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Lifeline for the poor

Philanthropic Pabna clinic offers free consultation, medicine to underprivileged patients

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU with ANDREW EAGLE

For the last few days Kolpona Begum from Nurpur in Pabna Sadar upazila has been suffering from high fever. She works as a cook in a student mess; the pay is meagre.

Kolpona doesn't often consult doctors because the medicine they prescribe is usually beyond her reach. But thanks to a private initiative, the Rauf Monjura Medical Centre in Singa of Pabna town, free check-ups and medication are now available to the economically least advantaged. As such, Kolpona need not suffer alone.

"The government hospital does give free treatment," she says, "but the medicine has to be bought. Often I don't take what they prescribe because it's unaffordable."

For Kolpona, the medical centre is something of a lifeline.

Like her, 50-year-old housewife Summa Khatun from Gangkola village in the same upazila also relies on the clinic. She has chronic hypertension and ulcers.

"I was here a week ago for medicine," she told The Daily Star late last month. "Today I have to re-fill my prescription. I'm really grateful that the medications are also free."

US-based practitioner Dr Md Shahed Arju had set up the clinic on 8 April last year in memory of his maternal grandfather. It aims to provide the best possible medical care to the underprivileged.

"Unless their condition is life-threatening, those who are very poor do not go to government hospitals readily," says the clinic's Director Akter Monira Begum.

"When they do go they often face discrimination and harassment. And because they do not get primary treatment serious illness can arise. Dr Shahed's plan is to develop this clinic into a 10-bed hospital with modern facilities. We have already submitted an application to the health directorate for permission to make that happen."

It's not the only provider of free healthcare in Bangladesh, she continues.

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Patients get free medications and checkups at Rauf Monjura Medical Centre in Pabna town. The private clinic has been serving the poor since last year.

PHOTO: STAR

Two held over 'gang rape' of Baul singer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

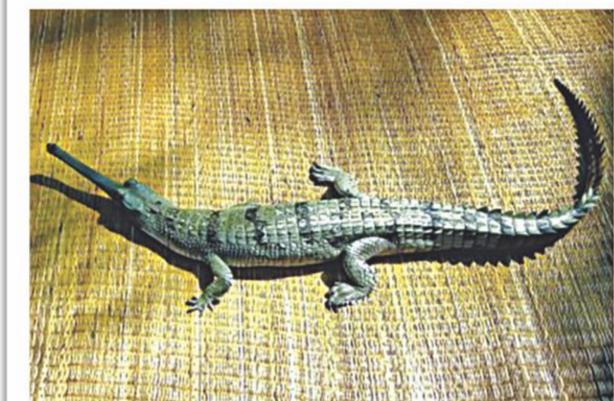
Two men were arrested yesterday in connection with the alleged gang rape of a baul singer after she was invited to a musical event in Ashulia of Savar on Wednesday.

The arrestees are Aatur, 32, and Razzak, 40, of Aukpara.

On Thursday, the 32-year-old victim, who used to take part in different musical programmes, filed the case with Ashulia Police Station against 10-12 unknown people.

According to the case statement, another female singer invited the victim, from Narayanganj, to the musical event at a rest house in Aukpara on Wednesday evening. When she went there, some 10-12 men

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First-ever move to increase Gharial population

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

For the first time, an initiative has been taken to exchange the critically endangered Gharials among the zoos to increase the species' population, according to officials.

An adult female from Rajshahi Zoo will be released today at the National Zoo in Dhaka and an adult male from the national zoo

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First consignment of Indian rice arrives

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The first consignment of rice that the government purchased from India has arrived at the Mongla Port and would begin to be unloaded tonight.

A ship carrying 4,700 tonnes of rice anchored at the Harbaiya outer anchorage on Wednesday. The ship contains 94,020 sacks of rice each weighing 50 kilograms.

Sources say the quality of the rice is satis-

factory.

Offloading of the rice would start tonight, said Assistant Controller of Movement and Storage Jahurul Islam Jahangir of the food department.

Lighter vessels would unload the rice and send it to different southwestern districts.

Another 50,000 tonnes of rice would be imported through Chittagong and Mongla ports, according to officials. Of the

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SIBL Foundation Hospital & Diagnostic Center

PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 12

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-25 12-45 4-45 6-41 8-00

JAMAAT 5-00 1-15 5-00 6-44 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Siddiqur back home, wants justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Injured Titumir college student Siddiqur Rahman wants the government to punish the policemen who would be found responsible for his eyesight loss.

"I am a victim. Personally, I have no anger against anyone. But if they [policemen] did excess, authorities should take action," he told reporters after arriving at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday afternoon.

"Sacrifice of my blood and eyes will be worthwhile if congenial educational atmosphere returns to the seven colleges [affiliated with Dhaka University]," he added.

Siddiqur, who is from a poor family in Mymensingh's Tarakanda,

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'Locked and loaded'

Trump says military options are 'in place' if North Korea 'acts unwisely'; his defence chief says war would be catastrophic; Russia warns risk of escalation 'very high'

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday turned up the heat on North Korea, warning Pyongyang that the US military is "locked and loaded" in the event of a misstep by the totalitarian state, despite mounting international calls for restraint.

Trump launched another salvo at the regime of Kim Jong-Un to keep its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs in check, as the North's official news agency accused the US of driving the situation "to the brink" of war.

The latest Twitter threat from the Republican billionaire leader came as concerns swelled worldwide that a miscalculation by either side could trigger a catastrophic conflict on the Korean peninsula.

"Military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely. Hopefully Kim Jong Un will find another path!" Trump wrote from his golf club retreat in New Jersey, where he

is spending two weeks.

The official KCNA news service countered in an editorial that "Trump is driving the situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war," calling the US "the mastermind of nuclear threat, the heinous nuclear war fanatic."

Earlier yesterday, China -- Pyongyang's main diplomatic ally -- had urged Trump and Kim to tone down the sabre-rattling.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang called on both sides to avoid "going down the old path of alternately showing strength and continuously escalating the situation."

"We call on the relevant parties to be cautious with their words and actions, and contribute more toward easing tensions and enhancing mutual trust," Geng said in a statement.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow was "very alarmed" at Trump's tough talk, saying Washington should take

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Titumir college student Siddiqur Rahman, in shades, arrives at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport from India around 3:10pm yesterday. After surgery there, he still cannot see with his right eye and can perceive only little light with the left. Inset, protesters outside the airport.

PHOTO: STAR

চট্টগ্রাম নগরীর মানুষকে জলাবদ্ধতার দুর্ভোগ থেকে বাঁচাতে এ যাবৎ কালের সবচেয়ে বড় প্রকল্প-

আন্তরিক ধন্যবাদ ও কৃতজ্ঞতা

চট্টগ্রাম শহরের জলাবদ্ধতা নিয়ন্ত্রণকল্পে খাল পুনঃখনন, সম্প্রসারণ, সংস্কার ও উন্নয়ন

শীর্ষক প্রকল্পের অনুমোদন দেয়ায় চট্টগ্রামের পরম বন্ধু গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা কে চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন ও চট্টগ্রামের আপামর জনসাধারণের পক্ষ হতে জানাচ্ছি আন্তরিক ধন্যবাদ ও কৃতজ্ঞতা।

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