

Every Dhaka resident should act like a mayor: Khokon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Guinness World Record set by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) will only be fruitful when the city corporation will be able to give residents a clean city, DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokon said yesterday. Addressing a press conference at DSCC Nagar Bhaban, following acknowledgement from the Guinness World Records, the mayor said they will speed up their cleaning activities to honour the achievement. A DSCC cleanliness campaign in the capital held earlier this year was officially recognised as a new world record on Monday. Urging city dwellers to extend their support to make the city clean, the mayor said every resident of Dhaka will have to "act like a mayor". "Setting up a Guinness World Record was not our SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



A young man navigates his way through moving vehicles while talking over the phone at Farmgate yesterday. Pedestrians often become victims of road accidents, and many of them meet with tragedies because of a lack of awareness.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Low-interest home loans for govt staff from November

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government employees are going to get loans at 5 percent interest rate from November, to buy houses or apartments. Five state-owned banks and financial institutions signed an agreement yesterday with the finance division at the finance ministry's conference room in this regard, in presence of finance minister AMA Muhith. From July 1, the government introduced a new home loan scheme for its employees who will get low-interest loans at 20-year repayment period for buying houses or apartments. The finance division issued a circular on July 31 saying any government employee under the age of 56 can get the low-interest housing loan. At the agreement-signing ceremony yesterday, finance secretary Abdur Rouf Talukder said all 14 lakh government employees will not come under the facility in the first year. Those who draw their salaries through automated system will avail the benefit in the first year. It will become available to all of those who want to avail it within the next two years. According to the finance ministry official, only five ministry and divisions now draw their salaries through the automated system. According to the circular, based on the location and grade of a government employee, they now take loans starting from Tk 20 lakh to Tk 75 lakh at an interest rate of 10 percent. Of the 10 percent, the government will grant five percent subsidy to the interest while the employee will bear the rest. The rate of interest will be charged only on the principal amount. In the first year, the government would require to give subsidy amounting to about Tk 300 crore to Tk 400 crore, Talukder said. SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Retain indigenous quota in civil service

Adivasi Quota Sangrakkhan Parishad demands

DU CORRESPONDENT

One week into the government review committee's recommendation of scrapping all quotas, demands for retaining certain quotas are being put forward. A group yesterday demanded that five percent allocation of quota privileges for indigenous people in government jobs be kept. They made the demand at a press conference, organised under the banner of 'Adivasi Quota Sangrakkhan Parishad', at Madhur Canteen, Dhaka University. At the programme, they alleged that cabinet secretary made a "generalised" remark that there are no backward communities in the country right now. "The grounds for abolishing the quota system has not been created yet as indigenous people are still facing hurdles in receiving higher education compared to people living in the plains," said William Nokrek, coordinator of the platform, while reading out a written statement. Achieving good results is an uphill battle for indigenous students due to the lack of qualified teachers and poor school facilities -- in terms of the number of schools and classrooms in the hilly areas. A student of an institution in Lama upazila of

Bandarban cannot be compared to a student of an institution in Dhaka. So, it would not be wise to push the indigenous community into an "unequal competition" by scrapping quota privileges for them, he said. "Quota reformists had demanded reformation, not abolishment of quotas, and some lawmakers had also extended their support to retaining the indigenous quota," he added. They also demanded immediate implementation of the prime minister's declaration of making special arrangement for indigenous people. The platform will also stage a protest rally on September 29 at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture and will march towards the Secretariat the next day to press home their demands. In the wake of countrywide demonstrations staged by general students, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 11 decided to scrap the quota system in government jobs. The PM, however, said a different arrangement will be made so that members of ethnic minority groups and physically-challenged people can get government jobs. On September 17, a seven-member government committee, led by Cabinet Secretary M Shafiqul Alam, recommended abolishing the quota system for class-I and class-II jobs in civil service.

Sinha's remarks about judiciary unacceptable: AG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The unseemly remarks on the apex court's judges made by former Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha in his recently published autobiography have damaged the image of the judiciary, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said yesterday, terming Sinha's comments "unacceptable". The attorney general made the comments while talking to reporters in his office at the Supreme Court. In his book "A Broken Dream: Rule of Law, Human Rights and Democracy," Justice Sinha did not clarify why his colleagues in the Appellate Division refused to sit with him, Advocate Mahbubey Alam also said. "I don't know if similar incident has taken place in any other country before," he added. Many other judges, including former Chief Justices Mustafa Kamal, Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury, Md Tafazzul Islam, ABM Khairul Haque and Md Muzammel Hossain discharged judicial functions during Awami League regime, but unlike Sinha, did not make allegations against the government, he said. The autobiography of Justice Sinha was published on September 16, in which the former CJ said that he stepped down "in the face of intimidation and threats from the government".

54pc third graders cannot read with comprehension

World Vision study finds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 21 percent of grade-III students cannot recognise most common words and letters, reveals a study conducted across 51 government primary schools. Around 33 percent students cannot read five words in 30 seconds, and only 46 percent students read with comprehension, it found; which means that 54 percent students do not understand what they are reading. The assessment is one of the three studies of a baseline report 2018 conducted by World Vision Bangladesh (WVB), who unveiled the results at a programme titled "Learning for Change" at Spectra Convention Centre in the capital yesterday. It showed male students lagged behind their female counterparts in achieving the reading competence. The percentage is 25 for boys and 18 percent in girls, according to the study on reading assessment of grade-III students. The assessment was conducted on a total of 1,319 students of 51 schools in seven districts of six divisions between September 3 and 15. In his presentation, Tony Michael Gomes, director of technical programmes at World Vision, said this 54 percent students

are at high risk of dropping out, as they struggle with basic reading of Bangla alphabets and in the long run they fail to read. The global standard of reading with comprehension in grade-III is 80 percent, anything lower than which is considered "a trigger for action as moderate risk" for dropout. A rate of 50 percent or below is considered critical risk for dropout, he added. Along with the reading assessment, results of two more studies on "Youth Employment sub-sector assessment" and "Participatory gender analysis" were also revealed at the programme. The participatory gender analyses revealed that overall scope of decision-making and control inside a household for rural women does not change drastically. The study on youth employment sub-sector assessment indicates key challenges for youth employment such as skill mismatch, limited opportunities, favoritism, social stigma, quality of training and accreditation of certificates. Iqbal Hossain, education specialist at Unicef, and Dr Tania Haque, a professor of department of gender and women studies of Dhaka University, also spoke at the programme.



From left, Nawazish Ali Khan, Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron, Rokia Afzal Rahman, Dr Mahfuzur Rahman and Dr Shahidul Quadir Patwari with the winning and runner-up teams.

A nat'l debate competition for visually impaired

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Curtains came down yesterday on an initiative to bring a differently-abled section of society in mainstream activities, as a national-level debate competition titled "Juktir Aloy Dekhi" -- for the visually impaired -- awarded winners in Dhaka. Dhaka University team emerged champion while Eden Mohila College and Chittagong University secured the runner-up and third place respectively. Debate for Democracy (DFD) organised the

PHOTO: STAR

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