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Your Right to Know

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"Transport fare, fuel price hike are a game arranged by the government to pick the public's pocket."

MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR,
SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE BNP

"The impact [of fuel price hike] will be on the market of everyday essentials."

GHULAM RAHMAN, PRESIDENT OF CONSUMERS
ASSOCIATION OF BANGLADESH

"Tens of millions of people are staring into an abyss. We've got conflict, climate change and Covid-19 driving up the numbers of the acutely hungry."

WFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAVID BEASLEY

BUS FARE HIKE IN DHAKA, CTG

On paper 28pc ON ROADS 50PC

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and
ARUN BIKASH DEY

The government's move to hike the bus fares appears to have spawned a free-for-all: many operators were charging as much as 50 percent higher fares, while the CNG-run buses were also collecting fares at the new rate that does not apply to them.

Take the case of Ali Akbar, a small trader in Chattogram, who was travelling on a minibus to New Market from Bahaddarhat.

The distance is six kilometres, so under the new tariff, the maximum charge would have been Tk 12.35. But Akbar had to pay Tk 20.

"When I protested, the staffer misbehaved with me and threatened to remove me from the bus," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Similarly, Shipra Paul, a schoolteacher, said she had to pay double the fare to go to Kotwali from Chawkbazar by a CNG-run

"Since it was the first day, our mobile courts did not take harsh action; rather, they asked the bus operators to return the extra fare to the passengers."

A BRTA OFFICIAL

minibus.

The price of CNG has not increased and the government has not increased the fare for CNG-run vehicles.

"Does anyone obey the rules? We the common people are the ultimate sufferers," Paul said.

The correspondent visited Muradpur, Bahaddarhat, Agrabad, Sholashahar, Oxygen, Karnaphuli Shah Amanat Bridge and Chawkbazar areas in the port city and found that CNG-run minibuses and buses were collecting almost double the previous fare from the passengers.

The situation is the same in Dhaka; the fare that the passengers had to pay yesterday was largely more than the 28 percent hike fixed by the government for buses in Dhaka and Chattogram.

Ahsan Habib, a private service holder, came to Farmgate yesterday from Gulistan by a bus named "Airport Bangabandhu

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Goods carrying vehicles strike postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of truck and lorry owners and workers associations postponed their nationwide strike last night following a meeting with Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan at the secretariat.

"We have agreed to postpone our strike following the home minister's assurance that our demands will be met," Hossain Ahmed Majumder, coordinator of Bangladesh Truck, Covered Van, Tank Lorry, Prime Mover Owners' and Workers' Coordination Council, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

Transport association leaders held the meeting with the home minister over the strike which began on Friday morning to press home their demands,

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KAJOL'S DSA PLIGHT

Charges in 3 cases framed in 1 day

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday framed charges against photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol in three cases filed under the Digital Security Act.

Kajol was charged with circulating indecent, defamatory, objectionable, and fake information about some ministers, lawmakers, and top Jubo Mahila League leaders on Facebook.

The photojournalist, now on bail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Judge Mohammad Ash Sams Joglul Hossain of Dhaka Cyber Tribunal read out the charges to him, Shamim Al Mamun, bench assistant of the tribunal, told The Daily Star.

Earlier in the day, the judge rejected three petitions submitted for discharging Kajol from the cases.

The tribunal also set January 2 for starting the cases' trial. "We will go to the higher court, challenging the legality of the charge-framing orders in the cases," Jyotirmoy Barua, a defence lawyer, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The three DSA cases were filed by Awami League lawmaker (Magura-1) Saifuzzaman Shikhor and Jubo Mahila League central committee members Usmin Ara Bally and Sumaiya Chowdhury Bonya with Sher-e-Bangla

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2 more killed in pre-polls clashes

30 injured as violence over UP elections on

STAR REPORT

Two siblings were hacked to death and 30 other people injured in attacks and clashes between supporters of rival union parishad chairman and member candidates in Meherpur and Pabna in the last two days over Thursday's polls.

With the latest deaths, at least 17 people have been killed in pre-polls violence in about a month, according to media reports.

In most of the cases, clashes took place between supporters of ruling Awami League men.

On November 2, Chief Election Commissioner Nurul Huda said the commission was embarrassed at the electoral violence. He also expressed concern over the matter.

A total of 846 union parishads will go to polls on November 11 in the second phase.

In Meherpur, the two siblings were killed and 10 more people injured in an attack on supporters of a UP member candidate by followers of his rival in Gangni upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased -- Jaharul Islam, 55, and Sahadul Islam, 50, -- were from Dhala village in the same upazila.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Ajmain Hossain Tutul, incumbent member of Kathuli Union Parishad and also a hopeful for the same post in Thursday's election, said he along with some of his supporters were conducting an electoral campaign in Dhala village around 9:15am.

All of a sudden, a group of people, led by his rival candidate Atiar Rahman, attacked them with sharp weapons, leaving 12, including the siblings, injured.

Ajmain said he was also hurt in the attack. At one stage, he managed to flee and take shelter in a nearby house.

The siblings were later sent to Gangni upazila health complex where doctors declared them dead, said the UP member candidate.

Ajmain said the deceased were his cousins. He said he along with the other injured was undergoing treatment at the health complex.

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Local companies to produce new Covid-19 pill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The procedure to produce Molnupiravir, the first ever pill to treat symptomatic Covid-19, developed by US drug companies Merck and the Ridgeback Biotherapeutics, has begun in Bangladesh.

A number of top local pharmaceutical companies have applied for the recipe approval of Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) to produce the drug.

The DGDA has already given the approval to some companies. Others will get it too, said sources, including officials from the companies.

Following the recipe approval, local pharmaceutical companies will produce samples and submit them to the DGDA. If allowed by the drug authorities, the companies can supply the pill to the market, said the sources.

Experts observed this as an important progress in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ten companies, including Eskayef, Beximco, Square, Renata, Incepta and Beacon pharmaceuticals limited, are on the list of those waiting for the approval.

Among them, only Eskayef, Square, Incepta, Acme and Renata have the UK-MHPRA standard medicine production plants.

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BNP fighting for existence Says PM in London

UNB, London

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has questioned whether the BNP will be able to exist as a political party.

"How can a party survive when it is led by a person convicted of arms smuggling, August 21 grenade attack, and siphoning off orphans' money?" she said.

Hasina, also the Awami League president, was addressing a reception accorded to her at Queen Elizabeth Centre in London Sunday. She joined the programme virtually from her place of residence here.

The PM said a convicted criminal in a killing case, arms smuggling and corruption case, and a fugitive, is now at the helm of a political party.

She said Khaleda Zia's sons are corrupt, which was revealed in an investigation by the US' FBI and also in Singapore.

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Fitting themselves to a wooden structure that resembles a boat -- electoral symbol of the ruling Awami League -- and holding oars, supporters of an AL-nominated chairman candidate march in Khalashibunia village in Khulna's Batiaghata union yesterday. The election atmosphere in the entire Batiaghata upazila turned festive ahead of the second phase of union parishad polls on Thursday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Firearms 'factory' busted in Ukhiya 3 Rohingyas arrested



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rapid Action Battalion claimed to have busted an arms-making factory in a hilly area of Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya upazila early yesterday and arrested three Rohingyas supplying firearms to the Rohingya criminals.

Ten local firearms and a huge quantity of arms-making equipment were seized during a drive in the area adjacent to extension-4 of Kutupalong Rohingya camp, said Lt Col Khairul Islam, commanding officer of Rab-15.

Of the arrestees, Baitullah, 19, and his brother Habibullah, 32, are residents of Block-C of Kutupalong Rohingya camp while Mohammad Hachhun, 24, is a resident of Block-G, he said.

"We had intelligence that a gang runs an arms-making factory in the area and supplies firearms to the Rohingya criminals," said the Rab official.

Based on the information, a team of Rab-15 raided the area. Sensing its

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