



**PICKING UP THE PIECES...** clockwise from left, a protective shed has been installed in front of FR Tower in Banani to prevent debris from falling on commuters and vehicles. A worker transports sacks of plastic granule in front of the desolate Wahed Mansion in Old Dhaka. Gulshan-1 kitchen market shopkeepers are trying to make the best out of the situation, displaying goods in the remains of their shops.

PHOTOS: RASHED SHUMON

## 'Investigate corruption in Rajuk and reform it'

### Noted urban planner Nazrul Islam tells govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday urged the government to reform Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) in order to reduce frequent fire incidents and their devastating aftermath caused by unplanned development in Dhaka.

Rajuk is failing to monitor the issue sufficiently and that is the reason why most buildings have been built flouting approved designs, while some have no approval at all, they said.

A group of urban planners, architects and engineers came up with this observation at a roundtable on "Ways to prevent fire incidents" at CA Bhaban in the capital. Prothom Alo in association with Sheltech organised it.

Presenting a keynote paper, Dr Toufiq M Seraj, founder managing director of Sheltech, said there are inconsistencies over the definition of high-rise building in the different codes -- Dhaka Building Construction Rules-2008 (above 10-storey), Fire Prevention and Protection Act-2003 (7-storey), and BNBC-2006 (above 6-storey).

He said the government should take the initiative to create a one-window service for building plan approvals after eliminating these inconsistencies.

"After the Rana Plaza tragedy, joint initiatives of planners and architects helped make the garment industry fully code-compliant, so a third party building compliance monitoring can also be set up in this regard," he said.

Seraj, also an architect, said Rajuk has the responsibility to monitor evacuation plan, location and size of staircase, emergency exits, enough space between buildings and stopping construction of illegal additional floors.

In his speech, prominent urban planner Nazrul Islam said the government should investigate the corruption in Rajuk and reform the body. "Otherwise, no plan can be executed properly," he added.

He said there is a lack of coordination among the two mayors of Dhaka city corporations and Rajuk.

Maksud Helali, a professor at Mechanical Engineering department of BUET, said the losses during the fire at FR Tower were the result of violating building code under Rajuk's watch.

He urged owners of buildings to maintain building

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

## SC upholds Khaleda's bail in Cumilla case

### Law alone not enough to ensure road safety: Anisul Huq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court order that granted bail to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in a case filed over the killings eight people by torching a bus in Cumilla in 2015.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order after dismissing a petition filed by the state seeking a stay on the HC order.

However, Khaleda Zia cannot be released from jail as she is arrested in few other cases, Deputy Attorney General Dr Md Bashirullah told The Daily Star.

The case was filed after eight people were killed and at least 25 were injured as a bus was torched in Cumilla's Choudhagram during anti-government agitations by the BNP-led alliance on February 2, 2015.

Following a bail petition filed by Khaleda, the HC on March 6 granted the six-month interim bail to her in the Cumilla murder case.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam appeared for the state while Advocate Khandker Mahub Hossain and Advocate AJ Mohammad Ali argued for Khaleda.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said proper coordination among three elements -- implementation of law, education, and awareness on road usage and traffic rules -- can curb road accidents.

The minister was speaking at a roundtable titled "Safe Road: Execution of Law and Public Awareness," at Jatiya Press Club.

"Law alone is not enough to ensure road safety...We won't get safe transport system only by enacting law, unless a healthy culture of obeying law is established and awareness is raised among people concerned," the minister said.

"Apart from enforcement of law, awareness and education is needed. If

we can coordinate these three, we will be able to curb accidents," he said.

Jago Bangla Foundation organised the programme at a time when the country is witnessing frequent road accidents, making it one of the most talked about national issues.

Anisul Huq emphasised on responsibility of and awareness among all stakeholders -- transport owners, workers, road users and law enforcers -- to ensure road safety.

He said the government has enacted Road Transport Act-2018 in line with the developed world. However, proper execution of law is urgent to see its benefits.

**ROAD TRANSPORT ACT NOT FUNCTIONAL YET**

The parliament passed Road Transport Act and Digital Security Act-2018 on

September 19 last year. Digital Security Act has already been in operation even before enactment of rules. But the government has not made Road Transport Act operational yet.

When this correspondent raised the issue with the minister after the programme, he said the rule of the act is must for execution of some of the sections. So, they will make the act operational after enactment of the rule.

At the 26th meeting of National Road Safety Council on February 17, a three-member committee was formed to look into how the Road Transport Act-2018 can be implemented.

The committee, comprising law minister, home minister and railways minister was asked to submit its report in 14

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Traffic fines should be spent for road crash victims: J Barua

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fines realised for traffic rule violations should be spent for victims of road accidents and training of drivers, a Supreme Court lawyer and rights activist said yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference, Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua pointed out that a huge amount of fine is collected for violation of traffic rules.

"But where did the money go? In which sector is it being used? It must be found."

He was addressing a press conference titled "State Compensation to the Victims of Road Accident: Allocation in National Budget", organised by Road Safety Foundation at the seminar room of Public Library.

"Since accidents take place due to violations of rules, the money collected as fine should be spent for the victims of road accidents and training of drivers," he added.

According to the organisation's documentation of media reports,

*Where did the money go? In which sector is it being used? It must be found.*

some 1,163 people were killed and 1,998 injured in road accidents in the first three months of this year.

"Unless there is accountability of collected fines, police will be encouraged to impose fines instead of establishing discipline on road," said Barua, vice president of the organisation.

Politically-backed syndicates involved in extortion are the main barriers to bringing discipline in the country's mass transport sector, Barua added.

"Extortion takes place due to political patronisation. In fact, the syndicate behind extortion maintains chaos in the mass transport system because if discipline is established, extortion will end," said Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua.

"Roads are built on public money and foreign loans. On what logic there is extortion on roads? On what moral ground? There is no answer. But the government does not take any measure against extortionists," he said.

He made a 14-point recommendation that include keeping enough allocation for the victims of road accidents in the upcoming budget, building specialised hospitals at each divisional city, ensuring treatment facilities to the injured of road accidents, regular training and motivating drivers, and regularly examining mental and physical health of transport workers.

MS Siddiqui, a legal economist, called for making third-party

SEE PAGE 5 COL 3

## TK 15CR EMBEZZLEMENT

### HC directs police to issue int'l red alert for fugitive convict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a rare move, the High Court yesterday ordered law enforcement agencies to issue a red alert through the Interpol to arrest a businessman who has been sentenced to life imprisonment in a corruption case over misappropriation of Tk 15 crore from Rupali Bank.

The fugitive convict is Abu Borhan Chowdhury, chairman of Everest Holding and Technologies Ltd, Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik told The Daily Star.

The inspector general of police, director general of Rapid Action Battalion, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and all law enforcement agencies have been directed to issue the red alert, and to submit a report on the progress of complying with the directive before the HC by the next hearing date of April 15.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice KM Hafizul Alam passed the order during hearing a suo moto (voluntary) rule on this issue.

On January 29 this year, the HC bench issued the rule, summoning three top officials of Rupali Bank Ltd to appear before it, who were exempted from charges in the corruption case by a lower court.

The three Rupali Bank officials are: its General Manager SM Atiqur Rahman, Deputy General Manager Mohammad Ali and Senior Principal Officer Md Abdus Samad Sarkar.

The court also issued the rule asking them to explain as to why they should not be tried in the case.

It issued the order and rule while hearing an appeal filed by Everest Holding and Technologies Ltd Managing Director AHM Bahauddin, who was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in the same case.

Atiqur, Mohammad Ali and Samad appeared before the HC bench yesterday as per its previous order.

DAG Manik said the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case with Motijheel Police Station on September 16, 2012 against Rupali Bank officials Atiqur,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 3

## QUESTION LEAK

### Three DU students arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested three students of Dhaka University including a Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader over their alleged involvement in leaking fake question papers to examinees and changing exam results to extort a hefty sum of money.

The trio was arrested from Hazaribagh in Dhaka on Saturday around 8pm, said Md Nazmul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's cybercrime division.

A Dhaka court placed them on a two-day remand each after they were produced before the court yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as: Imran Khasru, student of English department; also an organising secretary of BCL's Masterda Surya Sen Hall unit; Ahsan Habib, student of linguistics department and resident of the same hall, and Imran Hossain Rakib, student of linguistics department and resident of Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall.

Grade sheets of several HSC examinees were found in their possession, the police official said.

They used to create Facebook groups and allured examinees, giving them question papers of different public examinations. They would also change results to A+ grade in exchange for hefty amount of money," he added.

They were shown arrested in a case under the digital security act and public examination act filed with Hazaribagh Police Station.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 3

## Mahila Parishad to reach out to women through social media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While there are concerns that Facebook and Twitter are being used to spread hatred and racial tension, examples like #MeToo movement raise hope of women getting a platform to speak up against harassment and gender violence, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) held the discussion at its Segun Bagicha office on "Women's movement and social media", marking its 49th founding anniversary. Speakers at the event elaborated on how and why BMP should ensure its presence in the social media to connect to its members and other women across the country and beyond.

Speakers discussed about starting blogs, YouTube channels and websites where BMP will upload content to build awareness and

encourage women from every corner to join the movement.

Sima Moslem, joint general secretary of the organisation, said it is time now to understand and use technology to bring changes in society.

Many apps have been designed by the government and private sector to facilitate women's empowerment, and as a rights organisation BMP should learn about them first to do advocacy.

"Women's rights are human rights," a slogan that women activists are echoing now, was first said by Sufia Kamal -- founder of BMP -- decades ago. Information technology is the strength to overcome all barriers in today's world, said Ayesha Khanam, president of Mahila Parishad.

## Bangladesh can be proud of its progress: Mark Field

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The visiting British parliamentarian Mark Field yesterday appreciated Bangladesh's gradual progress -- turning into one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

Bangladesh has many achievements to celebrate, like reduction of extreme poverty and increase of life expectancy. The country can be proud of the huge progress it has made, said Field, the UK's state minister for Asia and the Pacific at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Speaking at a seminar in Dhaka, he also thanked the Bangladesh government for taking good development

policies, and maintaining partnership with the international community and private sector, which helped to make the huge strides.

Policy Research Institute, a non-government research organisation based in Dhaka, arranged the seminar on "Governance and development" at a hotel in the capital.

The British state minister, however, observed that the 11th parliamentary election of Bangladesh, held in December last year, could not meet the standards of free and fair polls.

Democracy means holding elections that are fair, and providing the voters freedom to choose, he said.

"...but I fear the parliamentary election which took place here in December did not meet this standard -- as I said at the time," said Mark, while presenting his keynote speech.

He urged the government of Bangladesh to uphold the democratic values along with making economic progress or achieving middle-income status.

Having a political opposition is important to hold the government accountable; besides, presence of a vibrant civil society and strong role of media are also crucial in upholding transparency of public institutions and

SEE PAGE 5 COL 3