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Early rain brings misfortune for haor farmers

Thousands of hectares of Boro paddy submerged in Sylhet region

DWOHA CHOWDHURY and MINTU DESHWARA

Farmer Tara Mia of Shailyani village in Rupeswar haor in Sunamganj's Madhyanagar cultivated nearly six acres of Boro paddy, partly on his own and partly through sharecroppers.

More than half of his crops are now submerged due to off-season rain and poor drainage ahead of the harvest season.

"Even if the weather turns favourable, not even half of the paddy can be harvested. Fifty to sixty irrigation machines are pumping water out of the haor, but whatever drains one day fills up the next," he lamented.

Abdul Hakim of the Bhukshimoi Baramasjid area in Moulvibazar's Kulaura is another farmer facing losses, as his 15 acres of Boro fields in Hakaluki haor have been completely submerged.

"The water level was rising slowly, but heavy rainfall on Friday and Saturday caused it to surge and submerge the

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A child receiving oxygen support at DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital in the capital's Mohakhali yesterday, as measles cases continue to surge across the country. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Govt appears to be stepping back on key issues

TIB raises concerns over moves on reform ordinances

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday said the government appears to be stepping back on critical issues such as judicial independence, human rights, anti-corruption, and prevention of enforced disappearances through its move to repeal, delay, or revise several key ordinances framed during the interim government period.

Speaking at a press conference titled "TIB's position on the repeal and amendment of certain ordinances framed for state reform" at its office in the capital, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman expressed concerns over the parliamentary special committee's recommendation to repeal four ordinances and the decision not to turn 16 others into law for now.

"By repealing the ordinances related to the judiciary, the government risks entirely discarding the issue of judicial independence," he said, adding that no timeline has been set, nor has any indication been given for future action.

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Election to women's seats on May 12

No EVMs in local polls: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday announced that voting for the reserved seats for women in the 13th parliament will be held on May 12 and the election schedule for the 50 seats will be declared on April 8.

The commission also decided not to use electronic voting machines (EVMs) in upcoming local government polls. However, no timeline for the elections has yet been set.

Speaking to reporters after a commission meeting at Agargaon in Dhaka, EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said the election schedule for women's reserved seat would include dates for nomination submission, scrutiny, and withdrawal.

According to the Jatiya Sangsad (Reserved Seats for Women) Election Act 2004, the EC must complete the election within 90 days of publishing the final results of a national election in the gazette.

The 13th national election, along with the referendum, was held on February 12, and results were published the next day. Fifty parties, including the BNP, Jamaat, and Jatiya Party, contested the polls. Of them, only nine parties won seats. The remaining 41, including the Jatiya Party, failed to secure any.

Over the women's seats distribution, Secretary Akhtar said BNP and its allies will get 36 seats; Jamaat and National Citizen Party 13 seats; and independent candidates one seat.

Meanwhile, the EC yesterday evening published the voter list for women's reserved seat election, containing the names of 296 parliament members eligible to vote.

The EC is also weighing options for about 1.5 lakh idle EVMs, amid a rising shortage, missing units, and uncertainty over disposal.

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I want to come home immediately

Ex-CJ SK Sinha tells Star from abroad

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Former chief justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, known as SK Sinha, who was allegedly forced to leave the country by the Sheikh Hasina-led government in 2017, has said he wants to return home immediately, adding that he has been struggling abroad.

Reaching out to The Daily Star on Sunday night via WhatsApp, he said, "The Hasina regime exiled me on October 13, 2017. Initially I stayed for two months in Australia, three months in Canada, 18 months in the USA, and then returned to Canada in July 2019 as a floating man with my wife. I don't have any status in

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Measles outbreak in year of elimination target

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh was successful in controlling rubella in 2018 and was supposed to eliminate measles and rubella from the country this year, but now it is struggling to deal with a measles outbreak.

Hundreds of children are now in hospitals with measles and related complications, and the authorities are scrambling to contain the surge of the highly infectious disease.

Experts said although the country has exhibited remarkable immunisation efficacy over the past few decades, vaccination gaps have left many children at risk.

In the absence of systemic reform, emergency measures like those taken in the current situation to control the measles outbreak will not yield significant benefits, they said.

A total of 118 suspected measles deaths, mostly children, have been reported since March 15, including five in the last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

At least 8,534 suspected cases were reported nationwide since March 15, including 1,282 suspected ones in the last 24 hours, the directorate said.

As of yesterday, 2,006 suspected measles patients, mostly children, were undergoing treatment at

hospitals across the country, it said.

However, the DGHS has so far been able to test and confirm 20 measles deaths and 1,099 cases.

Samples from suspected measles patients are tested at reference laboratories in Dhaka, a process that takes a considerable amount of time. Meanwhile, suspected cases are included in the list, and confirmed cases are updated later, creating a

The government on Sunday launched an emergency vaccination drive at 30 upazilas of 18 districts where the infection rates were relatively high.

On the first day, 76,123 children from six months to under five years were vaccinated, which is 95.8 percent of the first-day target, officials said.

Against this backdrop, the country is observing World Health Day with the theme "Together

WORLD HEALTH DAY

"Bangladesh's immunisation achievements were lauded worldwide and had significantly reduced deaths among children under five. From that situation, we are now witnessing a measles outbreak in the country..."

Prof Be-nazir Ahmed, former director of disease control at the DGHS

discrepancy between the two figures.

Besides, rash and fever, the main symptoms of measles, are common to several other diseases, officials said. Therefore, not all suspected measles cases are ultimately confirmed, which contributes to the difference between suspected and confirmed deaths, they added.

for Health. Stand with Science". Different government and non-government organisations have planned programmes to mark the day.

UNMET TARGET

Prof Be-nazir Ahmed, a health expert and former director of disease control at the DGHS, said Bangladesh's immunisation

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MEASLES OUTBREAK

Failure of AL, interim govts to blame

Health minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain yesterday blamed the country's ongoing measles outbreak on the previous Awami League government and the interim government.

"The outbreak is caused by the complete mismanagement and failures of past governments," he said, referring to the Awami League and the immediate past interim government.

He was responding to a notice from NCP lawmaker Akhter Hossen in parliament, who sought urgent measures to curb the outbreak.

"Their poor decisions caused shortages in vaccine stockpiles, affecting vaccines for measles and six other diseases," he said.

"After the last measles-rubella campaign in December 2020, no such campaign has been conducted in the last five and a half years," he said, adding that such special campaign are conducted in every four years.

As a result, newborns and other children

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TONU MURDER CASE

Court orders DNA test of 3 ex-army men

No arrests, no trial even after 10 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

In the decade-old Sohagi Jahan TONU murder case, a Cumilla court yesterday ordered the cross-matching of DNA profile of three retired army personnel.



Senior Judicial Magistrate Mominul Haque of Cumilla Sadar Cognisance Court-1 came up with the order after Inspector Tarikul Islam of the Police Bureau of Investigation filed a plea to that end.

The three army personnel, all currently retired, are Sergeant Zahid, Warrant Officer Hafizur Rahman, and Soldier Jahangir Alam.

Cumilla Court Inspector Mamunur Rashid said the court had earlier directed the investigation officer to appear before

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Evicted just a day earlier, makeshift stalls were seen crowding the sidewalk in Dhaka's New Market area yesterday. Hawkers often return to such high-traffic areas within hours despite regular eviction drives. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Bangladeshi shot by BSF along border

Indian national taken in by locals returned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A flag meeting was held yesterday between the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and India's Border Security Force (BSF) on Lalmonirhat border, following an incident in which a Bangladeshi youth was injured by rubber bullets fired by the BSF and an Indian citizen was brought into Bangladesh by angry locals.

At the meeting, BGB lodged a strong protest against the BSF, and demanded that such incidents of firing at the border must not occur in the future.

The hour-long battalion commander-level BGB-BSF meeting was held at Rahmatpur Gatiar Vita area, about 20 yards inside Bangladesh, near sub-pillar no. 5 of border pillar 887 at the Dhalsuti border in Patgram upazila, in the afternoon.

The BGB team was led by Commanding Officer of BGB-61 Teesta Battalion Lt Col Syed Fazle Munim while the BSF team was led by Commandant of the BSF-98 Battalion Sunil Kumar.

Nayek Subedar Badsha Mia, commander

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