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# Risha murder trial sees the light at last

Children's Act amendment clears way for resumption of trial

BISHAKHA DEVNATH

The trial of the sensational Risha murder case can finally resume as the Children's Act, 2013, has been amended plugging loopholes the defence exploited to stall the proceedings.

Fourteen-year-old Risha was stabbed to death on a foot-bridge close to her school, Willes Little Flower School in Kakrail, by her stalker Obaidul Kader, 28, in 2016.

The trial had progressed at the Additional Metropolitan Session Judge's Court, Dhaka, and 20 out of 26 witnesses had testified by June 2017 when the defence appealed to the court to transfer the case to Shishu Court.

The defence's ground for the transfer was that Risha was 14 at the time of her murder and two prosecution witnesses were below the age of 18.

Having had the appeal rejected, the defence prayed to the Metropolitan Session Judge's Court and got the case transferred.

The defence successfully stalled the trial drawing the

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Farmers bringing boatloads of pineapples from different hills to Samataghat Bazar in Rangamati yesterday. The growers are happy that their harvest has hit the market before the season begins.

PHOTO: ANVIL CHAKMA

## Pineapple delight

ANVIL CHAKMA, Rangamati

Even though the time pineapples usually ripen fall between the months of May and June, the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) get the fruit at its sweetest at this time of the year as well.

Pineapple growers are delighted to have the summer fruit grow early this year as they will benefit from early harvesting.

During a visit to Rangamati Samataghat Bazar recently, this correspondent saw the growers selling their produce on boats.

The market at Samataghat Bazar is set up twice every week (Wednesday and Saturday), when many cultivators come from different areas of the hill tracts with their boats full of pineapples. Local traders gather at the market to buy the fruits.

Each pair of the pineapples were being sold at Tk 15-20, this correspondent saw.

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# Priyanka enters Indian politics ahead of vote

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, sister of India's Congress Party President Rahul Gandhi, formally entered politics yesterday with the party appointing her general secretary for Uttar Pradesh East in a move reflecting the party's intent to go full throttle in the key political battleground ahead of the general elections.

Priyanka, 47, will take over her new assignment in the state which was a Congress bastion till mid 1980s, from the first week of February, a statement from

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# No public purchase sans open bidding

Govt moves to ensure transparency, encourage competitive tender process

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal yesterday said the government would discourage any public procurement without competitive bidding to ensure transparency and prevent wastage of money.

"We will try to follow the Open Tender Method in every work for the sake of transparency," he told reporters at the Cabinet Division after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.

It was the committee's first meeting after Kamal became the minister

of finance earlier this month.

The minister, also the committee chairman, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina didn't want to see any irregularities, errors and mistakes in any work.

Yesterday, the committee sent back the water resources ministry's proposal, the only one placed before the meeting, seeking to follow the Direct Procurement Method (DPM) for the physical works of Chandpur Irrigation Project and rehabilitation of Charbagadi Pump House and Hajimara regulator.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

# Man caught red-handed during rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A man was caught red-handed while raping a 36-year-old mentally challenged woman in Bahalgachia area of Patuakhali's Sadar upazila yesterday, said police.

The accused is Alom Akon, 60, of the upazila's Jaikathi area.

Alom took the woman to a nearby brickfield and raped her when she was returning home from a special school around 2:00pm, said Mostafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge

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# Unipay2u bosses jailed for 12yrs

Six convicted for laundering Tk 1,351cr through MLM

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced six officials of unipay2u Bangladesh Limited, including its chairman and manager, to 12 years' rigorous imprisonment each in a case filed for laundering around Tk 1,351 crore through multi-level marketing sham.

They are Managing Director Mohammad Muntasir Hossain, Chairman Md Shahiduzzaman Shahin, Executive Director Masudur Rahman, General Manager AM Jamshed Rahman, Adviser Monju Ehsan Chowdhury and Director HM Arshad Ullah.

Of them, Muntasir, Jamshed and Arshad were present during the verdict while the rest are absconding. Judge Abu Syed Diljar Hossain of the Special Judge Court-3 handed

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

# Sabbir, Taskin back in Tigers' fold

SPORTS REPORTER

The national selectors yesterday named Sabbir Rahman in Bangladesh's 15-member ODI squad for the upcoming three-match ODI series against New Zealand in February, despite the batsman being in just the fifth month of a six-month ban from international cricket.

Pacer Taskin Ahmed also made a comeback to both ODI and Test squads, while young off-spinner Nayem Hasan was the only new inclusion in the ODI squad.

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# Biswa Ijtema next month

Feuding groups decide together

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

This year's Biswa Ijtema will be held in February as leaders of two factions of Tablighi Jamaat have reached an understanding over holding the congregation, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said yesterday.

He made the announcement while briefing reporters after a meeting with the leaders of two factions at his secretariat office.

"In today's [yesterday] meeting, it has been decided that the Biswa Ijtema will be held in Tongi in February. The two factions will jointly organise the Ijtema," reports UNB, quoting the minister as saying.

It will be decided how and when the religious gathering will be held in a meeting at the religious affairs ministry at 10:30am today, he added.

A rift developed among Tablighi members -- well

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# Pray with the Pope from smartphone

MAIL ONLINE

The days when you prayed by putting your hands together appear long gone -- now even Pope Francis is asking his flock to go online instead.

In a sign of the times, the head of the Roman Catholic church launched a new app allowing the faithful to pray with him.

He presented the Vatican's latest digital platform, known as the Worldwide Network of Prayer with the Pope, during his traditional Sunday address to tens of thousands of people in St Peter's Square.

The new app, called Click to Pray, will inform the church's 1.3 billion followers what he is praying for -- such as world peace or the population of a country hit by a natural disaster.

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# Don't bother with press briefings

Trump tells White House press secretary, citing unfair treatment by news media

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump said Tuesday he has told his chief spokeswoman Sarah Sanders "not to bother" with formal media briefings in the White House, because journalists don't cover her fairly.

"The reason Sarah Sanders does not go to the 'podium' much anymore is that the press covers her so rudely & inaccurately, in particular certain members of the press," Trump tweeted.

"I told her not to bother, the word gets out anyway! Most will never cover us fairly & hence, the term, Fake News!"

The White House briefing room, a keystone of modern presidential messaging, has been largely abandoned under Trump.

The last briefing where Sanders took questions from reporters was on December 18. On January 3, Trump himself made a surprise appearance -- his first at the briefing room podium -- to deliver a statement on border security, but took no questions.

The White House Correspondents Association, which represents journalists covering the president, attacked Trump's statement.

"This retreat from transparency and

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## IN FOND MEMORY



Mrs. Anwara Islam, died on 24-01-2006 -- exactly the same day and date as her husband Mr. Sirajul Islam who died twenty four years earlier in 1982.

Please join us in praying to the Almighty Allah to grant them eternal peace.

Lubna, Akbar & Duree (Children)  
Anika, Talita, Numair (Grand Children)  
Amani, Tijaan & Jinaan (Great-Grand Children)

Ms Lubna Choudhury  
Founder-Principal, B.I.T.

**PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 24**  
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-15 5-43 7-15  
JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-30 5-47 7-45  
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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