

The Daily Star

www.thedailystar.net

REGD. No. DA 781 | Vol. XXX No. 213 | BHADRA 10, 1427 BS | Your Right to Know | MUHARRAM 5, 1442 HJRI | 16 PAGES PLUS LIFESTYLE PRICE : Tk12.00



ROHINGYA REPATRIATION ATTEMPTS

RESULT ZERO

Myanmar doing little while Bangladesh facing financial, ecological and security challenges



PORIMOL PALMA

When Bangladesh continues to bear the brunt of sheltering more than a million Rohingyas, Myanmar is doing little for their repatriation amid silence of global powers though the Southeast Asian country faces a genocide case, experts and officials said.

About 750,000 Rohingyas -- injured and starved -- fled a brutal military crackdown since August 25, 2017, leaving their homes burnt and relatives killed. Bangladesh generously opened the border and sheltered them, but is now facing tremendous financial, ecological and security challenges.

Even before 2017, some 300,000 other Rohingyas, who fled earlier waves of violence in Myanmar since 1978, were sheltered here.

Bangladesh hastily signed a repatriation deal with Myanmar in November 2017. The next year, UNHCR and UNDP signed a tripartite deal with Myanmar on creating conducive conditions for Rohingya return.

However, none of the demands of the refugees -- guarantee of their safety, basic rights and citizenship -- has been met Myanmar. As a result, two repatriation attempts -- one on November 15 in 2018 and the second on August 22 last year -- fell flat.

Even, the provisional order issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in January this year has failed to help make any headway. Dozens of MORE ON PAGE 3 SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Myanmar frustrating repatriation efforts

Says foreign secy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

In the face of Myanmar's strategy of doing nothing about restoring normalcy in Rakhine, Bangladesh is demanding the international community to create basic services, safety, security and livelihood options for the Rohingyas who would return to Myanmar.

Myanmar is doing what's needed to frustrate repatriation efforts, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen told a webinar on the Rohingya Crisis: Western, Asian, and Bilateral Perspectives.

Center for Peace Studies (CPS) of South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at North South University organised it in partnership with the High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh ahead of the third anniversary of Rohingya influx today.

"With the recent clearance operations by Tatmadaw against the Arakan Army in SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Media gag on govt employees

Old rules invoked to make approval mandatory for talking to, writing in the media; rights activists alarmed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The public administration ministry has asked all secretaries to give necessary instructions to their subordinates so that no public servant writes or talks to the media without prior approval of the authorities concerned.

Shaikh Yusuf Harun, secretary at the ministry, confirmed to The Daily Star yesterday that a letter has been sent to each and every secretary, citing section-22 of the Government Servant (Conduct) Rules, 1979.

"Yes, we have sent the letter. Is there any problem in reminding our officials of the matter?"

Asked what has prompted such a reminder now, he said, "Some [public servants] are talking to the media but they are not supposed to do so. That's why we have sent the letter."

The development comes at a time when rights groups and activists have expressed concern over "the government crackdown" on freedom of expression, especially since the coronavirus pandemic hit the country in March.

They say the latest move would shrink the scope of work of mass media, SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Journo Kajol denied bail yet again

Taken to BSMMU for check up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again refused to grant bail to photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Kajol's lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua submitted an appeal against the lower court's rejection order.

On June 24, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Dhiman Chandra Mondol rejected Kajol's bail petition SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

City buildings breeding Aedes

DGHS survey finds buildings with multiple floors by far the worst

HELEMI ALAM

Multi-storied buildings in the capital are the most common breeding ground for Aedes mosquitoes -- carriers of both dengue and chikungunya viruses -- followed by the buildings under construction.

A survey conducted by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) during the monsoon has revealed that 51.34 percent of the spots, where Aedes larvae have been detected, were in multistoried buildings while 20.32 percent spots were in under-construction buildings.

Among others, 12.83 percent were in slum areas, 12.57 percent in individual buildings and 2.94 percent in abandoned lands.

The survey was conducted at 2,999 houses in 100 areas -- 41 in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and 59 in Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) -- from July 19 to July 28. It detected Aedes larvae in 374 houses.

Experts urged the two city corporations and its residents SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

ONLINE NEWS PORTALS

Exclusion of leading dailies from list surprising

Says Editors' Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Editors' Council yesterday expressed surprise over the exclusion of leading newspapers from the government list of online news portals.

"The country's television channels do not require any separate government approval for publishing news online. The same rules should be applied for newspapers as well because those are published with government approval just like the television channels. SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,485

New cases in 24hrs



2,97,083

Total cases



3,983

Deaths



1,82,875

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



813,579

Deaths



23,647,489

Total cases

Suspects confess to murder, girl found alive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A girl, who had allegedly been raped and murdered according to an abduction case, was found alive yesterday, 51 days after her going missing from Bandar upazila of Narayanganj.

A police team found her in Kushiya area of the upazila yesterday morning and brought her to Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station, law enforcers said.

As the girl went missing, the abduction case was filed with Sadar Police Station against three persons, including two youths. Later, the trio confessed in a court that the body of the girl was dumped in the Shitalakkhya river after gang-rape and murder.

Meanwhile, the families of the youths claimed that the police had beaten the three accused, who are now in jail, in remand and forced them to make their confessional statement. However, the police denied the allegation.

Narayanganj Additional Superintendent of Police (administration) Mostafizur Rahman told at a press briefing yesterday noon that the fifth-grader had been missing since July 4.

About two weeks after her disappearance, her mother lodged a general diary (GD) with the Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station on July 17.

On August 6, her father filed an abduction case with the police station.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Office clerks and night guards at government primary school demonstrate in front of the primary education directorate in the capital's Mirpur yesterday, demanding that their jobs be made permanent and their work hours fixed. The demonstrators blocked a street from Mirpur-1 to Mirpur-10 for five hours from 10:00am, disrupting movements of vehicles. Many of them were not wearing masks.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Govt to start antigen testing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government was going to take an initiative to start antigen rapid testing in public Covid-19 labs to diagnose the coronavirus.

He was addressing an event marking the handover of medical equipment, a donation from the Taiwan External Trade Development Centre, to the Bangladesh government to fight novel coronavirus outbreak.

"Three types of tests are conducted for diagnosing coronavirus. These are PCR test, antigen test and the rapid antibody test. The government has no plan for now to conduct antibody test. Initiatives are being taken to carry out antigen test alongside the PCR test only at government laboratories," the minister told the programme at the secretariat.

Zahid said all government departments related to Covid-19 were active in bringing vaccines to the country. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would make a right decision at the right time after scrutinising the quality of the vaccines, he added.

On June 3, the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19 had recommended introducing the antigen rapid testing in the country. Many health experts have been stressing for months on using both antigen and antibody rapid tests to ease the pressure on pathology service.

Rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) are easy-to-use paper tests to facilitate testing outside of laboratory settings. The results of the tests are available within a short time

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A LOOK AT ROHINGYA CRISIS

FROM PAGE 1

Aug 26, 2017

As fighting spreads between the army and ARSA, thousands of Rohingyas flee to Bangladesh.

Sept 2, 2017

More than 2,600 houses are razed in Rohingya-majority areas in the week following the Aug 25 attack, the government says.

Sept 11, 2017

The UN human rights high commissioner calls the military operation “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing”.

Sept 19, 2017

Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi vows to punish the perpetrators of rights violations but does not address UN accusations of ethnic cleansing.

Oct 12, 2017

Rohingya Muslims are not natives of Myanmar, says the army commander-in-chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, during a meeting with US ambassador Scot Marciel.

Nov 2, 2017

Suu Kyi urges people “not to quarrel” on her first visit to Rakhine since the crackdown.

Nov 27 to Dec 2, 2017

Pope Francis visits Myanmar and Bangladesh, avoiding the word “Rohingya”, which is rejected by Myanmar, until meeting refugees in Bangladesh.

Dec 21, 2017

The United States imposes sanctions on 13 “serious human rights abusers and corrupt actors” including the general who oversaw the crackdown against the Rohingya.

Jan 10, 2018

The military says its soldiers murdered 10 captured Muslims in Inn Din village in Rakhine during insurgent attacks.

Feb 23, 2018

Myanmar has bulldozed at least 55 Rohingya villages that were emptied during the violence, Human Rights Watch says.

March 12, 2018

Myanmar’s military is building bases where Rohingya homes and mosques once stood, Amnesty International says.

April 11, 2018

Seven Myanmar soldiers are sentenced to 10 years of hard labour for the Inn Din massacre.

Sept 13, 2018

Suu Kyi says in hindsight her government could have handled the situation in Rakhine better.

Nov 15, 2018

A Rohingya refugee repatriation effort stalls amid protests in camps.

Jan 4, 2019

Rakhine nationalist Arakan Army insurgents kill 13 policemen as Myanmar marks Independence Day, setting off more conflict.

March 18, 2019

Myanmar’s army says it has set up a military court to investigate its conduct during the 2017 crackdown.

May 27, 2019

A military spokesman says Myanmar has granted early release to seven soldiers jailed for the Inn Din killings.

June 22, 2019

Authorities order telecoms companies to shut internet services in the conflict-torn west, an operator says, where government troops are fighting Arakan Army rebels.

Aug 20, 2019

The UN refugee agency and Bangladesh authorities launch a new repatriation bid, but it fails after no refugees agree to return.

Nov 11, 2019

Gambia files a genocide case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Nov 14, 2019

The International Criminal Court approves a prosecution request to investigate crimes against humanity against the Rohingya in a separate case.

Nov 26, 2019

Myanmar begins a military investigation into killings of Rohingya at Gu Dar Pyin village during the 2017 crackdown. The army later announces soldiers have been punished.

Dec 11, 2019

Suu Kyi appears at the ICJ in The Hague and rejects accusations of genocide against the Rohingya as “incomplete and misleading”.

Jan 20, 2020

Government-appointed panel investigating allegations of abuse say they had found no evidence of genocide but war crimes were possible.

Jan 23, 2020

The ICJ orders Myanmar to take urgent measures to protect the Rohingya remaining inside Myanmar.

Jan 25, 2020

Two Rohingya women are killed and seven people wounded when shells hit a village. The army rejects accusations it was responsible from a lawmaker, a villager and Arakan Army rebels.

Feb 21, 2020

Myanmar’s army says it will court-martial soldiers over abuses against Rohingya in two more villages during the 2017 crackdown.

April 16, 2020

Bangladesh rescues 396 Rohingyas from a boat adrift for weeks after failing to land in Malaysia. At least 32 die on board. Several other boats adrift for months before landing in Indonesia and Malaysia.

April 29, 2020

The UN envoy to Myanmar says it is committing war crimes in Rakhine after civilians are hit with air and artillery strikes in the conflict against insurgents. Myanmar says the allegations are “biased”.

May 25, 2020

Myanmar files a report on its adherence to measures to protect the Rohingya to the ICJ. Details are not published.



PHOTO: ANVIL CHAKMA

Struck hard by the pandemic, indigenous families sell vegetables, grown through jhum cultivation, in Bilaichhari area of Rangamati Sadar upazila to make a living. They have also put up a bamboo fencing in front to them to maintain social distancing for avoiding transmission of the virus. The photo was taken recently.

Result zero

FROM PAGE 1

Rohingyas, along with hundreds of Rakhines, were killed and thousands were displaced as fighting between Myanmar military and Arakan Army raged in the recent months.

REPATRIATION EFFORTS SLOW

The meeting of Joint Working Group -- comprised of officials from Myanmar and Bangladesh -- was not held since May last year though two meetings are scheduled a year, officials concerned said.

“The second meeting was due in the last quarter of 2019. Myanmar pushed it forward to February this year but that also did not happen. Now Myanmar is using coronavirus as a pretext for not holding the meeting,” an official told The Daily Star.

In the last three years, Bangladesh sent the information of 6,00,000 Rohingyas to Myanmar, but the latter has provided Bangladesh with verified information of only 30,000.

Again, 30 to 40 percent of the 30,000 names were rejected.

There are cases that one was rejected and others were selected from a family for repatriation, but this proposition is not helpful in any way for the Rohingyas to return to Myanmar, the official said.

Dhaka had proposed Naypyidaw for a bilateral technical committee meeting to sort out these issues, but was responded with indifference, which is indicative of delaying Rohingya repatriation, he said.

Through informal discussion in January this year, the two sides agreed for a targeted approach. The idea is that Myanmar will find out the Rohingya villages least affected and then have a comprehensive plan for repatriation.

Accordingly, all the families of the villages concerned will be repatriated. A meeting was scheduled in February, but Myanmar did not show interest.

“Now Myanmar’s attitude is that you return our people, we will do what’s needed. Myanmar now seems more emboldened. This is because the global powers don’t have any coordinated approach to address the Rohingya issue. So, Myanmar can get away by doing anything,” the official said.

Nay San Lwin, co-founder of Free Rohingya Coalition, said Myanmar also has made no attempt to amend discriminatory laws, including the citizenship, freedom of movement and education, which is very basic reforms required.

MYANMAR BENEFITS

Foreign policy experts say though there were sanctions from western countries on some military officials, the global

powers are still largely divided over the Rohingya issue because of their geopolitical and business interests.

For example, the UN Security Council has failed to adopt any resolution yet in last three years because of opposition from China and Russia, two veto powers.

Regional powers China, India and Japan -- all good friends of Bangladesh and Myanmar -- want bilateral solution to the Rohingya issue without putting pressure on Myanmar. The approach has not worked until now, analysts said.

Meanwhile, US imports from Myanmar has increased from \$366 million in 2017 to \$821 million in 2019. US exports also went up from \$211 million in 2017 to \$347 million in 2019, according to US Census Bureau.

Myanmar benefits from the European Union’s Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP), namely the “Everything But Arms” scheme that grants duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market.

According to the European Commission, Myanmar’s exports increased from €573 million in 2015 to an estimated €2.8 billion in 2019. Also, according to UN Comtrade data, Myanmar’s exports to UK went up from less than \$300 million in 2017 to \$536 million in 2019.

The businesses between Myanmar and other countries flourish though a UN fact-finding mission last year appealed for targeted sanctions, as well as an embargo on weapons sales to Myanmar, warning that a web of businesses run by Myanmar’s army is financing military operations on the Rohingyas.

The mission’s report identified at least 59 foreign companies -- including firms from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Hong Kong and China -- that have dealings with army-linked ventures. It also named at least 14 companies that have sold arms to the Myanmar military, including state-owned entities in Israel, India, South Korea, and China.

BANGLADESH LOSES

With no repatriation in sight, Bangladesh is counting losses. A study by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) showed, the estimated cost of hosting the Rohingyas \$1.2 billion a year in the first five years if there is no repatriation for sheltering and providing them humanitarian assistance.

“Gradually, the cost will increase given the decline in foreign funding, population growth and inflation,” CDP Executive Director Dr Fahmida Khatun told this correspondent on August 21.

The study also said around 7,000

acres were deforested due to the Rohingya settlement -- having long term ecological implications in the region, a tourist district of the country.

A study by COAST Trust, an NGO working in the country’s coastal belt, says transport cost went up by 35 percent and house rent by 60 percent since the Rohingya influx, while wages for laborers went down because of more labour supply from the Rohingya community.

“These issues have given rise to Rohingya-local tension,” said COAST Trust Executive Director Rezaul Karim Chowdhury. Also, lack of any income generating activities and education facilities gave rise to the crimes like drug trafficking, human trafficking and prostitution, he said.

“It is very likely that militant elements will grow in the camps if the provisions of education, income and better housing are not created.”

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed, director of the Centre for Genocide Studies at Dhaka University, said lingering of repatriation means rise of human trafficking through the sea and extremist ideologies -- that will ultimately affect the entire region’s development.

China, Japan and India -- all have their large investments both in Bangladesh and Myanmar -- and they should come forward to creating conditions conducive for Rohingya return at the earliest, he said.

“Myanmar may use fighting between Arakan Army and its military as a pretext. In that case, a combine force of China, Japan, India and ASEAN can help create a safe zone as sought by the Rohingya,” said Prof Imtiaz, who teaches international relations.

LIGHT OF HOPE?

Prof Imtiaz said the good thing is that the ICJ in its verdict acknowledged the ethnic identity of the Rohingya. Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi also used the word “Arakanese Muslims” in the ICJ hearing in December last year -- it’s a step towards Rohingya’s recognition.

“Justice at the ICJ may take time, but must happen. Germany paid reparations for genocide against the Jews. Eventually, Bangladesh also should claim reparations from Myanmar for the enormous cost it’s bearing for Rohingya influx,” Prof Imtiaz said.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said Dhaka must go for creative diplomacy, involving the regional civil societies, academia and media, apart from state actors, to create a broader consensus on the Rohingya repatriation and justice.

Suspects confess

FROM PAGE 1

Later, the police arrested three youths after tracking the call list of the girl’s mother.

On August 9, the accused testified under Section 164 in separate courts of Narayanganj Senior Judicial Magistrate and Judicial Magistrate. In their confessional statement, the accused said that they had killed the schoolgirl in a boat after raping her and threw her body in the Shitalakhyia river, said police.

After their confessional statement, the accused were sent to jail. Since then, the trio -- Md Abdullah, 22, Md Rakib, 19, and Khalilur Rahman, 36, -- are in jail.

Addressing the press briefing, ASP Mostafizur Rahman said, “Today, we came to know that the girl was not raped. The girl met one of the three accused on the day of the incident. Later in the night, she fled with her ex-boyfriend named Iqbal,” the police official said adding then, the two got married and started living in a rented house in Bandar Kushiyara area.

On the afternoon of August 23, the girl called her mother and asked for money. Later in the morning, police found her in Kushiyara area and arrested her husband, the police official said.

About the confessional statement of the accused, Mostafizur Rahman said, “Why they made the confession will be known after investigation.”

Shiuli Akhter, mother of accused Abdullah, said, “Police arrested my son without any proper investigation. Later, he was beaten in remand and forced to confess to gang-rape and murder.”

Rakib’s elder brother Md Sajib said, “My brother is innocent. He says he is being framed. Even after that, the police took him in remand and beat him twice. Later, police took this statement.”

Khalilur’s wife Sharmin Akhter said, “SI Shamim Al Mamun of Sadar Model Police Station demanded TK 20,000 from us. He took Tk 10,000 saying that my husband would not be beaten. The SI beat up my husband even after taking the money and forced him to make statement. I want justice.”

Abdullah’s mother Shiuli Akhter also brought similar allegation against SI Shamim.

When asked about the allegations, ASP Mostafizur Rahman said, “No such complaint was found. This matter will be investigated. If any police member is guilty, departmental action will be taken against them.”

Contacted, SI Shamim Al Mamun expressed unwillingness to make any comment in this regard.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Sadar Model Police Station Asaduzzaman said, “The confession was made in court, not to the police. I don’t know why they lied. It may be that they have admitted to a previous incident.”

He also said the allegation of beating was “false”. “If money changed hands, it will be investigated,” he added.

Exclusion

FROM PAGE 1

Such a decision was made at a joint meeting of the information ministry and the organisations concerned,” the Council said in a statement.

Referring to the government decision that newspapers have to get separate approval for publishing news online, the Council urged the government to find a logical solution.

Naem Nizam, the editor of daily Bangladesh Pratidin, signed the statement on behalf of the Editors’ Council.

“A list of 34 news portals was published in the first phase of registration of online news portals. We noticed with surprise that the names of the country’s widely-circulated and reputed newspapers were not on the list,” the statement reads.

“It is noticed with great concern that incidents of harassment and filing cases against journalists across the country have increased at an alarming rate. And the Digital Security Act is being used purposefully for this. We strongly protest it.

“There is no safeguard for newspapers and journalists. We think it is very urgent to bring necessary amendments to the law,” it noted.

The statement further mentioned that the newspaper industry is facing an uncertain future across the globe amid the coronavirus pandemic.

“The newspaper industry in Bangladesh is facing the same situation. The number of readers as well as the circulation of newspapers has dropped. Advertisements have declined alarmingly.

“The newspapers in the country have never faced such a situation before. We have continued publications despite all the obstacles.

“But the newspaper industry has not received any substantial assistance and cooperation from the government... It is deprived of the government support that profit-making industries have received. The newspapers placed their demands before the ministries concerned at different times. But sadly the government has never taken those demands into account...

“Amid the pandemic, journalists are risking their lives to serve the people. They have to work in the face of threats and intimidation. News organisations and journalists are being forced to maintain self-censorship, which creates obstacles to building healthy administrative and social systems,” it added.

Myanmar frustrating

FROM PAGE 1

Rakhine and the election in November, we have actually hit an impasse in terms of the repatriation process,” Momen said.

Some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military crackdown since August 25, 2017 and took shelter in Bangladesh, joining some 300,000 other Rohingyas who had fled earlier waves of violence since the 1980s. Over the last three years, two attempts of repatriation failed as Rohingyas refused to return.

Meanwhile, some are thinking of integrating the Rohingya people into Bangladesh society, but foreign secretary Momen rejected any such notion. Considering the forced return in the past, he said, “Bangladesh this time has been fully convinced of the need for creating necessary conditions for sustainable return, so as to avoid similar episodes in future.”

Momen said the international community should make sincere and greater efforts to secure conditions for Rohingyas to return to Myanmar. “...These should be our pledge to the community [Rohingyas],” he said, but added that many international interlocutors are found trying to appease Myanmar while heaping all their demands on the doorstep of Bangladesh.

The role of ASEAN and India, China, Japan and Korea would remain crucial in finding a durable solution to the problem. Search for a solution at the UN and relevant levels should also remain a priority, he said.

Former Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haue said Bangladesh had always sought to maintain friendship with Myanmar but the “elephant in the house is repeated exodus from Myanmar”.

Myanmar tried to provoke Bangladesh time and again. For example, in 2017, Myanmar air force violated Bangladesh airspace 17 times between August 26 and September 14. In 2018, Myanmar claimed rights on St Martins’ Island.

“If Bangladesh reacted to the provocations, the history of South Asia could have been different,” said Former Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haue.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh, Ear R Miller said the Rohingya crisis is a global political and diplomatic issue and the international community should work for a solution at the earliest.

“We must continue to press Burma for voluntary repatriation... Bangladesh should not be left alone to face the crisis,” he said.

Canadian High Commissioner for Bangladesh Benoit Préfontaine, said Canada supports repatriation as well as accountability issues of the Rohingya and will continue to do so. He stressed on Rohingya education and improving living conditions.

In response, Foreign Secretary Momen said involvement of Rohingyas in various crimes are higher than the host communities and radicalisation of youth cannot be ruled out altogether in a situation of despair and hopelessness.

“As such, Bangladesh had no option but to consider barbed-wire security fences around the camps to curb criminal activities in the area. These are not for their isolation, but for their good and security of locals.”

Responding to requests for greater internet connectivity, the government has decided to lift restrictions on 3G/4G mobile network soon, he said, but added that the internet helped destabilise the situation in the past.

Media gag on govt employees

FROM PAGE 1

which would curb media freedom.

Over the last few months, several government and autonomous bodies instructed its staffers to refrain from speaking to the media.

In its letter sent to the secretaries on August 18, the public administration ministry said some public servants, violating section-22 of the rules, are taking part in talk shows and discussions in different media outlets, including Betar, Bangladesh Television and private TV channels.

Going beyond their jurisdiction, some are also giving comments or opinions and writing articles or letters in newspapers and online portals without taking approval from their department chiefs, it mentioned.

On many occasions, they are giving comments or opinions on government’s policy decisions, the letter read.

In such a situation, the secretaries are asked to give necessary instructions to the public servants under ministries or divisions and subordinate agencies so that they follow the section, it added.

Section-22 of the rules says: “No government servant shall, except with the previous sanction of the head of the department or in the bona fide discharge of his duties, participate in a radio or television broadcast or contribute any article or write any letter, either anonymously or in his own name or in the name of any person, to any newspaper or periodical.

“Provided that such sanction shall generally be granted if such broadcast or such contribution or letter is not, or may not be considered likely to jeopardise the integrity of the government servant, the security of Bangladesh, friendly relations with foreign states, or to offend order, decency, or morality or to amount to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

“Provided further that no such sanction shall be required if -- such broadcast or such contribution or letter

is of a purely literary, artistic, or scientific character or connected with sports; such broadcast or such contribution is required to project government activities on development works to the people by the commissioner of divisions, deputy commissioners and sub-divisional officers.”

Earlier on April 16, the nurses of all public hospitals were instructed by the Directorate General of Nursing and Midwifery not to speak to the media.

A week later, Health Minister Zahid Maleque ordered health officials not to talk to the media. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University also followed suit by silencing their healthcare workers.

In a press statement on May 19, ARTICLE 19, a British human rights organisation, said it is alarmed by the Bangladesh government’s crackdown on freedom of expression since the coronavirus pandemic began.

“In particular, there has been an upsurge in attacks on media critical of the government’s response to the coronavirus pandemic in Bangladesh. The government is increasingly using the deeply flawed Digital Security Act 2018 to harass, charge and arrest journalists,” said the press release which is available on its website.

“There have also been restrictions on dissent by the public: medical professionals have been told not to talk to the media; social media is being monitored; and government employees have been told not to like, share or comment on social media posts that are critical of the Bangladeshi government,” it added.

Talking to this newspaper, noted rights activist Nur Khan Liton said the pattern of the government in 1979 when the rules were formulated and that of a democratic government are not the same.

As per the rules, government officials are allowed to speak to the media about the government’s development

Dream of a better life ends in nightmare

Traffickers use offers of marriage, job to lure Rohingya women, girls into sex slavery abroad; rescued overseas, many now trapped behind wall of red tape



Violence at home, insecurity here and uncertainty ahead -- the plight of Rohingya women and girls continues unabated. They are also becoming easier prey for human traffickers and being exploited.

SHUPROVA TASNEEM

For 29-year-old Taiyyaba Khatun, a Rohingya woman living in Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh, providing food for her children became an everyday struggle after she had a fall out with her husband.

"He moved to Cox's Bazar and left me all alone to look after our five children. A friend of mine told me she can find me work as a maid in India. She put me in touch with a trafficker who first took me to Dhaka, and then across the border to India. But when I got there, he sold me to a man for Tk 30,000," she said.

"He took me on a train and I ended up in New Delhi, where I was sold to a brothel. I cannot describe what I went through for the next few months there. I begged one of my customers to let me use his phone, but I couldn't reach anyone. Then one day, I managed to escape."

Taiyyaba wandered the streets of New Delhi, not being able to communicate with her broken Hindi, and ended up outside a roadside restaurant, exhausted and in tears.

Eventually, locals helped her reach a police station.

"From there, they moved me to a shelter with other women who had been trafficked from Bangladesh to India. There were some Rohingya girls there too."

At the shelter, Taiyyaba found herself trapped behind a wall of red tape. Although she was trafficked to India in 2015, it took her almost four years to return to the refugee camps in Bangladesh, and even this was only possible via illegal channels, she told this correspondent recently.

"They kept saying they are

working on my application, but I could not go back if my address in Bangladesh could not be verified. I am a refugee, how do I show any address other than that of the refugee camp?"

"I had left my children with my mother, and I was worried sick about them. In the end, she managed to raise enough money to pay another trafficker, who brought me back to the camps in Bangladesh."

In January, Rab rescued 13 Rohingya women from a house in the capital's Aftabnagar and arrested two members of a human trafficking gang.

According to an official statement, these men were connected to sex slavery rings and were planning on trafficking the girls to India and Malaysia.

"There is no clear data on the number of Rohingya girls being trafficked abroad from the refugee camps in Bangladesh, but there are definitely many girls who are ending up as prostitutes in India, Nepal, and even the UK. Once they leave the country, it is almost impossible to reunite them with their family members who are also refugees, even after they are rescued from sex slavery," said human rights lawyer Razia Sultana.

Pinaki Sinha, executive director of Saanlap, an Indian NGO which runs shelters for victims of trafficking rescued within the country, added, "Even in the case of Bangladeshi victims of trafficking who are rescued in India, it can take two to three years to cut through the administrative red tape and arrange for their return."

"When the person in question is a refugee, it becomes a more complicated issue for the two countries to resolve based on each

case," he added.

Asked, Additional Secretary Abu Bakr Siddique, who heads the anti-trafficking cell at the Ministry of Home Affairs, said he has not come across any requests of repatriation back to the refugee camps from trafficked Rohingya women.

"I cannot tell you about what happens in this scenario practically," he said, adding, "But even in terms of Bangladeshi victims of trafficking, it can take time to verify their addresses and bring them back through the official channels. Without this verification process, we cannot bring anyone back, so how can we do it with refugees?"

This inflexibility over the verification of proof of address, which is a necessary condition for trafficking victims to be reunited with their families, means that refugees who cannot provide this can become trapped in the countries they have been trafficked to indefinitely.

This is the case for 17-year-old Hafiza, who was taken to India two years ago by a "family friend".

Although her parents were at first reluctant to discuss the real reasons, her mother later confided that they were hoping to find a prospective groom for her.

"We trusted our contacts and found a good Rohingya man living in India," she shared. "We did not even dream such a thing would happen. Once she went across the border, she disappeared. We didn't hear from her for almost a year."

"I cried for my daughter every day. How could this happen to her? Then one day, I got a phone call saying she was in a shelter in India. She had fallen into bad hands and had to be rescued from them."

PHOTO: STAR FILE

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Myanmar must accept int'l solution for safe return of Rohingyas

HRW says on third anniversary of exodus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Myanmar government has failed to ensure that nearly one million Rohingya refugees can safely return home three years since fleeing their country, Human Rights Watch said in a statement circulated yesterday.

"Myanmar's government should recognise that the terrible suffering it has caused the Rohingyas won't disappear even amid a global pandemic," said the statement quoting Brad Adams, its Asia director.

"Myanmar needs to accept an international solution that provides for the safe, voluntary return of Rohingya refugees, while an understandably stretched Bangladesh should not make conditions inhospitable for refugees who have nowhere to go," Adams said, as per the statement.

The statement pointed out that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in January imposed provisional measures on Myanmar to prevent genocide while it adjudicates alleged violations of the Genocide Convention, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) in November 2019 began an investigation into Myanmar's forced deportation of Rohingya and related crimes against humanity.

"[But] Myanmar has not complied with these international justice measures, has not permitted the United Nations to investigate grave crimes inside the country, nor conducted credible criminal investigations of its own into military atrocities," the statement concluded.

In addition, the 600,000 Rohingya remaining in Myanmar's Rakhine State face severe repression and violence, with no freedom of movement or other basic rights.

The statement also added that desperate Rohingya seeking refuge in another countries in the region faced multiple levels of persecution.

"Some have been stranded at sea for weeks or months, with hundreds feared dead on boats that disappeared after Malaysia and Thailand illegally pushed them back using the Covid-19 pandemic as justification. Malaysia has detained arriving Rohingya refugees, denied them access to the UN refugee agency, and prosecuted some for illegal entry," it said.

The Myanmar government needs to amend the citizenship law in line with international standards, lift restrictions on freedom of movement, repeal discriminatory regulations and local orders, and cease all official and unofficial practices that restrict the movement of the Rohingya populations, noted the statement.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

THREE BY-POLLS JP to start nomination process today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) will start distributing nomination forms among prospective candidates in the by-election of Dhaka-5, Pabna-4 and Naogaon-6 from today.

Forms will be distributed daily from 10am to 5pm from the party chairperson's office at city's Banani.

Prospective candidates have been requested to collect nomination forms following health guidelines and without crowding.

Nomination forms will be accepted till August 29.

Interview of prospective candidates will be taken at the Jatiya Party Chairman's Banani office from August 31, JP said in a release.

Meanwhile, JP chairman GM Quader yesterday said as a democratic party JP will participate in all elections.

He also said JP has also prepared to participate in all the upcoming by-elections as a strong political party.

"We've already started working to finalise strong candidates to contest in the upcoming by-elections," GM Quader said at a tree plantation programme on the occasion of Mujib Borsho, birth centenary of Bangabandhu.

PKSF launches project to 'transform rural microenterprise'

CITY DESK

In a boost to the Bangladesh's microenterprise sector, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), an apex development agency of the country, has floated a new project titled 'Rural Microenterprise Transformation Project (RMTP)'. The six-year project, jointly financed by PKSF, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Danish government was launched on Sunday, according to a press release.

Md Ashadul Islam, senior secretary of Financial Institutions Division, Ministry of Finance was chief guest at the RMTP's virtual launching ceremony presided over by PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad.

Describing RMTP as a time-befitting project, Md Ashadul Islam said that development of microenterprise is very important for the country's overall economy. "Ensuring adequate financing for marginal producers and micro-entrepreneurs is a big challenge. In line with the government's development strategy, this project will help address this challenge," he said.

Terming PKSF 'an iconic institution' in development operations in Bangladesh, he said the organisation has proven their efficiency in implementing projects like RMTP.

PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad said Bangladesh's economy is still largely rural and agri-based, and 80 percent people are working in the informal sector.

To transform this situation, appropriate financing along with technology transfer, training, market expansion, and forwards and backward linkage are required, he added.

In his presentation, PKSF Deputy Managing Director Md Fazlul Kader said that value chain development, financial services, and institutional capacity development support will be provided for the promotion of agricultural products under three major farm sectors -- livestock and poultry, crops and horticulture, and fisheries and aquaculture.

He said the total project fund, which will directly benefit 50,000 micro-entrepreneurs across the country, stands at \$200 million, in which IFAD's contribution is \$81 million and DANIDA, a co-financier, will provide \$8.30 million.

Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah, managing director of PKSF; Winnie Estrup Petersen, ambassador of the Royal Danish Embassy to Bangladesh, and IFAD's Country Director Omer Zafar also spoke at the event.

ROHINGYA CRISIS NGOs call for peaceful coexistence until repatriation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cox's Bazar CSO NGO Forum (CCNF) yesterday called for peaceful coexistence for Rohingya response until their dignified repatriation to Myanmar.

Issuing a statement on the eve of Rohingya influx's third year, the forum said political process for dignified repatriation of Myanmar nationals who fled persecution should be prioritised.

Besides, authorities concerned should ensure transparency in aid management, said the forum, a network of 50 local and national NGOs working in Cox's Bazar.

CCNF reiterated its demands for all-out efforts from the United Nations, international NGOs and government to expedite dignified repatriation.

If repatriation of more than one million Rohingya refugees starts tomorrow, it will take over one decade, it said.

"So, they should not be kept sitting idle. They should be given pre-fabricated shelter, education and income-generating training to facilitate their human dignity," it added.

All sub-offices of intentional agencies should be shifted to Dhaka or Ukhiya to reduce journey costs to camps and reduce pressure on Cox's Bazar town, the forum said.

It said humanitarian workers should be given 24-hour access to refugee camps, so they can carry out activities against drug dealing, human trafficking, gender violence, and especially extremism, in the evening.

There should be aid transparency with disaggregated figures periodically, so there can be public monitoring of management costs and direct input costs centring refugees and host communities, it added.

Akij Footwear MD Sheikh Momin dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Sheikh Momin Uddin, managing director of Akij Footwear and SAF Industries Ltd, died of Covid-19 while undergoing treatment at Ad-Din Hospital in Dhaka yesterday. He was 63 years old.

Momin was the second son of the group's founder late Sheikh Akij Uddin. He was admitted to the hospital in Moghbazar on August 12 after being infected with the virus, confirmed Shikh Afluddin, Jashore-1 MP and younger brother of the deceased.

In the 1980s, Momin took charge of the abandoned SAF leather factory in Abhaynagar of Jashore and modernised it to become one of the largest leather factories in the country.

He won the National Export Trophy (Gold) for three consecutive years in 2009, 2010, and 2011. His first janaza was held at the hospital premises. His second namaz-e-zanaza will be held at ASF Industries premises today, followed by another one at his ancestral home in Bejerdanga area of Jashore. He will be laid to rest beside his father.



11 of 'mugger gang' arrested in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They formed a group of 11, and every evening, used to meet and discuss where and how to mug people. As part of their plans, the gang used to position themselves in an area of the capital and cautiously follow their target.

According to police, one day, they even posed as detectives to mug a person.

Their series of muggings finally ended after police arrested them all in the last few days, while investigating a case filed with Kotwali Police Station, said Saiful Alam Muzahid, assistant commissioner (Kotwali zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

The official said they came to know about the gang during investigation of a mugging incident that happened in Kotwali area on August 17.

On that day, the gang -- impersonating detectives -- mugged Tk 55,000 from a fabric trader.

The arrestees are Sarwar Hossain, Dulal, Anwar Gulda, Ameer, Nasir Hawlader, Emon alias Kajol Kumar Dey, Iqbal, Sohag Khan, Jakir Hossain, Sumon and Ramzan.

They were arrested from different areas at various times. Of the arrestees, Sohag, Iqbal and Dulal have already given confessional statements before magistrates, while the rest were on four-day remand, said Saiful.

Police seized a pair of handcuffs and two jackets with inscriptions of detectives from their possession, the officer said.

They are all accused in cases with different police stations.



Dhaka Medical College Hospital's outpatient department is back to its usual condition, as crowds gather to see physicians in the morning. While everyone showed up wearing face masks, social distancing remained a far cry amid the chaos. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Jute workers demand reopening of mills

Block roads in Khulna, Tangail

STAR REPORT

Hundreds of workers and different organisations took to the streets in Khulna and Tangail yesterday, demanding immediate reopening of jute mills under government arrangement and declaration of jute as a national asset.

In Khulna, under the banner of "Paatkol Rokkhaiy Sommilito Nagorik Parishad", they held a sit-in programme, blocking the BDC Road near Notun Rasta intersection. Workers of nine jute mills participated in the programme that began around noon, reports our Khulna correspondent.

Kudrat-e-Khuda, convener of the Parishad, said this movement is not a matter of a day but a lengthy process. "Through our movement, we want the government to reopen the mills under its own arrangement instead of shutting those down or handing over to public-private partnership," he said.

On August 16 and 17, the Parishad brought out processions in the city in order to press home their demands.

In Tangail, different organisations formed a human chain in front of Tangail Press Club around 11am over similar demands, reports our correspondent. They also placed a 15-point proposal in this regard.

The programme was organised under the banner of "Jatiya Krishak Samity" and "Bangladesh Khet Mojur Union". Later, they submitted a memorandum along with their demands to the prime minister through the deputy commissioner.

Their demands include protecting jute farmers, ensuring right price for jute, restarting state-owned jute mills and forming social movements for saving jute industry.

Non-smoke tobacco companies don't disclose ingredient

Say UBINIG and Prabartana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Maximum non-smoke tobacco companies don't disclose the ingredients used to make their products, said speakers at a webinar jointly organised by UBINIG and Narigrantha Prabartana yesterday.

Disclosing ingredients are obligatory according to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco control, speakers said at the webinar where findings of a research project were presented. The project was conducted by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Executive Director of UBINIG Farida Akhter presented the findings. The study found that 62 percent Zarda brands have no ingredient information on the packaging, she said. She alleged that at least 12 brands export their tobacco to Europe and America via various Indian companies.

For the study, an organisation named Tamak Birodhi Nari Jote (Tabinaj) collected 109 brands of Zarda. Out of these, only 41 brands disclosed information on top of the packaging.

The information is significant, Farida said, as tobacco product ingredients may affect public health in various ways.

Rumana Huq, of Dhaka University's Economic Research Bureau, said accurate information of smokeless tobacco companies are not available.

"The government earns only Tk 4 million from this informal sector, when in reality the sector is much bigger," she said.

"In the fiscal year 2018-19, customs duty on smokeless tobacco was withdrawn, but the reason behind this is unclear," said Rumana Haq.

Several journalists, NGO representatives, and members of Tabinaj from different districts were present at the webinar.

BDR CARNAGE CASE

Delay in delivery of verdict copy halts final disposal

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Neither the defence nor the state could file appeal with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the High Court verdict in the 2009 BDR carnage case, although HC verdict's full text was released seven months ago.

The defence and state sides of the sensational case could not submit the appeal as they are yet to get the certified copy of the HC judgement from the office concerned of the court.

SC Spokesman Md Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star recently that the copy section has been working to deliver the certified copy.

He, however, could not specifically say when the parties will be provided the copy.

Contacted, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam earlier told this newspaper that the government will appeal to the Appellate Division against parts of the HC verdict that acquitted the accused, and seek due punishment for them.

The AG said he requested the authorities concerned of the HC to deliver the certified copy at a minimum cost as the official cost of a copy is around Tk 1.3 lakh which the convicted accused may not afford.

An HC official concerned, requesting anonymity, told this correspondent that no decision was made to reduce the cost of the certified copy of the HC verdict as the authorities concerned of the Supreme

Court and government are involved in this issue.

He could not specifically say how much time will be needed to resolve it.

The HC on January 8 released the 29,059-page-full text of its verdict, that confirmed death penalty for 139 accused and upheld life imprisonment of 185 others for their involvement in the atrocities and massacre at the BDR Pilkhana headquarters in 2009.

The verdict is one of the largest in the world, in terms of accused involved -- 846 and numbers of pages.

"We have applied to the 'copy section' of the High Court for the certified copy of its BDR verdict, after the court [HC] announced the verdict in November 2017. We also communicated with the department after the HC released the full text of the verdict on January 8 this year. But we are yet to get any certified copy of the verdict," Advocate Aminul Islam, a defence lawyer for more than 400 accused of the case, told The Daily Star in the first week of July.

He said the authorities concerned of the HC recently estimated that the cost for a certified copy may be more than Tk 3 lakh.

He said the convicted accused will decide after receiving the certified copy whether they will file appeals individually or collectively.

The defence lawyer said the convicted of the BDR mutiny case, including the 69 accused, who got

acquittal, have been suffering in jail for more than 11 years and they don't know how long they will have to suffer as the case has not been finally disposed of by the Appellate Division.

Replying to a question, Advocate Aminul Islam said another case -- filed under the Explosive Substances Act -- in connection with the mutiny at the BDR headquarters in February, 2009 is still pending with a Dhaka court.

The trial proceedings of this explosives case -- in which the 69 accused are involved -- are now at the stage of recording statements from the witnesses, he added.

The trial court is scheduled to record the statements on September 7.

"We will move a bail petition on behalf of the 69 before the trial court on September 7," said the defence lawyer.

"Appeals will have to be filed in 30 days after receipt of the certified copies of the High Court judgement. Later, the Supreme Court may set a date to start hearing. The chief justice may constitute a bench for hearing and disposing of the appeals in this particular case," he said.

The mutiny on February 25-26, 2009 left the nation shocked -- as details of the unthinkable cruelty perpetrated at the Pilkhana headquarters of the paramilitary force emerged.

BDR was later renamed as Border Guard Bangladesh (BCB).

Human chain against MP attacked in port city



At least 15 people were injured when alleged supporters of Ctg-16 MP Mostafizur Rahman attacked the human chain.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A human chain, organised by Chattogram Muktiyoddha Command, demanding action against a lawmaker supposedly for his derogatory comments on a freedom fighter, came under attack at Chattogram Press Club yesterday.

Alleged supporters of Chattogram-16 MP Mostafizur Rahman attacked the gathering at 11:30am, leaving scores of people with minor injuries.

Abdur Razzak, finance secretary of Chattogram district (south) Muktiyoddha Command, alleged that the MP "dishonoured" freedom fighter Ali Ashraf over personal enmity and deprived him of state honour during his burial on July 27.

"After Ali's death, MP Mostafizur told local news portals that there was no incident relating to the Liberation War in Banshkhali, so we gathered to protest his comment," he said.

At least 15 participants of the human chain got injured in the attack, which was planned and instigated by Tazul Islam, assistant personal secretary of the MP, he further alleged.

Officer-in-Charge Md Mohsin of Kotwali Police Station said on information, police brought the situation under control and arrested three from the spot. A case has been filed.

This correspondent repeatedly tried to reach Tazul for comments, but he did not receive the phone calls.

Myanmar must

FROM PAGE 3

"The government has placed restrictions on mobile internet communications across eight townships in Rakhine State, and one in neighboring Chin State, making delivery of humanitarian aid even more difficult and depriving civilians of information. The government has not granted UN agencies and humanitarian groups unrestricted and sustained access to Rakhine State, heightening the burdens on ethnic populations in need," the statement said.

The global rights watchdog said that Bangladesh government had organised several official repatriation attempts which failed because refugees have been unwilling to return, saying they feared persecution and abuse in Myanmar.

"Refugees who have spoken to Human Rights Watch overwhelmingly express a desire to return to their homes in Myanmar once it is safe; when they have citizenship and freedom of movement; and when there is genuine accountability for atrocities," reiterated the statement.

Meanwhile, conditions in the camps in Bangladesh are deteriorating, HRW added.

"While Bangladesh commendably opened its borders to the Rohingya fleeing atrocities, the government's policies over the past year have put refugees' lives at serious risk and violated their basic rights," alleged HRW.

Bangladesh began building barbed wire fencing and guard towers around the refugee camps despite opposition by UN and other humanitarian agencies, which is a violation to their rights to freedom of

movement, HRW said.

"Refugees expressed fears that the fencing would restrict their ability to obtain essential services, make it impossible to flee in case of emergency, and create significant barriers for contacting relatives in other camps," pointed out the statement.

"For the past three years they have denied access to basic accredited education to the over 450,000 Rohingya children in the camps," it said.

The statement also spoke about the lack of digital rights of the Rohingya population.

"Nearly a year ago, the Bangladesh government, in response to a peaceful demonstration in Kutupalong camp commemorating 'Rohingya genocide awareness day', shut off all internet access in the refugee camps, directed mobile phone carrier companies to stop selling SIM cards to Rohingya, and confiscated thousands of SIM cards from refugees. Aid workers said this has seriously hampered their capacity to provide emergency health services, provide timely and accurate information about the virus, and rapidly coordinate essential measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the camps," it said.

"Concerned governments should ramp up support for the refugees in Bangladesh while issuing targeted sanctions against Myanmar for failing to create the necessary conditions for the refugees to finally go home," concluded the statement, quoting Adams.

13 lakh yaba pills seized from Bay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday claimed to have seized 13 lakh pieces of yaba pills and arrested two Rohingyas from the Bay of Bengal in Cox's Bazar.

"We were following the movement of a trawler since Saturday. On Sunday, we chased them at deep sea. As authorities hoisted local cautionary signal number four at sea due to bad weather, the smugglers were forced to come to shore and we arrested them," Maj Mehedi Hasan, deputy director of Rab-15, told The Daily Star.

The Rab official seized the contraband items while searching the trawler, he added.

Mohammad Aiaz (34) of 13 Balukhali rohingya camp and Mohammad Billal (45) of South Hazipara under Jhilongha union in Sadar upazila of Cox's Bazar were arrested during the raid, said officials.

United Hospital marks 14 years of service

CITY DESK

United Hospital Limited, the 500-bed multidisciplinary hospital in the capital's Gulshan, commemorated its 14th anniversary yesterday.

The day started with Quran recitation after Fazr prayers, says a press release. After Asr prayers, a special prayer was offered at the hospital to seek blessings, in presence of hospital consultants, nurses and management staff.

Mohammad Faizur Rahman, chief executive officer of the hospital, encouraged all to work as a unified team to deliver better healthcare to meet increasing patient expectations.

Shameem Ahsan new Bangladesh envoy to Italy

UNB, Dhaka

The government has appointed Md Shameem Ahsan, currently serving as the high commissioner of Bangladesh to Nigeria, as the next ambassador to Italy.

Ahsan is a career foreign service officer belonging to 11th batch of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Foreign Affairs cadre, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

He has worked in various capacities in Bangladesh missions in Kuwait, Doha, Nairobi, Rome and Washington DC. Prior to his present assignment, he served as Bangladesh Consul General in New York.

At the headquarters, he served in various capacities including as director general (external publicity) and (Europe).

IUB holds webinars marking Mujib Borsho

CITY DESK

To celebrate Mujib Borsho, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) hosted a series of webinars, as part of its various activities round the year, a press release said.

The webinars took place on August 17, 19, and 22. The sessions were held on issues such as Bangabandhu's secular ideology, dream for Bangladesh, and the country's role in geopolitics.

Education minister Dr Dipu Moni and Foreign Affairs minister A K Abdul Momen served as chief guests at the programmes. The sessions were broadcast live on IUB's YouTube and Facebook page.

At the first session, Dr Dipu Moni emphasised the role of Bangabandhu's secular ideology on imparting quality higher education to ensure overall development of the nation.

At the third session, the foreign minister highlighted Bangabandhu's pioneering role in building a progressive, all-inclusive, democratic and sovereign Bangladesh.

Luminaries such as Dr Kamal Chowdhury, Former Principal Secretary to the PM; Professor Fakrul Alam of UGC; A Matin Chowdhury, Chairman, IUB; Abdul Hai Sarker, Chairman, ESTCDT; Ambassador (Ret) Muhammad Zamir, Former Secretary & Chief Information Commissioner; Professor Nasreen Ahmed, former Pro-VC, DU; and more also discussed at the sessions.



LOST & FOUND

Policy No. 1482794 on the life of late Md. Rafiqul Islam Siddiqui issued by American Life Insurance Company (Incorporated in USA), Dhaka, is reported lost (GD Number 812, Dated 11/01/20, Uttara West Police Station, DMP, Dhaka). Anyone having any interest in the said policy should communicate immediately with the company. No claim will be considered unless substantiated within 30 days from today. D-102

অফিস স্পেস ভাড়ার বিজ্ঞপ্তি

চট্টগ্রাম সমিতি-ঢাকা, চট্টগ্রাম ভবন, ৩২ তোপখানা রোড, ঢাকা ১০০০ এর ১০তলা ভবনের ১টি ফ্লোর (২য় তলা) কমার্শিয়াল অনুমোদিত (২৯৪০ বর্গফুট) সরকারি/বেসরকারি সংস্থা/ব্যাবসা/বীমা/বাণিজ্যিক প্রতিষ্ঠানকে ভাড়া দেয়া হবে। ভবনে লিফট ও কার পার্কিং এর সুবিধা আছে। আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠান/ব্যক্তি সরাসরি নিম্নে বর্ণিত ঠিকানা/ফোন নাম্বারে যোগাযোগ করতে পারেন।

চট্টগ্রাম সমিতি-ঢাকা, চট্টগ্রাম ভবন, ১০ম তলা, ৩২ তোপখানা রোড, ঢাকা ১০০০। ফোন: ৯৫৫৪৯৯৪, ৯৫৬৮৯৫৪, ০১৯১-০১৯৯৮৮, ০১৯৮৭-৩৬৯১১১

Dream of a

FROM PAGE 3

Since then, Hafiza's application for repatriation back to the camps has been "under process".

"I just want my daughter back home with me. I wish now that I had never tried to get her married. I just wanted her to have a better life in another country."

According to Razia Sultana, who is also the founder of Rohingya Women Welfare, the promise of marriage and a better life is one of the most common ways to lure young girls out of the camps and into sex slavery.

"We try very hard to make families aware of the dangers of using these trafficking routes, and ask them to focus on educating and empowering their daughters instead," she explained. "Now, there are many Rohingya women in the community who are working towards similar ends."

Shamsun Nahar, who runs a training centre in Kutupalong (with donations from expatriate Rohingyas) to teach embroidery and other crafts to Rohingya girls, is one such woman.

After she became a refugee in 2017, she received training as a psychosocial worker from an INGO, which she now employs to talk to the girls she works with.

"Our community is quite conservative and there is a tendency to marry at a young age, often as teenagers," she said. "I try very hard to engage with the girls at my centre about the dangers of early marriage, especially the health related factors."

"For most Rohingya families living as refugees in Bangladesh, the best they can hope for their daughters is to get them married to an expatriate Rohingya living in India, Malaysia or Thailand," she said.

Noor, one of the teenage girls from her centre, agreed to this point of view. At only 14 years old, she has accepted an arranged marriage to a 22-year-old Rohingya man from Malaysia as a stepping stone to a better life outside of the refugee camps. "My older sister got married at 13, so it is

only natural it be my turn now. I heard my future husband is a good man with a steady income. I am happy with this decision, I don't want to be a refugee forever," she said.

When asked how she will reach her future husband in Malaysia, Noor says their families will "find a way." While there seems to be a general level of anxiety pervading the camps over the uncertainty regarding their futures, especially in the younger generations, more and more Rohingya girls are opting to forego marriage and work within their communities instead.

"Since we started working in the refugee camps in 2017, we have seen some big changes," Erum Marium, executive director of the Brac Institute of Educational Development, told The Daily Star.

"At first the families were quite cautious about sending their daughters to the child- and adolescent-friendly spaces we had created, but a huge strength of this community is that they are very willing to engage, and over time, they were very receptive to our interventions."

"For example, despite all the restrictions and strict gender roles, a large number of women took up the roles of Myanmar language facilitators at learning centres in the camps. The Rohingya youth are a vibrant and resilient group and are very open to new opportunities," Marium added.

Rubina (15) is one such Rohingya adolescent with the hopes of working for the betterment of her community.

"Before I became a refugee, I dreamed of being a school teacher," she said. "I studied in Rakhine and even when the authorities shut my school down, my father hired a private tutor for me. I want to keep studying, and I want to teach other Rohingya girls about the importance of being educated as well."

"I would never get married at an early age, I know my rights," she added defiantly.

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Jail Super
Shariatpur District Jail

Memo No. 58.04.6800.094.04.004.20-1182 Date: 19-08-2020

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concerned that the following tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal:

SL No.	Tender ID No.	Name of work	Publishing, closing date & time
1	485040	Supply of Unnotamaner Mashur Dal (Mota) for the period of October/2020 to September/ 2021	17-Aug-2020 10:00:00 02-Sep-2020 10:15:00
2	485041	Supply of Unnotamaner Cholar Dal for the period of October/2020 to September/ 2021	17-Aug-2020 10:00:00 02-Sep-2020 10:45:00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Mahabur Rahman Sheikh
Jail Super
Shariatpur District Jail

GD-1322

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran says 'sabotage' caused Natanz nuclear site blast

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization said on Sunday that "sabotage" was the cause of an explosion that damaged the Natanz nuclear facility last month. "Security investigations confirm this was sabotage and what is certain is that an explosion took place in Natanz," said spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi. "But how this explosion took place and with what materials... will be announced by security officials in due course," he was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA. Iran said after the July 2 incident that it had determined its cause but declined to release details due to "security concerns". Natanz governor Ramezan-Ali Ferdowsi said a fire had broken out at the site, but the country's atomic agency said it caused no casualties or radioactive pollution. At the time, IRNA published an editorial warning Iran's arch-foes against hostile actions, saying unnamed Israeli social media accounts had claimed the Jewish state was behind it.

Trump's media pugilist Conway steps down

Kellyanne Conway, a long-serving advisor to President Donald Trump known for sparring with reporters, announced Sunday she will step down to focus on her family. Conway, 53, has been at Trump's side since day one, managing his 2016 campaign that catapulted the reality TV star into the world's most powerful office. But the past four years of singular loyalty to Trump, including defending him on TV and with informal "gaggle" with the press, have taken a toll on the combative spin doctor who coined the phrase "alternative facts." While she made a name for herself as one of Trump's sharpest



defenders, her husband, prominent Washington lawyer George Conway, is a strident critic of the president, repeatedly and loudly questioning his mental fitness for office. "I will be transitioning from the White House at the end of this month," she said in a statement.

Bollywood's Bachchan back at work

Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan is back at work filming India's version of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" following a bout of Covid-19, while authorities eased coronavirus curbs on movie and TV shoots. A blanket ban on studio activity in March dealt a huge blow to India's cinema and TV industries, hitting not just Bollywood — the world's most prolific film factory — but also regional movie-making hubs and productions for television and streaming platforms. In June shooting was allowed again but with strict rules, including a ban on actors and crew aged over 65 — including Bachchan, 77 — until a court overturned that earlier this month. Late Sunday the government eased the regulations but still insisted that common facilities must be sanitised "as far as possible".

SOURCE: REUTERS, AFP



Armed policemen stand guard as survivors and family members of victims of the Christchurch mosque attacks wait in a queue to enter the Christchurch High Court ahead of the Australian white supremacist Brenton Tarrant's sentencing hearing in Christchurch, New Zealand yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Fairly likely' Navalny was poisoned: Berlin

AFP, BERLIN

The German government said yesterday it is "fairly likely" that Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny, who is currently being treated in a Berlin hospital, was poisoned.

The 44-year-old was brought to Berlin on Saturday from Siberia, where he fell ill on a flight with what Russian doctors have blamed on a metabolic disorder.

"We are dealing with a patient who it is fairly likely was poisoned," Angela Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert told reporters.

The Kremlin critic, Russia's best-known opposition figure, was rushed into intensive care on Thursday after his plane made an emergency landing in the Siberian city of Omsk.

Aides have said they believe Navalny was poisoned with a cup of tea, pointing the blame at President Vladimir Putin.

The Omsk regional health ministry said Saturday that caffeine and alcohol were found in Navalny's urine, but "no convulsive or synthetic poisons were detected".

"The suspicion is... that somebody poisoned Mr Navalny -- that somebody seriously poisoned Mr Navalny -- which, unfortunately, there are some examples of in recent Russian history, so the world takes this suspicion very seriously," Seibert said. Navalny was flown to Berlin on a plane chartered by the German NGO Cinema for Peace, an initiative financed by private donations.

US POLICE SHOOTING OF BLACK MAN

Protests erupt in Wisconsin

Victim hospitalised in serious condition; curfew imposed

REUTERS, WASHINGTON

Protests erupted in Kenosha in the US state of Wisconsin after police shot an apparently unarmed Black man multiple times in the back, according to the state governor, prompting authorities to impose a curfew.

The incident on Sunday was likely to add to continuing outrage and protests in the United States and abroad against police brutality and racism since the death on May 25 of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African-American man, after a white police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

The victim in Kenosha, identified by Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers as Jacob Blake, was hospitalized in serious condition.

A video circulating on social media and cited by the US media showed a



man walking towards a car followed by two officers and one of them shooting him as he opens the car door.

Soon afterward, multiple fires were set at the scene by a crowd that gathered to protest against the incident.

Social media posts showed crowds marching down streets of Kenosha, a city of around 100,000 people on Lake Michigan about 65 miles (100 km) north of Chicago, and throwing Molotov cocktails

and bricks at police officers.

Police responded by imposing a city-wide curfew until 7:00 am local time.

The shooting occurred at around 5 p.m. as officers were responding to what they called a "domestic incident". The victim was immediately taken to a hospital by the police, according to a Kenosha police department statement. No further explanation was given by the police as to what led to the shooting.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice said early yesterday that officers involved in the shooting had been placed on administrative leave.

The state's Division of Criminal Investigation said it would aim to issue a report to prosecutors within 30 days, according to US media reported.

Trump 'walked away' from Covid crisis: Biden

AFP, WASHINGTON

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said Sunday he blames Donald Trump for "walking away" as Covid-19 ravaged the country, in a televised interview alongside running mate Kamala Harris on the eve of the Republican convention.

The president, who is trailing Biden in polls, has been heavily criticized for his response to the pandemic, during which he has pushed for lockdown restrictions to be lifted early, been hesitant to embrace face masks, touted treatments not supported by medical experts and insisted the virus will just "disappear."

"I don't blame him for the current crisis," Biden told ABC as the US neared 5.7 million infections and 177,000 deaths, by far the most in absolute terms of any country in the world. "I blame him for walking away and not dealing with solutions."

With the economy in shambles after



pandemic-related lockdowns, Biden said again that the only way to get back on track was to bring the virus under control.

He vowed to heed scientific advice -- even if that would mean shutting country down once more. Biden slammed the segment of Americans who cite their "freedom" as they still resist wearing masks, despite evidence suggesting such barriers are one of the best ways to break transmission of Covid-19.

Workers in Qatar still facing abuses:HRW

AFP, DOHA

Qatar's massive migrant workforce is still being exploited by employers who withhold wages, threaten expulsion, and deduct pay, leaving some staff unable to eat, Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

Widespread abuses persist even after Qatar -- where more than 90 percent of the 2.75 population are migrant workers -- pledged to clean up its act following a torrent of criticism of its labour laws when it won the contest to host the 2022 World Cup a decade ago.

"Independent employers, as well as those operating labour supply companies, frequently delay, withhold, or arbitrarily deduct workers' wages," the New York-based rights group said in a report.

HRW said it interviewed more than 93 migrant workers working for more than 60 companies or employers and reviewed legal documents as part of its investigation.

"Employers often withhold contractually guaranteed overtime payments and end-of service benefits, and they regularly violate their contracts with migrant workers with impunity," it said. Qatari authorities have taken numerous steps to protect workers -- including the creation of an electronic Wage Protection System meant to detect unpaid salaries.



A news cameraman covers the LNU Lightning Complex Fire as it engulfs trees and brush in Lake County, California, US on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department, Sunamgonj
www.eedmoe.gov.bd

Tender Notice No. 03/e-Tender/NGSS/EED/Sun/2020-2021

Date: 23/08/2020

Invitation for e-Tender (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works mentioned below under Education Engineering Department, Sunamgonj District.

Sl No.	Tender/Proposal Package No.	Tender ID	Name of works/package description	Last date & time of selling documents	Last date & time of submission documents
1	e-Tender-1/NGSS/XEN/EED/Sun/2020-2021, Date: 23/8/2020	485977	Construction of 5-storied Academic Building with 5-storied Foundation Ground floor open in/c. Sanitary Water Supply & Internal Electrification Works at Golha High School, Dharmapasha, Sunamgonj	20/09/2020 Time: 17:00	21/09/2020 Time: 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents of said packages from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks' branches up to 20/09/2020 at time 17.00pm. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Nazrul Hakim
Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Sunamgonj
E-mail: ee_sun@eedmoe.gov.bd

GD-1323

সাধারণ বীমা কর্পোরেশন
ভাড়া আদায় ও প্রদান সেল (৩য় তলা)
৩৩, দিলকুশা বা/এ, ঢাকা-১০০০।

অফিস ভাড়া বিজ্ঞপ্তি

স্বনামধন্য রাষ্ট্রীয় প্রতিষ্ঠান সাধারণ বীমা কর্পোরেশনের ২৪-২৫, দিলকুশা বা/এ, অবস্থিত সাধারণ বীমা সদন-এ অফিস স্পেস সরকারী/আধা-সরকারী/স্বায়ত্তশাসিত/স্বনামধন্য ব্যবসায়ী/ব্যক্তি মালিকানাধীন প্রতিষ্ঠান-এর নিকট ১লা নভেম্বর-২০২০ হতে ভাড়া দেয়া হবে। ভাড়া নিতে আগ্রহীগণকে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে নিম্নঠিকানায় যোগাযোগ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে :

ভবনের অবস্থান ও ঠিকানা	জায়গার পরিমাণ
সাধারণ বীমা সদন, ৬ষ্ঠ তলা ২৪-২৫, দিলকুশা বা/এ, ঢাকা।	৬৪০ বর্গফুট

মোহাম্মদ মনিরুল ইসলাম
ম্যানেজার
ভাড়া আদায় ও প্রদান সেল
(৩য় তলা)
মোবাইল : ০১৫৫৩-৩৫২০৯৫
০১৮১৮-২০৩৫১২

মোঃ নজরুল ইসলাম
সহকারী জেনারেল ম্যানেজার
দাবী ও ভাড়া (৭ম তলা)
ফোন : ৯৫৬১২৯০

খসরু দস্তগীর আলম
ডেপুটি জেনারেল ম্যানেজার
সম্পত্তি, সংস্থাপন, আইন ও ভাড়া
(৪র্থ তলা)
ফোন : ৯৫৫৩৩৯৩

LAW DESK WEBINAR

Challenges to women’s rights during pandemic

Bangladesh, along with rest of the world, has been facing unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis in general the lockdown and restrictions associated with it, have had a gendered impact, affecting vulnerable women and girls disproportionately. Different forms of violence against women like dowry-related incidents, acid attacks, rape and others have significantly increased during this pandemic. In a statement issued on 6 April 2020, the Executive Director of UN Women has termed the violence against women as a shadow pandemic. In this backdrop, Law & Our Rights, The Daily Star invited a panel of experts to shed light on the shortcomings of the existing laws

measures to reduce and prevent violence against women and girls. On a national level, we have different laws which have been enacted as a response to the rising incidents of violence against women. Bangladesh has enacted two different special legislations to tackle acid violence. Punishments for rape has been raised in the Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain 2000 and laws have been enacted regarding domestic violence as well. Although the laws appear to be sufficient, they have many loopholes and therefore they do not adequately provide redress to the victims. When these laws get implemented, their inherent inadequacies become apparent. It is important to ask

RINA ROY
Programme Director,
Manusher Jonno
Foundation

Manusher Jonno Foundation conducted a telephonic survey from April to July 2020. In July, about sixty-three thousand women were contacted and it was found that besides an increase in domestic violence, there has also been a rise in violence against child workers. The informal sector had collapsed during the first two months of the lockdown, but they slowly opened up again in July - as a result, more children are being sent to work as domestic aides. The social insecurity, poverty and the closing down of schools have exacerbated the crisis and have led to a rise in child marriage as well. Instances of marital rape have also gone up.



We need to increase implementation of research and identify whether the implementation mechanisms of the government, such as the One-stop Crisis Centre (OCC), is working properly. In cases of crisis, when the usual social-support resources collapse, we need to identify what alternative social-support mechanisms can be resorted to. Women’s access to menstrual hygiene and contraception is also a significant area that we need to address. Our research focus can be shifted to these areas. We should also include and analyse the key drivers for the perpetrators in our research and try to find out the factors behind the increased incidence of violence, among other things. Our prevention measures should focus on possible perpetrators and include men and boys in awareness raising activities.

converted to COVID-19 treatment facilities. As a result, it has become paramount that we question the adequacy of the state’s actions in this regard. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) can act proactively while still staying within its mandate; for example, many states have recognised domestic violence as a ‘shadow pandemic’ in their national strategies and plans of actions. Nothing similar has been done in Bangladesh. Many research works have shown that domestic violence has a great economic cost. According to conservative estimates, a country loses about 2.5% of its GDP due to domestic violence. We expect the NHRC to push the government to undertake necessary policy measures and make proper budgetary allocation for domestic violence prevention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Prevention measures for violence against women should focus on possible perpetrators and incorporate awareness activities for men and boys.

» State actors should be held accountable as to the lack of gender-sensitivity in the national emergency response strategies for COVID-19.

» Citizen research can be used as a means of strengthening public participation and assisting the NHRC.
- » The National Action Plans and Policies pertaining to violence against women should be revised to include the impacts of the pandemic.

» The State should ensure that girls have access to education and continue schooling; special measures should be taken to provide protection to those who drop out of schools.

» Domestic violence should be recognised as a ‘shadow pandemic’ as a preliminary step to facilitate
- the assessment of the harms caused by domestic violence.

» Bangladesh’s reservation to CEDAW articles 2 and 16(1)(c) should be removed.

» The government should simultaneously work to remove the inadequacies in laws and ensure capacity-building and gender-sensitisation of the relevant implementing stakeholders under relevant laws, including members of law enforcement and the judiciary.

and policies pertaining to violence against women and share their recommendations for the stakeholders. Emraan Azad, from The Daily Star and also a Lecturer in Law, Bangladesh University of Professionals, moderated the discussion.

TASLIMA YASMIN
Assistant Professor,
Department of Law,
University of Dhaka



Bangladesh has ratified an array of international human rights instruments such as ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDAW, etc. We are obligated under the international instruments to take appropriate

whether the stakeholders have been sufficiently consulted and whether their consultations have been incorporated in the laws. We also need to pay attention to whether the implementing stakeholders have the necessary knowledge and training. The patriarchal premise permeating different sectors of society creates manifold obstacles in attaining justice for the women; this, among others, also needs to be taken into consideration. We are lagging in ensuring capacity-building and gender-sensitisation among the enforcement bodies. Our policies do not prioritise these issues; the national emergency response to COVID-19 also does not sufficiently address the needs of women and girls.

Our field-level workers are in regular contact with many women and based on our mandate, we have maintained such correspondence to try and keep track of the condition of women across the country. Our staff has also attempted to provide counselling to women over telephone. While there are many challenges and drawbacks of telephone surveys, we consider such correspondence to be a manifestation of our mandate in terms of supporting them in a situation where their access to traditional social-support systems and legal redress has largely been restricted, due to the unprecedented crisis.

DR. SAYED SAIKH IMTIAZ
Former Chairman,
Department of Women
and Gender Studies,
University of Dhaka



As researchers, we must be cautious about collecting information through digital/telephonic surveys. We need to be mindful of whether the interviewees will be subjected to newer and additional violence due to their participation. Most of the perpetrators of such violence are intimate family members, and the international community has reiterated the need for such cautiousness.

DR. FAUSTINA PEREIRA
Head, Legal
Empowerment
and Sustainable
Development, Center
for Peace and Justice,
BRAC University



Before the pandemic, the UN women’s surveys showed that 1 in 3 women has been subjected to violence, but this has intensified since the pandemic has started. 15% of women who had never been subjected to violence before, have been victims of violence during the pandemic. Children, elder people, differently abled people, and domestic workers also reside in the marginalised section within families. Rates of pregnancy have also gone up – we cannot but ponder whether it is entirely resultant of consensual sexual relations.

When we discuss the matters of violence against women and girls, we look largely towards the contribution of non-state actors, i.e. NGOs. In case of lawlessness in public sectors, we look to the state but in case of private incidents like domestic violence, we do not automatically look at the state – which is where in fact the primary responsibility lies. From the month of March to July, the access to justice in case of violence against women and girls was restricted. Women were told to show a COVID-19 negative certificate before providing them shelters. Many OCCs have been

DR. NOMITA HALDER, NDC
Member, National
Human Rights
Commission



The NHRC has expressed its concerns regarding the rise in violence against women. The NHRC acts as a bridge between the government and the people; it cannot provide redress independently. The government and concerned ministries are to provide the necessary assistance to the victims through legislative and policy measures. The NHRC’s dedicated team is active and has maintained correspondence with relevant stakeholders amid the pandemic.

The NHRC has many constraints – it works with limited resources to tackle a wide variety of issues. However, it is providing legal assistance to women through its panel lawyers. We have several national strategies and action plans that address violence against women. The NHRC has also addressed the relevant ministry to restrict the provision of relief measures to those who have been identified as perpetrators of domestic violence. However, we need to change the mindset of the society before we can properly implement the rights women are entitled to under the existing laws.

THE REPORT IS PREPARED BY LAW DESK, THE DAILY STAR.

LAW OPINION

Force majeure could be the way out from coronavirus fallout

M SHAHIDUL HAQUE AND
MD ABUL KALAM AZAD

The whole world is currently in a war against the novel coronavirus, a potential threat to a stable and growing economy. The havoc wreaked by the virus has pushed people to go into quarantine and contact by and large with the outside world is at standstill. Many people are without work and the country has experienced a closure of offices, businesses and development work for nearly three months. This essay on force majeure is intended to identify the ways in how to get out of this crisis by quickly cleaning up the stains and repairing damages to our economy and life. Before we deal with it, it is better to determine the primary domain of this essay.

Here we will address questions like: what is force majeure and why is this provision necessary in an agreement? Can force majeure be applied even if it is not mentioned in an agreement? Can we provide immunity to parties to the causes arising out of an ongoing pandemic? Can the parties, irrespective of their origin, be treated on the basis of equality? Can we attempt to find an acceptable solution for quick resumption of stalled work or supply of goods and services creating win-win situation for parties concerned? As opposed to the idea of supervening impossibilities, will the provisions of the Contract Act, 1872 help resolve force majeure during this difficult time of pandemic? We will attempt to answer these questions and more in the following paragraphs.

To being with, the roles, responsibilities and obligations of the parties which are clearly mentioned in a contract are determined through numerous discussions and negotiations. But force majeure takes its place in an agreement in general terms as a separate provision because it broadly means an ‘Act of God’ such as flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake or any other events or incidents not limited but including natural calamities which are beyond the control of

human beings. These are uncertain, not foreseeable and irresistible within the might of human capacity. Therefore, force majeure makes its room in an agreement to provide relief and recourse to parties to the agreement.

In order to avoid the uncertainties involved in finding a resolution, parties to agreements often prefer to provide a specific reason for force majeure along with a definition of which events shall qualify for special treatment within its purview. As the provision excuses a party from carrying out its obligations, it needs to be thought through and customised for the project in question. Care should be taken to ensure that force majeure events only relieve obligations to the extent that they prevent the party from performing them.

Force majeure as outlined above may assist the parties who are aware of it, they may take initiatives to resolve the stalemate by invoking the provision of force majeure, enjoying immunities for non-performance.

Parties to the agreement may resolve it by their conscience as the resolution of any unforeseen situation which stands on the way of fulfilment of the responsibilities of the parties, because reaching to the finality following lawful means is the first option as it can provide benefits to the parties minimising the damages. It provides the scope of application of the principle of force majeure even if it is not mentioned in an agreement.

The situation which has arisen out of this pandemic was never thought of by any human being; therefore, the parties to an agreement have no role in its aggressive presence or to its unknown disappearance if it happens by miracle. In this context, the parties for their failure of performance during the presence of current pandemic, without civil be treated as immune and keeping this in mind, the parties, mediators if appointed by the parties must not spend time as to the causes but to look forward as to resolution providing relief to the parties irrespective of their origin i.e. foreign or national, contractor or

subcontractor, etc.

Because a party to an agreement cannot enjoy an edge unless the other party knowingly agrees to it. Therefore, the standard is set to govern the provisions of an agreement reflecting equity and reciprocity, providing opportunities proportionate to the role and responsibilities of parties. The principle of equity shall be adhered to and damages caused will be shared between parties.

The pandemic has caused disruption and suspension of almost all work putting parties to the side lines and they have no other choice but to play the role of onlookers in most cases.



A committee at the national level with proper people and terms of reference can be formed so that it can find out generally acceptable terms and conditions for quick resumption of stalled performances irrespective of nature and volume of the work. The committee may work out recommendations sharing the issues with different stakeholders. Once the committee finishes its task, the government may act on it and finalise the recommendations into decisions. This shall help to set out a common feature and standard as to quick amicable resolution and resumption of works.

The Contract Act, 1872 provides how

the parties may reach to an agreement and contract, finalising a deal on any subject but it does not contain any provision on force majeure.

It is interesting to read some of the pieces on force majeure being published in esteemed newspapers these days where the theory of supervening impossibility as enumerated in section 56 of the Contract Act is mixed up. Perhaps, appreciation of both the ideas are not done applying legal mind. If we read section 56 of the Act carefully, it transpires that if parties agree to do something which is impossible, it is void. Secondly, performance becomes

uncertain in future also falls within the sphere of this section.

The differences between force majeure and theory of frustration or supervening impossibility are simple. Frustration or supervening impossibility discharges all parties from any further performance of their obligations under an agreement but force majeure provides recourse and relief as soon as the grounds of disruption of works are over and force majeure is flexible but frustration or supervening impossibilities are not. The flexibility of force majeure needs to be further explained by an example so that parties to the agreements may find some way out of the situation

created by the pandemic Covid-19. For example, suspension of Metro Rail project work at present may resume anytime as soon as either the restrictions are relaxed or normalcy of life returns. Therefore, force majeure remains outside the purview of section 56 of the Contract Act, 1872.

The stalemate that has been created by the pandemic is all pervasive and it has shaken life and livelihood, both. As of today, in absence of any vaccine to prevent the spread of the virus, precautions to reduce the threat to life and ensuring livelihoods especially of the marginalised segments of society are of paramount importance. In this backdrop, we should be careful to find out amicable settlement in between parties applying common formula to be worked out by the aforesaid committee or otherwise. With the easing of lockdown, relaxing of restrictions to movement within Bangladesh and beyond, both public and private entrepreneurs should start the process of negotiation finding amicable settlement to ensure resumption of work without further delay to mitigate the losses caused by the pandemic.

The achievable targets are to minimise job cuts, create further opportunities for employment, revamping the economic indexes, plugging the sliding down of people to the next tier, elevating Bangladesh to middle-income country status. The destination of our post pandemic journey should be capable of maintaining pace of repairing likely immense losses due to Covid-19 within a short time so that Bangladesh can fulfil the challenges of protecting lives and livelihoods of its citizens. We have no time to waste and that is why we should follow the principle of ‘the sooner, the better’.

THE WRITERS ARE FORMER SENIOR SECRETARY OF LEGISLATIVE & PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS DIVISION, MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS, AND FORMER PRINCIPAL COORDINATOR (SDGS) & FORMER PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER, RESPECTIVELY.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA TUESDAY AUGUST 25, 2020, BHADRA 10, 1427 BS

Has the world lost interest in the victims of genocide?

Rohingya repatriation remains a far cry

IT is three years today since the beginning of the mass exodus of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh from their homeland in the state of Rakhine in Myanmar, in order to flee from what has been called the worst genocide of this century. Since August 25, 2017, almost 750,000 Rohingya refugees have taken shelter in Bangladesh to escape persecution in their own country, bringing the refugee population in Cox's Bazar to around 1.1 million. Over the last three years, Bangladesh has had to bear the greatest brunt of the worst humanitarian crisis in recent times, resulting from the execution of Myanmar military junta's long term plans of denuding the area of the Rohingya population. Myanmar's pogrom of an ethnic minority has been acknowledged as an act of genocide and ethnic cleansing by the UN and most of the countries of the world. However, nothing has been done to rein in the Myanmar military. All efforts to see the safe return of the refugees to their own country have met with utter failure, thanks to Myanmar's subterfuge. Every time when it appeared that some progress in this regard was being made, Myanmar scuttled the prospect by creating more unrest in Rakhine. Regrettably, the role of China and Russia has contributed to a large extent to Myanmar's intransigence, encouraging its military to ride roughshod over international opinion. Every single resolution at the Security Council to take strict action against Myanmar has failed in the face of consistent opposition by these two countries. The Rohingyas have become victims of geopolitics mixed with blatant economic consideration. As of today, more than a hundred thousand Rohingyas are stuck inside ghettos in Myanmar, living in the most miserable conditions. And the world watches silently while the Myanmar military continues targeting the Rohingya on the flimsy excuse that they are conducting anti-insurgency operations. And while the Rohingyas in Myanmar are under threat of extinction, those on our side of the border are living an uncertain, indefinite half-life, with no hope of a change in their circumstances anytime soon. Meanwhile the host community has become increasingly frustrated, as the costs of living in the area has soared and neither the economy nor the land can bear the brunt of the pressure. It is thus discouraging to see the matter virtually on the backburner and no longer on the international agenda. While there has been no dearth of assurances from our friends, far and near, of help in the repatriation process, nothing tangible has been done. The international community can ill afford to remain silent any longer.


78,043 expatriates return to further insecurity

Have we done enough to mitigate their sufferings?

MIGRANT workers have been among the first victims of the global economic fallout of Covid-19 and latest data by the expatriates' welfare ministry shows that a large number of them have been compelled to return to Bangladesh over the last four months. At least 78,043 Bangladeshi workers returned home from 26 countries since April, according to statistics published by the ministry on August 23. Of them, 44,695 returned from nine countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Malaysia, the Maldives and Iraq, as they either lost their jobs or there was no prospect of employment in their host countries. As many as 4,732 female workers were also compelled to return home. From the beginning of the pandemic, migration experts have been apprehensive of its impact on migrant workers, their households, communities and the national economy at large. We, too, have written at length about the plight of those forced to come back home empty-handed, in debt and/or to a life of poverty, insecurity and unemployment, and urged the government to involve all stakeholders to come up with a comprehensive rehabilitation plan for these returnees. While the government created a Tk 200 crore fund for giving soft loans to returnees and the family members of those who died from Covid-19, and a separate loan package of Tk 500 crore for the expatriates who lost jobs amid the pandemic, experts note that these allocations are woefully inadequate given the far-reaching impact of the fallout on households and communities dependent on these migrants' incomes. In the proposed national budget for 2020-21, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment was allocated Tk 641 crore, which is one of the lowest allocations among major sectors. We appreciate that the government is documenting the number of people who are returning, based on which, we hope, it will design appropriate training and rehabilitation packages for all concerned. It is also imperative that the government document the violations of labour rights in the host countries and ensure that the wages and other dues of returnees denied by their employers are recovered through diplomatic negotiations. The ministry has assured the media that they will be training migrant workers to meet changing demands in a post-Covid international labour market, but their success will depend on how well designed and accessible the trainings are and how resourcefully the ministry is able to find job opportunities abroad in the near future. The government has so far maintained that the migration issue is "under control" but we reiterate what we've been saying all along—there is no room for complacency when it comes to such a crucial sector and the lives of millions of returnees and their families. Migrant workers and their families are yet to be included in the government's social safety net programmes, which it must revisit and address in an urgent basis.

Living with floods and reducing vulnerability in Bangladesh

MACRO MIRROR



FAHMIDA KHATUN

EVERY year, Bangladesh suffers from floods that cause loss of life, livelihoods, crops and property. However, in certain years, due to heavy rainfall and the flow of upstream water, floods become devastating. The floods of 1988, 1998, 2004, 2007 and 2017 are examples of when Bangladesh has seen the severity of floods in terms of duration and damages. The floods of 2020 have also emerged as one of those natural disasters, since the shocks are being felt by a large number of people for a prolonged period. It has been more than 40 days since the northern, north-eastern and south-eastern regions of Bangladesh are experiencing floods. Jamalpur, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts are reported to be among the most affected, while Rajbari, Bogura and Manikganj are the moderately affected districts. In more than 33 districts of the country, about six percent of the total population of Bangladesh have been affected so far.

The impact of floods is multi-dimensional, which encompasses economic and social aspects. Although floods are still ongoing and the actual cost of damages will be estimated by the Department of Disaster Management of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief once floods are over, some preliminary reports have assessed their impacts in 2020. The early assessment by the Needs Assessment Working Group (NAWG), which is a platform for government and non-government humanitarian agencies, indicates damages in several areas. These include loss of agricultural production, fisheries, livestock and poultry, and damages to food stock, infrastructure, roads, culverts, embankments, local markets, schools and health clinics. This has resulted in not only shortages of food, but also contributed to a lack of pure drinking water and a barely functional sanitation system. Livelihood systems have been disrupted due to loss of employment and the limited scope of income earning activities. Hence, livelihood, food security and healthcare are currently the major concerns among a large number of flood-affected people. This year's floods are like a double whammy for Bangladesh since the country is fighting the coronavirus pandemic along with the rest of the world. Several people were already without jobs and income for the last few months because of Covid-19. The situation has been aggravated by the floods, especially in affected districts such as Jamalpur, Sunamganj and Netrokona, where people were already vulnerable because of the pandemic. While people had to be evacuated to shelters from their inundated and damaged homes, health protocols of Covid-19 such as physical distancing, hand wash and mask use were not maintained. This created risks of the spread of coronavirus among the flood affected people. Also, the floods

have made it difficult for people to access healthcare since mobility is restricted and healthcare services have been disrupted. Lack of healthcare facilities at the local level may worsen the coronavirus situation, in addition to the usual risk of increased waterborne diseases and infections during floods. Women, particularly pregnant women, as well as girls, children, elderly people and persons with disability, are more vulnerable due to the disrupted healthcare system. The government has initiated relief and rehabilitation measures in affected areas, but the adequacy and coverage of relief have to be expanded in view of the demand for support. The government relief measures are mostly targeted based on the level of poverty. However, during floods, people from other socioeconomic backgrounds also become susceptible. The relief needs to be distributed among those who are facing survival challenges during

others who do. This could be the case in the distribution of flood relief too. The local administration should involve non-government and community level organisations in the identification and selection of flood affected people, and also in the distribution of relief. For the sake of transparency, the local administration should publish the list of recipients so that local people can see for themselves who have received relief and who have not. The rehabilitation of food supply will require attention to both crop and non-crop sectors, including agriculture, fisheries and livestock. According to experts, the floods may persist till September. This risks Aman cultivation and food security. Therefore, the government has to procure enough rice from domestic and international markets. In case of rice imports, a realistic assessment of the need should be made to protect the interests of both farmers

and infrastructure. Reconstruction of damaged embankments have to be done regularly. Besides, some infrastructure such as culverts cause waterlogging, which have to be replaced by bridges. For effective infrastructure development, coordination among various ministries and departments—including the Ministry of Water Resources, the local government engineering department, and the roads and highways department—is necessary. The role of the Ministry of Finance is also very important since more resources are needed and timely disbursement of funds is crucial. One of the concerns regarding project implementation in Bangladesh is its cycle. The delay in the initiation of the project implementation process has been a perennial problem. However, if we want to reduce the sufferings induced by floods, the work on repairing embankments should be finished by March of the coming year.



Riding a boat, a group of students leave an inundated school compound in Lalmonirhat's Chongadar village in July.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

floods, rather than going by the poverty list. Since the impact of floods is location specific, the allocation of relief has to be based on the need of each specific locality. Moreover, the types of flood relief have to be different from the usual relief items such as cash and food. During floods, people need items such as cooked food, drinking water and medicine. Keeping in mind the coronavirus pandemic, special health related support will be needed this time as well. Ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in relief distribution is critical to make the best use of the limited resources that the country has. A common criticism of the social safety net programmes in Bangladesh is that they suffer from lack of accountability. There are both inclusion and exclusion errors in the beneficiary lists, which include many who do not need support while excluding several

and consumers. Timely decision-making on rice imports by policymakers is crucial since the rice exporting countries are likely to take restrictive measures during the pandemic period. As the impacts of natural disasters such as flood are mostly similar every year, one would expect that the recovery measures are also well known. However, after every disastrous flood, the same issues surface afresh. For example, how efficient has the early warning system been, what has been the preparations including maintenance of shelters and the evacuation system, why were the embankments not repaired in time, and why was the flawed infrastructure not abandoned already? From media reports, it is clear that crops have been damaged in places where there are no embankments. Districts with higher water levels than others have nevertheless been less affected, as they have better embankments

Each year, when the country faces floods, these issues resurface even though floods are not unusual in Bangladesh. About 17 percent of Bangladesh remains underwater throughout the year, which is needed for environmental balance. Regular floods inundate around 18 percent of Bangladesh. So, approximately 35 percent of the country is under water during regular floods. Therefore, Bangladesh will have to learn to live with this situation. Indeed, Bangladeshi people have been coping with this annual deluge historically. What is needed most is to learn how to manage floods better with minimum damage of lives and livelihoods, and how to reduce flood-induced vulnerability. Adapting to floods is the key strategy for Bangladesh and a crucial part of its policy on disaster risk reduction.

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Bangladesh My Bangladesh

A spotlight on Bangabandhu's revolutionary speeches

TABASSUM MAISHA MONA

IT is incredible how the death of one person can impact the future of a country for generations to come. In the month of August, we remember the Father of the Nation with great remorse and regret over his heinous killing as well as his unfinished life and work. In our journey "from darkness to light, from captivity to freedom, from desolation to hope"—Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's words are resolutely appended everywhere. The present generation has had the opportunity to be acquainted with the narratives of the emergence of Bangladesh in more than one form, and no doubt it will be retold many times in future too, but who could tell it better than Bangabandhu himself? The book *Bangladesh My Bangladesh*, edited by Ramendu Majumdar and published by Muktohdhara, aims to portray a critical political juncture in the history of Bangladesh by compiling some crucial excerpts from Bangabandhu's speeches and statements from 1970 to 1972. As written in the blurb of the book, these speeches "tell us a story which has been heard in bits and pieces before but never with the continuity and intensity that this volume achieves by letting readers hear it from the man himself." Excerpts of selected speeches and statements included in the book can be categorised in three phases: 1970 pre-election speeches, 1971 post-election speeches, and finally two 1972 post-liberation speeches—the 1972 speeches are limited perhaps because the book was originally published in January 1972 immediately before his release from Pakistani captivity, with the more recent one being the Bangabandhu Birth Centenary 2020 edition. To be exact, the book starts with Bangabandhu's election broadcast on October 28, 1970, and

concludes with the fiery speech he gave on his return from Pakistan on January 10, 1972. Additionally, before every speech and statement, useful analytical editorial anecdotes are included to familiarise the readers with the political state of affairs of the time. Overall, it is a well-edited publication befitting Bangabandhu's Birth Centenary celebration this year. The 1970 pre-election phase portrays Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's preparations for fulfilling the promises he made to the Bengali people at different times of his

declared in his party manifesto the need to raised a collective voice in order to gain the freedom of the people of then East Pakistan from social, political, economic and cultural exploitation. He also repeatedly showed his firm conviction and faith in majority rule. All his speeches during the period were focused towards the restoration of people's fundamental rights and the realisation of the historical Six Points Movement. History endorsed Awami League as it grabbed 151 seats out of 153 in then East

surrender". From March 1 to 25, 1971, wherever he went, he encouraged people to remain resolute and fight for their legitimate rights. The March 7 speech thus culminated in his declaring, "Our struggle this time is the struggle for independence." The final clarion call for independence came from him on March 26, with decisive instructions to the people to resist and fight until the last soldier of the Pakistan army was expelled from the sacred soil of Bangladesh. In his post-liberation speeches, Bangabandhu, like a mature statesman, said there should not be any feeling of hatred against anyone; only a feeling of satisfaction and happiness should prevail as truth had at last triumphed—an attitude that can only be compared with Nelson Mandela when apartheid came to an end in South Africa. Only great and humane leaders like Mujib and Mandela, being politicians par excellence, can act in such a way towards those who have wronged them. All of the information here is from the excerpts of the speeches compiled in the book *Bangladesh My Bangladesh*, and all of them clearly warrant my claim that Bangabandhu's speeches between October 28, 1970 and January 10, 1972 were a journey of his pragmatic political agenda that has ultimately come to fruition with the existence of an independent Bangladesh. Obviously, Ramendu Majumdar has done a significant job as the editor of this publication. This work will specifically be rewarding for the generation that did not and will never have the opportunity to listen to Bangabandhu in person, as it will make them realise what a great politician and human being he was.

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The 1970 pre-election phase portrays Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's preparations for fulfilling the promises he made to the Bengali people at different times of his political career—the very fundamental pledge of which was to confront the oppressive Pakistani rulers and break the shackle of army and bureaucratic supremacy if his party, the Awami League, came to power. That also included the establishment of a living democracy guaranteeing fundamental freedoms in a revised constitution.

political career—the very fundamental pledge of which was to confront the oppressive Pakistani rulers and break the shackle of army and bureaucratic supremacy if his party, the Awami League, came to power. That also included the establishment of a living democracy guaranteeing fundamental freedoms in a revised constitution. During that very eventful time, a cyclone ravaged the coastal districts of what is now Bangladesh. Noticing the Pakistan government's indifferent and callous response to the unbearable sufferings of the people, he

Pakistan, gaining a total of 291 seats in all of Pakistan. In his post-election speeches, Mujib supported a re-envisioning and rewriting of the country's constitution on the basis of the Six Points, and assured the people that as the majority party, Awami League would bring an end to the era of exploitation. But he was soon disillusioned and realised that the corrupt and crafty Pakistani rulers would not abide by the verdict of the majority. He called upon the people to resist the conspiracy of sabotaging the people's victory, famously saying "Die but never

ROHINGYA GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Three years on: what’s next for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh?



AFTER August 25, 2017, headlines across the world were dominated by the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing to Bangladesh. This continued for almost a month after Myanmar security forces launched a deadly crackdown, or “clearance operation”, targeting the minority population from Rakhine state. A 444-page report prepared by the UN’s Independent Facts Finding Commission confirmed that more than 725,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, at least 10,000 Rohingya were killed, hundreds of women and girls were raped (mostly gang-raped), and around 392 Rohingya villages were partially or fully destroyed.

Since then, Bangladesh has become home to 1.1 million Rohingya refugees, including those who have fled previous bouts of violence as well as new arrivals. Kutupalong refugee camp, which covers an area of 13 kilometres, has become the largest refugee camp in the world for hosting 700,000 Rohingya refugees in a single camp. Today marks the third anniversary of the Rohingya influx in Bangladesh, but the solution to the Rohingya crisis has not been found yet.

The Rohingya community living in Bangladesh are frequently portrayed in two ways—national and international human rights bodies focus on their everyday struggle for food and water supply, sanitation, healthcare, housing, education, cooking materials, childcare, maternity support and

daily essentials; whilst the host community often criticise the easy access of refugees to support from national and international aid agencies. There are also increasing concerns regarding the growing degradation of the local ecology, rapid deforestation from using firewood, mounting illegal border trade, encroaching of grassland for livestock rearing and more. These issues are gradually eroding the space of coexistence between the host community and refugees.

Besides, growing tensions in connection with inter-group and intra-group conflicts as well as militant activities in the refugee camps, mounting cases of trafficking, and worries of reduced aid due to decreasing international support, are increasing the mistrust between the Rohingya and the host community, which is some cause for concern.

During the last three years, two repatriation attempts were made. The first one was on November 15, 2018, and the second one was in August 2019, but they failed mainly due to three reasons. Firstly, Myanmar’s continued reluctance and unwillingness to bring the Rohingya back. There were no convincing and tangible preparations taken by Myanmar in accordance with the “Arrangement on the return of displaced person from Rakhine State” signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar in January 2018.

Secondly, the international community did not support the repatriation attempts, which they termed as a premature move, because Rakhine’s situation remained unchanged and thereby, unsafe for the Rohingyas.

Thirdly, the Rohingya refugees declined to return voluntarily because Myanmar had failed to give any reliable promise or consistent commitment to the Rohingya to



Rohingya refugees walk after crossing the Naf river from Myanmar into Bangladesh in Whaikhyang.

PHOTO: AFP/FRED DUFOUR

guarantee their rights as citizens of Myanmar. Afterwards, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic affected the camps and halted all repatriation endeavours.

As a result, the fate of repatriation is hanging in the balance, and the future of the Rohingya is becoming increasingly uncertain. It is clear that Myanmar is in no hurry to resolve the Rohingya crisis, with no concrete steps mapped out to address or redress injustices in their country. On the other hand, Bangladesh seems increasingly more reluctant

to host such a massive refugee population on its territory. Three years have passed, but there is no light at the end of the tunnel for the persecuted Rohingya population.

Perhaps mounting pressure from the international community and international rights bodies, media portrayal of Rohingya vulnerabilities and continued efforts from Bangladesh might compel Myanmar to initiate the repatriation process for the third time, but it would certainly fail again because there are no dependable promises

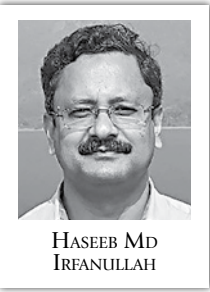
or tangible preparations from the Myanmar end that would give the Rohingya enough trust to return to their homeland voluntarily. However, based on previous experiences and the unexpected present situation, we can assume that Bangladesh will not willingly host 1.1 million Rohingya any more or give them space for social integration at any cost, and the option of third country resettlement has also been stopped because of the pandemic.

Considering these multifaceted dilemmas, the Rohingya people are leading their lives in extreme uncertainty. We can see no bright light of hope except their struggling present and an uncertain future. Although the Rohingya eagerly await a safe and dignified return to their homeland, they find little hopes in the given context of the Rohingya crisis.

The question now is: what needs to be done for the future of the Rohingya people? We strongly expect, with a renewed appeal, that the international community should uphold the idea of “burden-sharing” to help the Rohingya in refugee camps and make their lives more “liveable” in Bangladesh. There should also be efforts to form a “collective and global force” to compel Myanmar to comply with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 to bring the Rohingya living in Bangladesh back to Myanmar with safety, dignity and legal recognition by conferring citizenship on them.

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What role do nature-based solutions play in the Rohingya refugee crisis?



OVER the last three years, the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar and Teknaf have been telling us many stories of failures, successes and uncertainties.

These camps are a painful symbol of Myanmar’s atrocities against its own citizens, making them stateless. The government of Bangladesh, the United Nations (UN) agencies and their partners, and numerous donors, however, have managed to offer these 1.1 million people shelter, food, water, sanitation facilities, health services, protection from violence and trafficking, as well as education, energy supply, and safety from natural hazards. However, these 34 refugee camps still remain a failed story of humanity, full of uncertainties around return of the Rohingyas, including their 438,000 children, to Myanmar.

The Rohingya refugee crisis not only hurts our dignity as humans, it has also made a deep scar on Bangladesh’s efforts towards environmental conservation. According to a report by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of Bangladesh, as of early October last year, the overall ecological damage of this refugee crisis cost about USD 285 million. Almost 60 percent of this damage was due to the loss of biodiversity. Other losses include destruction of natural and planted trees as well as uprooting of trees. That report also noted that the refugee settlements occupy about 2,500 hectares of forest land, while another 750 hectares of forest were destroyed from firewood collection by the refugees.

Despite this worrying situation, the government and UN agencies have taken some commendable actions to improve the overall environment in the refugee camp areas. One of those is distribution of Liquefied Petroleum

Gas (LPG) cookers to the refugee families. LPG distribution was started in 2018 to reduce the huge pressure on Cox’s Bazar’s remaining forests from fuelwood collection. At the end of 2019, a study by UNHCR-IUCN-East West University showed that the LPG supply had reduced 80 percent of firewood use by refugee families. This success made LPG distribution one of the major activities of the UN agencies in 2020, and by April, they brought all 188,000 refugee families under



In 2018, indiscriminate hill-cutting was putting refugees at risk of landslides and damaging natural resources.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

this activity. This indeed has significantly reduced the pressure on the adjacent forests and their biodiversity.

But slowing down forest destruction is not enough to rebuild the severely degraded ecosystems of Ukhiya and Teknaf. We need appropriate actions on the ground to restore the damage caused by the refugee crisis—we need to apply nature-based solutions (NbS) for that.

NbS are different activities we do to protect, conserve and improve natural and modified ecosystems. But, in the present

refugee crisis, it may refer to the restoration of damaged ecosystems, like the hills, forests and hilly streams, and to the protection of remaining habitats from destruction.

In the Cox’s Bazar-Teknaf peninsula, NbS have to be applied in such a way that the altered ecosystems restart giving the services they are supposed to give us—a healthy, green environment to breathe in, stable hill-slopes that are no longer susceptible to landslides due to heavy rain, return of biodiversity to

an area that became barren in late 2017, sufficiently recharged groundwater, and hilly waterways smoothly carry rainwater without getting too silted up.

Although they are not calling them NbS *per se*, the UN agencies, their partners, and the Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) have taken some commendable NbS initiatives to improve the overall environment of the refugee camps. In 2018 and 2019, for example, they reforested about 350 hectares of camp area involving the refugees and host community. They followed the protocol

developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and BFD. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the plantation programme has started in August to replant a couple of hundred hectares of camp area maintaining social distancing and other safety rules.

Innovation is also going on alongside plantation. Last winter, FAO piloted dry season planting techniques in Teknaf. A 100 percent survival rate of the saplings in the experiment plots suggests that tree plantation in refugee camps would also be possible in the rainless winter months.

Another NbS widely implemented in the camps is stabilising the hill-slopes to avoid devastating landslides. Site Maintenance and Engineering Project (SMEP), a multi-agency partnership, has been creating terraces on tens and thousands of square metres of slopes with bamboo fences, geotextile and reinforced concrete rings, and greening the open soil with vetiver and other grasses and legume saplings, to avoid erosion.

On smaller scales, since 2019, UNHCR and its NGO partner CNRS have been piloting several NbS in the camps, including restoration of hilly streams with banks stabilised with vetiver and vadail grasses and excavation of water reservoirs to reduce pressure on groundwater.

In addition to these short-term, site-specific actions, there is a need for long-term, holistic approaches to restore the degraded landscape of Cox’s Bazar. Realising that, the Center for Global Development, BRAC, and The Nature Conservancy advocated for a long-term “forest landscape restoration” (FLR) approach, a type of NbS. While their suggestions are comprehensive and practical, and can effectively engage Bangladeshi host communities outside the camps, involving refugees is difficult in many proposed activities given the uncertainty around refugee repatriation, their possible relocation inside Bangladesh, and the government’s position on involving refugees in long-term activities with benefits.

The piloting, innovations, successes and challenges around different NbS we have tried in Rohingya refugee camps over the last three years bring in three opportunities before us.

First, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) and the University of Oxford have recently launched the NbS Bangladesh web portal (www.nbsbangladesh.info) and the NbS Bangladesh Network of experts and organisations working on NbS. These two new initiatives are giving us the opportunity to capture and widely share Bangladesh’s NbS experiences in the refugee crisis. Bangladesh can lead the world on how environmental conservation is possible through NbS even in humanitarian crises.

Second, over the last year or so, NbS has received significant global attention as a practical approach to deal with challenges, like climate change and natural hazards. This February, 20 leading environmental organisations proposed guidelines to make NbS better and successful. In July, the world’s largest environmental network IUCN launched the Global Standard for NbS to avoid misuse of the NbS concept. The government of Bangladesh, UN agencies, and their partners now need to recognise these developments as they implement NbS in the refugee camps. Such realisations can strengthen NbS, and thus nature conservation, in the ongoing refugee crisis.

Finally, over the past couple of decades, Bangladesh has been practicing NbS by sustainably managing, protecting and restoring its coasts, forests, hills and wetlands with local communities. Our NbS experience in Cox’s Bazar has further shown the superb capacities of Bangladeshi academics, practitioners and administrators to design, implement, innovate and assess NbS projects and related policies. We therefore need to recognise our strengths and start relying upon our own experts, instead of international ones, in nature conservation.

Dr Haseeb Md Irfanullah is an independent consultant working on environment, climate change, and research systems. His Twitter handle is @hmirfanullah

ON THIS DAY
IN HISTORY

AUGUST 25, 1944
Paris liberated

On this day in 1944, some two months after the Allied invasion of Normandy, Paris was liberated from German occupiers as the Free French 2nd Armoured Division under General Jacques-Philippe Leclerc entered the city.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

29 Not liable
32 Spinning toy
33 TV watchdog
34 Sticky stuff
35 Everybody
36 Mineral suffix
37 Tire track
38 Comes close
40 Brighten
42 Old gold coin
43 Kitchen gadget
44 Gushes forth
45 Some coasters

DOWN

1 Wealth
2 Breathe in
3 Begin to make sense
4 Tango need

5 More run-down
6 “Shogun” setting
7 Before today
8 Loss of prestige
9 Went to a diner
10 Much late-night TV fare
17 Check out
23 Boar’s mate
24 Praiseful poem
26 Surpasses
27 Fans’ place
28 Find a place to hide
30 Was sullen
31 Bag handlers
33 Punch ingredients?
39 Unrefined
41 Rap’s – Nas x

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11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

B A S I N
A W A R E
R E L A X
E Q U A T E
S I S
A N S W E R
S A L E S
S N I T
Y E P
J A P A N
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N A K E D

BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



Paris Saint-Germain youth product Kingsley Coman turned the tables on his former team in the Champions League final on Sunday night, tormenting them down the wing throughout the match before netting the decisive goal. The 24-year-old, still the youngest player PSG have ever fielded, fired the winner for Bayern Munich with a composed header. In goal, Manuel Neuer (R) marshalled the Bavarians' defence and made a string of excellent saves to deny Neymar and Kylian Mbappe, including this incredible double save.

PHOTO: TWITTER

HIGHLIGHTS

Bayern Munich are the first side in European Cup/Champions League history to win 100% of their games in a single campaign en route to lifting the trophy (11 wins).

Bayern Munich have won the European Cup/Champions League for a sixth time (level with Liverpool) and for the first time since 2012-13. Only Real Madrid (13) and AC Milan (7) have been crowned champions on more occasions.

PSG's record-equalling scoring streak was brought to a screeching halt by the Bavarians, who shut the world's most expensive attack out after they had scored in the past 34 consecutive matches. The Parisiens are tied for the record with Real Madrid, who scored in 34 games from 2011-14.

Each of the last seven teams competing in their first European Cup/Champions League final have all lost, with the last first-time winners being Borussia Dortmund in 1997 against Juventus.

Unbowed, Unbent, Unbroken

Bayern Munich lift sixth title with 1-0 win over PSG

AFP, Lisbon

It will be remembered as the strangest of Champions League seasons but it has ended with a familiar name on the trophy after Bayern Munich got the better of Paris Saint-Germain in Sunday's final in Lisbon, with their deserved success the result of the remarkable job done by coach Hansi Flick.

There was tickertape at the trophy ceremony and the usual celebratory songs playing over the loudspeakers at the Estadio da Luz as the Bayern players savoured the moment after Kingsley Coman's goal saw them defeat PSG 1-0.



But it was a bizarre spectacle with the 65,000-seat stadium empty, supporters having been barred from attending the biggest match in club football.

Against first-time finalists PSG, Bayern were worthy winners of their sixth European Cup, their third in the Champions League era.

They won all their 11 Champions League matches this season, an unprecedented feat. They scored 43 goals in that time on a run that included a 7-2 win at Tottenham Hotspur and the stunning 8-2 demolition of Barcelona in the

quarterfinals.

They just had the better of the final, even if they were fortunate at times up against the French side's formidable attack of Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Angel Di Maria.

Bayern's line-up featured four survivors from their last final victory, against Borussia Dortmund in 2013. But this was also about the new faces, such as 19-year-old left-back Alphonso Davies, the Canadian international.

"Moments like these you dream of as a kid," he told DAZN. "I honestly can't believe it, winning the Champions League is the top level."

'Inconsolable' PSG hope to learn from heartbreak

AGENCIES, Lisbon

Paris St Germain believe they can learn from their run to the Champions League final and become European champions after coming closer than ever in Sunday's 1-0 loss to Bayern Munich.

The French champions were left to pay the price for failing to convert the opportunities that came their way -- Neymar was notably denied by a fine Manuel Neuer save early on, but Kylian Mbappe really should have done better than shoot straight at the goalkeeper just before half-time.

"We have to create a great team to follow up on this campaign. That's our challenge," coach Thomas Tuchel said. "I'm going to talk with (sporting director) Leonardo and the people in charge to create that team."

"Over the last few weeks we have shown everything you need to win every title going," Tuchel added. "We lost 1-0 in the final against one of the strongest sides in Europe. We must maintain the same quality to carry on this road."

"Right now it's difficult to sleep, it's difficult to speak, it's difficult to explain," added midfielder Ander Herrera. "But, from tomorrow we're going to start again. We've built something very, very important."

"I had a feeling the first goal would decide the final. I'm disappointed but not too much. We were very, very close. What did we need to win? The first goal," Tuchel said. The two most expensive players in football history were signed, ultimately, to win this game. It was not their night, and Neymar was in tears. "Inconsolable" was the headline on the front page of sports daily L'Equipe on Monday, underneath a photo of the Brazilian crying.

"Neymar has had a great tournament, he cannot do everything," the German said. "We're a team, it's not any individual's fault," added midfielder Marquinhos. "We have to be proud of our team. Nobody thought we'd do that well in this campaign."



Coman 100% Bavarian

AFP, Lisbon

Kingsley Coman spent a decade at Paris St-Germain, coming up through the club's academy and making four senior appearances, but it was his goal which condemned the French giants to defeat in Sunday's Champions League final.

The 24-year-old headed the only goal in Bayern Munich's 1-0 victory in Lisbon, inflicting a devastating blow on his boyhood club in their first appearance in the final.

Coman departed as a teenager in 2014, winning two Serie A titles with Juventus before a trophy-laden spell in Germany.

"It's an incredible feeling, lots of happiness and a bit of sadness for Paris, they had a great run," Coman said. "My heart was 100 per cent Bayern because I'm 100 per cent professional but I'm not going to lie, to see Presnel (Kimpembe) like that, to see our team like that, gave me a little bit of heartache."

Europe's elite Flick-ed aside

AGENCIES, Lisbon

When Hansi Flick took over struggling Bayern Munich in November 2019 the media headlines declared that teams should no longer fear the German champions, but outstanding teamwork and a hunger for victory turned the season around, the coach said on Sunday.

"I am proud of this team," a beaming Flick told reporters. "When I started in November I read the headlines: 'No need to fear or respect Bayern Munich anymore', 'The team is awful.'"

"But the development of my team since then has been sensational. We made maximum use of everything. It is not easy to win three titles," he added.

Flick replaced Niko Kovac in November after a 5-1 loss to Eintracht Frankfurt and with Bayern having dropped out of the top three in the Bundesliga. But the former Germany assistant coach instantly turned the campaign on its head, leading Bayern to an unbeaten 2020 in every competition.

"It's such a huge joy, it feels like we have come a long way since November," said Mueller, who was a peripheral figure under Kovac. "I don't know how it looked from outside, but it felt like we deserved it in the way we played."

They have won 21 consecutive matches in all competitions and are on a 30-game unbeaten run. The Bavarians won every Champions League game this season - including a memorable 8-2 demolition of Barcelona in the quarterfinals - becoming the first side to do so.

"The team is always in the foreground," Flick said. "When you see how we worked until the 96th minute tonight in defence then it is a superb team spirit. Every player developed in such a way so as to

win three titles. This only happens as a team."

Flick is the third coach in the last decade to win the Champions League having being appointed during a campaign, after Roberto di Matteo with Chelsea in 2011/12 and Zinedine Zidane with Real Madrid in 2015/16.

But, as Thomas Mueller described, it was also 'brutal' mental strength and focus that saw them through.

"We kept marching on this season, we were there for each other, ready to correct each other's mistakes," said attacking midfielder Thomas Mueller, benched by Kovac but sensational under Flick.

"We have amazing quality but it does not work if you are not ready to suffer. Our mental strength is brutal."

"This is not the start of a new era," said retired former Bayern captain Mark van Bommel. "This process has been going on since 2010 and new players keep coming in as the older leave but the success remains."



James Anderson was on 598 wickets, two away from becoming the first fast bowler and Englishman to take 600 Test wickets following his five-for in the first innings of the third Test against Pakistan.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Pakistan face daunting task to save match

REUTERS, Southampton

Pakistan's openers frustrated England on the fourth morning of the third Test as they reached 41 without loss in their second innings, having been forced to follow on.

Abid Ali was 22 not out and Shan Masood was on 13 as Pakistan remained 269 runs shy of making England bat again. Rain forced an early lunch break, although the forecast is more encouraging for the rest of the day as England aim to wrap up a 2-0 series victory.

A scrappy morning in the field for England was summed up when James Anderson saw wicket keeper Jos Buttler fail to pouch a routine catch in his third over when Masood edged the ball outside off stump.

It is the fourth time in the match Anderson that has been deprived of a wicket due to a dropped catch.

Booters willing to take big pay cut

SPORTS REPORTER



Footballers are ready to sacrifice a portion of their salaries in a bid to starting the new season as they sit with the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) high-ups today to find a solution regarding their payment for last season, which was cancelled mid-way through due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The BFF sat with Bangladesh Premier League clubs on August 20 to discuss the new season, with majority of clubs being in favour of starting the new season only after settlement of outstanding payment issues.

As part of initiatives to reach a consensus between the clubs and the players, professional football league committee chairman Abdus Salam Murshedy and neutral members will sit with representatives of footballers' community at the BFF House today. Local players

are eager to settle the matter. Clubs have already settled payment issues with foreign players in line with FIFA guidelines.

"Considering the present situation, we want football back immediately as the footballers are unemployed and going through financial crisis. We are ready to sacrifice our salaries in a bid to bring back football on the ground, so that we can recover a bit from the crisis," national team's goalkeeper Ashraful Islam Rana said.

It has been learnt that the clubs proposed to extend last season's contracts with a 20 percent increase, but the players want 50 percent.

"We know we have to sacrifice and we are ready to do it. It is going to be a single season in almost three years because the 11th edition of BPL completed in August, 2019 and there is no certainty the upcoming season will start and finish in time," said national midfielder Mamunul Islam.

BCMA

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Bangladesh Cement Manufacturers Association (BCMA) is now at its own and permanent place with greater space

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3,256 clinics didn't seek registration

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

At least 3,500 private medical facilities did not bother to apply for renewing their licence by the deadline that passed on Sunday.

A total of 12,221 hospitals, clinics, and diagnostic centres did apply and 4,521 of them received the licence.

At present, 3,256 are pending for renewal after completing the formalities, 2,674 are waiting for inspection by officials, and 1,736 other facilities have already been inspected, according to data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

"We are now scrutinising the applications," Farid Hossain Miah, director (hospitals and clinics) at the DGHS, told The Daily Star yesterday.

About the facilities that had not applied for licence, he said, some might have already been closed.

"We will get a clearer picture when we get information from the civil surgeon offices. The civil surgeon offices will inform us which hospitals have renewed and which ones have not..."

Bangladesh Private Clinic Diagnostic Owners Association has said they hoped the government would extend the deadline.

But a government committee said the establishments that didn't apply for licence were illegal and the facilities would be sealed off.

On July 23, the ministry issued a circular giving private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres one month to renew their licence.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



An uncle cutting the hair of his nephew at their balcony in the capital's Tejgunipara area. Many are refraining from going to hair salons fearing they can get infected by the highly contagious coronavirus. Barbers are having hard times due to lack of customers. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

TORTURE IN CHAKARIA HC to step in if probe is inadequate

Mother, daughters get bail; son do not

STAR REPORT

A court in Cox's Bazar yesterday granted bail to a woman and her two daughters, who were tortured in broad daylight on Friday over "cattle theft" in the district's Harbang union.

Judge Rajib Kumar Dev of Cox's Bazar Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court passed the order in the morning, said defence lawyer Md Ilias Arif.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday said it would interfere if any irregularity takes place in the investigation into torture of five people, including the three woman, in Cox's Bazar. It also said it was monitoring the developments.

The bail order came after the three women -- Parvin, her daughters Selina Akhter Sheuli and Rozina Akhter and two other

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

CONGRESS LEADERSHIP ROW Sonia to continue as interim chief

Party decides at the end of a stormy meeting

THE HINDU ONLINE

Sonia Gandhi will continue as the interim Congress president till a new chief is elected in an AICC session, which will be convened as and when the situation permits, the party decided at the end of a stormy Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting yesterday.

It has also been decided at the meeting that a committee will be formed to assist Gandhi in day-to-day functioning as the Congress chief.

In her concluding remarks, Sonia Gandhi said "Congress is one big family and I don't hold anything against anyone. But all, especially senior leaders should raise concerns at the party forum only."

Earlier at the meeting, senior leader Ahmed Patel urged former party chief Rahul Gandhi to take over as Congress president. He was unanimously backed by other members of the CWC.

The CWC met virtually yesterday to discuss the leadership issue after its interim chief Sonia Gandhi offered to step down and asked the party to find a permanent head.

A letter from a group of senior leaders

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

China vetoes

August 25, 1972 SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

CHINA VETOES BANGLADESH'S UN APPLICATION

China today vetoes Bangladesh's application for UN membership. An Indian-Soviet resolution recommending the admission of Bangladesh to the United Nations is rejected by China's first Security Council veto. The Security Council will meet tomorrow to resume consideration of the application of Bangladesh for UN membership.

BANGABANDHU STILL FEELS WEAK

Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who is now convalescing in Geneva following a gallbladder operation in London Clinic on July 31, is still experiencing some weakness. According to a health bulletin issued by the prime minister's personal physician, "It is desirable to prolong his stay in Geneva."

"Bangabandhu is, however, extremely anxious to return to Bangladesh. He has agreed to go somewhere in Bangladesh for convalescence for a week or two," the bulletin added.

BHUTTO STRESSES NEED FOR MEETING WITH BANGABANDHU

Pakistan President ZA Bhutto today says that all outstanding problems between Pakistan and Bangladesh could be solved if Bangabandhu realises the necessity of a meeting with him. The Pakistan president, in a TV interview, regrets the negative attitude

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Receding tides leave trails of destruction

STAR REPORT

The tidal water that has flooded many areas in the country's coastal districts keeps receding, but it leaves a trail of destruction.

Roads in some areas have been damaged badly, while fish in many ponds have been washed away.

Some people are still waterlogged and enduring hard times.

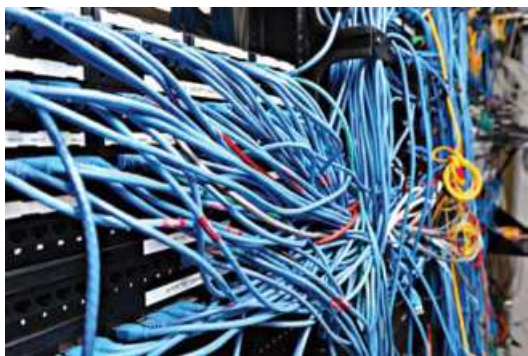
The country's southern region witnessed a huge tidal surge in the last week. Rivers were flowing 114cm above the danger level.

However, yesterday's bulletin of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said, "All the major rivers of the country are in a falling trend, except the Ganges. The trend may continue in the next 48 hours."

At least three rivers were flowing above the danger mark, said the bulletin

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Engineers achieve fastest internet speed



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Engineers have created the fastest-ever internet connection, much quicker than any ever successfully tried before.

The team behind the breakthrough, from University College London, were able to transmit data at 178 terabits per second. The speed is double the capacity of any system currently used in the world, and a fifth faster than the previous record.

The connection is so fast that it would be able to download the entire Netflix library in just one second.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

No new law scrapping Bangabandhu period ones

UNB, Dhaka

The cabinet has decided not to formulate new laws scrapping the old ones either enacted or promulgated from January 1, 1972 to August 5, 1975 during the rule of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

It decided that those laws and ordinances would only be amended.

The decision came at the weekly cabinet meeting held at the Bangladesh Secretariat, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair. The PM joined the meeting virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Briefing reporters after

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 25

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:30	12:45	4:45	6:33	8:00
JAMAT 5:05	1:15	5:00	6:36	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Firefighters trying to rescue a truck that fell into the water after a bridge collapsed in Gaibandha's Fulchhari upazila yesterday. Local government engineers said the bridge was in good condition but was damaged by overloaded trucks. Bailey bridges are usually rated at certain load capacity and trucks often use them with loads exceeding that.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

CORONAVIRUS VACCINE 172 countries engaged

Says WHO, expresses caution on using Covid plasma as US issues emergency authorisation

AGENCIES

Some 172 countries are engaging with the COVAX facility designed to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, the World Health Organization said yesterday, but more funding is needed and countries need now to make binding commitments.

Countries wishing to be part of the global COVAX plan have until August 31 to submit expressions of interest, WHO officials said, with confirmation of intention to join due by September 18, and initial payments due by October 9.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the facility was critical to ending the Covid-19 pandemic, and would not only pool risk for countries developing and buying vaccines, but also ensure prices are kept "as low as possible".

"Vaccine nationalism only helps the virus," he told a media briefing. "The success of the COVAX facility hinges not only on countries signing up to it, but also filling key funding gaps."

COVAX is co-led by the GAVI vaccines alliance, the WHO and the CEPI Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and is designed to guarantee equitable access globally to Covid-19 vaccines once they are developed and authorised for use.

It currently covers 9 candidate Covid-19 vaccines and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6