




The Daily Star




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"We'd be wrong if we think that rape is a matter of law and justice. It'd be a mistake to assume that a law passed in parliament will reduce the number of rape incidents."
SHIREEN HUQ OF NARIPOKKHO AT A PROTEST RALLY



I think we could lose the White House and both houses of Congress, that it could be a bloodbath of Watergate proportions."
US REPUBLICAN SENATOR TED CRUZ



"I wish good health to all the people around the world who are fighting the ills of the evil virus."
NORTH KOREA LEADER KIM JONG UN



Washing hands of workers' plight

While trafficked workers thrown into jail, recruiting agents remain untouched with no authentic paperwork to prove links

ZYMA ISLAM

While 81 migrant workers returning from Vietnam were incarcerated for more than a month, before finally being released from prison over this past week, the recruiting agents who sent them to the Southeast Asian country in the first place are going scot-free and denying all claims of trafficking.

They are emboldened by the fact that such workers' recruitment, employment, and paper processing are dealt with by up to three layers of recruiting agents.

Often the agency who represents a worker on his/her emigration clearance -- that means the agency officially sending the worker abroad -- has never even met the worker or seen the worker's paperwork.

So, in the case of the migrant workers returning from Vietnam, all paper trails point back to the agency listed on the emigration clearance -- the agency the worker had never met and has little evidence against.

These agencies are now denying trafficking charges, saying they had not even met the workers and their licences were misused by others.

Meanwhile, the intermediary agencies too are flat-out denying sending the

workers to Vietnam, confident that the only thread linking them to this trafficking are the workers' verbal testimonies.

Over the last few months, Brac's Migration Programme unit interviewed 120 migrant workers in Vietnam to map out the actors involved.

By collecting the Bureau of Manpower, Employer and Training (BMET) smart cards from the workers, they found that 11 recruiting agencies were involved in getting these workers' emigration clearances.

Through worker testimonials, Brac identified a further 11 agencies involved in passport and visa processing, as well as 52 local recruiting agents.

BMET clearance records collected by Brac link M/S A Jharna Trade International with sending at least 28 workers, who did not get their promised jobs, to Vietnam.

The clearances stated the workers were employed for 13 Vietnamese companies; apart from one company -- Nam Phuong Xanh Company Ltd based in the city of Vung Tau -- none of the other companies have a digital presence.

However, the proprietor of M/S A Jharna Trade International, Shanto Das, claimed

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People from all walks of life, including activists of different rights organisations, protest in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, demanding reforms in the country's rape law.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

HSC: TECHNICAL EDU BOARD Uncertainty over grading of 2.8 lakh

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Around 2.8 lakh Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) students, under Bangladesh Technical Education Board, are uncertain as to how they would be graded in the newly adapted HSC grading system.

The students take courses like HSC Vocational, HSC Business Management, and Diploma in Commerce that require them to sit for the final exams after finishing grade XI.

The scores of their final exams get added to their HSC results, said at least two officials of the technical education board.

"We are facing some difficulties. It is still uncertain how we will evaluate these candidates without their final exams' scores," said a top official of the board.

It is decided that their results would be announced based on their JSC and SSC results. However, we are yet to know about what to do with the final exam scores of these students, the official added.

The government on Wednesday decided to cancel this year's HSC and its equivalent exams due to health-safety concerns amid the coronavirus crisis.

Instead, candidates would be evaluated based on their

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Covid-19 death toll now 5.5k

23 die, 1,203 test positive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Covid-19 death toll reached 5,500 as the health directorate reported 23 deaths in the past 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

The daily death toll was at its peak between June and August, shows DGHS data, with June 30 seeing the highest, 64, number of deaths.

This daily figure has largely been below 30 from the beginning of September till date.

A health expert said the transmission of coronavirus continues with no intervention and may accelerate as the cold season approaches.

The total number of confirmed cases rose to 3,77,073 as the DGHS

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'Death penalty not a solution'

Demo in front of JS calls for drastic reform of laws to end rape culture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-rape protests continued across the country for the sixth consecutive day yesterday as different socio-cultural and rights organisations took to the streets to condemn the growing incidents of rape, sexual harassment and violence against women.

In Dhaka, protests were held in Shahbagh, Manik Mia Avenue and National Press Club areas.

In front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, activists from different organisations, including those working for women's rights, staged demonstrations.

The protesters were chanting slogans condemning the impunity of rapists and demanding prompt action to bring the rapists to book.

They were holding placards inscribed with slogans such as: "Stop protecting rapists", "Mukti chai, Rokkha Noi", "If you justify rape, you are a rapist too."

Before the programme started, police obstructed the protesters saying they would not allow demonstrations there, after which more protesters joined and began chanting slogans.

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Man arrested over gang-rape of teen

Indigenous community protest student's murder after rape in Dinajpur

STAR REPORT

Against a backdrop of ongoing countrywide outrage and protests against rape, the prime accused of a gang-rape of a teenage girl from Lalmonirhat was arrested on Friday night, and a demonstration was held yesterday demanding justice for the murder of a woman in Dinajpur, killed allegedly after rape.

From Patgram, Lalmonirhat, the 15-year-old orphan was travelling from her aunt's house to an uncle's house at Kaunia upazila in Rangpur by train on the evening of October 6.

When the train arrived at Kakina Railway Station in Kaliganj upazila, the girl

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MARITAL RAPE, CHILD MARRIAGE Issues that are now even more pressing

NILIMA JAHAN and ZYMA ISLAM

No conversation about rape is complete without recognising this: marital rape, and underage marriage "under special circumstances" are both legal in this country.

As it currently stands, girl children can be forced into sexual relationships without their consent as long as the perpetrator is legally married to them, even though it amounts to marital rape.

Underage marriage is allowed under Section 19 of the Child Marriage Restraint Act, which states, "... if a marriage is solemnised in such a manner and under such special circumstances as may be prescribed by rules in the best interests of the minor, at the directions of the court and with consent of the parents or the guardian of the minor, as the case may be, it shall not be deemed to be an offence under this act."

Critics of the law have pointed out time and again that "special circumstances" are not defined. The law also does not mention when and how a court can make such exceptions.

And as per Section 375 of the Penal Code, "Sexual

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Beyond public knowledge, Panchakhanda Basudeva Angan, a 1,000-year-old temple in Supatala village of Sylhet's Beanibazar, houses two more statues -- one of a Dhyani (meditating left bottom) Buddha and another of a Garudashin Vishnu (Lord Vishnu sitting or riding on Garuda, a mythical bird-like creature) -- alongside one Basudeva statue.

PHOTO: TARUN SARKER, SAGAR DAS CHOWDHURY

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On the road to ANCIENT SRIHATTA

Two ages-old statues found in Sylhet temple open new avenue of study

TARUN SARKAR

As per the record, Panchakhanda Basudeva Angan, a millennium-old temple in Supatala village of Sylhet's Beanibazar, housed only a Basudeva statue.

Beyond public knowledge, however, two more unrecorded ancient statues are kept in the historic temple.

During a visit to the temple in late June, the statues of a Dhyani (meditating) Buddha and a Garudashin Vishnu (Lord Vishnu sitting or riding on Garuda, a mythical bird-like creature) were found.

The Basudeva statue, depicting Lord Vishnu in Samapadasthanak posture in which the feet are firmly arid squarely planted, was mentioned in various journals while the two other statues remained unheard of.

In Achyut Charan Choudhury's book "Srihatter Itibritta", some publications of Bangladesh Asiatic Society, and a memorandum published by the temple in 2006 state that there is only the Basudeva statue in the temple.

But the expedition found all three statues are kept in the Sri-Mandir of the Panchakhanda Basudeva Angan and being worshiped.

Finding of the Dhyani Buddha proves the existence of Mahayana Buddhist while the Garudashin Vishnu is the only statue of its type to be found in the region.

Two neighbouring villages, Supatala and Nidhanpur, under Panchakhanda Pargana of ancient Srihatter, are very much known to historians and archaeologists. These places are crucial for understanding the ancient time of greater Sylhet.