

PHOTO OF THE DAY

AMRAN HOSSAIN



A burnt electrical switchgear room on the ground floor of Baitul Mukarram market after a fire broke out there around 11:30am yesterday. Two firefighting units rushed to the spot and doused the blaze within an hour. No casualty was reported.

UPAZILA POLLS

Voters' lack of interest an ominous sign for democracy: EC Mahbub

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The lack of eagerness among people centring the upazila elections is an ominous sign for a democratic nation, Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukder said yesterday. He made the remark in a written press statement at his office in Dhaka, expressing his opinion on the fifth phase of the local government polls. "The most concerning aspect of upazila election this time is lack of voters' eagerness. This is an ominous sign for a democratic state and nation... it is drawing the nation to the edge of a cliff," he said. "You [journalists] have wanted to know my opinion on this year's upazila election which ended in five phases [yesterday]. To opine how much these elections have been free, fair and acceptable, I would repeat what I said regarding general election earlier; if you ask your conscience, you would find the answer," the EC said. Upazila elections will never be free, fair and acceptable if there is any intervention by lawmakers, the election commissioner observed. If answers to questions such as why lawmakers flout electoral conduct to put their preferred candidate in office, or

why they sometimes take stance against their party-nominated candidate cannot be found, their direct or indirect influence in the polls are inevitable, the statement read. "In this context, question remains whether the local or upazila elections have been held constitutionally or not," he said. "The upazila polls this time were not inclusive, as the opposition parties did not contest in the election," Mahbub also said. "Democracy means the opinion of the majority gets expressed in an inclusive and participatory manner. In lopsided polls, opinion of the majority does not get reflected properly," the statement read. "The upazila parishad will fail to meet the people's expectations if it is not able to deliver their duties independently and the democratic norms of the local governance system are compromised," he added. Stressing that the polls environment is an important aspect to ensure inclusive elections, EC Mahbub said, "We are continuously moving towards one-sided polls, which is not a good sign for democracy." "Is there any necessity of such elections just for the sake of it? We want to find a positive way from this negative question," he said.

Random drives not enough: speakers

Call for fighting food adulteration at grower level

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said the authorities concerned should work on fighting food adulteration and contamination at grower level to ensure food safety for all. They said only random mobile court drives in the markets are not sufficient to ensure food safety. If required, the government should provide incentives to traders involved in agro and food processing so they do not get involved in food adulteration for profit. Bangladesh Supermarket Owners' Association (BSOA) and Bangladesh Food Safety Foundation organised the discussion on "Safe food for all: challenges and to-do" at Krishibid Institution Bangladesh, marking World Food Safety Day. Referring to statistics, Mushtaq Hasan Muhammad Iftikhar, former chairman of Bangladesh Food Safety Authority, said globally one in every 10 people suffers due to food poisoning.

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Towards a congestion-free Dhaka

Committee formed to remove illegal vehicles from roads in 2 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special committee led by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon was formed yesterday to remove illegal vehicles from streets and free footpaths from grabbers, to ease traffic congestion in the capital. In the next two months, the committee, in association with police, will identify illegal vehicles including rickshaws, battery-run rickshaws and CNG-run auto-rickshaws. It will then remove those from streets and reclaim footpaths from grabbers, stop intrusion of such vehicles from neighbouring districts and stop illegal parking. Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader revealed the information after the 12th board meeting of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) at

Nagar Bhaban in Gulistan. "It is not expected that all the decisions will be executed within two months. However, we believe, the committee led by Sayeed Khokon will show results to the city dwellers," he said. "We only take decisions but those are not implemented. Through the activities [of the committee] in the next two months, we want to bring back people's confidence," said Quader, also the general secretary of Awami League. The decision came at a time when traffic congestion in Dhaka eats up around 5 million working hours every day and the average speed of vehicles during rush hours has come down to 5kmph, according to Accident Research Institute (ARI) of Buet. The congestion causes an annual loss of between Tk 20,000 crore and Tk

55,000 crore, ARI said last year, citing findings of organisations working on the issue. The authorities, on many occasions, had taken initiatives to remove illegal vehicles from city's streets. Also, multiple drives had been carried out to reclaim footpaths from illegal occupation. But those initiatives lost momentum after a few days and illegal vehicles and occupants returned to streets and footpaths again. Asked whether he can give any assurance that such incidents will not recur, Quader said, "Solution will come if we try sincerely and stick to a programme." He mentioned that 99 percent riders now wear helmets due to their continuous efforts. "So, if we work with sincerity and coordination, we will get a solution and this time, we're going to take

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DHAKA TODAY

OPEN MIKE

Venue: Counter Culture Club, Dhanmondi Time: 5pm

OPEN MIKE

Venue: Jatra Biroti Time: 3:30pm

PHOTO EXHIBITION

Story of Pictures Organiser: Alekko Citto Venue: Drik Gallery Time: 2pm

EXPOSITION

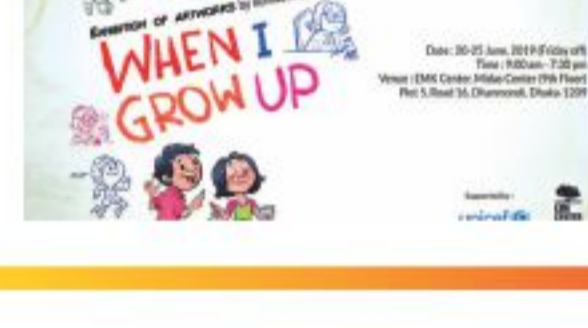
Bangladesh Beauty Expo 2019 Organiser: Royal Signature Venue: Banani Chairman Bari Field Time: 10am-9:30pm

FESTIVAL

Bangladesh International Theatre Festival Organiser: Ministry of Cultural Affairs Venue: Shilpakala Academy Time: 7pm

ART EXHIBITION

When I Grow Up Organiser: Amnesty International Artworks by Rohingya refugee children will be on display. Venue: EMK Center Time: 9am-7:30pm



Elderly population, an asset not burden

Speakers want engagement of senior citizens in income-generating activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Instead of being a burden to the society, elderly people -- aged above 60 -- can also contribute to the nation if they are engaged in income-generating activities, speakers said at a roundtable yesterday. When someone crosses 60, it does not mean that person has no efficiency left. If the elderly are economically empowered, their families and society will also take good care of them, they added. The speakers suggested that the government introduce a universal pension scheme for all, train more caregivers for "super-elderlies" [over 80] and implement the national policy for senior citizens. Bangla daily Prothom Alo in association with HelpAge International, Bangladesh organised the discussion on protection of elderly people at the newspaper's office in

Dhaka. Rashed Khan Menon, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on social welfare ministry, said the country wants to go forward including everyone in its development activities. So, there is no chance of leaving the elderly behind. "Economic empowerment of senior citizens is very important. It will help increase their efficiency or value in society," added the former social welfare minister. Sharifa Begum, a former senior research fellow at Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said majority of super-elderlies faces various physical constraints and at least one-third of them suffer from mental health issues. "Families should take proper care of

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Selima, Iqbal included in BNP standing committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP has inducted its vice chairmen Selima Rahman and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku into the party's standing committee, the highest policymaking body of the party. The announcement came from BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi during a press briefing at the party's Nayapalton headquarters yesterday. "We had announced fresh committees following the council meeting. Some posts in the standing committee remained vacant following deaths of several leaders," said Rizvi.

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An activist tears the image of a car, symbolising an end to the traffic problems and environmental damage caused by the huge number of private vehicles roaming the streets of Dhaka. The photo was taken from Car-free Cities Alliance's inauguration programme on Satmasjid Road.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Buet students continue their protest for the fifth consecutive day, to press home their 16-point demand. Inset, roads entering the university were blocked during the demonstration.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DEMOS AT BUET

Teachers' association urges authorities to end deadlock

DUI CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) yesterday expressed concerns over the deadlock at the university as a result of the ongoing students' demonstrations. In a statement, the Teachers' Association of the university urged the university authorities to solve the crisis as soon as possible. "A deadlock is prevailing in the academic and administrative activities due to ongoing protest of the students. The Teachers' Association is expressing deep concern as no effective steps were seen to be taken from the authorities' end. We are urging the authorities to bring back normalcy to the campus by resolving the crisis," reads the statement. Meanwhile, Buet students yesterday continued their protest for the fifth consecutive day, to press home their 16-point demand including cancellation of the recruitment order of director of students' welfare.

The protesters are boycotting all academic activities, and have locked up the administrative building and the office of the university's vice-chancellor. Ever since the students started their agitation over their 16-point demand, the vice-chancellor has not attended his office. Deans of different departments talked to the students, but could not give them any proper solution, said agitating students. They staged a sit-in in front of the campus Shaheed Minar from 11am till 2:30pm, blocking the Palashi-Bakshibazar road. BCL LEADERS MEET EDU MINISTER Meanwhile, leaders of Buet unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League, along with central leaders of the pro-Awami League student organisation, met Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday, to seek a solution to the crisis. "We informed the minister of the students' 16-point demand," president of Buet's BCL unit Jamius Sunny told The Daily Star. "The minister assured that she

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DEATH OF RAJIB HC verdict on compensation today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court will deliver its verdict today on the rule issued over compensating Tk 1 crore to the family of Rajib Hossain, who died after losing his hand after getting stuck between two buses in the capital last year. The HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Md Khairul Alam on May 23 fixed June 20 (today) for passing the judgement as it concluded hearing on the rule on May 8, Deputy Attorney General Motaheer Hossain Sazu told The Daily Star. On April 3, 2018, the third-year student of Government Titumir College lost his right hand after it got stuck between two speeding buses of BRTC and Sajan Paribahan,

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