

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



1,537
New cases in 24hrs



3,81,275
Total cases



5,577
Deaths



2,95,873
Recoveries



GLOBAL
UPDATE



1,087,444
Deaths



38,196,899
Total cases

Civilians in Rakhine being attacked

Says Amnesty International; no sign of conflict abating

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International has found new evidence of indiscriminate attacks on civilians in Rakhine amid serious escalations in the ongoing armed conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army.

“The Myanmar military’s utter disregard for civilian suffering grows more shocking and brazen by the day,” Ming Yu Hah, deputy regional director for campaigns of Amnesty International (AI), said in a statement on Monday.

There are no signs of the conflict between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar military abating -- and civilians continue to bear the brunt, she said, calling for the UN Security Council to urgently refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.

All this is happening even as Myanmar faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for a military crackdown that drove out some 750,000 Rohingyas to Bangladesh in 2017. No Rohingya refugee could be repatriated in more than three years as they say there is no guarantee of safety and citizenship.

AI said it is concerned by recent reports of increased presence of Myanmar military troops along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. Bangladesh also recently objected to the troops’ mobilisation in Rakhine along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

Analysis of images recently revealed MM2 type landmines, often used by the Myanmar military, in civilian areas. This device is larger than most anti-personnel landmines, and typically inflicts severe damage.

Several incidents involving civilians injured or killed by landmines have been credibly reported in Rakhine and Chin States in recent months.

AI expressed concern over local media reports of the Myanmar military using Rohingya children for

forced portering in Buthidaung.

A local civil society group estimates the number of civilians killed in this conflict since December 2018 in Rakhine and Chin States stands at 289, with 641 injured.

The true figure could not be independently verified, as a mobile internet shutdown and broader government crackdowns on media reporting have impeded documentation efforts.

However, in July 2020, Amnesty International was able to document indiscriminate air strikes and shelling by the Myanmar military, killing or injuring civilians, including children.

Evidence suggests Myanmar soldiers burned a village in central Rakhine State’s Kyauktaw Township in early September, AI said.

Over 120 structures in Taung Pauk and Hpa Yar Paung appear burned in Planet Imagery from September 10. Fires were remotely detected in the villages with satellite sensors on September 3.

New figures from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs indicate that 89,564 people were displaced to 180 sites in Rakhine between January 2019 and September 7, 2020. This adds to the already 130,000 displaced people in Rakhine interned in camps since 2012.

On September 11, the Myanmar military admitted that three of its soldiers had raped an ethnic Rakhine woman during operations in Rathedaung Township on June 30, despite their outright denials when the allegations were first raised in July.

“Even when the Myanmar military are compelled to admit wrongdoing, their handling of this appalling sexual violence case shows a complete neglect for accountability,” said Ming Yu Hah.

The international community must raise the alarm about the situation in Rakhine state now, or face questions later about why they failed to act again, she said.

Govt slaps gag on social media

FROM PAGE 1
in the media without approval from the authorities concerned.

In a letter, the ministry said some public servants, violating Section 22 of Government Servant (Conduct) Rules, are taking part in talk shows, discussions and news on different media outlets, including Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, private TV channels, and giving comments or opinions and writing articles or letters in newspapers and online portals without taking approval from their department chiefs or going beyond his or her jurisdiction.

On many occasions, they are giving comments or opinions over government’s policy decisions, the letter said.

On May 3, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University followed suit by silencing their healthcare workers as well.

On October 7, the Department of Secondary and Higher Education

issued a circular forbidding students and teachers from writing, sharing, “liking”, or posting anything that “ruins the image of the government or the state”, or “disrespects any important person, institution or profession” on social media.

They were also told not to post any writing, audio or video clips that could create “dissatisfaction among the general public”. The heads of institutions were asked to take action against any who did that.

After nurses, health officials, public officials, students and teachers, it is now the turn of the general public to receive a gag order.

Talking on the issue, eminent human rights lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua said, “They do not have the option of dictating what the general public will write on their social media accounts.

“We get to criticise them because it is our right. There is no law against criticising. This circular can be called illegal.”

Quizzing for the stars

FROM PAGE 1
13-week event is off to a great start, promising lots of excitement in every episode.

The competition is set up to be a grand festival of knowledge. With participation of 27 schools from across the nation, its allure is its scale. For weeks leading up to the launch on October 5, The Daily Star had been in contact with these schools and their student representatives to iron out the details of how this could be executed. The idea of general knowledge quiz competitions has been limited to physical events on stage, with a buzzer and at times, a quizmaster. But like many things during this pandemic, this model had to be discontinued.

Yet the quest for knowledge never stops, and The Daily Star GENIUS provides the perfect platform for buzzing young minds to pit themselves against each other, giving them the challenge and the recognition that is so very important. Not to forget, the platform also presents a much needed source of entertainment when schools are closed and extracurricular activities have come to a halt.

There will be nine matches in the first round, with the winner of each of these matches will face themselves in three semifinals, from where the three finalists will emerge. The winner of the final will receive, in addition

to a trophy and certificate, the title of the first-ever Daily Star GENIUS, and a Walton laptop to further assist in their endeavour to acquire knowledge. The matches are held online, where contestants answer questions from the comfort of their homes while host and quizmaster Ashrafal Haque Emu engages with them over video chat, making for a spectacle that is equal parts intense and entertaining.

The programme is broadcast live every Monday at 9:00pm on The Daily Star and SHOUT’s Facebook pages, The Daily Star’s YouTube channel as well as its website, adding to the extravaganza. Live audiences have been engaging in comments with answers and support for the participants, making the event enjoyable for everyone involved.

General knowledge, by some, is looked at as an academic practice, just something to help students pass entrance exams. For others, it’s all about rote memorisation. The prevailing understanding, however, is in the words itself. It’s general knowledge, not special. It’s about knowing what you should know; it’s about being aware. That is something that has been reflected in the questions that students have had to answer in the first two episodes. The main aim of this event is to encourage a knowledgeable and thinking approach to life for youngsters across the country.



Workers of Dhaka South City Corporation remove overhead cable TV and fibre optic cables hanging from electricity poles along Satmashjid Road in the capital's Dhanmondi yesterday to enhance the beauty of the city. The cable TV operators and internet service providers, however, said the authorities should not do this without making an alternative arrangement.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Rapists are beasts: PM

FROM PAGE 1

Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division of the law ministry also issued a gazette notification to this effect yesterday, reports our staff correspondent.

The ordinance is titled Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Daman Ain (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020.

Rights activists and lawyers have said the move was made only to calm protesters and that it does not deal with the reforms being demanded by gender experts.

Amid countrywide protests over the growing incidents of rape and violence against women, the cabinet on Monday approved the draft of the Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

According to the ordinance, “Lifetime Rigorous Imprisonment” mentioned in section-9(1) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act has been replaced by “Death or Lifetime Rigorous Punishment”.

It means the maximum punishment for rape is death penalty or life imprisonment. Earlier, the maximum punishment was only life imprisonment.

People recently took to the streets across the country after a video clip had gone viral on social media. In the footage, a woman from Noakhali’s

Begumganj upazila was seen being brutally tortured.

At least 975 women were raped across the country until last month this year and there were 161 incidents of rape last month alone, according to a report by rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK).

Of the victims, 208 were gang-raped, 43 murdered after rape and 12 died by suicide afterwards, the report added. Three women and nine men were killed while protesting assault incidents.

According to an estimate by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, there were 129 rape incidents last month. Among the victims were 83 minors.

On Monday, Law Minister Anisul Huq told media that although there were some controversies over the death penalty, the PM felt the need to impose the capital punishment under the current circumstances.

He also said the chief justice would be requested to issue a directive so that the Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Daman Tribunals across the country could hear and dispose of old rape cases with priority and also complete trials of new ones at a faster pace.

Besides, the law ministry would issue necessary directives to special public prosecutors, asking them to take initiatives to finish trial

proceedings quickly, the minister said. **DEATH SENTENCE NOT ENOUGH** Legal experts have said death sentence will not solve anything. The amendment does nothing to address the actual reforms being demanded by gender experts, they said.

Veteran women’s rights activist advocate Salma Ali said, “It is just a rushed act to calm some of the protesters.

“The decision-makers should have taken the time to consult with grassroots lawyers and law practitioners who deal with such cases first-hand,” she said.

The Rape Law Reform Coalition, a body comprised of 17 rights organisations including Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST) and ASK, have 10 demands regarding the law, and the death penalty is not one of them.

The demands include changing the definition of the law to include victims of all genders, defining “penetration” to include rape using objects, banning the use of character evidence against rape survivors during trial, allowing judges to hand out punishments proportionately and as per their discretion, ensuring that courts and systems are inclusive for survivors with disabilities and enacting the witness protection law.

Herd immunity in some city areas?

FROM PAGE 1

The study, jointly conducted by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), and the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b) also found that 74 percent of the slum dwellers were carrying Covid-19 antibody during the survey.

A total of 125 samples of individuals in slums and 692 samples of individuals from other areas in 25 wards of the city were tested for Covid-19 antibody under the study supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the USAID.

Researchers involved in the study said the findings do not imply that there should be any change in Covid-19 transmission control and prevention activities.

“Herd Immunity does not depend on a single aspect. The World Health Organisation is also suggesting that we should not think too much about herd immunity because it depends on

many things. We have not yet been able to carry out any thorough study,” Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the IEDCR, told this newspaper yesterday.

She said there was nothing in the study which implied that there should be any change in the existing health safety rules.

Expressing similar view, Prof Nazrul said there is no alternative to enforcement of the health safety rules such as wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, and washing hands.

Herd immunity occurs when a large portion of a community becomes immune to a disease through vaccinations or mass spread of a disease.

Prof Mushtuq Hussain, a consultant for the IEDCR, said, “The study showed that the majority of the infected people had no symptoms, and of them, 18 percent were children. This is why the educational institutions cannot reopen.

“The survey does not necessarily represent the whole picture... Based

on this survey, it is not possible to reach any conclusion about herd immunity,” he pointed out.

“A big portion of the population has not been infected yet. And those who have already been infected should not think they are safe because different studies show that antibody sustains in a human body for a maximum of three months.”

Antibody is a kind of blood protein produced in response to a specific antigen. It counteracts the antigen, and can prevent viruses from causing infections by binding, neutralising or making those inactive.

In case of Covid-19, there are two major types of antibodies -- one is the IgM that can last for a few days in the body and the other is the IgG which can last up to three months.

The findings came at a time when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina warned of a second wave of the novel coronavirus. A number of countries have already been hit by a second wave of the virus.

Rashid Haider passes away

FROM PAGE 1

Haider was born on July 15, 1941 in Pabna’s Dohapara village, and graduated in Bangla from the University of Dhaka. It is during his time at the DU that he began journalism through the magazine Chitrati. He was also a member of the Pakistan Writers’ Guild in 1964.

“Rashid Haider started writing from his early ages and played vital role in developing modern prose in Bangla,” said Professor Abdul Alim, former head of the Department of Bangla in Pabna university of Science and Technology.

Among his many acclaimed works is Sriti 71, Shahid Buddhijibi Koshagrontho and Asamabriksa. He was the author of more than 70 books throughout his illustrious career.

As a member of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya, Haider wrote the famous Toilo Shonkot, and acted in Nagorik’s first play, Baki Itihash.

Abul Hayat, a legendary name in television and theatre, mourned Rashid’s death.

“His [Rashid’s] brother, Zia Haider, was the founding president of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya. I have some fond memories with Rashid -- I was

especially moved when he published a beautiful write-up about me on my 75th birthday,” he told The Daily Star. Nagorik Natya Sampradaya conveyed their condolences at the news of his death.

Theatre actor Sara Zaker on a Facebook post wrote, “Rashid bhai was a member of Nagorik Natya Sampradaya, Zia bhai’s younger brother. When we did a play written by him, ‘Toilo Shonkot’, it was coincidentally Asaduzzaman Noor’s debut stage performance too. His work during his time at the Bangla Academy -- ‘Smriti 71’ -- will remain a great achievement for the entire country.”

“Rashid Haider was a wonderful mix of journalistic intelligence and literary sense. Smriti 71 is a masterpiece on the Liberation War,” said freedom fighter and writer Robiul Islam Robi, adding, “All members of the Haider family played vital roles in intellectual work in the country. His brother. Professor Zia Haider passed away a few years ago and now his [Haider’s] death is a big loss as well.”

Noted thespian Ferdousi Majumdar said Rashid was a staunch admirer of theatre. “We can never forget him

or his research and work on our Liberation War,” she said.

“He was a very close senior of mine,” said theatre legend Mamunur Rashid, adding, “We sat down for long conversations many times at Bangla Academy, it was a delight. He was an extremely talented and dedicated person.”

He said the writer especially loved books on selected works from 200 years of Bangla Natok, which was published by the Bangla Academy under his supervision.

Actor Tariq Anam Khan said Rashid Haider was an inspiration to him.

“His biggest achievement was the publication of the list of freedom fighters -- that is a huge undertaking that he successfully accomplished,” Tariq said.

“He called me ‘tui’, out of adoration. Out of all the writers that emerged after our independence, he stood out.”

The esteemed writer left behind his wife and two daughters -- both teachers at the DU.

He was laid to rest at the Azimpur Graveyard after his namaz-e-janaza at the DU Central Mosque.

PBI takes over probe of Rayhan’s death

Key suspect untraceable

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) will now probe the case filed in connection with the torture of a man to death in police custody in Sylhet.

Victim Rayhan Ahmed’s family alleged that he was tortured in the city’s Bandarbazar police outpost and later he died in a city hospital on Sunday morning.

As per an order from the Police Headquarters yesterday, the case was transferred to PBI, said Jyotirmoy Sarker, additional deputy commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

Meanwhile, sources in police said prime suspect of the case Akbar Hossain Bhuiyan, in-charge of the police outpost, has been untraceable since Monday night.

Rayhan, 33, a resident of the city’s Neharipara area, died at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital at 7:50am on Sunday, around an hour after he was admitted there by police.

After allegations of torturing him inside the Bandarbazar police outpost, an internal probe body of police was formed and the body initially found involvement of the outpost’s police personnel.

On Monday, four police personnel, including the outpost in-charge, were suspended and three others were withdrawn from the outpost.

Sources said Rayhan was detained by police on an allegation of mugging and brought to the outpost at 3:10am on Sunday. He was not found injured when he entered the outpost.

Around 6:30am, injured Rayhan was seen taken out of the outpost, and put in an autorickshaw.

The evidence was seen in footage of CCTV installed by the office of superintendent of Sylhet police near the outpost, a police official said, citing the report.

Azbahar Ali Sheikh, deputy commissioner (north) of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, said, “As there are many questions to be answered about the incident, the investigation will be conducted properly as the murder case was filed under the torture and custodial death act.”

NOAKHALI GANG-RAPE

Delwar sent to jail, Sumon on 4-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A court in Noakhali yesterday sent Delwar, chief of Delwar Bahini, to jail in connection with the torture and gang-rape of a woman in Noakhali’s Begumganj upazila.

Delwar is the prime accused in a rape case filed by the victim with Begumganj Model Police Station.

Judge of Noakhali Chief Judicial Magistrate’s Court Mashfiqul Haque passed the order after police produced him before the court this morning, said Mamnur Rashid Patwari, sub-inspector of Noakhali (Police Bureau of Investigation) PBI.

Following an application filed by Begumganj Model Police Station sub-Inspector Mostak Ahmed, the court also shown arrested Delwar in two other cases filed under the Women and Children Repression (Prevention) Act and under the Pornography Control Act over the incident.

The court also placed another accused Samsuddin Sumon, 39, on four-day remand in two cases filed under the Women and Children Repression (Prevention) Act and under the Pornography Control Act.

Sumon, the sixth accused in two cases, was arrested from Cumilla on Monday evening, said the PBI police official.

PBI SI Mamnur Rashid Patwari produced Sumon before the court with seven-day remand prayer.

Meanwhile, the court ordered to send Eklashpur UP member Moazzem Hossain Sohag to jail rejecting his bail prayer, said PBI inspector Mamnur Rashid Patwari.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

BLAST demands justice for its employee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) has demanded justice for its female employee who became a victim of sexual violence at a checkpoint on Teknaf-Cox’s Bazar road.

It also demanded that the government ensure her safety.

In a press release yesterday, the rights body also urged journalists to maintain objectivity and ethical standard in doing reports on women repression.

It made the call after some media outlets published reports over the rape incident of the BLAST employee in Cox’s Bazar on October 8.

“We are concerned seeing that some media have published the name and identity of the victim. We call upon all to remain respectful to the provision of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act-2000 that imposes a bar on disclosing the victim’s identity,” said the rights body.

“We believe that it is important for all the state authorities and agencies to remain respectful to the constitutional rights of all as well as the promises and measures taken by the government for ending violence against women.”