



SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Number of recipients rises but many still remain out of purview

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SPURS UPENDED

ManU defeat the high-flying side in their Premier League encounter

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THE MULLER INVESTIGATION

First charges filed in the Russian 'meddling', accused not named yet

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'Super rice' in sight

Plant engineered to double its yield

- Maize gene infused into rice
- Redesigned photosynthesis to increase crop yields
- Anatomy of rice leaf altered
- Rice plant to be more energy-efficient

REAZ AHMAD

Scientists have long been considering the idea of engineering rice plant in a way that the global production of the cereal gets a dramatic boost.

The idea came from the concern that the traditional research, which results in just one percent rise in the yearly yield, would not be enough to meet the ever-growing demand.

So the plan was to convert rice into a photosynthesis-efficient plant, which would produce substantially more grains using the sunlight.

Nine years into the initiation of an ambitious rice plant engineering project, a group of scientists have recently declared a major breakthrough in improving photosynthesis for the cereal.

They said this would change the plant architecture of rice once for all, make it more energy-efficient and thereby, increase the yield of the world's third most consumed grain, after maize and wheat, by 50 percent. It would eventually

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Dignitaries and winners of The Daily Star-Standard Chartered Celebrating Life awards at the award giving ceremony held at the International Convention City Bashundhara in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



3 cultural luminaries honoured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Convention City Bashundhara donned a lavish look of revelry last night for the award ceremony and gala of the 10th edition of The Daily Star-Standard Chartered Celebrating Life, a film-making, photography and lyrics contest.

Besides recognising the best entries in the categories theme "Celebrating Diversity in Bangladesh", three cultural icons were felicitated with lifetime achievement awards.

Visitors were greeted by an exhibition featuring some of the best entries in this year's photography contest. The stunning visuals of diversity would set the

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Khaleda's motorcade attacked in Feni

45 including journos hurt; 30 vehicles damaged; BNP chief's car unharmed

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA, from Feni

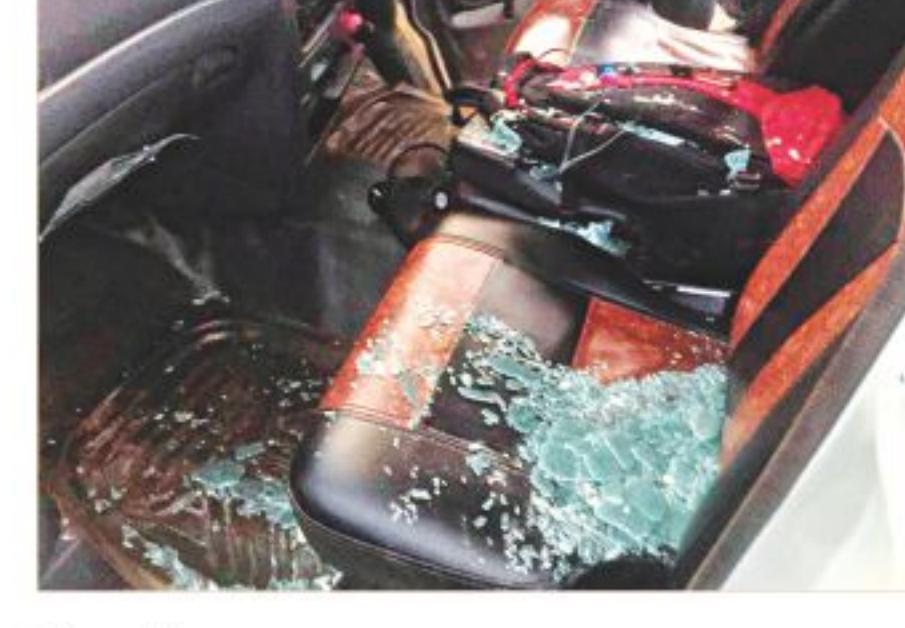
The convoy of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, heading towards Cox's Bazar for her visit to Rohingya refugee camps, came under attack at Mohammad Ali Bazar near Feni district town yesterday.

At least 45 people were injured and some 30 vehicles damaged in the incident.

When the cars were crossing the area around 4:45pm, a group of 40 to 50 youths with iron rods, sticks and brick chips swooped on the convoy, reported this correspondent, who was with the motorcade.

Chanting "Joy Bangla" slogans, they broke glasses of cars, including that of Channel i, DBC, Ekattor, Baishakhi, Ekushey TV channels and The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, and beat up dozens of BNP leaders and activists.

Nearly 15 journalists were also assaulted even after they disclosed their professional



identities.

Obstacles were created allegedly by ruling Awami League activists at different points, including Comilla, Feni and Chittagong, apparently in efforts to keep opposition men from welcoming their chief.

The former prime minister reached Feni Circuit House safely around 5:00pm. After having lunch and taking rest, she started for

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They celebrate by helping Rohingyas

STRAITS TIMES ONLINE

Most people celebrate their birthdays and anniversaries by going for a meal, but Singaporean police officer Muhammad Firdaus and his wife chose to spend the occasion helping Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Firdaus and his wife Naijihah Jofrie flew to Bangladesh on October 20, a week before the man turned 36.

The officer-in-charge of the Community Policing Unit at Geylang Neighbourhood Police Centre said he wanted to do something to celebrate not just his birthday but also his wedding anniversary, which was a day after his birthday. The couple got married five years ago.

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Further concerns over their return

Myanmar harvests abandoned Rohingya fields in Rakhine

AGENCIES

Myanmar's government began harvesting rice from farmland abandoned by Rohingya in northern Rakhine yesterday, officials said, a move likely to raise concerns about the prospect of return for more than half a million refugees who have fled communal violence in the area.

The border region has been emptied of most of its Muslim residents since late August, when Myanmar's military launched a crackdown on Rohingya rebels that the UN has described as "textbook" ethnic cleansing.

Hundreds of villages have been burned to the ground, with more than 600,000 Rohingya fleeing across the border for sanctuary in Bangladesh.

Under intense global pressure, Myanmar has agreed to repatriate "scrutinised" refugees who can prove their residence in Rakhine.

But details of the plan remain sketchy, seeding concern about who will be allowed back, what they will return to and how they will live in a region where anti-Rohingya hatred remains sky-high, writes AFP.

Yesterday, the government began harvesting 71,000 acres

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Get good governance

Bangladesh needs strong control structure for planned urbanisation, tell speakers at an int'l conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Strong governance is the key to planned urbanisation in Bangladesh, said urban experts from home and abroad at an international conference in Dhaka yesterday.

"The current governance structure is not conducive for Dhaka to become a liveable metro city," said Balakrishna Menon Parameswaran, lead urban specialist of the World Bank, adding, "Combination of leadership, planning and investment, and meaningful consultation is required for transforming Dhaka into a liveable city."

Lack of proper policies or wrong policies or a combination of both was holding back the desired urbanisation in Bangladesh, he said. In an unprecedented event, 20 lakh people moved into Dhaka in the last five years, he said.

The World Bank, Municipality Association of Bangladesh, Institute of Architects Bangladesh, Bangladesh Institute of Planners, and Institute of Engineers Bangladesh jointly organised the two-day conference on "Cities Forum: Building Knowledge Networks and Partnerships for

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Onion prices soaring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Onion prices were nearly one and a half times that of a week ago, and local traders are blaming the hike on increased prices in India, the country's main source of import.

Local variety was sold at as much as Tk 90 each kilogram in some kitchen markets of the capital yesterday, to the annoyance of people already hit hard by hiked rice price. Imported onions were sold at Tk 70 a kg.

A week ago, prices of the vegetable were in the range of Tk 48 to Tk 60 per kilogram, according to the data of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

The onion prices have gone up in



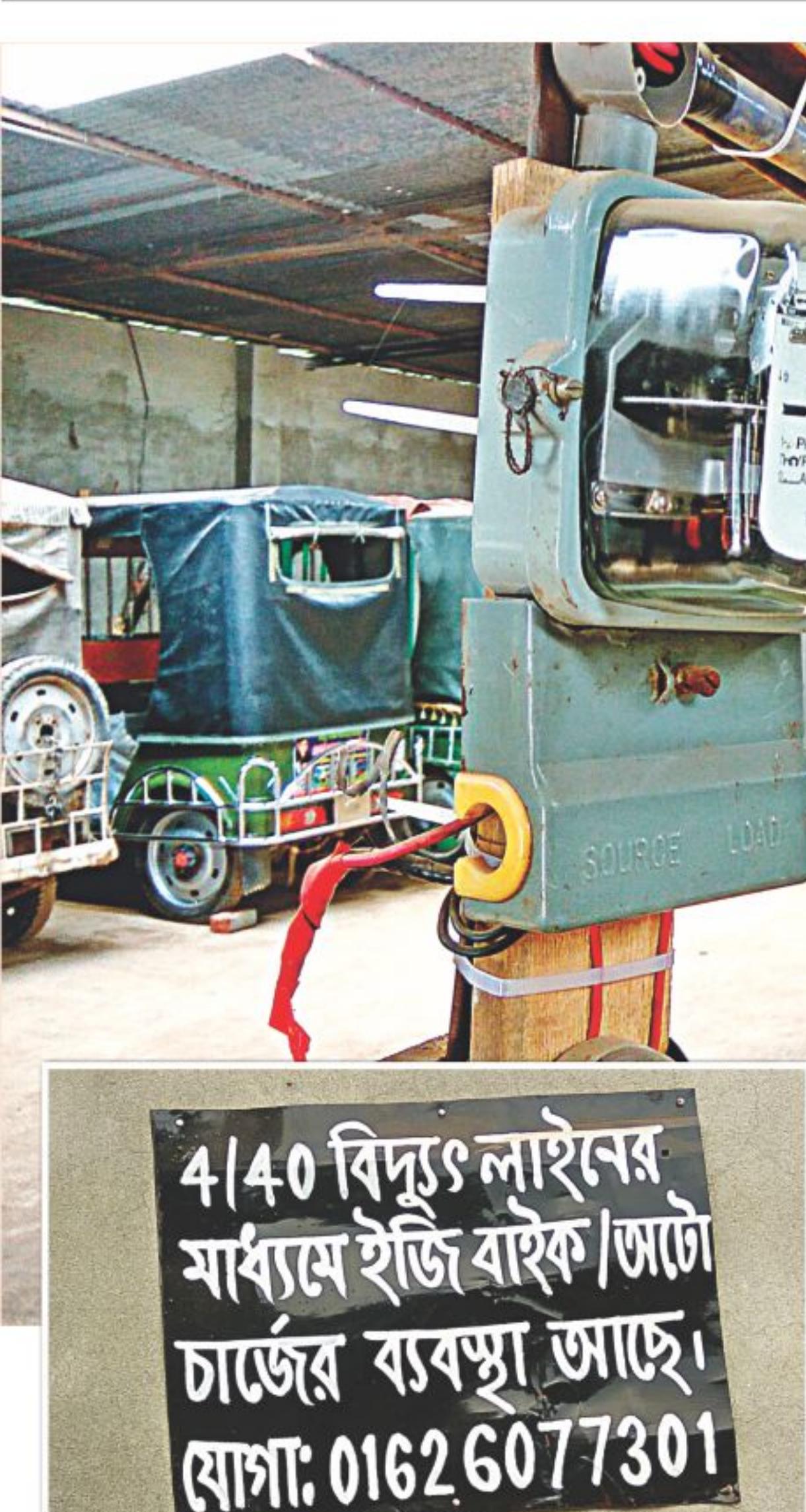
Chittagong as well, reports our correspondent.

"When will the price hit the Tk 100 level," an annoyed shopper asked a seller after being told the price of locally-grown onion was Tk 80 a kg at the AGB Colony kitchen market in Dhaka.

Refusing to give her name, she said she was aware of the recent price rise, but still was not expecting the onion price to be so high.

Traders blamed the price hike on high cost of import from India, the main source of onion, due to crop loss in heavy rains in the neighbouring country. The cultivation of early varieties of onion here was also affected by downpour at a time when old stocks were depleted.

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Illegal battery-run rickshaws, locally known as easy bikes, being charged at a garage in the capital's airport area recently. At least 40 such three-wheelers get charged there every day for Tk 80-100 each. The illegal charging consumes electricity, the dearth of which puts many areas of the country in the dark in the form of load shedding. The sign, inset, advertises fast charging.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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