

Old Dhaka still not safe

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Asked about the progress in this regard, Moinuddin Abdullah, secretary at the industries ministry, said the process was underway, and a committee was formed to that end.

He declined to give details.

In many parts of Old Dhaka, chemical warehouses and stores are located close to residential buildings and private hospitals.

For instance, Eastern Diagnostic Centre is atop several chemical stores selling flammable substances on Mitford road. The diagnostic centre doesn't have any emergency staircase for patients. A narrow stairway is all it has.

Similarly, Moonlight Clinic and Diagnostic Hospital, boasting an array of specialist consultants, is located right above chemical warehouses.

None of its administrative staff was available for comment yesterday.

A lack of awareness among locals about the hazards of chemicals is also a matter of concern.

Two-wheeled carts loaded with

barrels of flammable lubricant plied the narrow roads of Armanitola when this correspondent visited the area. A spark from a carelessly-thrown cigarette stub would be enough to make them explode.

Three people died in a fire at a shop selling chemicals for making deodorants in Chhoto Katra area on April 3 when a worker lit up a cigarette while others were pouring the liquid from one jar to another.

However, the picture is now different at Nimtoli.

No chemical warehouses or stores are there in the narrow stretch of the road, as local traders relocated their shops to other places.

Locals said they didn't get any help from the government for relocating those from Nimtoli.

A building that once had a chemical warehouse on its ground floor now houses a cafe.

Building's owner Mohammad Aslam said, "We have seen what can happen if we keep chemicals near our homes. How can we keep those here?"

Mamata defends

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days drinking water will not be available."

She said West Bengal government should be consulted.

"I love 'chitmahal' (people living in the enclaves). But I have to give justice. I do not do anything unilaterally without thinking of the people," she said.

Accusing local BJP of trying to rake up the enclaves issue to gain votes, she said the previous Left Front government in the state had not done anything either but her government was undertaking a survey and a census of

the population in the enclaves located in West Bengal.

Mamata, the Trinamool Congress chairperson, had expressed strong reservations over the introduction of a constitution amendment bill in Indian parliament last December to ratify the Land Boundary Agreement Bill which envisaged exchange of about 161 enclaves adversely held by India and Bangladesh.

Trinamool Congress, BJP and Asom Gana Parishad had strongly opposed two separate attempts by Congress-led UPA government to introduce the bill to ratify the LBA.



Potter Tapon Pal of Kumarbari in Rajapur of Jhalakathi is painting clay toys so that those could be sold during the three-day local fair celebrating Pahela Baishakh, the Bangla New Year. Pahela Baishakh is tomorrow.

PHOTO: ZAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL



CARS ON WRONG SIDE DMP to use spike strips

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To stop vehicles from travelling on the wrong side of streets, Dhaka Metropolitan Police will start using spike strips from this month as an experiment.

The strips will be installed on Hare Road in Ramna, Khan Muhammed Rejwan, deputy commissioner of traffic (South Division) of DMP told The Daily Star yesterday.

The spike strips would shred the tyres of a vehicle travelling on the wrong side of the street but the spikes would retract when a vehicle travelling on the correct side of the street goes over them.

DMP officials said if the device proved to be a success, then it would be installed on other important streets of the capital where vehicles often break rules and travel on the wrong side, create traffic jams, not to mention endangering others on the road.

Vehicles owned by VIPs are often seen travelling on the wrong side of streets ignoring traffic rules. Traffic policemen have been seen helping those vehicles break the rules rather than taking appropriate action against them.

2 UPDF men

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Niran Chakma, press and information secretary of the UPDF, held responsible the activists of Santu Larma-led Parbatai Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) faction for the killing.

But the PCJSS denied the allegation.

Remittances to rebound

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Washington on Friday. It may rise to \$516 billion in 2016.

Global remittances, including those to high-income countries, are estimated at \$581 billion this year, from \$542 billion in 2013, rising to \$681 billion in 2016.

The main driver of growth in remittance flows is the expansion of incomes in the destination countries, the World Bank said.

"Exchange rate movements of world currencies also contribute significantly to the outlook for remittances expressed in US dollars," it said.

The impetus to migrate remains strong, as employment conditions are improving in source countries for remittances. Low costs of cash transfers and easy remitting systems are also providing a boost, the report mentioned.

In 2013, growth in remittances to South Asia has slowed, rising by a modest 2.3 percent to \$111 billion, compared with an average annual increase of more than 13 percent during the previous three years, according to the report.

The slowdown was driven by a year-on-year decline in Bangladesh of 2.4 percent and a marginal increase in India of 1.7 percent in 2013.

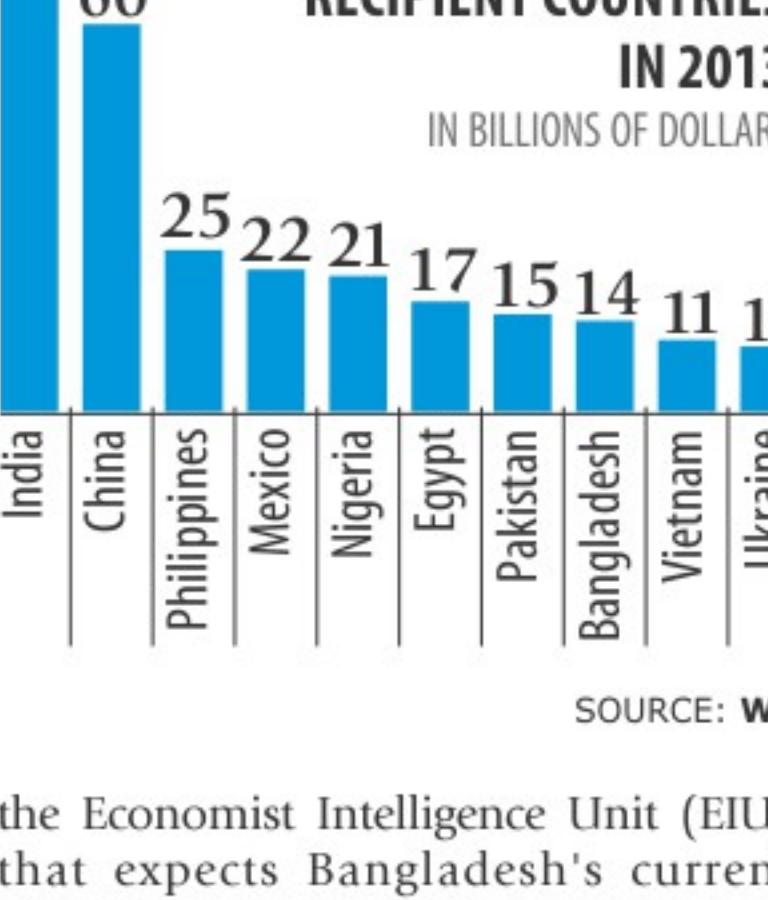
In Bangladesh, the fall in remittances stems from a combination of factors, including fewer migrants finding jobs in the Gulf countries, more migrants returning home due to departures and deportations, and the appreciation of the taka against the dollar.

Only 96,068 people found jobs abroad in the three months to March against 107,626 in the same period of last year, government data shows. In March, overseas employment was also about 10 percent down from the same month a year earlier.

"Still, some rebound is projected in the coming years, with remittances across the region forecast to grow," the WB said of Bangladesh that received around \$14 billion last year becoming the third largest recipient of remittances in South Asia, after India and Pakistan.

Bangladesh received \$1.27 billion in remittances in March, the highest single month inflow since July.

The World Bank report concurs with



SOURCE: WB

the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) that expects Bangladesh's current account will remain in the black in 2014-18, largely due to remittances.

"Despite an anticipated drop in remittances in 2013, they will remain an important feature of the current account and will continue to make up the bulk of inward transfers," EIU said. Remittances will be equivalent to around 10 percent of nominal GDP.

Remittances remain a key source of external resource flows for developing countries, far exceeding official development assistance and more stable than private debt and portfolio equity flows, the World Bank said.

For many developing countries, remittances are an important source of foreign exchange, surpassing earnings from major exports, and covering a substantial portion of imports.

In Nepal, remittances are nearly double the country's revenues from exports of goods and services, while in Sri Lanka and the Philippines, they are over 50 percent and 38 percent.

India led the chart of remittance flows, receiving \$70 billion last year, more than the \$65 billion earned from the country's flagship software services exports. In Uganda, remittances are double the country's income from its main export of coffee.

"There is no doubt that these flows act as an antidote to poverty and promote prosperity. Remittances and migration data are also barometers of global peace and turmoil," said Kaushik Basu, chief economist of the World Bank.

The report notes that while the medium-term outlook for remittances is

strong, downside risks loom mainly from migrants' return to their home countries as a result of conflict or deportation from host countries.

Last year saw an intensification of deportations, with more than 370,000 migrants sent back to their home countries from Saudi Arabia alone in the five months since November 2013.

Bangladesh was one of the countries that suffered the shock. Most of these migrants deported from the kingdom came from Ethiopia, Egypt and Yemen.

In the US, over 368,000 people -- mostly migrants seeking entry into the US and apprehended at the border -- were deported to their home countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to the report.

SAVINGS

"In addition to the large annual flows of remittances, migrants living in high income countries are estimated to hold savings in excess of \$500 billion annually. These savings represent a huge pool of funds that developing countries can do much more to tap into," said Dilip Ratha, manager of the migration and remittances team at the WB's Development Prospects Group.

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Continued efforts are required to lower the cost of sending money through official channels, although inroads are being made. During the first quarter, the global average cost for sending money fell to 8.4 percent of the transaction value, compared with 9.1 percent a year earlier, the WB said.

"The cost of remittances in Bangladesh is one of the lowest in the world mainly because of the strategic use of mobile financial services and strategic partnership developed among banks, telecom companies and microfinance institutions," Atiur Rahman, governor of Bangladesh Bank, said at the launch of the report.

"As development experts debate the post-2015 agenda, they also need to turn their attention to reducing the high cost of migration, particularly exorbitant fees paid by low-skilled workers to recruitment agents to secure jobs overseas," Ratha said.

Indian polls

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the halfway mark in India's 10-phase staggered polling.

Elsewhere, voting resumed in the fourth stage of the general election yesterday in four states - Goa, Assam, Tripura and Sikkim, reports BBC.

Sikkim, a tiny Himalayan state, is also holding local elections, including the contest for a seat in the regional assembly which is reserved for a Buddhist monk.

The first key day of polling saw millions of Indians vote on Thursday in 14 states.

The governing Congress party, led by Rahul Gandhi, is pitted against the main opposition BJP, led by the Hindu nationalist, Narendra Modi.

However, the anti-corruption Aam Aadmi (Common Man's) Party, with its stronghold in the capital, Delhi, is mounting a strong challenge.

Rahul Gandhi, scion of Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, today entered the parliamentary election fray by filing his nomination papers from Amethi constituency in Uttar Pradesh.

Rahul, 43, has represented in Lok Sabha twice and expressed confidence about retaining it for the third straight time, writes our New Delhi correspondent.

Rahul is expected to be challenged by Bharatiya Janata Party's candidate Smriti Irani, a leading actress who shot into fame by portraying the role of Sita in the popular TV serial "Ramayana".

Rahul was accompanied by his mother and party president Sonia Gandhi, sister Priyanka and her husband Robert Vadra when he filed nomination papers before the Returning Officer.

Later, interacting with the media, he expressed confidence about victory from the constituency.

He said he has family relations with Amethi and "we will have a good victory."

Rahul said he had focussed on three things for development of Amethi -- working with women's

bodies, connecting the area with national highways and railways and developing a food park.

He will focus on these issues in the future also to generate more employment for youths, he said.

Rahul along with Sonia, Priyanka and Vadra reached Amethi after conducting a roadshow through adjoining Sultanpur where his cousin Varun Gandhi is contesting on a BJP ticket.

Amethi is going to polls on May 7.

Meanwhile, the value of Rahul Gandhi's total assets has doubled to Rs 9.4 crore in the last five years. However, he does not own a car.

In the affidavit filed by him along with his nomination papers today, he has disclosed that the total value of his real estate assets (including the advance of Rs 6.8 crore paid on property) has increased from Rs 4.4 crore in 2009 to Rs 8.2 crore, an increase of about 86 per cent.

'Landmine blasts'

"The Maoists triggered the landmine blasts," Singh, a key official in ensuring election safety in the state, told AFP.

Five security men who were carrying out an election safety sweep and who hitched a ride in an ambulance were killed in another landmine blast, reports AFP.

The ambulance driver and a paramedic were also killed in that blast, which created a huge crater. Four men were injured two "very seriously" Singh said.

The security men had been securing the area for polling teams to travel," Singh said.

The Maoists have called for a boycott of the elections.

The doubling of the total value of the assets from Rs 4.7 crore to Rs 9.4 crore has been primarily due to appreciation in property prices.

The number of real estate assets owned by Gandhi has declined since 2009 as he as sold the two shops he owned in a mall and exited another agricultural property. He continues to own a share in the inherited farm in Sultanpur village in Delhi.

Fish trader now a surgeon!

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Babul owns the clinic National Care General Hospital which has a slogan too: "One Step Ahead in Health Service".

The duo, however, could not be a step ahead of the law. Early yesterday, a mobile court backed up by Rapid Action Battalion busted them.

Ratan and his relative Babul were jailed for a year and fined Tk 1.05 lakh each. They hail from Pirojpur.

The court also fined five other employees of the clinic Tk 5,000 each.

The clinic was sealed off and the patients were moved to National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor), said Executive Magistrate Anwar Pasha, who led the drive.

Pasha said the duo had been deceiving everyone, including government officials.

Babul, who has experience as a

magistrate added.

According to Rab, the clinic charged Farid, 22, of Jamalpur Tk 90,000 for a surgery in his leg and then kept him confined to the clinic for a month when he could not pay up.

Prof Abdul Gani Mollah, secretary general of Bangladesh Orthopaedic Society said, "Drilling bones using a regular drill is risky. It can create infection and patients may suffer for a long time."

He said the drills doctors use are more sophisticated and their revolutions per minute are fewer than off-the-shelf drills, which are not built to minimise vibrations during drilling.

During primary interrogation Ratan admitted that the drill was bought from a local hardware shop.

Rab said they recovered the 3,500

revolutions per minute drill from the clinic.

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Councils of the thana units started in September last year. Councils of the