

MIRPUR SLUM FIRE
Victims to be rehabilitated: Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said victims of the Friday night's fire at Chalanika in Mirpur that rendered thousands of people homeless will be rehabilitated.

"The government will rehabilitate all the victims," Quader said while distributing relief materials among people at nearby Bangabandhu Bidyaniketan School, where some of the victims have taken shelter for the time being.

The government will give all sorts of support along with relief materials until they are rehabilitated, he said.

"The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina always remains beside the helpless."

Mentioning the remarks of BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam about Mirpur slum fire, Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said Fakhru criticised Awami League and the government when he came to visit the fire victims but did not distribute any relief among them.

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'No reason to give away our land'

BNP says on reports of India seeking land for Agartala airport

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday said there is no reason for Bangladesh to provide its land to India in Brahmanbaria to expand Agartala airport.

"There have been media reports about it (India's desire to use Bangladeshi land in Brahmanbaria). We're closely observing the matter," said BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, while talking to reporters after placing wreaths at BNP founder Ziaur Rahman's grave along with leaders and activists of Jatiyatabadi Swachhasebak Dal, marking its 39th founding anniversary.

He further said, "Bangladesh government hasn't agreed yet, and there's no question about providing any land. There's no reason to give our land to any other country."

Media reports say India wants a piece of Bangladesh's land in Brahmanbaria to expand the Agartala airport, but the country is yet to make any proposal in this regard.

Fakhru said their party is "not optimistic" about getting any positive outcome to resolve the outstanding problems with India from the visit of its External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

"We've been hearing for 10 to 12 years that the Awami League government's relation with India reached the highest level, but we still didn't get the fair share of water from the Teesta River. Border killing could not be stopped as no step has been taken to remove the trade deficit with India," he said.

The BNP leader said no pending issue of Bangladesh with India has so far been resolved. "But India solved its own problems with us. That is why we can not be optimistic and we also don't expect much from this visit."

S Jaishankar was scheduled to arrive in Dhaka last night, to discuss bilateral issues and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming visit to India.

Fakhru also protested Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's remark involving Zia with the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975 -- saying the

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NO LESSON LEARNT

Fire hazard in Old Dhaka remains unchanged 6 months after Chawkbazar blaze; victims yet to receive financial help



This once-bustling intersection in Churihatta has become uncharacteristically deserted for Old Dhaka, as locals live with the trauma of the horrific fire, and in fear that the charred remains of Wahed Mansion may crumble on them. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

It seems the lessons have not learnt been yet. Six months have passed since the devastating Chawkbazar fire, and Old Dhaka is still sitting on a ticking time bomb as chemical warehouses continue to operate -- mostly in residential buildings -- due to lack of action by the authorities concerned.

What's more frustrating is that the families of the victims, who lost their lives in the chemical blaze, did not receive any financial assistance till date, despite promises made by the authorities.

Once a crowded place, Chawkbazar's Churihatta became quiet as the fire changed the landscape of the neighbourhood with Haji Wahed Mansion [from where the fire started] still being considered hazardous. Locals fear it may collapse anytime.

A three-storeyed building, opposite to Haji Wahed Mansion, was also damaged in the incident.

Out of around 30 businesses ravaged by the fire, only five could restart operation. One of them is Rajmohol Restaurant, situated in a building adjacent to Wahed Mansion.

"We opened two months after the fire. But business here is not good as before. People are still fearful," Asif Uddin, manager of the restaurant, told these correspondents during a visit to the spot on Sunday.

At least 70 people were killed in the fire on February 20, while many were injured. Several business establishments were gutted, with everything turning to ashes.

Locals said the owners of Wahed Mansion -- siblings Hasan and Sohail, who are now in prison -- can't avoid their responsibility.

"Greedy house owners like them didn't learn any lesson from the Nimtoli tragedy. They mindlessly rented out floors and rooms for storing chemicals and flammable products, just for money," he said.

"Hundreds such warehouses are still dotting the area but authorities seem to have turned a blind eye," said Ashraf Uddin Shadhin, president of Churihatta Ekota Sangha, a local voluntary club.

The warehouses store flammable substances, potent enough to cause disasters similar to the ones that devastated Chawkbazar and Nimtoli, they said, referring to the latest fire that broke out on August 14 at a plastic factory in Postar Dhal area of Islambagh.

Locals said they want to help the authorities identify the warehouses in residential buildings. They, however, alleged that the authorities are not cooperative.

After the fire at Wahed Mansion, its owners along with some others tried to establish that the fire originated from gas cylinders or transformer blast, they said.

"But CCTV footage dispelled that propaganda. It was chemicals, stored in Wahed Mansion, that

caused the massive explosion," Ashraf said.

He added that the owners threatened the adjacent building owners for providing the footage. Later, he filed a general diary in this connection.

Wahed Mansion owner's family wanted to reopen the building and started reconstruction some months back, but facing locals' protests they stopped the work, he said.

Now, the building remains locked.

Residents of old town say more than 500 chemical warehouses, factories and outlets are still being run in the overpopulated residential areas, although Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has stopped providing new licences as well as renewal of old ones since last year.

The chemical warehouses and stores are mostly located in Mitford, Armanitola, Kayettuli, SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Rab arrests four suspected militants from Hatirjheel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday arrested four men, who are allegedly members of militant outfit "Allah'r Dol", from the capital's Hatirjheel area.

A team of Rab-3 arrested Ibrahim Ahmed Hiro, 46, acting "ameer" of Allah'r Dol; Abdul Aziz, 50; Shafiqul Islam Suruj, 38, and Rashidul Islam, 28, in a drive late on Sunday, said Rab-3 Commanding Officer Lt Col Emaranul Hasan at a briefing yesterday.

Acting chief Hiro joined the outfit in 1997. A motor parts trader by profession, Hiro hails from Pabna. Abdul Aziz, hailing from Gaibandha, is the second-in-command. He also joined the outfit in 1997, according to Rab.

Mobile phones, pen drives, hard disks, a

credit card, and a cheque book were seized from the arrestees.

The Rab official said Allah'r Dol was formed in 1995 under the leadership of Matin Mehedi alias Mominul Islam. In late 2004, the outfit merged with banned militant organisation Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

As JMB faced a serious blow after the arrest of its top leaders following the 2005 countrywide bomb blasts, Matin left JMB with his followers and tried to reorganise Allah'r Dol.

He was arrested in 2007 when he was still the ameer, said a Rab press release.

Due to strategic reason, Allah'r Dol was renamed Allah'r Sarkar in 2014, it added.

"The arrested members admitted that the aim of the organisation is to remove SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

PHOTO OF THE DAY | RASHED SHUMON



A LINGERING EID VACATION ... Although Dhaka streets seem to be returning to their full chaotic glory following a quaint week of Eid, this long queue of locked-up rickshaws on the roadside in Tejgaon hints that not all rickshaw-pullers have come back to the megacity. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

DENGUE MENACE

DNCC to launch 'combing operation'

UNB, Dhaka

Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Md Atiqul Islam yesterday announced a "combing operation" will be launched in the city today, to eliminate Aedes mosquitoes.

He said this while talking to reporters after inspecting an anti-mosquito drive at Mohakhali bus terminal.

"Today, we visited the bus terminal's surrounding areas and found some abandoned tires. Aedes mosquitoes usually lay eggs in stagnant water. So, I asked the magistrate to fine the terminal authorities Tk 5 lakh," he said.

"City corporation staff will visit houses in each area during the combing operation. Action will be taken if Aedes larvae are found. We'll also conduct drives at all bus terminals, hospitals and police outpost areas," the mayor said.

Atiqul said DNCC staff will mark sites where Aedes larvae will be detected, and first-time offenders will be given warning. Action will be taken against them after 15 days, if larvae are

found there again. "We've brought 200 new fogger machines and 150 spray machines to terminate dengue, including Aedes mosquitoes. We'll inform media of our latest activities," he said.

Replying to a question over the effectiveness of pesticides, DNCC entomologist Kabirul Bashar said new pesticides have been brought in last week, and these are 97-98 percent effective.

DSCC FINES 9 BUILDING OWNERS Meanwhile, mobile courts yesterday fined owners of nine buildings Tk 2.28 lakh after Aedes mosquito larvae were found at the premises.

The mobile courts led by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) executive magistrates conducted the drives in the capital's Nayapaltan, Segunbagicha, Tophkhana, Dhanmondi and Jatrabari areas and found Aedes breeding grounds at the buildings, said a DSCC official.

Later, the courts fined the owners of the buildings, the official said. The buildings where Aedes larvae were found included Eastern View in

Nayapaltan and an under-construction site of S Farm in Dhanmondi, he said.

DSCC will also conduct cleaning drive led by Mayor Sayeed Khokon at Dhaka Medical College Hospital premises, including its emergency unit, tomorrow, the official added.

The city corporation has been conducting drives across the city to destroy breeding grounds of Aedes mosquito, which is the carrier of the virus causing dengue fever.

As part of the drive, a total of 225 buildings were inspected by DSCC mobile courts in the five areas yesterday, the official also said.

A total of 58,748 buildings in the areas were inspected so far and the owners and residents were asked to stay alert and ensure cleanliness to prevent Aedes mosquitoes from breeding on the premises of their establishments.

Also, members of Bangladesh Scouts have visited 1,11,000 houses to destroy Aedes larvae and breeding grounds.

The ongoing cleaning and awareness building campaign by DSCC and scouts and the drives by DSCC mobile courts will continue, he added.

9TH WAGE BOARD FOR JOURNOS
SC order on gazette today

STAR REPORT

The Supreme Court will pass an order today on a petition filed by the government seeking a stay on the High Court order that issued status quo on publication of gazette notification on implementing the recommendation of ninth wage board for journalists.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain fixed the date after concluding hearing on the government petition yesterday.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, who appeared for the government, told the SC that the writ petition which challenged legality of the ninth wage board and its recommendation is premature as the government is yet to issue any gazette notification on the recommendation.

The Newspapers Owners' Association (Noab) can place their objection in 14 days after the gazette is issued, he said.

Meanwhile, Noab's lawyer Advocate AF Hasan Arif opposed the government petition saying that the labour ministry is responsible for the formation of the wage board as per the rules of business, issued by the president. But the ninth wage board has been formed by the information ministry in violation of the rules of business, he argued.

On August 6, the HC issued the status quo for two months. The court also issued a rule asking the respondents to explain why the unilateral finalisation of the award by the ninth wage board without giving the stakeholders opportunity to raise objections to the recommendations should not be declared illegal.

At yesterday's hearing, terming the initial writ petition against publishing the gazette notification premature, the attorney general said the petitioner filed it as he does not want to pay salary to journalists properly, reports BSS.

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DHAKA TODAY

DISCUSSION

Marking death anniversary of Bangabandhu
Organiser: Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh
Venue: Tropical Mollah Tower, Madhya Badda
Time: 4:30pm

SEMINAR

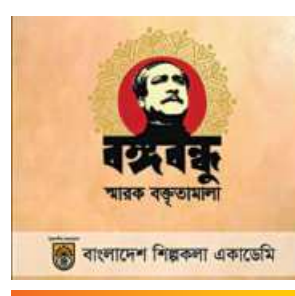
On Global Entrepreneurship
Venue: China Bangla Business Club
Time: 11am

WORKSHOP

Graphics Design
Organiser: UY Lab
Venue: Columbia Super Market, Mohakhali
Time: 4pm

LECTURE

Remembering Bangabandhu
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Time: 4pm



In loving Memories of...
Mashroor Sharar Azam
08/06/1993- 20/08/2013

Today in this sixth death anniversary of our beloved son **Mashroor Sharar Azam**- families, relatives, friends & well-wishers are requested to pray for his departed soul
May Almighty Allah grant him jannah.

on Behalf of his Family-
Md. Moshuiul Azam Shajal