

**BANK SAVINGS**  
**Writ petition challenges slash of interest rate**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the HC challenging the legality of the government move to reduce bank savings' interest rate to a single digit.  
Advocate Eunus Ali Akond submitted the petition as a public interest litigation, seeking a stay from the HC on the government decision and to direct the government to increase depositors' profits.  
In the petition, he said the finance minister has reportedly spoken of reducing the interest rate of all savings -- including postal savings. If this is carried out, people's profits will be reduced, Advocate

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**NAIMUL ABRAR'S DEATH**  
**Next hearing on March 9**

COURT CORRESPONDENT  
A Dhaka court yesterday fixed March 9 for next hearing of the case filed against Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matur Rahman over the death of college student Naimul Abrar Rahat.  
Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Jasim passed the order when the editor along with five of his lawyers -- including Ehsanul Haque Samaji -- was present.  
On February 17, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (in-charge) Md Kaisarul Islam granted him bail upon a bond of Tk 2,000 with two guarantors after Matur surrendered before the court.  
Earlier on January 20, the High Court granted him bail for four weeks and directed him to appear before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court of Dhaka on completion of the bail period.  
Abrar, a ninth-grader of Dhaka Residential Model College, was electrocuted during the anniversary celebration of a magazine of Prothom Alo on November 1 last year.

**A risky, stinking commute**  
**No railing along Shahjadpur drainage canal; locals suffer from garbage odour**



PHOTO: MATHEWS CHIRAN

**Narrow walkways on both sides of the canal without any safety railings leave children in constant risk of accident, while waste has also piled up in various spots. The photo was taken near Padardia earlier this week.**

MATHEWS CHIRAN

The walkway along the Shahjadpur canal that goes through in Badda and Shahjadpur has become a risky commute for locals due to a lack of safety railings along it, leaving pedestrians -- especially children -- at a risk of falling in.  
On top of that, there are no visible efforts from authorities to keep the drainage canal clean, causing blockage and foul smell.  
Dhaka Wasa built the drainage canal around 2009, to facilitate drainage of Gulshan and Badda areas, according to Wasa officials.  
The canal goes through Shahjadpur, Bhatara, Hazipara, Padardia and then finally meets the Shutivola canal in Satarkul of Badda. It is around 16 feet in width, 14 feet in depth and two kilometres in length.  
As both sides of the canal saw a growing population and housing over the last decade, so has foot traffic on the five-foot walkway. However, with no railings erected on either side, accidents are not uncommon.  
According to locals, there have been a number of instances of children falling into the canal while playing, including the death of a child couple of years ago. Besides, stray dogs also often slip and fall into the canal frequently, and locals have to rescue them.  
Md Shahjahan has been running a grocery store beside the canal since 2003.

"I haven't seen any railing set up by the authorities concerned since the beginning of the drainage canal. The walkway is very small and it is obviously risky for children," said Shahjahan, whose store faces the canal.  
Towards the end of the canal, there are litters of plastic garbage hindering water flow and emitting a tough-to-tolerate stench.  
Saiful Islam and Fatema Begum own a three-storied building near the Padardia end of the canal. Concerned about their safety, they put up a railing in front of their main entrance by their own funding eight years back.  
"We have two schoolgoing grandchildren. Every day, I need to drop them to school walking by the narrow canal side. What if they fall off accidentally? Therefore, we set up the railing with our own cost," said Fatema, clearly annoyed at authorities' inaction.  
"Living near the canal area, we have a mosquito problem. Also, the pungent odour that comes at times is unbearable. Recently, a cow corpse came drifting to the canal and it stayed for weeks; no one was there to remove it," she complained.  
The canal goes through newly-added DNCC wards, including wards 41 and 38.  
Contacted, incumbent DNCC ward-41 councillor Shafiqul Islam said, "The canal side walkway railing is the responsibility of Dhaka Wasa. We have informed the matter to

them, but to no avail."  
Meanwhile, recently-elected councillor to the ward Abdul Matin said, "I am yet to take oath officially as a councillor. But when I was a chairman of the ward, I informed Wasa officials nearly three years back; they replied that they did not have any fund and the railing was not in their main design."  
"This sidewalk is risky to anyone passing by. Particularly children are open to the risk of falling in it. A child died in the canal couple of years ago," he said, promising to inform Wasa again and take steps from the city corporation once he takes charge.  
On condition of anonymity, an executive engineer from the drainage (operations and maintenance) division-1 of Dhaka Wasa, said, "We did not have any plan for a railing when it was constructed. But as the child safety issues are coming up, we will set up a three-foot railing on both sides of the canal."  
Asked when it may start, he said it all depends on funding, and hinted that it may not be anytime soon.  
He also alleged that the locals have occupied space of the sidewalks while building their houses, adding that they often throw garbage in the canal, making it difficult for Wasa to maintain it.  
"The city corporation also has some responsibilities; they are supposed to look after solid waste management such as plastic, which are responsible for waterlogging," the official said.

**DHAKA CITY POLLS**

**EC has failed its acid test: Shujan**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission once again failed its "acid test" to hold an election in a free, fair and neutral manner, as the recently-held elections to the Dhaka city corporations were "controlled", a civil society platform for good governance said yesterday.  
Speakers at a press conference organised by Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) made the observation at a press conference, held at Dhaka Reporters Unity to publish an analysis on the polls.  
Speaking at the programme, Shujan President M Hafizuddin Khan said elections to the two city corporations once again proved that the present EC was actually not capable of holding a free, fair and credible election.  
"They [EC] have failed to hold a free and fair election. The Election Commission had no real intention to hold the election in a free and fair manner, which is ominous for

the nation," Hafizuddin, an adviser to a former caretaker government, added.  
Although many candidates complained to the EC about various irregularities, it did not look into those, he alleged.  
Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder said it seems that biased and controlled elections have become the new norm in Bangladesh politics.  
The Dhaka city corporation elections was an acid test for the EC, but it failed, he said, adding, "Voters were insulted in the name of elections."  
The EC has failed to eliminate voters' concerns and lack of confidence in electronic voting machines through this election. The apprehensions have rather deepened, he said.  
"This concern and lack of confidence have posed serious risks of collapsing our electoral system. Election is the only legitimate and peaceful way of power handover. We might move towards an

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**Papia on 15-day remand**  
**59 women victimised in public transports last year: report**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jubo Mohila League's suspended leader Shamima Nur Papia and her husband Mofizur Rahman Sumon have been placed on 15-day remand each, in connection with three cases filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar and Bimanbandar police stations in the capital.  
Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Jasim placed them on 10-day remand each in two cases filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station under the Special Powers Act and Arms Act.

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 59 women were raped and sexually harassed in public transports last year, says a report of Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, a passenger welfare association.  
Of them, 18 were raped, 14 gang-raped, nine faced attempted rape and 18 were sexually harassed, it said.  
The organisation prepared the report based on news published in national dailies between January and December, and unveiled the findings in a press release.  
There were 52 such incidents, 44 of which took place on roads and four each on rail and waterways, they said.  
A total of 44 cases were filed and 93 accused were arrested so far, the report said. It also said the victims were not only harassed by transport workers but also by fellow male passengers.

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**Juan Señor, president of London-based media consulting group Innovation, yesterday joined senior print journalists of the country in a discussion at The Daily Star Centre. Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh and Editors' Council jointly organised the programme.**

PHOTO: STAR

**Govt organisations' stalls drawing visitors**



**Museums, educational institutions, political organisations, and other government institutions have set up stalls at this year's book fair.**

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SAYED MOHMUD ULLAH

The stalls of government service providers and autonomous institutions have been drawing a good number of book lovers at the Bangla Academy portion of the month-long Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela this year.  
Out of 560 organisations, 126 government and autonomous institutions have set up stalls on Bangla Academy premises.  
Of these institutions, most were seen displaying books brought out by other publication houses, as they have few books published by themselves.  
"We just want to present a larger array of books for sales, so it does not matter who is selling whose books, if the publication houses do not make complains," said Md Anwar Hossain, director at Bangla Academy.  
Dhaka Metropolitan Police's stall is getting a good response from fair visitors, as they're selling a number of titles written by police personnel and books on Liberation War, according to stall attendants.  
"80 to 100 books are being sold daily on an average, but it's not important as the prime aim of installing a stall here is

to get closer to the people" said Abu Ali, a sub-inspector.  
"I have bought two science fiction titles 'Lal Diary' and 'Mayabi Jotsnar Boshonte' written by police official Mostak Ahmed," said Titash Baha, a student of fine arts at Dhaka University.  
Bangladesh Chhatra League, Jubo League, Bangabandhu Foundation and Joy Bangla Academy's stalls were selling books on Bangabandhu, Liberation War and various other fiction and nonfiction books.  
The other stalls making good sales include Dhaka University Publications, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, National Museum, Liberation War Museum, Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Dhaka Reporters' Unity and National Curriculum Text Books.  
Meanwhile, writer Rudra Goswami was seen signing books and interacting with readers at Anindya Publishers' stall at the fair, with two of his new releases "Obhijog Nei" and "Ghum Bhangchei".  
"Through my writings, I want to awaken a feeling of love everywhere, as nothing is possible without love," said the writer.

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**DHAKA-SYLHET HIGHWAY**  
**Expansion work to start in July: Quader**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday hoped to start the work for expanding Dhaka-Sylhet highway into four lanes in July, as uncertainty regarding funding is over.  
Asian Development Bank (ADB) will finance the project, the minister told reporters at his secretariat office, after holding a meeting with ADB Country Director Manmohan Parkash.  
The minister came up with the announcement amid media reports that the long-drawn project may face further delay, as ADB could divert its funds if the project is not approved by June this year.  
The minister said Development Project Proposal (DPP) will be prepared within March and then it would be sent to the Planning Commission.  
"After approval [by Ecneec], we hope that construction of the project would start within July," he said.  
As per preliminary estimate, the project would cost around Tk 20,000 crore and the lion's share of it will be funded by ADB, he added.  
At first, authorities wanted to implement the project with money borrowed from China. But the government later decided to do the work using their own resources, following failed negotiations with a Chinese company.  
But the Road Transport and Highways Division (RTHD) later changed their decision and asked the Economic Relations Division (ERD) to find a foreign financier. ADB last year gave consent to fund the project.  
The previous feasibility study and detail design was prepared on basis of data collected between 2013 and 2014. The design is being reviewed now, said a source at Roads and Highways Department (RHD), the implementing authority of the project.  
Tushar Kanti Saha, additional chief engineer (Sylhet zone) of RHD, who is overseeing the land acquisition matter for the project, said they are now conducting field level survey and hoped to hand over the final proposal to the deputy commissioner's office concerned within March.  
Replying to a question, he told this newspaper yesterday that it would take at least six months to complete all necessary procedures to make the land free for carrying out the project.  
AKM Manir Hossain Pathan, additional chief engineer (planning and maintenance wing) of RHD, said they have to bring some changes to the project design and hoped to complete preparation for DPP within two months.  
Once the project is approved, they would go for tendering process and it is difficult to give an exact deadline to complete the process, he said yesterday.  
"It would take at least five to six months," he added.

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**Application Deadline:**  
08 April, 2020

**Admission Test:**  
11 April, 2020

**GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

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**Application Deadline:**  
10 April, 2020

**MBA Admission Test:**  
11 April, 2020

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