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Your Right to Know

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In Bangladesh, infectious medical waste has never received adequate attention in spite of the growth of many hospitals, clinics and other facilities. On October 28, The Daily Star published a report that showed how untreated medical waste is accumulating in landfills in divisional cities, posing a serious threat to public health. But what is happening in the capital?

The Daily Star investigations reveal a shocking picture of medical waste mismanagement in the city. A huge illegal business profiting off of unsafe medical waste has developed over the years under the very nose of the authorities. Only a quarter of infectious medical waste is being sterilised properly. The rest is going directly from the hospitals to the black market to be used as recyclable plastic.

It is quite possible that such mismanagement is causing disease amongst waste cleaners, waste pickers, collectors, and recycling waste operators. The risk for the general public is also significant. The overall picture is quite alarming. It is high time the authorities paid proper attention to this sector.

BRISK BUSINESS OF HAZARDOUS MEDICAL WASTE

Safety takes a back seat

Hospital staffers, scrap and plastic traders make money; environment, public health ignored

PINAKI ROY and BISHAKHA DEVNATH

A worker hacks away at a pipe-like object at a small scrap shop in Old Dhaka's Islambagh. The sound of his hammer crashing against the pipe is instantly followed by bits of plastic flying off in all directions. Flecks of yellow and red tint the air.

Although the object being cut is without a label, it is clear that it was a dialyser meant for filtering the blood of kidney-disease patients.

The plastic pieces salvaged from it would change hands a few more times, before being recycled, perhaps into a jug.

Though recycling is to be

encouraged, in this form, however, it is quite alarming.

Unauthorised, unregulated recycling of medical wastes can cause spread of infections like hepatitis A and B, or something even more serious, according to experts.

A matter of grave concern is that hospitals are a source of superbugs resistant to commonly used antibiotics and such handling of medical wastes helps spread those superbugs, said Prof ABM Faruq, of Dhaka University's pharmaceutical technology department.

The small shop in Islambagh, innocuous at first glance, is part of a

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The shady 'recycle-man'

PINAKI ROY and BISHAKHA DEVNATH

He is an apparent big shot in the black market of medical recyclables. Probably in his late thirties, the man keeps close supervision over his business and is careful to leave no footprints behind.

His name is Jonny Mia.

An almost mythical character, in the shady world of medical recyclables, searching for him was akin to chasing shadows.

The Daily Star correspondents heard of his name on plenty of occasions while investigating medical waste recyclables. Only upon meeting him, was his existence finally uncovered.

It was around midday on October 3. The

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina greets guests at a reception organised at Senakunja in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday to mark the Armed Forces Day. Chiefs of the three services are also seen in the photo. Inset, the PM places a wreath at the Shikha Anirban to pay tribute to the martyred members of the armed forces.



PHOTO: PID



Tests await beneath pink parade

Tigers take on India in second Test today

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI from Kolkata

Pink fever has taken over Kolkata and myriad arrangements were in full flow for Bangladesh and India's first ever pink-ball Test, which will get underway from 1:30pm (Bangladesh time) today.

The ball, coupled with the fact that it is both countries' first day-night Test has induced much excitement among fans in Kolkata. Tickets were in short supply and BCCI president Sourav Ganguly had earlier informed that all of the tickets for the first four days of the Test, the

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ROAD TRANSPORT ACT

Govt goes soft on enforcement to end strike

Buses still off roads in some districts

STAR REPORT

In an attempt to appease the agitating transport workers, the government has assured gradual and relaxed implementation of the Road Transport Act 2018, jeopardising the law's proper enforcement.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader on Sunday, the day when the act came into effect, said that the government would not fully implement the act too quickly.

After four days of strikes by truckers that almost crippled businesses, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan early yesterday told transport workers that penalties mentioned in several sections of the law would not be enforced until June next year.

He said this at a meeting with transport sector leaders, prompting an end of the strike early yesterday.

As per the decisions made during the meeting, drivers of heavy vehicles would not be penalised even if they had licences to drive only light or medium vehicles. However, the drivers have to get proper licences by next June.

Besides, illegal parking and unauthorised modification of vehicles would not be penalised until June.

Moreover, the home ministry would send a proposal to the road transport and bridges ministry, suggesting changes to the act, said Rustam Ali Khan and

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Do not pay any heed to propaganda

PM urges people

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged everyone not to pay heed to propaganda about shortage of onion and salt in the market.

"We see confusion is being created carrying out propaganda. I would like to tell you all not to pay heed to such propaganda," she said while addressing a reception at the Army Multipurpose Complex in Dhaka Cantonment.

The premier hosted the reception for the family members and close relatives of the Bir Shresthas and other gallantry award-winning freedom fighters on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day 2019.

Hasina said various types of propaganda was being spread suddenly as

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More pvt firms to import onion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following a government directive, several private business conglomerates are importing onions to immediately check the skyrocketed price of the essential cooking spice.

The Ministry of Commerce last week issued a directive where the private firms have been asked to import onions via air from November 20 to 25, said Abdul Latif Bakshi, public relations officer of the ministry, adding that the imported onion would be sold through the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) at the rate of Tk 45 per kg at retail level.

During this period, S Alam Group will import a total of 17,050 tonnes of onions from Egypt via air, he said.

The first consignment of onion imported by the group arrived at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) in the early hours of Wednesday.

S Alam Group has also opened a letter of credit (LC) to import another 58,500 tonnes of onions via sea, Bakshi said.

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