targeted for their empowerment or

Prof Sayema Haque Bidisha, an economics professor at Dhaka University and also the research director of South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), has long been outspoken about the economic challenges women faced during the pandemic and what support they needed in the upcoming budget to address the challenges.

According to Sayema, since a large number of women have become "new poor" during the pandemic, this year's budget must have the option of increasing the coverage of the government's social safety net programmes, along with hiking the per-capita allocation, so that women who are currently living below the poverty line can be benefitted from the budget.

"This can simply be providing a sewing machine to a woman in a slum or arranging a small tea stall for her so that she can survive."

The DU teacher's recent study titled "Impact of Covid-19 on Women" showed that 16.1 percent of the female wage employees lost their jobs between March and December 2020, while almost 50 percent faced a pay

There must be prioritisation of training on alternative livelihood for them, both in urban and rural areas, Sayema said.

The study also showed that around 63 percent of the self-employed women saw a decrease in their profit or sales during that period, while more than 33 percent had to close their businesses temporarily.

She said the government must ensure that these female cottage and micro-entrepreneurs can access the stimulus packages designed for them since they hardly access the formal banking channels.

"And for them, the entire process of disbursement should be sorted out again. For instance, the package money can be disbursed by the micro-financers as they have wide access to the grassroots female micro and cottage entrepreneurs," Sayema added.

Experts also said unpaid care work still being unrecognised is holding women back.

According to a recent study by Prof Sharmind Neelormi of Jahangirnagar University, about 78 percent of the women-headed households, mostly representing the informal sectors, faced an economic crisis during the pandemic due to job loss, increased household responsibilities, and interruption in childcare support services at the workplace.

It also showed that 75 percent of the homemakers used to spend 3-5 hours a day for household work before the pandemic. Of them, 37.8 percent spent more time on household work than they previously did.

For employed women, 85 percent spent more than four hours a day for unpaid care work.

According to experts, it is necessary to include women's unpaid care work in national GDP estimation and care work to the System of National Accounts (SNA) of the coming fiscal

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said there must be monetisation of women's unpaid care work along with reduction of their workload by redistributing their responsibilities so that they can get a little time for being self-dependent.

EDUCATION ON THE LINE

educational institutions to conduct their classes online and on television

channels, it has been seen that female students lag behind in participating in distant learning and online classes, compared to their male counterparts.

For example, a 2020 SANEM study shows that only 6.7 percent of femaleheaded households participated in online classes, and compared to male students, there were more challenges for female students in terms of unavailability of device, insufficient internet facility, lack of mental preparation, and not being accustomed to technology.

Prof Sayema said when a family in Bangladeshi society faces a scarcity of digital devices or internet connections, the male students will inevitably get the preference.

Experts also believe that the impact of the gender technology gap and learning deficiency, along with income loss of the families and an increasing number of child marriage, will cause a dropout of a large number of female

"This is why this year's budget must focus on bridging the gender digital divide by providing women with gadgets and connections in a subsidised way," said Shaheen Anam.

"Besides, the government should keep in mind that increasing the education budget will not necessarily solve the problem, unless there are enough interventions to bring them back to classrooms by ensuring stipends for them and incentives for their parents," she added.

Although child marriage has long been prevalent in Bangladesh, school closures, economic downturn, and interruption in support services for girls during the pandemic forced many parents to marry off their underage girls.

A 2020 Brac study found child marriage increased up to 220 percent in July-September last year. A quick assessment by MJF from April to October last year revealed that 48 percent of child brides were aged between 13-15 years.

The MJF study also showed that at least 5,089 respondents had unexpected pregnancies during the pandemic due to the demand of husbands and in-laws, husband's home-staying, and disruption in family planning services.

Family planning expert Monjun Nahar said the family planning budget must be increased, and the government must ensure proper utilisation of the budget, identifying the gaps and challenges.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Violence against women was more prevalent during the pandemic than ever before as leading rights body Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) data shows at least 1,627 women were raped or gang-raped during the pandemic. Of the victims, 53 were killed after rape and 14 died by suicide in 2020.

In terms of domestic violence, the number of incidents was 37,912 in ASK's working area from April to September last year.

survivors' access to formal institutions to report incidents of violence.

Courts were shut and NGOs providing legal aid had to close their physical spaces. The local authorities became burdened with relief distribution and the police were busy implementing lockdown measures.

Mahila Parishad President Fawzia said this year's gender budget must have enough allocations for law enforcement agencies and courts so that they can provide better services to victims.

"In addition, attention and Although the pandemic prompted allocation are also needed to rehabilitate the survivors of genderbased violence," she observed

PANDEMIC IMPACT ON WOMEN

- **16.1** percent of the female wage employees lost their jobs in between March and December last year; almost 50 percent faced a pay cut
- Profit or sales of around 63 percent of the self-employed women dropped in that period; more than 33 percent had to close their business temporarily
- **78** percent of the women-headed households in informal sectors faced economic crisis due to unpaid care and domestic work
- Only 6.7 percent of female-headed households participated in online classes.
- Child marriage increased up to 220 percent during July-September 2020.
- 17 percent increase in maternal death
- 1,627 women were raped or gang-raped during the pandemic, of which 53 were killed after rape and 14 died by suicide in 2020
- 37,912 women in MJF's working areas faced domestic violence from April to September 2020

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Monitor and evaluate gender budget
- Budget should meet international commitments like CEDAW and SDGs
- Increase the coverage of the government's social safety net programmes, along with per-capita allocation
- Include unpaid care work of women in national GDP estimation and add care work to the System of National Accounts
- Reduce women's workload by redistributing their care work responsibilities
- Bridge the gender technology gap; prevent dropout of girls
- Stop child marriage, unplanned pregnancy and maternal death
- Increase budgetary allocation for family planning and ensure its proper
- Keep enough allocations for law enforcement agencies and courts to fight gender-based violence



An employee of a private hospital wearing headgear themed on Covid-19 coronavirus rides his motorbike around counselling people at markets and slums about the precautionary measures to be taken against the spread of the coronavirus in Hyderabad, India yesterday.

Bangladesh delegation addresses rulers, the discrimination meted out terms won

race," Kamaruzzaman said. "To us in Bangladesh, the name of General Yahya Khan does not connote a normal human being. It connotes a bloodthirsty murderer, a betrayer and the disintegrator of Pakistan. After what has been done, the killing of innocent children and citizens, the raping of our women folk, it is impossible for the people of Bangladesh to live under the same roof as Pakistan.

PLEA FOR RECOGNITION Three legislators from Bangladesh, Phani Bhushan Majumdar, Noorjehan Shah Moazzem Murshed and Hossain, who addressed the MPs today at the Indian parliament, made an impassioned plea for recognition of Bangladesh by the Government of India. The three legislators put before the Indian parliamentarians the background of the Bangladesh issue, its exploitation by the West Pakistani

to the people of East Pakistan and finally the genocide and the reign of terror let loose by the Pakistan army

on the innocent and unarmed people. Phani Bhushan Majumdar, leader of the Bangladesh delegation, said perhaps the Government of Indian wanted to avoid conflict with Pakistan and international complications. "God forbid, if Bangladesh went down fighting the economy of India would be affected adversely," he added.

Phani Majumdar also urged the Indian MPs to take up the question of release of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at every national international forum. apprehended that danger might come to Bangabandhu's life.

Noorjehan Murshed referred to the talk of "political settlement" and said that if there was to be a political settlement it would have to be on their terms. She made clear what their

terms would be after hundreds of "My Lai" killings in Bangladesh by the West Pakistan army. It was complete withdrawal of West Pakistani army and the liberation of Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh delegation also

met Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and sought support for their provisional Bangalee government. SWADHIN BANGLA BETAR CLAIMS **GUERILLA WINS**

Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra today claimed that the West Pakistan army had been routed in several areas by guerrillas of the liberation army. Over 500 regular troops had been killed and a gunboat sunk. The radio station went on to say that the Sylhet area in the northern provinces had been liberated, three major railway bridges destroyed and General Yahya Khan's troops under heavy pressure.

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Myanmar's NUG pledges FROM PAGE 12

statement yesterday.
The NUG is concerned about the difficult situation of the Rohingyas, especially who fled to Bangladesh in 2016-17. Nearly a million Rohingyas fled a military crackdown that has been dubbed by the rights bodies as genocide, read the statement.

In 2019, The Gambia, on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), filed a genocide case with the ICJ in the Hague. In the hearing, the then state counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi of the National League of Democracy (NLD), defended military

The NLD, which won Myanmar's general elections last year and formed the government, was ousted by the military through a coup. NLD leader Suu Kyi and a number of other leaders were arrested, while a nationwide disobedience movement began and faced crackdown by the military.

Early this year, the ousted leaders a shadow government, NUG, which is seeking international recognition and mobilising Myanmar's ethnic groups, including the rebel ones. On May 24, Myanmar's Army

General Min Aung Hlaing cast doubt

on the return of Rohingyas from Bangladesh, which has been sheltering around a million Rohingyas. In yesterday's statement, the NUG

did not say anything concrete about the Rohingya return. It, however, mentioned that as the lawful government of Myanmar, it's

among the NUG's duties to ensure continuity of representation before the ICJ and to be mindful of the timetable set by the Court.

'We will continue to work closely with the Court and all relevant stakeholders for the benefit of the country and all people in Myanmar."

Potember last year. However, the pandemic limits Turnaround still not happening

FROM PAGE 12

To improve the revenue mobilization, the government should take effective measures to tackle tax evasion and money laundering, it said.

As of April, the rate of implementation of the total public expenditure was 42 percent of the annual target of Tk 567,999 crore. Such a low level of budget

implementation is seriously concerning at a time when the economy is ravaged by the adverse impacts of the pandemic, it added. On top of that, only 48.7 percent or

Tk 102,730 crore of the total outlay of Tk 209,272 crore was spent in the first 10 months. Among the top 10 ministries and

divisions, implementation remains the lowest in the Health Services Division, only 31.3 percent, said Towfiqul. Given the increased pressure on the

public health service sector in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the current scenario is in stark contrast to the citizen's expectations and the realities of the demands on the ground, he said.

CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun said increasing the allocation for the health sector might not bring any good because of frequent irregularities and corruption. The attention should rather be on

implementing the current allocation

properly, she said.

ĈPD's Distinguished Mustafizur Rahman said a portion of the funds for the health sector should be used to strengthen the 16,000 government community clinics by recruiting employees and procuring equipment, he said.

The coming budget should focus more on equity, redistributive justice, protecting jobs and saving lives, and less on economic growth, Towfiqul

The budget should set targets in employment and growth of household earning, rather than GDP growth or per capita income.

large number of became unemployed amid the pandemic and a majority of them were reemployed, with many shifted from the services sector to farming. Their earning and working hours

have not restored to the pre-pandemic level. This has subsequently increased the poverty rate and inequality. In addition, rising trends in

food inflation are expected disproportionately affect the lowincome people. Many people living in the cities and

suburbs have become the new poor, but they have not received the cash support and other assistance, he said. The small and medium enterprises

and the low-income professionals have not received the support they expected from the stimulus packages, but the picture is quite different in the large industries, Towfigul said.

Since the highest share of the liquidity support was offered to the large industries, crony capitalists might take advantage of their strong political foothold to use the banks to obtain more than their fair share of the funds, The government announced Tk

124,953 crore stimulus funds for 23 sectors amid the pandemic. But private sector credit growth did not pick up.

Private sector credit growth stood at 8.79 percent in March, falling short of the central bank's target of 14.8 percent and indicating a frustrating situation in the investment sector.

CPD Research Director Khondaker Golam Moazzem said banks should provide at least 30 percent of their disbursed loans to new entrepreneurs in the small and medium enterprises.

Despite issuing more than 100 circulars related to the liquidity support packages over the past year, the central bank has not been able to address the regulatory gaps.

has made some of the government's liquidity support packages available also for poorly governed banks and loan defaulters.

Tales of horror unravelling

managed to return before Eid-ul-Fitr. They are now in police custody, investigators told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that they got some vital information from them. They also said they were trying to identify and detain all the culprits involved.

Speaking to The Daily Star, police officials linked with the probe said they, along with the victims, have raided three "huts" adjacent to the bordering areas in Satkhira, where the women were kept before being trafficked.

The law enforcers detained at least 10 suspects for their alleged involvement in the crime.

The investigators suspect that nearly 5,000 women and girls, aged between 15 to 30, were trafficked through three points of the bordering districts in Satkhira, Jashore and Lalmonirhat over the last five years. The criminals spent between Tk 15,000 and Tk 20,000 to take each

victim to the other side of the border without passports and visas, they said. After the video clip of a 22-year-old woman being tortured and sexually assaulted went viral on social media,

Indian police on May 27 arrested

Rifatul Islam Ridoy, also known as Ridoy Babo on TikTok, along with five other Bangladeshis, from Bengaluru. Bangladesh police then began an

investigation and found a transnational racket, involving some Bangladeshis, which trapped victims using the social media platform TikTok. Police said Ridoy can be seen in the

Shahidullah, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Tejgaon division), earlier at a press briefing said some criminals from the south-western region of Bangladesh and several Indian states were involved in the gang. The racket's network is stretched out to Dubai, UAE, and some other countries in the Middle East. VIDEO UPLOADED FROM BANGLADESH'

Investigators said the first video that went viral was uploaded by one of the three victims who managed to flee. The Daily Star could not verify this

'She uploaded the video after coming back to Bangladesh. She did it hoping to get justice as she wanted the

assaulters' arrest," said an investigator,

wishing not to be named.

All the women were tortured by the same group The official said another woman was

seen in the viral video, who tortured the three women as they refused to be a sex worker and asked to be sent home. Wishing not to be named, another

would be filed against the woman seen in the first video. Police said the woman went to Dubai in 2019 where she was pushed

police official said a case under the

human trafficking prevention act

into the sex trade and also worked as a bar dancer for six months. She then came to Bangladesh and later went to India a few months ago

with "TikTok Ridoy". Then, she lured the three women into going to India, promising to give them modelling contracts or well-paid

jobs, the official said. "The woman then kept the three victims at a hotel and forced them to

have intercourse with men. On Friday, the woman, who was seen being tortured in the previous video, underwent a medical

examination in Bengaluru. Meanwhile, the six accused have been remanded for 14 days.

Doctor dies

FROM PAGE 12

DHAKA TUESDAY JUNE 1, 2021, JAISHTHA 18, 1428 BS

College. Prof Farid tested positive for coronavirus around two months ago and tested negative after treatment, the physician said.

Faisal said he had been suffering from post-Covid complications.

As his condition deteriorated, he was moved to ICU at Chattogram Maa-O-Shishu Hospital Medical College where he breathed his last around 12:10am yesterday, said the BMA leader.

With this death, 159 doctors have died from Covid-19 in the country, said Ehteshamul Huq Choudhury, secretary general of BMA.

New Nasa photo

Our own galaxy is hard to study as it is obscured by a fog of gas and dust. But researchers were able to penetrate the fog using the Chandra X-Ray Observatory, which sees X-rays instead

The research, published in the journal Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society, gives the clearest picture to date of a pair of X-ray emitting plumes coming from the area near the black hole at the center of the galaxy.

Researchers were interested in the X-ray thread G0.17-0.41, which, according to Wang,

"This is evidence of an ongoing magnetic field reconnection event. The thread, writes Wang, probably represents "only the tip of the reconnection iceberg."

"It's a violent process," Wang said. Scientists now think that magnetic econnection also takes place in interstellar space and occurs at the outer boundaries of the expanding

Accord extended

can only source from Accord-certified safe factories. Failing to do so could expose the brand to litigation.

The signatories include some of the biggest brands like Primark, Tesco, H&M, American Eagle Outfitters, Marks & Spencer, Inditex, Benetton, Adidas, Loblaw among others.

However, only the British brand ASOS Ltd. and the German brand Tchibo have agreed to re-sign the contract. The current contract was

"We welcome this extension, which will allow us more time to negotiate a successor agreement to the Accord. We must put the mechanisms in place to ensure the success and credibility of the RSC as well as a safe workplace

Hoffman, UNI General Secretary. "This three month extension ...] demonstrates that we will not allow the safety and health of the Bangladeshi garment workers to be jeopardized while we continue negotiating a successor agreement with the brands, preserving the achievements in Bangladesh and also expanding them to other countries," said IndustriALL general secretary

in place to reduce the spread of the

Senior scientific advisers believe that, where possible, working from home makes sense beyond June because it would cut the number of people who come into contact with each other.

UK had not surpassed that number since 12 April. Asked on BBC Radio 4's Today

already in a third wave of infections, Prof Gupta said: "Yes, there has been exponential growth in the number of the new cases and at least threequarters of them are the new (Indian) "Of course the numbers of cases

are relatively low at the moment - all

waves start with low numbers of cases that grumble in the background and then become explosive, so the key here is that what we are seeing here is the signs of an early wave.' However, he said the number of

in the UK meant this wave would probably take longer to emerge than previous ones.

security for some time, and that's our concern. In China, authorities imposed

of incoming international flights to its capital and tightened restrictions in its biggest city, as part efforts to contain the coronavirus outbreak that has seen cases double in the past month.

of visible light.

especially

reveals a new phenomenon."

Magnetic field reconnection events occur when opposing magnetic fields are forced together and combine, expelling lots of energy. These events produce Northern Lights, and are responsible for phenomena like solar

plumes driven out of our galaxy's

signed in May 2018.

UK in early stages

Valter Sanches.

On Sunday, the UK reported more than 3,000 new Covid infections for a fifth successive day. Prior to this, the

programme whether the UK was

people who have been vaccinated

"There may be a false sense of

fresh travel limits, cancelled flights and tested thousands of residents in Guangdong yesterday after the Indian variant of the coronavirus was reported in the country's most populous province. Vietnam announced the suspension