

COVID-19 VACCINE
China joins Covax, boosting WHO-led programme
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The Daily Star

Premium Exterior Paint
BERGER WeatherCoat ANTIDIRT SUPREME 10 YEARS DURABILITY

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"This is the first time I've been speechless... This is unbelievable."
WFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAVID BEASLEY REACTS TO THE NEWS OF NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

"They cannot break the resistance of the Iranian nation with these inhumane actions."
IRAN'S PRESIDENT HASSAN ROUHANI SLAMS NEW US SANCTIONS ON BANKS

"The way it was done and the feeling that they're kicking you out is what hurt the most."
URUGUAY STRIKER LUIS SUAREZ ADMITS EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWN AT THE MANNER OF BARCELONA EXIT

ANTI-RAPE LAWS

Definition slanted against victims

Crucial changes need to be made to ensure higher conviction rate, say legal experts, activists

NILIMA JAHAN and ZYMA ISLAM

When the law minister on Thursday announced that the law would be reformed to provide for death penalty for rape, activists, researchers and lawyers pointed out that far more crucial changes need to be made with immediate effect.

To begin with, for example, "rape" itself is restrictively defined only as penile-vaginal penetration -- although rape in reality constitutes many types of violent actions.

"In 2000, even though we have brought the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act to modify the punishment for rape, what it did not touch upon is the substantive definition of rape," said Taslima Yasmin, assistant professor at Department of Law, University of Dhaka.

"For this definition, in section 2 of the Act, it is mentioned to apply the definition given in section 375 of The Penal Code 1860; and with that, we have continued the 150-year-old archaic definition of rape," she said.

Section 375 defines rape as sexual intercourse with a woman against her

will, without her consent, and adds that penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape. That is the extent of the definition.

Lawyers and activists say that the narrow definition of rape and some archaic provisions in laws relating to rape result in a low conviction rate, with a study last year estimating the rate to be three percent. Moreover, procedures -- such as the requirement of medical tests to find semen -- are also set up in a way that makes it hard to convict perpetrators and further adds to the trauma and scrutiny of survivors.

On October 5, when the Noakhali gang-rape survivor was first brought to the police station, the police filed a case under "attempt to rape" charges.

The charge was filed under Section 9(4) (B) of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, which covers the issue of rape.

"She was not raped," said the Begumganj police, even though they had in probability seen the extremely violent video where the survivor was repeatedly raped using hands, as well as a stick.

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Demonstrators stage a rally in front of the National Museum in the capital's Shahbagh area yesterday afternoon protesting the growing incidents of rape, sexual harassment and violence against women in the country. They demanded justice for the victims and security for women.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

8 arrested in Ctg over gang-rape

More incidents of rape surface

STAR REPORT

At least 19 people were arrested on rape charges across the country in less than 24 hours since Thursday evening.

Of them, eight persons, including a female, were arrested in connection with the gang-rape of a 22-year-old housewife in Chattogram yesterday.

The gang-rape incident took place early yesterday when the victim was returning to her residence from adjacent Rangunia upazila.

She took a rickshaw from Bahaddarhat CNB area on her way back to home. A group of eight to 10 persons on CNG-run auto-rickshaw stopped her in Maulavi Pukurpar area.

Later, they dragged her beside a dustbin and gang-raped around 12:30am, police said.

Local police was informed about the incident by the One-stop Crisis Centre

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Stressed, bored

Pandemic taking its toll on mental health of children

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Lonely and bored, Mahdia Mahmud is now having trouble concentrating.

"When will I be able to play with my friends again?" the second grader of a reputed school in the capital's Mirpur hurls this question to her parents every now and then.

"I miss my friends. I want to play with them. How long will I have to do online classes?" she further asks.

Her mother Mousumi Julekha said the child is no longer that curious anymore and cries frequently. "My daughter hardly talks to anyone these days," she complained.

She also said, "It seems she has become too emotional and sometimes it's hard to manage her. We can do nothing but let her play games on our phones to keep her occupied."

Mahdia's case is not an isolated one.

Closure of schools across the country for around seven months now has kept millions of children confined to their homes and away from their peers, resulting in growing monotony, boredom and stress, according to educationists and psychologists.

They also said these psychological problems, which came along with the school closure, may leave a long-lasting effect on the mental health of the children.

Children in urban areas are suffering more as most have to live in cramped conditions amid little space. The sense of being confined and having to stay away from friends is affecting these children's mental health

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COMBATTING HUNGER WFP wins the Nobel Peace Prize

REUTERS, Geneva

The United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) won the Nobel Peace Prize yesterday for its efforts to combat hunger around the world and improve conditions for peace in areas affected by conflict.

The Rome-based organisation says it helps some 97 million people in about 88 countries each year, and that one in nine people worldwide still do not have enough to eat.

"The need for international solidarity and multilateral cooperation is more conspicuous than ever," Berit Reiss-Andersen, chairwoman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, told a news conference.

She called the WFP a driving force in efforts to

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NEW INDIAN ENVOY IN TOWN Starts off with the vaccine diplomacy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

New Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami has started his assignment in Bangladesh distinctly with vaccine diplomacy.

At the first interaction with the press in Dhaka on Thursday, he looked eager and spoke his mind with great warmth to thaw whatever tensions reported in the Indian media recently.

"We are committed to ensuring the fastest possible partnership with Bangladesh on all aspects of [Covid-19] vaccine development," he told the media at his official residence, India House, just after presenting credentials to President Abdul Hamid in the evening.

Foreign relations experts said a priority collaboration for vaccine could serve as a strong catalyst to help India cement the cracks developed in its bilateral relationships with Bangladesh over time involving a host of issues, from water-sharing to geopolitics.

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Vikram Doraiswami

ANTI-RAPE PROTESTS Demand for justice gets louder

STAR REPORT

People from different walks of life, including teachers, students, politicians and right activists, yesterday took to the streets in the capital and demanded exemplary punishment of rapists and their patrons.

They also demanded the home minister's resignation for failing to ensure justice and stop rape and torture of women in the country.

Several hundred students held a protest rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club under the banner of Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakshan Parishad, which had led the quota reform movement.

Nurul Haque Nur, joint convener of the organisation and

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PABNA MENTAL HOSPITAL Service seekers at the mercy of brokers

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPUI, Pabna

Family members of patients with mental illnesses seeking treatment at Pabna Mental Hospital are being harassed by brokers outside who demand money to get them an appointment with a doctor inside or lure them to privately run so-called mental health clinics.

Long understaffed by doctors and facilities overstretched, services at the country's first specialised hospital for treatment of mental illnesses have further been diminished over the last few months due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Amidst the global pandemic fallout, World Mental Health Day 2020 is being observed today with the goal of increased investment in mental health programmes at the national and international levels.

The 500-bed public hospital is running with 350 general beds and

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A woman feeds lunch to her ailing husband on the premises of Pabna Mental Hospital in the district's Hemayetpur area on Monday. The patient had to wait for hours before visiting a doctor at the outpatients department. The hospital now admits patients on only one day in a week due to the Covid-19 situation and this causes the rush of outpatients.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPUI

SAUDI RETURNEES Troubles over Covid tests add to woes

Many struggle to get test reports before scheduled flights to KSA

RASHIDUL HASAN

Rush for tickets to Saudi Arabia went down to some extent after the number of flights was increased, but Bangladeshis seeking to go to the Arab country are not getting enough time to get tested for Covid-19 due to tight flight schedule.

In this situation, many fear that they might miss their flights. On Thursday, Moinul Ahsan, civil surgeon of Dhaka, said a record number of Bangladeshi expatriate workers -- 3,283 -- went to the Dhaka North City Corporation market sample collection centre the previous day to get their Covid-19 tests done.

He said many of them were migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. Samples of 2,137 migrant workers were collected from morning till evening on Thursday, the civil surgeon added. "Although it is a challenge for us to collect samples and carry out tests of so many expatriate workers within a specific period of time, we are trying our best so that no one misses flight for failing to get Covid-19 test report," he added.

Officials at the DNCC market sample collection centre said they could easily complete their tasks -- collection of samples and delivery of reports if they could get the minimum required time.

"But in several cases, people requested us to deliver their Covid-19 test reports within four to five hours as they had only six to seven hours in their hands to get to their

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