

N'ganj arms recovery drive called off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Law enforcers yesterday called off the arms recovery drive that had been continuing for 10 days in Rupganj upazila of Narayanganj.

Yesterday, another rocket shell and some electronics devices were recovered at Purbachal in the upazila.

Moinul Haque, superintendent of police (SP) of Narayanganj, said the operation was called off as there were no arms left.

The arms recovery case has also been shifted to CID from DB police, said the SP, adding that senior ASP Ehsanuddin Choudhury of CID would investigate the case.

OC Mahmudul Islam of district DB police on June 3 filed the case against unknown number of criminals and six by name. Of the six accused, five have been arrested.

Earlier, in a drive from June 1 night to afternoon the next day, police recovered 62 SMGs, two binoculars, two walkie-talkies, two rocket launchers, five pistols, 49 shells, 42 hand grenades, 44 magazines of SMG and huge bomb-making materials and bullets from a canal at Purbachal in Rupganj.

On June 3, police recovered five more SMGs from Basundra Atlabo area under Bholabo union in the upazila. On June 7, after water was pumped out of the canal, another rocket shell was recovered.

GEARING UP FOR EID



As Eid approaches, clockwise from top left, people flock to the footpath shops to buy dresses in the capital's Gulistan area. Dhaka witnesses severe gridlocks yesterday in many streets, such as this one in Farmgate. A worker busy working on the body of a launch to get it ready before Eid. A woman dries shemai (vermicelli), a must item on Eid day, in Bogra.

Police, politicians, admin involved in highway extortion

Says Quader



UNB, Comilla

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said a syndicate comprising police, politicians and administration officials is involved in extortion in the highways ahead of Eid.

"Several groups are involved in the highway extortion syndicate. There are also involvement of political leaders, administration and law enforcers," said Quader while inspecting the mobile court activities on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Paduar Bazar area of Comilla.

Pointing to the extortionists, the minister warned that the government will take stern action against those involved.

Quader, also Awami League general secretary, said the party will nominate candidates for the next general elections based on monitoring, scrutiny, survey and information.

"Those who are more acceptable to public will get priority..." he said.

Responding to queries about the eviction of BNP leader Moudud Ahmed from his Gulshan residence, Quader said if a former law minister does not follow court order, then how public will expect rule of law from his party BNP.

Raise taxes to discourage tobacco consumption

Demand campaigners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-tobacco campaigners yesterday demanded an increase in tax rates on tobacco products as the proposed taxation policy for fiscal 2017-18 will keep the items within people's reach.

Tax on tobacco products such as cigarettes was not increased in accordance with last year's increased buying power of consumers, per capita income and inflation, they said.

Speakers made the observations at a press conference jointly organised by Progotir Jonno Gyan (Progga) and Anti-Tobacco Media Alliance (ATMA) in association with different anti-tobacco campaigning organisations at Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Tax on the most consumed item of them all, high-end premium brand cigarettes as well as smokeless tobacco products, will

remain the same this fiscal year, they said, adding that only two percent tax increase was proposed for local low quality cigarettes in this year's budget.

Under the circumstances, tobacco products will even seem more affordable to the consumers whose buying power have increased considerably. Therefore, the government should raise taxes on these harmful products so the people are discouraged in consuming these, said the speakers.

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad said youths slowly become addicted to various drugs after getting used to consuming tobacco products such as cigarette. However, its price was not increased according to people's affordability.

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Malls yet to draw Eid shoppers

UNB, Dhaka

Eid shopping in the capital is yet to gain momentum for lack of buyers although the shopping malls are ready with diverse arrays of products.

City dwellers said they were skipping the shopping malls for the higher prices of various products as the prices have gone up this year compared to the last year.

Besides, many said that they were also facing a budget deficit for the Eid shopping after meeting their living costs and children's educational expenses.

However, traders claimed that the prices of the items have not increased much against the production costs.

Visiting different markets in the capital, the news agency found that the prices of products for women and children, including dresses and handbags, went up while that of men remained the same.

Thin crowds of shoppers were seen at Bashundhara City Shopping Complex, Elephant Road, Bailey Road, Polwel Super Market, Twin Tower Concord Shopping Complex, Hosaf Tower Shopping Complex, Mouchak Market and Fortune Shopping Complex on Friday, a weekly holiday, when generally markets see huge crowds.

Shopkeepers at Bashundhara City Shopping Complex said although visitors are thronging the market, few are buying products.

Salespersons at Polwel Super Market said though they sold products to wholesalers from Shab-e-Barat till the beginning of Ramadan, they were hardly finding any retail buyers.

Mohiuddin Ahmed, a shop-owner at Bailey Fiesta Shopping Mall, said every shop has a collection of best design and quality products, "However, buyers are only roaming the markets. We hope the sales will see a boost from this week."

Meanwhile, the shop owners in Malibagh and Mouchak areas alleged that customers are not visiting their markets due to the dilapidated condition of the roads around the markets caused by the construction of Mouchak-Moghbarz flyover.

"As a result, we can hardly sell any products," alleged Shamsul Hoque, a shop owner at Fortune Shopping Complex.

Mohamaya Lake beauty waiting to be explored

Govt planning steps to make it a tourism hotspot

UNB, Dhaka

The government is planning to take necessary steps for further developing Mohamaya, a hillside lake in Mirsarai, Chittagong, into a popular tourist destination since it lacks publicity, infrastructures and care.

The lake can draw a huge number of tourists if it could be maintained properly, said locals.

Contacted, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon told the news agency that they are working out plans to develop the spot further.

"We've already talked to the local MP [housing and public works minister] about Mohamaya Lake, and we'll take

required steps to make the site more attractive and secure..." he said.

On December 29, 2010, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the Mohamaya Lake and Irrigation Project, situated two kilometres east of Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

Nurul Alam, a local businessman, said, "The spot has immense natural qualities to attract nature lovers..., but it needs proper protection and maintenance."

Currently, he said, an approach road from Dhaka-Chittagong highway and the roads that were constructed in the lake area remain in a dilapidated condition.

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A Chinese performing arts troupe enthralled audience at a cultural programme in Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday. The event was arranged by Bangladesh China Cultural Economic Center and the Chinese embassy in Dhaka.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



After rains on Thursday night, the road from Asam Bosti in Rangamati municipality to Kaptai Sarak was blocked at three points because of landslides from hills, halting vehicular traffic. The photo was taken in Manikchhar area yesterday.

Dalits demand quota in govt service, university

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Members of Dalit and excluded community yesterday formed a human chain in front of Ashwini Kumar Hall of the city to press home their eight-point demand including quota in government service and public university admission.

They also called for immediate end to all kinds of discriminations against them at the programme organised by Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM) in cooperation with Nagorik Udyog.

The speakers claimed that there are around 5.5 to 7 million Dalits and excluded community members in the country with only 5 percent literacy, 10 percent schooling and 95 percent dropout rates.

The Constitution of Bangladesh says that the state shall not discriminate citizens on

grounds of religion, race, caste, ethnicity, birth and profession.

However, in reality, Dalits are excluded and other minority communities country-wide are facing discrimination, speakers said.

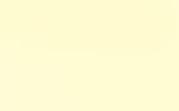
It is the state's responsibility to protect rights, dignity and uniqueness of the Dalit communities in Bangladesh, they added.

"We demanded quota in government service and all public university admission," said Uttam Kumar Bhakta, organising secretary of BDERM.

BDREM district president Lalit Das addressed the programme where Secretary of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) Barisal Ranjit Dutta and Sushanta Ghosh were present among others.



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