

source: accuweather.com

Weekly weather forecast for the city	Today	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	High: 33° C Low: 27° C A morning thunderstorm in spots	High: 34° C Low: 27° C Morning thunderstorms possible	High: 37° C Low: 29° C Very hot	High: 37° C Low: 30° C A morning thunderstorm or two	High: 37° C Low: 29° C Very hot; morning thunderstorms	High: 34° C Low: 29° C Thunderstorms possible in the morning	High: 33° C Low: 27° C Cloudy with rain possible

e-mail: starcity@thedailystar.net

Old, unfit buses still running on city streets

RAIHAN SABUKTAGIN

A huge number of old and unfit buses are plying the city roads due to corruption and weak monitoring by the authorities concerned.

These buses meet accidents frequently and offer uncomfortable journey to the commuters.

A BRTA (Bangladesh Road Transport Authority) survey says 3,502 buses and minibuses out of 4,042 plying the city are either older than 20 years or approaching the 20-year-of-service life.

BRTA officials said a large number of buses have crossed the 20-year service limit fixed by the government for operating in the city.

In most cases the manufacturing date mentioned in the registration book is doctored to violate the government rules, they said.

The survey said 504 buses and 2,998 minibuses, given permission for operation in the city, are aged between 15 and 20 years and 890 buses and minibuses are aged between 10 and 15 years.

According to the BRTA officials, about 83 percent of the buses plying the city streets are at least 15-year-old and many of them older than 20 years.

However, the survey does not mention about more than 20-year-old buses as documents are

doctored at import level to show them less than 20-year-old.

A BRTA official said the manipulation takes place at ports. "We have to depend on the documents provided by the customs officials."

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The Motor Vehicle Ordinance allows import of maximum four-year-old vehicles but importers tamper the age at the time of customs inspection before seek-

ing registration with the BRTA, the official said.

Another BRTA official said they examine engine, chassis, wheels, mirrors, lights, brake and other parts of a vehicle during registration process. But these are not maintained properly after getting fitness certificate.

Some bus owners and drivers said mirrors, colour, indicators and backlights do not last more than 30 days while a break shoe needs to be replaced in every two months but in most cases these are not replaced when needed.

Poor maintenance and reckless driving make most buses unfit within a short period of time. But their fitness is not checked regularly.

BRTA officials said they cannot monitor the fitness of buses due to lack of required manpower. BRTA provides fitness certificate for a year.

Passengers said the unfit buses often go out of order on the street and they have to change the bus that causes sufferings and loss of time.

Montaj Ali, a private car driver, told Star City that the buses especially the "local" ones hardly have backlights or indicators and it is hard to assume which direction the bus would follow or when it will stop.

Abonti Nurul, a lawyer who takes bus every day for reaching



Buses with 'cha' serial number which means they are at least twenty years old, ply on the city streets without any difficulties. The photo above was taken yesterday afternoon in front of Nagar Bhaban in Gulistan.

her office from Rupnagar at Mirpur said she always remain in anxiety over her bus journey towards office because of unnecessary delay.

"The old and unfit buses often stuck on the road and I have to find alternative to reach my office and it is very difficult to find any."

Mohammad Abdul Karim, chairman of the National Board of Revenue, admitted that some vehicles enter the country with tampered documents.

He said they have taken initiatives to prevent such illegal activities. BRTA Chairman AGM Shahjahan said they conduct

mobile courts thrice a week to keep the unfit and old buses off the roads. "We hope within a short period of time the number of such buses will decrease."

Another housing project moving at snails pace

TAWFIQUE ALI

Those who won the second round of lottery for plots in R a j d h a n i U n n y a n Karttripakkhya's (Rajuk) Uttara Third Phase housing project are uncertain when they would be given their allotment papers because of slow progress in developing the area and silence of the authorities.

"Winners of second lottery are worried about their plots, as Rajuk authorities have not yet announced any date to hand over the allotment papers," said a 5-katha plot winner.

"We paid the application fees in January 2004 and the list of lottery winners was made public on April 4, 2005 with an identification number," he said. "But ever since, Rajuk has been mum with no communication with the lottery winners."

A Rajuk official making an off the record remark said that they

cannot issue allotment papers until the list of plot winners in other categories is settled, but could not state when it would be settled.

"We don't know the reason for the delay," said the lottery winner.

"I do not know when the list of remaining plot winners will be made public," said Project Director (PD) Kazi Reazul Monir. "Rajuk chairman may respond to it," he added.

But despite several attempts, Rajuk chairman KAM Harun was not available for comments.

Many lottery winners said they were suspicious about the manner Rajuk settled the remaining plot allotment. "We don't even know where the locations of our proposed plots are," they said.

They further said they had already paid Tk one lakh as application fees for a 5-katha plot and Tk 75,000 for a 3-katha

plot. It is very difficult for middle-income people to keep their hard-earned money stagnant for an uncertain period of time; not even knowing if it was an investment in vain.

Initially, around 2,200 plot winners got allotment papers during the Awami League regime. Then the BNP government held the second round of lottery for applicants in three categories -- private service holders, businessmen and industrialists and others.

Out of 8,618 applicants, 1,136 were picked as winners through the lottery held on April 3, 2005.

The housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas at the lottery draw function said that the rest of the categories would be announced within a month.

"It will take three years to handover all the plots of Uttara Third Phase," he had said at the function.

Rajuk called for applications in 12 categories for about 6,640 plots in the project but announced the winning list of three categories. Rajuk then issued just an identification number to the lottery winners.

The remaining categories whose list has not been made public include ministers, lawmakers, judges, freedom fighters, journalists, government service holders, autonomous service holders, armed forces, artists, litterateurs and sports personalities. Plots under these categories were expected to be allotted through a computerised evaluation process.

The total project area has been divided into 59 units.

Responding to the slow pace in project development, the PD said, ground development work has been completed in only 10 out of 59 units, while work is going on in another 10 units.

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Victim of a green-eyed monster

Life of a year and a half old child, fed acid by his aunt, hangs on a thread

IMRUL HASAN

Durjoy, barely one and half year-old, is fighting death at the Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) in Banani having been fed acid by his aunt on January 19 last year.

He is hanging on to his delicate life with assistance and financial help by ASF doctors, fund-raising institutions and a few people.

But this aid is not sufficient as the infant needs a rather complicated operation to be performed by a team consisting of a child plastic surgeon, facial surgeon, an Ear, Neck and Throat (ENT) specialist for children and an anaesthesiologist.

Dr. Palash Karmaker, ASF's medical officer said that according to Durjoy's present condition he might never speak as his vocal chords and facial organs were melted.

"We are trying our best to bring him out of this condition. It is very rare that an acid burn victim like Durjoy could survive after this type of injury," said Palash. He added that as the child had survived for about a year, it may be possible to keep him alive.

When asked about his future, Gabi Jaschke, head of programmes of ASF said: "He will always have complications. It is not possible to repair organs, but he can be given enough treatment to live."

ASF contacted some senior physicians related to such cases, who said that keeping Durjoy's breathing normal is quite difficult with the treatment available in Bangladesh and it was necessary to take him abroad for further treatment.

Durjoy's father Ashutosh is a blacksmith at Bagarpara, Jessore. He is the youngest of three brothers. After four years of his marriage, Durjoy was born in 2005. Ashutosh's second brother has two daughters. According to the Hindu law, the girls are not entitled to own any property. Green with jealousy at the idea of Durjoy becoming the heir, wife of Ashutosh's brother fed Durjoy acid when he was just one month and 19 days old.

In February 2006, Dr. Ron Hiles, a British doctor, found Durjoy's mother pleading for help as he was walking along the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) lobby.

Hiles talked to the doctors and said that the child needed a certain operation which could be performed at the ASF hospital that had the necessary facilities;

the operation being long and complicated.

ASF immediately adopted Durjoy and Hiles operated on him. At the time the doctors were not aware of the severity of the damage inside his mouth. His oral cavity was fully blocked. It was difficult to put the tube for anaesthesia through the mouth.

Dr. Hiles did a tracheotomy to put in the tube for anaesthesia. Then he opened Durjoy's lips and released his oral cavity after an operation that lasted for almost seven hours.

Durjoy came round immediately after the operation but suddenly had a heart problem and was taken to an Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

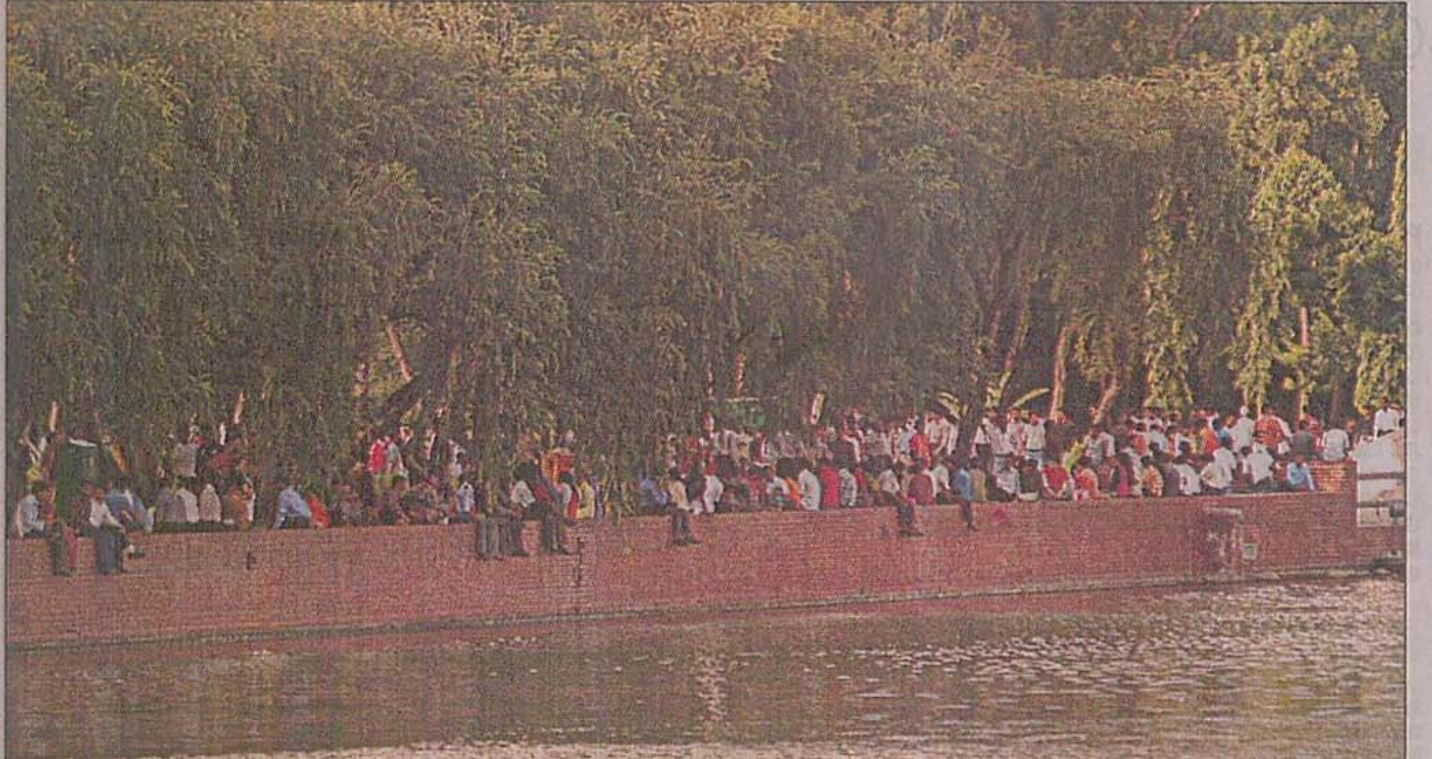
ASF officials said that they are trying to contact a hospital abroad to process Durjoy's treatment for free, but a big amount of money is needed for his travel and incidental expenses.

Since his adoption by ASF, the organisation spends an average of Tk 10,000 a day for his hospital costs only, excluding the surgeons' fees as their services are free.

"If we can raise around Tk 20 lakh, it would be possible to continue his treatment," Munira said.

Durjoy's mother, a distraught Eiti Rani cannot be consoled. "I only want my child to get better and behave normally," she said.

"I know that the ASF is doing its best. At



Time to relax. Shortage of places to spend some time in leisure has prompted city dwellers, mainly the youngsters to throng Zia Udyan for relaxing and being able to breathe some fresh air.

STYD ZAKIR HOSSAIN

SHAFIQUL ALAM KHIRON