

Seed crisis deals setback

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vegetables on two bighas.

"But the high demand for onion inspired me to cultivate onions on all seven bighas this year," he said.

But he was only able to buy 2kg onion seeds from the local market, at a cost of Tk 14,500.

"I need 4-5kg seeds for cultivating the entire land. If I don't manage to get it in the next one or two weeks, I may miss the season."

Babu had to borrow money in order to buy the seeds, which he got last year for Tk 1,200, as he didn't anticipate needing so much money for seeds.

The seed crisis in local markets has now led to rocketing prices, which has reached the highest ever level in the country -- and farmers are bearing the brunt.

Seed traders are taking advantage of the lack of fixed-price seeds and charging excessive prices, farmers alleged, due to the lack of monitoring by the government.

UNSTABLE SEED MARKET

Amidst a scarcity of local seed, Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) has also stopped selling fixed-price seed to farmers, sources said, badly affecting the onion seed market.

Talking with The Daily Star, Md Abu Rayhan Tarek, manager of seed marketing at BADC, said the corporation usually supplies some onion seeds every year but farmers mostly depended on local markets and seeds marketed by private companies.

BADC was unable to reserve sufficient onion seeds this year, he added.

"Last year, BADC supplied five tonnes of onion seeds but this year only has a reserve of 3.4 tonnes," Tarek said.

"BADC, however, could not sell any onion seeds to farmers at the government fixed rate [Tk 3,500 per kg] because we have supplied all the seeds available to the Department of Agricultural Extension [DAE] for their departmental projects."

Most of the farmers did not preserve seeds last season due to the high price of onion, which in turn caused a price hike of onion seeds this year, he added.

The current retail price of local onion is Tk 75 per kg, although the price at one point exceeded Tk 200 during the past few months.

DAE Director General Md Asadullah told The Daily Star that seed trader syndicates were destabilising the seed market -- so, the DAE is planning to give seed aid to small farmers.

"Due to the seed crisis, we plan to distribute seed aid among 50,000 farmers in 21 high onion-cultivating districts. Each farmer will get 250g onion seed per bigha," the DG said.

The yearly demand of onion is approximately 32-33 lakh tonnes but annual domestic production has been

25-26 lakh tonnes in the last few years, leaving a shortage every year that causes the crisis, the DAE DG added.

Imported onions -- largely from India -- make up the shortfall, and prices leapt when India banned onion exports earlier in September.

A total of 25.6 lakh tonnes of onion were produced last year across the country, cultivated on 2.38 lakh hectares, according to the DAE.

This season, the DAE has targeted a total of 2.50 lakh hectares of land for onion cultivation -- of these, 1.85 lakh hectares for seed onion cultivation and 65,000 hectares for bulb onion production, said Khandaker Md Rashed Iftekhar, control room in-charge of DAE (Khamarbari).

This season's onion production target is 29.5 lakh tonnes, he added.

Bulb onion, known locally as "kondo peyaj", has already been cultivated and is expected to be harvested from mid-December, Rashed told The Daily Star, and farmers are also preparing to cultivate seed onion from this month.

A total of 1,142 tonnes of seeds are needed to achieve the onion cultivation target, he added.

PRODUCTION COSTS UP BY 30PC
Meanwhile, farmers said onion production costs have risen by around 30 percent due to the price hike of onion seeds as well as higher labour costs.

Where last year he spent Tk 25,000-30,000 for cultivating each bigha of onion, this year he needs Tk 35,000-40,000, Md Jowadul Islam Montu, a reputed onion trader from Manikhat village in Sujannagar upazila, told The Daily Star.

Labour costs went up too, he said, where last year he paid day labourers Tk 400 per day, he paid Tk 600 this time.

Montu added that onion seeds from the retail market are of poor quality, so he is unsure about onion yield in the coming year.

DAE DG Md Asadullah said despite the scarcity of good quality seeds, he expects the cultivation target will be achieved.

"Although we do not have sufficient quality seeds this year, we have still taken a large target for onion production as an additional yield of two lakh tonnes of onion is expected this year."

The DG claimed, despite the high seed price and other costs as well as quality concerns, farmers will manage to get the necessary seeds and cultivate their fields as targeted.

"Seed crises provide a good lesson for the agriculture department. We have a plan to increase production of quality seeds to bring up the capacity of the department so that farmers are not harassed in this way in the future," the DG said.



A Buddhist monk paddles a boat down a flooded street in Nakon Si Thammarat province in Thailand yesterday. Six days of heavy rain caused widespread flooding in the province, affecting hundreds of communities and inundating large swaths of farmland.

PHOTO: REUTERS

35 more die, 2,316 infected

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Against a total of 16,807 tests in 118 laboratories across the country in those 24 hours, the positivity rate was 13.78 percent while the total positivity rate was 16.72 percent.

At the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak, the daily positivity rate was comparatively lower, but it rose to 25 percent of those tested in late May.

Until the third week of August, the positivity rate was over 20 percent, which came down to 10 percent in October.

Since the beginning of November, the positivity rate started rising again and rose to the highest 16.43 percent

in the last two months.

Meanwhile, a total of 2,593 Covid-19 patients have recovered in the last 24 hours.

With this, the total number of recoveries reached at 388,379 and the recovery rate at 82.33 percent.

Among the 35 dead, 23 were males. All of them died in hospitals.

One of them aged between 11 and 20 years, one between 21 and 30, five between 41- and 50, five between 51 and 60, and rest 23 above 60 years, added the release.

One each was from Rajshahi and Barishal divisions, three each were from Rangpur and Chattogram, five were from Mymensingh and 22 were

from Dhaka division.

As of yesterday noon, a total of 2,955 Covid-19 patients were undergoing treatment at general beds while 334 were at ICU beds in the Covid-19 dedicated hospitals across the country.

Of all dead so far, 5,164 -- more than 76 percent -- were males.

And a total of 3,598 or more than 53 percent were above 60 years old while 1,752 or nearly 26 percent were aged between 51 and 60 years.

So far, Dhaka division saw the highest number of casualties due to Covid-19 followed by 1,269 or nearly 19 percent from Chattogram division.

New mysterious monolith

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outside the small town of Atascadero, San Luis Obispo County, in central California.

According to local newspaper Atascadero News, the monolith was spotted on Wednesday at the top of Pine Mountain. Several people have already rushed to the site to see the mysterious structure and take photos with it.

The report said the structure appeared to be made of stainless steel,

10-feet tall and 18 inches wide and weighing about 200 pounds.

As with other monoliths sighted in recent weeks, there is no information about who installed the structure or why.

The object appeared welded together at each corner, with rivets attaching the side panels to a likely steel frame inside.

Unlike its Utah sibling, the monolith in California wasn't strongly

attached to the ground and looked like it could be easily knocked over, the local media report stated.

This is the third sighting of a monolith in less than 20 days after the first metal structure was spotted in Utah on 18 November, leading to speculations about why it was installed and by whom. Almost as mysteriously as it appeared, the structure was removed on 27 November by five men who told witnesses to "leave no trace".

বাংলাদেশ শিপিং কর্পোরেশন					
বিএসসি ভবন, সফটসোলা রোড, চট্টগ্রাম					
Website: www.bsc.gov.bd					
তারিখঃ ০২/১২/২০২০					
২য় পুনঃ নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি					
বাংলাদেশ শিপিং কর্পোরেশনের ট্যাকার জাহাজ পরিচালনার জন্য নিম্নোক্ত শূন্য পদে সরাসরি নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত যোগ্যতাসম্পন্ন বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে পুনঃ দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।					
ক্রম নং	পদের নাম	পদ সংখ্যা	২৫/০৩/২০২০ তারিখে বয়স	বেসনম্বর (বিএসসি/বেসনম্বর-২০১৫ অনুযায়ী)	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা
০১	মহাবাহুস্থাপক (জাহাজ মেয়ামত)	০১টি	৪৫	৬৪০০০-৬৬৫৬০-৬৯২৩০-৯২০০০-৯৪৮৮০/-	প্রথম শ্রেণীর কম্পিউটার সার্টিফিকেট (ডেভ/মোটর) এবং উক্ত সার্টিফিকেট গ্রাডির পর সমুদ্রগামী জাহাজে ০৫ বৎসরের অভিজ্ঞতা। অথবা বিএসসি ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ডিগ্রী (মেকানিক্যাল/ইলেকট্রিক্যাল/নৌকাল আর্কিটেকচার) সহ ১২ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা।
০২	মহাবাহুস্থাপক (ডিপ্লি এন্ড সিএসও)	০১টি	৪৫	৬৪০০০-৬৬৫৬০-৬৯২৩০-৯২০০০-৯৪৮৮০/-	প্রথম শ্রেণীর ইঞ্জিনিয়ার অফিসার অথবা প্রথম শ্রেণীর ডেক অফিসার (মাস্টার মেরিনার) এবং সমুদ্রগামী জাহাজে মাস্টার/প্রধান প্রকৌশলী হিসেবে ০৫ বৎসরের বাতর অভিজ্ঞতা।
০৩	মহাবাহুস্থাপক (গোকার্পণ)	০১টি	৪৫	৬৪০০০-৬৬৫৬০-৬৯২৩০-৯২০০০-৯৪৮৮০/-	প্রথম শ্রেণীর কম্পিউটার সার্টিফিকেট (মোটর) এবং উক্ত সার্টিফিকেট গ্রাডির পর সমুদ্রগামী জাহাজে ০৩ বছরের ও অধিক ০৩ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা। অথবা বিএসসি ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ডিগ্রী (মেকানিক্যাল/ইলেকট্রিক্যাল/নৌকাল আর্কিটেকচার/ইলেকট্রিক্যাল) সহ ১২ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা।
০৪	মহাবাহুস্থাপক (কার্গো সুপারভিশন এন্ড অপারেশন/চার্জিং)	০১টি	৪৫	৬৪০০০-৬৬৫৬০-৬৯২৩০-৯২০০০-৯৪৮৮০/-	প্রথম শ্রেণীর কম্পিউটার (ডেক) সার্টিফিকেট এবং উক্ত সার্টিফিকেট গ্রাডির পর সমুদ্রগামী জাহাজে ০৫ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা। অথবা দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণীর সহায়ক দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণীর স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রী এবং সফটওয়্যার ১২ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা।
০৫	আবেদনকারীকে সরকার কর্তৃক চাকুরীর নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফর্ম পূরণ করে আগামী ৩১/১২/২০২০ তারিখের মধ্যে সচিব, বাংলাদেশ শিপিং কর্পোরেশন, বিএসসি ভবন, সফটসোলা রোড, চট্টগ্রাম-এর বরাবরে হার্ডকপি এবং সফটকপি (সফটকপি) scyb@bsc.gov.bd (cc to md@bsc.gov.bd) ই-মেইলে পৌঁছাতে হবে। অসম্পূর্ণ/ক্রটিপূর্ণ আবেদনপত্র বা নির্ধারিত তারিখে/সময়ের পর কোন আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না। বামের উপর পদের নাম উল্লেখ করতে হবে। নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফর্মটি জনশ্রবণ মন্ত্রণালয়ের ওয়েবসাইটে এবং বিএসসি ওয়েবসাইটে www.bsc.gov.bd তে পাওয়া যাবে;				
০৬	আবেদনপত্রের সাথে যে সকল কাগজপত্র সংযুক্ত করতে হবে				
(ক) সকল শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার সার্টিফিকেটের সত্যায়িত কপি; (খ) প্রথম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত চারিত্রিক সন্দেহপত্র সত্যায়িত কপি; (গ) স্থায়ী ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ/পৌরসভার চেয়ারম্যান/ওয়ার্ড কাউন্সিলর কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত নাগরিকত্ব সন্দেহপত্র ও জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি; (ঘ) সশ্রী সশ্রী ০৪ (চার) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের সত্যায়িত রঙিন ছবি; (ঙ) অভিজ্ঞতা সন্দেহপত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি; (চ) বাংলাদেশ শিপিং কর্পোরেশন, চট্টগ্রাম এর অনুকূলে ৩৫০০/- (তিন হাজার পাঁচশত) টাকার (অফেরতসেবা) পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট; (ছ) সিভিল এর সত্যায়িত কপি; (জ) সিভিল ক্লাস-১ এর সত্যায়িত কপি;					
০৭	মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় সব ধরনের সন্দেহপত্র মুকুপিত প্রদর্শন করতে হবে;				
০৮	প্রার্থীদেরকে লিখিত ও মৌখিক পরীক্ষার অংশগ্রহণ করতে হবে। নির্ধারিত পরীক্ষার (লিখিত ও মৌখিক/সাক্ষাতকার) অংশগ্রহণের জন্য প্রার্থীদেরকে কোন প্রকার ডি/ডি/অর্থ প্রদান করা হবে না।				
০৯	কর্তৃপক্ষ সরকারি বিধি-বিধানের সাথে সাংঘর্ষিক নয় এমনভাবে কোন শর্ত পরিবর্তন বা অতিরিক্ত শর্ত সংযোজন করতে পারবেন। আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ, বাছাই এবং নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে কোন কারণ দর্শালে ব্যক্তিকে বাংলাদেশ শিপিং কর্পোরেশন কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে। এ নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি আবেদন/সম্পূর্ণ পরিবর্তন/বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করে;				
১০	কোন তথ্য গোপন করে বা ভুল তথ্য প্রদান করে চাকুরীতে নিয়োগপ্রাপ্ত হলে কোন কারণ দর্শালে ব্যক্তিকে সফটওয়্যার প্রার্থীর নিয়োগপত্র বাতিল করা হবে এবং তার বিরুদ্ধে আইনানুসারে ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে;				
১১	প্রার্থীর যোগাযোগের ঠিকানা সফটকপি ২০ (বিশ) টাকার মোবাইল ডাকসিমেটিক ৯"৪" সাইজের ফেরত খাম আবেদনপত্রের সাথে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে;				
১২	চাকুরীরত প্রার্থীকে অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে; কোন অগ্রিম কপি গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না এবং হাতে হাতে কোন আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না;				
১৩	উল্লিখিত পদে ইতোপূর্বে যে সমস্ত প্রার্থীকে আবেদন করেছেন তাদের পুনরায় আবেদন করার প্রয়োজন নেই;				
১৪	একজন প্রার্থী কেবলমাত্র একটি বিভাগ/পদের জন্য আবেদন করতে পারবেন;				
১৫	নিয়োগের জন্য বাছাইকৃত ব্যক্তি/প্রার্থীকে ০২ (দুই) বছরের জন্য শিক্ষানবিস থাকতে হবে;				
১৬	বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে পদের সংখ্যা/হ্রাস বৃদ্ধি বা বাতিল/প্রত্যাহারের অধিকার কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করেন;				
১৭	নিয়োগ সক্রান্ত যে কোন বিষয়ে কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্ত চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।				

They're also

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Khan Menon, president of Workers Party, told the briefing.

"All democratic and patriotic forces will have to be united to resist these fundamentalists," he added.

The press conference was held to affirm the party's stance against the recent ongoing movement of some Islamist outfits

including Hefajat-e-Islam, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis and Islami Andolan Bangladesh against sculptures.

In recent times, Hefajat top leaders including its newly-elected amir (chief) Junayed Babunagari and joint secretary general Mamunul Haque have been staging showdowns against

the government's move to construct a sculpture of the Father of the Nation in the capital.

In yesterday's press briefing, Menon called upon the government to handle fundamentalists with an iron hand. He said Islamist outfits are trying to turn "Bangladesh into another Pakistan".

Fazle Hossain Badsha, general secretary of the party and also a lawmaker, criticised the government for its "soft stance" against those who were opposing Bangabandhu's sculpture.

"This strategy of the government will not bring any good result," he said.

Workers Party leaders called upon the ruling Awami League to make the AL-led 14-party alliance more active and stronger to tackle Hefajat and other Islamist outfits politically.

About Babunagari and Mamunul, they said through speaking against Bangabandhu and the constitution, those two have violated the constitution.

They also said they were shocked that Babunagari and Mamunul were yet to be arrested.

At the event, party leaders also raised questions about the logic of banning political programmes in the capital without prior permission.

Moscow vaccination centres

FROM PAGE 12

People in Moscow will be able to register for the jab online from today, Sobyanin said in a statement on his website.

Russia, which has resisted imposing stringent lockdown measures, reported a record 28,145 new infections earlier yesterday, including 7,750 in Moscow.

The virus has killed at least 1,495,205 people worldwide since the outbreak emerged in China last

December, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP yesterday.

The United States is the worst-affected country with 273,847 deaths from 13,925,350 cases.

US deaths from the pandemic have surged past 2,000 for two days in a row as the most dangerous season of the year approached, taxing an overwhelmed healthcare system with US political leadership in disarray.

Madhu's bust in DU

FROM PAGE 12

Contacted, DU Proctor Prof AKM Golam Rabbani told The Daily Star that it could not be known yet whether the incident was intentional or unintentional. The people concerned have been asked to probe the incident, he added.

The sculpture was first inaugurated by then DU VC Prof Emajuddin Ahmed in 1995. After the reconstruction of the sculpture in its present location, it was opened in 2001 by then VC AK Azad Chowdhury.

Its sculptor was Toufiq Hosien Khan.

Charges pressed

FROM PAGE 1

In the charge sheet, the police stated that the victim and her husband were forcefully taken into the hostel by the accused while the couple came to the college area to travel that evening.

Later the accused asked for Tk 50,000 as ransom and being denied, they raped the victim after tying her husband, snatched her gold jewellery and mugged Tk 2,000.

Victim's husband filed a case with Shahporan Police Station that night accusing six named and three to four unnamed.

Police later arrested all six named accused along with two others and these eight are accused in the charge sheet.

Earlier, all eight accused confessed their crimes before the court under section 164 of penal code.

On November 30, the DNA reports of the accused were sent to the investigation officer via the Sylhet court where their involvement was proved.

Meanwhile, the police that night recovered several arms from a hostel room which was occupied by the prime accused Saifur Rahman. A case was filed accusing Saifur Rahman by police that night.

In the arms case, police also pressed

charge sheet to the court along with gang-rape case charge sheet.

The investigation officer Indranil Bhattacharya accused Saifur Rahman and Shah Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman Rony in the charge sheet.

Meanwhile, three probe bodies -- one judicial probe body, one of education ministry and another of the college -- were formed and all of them submitted their reports to the authorities.

Moreover, National University suspended studentship of Saifur, Shah Mahbubur Rahman Rony, Mahfuzur Rahman Masum and Rabiul Hasan and cancelled their certificate.

The MC College authorities also suspended them from the college.

All eight accused are Bangladesh Chhtra League (BCL) activists, but were not in any posts as there are no BCL committees at the college, Sylhet city and district.

They all are member of one fraction of BCL that follows Advocate Ranjit Sarker, former youth and sports affairs secretary of Sylhet district Awami League.

Ranjit Sarker, however, earlier denied of having any fraction of BCL under his influence and demanded justice for the accused.

Bhutto threatens

FROM PAGE 12

five-day working tour of the coastal areas and the Sundarbans. The prime minister has seen for himself the coastal embankments for the conservation of forest resources of the area during his tour. He is also learnt to have had extensive discussions with the local leaders and people about the problems of the coastal areas and the ways and means for their solution. The prime minister also issues an order during his trip to the relevant authorities to expedite the survey work of unexplored islands in the Bay of Bengal, including Manpara in Barisal district.

AUSTRIAN ENVOY CALLS ON BANGABANDHU

Austrian Ambassador Dr Saller, accompanied by Otto Santer, Austrian expert on tourism, calls on Bangabandhu at the Gono Bhavan today. The Austrian Ambassador says they will visit some tourist spots in Bangladesh and prepare a survey report to see what Austria can do for the development of tourism in Bangladesh.

BANGLADESH TEAM VISITS FARAKKA

A five-member team of Bangladesh experts led by BM Abbas, adviser to the Bangladesh prime minister and chairman of Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission, visits Farakka today.

After visiting the Farakka project, the team will proceed to Patna and from there will go by a special plane to see the Kosi Barrage and other river protection works in that area. After these visits the team will go to Delhi for the third meeting of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission to be held from December 11 to 13. SOURCES: December 5, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

1,036km to pave

FROM PAGE 12

According to the authorities concerned, the initiative comes as a response to insurgent activities and smuggling along a 20-kilometre stretch of unguarded hilly border with Myanmar in the southeast, which has become a safe haven for insurgents and weapons smugglers.

The region adjacent to this vulnerable stretch of border falls mostly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts district of Bandarban, where thick vegetation and dense forests make it virtually impossible for law enforcers and border guards to navigate and is therefore completely unguarded.

The border will run along the three hill districts of Bandarban, Khagrachhari and Rangamati to strengthen border surveillance and check the activities of insurgent groups.

Local law enforcers said these groups smuggle in arms from insurgents active in India's eastern states, also known as the Seven Sisters, and Myanmar through the largely unguarded hilly borders with India's Mizoram and Myanmar's Chin states.

Of late, an armed group called the Marma Liberation Party has been active in these border areas, they said.

"The Marma Liberation Party has been active in Bandarban border for the last three years. Sometimes it is tough to reach remote areas," Superintendent of Rangamati Police Alamgir Kabir told The Daily Star.

According to officials of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, several hundred armed youths are operating in the rugged hills for four factions of two well-known organisations -- Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS Santu Lama faction), PCJSS (MN Lama faction), United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and UPDF (democratic).

Mathew (not his real name) is a case in point. He joined the PCJSS in 2013 but now realises that he is on the wrong path and wants to return to normal life.

He shared his story of joining the force.

Mathew went to attend a PCJSS discussion with his friend and joined, being motivated by the speeches of the leaders.

He was moved to a border area for training and can now operate heavy guns.

He received a monthly salary of just Tk 500 and was tasked for collecting extortion money.

"If there was any big operation, only then was I assigned to go," he said in an anxious tone.

Mathew said the groups have weapons like machine guns, self-loading rifles, M16, AK-47s, AK-22s, AK-56s and even rocket-propelled grenades.

No one, however, could estimate the number of illegal firearms the groups have in their arsenal.

"Once the border road is constructed, the trespasses will stop and the illegal arms trading too," SP Kabir said.

UN envoy says 20,000 foreign forces in Libya

AFP, Tripoli

Twenty thousand foreign forces and mercenaries are in Libya despite a ceasefire and long-standing arms embargo, the UN envoy said Wednesday, calling the situation a "shocking violation of Libyan sovereignty".