

'Accident or sabotage?'

DSCC mayor asks fire dept to find out reasons behind recent fires

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday asked the Fire Service and Civil Defence to find out reasons behind the recent fire incidents with utmost importance, since questions have been raised whether those were acts of sabotage.

Addressing a views-exchange meeting at Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) auditorium, Khokon said the business community will have to remain alert in this regard.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

1,300 city markets, malls at fire risk

Fire dept's 2017 survey rings alarm

HELEMUL ALAM

Ignoring fire risk, most shopping malls and markets in the capital have been running without mandatory safety measures for years, posing a serious threat, according to Fire Service and Civil Defence.

The fire at DNCC Kitchen Market in Gulshan yesterday is an example of reluctance and indifference in this regard as the market authorities did not comply with the recommendation made by the fire service after a fire incident there in 2017.

"After the 2017 fire, we had made several recommendations to the [DNCC] market authorities regarding fire safety. However, none of those were implemented," said Maj Shakil Newaj, director (operation) of the fire service.

In 2017, Fire Service and Civil

Defence identified 622 shopping malls and markets in Dhaka as "extremely risky" and 678 others as "risky" after conducting a survey on 1,305 commercial establishments from October to November 2017. Only five buildings

licence, said Major Shakil.

The establishments include private and government-owned malls, super markets and kitchen markets, he added.

They also issued several letters to the market authorities, including the ones owned by the two city corporations, to take necessary safety measures, but most of them did not comply, said Wahidul Islam, assistant director of warehouse and fire prevention of the fire service.

DNCC market was in the extremely risky category.

According to Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) 2006 and Fire prevention Act 2003, a market will have to keep sufficient fire extinguishers (an extinguisher for every 550 square feet) and sufficient staircases.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

622 extremely risky

678 risky

FIRE SERVICE SURVEY (OCT-NOV 2017)

were marked as safe.

The extremely risky (with no fire-safety necessities) or risky (with some fire-safety measures installed) markets and malls have been in operation for years without fire-safety clearance and



Smoke billows from the DNCC Kitchen Market in Gulshan as firefighters douse the blaze amid curious onlookers yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

PHOTO OF THE DAY

PALASH KHAN



Labourers push a two-wheel cart carrying some 50 large drums, which are often used to store fuel oil, in front of Kakrail Mosque in the capital. They said these were being transported to Old Dhaka.

DHAKA TODAY

Corruption, lack of governance behind haor people's plight

Speakers tell ALRD seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to corruption and absence of good governance, people in the haor region continue to suffer, speakers said at a seminar yesterday.

They urged the government to implement existing laws and regulations to mitigate people's sufferings.

Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) organised the seminar at Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka.

Noted economist Prof Abul Barkat presented a survey result titled, "Haor Ruling System of Bangladesh and the Rights of Haor People" as the study's lead researcher.

ALRD conducted the study in assistance with Human Development Research Centre.

Prof Barkat said, "Although poor fishermen have ethical and legal rights on haor, rich and influential lessees continue to occupy those." The fishermen cannot even participate in the leasing process, he added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Govt itself hindering establishment of secularism: Kamal Lohani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent cultural personality Kamal Lohani yesterday alleged that the government itself is hampering the establishment of secularism in the country by compromising with the Islamic group Hefazat-e Islam Bangladesh.

"Many changes in textbooks are being brought as per recommendations of the Hefazat; Hijab is being made compulsory at different educational institutions; many Jamaat leaders are joining Awami League; thus, secularism is not being established," he claimed.

Kamal Lohani was speaking at a routable titled "Independence of Bangladesh: Prospects and Problems of Secularism" in the capital's CIRDAP auditorium. Workers' Party of Bangladesh organised it.

"The punishment for hurting religious sentiment as per sections 295 to 298 of the Penal Code has been kept for the benefit of the religious majority, as the use of this law is less seen in case of religious minorities," said Workers'

Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Fazle Hossain Badsha.

Samyabadi Dal President Dilip Barua said the prime aim of forming the 14-party alliance was to thwart the religious fundamentalists and communal forces, so AL should not make any compromise with religious forces.

MM Akash, a professor of economics department at Dhaka University, alleged that both AL and BNP are patronising religious groups to gain political benefits.

AL presidium member and coordinator of 14-party alliance Mohammed Nasim claimed that sometimes his party sits with Islamic groups to address fundamentalism.

Speaking as chair, Workers' Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon said proper constitutional initiative can establish secularism.

The government on March 13 banned airing of local advertisements on downlinked foreign channels.

The minister hoped that operators have

made preparations to carry out the order. "We have already issued two circulars. We want to implement it from April 1," he said.

No Bangladeshi TVCs on foreign channels from Apr 1

Says info minister

UNB, Dhaka

The government will strictly implement its decision to stop the airing of Bangladeshi commercials on downlinked foreign television channels from April 1, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud said yesterday.

"Running ads on foreign channels is a punishable offence," he reminded cable operators. "Legal action will be taken from the first day of April [to stop the practice]."

"Some local companies are running advertisements on foreign channels that have become popular in Bangladesh," Mahmud told a seminar, "Private Television in Crisis", organised by Broadcast Journalist Center at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

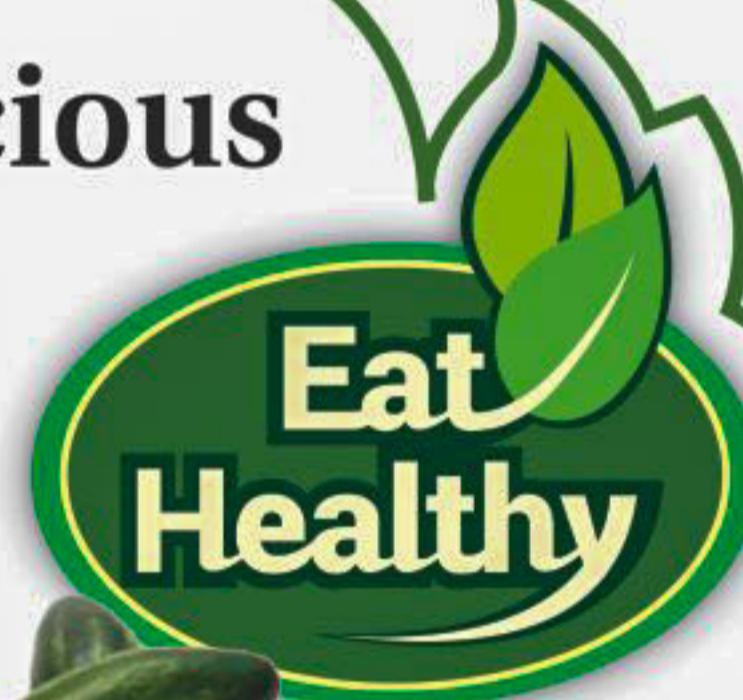
"This practice is harming local television channels. We hope that local channels will see a business of Tk 300-500 crore annually once this [government directive] is implemented," he said.

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made preparations to carry out the order. "We have already issued two circulars. We want to implement it from April 1," he said.

The nutritious and delicious POINTED GOURD



Eat Healthy



Known as pointed gourd in English and as potol in Bangla, this vegetable can be turned into a delicacy or a quick snack in minutes. It can be cooked in different combinations with the use of multiple condiments, each equally delicious. In our country, the typical dish made of this particular vegetable would be potol bhaja, where the pointed gourd is seasoned with turmeric, chilli and cumin and then either covered in rice flour and fried or fried just with the seasoning itself.

Pointed gourd is a vegetable that has many tricks and qualities up its sleeve. The vegetable is known for being a good source of vitamins and minerals.

It is also rich in carbohydrates, Vitamin A and Vitamin C. It contains major nutrients and trace elements (magnesium, potassium, copper, sulfur, and chlorine) which are all needed for human body. All these nutrients of this versatile tropical vegetable help to improve digestion and blood sugar levels, treat constipation and fight ageing. It also helps to reduce weight as it is rich in fibre and low in calories. This vegetable has many healing properties ranging from the ability to prevent and cure colds to curing jaundice of the liver. The pointed gourd, apart from being antiviral is also antibacterial which is why it helps to prevent different types of diseases. Hence this vegetable is a great choice for people who want to reduce consumption of calories and have a healthier lifestyle and eating habits.

Md Iqbal Hossain, a pointed gourd farmer from Shahbazpore, Jessor, shares that choosing a place which gets 6-8 hours direct sunlight is required for better yield. Propagation of pointed gourd is usually done by vine cuttings or by root suckers; propagation by seed is reduced due to poor germination and inefficiency. First irrigation should be given immediately after planting. Subsequent irrigation should be carried out at 3-4 days interval. Usually potol vines are trained on vertical trellis by tying with wires. Fertilisers, such as, Triple Super Phosphate (TSP), Potash, Urea, are added as per requirement. Pesticides are applied for 8-10 days and the vegetables are harvested 7-15 days after

pesticide application, depending on the weather conditions.

Iqbal along with many farmers of the area provide vegetables for Shwapno under the Shuddha project. According to Iqbal, this initiative allows farmers to get to know about safe agricultural practices such as how much fertiliser or pesticide should be used. Farmers also have an opportunity to learn about the interval period between pesticide application and harvesting, known as the Pre-Harvest Interval (PHI).

Delicious in all its forms, pointed gourd brings forth immense nutritional benefits and is a rich source of many micronutrients, such as Vitamins A, B1, B2 and C and also calcium. The added benefit is that this nutrition-packed vegetable is now available all throughout the year and thus, it can be consumed anytime one desires.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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The Daily Star