



Police have left barricades on this street near Baitul Mukarram National Mosque for several months. While these cause inconvenience for vehicles, hawkers have turned them into storage space for boxes. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Try rape, sexual harassment cases under speedy tribunal

Speakers urge govt to end 'epidemic' situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of rape and sexual harassment -- particularly of children -- is on the rise across the country due to absence of proper and timely punishment of the perpetrators, speakers said at a press conference yesterday.

Termed the current situation an "epidemic", they suggested that the government ensure justice for the victims through carrying out the judicial process under speedy trial tribunal and give the culprits exemplary punishment.

The press conference was held at Jatiya Press Club in the capital on the occasion of International Day of Rural Women, to be observed today. The National Committee to Observe International Rural Women's Day, an alliance of non-government organisations, arranged the event.

Citing recent data of different rights organisations, Tamanna Rahman, a member of the committee, said at least 572

children were victims of rape and sexual harassment in the first six months of this year.

Of them, 23 were murdered after rape, she said, adding that the number of these incidents is significantly higher than that in the same period last year.

FROM JANUARY TO JUNE
572 children raped and sexually harassed
23 murdered after rape
 Most victims are from disadvantaged families and majority of them don't get justice in time

"After analysing the data, collected from various media reports, we have found that most of the victims are from disadvantaged families and the majority of them don't get justice in time," said Tamanna, also a coordinator of Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC).

In a keynote paper, she also said the perpetrators are mostly relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. She urged parents to be more cautious in this regard and asked people to change their mindset.

Ferdous Ara Rumeen, secretariat coordinator of the National Committee, SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Two die of dengue over last two days

STAR REPORT

Two persons died of dengue over the last two days in Dhaka and Jashore. Delowar Hossain (42), owner of a shoe factory, passed away yesterday at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), hospital sources said.

Ziaur Rahman, brother-in-law of the deceased, said Delowar had been suffering from fever for the last five days. He was diagnosed with dengue around three days back.

Delowar, a resident of Kamrangirchar, was admitted to the hospital on Saturday and breathed his last around 1pm yesterday, he said.

In Jashore town, a housewife died of dengue fever at Jashore General Hospital on Sunday evening.

The deceased was identified as Sagarika Ghosh (28), wife of Ananda Ghosh of Mollahpara Amtola area, our Benapole correspondent reports.

Sagarika was admitted to the hospital after she was diagnosed with dengue fever on October 9, said Dr Abul Kalam Azad, caretaker of Jashore General Hospital.

Ananda Ghosh said Sagarika and their daughter Swastika (12) became ill a week ago. They were initially admitted to the local Keshobpur Health Complex.

Sagarika was later shifted to Jashore General Hospital while Swastika is still undergoing treatment in Keshobpur Health Complex.

According to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), 93 persons died of dengue so far this year since January.

A total of 300 patients were admitted to different hospitals across the country in 24 hours till 8am yesterday, of whom 214 are outside Dhaka, SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Gun licence holders can't work as guards

Says ministry notice

UNB, Dhaka

Mentioning that firearm licence holders cannot work as security personnel for other persons or organisations, the government has said licences of those engaged in such practice will be annulled immediately.

The home ministry issued a notification yesterday in this regard.

As per the Firearms Licence Supply, Renewal and Use Policy-201, a person can use or carry their licensed firearm for his self-protection but cannot work as a bodyguard for another person or persons or as guard for protecting any property.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Special programmes needed for ethnic groups

Experts say at conference on social safety net

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNP) are failing to properly develop the living standard of ethnic minorities in the country as no sustainable economic development plan has been enlisted for them, speakers at a conference said yesterday.

They stressed on establishing small industries locally, considering special skills of ethnic minorities, apart from the various services given by SSNP.

Right to Food Bangladesh (RFB), a platform of food security campaigners, and non-government organisation World Vision jointly organised the conference on "Small ethnic groups in SSNP: proposals for new policy framework" at Cirdap auditorium in the capital.

Presenting a research paper, Dr Asif Shahan, assistant professor at Dhaka University's development studies department, said that cultural diversity of various ethnic groups are not being considered in SSNP and that is why various services under these programmes are failing to play an effective role to enhance their capabilities.

"Government should introduce special programmes including adequate employment opportunities as per their [ethnic groups'] skills," he said.

He claimed that though vulnerable group development (VGD), vulnerable group feeding (VGF), disability allowance, and old age allowance are available in some places due to the role of NGOs, their participation in other programs is almost absent.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Tk 9 lakh crore siphoned from country: Menon

UNB, Gazipur

Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon yesterday said around Tk 9 lakh crore has been siphoned off abroad from the country.

"As far as I know, some Tk 9 lakh crore has so far been siphoned off, and the previous finance minister also admitted that Tk 5.25 lakh crore has been taken out of the country with which a national budget can be formulated," he said.

Menon made the remarks while addressing the Gazipur district unit council of Workers Party, at Bangataj Auditorium in the city.

"The Prime Minister has become the role model of development, but only five percent people are the beneficiaries of it," said Menon. "Those who run casino business are intruders into the party [alliance] and loan defaulters. They make huge sums of money and build second homes in foreign countries with that," he said.

"The prime minister has launched a drive against them. Don't spare them as their roots are deep, and they have become unrestrained after having enjoyed power," he urged the prime minister, adding, "Now it's time to remove discrimination from society, and build a modern and secular Bangladesh being imbued with the spirit of Liberation War."



Lines of motorbikes are regularly parked on Banani Road 18, narrowing the busy street and disrupting traffic movement. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Uber drivers observe strike

Demand raising fare, reduction in commission, removal of bar on working hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of Uber drivers yesterday observed a 24-hour work abstention, starting from midnight, to press home their eight-point demand.

Under the banner of 'Dhaka Ridesharing Drivers Union', they demanded reduction in the commission they have to pay to Uber, raising fare due to a hike in gas price, taking no action against drivers without properly investigating passenger complaints, putting a limit of two kilometres on maximum distance between drivers and passengers, and removal of the bar on working hours. At present, they are allowed to drive for Uber for 12 hours per day.

The commission taken by Uber should be brought down to 12 percent from the existing 25 percent, Belal Ahmed, general secretary of the union, told The Daily Star.

He said they have been pressing their demands for the last six months and have held several demonstrations.

"The Uber authority did not pay heed," he said.

So, they went for work abstention, he added.

Belal claimed that at least 7,000 drivers

had joined their protest. Besides many bikers also joined in, he claimed, adding that 'Bangladesh Ridesharing Drivers Union' has also extended support to the cause.

Asked about passengers' inconvenience, he said, "We are requesting them to bear with us for one day, for the betterment of the service."

UBER'S STATEMENT
 Meanwhile, ridesharing app Uber's Dhaka office issued a statement in this regard.

"We regret the disruption caused to the rider and driver-partner community, due to a small group of individuals. We strive to provide reliable and safe transport options to get around the city and hope to minimise any distress caused," it said.

"We are committed to providing reliable, convenient and safe transport options to our riders, while providing access to flexible income opportunities for our driver partners," it added.

"We always prioritise the well-being of our driver-partners and have processes in place to address concerns and issues through our Partner Sheba Kendra and in-app feedback," it said.

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