

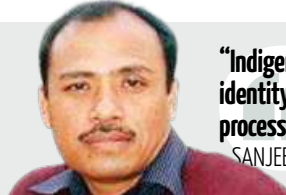


The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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"Indigenous people are those who lost their ethnic identity, got deprived of their land right in the process of building a modern state."
SANJEEB DRONG, LEADER OF BANGLADESH ADIBASI FORUM



"People will be able to elect a government of their choice through freely exercising their voting rights if the election is held under a neutral caretaker government."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR



"Shah Rukh Khan and his family are being used as a smokescreen, a soft target to distract from 3000kg Taliban-drug haul at Adani port."
VISHAL DADLANI REACTS TO ARYAN KHAN'S ARREST

CHILD MARRIAGE IN PANDEMIC A SCOURGE returns on tiptoe

PINAKI ROY with NAZIBA BASHER

She wanted to be a teacher one day and was studying hard to reach that goal. But that dream, she feels, has just slipped away.

At only 16, Sultana (not her real name) was married off by her parents a few months after the Covid-induced school shutdown came into effect.

"I used to enjoy school. I was a good student and liked studying. But I got married, and since I am young, I couldn't fight my parents and get out of it."

"I'm still getting used to being married. I just try to do everything I am told to do so that I don't get into trouble."

Sultana is just one of the thousands of children whose dream of an independent future was nipped in the bud over the past year and half.

According to international researches, almost 2.5 million child marriages took place across the world during the pandemic.

In Bangladesh, at least 11,000 school children were married off by their families between March 17, 2020, and September 12 this year, according to data The Daily Star gathered from different districts.

This means all these children are victims of what is now a crime as per the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017, which

stipulates that girls must be aged at least 18 to be eligible for marriage and boys 21.

The grim picture unfurled when schools across the country reopened on September 12, after around a year and half, and teachers noticed many of their students did not return to their classrooms.

In March, Unicef published a report "COVID-19: A Threat to Progress against Child Marriage", which warned that school closures, economic stress, service disruptions, pregnancy, and parental deaths due to the pandemic are putting the most vulnerable girls at increased risk of child marriage.

"Despite significant progress in recent years, Bangladesh has the fourth highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. Covid-19 compounds the difficulties facing millions of girls. School closures, isolation from friends and support networks, and rising poverty place girls at heightened risk of child marriage," said Tomoo Hozumi, Unicef representative in Bangladesh.

Experts said though the country made substantial strides in curbing child marriage in recent years, policymakers were caught unawares by the sudden global pandemic and failed to grasp the adverse impact it could have on the fight against child marriage.

MORE ON PAGE 3

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



"School closures, isolation from friends and support networks, and rising poverty place girls at heightened risk of child marriage."

TOMOO HOZUMI, UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE IN BANGLADESH.

"We now have to envision more ways to resist child marriages. We have to bring the victims back to school."

KASHFIA FERUZ, DIRECTOR OF GIRLS RIGHTS, PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Country to get another nuclear power plant

PM opens installation of reactor pressure vessels at Rooppur

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government might set up another nuclear power plant in the southern region to meet the increasing demand for electricity.

"If we are able to build another nuclear power plant, we will no longer face a power crisis," she said.

The government is looking for a suitable place in the country's southern region to build another nuclear power plant, she said while launching the installation of reactor pressure vessels inside the physical structure of unit-1 of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

Joining the programme from her official Ganabhaban residence in the capital through video conferencing, she said the country has now turned into a developing nation due to the relentless efforts made by the incumbent government since 2009.

"We are committed to making Bangladesh a developed country by 2041."

The Rooppur plant is expected to add 2,400MW of electricity to the national grid by 2024.

The mega project is being implemented by the state-run Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission under the Science and Technology Ministry, with financial, technical and technological support given by Russia through its state nuclear agency, Rosatom.

The PM said her government is setting up 100 special economic zones across the country that will require power to operate.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Children aged 12-17 to get Pfizer shots Says health minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will inoculate children aged 12-17 with Pfizer Covid vaccine soon, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said yesterday.

For this, the children have to register using their birth certificates.

The minister announced this at a time when schools and other educational institutions, except universities, were opened last month on a limited scale following a closure of more than one and a half years.

"Sixty lakh Pfizer vaccine doses are already in stock. We will vaccinate 30 lakh children initially. Another 70 lakh Pfizer vaccine shots will come soon," he said at a press conference on Covid-19 vaccines in the capital.

Including the children, the number of fully vaccinated people will reach eight crore by December-January and the government has ensured enough vaccine

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Biggest hike in LPG price to date

Energy regulator raises retail price by 22pc, cites rising prices on international market as key reason

ASIFUR RAHMAN and MAHMUDUL HASAN

Bad news comes in threes, it is often said.

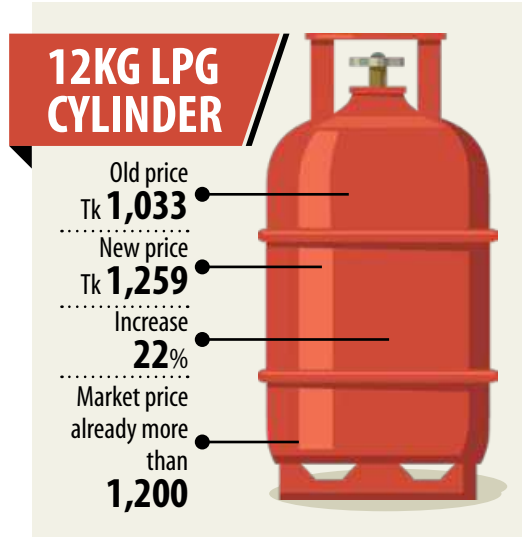
And for the average citizen, the third stroke of bad news, after the runaway prices of commodities and proteins, came yesterday: the liquefied petroleum gas, which has progressively become the fuel of choice for cooking and running vehicles, has become 22 percent dearer.

From yesterday, a 12 kg cylinder, the most common form for marketing the fuel, would sell for Tk 1,259 from the 27 private operators, said the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC).

The private operators accounted for 98 percent of the 12 lakh tonne of LPG that was sold last year. Previously, the official price of the cylinder was Tk 1,033, although purchase receipts obtained by The Daily Star showed consumers were paying between Tk 1,200 to Tk 1,300.

The price of LPG used in cars has been raised to Tk 58.68 a litre from Tk 50.56 a litre.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



ELECTION COMMISSION FORMATION

It's akin to law

Law minister on search committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq said yesterday that the search committee which appoints the Election Commission is akin to a law, and it will form the next EC as there is not enough time to formulate a law in this regard.

According to the country's constitution, the appointment of the chief election commissioner and not more than four election commissioners "shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf, be made by the president".

Addressing a "Meet the Reporters" programme at the Dhaka Reporters Unity, the minister said enacting a law within February 15 (when the tenure of the current EC will expire) would not be possible and the law would be made later.

In 2012, when the search committee was formed, the president took opinions of all political parties and everyone agreed to it and later the committee came into being through the issuance of a gazette, he said.

Although the search committee is not a law, it is close to one, said the minister.

On September 25, 53 eminent citizens of the country called for an immediate reconstitution of the EC by enacting a law as per the constitution.

Although the constitution mandates that appointments

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Enacting law is a must

Says EC Mahub

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The need for a law to appoint the chief and other election commissioners is "undeniable" in order to establish universal voting rights, empowerment of the people and democracy, said Election Commissioner Mahub Talukdar.

He, however, said the formation of such a law is impossible without the consensus of all political parties.

"The debate over the formation of the next election commission is now at its peak. In the last 50 years, no law has been enacted to appoint the commission," Mahub said in a press briefing at the EC office.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



DURGA PUJA GREETINGS!

We wish our readers a joyous celebration of Durga Puja. Let the festivities end on a note of communal harmony and prosperity.

Durga arrives to fight evil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The five-day-long Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindu community, begins today through the Mahashashthi puja amid much festivity and religious fervour.

Preparation of puja mandaps (pavilions) in the capital and across the country are almost complete. The artisans are busy putting the finishing

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Recent dips in nighttime temperature are causing many children to catch cold-related diseases. The photo of the mothers with their newborns suffering from cold was taken at Dhaka Shishu Hospital yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Taiwan won't bow to China

Says president; Beijing denounces her for provoking 'confrontation'

REUTERS, Taipei

Taiwan will keep bolstering its defences to ensure nobody can force them to accept the path China has laid down that offers neither freedom nor democracy, President Tsai Ing-wen said yesterday, in a riposte to Beijing that its government denounced.

Claimed by China as its own territory, Taiwan has come under growing military and political pressure to accept Beijing's rule, including repeated Chinese air force missions in Taiwan's air defence identification zone, to international concern.

Chinese President Xi Jinping vowed on Saturday to realise "peaceful reunification" with Taiwan and did not directly mention the use of force. Still, he got an angry reaction from Taipei, which said only Taiwan's people can decide its future.

Addressing a National Day rally, Tsai said she hoped for an easing of tensions across the Taiwan Strait, and reiterated Taiwan will not "act rashly".

"But there should be absolutely no illusions that the Taiwanese people will bow to pressure," she said in the speech outside the presidential office in central Taipei.

"We will continue to bolster our national defence and demonstrate our determination to defend ourselves in order to ensure that nobody can force Taiwan to take the path China has laid out for us," Tsai added.

"This is because the path that China has laid out offers neither a free and democratic way of life for Taiwan, nor sovereignty for our 23 million people."

China has offered a "one country, two systems" model of autonomy to Taiwan, much like it uses with Hong

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1