



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE
Showbiz

STARTING STRONG
Bangladesh defeat Sri Lanka 4-2 in Bangabandhu Gold Cup Opener
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Military vows support to Maduro, as he faces opposition challenges
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Cops collect toll for use of road

Vehicles using road in front of trade fair venue forced to pay 'parking toll'; EPB awarded job to police without tender



SHARIFUL ISLAM and JAMIL MAHMUD

Police are forcibly and illegally taking money in the name of "parking tolls" from any car using the road in front of the Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) in Agargaon.

The road that connects Rokeya Sarani with Mirpur Road -- on which several important establishments like public schools and hospitals, including Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, are located -- has also been made off-limits to regular traffic.

Exceptions are made only for those working and living in Agargaon and Sher-e-Bangla Nagar areas.

This particular stretch of the road becomes especially important for vehicles on Rokeya Sarani to cut through to Mirpur Road when Crescent Road remains closed for security of the prime minister's residence, Gono Bhaban.

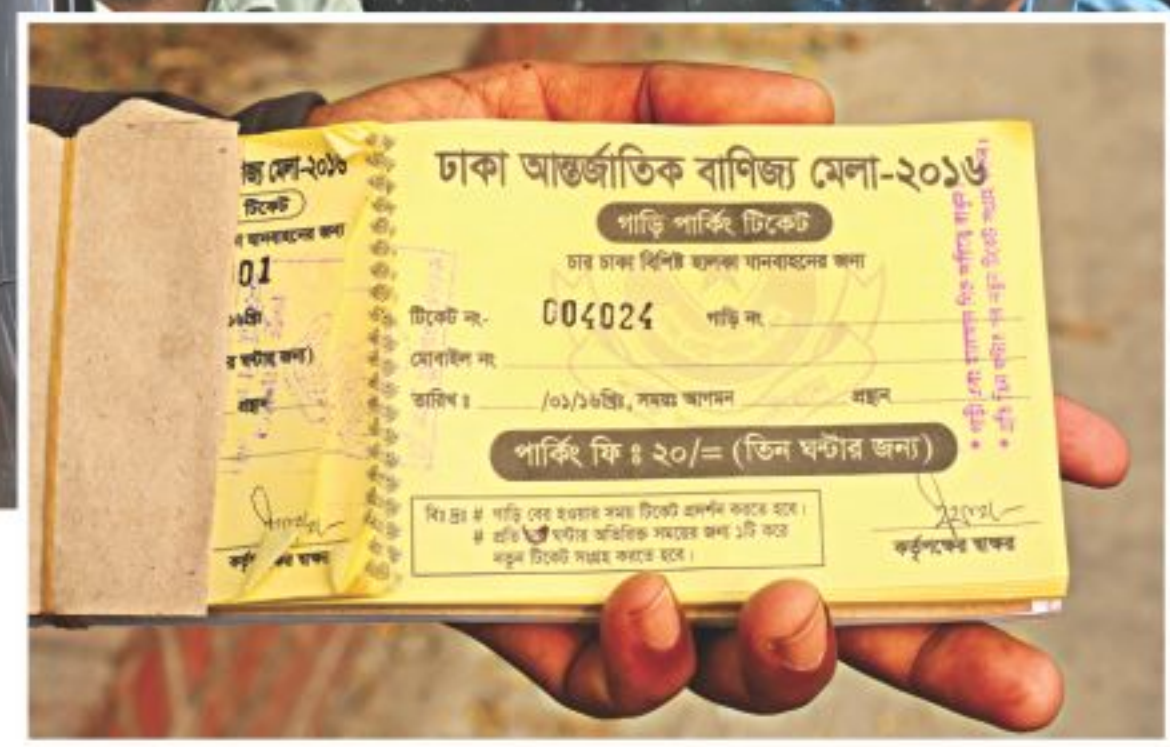
Though the job of parking fee collection there is usually leased out to private firms, the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), the main organiser of the month-long yearly fair, this year has given the job to police, that too without tender.

Several thousand vehicles use the road regularly, according to a former in-charge of a police box there.

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN
A policeman collecting toll from a car near the trade fair yesterday. Since the fair began on January 1, cops have been illegally charging vehicles using the road connecting Rokeya Sarani with Mirpur Road.



PART-3
For 91 days from January 5 to April 5 last year, there was hardly a single day when innocent people were not burnt to death or injured in arson attacks on public transports. Some lost their loved ones, others their lone bread earners during the longest spell of horror allegedly carried out by the BNP-led coalition, protesting the January 5, 2014, elections. At least 95 people were killed and about 1,500 injured. Most of them were ordinary citizens, living from hand to mouth. Another 45 got killed in "shootouts" with law enforcement agencies. About half of them were allegedly involved in arson attacks. The economic loss from the blockade and shutdown was enormous. One year on, the overall picture has changed but the ordeals of those injured and the families of those killed have not. The Daily Star visited over a dozen such families. Today's story is about petrol bomb victims of Magura.

Living with old memories

A mother refuses to stay in her dream home because it came at a high price



Sakiran Begum of Malikgram village in Magura Sadar upazila could not hold her tears while talking about her son Matin Biswas's death in an arson attack during last year's countrywide blockade enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and WASIM BIN HABIB

It has always been her dream to live in a pukka house, which she has got now. It's a small, tin-roofed house in her small homestead. But she cannot live in it as it came at a high price -- her son Matin Biswas's life.

"All our life we longed for a house and we have it now. But my *Moni* [Matin] is no more to live in it," she said, crying incessantly.

Sakiran Begum lives in their old, decrepit hut, made of bamboo fence and corrugated iron sheets. The tiny hut says it all about her family's poverty. A cot, a mosquito net, a small table, and some utensils are all she has in the hut, which was partitioned by a bamboo fence. In one part of it, she keeps her goats.

"I feel bad to live in that house. I can't live in there," she said, taking a pause before beginning

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The burnt hands of Ilias Biswas, below, who suffered 50% burns in an arson attack last year.

No time to rest

Badly burnt man toils on to provide for his family

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and WASIM BIN HABIB

Ilias Biswas cannot afford to stay at home.

After surviving a deadly petrol bomb attack on March 21 last year, he could rest only till his wounds healed. And then he had to return to the backbreaking job of a day labourer.

"How would I provide for my family if I did not go to work? We would have to die of starvation," said the father of two, with his head hunched, his eyes gazing at the ground.



Ilias Biswas

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RESENTMENT OVER PAY SCALE Of 'anomalies' and confusions

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

It was supposed to get praise but all it generated was bitterness. The eighth National Pay Scale should have come as good news for the public servants as it will give them more money in the pocket and a number of other perks.

Overall, the salaries and allowances for the civil servants have nearly doubled. They are also getting Bengali New Year bonus from the current fiscal year.

Instead of gratitude the government is hearing unhappy outbursts from the very people it is supposed to please. The causes are the exclusion of time scale and the selection grade as well as difference in pay among different cadres.

Amid movements and confusions among different government service employees, a puzzled finance minister commented that the ongoing movement is because of a lack of correct information.

Public university teachers have been one of the most vocal protesters of the exclusion of the selection grade and

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Everything OK

Elimination of time scale, selection grade a right decision, Farashuddin, head of Pay Commission, tells Star

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD FAZLUR RAHMAN

Mohammed Farashuddin firmly believes it was wise to drop the time scale and selection grade from the Eighth National Pay Scale.

The head of the Pay and Services Commission, however, said that more incentives could be given to civil servants.

"I strongly stand by the commission's recommendations on the selection grade and time scale. The alternative [annual increment] to those has been approved by the government. It should be continued, perhaps with more incentives," he told The Daily Star in an interview on Thursday.

He said the time scale and selection grade were imperfect, incomplete and riddled with irregularities.

Many public servants, who took the facilities, didn't get



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Tongi abuzz with Muslim devotees

Biswa Ijtema begins

HELEMUL ALAM and ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE AKAND

Ignoring cold, lakhs of devotees from home and abroad yesterday joined the first day of Biswa Ijtema on the Turag bank in Tongi to seek divine blessings.

The first phase, which will conclude with Akheri Munajat (final prayers) tomorrow, began with delivering religious sermons after Fajr prayers.

The second phase of the largest congregation of Muslims after the Hajj will be held from January 15 to 17.

Three devotees who participated in the Ijtema died due to old age compli

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Khaleda, war criminals committed similar crimes

Says PM

BSS, Gopalganj

Like the war criminals, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia also would not be spared by the people of Bangladesh for having committed similar crimes, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday.

"The people of Bangladesh rejected Khaleda Zia in the recent municipal elections and they would certainly give an identical reply to her [in future] for her politics of destruction, killing and arson," she said.

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