

10-year-old

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A case was filed with Godagari Model Police Station.

In Gaibandha, a teenage girl of Harijan community was abducted and raped for multiple times throughout around last one and a half months by a man of Sundarganj upazila.

Abdul Motalib, 35, of the upazila's Ramjibon village, abducted the 16-year-old girl, alleged the victim's mother, who filed a rape case against Motalib.

The victim was freed on Wednesday, according to the case statement. When she returned, locals did not allow her to stay in her village.

Finding no other way, she took shelter to the house of Haider Ali, a former Ramjibon union parishad member.

But a day later, Haider and his cohort Mozaffar attempted to rape the girl. Then, the girl tried to flee from the house with the help of night guard Abdul Motin. But the girl did not get respite because Motin also tried to rape her, said the case statement.

Finally, the girl could return her home on Thursday night.

The victim's mother on Friday filed a rape case against Motalib and attempted rape case against Haider, Mozaffar and Motin, said Shafikuzzaman Sarker, sub-inspector of Bamundanga police outpost and investigation officer of the case.

No none was arrested in this connection.

Meanwhile, Rab yesterday arrested three teenage boys for raping a fourth-grader girl in Manikganj Sadar upazila.

The arrestees are aged between 14 and 15.

The victim was going to her tutor's house on Thursday afternoon. On her way, two of the accused intercepted her, took her to a poultry farm and raped her.

They also threatened the girl to kill her, if she disclosed the incident, said Assistant Superintendent of Police Unu Mong, company commander of Rab-4.

A day later, another accused raped her in a similar fashion.

The victim shared the incident with her mother on Saturday and the mother informed Rab of the incident.

Rab then arrested the three from Sadar upazila's Shanbanda area, said the Rab official.

[Our correspondents in Rajshahi, Bogura and Manikganj contributed to this report.]

JS body for action

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vaccine crisis, whether vaccines were being brought to the country under government-to-government arrangements or through agents, and also the availability of ICU beds and supply of oxygen, meeting sources said.

Speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a member of the committee said the DG of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) was requested through his personal secretary at least three times to attend the meeting.

"But the DG did not give importance to attending the meeting. There were a lot of issues on purchases by the DGHS which were scheduled to be discussed in today's [yesterday's] meeting. But the committee couldn't discuss all those issues properly due to the absence of the DG," the lawmaker said.

Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, chief of the parliamentary watchdog, asked the health ministry to take action against Khurshid.

"If no action is taken in this regard, the issue may be raised in parliament," the Awami League lawmaker told the meeting.

A member of the committee told this newspaper that the DGHS DG gave three different reasons to as many persons related to the Jatiya Sangsad committee over his absence at the meeting.

According to meeting sources, the committee members expressed dissatisfaction as the ministry didn't include its members and important personalities of the society such as imams, priests, and star players in creating social awareness among the people about the pandemic.

The committee asked the authorities concerned to deal with the Delta variant of novel coronavirus more efficiently.

The meeting expressed dissatisfaction over the fact that the "Prime Minister's Incentive" for doctors, nurses, and health workers, who died of Covid, remaining undistributed.

It recommended taking necessary measures so that the family members of the deceased get the incentives as soon as possible under a simplified process.

Committee member Abdul Aziz said, "Family members of many deceased doctors and health workers have complained to us that they did not receive incentives. We have asked the ministry to take measures so that the respective family members of the deceased get the incentives quickly."

Contacted, DGHS DG Khurshid told The Daily Star that he couldn't join the standing committee meeting as he was on a leave. "But I sent an official to the meeting to represent me there."

Meanwhile, a press release issued yesterday by the Parliament Secretariat said the meeting recommended taking immediate steps to start the process of producing Covid vaccines locally to bring all the people of the country under vaccination coverage.

Committee members Health Minister Zahid Maleque, AFM Rahul Haque, Abdul Aziz, Syeda Zakia Noor, Rahgir Almahe Ershad and Amirul Alam Milon, among others, took part in the meeting.



Multiple medical staff come together as they inoculate a Person With Disability (PWD) who earlier refused to get the Covid-19 jab during a special vaccination drive for differently abled people held in Mumbai, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Khulna seeing the worst of pandemic

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At least 136 patients were receiving treatment at the hospital yesterday against its capacity of 110. There are only 14 doctors and 67 nurses to look after them.

Besides, the hospital is facing a shortage of high-flow oxygen support, several staffer told our Khulna correspondent on condition of anonymity.

In 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, the Covid positivity rate was 27.94 percent in Khulna district while the rate was 16.38 percent in the country.

Contacted, Rasheda Sultana, DGHS health director of Khulna, said, "The overall situation is still under our control."

Seventy beds were installed at the Sadar hospital yesterday, and new

patients were admitted there, she mentioned.

"We have brought doctors from other places to attend the patients."

The number of Covid-related deaths in Khulna is much higher than that reported every day.

In the first 20 days of this month, at least 52 people died with Covid-like symptoms in the district, much higher than the official figure of 34, according to data from the Khulna civil surgeon's office.

In the previous month, the number of deaths (Covid-like symptoms) was 31 while the official toll was 27.

The situation in Rajshahi division also continues to worsen as 12 deaths from the virus were reported yesterday.

The Covid positivity rate in Rajshahi district was 25.11 percent while it was

22.31 percent in the division.

As of 12:00pm yesterday, an additional 68 patients were receiving treatment in the 289-bed Covid unit at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, according to the DGHS data.

Dhaka division saw 21 Covid deaths yesterday.

The rush of patients at all the 15 Covid-dedicated hospitals in the capital has also been on the rise over the last few days.

On the first day of June, there were 757 patients in general wards and 177 in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) in 15 Covid-dedicated hospitals in the city.

Yesterday, the number of patients rose to 1,089 in general wards and to 182 in the ICUs.

The situation in Chattogram is also alarming as nine Covid patients

died there yesterday. The occupancy of general beds in the four Covid-dedicated public hospitals also rose to 208 yesterday from 172 on June 1.

Meanwhile, the local administration has imposed weeklong restrictions on public and vehicular movement in Tangail and Lengua municipal areas from tomorrow to curb the surge in Covid cases, reports our correspondent from Tangail.

In these areas, only kitchen markets, shops selling essential goods and medicine stores will be allowed to stay open while all the markets, shopping malls, hotels, restaurants will remain closed during the period.

Besides, all the vehicles except for trucks carrying daily essentials will have to be kept off the roads.

Local body polls amid Covid fears

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The voting will begin at 8:00am and continued till 4:00pm without any break.

According to the EC, the election of 204 union parishads of 13 districts will be held today. The districts are Barishal, Barguna, Bhola, Jhalakathi, Patuakhali, Pirojpur, Rangpur, Bagura, Narsingdi, Gazipur, Madaripur, Sunamganj and Laxmipur.

Election to 20 UPs will be held using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and the rest 184 using traditional ballot papers.

A total of 859 candidates are vying for UP chairman posts and 690 for member positions and 2154 for women's reserve seats, said EC.

One hundred and seventy-three UPs out of the 204 UP that are going to the polls today are from Barishal Division.

Our Correspondent, Barishal reported that EC officials said that half of the voting centres of the division are "risky".

Regional Election Officer of the Barishal Division Md Alauddin said that there is some "important" voting centre. "We have talked with the law enforcement agencies, they are all committed to holding a free and fair election," he said.

Barisal Range DIG SM Akhtaruzzaman said BGB would remain a striking force in addition to more than 10,000 police and 750 RAB members for holding the elections in division smoothly.

Voters from different UPs have expressed concerns about holding the election amid Covid 19 situation. Patuakhali district's Muradia UP voter Abdus Sattar Hawlader said that it will be a challenge for EC to maintain

health guideline at polling centres as such a place remain overcrowded with voters as well as enthusiastic people.

Barishal Division regional election officials said they asked to ensure social distance and providing sanitizer every election center. "No voter will be allowed enter voting centre without wearing any mask" he added.

LAXMIPUR-2 BY ELECTION
By-elections to the Laxmipur-2 constituency and election to the Jhalakathi municipalities and Setabganj municipalities of Dinajpur will be held using EVM, said EC officials.

The by-election to the Laxmipur-2 constituency is taking place as the seat fell vacant after Mohammad Shahid Islam, also known as Kazi Papul's moral turpitude. It fell vacant since January 28 when Papul was sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment

by a Kuwait court.

A correspondent in Laxmipur reported that there was a lack of festivities in the JS seat that covers area of Raipur and part of Laxmipur Sadar area as candidates from two parties -- Awami League and Jaitiya Party--are taking part in it.

Moreover, JP candidate Sheikh Mohammad Faiyaz Ullah Shipon did not held that much electioneering, said locals. AL candidate Nuruddin Chowdhury, however, held massive electioneering.

Returning officer Dulal Talukdar said that they have taken all-out preparation for holding a free and fair election and measures to stop possible violence.

He said that they held mock voting and massive campaigns at the municipalities to make voters aware of using EVM machines.

Budget raises question on will for clean energy

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Development Authority (SREDA) has been included in the annual development programme for fiscal 2021-22, the CPD said.

The ADP allocation for the incoming fiscal year includes nine coal-fired power project with allocation.

"This raises a question about the ministry's position regarding government's stance on abandoning coal-fired power plants," Moazzem said.

He went on to urge the ministry of power, energy and mineral resources to put a stop to all kinds of activities related to coal-based power generation particularly those which are in the pipeline.

Despite being burdened with overcapacity, the budget for fiscal 2021-22 -- which has 15.6 percent more allocation from the power sector than the current year -- has more allocation for generation.

"Overcapacity has increasingly become a concerning issue," he said, adding that as much as 60 percent capacity is currently unutilised.

And yet, in the incoming year, only 38 percent of the ADP allocation for the power sector is enhancing the country's transmission and distribution capacity, with the lion's share going towards generation.

In fiscal 2020-21, the length of transmission and distribution lines has increased at a slower pace compared to that of generation (3.7

percent and 5.9 percent respectively vis-à-vis 8 percent).

The dearth of transmission and distribution lines are mentioned as major reasons for load shedding.

"Surprisingly, official data indicates no load-shedding in the country between July 2019 and June 2021," Moazzem said.

Adding to the problem of overcapacity is the extension of tenure of most of the quick rental power plants despite the official stance on gradual phasing them out, according to the CPD.

And most of the quick-rental power plants are remaining unutilised.

"Without exiting these power plants it is difficult to create space for demand for renewable energy in grid areas," Moazzem said.

CPD Chairman Rehman Sobhan questioned why many dated and inefficient power plants are still operating.

"Those should have been retired by now."

He also urged the government to identify how much of the excess capacity has been attributed to distribution failure.

"In a country which has the lowest per capita consumption of energy in the world, they should know such a thing as a demand failure," he said, adding that there is a big mismatch among planners and policymakers and there is no regulatory authority for coordination of the installation

and distribution.

He went on to call for free electricity for people rather than letting the power plants sit idle.

Letting the plants remain idle is a "massive mis-utilisation of valuable resources".

Sobhan acknowledged the capacity growth and the availability of power as one of the great success stories of this government.

The excess capacity of energy generation exists in paper only and not in reality, said M Tamim, professor at the Department of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET).

The government is committed to reducing carbon emission and efforts are on way to phasing out coal energy, said Mohammad Hossain, director general of Power Cell.

Quick rental power plants will be gradually phased out.

"If we take the captive power to the national grid, the difference between efficiency and supply will be reduced, we are working on it," he added.

There is a need to look for renewable energy beyond solar and wind energy, for which more research is required, said Mohammad Alauddin, chairman of SREDA.

Imran Karim, president of the Bangladesh Independent Power Producers' Association, recommended that Bangladesh should have the capacity to toggle between various

fuels to reduce energy generation cost.

Asif Ashraf, director of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and managing director Urmi Group, called for tax incentives to businesses that generate solar energy.

Rooftop solar energy can be a good source of renewable energy in Bangladesh, which can be used beyond industries, said Mahmood Malik, executive director and chief executive officer of Infrastructure Development Company Limited.

DM Majibor Rahman, president of Solar Mini-Grid Association, proposed a core committee of engineers for research and analysis for efficient generation of solar energy.

The inter-agency coordination is highly important with a view to ensure efficient power distribution at different district and upazila levels, he added.

The budget for fiscal 2021-22 is business-as-usual and no special initiatives are taken into consideration for the power and energy sector, said Farseem Mannan Mohammedy, director of the Centre for Energy Studies at BUET.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the CPD, highlighted the progress made by the power and energy sector.

"Uninterrupted power supply is crucial. Otherwise, the production cost and efficiency of industries are hampered."

Third Covid

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with 29 percent receiving one dose.

Far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who previously hit out at vaccines, has promised to immunise the entire population by the end of the year -- something specialists consider unlikely.

He has been criticised for downplaying the illness from the outset, opposing lockdown measures and plugging unproven medical treatments.

On Saturday, thousands of Brazilians again took to the streets to protest against his handling of the pandemic.

The pandemic has killed at least 3,862,364 people since the virus first emerged in December 2019, according to an AFP compilation of official data yesterday.

ONE-BILLIONTH SHOT

The number of Covid-19 jabs administered in China has passed the one billion mark, health officials said yesterday, more than a third of the doses given worldwide.

The announcement by the National Health Commission comes after the number of shots administered globally surpassed 2.5 billion on Friday, according to an AFP count from official sources.

It is unclear what percentage of China's population has now been inoculated but its vaccination drive got off to a slow start after a successful fight against the virus left little sense of urgency to get jabbed.

Trafficking

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December last year by the same racket thought to be led by Nodi Akter, 31, and Rifadul Islam Ridoy, 26, popularly known as Ridoy Babo on TikTok.

The whereabouts of her sister and aunt are still unknown.

She is one of the five victims, aged between 18 and 27, who managed to flee from the clutches of the traffickers and come back.

She filed a case on Saturday accusing 22 people, including Nodi and Ridoy, under human trafficking prevention act with Hatirjheel Police Station. Another victim filed a case with the same police station the same day against 14 people including Ridoy.

Two other victims had earlier filed separate cases with the police station.

Police have been looking for Nodi, who is said to have trafficked several women to India over the last few years.

Md Shahidullah, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Tejgaon division), said the racket has networks in the UAE and some other countries in the Middle East.

In her complaint, Sania said, her mother, step-father and four sisters used to live in a house in the capital. The step-father was the only earning member of the family.

Her elder sister 20-year-old Rita, not her real name, dropped out of high-school and was desperately looking for a job when she met suspected trafficker Nodi on Facebook.

Nodi, who was in India that time, promised her a job at a beauty parlour in Bengaluru that would pay Tk 30,000 a month.

They made a plan and Rita left for Jashore on November 20 last year.

A few days later, Nodi visited Sania's home and said Rita fell sick and was undergoing treatment at a hospital and that there was no one to take care of her.

She then said Sania should also go to Bengaluru and work at the parlour. Sania's mother was not willing to let her go alone and requested that Sania's aunt Marina, not her real name, go with her.

On December 16, 2020, Nodi took the duo to Benapole by bus. Then they were taken to Kolkata, from where they were sent to Bengaluru by train. They slept at the house of a woman named Taslima.

A day after reaching there, Sania was sent to a house in the city while Marina was sent to a hotel in Kerala. Both of them were raped and sexually abused there.

After three days, Sania was taken back to Taslima's house where she found her elder sister Rita. By then, they understood that they were victims of traffickers.

When Rita protested and demanded to be released, gang members named Ridoy, Sagar, Akeel, Rubel and Sabuj went to the house and severely tortured her. Ridoy took Sania to a house in Anandapura Circle where she found her aunt Marina and three other girls.

From there, the gang used to send her to different hotels and massage parlours in Bengaluru and Chennai until she managed to escape.

HUNT FOR NODI

She is accused in all five trafficking cases filed with Hatirjheel Police Station in recent weeks.

Hafiz Al Faruk, additional deputy commissioner (Tejgaon division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star yesterday that law enforcers in Bangladesh arrested 13 suspects while Indian police arrested 12.

Police said Nodi, a key suspect, can speak four languages. The traffickers used her to lure young women from Bangladesh.

Investigators have learnt that Nodi herself was trafficked to Malaysia by a racket in 2017. After coming back to the country in 2019, she met another trafficker named Sonia and eventually got involved in the racket.

FOUR RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS SHOT DEAD

Four eminent scientists and scholars of Rajshahi University were shot dead by Pakistani troops a few days ago after they reported for duty on an assurance of personal safety. Those killed are Dr Raquib, head of the Department of Applied Physics, Dr Saleh Ahmed, reader in statistics, Professor Habibur Rahman, reader in mathematics and Dr Abdul Haque, reader in law. The head of the Department of Bangla

of the university Dr Mazharul Islam described in Kolkata on June 17, 1971 that in the last week of May, the university authority issued an appeal to all professors to rejoin duly, assuring them personal security. When the four professors returned to the campus from their hiding they were rounded up by troops at night, taken to the cantonment and shot dead, he added.

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Decision on aid postponed

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people of Bangladesh if their economy is propped up with foreign economic aid and loans."

US MILITARY GOODS SENT TO PAKISTAN DESPITE BAN

A freighter flying the flag of Pakistan was preparing today to sail from New York for Karachi with a cargo of United States military equipment for Pakistan, apparently in violation of the administration's officially proclaimed ban on such shipments.

Senior state department officials, in response to inquiries, acknowledged that at least one other ship was now on the way from the United States to Pakistan carrying what they described as "foreign military sales" items.

These items, they indicated, came from excess Defense Department stocks and apparently were shipped as a result of confusion within the Administration as to how the three-month-old ban on shipments of military equipment to Pakistan should be applied.