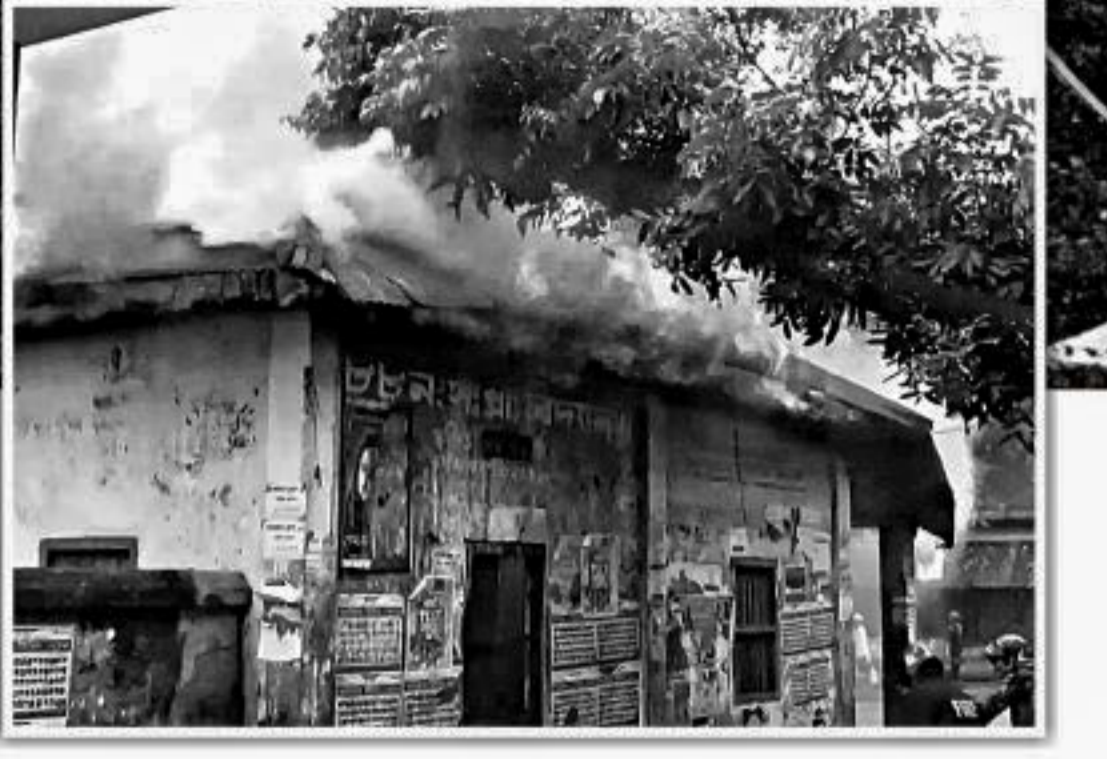




Charred furniture inside a classroom of a primary school in Manikganj after it caught fire yesterday. Inset, firefighters try to douse the blaze that engulfed another school, on the same building. All the classrooms of the two schools were gutted in the mysterious fire.

PHOTO: STAR



## Mice born

FROM PAGE 16

All these offspring were normal, lived to adulthood, and were able to give birth to offspring of their own.

The study, published in scientific journal Cell Stem Cell, examined why same-sex mammals are not typically able to reproduce, suggesting stem cells and targeted gene editing can make the process easier.

"We were interested in the question of why mammals can only undergo sexual reproduction," the study's co-senior author Dr Qi Zhou said.

"We have made several findings in the past by combining reproduction and regeneration, so we tried to find out whether more normal mice with two female parents, or even mice with two male parents, could be produced using haploid embryonic stem cells with gene deletions."

While some species of reptiles, amphibians and fish can change gender in order to reproduce or exist as both male and female at the same time, same-sex reproduction for mammals is a more difficult proposition, Dr Zhou said.

He said in mammals, certain maternal or paternal genes are shut off during the development of sperm and egg cells, meaning offspring that do not receive genetic material from both a mother and father might experience developmental abnormalities.

By deleting imprinted genes from immature eggs, researchers have in the past been able to produce mice with two mothers, although most still displayed genetic defects.

To produce healthy bi-maternal mice, Dr Zhou, his co-senior authors Dr Baoyang Hu and Dr Wei Li, and their colleagues used haploid embryonic stem cells (ESCs), containing half the normal number of chromosomes and DNA from each parent.

"We found in this study that haploid ESCs were more similar to primordial germ cells, the precursors of eggs and sperm," Dr Hu said. "The genomic imprinting that's found in gametes was 'erased'."

Alongside the 29 healthy mice produced by same-sex female parents, a dozen mice were also born to two male parents during the course of the study.

However, the process of creating mice from same-sex male parents, which involves modifying a larger amount of genes and inserting fertilised embryos into surrogate mothers, is more complicated.

All offspring from two males born during the study died after less than 48 hours, although scientists believe they can improve the process in future tests.

## Heavy rain

FROM PAGE 16

the depression is over. Present low temperature is no way related to winter," he told The Daily Star.

According to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre of Bangladesh (FFWC), all the major river systems of the country were in a rising trend, except the Brahmaputra-Jamuna.

"However, the rivers are flowing below their respective danger levels," said FFWC Executive Engineer Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan.

The severe cyclonic storm "Titli", which made a landfall in Odisha on Thursday, eventually weakened into a deep depression and moved north-east. The deep depression is likely to continue to move northeast towards the Gangetic West Bengal.

As a result, the Gangetic West Bengal is likely to witness heavy to very heavy rainfall till today, according to the Indian Meteorological Department.

Titli has already claimed at least eight lives, including seven in Andhra Pradesh and one in Odisha.

# Treat women with respect and dignity

## Rahul Gandhi on #MeToo campaign

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

As the #MeToo campaign rages on in India, Congress party president Rahul Gandhi yesterday came out in support of the movement, saying it was about time that everyone learns to treat women with respect and dignity.

He also said he is happy that the space for those who do not treat women with respect and dignity is closing.

The #MeToo movement has gained pace in the last fortnight with scores of women speaking out on sexual harassment at workplaces and support pouring in for them from various quarters.

"It's about time everyone learns to treat women with respect and dignity. I'm glad the space for those who don't, is closing. The truth needs to be told loud and clear in order to bring about change," Gandhi tweeted along with the #MeToo hashtag.

The chorus is growing for action against India's junior minister for external affairs M J Akbar who has been accused by at least eight former women colleagues of sexual harassment when he was the editor of The Telegraph and The Asian Age newspapers.

Akbar, on an official tour of Nigeria, is the first politician to get entangled in the #MeToo firestorm.

Women ministers in Prime Minister Narendra Modi government like Uma Bharti and Smriti Irani have come out in support of the campaign saying that women who are speaking up now should be supported and not victimised.

BJP sources said there is increasing discomfort in the Modi government and the party about the continuance of Akbar as minister as the Prime Minister himself has made empowerment of women and their causes as a key plank ranging from gender justice in the context of instant triple talaq and flagships welfare schemes for girl child, cooking gas connections for women, easy financial schemes for

women entrepreneurs and recent increase in salaries of women healthcare workers.

The Congress party and the CPI(M) too added to the pressure on the government on the Akbar issue flagging the topic of women's safety, dignity and rights.

The #MeToo movement has ensnared a number of personalities from India's media world, entertainment and advertising worlds including actors Nana Patekar, Alok Nath, Adman Suhel Seth, Bollywood directors and Vikas Bahl.

Some newspapers are publishing lurid details of women victim-complainants how they were treated by the sexual predators.

## Former S Korea president appeals 15-year jail term

AFP, Seoul

Former South Korean President Lee Myung-bak will appeal a court verdict that last week sentenced him to 15 years in prison for corruption, his lawyer said yesterday.

Lee was found guilty of bribery and embezzlement charges -- becoming the latest of the country's former leaders to be jailed after leaving office.

The conservative politician, who helmed Hyundai Construction before his election to the presidency, was separately ordered to pay a fine of 13 billion won (\$11.5 million) by the Seoul Central District Court.

The court found that Lee, 76, was the de-facto owner of DAS -- a controversial auto parts company which he claimed belonged to his brother -- which he used to create a slush fund worth around 24 billion won.

## BNP reacts

FROM PAGE 16

Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital on August 21, 2004.

The convicts were handed down various punishments for the bombing that killed 24 people and injured scores.

In its observations, the court said the defeated forces of 1971 attempted to diminish the spirit of the Liberation War and halt development of the newly independent country by killing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members on August 15, 1975.

Following Bangabandhu's assassination, four national leaders were murdered inside a prison through a conspiracy. But the conspiracy did not stop; it rather continued.

Later, an evil attempt was made on August 21, 2004, to turn the AL into a leaderless party, it said.

Citing a court observation, Fakhrul said the BNP was not born in 1975. Besides, no BNP men were found accused in connection with the assassination of the four national leaders inside a prison and no BNP men were implicated in the killing incidents.

"In this context, how does the court come up with such observations pointing the finger at the BNP for all these gruesome incidents?" the BNP leader asked.

Referring to the court's observation over the ruling party's attitude towards the opposition, Fakhrul said the AL's behaviour towards its political opposition was the complete opposite of the court's observation.

"We expect that the Awami League will comply with the court's observation in this regard."

Fakhrul said the court, in an observation, mentioned the killings of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and AL lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, but did not say anything about many BNP's missing leaders, including M Ilias Ali and councillor Chowdhury Alam.

Apart from this, the court did not say anything in its observation about the oppressive acts that had been going on across the country for the last 10 years, he said.

"The observations have made the verdict questionable as the court did not say anything about the ongoing abductions, disappearances and fictitious cases being lodged against BNP men," Fakhrul added.

## Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 16

inter-governmental body within the UN system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.

It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. It meets at the UN office in Geneva.

The UNHRC replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

## Hilsa catch ban defied in Munshiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Defying a ban, a section of fishermen have been netting hilsa in the Meghna and selling those at a makeshift market in Sadar upazila for the last couple of days.

Locals said the market opens around 6:00 in the morning and continues till noon every day. Wholesale traders from different parts of the country throng there to buy hilsa, they added.

Some 200 fishermen are involved in catching hilsa in the river along Char Abdullah, Kalirchar and Bakchar villages and selling those at the makeshift market in Bakchar area, they said.

Senior Fisheries Officer Nasir Uddin of Sadar upazila admitted the incident and said the fishermen chose the place as the area was remote.

"But we are conducting regular drives," he said, adding that they fined two fishermen Tk 2,000 each yesterday for violating the ban.

A 22-day government ban on netting, selling and transporting hilsa across the country began on October 7 midnight. A circular to that end has also been issued.

Taking the opportunity of the ban, some unscrupulous fishermen and seasonal traders have been selling hilsa at low prices door to door in Louhajang upazila.

Women and adolescents mainly turn into the seasonal traders.

A housewife yesterday bought five kg of small and middle-sized hilsa from an adolescent boy at only Tk 500 in Uttar Haldia village under the upazila.

On a regular day, hilsa usually sells at Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,200 a kg in the fish market in the upazila, she said.

Idris Talukder, a senior fisheries officer in the upazila, said they could not conduct drives in the Padma yesterday due to rough weather.

On Wednesday, two executive magistrates from the deputy commissioner's office conducted a drive in the river and detained 24 fishermen for violating the ban.

## SAHR

FROM PAGE 16

suspected to result in defamation, hurting religious sentiments, deteriorating law and order and inciting violence.

"SAHR strongly believes that the government of Bangladesh continues to ignore its obligations to protect human rights and the concerns of its citizens when drafting legislation, especially this act," the statement said.

Terminating the Digital Security Act "super draconian", the SAHR said the act replaced section 57 of the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) Act, under which many people had been arrested, including noted photographer Shahidul Alam.

It also called upon the government to review all existing cases filed under section 57 of the ICT Act and withdraw those unjustified and arbitrary.

On September 19, parliament passed the Digital Security Bill 2018 amid widespread concern, criticism and protest from rights activists, journalists and civil society representatives.

President Abdul Hamid signed the bill into a law on October 8.

## Cigarette butts

FROM PAGE 2

worth over Tk 15 crore last year. Around 37 percent fire incidents were caused by electrical short circuits while burner fire was responsible for 23.4 percent.

Motahar Hoshan Khan, president of Electronics Safety and Security Association of Bangladesh, said, "It is possible to lower the number of fire incidents if electrical equipment is inspected periodically."

"Developed countries maintain this practice regularly. We should introduce this system here," he told this newspaper.

According to the fire department, the number of fire incidents is gradually increasing in the country. As many as 5,376 fire incidents happened in 1996. It grew to 18,105 last year.

As usual, the amount of losses from such incidents is also on the rise. In 1996, the damage was worth of Tk 63.69 crore. Last year, it jumped to Tk 257.45 crore, the report said.

Fire officials stressed on taking precautionary steps for fighting fire.

They said usually in Bangladesh fire incidents become frequent during the winter and the poor and working class people are the major victims.

"If we remain aware about this very small but crucial issue, we can change things dramatically," added Ali, chief of the BFSCD.

## Even dead not spared

FROM PAGE 1

cases were being filed against dead men.

"I have spoken with the IGP even today [Thursday] and asked him to find out who did this," he said. "It will be verified. How can a dead man be an accused in a case?"

Apart from the dead, many people who have been implicated in similar cases filed over alleged incidents that took place when they were outside the country or at their workplace. Some are hajj pilgrims, others are paralysed and bound to their beds.

Such loopholes are "unprecedented," a number of top police officials said.

They said the cases are full of such "mistakes and loopholes" as field level police are filing those against leaders, activists and supporters of the BNP and its front organisations on instructions of the police high-ups.

The cases are being filed following the lists of the central, city, thana and ward unit committees of the BNP. Local units of the ruling Awami League are helping police by providing names, the officials added on condition of anonymity.

As the cases have been filed quickly ahead of BNP's founding anniversary (September 1) and any big programmes or rallies, police did not get enough time to verify whether anyone in the committees are dead,



Zillur Rahman

according to the police officials.

In some instances, the alleged incidents did not happen at the time or place mentioned in the case statement.

For example, police in the capital filed 38 cases against several thousand leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations within 12 hours of the BNP rally on September 30 at Suhrawardy Udyan. At the rally, top BNP leaders instructed party activists to prepare simultaneously for movement and the national election.

The Daily Star visited the 10 spots named as "place of occurrence" in the cases filed with Hazaribagh, Dhanmondi, Kalabagan, New Market, Kamrangirchar, Motijheel, Paltan, Shahbagh, Ramna and Jatrabari police.

He spoke with more than a dozen roadside vendors, shop owners and their employees and local residents around each of those spots. None of them could recall any incident of attack on police, vandalism and obstruction of police duty as claimed in the case statements.

Several officials of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said there were instructions from the high-ups to file multiple cases against each BNP leaders and workers.

"If all BNP leaders and active workers are accused in cases, we will be able to arrest them even after announcement of the election schedule. The Election Commission will have nothing to say if an accused in a criminal case is arrested," said an official, asking not to be named.

In BNP's estimation, 4,135 cases have been filed against 85,604 identified and 274,703 unidentified party leaders and activists from September 1 to October 4 across the country. During the same period, police arrested 4,650 BNP men in those cases.

The BNP claims all of these cases are aimed at keeping the party men on the run so they cannot take part in polls activities.

Fearing arrests, many are coming to the High Court seeking anticipatory bail.

Since October 1, around 1,000 people who were made accused in such cases have been granted bails, said the deputy attorney generals of two High Court benches concerned.

### NO ESCAPE FOR THE DEAD

Zillur Rahman, son of Abdur Rahman from Jurain, died on March 26. He was 38.

Doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital declared him dead after he was taken there with heart problems, according to his death certificate.

He was buried at Azimpur Graveyard the same day and the receipt of the graveyard bears the serial number of 10342.

However, in the two cases filed with the city's Kadamtoli Police Station on September 11 and 12, Zillur has been charged with vandalising vehicles in two places with iron rods and sticks and throwing brick chips at police. He is listed as accused number 3 and 5 respectively in the cases.

According to the case filed by Sub-inspector Ershad Alam, the dead man was among 108 other accused who vandalised Narayanganj- and Chattogram-bound trucks, buses, CNG-run auto-rickshaws and human hauliers, on the road in front of Shyampur Lal Masjid at Kadamtoli at 2:10pm on September 11.

In the other case filed the next day, SI Alam Badsha found Zillur among 109 accused vandalising trucks, buses and CNG auto-rickshaws moving on

Dhaka-Mawa highway in front of Sangit Cinema Hall at Dholaipar at 3:00pm on September 12.

In both the cases, police named him as only Zillur and his father as only Rahman. His address, however, was rightly mentioned.

Zillur was the joint secretary of ward 53 unit of BNP. He lived in Malaysia and South Korea for around 10 years since 1995, said his father.

"We are not getting respite from police even after Zillur's death," Abdur Rahman told The Daily Star on Tuesday.

Days after filing the cases, a sub-inspector in civil dress went twice in search of his son at an engineering workshop near their home that Zillur ran. He also owned a cosmetic shop in Chawkbazar.

Abdur Rahman said as police used to hunt for his son, he asked Zillur to leave his own area. So around six years ago, Zillur rented a house in Azimpur where he lived with his wife and five-year-old son.

Zillur's elder brother Mizanur Rahman said they told the police official about his death, but he initially did not trust them. But later police asked them to submit his death certificate to the police station.

Jahangir Alam, son of late Rowshan Ali Molla in Gendaria, died on July 1 last year at the age of 65 due to cardio respiratory failure, according to his death certificate issued by Asgar Ali Hospital in the locality.

Complainant Syed Abdul Mannan, SI at Gendaria Police Station, in the case filed on October 3 mentioned his name as Jahangir Hossain though the address and the father's name match with his.

The case statement says Jahangir was among 77 named and many unnamed BNP-Jamaat leaders and activists who gathered in front of Jahangirnagar Hospital in Gendaria at 5:15pm that day, blocking a road as part of a sabotage plan. He was mentioned as accused number 41.

Family members and locals said Jahangir, a cloth trader in Sadarghat area, was never actively involved in politics.

Abdul Jalil, officer-in-charge of Kadamtoli Police Station, said he was not aware if any dead man was implicated in the case, but would look into it.

Gendaria Police Station OC Kazi Mizanur Rahman also promised to do the same, saying it was not supposed to happen.

"TAKE AWAY HIS BODY" Mansur, a former BNP ward 52 unit president, died on October 27 last year at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University due to heart failure. He was 62.

A teacher at Muradpur High School and widely known as Mansur Ali Master, he was charged with vandalising trucks, buses, CNG auto-rickshaws and Leguna in front of Eagle Box at Ali Bahar in Kadamtoli on Dhaka-Narayanganj highway on September 5.

Akhter Hossain, a sub-inspector at Kadamtoli Police Station, lodged the case on September 6, where 195 others are also charged.

"We told the police that he has died, but police did not believe us until we provided them with his death certificate," said his wife Shahanur Akhter.

Even then an SI with other policemen is harassing her son Mohammad Murad, asking if he is involved with the BNP politics, she alleged.

Murad claimed he was never into politics.

Angered by what is happening centring on her late husband, Shahanur has made a decision.

"If police come again, I will take them to Jurain Graveyard where my husband lies buried. I will tell them: 'Take away his body,'" she said.

## Man killed

FROM PAGE 16

Dhaka CMH for better treatment.

The Rab said two others travelling in the car managed to flee. It also claimed to have recovered two pistols, three magazines and 12,000 yaba pills from the vehicle.

Talking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a cousin of the deceased said Asim owned a clothing shop in the city's Riajudding Bazar. He was on his way home in Murdarpur's Sunnia Madrasa area from the shop when the incident took place.

"We don't know what exactly happened to my cousin, but he told his wife over the phone on Thursday night that some plainclothes law enforcers intercepted his car."

According to him, Asim earlier did politics with Jubo League leader Helal Akbar Chowdhury Babar, but a rivalry developed between the two over some political issues and Asim parted company with Helal.

Lt Col Miftahuddin Ahmed, commanding officer of Rab-7, said all their men were in uniform at the check post in Bibirhat Railway Gate area.

Seeking anonymity, the officer-in-charge of a police station in the port city said Asim was arrested in a case in 2009. He was also accused of carrying out an attack on Helal's car.

Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not reach Helal for comments as his phone was found switched off.

Yesterday afternoon, Asim's relatives received his body from the law enforcers after an autopsy at the CMC morgue.

The Rab handed over the car to Panchliash Police Station. It will file a case with the police station in this connection.