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IMF deputy MD in town, begins official visit today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Antoinette Monsio Sayeh, deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon, officially begins her four-day visit this morning through a meeting with Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder at his office.

She will wrap up her visit just days before Bangladesh places a \$4.5 billion loan proposal to the IMF executive board later this month.

The IMF high official will visit the country's flagship project Padma Bridge on Wednesday. The same day, she will be flying back to Washington.

Antoinette, who visited India, Vietnam and Thailand before arriving here, will meet Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal at a local hotel this afternoon.

Officials earlier said there would not be any further negotiations on the loan programme during her visit.

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Muslim devotees gather around a pool of water for wudu (ablution) before prayers yesterday at the Ijtima grounds on the bank of the Turag river. The first phase of the Ijtima will end today with Akheri Munajat (final prayers).

PHOTO: COLLECTED

AL's number one enemy is infighting

Party veterans tell Hasina; AL to counter BNP's programme tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League has become its worst enemy because of rampant infighting at its grassroots, said leaders of the ruling party yesterday.

Rifts between local leaders and activists are responsible for the party's poor state, they told AL President Sheikh Hasina and requested her to do something to unite the local leaders and thus make the party more organised, insiders said.

Rivalry in the party is the only real cause for worry ahead of the national election, the senior leaders said, adding that as an organisation, the AL was stronger than the BNP.

The senior leaders expressed these views at a meeting of the AL Advisory Council, AL National Executive Committee and AL Central Working Committee, at the Gono Bhaban.

At least 20 members of the advisory council and executive committee addressed the meeting and some of them expressed dismay at the feuding AL leaders.

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BUSINESS

Bangladesh makes major leap in Global Innovation Index

Bangladesh has advanced 14 spots in the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2022 but it still lags behind some of its innovative peers.

The ranking by the United Nations' World Intellectual Property Organization placed the country at 102nd last year, up from 116th in 2021, among 132 economies.

Although Bangladesh's overall score was 19.7 compared to top-ranked Switzerland's 64.6, its performance was in line with the level of the country's development, according to the report.

The lower ranking, however, highlights Bangladesh's weak education system, lack of human capital and research, and shortfall in business sophistication.

STORY ON B1

A police officer's bias against a rape victim

MOSTAFA SHABUJ and MOSTAFA YOUSUF

On December 2, 2021, 16-year-old Sadia Akhter (not her real name), a domestic worker, stole gold jewellery and cash from the apartment in Wari, where she worked, complying with her boyfriend's instructions. With the stolen items she fled to her boyfriend in Barishal. According to the FIR, her boyfriend Sumon Chandra Das, 30, who had promised to marry her, picked her up from the launch ghat in Barishal and took her to a hotel where he and his friends raped her several times. They left her there taking the gold ornaments and cash with them.

Her ordeal did not end there. A few days after the (theft) case, Sub-Inspector Sohel Rana of the Wari police station and also the investigating officer of the theft case arrested Sadia from her village. The court sentenced her to 10 months in a correction centre, as she was a minor. Now, after being charge-sheeted by the police, she awaits her trial.

But no action had been taken against those who had raped her despite her complaint with the police at the time. Sadia has told The Daily Star that the police had assured her they would file a rape case. But even after 11 months neither was any case filed against the rapists nor were the medical records of the rape preserved.

"The investigation officer had me sign five to six blank papers assuring me of filing a rape case when I informed him of the rape, but did not lodge any case", Sadia, who is from Patuakhali, informed.

She added that the investigation officer had visited the spot where the gang rape took place and was convinced that it had taken place. But he still did not file the rape case as promised.

Meanwhile, on October 29 last year, the victim, upon getting bail while serving her term for theft, filed a rape case against Sumon Chandra Das, 30, and Imran Hossain Mallik, 23.

Sumon, of Kaliganj village in Kaunia upazila of Barishal, and Imran, of Darial village of Bakerganj upazila in the same district were arrested on January 19, 2022, on charges of being involved in the theft. But Sumon was released on bail after

But no action had been taken against those who had raped her despite her complaint with the police at the time.

two months and Imran after 20-25 days even though Sadia did not get bail until October, according to police sources.

Incidentally, January 19, 2022 was also the day that Dhaka Metropolitan Court Judge Mohammad Nurul Huda recorded Sadia's statement regarding the gang rape.

Sadia could not file the rape case earlier as she was in the correction centre. After the rape case had been filed, Barishal police arrested the duo. They were sent to the court where the main accused has given a confessional statement about the rape. But without medical records and other evidence, it is possible that the accused may walk free again. "I want my rapists to be

punished. I still hope that the government will give me justice, but I am not sure that I will get the justice as I have no effective evidence now," commented Sadia.

A CURIOUS OMISSION THAT MAY BE AT THE COST OF JUSTICE

Investigation officer Sohel Rana submitted the charge sheet to the court against Sadia, Suman and Imran accusing them in the theft case. A separate charge sheet was filed for Sadia as she was 16 years old at the time of theft.

However, in the charge sheet, sub-inspector Sohel Rana stated that Sadia was raped by Suman and Imran in Barishal.

Sohel Rana, the investigation officer of the theft case did not receive phone calls as this correspondent tried to reach him over phone for a week for his comments.

Later, Md Kabir Hossen Howlader, officer-in-charge of Wari Police Station, told The Daily Star that the girl and her two friends were arrested in a theft case "The girl alleged she was raped by her friends in a hotel," he said.

"We sought court directives drawing the attention to the rape. But we did not get any further order on the alleged incident of rape. That's why we submitted the charge sheet only in the theft case," the OC claimed.

However, experts say that rape is a cognisable offence and a police officer has the authority to make an arrest without a warrant and to start an investigation with or without the permission of a court.

Asked what the police's role should have been in the incident, eminent jurist

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Swiss firm claims success in removing CO2 from air

AFP, Zurich

A Swiss company says it has certifiably extracted CO2 from the air and permanently stored it in the ground -- for the first time on behalf of paying customers, including Microsoft.

Climeworks, a startup created in 2009 by two Swiss engineers, said its facility in Iceland had successfully removed carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and injected it into the ground, where it would very gradually be transformed into rock.

The potential for scaling up remains to be proven.

In its announcement on Thursday, Climeworks said its process had been certified in September by DNV, a Norwegian independent auditor, marking the first time carbon had been permanently captured on behalf of paying corporate clients.

Climeworks counts companies including Microsoft, Stripe and Shopify among the clients who have already bought into its future carbon removal services, to compensate for their greenhouse gas emissions.

The startup said it hoped "to lead as an example for peers, customers and policy makers alike that are committed to climate action".

The Paris Agreement, agreed by nearly all the world's nations in 2015, called for the rise in the

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Mamata capable of running India Says Amartya Sen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen has opined that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee clearly has the ability to become India's prime minister.

In an interview with PTI in Kolkata, Sen expressed doubts about the main opposition Congress' ability to win the 2024 general elections as the party has "weakened". He, however, said it is the only party to provide an all-India vision.

Asked if Mamata Banerjee could be the country's next PM, Sen said, "It's not that she does not have the ability to do it. She clearly has the ability. On the other hand, it's yet not established that Mamata can pull the forces of public dismay against the BJP in an integrated way to make it possible for her to have the leadership to put an end to the factionalisation in India."

Sen said it "would be a mistake" to think that the 2024 Lok Sabha elections would be a one-horse race in favour of the BJP and felt that the role of a number of regional parties would be "clearly important".

"I think the DMK is an important party, the TMC is certainly important and the Samajwadi Party has some standing but whether that could be extended I do not know.

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Workers installing power cables and other equipments on the Agargaon-Motijheel section of the metro rail line in the capital's Farmgate yesterday. This segment of the MRT Line-6 is scheduled to be opened to public by this December.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Iran executes British-Iranian for spying

AFP, Paris

Iran yesterday said it executed a British-Iranian dual national after he was sentenced to death for spying for the United Kingdom, drawing strong condemnation from Britain and international rights groups.

Alireza Akbari, 61, was hanged after being convicted of "corruption on earth and harming the country's internal and external security by passing on intelligence", the judiciary's Mizan Online website said. It did not say when or where the execution took place.

Mizan said Akbari, who had been arrested more than two years ago, had been a spy for Britain's MI6 secret intelligence agency and had received around \$2 million for his services.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he was "appalled" by the execution.

"This was a callous and cowardly act, carried out by a barbaric regime with no respect for the human rights of their own people," Sunak tweeted, adding his thoughts were with "Alireza's friends and family".

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