Not 500, 20 or 30!

Planning Commission proposes two groups to go abroad under school feeding project

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The planning commission has proposed for sending two groups of primary education officials -- 10 to 15 members in each -- abroad for having knowledge about school feeding progarmme there.

Earlier, the Primary and Mass Education Ministry in the Development Project Proposal (DPP) of Primary School Feeding Programme (PSFP) proposed to send 500 officials abroad for training and knowledge gathering about school feeding programmes at a cost of Tk five crore from the project.

Primary and mass education senior secretary Akram-Al-Hossain said

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Technology, aside from providing major benefits, can bring forth new sets of complications. For example, electronic billboards, like this one at the capital's Nayapaltan, need frequent maintenance to keep them flashy and glowing at night. They also need a team of skilled technicians, like this group of four, to properly deal with all the wiring and panels. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: **RASHED SHUMON**

DSCC mayor defies dogged dog lovers

Canines picked up from TSC and Dhanmondi, dumped in Matuail

FAHMIM FERDOUS

Despite repeated calls by animal rights groups to not relocate stray dogs of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), Mayor Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh's instructions to relocate canines have been carried out over the last two days.

While activists and community members strongly denounced the move to move sterilised and vaccinated dogs to the Matuail landfill, DSCC officials stayed on the defense when contacted by this newspaper, eventually giving a quizzical legal justification.

Tauhid Tanjim, a master's student of Dhaka University (DU) and co-founder of Animal Welfare Club of Dhaka University, has been feeding over a hundred dogs in the Dhaka University area since the university shut down in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"On Monday, I heard that dogs were taken away from TSC. I immediately went and talked to shopkeepers in the area, and they said a vehicle of city corporation came, picked up dogs with nets, sedated them with injections and took them away. Eight or nine dogs are now missing. We had recently sprayed and vaccinated these dogs too," he told The Daily Star.

'MAYOR'S ORDERS'

Asked about it, DSCC veterinary officer Dr Shafiqul Islam said they removed some dogs from and left them in Matuail landfill because they were creating problems and there were "objections" against them.

Asked if someone from DU campus area objected about dogs, he backtracked and said, "Not from TSC; dogs were taken from Ramna Park area."

When this correspondent told him that Ramna Park is closed, and asked if someone from the area complained about dogs, he backtracked again, saying, "No there were not objections. It was the mayor's order."

When reminded that relocation of stray animals is illegal as per the Animal Welfare Act 2019, he first said it was not relocation but "temporary relocation" and the dogs would return, and then said, "It is the mayor's order. You have to talk to him."

He also admitted that some dogs were also picked up from Dhanmondi Lake area on Tuesday and shifted to Matuail.

'THESE ARE FRIENDLY DOGS, STERILISED AND VACCINATED'

Nona Ahmed, chairman of Stella Animal Welfare Foundation, says she also found out that dogs were loaded on a truck from Dhanmondi Lake and whisked away. "I have been feeding these dogs for the last four years. All these dogs are sterilised and vaccinated, and these are very friendly dogs. If they get sick, I treat them. There are no complaints about them; I know because I feed them daily."

"Dogs are taken from various area and dumped in Matuail. That's not their territory. They will fight among themselves, and starve to death," said Ahmed.

"Once these sterilised and vaccinated dogs are removed, other unvaccinated dogs will come and reproduce, and they will become a health risk for people," she said. "We sterilise and vaccinate dogs for

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PHOTO COURTESY: ANIMAL WELFARE CLUB OF DU

A group of DU students have been feeding over a hundred dogs on campus for the last six months, and have vaccinated and sterilised many of them.

Onion price peels off middle-class stability

HELEMUL ALAM *and* SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Lutfur Rahman, a resident of Shuritola, never thought he would reach such a point in his life where he would have to purchase essentials from a government subsidised OMS truck. But there he was yesterday, standing in a long queue leading up to a truck that came to his area.

Lutfor was never really comfortable with his economics, but he still managed to take care of his five-member family before the pandemic. Once the shutdown set in though, his income almost halved, and the recent hike in the price of essentials -- the price of onions has almost doubled since Monday night -- just pushed him over the line.

"I used to earn Tk 40,000 every month. But it's now come down to Tk 15,000-20,000. It's such reached a point where I can no longer withstand sudden price hike of essentials," Lutfor told this newspaper. "I never thought it would get to this, but I just had to stand in line for an hour to buy my onions, soybean oil, sugar, and lentils."

This is not just Lutfor's story. Due to the joint offensive of the coronavirus and the price hike, many from the middle and lower income groups are being forced to go to OMS trucks, sometimes coming from faraway on foot.

Considering the hardships, the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) has started selling four essential commodities through these trucks from September 13.

However, there's only 40 trucks in the city against this huge demand, which makes it difficult for most to access them. The situation isn't much better outside Dhaka. There's a meagre 235 trucks that operate outside the city.

There's 10 in Chattogram, seven in Rangpur, five each in Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barishal, Sylhet, Bogura and Cumilla, three each in Jhenidah and Madaripur and two each in rest of the districts. The trucks will be in operation till October 1.

Every dealer in a truck is allocated 500 to 700kg sugar, 400 to 600kg lentil, 700 to 1,000-litre soybean oil, and 200 to 400kg onion.

The price of sugar per kg is Tk 50, lentil is Tk 50, soybean oil per kg is Tk 80, and onion (large ones) per kg is being sold at Tk 30.

"I have come here walking around half an hour. My income has already dropped to Tk 7,000 to Tk 8,000 monthly from Tk 15,000 to Tk 16,000. I can no longer afford to buy from grocers," said Ilias Hossain, a small trader of Armabag area.

Even after the long walks and longer lines, each person was allocated only one kg of onion. The dealers say it's because of the huge demands.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

459 killed in road accidents in August

32 lives lost on Aug 4 alone: Jatri Kalyan report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four hundred and fifty-nine people were killed and 618 injured in road accidents across the country in August, a report said yesterday.

The deaths and injuries were recorded from 388 road accidents last month, according to the report prepared by Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity.

The Samity made the report analysing news published in national and local newspapers and online portals.

A total of 14 people were killed and three were injured in 15 accidents on railways throughout the country during the same period, the report said.

Additionally, 80 more people died, 52 received injuries and 31 were missing in 41 accidents on waterways in last month.

Most of the road accidents happened on August 4, the report said. Thirty-two people died and 46 sustained injuries in 26 accidents on roads on that day.

Out of the total accidents, 5.15 percent occurred in Dhaka city, 2.06 percent in Chattogram and 0.25 percent took place on railways.

ARMS CASE

Shahed claims innocence

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed yesterday claimed himself innocent and demanded justice after a Dhaka tribunal read out charges to him from the statements of prosecution witnesses in an arms case.

The accused made the submission while giving his self-defence statements against the statements given by 10 prosecution witnesses before the tribunal earlier.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Special Tribunal-1 of Dhaka then fixed today for arguments in the case.

The same tribunal framed charges against Shahed, accused in over 60 cases, on August 27 in the case.

Shahed was arrested on July 15 from Satkhira when he was trying to leave the country on a boat.

He was later remanded in a case filed over issuing fake Covid-19 test results and charging patients unfairly for testing and treatment.

On July 19, a team of DB police found Shahed's private car in front of a house in Sector-11, in the city's Uttara Paschim area.

BOOKS BRIEFING

Where to find Booker Prize-shortlisted titles in Dhaka

SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI, *Star Books Desk*

"It's interesting to realise there are so many female authors out there; there are so many interesting non-white authors out there, giving us different glimpses of the world," said Emily Wilson, graduate chair of comparative literature and theory at University of Pennsylvania, at the Booker Prize shortlist announcement ceremony on Monday.

Her statement reflects the scale of diversity in both the longlist and shortlist this year, and most of the books are now available at Bangladesh Culture & Books in Dhaka airport. "By this month, we will have a full stock of the six shortlisted books," they told The Daily Star.

The store has copies of Avni Doshi's *Burnt Sugar*, published in the subcontinent as *Girl in White Cotton*, arriving soon. Longlist contenders -- *Apeirogon* by Colum McCaan, Kiley Reid's *Such A Fun Age*, and Hilary Mantel's *The Mirror* and *The Light* -- are due to arrive soon.

Charcha and online bookstore Bookshop.com both have copies of *Girl in White Cotton* available upon pre-order, and both Charcha and Bookworm Bangladesh are taking orders for all Booker nominees.

Bookworm has brought in all three of Mantel's *Wolf Hall* trilogy. All the books are original editions. Barring pandemic-driven delays, pre-orders are taking up to a month to arrive in Bangladesh.

THE SHORTLIST NOMINEES

Four of the shortlisted six are debut novels, with stories ranging from Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and India to the US and Scotland. Author and judging panellist Lee Child said, "I think all 13 [longlisted titles] are about people under extreme pressure…which was interesting to us. Is that an artefact of this year?" That connection weaves the shortlist together as well.

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BM College office vanladised

20-25 masked miscreants also assault staffer, take away CCTV record

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barishal*

Some unidentified miscreants yesterday vandalised the social welfare department of Barishal Government Brojomohun (BM) College and assaulted the office assistant of the department.

Wearing masks and wielding sharp weapons, they also vandalised the head of the department's office, said the principal and teachers of the college.

The incident took place around 1pm and the injured -- Mizanur Rahman Bachchu -- was taken to Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital for treatment.

Prof Abdus Sabur, head of the department, said around 20 to 25 of miscreants entered the department carrying sharp weapons and rods.

"They started vandalising Bachchu's motorbike and then beat and stabbed him," he said. "Afterwards, they destroyed furniture and other items of the department's office and teacher's room on the second floor. They also vandalised my office," he added.

Prof Sabur said miscreants then took the CCTV records, machines and CPU of the department's main computer. "We don't know who were behind this vicious attack. Why would anyone do such thing?" he said.

Dr Golam Kibria, acting principal of the college, said they will file a case in this regard soon.

Asked, injured Bachchu said he too had no clue as to why anyone would vandalise the department let alone assault him.

Contacted, Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge of Barisal Kotwali Model Police Station, said they are investigating the incident, and no one was arrested yet. Police were on guard at different points of the college, he added.

The college's academic activities have been closed since March to control the spread of Covid-19. However, all the departments are open at present to take care of administrative and other related works.

The vandalised office of the social welfare department. PHOTO: **TITU DAS**

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