



A man pulls a rickshaw-van covered with a mosquito net, while another lies inside it as part a campaign to promote the use of the nets while sleeping to avoid mosquito bites. The Dhaka South City Corporation organised the campaign to raise awareness about chikungunya. The photo was taken in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Homeless people

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to their houses as they are vulnerable to landslides,” Satya Brata Saha told The Daily Star.

Asked, he said the report would be submitted “soon”.

Md Reaz Ahmed, director general of Department of Disaster Management, however, said the committee would submit its report in couple of weeks and they would go for the permanent rehabilitation of the victims on receiving it.

“We will not only rehabilitate them but will also prepare a comprehensive policy about preventing landslides in the hills. Besides, we will hold a major workshop on the matter and take opinions of all stakeholders,” said Reaz.

About the emergency response of the government, he said Tk 1.6 crore and 600 tonnes of rice were distributed among the victims immediately after the landslides.

Many development partners were showing interests in building houses for the victims. UNDP alone wanted to construct 1,500 houses for them, he said, adding that the government recons to include development partners in the initiative.

According to the ministry of disaster management, landslides have emerged as a major hazard.

Eighteen percent of the total area of Bangladesh is covered by hills. Human settlements and activities on the hill slopes make landslides lethal, a report of the ministry said.

Contacted, Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Manzurul

Mannan said they were still undecided about the rehabilitation plan.

“We are thinking about building different small villages to rehabilitate the victims. But we are not sure where they would be,” he said, adding that they were waiting for a government policy or decision to this end.

Prof ASM Maksud Kamal, chairman of Disaster Science and Management at Dhaka University, said their study identified the main reasons behind landslides as torrential rains, setting up of “risky” houses, roads and tube wells, cutting of trees and destruction of the ecological balance of the areas.

He said if certain natural characteristics of hills were harmed, they would “behave differently”. “The recent landslide was one of such behavior,” he told The Daily Star.

Settlers did not know how to use the hills. By doing different kinds of cultivations, the people from mainland made the hills vulnerable to disasters, he said.

The DU professor also said to make safe living in the hills, the law to this end must be implemented and punishments for violations also would have to be increased.

Prof Kamal said a total assessment from different perspectives must be done now to prepare plans for the future.

He also suggested community-based early warnings, which were piloted in Chittagong and Cox’s Bazar’s Teknaf under a comprehensive disaster management programme,

should also be launched in the hilly areas.

Bangladesh

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competition for the first time, secured 110th position.

Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, chairman of Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad Committee, said: “I am delighted to learn about the excellent performance of our team in the 58th IMO.”

“Achieving 26th position among 111 countries, beating all other countries in South Asia, is laudable. Two of our contestants got silver medals, missing the gold by only 1 and 2 points,” he told The Daily Star.

“Two of the problem sets in this year’s IMO have been among the most difficult sets in recent years, and none of the contestants from any team could solve those completely. I am happy to see all the six members of our team perform well. This reflects the overall balanced team structure. I congratulate all the members of the team.”

Curtain will fall on this year’s IMO with distribution of medals midnight tonight (Bangladesh time). The next year’s event will be held in Romania.

Bangladesh Mathematical Olympiad Committee had picked the six participants though *Gonit Utsab* held across the country. The event was conducted by daily Prothom Alo and patronised by Dutch-Bangla Bank.

Fear grows

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The measures have included the installation of metal detectors at entrances to the site, which Palestinians reject since they view the move as Israel asserting further control over it.

Erdogan, who said he was speaking in his capacity as the current chairman of the summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, called the restrictions “unacceptable”.

“I urge the international community to immediately take action to remove practices that restrict freedom of worship at Haram al-Sharif,” he said.

Israel says the July 14 attackers smuggled guns into the holy site and emerged from it to shoot the police.

Friday’s main weekly Muslim prayers -- which draw thousands to Al-Aqsa -- brought the situation to a boil.

In anticipation of protests, Israel barred men under 50 from entering the Old City for prayers, stoking further Palestinian anger.

Clashes broke out between Israeli security forces and Palestinians around the Old City, in other parts of annexed east Jerusalem, in the occupied West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Three Palestinians aged between 17 and 20 were shot dead. The Palestinian Red Crescent reported 450 people wounded in Jerusalem and the West Bank, including 170 from live or rubber bullets.

In the evening, a Palestinian broke into a home in a Jewish settlement in the West Bank during a Sabbath dinner and stabbed four Israelis, killing three of them.

The 19-year-old Palestinian was shot by a neighbour, an off-duty soldier, and was taken to hospital.

The Israeli army said he had spoken of the Jerusalem holy site and of dying as a martyr in a Facebook post.

The Israelis killed in Neve Tsuf, north of Ramallah and also known as Halamish, were a grandfather and two of his children, an Israeli military official said. The grandmother was wounded.

Israeli soldiers raided the Palestinian’s nearby village of Kobar overnight and arrested his brother, an army spokeswoman said.

Preparations were also being made to demolish the attacker’s home, a measure Israel regularly employs because it views it as a deterrent, although human rights groups say it amounts to collective punishment.

Amid mounting pressure to respond to the dispute over the mosque compound, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas announced late Friday he was freeing contacts with Israel.

There was no immediate public reaction from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

It's not aliens

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“However, many people were more interested in the signals as potential proof of transmissions from an extra-terrestrial intelligent civilization,” wrote Abel Mendez, director of the Planetary Habitability Laboratory at the University of Puerto Rico at Arecibo in a blog post Friday, revealing the true nature of the signals.

After further fueling speculation by summoning the world experts in the hunt for life elsewhere in the universe -- The SETI Berkeley Research Center at the University of California -- the team issued its conclusion.

“We are now confident about the source of the Weird! Signal,” Mendez wrote.

“The best explanation is that the signals are transmissions from one or more geostationary satellites.”

The signals only appeared around Ross 128 because it is located “close to the celestial equator where many geostationary satellites are placed,” Mendez added.

He also released the results of an informal survey that he had posted on his website, asking people to weigh in on what they thought the source of the signals was, and whether or not they were scientists well versed in the matter.

“Nearly 800 people participated in this informal survey (including more than 60 astronomers),” he wrote.

The whole group’s consensus was that the signals were most likely coming from some story of stellar activity, or some kind of astronomical phenomenon.

Country

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would be designated for heavy vehicles like trucks. As a result, traffic congestion would reduce.

Similar digital booths would be introduced at all toll plazas across the country in phases, the minister added.

Quader, also the Awami League general secretary, said BNP was making the country’s political environment “poisonous” through provocative comments.

On brink of losing lights

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by objects thrown by the demonstrators.

However, Dhaka’s police chief Asaduzzaman Mia yesterday said they will take action after investigating how the student was injured.

A video clip available on social media shows that a scuffle broke out as police tried to snatch away a banner from the protesters. Siddiqu was standing aside. As he ran to the front, a policeman fired teargas and he fell down.

Talking to The Daily Star, Dr Iftekhar said a five-member medical board has initiated the treatment of Siddiqu. “His one eye has been surgically repaired and the other washed.”

But he would need treatment for a prolonged period, said Dr Iftekhar, who is a member of the medical board.

“Some contents of sclera (white part) of Siddiqu’s right eye had come out and we fixed that today [yesterday]. The structure inside his left eye was disorganised,” he said, adding they washed out the blood in the left eye.

The physician added Siddiqu got a “blunt” injury in his eyes which were hit by some thick and heavy objects. His eyes and face were swollen due to the injury.

Asked how much hope he holds for Siddiqu’s eyesight, he said, “[Those are] severely traumatised eyes. How much of it [eyesight] will be back we don’t know.”

Asked whether Siddiqu needs to be taken abroad for better treatment, Iftekhar said the medical board will decide the next course of treatment, adding that they are making the highest possible effort.

FAMILY APPEALS FOR HELP

Member of a poor family of Tarakanda in Mymensingh, Siddiqu lost his father at only three. His elder brother Nayeb Ali left studies after HSC exams to support the family.

Nayeb, a labourer who offloads iron rods from trucks and carries those to warehouse, pins high hopes on his brother. He believes with Siddiqu graduating soon, the family would see better days.

“We had to sell our last piece of land for the education of Siddiqu,” said his mother Solema Khatun while talking with reporters at the NIO.

The sixty-year-old now only sees dark days ahead.

“We are very poor and we have no place to go. I urge our prime minister to be kind enough to help Siddiqu...” Solema Khatun appeals for her son as tears welled up in her eyes.

Siddiqu used to live at a rented room in Khilkhet and bear his expenses by private tutoring.

His friends are trying to collect funds for his treatment.

“We are trying our best to help our friend, but it is not enough ...” said Shah Ali, a student at Titumir.

'CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS'

Terming the statements over the eye injuries of Siddiqu “contradictory”, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia yesterday said, “Police claimed the college student might have been hurt by a heavy object hurled by his fellows when law enforcers tried to disperse them by firing teargas canisters. On the other hand, the students alleged that Siddiqu was wounded by a teargas shell.

“We will take proper actions after investigating the incident.”

Law enforcers lobbed teargas shells after they failed to persuade the agitating students to leave Shahbagh intersection, Asaduzzaman said. “Police only took action when the student attempted to vandalise vehicles.”

After the incident, Shahbagh police filed a case against around 1,200 unnamed students of the seven government colleges on charges of attempting to kill policemen, rioting with lethal weapons and damaging property.

Witnesses and students say the allegations are false. Some onlookers, who witnessed the protest at Shahbagh, saw no brick chips or sticks, let alone any arms, in the hands of the protesters.

The other charges include obstructing police from discharging duties and holding unlawful assembly.

Meanwhile, the students of the seven colleges held protest rallies on their campuses and in Nilkhet and the Jatiya Press Club areas.

They demanded action against the policeman who was seen firing a teargas shell at close range, injuring Siddiqu.

They also issued an ultimatum to the authorities to meet their demands by July 25. Otherwise, they will go on a tougher movement from a July 26 rally in the capital.

The students demand withdrawal of the case against the students, punishment of the law enforcers involved in excesses and proper treatment and rehabilitation of Siddiqu.

Following the protests on Thursday, the authorities of the colleges -- Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Begum Badrunnesa Government Mohila College, Mirpur Government Bangla College and Government Titumir College -- announced the exam schedules.

The colleges became affiliated with Dhaka University on February 16.

Meanwhile at a press conference, the BNP condemned filing of the attempt-to-murder case against the demonstrating students and demanded the government withdraw it immediately.

Early marriage even earlier

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marriage restraint act passed by parliament in February allows parents to marry off their children earlier by obtaining a court order.

The recent BBS survey collected data from 2.2 lakh households across the country.

Of the eight divisions, Sylhet has the highest average marriage age for both men (26.6 years) and women (20.4 years). Women in Rangpur and men in Rajshahi are getting married the earliest, at 17.9 and 24.5 years.

There are districts where girls are married as young as 16.3 to 17.5 years. They include Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogra, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj, Sirajganj, Tangail, Sherpur, Chuadanga, Magura, Narail, Gopalganj, Madaripur, Khagrachhari, and Patuakhali.

AKM Ashraful Haque, director of the BBS project that keeps track of vital statistics, told The Daily Star that their report showed various trends but he could not tell why women were getting married sooner.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad President Ayesha Khanam said poverty and social security concerns played a vital role in making parents marry off their daughters at an early age.

Ayesha also stressed that the law, having a provision for underage marriage in “special circumstances”, sent a wrong message to the society.

Aminul Haque, chairman of Dhaka University’s Department of Population Sciences, said any drop in women’s average marriage age was alarming. Social insecurity, job insecurity, and young people’s growing exposure to social media were affecting the age of marriage, he said.

Population scientist AKM Nurun Nabi also called the phenomenon alarming, especially since efforts had been made to raise awareness against early marriage. “We can’t explain for sure the exact reason behind such regression. Poverty and social insecurity are definitely important factors.”

Plan International, an international organisation that champions the cause of preventing child marriage, identified four reasons for girls getting married young.

The reasons are: younger brides are often preferred because they are considered more obedient and respectful towards their husbands; some girls are married early because their families believe marriage will protect their daughters from sexual violence, and protect the family’s honour from the social stigma associated with having unmarried daughters at home; parents often cannot afford to keep their daughters at home while marriage provides the family with economic security; and laws that protect girls from early marriage are either not enforced or completely ignored in

many countries.

Women in Bangladesh are more likely to get married off without their consent than men. A baseline household survey conducted by another international NGO, Oxfam, found 49 percent women were married off by their parents against their will. Only four percent of men had the same experience, the survey found.

Some recent media reports shed light on young girls’ vulnerability to early marriage at a time when awareness and resistance against child marriage were growing.

On July 4, a report headlined “early marriage halted at Nandail, fake marriage registrar held at Trishal” was run by a daily. Two days later, the story of a 15-year-old rural girl, who took refuge at a local administrator’s office to escape the marriage arranged by her mother, was published in the media.

Rebecca Momin, who leads the parliamentary standing committee on women and children affairs ministry, said efforts were on to stop child marriage.

“We’ve issued letters to all districts asking prompt actions against any marriage being solemnised with underage brides,” she said.

She, however, said there were some ground realities, including poverty and social insecurity, in rural areas that force parents to get their underage daughters married off.

told The Daily Star that they came know about the “accident” over phone from one Belayat, who had a business rivalry with Jakir for a long time, thus raising suspicion about the incident.

Belayet is an inhabitant of their village Baniar Chala, located around 7km away from the spot.

Contacted, Belayet told The Daily Star that one Rashidul form Rajendrapur area informed him over the phone about the incident.

“Knowing details about the car and from a business card with a mobile phone number, I thought that the victim was Jakir. So I informed his family.”

When asked why Rashidul had called him, Belayet said he did not know and that he could not remember who Rashidul was and that he could be an acquaintance.

He, however, denied having any business rivalry with Jakir and said they had not been in touch for about eight years.

Hearing the news, police from Salna Highway Police Station and Hotapara

Police Outpost, under Joydevpur Police Station, and firemen from Shreepur Fire Station went to the spot.

Officer-in-Charge Abdul Hai of the highway police station said police from the outpost first reached the spot while Nazmul Ahsan, in-charge of the outpost, said it was the highway police who got there first.

Police could not recover the money. Jakir’s nephew Sagar also alleged that the outpost in-charge Nazmul had detained his father Nasir Uddin and his car two to three months ago and threatened to implicate him in a narcotics case.

Police released his father and the car after taking Tk 6.5 lakh in bribe and Belayet mediated the negotiations, he claimed.

Nazmul denied the allegations.

Mohammad Jihad, station officer of Shreepur Fire Station, said police had taken the victim to the hospital before firemen reached the spot. He said he overheard relatives asking about the missing money.

An accident shrouded

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vehicle hit his car near Rajendrapur National Park’s Gate No-3 around 11:00pm on Friday, his family members suspect otherwise.

“At around 8:30pm, my brother left his Uttara home with Tk 27 lakh to give the money to the garment factory owners at Baniar Chala village in Gazipur. He was driving the car. If he died in an accident, the money should have been found on him,” his brother Nasir Uddin told The Daily Star.

The family suspect that he was either killed during a robbery staged as an accident or if there really was an accident, whoever went to the scene first took the money.

Quoting locals, Abdul Hai, officer-in-charge of Salna Highway Police Station, said Jakir’s car skidded off the road and flipped over after an unknown vehicle hit it.

He was rushed to Shaheen Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College where doctors declared him dead.

The victim’s nephew, Sagar Mia,