



Demanding justice for Ramisa, schoolchildren, their guardians and local residents form a human chain in front of the victim's house in the capital's Pallabi yesterday. Eight-year-old Ramisa was raped and murdered in the area on May 19.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Zero tolerance against gender based violence Says minister

BSS, Dhaka
Women and Children Affairs Minister AZM Zahid Hossain yesterday said the government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against any form of violence against women and children. "The country's laws provide the highest punishment, including the death penalty, for those who abuse or rape children. This law was enacted during the tenure of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia," said Zahid, also the social welfare minister. He made the remarks at a views exchange meeting with locals at Hakimpur Hili Parishad hallroom in Dinajpur. The minister discussed in detail the government's development activities, law and order situation, and social safety net programmes. The minister said the government has taken the recently murdered Ramisa rape and murder case very seriously, as the accused was arrested within 24 hours of the incident. He hoped that law enforcement agencies will quickly complete the investigation and submit the charge sheet to the court.

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Heavy rainfall raises early dengue risk

Warn experts, call for urgent action

HELEMUL ALAM

Excessive rainfall across Bangladesh is increasing the risk of an early dengue outbreak this year, prompting entomologists to call for immediate government action to eliminate mosquito breeding sources and strengthen public awareness campaigns. Bangladesh recorded 76 millimetres more rainfall in April compared to the seasonal average, with the trend continuing into May, according to meteorologist Bazlur Rashid. The Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) has forecast rain in parts of Rangpur, Rajshahi, and Dhaka divisions and at one or two places in the Khulna, Barishal, and Chattogram divisions, and moderately heavy to heavy rainfall in parts of Mymensingh and Sylhet until May 23. Entomologists warned that early rainfall has already created mosquito breeding grounds across the country, and failure to act quickly could trigger a major dengue outbreak this year. According to the DGHS, at least five dengue patients have died, and 2,963 have been hospitalised this year as of May 19. "We are working in 13 districts of Bangladesh from Jahangirnagar University. Based on observations over the last 13 days, we can roughly say that in urban areas across the country, the Breteau Index has crossed 20,"

said entomologist Kabirul Bashar, professor at Jahangirnagar University. "While it is not extremely high, the index is significantly higher in many upazila-level areas where urbanisation has expanded. This



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Remove all water-holding containers
- Prevent stagnant water in and around homes
- Strengthen solid waste management
- Cover drains, toilets, and water points
- Identify and monitor mosquito hotspots
- Take precautions before leaving for holidays

trend is visible nationwide," he added. A Breteau Index (BI) of 20 means 20 water-holding containers with Aedes mosquito larvae were found per 100 houses inspected. The

indicator is widely used by the World Health Organization and public health authorities to assess mosquito density and dengue risk. A BI of 20 is considered a warning threshold, indicating increased potential for dengue transmission. "Source management remains the top priority. All water-holding containers that can serve as breeding sites must be removed. The peak season is approaching, so preparedness must begin immediately," Bashar said. He noted that rainfall leads to water accumulation in discarded containers, creating ideal breeding conditions for Aedes mosquitoes. "When it rains, water collects in scattered containers, creating ideal breeding grounds for Aedes mosquitoes. Waste management must be strengthened to prevent water accumulation," he said. Bashar said this period is crucial for preventive action, especially through better solid waste management and removal of containers in rain-prone areas. Expressing concern ahead of the upcoming Eid holidays, he urged residents to take preventive measures before leaving home. "Any place where water can accumulate must be emptied. No container should be left exposed where rainwater can collect, as it can become a breeding site for Aedes mosquitoes," he said. He also advised covering drains, toilets and other water-

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ACC leadership vacuum drags on

Search committee delay stalls new commission

DIPAN NANDY

The search committee to form a new Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is unlikely to be constituted before the Eid holidays. Officials anticipate that the committee will be formed in the first week of next month after the break, meaning the ACC may remain without a commission for another one and a half months. The anti-graft body has been operating without commissioners since the resignation of the commission led by Dr Mohammed Abdul Momen on March 3. Since the Bureau of Anti-Corruption was transformed into the ACC in 2004, this is the longest period the institution has remained without a commission. Several senior ACC officials

told The Daily Star that the institution has become largely stagnant. They had hoped the search committee would be formed before Eid and that a new commission would take office by mid-next month, but the delay has disappointed them.

Officials said although the ACC Act, 2004 has been reinstated, no initiative has yet been taken to form the legally required search committee for appointing a new commission. The previous interim government had attempted to amend the ACC Act through an ordinance issued on December 23 last year. During the first parliamentary session of the BNP-led government, 133 ordinances, including the ACC-related ordinance, were placed before parliament. Of those, 113 were passed, seven rejected, and 13 – including the ACC ordinance – remained pending. Under the law, the effectiveness of those 13 ordinances expired 30 days after the start of the parliamentary session on April 11. As a result, the ACC Act, 2004 came back into effect from that date. However, more than a month after the law was reinstated, the Cabinet Division has yet to form the search committee to appoint a new ACC chairman and two commissioners.

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- Search committee unlikely before Eid
- ACC without commissioners since March 3
- Key approvals stalled
- Longest commission vacuum since 2004

Eid travel to be comfortable despite challenges

Says road transport and bridges minister

UNB, Dhaka

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Shaikh



Rabiul Alam yesterday expressed optimism that homebound people will have a comfortable and smooth journey ahead of this year's Eid-ul-Azha. He, however, said challenges remain in transporting nearly 2.5 crore passengers alongside sacrificial animals within a short period. He made the remarks while talking to reporters after attending a cheque distribution programme for families of road accident victims at the Cumilla district Shilpakala Academy auditorium. "Due to limitations in the country's infrastructure and transport system, Eid travel often becomes difficult. However, with public cooperation, awareness and favourable weather conditions, we hope the Eid journey will be smooth and comfortable," he said. Rabiul also said work is underway to expand the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway into

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Unresolved murders reflect deep-rooted culture of impunity

Say speakers at 'Taqi Samabesh'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a rally yesterday said the unresolved murders of Tanvir Muhammad Taqi, Sohagi Jahan Tonu, journalist couple Sagar-Runi, and college student Mosarat Jahan Munia point to a deeply rooted culture of impunity that has emboldened criminals and eroded public trust in the rule of law. The rally titled 'Taqi Samabesh' was held in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in the afternoon, organised by Santrash Nirmul Taqi Mancha demanding justice for the teenager from Narayanganj 13 years after his murder. Addressing the rally, Prof Anu Muhammad said the failure to ensure justice for Taqi, Tonu, Sagar-Runi, and Munia proves that impunity is entrenched in every tier of the state, regardless of who is in power. He alleged that the trial of the Taqi murder case was halted because the then prime minister explicitly took a stance in favour of the killers in parliament. He also expressed disappointment as the current government has not shown significant attention to expedite the trial process. Rafiur Rabbi, Taqi's father and also convener of Santrash Nirmul Taqi Mancha, criticised the administration, stating that no progress has been made in the murder cases even three months after the BNP-led government assumed power. He also made a startling claim that a senior Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) official had told him 13 years ago that the Sagar-Runi murder mystery would never be unravelled.

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Failure to ensure justice for Taqi, Tonu, Sagar-Runi, and Munia proves that impunity is entrenched in every tier of the state, regardless of who is in power.

PROF ANU MUHAMMAD

77,432 Bangladeshis reach Saudi Arabia to perform hajj

BSS, Dhaka

A total of 77,432 Bangladeshi pilgrims have reached Saudi Arabia through 199 pre-hajj flights to perform hajj this year. Of the total pilgrims, 4,464 travelled under government management, while 77,432 were sent under private arrangements, said Md Lokman Hossain, director of the Bangladesh Hajj Office. He added that 660 agencies were involved in managing hajj operations under the private sector, including 30 lead agencies and 630 coordinating agencies. According to the hajj bulletin, 21 Bangladeshi pilgrims have died of natural causes so far, including 15 men and six women. Of them, 14 died in Makkah and seven in Madinah. The bulletin further said pre-hajj flight operations have now been completed, with Biman Bangladesh Airlines and two other carriers transporting all 77,432 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. Officials said Saudi medical teams have so far provided treatment services to 43,440 pilgrims, while IT helpdesks have assisted 20,288 pilgrims. This year's hajj will be observed on May 26. Bangladeshi pilgrims are scheduled to begin returning home from May 30, while the final return flight is set for June 30.



The "Holiday Market," a weekly street market in the capital's Motijheel area, has gained momentum ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, which will be celebrated on May 28. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BNP failed to uphold key commitments Says Sarjis

JNU CORRESPONDENT

Despite taking people's mandate, the BNP is betraying the people, as it has failed to uphold key political commitments, including the July Charter and a proposed referendum, said Sarjis Alam, chief coordinator (north) of the National Citizen Party (NCP) yesterday. "The party is trying to politicise the judiciary and is creating an environment to suppress political dissent," he said while speaking at a programme in the capital marking the joining of leaders and activists from the Dhaka Metropolitan North and South units of United People's Bangladesh (UP Bangladesh) into the NCP. Sarjis said the NCP will continue its movement

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