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"Khaleda Zia's condition is very critical now and there's a possibility that she might not recover."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR AFTER PLACING WREATHS AT THE GRAVE OF PARTY FOUNDER ZIAUR RAHMAN



"I have no work, except for attending meetings and seminars to raise awareness against food adulteration."
FOOD MINISTER SADHAN CHANDRA MAJUMDER ON HIS LIMITED SCOPE TO WORK



"The mistakes of the past were not enough to stop the plundering... our sister Earth... we have seen it in the scarred face of the Amazon region."
POPE FRANCIS ON "PREDATORS" PLUNDERING THE EARTH FOR FINANCIAL GAIN (PAGE 8)

UNTREATED MEDICAL WASTE

A serious threat to public health

MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

Untreated medical wastes are accumulating at landfills in seven divisional cities, posing serious threat to public health.

These divisional cities, excluding the capital, have around 1,380 healthcare establishments -- public and private -- which produce over 20 tonnes of medical wastes every day.

Although there have been many reports on the same scenario in Dhaka city, the other divisional cities have often escaped scrutiny in this regard.

But the picture there is also quite alarming.

With no comprehensive official data on medical wastes available, The Daily Star has obtained the approximate figure after talking with civil surgeons, city corporation officials and third parties.

The Daily Star correspondents have found an alarming picture of medical waste management -- from collecting and sorting wastes at the primary sources (hospitals and clinics) to dumping at designated landfills in Chattogram, Rajshahi, Barisal, Khulna, Rangpur, Sylhet and Mymensingh.

In these cities, there are designated bins for hazardous medical waste in almost every healthcare facility, but the healthcare professionals hardly follow the procedure regarding proper disposal of medical wastes.

According to experts, medical waste is not like other wastes and it can infect through the skin, as well as through inhalation or ingestion.

They said HIV, and Hepatitis B and C present the greatest risk from such waste. Besides, antibiotic resistant germs (superbugs) and other dangerous germs can spread from medical waste.

"Often, we observe public health hazards [cholera, typhoid or else] and we discuss only sewerage, not about medical waste. But it may be sourced from medical waste," said Prof Ahmed Abu Saleh, chairman of microbiology department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

"Medical waste management situation is at a vulnerable stage as it has been overlooked over the years," he added.

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A woman picks up a blood bag, with the blood inside still visible, at a dumping ground where medical waste is disposed with other wastes in Parairchawk of Sylhet. Such mixing of medical wastes with other rubbish is a violation of the rules, but it is done all around the country. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR AND RAJIB RAIHAN

MEDICAL WASTE

2 treatment devices stay idle for 4yrs

BISHAKHA DEVNATH

At a time when safe disposal of medical waste is a nationwide concern, two waste treatment devices have been sitting idle since 2015.

The devices called hydroclave were imported from Canada at a cost of nearly Tk 17 crore. One is at the National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital (NIOH) in the capital and the other at Shaheed Sheikh Abu Naser Specialised Hospital in Khulna.

The devices can sterilise medical waste for safe disposal.

"It [the device] was forced upon us. We didn't want it," said Rona Rehana, assistant director of NIOH.

The machine was rejected by all other public hospitals before it found a place at NIOH in 2018, she told this correspondent during a recent visit to the hospital in Argargaon.

The first issue was

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Rejoinder, our reply

Dhaka Water Supply & Sewerage Authority has issued a rejoinder against a report headlined "JS body blasts Wasa boss for utility's failure" published in The Daily Star on October 21.

In the rejoinder, Wasa said, "The reporting was totally wrong and baseless. Rather the JS body appreciated the progress of Dhaka Wasa in last 10 years under the leadership of its Managing Director Taqsem A Khan.

"The members of the committee were extremely pleased at the remarkable successes of Dhaka Wasa."

"They reiterated that Dhaka Wasa has become the role model for other utility agencies in South Asia."

Afterwards, they suggested being more careful on issues raised regarding Dhaka Wasa activities, it said.

OUR REPLY
Our report was based on

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Number of landless in villages drops

Reveals Agriculture Census 2019, reflecting a rise in land ownership in last 11 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of landless people in rural areas declined in the last 11 years reversing the previous trend, according to the preliminary findings of Agriculture Census 2019.

Released by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics yesterday, the census report said 23.23 lakh households do not own any land now -- which is down from 32.65 lakh in 2008.

"It means that land ownership has increased because of rising income of people," said Jafor Ahmed Khan, project director of the Agriculture Census, after the release of the report at the BBS headquarters in the city.

The bureau said the sharp decrease could be partly attributed to the increasing trend in urbanisation around metropolitan areas and partly to possible migration of landless people from rural to urban areas.

The census, usually carried out every

10 years, found the number of landless households is 40.24 lakh in the country and 17 lakh of them live in urban areas.

A total of 3.55 crore households have been found in rural and urban areas this year, up from 2.87 crore in the 2008 census. And the number of rural households rose to 2.96 crore from 2.53 crore in 2008.

Yet, the ratio of rural households with no ownership of land dipped 5 percentage points to 7.84 percent in the latest census, breaking the previous trend.

Quazi Shahabuddin, former director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said remittance inflows could be one of the plausible reasons for the decline in landlessness both in terms of absolute number and percentage.

"This figure is not unlikely because of various factors such as micro credit operations and government's special programmes including safety net and asset

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Woman gang-raped on char in Bhola

BCL leader who came to 'rescue', raped her again

STAR REPORT

A woman was allegedly gang-raped, first by a group of four men in front of her two-year-old son and then by a Chhatra League leader who "rescued" her from the four, at Monpura upazila in Bhola on Saturday evening.

The victim filed a case against seven -- Nazrul Islam, 30, Bilal Hossain, 35, Rased Palwan, 25, Shahin Khan, 22, Kiran, 26, Shahid Khan, 22, and Rijaz Hossain -- with Monpura Police Station yesterday.

Quoting the case statement, Shakhawat Hossain, officer-in-charge of the police station, said the victim and her toddler son boarded a speedboat in Char Fasson to return home.

Two men were already on the speedboat except its driver. On the way, the driver of the speedboat Rijaz Hossain, who was made an accused in the case, took two more men as passengers, he said.

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Baghdadi dead in US military raid

Trump confirms killing of IS leader, thanks Russia, Turkey, Syria and Iraq for help

REUTERS, Washington

Fugitive Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi died "whimpering and crying" in a raid by US special forces in northwest Syria, President Donald Trump announced yesterday, fulfilling what he called his top national security goal.

Baghdadi, who had led the jihadist group since 2010, killed himself by detonating a suicide vest after fleeing into a dead-end tunnel as US forces closed in, Trump said in a televised address from the White House.

He was positively identified by DNA tests 15 minutes later, the president said.

"He was a sick and depraved man and now he's gone," said Trump, adding that capturing or killing Baghdadi had been his administration's top national security priority.

Hours later, the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia said Islamic State spokesman Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir, described as Baghdadi's right-hand man, had also been killed in a separate joint raid by Kurdish-led and U.S. forces in northern Syria.

The death of Baghdadi is a severe blow to Islamic State, which has been in disarray and has no declared successor as leader yet. But the group has



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'Bar, casino' in Aziz M Bhai's house

Liquor, gambling equipment seized in DNC raid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) yesterday raided the house of controversial industrialist and film producer Aziz Mohammad Bhai, in the capital's Gulshan-2.

The DNC officials raided two buildings on the same plot on Gulshan-2's road 57 and seized a huge amount of illegal liquor and casino equipment.

Fazlur Rahman, DNC additional director who led the drive, said the gambling equipment was found on the rooftop of one of the buildings and "a huge amount" of liquor in a room on the third floor of the other building.

The seized items include 390 bottles of foreign liquor of different brands from both buildings, 24 cans of beer, four kg of flavoured tobacco for

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A roulette table at yet another illegal gambling den. This one was unearthed in the capital at the Gulshan house of controversial industrialist Aziz Mohammad Bhai during a raid yesterday. Inset, bottles of foreign liquor lined up in a cabinet.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

TURMOIL AFTER ABRAR MURDER

Buet academic activities yet to resume

ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Academic activities at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology are yet to resume even three weeks after Abrar Fahad's murder.

Term finals of all the departments, scheduled to start on October 20, have been postponed amid the ongoing boycott by the students.

"At a meeting of the university's academic council on October 12, we decided to cancel the test schedule taking the students' demands into account," Prof Abul Bashar, a member of the academic council told The Daily Star.

Earlier, students demanding justice for Abrar declared that they would not attend classes or exams until the authorities expelled all the students accused of being involved in the murder.

The authorities, in a notice issued on October 11, said they would expel the perpetrators after receiving a police probe report.

Talking to this newspaper, an administrative official of the university yesterday said the university would expel the accused who would be found guilty in the investigation being conducted by the law enforcers.

Many students are fearing that they might be subjected to a two-month session jam due to the ongoing situation.

"If we continue to boycott classes and examinations, no one other than us will be the sufferer," a batch-15 student of Mechanical Engineering department told The Daily Star yesterday, seeking anonymity.

"We will be missing some upcoming recruitment tests

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