



Police fire a water cannons at protesters demonstrating against the coup and demanding the release of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, in Naypyitaw, Myanmar yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Husband held overnight for testifying

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According to the case filed with Shahporan Police Station after the woman was gang-raped on MC College campus, the Chhatra League men who raped the woman also took away the valuables from her and her husband.

On December 3, police pressed charges of gang-rape against eight Chhatra League leaders, and named 51 people as witnesses in the case.

Charge sheets, submitted in the other case filed over the robbery, mentioned the names of the same accused and witnesses.

The tribunal framed the charges in the gang rape case on January 17 and

fixed January 24 to begin the trial. The plaintiff's lawyer on January 24 filed a petition to the tribunal to hold trials of both cases in one court, but the court denied the plea. The plaintiff's lawyer then appealed to the High Court the same day.

Since the plaintiff's lawyers were to file that plea, no witnesses appeared before the court that day, the lawyer said. The court then fixed January 27 to hear the case and issued a non-bailable warrant for the man.

Meanwhile, the High Court bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman on Sunday directed the Sylhet tribunal to

hold trials of both the cases.

Lawyers in Sylhet pointed out that some of the accused in the cases didn't have a lawyer to represent them when the charges were framed. And one of the accused still does not have a lawyer.

This might create a legal loophole through which the accused could get acquitted even after they are convicted, they added.

The HC bench on Sunday ordered that attorneys represent the accused if there is no alternative. The bench then directed the police commissioner in Sylhet to ensure safety of the victim, her husband, the witnesses and the lawyers representing the victim.

## Headache called brick kiln

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hazardous environment will have an adverse impact on their mental and physical health."

When the school began its journey in 1992, the brick field was small. But it kept expanding over the years. And taking advantage of school closure due to the pandemic, it expanded further and even moved into the school yard, she said.

There are some other schools in the area, including Munshibazar Government Primary School, Kaliprasad High School, and Sajeda Bari Kindergarten School.

As per the Brick Manufacturing and Brick Kilns Establishment (Control) Act-2013, establishing a brick field is prohibited within a three-kilometre radius of residential areas, upazila headquarters, fruit orchards, farmlands, forestlands, education institutions and localities, said Nurul Muhaimin Milton, general secretary

of Moulvibazar Environmental Journalists' Forum.

Jalalia is a residential area with vast swaths of cropland. Farmers say their production is being hampered as the ashes fill up their fields.

"Normally, a brick kiln emits a huge amount of hazardous smoke and ashes that pollute the environment. If a brick kiln is located in a residential area, it poses serious health risks to people," said Narayan Saha, former head of Department of Forestry and Environmental Science at Shahjalal University of Science Technology.

Kamalganj Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Mahbubul Alam Bhuiyan said locals can suffer from various diseases including respiratory problems, cough, allergies and pneumonia due to the air pollution caused by the brick kiln.

"We, the people of this area, have discussed the issue with the administration multiple times. But we

did not get any result."

Kamalganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ashekul Haque said, "We are aware of the matter. We have already visited the area to observe the situation.

"The brick kiln was established long before setting up the school. So, it would not be justified to evict the brick field. We are now discussing it with our higher authorities to finalise the next course of action."

Badrul Huda, assistant director of the Department of Environment in Moulvibazar said, the brick field has approval from the environment department.

"We will look into the matter. We will take action, if anyone thinks unlawful activities are happening there," he told The Daily Star.

Contacted, the brick field's manager Mintu Deb said the brick field has been running its activities in compliance with all legal provisions since its establishment.

## Man sent to jail for rape

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into a quarrel. The husband then called his friend Faruk and asked him to take the victim to her father's house in Mawna area.

The victim came out of her house with Faruk. Around 12:30am, Faruk took the woman to a remote area of Beldia village and raped her.

After the incident, Faruk dropped the victim near her father's house and threatened her to kill if she discloses the incident, said Khandaker Imam Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police Station.

The victim yesterday filed a case against her husband and his friend Faruk.

Following the case, police arrested Faruk. But the husband went into

hiding.

In Dinajpur, a court yesterday sent a man to jail on charge of sexually harassing a minor girl in Ghoraghat upazila.

The accused, Lal Miah, 48, is a resident of Moglispur village under the same upazila.

Police said the three-and-a-half-year-old victim was playing near her house on Sunday afternoon. At that time, neighbour Lal took the girl to a nearby bush and sexually harassed her. When the girl started screaming, Lal beat her up.

At one stage, the victim could manage to flee the scene and returned home. She then shared the incident with her family members.

As the news spread, locals caught

Lal and beat him up.

On information, police rushed to the spot and arrested Lal, said Azim Uddin, officer-in-charge of Ghoraghat Police Station.

The victim's uncle lodged a case against Lal, who was sent to jail through a court yesterday, the OC added.

In another incident, a man has been sued for raping a fifth-grader in Birganj upazila on Wednesday.

The accused, Shamsul Islam, 38, is a resident of Jagdal village under the same upazila. He went into hiding after the incident, said police.

[Our Gazipur and Dinajpur correspondents contributed to this report.]

## West backs shot after S Africa halts roll-out

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Africa using a similar viral vector, vaccines may continue to ease the toll on health care systems by preventing severe disease."

French Health Minister Olivier Veran voiced support for the AstraZeneca vaccine, arguing it provided sufficient protection against "nearly all the variants" of the virus.

German Health Minister Jens Spahn said current evidence suggests all three vaccines approved in Europe - which include AstraZeneca - provided effective protection against serious infections.

Britain and Australia urged calm, citing evidence that the vaccines prevented grave illness and death, while AstraZeneca said it believed its vaccine could protect against severe disease.

"We think that both the vaccines that we're currently using are effective in, as I say, in stopping serious disease and death," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told reporters. Britain also uses the Pfizer shot.

"We also think in particular in the case of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine that there's good evidence that it is stopping transmission, as well, I think 67% reduction in transmission."

Australia is expected to approve the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine within

days and expressed confidence in it.

"There is currently no evidence to indicate a reduction in the effectiveness of either the AstraZeneca or Pfizer vaccines in preventing severe disease and death. That is the fundamental task, to protect the health," Health Minister Greg Hunt said.

But if vaccines do not work as effectively as hoped against new and emerging variants, then the world could be facing a much longer - and more expensive - battle against the virus than previously thought.

The AstraZeneca vaccine was the big hope for Africa as it is cheap and easy to store and transport. South Africa, which had hoped to roll out the AstraZeneca shot this month, is storing around 1 million doses it has received from the Serum Institute of India.

The B.1.351 variant dominant in South Africa, also known as 20I/501Y.V2, is also circulating in at least 40 other countries, including the United States. Other major variants include one first found in Britain, known as 20I/501Y.V1, and one found in Brazil known as P.1.

Austria warned against non-essential travel to its Alpine province of Tyrol because of an outbreak of the South African variant there. Cases were also detected north of Paris,

forcing one school to close.

**VACCINE SHOCK**  
An analysis of infections by the South African variant showed there was only a 22% lower risk of developing mild-to-moderate Covid-19, more than 14 days after being vaccinated with the AstraZeneca shot, versus those given a placebo.

Protection against moderate-severe disease, hospitalisation or death could not be assessed in the study of around 2,000 volunteers who had a median age of 31, as the target population were at such low risk.

Professor Shabir Madhi, lead investigator on the AstraZeneca trial in South Africa, said the vaccine's similarity to another produced by Johnson & Johnson, which reduced severe disease by 85%, suggested it would still prevent serious illness or death.

"There's still some hope that the AstraZeneca vaccine might well perform as well as the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in a different age group demographic that I address of severe disease," he told BBC radio.

Sarah Gilbert, professor of vaccinology at the University of Oxford, said efforts were under way to develop a new generation of booster shot vaccines that will allow protection against emerging variants.

## Dogs detect

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samples from Covid-positive patients and we can say that they have a 94% probability in our study ... that they can sniff them out," said Holger Volk, head of the veterinary clinic.

"So dogs can really sniff out people with infections and without infections, as well as asymptomatic and symptomatic Covid patients," he added.

Stephan Weil, premier of Lower Saxony, the state of which Hanover is the capital, said he was impressed with the study and called for a feasibility tests before the sniffer dogs are put to use in everyday life, such as on people attending concerts.

"We now need tests in selected events," Weil said.

In Finland, dogs trained to detect the novel coronavirus began sniffing passenger samples at Finland's Helsinki-Vantaa airport last September, in a pilot project alongside more usual testing at the airport.

Chile's Santiago international airport is also using canine detectors.

## Journo Akib

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in connection with the case. The court sent him to jail without granting him bail in the case.

On January 25, the district and sessions judge's court of Kishoreganj rejected a bail petition of Akib.

Seeking bail, he then submitted a petition to the HC through his lawyer Hatem Ali.

After hearing of the bail petition, HC bench of Justice AKM Asaduzzaman and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo yesterday granted bail to Akib for six months.

Deputy Attorney General Md Aminul Islam told The Daily Star that the state would not move any appeal before the Supreme Court's Appellate Division challenging the HC order.

He said a mobile court fined Akib Tk 5,000 for running a motorcycle without licence on December 28. Then, he allegedly slammed the DC, the executive magistrate concerned and police personnel through a Facebook live programme, DAG Aminul said.

Lawyer Hatem could not be communicated for his comments on the issue.

## CTTC nabs

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imprisonment in one of the cases.

According to a press release sent by DMP's media wing, CTTC officials had intelligence that some criminals were trying to gather firearms to carry out targeted killings and violence.

Suspecting this was an attempt by militants, the officials started investigation and carried out a drive in Pallabi area, detaining a person for interrogation.

During primary interrogation, the officials came to know that the arrestee was "top criminal" Mamun, the press release mentioned.

CTTC officials said Mamun was one of the top criminals from Mirpur area who "controlled the underworld in the area" before he was arrested by law enforcers in 2001.

He came out of jail and fled to India in 2004. While in India, he communicated with fugitive "top criminal" Shahadat Hossain.

Shahadat's men used to extort money from different important people and businessmen by threatening them over phones, said police.

## Somali opposition leaders 'no longer recognise president'

AFP, Mogadishu

Somalia's opposition leaders have announced that they no longer recognise President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, after his term expired without a political agreement on a path toward elections to replace him.

The Horn of Africa nation was supposed to hold indirect elections before February 8 but the deadline was missed as the central government and federal states failed to break a deadlock over how to proceed with a vote.

It now confronts a political crisis alongside a violent Islamist insurgency, a locust invasion and serious food shortages.

A coalition of opposition candidates urged the president, better known by his nickname Farmajo, to "respect the constitution" and ensure a peaceful transfer of power in the

fragile country.

"Starting from 8th February 2021, the council of opposition candidates does not recognise Farmajo as president," they said late Sunday in a statement.

"The council will not accept any form of mandate extension through pressure."

The group is allied against Farmajo but comprises candidates running individually for his job, including two of Somalia's former presidents.

They called for the creation of a transitional national council composed of the speakers of parliament, opposition figures, regional leaders, and civil society groups, to steer the country through this period.

Some roads in Mogadishu, including the route to parliament, were closed yesterday, witnesses said, after a tense evening in the capital.

## Foreign policy will remain

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and said no organisation was above the law.

Hlaing made no mention of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Meanwhile, martial law was declared in several cities nationwide. Local authorities announced by loudspeakers in the commercial city of Yangon and the second-largest city of Mandalay that the curfew would run from 8:00 pm to 4:00 am.

A similar declaration has been made in a township in Ayeeyarwaddy further south. In other parts of the country, such as Myeik, the curfew runs from 9:00 pm to 3:00 am.

The announcement also prohibited the gathering of five or more people in public places and also banned anti-coup protests.

The junta has so far refrained from using deadly force against the demonstrations sweeping most of the country, but with pressure building riot police fired water cannon in an attempt to disperse thousands gathered in Naypyidaw yesterday.

The military last week detained Suu Kyi and dozens of other members of her National League for Democracy party, ending a decade of partial civilian rule and triggering international condemnation.

In the face of an increasingly bold wave of defiance, state broadcaster MRTV warned that opposition to the junta was unlawful and signalled a potential crackdown.

"Action must be taken according to the law with effective steps against offences which disturb, prevent and destroy the state's stability, public safety and the rule of law," said a statement read by an announcer on the channel.

Britain and the European Union yesterday requested that the United Nations Human Rights Council hold a special session in response to the ongoing political crisis Myanmar.

Tens of thousands of people overcame a nationwide internet blockade to rally over the weekend in the first major outpourings of opposition to the coup.

The movement built yesterday, with protests across the country and the start of a nationwide strike.

In Yangon, the nation's commercial capital, crowds split onto the city's main roads, immobilising traffic and dwarfing the previous day's rally.

"Down with military dictatorship" and "release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and arrested people", protesters chanted, flashing the three-finger salute that has come to symbolise their movement as car horns were honked in support.

Calls for a nationwide strike gathered momentum over the weekend, with textile workers, civil servants and railway employees walking out of work in the commercial hub.

"This is a work day, but we aren't going to work even if our salary will be cut," one protester, 28-year-old garment factory worker Hnin Thazin, told AFP.

Similarly large crowds marched in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, many clutching photos of Suu Kyi and waving the red flags of her party.

Police attempted to disperse thousands of people gathered on a highway in Naypyidaw, where the deposed leader is believed to be detained.

## Fugitive convict selling

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Pallabi Police Station and tortured the brothers brutally. Jonny later died of his wounds at a city hospital.

Rocky had filed the case with a Dhaka court, the first ever case filed under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013.

A judicial inquiry found Pallabi Police Station then SI Zahidul Islam Khan, assistant sub-inspectors Md Kamruzzaman Minto and Rashedul Hassan and two police informants Russel and Sumon involved in the

incident.

Delivering the landmark judgement on September 9 last year, a Dhaka court sentenced the three policemen to life imprisonment and Sumon and Russel to seven years in prison each.

Pallabi Police Station OC Kazi Wazed Ali said he has deployed three teams to arrest Russel. "If he enters the area we will be able to arrest him," he said.

He also said the allegation of Russel's involvement in drug dealing was not true.



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বাউবি/প্রশা/নি-৮(১৯)/৯৬/পাট-৩/৪৯৮

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