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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE YOUTH SHOUT

BB CYBER HEIST

Filipino justice secretary orders probe against himself

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REASON SHE LOST

Hillary Clinton claims FBI chief, Putin cost her US presidential election

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URBAN POOR

Caught in cycle of misfortune, debt, neglect

BISHAKHA DEVNATH

Rokeya Begum's family lived off paddy farming in Bajitpur upazila of Kishoreganj. Three years ago, adverse weather damaged their crops, leaving them with nothing to subsist on.

Looking for a living, she came to Dhaka with her husband, Raihan Uddin, and elder son. But before they could start anew at a slum in the capital's Meradia, Raihan fell sick and was diagnosed with TB. Bedridden, he shelved his plan for setting up a tea stall.

Rokeya began working as a maid, but the income was too little even to pay for food and the one-room house they rented. She was worried sick thinking how she would buy Raihan's medicines and repay the Tk 35,000 microloan they took to farm their land.

So she borrowed money from better-off people at the slum at 100-120 percent interest rate to buy food and medicines for Raihan. Back in the village, her in-laws took care of the microloan and her two other children.

"That's our fate.... When one lender pesters us, we borrow from another to pay him back," says Rokeya sitting in a 10-feet-by-10-feet room in the slum as she explains why she has not yet made it out of the cycle of debt.

Her story reflects the misery of many slum dwellers who come to cities looking to leave behind the hardship because of social and economical shocks or environmental consequences.

They do find a place into the world of flashing lights and busy streets, but their lives don't get any easier because of the high living cost and the absence of basic social and government protection.

Of the yearly influx of urban migrants, five to seven lakh people come to the capital, according to Unicef.

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Slum dwellers live in an unhealthy environment without basic government services like water and electricity supply, primary healthcare and education. They are largely ignored because of the mindset that ensuring their rights would encourage urban migration. The photo was taken at a slum in Mohammadpur area recently.

ARTICLE 19 TOP! QUOTE

"Brutal attacks on journalists and online activists, and the use of unfair laws and criminal defamation provisions which clearly violate international standards, continued to stifle free speech."

UK-BASED RIGHTS ORGANISATION **ARTICLE 19** SAID ABOUT THE STATE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN BANGLADESH IN 2016.

Humiliated, RMG worker kills herself

Police detain four

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A garment worker allegedly committed suicide after she was humiliated over an allegation of illicit affair with a neighbour.

The victim was even asked to pay Tk 50,000 to one of the culprits to save her honour, alleged her younger sister.

On Tuesday evening, the body of Mousumi Akhter, 22, of Faridpur's Boalmari upazila, was found hanging from a ceiling fan at her rented home at Sharokunjuo in the capital's Hazaribagh Beribadh. She had been working at W Apparels in the area since January this year.

Police arrested four people, including the caretaker of the house and his wife, on charges of provoking the girl to take her own life.

The four are caretaker Liton, 38, his wife Rokhsana Begum, 30, Ijazul Islam, 21, and Kamal Hawladar, 22.

Mousumi, along with her younger sister Sumi Akhter, rented a room on the ground floor of the three-storey building around a month ago.

On the same floor, rooms have also been rented out to bachelors.

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ADB focuses on water worries

Plans to double assistance in projects

REAZ AHMAD *from Yokohama, Japan*

Keeping the looming water scarcity in mind, the Asian Development Bank has nearly doubled its allocation for water sector projects across Asia to $4.2 billion this year, up from an average yearly funding of $2.4 billion in the last six years.

In a welcome departure from a low-level annual funding of less than half a billion dollars in irrigation and drainage, the ADB decided to more than triple its funding in irrigation to $1.5 billion in 2017, placing high importance on crucial needs of the farm sector in the largely agrarian Asian economies.

The ADB's Deputy Director General Amy Leung said this at a media briefing at the Pacifico Yokohama, one of Japan's largest convention facilities, yesterday ahead of the beginning of the Bank's golden jubilee celebration and annual meeting in Yokohama today.

Leung said 3.4 billion people would be water-stressed in Asia by 2050 as projected demands for water would increase by 55 percent from now, food by 50 percent and energy by 66 percent.

How big a slice of pie Bangladesh can expect from this larger financing for water and irrigation sectors? Though Leung had no ready answer, she said Bangladesh is crucial as far as growing water needs are concerned.

Later in the day, ADB officials from its headquarters in

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NEWS ANALYSIS

ASSURANCE ON SECTION 57

Not holding out much hope

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Law Minister Anisul Huq's assurance of removing section 57 of the ICT Act, a threat to free speech, does not offer much comfort to media professionals and free thinkers.

It is because the same provision is going to return in the proposed Digital Security Act approved by the cabinet last August.

According to section 57, if any person deliberately publishes any material in electronic form that causes deterioration of law and order, prejudices the image of the State or a person or causes to hurt religious belief, the offender faces jail term for a maximum of 14 years.

Legal experts have unequivocally been saying section 57 goes against the people's right to freedom of expression and free speech. Vague wordings in the section can easily be used and misused against newsmen and social media users and would

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For one taka

Street children given meal, education

MD AMINUL ISLAM *with* ANDREW EAGLE

There's a difference between buying and begging: one taka. Opposite the Mymensingh railway station every afternoon up to eighty street children gather, each proudly presenting a solitary taka to buy their lunch. Since 11 December 2016 the 'Reading for Food' project run by NGO Biydanondo Foundation has combined free education with a basic meal. With two sites in Mymensingh town, with the second one on Zilla School Road, a total of over one hundred street children benefit each day.

"My children Niloy and Sejuti Das are both primary level," says Dipali Rani Das, a widow who lost her husband two years ago. "The free education and meal they receive from the foundation helps us a lot."

"The lessons here are delivered with love and kindness," says another student's mother, Rupali Saker. "It leaves the children happy."

Tamana, Apu, Rakib, Konika and Smriti all study informally through 'Reading for Food.' Their enthusiasm for both classes and the one-taka meal is unanimous.

"One taka is charged per meal to ensure the children understand that they are not begging," says Umme Kulsum Shipra, a voluntary teacher of the organisation who is also an assistant teacher at Progressive Model School in the town. "Like our other teachers, I joined this programme to support the education of street children."

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PHOTO: AMINUL ISLAM

Street children studying near Mymensingh Railway Station. They get free education and a meal for Tk 1.

FISH FRY NOT SPARED

The ban on catching fish in the haors was lifted last week after fish, livestock and birds started dying in the water bodies. Taking advantage of this, fishermen are catching whatever they can, including fish fry. Fry of snakehead fish were up for sale at Tk 350 a kg yesterday at a kitchen market in Sylhet.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Some officials giving govt bad advice

Says chief justice

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha yesterday said some over enthusiastic officials and employees were acting against the interest of the government by giving it bad advice.

They are making recommendations that go against the rule of law, he said while addressing a reception programme organised by Joypurhat Bar Association at its auditorium.

The Supreme Court is the guardian of the constitution and the chief justice is the head of the judiciary, he said, adding that misunderstanding could be largely removed through a dialogue between the head of the government, president and chief justice.

Joypurhat Bar Association President Nripendranath Mondal, its Secretary Md Shahin Alam

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