

## VIOLENCE ON WOMEN

## DMP launches hotline, quick response team

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday launched a quick response team for women and children undergoing abuse.

"Any women and children living in a situation of abuse can call the hotline, and the team will go over to the victim's location," said Hamida Parveen, deputy commissioner of the Women Support and Investigation Division.

The rescued person will be kept in custody of the Victim Support Centre. "A lot of domestic workers live in conditions of abuse in the city. We will rescue them and help them go back home," said Parveen.

DMP Commissioner Md Shafiqul Islam launched this new team.

The hotline number where the team can be reached is +8801320042055.



**AFTERNOON DELIGHT ...** Near the Malibagh rail gate in the capital, dozens of tea stalls have installed televisions and play movies from every afternoon well into the evening. Daily earners gather at the shops after a hard day of work, to unwind with some tea, snacks and entertainment. The photo was taken earlier this week.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FINAL SEMESTER STUDENTS OF PVT UNIVS  
UGC to allow in-person practical classes, exams at a 'limited scale'

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The University Grants Commission is going to allow private university students, who are at their final semester, to attend practical classes and exams in person.

These classes will be held following strict health guidelines and maintaining six feet distance between two students.

A maximum of 10 students from each class will be allowed to attend the lab classes and exams, and only one class will take place per day, a UGC member told The Daily Star after a meeting yesterday afternoon.

The virtual meeting was attended by chairman, members and top officials of UGC.

"We have decided that students who are at their final semester before graduation or post-graduation will be allowed to attend practical classes and exams in person," UGC Chairman Prof Kazi Shahidullah told this newspaper.

He said they took the decision as many private universities appealed to them to do so as only a handful of student need to take the practical classes and exams for graduation.

"We are not reopening the universities, we are just allowing them to attend classes and exams under special circumstances," he added.

Prof Shahidullah said the universities will bear all responsibilities for the students.

UGC member Prof Muhammed Alamgir said they are considering the matter as students who are in their final semester are not getting graduation certificates as their lab classes and exams are pending.

UGC in a directive in May said private universities that have completed 70 percent of academic activities for outgoing semester and have been conducting online classes successfully for theoretical courses will be able to evaluate their students through online viva exams and virtual presentations.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## MLM SCAM

## Three arrested over embezzling Tk 6cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police arrested three men of a "multi-level marketing (MLM)" company from the capital's Pallabi area, on charge of embezzling over Tk 6 crore from 1,427 people by tempting them with exorbitant profits.

"The fraudulent group had been running the MLM business by recruiting members, telling them that they will receive 250 percent dividend. They targeted government employees and the relatively wealthy," Sheikh Md Rezaul Haider, an additional deputy inspector general of CID, told reporters at a press briefing at their headquarters yesterday.

CID received a complaint from some people that Sopan Products Ltd and Sopan Properties Ltd have been operating the MLM business for the last eight months.

Based on the allegations, a team of CID Dhaka Metro (North) conducted an operation at their office in Pallabi area on Monday and arrested three, including Gazi Mohiuddin (27), managing director of Sopan and the ringleader.

The other two are directors of Sopan - Anisur Rahman (37) and Harunur Rashid (37).

A computer, Tk 47,000 cash and Tk 59,26,594 in different bank accounts were seized from the arrestees.

## 'Some get excess water, others don't get enough'

## Speakers say at water rights webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rahmat Ali, a landless angler in Sirajganj's Rayganj Upazila, faced 11 cases and spent 39 days in jail about fight over illegal occupation of the upazila's Sonadanga Beel.

"When our beel was being seized, we went to government offices and found 85 bighas of the beel was government's khas land. The grabbers had made fake papers to occupy the land illegally," Rahmat Ali said at a webinar yesterday.

The webinar, titled "Water Policy and Public Rights" was jointly organised by The Daily Star and Nijera Kori. It was supported by ICCO Cooperation. Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, chaired the programme.

"When we tried to do something about the occupation, they started filing a lot of cases against us anglers," Rahmat Ali added.

Eventually, their collective won. 140 fishermen, against whom cases were filed,

won their legal battles and won the right to catch fish from the beel. But they had to expend a lot of their resources, and had to knock on every other door of the court.

Similar experiences were shared by Ayesha Begum from Khulna's Dumuria. "Ever since influential people got a lease of our river [name of river not mentioned], they made a dam here and started polluting the water."

"We grew up catching fish and picking water lilies and vegetables out of the river, but the same water smells too foul for any of that now. We protested over and over and demanded action from the government, but instead we were charged with lawsuits," Ayesha Begum narrated.

Organisers of the also showcased recorded interviews of people from Rangpur and Gaibandha who were victimised in the same way.

"We have a lot of laws to protect our water resources and ensure that every person has

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## RU to hold in-person tests for admission

OUR CORRESPONDENT, RU

Admission tests for Rajshahi University's 2020-2021 session will require students to appear in person, in spite of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, university authorities have confirmed.

The decision was taken at an academic council meeting held at the university senate building yesterday morning, said a press release.

The academic council made it clear that first year honours admission seekers will have to participate in the test by appearing in person, not online. Most of the teachers present at the meeting opined in favor of hosting the exam on university campus,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

DNCC TRAFFIC INFRASTRUCTURES  
Ecneec okays project worth Tk 319.23cr

Bss, Dhaka

The government has approved a Tk 319.23 crore project to improve road safety, including traffic infrastructures development, as well as reducing traffic congestion in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) areas.

The approval came from the 13th Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) meeting of the current fiscal year, held virtually with Ecneec Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The premier joined the meeting from her official Gono Bhaban residence through videoconferencing while other Ecneec members were connected from the NEC conference room in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area.

Three projects at a cost of Tk 5,189.69 crore of two ministries were approved in the meeting, said Planning Division Senior Secretary Md Ashadul Islam while briefing reporters after the meeting.

Among these, two are revised projects and the rest one is fresh, he said.

Of the total cost, Ashadul said Tk 2,270.76 will come as project assistance while the rest from the government.

Talking about the project titled "Road Safety including Improvement of Traffic Infrastructures in Dhaka North City Corporation Areas," Planning Commission Member

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## Sustainability through ESG practices for a better tomorrow

It was not too long ago that "Corporate Social Responsibility", or CSR was considered as the key indicator in judging a company's responsibility for society in the sense of sustainable business practices. However, in recent times, Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) has emerged as three central factors in measuring the sustainability and societal impact of an investment in a company or business. Starting from Fortune 500 companies to new startups,



investors are now considering ESG ratings as key indicators in determining future financial performances (return and risk).

To mark the occasion of sustainability day, it is therefore befitting to highlight some of the benchmark ESG initiatives practiced by one of the leading multinationals in Bangladesh. Having a rich heritage of 110 years operation in the country, British American Tobacco Bangladesh (also known as BAT Bangladesh or BATB) has been the pioneer of several ESG initiatives which are contributing directly towards supporting the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals i.e. SDGs in Bangladesh.

Considered to be one of the pioneer CSR initiatives in Bangladesh, 'Bonayan' the flagship afforestation program of BATB, was initiated in 1980 with the collaboration of the government's Forest Department to combat the climate change impact. This largest private-sector driven afforestation program has distributed over 110 million saplings of medicinal, fruits and timber varieties, across the country over the last 40 years of its journey. Every year, the Bonayan programme distributes approximately 4-5 million saplings free of cost to diverse beneficiaries. Bonayan is also helping to bring an environmental as well as social balance to the community landscape in Bangladesh, through some notable afforestation projects at Lalon Shah Bridge, Hazrat Shah Amanat International Airport, Lama Alikadam highway, Rohingya Camp, Mirinjia point - Lama, Kushtia-Jessore highway, GK project, Jamuna Bridge, Kushtia by-pass road etc. For its exemplary contribution, Bonayan has been awarded the prestigious 'Prime Minister's National Award' four times and the 'Chief Advisor's National Award' once, alongside the numerous District/Upazila level awards received every year. This initiative has also been recognized internationally through the renowned "Asia Responsible Entrepreneurship Award" on Green Leadership by Enterprise Asia.

Over the last 40 years, 'Bonayan' has created many life-changing stories. A lot of beneficiaries received support from the 'Bonayan' initiative when they were unemployed. After receiving the saplings free of cost, they eventually generated enough revenue to combat their financial crisis and helped their families to live a better life. There are also many inspiring stories of poor female beneficiaries who received the free saplings from the 'Bonayan' program, nurtured the trees like their children and eventually managed to earn a living by selling fruits and wood, ensured schooling for children, successfully married off their children and also built 'pukka' houses for themselves. In driving such positive changes across the society and environment, 'Bonayan' directly supports the government's agenda regarding SDGs: Goal#1 (No Poverty), Goal#2 (Zero Hunger), Goal#11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), Goal#13 (Climate Action) and Goal#15 (Life on Land). Another of BAT Bangladesh's flagship initiatives 'Probaho' supports communities across Bangladesh by providing safe drinking water, free from arsenic and other impurities. This project was initiated in 2009 and till date comprises of more than 100 water filtration plants in arsenic prone areas like Kushtia, Jhenaidah, Meherpur, Rangpur, Manikganj etc. and in Chittagong Hill Tracts areas like Bandarban. 'Probaho' ensures 460,000 liters of pure drinking water to 225,000 beneficiaries every day. As a result, 99.7% people from the beneficiary communities do not suffer from arsenic or other diseases, according to an impact assessment study report. 'Probaho' compliments the Government's targets to achieve SDGs: Goal#6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) along with Goal#1 (No Poverty) and Goal#3 (Good Health and Well-being). As a recognition for the outstanding contribution to the society, 'Probaho' has also received the prestigious 'Asia Responsible Entrepreneurship Award' in 2015 and the Bangladesh Innovation Award 2018 by the Bangladesh Brand Forum.

To support the Bangladesh Government's efforts in promoting the renewable energy sector, BATB initiated its third CSR project 'Deepto' in 2011 to support communities across off-grid areas in Chittagong Hill Tracts. Under Deepto, BATB has till date supplied 2,590 units of solar home systems across remote villages of Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati districts. This initiative has enabled and empowered the communities to improve their lifestyle through quality education and various income generating activities. More than 13,000 people got their first access to electricity at home through this project. 'Deepto' is aligned with SDGs: Goal#1 (No Poverty), Goal#4 (Quality Education), Goal # 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy) and Goal#8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth). For all its contribution, this project has also won the acclaimed 'Asia Responsible Entrepreneurship Award' in 2018. Alongside these premier CSR initiatives, BAT Bangladesh also focuses on several projects and campaigns for environmental (soil, water, air) protection and conservation. Establishment of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) club is one remarkable initiative that the company has undertaken in early 2000s to support around 35,000 farmers. BATB has set up 75 IPM clubs across the country to popularize the IPM practices among the farmers in order to support the agenda of the Department of Agricultural Extension's (DAE) under the Ministry of Agriculture. Every year, 12 Farmers Field School (FFS) sessions are organized in collaboration with DAE. Apart from IPM, several other Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) such as green manuring with Dhaincha (Sesbania), crop rotation, enhancing crop intensity, usage of compost and bio-fertilizers over chemicals etc. have been introduced among farming communities in recent years. Another notable project named 'Surokha' to combat agrochemical waste management has also

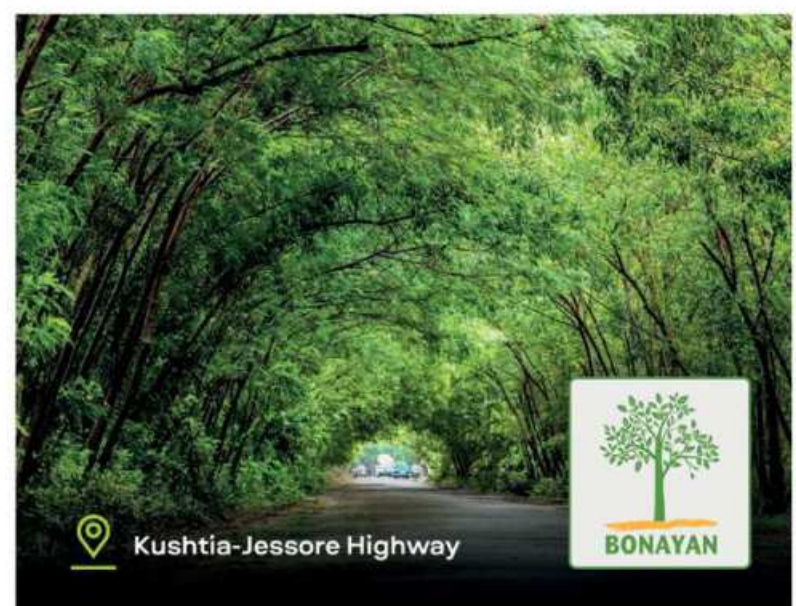
been initiated recently.

As a responsible company BATB has also taken up some challenging environmental targets in the areas of carbon emission and the elimination of single use plastics. BAT Group aims to become the benchmark in achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 through reduction in energy consumption, usage of renewable energy sources, reduction in factory waste discharge etc. The elimination of unnecessary single use plastic is also a key agenda for the business in the coming years.

All remarkable ESG practices tend to fade away if proper governance and compliance is not ensured. In this aspect, BAT Bangladesh has proudly set the benchmark for excellence in corporate governance which is reflected through the recognitions and awards the company receives every year both nationally and internationally. Some of the notable awards the company is bestowed with regularly, comprises of the 'Highest Tax-payer' award, ICSB Corporate Governance Award, ICMAB Award, SAFA award for best presented Annual Report etc.

As a company, BATB believes that at the core of all the outstanding ESG initiatives are its employees, who are responsible for passionately driving the agenda forward. Furthermore, BATB acknowledges the strength from diversity and passionately drives for empowering women at all levels. The company ensures gender equality and female-friendly workplace through various initiatives such as 9 months' maternity leave, own day-care center (Angel's Nest), respect in workplace, grievance mechanism, celebratory culture and many more. Recent years have also seen the company become proud recipients of the 'Top Employer in Bangladesh' award and the 'Most Women Friendly Organization' award which strongly compliments the company's ESG agenda.

BAT Bangladesh is relentlessly working to create a step change in



ensuring sustainability through its robust ESG initiatives. The company wishes to create a benchmark in ESG practices which can act as a source of inspiration for others to follow. BATB wishes to continue supporting the Bangladesh Government's agenda of achieving the SDGs and collectively aim for a better tomorrow.

Press Release