

Regime forms

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the panel are the junta's minister for international cooperation U Ko Ko Hlaing, union attorney general Thida Oo, deputy foreign minister U Kyaw Myo Htut and international criminal law expert Khin Oo Hlaing, reported Myanmar newspaper The Irrawaddy.

About 750,000 Rohingyas fled a ruthless military crackdown and took shelter in Bangladesh in 2017, which was termed a genocide by rights groups. In November 2019, The Gambia filed a case at the ICJ, accusing Myanmar of committing genocide against the Rohingya.

The Gambia's legal team submitted a list of the Myanmar military's atrocities against the Rohingyas, including mass rapes, murder and burning their houses. As the case could take years, The Gambia asked the ICJ to order Myanmar to take "provisional measures" to prevent more violations.

The ICJ then ordered Myanmar to report on its compliance with the provisional measures in four months and then every six months thereafter.

The then Aung San Suu Kyi-led civilian government submitted two reports prior to the military in a coup on Feb 1.

The deputy foreign minister for Myanmar's parallel National Unity Government (NUG), U Moe Zaw Oo, during an online press conference on June 4, said the civilian government would no longer offer a defense in the case. It vowed to work with the ICJ and said it would accept the court's decision in the case.

The NUG also said it is considering accepting the exercise of jurisdiction by a separate international court -- the International Criminal Court -- over the killings, torture and other crimes against civilians committed by the Myanmar junta since the coup.

The Myanmar military seized power from the democratically elected National League for Democracy government, detained civilian leaders and abolished the new parliament on the day it was scheduled to convene.

A terrible blood

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wrapped in cloth. One villager said the troops looted houses and market stalls before setting them ablaze.

As they spoke, flames shot up from tin shacks. The heat buckled the metal and burned the underpinnings, bringing them to the ground.

3,500 CHOLERA DEATHS: WHO World Health Organisation said today that 65,000 cases of cholera resulting in 10,660 deaths had been reported in 27 countries since the beginning of 1971. The most serious epidemic was among the East Pakistan refugees who had suffered more than 24,000 cases with 3,500 deaths as of June 20, 1971, it added.

INDIA CAUTIONS PAKISTAN

India warned that while it would not adopt a provocative attitude, it would retaliate with full force against any aggression from Pakistan. The official spokesman was commenting on reports from the India-East Pakistan borders where, India charged, the Pakistan army had been violating Indian territory. The Pakistan army had come up to the frontier in violation of an agreement that the two countries keep six miles between their armies, the official said.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan government in Islamabad lodged a protest with the Indian high commission there for alleged continued and unprovoked attacks by Indian Army on Pakistan territory. It said there were eight instances of violation in four days between June 18 to 21 and that this had heightened tension in the area.

GUERRILLAS ATTACK POLICE STATION

A group of freedom fighters led by guerrilla commander Khalil attacked today a police station at Palong in Faridpur district. Three policemen including a sub-inspector were killed and nine rifles were captured in the operation. They also destroyed the Shibchar and Palong wireless stations.

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Rare giant

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which has long been a site of illegal logging.

"This is the most exciting news for Cambodia and for the whole world that such a rare and most critically endangered species was discovered in Cambodia," he said.

"This is a positive result for the government's efforts to protect natural resources."

The species was first found in forests in neighbouring Vietnam and Laos in 1994.

Muntiacus vuquangensis, as it is scientifically known, is on the red list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature as critically endangered.

Illegal logging remains a major environmental hazard in Cambodia, with vast tracts of forest under threat since the country's civil war ended in 1998.

Virachey National Park suffered rampant deforestation in the early 2000s but its situation has been improving.

"The park has become a safe shelter for wildlife," Neth Pheaktra said.



Spectators watch fireworks exploding in the sky and the brig "Rossiya" (Russia) with scarlet sails floating along the Neva River during festivities in honour of school graduates in Saint Petersburg, Russia, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Tainted with excessive chemicals

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flavour, and consumers are at risk of different health problems.

Moreover, farmers are using too much chemical fertilisers and pesticides in pineapple fields, reducing fertility of the soil and also destroying ecological balance and diversity.

Environmentalists also blamed a lack of proper monitoring, training and motivation by the authorities concerned for the wrong practice of the growers.

Madhupur Garh region is known for producing copious amounts of pineapples, including Giant Q, Honey Queen and Joldungli varieties.

The harvest time of this region's pineapple is between June and August.

Mahmudul Hasan, Madhupur upazila agriculture officer, said pineapple is cultivated on around 6,500 hectares of land in the upazila. Over 3,000 hectares in nearby Ghatail upazila of the district is also used for growing the fruit. It is grown in Phulbaria upazila of Mymensingh as well. Around two lakh tonnes of pineapple are produced in the region every year.

Pineapples grown in the region are juicy and tasty. The demand for the fruit is also higher this year than the previous years, he said.

Many believe consuming pineapple can help them prevent contracting

Covid-19 as the fruit is a good source of vitamin C.

Shahid Mahmud, executive director of Sabuj Prithibi, a Tangail-based green organisation working for ensuring safe food, however, said the region's pineapple is losing its good reputation due to the alleged use of excessive hormone.

The growers have to depend on chemical traders' suggestions as local agriculture officials do not come up with their advices, he said.

If chemicals are applied, the fruit will ripen overnight and the beneficial nutrients will be lost, he added.

"Actually, we have no knowledge about hormones. We use it as per suggestions of local chemical traders," said Shamsul Haque, a farmer from Aushnara area in Madhupur.

Sale of growth hormones like Cropsare, Superfix, Planofix, Anafix, Plantfix, Cyanofix, and Sarafix picks from May to June.

The major quantity of pineapple ripening hormones such as Prolong, Ripen, Promote, Bright, Ethephon, and Tomtom is sold from July to August.

Though it is written on the chemical packets that these are not harmful for human health and environment, physicians say consuming chemically treated fruits can cause diseases.

Medicine specialist Dr Ashraf

Ali said, "I don't know much about growth hormones, but the chemicals used for ripening fruits are harmful for human health."

Sources said farmers have been doing this in recent years after being motivated by representatives of different chemical companies.

Farmers also use too much chemical fertilisers in their fields hoping to get better yields.

Experts, however, say one third of the fertilisers being used is enough if those can be used properly.

Using excessive growth hormones makes pineapple bigger, but the fruit becomes sour and tasteless, say locals.

Farmer Fazlul Haque of Kuragachha in Madhupur has been cultivating pineapple since 1988. This year, he has grown the fruit on 12 bighas of land. He uses hormones in his fields.

Asked why he uses hormones, Fazlul said pineapples grown without hormones become small and look black. The buyers, however, like large yellow fruits.

"Wholesalers also prefer the fruits ripened by hormones as those remain fresh for a longer period than the fruits which ripen naturally," he said.

Farmers said bees and flies do not sit on chemically-treated pineapples and cannot damage those. Moreover, foxes do not eat or touch those.

A farmer said pineapples in the

region become ripe at a time and they have to incur losses if they are not able to sell their produce at a fair price. "So, we need to take the fruit to markets in phases after ripening those with hormones."

Nazrul Islam, a grower at Moterbazar of Chatail upazila, does not use hormones for ripening pineapple. He said the fruit has an aromatic flavour when it is matured and starts ripening naturally.

Contacted, agriculturist Ahsanul Bashar, deputy director of Department of Agricultural Extension in Tangail, claimed that the hormones the growers use are not so harmful.

"Hormones are widely used all over the world for growing pineapple. However, these should not be used excessively. We convey this message to the fruit and vegetable growers at training programmes," he said.

Ahsanul, however, admitted that they have no separate training programmes for the pineapple growers.

Farmers said they are not getting fair prices of their produce due to a lack of proper marketing system and preservation facilities.

They said they would get fair prices if different fruit processing factories, which produce jam, jelly and juice, are set up based on pineapples from Madhupur.

Man sedates

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to know about the incident. The filing of the case was delayed since they were advised about seeking an arbitration over the matter, it said.

The OC said they were raiding different places to arrest the accused, who had gone into hiding.

The girls were sent to the sadar hospital in the district for medical tests, he added.

Shaheen Md Abdur Rahman Chowdhury, resident medical officer at the hospital, said the girls were being treated at the one-stop crisis centre there.

Engr threatened

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BPC bitumen is available in the market but the contractor wants to use Iranian bitumen only to save money, he added.

"I am being threatened but I'm not afraid of it. I will make the road's sealcoat with BPC bitumen. This will make the road stronger and more sustainable," he said.

Contacted, Lalmonirhat Railway Divisional Engineer (DEn) Anwar Hossain said that he heard about the matter.

Efforts are being made to resolve the issue. The construction work has to be done as per the schedule, he said.

Construction work of approach road, road divider, footpath, drain, garden, and protection wall of Kurigram Railway Station started on July 9, 2020, at a cost of over BDT 1.6 crore.

Although the project was supposed to be completed in 180 days, there was still 10 percent work incomplete.

Myanmar torches

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A total of just under \$668 million dollars of narcotics, including 224 million meth tablets, were torched in the three cities.

As a woman barked a command over a loudspeaker in Yangon, four men in military uniform pressed buttons on tables in front of them, and the stash went up, flames licking the early morning sky.

Firefighters stood ready and well back from the noxious smoke.

Despite Covid-19 travel restrictions, there has been an "overall sustained expansion of the methamphetamine market in East and Southeast Asia" the UN said earlier this month.

Myanmar's troubled Shan State remains the main source of the drug, it added, which is often smuggled on to wealthier overseas markets such as Australia and Japan in its more potent crystallised form.

The body has warned of an even bigger deluge as Myanmar's legal economy tanks, following weeks of nationwide unrest and strike action following the military takeover.

The Golden Triangle, traversing the Myanmar, Laos and Thailand frontiers, has for decades been the hub of Southeast Asia's lucrative drug trade.

Myanmar's poppy-covered hills provide an ideal location for illicit labs, with a largely unchecked supply of precursor chemicals flooding in from China.

Ex-UPDF man

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Aongay Marma said Amor was a former member of the organisation.

"We recovered the body of Amor and sent it to Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital for an autopsy," said Payer Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Dighinala Police Station.

Ukraine army says soldier killed in separatist shelling

AFP, Kiev

A Ukrainian soldier was killed in the conflict-ridden east of the country in a mortar and grenade attack launched from territory held by pro-Russian separatists, the military said yesterday.

The Ukrainian army has been locked in simmering trench conflict with breakaway fighters in the eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions since 2014 when Moscow annexed the Crimean peninsula.

The military said in a Facebook post that separatists had fired on its troops with mortars and anti-tank weapons from near their administrative centre of Donetsk.

"As a result of the shelling, one Ukrainian serviceman received a fatal shrapnel wound," the Ukrainian military's statement said.

It added that Ukrainian troops had returned fire and also accused separatists of near daily violations of a ceasefire brokered last year that has been left in tatters.

After an uptick in violence in the beginning of the year, Russia in April amassed 100,000 troops on Ukraine's borders, raising fears of a major escalation in the long-running conflict.

Moscow soon announced a pullback, but both Washington and Kiev say that the withdrawal has been limited.

The war has claimed more than 13,000 lives.

Kiev and its Western allies accuse Russia of sending troops and arms to support the separatists, which Moscow has denied.

Govt taking steps for cash, food aid for the poor

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said the government was taking necessary steps in this regard.

Hewas addressing a virtual press briefing following the meetings of cabinet committees on economic affairs and government purchases.

Regarding the government measures to address the impact of the fresh lockdown on the urban poor and temporary labourers, the minister said, "I believe that we are well-prepared to take care of them."

There is a separate committee supervised by the prime minister to look after this issue, he added.

"I believe we will be able to identify the affected poor and required assistance will be provided.

Preferring anonymity, a finance ministry official said the PM may announce the government's steps for the poor people in her speech concluding the budget on June 29.

The official added that two funds, amounting to Tk 12,000 crore, have been set up under the social safety net programmes in the new budget, and that money can be allocated from these funds for such programmes.

Meanwhile, the disaster management and relief ministry is planning to provide food support to the poor during the lockdown.

An official at the ministry said they have plan to provide assistance like what they did during the countrywide "shutdown" following the first wave of Covid-19 last year.

During a special period like lockdown, they usually provide a packet having seven commodities -- 10 kilogram of rice, lentil, edible oil, dry food like noodles and others.

They have started preparing a list in this regard, he informed.

The food will be distributed among the poor across the country with the help of local administrations and representatives.

After issuing the government gadget on the lockdown, they would issue a circular regarding their steps

The national hotline - 333 - would be launched to provide humanitarian assistance and food to the needy, he added.

The finance minister earlier told The Daily Star that they were preparing a list of poor people with

the help of local administrations and representatives.

Despite suggestions from experts, the minister said the government will not take help from the NGOs in this regard.

FINANCE MINISTER'S BRIEFING In reply to a question about further extending the time for loan payment to RMG factory owners under a stimulus package, Kamal yesterday said no decision has been taken yet in this regard.

Mentioning that the time for the payment would expire on June 30, he said, "The prime minister is looking into the matter. I also personally spoke to Bangladesh Bank's governor."

"Let's see if we can manage within the deadline."

Regarding the projection targets in the current fiscal year, he said the most difficult task of generating revenue saw a 17 percent growth, while there is also growth in the foreign exchange reserves.

Many assumed that there would be no remittance inflow but the opposite happened, as expatriate workers maintained the inflow of remittance against all odds.

March of the elephants

China's rogue herd spotlights habitat loss

AFP, Beijing

thousands of residents have been evacuated from their path.

"For some reason these elephants felt that their traditional home range was no longer suitable... and then they just left to find somewhere else," Ahimsa Campos-Arceiz, an elephant specialist at the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden, told AFP.

"But they didn't have a destination in mind. They are just moving around trying to find a place that will work for them."

Officials have been tracking the wandering herd with drones round the clock, worried they might go on a rampage if they are stressed. Elephants rely on infrasonic sound -- the vibration of their feet -- to communicate but in towns they can be easily confused due to vehicle

noises.

Forests in far southwest Yunnan province where the elephants came from are rapidly giving way to rubber and tea plantations, and herds have become marooned in disconnected preserves.

China is one of the few places in the world where the population of the endangered Asian elephant is increasing, due to strict anti-poaching laws and conservation efforts.

The country's wild elephant numbers have doubled to over 300 animals in the past three decades. But their habitats have shrunk by nearly two-thirds over the same period, said Zhang Li, a professor of ecology at Beijing Normal University.

Habitat fragmentation -- with hydropower plants and highways

blocking old migration paths -- makes it difficult to find mates and socialise.

Electric fences built to safeguard villagers also risk injuring wandering animals.

Forest destruction has led to a surge in conflicts between elephants and villagers in the region in recent years. From 2013 to 2019, more than 70 people have been trampled to death and dozens injured by marauding elephants in Yunnan, data from the local wildlife office shows.

"The current march spotlights the threats facing Asian elephants," Wang Hongxin from Beijing Normal University said, warning conflicts would rise if habitat size is further reduced.

"Humans must retreat and let land return to the wild."