

Bangladesh

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the distribution of cotton yarn. The prime minister desires that operational bottlenecks must be removed as quickly as possible so that the real weavers get regular supply of cotton yarn.

US COMMISSION REPORT ON BANGLADESH
Members of a Presidential Commission for aid to South East Asia look forward to the day when Bangladesh would be able to stand on its own feet. They forecast that this would be as early as next spring. In a letter to US President Richard Nixon yesterday four members of the commission wrote that unless another natural disaster strikes, Bangladesh should by the spring of 1973 be emerging from the relief stage and launch upon a period of reconstruction and development. The four members stayed in Bangladesh from September 1 to 8 in order to assess the effectiveness of the American aid to the country. They believe that the US share of the 800 million dollars which the world campaign provided to aid Bangladesh had been completely successful.

MAHILA SAMITY MEMBERS CALL ON BANGABANDHU
Bangabandhu today receives a delegation of Bangladesh Mahila Samity led by its president Dr Nilima Ibrahim. Dr Ibrahim discusses with the prime minister the problems of the working women of the city and impresses on him the construction of hostels in the city for their accommodation.

SOURCES: October 8, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

Vaccine may

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rival AstraZeneca's jab last week. The announcement by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) could speed up the process of approving a successful vaccine in the bloc.

Nine experimental vaccines are in the pipeline of the WHO-led COVAX global vaccine facility that aims to distribute 2 billion doses by the end of 2021.

So far some 168 countries have joined the COVAX facility, but neither China, the United States nor Russia are among them. The Trump administration has said it is relying instead on bilateral deals to secure supplies from vaccine makers.

"Especially for the vaccines and other products which are in the pipeline, the most important tool is political commitment from our leaders especially in the equitable distribution of the vaccines," Tedros said.

"We need each other, we need solidarity and we need to use all the energy we have to fight the virus," he said.

Trio wins

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"I feel delighted to be recognized in that way because I think having visible role models can make a huge impact on young women thinking about becoming scientists," Ghez told AFP.

The term "black hole" refers to a point in space where matter is so compressed as to create a gravity field from which even light cannot escape.

CENTRE OF OUR GALAXY
Penrose, a professor at the University of Oxford who worked closely with famed physicist Stephen Hawking, used mathematical modelling to prove back in 1965 that black holes can form, becoming an entity from which nothing, not even light, can escape.

His calculations proved that black holes -- super dense objects formed when a heavy star collapses under the weight of its own gravity -- are a direct consequence of Einstein's general theory of relativity.

Genzel and Ghez have led research since the early 1990s focusing on a region called Sagittarius A* at the centre of the Milky Way.

Using the world's largest telescopes, they discovered an extremely heavy, invisible object -- around 4 million times greater than the mass of our Sun -- that pulls on surrounding stars, giving our galaxy its characteristic swirl.

The pair in particular developed methods to see through the huge clouds of interstellar gas and dust to the centre of the Milky Way, creating new techniques to compensate for the image distortion caused by Earth's atmosphere.

In April 2019, astronomers unveiled the first photo of a black hole.

Martin Ward, a professor of astronomy at Durham University, called the work of the trio "a great example of theoretical insight and prediction followed by state-of-the-art observational evidence."

"Using classical Newtonian mechanics the nearest super massive black hole at our galactic centre was revealed, and so 'darkness made visible'," Ward said in a statement.

Genzel is a director at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics in Garching, Germany and a professor at the University of California.

Ghez is a professor of physics and astronomy at the University of California.



A crater caused by a shell explosion is pictured in the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region's main city of Stepanakert yesterday, during the ongoing fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region.

PHOTO: AFP

SC yet to decide if it's legal

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In this situation, the apex court may not hold hearings on the appeals that challenged the HC judgement, he said.

Replying to a question on whether his office would take any initiative for early hearing of the appeals before the Appellate Division, Momtaz said, "Let's see".

The apex court was scheduled to hold hearings on the appeals on February 13, 2018.

In its verdict, the HC had observed that empowering executive magistrates with judicial powers is "a frontal attack on the independence of the judiciary and is violative of the theory of separation of powers", and

judicial mobile courts could be run by judicial or metropolitan magistrates. It had declared unconstitutional 11 sections of the Mobile Court Act-2009 on empowerment of executive magistrates and process of running mobile courts, their powers to convict and sentence offenders, district magistrates' powers to run mobile courts, provision of appeal against mobile court orders and government powers to amend schedule of the act.

SC Lawyer Hassan MS Azim, who moved the writ petitions on which the HC delivered the verdict, told this correspondent on Monday that the Appellate Division on January 16, 2028, extended its stay order on the HC

verdict until disposal of the appeals. The same day, the SC had allowed the government to move three leave-to-appeal petitions challenging the HC judgement, and set February 13, 2018, for hearing on those.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, then performing duties as acting chief justice, passed the order after granting the petitions.

Justice Wahhab Miah resigned from the post of a judge of the Appellate Division, hours after Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain was appointed as the chief justice on February 2, 2018. The appeals were not heard on

as they were not included in the Appellate Division's cause list, said the SC lawyer.

He said it was the Appellate Division that has the sole authority to include the appeals in its cause list for hearing and disposal. "It cannot be specifically said when the Appellate Division will include the appeals in the cause list," he said, adding that executive magistrates could run mobile courts until the appeals were disposed of.

He further said the attorney general's office has not submitted the concise statements (points on which lawyers place arguments before court) to the SC.

Six held over rape, sodomy

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Early on Sunday, the youths forcibly entered the victim's house and gang-raped her.

They tied the woman's legs, hands and blindfolded her before dumping her into a nearby ditch.

Later in the morning, police rescued the woman in an unconscious state. She was taken to a local hospital for treatment.

The following day, the victim filed a case with Ramgati Police Station against five people. Police arrested two of the accused on Monday night, said Ramgati OC Mohammad Solaiman.

In Kushtia, police on Monday night arrested a madrasa teacher on charges of raping his student in Poradaha area of Mirpur upazila.

The arrestee is Abdul Quader, a teacher of Sirajul Islam Darul Uloom Maryam Nesha Women Madrasa.

Yesterday, he gave confessional statement to a local court.

Police said some 35 female students stay at the residential madrasa. Around 8:00am on Sunday morning, the

accused called his class-eight student to his room and raped her. Later at night, Quader again raped her.

The alleged rapist threatened the victim of dire consequence if she disclosed the matter.

But the girl on Monday shared the incident with one of her classmates. As the news spread, locals attacked Quader's room and vandalised it.

Later, the victim's father filed a case against Quader, said SM Tanvir Arfar, superintendent of police in Kushtia.

The SP said medical examination of the victim confirmed that she was raped.

In Bandarban, police on Monday night arrested a man over raping a mentally-challenged woman in the district town.

The arrestee is Jamal Hossain, 25. Hailing from Patuakhali, he lived in a rented house in Army Para area of Bandarban town.

Police said Jamal raped the woman on September 27. The incident was recorded in a CCTV camera of a nearby market.

On Monday, locals saw the footage and identified the alleged rapist. They caught Jamal and handed him to police.

During primary interrogation, Jamal admitted that he raped the woman, said Sohag Rana, inspector (investigation) of Bandarban Sadar Police Station.

In Dinajpur, a court yesterday sent two people, including a woman, to jail in a case over gang-rape of a sixth-grader.

The accused are Sanu Ara, 24, and Liton Hossain, 30. They are from separate villages in the district's Biral upazila.

Police and victim's family members said the schoolgirl was abducted by criminals from Jagatpur village in the same upazila on Saturday afternoon.

The abductors handed the victim to others who gang-raped her on Saturday and Sunday.

The victim's mother filed a case with Biral Police Station. Police later rescued the girl, said Abdul Kader,

inspector (investigation) of the police station.

In Chattogram, Rab arrested a 74-year old man over raping a 12-year-old girl in Urkirchar area of Raozan upazila early yesterday.

The arrestee is Sadhan Barua, a resident of Urkirchar Aburkhill Nandan Kanan area.

Rab sources said the rape incident took place on October 1 evening near the victim's house.

Raozan OC Abdullah-AL- Harun said they sent the victim to One Stop Crisis Centre of Chattogram Medical College Hospital on Tuesday and visited the crime scene.

Rab officials said the accused during primary interrogation confessed to committing the crime.

In Natore, police arrested a youth in Lalpur upazila yesterday morning over sodomising a 10-year-old boy.

The arrestee is Shishir Hossain, 18. [Our correspondents from Noakhali, Kushtia, Bandarban, Dinajpur, Chattogram and Natore contributed to this report.]

Trump faces backlash for removing mask

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Trump, who received experimental treatment, has repeatedly played down the disease, which has killed more than 1 million people worldwide. The United States has the world's highest death toll from the pandemic.

White House physician Dr Sean P Conley, stressed that the Republican president, who is running for re-election against Democrat Joe Biden in the November 3 election,

would have world-class medical care available around the clock.

In a briefing at Walter Reed, Conley said Trump is "back" but that he would not be "entirely out of the woods" for another week.

Trump has repeatedly flouted social-distancing guidelines meant to curb the virus' spread and ignored his own medical advisers. He mocked Biden at last Tuesday's presidential debate for wearing a mask when

campaigning.

"I was aghast when he said Covid should not be feared," said William Schaffner, a professor of preventive medicine and infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville.

"This is a disease that is killing around a thousand people a day, has torpedoed the economy, put people out of work. This is a virus that should be both respected and feared."

Democrats also weighed in. "This is a tragic failure of leadership," Democratic Senator Chris Coons tweeted.

But Trump depicted himself as a man who vanquished the disease and emerged stronger.

"If the President bounces back onto the campaign trail, he will be an invincible hero, who not only survived every dirty trick the Democrats threw at him, but the Chinese virus as well," he wrote on Twitter.

Slow ADP fund release causing more delays

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The six railway projects being implemented under Indian LoC are: construction of Khulna-Mongla Port rail line; construction of 3rd and 4th dual gauge lines in Dhaka-Tongi section and dual gauge double line in Dhaka-Joydebpur section; rehabilitation of Kulaura-Shahbazpur section; conversion of meter gauge into dual gauge line from Parbatipur to Kaunia section; construction of double line in Khulna-Darshana section; and construction of dual gauge line from Bogura to Sirajganj.

The other project -- construction of Akhaura-Agartala dual gauge railway link -- is being executed with Indian grants.

The government has decided to put a hold on the implementation of low-priority development projects amid the drastic fall in revenue collection caused by the coronavirus pandemic and as part of its belt-tightening measures.

Out of 39 railways projects being worked on, 24, including these seven projects, have been listed as low-priority projects, halting disbursement of ADP fund, railways sources said.

Although these low-priority projects were allowed to use project aid or foreign loans but their implementing

authorities cannot use them as they have to pay custom duties and Vat to release those funds, which are not available now, the sources said.

The development comes when almost all the projects are running behind schedule, they added.

In this situation, the railways minister on Monday sat with the projects directors and officials of his ministry and Bangladesh Railways to short out different problems involving the work.

Take the following project for an example.

Around two-and a half years ago, the government had approved this project to build a double rail line along the existing single track from Khulna to Darshana.

The project, aimed at boosting trade activities with neighbouring countries using the Mongla port, was supposed to be implemented from January 2018 till December 2022 at a cost of Tk 3,506.75 crore. Seventy-seven percent of the fund would be provided by India in loan money.

Almost half the project period has elapsed, its authorities have not even appointed a consultant yet, let alone start the physical work.

The situation over the construction

of Khulna-Mongla Port rail line is similar.

The project was approved in December, 2010 involving Tk 1,721 crore. The deadline was initially extended to December 2014, then to June 2018, then to June 2020 and finally to June, 2021.

In the meantime, the project cost rose to Tk 3,801 crore, of which India would provide Tk 2371.34 crore in soft loan.

Project Director Jahangir Hossain raised the fund issue at Monday's meeting, apart from visa-related problems being faced by Indian nationals involved in the project and slow progress in the work due to the Covid-19 pandemic, meeting sources said.

Project Director Afzal Hossain of Dhaka-Tongi and Tongi-Joydebpur project raised the problem they are facing to acquire more land from Civil Aviation Authorities for the construction of more lines at the Airport railway station and their problems with Dhaka Elevated Expressway project regarding clearance, they said.

A portion of the expressway will be constructed over the rail line from Banani to Malibagh and the railway

authorities have some reservation over the "poor clearance" of the expressway project, they added.

"The railways minister, after hearing about the problems, gave directives on solving those issues," one of the meeting participants told this correspondent.

About fund crunch, the minister said they had already talked with the finance secretary and planned to channelise some fund from other projects to these low-priority projects, meeting sources said.

Contracted, Nurul Islam Sujon yesterday told The Daily Star that he had already directed his ministry's secretary to talk to the finance secretary so that funds were released for these "important" projects.

He said apart from the health and the agriculture ministries, all other ministries had to categorise projects based on priorities, and the authorities concerned would evaluate the situation in this month so that project works continued.

"I have given some directives to expedite project work, which got slowed down due to several reasons, including the Covid pandemic, and complete it within the deadlines," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Minni appeals

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seeking her client's acquittal in the case.

ZI Khan Panna, principal counsel for the convict, said the trial court convicted and sentenced Minni based on her confessional statement made under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and CCTV footage.

"We will prove that Ayesha Siddika Minni is completely innocent when the High Court hears our appeal," he said.

He said, "The High Court will now fix a date for the hearing on the admission of the appeal. Later, we will move a petition before the court seeking her bail."

Panna could not say when the HC would hold the hearing.

Both the lawyers said they heard that the other five death-row convicts in the case filed separate appeals with the HC, challenging the Barguna court's verdict.

Contacted, Supreme Court Spokesperson Saifur Rahman told this correspondent that he did not know whether the convicts in the Rifat murder case moved to the HC.

On September 30, the Barguna court sentenced Minni and the five others to death.

The other condemned convicts are Rakibul Hasan alias Rifat Farazi, Abdul Kaiyum alias Rabbi Akon, Mohaiminul Islam Sifat, Rezwanul Khan alias TikTok Rifat and Md Hasan. They were also fined Tk 50,000 each.

The court, however, acquitted four other accused -- Rafiqul Islam Rabbi, Mohammad Sagor, Kamrul Islam Saimum and Md Musa -- as they were found innocent.

Documents in the sensational murder case reached the HC on October 4 as a death reference to examine the trial court verdict.

Officials of the Barguna court brought the documents of the case, including the judgment, to the HC, its special officer Saifur Rahman told this paper on that day.

He said the HC authorities would now take necessary measures following relevant rules.

Rifat, 25, an internet service provider, was hacked by some youths, led by prime accused Nayon Bond, in front of Barguna Government College in broad daylight on June 26 last year. He died at Barishal Medical College Hospital later that day.

A video clip of the barbaric attack, believed to be captured on a mobile phone, went viral on social media triggering public outrage, with many condemning bystanders for not coming forward to save Rifat.

The following day, the victim's father filed the murder case with Barguna Sadar Police Station, naming 12 as accused.

Minni was first named as a witness. She was, however, made an accused in the charge-sheet later.

102-carat

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Only seven other white diamonds bigger than 100 carats and of the same quality have ever gone under the hammer.

The stone was sold without a reserve price, meaning the diamond went to the highest bidder and did not need to meet a minimum threshold, the first time in auction history that a diamond of this calibre has been offered that way.

The tactic can be risky but can also generate a buzz that sellers hope will elevate the final price.

In this case, the seller's move was "a brave decision that has come back to bite them", according to Kormind.

Originally a 271-carat rough stone, the gem was discovered in the now-closed Canadian Victor Mine in 2018.

"(The) diamond is the best of the best when it comes to exceptional white diamonds and it is difficult to overstate its rarity and beauty," said Sotheby's worldwide jewellery chairman Gary Schuler ahead of the sale.

In November 2017, the largest diamond ever presented at auction, with more than 163.41 carats, sold in Geneva for more than \$33.8 million, fees and commissions included -- a global record in this category.

But it is not a record overall for a diamond: in April 2017, the giant "Pink Star" pink diamond sold for \$71.2 million at a Sotheby's auction in Hong Kong.

Egypt releases detained journo amid outcry

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's prosecutor-general has ordered the release of a journalist days after she was arrested in the country's south, amid outcry from international press freedom advocates.

"The prosecutor-general has ordered the release of the defendant Basma Mostafa after she was questioned on the charges laid against her," the prosecution said in a statement overnight Monday into yesterday, adding that the investigation would continue.

Prosecutors had accused her of "using her personal social media account to publish and promote false news", the statement said.