

Kathalbari ferry

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Transport Corporation (BIWTC). In July, 2017, Kathalbari Ghat was shifted to the present site from Kawrakandi in Shibchar upazila due to river erosion.

Sharful Islam, executive engineer (river management) of the Padma Bridge Project, said the main channel of the river runs through Kathalbari area.

"A three-km stretch of the river bank is unprotected. We need to start dredging and work of river bank protection immediately. The ferry ghat had to be relocated from there," he mentioned.

Sixteen ferries, 82 launches and more than 400 speedboats operate on this route.

JS body

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in parliament on November 8 for its approval by Law Minister Anisul Huq. The bill was also placed there the same day and it was sent to the committee for scrutiny.

The committee was asked to submit its report before the House in seven work days.

The ordinance was issued amid widespread outrage triggered by a viral video footage of a woman being tortured and gang-raped in Noakhali's Begumganj.

At least 975 women were raped across the country in the last nine months and 161 of the incidents took place last month alone, according to a report by rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra.

Several organisations, including Feminists Across Generations, advocated that death penalty was not the solution.

According to the Article 9 (3) of the existing law, if a woman falls victim to gage-rape and gets injured or dies, the punishment is the death penalty or life imprisonment for each rapist.

The latest bill also proposes changes to sub-articles 11 (Ga) and 20 (7) of the existing law.

Any simple injury for dowry will be a compoundable offence (the complainant can drop the charge) in accordance with the article 11 (Ga) of the proposed law.

In the article 20 (7) of the bill, the Children Act, 2013 has been incorporated in place of Children Act, 1974 to follow the latest law as much as possible during the trial of any crime committed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act-2000 in case any child commits or witnesses such crime.

The trial of rape cases shall be completed by 180 days at Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunals according to the existing law.

US spied

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espionage took place from 2012 to 2015.

That would suggest that the US spying, if confirmed, was going on during and after the 2013 Snowden affair, which erupted when former intelligence contractor Edward Snowden revealed that the US government was spying on its own citizens and its allies.

According to DR, the fresh allegations are based on internal Danish intelligence reports written by a whistleblower who wanted his superiors to act.

Other US allies, such as Germany, France, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden, were also the targets of US espionage in the defence sector, DR's report said.

DR said its investigation showed the US National Security Agency (NSA) "took advantage of a top secret Danish-American surveillance collaboration to deliberately spy on central ministries and private companies in Denmark."

The broadcaster reported that much of the espionage concerned the defence sector and in particular Denmark's tender for a new jet fighter to replace its ageing fleet.

Copenhagen ended up ordering 27 F-35s from US manufacturer Lockheed Martin, which beat out the Eurofighter and Sweden's Saab Gripen.

Libya talks end without naming govt: UN

AFP, Gammarth

UN-led talks aimed at appointing an executive to help lead Libya out of a decade of conflict ended Sunday without discussing names, the world body said.

"We have agreed to reconvene in about a week in a virtual meeting (to) agree on the selection mechanism for the coming authority," the UN's interim Libya envoy Stephanie Williams told journalists.

But she said "no names... were discussed" during the meetings in neighbouring Tunisia.

Libya has been riven by conflict since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed veteran dictator Moamer Kadhafi.

The latest phase in renewed efforts for peace in the North African country brought together 75 delegates selected by the UN to represent a broad range of constituencies.



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo participates in a wreath-laying ceremony in homage to victims of terrorism at Les Invalides in Paris, France, yesterday. Pompeo arrived in Paris Saturday at the start of a seven-nation trip to US allies.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Moderna vaccine gives more hope

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Moderna's interim analysis was based on 95 infections among trial participants who received either a placebo or the vaccine. Of those, only five infections occurred in those who received the vaccine, which is administered in two shots 28 days apart.

"Having more than one source of an effective vaccine will increase the global supply and, with luck, help us all to get back to something like normal sometime in 2021," said Eleanor Riley, professor of immunology and infectious disease at the University of Edinburgh.

Moderna expects to have enough safety data required for US authorization in the next week or so and the company expects to file for emergency use authorization (EUA) in the coming weeks.

A key advantage of Moderna's vaccine is that it does not need ultra-cold storage like Pfizer's, making it easier to distribute. Moderna expects

it to be stable at normal fridge temperatures of 2 to 8 degrees Celsius (36 to 48°F) for 30 days and it can be stored for up to 6 months at -20°C.

Pfizer's vaccine must be shipped and stored at -70°C, the sort of temperature typical of an Antarctic winter. It can be stored for up to five days at standard refrigerator temperatures or for up to 15 days in a thermal shipping box.

Another drugmaker Sanofi also said their vaccine also won't need to be super-cooled.

"Our vaccine will be like the 'flu vaccine, you can keep it in your refrigerator," the Paris-based drugmaker's France chief Olivier Bogillot told the CNews channel.

"This will be an advantage for some countries," he added.

The Sanofi vaccine, one of many in development, will be available for distribution next June, Bogillot added.

While the breakthroughs open a chink of light at the end of the tunnel, experts caution there are still difficult and dangerous months ahead.

The 95 cases of Covid-19 included several key groups who are at increased

"A vaccine on its own will not end the pandemic," warned World Health Organization head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Supply will initially be limited to health care workers and other vulnerable populations, which could offer major help to hospital systems but will "still leave the virus with a lot of room to move," he said.

The data from Moderna's trial involving 30,000 volunteers also showed the vaccine prevented cases of severe Covid-19, a question that still remains with the Pfizer vaccine. Of the 95 cases in Moderna's trial, 11 were severe and all 11 occurred among volunteers who got the placebo.

Moderna, part of the US government's Operation Warp Speed program, expects to produce about 20 million doses for the United States this year, millions of which the company has already made and is ready to ship if it gets FDA authorization.

The 95 cases of Covid-19 included several key groups who are at increased

risk for severe disease, including 15 cases in adults aged 65 and older and 20 in participants from racially diverse groups.

"We will need much more data and a full report or publication to see if the benefit is consistent across all groups, notably the elderly, but this is definitely encouraging progress," said Stephen Evans, professor of pharmacoepidemiology, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

One unknown with this vaccine, and all the others currently being tested, is whether they will stop Covid-19 spreading.

"It is likely that vaccines that prevent symptomatic disease will reduce the duration and level of infectiousness, and thus reduce transmission, but we don't yet know if this effect will be large enough to make any meaningful difference to the spread of the virus within communities," said Riley at Edinburgh University.

Marriott hotel construction illegal in Bandarban

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acknowledged by this country's constitution, the CHT Regulation 1900, Bandarban Hill District Council Act 1989, and CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2001, said the statement.

"There is no scope to construct such private, profit-making ventures under these laws," it added.

Such a corporate venture is a threat to the existence of the local culture, heritage and ecosystem, said the citizens, adding that they want the project cancelled.

"Instead of listening to the legitimate demands of the Mro community, R&R Holding Ltd has begun razing the hills, obstructing the people from reaching their burial places, water sources as well as their sacred stones and trees.

"The hotel and the traffic it will bring poses a security concern for the

women of the community, and their lifestyle," it said.

"On top of that, taking up space for a resort will further decrease the already shrinking space for jhum farming.

Representatives of R&R Holding Ltd gave several interviews to the media stating that they are doing the project with the permission of the district commission. This would make this project illegal, because the commission cannot hand over ownership of the land to any party without the explicit permission of the community and the mauza headman."

"We demand that all economic activities, including tourism that is not sanctioned by the community, be stopped immediately. We also demand that the land grabbers be evicted."

The statement was signed by,

among others, Professor Emeritus of University of Dhaka (DU) Dr Serajul Islam Choudhury; eminent human rights activist Sultana Kamal; Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori; executive chair of Power and Participation Research Centre, Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman; trustee of Gonoshasthaya Kendra Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury; former governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr Salahuddin Ahmed; Distinguished Fellows at Centre for Policy Dialogue Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya and Dr Mustafizur Rahman; Chief Executive of Transparency International Bangladesh Dr Iftekharuzzaman; Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam; Professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University Dr Anu Muhammed and Dr MM Akash at DU; Dr Hamida Hossain; Professor Meghna Guha Thakurta;

Professor Amena Mahsin; Chakma Raja Barrister Devasish Roy; Chief Executive of Gonoshakkhorota Ovijan Rashida K Chowdhury; Secretary of Shujan Dr Badul Alam Majumdar; Naripokkho member Shireen Huq; eminent Jurist Dr Shahdeeb Malik; writer Rahnuma Ahmed; photojournalist Shahidul Alam; Executive Director of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit Dr CR Abrar; Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association; Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, executive director, Coast Guard; Barrister Sara Hossain; executive director of Bangladesh Indigenous Forum Sanjeeb Drong; President of the Bandarban chapter of Chittagong Hill Tracts Forest and Land Rights Protection Committee Juamlan Amlai and Gautam Dewan, CHT Citizen's Committee.

Workers to get regularised, recruited

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according to media reports.

"The government is expected to make RM 95 million from compounds and other payments that undocumented migrants and employers will pay," reported The Star, quoting Malaysia Home Minister Hamzah Zainudin.

Migrant worker Abdul Kuddus said many Bangladeshi undocumented workers face different difficulties in and outside their workplaces in the Southeast Asian country.

"You can't move freely and you can't even sleep well when you are undocumented," he said.

Kuddus, who is currently stuck at home because of the pandemic, said he was an undocumented worker before he got regularised under an amnesty programme in 2016.

During crackdowns on undocumented foreign workers by Malaysian police, they flee their workplaces and sometimes have to spend nights in the woods, he added.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, Malaysia has hired about 10.57 lakh Bangladeshi workers since 1978.

The exact number of Bangladeshi living without legal papers in Malaysia is unknown.

Asked, Zahirul Islam, labour welfare counsellor at Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, could not tell how many of them are expected to avail the latest opportunities.

Last year, about 53,000 Bangladeshi undocumented workers obtained legal status and returned home under Malaysian government's Back for Good programme, said the labour welfare official.

Zahirul said the high commission was yet to formally receive the programme details from the Malaysian authorities.

Malaysian Home Minister Hamzah Zainudin was quoted as saying on Thursday that under the latest Repatriation Recalibration Plan, the migrants can volunteer to return to their homeland, subject to certain conditions.

The migrants and employers who wish to participate in either programme are to deal directly with the Immigration Department and the Peninsular Malaysia Labour Department, the minister added.

New pay scales on December 16

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introduced new pay scales to suit individual officers who served their purposes.

The new pay scales will confer greatest benefits upon low-paid government employees, particularly the present class four and class three employees. Upon the new arrangement, the maximum pay of class one senior officials may not exceed Tk 2,400 per month while the present class four employees will draw a minimum of Tk 200 per month, including allowances.

WICKMAN CALLS ON BANDABANDHU

The Swedish Foreign Minister Krishter Wickman, who is now visiting Bangladesh, calls on Bangabandhu today at the Gono Bhaban. They discuss bilateral matters during the meeting. It may be mentioned that the official level talks between the foreign minister of Bangladesh and Sweden begin today at the State Guest House in Dhaka.

HUNGARIAN RAILWAY CARRIAGES FOR BANGLADESH

The Hungarian wagon and machine building factory will supply Bangladesh 27 special railway carriages equipped with highly efficient ventilators. Hungary will fulfil the order by December 20, 1972 so that the railway carriages can be supplied to Bangladesh as quickly as possible.

SOURCES: November 18, 1972 issues of *Bangladesh Observer*, *Dainik Bangla* and *Dainik Ittefaq*.

Govt to spend

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According to the meteorological department, the country saw the second longest spell of flooding this year since 1998, when floods lasted 63 days.

This time, the duration of floods was 61 days -- from July 27 to September 30. The prolonged floods damaged many roads, bridges and culverts.

Project documents mention that floods hit 182 upazilas of 28 districts in Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Chattogram divisions. All these areas will be covered under the project.

Moreover, the country witnessed around 50 percent more rainfall in the first nine months of this year, compared to the average rainfall in the corresponding period in the last 30 years.

Meteorological department data shows that on average, 363.621 millimetres of rainfall was recorded in the country between January and September.

The project documents say heavy rains damaged roads, bridges and culverts in 139 upazilas of 22 districts in Rajshahi, Khulna, Dhaka, Mymensingh and Chattogram divisions. The project will cover these areas.

The LGED prepared the project, incorporating data from public representatives across the country.

Under the project, 6,148 km roads across the country will be repaired.

Besides, 78 km of RCC (roller-compacted concrete) roads will be repaired, and 268 bridges (4,631.85 metres) and 239 culverts (692.37 metres) will be reconstructed.

Trees will be planted on both sides of 328 km roads under the project, say the documents.

Vetting the project, the Planning Commission observed that it will play an important role in fixing rural infrastructure damaged by the cyclone, floods and heavy rains, and also help boost economic activities in these districts.

Four more development projects involving over Tk 2,600 crore are likely to be placed at today's Ecne meeting. The project areas are in Gaibandha, Barishal, Pirojpur, Jhalakathi, Khulna and Jamalpur. All those will be implemented with the government's own funds.

SpaceX-Nasa

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Crew Dragon will gradually raise its orbit for the next 27 hours through a series of onboard thruster firings, giving the astronauts time to eat pre-packaged dinners and roughly eight hours to rest before docking at the International Space Station at 11:00 pm eastern time on Monday.

An air leak caused an unexpected drop in capsule pressure less than two hours before launch, Nasa officials said. But technicians said they conducted a successful leak check, and the scheduled launch was still on.

The Resilience crew includes Hopkins and two fellow Nasa astronauts, mission pilot Victor Glover and physicist Shannon Walker. They were