

## UNO faces probe over sexual abuse, fraudulence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

An upazila nirbahi officer is facing investigation over allegations of sexual harassment and fraudulence made by a college student in Mirzapur, Tangail.

Manjur Hossain, currently the UNO of Karimganj, Kishoreganj, allegedly made false promises of marriage to the young woman and lived with her in rented houses when he was the UNO of Basail upazila in Tangail.

The woman submitted a written complaint to the senior secretary of the public service ministry sometime in February.

The deputy commissioner's office in Tangail is looking into the allegations.

According to the complaint, the woman was introduced to Manjur on Facebook when he was the UNO of Basail last year.

Manjur developed a relationship hiding the fact that he was married and had two daughters, it added.

One day, he took her to his official residence and coerced her into having sex with him.

Later, her parents arranged her marriage with someone else, but the UNO somehow stopped the marriage, read the complaint.

"He then took me from home to a guest house in Tangail town, making promises of marriage. He later rented a house in the Kumudini College area [hiding his identity]... and we lived like a married couple for two months," read the statement.

"I always asked him to marry me and he always made promises of marriage.... He asked me to be patient and sought time.... I was a helpless girl who left her family. I believed him," read the complaint.

Manjur then told her that he would marry her in India and took her to Hyderabad in September

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Residents of Agargaon's Cumilla slum in the capital collecting water from a leaking Wasa pipe on the side of the road near the National Archive Building yesterday. The slum's dwellers have been facing a water crisis for the past several days. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

# World food prices hit record high: FAO

AFP, Paris

World food prices hit an all-time high in March following Russia's invasion of agricultural powerhouse Ukraine, UN food agency said yesterday, adding to concerns about the risk of hunger around the world.

The disruption in export flows resulting from the February 24 invasion and international sanctions against Russia has spurred fears of a global hunger crisis, especially across the Middle East and Africa, where the knock-on effects are already playing out.

Russia and Ukraine, whose vast grain-growing regions are among the world's main breadbaskets, account for a huge share of the globe's exports in several major commodities, including wheat, vegetable oil and corn.

Ukrainian ports have been blocked by a Russian blockade and there is concern about this year's harvest as the war rages on during the spring sowing season.

"World food commodity prices made a significant leap in March to reach their highest levels ever, as war in the Black Sea region spread shocks through markets for staple grains and vegetable oils," the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said in a statement.

The FAO's food price index, which had

already reported a record in February, surged by 12.6 percent last month, "making a giant leap to a new highest level since its inception in 1990", the UN agency said.



The index, a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities, averaged 159.3 points in March.

The jump includes new all-time highs for vegetable oils, cereals and meats, the FAO said, adding that prices of sugar and dairy products "also rose significantly".

Russia and Ukraine together accounted for around 30 percent and 20 percent of global wheat and maize exports respectively, over the past three years, the FAO said.

Wheat prices rose by almost 20 percent, with the problem exacerbated by concerns

over crop conditions in the United States, the organization said.

The FAO's vegetable oil price index surged by 23.2 percent, driven by higher quotations for sunflower seed oil, of which Ukraine is the world's leading exporter.

Spanish supermarkets have rationed the sale of sunflower oil to stop customers stockpiling over shortage fears due to the war.

The United States has accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of creating "this global food crisis".

France has warned that the war has increased the risk of famine around the world.

Ukraine on Thursday called on the European Union to provide aid to its farmers. The European Commission has been asked to coordinate the delivery of fuel, seeds, fertilisers and agricultural machines to the country.

For his part, Putin warned on Tuesday that, against the backdrop of global food shortages, Russia would "have to be prudent with supplies abroad and carefully monitor such exports to countries that are clearly hostile towards us".

The conflict has also sent oil and gas prices through the roof, causing inflation to rise further across the world and raising concerns that it could derail global economic growth.

## Help nations

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international cooperation to respond effectively to public health emergencies.

In this connection, she said that the Covax facility has offered a global platform for the purpose.

"We must support this platform with necessary resources and expertise to deal with future pandemics."

The PM said that the impact of the pandemic could have been devastating in Bangladesh if the country did not have a strong healthcare system.

"Throughout the pandemic, we were able to keep the infection at tolerable levels and now we see a drastic fall in infections."

The prime minister said Bangladesh has vaccinated

more than 90 percent of the target population for free.

"Our longstanding partnership with GAVI has been critical in achieving this success."

She also sought continued support from the Covax AMC mechanism.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, President of Senegal Macky Sall and Chair of Gavi Board Prof. José Manuel Barroso delivered statements at the opening session, while

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, Tunisia's Prime Minister Najla Bouden and UN Secretary General António Guterres also delivered video messages.

## EU freezes \$32b of oligarchs' assets

REUTERS, Brussels

EU governments have frozen about 30 billion euros (\$32.6 billion) of assets linked to oligarchs and other sanctioned people with ties to the Kremlin, the European Commission said yesterday.

The assets, totalling 29.5 billion euros since the start of the war in Ukraine, include bank accounts, boats, helicopters, real estate and artwork, according to the Commission, the EU's executive body.

Additionally, about 196 billion euros of transactions have been blocked, it added.

However, the Commission had no estimate for the total value of oligarchs' assets in the European Union.

The volume of frozen resources may also represent only a minor share of assets believed to be owned by people sanctioned by the bloc following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. The Netherlands alone has estimated that about 27 billion euros in assets in the country and jurisdictions linked to it belonged to blacklisted oligarchs.

## 'I accept Supreme Court's decision'

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present for a quorum.

A former cricket star who took office in 2018, Khan said he was disappointed but accepted the Supreme Court ruling that he had acted unconstitutionally in blocking the no-confidence vote when it was due to take place last Sunday, after which he dissolved parliament and called an election.

"I am saddened by the verdict, but I accept it," the premier said at the start of his speech addressing the nation.

Khan said he was also saddened at the haste with which the court made its decision.

"There was foreign interference in Pakistan's no-confidence (vote). I wanted the SC to at least look at it. It was a very serious allegation that a foreign country wants to topple the government

through a conspiracy."

He said he would not recognise any opposition government that replaced him.

"I will not accept an imported government," he said in a late-night address, suggesting the move to oust him was part of a foreign conspiracy and calling for peaceful protests tomorrow.

"I'm ready for a struggle." The crisis has threatened political and economic stability in the country of 220 million people, where the military has ruled for half its history.

Khan, who opposed the US-led intervention in Afghanistan and has developed relations with Russia since becoming prime minister, has accused the United States of supporting a plot to oust him. Washington has dismissed the accusation.

If he loses the no-confidence vote, the

opposition will put forward a candidate for prime minister.

Shehbaz Sharif, the younger brother of three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, said after the court ruling that the opposition had nominated him to take over should Khan be ousted.

The embattled Pakistan PM accused the opposition of open horse-trading and "buying and selling of consciences of lawmakers".

"Every child knows the price at which consciences are being sold," he said, adding that "politicians are not sold this way even in banana republics".

The opposition has said it wants early elections but only after delivering Khan a political defeat and passing legislation that it says is needed to ensure the next polls are free and fair.

The election commission has said the earliest it

can hold elections is in October, which means any new government will have to deal with pressing economic issues before that.

Political analyst Hasan Askari told AFP any new government will still have to deal with the underlying issues.

"Conflict and confrontation will persist... the prospects of political harmony and long-term stability are minimal," he said.

Pakistan has been wracked by political crises for much of its 75-year existence, and no prime minister has ever seen out a full term.

Publicly the military appears to be keeping out of the current fray, but there have been four coups since independence in 1947 and the country has spent more than three decades under army rule.

## Two killed 'for refusing to work' in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A farmer and his family members allegedly hacked two men to death in Jashore's Chaugachha upazila yesterday as the duo refused to work at the farmer's paddy field.

The victims are Yunus Ali Khan, 55, and his brother Ayub Ali Khan, 53. Their nephew Asaduzaman, 36, was also critically injured in the attack, said police.

According to locals, farmer Mukul and his family members assaulted Yunus after he refused to work.

Yunus then returned home and came back with his brother Ayub and nephew Asaduzaman to protest.

Meanwhile, Mukul, his siblings Bipul and Billal and their father Afzal Khan attacked them with sharp weapons.

Doctors at the upazila health complex pronounced Yunus and Ayub dead after they were rushed to the healthcare facility.

## Mother, daughter drown as boat sinks in Barishal

SUSHANTA GHOSH

A woman and her daughter were killed as a boat sank in the Gazaria river in Barishal's Mehendiganj upazila yesterday noon.

The victims are Mahinur Begum, 55, and her daughter Nasreen Akhter, 25, of Darir Char Khajuria union.

According to the passengers' relatives, three children remained missing.

The fire service, coast guard and river police went to the spot and started a joint rescue operation.

The relatives of the missing are rushing to the river bank. The trawler was carrying 25 passengers.

## Two men killed in clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Two men were killed and another was injured as miscreants attacked them over establishing supremacy at Poddar Bazar in Faridpur's Bhanga upazila Thursday night.

The victims are Soleman Shorif, 35, and Kamrul Matbar, 32, of Jandi village in the same upazila.

The injured is Amirul Matbar, 40, of the same area. He was admitted to Bhanga Upazila Health Complex.

Soleman Shorif died on the spot around 10:15pm on Thursday and Kamrul Matbar died on the way to Dhaka around 12:30am yesterday.

## Woman's body recovered from septic tank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police have recovered the decomposed body of a woman from a septic tank in Chattogram city's Nasirabad Housing Society.

The victim's identity could not be known immediately, said police.

Sadekur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of Panchlaish Police Station, said, "The body was recovered from the septic tank of House-3, Road-6 in Nasirabad Housing Society around 8:00pm on Thursday.

"The caretaker of the house found the body while cleaning the tank and informed police."

## Bangladesh a role model

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vaccination campaign; distribution and delivery are the other aspects, where many countries came undone.

To ensure that the vaccines are shot into as many arms of the targeted population, the government ran several special drives. The result was people flocking to vaccination centres.

As of March 27, Bangladesh received 29.64 crore doses from various sources, including gifts and Covax cost-sharing agreements, according to a report prepared by the health ministry on the status of vaccination.

The government bought 9.2 crore doses of vaccines -- 1.5 crore from Serum and 7.7 crore from Sinopharm -- under bilateral agreements.

Besides, the country got 9.62 crore shots in donations from Covax, 8.71 crore in cost-sharing agreement with Covax and 2.1 crore as gifts from countries with a surplus.

The government has

spent about Tk 13,311 crore for purchasing and transporting vaccines, according to the finance ministry's cost estimation.

The amount includes \$741 million of the \$940 million the government got from the Asian Development Bank as loan.

About \$75 million was given to Serum for the 1.5 crore doses of Covishield vaccines and another \$550 million was spent for procuring vaccines under bilateral agreements.

The government is now mulling over readjusting the allocation for vaccine procurement, said a finance ministry official requesting anonymity.

There are enough doses, so the remaining \$200 million from the ADB loan might not be needed.

"We have enough stock in hand. What we need now is administering the vaccines within the shortest possible time. Otherwise, the vaccines may go out of date," said a health ministry official preferring anonymity.

## Police probe finds

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report was submitted to the DMP Commissioner's office on Thursday night.

DMP Commissioner Shaful Islam yesterday said he has yet to get the copy of the report.

The probe body, formed on Monday and comprising an additional deputy commissioner of protection unit and assistant commissioner of Tejgaon division of DMP, was asked to submit the report in three work days.

## Shanghai widens Covid testing as other Chinese cities impose curbs

REUTERS, Shanghai

Shanghai yesterday announced a record 21,000 new cases and a third consecutive day of Covid testing as a lockdown of its 26 million people showed no sign of easing and other Chinese cities tightened curbs -- even in places with no recent infections.

Beijing authorities intervened in Shanghai after its failure to isolate Covid by locking the city down in stages, and insists that the country stick to its zero-tolerance policy to prevent its medical system from breaking down.

Authorities across China, which have mostly managed to keep COVID at bay for the last two years, are stepping up coronavirus control measures, including movement restrictions, mass testing and new quarantine centres.

Cities that sprang into action this week include Zhengzhou, in central Henan province, which on Thursday said it would test all 12.6 million residents after finding a few asymptomatic cases.

Beijing has strengthened regular screening for employees in the city's key sectors, requiring all staff at elderly care agencies, schools and

institutions handling imported goods to take tests at least once a week.

In Shizong county in southwest China's Yunnan province, shops were shut, transport suspended and residents barred from leaving their towns or villages.

Nomura this week estimated that 23 Chinese cities have implemented either full or partial lockdowns. The cities collectively are home to an estimated 193 million people and contribute 22% of China's GDP. These include Changchun, a major manufacturing hub that has been locked down for 28 days.