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SECOND EDITION

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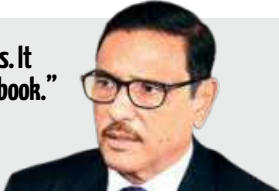
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"BNP has no existence on the streets. It exists only online, including on Facebook."

AWAMI LEAGUE GEN SECY
OBAIDUL QUADER



"We won't say only the Hindus have been affected in the attacks. We think the entire nation has been attacked."

BNP LEADER GAYESHWAR CHANDRA ROY ON
RECENT COMMUNAL VIOLENCE



"Hunger is rising and children are dying. We can't feed people on promises... The international community must come together to address this crisis, which is fast spinning out of control."

DAVID BEASLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME, ON AFGHANISTAN



LIFE AS A CONSTABLE

Under stress, in distress

"They do high-risk jobs round the clock, and are often reprimanded by their supervisors. They constantly worry about their future and have little scope to spend time with their families. When combined together, all these can lead to severe mental breakdowns."

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

When Jibon Sarker (not his real name) joined the police force as a constable about 10 years ago, he took it for a life-changing job. In many ways, it is; but not for the right reasons.

He has an 11-hour shift, almost no weekly day off and hardly any leave. Posted at a police checkpoint in the capital, Jibon starts his shift at 7:30 in the evening and ends at 6:30 the next morning.

That's his official workhour. He needs more than four hours' preparation to start his day, from collecting firearms standing in a long queue at the Rajarbagh barracks and reaching the post through the crippling city traffic. After the day is called, he needs another hour or so to return to the barracks. That's about 16 hours out of his daily life.

Some days are longer. Like him, some 1.29 lakh police constables across the country work too long for too little. Presently, newly-joined police constables in Dhaka get a monthly pay of about Tk 17,000, plus subsidised food items worth Tk 1,500-4,000, depending on the marital status and number of children.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



People attend a rally organised by Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad in Chattogram city's Andarkilla area yesterday, denouncing the recent communal attacks on Hindu homes and temples in different places of the country. One of the placards carried to the protest read "Religion is for individuals; Bangladesh is for all". Story on page 3.

PHOTO: STAR

Khaleda Zia undergoes a minor surgery

Now at ICU, doing well, says Fakhrul



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was placed at the intensive care unit of Evercare Hospital in the capital after she underwent a minor surgery yesterday.

"Madam [Khaleda] underwent a biopsy. She had conversations with her son Tarique Rahman and her brother Shamim Iskander after the surgery. Syeda Sharmila Rahman, her son Arafat Rahman's widow, has also talked to her. At present she is undergoing treatment at the ICU, but she is doing well," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said.

Addressing a press conference at the party chairperson's Gulshan office, he said, "She is out of danger."

Khaleda's physician Dr Zahid Hossain said, "A small lump was found in her body. It needs to be examined through biopsy to know its nature. That's why a small surgery was performed."

He said the former prime minister was physically okay after the surgery and had talked with family members.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

CORRECTION

In our yesterday's report headlined "Ctg temple vandalised", we inadvertently wrote that a Buddhist temple in Teknaf was vandalised; it rather was a kitchen (around 25 yards from the temple) that was set on fire. Our report, however, clearly stated citing a police official that the incident was not communal. We regret the error.

MAYHEM AT TEMPLES, MANDAPS 'Aide' to Cumilla mayor involved

Say police sources citing a key accused on remand

STAR REPORT

The man suspected of putting the Holy Quran at a puja mandap told officers that an aide to the Cumilla mayor was among the instigators of the communal attack in the district on October 13.

Iqbal Hossen, who faces charges of placing the Quran at the puja mandap, is currently being interrogated by police on a seven-day remand.

He named Moinuddin Ahmed Babu as the one who incited the crowds at Nanua Dighir Par, where the attack took place. Moinuddin is known among locals as the personal secretary to Cumilla City Corporation Mayor Monirul Haque Sakku, said an officer with knowledge of the information provided by the suspect.

The officer, requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star that Moinuddin fled the area after the attack.

Contacted, Mayor Sakku said, "I don't have a PS. But Babu often accompanies me. I asked the police to analyse video footage to find out his role in the mayhem. If he is found guilty, he must be punished."

The mayor is currently in Saudi Arabia where he is performing Hajj. Requesting anonymity, one of the interrogators told The Daily Star that Iqbal was as stubborn as an extremist during the interrogation.

"He is cunning and knows how to evade questions," the interrogator added. Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation Department was asked to investigate a case filed under the Digital Security Act over hurting religious sentiment in Cumilla.

M Tanvir Ahmed, additional superintendent of police in Cumilla, told

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PIRGANJ HINDUS Cowering in fear, still

KONGKON KARMAKER and MOSTOFA SHABUI from Pirganj, Rangpur

Nando Rani, 30, is still reeling from trauma after what she and her family suffered on the night of October 17.

"My sons, both very little, are still scared of what might happen every time night falls. They keep insisting that we should leave the village... We now know that, being Hindus, we can come under attack anytime, anywhere in the country."

Eight days after the brutal communal attacks in Rangpur's Pirganj upazila, the Hindu community of Boro Karimpur village has yet to overcome the fear of further attacks.

Usha Rani, 60, mother of Jagadish Chandra Das, never witnessed such violence before. She had to rush to a nearby paddy field to hide that night.

"People of all religions had been living in harmony in our village. We always respected each other's faiths and lived peacefully. However, the October 17 incident left us all speechless and traumatised... Even now, I am scared to close my eyes to sleep at night."

Around 180 Hindu families have been living in two neighbourhoods of the village for decades.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

ERADICATING CHILD MARRIAGE, LABOUR

Pandemic pushes goals further away

Finds a study by Manusher Jonno Foundation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Child labour and child marriages have surged in Bangladesh amid the pandemic, found a recent study by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) -- unravelling the decades of progress made on bringing down the two social ills.

Between April and October last year, at least 13,886 girls between the ages of 10 to 17 were forced into child marriages and 8,140 children were sent to work, found a survey by the MJF, a non-government and non-profit organisation that works to improve the lives of the poor and the marginalised communities.

"Child marriage and child labour have increased due to the pandemic -- and poverty was the main reason," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, at a webinar on bringing children back to

MJF SURVEY FINDINGS ON CHILD MARRIAGE

- 13,886 girls of 10-17 years married off in Apr-Oct'20
- 50% were 16-17 years old
- 48% were 13-15 years old
- 78% marriages initiated by parents

classrooms in the post-pandemic world.

MJF and the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh jointly organised the webinar, which included a class 10 girl student from Nilphamari who was married off during the pandemic and a student of Kamrangirchar who was forced into child labour.

"Maybe, the parents thought of marrying off their girl child and sending their boy child to work as a coping mechanism," said Anam, also a core group member of Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

Of the girls married off, 48 percent were aged between 13 and 15 years, found the survey by MJF, which was conducted with the support of UNFPA, UNICEF and Plan International in 21 districts.

As many as 78 percent of the marriages

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

BUSINESS E-commerce customers to get back Tk 214cr stuck in payment gateways

The government yesterday decided to return Tk 214 crore that has remained stuck in the payment gateways to customers after some errant e-commerce platforms failed to deliver goods against advance payments. The funds are owned by the customers who made the payments to buy products since July 1 but did not receive the delivery. "Bangladesh Bank will take steps to return the money to the affected consumers within the next three months," said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi.

STORY ON B1



Afghanistan's spin wizard Rashid Khan (C) wheels away in celebration after dismissing Scotland's Brad Wheal (L) during their T20 World Cup match at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday. Rashid took four wickets while Mujeeb Ur Rahman scalped five as Afghanistan bowled out Scotland for 60 after having scored 190 to script a 130-run victory.

PHOTO: AFP

India on alert as 'Delta Plus' variant detected

AGENCIES

India's health authorities are on alert as Covid genomic surveillance experts reported some cases of a new sub-lineage of SARS CoV 2's Delta variant, which is potentially more infectious, in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra states.

Seven cases of the new variant AY.4.2, dubbed "Delta Plus", were detected in Indore city of Madhya Pradesh in a genome sequencing report by National Centre of Disease Control (NCDC), sources in NCDC said.

Out of seven, two people infected are army officers posted in a cantonment, said Indore chief medical and health officer BS Saitya.

Delta AY.4.2 variant has been detected in less than one percent samples in Maharashtra and has not yet been described as a variant of concern, according to Anurag Agarwal, the lead scientist of the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology.

The scientists of consortium of government labs, which undertake genome sequencing, have indicated that the new variant may be more contagious and faster transmissible than the Delta strain, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

"Delta remains the predominant variant... a Delta sub lineage newly-designated as AY.4.2 is noted to be expanding in England. It is now a signal in monitoring and assessment has commenced," the NCDC report said.

The report also said that the sub-lineage had caused the Covid surge in Indore district in September when the Covid-19 infections had jumped by 64 percent than in August.

AY.4.2 was first detected in the UK in July this year and over 15,000 cases have been reported since then. It has been noticed in 33 other countries too even though in lesser numbers.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has been examining all available data relating to variants of SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19, in the UK -- where daily infection rates remain high.