

## DSCC fires engineer over graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation has fired engineer AHM Abdullah Harun over irregularities and corruption involving Tk 12 crore.

He was a deputy engineer of the waste management department and involved in irregularities when he was the acting executive engineer of the same department, according to an order issued on Sunday.

“He paid abnormal and extra bills to contractors without having the work completed according to the design, for which the DSCC incurred losses,” said the order.

Contacted, Abdulla Harun told The Daily Star that he would talk about it later.

“I have a lot to say, but I need some time. You will know everything soon,” he added.

**“I have a lot to say, but I need some time. You will know everything soon.”**

The order, signed by DSCC Secretary Akramuzzaman, said when Harun was the executive engineer, he floated a tender worth Tk 28 crore for removal of waste and soil from the sides of a 6km stretch of road between Kamalapur TT Para and Kadamtali area.

There was a huge gap between the actual cost of the job and the money spent. “A total of 1.20 lakh tonnes of waste, soil, and rubbish were estimated under the tender, including 5,000 tonnes of waste.” The soil and rubbish could have been sold but the work order asked it to dump them for Tk 11.88 crore, the order said.

He was fired under section 64(2) of the DSCC employee job regulations 2019 for public interest and corporation interest, said the order.

It said Harun would get salaries for 90 days.



Laden with sacks of grains, battery-run three-wheelers ply Dhaka-Aricha highway near Savar's Hemayetpur. These illegal slow-moving vehicles keep running on highways despite a ban. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

### POOR AIR QUALITY

# Statements at seminars DO NOT WORK

HC observes, orders demolishing illegal brick kilns in and around Dhaka in 15 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday blasted the government for not taking sufficient measures to control the air pollution in Dhaka and its surrounding areas even after repeated directives.

“The situation has become awful because of air pollution. How much power did the Department of Environment exercise to curb the air pollution?” the court asked.

Statements at seminars do not work. Effective steps must be taken to bring the situation under control, the bench observed.

“Why are the illegal brick kilns not



being shut down despite repeated orders of this court?” it further asked.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Md Iqbal Kabir Lytton made the statements.

To prevent pollution, the court directed the authorities to demolish all illegal brick kilns in Dhaka and its surrounding districts – Gazipur, Manikganj, Narayanganj and Munshiganj – in 15 days.

The brick kilns are considered to be one of the three main sources of air pollution.

The court ordered the DoE and the districts’ deputy commissioners to implement the directive without any failure and submit separate reports before

the bench after demolishing the illegal structures.

The bench passed the order during hearing a writ petition filed by rights organisation Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) in 2019 seeking necessary order.

During hearing the same petition, the director general of DoE on February 16 submitted a report to the HC, saying that a total of 319 illegal brick kilns are still running and polluting the environment in Dhaka and the four districts even after 95 were shut down through mobile courts between November last year to January this year.

Lawyer Manzill Murshid appeared for the writ petitioner while lawyer Amatul Karim Swapna represented the DoE during virtual proceedings of the HC yesterday.

The air quality in Dhaka rated the worst in the world at different times in recent years. On February 9 this year, Dhaka’s air was rated as the world’s second-most polluted.

## G7 sees ‘massive impact’ of Russia sanctions Left in legal limbo

AFP, Berlin

Western sanctions against Russia are having a huge impact on its economy, Germany’s finance minister said yesterday, as the G7 mulled further punitive measures in response to Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine.

Sanctions have “already had a massive impact on capital markets and the currency”, said Christian Lindner, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the G7 club of wealthy nations.

G7 finance ministers at a meeting “exchanged suggestions for further measures that could be taken”, Lindner told a press conference, adding that a decision on the proposals would be taken in the coming days.

The aim of the sanctions is to “isolate Russia politically, financially and economically”, Lindner said.

Since the start of the invasion, Western countries have aimed a barrage of sanctions against Moscow, including the exclusion of a number of banks from the SWIFT payments network, a key piece of piping in the global financial system.

Western allies have also taken steps to limit the Russian central bank’s access to international capital markets, destabilising the ruble, as well as freezing the foreign-held assets of a clutch of Russian oligarchs.

## Flee homes

FROM PAGE 1

for 40 miles (60 km) along a highway to the north.

“For the enemy, Kyiv is the key target,” Zelensky, who has remained in the capital rallying Ukrainians, said in a message overnight. “We will neutralise them all.”

He called in a live video address to the European Parliament for the EU to “prove” it is with Ukraine as the invasion targeted civilians, reports AFP.

Some Kyiv residents have been sheltering in underground metro stations at night. There are long lines for fuel and some products are running out in shops, but by day the city is still holding out, with a semblance of ordinary life

on the streets.

In the south of the country, Russia claimed to have completely encircled Ukraine’s Azov Sea coast. If confirmed, that would mean Russian forces invading from Crimea had joined up with separatists in the east and had cut off Ukraine’s main eastern port, Mariupol.

Meanwhile, the office of the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court said it will seek court approval to open an investigation into alleged war crimes in Ukraine.

More than 660,000 people have fled Ukraine to neighbouring countries, the UN refugee agency said yesterday.

FROM PAGE 1

adequate and recommended giving another 63 acres to the university on top of the originally sanctioned 257 acres.

But the recommendation was never implemented.

Since the inception of DU, about 57 acres of its land was acquired in phases by different governments during the British period, Pakistan period and even in an independent Bangladesh, according to Dhaka University’s Estate Office.

The acquired land includes parts of Dhaka Medical College, Buet, Badrunnessa College, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, National Museum, Anandabazar, Phulbaria, Nilkhet and Anandabazar police outpost.

The university has been trying to recover the land for around 85 years and successive governments assured it of help in reclaiming the land, but no concrete actions were taken.

When the DU started its journey over a century ago, it had 877 students, 60 teachers and 12 departments. It grew over time and now has some 37,000 students, 1,992 teachers, 83 departments, 13 institutes and 56 research centres and bureaus.

With the growth, it needed more land. In the 1990s, the university authorities started raising demand for more land on the outskirts of the capital to build a second campus, holding multiple meetings with different government high-ups.

During the last caretaker

government rule, in 2007-2008, the university authorities formed a committee headed by the then pro-vice chancellor Prof AFM Yusuf Haider to formulate a plan for its second campus.

“We held multiple meetings with officials of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives. They asked us to formulate a plan. Subsequently, we formulated a plan and submitted it to the ministry,” said Yusuf Haider.

The initiative lost steam after the Awami League government assumed power in 2009, he added.

In November 2017, the DU authorities wrote to Rajuk, seeking an allocation of 100 acres for the second campus.

Rajuk at its 8th board meeting in 2018 decided to allocate 52 acres in Purbachal and gave temporary allotment papers to the DU authorities the same year. The land price was set at Tk 15 lakh per katha, said sources at the university.

This happened despite unresolved legal issues that developed five years prior to this.

In September 2013, eight environmental organisations, including Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), filed a writ petition with the High Court against Rajuk’s move to create new plots.

They argued that Rajuk was creating the plots in deviation of its original plan, which would cause environmental damage.

The court in February

2017 ordered Rajuk not to revise the original plan without the court’s permission.

Rajuk did it anyway, creating 84 new plots and allocating them to DU and 83 other organisations. The new plots were created in seven categories, including 39 social infrastructures, 11 nursery schools, four primary schools, seven secondary schools, and 16 colleges and institutes.

When the matter was brought to the court’s notice, the HC issued an embargo on the handover process in 2018, said Bela Chief Executive Syeda Rizwana Hasan.

Contacted for the latest update, both DU and Rajuk authorities refused to divulge information. The DU public relations office referred this writer to the University Estate Office, which referred him to the registrar’s office, which in turn referred him to the vice-chancellor’s office.

When copies of the documents related to the deal with Rajuk were sought in writing, DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said Rajuk already sent them a proposal for the handover.

The Rajuk chairman’s office on October 18, 2021, first asked this writer to apply for the information. Later, it referred the matter to a member, who looks after Rajuk’s Estate and Land. From there, the matter was referred to the director (Estate and Land) who referred it to the deputy director who in turn referred it to the office of the assistant deputy director.

The writer then filed an application under the Right to Information Act, seeking relevant information.

On November 9, Rajuk chairman called him to say that he would like to talk about the matter in person.

During a meeting later that month, Rajuk Chairman ABM Amin Ullah Nuri said the handover process has stalled as a case was pending with the court.

Asked about the DU land, Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury stressed the need for recovering the land occupied or acquired by successive governments.

“The university campus should be expanded by recovering the land adjacent to the campus. The plan for establishing a second campus elsewhere is unrealistic,” he added.

Tarun Sarkar is a journalist and researcher writing for The Daily Star.

## There’s no

FROM PAGE 1

The newly appointed CEC said, “We expected that the political leadership will discuss among themselves about political consensus. We will hold talks with our colleagues and then we will decide what to do about this. We need to think more precisely about how we will proceed.”

The other four election commissioners, Begum Rashida Sultana, Brig Gen (retd) Ahsan Habib Khan, M Alamgir, and Anisur Rahman were present.

After paying homage, they observed one minute of silence to remember the supreme sacrifice of the martyrs.

## 5 cops sued for not registering rape case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Five officials of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), including the officer-in-charge of Hatirjheel Police Station, were sued yesterday for not registering a rape case.

They are OC Abdur Rashid, Inspectors Mohiuddin Faruk and Golam Azam, and Sub-inspectors Shoriful Islam and Chayan Saha.

A woman filed the case with the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-7 of Dhaka, Istiar Alam, the tribunal’s bench assistant, told The Daily Star.

After a hearing, Judge AM Julfikar Hayat recorded the complainant’s statements, he said.

According to the case statement, when the woman went to Hatirjheel Police Station on February 16, the four officials refused to register the case.

She was raped by three men while five others abetted the crime in Hatirjheel on February 13, according to the complaint.

## High Court clears path to prosecute Pradeep in Tk 3.85cr graft case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared the way for the lower court concerned to continue trial proceedings against Pradeep Kumar Das, former officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, in a Tk 3.85 crore corruption case.

The HC so rejected a petition filed by Pradeep, also a death-row convict in Major (retd) Sinha Md Rashed Khan murder case, for scrapping the trial proceedings of the case.

## 4 arrested for murder of 13-yr-old boy in Cox’s Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox’s Bazar

Rab officials have arrested four people for the murder of a 13-year-old boy in Ramu of Cox’s Bazar.

The arrestees are Nurul Islam, 20, Md Arif Hossain, 36, Md Hossain, 31, and Abu Hena Hanif, 30. Nurul and Arif were directly involved in the murder of Md Owayez, Rab-15 Assistant Director Md Billal Hossain said.

Jahangir Alam, the victim’s father, filed a case with Ramu Police Station accusing some unidentified criminals on February 28 and the four were arrested that night, said the Rab official.

On February 26 police had recovered an unidentified body next to a road in Khuniapalong and later identified it as that of Owayez.

## 8 dead, positivity rate dips to 3.35%

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight people died with Covid-19 and at least 799 new infections were recorded in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to a health directorate press release.

The positivity rate dropped to 3.35 percent from 3.65 percent the previous day. The total number of cases rose to 19,44,376 with an overall positivity rate of 14.48 percent.

## SSC, HSC

FROM PAGE 1

They will not need to sit for exams on religion, ICT, Bangladesh and Global Studies and science.

Applicants of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) will need to sit for Bangla, English, the three optional subjects and a fourth subject.

HSC candidates will not need to sit for exams on ICT subjects.

Board officials said candidates’ grades in previous public exams will determine results of subjects for which no exam will take place.

Prof Gazi Hasan Kamal, chairman of Mymensingh education board, also said they have included more subjects than last year as students got more time for lessons.

Kamal said there will be preparation tests for SSC and HSC candidates at their educational institutions.

Prof Md Moshuazzaman, member of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, said they have already prepared a short syllabus for all subjects and notified all concerned.

**FEWER MARKS AND TIME**

Two separate notifications issued by boards yesterday also said students will need to sit for an exam of 55 marks – 40 for written answers and 15 for multiple choice questions – for the subjects that do not have any practical examinations.

For subjects with practical examinations, students will have to sit for exams of 45 marks – 30 written and 15 MCQ.

But SSC examines will

need to sit for 50-mark exams each for English I and II papers, while HSC candidates will need to take 50 marks exams for English I, II and Bangla II papers.

The exam duration will be two hours.

In the pre-Covid times, a student had to sit for three-hour exams marked out of 100.

According to the notifications, boards fixed probable dates for SSC candidates to start filling forms online on April 13 and for HSC candidates on June 8.

Educational institutions will be able to take preparatory exams for SSC candidates from May 19 and for HSC candidates from July 14.

**Lockdown fears spark panic buying in HK**

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kongers stripped shop shelves bare yesterday as panic buying set in following mixed messaging from the government over whether it plans a China-style hard lockdown this month.

The latest disarray came as the city’s top medical school estimated just under a quarter of all residents had been infected with Covid-19 since the start of the year.

Photos circulating on social media showed people had trouble finding a variety of items including meat, vegetables, frozen food, noodles, paracetamol and testing kits.