

# WATER WOES



Solid waste almost clogs this drain inlet in the capital's Sowarighat area. An inadequate and clogged up drainage system combined with a network of filled up or encroached upon canals are a few of the key reasons behind the city's escalating waterlogging crisis, according to experts. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



## BNP will come back strong after leaders' nationwide tours

Fakhrul tells reporters after meeting with chiefs of 51 teams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP will come back as a strong unit once 51 organisational teams led by senior and central leaders conclude their countrywide tours.

BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told this to reporters emerging from a meeting with the chiefs of the teams at the party's Naya Palatan central office.

The teams, however, had started their 15-day visit to the party's 75 organisational districts on April 22, said Fakhrul, adding that the teams were formed as per the decision of the party's standing committee. The tour will conclude on May 7.

"The 51 teams will go to our all 75 organisational districts to hold formal and informal meetings with grassroots leaders and activists, and give them necessary directives to reinforce the party activities," Fakhrul said.

Besides, the teams will work to eradicate internal conflicts and misunderstandings among the party men, said the party insiders.

The teams will also give the district leaders directives to simultaneously take preparation for participating in the next general election, likely to be held in January 2019, and waging a tougher movement to force the government hold the polls under a neutral administration.

As the election to six city corporations -- Rajshahi, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal, Gazipur and Rangpur -- are likely to be held in mid-June next year, the teams will take special care of those city units to ensure BNP's success using the strategy it used in Comilla city polls, the insiders added.

## Dhaka Wasa a 'failed organisation'

Says Mayor Khokon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When it comes to addressing the waterlogging problem in Dhaka city, Wasa is a "failed organisation", said Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday. "Wasa is not working properly to solve the waterlogging problem. Rather, they are busy with projects involving hundreds of crores of taka," he said while speaking at the inaugural ceremony of "Dhaka Uthshab-2017" at TSC of Dhaka University. Dhaka Debating Society organised the programme.

The mayor said it is necessary to merge Wasa (Water Supply and Sewerage Authority) with the two city corporations in Dhaka or change its leadership to solve the crisis.

Though it is the duty of Wasa to address the problem, Khokon said, they are not paying attention to it.

"This cannot go on. We want a proper management in Wasa as there is no alternative," the mayor said.

"There are many problems in the city. I don't have the mandate to solve all the



problems. But people expect me to solve those as their representative," the mayor added.

Incessant downpour in the last few days caused huge waterlogging at different parts of the city, which revealed the weakness in managing the drainage system in Dhaka city. Many areas including Karwan Bazar, Gandaria, Kathalkabagan, West Shewrapara, Dhanmondi, Nayapalatan, Fakirapool, Razabazar, Shantinagar and different parts of Old Town were the worst affected areas.

Since the canals, the primary drainage system of the city, are blocked, they cannot hold the huge volume of storm water released during the monsoon, said locals in different areas.

This messy situation could be attributed to encroachment on the drainage canals and low-lying areas by various vested quarters, inadequate drainage and pumping facilities, a lack of coordination in management of facilities by various agencies, change of drainage pattern due to land development or other human interventions, and in some areas, insufficient cleaning of drainage system, they added.

## Too dirty to use

HELEMUL ALAM

For the last two months, Yasmin Zaman, a housewife in the capital's west Rampura, has been waking up around midnight.

Hurriedly, the resident of Thai Lane of Ullon, fetches empty containers from her kitchen and sets them near the water taps in her house and waits patiently.

As soon as the clock strikes 1, she turns the taps on and starts filling up the containers one by one with water.

The 40-year-old diabetes patient has been doing this for the last two months as the water supplied by the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) has been murky with foul odour all throughout the day except from 1:00am to 4:00am.

Many of the residents claimed that the water had become contaminated by sewage due to a leak in the Wasa pipeline.

They also claimed that they were under health risk and many were already suffering from diarrhoea because of the unhealthy water.

Residents of the area said they were getting clean water only for three hours at night as most of the people remained asleep during that time and did not use bathrooms.

"We have been getting the dirty water from Wasa for almost two months, which is hampering our daily activities like cooking and taking baths. But most importantly, we are facing an acute crisis of drinking

water," said Yasmin, a house owner in the area.

She said, "At times, we have to collect water from a nearby Wasa pump by hiring rickshaw-vans. Our family expenses have gone up to around Tk 1,000 per month."

Two out of her four tenants have already moved out due to the severe water crisis, she claimed.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



A resident collecting water in West Rampura.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bangladeshis' life expectancy now 71.6 years

BSS, Dhaka

People's average life expectancy in Bangladesh is now 71 years and six months, up by nine months from 70 years and nine months in 2015.

The average life expectancy for males is less than females, planning minister AHM Mustafa Kamal told reporters at a press briefing after the ECNEC meeting in Dhaka yesterday.

Quoting a report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), he said the average life expectancy for males is 70 years and three months in 2016, which was 69 years and four months in 2015.

The average life expectancy for females is 72 years and nine months in 2016, which was 72 years in 2015, he added.

The average life expectancy for people was 70 years and four months in 2013 and in 2014 it reached 70 years and seven months.

The minister said the average life expectancy in the world is 71 years and four months.

## Former British PM Cameron due today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT



Former British prime minister David Cameron arrives in Dhaka this evening on a 24-hour personal visit.

Despite the personal nature of the visit, Cameron will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina tomorrow and attend a roundtable discussion at International Growth Centre.

He is also expected to visit a DFID project in Dhaka.

The Growth Centre, based in London School of Economics and in partnership with University of Oxford, is a research organisation working to promote sustainable growth in developing countries.

Cameron is the chair of a commission launched in March under Growth Centre that has an office in Dhaka.

Cameron, prime minister of the United Kingdom from 2010 till 2016, stepped down as the PM last year after Brexit voting.



Executive Committee Member of Dhaka Club Limited Md Abdus Salim hands over a cheque for Tk 24 lakh in aid of Savar's Rana Plaza building collapse victims, to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association President Siddiqur Rahman at a function in the capital on Sunday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Maitree Express travel time to come down to six hours

UNB, Dhaka

The passengers who travel by Maitree Express will soon enjoy direct journeys on Dhaka-Kolkata-Dhaka route that will cut down travel time from the existing nine hours to about six hours.

The nonstop service of Maitree Express, launched in 2008, is expected to begin from August next, a diplomatic source told the news agency.

This will bring an end to a longstanding grievance of passengers travelling by Maitree Express, who have to get down both at Darshana and Gede stations, said Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Harsh Vardhan Shringla.

## 560 model mosque project approved

Ecneec also okays 12 other projects

UNB, Dhaka

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) yesterday approved the construction of 560 model mosques-cum-Islamic cultural centres at district and upazila levels with an estimated cost of Tk 9,062.41 crore.

The approval came from the weekly Ecneec meeting in the NEC conference room in the city with Ecneec Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said a total of 13 projects were approved today involving an overall estimated cost of Tk 20,402.75 crore.

Of the approved 13 projects, 11 are new while two are revised ones.

The planning minister said Bangladesh Islamic Foundation under the Ministry of Religious Affairs will implement the construction of some 560 mosques-cum-Islamic cultural centres by December 2019.

Of the total project cost of Tk 9062.41 crore, the government will provide Tk 892.62 crore while the rest Tk 8,169.79 crore will come as grant from Saudi Arabia.

The Ecneec meeting also approved the Introduction of 3G Technology and Extension of 2.5G Network of State-run Teletalk with an estimated cost of Tk 675 crore to be entirely borne by the government.

The meeting also gave nod to the establishment of IT/Hi-tech park (in 12 districts) involving an estimated cost of Tk 1,796.40 crore to be completed by June 2020.

The Bangladesh Hi-tech Park Authority under the ICT Division will implement the project at Kuet in Khulna, Barisal Sadar, Rangpur Sadar, Chittagang Port, Lalmai in Comilla, Ramu in Cox's Bazar, Mymensingh Sadar, Jamalpur Sadar, Singra in Natore.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Janata Bank test question leaked

Allege a group of candidates, demand scrapping of exam

DU CORRESPONDENT

A two-day ultimatum was issued yesterday by a group of jobseekers to cancel the written test for a position at state-run Janata Bank as the question paper for the test was allegedly leaked.

The jobseekers under the banner of "general students" also demanded a fresh written test for the Executive Officer position and punishment of the ones involved in the question leak that took place on the night before the test day.

The demands were made at a press conference at the office of Dhaka

University Journalists' Association (DUJA).

On April 21, around 9,400 candidates attended the two-hour-long written test at city's Eden College, Lalmatia College and Ideal College venues.

Dean of social science faculty at Dhaka University Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed, the controller of the test, however, denied the question leak allegation.

At the press conference, the candidates claimed that the question paper was leaked on the night before the test and the questions were available on

social networking sites, especially on Facebook and Messenger.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Rakibul Hossain, spokesperson of the complainant jobseekers, displayed several screenshots of the leaked questions that were available on the social media on the night before the test.

"We went to Prof Farid with the evidence, but he told us that he couldn't do something if we had given those to him before the test," he said. "We will launch a tougher movement if the written test is not cancelled within Thursday [April 27]."

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