

CHILD MARRIAGE DUE TO COVID

10m additional girls at risk

Says Unicef report, estimates 650m girls, women alive today were married in childhood

AFP, Washington

The outsized impact Covid-19 has had on women in some countries could result in an additional 10 million child marriages in this decade, according to a new analysis released yesterday by Unicef.

"School closures, economic stress, service disruptions, pregnancy and parental deaths due to the pandemic are putting the most vulnerable girls at increased risk of child marriage," said a study titled "Covid-19: A threat to progress against child marriage."

That trend, if confirmed, would represent a serious retreat from recent years of progress against child marriage.

In the last 10 years, according to the study, the proportion of young women globally who were married as children had declined by 15 percent, from nearly one in four to one in five. That progress "is now under threat," said the study, released on International Women's Day.

"Covid-19 has made an already difficult situation for millions of girls even worse," said Unicef executive director Henrietta Fore.

"Shuttered schools, isolation from friends and support networks, and rising poverty have added fuel to a fire the world was already struggling to put out."

Girls who marry in childhood, the study said, are more likely to experience domestic violence and less likely to remain in school. They face an increased risk of early and unplanned pregnancy, and maternal complications and mortality. Isolation from family and friends can take "a heavy toll on their mental health."

Meantime, pandemic-related travel restrictions and physical distancing have made it harder for girls "to access the health care, social services and community support that protect them from child marriage, unwanted pregnancy and gender-based violence," while making it more likely that they drop out of school.

The report estimates that 650 million girls and women alive today were married in childhood, about half of them in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, India or Nigeria.



A woman tries to cross a blocked road with burning tires during a protest against the fall in Lebanese pound currency and mounting economic hardships in Khaldeh, Lebanon yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

HK leader praises China's plan to install 'patriots'

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong's leader yesterday praised China's plan to ensure only "patriots" remain in politics, denying the move was a purge of the opposition.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam ruled out any need to consult the public on the changes, as they were decreed by Beijing.

Legislation to vet all election candidates in Hong Kong is currently being discussed by China's rubber-stamp parliament and is expected to be adopted on Thursday.

China has said only those deemed "patriotic" will be allowed to stand.



Afghan women leave journalism in droves as violence soars

AFP, Kabul

Nearly 20 percent of Afghan women journalists have quit or lost their jobs in the past six months, a media watchdog group said yesterday, as a wave of murders targeting the press has intensified in the war-torn country.

The Afghan Journalists Safety Committee said that more than 300 women had left the industry in recent months, citing the "wave of targeted killings" as one of the main reasons -- along with financial difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The report comes as the world marks International Women's Day and less than a week after three female media workers from Enikass TV were gunned down by militants in the eastern city of Jalalabad in an attack claimed by the local Islamic State group affiliate.

Another woman working for the station was murdered in December. Enikass said yesterday it had asked all remaining women staffers to stay home until security improves.

"I love journalism but I also love to



live," Nadia Momand, a presenter at Enikass, told AFP.

"I'm not going to go out again unless they send me an armoured vehicle."

"There is no protection for them," said Zalmat Latifi, the broadcaster's director.

"We also decided not to hire any additional women employees," he added.

The watchdog noted in a statement that "Afghanistan is celebrating International Women's Day this year at a time where security threats against journalists and media workers,

especially women in the media, have intensified".

Journalists, religious scholars, activists and judges have all been victims of a recent wave of political assassinations across Afghanistan, forcing many into hiding and some to flee the country.

The killings have been acutely felt by women, whose rights were crushed under Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001 -- which included a ban on them working.

Intelligence officials have previously linked the attacks against women to demands at ongoing peace talks in Doha -- between the Kabul government and the Taliban -- for their rights to be protected.

The attacks come as speculation is rife over America's future in Afghanistan, after the administration of President Joe Biden announced plans to review the withdrawal agreement signed with the Taliban last year that paved the way for foreign troops to leave the country by May.

BRAHMAPUTRA DAM

Start construction within yr

Tibetan Communist Party official urges China

REUTERS, Shanghai

China should aim to begin construction of a controversial hydropower project on the Brahmaputra river within the year, a senior Tibetan Communist Party official said in comments published yesterday.

Comprehensive planning and environmental impact assessments for the project should be completed as soon as possible, Che Dalha, chairman of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, said in a delegation briefing issued by China's parliament.

Tibet should "strive to launch construction within this year," he said.

China's plans for a giant hydropower project on the river, known in Tibet as the Yarlung Tsangpo, have stirred fears in India it could disrupt downstream river flows, worsen water shortages and even cause flash floods.

The river flows for about 2,900 km (1,800 miles) through Tibet, India and Bangladesh into the Bay of Bengal.

The "Yarlung Tsangpo downstream hydropower base" was listed in China's new five-year plan last week as one of the country's major energy development

projects for the 2021-2025 period.

China could build up to 60 gigawatts (GW) of generation capacity on the river, state media have reported, which would make it the world's biggest hydropower project, overtaking China's 22.5 GW Three Gorges Dam.

A Chinese diplomat said late last year the project was at a "preliminary planning and demonstration" stage.

As a lower riparian State with considerable established user rights to the waters of the trans-border rivers, the Indian government has consistently conveyed its views and concerns to the Chinese authorities and has urged them to ensure that the interests of downstream States are not harmed by any activities in upstream areas.

India is considering plans to build its own dam on the river to increase its water storage capacity and counteract the impact of the Chinese project, an official said last year.

According to Tibet's five-year plan proposals published in January, the region aims to "research and promote" the project and begin related engineering work as soon as possible.

Critics say the radical overhaul of the city's already limited democratic system will demolish what remains of the pro-democracy opposition and ensure only loyalists remain, an argument that Lam rejected yesterday.

"The improvements to the electoral system are not designed to favour someone, it is designed to ensure that whoever is administering Hong Kong is patriotic," Lam, a pro-Beijing appointee, told reporters after returning from the gathering in Beijing.

"The decision is timely, necessary, lawful and constitutional, and the central authorities' leadership and decision-making power are unquestionable."

RAK
CERAMICS

RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited

RAK Tower (7th, 8th & 9th Floor), Plot # 1/A, Jasimuddin Avenue,
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NOTICE OF THE 22nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 22nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited will be held on Wednesday, March 31, 2021 at 11:00 am (Bangladesh Time). Pursuant to the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission's Order No. SEC/SRMRC/04-231/25 dated 08 July 2020, the AGM will be held virtually by using digital platform through the following link <https://tinyurl.com/rakagm2021> to transact the following businesses:

AGENDA

1. To receive, consider and adopt the Audited Financial Statements of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2020, together with the reports of the Auditor and the Directors.
2. To declare dividend for the year ended 31 December 2020.
3. To elect/re-elect Director(s) of the Company.
4. To appoint the Statutory Auditors of the Company for the year 2021 and fix their remuneration.
5. To appoint the Chartered Secretary in Practice (Compliance Auditors) of the Company for the year 2021 for compliance certification on corporate governance and fix their remuneration.
6. To approve of entering into contract for supply of goods and materials with Mohammed Trading amounting to 1% (one percent) or above of the revenue for the immediately preceding financial year.



QR code for virtual AGM

By order of the Board of Directors
Sd/-
(Muhammad Shahidul Islam FCS)
Company Secretary

Dhaka, Bangladesh
Date: March 09, 2021

Notes:

1. The shareholders whose name appeared in the Share/Depository Register as on the 'Record Date' (i.e. February 25, 2021), are eligible to participate in the 22nd AGM and receive the dividend.
2. The Board unanimously recommended dividend @ 10% in cash of the paid up capital of the Company for the year 2020.
3. Pursuant to the BSEC Notification No. BSEC/CMRRCD/2006-158/208/Admin/81, dated 20 June, 2018; M/s A. Qasem & Co., Chartered Accountants has been recommended by the Board of Directors to be appointed as Statutory Auditors of the Company for the year 2021 subject to approval of the shareholders.
4. Pursuant to the Corporate Governance Code, 2018 of the BSEC dated 03 June, 2018, M/s. Jasmin & Associates, Chartered Secretaries & Corporate Affairs Consultants, has been recommended by the Board of Directors to be appointed as Compliance Auditors of the Company for the year 2021 for compliance certification on corporate governance subject to approval of the shareholders.
5. In order to comply with the BSEC notification No. BSEC/CMRRCD/2009-193/2/Admin/103 dated 05 February, 2020, the Board of Directors has recommended to enter into contract for supply of goods and materials with Mohammed Trading [Owner is Managing Director of RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited] amounting to 1% (one percent) or above of the revenue for the immediately preceding financial year subject to approval of the shareholders.
6. A shareholder entitled to attend and vote at the AGM may appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his/her behalf (such a proxy shall be a shareholder of the Company). The Proxy Form, duly filled, signed and stamped of BDT 20 must be sent through email to the Company at sharedepartment.bgd@rakceramics.com not later than 48 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.
7. Shareholders are requested to submit through mail to the Company at sharedepartment.bgd@rakceramics.com on or before March 25, 2021, their written option to receive dividend in the form available in Company's website www.rakceramics.com/bangladesh If the shareholder fails to submit such option within the stipulated time, the dividend will be paid off as deemed appropriate by the Company.
8. The concern stock broker, merchant banker and portfolio manager are requested to submit through mail to the Company at sharedepartment.bgd@rakceramics.com on or before March 25, 2021; the statement along with detail of their margin client or customer who has debit balance or margin loan, who are entitled to receive cash dividend of the Company for the year ended December 31, 2020. The statement should include shareholder's name, BO ID number, client-wise shareholding position, gross dividend receivable, applicable tax rate, net dividend receivable etc. along with the Consolidated Customers' Bank Account number, routing number and contact person.
9. The shareholders will be able to submit their questions/comments and vote electronically 24 hours before commencement of the AGM and during the AGM. For logging in to the system, the shareholders need to put their 16 digit Beneficial Owner (BO) ID number and other credential as proof of their identity by visiting the link <https://tinyurl.com/rakagm2021>
10. Shareholders are requested to log in to the system prior to the meeting start time of 11:00 am (Bangladesh Time) on 31 March 2021. The webcast will start at 10:45 am on March 31, 2021. Please contact +8801730058055 and +8801730055555 for any technical difficulties in accessing the virtual meeting.
11. Detail log in process has been sent through email to respective shareholder's mail ID available in their BO Account maintained with the Depository. The detailed procedures to participate in the virtual meeting along with link are also available in the Company's website www.rakceramics.com/bangladesh