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## Private univs seek review of UGC directives

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Private universities authorities called for the review of the University Grants' Commission directives to stop assigning students' grades without holding semester finals, enrolling new students without admission tests, and holding tests online due to the coronavirus situation.

Private universities owners' association as well as top administrators said that they were just two or three weeks from finishing the spring semester and took some decisions for the crisis period so that the students don't fall into session jams.

"Authorities of many private universities were stunned seeing the UGC orders," said Sheikh Kabir Hossain, chairman of Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB).

He said most of the universities were in their final weeks of the spring semester.

"Many universities are taking online classes and they have arranged the exam. They can either welcome the directive or can be hurt from it," he said.

He said that The Private University Act 2010 does not have any clear instruction about conducting exams, or awarding grade without semester finals.

"Usually, the university's academic council or syndicate takes decisions in this regard. Many universities are awarding grades without final exams based on midterms and class assignments."

"We will request them [UGC] to review their directives and we will send a letter to them soon," Kabir said.

He said that the decision was taken without their consultation.

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The imam of Baitul Mukarram leads Johr prayers at the national mosque in the capital yesterday, a day after the government issued a circular saying that none but employees of mosques are allowed to offer daily or Juma prayers at mosques. The move was taken to slow the spread of coronavirus.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## 2 mentally challenged girls raped

Cases filed; police yet to arrest rapists

STAR REPORT

Two mentally challenged girls were raped in Bagerhat and Laxmipur on Monday.

Family members of the victims filed cases in respective police stations and police sent both the victims to hospitals for medical tests while rapists went into hiding, reported our correspondents in Bagerghat and Noakhali.

In Bagerhat, Hafizur Rahman, 45, was made an accused in the case.

The victim's mother, who filed the case, said her husband left home around 8:00am on Monday. Right after that, she went outside to buy rice. Returning home, she saw Hafizur running out of their house.

As soon as the mother entered the home, she found her daughter crying who later shared the incident with her. Later, she informed police, she added.

Mahtab Uddin, officer-in-charge of Bagerhat Model Police Station, said they visited the spot and were launching drives to arrest the accused.

In Laxmipur, the victim's brother filed a case with Laxmipur Sadar Police Station.

Quoting locals, police said Abdul Kadir, owner of a confectionery store, picked up the mentally challenged girl on Monday night and took her to his shop and raped her.

Later, the girl shared the incident with her family members.

AKM Azizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they sent the victim for medical tests after her brother filed a case.

"We are trying to arrest the accused," the police official added.



PRAYER TIMING APRIL 8

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-40 12-45 4-45 6-21 7-45  
JAMAAT 5-15 1-15 5-00 6-24 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## 3 held with relief rice in Natore

AL leader among them

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Local administration arrested three people, including an Awami League leader, for misappropriating 13 sacks of rice of the government's food-friendly programme in Natore's Singra upazila.

The incident came just three days after the seizure of 5.5 tonnes of relief rice from the house of an Awami League (AL) leader in Naogaon's Raninagar upazila.

The arrestees are Shahin Shah, a local AL leader and member of Sukash union parishad, rice trader Golam Hossain, and rice dealer Md Lebu, said Nasrin Banu, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Singra.

Locals detained Shahin and Golam in Boalia Bazar area when they were returning with eight sacks of rice, each weighing 30kg, yesterday afternoon and informed the upazila administration.

A team, led by Executive Magistrate Nazmul Alam, raided the spot and arrested the two. Lebu was arrested later from the same area based on the information given by the two.

This rice is allocated for the poor and extreme poor people and sold at Tk 10 per kg as part of the government's social protection programmes.

During primary interrogation, Golam confessed that he used to sell the rice of

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

## Bangabandhu to continue as party chief



Bangabandhu addressing the council session of Awami League on April 8, 1972.

APRIL 8, 1972

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

AL COUNCIL RESOLUTION PASSED

Bangladesh Awami League Council today unanimously adopts a resolution requesting Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to continue as the president of the organisation till the next session of the Council. The Council also bestows upon Bangabandhu full power to form an organising committee for Bangladesh Awami League and organising committees for the districts.

Bangabandhu, however, tries to convince the councillors that he

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## Forge nat'l consensus

Jatiya Oikyafront urges govt, places 5-point proposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Putting forward a five-point proposal, Jatiya Oikyafront yesterday urged the government to forge a national consensus to tackle the coronavirus crisis.

The front in a statement also asked for the formation of an "Emergency Economic Council" based on national consensus to deal with the post-coronavirus socioeconomic situation.

It said overcoming any disaster with a "narrow and partisan" attitude was not possible.

"It is now urgently necessary for the government to ensure the essential lifesaving healthcare services to 18 crore people who are at the risk of coronavirus, and expand the coronavirus testing facilities across the country," the statement

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STAY HOME, STAY WELL

## Act wisely, responsibly

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

With the spread of coronavirus touching new heights every day, a loud and clear message to stay indoors and maintain social distancing has been sent out to the world.

Knowing that there is no vaccine or treatment available to cure the virus, it is time for every single individual to act responsibly and wisely, says Dr. Chowdhury Rehnuma Tabassum, medical officer of pediatric neurology and autism at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

She said social distancing and isolation is the ideal way to go, and maintaining mental strength is the key to stay safe.

Rehnuma suggested that to continue being mentally strong, one must not read news regarding the virus too frequently as people already know about the virus.

If it is possible, it is better to avoid checking on the death toll because this number may mentally weaken people. "It is not a cricket match or any sport that you have to be updated about the score or number."

Rehnuma said that rumours and misinformation are the biggest enemies at the moment, as they may misguide people.

"So, keep yourself away from misinformation

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## Acute food crisis hits village in Bandarban

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

Amid countrywide shutdown to prevent Covid-19, inhabitants of many remote hilly areas in several upazilas of Bandarban are facing a severe food shortage as authorities are yet to send any aid for these people.

For the last couple of years, many hill people have been facing a food crisis during April and May due to a poor harvest of Jhum cultivation (slash-and-burn agriculture) and the situation aggravated this year thanks to the shutdown.

Family of Pekru Mro, an elderly woman from remote Kapru Para area in Lama upazila, was found to have been subsisting only on potatoes for the last two weeks as they got nothing else to eat.

"We have no food in our house. Sometimes we eat potatoes found in the nearby jungle, sometimes we starve", she said.

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Pekru Mro, middle, her husband and son eat wild potatoes at their home in Kapru Para of Bandarban's Lama upazila yesterday. Locals said at least 30 families in this remote area, 47 km off Bandarban town, have been suffering from food shortages for the last two weeks as they are self-isolating to protect themselves and others from catching coronavirus. They are yet to receive any relief from the government.

PHOTO: SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

PRISONER EXCHANGE

## Taliban break off talks with Afghan govt

REUTERS, Kabul

The Taliban yesterday broke off talks with the Afghan government on a prisoner exchange, a main step in peace talks being brokered by the United States after it agreed on a troop withdrawal pact with the militants.

Suhail Shaheen, a spokesman for the Islamist insurgent group's political office in Qatar, said on Twitter a technical team would not participate in "fruitless meetings" and the release of their prisoners was being "delayed under one pretext or another".

The late February pact between the United States and the Taliban, under which US-led international forces will withdraw in exchange for Taliban security guarantees, is the best chance yet of ending the 18-year war.

But peace hinges on talks between the US-backed Afghan government and the militants. A prisoner exchange is meant to build confidence on both sides for those talks.

A spokesman for the government said it would maintain its work on the prisoner release plan.

"We ask the Taliban to not sabotage the process by making excuses now," said Javid Faisal, a spokesman for the National Security Council in Kabul.

The Taliban suspension of the talks could lead to an escalation of violence, which in turn could threaten the plan to withdraw US troops, a major objective of President Donald Trump.

A three-member Taliban team arrived in Kabul last month from Qatar to begin the prisoner exchange process.

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