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Your Right to Know

PLUS 4 PAGES JACKET ON WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY  
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INDEFINITE TRANSPORT STRIKE

## Businesses in for a blow

Truckers go on strike today; passengers in 19 dists suffer as transport workers continue work stoppage to protest enforcement of new road law



Ailing Shakira Banu, middle, walks with support from her mother and daughter, as they look for a mode of transport to go to a doctor amid the strike in Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a wildcat transport strike causing immense sufferings to people in at least 19 districts, businesses now brace for a blow as truck owners and workers yesterday announced an indefinite work stoppage from today, protesting the enforcement of the Road Transport Act 2018.

In a late development, owners and workers of trucks and covered vans held an hour-long meeting with Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan last night, but it ended inconclusively.

"Three of us went to his [home minister] Monipuripara residence in the capital and told him that it was not possible for us to give a decision on our programme. We will sit with him again tomorrow evening," said Mokbul Ahmed, joint convener of Bangladesh Truck, Covered-van Goods

Transport Owners-Workers Unity Council that called the work stoppage.

"Our programme will continue," Mokbul, who led the three-member team, told The Daily Star.

Sharif Mahmud Apu, senior information officer at the home ministry, also confirmed that another meeting with the transport leaders will be held this evening.

Yesterday, transport workers in nine more districts joined the work stoppage that began in 10 districts on Monday, defying Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader's call for them to refrain from such programmes over the new law that came into effect on Sunday.

The workers held people hostage by keeping buses off the roads -- an old tactic they often use to press home their demands -- cutting off road communications between

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## First onion cargo flight due tonight

Several flights to arrive till Nov 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi yesterday said the first air cargo carrying onions from Egypt would land in Dhaka at midnight today.

He said the chartered flight was supposed to land at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday, but it was delayed due to a technical problem and long transit in Saudi Arabia.

"I am deeply troubled by the onion prices," said Munshi, who returned from Australia yesterday, two days ahead of schedule. He had gone to the country to attend an

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S ASIAN DIASPORA

## Sir Fazle Hasan Abed honoured

UNB, Singapore

Founder and Chair Emeritus of Brac Sir Fazle Hasan Abed has been honoured with the Outstanding Member of the South Asian Diaspora Award (OMSAD). The award was given at the Fourth South Asian Diaspora Convention held in Singapore's National University from November

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People scramble for packs of salt at grocery shops in the capital's Karwan Bazar yesterday after a rumour spread that the price of the essential cooking ingredient would shoot up.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

RUMOURS OVER PRICES OF SALT

## Swift govt actions check panic buying

STAR REPORT

Following rumours that salt prices would go up like those of onions, people across the country went into panic buying yesterday, emptying shelves.

The government swung into action and mobile courts jailed eight traders, fined 15 people and dozens of stores, and held 52 people for stockpiling and selling salt for unreasonable prices.

The rumours started spreading like wildfire, on the streets and in social

media, since Monday afternoon and people who had to endure the recent onion price hike got spooked and made a dash to stores in huge numbers, buying a lot more table salt than they needed.

Unscrupulous traders across the country took advantage of the panic buying and jacked up the prices as high as Tk 80 a kg, which is usually Tk 25-35.

The chaos prompted police and local administration to launch drives in the capital, Sylhet, Rajshahi,

Bogura, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, and Moulvibazar.

There were also reports of panic buying in Cox's Bazar, Chattogram, Lalmonirhat, Chandpur, Cumilla, Pirojpur, Narayanganj, and Bagerhat.

The government even issued a press note yesterday, warning stern actions against anyone spreading rumours about salt or anything else in social media.

"A quarter has been involved in spreading rumours in the country in

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Agitating transport workers ask a trucker to keep away from driving as they protest the enforcement of Road Transport Act near Satrasta intersection in the capital yesterday. Under the new law, drivers would face tougher penalties for violations of traffic rules.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'LAND DISPUTE'

## Man injured in acid attack

A CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A youth had acid thrown on him allegedly by rivals of his family in Ratanpur union of Satkhira's Kaliganj upazila early yesterday.

The victim, Rafiqul Islam, 26, is now in a critical condition as about 60 percent of his body, including his face, eyes and head, was burnt, said doctors.

He is now undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH).

The victim's family members said they had a longstanding rivalry with neighbour Babu Gazi, a member of Ratanpur Union Parishad, over land-related issues and that Babu had long been threatening them in many ways.

The attack was carried out around 3:30am when Rafiqul went out of his home to use the toilet, said Shafiqul, a cousin of the victim.

Hearing Rafiqul screaming, family members rushed out of home and saw Babu and his associates Siraj, Tutul and

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FOOD, DRUG ADULTERATION

## HC suggests death penalty, life term

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that the people who produce, store, and sell adulterated foods and medicines should get death sentences or at least life in prison.

Those who are accused of these offences should be implicated under the Special Powers Act, 1974 in order to ensure their maximum punishment, the court said.

A death sentence is the highest punishment that can be awarded under this act.

The people accused of selling adulterated medicines at pharmacies are given seven days of imprisonment by the mobile courts, the court said, adding that the punishment is very minimal.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul came up with the observation while hearing a writ petition filed by Mahfuzur Rahman Milon, executive director of Justice Watch Foundation, a human rights organisation.

During the proceedings, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Abdullah Mahmud Bashar submitted a report prepared by the Directorate General of Drug Administration before the HC.

Citing the report, Bashar said mobile courts across the country had destroyed expired medicines worth Tk 34.7 crore and realised Tk 1.75 crore as fine from those who were involved in selling and storing adulterated and expired medicines in the last two months.

The courts also filed 572 cases in this connection during this period.

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