

Religion belongs to communities but festival to all: President

UNB, Dhaka

Mentioning that sense of unity and secularism is the long-practicing characteristics of people of Bangladesh, President Abdul Hamid yesterday said religion belongs to a community but festival belongs to all.

The President was talking to media during a reception he hosted to members of the Hindu community at Bangabhaban on occasion of Durga Puja. President exchanged greetings and pleasantries during reception. Religious Affairs Minister Principal Matiar Rahman, along with Hindu religious personalities and leaders of various puja committees were also present.

"Bangladesh is a country of communal harmony.



Sewage flows into Gulshan-1 Lake of the capital while garbage fills its bank but the authorities are as unperturbed as before about the pollution of the water body and ruination of its beauty. The Daily Star published photos of the lake several times before. This one was taken last week.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BANGLADESHI DETAINEES IN TEXAS They call off hunger strike

After Dhaka-Washington negotiation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Fifty-four South Asians, including 35 Bangladeshis, seeking asylum in the US ended their six-day hunger strike at a detention centre in El Paso, Texas on October 20 following two days' negotiations between Dhaka and Washington, said diplomatic sources.

However, a press release of the Bangladesh embassy in Washington says the figure was 41, including the 35.

Minister (Consular) Md Shamsul Alam Chowdhury at the embassy led the negotiations earlier that day with representatives of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Department of Homeland Security, it adds.

Insisting that all the detainees be released through "bail bonds", he brought food for the ICE detention facility's protesters, persuaded them into cancelling the strike and informed them about some decisions.

Sources said the demonstrators were allegedly protesting confinement, lack of access to healthcare or medical staff and to interpreters, harsh treatment from guards, and possible deportation.

Both sides agreed on releasing the detainees from October 26 to November 15; and allowing 17 to shift to

Most building designs lack fire safety measures

Leading architect Prof Nizamuddin Ahmed tells Rotary, fire service, scouts seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fire safety measures are ignored in most building designs in Bangladesh posing a high risk to human lives, a leading architect told a seminar in the capital yesterday.

Building owners, particularly of tall ones, must install escape plans with the help of professional architects and engineers, said the leading architect, Prof Nizamuddin Ahmed, also a leading Rotarian and national programme committee chair of Bangladesh Scouts.

Rotary Club of Dhaka Urbana in association with Bangladesh Scouts and Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence organised the safety seminar, "Earth, Steel

and Fire", at a hotel.

Lack of planned escape routes lead to deaths from suffocation and being crushed in panicking crowds, said Prof Nizamuddin, adding that narrow lanes and water shortages in localities, particularly in Dhaka city's case, are two others making fires devastating.

Advent of taller buildings and use of enclosed areas for air conditioning and of highly combustible materials have increased the number of possible fire hazards, he said.

He urged the regulatory authorities and building owners to make sure alternative staircases at a distance from planned escape passages, there are "refuge cells" or places in

SEE PAGE 5 COL 3

Fines for illegal parking, speeding to be hiked

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Dhaka

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said fine for illegal parking and over speeding will be raised.

"The existing fine of Tk 200 to 300 is not enough and once increased, drivers will think before speeding and illegal parking," he told a procession organised by "Nirapad Sarak Chai", in the Capital's Shilpa Kala Academy.

However, the minister did not mention when the fine will be raised or how they will check over

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



The Dhaka North City Corporation working to build a speed breaker on Kalshi Link Road in the capital yesterday, where Sharmin, 18, was killed after being run over by a covered van the day before. The authorities were forced to do that in the face of protest by local residents.

PHOTO: SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Form ninth wage board for journo

Demands BFUJ faction

BSS, Dhaka

Leaders of a faction of the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) demanded formation of ninth wage board and announcement of the New Year bonus for journalists and employees of the newspaper industry of the country.

Welcoming the announcement of new pay scale and New Year bonus for government employees, BFUJ leaders called upon the government to announce dearness allowance immediately before the formation of the ninth wage board, said a BFUJ release yesterday. The proposals were taken recently at a meeting of the national executive council of BFUJ.

The leaders urged the owners of the media houses to ensure New Year bonus for journalists and employees on the first day of next Bangla year, said the release.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

FREQUENT CRASHES ON KALSHI LINK ROAD What to do?

DNCC building speed breaker but experience shows unplanned breakers only add to the problem

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the face of public protest, the Dhaka North City Corporation started building a speed breaker on Kalshi Link Road yesterday, a day after a female student was killed in a road accident there.

Since 10:30am, several hundred locals had blocked the road, stopping vehicular movement for at least three and a half hours. They put a two-hour blockade on Wednesday evening as well after Sharmin Akhter, 18, of Manikdi was run over by a covered-van around noon.

Local residents said they were demanding a speed breaker there because the area came to be known as accident-prone in the last one and a half years.

"One or two accidents take place every week here," said a local, wishing anonymity. He added that the accidents happened because of speeding vehicles.

In the same area, another person was killed in an accident during Ramadan, and the local residents grew restless to have a speed breaker there.

They even had started digging the road but the authorities stopped them, saying they would build it of their own.

However, an analysis of The Daily Star reports shows unplanned speed

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

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RICE

THE ULTIMATE DELICACY

KNOW YOUR FOOD

For us Bengalis "bhaat" is what cheese is to the French; the dominant dish in every household without which lunch or dinner is unimaginable. But many are unaware that cultivation of rice can trace its roots back to five thousand years ago. So it comes as no surprise that rice has found its place in cultural festivals as well; Pahela Baishakh is synonymous with cooked rice that is soaked overnight and then eaten the next day for breakfast with an assortment of "Bhortas" and fried Hilsha fish. "Khichuri" a form of rice that is cooked with pulses and spices, is a very common sight on rainy days. Rice is one of those foods that not only compliments vegetable and curry dishes let that be spicy, sweet or sour but is also used to prepare desserts such as rice pudding, "jorda" and can even be processed to produce puffed rice, "khoi" etc.

The production of rice is solely responsible for about forty-eight percent of the rural employment. It is considered the staple food for about a hundred and thirty-five million people in Bangladesh. The most common type of rice eaten by Bangladeshis is called Miniket whilst the most expensive one is Basmati. It is a great source of carbohydrates and also contains some protein and minute amounts of vitamins and minerals.

Shwapno sends a quality control team to inspect designated rice mills every alternative week; amongst them Md. Abdus Samad's rice mill is also one of them. Mr. Samad collects grains from various rice fields across the districts such as Natore, Sirajganj, Jessore and many more and starts off by visiting the rice fields. He is always on the lookout for farmers who only cultivate one variety of rice all across their fields as many cultivate a combination of grains. After selection of the fields he makes preparations for the unprocessed rice to be sent to his mill where it is inspected and cleaned of impurities. After that the grains are put through a machine that separates the rice from the grain. The rice is washed with arsenic-free water and inspected further to separate broken grains from the intact ones. Humidity is an important factor in this whole process, so temperature is always kept at fourteen degree celsius. This whole process of acquiring the grain to produce rice is done within 24 hours and then sent off to the markets.

After a long day of hard work, the sense of pleasure and content when a hot plate of steaming rice is placed on the table, is one that only Bengalis from all walks of life can comprehend. Similarly, it is also important for us to acknowledge that these grains of rice play a much bigger role than just filling our tummies as for many it is their sole source of income as well.

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The Daily Star

Photo: Dolan Tahakder

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