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Your Right to Know

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"By 2030 we really hope to have made huge strides in fixing some of the biggest problems the Earth faces."
BRITAIN'S PRINCE WILLIAM LAUNCHES A GLOBAL PRIZE AIMED AT SOLVING WORLD'S GREATEST ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS



"Dialogue is not an excuse for playing for time. ... On the contrary, it means ... getting ready to play hardball whenever necessary."
FRANCE'S FOREIGN MINISTER JEAN-YVES LE DRIAN ON NAVALNY POISONING AS PARIS, BERLIN PUSH FOR RUSSIA SANCTIONS



"... *Taiwan's Indian friends will have one reply: GET LOST!"
TAIWAN FOREIGN MINISTER JOSEPH WU AFTER CHINA TELLS INDIAN MEDIA NOT TO CALL TAIWAN A COUNTRY



Death sentence awaits rapists

Govt to amend law to ensure tougher punishment for rape; proposal to be placed in next cabinet meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of protests over the growing number of rape incidents, the government is going to amend the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, to make death sentence the highest punishment for committing rape.

Currently, the highest punishment is life imprisonment.

Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star yesterday, "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last night [Wednesday night] instructed me to prepare a draft for amendment to section-9(1) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, and to place it before the cabinet on Monday for approval.

"Accordingly, we are in the process for preparing a draft for amending section-9(1) and a few other sections of the act for consideration of the cabinet," he said without giving further details.

According to section-9(1), if any male rapes a woman or a child, he could face rigorous life imprisonment and fines.

The government move came at a time when the country is witnessing vigorous protests over the growing number of incidents of sexual harassment and rape.

The gang-rape of a woman in Noakhali and the video of it being released on social media triggered outraged as anger was already simmering across the country following a string of recent rape incidents.

At least 975 incidents of rapes had happened between January and September 2020, according to Ain O Salish Kendra.

The demand for capital punishment as the highest punishment for rape has been getting louder every day.

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With her injured right arm hung from her neck with a shoulder strap, a protester chants slogans holding a microphone with her left hand at the capital's Shahbagh intersection yesterday, demanding an end to rape incidents across the country. The demonstrator got injured during a scuffle with police in the same area a few days ago.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

5-year-old raped in Noakhali

Teenage girl gang-raped in Gazipur

STAR REPORT

Yet another teenage girl was gang-raped on Wednesday evening in Gazipur while a five-year-old girl was raped in Subarnachar upazila of Noakhali amid ongoing protests against the heinous crime.

The 13-year-old victim used to live with her family members in Tetuibari area under Kashimpur Police Station in Gazipur city. The victim's mother filed a case against two accused yesterday morning.

On Wednesday noon, the victim was staying alone at her residence as her parents went to work. She came out of her residence to find out one of their neighbouring babies.

On her way, Samrat Hossain Shanto, 20, a resident of the same area, called the girl. But she did not respond and started

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Graft obstructs a step forward

Most of 8,500 post offices transformed to provide IT-based services hardly functioning; probe finds irregularities

ASIFUR RAHMAN and RASHIDUL HASAN

"IT-based rural post office" -- that's what is written on the two-room pucca building of Koilain Post Office in Nawabganj, Dhaka.

The post office was transformed into a post e-centre so that people can get various IT-based services.

But during a visit late last month, its collapsible gate was found locked from outside. A local woman was seen collecting dried cow dung on the premises.

The postmaster, Mashiur Kabir, was not there.

He, however, rushed back to his office from his pharmacy in a market nearby, after getting a phone call. But he could not show what services his office provides.

"I don't have the office key to open it," he told The Daily Star. "It is with the runner who went to the nearby village."

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WORLD POST DAY



DIGITAL SECURITY ACT

Rise in use of the law alarming

Says Amnesty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two human rights bodies have expressed concern over the escalation in the use of Digital Security Act, 2018 against the media, journalists and rights activists.

Amnesty International and Front Line Defenders issued separate statements yesterday criticising the government for intolerance towards human rights defenders and all those critical of its actions.

The statements were issued marking two years of the draconian law coming into force.

According to 2020 World Press Freedom Index, Bangladesh ranks 151 among 180 countries.

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1 in 10 in Dhaka may have been infected

Says WB report; warns Covid pandemic unlikely to pass anytime soon

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON AND WASIM BIN HABIB

One in every 10 people in the capital may have already been infected with Covid-19, says the World Bank, warning that the coronavirus pandemic is not likely to pass anytime soon.

Even if the actual infections were much higher than the registered cases, it seemed unlikely that Bangladesh and other South Asian countries were already close to the levels that would trigger herd immunity, the global lender said in its latest report on the nations.

"The evidence that those who recover from Covid-19 develop long-term immunity is not very solid. Hence, there is significant uncertainty about the future development of the pandemic in South Asia, and the only relative certainty is that it is unlikely to pass anytime soon," said the report, released yesterday.

The report titled "Beaten or Broken?"

Informality and Covid-19" comes at a time when Bangladesh is fearing a second wave of the coronavirus infection in the upcoming winter amid a steady number of daily infections and deaths.

The total number of confirmed cases in the country stood at 374,592 after the authorities recorded 1,441 new cases in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday against 13,605 tests.

Twenty people died from the virus during the same period, taking the total number of deaths to 5,460.

In another development, Mercy Tembon, World Bank's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, said the lender would allocate resources to support Bangladesh's plan on obtaining potential vaccine for the virus.

"We shall allocate resources to support Bangladesh's plan to obtain vaccines for its population and prepare a strategic plan for vaccination," she told The Daily Star in reply to a written query, at a telephonic

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Dist hospitals to be readied

Says PM about tackling second wave of Covid

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the government is getting all the district hospitals ready with ICUs and oxygen supplies to provide healthcare services to the people in case the Covid-19 hits again in the upcoming winter.

"The outbreak of coronavirus had begun last winter. It may resurge in the upcoming winter. Keeping it in mind, we are arranging all sorts of medical services, including setting up ICUs and ensuring oxygen supplies to every district hospital," she said.

The PM was addressing a programme yesterday marking the opening of the Itna-Mithamoin-Austagram all-weather road in Kishoreganj to traffic.

She inaugurated the 29.73-km road

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American poet Gluck wins Nobel prize in literature

AFP, Stockholm

The Nobel Literature Prize went to American poet Louise Glück, known for themes of childhood and family life that draw inspiration from myths and classical motifs.

Glück, 77, was honoured "for her unmistakable poetic voice that with austere beauty makes individual existence universal," the Academy said yesterday.

Glück has previously won the Pulitzer Prize in 1993 for her collection "The Wild Iris," and the National Book Award for her latest collection, "Faithful and Virtuous Night", in 2014.

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With children at the front, a train passes through a kitchen market, set up illegally on the railway lines in the capital's Jurain area yesterday. The authorities had evicted the vendors around a month ago but they have come back again. Every time a train crosses the place, the vendors have to remove goods and tents from the line. Such disregard for safety sometimes proves to be fatal.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

NEW HSC GRADING SYSTEM

Those who might have failed lucky

YEAR	TOTAL STUDENT	FAILURE RATE
2019	13,36,629	26.02%
2018	12,88,757	33.36%
2017	11,63,370	31.09%
2016	12,03,640	25.30%
2015	10,61,614	30.40%

SOURCE: EDUCATION BOARDS

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGR

Students who could have failed the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and its equivalent examinations this year are set to get their certificates as no student will be left behind under the government's new grading system.

Education board officials said over the last five years, 25 to 30 percent examinees sitting for HSC and equivalent exams had failed. But with the government's decision to grade this year's candidates based on their Secondary School Certificate, Junior School Certificate results, 100 percent examinees will pass.

"These 25 to 30 percent students, who could have failed in the exams are getting undue privilege," said Professor Siddiqur Rahman, former Director of the Institute of Education and Research at Dhaka University.

"This is never acceptable. They will get certificates without achieving qualification to pass the level. They will get some privilege even when enrolling for higher education," said Siddiqur, also a member of the National Education Policy 2010 Formulation Committee.

He pointed out that many students who achieved a lower GPA in SSC exams and would have prepared better for the HSC exams will be deprived under new system.

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