



P3 Pantha Kunja Park lies neglected



P5 Khulna Public Library overlooked, ignored



P6 UK, India to step up defence co-op



WR1 Are we doing enough over climate change?



BACK IN BUSINESS... The Dhaka New Market is back to its usual self after an abrupt two-day closure. It is packed with Eid shoppers on the weekend yesterday as they go from one shop to another in search of dresses, footwear and ornaments. The market remained shut Tuesday and Wednesday following clashes between shopkeepers and Dhaka College students.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

CHOLERA IN CAPITAL

Vaccination drive to start next month

Move comes amid spike in patients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government would start administering oral cholera vaccines in the capital from next month.

"Inoculation will begin in areas prone to cholera and diarrhoea," he said, adding that the health department has a plan to widen the vaccination programme in future.

The minister was speaking to journalists after visiting Government Titumir College in the capital, where the entrance test for the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) course applicants took place.

Addressing a briefing on April 13, health directorate spokesperson Nazmul Islam said a total of 2.3 million people, aged one year and above, will get oral cholera vaccines from next month in five diarrhoea-prone areas in the capital.

Expectant mothers will not be included in the campaign to be held in Jatrabari, Dakshinkhan, Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Sabujbagh areas.

In 2020, the health directorate vaccinated 12 lakh people in six areas of the city with the first dose of cholera vaccines. Due to the Covid-19 emergency, the

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NEW MARKET CLASHES

BNP leader arrested for inciting violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested BNP leader Mokbul Hossain for instigating the clashes between shopkeepers and Dhaka College students in the capital's New Market area that left two persons dead and scores others wounded.

AKM Hafiz Akhter, additional commissioner of Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that he was the prime accused in the case filed by police on Wednesday.

Mokbul, former New Market thana BNP president and current member of the party's Dhaka South unit convening committee, was held from his Dhanmondi home and was being interrogated at the DB office on Minto Road, the police official said.

He owns two shops in the New Market. The deadly clash ensued after a worker of one of

Mokbul's shops called in some Dhaka College students to "punish" the employee of the other shop following a brawl between the two.

That spilled over into daylong pitched battles between Dhaka College students and shopkeepers the following day.

On Thursday, Mokbul told The Daily Star that one of the shops he owns in New Market is run by his brother and the other by his cousin.

"I have not even gone to New Market area in the last four months. Instead of filing the case against the real culprits, police filed a politically motivated case against leaders of the BNP and its affiliated organisations," he had said.

Yamin Kabir, inspector (investigation) of New Market Police Station, filed one of the cases that named 24 people for obstructing police from discharging duties, assaulting law enforcement officers, and damaging properties. Twelve of the 24,



Mokbul

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Tourism to see a turnaround after 2 years

Huge rush expected during Eid holidays

RASHIDUL HASAN

The tourism industry is set to rebound during the Eid vacation after two years of slump amid the pandemic.

Thousands of people are likely to make trips to domestic and foreign tourist destinations during the Eid vacation, said the leaders of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh (Toab), adding that the number of such trips fell significantly due to Covid in 2020 and 2021.

It has already become difficult to get air tickets for the domestic and foreign tourist destinations, thanks to the rush of holidaymakers.

Officials of all three airlines of the country -- Biman, US Bangla and Novoair -- told The Daily Star that the demand for tickets to two popular destinations, Cox's Bazar and Sylhet, was very high from May 2. Eid is likely to fall on May 2 or 3.

US Bangla Airlines has already sold almost 80 percent of the Dhaka-Cox's Bazar tickets for flights in the first week of May, said its spokesperson Kamrul Islam.

Towards the end of 2020, the tourism industry tried to recover from losses, but the slump caused by the second and third wave of coronavirus forced many tour operators to leave the business, Toab leaders said.

Forty lakh people are currently employed in the tourism sector that added 4.4 percent to the GDP in 2019, said Toab President Rafeuzzaman.

Toab includes 700 tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, motels, resorts, airlines, and transport companies.

In a recent study, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) said the hospitality industry lost around Tk 60,000 crore in 2020.

The study released earlier this month said 1.1 lakh people lost their jobs amid the pandemic.

"We hope that domestic tourism will rebound centring the Eid. We are expecting that over 1.5 million holidaymakers will make trips to domestic and outbound destinations this Eid," Rafeuzzaman, also a member of the governing body of Bangladesh Tourism Board, told The Daily Star.

Mohammad Iqbal Mahmood, president of Bangladesh Outbound Tour Operators Association, said six-seven lakh people are likely to travel to different destinations outside the country during the vacation. India alone will see almost five lakh visitors from Bangladesh.

US Bangla's Kamrul said demands for tickets of Dhaka-Kolkata and Dhaka-Male flights were very high with most of the tickets already sold, causing the prices of remaining Dhaka-Kolkata tickets to skyrocket.

Tickets for flights to Nepal, Turkey, Thailand, the Maldives, Bangkok, Malaysia and Dubai are also in high demand.

Between April 20 and May 7, many people in Bangladesh will have just one work day on May 5.

Former Toab director Taslim Amin said all the resorts in and around Dhaka were fully booked for three days from Eid while the rooms in good hotels, motels and resorts in Cox's Bazar and Sylhet were booked for a week after Eid.

The situation will be almost similar in Rangamati and

TOURISM SECTOR

- ▲ Tk 60,000cr lost due to pandemic
- ▲ 40 lakh people involved in the sector
- ▲ 1.1 lakh lost jobs
- ▲ 15 lakh to make domestic, foreign trips this Eid

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Eighth grader holds senior officer's post

Ministry, BPC sit on audit objections to recruitment anomalies at SAOCL

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Shahidul Islam landed a job in Standard Asiatic Oil Company Limited (SAOCL), a partner company of state-run Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), as a senior officer (maintenance) in 2015.

He got the highly technical, first-class government job without any written test or viva, with a class VIII certificate. There was no circular for the position either.

An equivalent post in similar companies requires at least a BSC degree, BPC sources said.

Like him, 13 other people were recruited to fill in different vital posts between 2012 and 2019 without any circular and competitive examinations in violation of government recruitment policies.

Nearly one and a half years after the government's own auditors raised objections against these "illegal recruitments", the power and energy ministry or the BPC is yet to take any action, and all the 14 are serving in the positions.

Narayan Chandra Saha, chief accounts and finance officer at the Department of Internal Resources of power and energy

ministry, submitted the audit report to the director general of the Directorate of Power and Energy Audit in December 2020.

Chattogram-based SAOCL is jointly owned by Asiatic Industries Ltd, a private company, and BPC, each having 50 percent of the shares. Its recruitments are done by a Management Advisory Committee with approval of the company Board. The BPC chairman is the Board chair.

In the case of the 14 recruits, however, the Management Advisory Committee headed by Asiatic Chairman Moinuddin Ahmed did not take the Board's approval, the audit report said.

All of them are known to be close to Moinuddin Ahmed and former company general manager Mohammad Shahed, it added.

The power and energy ministry did not respond to our calls and text messages on Thursday.

Current BPC chairman said they launched a fresh investigation into the matter, and would take actions accordingly once the investigation completed.

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Jaywalkers, including one with two children, squeeze through a gap in the railing on the central reservation of Mirpur Road. Such pedestrians dodge vehicles while darting across busy roads, putting themselves and motorists in harm's way. The photo was taken in the capital's Nur Jahan Super Market area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN