

'It will be our failure as a nation'

Sultana Kamal worries Sundarbans may get included on List of World Heritage in Danger

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent rights activist and environmentalist Sultana Kamal yesterday said industrialisation near the ecologically critical area (ECA) of the Sundarbans is irrational and unscientific, which is being carried out under political consideration.

She urged the government to refrain from such move immediately to protect the world's largest mangrove forest and prevent it from being enlisted as one of the endangered world heritage sites.

She made the remarks while speaking at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity, organised by National Committee to Protect the Sundarbans.

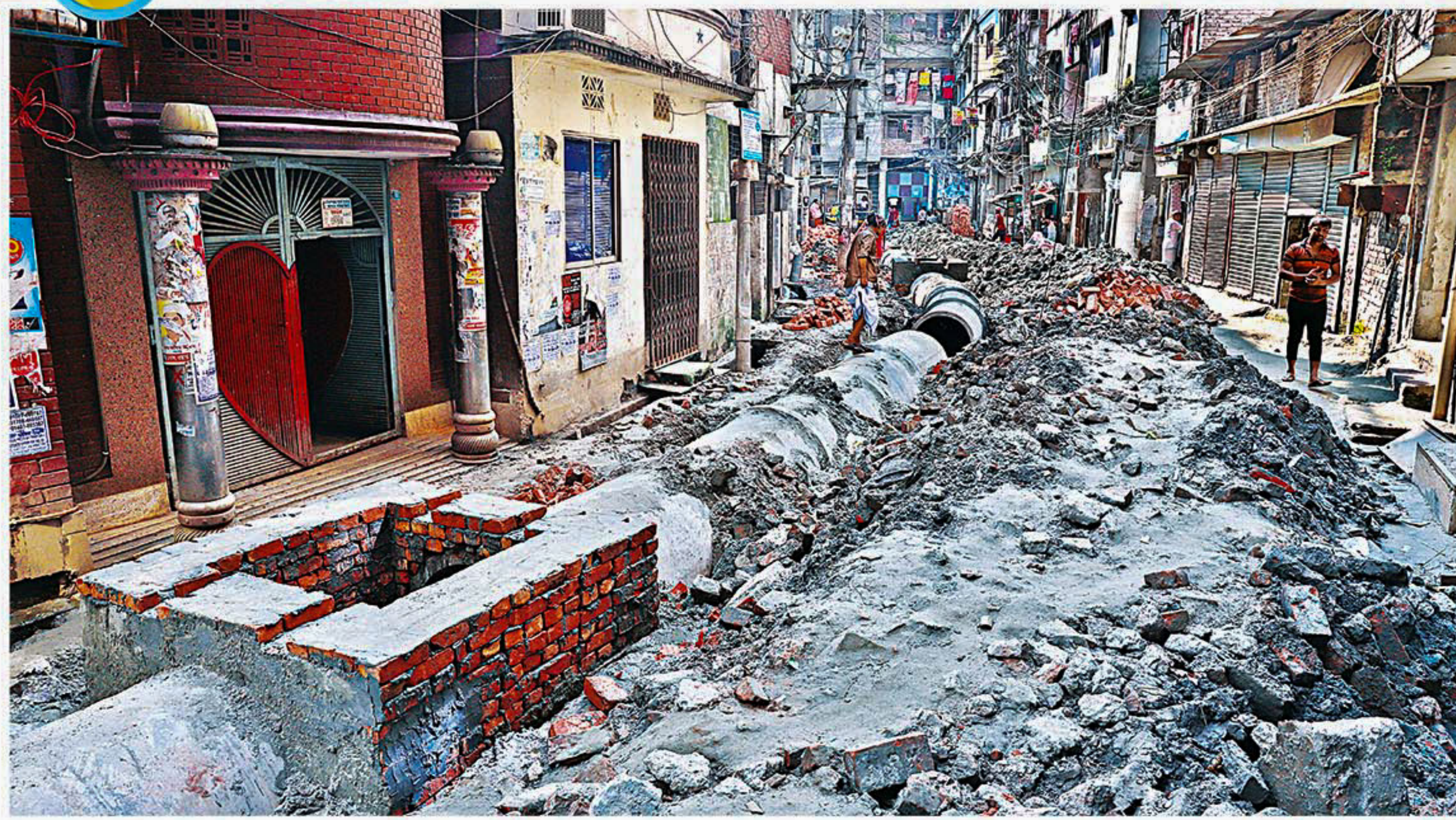
Despite protests at home and abroad, the government is building a coal-based power plant -- known as severely harmful -- in the ECA of the Sundarbans under Rampal upazila of Bagerhat, said Sultana, convener of the committee.

It [government] also approved establishing several heavy industries near the forest. The government is building two other coal-based power plants in coastal areas --Payra and Taltali -- which are close to the forest, she added.

"...Such activities of the government have left the country's people and environmentalists around the world panicked. We want the government to change its stance," said Sultana, also chairperson of Transparency International Bangladesh (ITB).

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PHOTO OF THE DAY



NOT A WAR ZONE... Nazimuddin Road in Nawab Bagicha area has been dug up as per whims for improving the drainage system. The authorities concerned started the "development work" couple of weeks ago, without taking into account that people living in the area have to use the road day in, day out. The photo was taken yesterday.

AMRAN HOSSAIN

Increase primary teachers' facilities

Speakers urge govt

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the government to increase facilities for primary school teachers and bring all educational institutions under the monthly pay order (MPO) scheme.

Bangladesh Teachers' Association (BTA) under the banner of "MPO Bhukto Shiksha Protisthan Jatiyakoron Liaison Forum" organised the event at Jatiya Press Club, marking World Teacher's Day.

Speaking as chief guest, Awami League Advisory Council member and Chairman of Women Affairs Sub-Committee Dr Sultana Shafi said teachers of primary and secondary levels are receiving few facilities.

Md Najrul Islam Rony, spokesperson of the platform, urged the government to reduce salary disparity, increase facilities and nationalise all schools.

Govt framework needed for affordable housing

Say speakers at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government needs to create a framework for providing affordable housing facilities for low-income groups in Dhaka and other urban areas, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

The programme, a part of the "1st International Conference on Urban and Regional Planning 2019", was arranged by Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Center.

Hasina Mushrofa, head of Brac Urban Development Programme, said the government has mandates for urban development including those in the

Sustainable Development Goals, in the Delta Plan and in its national flagship programme "My Village, My Town".

However, absence of institutional framework or a national urban policy creates challenges for implementing the mandates, she said while addressing the discussion on "Housing and Community Planning, Environmental Management, Sustainable Cities and Settlements".

Drafts of the policy were prepared several times in the past but the policy has not been enacted yet, she added.

Inter-ministerial coordination is also required to implement the mandates, she further said.

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Dhaka-Manchester Biman flight by Jan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will launch a direct flight between Dhaka and Manchester, a major city in the UK, by January next year, considering huge demand.

M Mohibul Haque, secretary to the civil aviation and tourism ministry, revealed this yesterday during a meeting with visiting Mayor of Greater Manchester Andrew Murray Burnham at a city hotel. British High Commissioner to Dhaka Robert Chatterton Dickson was also present.

The secretary said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given her consent to commence the direct Dhaka-Manchester flight, which will benefit expatriate Bangladeshis living in the northern part of England, said a press release.

Mentioning that currently Biman's fleet consists of modern aircraft like Boeing's Dreamliner 787, Mohibul said the national flag carrier will introduce new destinations for ensuring utmost use of its airplanes.

Burnham assured that he will extend all out support to Bangladesh for establishing the direct air connectivity.

Use of AI can reduce risk of question leaks

International experts say

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR, back from Bengaluru

Digital transformation and use of artificial intelligence in education system in Bangladesh can play a significant role in reducing risk of question paper leaks and teachers' errors in marking answer scripts, international experts said.

Incidents of question paper leaks in public exams like PECE, JSC, SSC and HSC and equivalent levels in the last several years have created doubts in people's mind about the credibility of exams as well as the standard of education.

"Use of AI can help in mitigating risk of question paper leak," Global Director, Education Leadership, Microsoft Corporation, Alexa Joyce said while talking about the benefits of digital transformation and using AI in education.

"If you have paper-based exam approaches, you have to print questions in huge numbers and move the paper in secured way all over the country. And you run risk of students getting access to the paper, copying them and sharing it on the social media," she said.

"It has happened in some countries," she added.

She made the remarks while talking to this newspaper during the Asian Summit on Education and Skills (ASES) held in Bengaluru, capital of the Indian state of Karnataka, from September 22 to 24.

After public outcry following question leak in 2014, the education ministry formed a high power probe committee headed by then additional secretary Sohob Hossain. The committee, in its report, recommended managing question paper using AI to avoid repeat of question leaks.

A probe committee member said that the recommendation of using AI is still in consideration.

"Question leak has stopped for the time being but we know this is not permanent. We are using improved technology and trying other ways to stop question leak,"

Sohob said while responding to whether the government will introduce AI in curbing question leaks.

At the Bengaluru summit, Alexa also said, "Digital transformation and AI can reduce teachers' workload and save time in assessing scripts. It can help traditional multiple choice question exam system. It is very easy to give automated feedback in short time."

"We are also seeing AI used to check whether someone has copied others' work. You can collect the data handwritten on paper and scan it, and you can analyse the data easily," she added.

Primary and Mass Education State Minister Zakir Hossen, who also led a Bangladeshi delegation at the summit, while talking to this newspaper said Bangladesh is adopting different technologies in the education sector.

Board officials said around 10-12 percent examinees have applied for reassessment of scripts of SSC and HSC exams under the Dhaka Education Board in the last three years.

Teachers need to assess papers of around 92.15 lakh students taking latest public exams.

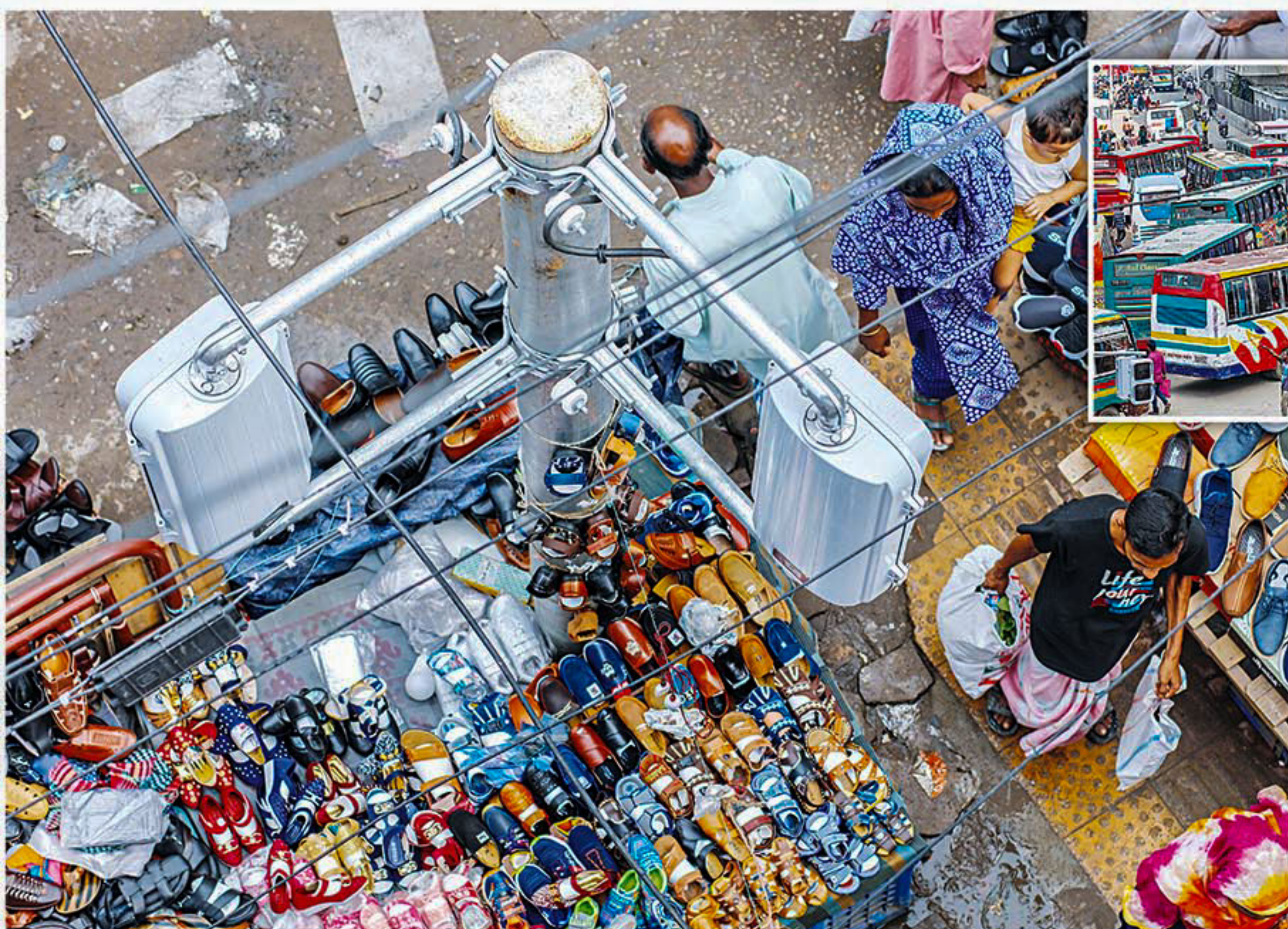
Around 30.95 lakh students sat for latest PECE exams after class V, about 26.70 lakh students appeared for JSC exams after class VIII, 21.36 lakh took SSC exams after class X and 13.51 students took HSC exams after class XII.

Teachers also need to assess scripts of two school exams in a year of over 2.5 crore students.

Dhaka Education Board officials said that 57,555 examinees out of total 5,48,220 applied for reassessment of scripts of SSC exams in 2019 -- 10.50 percent of total examinees.

Officials said that they need to publish results of HSC and SSC within 60 days and publish results of JSC and PECE in less than 30 days.

So examinees need to hurry to check the papers -- sometimes causing errors.



A shoe seller has set up his shop around a recently installed digital traffic signal at Gulistan intersection, tying the products around the pole. The automated system was meant to ease traffic and pedestrian movement but everyone acts as if the signals are invisible, inset. The photos were taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DHAKA TODAY

CONFERENCE
Urban and Regional Planning and Planners' National Convention
Organiser: Bangladesh Institute of Planners
Venue: Cirdap, Topkhana Road
Time: 3pm

LECTURE
Indian Spotted Eagle: Biological Controller of Agricultural Land
Organiser: Wild Team
Venue: Cosmos Centre, Malibagh
Time: 5pm

SEMINAR
TB and Tobacco: The Way Forward
Organiser: ARK Foundation
Venue: Six Seasons Hotel, Gulshan-2
Time: 10am

CONFERENCE
Youths Committed to Quality

Education for Sustainable Development
Organiser: Bangladesh Catholic Students' Movement
Venue: CBCB Center, Mohammadpur
Time: 3pm

WORKSHOP
On Leadership and Enterprise
Venue: Ichchey Foundation, Lalmatia
Time: 2pm

TRAINING
Tax Management and Focusing on Budget
Venue: IPDP Training, Banani
Time: 6:30pm

MUSIC CLASS
A Journey with Irish Whistle
Venue: Jatra Biroti, Banani
Time: 3pm

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