

## Finally, a bigger Sylhet city!

To be expanded to 58 sq km from 26.50, says dist admin; not big enough, refutes mayor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Over a century-old Sylhet municipality was upgraded to a city corporation in 2002, consisting 26.50 sq km area. In 2014, a proposal to expand the country's smallest city corporation to 160.62 sq km was forwarded to the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives by the city corporation as per the masterplan for the city.

And after six years, the city is finally being expanded to around 58 sq km in total and Sylhet District Administration circulated a public notice in this regard on Sunday.

In the notice, signed by the deputy commissioner of Sylhet, the administration listed parts of four unions of Sylhet Sadar upazila and three unions of Dakshin Surma upazila to be included to the city corporation area.

In the circular, locals of these areas are asked to file their written objections or suggestions to the deputy commissioner by September 8.

Meer Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, deputy director of the local government in

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PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

The already difficult life of a hawker now includes risk of catching a dangerous virus. In pursuit of securing the barest minimum of income, they have started returning to the streets as traffic has started to normalise in the capital. Even though coronavirus risks remain high, they have no choice but to do so. In a loss-loss situation, they stand to lose everything if they do get infected, as there's no safety net for them or their families.

## Primary education thru' radio set for launch tomorrow

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is set to broadcast lessons for primary students through radio to reach the maximum number of children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It started television education through Sangsad TV on April 7, so primary students can make up for losses due to closure of educational institutions.

Many guardians said it was only partially fulfilling the objective, as about a half of the country's people -- many of them underprivileged -- do not have access to TV sets.

A recent survey of primary and mass education ministry shows that almost 60 percent of households that have primary school going children do not have TV sets.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey-2019 of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics showed that 50 percent of households do not have television sets.

"We had launched TV education but many cannot avail this service, so we are now going to start education through radio. We will broadcast lessons from Wednesday," Akram-Al-Hossain, primary and mass education senior secretary, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He added that Bangladesh Betar and community radio channels will broadcast the one-hour lessons from 4:05pm every Sunday through Thursday.

During that hour, they will air 10-minute sessions for first to fifth grade students, and children will be informed about routine.

He claimed Bangladesh is the first country in Asia-Pacific to introduce education through radio.

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## EC mulls renaming local govt bodies, posts in Bangla

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission is considering Bangla names for local government bodies and the positions within them by amending the relevant existing law.

It is planning to introduce Bangla names for the terms city corporation, municipality and union parishad and the posts mayor, chairman etc by amending the election-related laws of local government bodies.

A draft version of the law to hold city corporation, municipalities and union parishad election were discussed at an Election Commission meeting yesterday, said EC senior secretary Md Alamgir after the meeting held at the EC office in Dhaka.

He said that they would hold further discussion on the issue later this month to finalise the decision. "We will also take opinions from stakeholders before finalising it," he added.

Alamgir said that they have taken the move as Bangla is an enriched language.

EC proposed renaming of city corporation to mahanagar sobha,

pouroshabha to nagarshabha, union parishad to palli parishad and ward into mahalla.

It also proposed renaming of corporation to sobha, city corporation mayor to mahanagar sobha adhikarik or mahanagarpati, councillor to sadasya or paarishad.

EC is considering renaming of pouroshabha mayor to puradyakho or nagarpati, union parishad chairman to palli parishad pradhan, upazila parishad chairman to upazila parishad pradhan, upazila vice chairman to upazila parishad upa-pradhan and others.

EC officials said that they have decided to amend the election-related laws of local government bodies in Bangla to make it easy to read and understandable to all.

At the meeting, election commissioners discussed due by-polls. Alamgir said the commission will likely to announce by-elections to Dhaka-18 and Pabna-4 constituencies on August 22 or 23.

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## 'They have nothing better to do'

BNP leader Rizvi on EC's move to rename govt institutions, posts

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday said that Election Commission (EC) is going to unilaterally change names of local government institutions and their posts at the "behest" of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"Now, EC has no work as they have sent elections to the graveyard. He [chief election commissioner] is now trying to rename 'union parishad' as 'palli parishad', 'upazila chairman' as 'upazila pita [father]' and 'city mayor' as 'mahanagar pita'," said BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

Speaking at a doa-mahfil, he said, "CEC is changing the traditional names and systems of [local government] institutions following the instruction of Sheikh Hasina. He is not taking opinions of any other political party."

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal arranged the programme on the ground floor of BNP's Nayapaltna central office, to seek salvation for Swechchasebak Dal President Shaiful Bari Babu and BNP Assistant Organising Secretary Abdul Awal Khan.

Though EC is an independent body, Rizvi said the

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## High risk, higher uncertainty

Pandemic takes toll on ambulance drivers

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Mostafa Kamal (45) has been working as an ambulance driver for nearly 10 years. In the past, he took two to three calls per day, which would be enough to meet his family's needs.

But as soon as the coronavirus hit the country, his circumstances changed unimaginably. For one, his job suddenly became hazardous, as he risked contracting the virus every time he transported a patient and transported them to a hospital. But of course, he had to continue, because he had no alternative to feed his family.

Secondly, as the number of calls

result to the house owner and he finally agreed to let us stay," he said. However, this has not stopped the landlord from nagging Kamal every now and then.

Kamal's is one of many such stories on the misery of ambulance drivers during the pandemic.

Md Monir (45), a former colleague of Kamal's at Anjuman Mufidul Islam, a welfare organisation, spoke of a different woe for ambulance drivers -- the pandemic comes with a stress on their mental health. "Wherever we go, people avoid us, as if we have Covid-19," Monir said.

"Even patients don't want to use



In a desperate bid to revive falling incomes, ambulance drivers Monir and Kamal have put up simple adverts everywhere they can think of. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

from regular patients -- such as patients with heart-related illnesses -- declined, ambulances drivers experienced a sharp decrease in their incomes.

But the worst was yet to come. One day, after he got home from work, Kamal was told by his landlord that he needs to look for a new place. The owner of the house feared he might be carrying the Covid-19 virus.

"It was a big shock for me. I have never faced such a dire situation in my life," Kamal told this correspondent. "I tried to reason, but the owner didn't want to listen. At a time when it's hard to make ends meet, shifting would be a big financial burden," he added.

Out of luck, Kamal started looking for places, but finding rent within one's budget isn't easy in Dhaka.

"Then I decided to test myself. Fortunately for me and my family, the result came out negative. I showed the

ambulances out of coronavirus fear," Monir exclaimed.

Sharing one experience, he said, "Two months back we were carrying a Covid-positive patient's body from Dhaka to Narsingdi. Shockingly, we had to turn our ambulance midway as villagers and the area's chairman received information and refused to let us in."

"We had to bury the body in Dhaka's Mohammadpur," Monir said.

Other drivers shared a host of stories with this correspondent. From staying out of home for two months to spending nights inside ambulances, the community has seen it all during these trying times.

But for all their woes, ambulance drivers have no source of regular income as they work as freelancers and have no affiliation with any government or private hospitals.

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## JP lawmaker Firoz Rashid charged in land grabbing case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against Dhaka-6 constituency lawmaker Kazi Firoz Rashid, also a presidium member of Jatiya Party, on the charge of grabbing a government land.

Md Jahangir Alam, an ACC deputy director and also the case's investigation officer, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka, showing 15 people as prosecution witnesses.

In the charge sheet, the IO said the charges brought against the accused were primarily proved and he should be brought under trial.

Zulfikar Ali, a former deputy director of ACC, filed the case against Firoz Rashid with Tejgaon Shilpanchal Police Station on April 5, 2016.

According to the first information report (FIR), a government house on a one-bigha of land in Dhanmondi residential area was allocated to then Canadian High Commissioner Mohammad Ali on November 3, 1951.

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## Opportunities open up in Bahrain for Bangladeshis

JAMIL MAHMUD

Bangladeshi migrant workers in Bahrain are seeing fresh employment opportunities amid the coronavirus pandemic, as some local employers there, especially in the construction sector, are opening up jobs for such workers.

Although nominal in number, the opportunities came as a beacon of light for the Bangladeshi workers, many of who had been facing hardship due to job losses in current situation.

The Bangladesh embassy in Manama has been trying to assess and meet the employers' demands after communicating with unemployed workers, and mediating between them and the employers, said an official at the embassy.

Unlike other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, foreign workers in Bahrain, home to about 1,50,000 Bangladeshi workers, have the opportunity to change their sponsors and employers by obtaining "flexi permit" from the country's Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA).

In May, LMRA informed Bangladesh mission that some 7,000-8,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers have lost their jobs amid an economic shutdown.

Following this, the embassy communicated with some local training centres aiming to facilitate

new set of skills training and re-employment for such workers in different sectors, said the mission official.

On July 9, the embassy issued a circular via social media to this end, and attached a form with it to input necessary information of expectant Bangladeshi workers who were in need of job.

Within a week, some 800 workers responded and about 300-400 of them sought job opportunities, said the official, wishing not to be named.

He said they also collected several circulars looking for foreign workers in recent weeks and conveyed the information among Bangladeshi workers, while also providing data of the workers to the recruiters.

Sheikh Mohammed Tauhidul Islam, labour welfare counselor at Bangladesh Embassy in Manama, said a number of companies run by Bangladeshis work on sub-contract basis in Bahrain and they mainly supply workers to different construction sites.

"Recently, such companies have been talking about workers' shortage," he added.

Tauhidul said present market demand suggests the number of people affected by the pandemic could be lesser in Bahrain than what was estimated earlier.

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## 17 more Tabligh members return home from India

STAR REPORT

Seventeen more Bangladeshi Tabligh Jamaat members, including eight women, returned home on Sunday night after languishing in an Indian jail for 40 days.

Mohsin Khan, officer-in-charge of Benapole Check-post Immigration Police, yesterday said Indian immigration police handed them over to the Bangladesh authorities through Benapole check-post around 11:30pm on Sunday.

All the returnees were sent to Gazir Dargah institutional quarantine in Jhikargachha upazila of Jashore for 14 days, said Habibur Rahman, a medical officer of the health department of Benapole check-post.

The 17 Bangladeshis are residents of different areas of the country, our Benapole correspondent reports, quoting the officer. According to immigration police, 265 Tabligh Jamaat men went to India in February this year. They were staying there during the coronavirus outbreak.

Indian police arrested them from different parts of the country at the end of March for violation of the Foreigners Act, visa rules and Covid-19 lockdown rules.

Of them, the 17 Bangladeshi Tabligh Jamaat members were sent to central jail of Haryana after arrest, said immigration police, adding that a court of the state later sentenced them to 40 days' jail. The decision to return them was taken following discussion between high officials of the two countries after their jail term ended.

On August 7, 14 out of 265 Tabligh Jamaat members returned home after languishing in jail for the same period.



Students gather at a shop in West Tejpurbar yesterday to fill up college admission forms. The young students have been waiting for two months since the publication of SSC results to move on to the next step in their education. The only thing missing seems to be face masks.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## FARMERS BANK SCAM

### Shahed remanded for seven days

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Regent Hospital Chairman Mohammad Shahed on a seven-day remand in a case filed over misappropriation of Tk 2.71 crore of Farmers Bank Ltd.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after Anti-Corruption Commission's Deputy Assistant Director Mohammad Shahjahan Meraj, also the case's investigation officer, produced Shahed before the court with a 10-day remand prayer.

In the remand prayer, the IO said Shahed, in association of other accused, embezzled the money from the bank. So, he needs to be remanded to know further information about the embezzlement, the IO added.

Claiming himself innocent, Shahed told the court that he had FDR of Tk 50 lakh in Farmers Bank against the loan. Moreover, he claimed that he is unwell as he has been in police custody since July 15 and appealed to the court to reject the remand prayer.

No lawyer was present in the court to defend him yesterday.

After hearing both sides, the magistrate rejected his pleas and issued the remand order.

On July 27, the ACC filed the case against Shahed and three others with its Integrated District Office-1 of Dhaka.

The other accused are -- Mahbulul Haque Chisty, of

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