



Right in the middle of the busy Moghbazar-Mowchak Road in the capital, a gaping hole has been left like this for the last 7-8 days as part of DNCC's drainage development work. Along with obstructing vehicular movement, this unprotected hole is also posing a risk of injury for pedestrians. This photo was taken yesterday in Moghbazar Wireless Gate area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Pay Tk 10 lakh or keep shops shut'

Seven stores at Ananda Bazar market remain closed in fear of DU BCL leaders

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Seven shops of Ananda Bazar located in front of Dhaka University's Amar Ekushey Hall has remained shut since March 13, as two Chhatra League leaders allegedly ordered shop owners to close their shops.

The leaders later asked for Tk 10 lakh from the owners to reopen the shops.

This correspondent visited the spot early yesterday and spoke to the shop owners.

The morning is supposed to be a busy time for them, but instead, they said they aren't raising their shutters in fear of BCL leaders Enayet H Monon, president of Amar Ekushey Hall, and its general secretary Imdadul Hasan Shohagh.

The allegations come 46 days after BCL announced their new hall committees for DU.

According to the owners, on March 13 around 8:00pm, the BCL leaders stormed the market with some of their followers and ordered the owners to shut the market. At stage one, the group started threatening and misbehaving with the owners, leaving them with no option but to comply. There are around 330 shops at the market and allegations run rife that the BCL leaders collect extortion money from all of those. Besides the seven stores, all the others are open at present.

Later this Friday, the BCL leaders met some of the shop owners at the nearby hotel and asked them to pay Tk 10 lakh if they wanted to reopen the market.

Both the BCL leaders have denied the allegations.

"I don't know anything about it. It sounds like the allegations are part of a conspiracy against us," said Monon.

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Minimise use, extraction of groundwater

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An estimated 32 cubic kilometres of groundwater is being extracted annually, of which, 90 percent is used in irrigation and 10 percent for industrial and domestic purposes.

The numbers were revealed at a seminar titled "Good Groundwater Management: Justice in Achieving SDG" yesterday at CIRDAP Auditorium, Dhaka.

Dr Anwar Zahid, director of groundwater hydrology, Bangladesh Water Development Board, in his keynote presentation, said, "Due to such over-extraction, groundwater is being contaminated with salt and heavy metal. 24 percent of lands are now exposed to extremely elevated arsenic, salinity and groundwater depletion hazards."

"Again, we have observed that groundwater level in urban areas, particularly Dhaka and Barind Tract, is declining permanently at an alarming rate. This implies that the water level is not being recharged even after the monsoon. With increased extraction, fluctuation of groundwater level has also increased with time," Dr Zahid added.

Md Tazul Islam, minister of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, emphasised minimising usage and extraction of groundwater.

"There is no alternative to minimising groundwater usage. At present, in many districts, people cannot use groundwater anymore and we are being forced to supply them with purified surface water," he said. "To achieve SDGs, 70 percent of our water consumption must come from the surface water sources."

He said the government is planning to construct water recycling plants where used water will be purified and resupplied to communities to reduce pressure on natural water sources.

In a previous study, it was revealed that Bangladesh is losing groundwater at an average rate of 8.73 millimetres per year. In 2006, the number of shallow water pumps that extract groundwater directly from the aquifers close to the ground surface was 11,82,525, and within 12 years,

ISSUES

- » 32 cubic km groundwater extracted annually
- » 90pc of extracted groundwater used in irrigation
- » 10pc used for industrial, domestic purposes
- » 24pc of land exposed to elevated arsenic, salinity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Minimising usage and extraction
- » Sourcing 70pc of water consumption from surface water
- » Issuing government licence to stop extraction
- » Constructing water recycling plants

in 2019, the number of shallow wells increased up to 16,00,000.

Prof Dr Kazi Matin U Ahmed of Dhaka University's geology department, said, "We need a license from the government to extract all types of natural resources except groundwater. As a result, we have been extracting groundwater in an unplanned and unregulated manner."

"If we continue to extract groundwater in this way, many parts of the country will not remain liveable due to loss of agriculture, salination and heavy metal contamination," he said.

Strengthen healthcare at community level: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If there was effective health service delivery in district and upazila level hospitals, some 60-70 percent of people could be served with quality health services, according to a report titled "Bangladesh Health Sector: Present Challenges and Future Guidelines".

Prof AFM Ruhul Haque, former minister for the ministry of health and family welfare, presented the report yesterday. The report is based on discussions with 60 relevant stakeholders, including physicians, educationists, politicians, journalists and cultural personalities, during 11 dialogues held between March 11 and July 2, 2021.

While presenting the report, Prof Haque mentioned nine key problems behind inefficiency of the health system, including lack of adequate and skilled human resources, dysfunctional medical devices, lack of incentives and facilities for health staff working in rural and hard-to-reach areas, and inadequate medicines for outdoor patients.

The majority of the participants in those dialogues recommended strengthening the health services at community level.

Other recommendations include division-

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'Underinformed no more'

Integrated hotline service to provide support to migrant workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Migrant workers' plight begins right here at home, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad said yesterday.

He said this while addressing a ceremony at the Probashi Kalyan Bhaban in the capital.

Regarding migrant workers' lack of information about the migration process, the minister said there is a 90 percent chance that a worker will be unable to identify their recruiting agent or who their overseas employers are.

If they're asked whether they even have an employment contract, most will be unable to answer, he further said.

To address this gap, "Bangladesh: Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance (Prottasha)" project, implemented by IOM in partnership with Brac, handed over its hotline service to the Wage Earners' Welfare Board of the ministry at the ceremony.

From now on, the Prottasha hotline service will be merged with the ministry's Probash Bondhu Call Centre to provide more integrated information support to the migrants and their communities, according to the organisers.

The Prottasha hotline has assisted over 2,500 people in Bangladesh and abroad since its inception in 2019, according to a document.

On the other hand, the Probash Bondhu Call Centre receives 200 to 215 calls per day, said WEWB Director General Hamidur Rahman.

Secretary of the ministry Ahmed Munirur Saleheen said the new service can play a far-reaching role in disseminating information among migrants.

Fathima Nusrath Ghazzali, officer in-charge of IOM Bangladesh, said IOM has been supporting the government since 1992 to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration.

PRAYER
TIMING
MAR 21

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4:55	12:45	4:45	6:16	7:45
Jamaat	5:30	1:15	5:00	6:20	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Dilara Hashem passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent writer Dilara Hashem passed away at her home in Washington, United States on Saturday.

She was 86 years old.

Her novel -- Ghar Mon Janala, which tells the story of Najma, a woman struggling for life in a middle-class society, has evoked a huge response from the readers.

Born on August 21, 1936, in Jessore, East

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Uncertainty over SCBA polls result

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The result of Supreme Court Bar Association election is yet to be declared even after four days of the polls.

The resignation of AY Mashuazzaman, head of the election committee, and alleged pressure and misbehaviour by the ruling Awami League-backed lawyers are causing the delay.

The pro-AL lawyers have been demanding recounting of votes, cast for the secretary post, on charge of irregularities.

It is still uncertain when the result of the election, which was held on March 15-16 to elect 14 executive posts, will be declared since no new election conducting committee has been formed yet.

"The pro-Awami League lawyers kept me waiting till 4:00am on Thursday night. They made derogatory remarks before their leaders about me and pressurised me to recount the votes... although there is no such provision," Mashuazzaman told The Daily Star yesterday. "I submitted my resignation letter to the SCBA secretary...," he said.

Contacted, Additional Attorney General SM Munir said, no AL lawyer misbehaved with Mashuazzaman.

Some pro-BNP lawyers did it, he said. "He [Mashuazzaman] knows very well when the SCBA

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Supreme Court judges, former judges, lawyers, political leaders and family members attend namaz-e-janaza of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at National Eidgah Field yesterday. He was laid to rest in Dhaka's Banani graveyard in the afternoon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People from all walks of life yesterday bade farewell to former president Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed.

The former chief justice was laid to rest in Dhaka's Banani graveyard around 12:15pm, Supreme Court spokesperson Md Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star.

Earlier in the day, his body was kept at National Eidgah Field on the Supreme Court premises for around one hour from 10:00am when SC judges, former judges, lawyers, law officers, political leaders and Justice Shahabuddin's family members paid their last tributes to him.

After his second namaz-e-janaza on National

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