



Under the scorching sun, a crow finds respite after coming across fresh running water, putting its beak into the stream to have a little drink. As temperatures remain in the high 30s, dogs, cats, and birds are always on the lookout for water sources, as like us, they also might find the summer heat unbearable at times. This photo was taken from the capital's Gabtoli yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Half a century with a shrapnel in her skull

Nurjahan still suffering from mortar attack by Pakistan forces on this day in 1971

MINTU DESHWARA and HASAN MEER

Young Nurjahan Begum and Nuru Mia got married in early 1971.

Inhabitants of a small village in Akhaura, they lived in a tiny house, but the couple never stopped dreaming of big achievements in life. Then the war for independence broke out.

Nuru was adamant to join the Mukti Bahini, a decision Nurjahan supported. After Nuru left home to take part in the war, Nurjahan's father, mother, and two younger siblings moved in with her.

On April 28 -- to this day half a century ago -- the Pakistan occupation forces launched an attack in their area. The enemy kept on firing mortar shells at the village and one of the shells exploded in their backyard.

Nurhajan's family members died on the spot while she got seriously injured in the attack. Pieces of shrapnel penetrated her arm, leg and left side of the head.

Nurjahan, now 70, is still carrying those fragments of violence unleashed by the occupation forces in her cranium. She continues to face several complications and remains almost in a comatose state these days.

She now lives with her children in West Gurabhui of Kulaura upazila.



An X-ray (right) shows a piece of metal in Nurjahan's (left) cranium.

"For the past three years, my mother's sufferings have intensified. She has been experiencing headaches and is often dizzy," said her daughter Amena Begum.

As her condition worsened, family members took her to see Dr Mohammad Sayed Inam Walid, a psychiatrist and assistant professor of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

"I did an MSE (mental state examination) and spoke to the family about the patient's medical history. When I learned about the shrapnel wound, I was shocked," he said.

"I wanted to know the details of the incident, but she could barely remember it," he said.

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COVID-19 PM provides Tk 10cr for journalists

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday provided Tk 10 crore as assistance to the country's journalists during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

"The prime minister has given Tk 10 crore to Bangladesh Journalists' Welfare Trust for extending assistance to journalists across the country at this tough time of Covid-19 pandemic," Ihsanul Karim, Press Secretary to the prime minister, told the news agency.



UGC finds another unauthorised study centre in the capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

University Grants Commission has found an unauthorised study centre -- London School of Commerce, Dhaka -- and urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to close the centre.

LSC Dhaka has been offering different degrees in the name of different universities of the United Kingdom, said a press release signed by Shamsul Arefin, director of UGC's public relations, yesterday.

The study centre opened a website -- www.lscdhaka.org -- and published circular of students' admission but it has no government approval, said the release.

UGC Member Prof Biswajit Chanda said according to the Private Universities Act 2010, it is illegal to run a study centre of a foreign university without permission.

He said it is an offence to run student admission and educational activities at a study centre without prior permission from the government.

He advised all students and admission seekers to be aware of this unauthorised study centre.

UGC found that LSC, Dhaka has been conducting its activities since 2005 and it has two branches -- at Gulshan-2 and Banani -- in Dhaka.

LSC, Dhaka provides Bachelor of Business Studies,

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NATIONAL LEGAL AID DAY TODAY

Free legal help for the helpless

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

It has been a long and agonising wait for Sheikh Zahid.

An accused in a case filed over the murder of his wife and daughter, Zahid from Baghmara Motlober Mor in Khulna Sadar was sentenced to death on June 25, 2000.

After the verdict, Zahid, who was staying in the condemned cell of Khulna jail, filed an appeal challenging the judgment.

On July 31, 2004, the High Court confirmed his death penalty.

He then filed a petition with the Appellate Division next year through the authorities concerned of Khulna jail, challenging the HC verdict.

But the petition remained pending for years until the jail authorities sent a letter to the Supreme Court Legal Aid Office (SCLAO), on March 1 last year, requesting for the update of Zahid's petition.

SCLAO Chairman Justice Enayetur Rahim directed the officials concerned of the SC to inquire about the petition and take necessary steps so the Appellate Division could hold a hearing and deliver a verdict as early as possible.

Subsequently, the Appellate Division held a virtual hearing and delivered the verdict, acquitting Zahid of the case on August 25 last year.

Zahid, now 49 years old, walked out of jail the following day. SCLAO's coordinator Ripan Paul Sku told The Daily Star.

As Zahid stayed behind bars for all these years, he did not have anything to survive. "The SCLAO is trying to do something for him," Ripan Paul said.

Like Zahid's case, the Supreme Court Legal Aid Office has been working to provide legal assistance to the poor and helpless people at free of cost since its inception in September 2015.

It continued serving even during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, maintaining health rules.

The country is observing National Legal Aid Services Day today.

The SCLAO has provided legal opinions and advice to 17,952 helpless people at free of cost till this March, according to a study report of SCLAO.

It has got 799 cases disposed of through its panel lawyers during this period, the

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Measures to protect Halda paying off

Aquatic life thrives as River Police keeps eye on poachers

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

Ahead of every spawning season, miscreants lay snares along the Halda river, the lone natural breeding ground of carp in South Asia. They net brood fish, while other aquatic creatures like dolphins also get stuck and die.

But this year, the scenario has changed totally thanks to multiple measures taken by various government bodies to make sure no trap is laid along river.

The initiative is paying off to protect the unique aquatic ecosystem, as death of dolphins and brood fish has reduced remarkably. No dolphins died this year with only one brood fish found dead in mid April.

Last year, Hathazari Upazila Administration recovered three dead brood fish and two dolphins from the river.

Three key measures have since helped minimise the dangers to aquatic life -- setting up an outpost of River Police, CCTV cameras along the ten kilometres of Halda and declaring Halda as Bangabandhu Heritage.

As the end of April and May are the high time for laying eggs, brood fish have been roaming within the river uninterrupted. The brood fish and dolphins popping up has made the egg collectors and experts hopeful for a great

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Five teens held for 'killing' 15-year-old

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested five teenagers on charge of killing a 15-year-old boy in Chattogram city's Mohammadpur area.

The deceased -- identified as Md Rafiqul Islam, son of Firoj Mia, hailing from Brahmanbaria -- was a factory worker.

The arrestees are around 14 to 15 years old, said police.

Panchlaih Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Abul Kashem Bhuiyan told The Daily Star, "A brawl ensued between Rafiq and a group of teenagers over a mobile phone couple of days ago.

"They also threatened to kill him," he said quoting family members.

"The group later picked Rafiq up from Muradpur area on Monday and took him to Sultan Colony area in Mohammadpur. At one stage, Rafiqul was stabbed in the chest," he said.

"Hearing screams, people rushed to the spot, held one of the group members and beat him," the official added.

Rafiqul was declared dead at Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

His family filed a case with the police station accusing seven teenagers and a youth, said police. Afterwards, they arrested the five, the OC said.

Qatar makes quarantine at hotel mandatory for incoming Bangladeshis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hotel quarantine is mandatory for people arriving in Qatar from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, local newspaper Gulf Times reports quoting the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in Qatar.

In a statement yesterday, the Qatar authorities said due to the emergence of a new strain of the Covid-19 virus in India, and in order to preserve public health in the Gulf country, it has been decided that no exceptions to the hotel quarantine policy will apply, and that the following measures should be implemented for travellers coming from these six countries, whether they are travelling by a direct flight or via other countries (transit).

All passengers whose original flight is from the said countries are subject to mandatory Covid-19 PCR test done 48 hours before departure from the testing centres approved by their local health authority.

No one can board the flight to Qatar without a valid negative PCR certificate.

All arrivals from those countries must undergo 10 days' quarantine in a dedicated quarantine facility, or 14 days if quarantined at the Mekaines facility.

Home quarantine criteria are not applicable for travellers coming from these countries, including exemptions due to vaccination or recovery from a previous infection with the virus during the past six months.

All arrivals from these countries must undergo a repeat Covid-19 PCR test at the quarantine facility within one day of arrival.

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PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Throng of people were coming out of the capital's Bashundhara City yesterday, their hands full with shopping bags. With the government deciding to open malls ahead of eid amid a surging rate of Covid-19 infections, businesses are benefitting but questions remain whether public health safety should have taken precedence.

Progga, ATMA demand raising tobacco prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Research and advocacy organisation Progga (Knowledge for Progress) and Anti-Tobacco Media Alliance (ATMA) yesterday demanded increasing prices of cigarettes and other tobacco products through imposing specific taxes.

They made the demands at a virtual press conference.

The two organisations proposed introducing a tiered, specific excise (supplementary duty-SD) with uniform tax burden (SD share of 65 percent of the final retail price) across all cigarette brands for the upcoming budget of fiscal 2021-22.

For 10-stick cigarette packs, they demanded the government set Tk 50 for low-tier cigarettes followed by Tk 32.50 as SD; Tk 70 for medium-tier ones with SD of Tk 45.50; Tk 110 for high-tier ones followed by SD of Tk 71.50; and for premium-tier, Tk 140 with SD of Tk 91.

They also demanded reducing price tiers from four to two by reducing the gaps in final prices and tax rates among cigarette brands within fiscal 2025-26. They said, for 25 non-filtered bidi sticks, the retail price should be Tk 25, and the price for 20 filtered sticks should be Tk 20.

For smokeless tobacco products, the organisations' demands were to fix price of per 10-gram jarda and gul at Tk 45 and 25, respectively, where supplementary duty should be 60 percent on the final retail price.

The existing 15 percent value added tax (VAT) and one percent health development surcharge on all tobacco products should be retained, said Progga Tobacco Control Project Head Md Hasan Shahriar, while presenting the budget proposals.

"I fully support the budget proposals to increase tobacco taxes and prices. The government must look for people's

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