

City



BANGLADESH UPDATE 6,430 New cases in 24hrs New cases in 24hrs Total cases Deaths Deaths Deaths Deaths







EXTREME CLIMATE EVENTS

# Bangladesh loses 2pc of GDP a year

PM says in write-up for Diplomat magazine

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh loses two percent of its GDP to extreme climate

events every year. By the turn of the century, the figure will go up to 9 percent. By 2050,

more than 17 percent of the country's coastlines will go under water displacing 30 million people, she wrote in the renowned magazine Diplomat in its April 2021 issue.

"Six million Bangladeshis have already become climate displaced. And yet we continue to bear the 1.1 million Rohingyas from Myanmar at the cost of environmental havoc in Cox's Bazar. Who will pay for this loss and damage?" the PM asked.

In the write up under the headline "Forging Dhaka-Glasgow CVF-COP26 Solidarity", Hasina said humans are consciously destroying the very support

systems that are keeping us alive.
"What planet shall we leave for the Greta Thunbergs or those at the Bangladesh Coastal Youth Action Hubs? At COP26 we must not fail them," she

Hasina, president of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), said Bangladesh wants to see climate

financing unleashed, not only towards low-carbon economy, but also for the promised \$100 billion, and 50 percent dedicated to

climate resilience-building. want to international carbon markets unlocked for transnational climate cooperation and

solutions found to our profound loss, damage and climate injustice.

The PM said for Bangladesh, often referred to as the "ground zero" of natural disasters, climate change is a survival battle braved by millions of its resilient people whose homes, land and crops are lost to the recurring wrath of

She said like Bangladesh, every CVF nation has an irreversible climate loss and damage story to tell. "But they contributed little to global emissions. It is time to address this climate injustice."

Hasina said Bangladesh has learnt to self-finance its climate projects. The government has thus created a \$450 million Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund that supports nearly 800 adaptation and resilience projects in its vulnerable coasts.

"We are spending on an average 2.5 per cent of our GDP -- \$5 billion each year -- on climate adaptation and resilience-building," she added.

## Health safety rules flouted

"This could fuel a jump in coronavirus infections at a time when the number of infections keep rising," he said.

Over 1.16 lakh candidates took the one-hour test for the 2020-21 academic year against 4,350 seats in 47 government medical colleges and another 8,340 in 70 private medical colleges. At the 15 centres in Dhaka city, some 47,000 attended the test.

On March 24, Health Minister Zahid Maleque insisted that the MBBS admission test would be taken in compliance with health guidelines.

The Daily Star correspondents and photojournalists, while visiting at least five exam centres in Dhaka, found that on many occasions admission seekers were facing obstacles while entering and exiting the centres due to the gathering in front of the halls.

"We faced overcrowding while entering the exam halls. We needed to make our way in the crowd -- it was dangerous," Nusrat Tahmina told the Daily Star after taking the exam at

Teachers Training College. She, however, said there was not much problem inside the centre -- each

bench was occupied by just one student. Zeenat Ara Chetona, who took the exam at Udayan High School, said, "When we entered the centre, we couldn't maintain social distance. In fact, it was almost impossible due to the presence of a huge number of

admission seekers and guardians. But the authorities provided hand sanitisers inside the centre and they sat one student per bench, she said.

There was a huge traffic jam in front of the Dhaka College centre since 8:00am due to the presence of examinees and guardians. A huge gathering was seen

in front of the Teachers Training College and Government Laboratory High School centres, which are located close to each other

Candidates and parents started coming to the examination centres of Dhaka University from 8:00am.

A father waiting outside the gate of Arts Faculty of Dhaka University said he left home early in the morning because he did not want to take any risk due to the transport crisis.

But there was no clear instruction about the guardians, and so they were least bothered about the safety rules.

"We all know how poor our sense of responsibility is. The government was keen on holding the test, but did not make any arrangement."

Nurul Azam, a guardian waiting in front of Udayan High School, said, There are only five to six security guards here. It is not possible for them to handle such a huge crowd. There is also a lack of awareness among parents. They were blocking the path in front of the gate.

guardian, Mukhlesur Another Rahman, who came from Savar told this paper, "All other exams were postponed due to the new outbreak of coronavirus, but the health ministry themselves took the admission test. It will give a wrong

message to the people." "There was a transportation crisis for a few days; we came early so found no problem but how will we go now?" he

Professor Dr AKM Ahsan Habib, director (Health Education) of Directorate General of Health Services, said in a press release after the exam that they maintained the health safety guidelines properly during the

### Hefajat blames it on ruling party He was addressing a rally after Juma

documents and other government establishments were torched. But you shot and killed people as if they were

"We didn't see the IGP expressing grief over the deaths. Aren't they citizens of the country?

"If this is your mindset, then we want to tell you that tomorrow's Bangladesh is Hefajat's Bangladesh.'

Hefajat also criticised the local media of Brahmanbaria who decided not to cover the Islamist organisation's strike on Sunday protesting Hefajat's attack on the press club in the district.

"Someone may have mistreated journalists in Brahmanbaria. We apologise for it," Mamunul said.

He then claimed that the media could not write anything against an MP in Brahmanbaria but they "keep writing fictitious stories about Hefajat".

The organisation's deputy chief Ahmed Abdul Quader said, "We want to seek revenge for the blood that has been shed. The Jubo League, Chhatra League and Helmet League attacked us. But the police didn't arrest them.

Hefajat leader Maulana Jasim Uddin said, "The country has been turned into a police state. Every drop of blood will be remembered. Ershad is gone, Khaleda Zia is gone too. Sheikh Hasina will also have to go to jail. Wait, it's not

'WITHDRAW ALL FALSE CASES' Hefajat chief Junaid Babunagari said

the cases filed by police following the mayhem were "false" and demanded that they be withdrawn immediately.

"The cases which were filed across the country following the peaceful movement of Hefajat supporters are false cases. It was the police who instigated the Hefajat men, attacked the demonstrators and killed innocent people. The law enforcers are now harassing us by filing false cases," he said.

"We demand exemplary punishment and immediate removal of Hathazari Police Station OC Rafiqul Islam. We also want trial of those policemen who shot innocent protesters.

prayers in front of Hathazari madrasa in . Chattogram. Hathazari is a stronghold of Hefajat men, mostly Qwami madrasa "We've prayed for Bangabandhu

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We also pray for Bangladesh. We are not antiliberation or anti-government or anti-Bangladesh. We oppose the atheists and we will continue to do so," he said.

"The government is trying to close the madrasa in the name of containing the spread of Covid-19. We will resist the decision with an iron fist."

Due to the rally, traffic on the Hathazari-Khagrachhari road remained suspended for hours and police were on alert.

Yesterday, similar protests were staged in Narayanganj and Munshiganj, where hundreds of demonstrators joined defying the health restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

At least 43 cases have been filed so far in connection with the destruction carried out by Hefajat activists in Dhaka, Chattogram, Brahmanbaria, Kishoregani and Narayangani.

Over 20,000 people were made

accused in the cases. Although there are plenty of video clips and photos showing that the recent countrywide mayhem was unleashed by Hefajat, only a handful of people from the Islamist organisation

have been accused in the cases HEFAJAT-COPS CLASH IN GAZIPUR

At least 20 people, including seven policemen, were injured as police and Hefajat supporters clashed on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Gazipur after Juma prayers yesterday.

The clash broke out as Hefajat men tried to block the highway near Chowrasta Jame Masjid area. As police went to clear the blockade, the protesters threw brick chunks at them, leading to the clash, our correspondent reported,

quoting witnesses. Police fired tear gas and dispersed the

At least seven people were detained from the spot, the correspondent added.



of communication in some remote char areas of Tangail, Sirajganj and Jamalpur districts during the rainy season. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

## Covid to cause \$1 trillion losses

The report said India's central budget for education dropped by 11 percent in the period while Bangladesh's budget rose by 12 percent.

The World Bank introduced a concept several years ago known as learning-adjusted years of schooling (LAYS). It seeks to combine access and learning outcomes into a single measure. It combines quantity (years of schooling) and quality (how much a student knows at a given grade) into a single summary measure of human capital in a society.

The latest report said estimates of the loss of LAYS in the third quarter of 2020 were based on scenarios between three to seven months of closures.

"As things stand, it seems an even more pessimistic scenario is unfolding -- one where schools have been shuttered for nine months. Learning-adjusted years of schooling in the South Asia region falls from a pre-Covid baseline of 6.5 years to 5.5 years -- suggesting that children could lose a full year of learning adjusted schooling," said the report.

The World Bank report said many of these students will find it harder to return the longer they are away from school. The effects on their expected future lifetime earnings will be exceptionally large compared to a scenario where Covid-19 never

The typical student can expect to lose as much as \$445 annually as a result of lost schooling and learning. In the long run, this could cost the South Asia region over \$1 trillion in

This amount is almost a quarter of what the region will spend to educate this generation of students."

The closures kept 391 million students out of school in South Asia. Many probably left school to help families with lost income. School closures in South Asia, on average, have been maintained for longer compared to the global average, despite findings that children, in general, have low caseloads and insignificant death rates

Schools in Maldives and Pakistan were kept mostly open, while Pakistan's approach to school closures varied across provinces and changed during the year. Schools in India received national guidelines for states to decide, but a national directive for the reopening of schools and colleges for non-virtual learning only came in January 2021. "The consequent loss of skills will reduce the productive capacity of the economies in the region for years to come." Between March 11, 2020 and

February 2, 2021, Bangladesh kept schools closed more days than any other South Asian country.

Professor Syed Md Golam Faruk of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education said TV, online and assignment-based lessons were going on to make up for the learning loss.

'We are assessing the education loss due to the closure. We will make special plans like arranging extra classes for students, who might lag behind due to the digital divide," he told The Daily Star.

# Reign of fear in Faridpur

and Toufique, also a former vice-president of the district unit Chhatra League, had to pay the price. He said he was beaten up mercilessly

by members of the syndicate on May 24, 2018 and also falsely implicated in a murder case. "My only fault was I participated in the bidding ignoring the unwritten

law that only they or those who pay

them commission can participate in the bidding in the district," he told The Daily Star recently. CID probe revealed that the Barkat-Rubel syndicate controlled all the tenders of roads and highways, public works, LGED ministry, health

department, BRTA, the municipality, zila parishad, Water Development Board, and the medical college. They illegally took commissions from various haats (markets) and

district land registrar's offices and extorted money in the transport sector. The syndicate earned thousands of crores of taka under the shelter of Babar and Fuad, the CID mentioned in the charge sheet of a money laundering case filed against Barkat and Rubel last year.

"It was not possible for anyone to do any work without giving them commission," said Alim Haidar Tuhin, former vice-president of Faridpur district BCL unit.

However, the situation changed ignificantly after the arrest of the brothers, with their patrons and cohorts coming under immense pressure.

Faruq Hossain, executive engineer of LGED, they were now noticing that the number of tender submissions and contractors has increased since the arrest of Barkat and Rubel.

"We have already cancelled 41 work

orders of Barkat and Rubel. Barkat, general secretary of Faridpur town AL, and Rubel, former the president of Faridpur Press Club, along with seven others were arrested on June 7 last year for their alleged involvement in the attack on the house of Faridpur AL President Subal Chandra on May 16,

Later on June 26, SM Miraj Al Mahmud, a CID inspector, lodged a case with Kafrul Police Station against the two brothers among others under the Money Laundering Act.

Local sources say it was the attack on the house of Faridpur AL president that turned things around.

The 10 charge-sheeted accused in the case, including Barkat and Rubel, own land, houses, flats, and personal vehicles.

They amassed such a vast amount of wealth through tender manipulation, land grabbing, lobbying, extortion and commission trade in the last decade, according to local politicians and an intelligence report.

Babar, vice-president of Faridpur district Awami League, and Fuad, also former convener of Faridpur district Jubo League, were among eight other charge-sheeted accused. BABAR'S RISE Local party leaders said Babar, 63, who

is the third accused in the charge sheet

in the money laundering case, was never

involved in AL politics earlier. After his

brother Mosharraf became a minister

in 2009, he virtually took control of In his confessional statement, Rubel

referred to Babar as Babar chacha (uncle) and said, "I have paid Babar chacha Tk 1 crore to get the work order for constructing the district council Rubel also confessed that Babar took Tk 40 lakh for the contract of

the upazila administration building

construction and another Tk 40 lakh for the jute research market, according to CID investigators. Bipul Ghosh, former general secretary of Faridpur district AL and former central committee member of the party, said Babar was chiefly behind criminal activities like land

grabbing and plundering other people's

properties, which had been going on in Faridpur since 2009. In the 2008 general election, Babar had worked for the BNP candidate and used to ride a 50cc motorcycle. Yet he later took control of Faridpur AL and started illegal activities which dented the party's image, said a number of local

Before the election, Babar was an employee of a private company in Dhaka. In 2008, he returned to Faridpur and started a poultry firm with a bank loan he took mortgaging his ancestral

According to an intelligence agency report, Babar has built a palatial house on five acres of land at a cost of around Tk 10 crore in Faridpur town. He also amassed vast wealth in several areas of Faridpur town and on the outskirts, said the report.

CID sources said Babar has a home in Australia and businesses in Singapore. His portion of the ill-gotten gains was laundered abroad, including to these two countries, they added.

The Daily Star was unable to get a comment from Babar as he neither received calls nor responded to text messages.

Asked about the allegations, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, also lawmaker from Faridpur-3, told this paper on March 3, "I have no idea at all about how they made money. They got work orders through tender. I did not give them the work as it is not the job of a lawmaker or a minister. It is the job of government officials.'

About his brother's alleged involvement in tender manipulation and extortion, he said Babar neither signed any documents nor was he involved in any such activities. FUAD'S 'HELMET GANG'

AHM Fuad, the APS of Khandaker Mosharraf, allegedly took 15 percent commission from those whom he helped win work orders from the Public Works Department, Power Development Board, and the education engineering, public health engineering, and the roads and highways departments. He had a "helmet gang" which

would punish anyone going against him or submitting a tender without his permission or without giving him commission. He has five flats at Sumon Tower in Charkamalapur area in Faridpur town,

two flats on the 10th and 11th floors of Zaman Tower in Jhiltuli Mahalla, one at Dhanmondi and another at Siddheswari in Dhaka, according to the intelligence report. Besides, he owns a huge swathe of land in Faridpur.

Fuad could not be reached as his ellphone was found switched off. OTHER ACCUSED

Before the 2008 election, none of the

10 charge-sheeted accused had any mentionable wealth. Former Faridpur town Jubo League oresident Khandakar Nazmul Islam Levi had leaned towards the centre

became a minister. got involved in tender manipulation and land grabbing by engaging in the syndicate along with Barkat, Rubel, and Fuad.

of power after Khandaker Mosharrat

According to the intelligence report, Levi had several flats and a large plot of land in Faridpur town. He also has three houses in Dhaka, and Gazaria Haat has been leased out in his name.

Asibur Rahman Farhan, former general secretary of Faridpur town unit lubo League, and Fahad bin Wazed Fahim, general secretary of Faridpur District Swechchhasebak League, used to participate in the processions and rallies of Khandaker Mosharraf.

Of the three, Levi and Fahim are now behind bars.

Farhan has four flats in Dhaka's Mirpur and has about six acres of land in Faridpur town and Bakhunda area, the intelligence report says. He also runs a Chinese restaurant in the town.

He built a two-storey house south of Faridpur Kotwali Police Station on land he leased from the municipality.

Fahim owns at least five flats in Faridpur town and two business firms called Digital Press and Fahima Construction.

He was assigned by the syndicate

leaders to control tenders of the

Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation, Water Development Board, and PDB, according to locals and the intelligence agency report. Former joint convener of Faridpur town Jubo League Kamrul Hasan David,

district Jubo League joint convener Mohammad Ali Minar, and Faridpur town Jubo League joint convenor Tariqul Islam alias Nasim are among the charge-sheeted accused. Local sources say all three were members of Fuad's "helmet gang". Their

job was to guard the tender boxes in various government departments and prevent anyone other than their own men from submitting tenders. They would hack or beat up their critics and rivals on Fuad's instructions. The amount of their wealth could not be known from local sources, though

the CID in the charge sheet mentioned

they also got a share of the illegally

earned money of Barkat and Rubel. Apart from the 10 charge-sheeted accused, CID also found the names of 42 others who have links with the syndicate but did not press charges against them due to lack of evidence. An investigator said an investigation is going on against them and if they get evidence, a supplementary charge sheet will be given against them.

## Democratic society suffers if media doesn't work properly

Says information minister Bss, Chattogram

Terming media the mirror of the society, Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud has said multidimensional and democratic society suffers when the media does not play its role properly.

"We live in a democratic

multidimensional society. The media is the fourth pillar of the state. So, when the media does not work properly, multidimensional and democratic society suffers," he said.

The minister said journalism is not just a profession, but a vow for many iournalists.

There are many journalists who could have retired as secretaries if they had entered government service. Many have left university jobs to pursue a career in journalism. The best students of the university study journalism. They come to this profession falling in love with journalism. It is necessary to keep an eye on fake journalists so that they cannot tarnish the image of the entire journalistic society," he added.

Mahmud was addressing the concluding ceremony of a function titled "Foundation Training Workshop on Journalism", organised by Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) at Kaptai Upazila Auditorium yesterday.

"We want to develop the country, but not just materialistically. In the last 100 years, the European countries have developed a lot with material development. But humanity is lost there. In many cases, there is also loss of values. Family bonds are lost there. In European society, 30 to 50 percent marriages end in divorce," the minister said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Mother of three gang-raped in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A mother of three has been gangraped allegedly by a group of three men in Patuakhali's Baufal upazila around 9:00pm on Thursday.

Mamun, officer-in-charge (inquiry) of Baufal Police Station, said the victim filed a case with the police

Police are taking legal action against the accused and the woman was sent to Patuakhali General Hospital for medical examinations, he said. According to police, a group of

three men blocked her way around

:00pm when she was returning home from the house of UP member Nilufa Begum.

They then took her to an isolated place and raped her. Contacted, UP member Dulal Sikder said after receiving the news, locals rescued the victim and sent her

## to the police station. Cop's son found dead at Ctg home

His body bore bullet wounds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg Police recovered a bullet-hit body from a house in Akbarshah area in Chattogram

The victim was identified as Musfiqul Haque Mahin, 18, son of Mohim Uddin, a sub-inspector of Khulshi Police Station under Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP).

The law enforcers primarily suspected that Mahin shoot himself with his father's service pistol.

Abdul Warish, deputy commissioner west) of CMP, told The Daily Star, "The ncident took place around 1:40pm at SI Mohim's house in Shapla residential area of Akbarshah. "SI Mohim scolded his son Mahin

over his studies and went to the mosque

to say his Friday prayers. Following the event, Mahin shut the door of his bedroom and shot himself with his father's pistol at his chest. Quoting the family members, Arif Hossain, assistant commissioner of

Pahartali zone of CMP, said Mahin was supposed to take part in yesterday's medical tests, but he did not do so triggering his father's anger. Mahin first took bath, wore Panjabi,

shut the door from inside of his bedroom, and fired one round," he said. Mahin was rushed to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where on-duty doctors declared him

dead, the police official said. Police took SI Mohim's service pistol An Unnatural Death (UD) case will be lodged in this regard, said Jahir

Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of

#### Akbarshah Police Station. Rejoinder

the spot on February 27, he saw notorious illegal logger, Md Jamal, chitchatting with a forest guard in front of the Chiringa range office in Sharaf Bhata union.

We stand by the report.