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## 243 women, girls faced violence in May Says mahila parishad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 243 women and girls faced violence in May, according to a report prepared by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

Of them, 62 -- including 40 girls -- were raped, according to the media monitoring report of the organisation.

Additionally, 20 women -- including 12 girls -- were gang-raped. Two were killed after rape and one girl died by suicide afterwards.

Attempts were also made to rape seven women -- including three girls -- as per the report, based on information taken from 16 national dailies.

In this time period, 23 females, including 22 girls, faced sexual violence, while seven women, including six girls, faced sexual harassment, of whom one died by suicide due to the harassment.

Meanwhile, five women  
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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

A young girl floats a paper boat into the water. Her face lights up with joy as the little boat drifts away. Nowadays, most children are busy in the digital world. However, in many rural areas such activities are still popular. The photo was taken yesterday in Khulna's Phultala area.

## Air pollution linked to rise in AMR: Saber

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment Minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury yesterday said air pollution is linked to antibiotic resistance.

The minister said 1.7 million people die every year across the globe due to antibiotic resistance or AMR.

"The linkages between these two issues [air pollution and AMR] are very important from a health perspective. It's not just about the environment; it's also about public health," the minister said.

He was speaking at an event, titled "Save Your Breath: Policy Dialogue on Clean Air Imperatives".

USAID and Shakti Foundation organised the programme at a city hotel marking World Environment Day.

Notably, a 2018 research published in The Lancet Planetary Health claimed that fine particulate matter (PM2.5), often found in air pollution, contributes to antibiotic resistance.

The research also projects the alarming toll of premature deaths caused by antibiotic resistance linked to PM2.5.

Speaking as the chief guest, Saber termed air pollution a silent killer and mentioned that his ministry has now formulated rules to identify and tackle both indoor and outdoor air pollution.

He stressed the need to identify exact sources of air pollution and suggested potential partnerships for funding and technology.

Lawmaker Nahim Razzak, convener of the Climate Parliament Bangladesh, cited a lack of coordination as the main reason for urban mismanagement. He urged combined efforts from all stakeholders to combat climate change and environmental issues.

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## 682 hajj pilgrims in a bind as funds stuck in bank

RASHIDUL HASAN

A total of 682 hajj pilgrims are facing uncertainty about traveling to Saudi Arabia this year as their flight tickets have not been booked.

Around Tk 13 crore for the tickets has been deposited to Premier Bank, but the bank is yet to release the funds.

The religious affairs ministry yesterday said these pilgrims may not reach Saudi Arabia on time. It also wrote to Premier Bank twice, urging the bank to release the funds by May 27, but to no avail.

In a letter yesterday, the ministry warned Premier Bank that it would be held responsible for any hindrance in sending the pilgrims.

Matiul Islam, additional secretary to the ministry, told The Daily Star that the pilgrims are now worried about missing their flights.

The first hajj flight was on May 9, and the last one is scheduled for June 12.

The ministry reported that the negligence of two hajj agencies

primarily caused this issue.

Akbar Hajj Group initially planned to send 428 pilgrims but later withdrew.

These pilgrims were then transferred to Shikdar Air Travels, which also later declined to send them. Subsequently, they were moved to Al Risan Travel Agency.

The funds for these pilgrims are held in Premier Bank's Mohakhali branch, while Al Risan Travel's account is with Islami Bank's Uttara branch. Despite requests to transfer the money to Islami Bank for ticket purchases, Premier Bank has not acted.

Al Risan Travel Agency sought help from the ministry, which first contacted Premier Bank in March and again on May 26, directing the transfer by May 27. However, Premier Bank has not responded, said Matiul Islam.

Seeking anonymity, an official from Premier Bank's Mohakhali branch stated that Tk 6 crore was released on May 30, allowing for the purchase of air tickets for 318 pilgrims.

He said they are working to release the remaining funds soon.

## BANGLADESH, JAPAN JOINT PPP PLATFORM Two more projects dropped

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Two more development projects to be implemented following a public-private partnership module under Bangladesh-Japan joint initiative have been dropped.

The projects are expansion of Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Highway and the upgrading of Nabinagar-Manikganj-Paturia Highway into an expressway.

The decision came at the sixth Bangladesh-Japan Joint PPP Platform meeting held in Dhaka on March 18 this year, shows its minutes.

With the two, five projects have been dropped from the government-to-government initiative, which had created hopes of receiving huge investments from Japanese companies.

The development came at a time when most of the other projects under the initiative could not make significant progress over the last six years due to multiple problems.

However, a new project for building two bridges -- Tora Bridge on Dhaka-Aricha highway and the second Bhairab Bridge -- was included in the initiative.

Following an agreement signed between Public-Private Partnership Authority (PPPA) in Bangladesh and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism of Japan in 2017, Japanese companies will invest under

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### PROJECTS DROPPED SO FAR

- Expansion of Ctg-Cox's Bazar Highway
- Upgrading Nabinagar-Manikganj-Paturia Highway into expressway
- Multi-modal transport hub at Airport railway station
- Inland container depot at Gazipur's Dhirasram
- MRT Line-2

### ON VERGE OF WITHDRAWAL

- Outer ring road around Dhaka

### PROJECTS THAT REMAIN

- Multi-modal transport hub at Kamalapur station
- Tora Bridge on Dhaka-Aricha highway, 2nd Bhairab Bridge
- Operation, maintenance of HSIA third terminal
- Ctg Sewerage Project

## Ensure departure of 16,970 workers to Malaysia: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the state minister for expatriates' welfare to facilitate the departure of migrant workers to Malaysia who missed the May 31 deadline.

She also urged an investigation into why workers with valid visas couldn't obtain tickets to Malaysia, sources revealed.

During an impromptu discussion after a formal cabinet meeting at the Prime Minister's Office, it was discussed that despite clearance from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, 16,970 migrant workers were unable to travel to Malaysia before the deadline.

Additionally, the premier announced plans to establish 12 new border haats to enhance trade with India during her upcoming visit to New Delhi. She also instructed for an increase in relief materials for cyclone Remal affected districts, said Cabinet Secretary Md Mahub Hossain.

Furthermore, the cabinet decided to revert to the previous office hours of 9:00am to 5:00pm, effective from the first working day after Eid-ul-

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