Death of 14 Protesters Govt must carry

out impartial investigation

Say Amnesty Int'l, 10 other rights bodies

a joint statement yesterday.

Bangladesh authorities must conduct

prompt, thorough, impartial, and independent investigations into the

death of at least 14 protesters in the

country between March 26 and 28,

said 11 human rights organisations in

Asian Human Rights Commission

(AHRC) and Amnesty International,

also called upon the government

to respect people's right to peaceful

assembly and urged the international

community to plead with Bangladeshi

authorities to put an end to the

practice of torturing and forcibly

Mentioning media reports, the joint

statement said between March 20 and

26, police and members of the ruling

Awami League attacked a series of

protests across Bangladesh, organised

The High Court yesterday ruled that

Tufan Sarkar, a suspended Sramik

League leader of Bogura who is

accused of committing corruption,

cannot seek bail from any court for six

Tufan committed forgery with the

HC by submitting a fresh bail petition

even though a rule over this issue

was pending with the same court,

Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer

The ACC filed the corruption case

with Bogura Sadar Police Station on

December 31, 2018, against Tufan,

who came to the limelight after

'raping" a college girl and shaving

heads of the victim and her mother in

The graft case against Tufan, now in

ail, was filed for amassing wealth of

Lawyer Sazzad said filing of a fresh

Sazzad Hossain told The Daily Star.

months for resorting to fraudulence.

Rules High Court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

disappearing opposition activists".

The rights bodies, including

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

PD punished for 'good work'

BR committee found non-compliance by the firm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

junior in his BCS batch.

The move came at a time when a technical committee has been assigned the job of determining whether those engines can be used for railway operations. Two committees have already found that the South Korean company breached the contract.

A committee even recommended punitive action against Hyundai.

Nur Ahmed Hossain, a grade-3

The ministry issued a circular on Wednesday replacing Nur Ahmed with Mohammad Hassan Mansur, director of another project. Before Nur Ahmed, Hassan Mansur was the

The same circular said Partha Sarkar, director of another project, will replace PD Hasan Mansur and Tabassum Binte Islam, joint director general (mechanical) of BR, will

anything about the reason behind the changes but said the order would come into force immediately.

list of the BCS exam, BR sources said.

"You can't term it rare, but this is definitely unusual," a mid-level BR official told this correspondent. Contacted, Nur Ahmed said: "I am considering legal steps." He refused to

CHANGE OF PD: CULMINATION OF MANY FACTS

diesel electric The metre-gauge

committee said the technical specifications of four key components -- engines, alternators, compressors, and traction motors -- of the supplied locomotives did not match the over phone.

specifications mentioned in the

City

The project authorities halted 65 percent of the payment for the locomotives and the railways minister in October last year ordered a probe into the mishap. The locomotives have been sitting idle in a workshop

A probe committee, led by Farukuzzaman, additional secretary (law and land) of the ministry, submitted its report on February 25. The Daily Star obtained a copy of the report.

committee recommended actions against Hyundai for supplying locomotives in deviation from the contract and CCIC Singapore Pte Ltd, which the BR employed for the preshipment inspection, for failing to carry out its duties.

The probe committee report shows that Hyundai supplied alternator model TA9-12CA9SE, but the agreement sought alternator model TA12-CA9.

Railways officials said the two models are different in terms of power output.

Besides, as per a government plan, all rail lines in the country would be converted into dual gauge within a few years. The government had instructed the BR to purchase locomotives which could be used on both metre-gauge and broad-gauge by changing the undercarriages.

But with the TA9-12CA9SE alternator, the locomotives will not run on broad-gauge, said officials.

The project director not only halted the payment to Hyundai but also raised allegations about "some senior BR officials" joining hands in the unethical activity, to release the fund.

Asked whether they would take any steps against Hyundai, the Railways Minister Md Nurul Islam Sujon on March 10 did not give a direct answer.

He had said the alternators, an important component of the dieselelectric locomotives, specified in the contract should have been different. He said they were looking into as to why the "applicable" alternators, which according to him is the TA-09, were not selected in the first place.

The BR on March 23 formed the four-member committee, led by Prof Muhammed Mahbubur Razzaque of Buet's Mechanical Engineering Department, and asked it to submit a

report within 10 working days. Contracted yesterday, he said they could not start their work due to the Covid-19 situation.

The Daily Star could not reach Salim Reza, railways ministry secretary,

A replica of metro rail set up at the capital's Tejgaon Nabisco intersection area by the Dhaka North City Corporation celebrating the golden jubilee of the country's independence. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Oxygen supply still dangerously low

dedicated hospitals in Dhaka expressed helplessness amid a rising number of critical patients and an inadequate number of HFNCs.

"No one can understand our incapacity and helplessness when we witness a patient's oxygen saturation going down to 50 percent. The air turns heavy with the grief of the patients' attendants. They appeal to us to transfer the patients to the intensive care unit, but there is no way to do so, as each ICU bed is occupied and there are 25 people on the wait-list," wrote a consultant at Mugda Medical College Hospital on Facebook.

Experts said if the high-flow oxygen support could be given on time, the lives of many in need of ICU support could be saved. More than five percent Covid-19 patients might need critical care, they added.

Farid Hossain Mian, director of hospitals and clinics at the DGHS, said, "We have increased the number of HFNCs and other equipment compared to last year. But it is still inadequate. We are working to send more HFNCs."

The DGHS has sought the supply of 102 more HFNCs to the 10 Covid-19 dedicated hospitals in Dhaka.

The situation outside Dhaka is bleak. There are only 720 HFNCs in government and private hospitals dedicated to Covid-19 patients.

In Chattogram, there are six HFNCs in Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases and Hospital and 60 more in Chattogram Medical College Hospital, according to the

Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist, said, "The number of the high-flow nasal cannula is very inadequate. We have been insisting the authorities concerned to understand the necessity of high-flow oxygen. But the progress is still slow."

"It is a failure of planning on the part of the government," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Echoing him, Prof Nazrul Islam, member of the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19, said many deaths could have been avoided if there was an adequate number of HFNCs.

"The health directorate has failed to ensure a sufficient number of this device. Despite the prime minister's instructions to set up ICUs in district hospitals in June last year, the department could not complete it [the job] yet," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"These are simply due to their indifference," he added.

"In terms of hospital management, we cannot see any government effort effective. Otherwise, why are so many patients dying?" Prof Nazrul said.

Contacted, Col Nazmul Haque, director of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, admitted that the number of HFNCs in his hospital was inadequate.

"We are struggling to deal with the rising number of patients complaining acute respiratory illness," he told this

He, however, said there was a need for manpower to operate this device. "So increasing only the number of this device is not a solution.

The progress of setting up a central oxygen supply system, required for HFNCs to work, in the hospitals across the country is also dismal.

with other government organisations and development partners took up multiple projects to install central oxygen supply systems in 124 hospitals.

Only 59 of them got the system so far. Installation is ongoing in the other hospitals, according to the DGHS.

HOSPITAL BEDS TO BE INCREASED Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government was working to turn the DNCC market in Mohakhali into a Covid-19 hospital.

According to the DGHS, there would be 50 ICU beds, 200 HDU beds and 1,000 isolation beds.

to me today [Thursday] that it will Farid told The Daily Star.

According to the DGHS data, there are 9,711 general beds and 586 ICU beds in Covid-19 dedicated hospitals across the country.

beds and 370 ICU beds were occupied

In Dhaka city, only four out of 108 ICU beds and 205 out of 2,511 general beds at Covid dedicated hospitals

named in the new cases, the IGP said

attempts were being made to identify

those involved in the incident by going

be taken against each of them," he said.

At least 11 new cases have been filed so

far in connection with the destruction

carried out by Hefajat activists in

Brahmanbaria. With this, the total

accused in the cases, OC of Special

Branch of Brahmanbaria District Police,

Mohammad Imtiaz Ahmed, confirmed

So far, 21 people were arrested in

Among the arrestees, 18 were picked

connection with the cases, the police

up by sadar police while three by

Ashugani police, district police control

people, including a 14-year-old boy, dead in Brahmanbaria from March 26

Clashes involving Hefajat left 12

Families of the victims are yet to file

Meanwhile, a team of Criminal

Investigation Department (CID) of the

police has started collecting evidence

Officials said that on March 29 and

30, CID's crime scene and forensic team

collected various clues by inspecting 37

spots in Brahmanbaria Sadar, Sarail and

Shahriar Rahman, superintendent

of police of Brahmanbaria CID, said,

"Evidence collected from the scenes will

be examined with the permission of the

court. It will be checked whether place

were burnt with petrol or something

from the places of violence.

Ashuganj upazilas.

Over 15,000 people were made

"Once identified, legal actions will

through video footage.

MORE CASES FILED

number of cases rose to 18.

to The Daily Star.

officer said.

room said.

any cases.

by different political and civil society groups, beat up and injured hundreds of largely peaceful protesters.

Tufan cannot seek bail for six months

In June last year, the DGHS along

"The respective director has said

need more than 10-12 days to launch the DNCC hospital," DGHS Director

Nearly half - 4,165 - of the general

Woman gangraped at eco-

Tk 1.59 crore illegally.

park in Barguna OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A woman was gang raped while visiting Sonakata Tengragiri Eco-park in

Barguna's Taltoli upazila. The victim filed a case against four people -- Shohag, 25, Hasan, 28, Mizanur, 24, and Zahidul, 27 -- with Taltoli Police Station in this connection.

Faridul Islam, officer-in-charge (OCnquiry) of Taltoli Police Station, said he victim, along with her brotherin-law, went to visit the eco-park on Wednesday afternoon.

When they reached the deer enclosure near the entrance on a rented notorbike, the brother-in-law went to a nearby shop to buy some water.

At that moment, four men approached the victim and said, "You have come here for romance, this is not the place for it." They then mugged the motorbike driver and tied him to a tree.

Sohag and Hasan then took the victim into a forest in the park and raped her there while Mizanur and

Upon hearing the victim screaming, police. Meanwhile, the four culprits fled.

Police said the victim was rescued from the spot and brought to the police station. A case has been filed against the four and attempts are being made to

Detected first in March last year, the country saw a steep rise in the number of cases in June when a total of 98,330 cases were registered. The infection rate remained high until August when

Meanwhile, 59 people died from Covid-19 during the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services.

recorded in a single day in more than nine months and the second-highest ever. On June 30, Covid took the lives of 64 people.

With this, the total number of deaths reached 9,105 and the death rate stood at 1.47 percent.

The current positivity rate is 22.94 percent while the total positivity rate stands at 13.15 percent.

across the country in the 24 hours. At least 2,539 Covid-19 patients

stands at 5,44,938 and the recovery rate at 88.21 percent.

B'baria still reeling from Hefajat havoc The police chief also said the people investigation, he said they would look of Bangladesh traditionally follow into those. Asked why no Hefajat men were

Speaking to The Daily Star, Manzurul Alam, general secretary of the institution, said, "We had some rare photos and collection of music of the maestro [Alauddin Khan], but all those have been damaged.'

The hartal supporters did not spare the museum, classrooms, a stage called Sarod Mancha, administrative offices, musical instruments, and furniture of

A high-level police team, led by Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed, visited the academy yesterday. These correspondents, while accompanying the IGP, found burnt

The police team also visited the Sadar Land Office, the public library, Brahmanbaria press club, police lines and Sadar model police station, which

were also attacked during the mayhem. Expressing anger at the attackers, the IGP asked," Why the state establishments are being attacked time and again? Are they against the state

that is Bangladesh?' He was talking with reporters at the Brahmanbaria Press Club after inspecting the spot.

He said, "We see such horrible attacks happening in Brahmanbaria almost every year. Hathazari is also being attacked in the same way. State properties are being destroyed repeatedly. Is their position against the state?

"What have we achieved in the last 50 years? Repeatedly, communal groups are attacking the non-communal Bangladesh, which was liberated by the supreme sacrifice of 30 lakh martyrs," he went on.

He said land offices in Brahmanbaria and Chattogram's Hathazari have been set on fire. "It is not certain whether this record system can be restored in the next 50 years. Thousands of people will

their own religion. Those who are in the "business of religion", have two characters. They conduct waaz and procession with sticks, he said.

"We now need to understand the difference between the true religious people and those who do business over religion," said the IGP. He said, "I want to make it clear

18 crore Bangladeshis are with you. Together we can overcome fear. Many inhabitants have left the district town after the mayhem They did not come back home as police were yet

to the people of Brahmanbaria that

to arrest the perpetrators. N Hefajat leaders were named in the 18 cases filed with different police stations of the districts in last the three

Talking with The Daily Star, Kabita Akter, a housewife living the district's Banikpara area, said, "We have seen people setting fire to motorbikes, houses and vandalising different establishments. We pass every moment in fear. We came to our village in Akharua so that we can sleep well and live safely."

Monir Hossain, director of Titas Abritti Parishad, said "We had seen a similar mayhem in 2016 but no action

On January 12, 2016, several hundred madrasa students vandalised eight to ten establishments, including Ustad Alauddin music academy. Around 12 cases were filed but the investigations in those cases are yet to see any light.

While addressing the media, IGP Benazir yesterday said people in Brahmanbaria have the right to stay

"We will ensure it. Those who have video clips and pictures of the attacks should provide us with them. File cases and we will take action," he said.

Regarding the previous cases'

Tk 100 from Tk 90 a litre, onion to Tk 20 from Tk 15 a kg, and sugar to Tk 55 At kitchen markets in Shukrabad, Town Hall, and Mohammadpur Krishi

Market, this correspondent found the prices of rice, oil, lentil, sugar, garlic, potato and chicken rose between Tk 5 Yesterday, miniket rice (local) was

sold for Tk 65 a kg, up from Tk 60, sugar

for Tk 70, up from 65, onion for Tk 35, up from Tk 25, and garlic for Tk 115, up from 110 a month ago. Broiler chicken was being sold for Tk

150 to Tk 160 a kg and the variety called Sonali for Tk 280 to Tk 300. A month ago, the prices ranged between Tk 130 and Tk 140, and Tk 200 and Tk 220 respectively. Meat traders at some markets hiked

the prices of beef by Tk 20-30 a kg.

The prices of potatoes rose by Tk 5 a kg and soybean oil by Tk 7 a litre in one month.

Struggle gets even steeper for poor prices of onions, edible oil and sugar in for Tk 70. up for tears. "I have nothing to say. Ramadan is its open market sales programme. TCB's prices of soybean oil rose to

here. Commodity prices are rising and coronavirus is spreading again. How will I survive with my family if there is another lockdown?" he asked. Requesting not to be named, an

employee of a firm, said his monthly salary was slashed by 20 percent due to the pandemic. He added that the rising prices are a second blow to him. Making matters worse for people like them, the Trading Corporation of

and Tk 40 in a month. Bangladesh (TCB) yesterday hiked the

ahidul kept guard. ocals rescued the victim and informed

Daily Covid cases FROM PAGE 1

5,335 got Covid.

This is the highest number of deaths

Some 28,198 samples were tested

also recovered during this period. The total number of recoveries now

BANGLADESH New cases in 24hrs Total cases

6,469
New cases in 24hrs



He halted payment to S Korean company after

Railways ministry has changed a project director, who had halted payment to Hyundai Rotem Company (HRC) for supplying 10 locomotives to Bangladesh Railway breaching the contract, and posted him under a

BR official, has been discharging duties as the director of the project for procuring 10 locomotives, among other items, since October 2019.

director of the 10 locomotives project.

replace PD Partha. The office order did not mention

Meanwhile, the ministry yesterday issued another circular appointing Nur Ahmed as additional general manager (east zone) of BR. Both the incumbent general manager and Nur Ahmed are from 10th batch of BCS and the latter is senior as per the merit

make further comments.

locomotives -- bought under a project worth around Tk 300 crore -- arrived at a railways workshop in Chattogram's Pahartoli after they were unloaded at the Chattogram port in September last

In its report, a BR commissioning

Rejoinder, our reply full story would have done the justice and served right for a reputed newspaper like The Daily Star. It is to be mentioned here that in a letter dated 23/11/2020 the council of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (ASB) cancelled the grant asking the researchers to return the given grant money (BDT 1,75,000). Following this we realized that it was a draft report prepared at the initial stage of the research submitted

mistakenly. Therefore, we did apologize

for the mistake, returned the grant

money, withdrew the report and

proposed to submit the original report

that was meant to be submitted. Against

this backdrop few points need to be

considered here: First and foremost, this was an unpublished report and withdrawn. Second, with the cancellation of the project and returning of the grant money following ASB council's decision, the formal contract between the researchers and the ASB ended right there rendering any further discussion on the issue invalid, let alone publishing it in the newspaper. The document in question is withdrawn and it ceased to exist for all practical purposes. Now, we wonder how could an unpublished and unaccepted report be termed as plagiarized as was reported here? Let us give one small example in this respect that many submitted articles in academic journals regularly gets turned down for many diverse reasons including that of plagiarism. Would the issues of those unaccepted articles also be discussed in the newspapers? In fact, the issue of plagiarism does not apply in any count in case of any unpublished and unaccepted work like this. Internal plagiarism check is done on research works only to identify them so that those can be rectified. The concerned authority in such a case holds right either to suggest/ask the researchers to correct their errors or to cancel it. No way this can be publicized as a plagiarized work. We, therefore, strongly oppose the title and the use of the word

We do not feel like to present any further clarification on the details of the incident as presented in the news report. Rather we would like to urge The Daily Star and for that matter all other media to delve deep into the matter to find out why all on a sudden an internally resolved issue four months earlier is making news now? The politics behind

throughout the article.

it then will be exposed. Finally, through this rejoinder we earnestly request The Daily Star and all media workers not to fall into the trap of motivated story and sensationalize an issue that may in effect victimize innocent people. As always, our immense faith on progressive media forces is unshaken and we believe that

at the end of the day justice will prevail. **OUR REPLY** Firstly, the claim made by the researchers that it was a draft report is not borne out by the facts. The paper in question was submitted to Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (ASB) along with two reviewers' comments as the final report of the research for which they were under contract. The paper has "final report" (Churanto Pratibedan) written on its cover page. Even their application to ASB, dated February 19, 2020, for disbursement of the remaining grant money reads, "...we have completed the

research work and are now presenting the final report." Nowhere in our report did we mention the paper was published. Our report categorically stated that the two authors submitted their final report to ASB and the research and seminar committee of the organisation found it "heavily plagiarised" and filled with "innumerable errors". Following this, the organisation cancelled the research grant and asked them to return the

money paid in advance. The researchers also argued that it was "an internally resolved issue four months earlier". But the matter was not resolved four months ago as the ASB council, the supreme authority of the organisation, on February 25 this year took a decision to place the matter on the agenda of its monthly general meeting for the next course of action. The meeting is yet to be held.

Lastly, the rejoinder reads we realised that it was a draft report prepared at the initial stage of the research submitted mistakenly.' We cannot but wonder how such responsible researchers could mistakenly" submit a paper full of errors and "realise the mistake" after nine months only when the authorities "cancelled the grant asking the researchers to return the given grant money (BDT 1,75,000)". In preparing our report, we talked to

the researchers concerned and gave their

versions elaborately.

We stand by our report.