

## DNCC to boost tax revenue

Month-long drive starts to bring more establishments under net

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday started a month-long “combing operation” to increase its tax net.

Mayor M Atiqul Islam inaugurated the event from Mohammadpur under its Ward 33.

DNCC will carry out the drive in 17 wards experimentally of zone 2 and 5, before gradually targeting all the wards under it.

“The aim of the combing operation is to increase the tax net through bringing the holdings or institutions, which were dropped earlier, under it. This will also increase the involvement of councillors in the activities of the revenue section,” said Atiqul.

He said they will go door to door where there will be houses, offices and commercial establishments.

The mayor said they have set up a target of revenue income Tk 400 crore from holding tax and Tk 100 crore from holding tax in the current fiscal and they have to achieve it.

“There are many residential buildings where they are running business on the ground floor. How are they doing it? I will ask Rajuk to meet me in this regard next week,” he said.

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Despite the government's explicit instructions to carry passengers according to seat capacity, buses crammed with commuters were seen in many areas of the port city. Health experts say this is no time to relax, as such indifference to health risks may lead to a worse situation. This photo was taken yesterday from Agrabad area.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTS IN CTG

# Fares back to normal, as is cramming of passengers

ARUN BIKASH DEB, Ctg

Public vehicles in the port city are defying government instructions, as they are carrying more passengers than the seat capacity, contributing to further transmission of the coronavirus.

The transports were supposed to carry individuals according to the seat capacity from yesterday, as part of the government's instruction for them to realise normal fares.

In addition, passengers not wearing facemask would be disallowed to board, and the seats will have to be sanitised in the beginning of every trip.

Earlier, the government allowed public transports to realise 60 percent additional fare, on condition of carrying half the number of passengers according to capacity.

Passengers alleged that although transport workers used to take this additional fare, they did not follow the instructions. As a result, altercations between passengers and the workers was common.

In the streets, this correspondent saw public transports blatantly ignoring the government instructions. Many passengers were seen standing on buses in Chawkbazar, Muradpur, Bahaddarhat, Sholoshahar Gate 2, Oxygen and Karnaphuli Shah Amanat Bridge areas.

Almost two-third of the passengers were seen without facemasks. Sources said around 1,000 minibuses, and 2,000 human-hauliers ply on 12 routes in the city.

Tarit Kumar Dutta, a private job holder, was frustrated as he boarded a minibus at Sholoshahar Gate 2 to go to office yesterday morning.

“Health guidelines are being ignored in the bus...Many passengers are standing very close to each other, while most are not wearing facemasks,” Tarit said. “When I protested taking in additional passengers, I got into an altercation with the conductor, and he misbehaved with me.”

Abdus Sattar Roni, general secretary of South Chattogram Passengers Welfare Association, told The Daily Star that public transports are carrying excess passengers, but law enforcers are not acting against them.

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## No law to hold forest officers accountable

LAW DESK

Illegal tree felling remains rampant in most reserved forests in the country.

This has been happening at a time when the government is trying to increase the country's forest coverage to 18 percent from the current 15.58 percent by 2030 -- a condition to achieve Sustainable Development Goal.

According to data from the Department of Forest, 10 percent of the country's total forestland has been lost since independence due to deforestation, land grabbing, leasing, and allocation for government and non-government projects.

Last month, a news report of The Daily Star also showed that illegal tree felling continues unabated in Chiria Reserve Forest of Chattogram's Rangunia upazila.

The logs obtained by felling are either shipped across Karnaphuli to sawmills, where they are processed and transferred to high-end furniture stores, or to brick kilns.

Locals and NGO representatives have pointed to inaction of forest officers as a cause of these violations.

There are a good number of relevant laws regarding forest conservation, such as Forest Act 1927, Environment Conservation Act 1995, Wildlife Conservation and Security Act 2012, and Brick Manufacturing and Brick Kilns Establishment (Control) Act, 2013.

As per brick manufacturing and brick kilns act, use of timber as fuel in brick-fields is prohibited. Moreover, the act also states that brick-fields cannot be established within 1km of forest and ecologically critical areas, within 2km of government-owned forest areas and within 500m of hills and mounds.

The forest act lists activities that are prohibited in reserve forests, which includes clearing any part of the forest, felling, removing timber, setting fire, burning lime or charcoal.

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## ILLEGAL WEALTH

# Charges against suspended DIG prisons accepted

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday took cognizance of the charges against suspended Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Prisons Bazlur Rashid in a case filed for amassing Tk 3.08 crore beyond known sources of income.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after scrutinising the case dockets and other relevant documents.

The judge then transferred the case to the Special Judge's Court-5 of Dhaka for trial and fixed September 22 for hearing on charge framing against the accused.

ACC arrested Bazlur Rashid in the case filed with its Integrated District Office-1 of Dhaka and showed him arrested in the case on October 20 last year. The following day, the home ministry suspended him from his post.

According to the case statement, Bazlur signed a contract with a real estate company in 2018 to buy a flat in the capital's Siddeshwari Road area at a price of Tk 3.09 crore.

## Rangpur recreational spots reopen after six months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, DINAJPUR

After six months of closure, the people of Rangpur have started visiting tourist spots, sites, and parks of the district again from yesterday.

All the spots were closed on March 24, at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, Rangpur Zoo and Tajhat Jamidarbari will remain closed for a few more days, as their authorities are yet to take any decision on reopening.

At the end of August, Ahsan Habib, Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur, issued a public notice over the reopening, with directives asking visitors and authorities to maintain health safety guidelines.

During a visit to several spots on Monday, this correspondent found that the sites were being cleaned and redecorated ahead of the reopening. In Rangpur, the most popular entertainment spots include Suravi Udyan, Nasniyar Beel, Chikli Park, Bhinnajagat and Anandanagar. Many of

these spots now sport an attractive look to welcome back visitors.

Curators at these parks said they are doing everything to ensure health guidelines as given by the health ministry.

Although a reopening date is yet to be fixed, the Rangpur Zoo has become a more attractive place, thanks to the lack of visitors for over six months, which made it a safer and more comfortable place for the birds and animals. As a result, the entire zoo wears a fantastic look, our correspondent found while visiting the largest entertainment spot in the district.

Dr Ambar Ali, Deputy Curator of Rangpur Zoo, said, “We are ready and we hope to open the zoo soon.”

The custodian of Tajhat Jamidarbari in Rangpur said the spot is not reopening as they are yet to get any instruction from the concerned department.

Meanwhile, the decision to reopen the

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## ACC freezes bank accounts of former BNP MP Dulu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has frozen Tk 7.36 crore in different bank accounts of former BNP lawmaker Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu and his wife Sabina Yasmin.

ACC's Assistant Director Shafi Ullah has been inquiring into the allegation against Dulu of amassing illegal wealth. The enquiry began last year.

As a part of the enquiry, the ACC has frozen the accounts, confirmed ACC's Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya.

According to the allegation, Dulu amassed wealth through extortion and tender manipulation.

Contacted, Shafi Ullah said they have requested Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) to give banks directives to freeze Dulu's accounts. Against this backdrop, his bank accounts were frozen on August 27.

Source said Dulu has amassed Tk 7.36 crore beyond the known source of income since 2008.

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## ARMS CASE

# Complainant testifies against Papia, husband

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Md Shafiqul Islam, former deputy assistant director of Rab-1, yesterday gave his deposition before a Dhaka tribunal in the arms case filed against expelled leader of Jubo Mohila League Shamima Nur Papia and her husband Mofizur Rahman.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Special Tribunal-1 of Dhaka recorded the witness's statement. Later, the witness was cross-examined on behalf of the accused.

Before that, defence lawyers completed cross-examination of Sub-inspector of Rab-1 Saiful Islam, who prepared a seizure-list of the arms case. Saiful gave his deposition before the tribunal on Monday.

The judge has fixed today for next hearing.

In his statement, Shafiqul, also the case's complainant, told the court that upon being informed from a reliable source, he and his forces arrested Papia and her husband -- a former Chhatra League leader -- and their two accomplices from Dhaka airport on February 22 when they were trying to leave the country.

The following morning, he, along with his team, raided Papia's house on Indira Road, Farmgate, and recovered a foreign pistol, two magazines, 20 bullets, five bottles of foreign liquor, Tk 58,41,000 cash, and credit and debit cards of different banks. SI Saiful prepared a seizure list in front of the witnesses, Shafiqul added.

On February 24, he filed the arms case against the couple with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station. During their arrest, Rab members recovered seven passports, Tk 2,12,270, fake notes worth Tk 25,600, \$11,481, some Sri Lankan rupees and Indian rupees from their possession.



Fruit sellers have set up shops on a road divider at Gulshan -- while this has added some colour to an otherwise bleak street, it is risky for the sellers to be positioned in such an accident-prone place. Moreover, crowds will gather to buy fruits, putting themselves at risk by standing on a busy road.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



People from all walks of life gathered at the capital's Dhakeshwari Temple yesterday, to pay last respect to CR Dutta. The Liberation War hero passed away in the US on August 25, aged 93. His body reached home on Monday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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## CR Dutta given a fitting farewell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The funeral of Maj Gen (retd) CR Dutta, Bir Uttam was held with state honour yesterday.

The cremation of CR Dutta, commander of sector-4 during the country's Liberation War, was carried out at Sabujbag Crematorium following a gun salute by Bangladesh Army.

Earlier, Dutta's coffin wrapped in the national flag was taken to Dhakeshwari Temple where people from all walks of life paid their last tribute to the war hero.

He was given a guard of honour in the presence of Dhaka Deputy Commissioner Shahidul Islam. Later, the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs placed a wreath on the coffin.

Dutta's war-time fellows and former colleagues gathered to pay their last respects. People from different political parties and organisations also paid homage.

Awami League Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif paid tribute on behalf of his party.

Talking to journalists, Hanif said, “He [Dutta] was not only a freedom fighter but also an organiser of the Liberation War.

## Veggie prices shoot up at Ctg kitchen markets

ARUN BIKASH DEB, Ctg

Many Chattogram residents are dealing with a new financial struggle, as prices of most vegetables have shot up by Tk 10-20 per kg in the span of a week, putting further pressure on families, many of which already saw their incomes fall due to the pandemic.

Tuhin Biswas (not his real name), a high school teacher, normally receives around Tk 15,000 salary, and must depend on private tuition to maintain his family.

However, he has been struggling with a serious financial crisis since March, as the school remained closed and he lost all private students. Now he must make do with only his salary.

Tuhin came to Chawkbazar Kitchen Market on Saturday, when he talked to The Daily Star.

“All vegetable prices have increased in just a week,” he told this correspondent. “If I buy five kg of different vegetables, I'll have to pay an extra Tk 100 now, which is a huge thing in the current situation.”

Md Tawhid, an auto-rickshaw driver, came to Bahaddarhat Kitchen Market and was instantly frustrated after getting to know the prices.

“The number of passengers has dropped significantly after the pandemic...as did our incomes,” he said, “This just made things worse.”

This correspondent visited different kitchen markets on Friday and Saturday, and indeed found the prices hiked. A kilogramme of tomato was sold at Tk 80 the previous week, but is Tk 100 this week. Brinjal was Tk 50 per kg, but now it is Tk 60-65, and green chillies are being sold for Tk 200 per kg, around Tk 30 more than last week.

Traders said vegetable supply has decreased in markets, as gardens in the north-eastern region have been inundated.

Md Yasin, president of Karnaphuli kitchen Market Traders' Association, said vegetable supply from northern districts has decreased due to floods.

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