

## Govt to partially refund HSC fees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has made the decision to reimburse a portion of the application fees that were collected for this year's Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalents exams.

The decision was made after the HSC and equivalent examinations were called-off on October 7 due to health-safety concerns. Instead, candidates will be evaluated based on their results in Junior School Certificate (JSC), Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and their equivalent tests.

"As there's no need to spend on many exam related costs, we will refund a part of the form fill-up fees," Ziaul Haque, chairperson of Dhaka Education Board told The Daily Star. These costs include examiner's fees, script evaluation fees, practical exam arrangement fees etc.

"We are still calculating the amount of money that will be reimbursed," said Ziaul, who is also chair of Inter-education Board Coordination Sub-committee. "Once the process is completed, we will reach out to the students."

The education boards had previously charged Tk 2,500 for science students and Tk 1,940 for humanities and business students as form fill-up fees.

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**THE 'CANCER' YET TO BE REMOVED ... Demolition work of the BGMEA building in the capital's Begunbari continues through manual labour at snail's pace. The workers are also not wearing any protective gear while working on the high-rise, inset. This building, constructed illegally, was ordered by the High Court to be demolished in 2011, but the process remained in legal and logistical tangle until January this year. The Supreme Court in its final verdict on its demolition termed it 'a cancer on Hatijheel project'. The work was expected to be finished by June, but judging by the progress, it may take months.**

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



## MJF VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

# Many people unaware about victim, witness protection: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Incorporating general people's understanding while setting definition of "victim" and "witness" in relevant law is essential to ensure their protections, former chairman of National Human Rights Commission Prof Mizanur Rahman said yesterday.

"Let us not bother as much with the technicalities of law. Rather, we should put more emphasis on a common person's perception and understanding of the protection of victim and witness," he told a virtual conference.

If such "common truth" can be established then there will be no need for "groping around for the definitions", said Prof Mizanur, a teacher of law at Dhaka University.

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) organised the virtual conference as part of preparation of a draft law on victims and witnesses protection.

Prof Mizanur added that limiting only within the technicalities of law might not fulfill the objectives of protecting victims and witnesses.

During the event, findings of a field-level survey on "Protection of the Victims and Witnesses", commissioned by MJF and conducted on 763 respondents across eight divisions, were shared.

Barrister Tapas Kanti Baul, who presented the report findings, said most respondents said they were unaware whether the country has a victim and witness protection law. Many also said they have no clear idea about "victim or witness protection".

He said during the field-level survey they found different challenges for protection victims and witnesses, with three major areas to address.

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# Legal framework for mental health inadequate

Experts for more inclusive law, budgetary allocation

LAW DESK

According to the National Mental Health Survey in Bangladesh (2018-19), some 17 percent of Bangladeshi adults are undergoing mental health problems.

Amid the pandemic, mental health issues have worsened. The availability of services, however, is grossly inadequate and has been this way for long. The pandemic has only unmasked the existing crises permeating the mental health care sectors in general.

A recent report by The Daily Star reveals Pabna Mental Hospital, the main public hospital in the country, is grossly understaffed and has only 500 beds. Of the 25 allotted posts for doctors, 13 are vacant.

The higher authorities have repeatedly been urged by the hospital management to take actions, but nothing has happened.

All these information reveal how grossly neglected mental health is at the policy level.

We do, however, have a law regarding mental health which needs to be revisited. The outdated Lunacy Act of 1912 was replaced by the recently enacted Mental Health Act, 2018.

The Act entrusts the government with the responsibility of regulating, developing, controlling, expanding and co-ordinating the activities associated with mental health services. It requires forming "mental health review and monitoring committee" with deputy commissioner as the president in every district.

It obliges the government to ensure right to education, property, health and honour of the mentally ill persons and requires formulation of rules for their proper implementation.

The current irregularities at the mental health hospitals (from leaving the patients at the mercy of brokers to not rendering quality treatment) and the inadequacies of services are inconsistent with what the act in general envisions.

The fact that the grassroots level mental hospitals do not reflect what the law says, helps us perceive that there is lack of a proper monitoring scheme to oversee the effective implementation of the law.

The act further states that the government may establish mental hospital, medical

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## MISAPPROPRIATING Tk 34.42CR

# ACC sues eight BWDB engineers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed a case against eight engineers of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and three others for misappropriating Tk 34.42 crore.

ACC Deputy Assistant Director Sahidur Rahman filed the case with its integrated district office in Habiganj yesterday morning, said ACC Public Relations Officer Pranab Bhattacharya.

The accused are: Sigma Engineers Limited Managing Director Syed Md Kamal, Chairman Syed Arshed Reza and General Manager Abdus Salam, BWDB Superintendent Engineers SM Shahidul Islam, Abu Taleb, M Golam Sarwar and Abdul Basit, and Executive Engineers Anisur Rahman, Md Abbas Ali and Ruhul Amin, and Chief Engineer (Mechanical Equipment) Chowdhury Nazmul Alam.

According to the case statement, under the Manu River Irrigation Project, pumps priced Tk 20.41 crore were purchased from Sigma Engineers for Tk 54.83 crore.

The accused in collusion with each other misappropriated the money, read the FIR.

## MISINTERPRETATION OF RELIGION

# Close aide of Saudi expatriate arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit yesterday claimed to have arrested a close aide of a Bangladeshi expat in Saudi Arabia, Mustaq Mohammad Arman Khan, who had been spreading provocative messages on social media through misinterpreting religion.

A team of CTTC arrested Sirajul Islam from Dhaka's Badda area, CTTC Deputy Commissioner Saiful Islam told The Daily Star. "He is a close aide of Mustaq and had been disseminating information through private apps and social media," he added.

Saiful said Sirajul used to work at a private firm as a chartered accountant and lives in Badda with his family.

On August 22, an official of the unit filed a case with Ramna Police Station against Mustaq for misinterpretation of religious affairs and spreading provocative speech.

A Buet graduate of 2006, Mustaq went to Saudi Arabia in 2018 and had been spreading provocative messages since then, claiming himself a religious leader, CTTC officials said. Law enforcers have already arrested 19 youths who were preparing to join him in Saudi Arabia.

According to CTTC officials, Sirajul took oath under Mustaq's leadership and used to propagate his video content on social media and private apps to increase the number of followers.

Sirajul was shown arrested in the case filed with Ramna Police Station.

## ROAD ACCIDENTS

# 37,000 killed in last 5yrs: report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 37,170 people were killed and 82,758 injured in 26,902 road accidents in last five years since 2015, according to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity.

The passenger welfare platform compiled the report based on newspaper reports, although most of the incidents of road crashes remained unreported, said a press release of the samity.

The platform revealed the information yesterday ahead of National Road Safety Day -- to be observed today.

As per the organisation, 8,642 people were killed in 6,581 road accidents in 2015 while 6,055 were killed in 4,312 crashes in 2016.

At least 7,397 were killed in 4,979 road accidents in 2017 while 7,221 were killed in 5,514 road crashes in 2018. In 2019, the country witnessed killing of 7,855 people in 5,516 road crashes.

In the press statement, the organisation demanded immediate implementation of the government's electoral pledge of ensuring road safety.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary

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## ROOPPUR SCAM

# Contractor gets permanent bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted permanent bail to contractor Asif Hossain in a case filed over corruption in purchasing furniture and household items for Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Pabna.

The bench of Justices Nazrul Islam Talukder and Ahmed Sohel delivered the verdict after hearing a rule over granting bail to Asif, managing director of Majid and Sons Construction Limited that supplied household items.

Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Khurshid Alarm Khan said Asif cannot get released from jail as he is arrested in another corruption case over the same incident.

ACC will appeal before the Appellate Division challenging it, he added.

## SWECHCHASEBAK LEAGUE LEADER MURDER

# A family's joy snatched away

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Almost a week has passed since the brutal murder of Swechchasebak League leader Masudur Rahman Shuvra. His wife, Tahrima Akter Chumki, is still in shock and cannot stop weeping for her late husband.

On Saturday night, unidentified assailants hacked Shuvra, secretary of Swechchasebak League's Gouripur upazila unit, to death at the upazila's Pan Mahal area. His two companions were injured in the attack, said police.

"The whole world means nothing to me now," said a sobbing Tahrima. "I never thought I'd see such a day in my life. I'll never be able to feel a moment of relief."

Tahrima married Shuvra around two years ago, and was happily living with her new family. But the criminals snatched that happiness away from her, said Shuvra's aunt Majeda Begum.

Since the incident, Shuvra's parents, Mukdesur Rahman Babul and Kaleda Begum, are bed-ridden and sometimes they desperately search for Shuvra, said Sufia Begum, another aunt of the deceased.

Shuvra was grandson of late Abdus Sobhan -- a language veteran and freedom

fighter, who was an organiser during the Liberation War, and Awami League (AL) president of Gouripur upazila unit for 35 years. Family sources said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited their house during her visit to Gouripur in 1992.

Sadequ Rahman Selim, the victim's uncle, alleged that the mastermind behind the killing is Gouripur Municipality Mayor Syed Rafiqul Islam, who was involved with Jatiya Party in Gouripur.

Rafiqul went to Saudi Arabia following the fall of the Ershad regime. After returning from the middle-eastern country, he was elected as commissioner of Gouripur municipality in 2003, and joined AL in 2011, said Selim, who is former vice-president of Mymensingh Chhatra League district unit.

Demanding immediate arrest of killers and capital punishment, Swechchasebak League and ex-Chhatra League leaders organised protest rallies yesterday.

## FOUR ARRESTEES PLACED ON REMAND

Four people arrested in connection with the murder were produced before Mymensingh Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court yesterday, seeking seven-day remand for each, said Md

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Workers of Bando Eco Apparels garments factory blockaded the Dhaka-Aricha highway near Aminbazar for three hours yesterday evening, protesting partial closure of the factory and layoffs. Police later arrived at the scene, and exchange of tear shells and brickbats ensued before the road was cleared by law enforcers. This photojournalist was injured by a brickbat and had to receive three stitches on his head, minutes after taking this photo.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

A pick-up truck carries so much wood that it almost dwarfs the size of the vehicle itself. If that wasn't enough, a person nonchalantly sits on top of the huge pile, only held together by some flimsy ropes. If the logs somehow get loose, an accident could be imminent. This photo was taken on Tuesday from the capital's Tejgunipara.

## 3 madrasa teachers among 4 arrested for corporal punishment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Four people were sent to jail on allegation of punishing 50 madrasa students on Tuesday.

The incident took place at Ashraful Ulum Hafezia Forkania Madrasa and Etimkhana at Sangkuchail of Burichang in Cumilla, Mojammeel Haque, officer-in-charge of Burichang Police Station, confirmed.

The arrestees are madrasa chairperson Badshah Mia (70) teachers Motaleb (35), Mizanur (35), and Hafez Shafiqul Islam.

As per the case statement, the incident happened after a student complained to Badshah that a few students stole his snacks. Badshah and teachers sent 50 students for a punishment technique known as upside-down for 30 minutes. Around 20-25 students fell sick at the time. Some suffered headaches with vomiting while some started bleeding through mouth and nose.

Hearing their screams, locals surrounded the madrasa and called up police. Law enforcers rescued the students and sent them to local upazila health complex for treatment, while detaining those involved.

Mir Hossain, health officer of Burichang Health Complex said, "Some students were given primary treatment while four were sent to Cumilla Medical College Hospital."

# Fishing community the major polluter

Finds probe body about waste that washed ashore on Cox's Bazar beach in July

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Cg

Most of the trash that washed ashore on Cox's Bazar beach in July, causing uproar among environment activists and conservationists, came from the fishing community. A probe body formed the same month came up with the findings recently after analysing the waste, visiting the spots, and talking to fishermen, locals and experts.

The committee categorised the waste into two groups -- organic and non-organic. The latter formed 92 percent of waste that includes plastic drum, fishing net, plastic gallon, plastic basket, plastic pipes, TV casing, transparent plastic particles, liquor bottles, shoes, sandals and medical waste.

The committee found that the waste was mostly dumped by the seamen of Cox's Bazar. The garbage found on the shore are similar to those being carried by the fishers in their boats. Apart from this, some amount of domestic and medical waste ended up in the sea through four rivers -- Bakkhali, Matamuhuri, Reju and Naf.

The fishers often left the nets in the sea after any mammal got stuck in those and at times strong current washed away the nets. Fishing vessels along international maritime boundary were also found to dump a vast number of liquor bottles in the sea.

Straight into the sea from Bela Hatchery and Himchari point, there was a garbage vortex just 10km far from the said points, the investigation committee found.

The waste takes resort to seabed through Moheskali channel and

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