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Girl's family 'outcast' over rumours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The family of Nurunnahar Chowdhury, who recently went to the USA for higher education, has allegedly been ostracised by a local mosque committee in the district's Kulaura upazila over her wearing short dresses and rumours over marrying a Hindu man there.

Her father Abdul Hai Chowdhury Gulab said they lodged a written complaint with the Kulaura upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Monday afternoon.

According to the family, Nurunnahar from Krishnapur village went to the USA on December 26 last year. After seeing Facebook posts of the student, some locals started spreading false information about her.

The local mosque management committee called an arbitration on December 28. But Abdul Hai, 70, could not join due to illness.

Following the orders by Shamsul Islam Makhon Mia and Amin Mia, president and secretary of the committee, the family was ostracised, said the complainant.

Speaking to The Daily Star over the phone, Nurunnahar said, "Some locals from the mosque informed me over the phone that my family has been ostracised. I asked my father to join the meeting. However, he couldn't attend as he was suffering from dementia.

"When I heard about my family being ostracised, I asked Amin Mia what my father's fault was. He replied that I went to America and married a man from another

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The Public Works Department constructing a walkway bordering the lake inside Ramna Park in the capital. The authorities have taken the step as a part of its beautification work across the recreation site situated right at the heart of Dhaka. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

No need to worry about NeoCov

Say 2 Bangladeshi experts

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

As a group of Chinese researchers flagged concerns about NeoCov, claiming this new virus has a latent potential to mutate and penetrate the human population, two Bangladeshi experts think the fear is illogical and there is no need to panic.

The experts said people should not draw any conclusion as it is yet to be studied how threatening this virus can be for humans.

"It will be illogical to be worried about NeoCov. Because, the speculation by the Chinese researchers is a hypothesis, not yet real," Arifa Akram, an assistant professor of virology at the National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Centre, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The World Health Organisation on Friday also pointed out that the potential of the virus to pose a risk for humans would require further study.

The Chinese scientists said NeoCov, a close relative of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV), was discovered in a bat population in South Africa and is currently spreading only among animals, reports Indian news portal Livemint.

The focus of their study, yet to be peer reviewed, is based on a simple theory that if NeoCov picks up a particular mutation only then it could use the same pathway to infect humans as the Sars-CoV-2 virus.

They also hinted infection with NeoCov could not be cross-neutralised by antibodies targeting SARS-CoV-2 or MERS-CoV.

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JHENAIDAH-JASHORE HIGHWAY EXPANSION

Good start, but end still afar

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

In a rare move, the authorities appointed a project director just after five days of the approval of the Jhenaidah-Jashore highway expansion project in November 2020.

The move came after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina while approving the project at the Ecneec expressed serious discontent over the five-year tenure of the project.

Following her directive, the project period was cut to three years and a deadline for December 2023 was set.

But uncertainty looms over the project's completion by then as authorities have spent 14 months to appoint consultants for detailed design, preparing bid documents and other work.

Roads and Highways Department (RHD), the implementing agency for the Tk 4,188 crore project, is scheduled to sign a contract with a joint-venture company for the consultancy services tomorrow.

The firm will get one year to

draw up the design and prepare documents, Project Director Zabid Hasan said.

They expect to start the bidding process after June.

"We want to complete all the process within this year," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

This means the entire work of expanding the road to a dual carriageway will get only one year to be completed.

"We will try our best," he said about meeting the deadline.

She asked why it would take five years to improve on a 48.5 kilometre road and ordered its completion in 3 years.

Cost escalations and delays in development projects are common in the country and the prime minister expressed discontent over the issue on several occasions.

JHENAIDAH-JASHORE HIGHWAY
The 48.50km Jhenaidah-

Jashore highway is a part of a 260km road corridor that would be developed under a programme called "Western Economic Corridor and Regional Enhancement Programme (WeCARE)".

The RHD will improve the 260km road corridor into four lanes along with service lanes on both sides, aiming to improve cross-border connectivity.

When the Jhenaidah-Jashore highway expansion project was placed before the Ecneec on November 24, 2020, with a stipulated deadline of October 2020 to December 2025, including a one-year defect liability period, the PM expressed discontent.

She reportedly questioned why it would take five years to improve a 48km road and asked for its completions within 2023.

Asked why they took 14 months to appoint consultants, the project director said they had to get approval from both the government and the World Bank at every stage, which took time.

Impose arms embargo on Myanmar

UN special rapporteur urges UNSC

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tom Andrews has made an urgent call to the UN Security Council to impose an arms embargo on the Myanmar military and significantly increase financial pressure.

The call was made on the first anniversary of the illegal coup by the Myanmar junta yesterday.

During the year, some 1,500 civilians were killed and thousands of others detained, leaving the country in a complicated conflict that is akin to a civil war.

"The military junta is functioning as a criminal enterprise, committing murder, torture, abductions, forced displacement, all the while stealing the revenue and seizing the assets that rightfully belong to the people of Myanmar," he said.

"What is worse, they appear to be getting away with it. Their attacks continue unabated. The suffering of the Myanmar people is steadily increasing," Tom Andrews said in a statement yesterday.

He said recent months have seen an even further escalation of violence, and a campaign of terror now widespread across the country.

"I have received more reports of mass killings, attacks on hospitals and humanitarian targets, and the bombing and burning of villages," he added.

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Hawkers sell used jackets to a large number of underprivileged people, who cannot afford clothes to keep them warm in the shivering winter, living in the capital. Each jacket costs between Tk 100 and Tk 300. The photo was taken in the capital's Gulistan area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Biman buys 2 Boeing 737s

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has bought two Boeing 737-800 aircraft, which it had been leasing from Ireland's Celestial Aviation Trading Ltd since 2009.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal, managing director and CEO of Biman, said the planes were purchased at a fair price.

Sources in the civil aviation ministry said Biman bought the two aircraft for Tk 168 crore with its own funds.

Boeing 737-800 is commonly used on mid-haul routes and is Boeing's most popular aircraft.

Biman now boasts one of the youngest fleets in Asia with 21 modern planes, including four Boeing 777-300 ERs, four Boeing 787-8s, two Boeing 787-9s, six Boeing 737-800s and five De Havilland Canada Dash 8 aircraft.

Of the 21, the national flag carrier owns 18 and the rest are on lease.

Kazi Wahidul Alam, aviation expert, said that despite the new planes, the national airline still remains in bad shape as it has failed to spread its wings to new destinations or revive suspended ones due to the absence of proper planning, marketing policy, and expert professionals.

6TH PHASE UP POLLS Independents grab 95 chair posts, AL 117

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR



In the sixth phase of Union Parishad elections held on Monday, independents bagged chairman posts in 95 UPs and Awami League nominees in 117 UPs, according to Election Commission data unveiled yesterday.

The omission said voter turnout was 69 percent in 216 UPs of which the unofficial results have been published. Since the first phase of the election, the EC has announced unofficial results of a total of 3,893 UPs. AL nominees won in 2,132 UPs and independents in 1,692 UPs.

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