

Pakistani soldiers continue

FROM PAGE 12
parties such as the Moslem League and Jamaat-e-Islami. The collaborators acted as intelligence agents and enforcers for the army by pointing out homes and villages and people who had helped the guerrillas.

BANGALEE EMPLOYEE ESCAPES PAKISTAN CHANCERY
A Bangalee employee in the Pakistan high commission in New Delhi, SM Nurul Huda, today made a daring escape when he scaled the chancery wall to free himself from confinement in his official residence.

Shortly after his escape from what he described as prison life, Huda, 27, contacted the Bangladesh mission to declare his allegiance to the "legitimate government of my motherland". He was attached to the high commission as a supervisor in the telephone exchange. When he met newsmen later, he betrayed his concern for his wife now in Bangladesh.

"I know it is a big risk dodging two armed West Pakistani guards inside our quarters. But I had no choice; I just could not bear it any more. I

appeal to you to rescue my colleagues who are being treated like prisoners inside the chancery."

He added that Bangalee employees in the Pakistan high commission had been held as hostages and were being subjected to all kinds of indignities.

ON THE WAR FRONT

In the Rangpur-Dinajpur-Rajshahi sector, Mukti Bahini raided Pakistani troops near Khanpur, killing three enemy soldiers and injuring two others. In another operation, Mukti Bahini ambushed a mixed patrol of Pakistani troops and Razakars near Hilli-Panchbibi area killing six soldiers and two Razakars. Another group of Bangladeshi guerrillas fired on Pakistani troops near Karia and killed seven.

In the Mymensingh-Sylhet sector, one boat carrying Pakistani troops was sunk by Mukti Bahini while attempting to cross near Lubhachra. In this operation, they killed 10 enemy soldiers.

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

Trains to run from 2022

FROM PAGE 12
period would start," he said, wishing anonymity.

In 2010, the government decided to lay a 128-kilometre metre gauge rail track to link Chattogram with Cox's Bazar at a cost of Tk 1,852.35 crore.

But it changed the decision in 2014 and decided to go for a dual gauge track for better connectivity, raising the cost tenfolds to Tk 18,034.47 crore.

The authorities then made more changes as they shelved plans of the first phase to construct the track up to Gundum, near the Myanmar border, from Ramu, due to fund shortages.

After the first revision of the plan in April, 2016, the deadline was set at June 2022, and, after a lot of hurdles, the construction work for the track from Dohazari of Chattogram to Ramu started in March 2018.

This is one of the eight fast track projects. This project is jointly funded by the government and Asian Development Bank.

In March this year, the railways minister expressed hope that Cox's Bazar will come under the rail network within December 2022.

Yesterday, he visited the project site at the Cox's Bazar end and said the rail line would be open on December 16 next year, said a press release issued from his ministry.

The deadline of the project is June next year but the pandemic-related problems and delay in getting lands from some government agencies have delayed the project implementation, he added.

"So, the date to inaugurate the line has been set in December next year, deferring the deadline for six months," the press release quoted the minister as saying.

"This 100-km single line dual-gauge rail line is a part of the Trans-Asian Railway. If Myanmar constructs a rail line up to Gundum in future, we will build a line up to that point," the minister said.

The minister visited under-construction station at Cox's Bazar and a part of embankment where around 6km of the line have already been installed.

46 go to the UAE on trial

FROM PAGE 12
take measures in line with their Covid-19 protocol.

"In that case, the UAE authorities might send the passenger into isolation or quarantine."

Sources at the Dhaka airport said the UAE will examine the standard operating procedure (SOP) of the respective healthcare facilities at the HSIA.

If it approves the SOP, expatriate Bangladeshis will be able to return to their workplaces on a regular basis, added the source.

Sazzad said DMFR Molecular Lab and Diagnostic, one of the seven healthcare facilities permitted to set up labs at the HSIA, have so far installed a mobile lab to conduct Covid-19 test for UAE-bound passengers.

In August, the UAE lifted their ban on flight operations from Bangladesh and several other countries but made the RT-PCR test result mandatory for passengers flying in from Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia and Indonesia.

Since then, the expatriate Bangladeshis in UAE, who sent home about 10 percent of the \$24.8 billion of the remittance the country received in the last fiscal year, have been demanding test facilities at the country's three international airports.

Around 35,000 Bangladeshi

expatriates are waiting to return to work in the UAE.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on September 6 instructed the ministries concerned and the Health Directorate to set up labs at the international airports in Dhaka, Chattogram and Sylhet within two to three days.

The expatriates' welfare ministry on September 15 announced that on the basis of the recommendations made by the Health Directorate, it has given permission to seven healthcare facilities to set up labs at the HSIA.

The following day on September 16, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) at a meeting asked the representatives of the seven organisations to set up their labs at the rooftop of the two-storey car park building at the Dhaka airport.

The representatives argued that it would not be possible for them to set up labs in an open space due to various complications. CAAB, however, remained rigid on their stance.

On September 21, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad and Health Minister Zahid Maleque said the venue designated by the CAAB is not suitable for setting up labs for now.

In the presence of top officials of Prime Minister's Office, the two ministers in a new decision said labs will now be set up temporarily inside the airport.

6 policemen withdrawn

FROM PAGE 12
General Hospital Morgue for autopsy.

Mohammad Shahidullah, superintendent of Patuakhali police, said a three-member probe body was formed by the district police.

The team would be headed by Additional Superintendent of Police Mahfuzur Rahman, he said, adding that a separate probe body was also formed by the naval police.

A day earlier, members of Banatibazar Naval Police Outpost, led by ASI Mamun, chased the fishermen

and his trawler on the Ramnabad river.

Later, Sujan was beaten by the naval police, alleged locals.

At one point, Sujan fell unconscious on the trawler net.

News spread that Sujan had died. Hundreds of agitated people, including fishermen, confined policemen with their trawler.

Unconscious Sujan was taken to Kalapara Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead.

Room for free speech online shrunk

FROM PAGE 1
and physically assaulted internet users and conducted technical attacks on the internet.

Bangladesh was classified as "partly-free" both in 2019 and 2018. In those two years, it had scored 44 and 49 respectively.

According to the report, Bangladesh is one of the 38 countries where government authorities initiated legal or administrative reforms affecting tech companies' management of user data.

A new data protection bill proposed in October last year in Bangladesh would also require domestic data storage, said the report.

"Bangladesh's draft Data Protection Act includes data localisation and data mirroring provisions. It also includes extremely broad and far-reaching investigative powers, including the power to obtain access to all personal data and access to any premises," said the report.

It states that Bangladesh's 2020 draft National Cloud Policy includes explicit data localisation for all personal and government data.

"[According to the draft policy] transfers of data is only allowed for backup purposes, but only if the data doesn't include any personal

or sensitive data or data that is otherwise 'not detrimental to the security of Bangladesh and important infrastructure and if the transfer is to a country where Bangladesh can fully enforce its laws through bilateral or multilateral agreements,'" pointed out the Freedom House report.

The report scores countries across three wide categories: obstacles to access, limits on content, and violations of user rights.

To score obstacles to access, the report looked at the infrastructural, economic, and political barriers to access; government decisions to shut off connectivity or block specific applications or technologies; legal, regulatory, and ownership control over internet service providers; and independence of regulatory bodies.

To assess how content is limited, the report examined legal regulations on content, technical filtering and blocking of websites, and how digital tools are used for civic mobilisation.

Violations of user rights examines legal protections and restrictions on free expression; surveillance and privacy; and legal and extralegal repercussions for online activities, such as prosecution, extralegal harassment and physical attacks, or cyberattacks.

Uncontested wins, rebels bug AL

FROM PAGE 1
Experts and right bodies have recently slammed such polls saying this trend will leave a long-term negative impact on the country's democracy.

In a statement on Tuesday, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) said people's right to choose their representatives by casting votes has been curtailed and many "qualified" candidates have lost interest in taking part because of the trend of winning elections uncontested.

"It is an ominous sign for democracy," ASK said in the statement.

Yesterday, Election Commissioner Mahubul Talukdar said in a multi-party democracy, it was expected that multiple political parties would join polls.

"Finding out why competition is missing from elections and taking required steps to overcome it is extremely essential. Voters' apathy towards election is an ominous sign for democracy," he said.

In Monday's election to 160 union parishads, 43 chairman candidates were elected uncontested, which means around 29 percent contestants were elected without even getting a single vote.

It was the second and final part of the first phase of the UP polls. Results of four UP polls were withheld.

Independent chairman aspirants sealed victory in 36 unions, meaning they constituted 29 percent of the winning candidates in 113 unions, where poll results were available. Results in the rest four unions were suspended for various reasons, including violence.

Most of the victorious independent candidates were AL rebels.

AL insiders think giving party nomination to the wrong candidates, internal feud and a lack of chain of

command in the party grassroots are the main reasons why many leaders were contesting the polls ignoring the party's decision.

And those rebels gave AL candidates a tough time on Monday although no candidates were fielded by other major political parties like the BNP, they said.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahubul Alam Hanif, however, thinks the dissidents were not a "big headache" for his party.

"Earlier, local government polls were not held in partisan manner. The partisan polls were introduced for the local government bodies in 2015 and many grassroots leaders have not yet become habituated with the new system. It will take some time," he told The Daily Star.

"But our party's tough stance against party rebels will remain the same in future," he warned.

Asked why many of the rebels were winning, the AL leader said, "They got votes of those who are against the ruling party. A section of Awami League's votes also went into their bags as those were cast by the supporters of the rebel candidates."

On June 21, 204 union parishads went to polls in the first part of the UP polls' first phase. Forty-nine independent chairman candidates, mostly AL rebels, won while 28 were elected unopposed.

AL rebels proved their worth in some places in that election.

Take the example of Khulna's Dighalia. AL dissidents secured victory in five of the six UPs in the upazila. The party candidate won only in Barakpur union.

In Dighalia union, the AL candidate secured the third spot bagging 3,965 votes. AL dissident Haider Ali Morol got 6,082 votes while another rebel

To score a country in this criteria, questions are asked such as whether there are criminal penalties on online activities protected under international human rights standards, and whether state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' right to privacy.

Bangladesh was given the least possible scores in those two questions. It also fared extremely poorly in the question: "Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship?"

The report said, "More governments have introduced problematic rules on removing users' speech from internet platforms. Some of the laws are designed to suppress content that is critical of the government, rather than protecting users from harmful material."

Other countries that scored in the same range as Bangladesh include Iraq and Rwanda.

"Democratic governments have an obligation to craft regulations that enable users to express themselves freely, share information across borders, and hold the powerful to account. Otherwise, new technologies may serve to reinforce and hasten democracy's global decline," mentioned the report.

bagged 4,849 votes.

In Gazirhut UP, AL candidate Kamal Uddin Siddique bagged 4,745 votes while AL rebel Mofizul Islam got 4,900 votes.

In Arongghata UP, AL candidate Mofizur Rahman got 2,896 votes while AL dissident Farid Akter got 3,453 votes. In Senhati UP, AL candidate Farzana Naznin got 6,395 votes while AL rebel bagged almost double votes -- 11,674.

AL candidate Gazi Zakir Hossain secured 6,903 votes in Barakpur UP polls while party dissident Sheikh Ansar Uddin bagged 5,915 votes.

The highest number of independent candidates winning was from Satkhira. They won in 11 UPs while AL candidates in nine unions under two upazilas.

Of the 11 independents, six were leaders from the AL, three from the BNP, one was from Jamaat-e-Islami and the other from Workers Party.

In Cox's Bazar, elections to 14 unions were held and results in two others were withheld. AL candidates won in six UPs, party rebels sealed victory in two while the other four chairman posts were won by leaders from the BNP.

Voting in 13 UPs in Subarnachar and Hatiya upazilas under Noakhali were held where nine AL candidates won while AL dissidents got elected in four.

In Bagerhat, voting was held in 65 UPs and 38 AL nominees won unopposed. Twenty-five AL candidates won while AL dissidents were elected as chairman in two unions.

In Chattogram, election to 12 UPs under Sandwip upazila was held. AL candidates won in 10 UPs while party rebels were elected in two, show polls results.

Registration, guidelines for IPTVs soon

FROM PAGE 1
Secretary Md Afzal Hossain and heads of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and Press Information Department, among others, were present in the meeting.

"We are formulating some guidelines. In fact, our aim is to flourish the sector... We are working so that broadcasting media can protect the interest of the country and materialise the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

He said the meeting also discussed the OTT (Over the Top) platform policy and other new media. "We've

decided that registration for IPTV would be given soon. But, before this, a guideline would be completed for the sector," said Hasan, also Awami League joint general secretary.

The minister said "Digital Bangladesh" was achieved under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and directives of Premier's ICT Affairs Advisor Sajeeb Wazed Joy.

The ministry has already received about 600 applications, said the minister, adding, "Now, we have taken an initiative to give registration as scrutinies of many applications have

been completed. Other ministries, especially ICT and telecom, are also involved in the process."

Information and Broadcasting Ministry additional secretaries Md Mizan-ul-Alam and Khadiza Begum, PID principal information officer Md Shahenur Mia, BTCL managing director Dr Md Rafiqul Matin, BTRC director Lieutenant Colonel Reza, Information and Broadcasting Ministry joint secretary Md Abdus Sattar Sarker, deputy secretary Rozina Begum, and legal officer Md Saidur Rahman, among others, were present in the meeting.

Family under pressure to compromise

FROM PAGE 1
surgery kept on creating mental pressure on us by making repeated phone calls. I do not want this; I only want justice."

Cleft palate problem is fairly common among newborns. It is a condition whereby a child is born with an opening in the roof of the mouth, making it difficult for children to eat and speak as food and liquid go up through the opening into the nose instead of going down the throat into the stomach.

For a child to be able to speak and swallow normally, the palate needs to be surgically sealed off.

WHAT HAPPENED WITH AZAN

Sayem's son was one of the seven children who had cleft palate surgeries conducted by Dr BK Das Bijoy on August 22 at the hospital. It was part of a free campaign funded by a US-based charity.

Dr Bijoy conducted the surgery on Azan from 2:30pm to 4:15pm, said Sayem and Tanzum.

After the surgery, the unconscious boy was kept in the post-operative ward, and was shifted to the general ward around 7:00pm.

"There was no doctor either in the post-operative ward or in the general ward. As our baby continued to have breathing difficulties, we took him to the operation theatre twice. Each time, the doctors, including Dr Bijoy, misbehaved with us," the parents alleged in their written complaint.

"The duty nurse forced us to feed our unconscious baby medicine syrup, after which our baby's condition turned severe. But this time too, Dr Bijoy

rudely said this is not a problem and drove us from the operation theatre around 9:00pm.

"After we took our baby back to the general ward, he died around 10:00pm.

"As our child had previous neurological complications, we showed all previous prescriptions and test reports to Dr Bijoy. But he said there is no link between the surgery and those issues."

The family alleged that the admission date of their child has been mentioned in the death certificate as August 22, instead of August 21.

In the death certificate, the cause of death was written as "aspiration pneumonia", a lung infection caused by inhaled oral or gastric contents.

Dr Bijoy, however, told The Daily Star that the baby died after developing "laryngospasm", a spasm of the vocal cords that temporarily makes it difficult to speak or breathe.

Laryngospasm typically lasts less than 60 seconds, but in some cases can last up to 20 to 30 minutes and cause a partial blocking of breathing in, while breathing out remains easier, according to medical experts.

Three physicians, including a child specialist, told this correspondent that laryngospasm is not fatal while aspiration pneumonia can become serious if left untreated.

Laryngospasm or aspiration pneumonia cannot lead to the death of any baby within several hours. There must be some associated reasons," Dr AKM Shafayat Lashkar, a child physician at Modern Hospital Shopipur in Gazipur, told The Daily Star.

Third grader gets

FROM PAGE 12
and the mother tested Covid-19 positive on September 17. But we came to know about it on September 19 as the child did not join school after the first school day. The child is now doing well in home isolation," the headmaster added.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the student's mother said, "The child went to school on September 12. The following day, the child had a fever. I gave medicine after taking advice from a local physician. Later, the child and I had cough and fever. So we gave samples at the Upazila Health Complex on September 16 for Covid testing and got the results on September 17. We have been staying home since then."

She said schoolteachers, the upazila nirbahi officer and the upazila health and family planning officer had been in contact with them and they were providing all kinds of support to them.

According to school sources, it has a total of 310 students. Of them, 58 are in class-III.

Due to the pandemic situation, the school now holds classes once a week for students of classes-I to -IV. For fifth graders, it arranges classes six days a week.

Assistant Teacher Arpita Mandal said, "We teach our students maintaining hygiene rules. There is no panic among the students and parents about coronavirus. Our school attendance rate is about 80 percent."

Sushanta Vaidya, Kotalipara upazila health and family planning officer, said they were monitoring the health of the infected student.

Kotalipara UNO Ferdous Wahid said all schools in the upazila were running their academic activities complying with health safety rules.

"We are constantly monitoring these schools. The body temperature of the students is being checked in every school every day. If any student is found showing Covid symptoms, he or she will be tested immediately," he added.

I'm scared

FROM PAGE 12
and Tarek.
Sub-inspector Bellal Hossain, investigation officer of the case, said rejecting their bail prayers, the court sent the three to jail.

According to the case statement, the teen stopped his study due to poverty when he was a sixth grader and started learning and singing baul songs in different places with some bauls of his area. During his baul incarnation, he started wearing white dresses, including lungi and fatua, and grew long hair.

The accused became angry and threatened the teen. Besides, the accused also insulted other bauls who used to visit his house often. One day, the teen protested it.

On the night of September 18, five to seven people went to his house, woke him up and dragged him out of his house and shaved his head. They also threatened him with expulsion from the village, the teen said in the case statement.

He told this correspondent, "When I was screaming, they started beating me up. Later, locals came and saved me."

He said in fear, he took shelter in another village that night.

The teen alleged that the attackers told him that "by wearing white dresses (dhuti) and lighting candles, you are becoming a Hindu and you have to be a Muslim again by reciting Kalema."

Contacted, Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shibganj Police Station, said in primary interrogation, the three accused told them that the teen wears white dresses, lights candles and incenses which is against the Islam. Therefore, they wanted to give him a lesson.

Asked about the teen's fears, Tanvir Hasan, assistant superintendent of police (Shibganj circle), said they were taking steps.

Saarc FMs meet

FROM PAGE 12
representation in the government in Kabul.

The Saarc is the regional intergovernmental organisation of eight countries of South Asia-Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

It is learnt that the majority of members in Saarc agreed that an empty chair can be kept for Afghanistan during the meet. However, Pakistan did not agree and the meeting was called off.

Saarc Secretariat told ANI that the meeting was cancelled due to the lack of concurrence from all member states as of today.

US Space Force

FROM PAGE 12
"Every winning team needs a uniform! We started with the female design and then created the male prototype," wrote Chief of Space Operations General Jay Raymond.

Launched officially in December 2019, the Space Force was organised to address challenges of fighting war in the exosphere, seen as a distinct theater from the air force.

Similar designs with diagonal buttons holding down breast flaps have been seen for centuries in European and American uniforms, and are donned with large amounts of braid by marching band drum majors today.

But the designers for the Space Force seemed aware of the sleeker uniforms seen in "Star Trek", "Battlestar Galactica" -- where uniforms also had the diagonal buttons -- and "Star Wars". Indeed, the force's service badge and logo are difficult to distinguish from that of the Starfleet Command from Star Trek.