULNERABLE FORUM

PM to chair global event tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh along with Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) will host the virtual Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) leaders’ event tomorrow.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as the current president of the CVF will chair the event that will begin at 7pm, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The CVF leaders and other speakers will focus on the urgent need for all countries to strengthen climate action and adaptation efforts by enhancing the Paris Agreement national contributions in 2020 at the event.

UN Secretary General António Guterres, Chair of GCA Ban Ki-moon, heads of state and government of the CVF countries, the United Kingdom and Italy (host and co-host of COP26), the Netherlands, CVF thematic ambassadors and other international partners will join the event.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen and Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister ... will also join the event.

CVF is an international partnership of countries highly vulnerable to a warming planet.

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AKMA Awal, wife get HC bail in graft cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail for four weeks to former member of parliament from Pirojpur AKMA Awal and his wife Laila Parveen in two separate corruption cases.

The HC also asked Awal and Parveen to surrender to the trial court concerned after four weeks in connection with the cases.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohel came up with the order after hearing two separate petitions recently filed by Awal and Parveen seeking anticipatory bail in the cases.

Awal and Parveen appeared before the HC bench during the hearing.

Anti-Corruption Commission’s lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that it can be said after going through the full text of HC order on which ground it granted bail to Awal and Parveen.

ACC will file an appeal with the Supreme Court against the HC order, Khurshid said.

The ACC filed a case with its Dhaka office on September 30 against Awal, who was elected lawmaker from Pirojpur-1 in 2008 and 2014, on charge of illegally amassing Tk 33 crore.

The same day, the commission filed another case against Laila over illegally amassing Tk 10.98 crore.

Teachers demand secondary education be nationalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers across the globe celebrated World Teacher’s Day yesterday with the theme “Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future”.

To mark the day, Bangladesh Shikhhak Samity and MPO Bhukto Shikhhak Protisthan Jatiyakoron Liaison Forum held a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday. At the rally, the teachers demanded nationalisation of secondary education to not only ensure quality education, but also end the hardships faced by non-MPO educators.

Many non-government teachers are passing their days in dire condition in the absence of adequate salaries and benefits, they said. They also expressed dissatisfaction over the fact that there was no official observance of the day in the country.

Nazrul Islam Rony, president of Bangladesh Shikhhak Samity, urged the government to nationalise the secondary education sector by December this year, saying, “Otherwise we will initiate stern

movements to press our demands,” he said.

Swadhinata Shikhhak Parishad organised a webinar to mark the day, where its general secretary Shahjahan Alam Shaju said Bangladesh still invests only 2.4 percent to 2.5 percent of its GDP for education, although it should be at least six percent.

Several speakers alleged that many teachers are living under miserable conditions in the absence of adequate salaries and benefits from the government.

Speaking there, Education Minister Dipu Moni said that although many are demanding the nationalisation of secondary schools, there are some financial and policy related issues connected with this, adding that the government has taken various measures so teachers can live a dignified life.

She said that government is now prioritising infrastructural development.

In another event at Jatiya Press Club, chairperson of Shikhhak Karmachary Oikya Jote Selim Bhuiyan demanded nationalisation of all teaching jobs by November.

Trial of Abrar Fahad murder underway

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of Buet student Abrar Fahad murder case began at a Dhaka tribunal yesterday, with deposition of the complainant.

Judge Abu Zafar Md Kamruzzaman of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka recorded the statement of complainant Md Barkat Ullah, father of the victim, for over an hour.

Later, the defence for accused Anik Sarkar started cross-examination of the complainant. As the defence could not complete it, the judge set today for the next hearing.

In his statement, the complainant told the court that he came to know from people that some students of Buet’s Sher-e-Bangla Hall, in a pre-planned way, beat his son to death.

Later, he came to Dhaka and discussed with some students and teachers and came to know from CCTV footage that 19 students, including Anik Sarkar, beat up his son mercilessly with cricket stumps, sticks and skipping rope, sometime between 8:05pm on October 6 and 2:30am on October 7 last year, with an intent to kill him.

“After collecting CCTV footage, information from other students and teachers and consulting with my relatives, I filed the case against the accused with Chawkbazar Police Station,” the complainant said in his statement.

The witness also said the accused killed his son due to previous enmity and later, eight of the

accused narrated to magistrates how they tortured his son to death.

The complainant sought exemplary punishment for all the 25 accused.

Twenty-two of the accused -- now in jail -- were produced before the tribunal during yesterday’s hearing. Three other accused -- Mustaba Rafid, Muhammad Morshed-Uz-Zaman Mondol alias Jishan and Ehtashamul Rabbi Tanim -- have been absconding since the incident.

On October 7 last year, Abrar, a second-year student of Buet, was beaten to death by a group of Buet unit Chhatra League activists in a dormitory.

Later, Abrar’s father filed the murder case.

The incident triggered a firestorm of protests on campuses across the country. Many took to social media to demand justice for Abrar.

Amid protest, Buet authorities on October 11 banned all political activities on the campus and suspended 19 students, mostly leaders of the university’s BCL unit who have been made accused in the case.

Eight of the accused gave their confessional statements before separate magistrates narrating the horrifying torture during investigation on different dates last year.

Inspector Md Wahiduzaman of Detective Branch of police submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka against 25 Buet students on November 13 last year.

An unusual offering as a last-ditch effort

With hopes to appease it, villagers in Barishal pour khichuri into Arial Kha

SUSHANTA GHOSH

On Saturday afternoon, thousands of villagers gathered around the banks of the Arial Kha river with a resolve. Over the past few years, erosion caused by the river has intensified, submerging two mosques, a primary school, at least 50 houses, and hundreds of acres of agricultural land.

On the day, right after Zuhur prayers, villagers participated in a milad, went to the river bank adjacent to Aroji Kalikapur Primary School -- under Babuganj upazila of Barishal district --, and poured at least three decks of khichuri into the river.

“We organised the action with a hope to protect the village from erosion,” said Mizanur Rahman, a member of Chadpasha union. “Many villagers volunteered to provide 48 kilogrammes of rice, while someone donated money for the other ingredients.”

“We spent a little more than Tk 10,000 to buy 30kg lentil, around 40kg vegetable, 10kg hen meat and spices and cooked the khichuri,” he added.

Dulal Hawlader, a retired office assistant at Barishal Divisional Office and president of the organising committee, said, “The river is very angry here, eager to devour everything it comes across. We have poured the khichuri with the hope to appease it. If Allah wants, the erosion can be stopped.”

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Activists of left-leaning parties scuffle with police at Shahbagh yesterday as they try to break through barricades set up by law enforcers. They were heading towards PMO, demanding arrears and announcement of minimum wage for jute mill workers.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Left alliance’s march for jute mill workers obstructed in capital

UNB, Dhaka

Democratic Left Alliance (DLA) activists and police scuffled yesterday at Shahbagh during a procession demanding arrears and announcement of minimum wage for jute mill workers.

A procession of DLA, an alliance of eight left-leaning parties, was heading towards the Prime Minister’s Office but police obstructed it at Shahbagh.

The scuffle took place when protesters tried to break through barricades set up by police in front of hotel InterContinental Dhaka.

Left parties have been demanding the reopening of all state-owned jute mills and their modernisation. They also sought payment of workers’ arrears and the announcement of minimum wage for them.

DLA has been protesting since the closure of the 25 state-run jute mills under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation.

The government’s plan was to bring in private sector players who would oversee the reopening of the chronically loss-making mills as viable commercial entities. But no investor has come forward yet.