

## PRESS CLUB OF INDIA Info minister inaugurates Bangabandhu Media Centre

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud inaugurated the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman media centre at the Press Club of India in New Delhi yesterday.

"The relationship between Bangladesh and India has reached new heights under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina. This (Bangabandhu centre) will strengthen the relationship between the countries," he told the media at an event held at the Press Club on Raisina Road.

The centre will be equipped with modern facilities along with an exhibition hall and library on the first floor of the club.

Earlier, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) established the "Bangabandhu Chair"

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



The footpaths near the capital's Rajarbagh police line have been turned into an obstacle course. With slabs placed in regular intervals, pedestrians have to navigate their way through them, which beats the purpose of a footpath. In such a situation, tumbling over has become a regular occurrence, especially during nighttime. Inset, as sharp rods protrude out of them, walkers are exposed to increasing risk of injury as well. These photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



## We will decide on our own

Says foreign minister over  
policy on Afghanistan

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen has said Bangladesh will decide its policy towards Afghanistan independently noting that what India or Pakistan is doing is not that much important to Bangladesh.



"Bangladesh always decides its foreign policy in the interest of its own independence," he told BBC Bangla in an interview during his recent visit to the UK, making it clear that the decision of Bangladesh is not linked with that of any other country.

The foreign minister said Bangladesh always believes in a people's government that comes through a political and democratic process, and it always extends support to such a government where people's desire is reflected.

"We'll extend support if people's desire is reflected in the new Afghan government. At this moment, we don't know as we're yet to understand the situation in Afghanistan," Momen said. He said things will depend on how the new Afghan government acts and what policy it adopts after the formulation of the government.

Responding to a question, Dr Momen said there is a commitment from the highest level that no one will be killed along the Bangladesh-India border but unfortunately it is still happening.

He said it is unfortunate for Bangladesh while it is shameful for India as it is happening despite commitment.

"In principle, the two countries decided that no one should be killed and no live bullets will be used. But it's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Reunited after 22 years

Assumed dead, woman returned  
to family from Nepal



Ameena Khatun, in wheelchair, meets her family members at Dhaka airport yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

RASHIDUL HASAN

Twenty-two years ago, Ameena Khatun of Bogura's Dhunat upazila went missing. Her three sons and a daughter could not find her and assumed that their mother was no longer alive.

They even mentioned their mother as "deceased" on their voter identity cards.

Fortunately, thanks to the Bangladesh embassy in Nepal and local administration, Ameena was found alive and well in the Himalayan country last May.

A special flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines brought Ameena, now around 75, back to Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

"She was possibly a victim of human trafficking," the embassy said in a Facebook post.

"Bangladesh embassy in Nepal went through the whole process and bore

all expenses to bring her back and reunited the family at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport," Masud Alam, councillor of the embassy, who accompanied Ameena during the journey, told The Daily Star.

"A special chartered flight of Biman, carrying Ameena, departed Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport," AFM Anisur Rahman, Biman's country manager in Nepal, told this correspondent.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Nepal Salahuddin Noman Chowdhury, among others, saw Ameena off at the airport. "Ameena's three sons and grandchildren received her at Dhaka airport," said councillor Masud.

Asked how Ameena was found, Masud said on May 30, Mukesh Mehta from Nepal's Sunsari district mentioned in a Facebook post that

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## AIR QUALITY OUTSIDE DHAKA

# Other cities not faring any better

ASIFUR RAHMAN

When it comes to air pollution, Dhaka continues to be one of the most polluted cities in the world.

But what about the other areas of the country?

Turns out, they are not faring any better either.

According to a recently published global data of Air Quality Life Index (AQLI), air quality of each of the country's 64 districts was found to be unhealthy and at least three times higher than the World Health Organization guidelines.

For example, according to the Department of Environment's (DoE) Daily Air Quality Index (AQI) report of September 1, Mymensingh's air quality was worse than the capital's.

That day, Dhaka's AQI was 105 whereas Mymensingh's was 119. Meanwhile, Rangpur's was 104.

The AQI regards the range of 0-50 points as good air quality, 51-100 as moderately good, 101-150 cautionary, 151-200 as unhealthy, 201-300 very unhealthy, and 301-500 as extremely unhealthy.

This trend was also seen on some days of August, when air quality of other cities of the country was also at an alarming level.

The data of August 30 and 31 shows Dhaka and Mymensingh's AQI was the same, while on August 29, Dhaka's AQI was 112, whereas it was 120 for Mymensingh and Gazipur.

DoE monitors pollutants such as carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), particulate matter (PM 10 and PM 2.5) for the index.

High air pollution often leads to citizens developing numerous diseases, such as asthma, lung

cancer, cardiovascular issues and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorders, said physicians.

With International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies being observed worldwide today, The Daily Star looks into the situation in some of the cities outside the capital and reasons behind the pollution.

According to experts, brick kilns, faulty vehicles, fossil fuel, dust from roads and construction sites, and toxic fumes from industries are

being left in the open by the roadside, from where dust gets mixed with the air," he said.

Besides, expanding industries can be seen even in villages, as agricultural land gets occupied. This expansion is not only polluting the air but also the waterbodies with their discharges.

"Not to mention, there are many brick kilns in the city corporation area, even though they're prohibited. At the same time,

Some coal-based power plants are also attributing to this problem in some cities. Besides, indiscriminate disposal of waste and burning garbage at dumping sites are also causing severe air pollution.

According to the AQLI report, the most polluted areas of the country are Khulna and Rajshahi, where an average resident is exposed to pollution that is more than seven



## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CLEAN AIR FOR BLUE SKIES

### MAJOR REASONS FOR AIR POLLUTION

- Brick kilns
- Vehicular emission
- Construction sites

### WHAT CAN BE DONE



- Phasing out use of burnt bricks
- Making use of block bricks mandatory
- Covering construction sites
- Phasing out unfit vehicles
- Importing diesel with less sulfur contents
- Planting more trees

the major sources of air pollution, which continues to increase day by day.

In 2015, Mymensingh was declared the eighth division of the country. Since then, massive construction works have started, and industries have been expanding there after Gazipur, said Advocate Abdul Motaleb Lal, an environmental activist of Mymensingh.

"The construction materials

the number of vehicles has also increased in the city," he added.

According to Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), the smog from brick kilns, smoke from unfit vehicles and dust generated from constructions sites remain the main sources of air pollution.

This issue is prevalent not just in Dhaka, but also in other cities. Brick kilns are the top polluters in areas surrounding the capital, he

times the WHO guidelines.

PM 2.5, microscopic particles that are just three percent the diameter of a strand of human hair and most deadly for humans when they enter the respiratory system, is high in Narayanganj, Jashore, Rajshahi, Khulna, Pabna, Dhaka and Gazipur, found the study.

The average annual PM 2.5 concentration in Bangladesh was 77.1 microgrammes per cubic metre

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



## COURT CHRONICLES

## Why no trust, fund for victims of road accidents: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain why it should not be directed to establish a trust and assistance fund to provide compensation to road accidents victims or their families.

In the rule, the court asked respondents to show cause in four weeks why the direction should not be given under sections 53 and 54 of Road Transport Act, 2018.

Secretaries concerned of road transport and bridges, law, public administration and finance ministries, and chairperson of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority have been made respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetullah Rahman and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman issued the rule, following a writ petition filed seeking necessary directive on this matter.

Five people, including four lawyers, submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC on Sunday, saying that victims of road accidents have legal rights to seek compensation from the government under relevant sections of Road Transport Act, 2018.

But right now, they cannot seek compensation, as there is no trust or fund, although there are provisions for establishing them under sections 53 and 54 of the act, they said in the petition.

The petitioners are Supreme Court lawyers Manoj Kumar Bhowmick and Raoshon Ara Sikdar Daisey, Dhaka Judges Court lawyers Parvin Aktar and Bithika Majumdar, and ex-Brac employee Sabina Easmin Shova.

Lawyer Manoj Kumar Bhowmick moved the petition, while Deputy Attorney General Bepul Bagmar represented the state during the petition's virtual hearing.

## 'IO committed serious offence'

Says HC over forcibly taking confessional statement from minor in Bogura

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday rebuked Nayan Kumar, an inspector of Criminal Investigation Department of police in Naogaon, for forcibly taking confessional statement from a murder victim's brother, a minor, in Bogura in 2015.

The court also directed the government to restrain Nayan from conducting investigation into any offence till further order.

Nayan, who was a sub-inspector of Bogura's Sariakandi Police Station and also investigation officer of the murder case, had recorded the confessional statement from the minor on November 30, 2015.

"He [Nayan] has committed a serious crime by doing it [forcibly taking confessional statement]. It is not believable that a minor killed his younger brother. It seems to us that Nayan Kumar is not competent to conduct investigation into any offence. He should be restrained from any investigation proceedings for the interest of the country," the HC bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim and Justice Md Atoar Rahman said.

The bench said this during virtually hearing a criminal revision petition

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### HC BENCH OBSERVES

filed challenging the legality of the trial proceedings of the case at the Juvenile Court in Bogura.

The court asked current IO Md Mansur Ali, a sub-inspector of Police Bureau of Investigation in Bogura, to send the relevant documents of the case to it by September 27. It fixed September 27 for further hearing on the petition.

Nayan, who appeared before the HC bench yesterday in compliance with its August 22 summons order, has been ordered to appear in person to the HC

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Halt recruitment, take steps against former RU VC: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed the recruitment of 138 teachers and staffers of Rajshahi University (RU) for three months, as they were allegedly appointed by then Vice-Chancellor Prof M Abdus Sobhan in violation of relevant law and rules.

The teachers and staffers were appointed on May 5, during Prof Sobhan's last day in office.

In response to a writ petition, the court also ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission to take appropriate legal action against Abdus Sobhan for his corruption in the recruitment and submit a compliance report to it by November 14.

At the same time, the HC issued a rule asking the respondents to explain why their inaction to take steps against Prof Sobhan for misappropriation of public fund by abusing his position should not be declared illegal.

The secretary to Secondary and Higher Education Division under the education ministry; chairperson of University Grants Commission; chairperson of ACC; VC and registrar of RU, and Prof Sobhan have been made respondents to the rule.

Moreover, the HC stayed the operation of the Teachers' Recruitment Policy, 2017, under which the appointments were made.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Kamrul Hossain Mollah came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed by the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), challenging the legality of the recruitments and the inaction of the government and ACC in taking steps against Sobhan.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Dengue cases cross 12,000 mark



Death toll 52

6 died in Sept so far

34 in Aug, 12 in July

275 more hospitalised yesterday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 275 patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday.

With the new cases, the number of dengue cases crossed the 12,000 mark in the country.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), among the new cases, 55 are from outside Dhaka.

So far, 52 people have died of dengue infection in the country this year. Twelve people have died in July, 34 in August and six in September so far.

A total of 1,735 were

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4