



FRIENDLY FACES... Two youngsters come across a pack of friendly canines near the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University, and neither party is shy of a little public display of affection. Dogs are one of the few species of animals that are naturally friendly to people -- even to those they are not familiar with, as long as the sentiment is reciprocated. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Motorbike accidents on the rise in capital

Influx of bikes due to ride-sharing services, say experts; stress on training

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the sharp rise in number of motorcycles in Dhaka, the number of road accidents involving bikes also saw a gradual rise in the last three years, experts said yesterday.

Terminology of ride-sharing service as one of the main reasons behind the influx of motorbikes in the city, they emphasised on training to ensure road safety.

The observations were shared at the inaugural session of a training programme at Buet's Accident Research Institute (ARI).

ARI, in collaboration with Obhai Solutions Ltd -- a ride-sharing service provider -- arranged the two-day programme for 30 of the latter's riders.

In total, 300 riders will receive training this month. Others will be provided training gradually, Obhai officials said.

"Motorbikes are increasingly involved in road accidents of late. Road accidents, especially in the capital, have increased due to ride-sharing services," Shahriar Parvez, a lecturer at ARI, said at the programme.

Ride-sharing services were launched in Dhaka in May 2015, and over two dozen service providers are now available in the city. The cabinet on January 15 last year approved the "Ride-sharing Service Guidelines 2017" to bring the companies under a regulation.

RISE IN MOTORBIKE ACCIDENTS

According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, total 1,04,064 motorcycles were registered in Dhaka in 2018 while the number was 75,251 in 2017 and 53,738 in 2016.

According to ARI, at least 280 accidents occurred in Dhaka city last year; motorcycles were involved in 24.47 percent of the cases.

In 2017, 263 accidents happened in the capital, and in 18.25 percent cases, motorcycles were involved, it said.

In 10 months (March to December) of 2018, 123 accidents occurred in Dhaka, and motorcycles were involved in 9.75 percent cases.

ARI prepared the data on the basis of newspaper reports.

Speaking at the programme, ARI Director Prof Mizanur Rahman said motorcycles are one of the most vulnerable vehicles when it comes to accidents.

He said in many cases, helmets for passengers provided by the service providing companies are not up to the mark, which increases casualties.

Shifun Newaz, an assistant professor at ARI, acknowledged Obhai's endeavour for the safety of riders and passengers.

Quazi Omar Ferdous, chief operating officer of Obhai, said safety of riders and passengers is their number one priority and they would continue the training programme for their riders.

Atiql focuses on improving liveability of Dhaka

Announces manifesto for DNCC by-polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League mayoral candidate Atiql Islam yesterday announced his election manifesto with promises of addressing the mosquito menace, improving drainage system and air quality, and enhancing sports and outdoor facilities.

He also pledged to form a special committee to curb corruption and develop an app through which people would be able to file their complaints regarding corruption.

Atiql, former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) unveiled the manifesto titled "Shobai miley, shobar Dhaka" at a hotel in the capital.

If voted to power, Atiql will succeed the late Annisul Huq. The DNCC mayoral post has been vacant following the death of Huq on November 30, 2017. He was elected mayor on April 28, 2015.

Last month, the High Court cleared the way for holding DNCC by-election and election to the 36 new wards -- 18 under

DNCC and 18 under the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC). It will be held on February 28.

Addressing the press conference, Atiql said, "Dhaka's problems can only be solved if we all work together. City corporation will fulfil its obligations to residents."

He pledged to finish the projects and development works initiated by the previous mayor, and also undertake new projects to resolve major issues affecting the city.

Atiql said he will work to introduce a modern traffic management system, an app where citizens could share issues involving the city, and modern bus stops with GPS tracking facilities.

He pledged to take several steps to ensure a healthy Dhaka city, including sustainable waste management system.

Atiql promised that he will address drug abuse in the city and promote sports among the youths.

He also expressed his determination to remove all establishments built on footpaths and government land.

Why are govt doctors allowed to practise privately: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to form an independent medical commission to frame a guideline for those state-appointed doctors who also run private medical practices.

It also issued a rule asking the respondents to explain why the section of the relevant law that allows state-appointed doctors to run private medical practice beyond their office hours should not be declared unconstitutional.

Government-appointed doctors are allowed private practice beyond their office hours under the Medical Practice and Private Clinics and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982.

The health secretary; director general of the Directorate General of Health Services; president of Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council and president of Bangladesh Medical Association have been made respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by five Supreme Court lawyers, seeking directives to stop private practice of government-appointed doctors.

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'Inadequate facilities' behind unwillingness

Doctors say regarding joining district, upazila hospitals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Physicians at a seminar yesterday blamed "inadequate facilities" behind their unwillingness to join government hospitals in the district and upazila levels.

"Lack of security at work, insufficient guidelines and inter-cadre disparities are discouraging government doctors to go to rural areas," claimed Dr Ehteshamul Haque Chowdhury Dulal, secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA).

BMA organised the seminar on "Sustainable Development Goals: Actions needed in health sector" at its auditorium.

Dr Ehteshamul also alleged that the health and family welfare ministry did not take proper initiatives to address the crisis in the last few years.

"Students who become doctors take an oath to serve patients but the government should understand why doctors are unwilling to go to district and upazila levels," he said, urging the prime minister

to resolve the crisis.

Dr Kanak Kanti Barua, vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said the government should introduce standard accommodation for physicians in the non-urban areas and address the dearth of basic science teachers and modern facilities at the medical colleges to achieve SDG.

Dr Rashid-E-Mahub, former president of BMA, said that both the government and people are blaming doctors without understanding their issues.

"We cannot take administrative decisions; the health ministry should sit with us and take initiatives to develop the sector," he said.

Zahid Malek, minister for health and family welfare, said the government will soon provide extra facilities to doctors in district and upazila levels, including housing, but physicians have to be more prudent.

"If a doctor does not maintain work hours, legal action will be taken" he said.

Constitution was violated on Dec 30

Says Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the constitution of the country was violated on December 30, as people were denied from casting their votes on that day.

"Many said December 30 election was a farce; many termed it drama. I believe that people of the country will not accept it. We will do whatever we have to do," he said at a discussion in remembrance of Rashid Suhrawardy, recently-passed son of Shaheed Suhrawardy, at Jatiya Press Club.

Kamal, also the top leader of Jatiya Oikyafront,



Activists of Bangladesh Chhatra Union -- a left-leaning student organisation -- bring out a procession on Dhaka University campus yesterday, protesting the decision to hold voting for the upcoming Ducusu polls inside dormitories. PHOTO: STAR

Out of the literary box

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Have you ever read a poem where each line is written by a different poet? Or one that is composed based just on a painting? How about a verse that must contain specific words chosen by a group of writers?

Such experimental techniques are used by writers who write regularly for independent literary magazines, lovingly called "little mag". With unique styles of writing, little mags open up opportunities for new writers who want to practice literature outside the mainstream.

On the premises of Bangla Academy at the Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela, anyone can find a gathering of such writers and little mag stalls in the "Little Mag Chatter" or little mag corner. A total of 155 stalls for 180 little mags have been installed in the premises this year.

"For budding writers, little mag is a good place to start, because mainstream publishers want conventional write-ups that is beneficial to their business. But little mags don't care for such issues; instead, they encourage writers to break stereotypes, be it in form or topic, through their writing style," said Roktim Rajib, who writes regularly in "Orbak" (something new) magazine.

According to the little mag editors and writers, little mag movement started in the '80s in the country to introduce new writing styles and helping new writers emerge. However, now the lustre of the little mag has started to lose its originality and readers are not that interested anymore, due to various reasons.

"The little mag is now mostly dependent on writers who value work of fellow writers. General readers are more attracted to popular publishing houses," said Aniruddho Dilwar, an editor of "Uttorer Hawa" (Northern Wind) magazine.

Some of the writers believe that some little mags now follow conventional writing styles, and publish an edition that is not much different from general literary magazines.

"Due to the lack of quality write-ups from some little mags, people do not show interest in reading those," said Dipankar Marduk, assistant editor and writer of "Loko".

However niche, there is readership for experimental literature at the fair. "I like reading on various topics and poetry, and I buy little mags whenever I come to the fair," said Tasfia Jaman, a master's student from Jahangirnagar university.

Meanwhile, 149 new books hit the fair yesterday.

CHEMICAL WAREHOUSES DSCC drive to begin next week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A drive against chemical warehouses which pose potential fire hazards will be conducted from next week, to make Old Dhaka free from risks of fire.

The decision was made at a stakeholders' meeting at Nagar Bhaban, with Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon in the chair.

"We will form a team before starting the drive, comprising representatives of different business organisations related with chemical goods, the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Department of Environment, DSCC and Fire service and Civil Defence," said the mayor.

He said the team will work to find the warehouses, factories, organisations or shops, which have any of the 20 flammable and risky chemicals in the old part of the city, and take immediate action against them.

If the monitoring team does not find anything like this in a shop or factory,

Failed to bring discipline on the road: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said road accidents have become a major concern, once again admitting his failure to bring discipline in the road transport sector.

"Actually, discipline has not returned on roads. I am admitting this," Quader said while replying to a question at a press briefing at his secretariat office.

Quader, who has been at the helm of the ministry for over seven years, at a programme on October 22 last year, had admitted his failure in enforcing discipline in the road transport sector.

Days after taking charge of the ministry for the third time, Quader on January 10 said bringing discipline on the road will be his first priority.

Road accidents are taking a toll on people's lives and the country's economy, due to lack of discipline in the transport sector, say experts.

At least 4,439 people were killed and 7,425 injured in 3,103 accidents last year, according to road safety campaign Nirapad Sarak Chai. According to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, at least 7,221 people were killed and 15,466 injured in

5,514 road crashes last year.

Quader yesterday reiterated that considering the level of progress in infrastructure, discipline in the road transport sector has been unsatisfactory.

"For this reason, accidents and congestion happen. However, we are trying to make some development in this regard," he said.

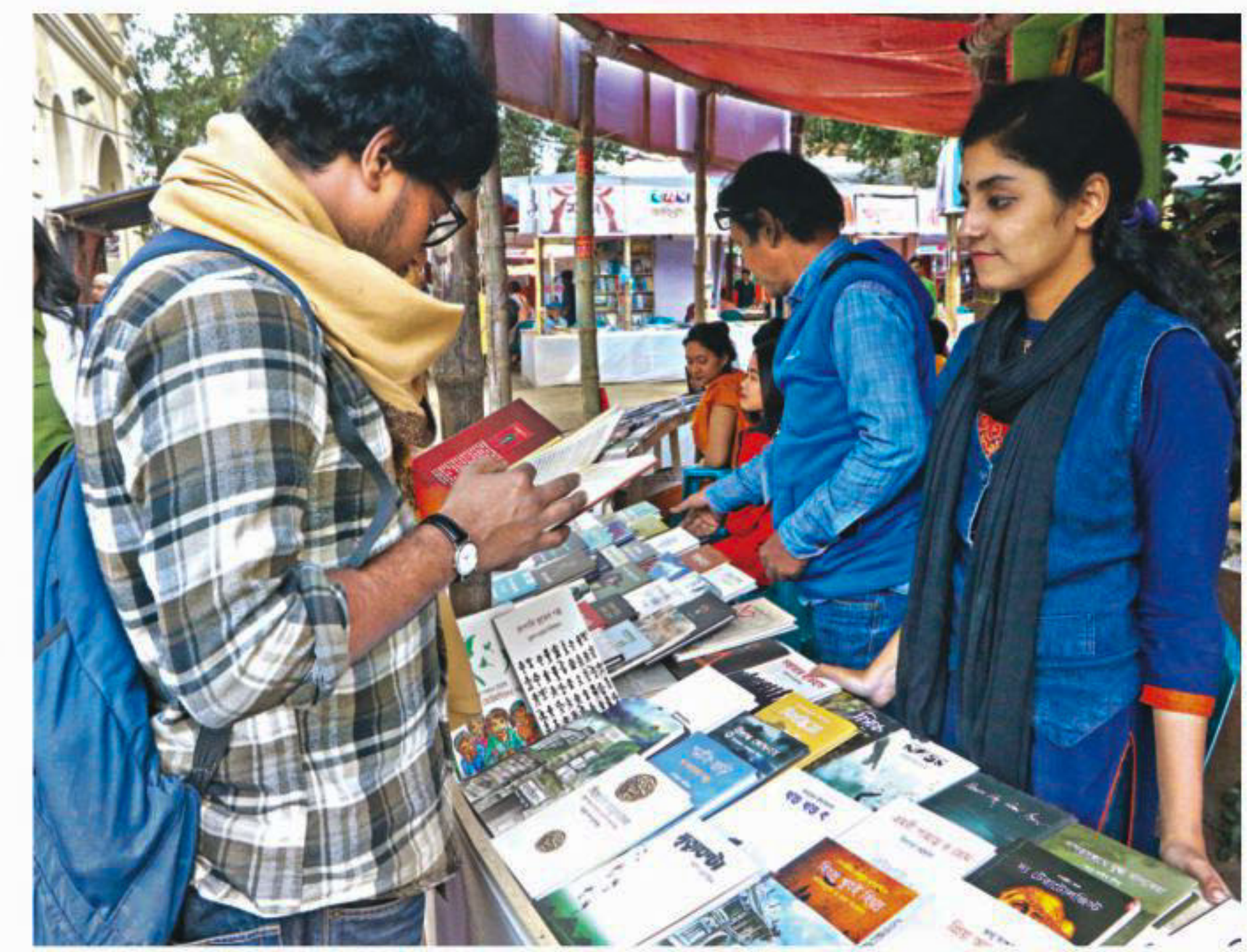
The minister said he will call the meeting of National Road Safety Council (NRSC) very soon and will discuss these issues.

"We will reform the committee and consider some new programmes," he said, mentioning programmes taken by Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and Road Transport Coordination Authority.

The minister said he will call experts in transport sector at NRSC meeting, seek report from them, and considering their recommendations and if necessary, a task-force will be formed to control the situation.

"Road accidents are a major concern for us. Denial would not yield anything," he said, adding that comparison with other countries will not benefit anyone.

He also blamed a group of politicians and people's representatives for small vehicles operating on highways, ignoring the High Court ban.



Visitors check out publications at the "Little Mag Chatter". PHOTO: STAR