

JS body for bluebooks for rickshaws

RASHIDUL HASAN

The parliamentary standing committee on home ministry yesterday made several recommendations including introduction of bluebooks for rickshaws and vans in the city.

The committee recommended that Kuril-Jatrabri road be made off-limits for rickshaws to ease city's traffic congestion.

It also discussed the role of home ministry and traffic police in freeing the capital from traffic congestion.

"There is no law and regulation for non-motorised vehicles including rickshaws which cause the traffic jam," Major General (retd) MA Salam told reporters after the meeting at the parliament building.

"We have recommended enacting a law for all non-motorised vehicles like rickshaws and vans," he said.

He said pedestrians and non-motorised vehicles are "two main reasons" for traffic jam.

"Pedestrians must use over bridges. There is a provision of fines for not using them. We have asked police to enforce it," he added.

Home Minister Sahara Khatun, State Minister for Home Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj, among others, were present at the meeting.

3 Bangladeshi teachers killed in Saudi road accident

UNB, Dhaka

Three Bangladeshi lecturers of King Khaled University were killed and two others injured in a tragic road accident at Doadmi, 328-km northwest of Riyadh last Friday.

A relative of one of the victims told UNB that lecturers Sakil Ahmed Sohel, 27, Dr Akhtaruzzaman Afroz, 24, and his wife Sarzia Sajib, 25, died in the mishap.

The injured were identified as Moidul and his wife.

All were returning to Jeddah by a car after performing umrah at Makkah on Friday night. As they reached Doadmi at about 9:30pm, they were caught in a sandstorm, said Nasibur Rahman, uncle of the deceased Sohel.

"As they tried to park their car on roadside, a speeding lorry hit their car, leaving the three dead on the spot," Nasibur said.



Atiur made BB boss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted economist and Dhaka University teacher Dr Atiur Rahman is going to be appointed governor of Bangladesh Bank.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday told journalists that an announcement in this regard might be made today. Finance ministry sources also said an order in this regard is likely to be issued today.

The tenure of Bangladesh

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

OnlinePoll

Do you support the government's decision not to privatise any more state-owned enterprises (SoE)?

Yes (36.35%)
No (62.31%)
No Comments (1.34%)

Total votes: 674

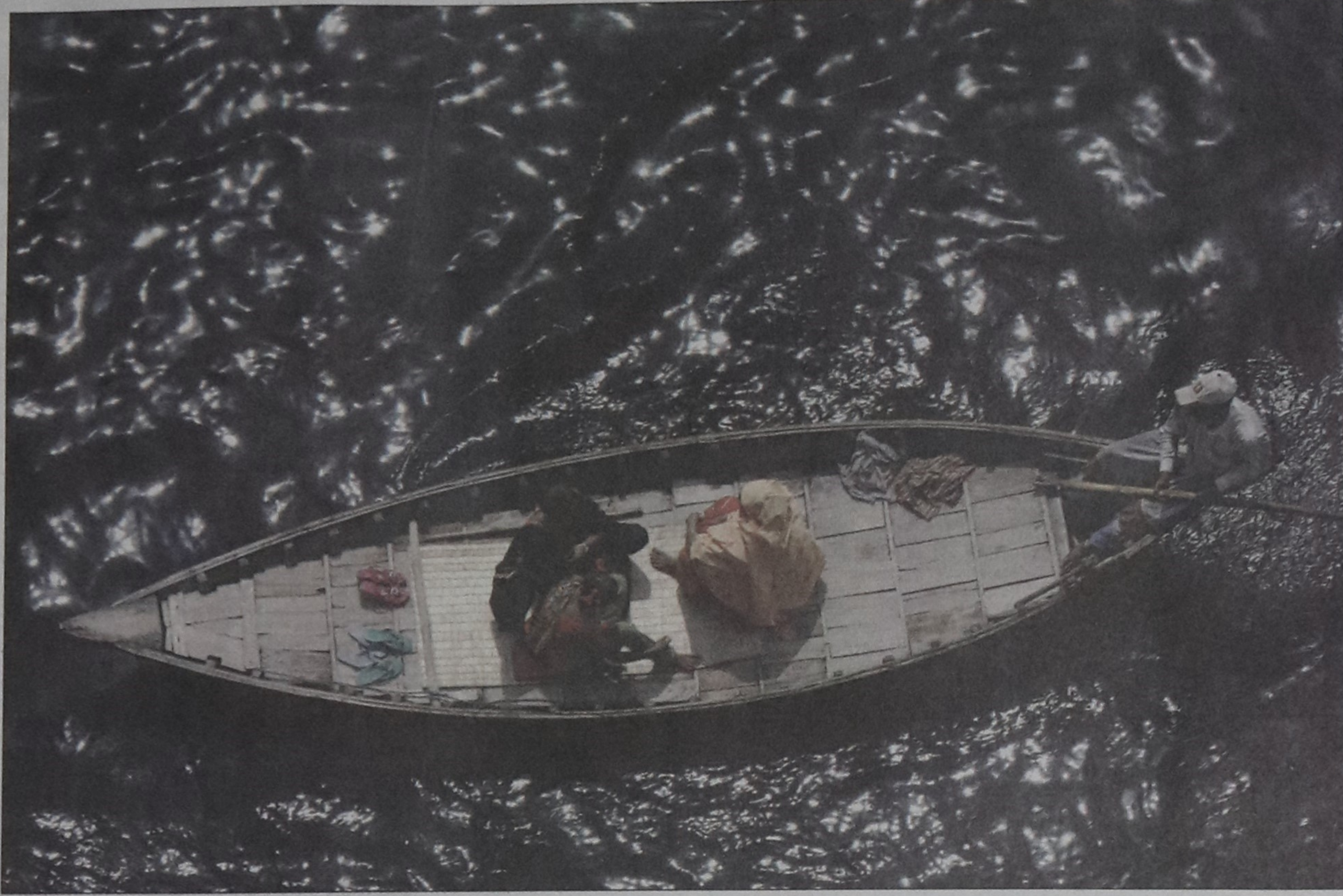


PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

POISONED BURIGANGA... A boat carries passengers, top, on the murky waters of the Buriganga. Wholesale dumping of industrial waste, sewage and garbage left the river, touted the lifeline of the capital, in this sorry state. The photo was taken from Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge-2. The photo on the right taken at Lalbagh shows the filthy water of the Buriganga.

All Dhaka rivers left 'dead'

Industrial pollution goes unabated on docile action

PINAKI ROY

Soft attitude of the government towards polluters and lack of awareness among city dwellers have literally left dead all the rivers and other surface waters in and around the capital.

Over the years the government agencies conducted small-scale drives against the polluters without yielding any major success. The polluters have meanwhile continued polluting the rivers side by side with city dwellers linking excreta discharge to the storm sewerage that ultimately falls into the rivers.

The immediate past caretaker government had earlier directed industrialists to install Effluent Treatment Plants (ETP) at their respective industries by October 31, 2007. But most of the industrialists defied the directive and the government also did not go for action against the violators.

Even the Department of Environment (DoE) does not know exactly how many of the industries have ETPs installed.

"Some industries set up ETPs but don't use those as they need to spend additional money to treat their

SEE PAGE 12 COL 6

Quick bucks out of crisis

Wasa water being sold at 5 times the official price; water crisis grips Gulshan

TAWFIQUE ALI

Wasa water has become a source of quick bucks for some dishonest government employees in the wake of unbearable water crisis in the capital, allege a number of city dwellers.

They allege a clique of Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) officials are exacting more money than the official rates for water supply in lorries without money receipts.

Meanwhile, the crisis has gripped the posh Gulshan residential area with supply of "no single drop" on certain roads for last one week forcing the residents to leave their apartments.

Azra Azad, a resident of House 14, Road 30, said after a week of no water, her house got a lorry of water Sunday morning in exchange of Tk 1,500, much higher than the official rate. Besides, the Wasa men did not give them any money receipt.

The official rate of the largest water

lorry of 2,200 gallons (10,000 litres) is Tk 300, while a 250-gallon (1,100 litres) unit costs Tk 75, says a Wasa official.

Nazmun Nahar, another resident of the same house, said, "The lower-level Wasa zone officials said we would not get water if we raised questions about money."

"Water crisis has become so acute that at one stage I had to leave my apartment and move to my brother's house in old

SEE PAGE 12 COL 3



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

PM calls for action

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the power division and Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) to act expeditiously in reducing sufferings of the people caused by ongoing water and power crisis.

The PM gave the directive at a meeting with the power secretary, chairman of Wasa, managing director of Dhaka Power Distribution Company and managing director of Dhaka Electricity Supply Company.

Hasina after returning home from Saudi Arabia, summoned the officials concerned in her office and discussed about the matter how to solve the water and power crisis in the city.

During the meeting, she asked them to inform the news of load shedding in the areas concerned through

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Dhaka gone crazy

Heat, outage, water crisis cripple city life

HELEMLU ALAM

Life in the capital has become utterly miserable over the last ten days due to a severe heat wave accompanied with repeated load shedding, an acute water crisis, shortage of gas supply, infestation of mosquitoes, and the resultant near epidemic of diseases like diarrhoea.

Other diseases like typhoid, jaundice, and heatstroke are also on the rise.

Residents of Dhaka city experienced a 14-year record high temperature of 38.7 degrees Celsius yesterday with one person dying of diarrhoea the day before.

Students who are taking the ongoing higher secondary certificate (HSC) exams are the worst sufferers among the living, amid an aggregate average load shedding of 8 to 12 hours a day, accompanied by mosquito bites, inadequate gas supply to their home kitchens, and no water at all or supply of dirty malodorous water.

Md Sazzad Hossain, an HSC candidate from Dhaka Commerce College, said he has been enduring load shedding every

other hour while preparing for his exams in the sweltering heat punctuated by mosquito bites.

Ahsanul Haque, another HSC candidate from Dhanmondi Ideal School who lives in Mirpur section-12, said everyday they have been going through eight hours of load shedding which is seriously hampering his preparation for the exams.

"Although my father set up an IPS, it doesn't work with repeated load shedding as it needs three hours of continuous charge to produce one hour of alternate electricity," he said.

Nazrul Islam, owner of a plastic goods factory in Islambagh, said production in his factory dropped about 80 percent due to the repeated load shedding.

He said owners of over one lakh small plastic goods factories in Islambagh and Lalbagh areas have been going through the same ordeal.

All three children of Shudhir Chandra Saha, another resident of the area, already have skin rashes due to the hot weather with no way to operate any cooling device

due to the load shedding.

Residents of different areas including parts of Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Gandaria, Mohakhali, Gopibagh, Jatrabari, and Shantinagar have been enduring severe water crisis or getting malodorous dirty water.

Md Ayub, a resident of PC Culture Housing Society in Mohammadpur, said they have been facing a water crisis for the last ten days.

A portion of their area has not been getting a single drop of water while they have been getting a very little amount since Saturday, which is not at all adequate to meet their demand, he said.

A high official of Wasa blamed the incessant load shedding for the current water crisis, since almost a half of their pump houses do not have alternate power generators.

Wasa currently has 233 fixed generators and 40 mobile generators for 514 pump houses in the city, he said.

The official said Wasa authorities took

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Tk 14 for paddy, Tk 22 for rice

Govt fixes procurement prices 1-2 taka higher than production cost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has fixed the procurement prices of per kg Boro paddy at Tk 14 while rice at Tk 22 to encourage farmers and protect their interest.

A meeting of the Food Planning and Monitoring Committee also decided that a total of 10.5 lakh tonnes of rice and 1.5 lakh tonnes of paddy will be procured from May 1 to August 30 this year.

Agriculture Ministry officials said the procurement price of rice has been fixed one or two taka higher than its production cost to protect the farmers from loss amid low price of rice on the local market.

The meeting presided over by Food Minister Dr Abdur Razaque yesterday also fixed the price of per kg 'atap' (sunned rice) at Tk 21.

According to the agriculture ministry, the production cost of Boro paddy is around Tk 13

per kg while Boro rice Tk 20 per kg.

The meeting decided that the procurement drive would start on May 1 and continue until August 30. Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury were present at the meeting.

The government will procure 12 lakh tonnes of rice and paddy during the Boro season. In last Boro season, the procurement target was 15 lakh tonnes but the achievement was around 11.67 lakh tonnes.

After the meeting Abdur Razaque said the price has been fixed after consulting with all concerned. He said prices of rice may go up a little in the market but necessary measures would be taken under safety net programmes so that the marginal consumers are not adversely affected.

After harvesting bumper Boro production for two consecutive seasons, some quarters

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Move to drop 10 'political' cases against Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The public prosecutor (PP) has appealed for withdrawal of 10 'political' cases filed against the Awami League (AL) President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The appeal was submitted to the Dhaka district committee, dealing with the politically-motivated cases filed in Dhaka district. So far, 50 such cases have been submitted to the committee for consideration, sources said.

PP Md Abdullah Abu yesterday said a private television channel that he recommended to withdraw 50 cases out of 810 filed in Dhaka district, adding, "these cases were filed against politicians, including Sheikh Hasina."

He said he also evaluated documents of some of the cases, which cannot be withdrawn, as those were not filed for political harassment.

Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka Zillur Rahman said many minister and lawmakers submitted prayer to the home ministry for withdrawal of the cases against them. The cases filed against the prime minister, lawmaker Tofael Ahmed

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

MUTINY 72 more BDR men shown arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seventy-two more suspected Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) mutineers were shown arrested yesterday and 10 of them were placed on a five-day remand each.

Meanwhile, a lost BDR pistol was recovered from the Pikhana quarters of a BDR member.

A BDR jawan died of cancer at Narsingdi Sadar Hospital Saturday, says a BDR press release.

Criminal Investigation

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Caretaker govt system not a must to hold fair polls

Says EC Sakhawat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Sakhawat Hossain yesterday said the caretaker government system is not a must for holding the parliamentary election in a free and fair manner.

"Election can be held freely and fairly without the caretaker government system. But it depends on the Election

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3