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Hotline facing barrage of prank calls

## Helpline in distress

999 response slow because of outmoded system and manpower crisis

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The speed at which the National Emergency Helpline (999) responds to distress calls is much slower than that of developed countries due to an outdated operating system and manpower shortage.

The average response time of the 999 unit in Bangladesh is about 20 minutes against around seven minutes in countries like the US, the UK, and Japan, said several unit officials.

Because of such delayed response, the callers in distress run the risk of being deprived of emergency services, while many alleged that they had to wait for hours after calling the helpline.

999 is a toll-free hotline number that allows citizens in trouble to call and ask for help from police, fire service or ambulance service providers in case of any crimes, accident or other emergencies.

At present, the emergency helpline unit receives around 30,000 calls a day.

Officials at the unit said the response time would have come down significantly if their demand for providing the unit with automatic caller identification and location system had been met.

They said the Police Headquarters sent a demand note



A great assortment of iftar items on the streets is a tradition of Chawkbazar in Old Dhaka. The photo of iftar delicacies was taken yesterday, the first day of Ramadan. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

### NATIONAL EMERGENCY HELPLINE



999 is a toll-free hotline number that allows citizens to call and ask for police, fire and ambulance services for any kind of incidents

The unit now receives around 30,000 calls a day

999 has the capacity to attend 100 phone calls at a time; it should be at least 500 calls

Emergency response time 15-20 minutes in Bangladesh, whereas it is around 7 minutes in the US, the UK, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and China

to the home ministry in this regard in May, 2018, and a decision to provide the unit with the system was made in August, 2019, after a series of meetings involving different ministries and government agencies.

"But it is yet to be implemented," one of the officials told this newspaper.

The system can locate the caller's exact address instantly which is not possible in the existing manual

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3

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## Pak PM dodges ouster

Opposition decries 'treason' as no-trust vote blocked; cabinet, parliament dissolved on Imran's order; election in three months; SC to have the final say

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's political turmoil deepened yesterday, when Prime Minister Imran Khan avoided an attempt to oust him and sought fresh elections after dissolving parliament, a move the opposition called treasonous and vowed to fight.

The deputy speaker of parliament, a member of Khan's party, blocked an opposition no-confidence motion that Khan had widely been expected to lose, ruling it was part of a foreign conspiracy and unconstitutional.

That stymied the opposition's attempt to come to power, and set up a potential legal showdown over the Constitution in the country of 220 million people.

Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif called the blocking of the vote "nothing short of high treason" and said on Twitter there would be consequences for "blatant & brazen violation of the Constitution." He added he hoped the Supreme Court would uphold the Constitution.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, head of the opposition Pakistan People's Party, promised a sit-in at parliament and told reporters, "We are also moving to the Supreme Court today."

The Supreme Court's Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial yesterday said evening the court would hear the matter today and that any directions given by the president and prime minister would be subject to the court's orders.

The chief justice said that no unconstitutional step should be taken by any state institution and that no one should try to take advantage of the situation. Justice Bandial also ordered the interior and defence secretaries to brief the court on the law and order situation.

Bandial said the court would review the deputy speaker's actions. The court, however, rejected a request to suspend the deputy speaker's ruling and directed the attorney general to present it today, reported Dawn.



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## 'Which law says women can't wear teep?'

Suborna asks in parliament, condemns harassment of a teacher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Suborna Mustafa yesterday expressed resentment in parliament over the harassment of a Tejgaon College teacher, allegedly by a policeman, for wearing a 'teep'.

Speaking on a point of order, the popular actor and a lawmaker from reserved seats questioned which law of the land says a woman cannot wear teep (a decorative mark, mostly in the shape of a dot, worn in the middle of the forehead by many women).

She demanded that the government take immediate action against the accused policeman.

Lata Samaddar, a lecturer of theatre and media studies, yesterday filed a complaint with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station. She wrote that when

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## FARMERS' SUICIDE Tube-well operator held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday arrested a man for allegedly abetting the suicides of two Santal farmers in Rajshahi's Godagari upazila last month.



Shakhawat

The arrestee is Shakhawat Hossain, deep tube-well operator of Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) at Issoripur village.

The arrestee stands accused in two cases filed with Godagari Police Station for abetting the suicides by not supplying water to farmlands for Boro irrigation.

Kamrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Godagari Police Station, said they arrested Shakhawat around 1:00am in Chabbishnagar area of the upazila.

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With schools and colleges open in Ramadan, the streets in the capital were crowded during peak hours yesterday. The photo of commuters desperately trying to get on a bus was taken at Farmgate in the afternoon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Cousin admits to raping, killing five-year-old

Body found in a septic tank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Police recovered the body of a child from a septic tank yesterday, 10 days after she went missing, in Noakhali's Chatkhali upazila.

The body was found based on information give by Shahadat, 22, the five-year-old victim's cousin, who was detained after the filing of a general diary with Chatkhali Police Station, said Gius Uddin, officer-in-charge of the station.

The GD was filed by the child's father on March 25, a day after she went missing.

Shahadat, in police custody, admitted to kidnapping, raping and killing the child, and then throwing her body in a septic tank of his home.

According to the GD, the child went out to play with her friends the day before and had been missing since then.

The body has been sent to Noakhali General Hospital for autopsy.

OC Gius said the accused confessed to holding the victim hostage and raping her several times, which led her to bleed. He then killed the child, wrapped her body in a plastic bag and threw it into a septic tank.

The child's father yesterday filed a case with the station accusing Shahadat of raping and killing his daughter.