



# The Daily Star

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Your Right to Know

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“... Politically influential people are usually grabbing rivers by misusing their power in most cases.”

NRCC CHAIRMAN MUZIBUR RAHMAN HOWLADER



“Humanitarian aid budgets face dire shortfalls as the impact of the global pandemic continues to worsen.”

UN CHIEF ANTONIO GUTERRES

“We want to know the origin and we will do everything to know the origin.”

WHO CHIEF TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS ON FINDING COVID-19 ORIGINS



## Yaba flows in as drives lose steam

*Beset by criticism since Sinha killing, police seem lax in monitoring*

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The anti-narcotics drive, particularly against yaba, has lost momentum since the killing of Maj (ret'd) Sinha Md Rashed Khan in police firing in Teknaf four months ago, resulting in an increase in the availability of the crazy pills in the capital and elsewhere.

Following the incident on July 31, the pink pills started sneaking in through Teknaf in large volumes before making their way to the capital and other parts of the country amid lax monitoring by police, said a number of yaba dealers.

The killing of Sinha, who had served in the Special Security Force, set off huge criticism against police and flung open a floodgate of allegations over various acts of brutality and misdeeds.

The entire batch of Cox's Bazar district police, including the superintendent of police, was transferred after the killing at Shamlapur checkpoint in Teknaf.

Upset by the development, police officers of various ranks said it was the police who had to take all the blame though many members of other forces and agencies dealing with narcotics in Teknaf also made financial gains from the illegal trade.

“Many drug dealers even started filing cases against us which dented our morale,” said an official of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, who led an anti-narcotics team.

As the officers' morale was down, their subordinates also became frustrated which led to a significant drop in anti-narcotics drives and seizure of yaba, the official told The Daily Star, seeking anonymity.

Seizure of the pink pills by police declined by almost half in two

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People queue up for Covid-19 testing without maintaining social distancing outside the capital's Mugda General Hospital around 8:20am yesterday. Those standing at the front of the queue reached there as early as 6:00am as the hospital would test only 200 for the day. With the country recently seeing a spike in the number of novel coronavirus cases, such lines at testing facilities are getting longer.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## 19 public univs to have one test for admission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nineteen public universities will enrol students through a centralised admission test for the next academic session to reduce hassles of the admission seekers.

The students will take the test in person, and the university authorities will meet on December 19 to decide how the “Central Admission Test” will be arranged and what will be its methods.

The decision was finalised at a meeting between members of the University Grants Commission and the vice-chancellors of the universities yesterday.

Talking to The Daily Star after the meeting, UGC member Prof Muhammed Alamgir said it was final that the 19 universities would hold a cluster admission test.

One of the VCs said there would be three exams

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## Life sentence means 30 yrs

*Says apex court*

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has ruled that life imprisonment means a convict will remain behind bars for 30 years and will get remission and deduction benefits under relevant laws if it is not specifically mentioned in the verdict that the convict is sentenced to imprisonment until natural death.

However, the apex court yesterday said the imprisonment for life apparently means a convict's jail sentence for the rest of his or her natural life.

If the courts concerned, including the International Crimes Tribunal, sentence a convict to imprisonment for life until natural death, he or she will not get the benefits under the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), the SC observed in a short verdict.

“Imprisonment for life in prima facie case means the entire remaining period of the convict's natural life. Imprisonment for life be deemed to equivalent to imprisonment for 30 years if sections 45 and 53 are read together along with sections 55 and 57 of the Penal Code and 35A of the Code of Criminal Procedure.”

However, in case of a convict awarded life imprisonment until his natural death by the court/tribunal, International

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23 YRS OF CHT PEACE ACCORD

## Crux of the crisis lies in land issues

SANJOY KUMAR BARRIA

Parao Mro, 65, karbari of remote Cha Hla Mro Para of Lama upazila in Bandarban had to leave his ancestral land around ten years ago following threats from a land grabber.

“Eight Mro families of Cha Hla Mro Para and Lulaing Mukh Mro Para were evicted and they took shelter in Latua Mro Para, Tonkaboti and Taingya Headman Para,” said Basi Mro, son of Parao Mro.

They are among around 230 Jumma families who have been evicted from their ancestral land in eight mouzas of Bandarban since the signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord in 1997, according to local sources.

Their land was grabbed by either Bangalee settlers or private rubber plantation owners and horticulturists.

Singpas Mro, headman of Lulaing mouza, told The Daily Star that the land grabbing will never stop if the authorities do not take stern action.

“Six Mro families who moved from Lulaing Mukh Mro Para amid threats from land grabbers are now living in my mouza in inhuman conditions,” said Singpas.

“If the Peace Accord is fully implemented, it won't be possible for anyone to evict indigenous people from their ancestral land anymore.”

Today marks 23 years of the accord signing between the government and the Parbatya Chittagong Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) during the first tenure of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Gautam Dewan, president of CHT Citizens Committee, also believes the indigenous people would not be victims of land grabbing if the 1997 Peace Accord was fully implemented.

“Land problem remains the core issue of Chattogram Hill Tracts. Everything else is meaningless if the land problem is not solved,” he said.

“The Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act was amended in 2016 in line with the Peace Accord but the government

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## Pledge-bound to ensure peace in the hills: PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government was pledge-bound to ensure peace across the country, including in the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT).

She made the comment in a message issued on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the CHT Peace Accord.

Hasina greeted the countrymen, especially the people of the three hilly districts, and sought cooperation from all for the full implementation of the accord.

The peace accord brought an end to the long ethnic skirmishes in the CHT region and established the trend of peace and development there, she said.

The PM said the post-1975 undemocratic governments (after

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## I see no change in US-Bangla ties

*US ambassador tells The Daily Star about administration change in Washington DC*

PORIMOL PALMA and REFAET ULLAH MIRDHA

US engagement with Bangladesh on trade, economic and defence fronts has increased in recent months. In September, the countries signed an open sky deal and held comprehensive economic partnership dialogues. US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun visited Dhaka in October as part of advancing the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy. President-elect Joe Biden will be in the White House in January. US Ambassador to Bangladesh, Earl R Miller, shared his views on these matters with The Daily Star on November 22.

**DS: Will there be any change in US-Bangladesh relations in the coming years as the new administration takes over in January?**

Miller: I don't anticipate any major changes. The relationship between the two countries is very strong. It is not only commercial engagement; we work together in the security field, and the people-to-people tie is enduring and powerful. I can only see the relationship building from strength to strength.

I can't say in details... things are still uncertain about what will be in the [next] couple of months. You know democracy is messy and noisy and always imperfect. Any

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Earl R Miller

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING Some officials of two foreign airlines involved

*Claims CID*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department yesterday said it found involvement of some officials of two foreign airlines serving Dhaka in human trafficking from Bangladesh.

Seven officials of the two airlines were called to the CID headquarters and interrogated who primarily admitted that they are involved in the crime, CID chief Mahbubur Rahman said at a press conference at its headquarters in the capital.

However, the CID did not disclose the names of the airlines and the officials.

He said all those who have been trafficked from the country have been taken on tourist visas or on visa for attending different conferences.

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3RD SUBMARINE CABLE

## Bangladesh 'could export bandwidth to Bhutan, KSA'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will be able to export extra internet bandwidth after the installation of its third submarine cable as Bhutan and Saudi Arabia have already shown their interest in procuring bandwidth from the country, say top planning ministry officials.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) approved a Tk 693-crore project yesterday to install the third submarine cable to meet the rapidly growing internet bandwidth demand and ensure uninterrupted broadband internet services.

The officials also said the new submarine cable would boost internet speed and help introduction of 5G services in the country.

Four projects worth Tk 2,115.20 crore got the Ecne's approval at its weekly meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

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Sabina Begum lost her domestic-help job a few months ago amid the pandemic. Now she polishes shoes near Bangladesh Bank in the capital's Motijheel to make ends meet. Many have lost their primary source of income in the pandemic and have been forced to take up jobs that pay far less.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

BHASAN CHAR

## 2,500 Rohingyas soon to be there

*A source says; 66 tonnes of food, other necessities taken there*

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, back from Bhasan Char

An isolated island around 52 kilometres from Chattogram city has now been transformed into a planned, modern township with rows of white, multi-storey buildings.

Even three years ago, the island, Bhasan Char, would go under water during high tide. It was home to just a few cowboys who herded buffaloes there.

Today, Bhasan Char boasts round-the-clock electricity, water supply and gas connection in common kitchens, agricultural farms, modern markets, cyclone shelters, a recreation centre, hospitals and schools. It also has modern roads and proper sanitation facilities.

The island, which used to be a hideout of robbers even five years ago, now looks ready to perform the function for which it was repurposed -- to receive Rohingya refugees who took shelter in Cox's Bazar following a brutal military crackdown in their native Myanmar in August 2017.

But the relocation process is yet to start. The UN and some aid agencies argue that the island is isolated, flood-prone and would be hazardous for Rohingyas because of cyclones and tidal surges.

A high-placed source said some 2,500 Rohingya refugees of 500 families would be shifted to the island soon as part of the relocation. Around 66 tonnes of food and other necessary household items have already been taken to the island as of November 29.

Commander Md Anowerul Kabir, deputy project director of Ashrayan-3 Project (the official title of the Bhasan Char project), however, said they do not have any update about the arrival of the Rohingyas yet.

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