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Your Right to Know

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"We got some positive responses. We told them [Myanmar] it's an opportunity for you to take back your nationals."
FOREIGN MINISTER AK ABDUL MOMEN ON ROHINGYA REPATRIATION



"English version would be introduced at one government school in each district."
STATE MINISTER FOR PRIMARY AND MASS EDUCATION ZAKIR HOSSAIN



"No company can favour another country over the EU ..."
GERMAN ECONOMY MINISTER PETER ALTMAYER THREATENS LEGAL ACTION OVER COVID VACCINE DELAYS



Greed puts lives at risk

37 syndicates in 5 major Dhaka slums continue to supply risky, illegal gas and electricity connections which help fires spread, earn an estimated Tk 3.40 crore per month

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Three months ago, a devastating fire raged through a portion of Kalyanpur slum, killing a young man and injuring several others. The investigation by fire service officials found faulty electric connections behind it.

However, the same low-quality power connections were installed while rebuilding this settlement.

Four incidents of fire in the space of a month at four slums in the capital late last year rekindled the issue of faulty power lines. Investigation by the fire service found electric short circuits behind three of these incidents -- in Kalyanpur in late October and two in Mohakhali and Mirpur in end November -- said Abdul Halim, assistant director at Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Slum dwellers allege that syndicates run by some local ruling party men in collusion with unscrupulous officials from Desco

and Titas provide these illegal power and gas connections.

Illegal gas and power lines pose serious dangers to around two lakh dwellers of five major slums in the capital -- Korail and Sattola in Mohakhali, Natunbazar Porabosti in Kalyanpur, and Bhasantek Bosti and Chalantika Bosti in Mirpur.

At least three dozen syndicates operate in these five settlements and supply gas and electricity to slum dwellers, The Daily Star found after talking to slum dwellers and sources involved in the illegal trade.

They earn an estimated Tk 3.40 crore per month for this "service" -- a large chunk of which is allegedly used to "manage" police and Titas and Desco employees.

On average, slum dwellers pay Tk 500 for electricity and Tk 700 for gas every month.

While several residents said a few houses in these slums were given electricity connections legally through setting up electric metres on poles, other connections are illegal.

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A tangle of electrical wires from a small tin shed crisscrossing in haphazard fashion in the capital's Karail slum. A main electrical line was seen going into the shed, and all these wires were presumably connected to it to provide electricity throughout the slum. This causes a risk of fire in the densely populated area.

PHOTO: FILE

Hasina-Modi in-person summit 'on March 27'

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi are likely to have a Summit meeting in Dhaka on March 27, taking forward the relations between the two countries with the celebratory year in focus.

Bangladesh is ready to welcome Prime Minister Modi on March 26 to celebrate 50 years of Bangladesh's independence together.

Bangladesh and India will hold four secretary-level meetings before the Summit meeting between the two prime ministers to give inputs for the March-27 talks.

The meeting between the Water Resources Secretaries of the two countries will be

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Form Supreme Judicial Council

42 noted citizens again write to president demanding probe into EC graft allegations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-two eminent citizens have written to the president for the second time, reiterating the demand for constituting Supreme Judicial Council to probe allegations of "serious financial corruption and gross election-related misconduct" against the Election Commission.

The distinguished citizens sought to meet President Abdul Hamid so that they can brief him about the allegations face-to-face, jurist Shahdeen Malik said in a statement yesterday on behalf of the citizens.

They also attached to their second letter, sent to the president on January 17, copies of media reports on irregularities at the EC, the statement mentioned.

Those include a report of The Daily Star which said the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) detected financial anomalies in the EC's expenditure on paying many of its trainers ahead of the last parliamentary polls and upazila elections.

Earlier on December 14, the noted citizens sent a letter to the president, calling for constitution of Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) to probe allegations of "serious financial corruption and gross election-related misconduct" against

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RELIEF FOR COVID, AMPHAN-HIT PEOPLE

Those who needed it most got the least

Finds the Pirojpur part of a study by CPD, Oxfam, EU on distribution patterns in 13 dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The state of relief distribution in the country can perhaps be gauged through a detailed look at one district during two recent crises -- cyclone Amphan and the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The upazilas of Pirojpur most in need, with the highest poverty rates, received the least proportion of general relief, revealed a study yesterday.

Kaukhali upazila, for example, has a poverty rate of 52.2 percent, where most of its residents reside below the poverty line. With only seven upazilas in the district, Kaukhali received only 9.1 percent of the relief rice and 5.7 percent of the cash allocated for the district.

A similar situation was seen in Indurkani and Najirpur upazilas in spite of the fact that half of their population lives below the poverty rate.

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University student dies after rape

Says family; one accused dies after taking alcohol, according to police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A private university student in the capital died yesterday, a day after her father filed a rape case accusing five of her fellow students.

Yesterday evening, a Dhaka court placed on remand two of the accused -- Mortuza Raihan Chowdhury, 21, and Nuhat Alam Tafsir, 21.

They were arrested the previous day after the victim's father filed the case with Mohammadpur Police Station, said the station's Officer-in-Charge Abdul Latif. The number of days they are to be on remand could not be known when this report was filed early today.

The victim was admitted to a hospital in the early hours of Saturday, where she had been undergoing treatment till her death yesterday morning, the OC told The Daily Star last night.

He added that the arrestees went to the same university as the victim.

Quoting the case statement, OC Abdul Latif said, "On Thursday, five including the victim went to a restaurant in sector-3 of Uttara. There, they made her drinking alcohol. As she fell sick, they took the girl to one of her friend's house in Mohammadia Homes Limited in Mohammadpur. There the prime accused raped her there."

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50 lakh shots sent to 61 dists

20 lakh jabs, a gift from India, to be 'set aside for Dhaka, N'ganj, Gazipur'

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The government has sent 50 lakh vaccine doses, purchased from Serum Institute of India, to 61 districts for the mass inoculation campaign against Covid-19 beginning on February 7.

The jabs have been transported to all the districts in the country, except Dhaka, Gazipur and Narayanganj. The government might allocate vaccine doses for these three districts from the 20 lakh shots, which have recently been gifted by the Indian government, said health officials.

The officials could not confirm how many doses these three districts might get.

"Dhaka along with Gazipur and Narayanganj has not yet received any vaccine from the 50 lakh doses. It has also not been decided how many shots we will get," Abu

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Cancer patients and their relatives crowding at the surgery unit of the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital at the capital's Mohakhali. Cancer patients from all over the country come to the hospital for treatment and diagnosis, but as seen here, considerations of social distancing amid the coronavirus pandemic is not high on the list of priorities. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Failing to rape, man kills teen

Victim's friends tell cops; forensic expert finds marks of strangulation

STAR CORRESPONDENT

A man was arrested on charges of killing a 15-year-old girl after failing to rape her near the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital early yesterday.

The homeless girl used to sell flowers on Dhaka University campus.

The suspect, 36-year-old Khayer, also a homeless man, was arrested at the scene, said Mamun or Rashid, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station.

A team of police went to the scene after hearing that three teenage girls were beating up a man near the Shaheed Minar, the OC said.

The girl was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors pronounced her dead around 3:00am.

The girls told police that the victim was their friend and that Khayer must have strangled her to death.

Sub-inspector Komol Krishna Saha, who is investigating the case, said "Khayer is giving confusing statements during interrogation. We are investigating it."

A friend of the victim said she was with her and three others near the Shaheed Minar around 12:30am. "In the morning, I learnt that she got killed," she said.

Forensic expert Pradip Biswas of Dhaka Medical College said there were injury marks in the girl's throat.

An autopsy has been done and DNA and other samples collected, he said, adding that the exact cause of her death will be confirmed after examining those.

The victim's mother later filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing Khayer.