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NO BILLBOARD
Beauty of port city restored

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN, Ctg

You will be delighted if you visit the port city. The entire city now wears a fresh look as the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) has removed almost all the billboards along the roads.

Even at the beginning of last month, hundreds of billboards were seen erected on the roofs of buildings, and by the roadside here and there, overshadowing the beauty of the city.

However, the scenario started to change after January 14 when a special drive was launched to remove them.

CCC Chief Executive Officer Kazi Mohammad Shafiul Alam said not a single billboard in the port city was authorised as many did not have their approval renewed after the 2014-15 fiscal year.

The others were illegal and built without ensuring proper safety measures, said sources.

The ongoing drive aimed at restoring the beauty of the port city, said Kazi, adding that no new billboards would be allowed and anyone who would come forward to work for the city's beautification would be welcomed.

According to corporation sources, there were about 10,000 billboards across the city.

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With the eyesore of cluttered billboards along Chittagong city roads gone, the city now looks clean, thanks to recent eviction drives by the Chittagong City Corporation. The photos, left, were taken in the city's Tiger Pass area yesterday. Right, billboards obstructed view in the area in 2014.



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS



Harper Lee no more

AGENCIES

American novelist Harper Lee, famous for her masterpiece "To Kill a Mockingbird" and for shunning the fame it brought her, has died aged 89, officials in her hometown said yesterday.

A spokeswoman for Monroeville, Alabama, where Lee was born and spent her final years living in seclusion, confirmed local media reports of her death, saying: "She did pass away."

Lee's 1960 novel, which earned her a Pulitzer Prize, came to define racial injustice in the Depression-era.

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BNP struggles to pick single UP candidates

PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

With the party's sixth national council less than a month away, the BNP is likely to face intra-party conflicts at the grassroots over picking single chairman candidates for the ensuing union parishad polls.

For the first time in the country's history, elections to UP chairman posts are going to be held on partisan lines. Polls to over 700 UPs will be held in the first phase on March 22. Sources in BNP said multiple chairman candidates have emerged in more than half of the UPs.

According to the polls schedule declared by the Election Commission, February 22 is the last date for filing nominations. The BNP is likely to finalise the list of its nominees by February 21.

The rest of around 3,500 union parishads will go to polls in different phases until June 4.

A senior BNP leader said they have already finalised the names of around 200 UP chairmen hopefuls from Barisal, Noakhali and some other districts.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Wednesday directed party high ups to stop the ongoing reform at grassroots as it might trigger infighting ahead of the party's March 19 national council.

Accordingly, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has asked some district leaders to stop the preparations for holding district councils, said party sources.

Talking to The Daily Star, some BNP leaders involved in picking party candidates said although the party's high command stopped holding the district councils for now, the ensuing UP polls might set off infighting in the party.

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Train fare to increase from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People have to pay extra for train journey as the new railway fare for passengers and freight is effective from today.

Passenger fares have gone up by 7-9 percent on route-wise following the enforcement of the fare hike.

The enforcement has come more than a month after the parliamentary standing committee on railways endorsed a plan for the train fare hike on January 12, aiming to improve the service quality and minimise losses in the railway sector.

Habibur Rahman, additional director general (operations) of Bangladesh Railway, told The Daily Star yesterday that the new railway fare would be effective from today.

He also said passengers, who had purchased advanced tickets for today from February 16, had already been charged the new fares.

However, the move would have little impact on around Tk 900-crore annual losses as it would bring in only an additional Tk 45 crore annually, railway officials say.

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Lions on the loose in Kenyan capital



AFP, Nairobi

Wildlife rangers yesterday hunted for two lions who escaped from Nairobi's national park and meandered into "highly populated" areas of the Kenyan capital.

Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) issued an appeal, "for help to get two lionesses that strayed from the Nairobi National Park."

Armed rangers as well as KWS vets with dart guns scoured bush and agricultural land alongside the Kibera district, one of Africa's largest slums.

"Lions are dangerous wild animals. Avoid provoking the lions by confronting them," said KWS spokesman Paul Udoto.

At least two lionesses are reported to have left the park late Thursday, spread over 117 square kilometres.

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2-year-old rescued 39 days after abduction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Police yesterday rescued two-year-old child Leon, who was abducted 39 days ago from Aliganj area in Narayanganj, from Durgapur in Comilla.

The law enforcers also arrested four alleged abductors including a woman in connection with the abduction.

The arrestees are Parveen Aktar alias Soma, 28, of Rangpur Sadar, her husband Maznu Miah, 36, Anwar Hossain, 35, and Zaman, 55, of Comilla Dakkhin Police Station.

Abdur Razzak, inspector of Fatullah Model Police in Narayanganj, said Soma and her husband live in a slum at Fatullah with Leon's parents Dilu Miah and Bilkis.

On January 10, Soma took Leon from Dilu, who

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Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, centre, Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, 2nd from left, and Kaler Kantho Editor Imdadul Haq Milan, far right, unveiling the logo of News24, a private television channel of East West Media Group Ltd, at the International Convention City Bashundhara in the capital yesterday.

Logo of new TV channel News24 unveiled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The logo of News24, an HD satellite television channel of East West Media Group Ltd (EWMGL), was unveiled at the International Convention City Bashundhara in the capital yesterday.

The news channel,

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Dozens killed as US hits IS in Libya

'Key operative' killed; militants increase use of child soldiers

AGENCIES

A US air strike on a jihadist training camp in Libya killed dozens of people yesterday, probably including a senior Islamic State group operative behind attacks in Tunisia, officials said.

"The US conducted an air strike early this morning (Libya time) against an ISIL training camp near Sabratha, Libya, that likely killed ISIL operative Nouredine Chouchane," a US official said, using an alternative acronym for the IS group.

A jihadist safe house was destroyed in the dawn raid in Sabratha about 70 kilometres west of Tripoli, according to Hussein al-Dawadi, an official in the city, located near the border with Tunisia.

"The raid killed 41 people who were all inside the house," Dawadi told AFP. "The vast majority of those killed were Tunisians who were probably members of IS."

In July, an attack on a beach resort near the Tunisian city of Sousse killed 38 tourists -- including 30 Britons. That followed an attack on the National Bardo Museum in Tunis in March that killed 21 tourists and a policeman. Both attacks were claimed by IS, which the United States is also targeting with air strikes in Syria and Iraq.

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 20

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN	5-20	12-45	4-30	6-03	7-30
JAMAAT	5-55	1-15	4-45	6-07	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION