



Even an inch of free space was seemingly hard to come by at Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday. With Eid just days away, hundreds of people were en route to their home-towns, to spend Eid surrounded by the warmth of their loved ones.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

90pc of haor paddy harvested
Says deputy minister for water resources

UNB, Dhaka

Farmers have so far harvested 90 percent of Boro paddy in haor areas, said AKM Enamul Haque Shameem, deputy minister for water resources yesterday.

"The remaining ten percent paddy in haor areas will be harvested soon," he told reporters, after inspecting the progress of work on the protection project of Padma's Naria-Jajira in Shariatpur.

Due to the government's timely steps, the farmers of haor areas have avoided a huge loss, he said.

There are 2,22,805 hectares of haor land across the country. Of these, only 5,765 hectares of haor crops have been damaged.

Prime Minister Sheikh

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PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 30

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:05	12:45	4:45	6:30	8:00
JAMAAT 4:15	1:15	5:00	6:40	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
28	30		6:30
29	01	3:59	6:31
30	02	3:58	6:31

DSCC gyms not fit for use

No trainers, old and rusty equipment make the facilities a hard choice for working out

DIPAN NANDY

Although Sutrapur Modern Gymnasium, located near the capital's Katherpool intersection, has the word "modern" in its name, visitors will have a hard time finding anything modern about it.

Regulars of the gym have been working out with the same rusty old equipment for years; literally most of the tools have rust on them. At the same time, the plaster on the walls is also falling off.

Ravi Chandra Dey has been working out at the gym for the last 10 years.

"I haven't seen any new equipment in these 10 years," he told The Daily Star. "There is no trainer here; the environment is not good as well."

Azad Noor Shanto, another regular, said, "I used to work out at a private gym and recently started coming here. The situation here is abysmal. All the equipment is old."

The situation is similar in all gyms run by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

There are no trainers for the gyms and no suitable environment for exercising. The situation -- the peeling plaster, the rust -- is such a big issue that some gyms have even closed down.

"Sher-e-Bangla Men's and Women's Physical Training Center" at Mohammad Sayeed Khokon Community Center in Gandaria is on DSCC's list of gyms. But in reality, its existence couldn't be found.

Monir Hossain Chowdhury, in charge of security at the community centre, said no gym equipment has arrived there yet.

The only gym for women -- Haji Fazlur Rahman Women's Physical Training Center -- is on the third floor of Fakir Chan Community Center in Narinda.



At Sutrapur Modern Gymnasium, the equipment are covered in rust and the plaster is coming off the walls. Those who are regulars at the gym said the situation has not improved in years.

PHOTO: STAR

Lubna Chowdhury, a regular there, said the centre's equipment is not up to par. "I've been going to this gym for about five years," she said. "The facilities here are good, but it would have been better if the equipment was more modern."

Rahima Khatun, who is in charge there, said to improve the gym's facilities, they need new equipment.

Habib Ullah Sardar Men's Physical Training Center is located on the fifth and sixth floors of Fakir Chan Community Center. Although it has two floors, the gym's condition is extremely poor.

Siraj, who works out there, said the environment is quite dirty. Covers of the

equipment remain torn. Many of the tools are broken. "We are potentially harming ourselves by using the equipment. There is no cleaner here as well."

Rahmat Ullah alias Lucky Ustad, who acts as the gym's trainer, said more equipment is needed to improve facilities.

Although Lucky trains others there, one Nurul Islam Khan is on DSCC's trainer list. However, Shihab Hossain said even though he has trained there for three years, he has never seen Nurul.

Talking to The Daily Star, DSCC Social Welfare and Slum Development Officer Akand Mohammad Faisal Uddin said, "We have some plans to develop the gyms."

SCBA ELECTION RESULTS AL, BNP at loggerheads

STAR REPORT

A top Awami League leader has said they favour the transparent Supreme Court Bar Association election, while BNP alleged that "one-sided" announcement of the results by ruling party-backed lawyers was "terrible injustice".

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif yesterday said the SCBA election issue could be better explained by the lawyers.

"We always favour a transparent election and the results would be accepted by all," Hanif told reporters in Kushtia, reports BSS.

He said relating BNP leader Khaleda Zia's case with Dhaka Bar Council election is a part of BNP's political play.

Earlier on Thursday, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir described the "one-sided" announcement of the disputed results of SCBA election by the pro-AL lawyers as a "terrible injustice". "The cadres of Awami League, who usurped power, broke the locked house at night in a terroristic manner and announced the results [of SCBA]," he said.

Speaking at an iftar party in Dhaka, he urged the lawyers to strongly protest the incident.

Earlier on Wednesday night, the results of SCBA election, that took place 41 days ago, was announced after scuffle and chaos broke between pro-AL and BNP lawyers, over the recounting of votes cast for the post of secretary, where the candidate from pro-BNP panel was leading.

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'Initiate an impartial probe' Eminent citizens express concern over burning of Jhum garden

STAR REPORT

Eminent citizens of the country have expressed concerns over the burning of indigenous-owned Jhum gardens by a rubber company in Bandarban.

"We are deeply disappointed by the administration's lack of visible action in the burning of Jhum garden; We are concerned. Indigenous families affected by the fire are likely to face a food crisis soon," read the statement.

"The local administration has not taken any action for justice or reassurance from the affected families, which has upset us."

The statement also called for an impartial investigation into the burning of a 100-acre Jhum orchard to ensure legal redressal, immediate arrest of those responsible, the safety of the victims, adequate compensation and occupation of Mro people in the neighbourhood.

Earlier, Lama Rubber Industries Ltd, with the help of local land grabbers, occupied about 300 acres of land belonging to the indigenous community of Langkom Mro Karbari Para, Joychandra Tripura Karbari Para and Rengen Mro Karbari Para of Sorai union in Bandarban's Lama upazila.

"The company had filed false cases against the indigenous people at different times when they protest they said. Although the land ownership of the indigenous plains is determined by the customary law of the country, the land ownership of the indigenous in the three hill districts is social," read the statement.

It also said the principle of "universal property ownership" is the basis of their land ownership. Hence, this proprietary lineage is verbal. It is managed by the headmen and Karbaris of the hill tracts under three circles. But in the last 30 years, 51 percent of the hill's social ownership of land and property has been lost.

A detailed report was published in The Daily Star Bangla platform on April 27 under the headline "Allegations of burning Mro's Jhum garden against the Rubber Company".

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KARAIL SLUM TO GULSHAN-1

Boatmen bear the brunt of extortion

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

For years, slum dwellers have been making a living by operating boats on the lake connecting Karail slum and Gulshan-1. However, these days, they are having an extremely hard time continuing their profession, due to the immense pressure from local extortionists. The boatmen allege that thugs attack them as they are unable to pay the demanded extortion money.

An incident on January 10 is an example of the situation. More than seven armed men stormed into the Karail berthing point, beat up at least five boatmen and damaged six of their canoes.

When this correspondent visited the spot recently, he found the boatmen fixing the damaged boats. Seeking anonymity, they expressed their



grief to The Daily Star.

To operate each boat, the goons demanded Tk 1 lakh in advance, they said. "As we couldn't pay the money, they attacked us and damaged our boats," said one of the boatmen.

Asked who carried out the attack, the victims said followers of Nasir Uddin, ward-20 councillor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), did so.

They demanded as much as Tk 1,000 daily from each boat, they said.

The passengers -- mostly slum dwellers -- are charged Tk 10 each to go from Karail slum to Gulshan-1 police check-post.

Abdus Sobhan, president of Karail Slum Bou Bazar unit, said around 30,000 families live in those shanties.

The slum dwellers traditionally kept the boat

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For years, slum dwellers have been making a living by operating boats on the lake connecting Karail slum and Gulshan-1. However, the entire endeavour has been hampered by local extortionists. In the last month, the boatmen were unable to collect the fare directly from passengers. They have allegedly also faced attacks from extortionists upon failure to pay them.

PHOTO: STAR