

PHOTO OF THE DAY

ANISUR RAHMAN



A car drives over a large crack on a lane of Sultana Kamal Bridge over Shitalakkhya River. Due to high traffic volume and lack of maintenance, the expansion joints have become damaged in at least three spots. The cracks have developed in such a scale that one can even see the road underneath. What's even scarier is that this situation is prevailing for over a year. The photo was taken at Demra on Friday.

Electrical fire safety unaddressed: Buet VC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although electrical faults are often responsible for fire incidents, there is no electrical engineer on the building approval committee of Rajuk, vice-chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) Prof Saiful Islam observed yesterday.

Speaking at a seminar titled "Fire hazard in buildings: Recent crisis" at the Buet auditorium, he further said there is no requirement for approval of the electrical design of a building, adding that such a crucial job is often done by untrained technicians.

Buet alumni society organised the seminar at Buet auditorium.

While there is an acute need of professionally-trained electrical technicians in the country, builders usually prefer untrained technicians to save a small amount of money, said Prof Islam.

Speakers at the seminar pointed out various weaknesses in the building approval process that contribute to fire risks.

"The current building plan approval process in the capital lacks representation of fire safety experts," said Maksud Helali, a professor of mechanical engineering at Buet.

A high-rise building must have all required fire fighting facilities, he said. Severity of a fire incident depends on how it propagates, he said, so containing the propagation is the foremost challenge in the entire process of firefighting and safety. "Most tall buildings [of the capital]

-- 15-storied and higher -- have been found without fire safety provisions like emergency escape and protected alternative staircase," said Prof Nizamuddin Ahmed, a noted fire safety expert, in a presentation.

Nizam said that he along with his students have surveyed a number of tall buildings in Dilkusha, Mohakhali and Gulshan commercial areas over the last week, some of which he visited a decade ago, and found them in high risk in the event of a fire.

Unobstructed emergency escape route, alternative staircase protected with fire-rated door and a 2.5-minute escape plan are some of the vital fire safety provisions that those building still lack, he said.

"Smoke kills if a building lacks emergency escape," he said, "In fact, every home must have an emergency escape plan."

"Since 2004, I have occasionally visited these buildings, found them in dire state and reported time and again with photographs, but they [building authorities] have not yet given a damn for installing safety measures," he said.

In most cases, building owners deviate from what the architects and engineers recommend in the building design, he said.

National Professor Jamilur Reza Chaudhury, president of Buet alumni society, said, "These prestigious buildings, designed by well-known architects lack fire safety features. Architects, engineers and building owners are all equally responsible for this situation. Safety supervision and maintenance are starkly missing in SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Lack of data barrier to attaining SDGs

Says planning minister

BSS, Dhaka

Planning Minister MA Mannan yesterday said the government has been working relentlessly to further alleviate poverty and also to make the ongoing development efforts sustainable.

"Our main task is to unleash development, ensure modernisation and poverty alleviation. Out of these three, I'll put poverty alleviation in the first slot. Poverty is behind all problems like lack of healthcare facilities, lack of food and education," he said.

The minister was addressing the inaugural session of a programme titled "Citizens Conclave: Four years of SDGs in Bangladesh: Citizen's

Platform for SDGs in Bangladesh" at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center.

Mannan said for attaining the SDGs, the government has undertaken a number of steps as well as continuing field work in this regard. "We'll require a huge fund to attain the SDGs... but we have confidence that we'll be able to mobilise the resources."

The planning minister also said apart from resource constraints, lack of data is also a barrier towards attaining the SDGs.

UN Resident Coordinator and Representative of UNDP Bangladesh Mia Seppo spoke on the occasion as guest of honour, SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Nobody wants to leave their motherland: Sultana Kamal

Demands ancestral land rights of Santals in Gaibandha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of minority communities left the country at different times in the country after they lost their right to live with dignity, human rights activist Sultana Kamal said yesterday, calling for ensuring rights of the Santal community in Gaibandha over their ancestral land.

"Nobody wants to leave motherland unless they feel threatened for their own life and assets," Sultana Kamal said during a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

Jatiya Adivasi Parishad, Shahebganj Bagda Farm Bhumi Uddhar Committee (SBFBUC), Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and Association for Land Reform Development (ALRD) arranged the programme.

Filimon Baskey, president of SBFBUC, read out the written statement where he placed an eight-point demand including land return, separate land commission, compensation to the families of

three Santal people who were shot dead in 2016, withdrawal of cases against them, and trial of the policemen who set Santal houses on fire.

Indigenous Santal community in the area has long been demanding ownership of around 1,842 acres of land, which was acquired in 1962 by the then government on condition of "only to cultivate sugarcane" for a mill. If not used for sugarcane cultivation, the land was supposed to be given back to real owners with compensation.

In 2004, Santals and Bangalees started demonstrations to get their land back, as the Rangpur Sugar Mill was shut down.

On November 6, 2016, a three-way clash broke out between Santals, staffers of Rangpur Sugar Mills and police, over eviction of indigenous people from the disputed land, leaving three Santal men dead and 20 others, including nine policemen, injured.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

DHAKA TODAY

- TALK**  
Udbhaboner Nepothe: Sonali Bag  
Organiser: DU Science Society  
Venue: Applied Chemistry Dept, Curzon Hall  
Time: 3pm
- FILM SCREENING**  
Films on Poets: Howl  
Organiser: Red Shift Events  
Venue: The Junction, Niketan  
Time: 7:15pm
- COMPETITION**  
Earth Festival  
Venue: Dhaka School of Economics, Ramna  
Time: 9am
- ART EXHIBITION**  
Dawn of Black  
By Anukul Chandra Mojumder  
Venue: Bay's Edgewater, Gulshan 2
- Time: 10am
- DISCUSSION**  
Inhaling Interior Seas - Arijit Chatterjee & Asha Sumra  
Organiser: Bengal Institute  
Venue: EMK Centre  
Time: 6pm
- CONFERENCE**  
Obhishashon o Shonar Manush Shomnilon  
Organiser: RMMRU  
Venue: BICC  
Time: 9am
- REPORT LAUNCHING**  
State of Bangladeshi Children 2018: From the newspapers  
Organiser: Manusher Jonno Foundation  
Venue: Jatiya Press Club  
Time: 11am

Ask PPs not to oppose Khaleda Zia's bail

Moudud urges PM

UNB, Dhaka

Senior BNP leader Moudud Ahmed yesterday sought Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's instruction on public persecutors not to oppose their Chairperson Khaleda Zia's bail petitions.

"Since you [PM] talk about parole, please instruct the public persecutors not to oppose Khaleda Zia's bail. If it happens, parole is not necessary as she can be freed on bail," he said.

Moudud, a BNP standing committee member, made the remarks while speaking at a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club. Jatiyatbadi Mohila Dal organised the event, demanding Khaleda's proper treatment and release from jail.

On Friday, the prime minister in a press conference at Gono Bhaban said one has to apply first to be granted parole. "No one has applied for that so far."

Reacting to the PM's remarks, Moudud said it is clear that the government does not

want Khaleda to walk out of jail. "Khaleda Zia has been kept in jail in false cases. But she'll be freed today or tomorrow with dignity."

Khaleda was sent to jail on February 8 last year, after being convicted in Zia Orphanage Trust graft case. She was also convicted in Zia Charitable corruption case. The BNP chief was shifted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University on April 1 for treatment.

About the oath-taking of their party's MP-elect Zahidur Rahman Zahid, Moudud said the 11th parliament will not get legitimacy due to joining of some BNP MPs-elect.

"Zahidur Rahman took oath. I don't know what benefit the government will get if one or two more MPs-elect go to parliament like him. But people know the current parliament won't get legitimacy even if they take oath, since it was not formed with people's representatives," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Sheikh Jamal's 66th birth anniv today

BSS, Dhaka

The 66th birth anniversary of Sheikh Jamal, son of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, will be observed across the country today.

To mark the day, Awami League (AL) and its associate bodies have chalked out elaborate programmes including recitation from the Holy Quran, milad and doa mahfil, placing wreath at his graveyard and discussions.

AL will pay tributes to Sheikh Jamal by placing wreaths at his Banani grave around 7:30am today.

The freedom fighter was born on April 28, 1954 in Gopalganj. He was assassinated in the military coup on August 15, 1975.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A vendor making and selling "Tal Pakha" on a corner of a road in Tanti Bazar in Old Dhaka. These handmade fans of palm leaves not only give relief from the soaring summer heat and during power cuts, they are also a part of our culture and tradition. The fans are being sold at Tk 25-30.



Posters of Motor Parts Bonik Kalyan Samaji election hang overhead in Bangla Motor area yesterday. No initiative has been taken to remove these eyesores. PHOTO: STAR

DEATH OF BRACU STUDENT Culprit pickup driver held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested the pickup driver who crashed Brac University student Fahmida Haque Labannya under its wheels after she fell off a motorbike on Thursday.

He was arrested from Savar, and was being interrogated, said OC Janea Alam Munshi of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station. The OC did not disclose the name of the driver, saying they would provide details in a press conference today. Police also seized the vehicle.

Earlier, police held Suman, 23, the biker of the ride-sharing motorbike Labannya was on, from Mohammadpur.

In primary interrogation, Suman said Labannya took the ride from Shyamoli around 10:30am to go to Khilgaon. A jaywalker suddenly appeared in front of the bike near National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, prompting him to brake, he said.

Labannya fell off the bike and a pickup ran her over, the police official said quoting the biker. She was declared dead at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital.

Put up resistance against militancy, terrorism: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged people of the country to put up resistance against militancy, terrorism and drugs in a coordinated way.

"I call upon all: put up resistance, mobilise public opinion and make people aware about the menaces of militancy, drug and terrorism," she said.

The prime minister was addressing the closing and medal distribution ceremony of Bangabandhu Inter-University Sports Champs 2019 at Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Describing militancy, terrorism, drugs and corruption as the wounds of society, the prime minister urged guardians, parents, teachers, relatives, ulemas (Islamic scholars), imams and muazzins, public representatives and others to keep the society and country free from these social diseases.

"Our country and society will have to be safe from these."

She said her government worked in the last 10 years for the development of the country's sports sector, alongside socioeconomic uplift and poverty reduction.

Hasina said the government is making efforts so that youths can develop themselves in a proper way engaging in education, sports and cultural exercises.

The premier mentioned that she has family ties with sports, as her grandfather, father Bangabandhu, brothers Sheikh Kamal and Sheikh Jamal, Kamal's wife Sultana and even Jamal's wife were engaged in sports.

She said Bangladesh got many brilliant footballers in the last 10 years following the introduction of Bangabandhu Gold Cup Primary School Football Tournament and SEE PAGE 4 COL 1