

## Second phase of Ijtima underway

STAR REPORT

The second phase of Biswa Ijtima began yesterday on the bank of the Turag in Tongi of Gazipur with sermons by Islamic scholars.

Several lakh devotees from home and abroad have joined the Ijtima. The number of devotees rose significantly during Juma prayers.

The second phase started with "ambayan" (general sermons) after Fajr prayers with the participation of a large number of devotees, including the followers of Indian preacher Moulana Muhammad Saad Al Knadhalvi.

The sermons were delivered by Pakistani scholar Moulana Mohammad Osman and were translated into Bangla by Maulana Zia bin Qasim as Maulana Saad did not attend this year's Ijtima.

Mohammad Sayem, coordinator of media for the Ijtima, said three

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Even though Golapbagh field was renovated a year ago, it still has not been opened to public, depriving children of the area a much-needed playground. However, some elderly locals have started to use the space for walking. This photo was taken recently. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Robbed off a playground for 16 years

Even a year after renovation, Golapbagh field still not opened

DIPAN NANDY

According to the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) website, Golapbagh field is the single biggest playground in south Dhaka. This ground was closed for 10 years from 2006 as construction materials of the Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover were kept on the ground.

In 2017, the authorities started renovating the field, which ended in 2021. But even after one year, the ground has not been opened to locals. Youths of the area are robbed of a playground and an open space for 16 long years.

The authorities said locals will be able to use the ground once a management committee is formed.

DSCC sources said a boundary wall and fencing, a gymnasium, basketball court, pavilions, dressing rooms, waiting rooms, walkways, a library and market buildings were set up at the playground for Tk 16 crore. It was done under a project, titled "Different Infrastructure Development of Dhaka South City Corporation".

The contractor of the playground's renovation work, UDC Construction, completed the project by the end of 2021 after extending the deadline a couple of times.

A lottery for allotment of 43 shops in the market building was also held on April 12 last year.

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# Arable land ravaged by industrial pollution



MOKAMMEL MRIDHA, back from Shreepur, Gazipur

There were very few people on the road. Even the shops and tea stalls were vacant in Gazipur's Dokhola in the afternoon. It seemed life was calm and peaceful for the locals, even though the reality was far from it.

The area lies under Mauna union of Gazipur's Shreepur upazila, the district that has several factories, accused of heavily polluting the environment.

Like the other areas of the district, there are many factories, dyeing and washing plants at Dokhola.

The vast areas of Mauna union's agricultural land have been ravaged due to untreated effluent from many of those factories, said locals.

"Ten years back, our fields were adorned with paddy and different types of vegetables round the year," said 70-year-old Azam Ali of Dokhola village.

"But now we cannot cultivate crops since our fields lost the ability to produce them due to the effluent discharge from factories."

"Almost 1,000 acres of land in our locality lost crop production capacity since the land remains submerged by effluent from the factories," added Azam.

Due to the sheer amount of effluent disposed into the canal from nearby factories, the canal overflows and submerges nearby arable lands.

Talking to this correspondent, Azam informed that the inundation has been occurring in their area ever since the Labalang canal flowing through their locality lost its navigability due to excess waste dumping.

"Let alone our crops, even the tins of our houses don't last for even two years. They get rusted due to chemical-induced air from the factories," said Abdul Jalal of the same area.

While visiting Muktijodhha Nurul



PHOTO: STAR

Haque Road, around one kilometre from the Mauna intersection on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway, this correspondent saw several factories on both sides of the road.

Many of the factories have dyeing units and discharged liquid into drains covered with concrete slabs.

Ideally, the effluent was supposed to be treated and cleaned before discharging, but most factories don't obey the rule.

The truth came to light when this correspondent reached the Labalang canal.

A deep brown liquid was coming out from the drains and kept mixing with the canal's dark-coloured water, indicating that it has been polluted for a long time.

"Vast agricultural lands have been ravaged on both sides of the canal, stretching around 50 kilometres from Shreepur upazila to Mirzapur upazila's Bhawal in Tangail," said Khorshed Alam, a member of National River Conservation

Committee, Shreepur unit.

"In the early phase of the pollution, factory effluents were being drained out through Labalang canal and straight to Turag River. Once the canal bed had filled up with waste dumped by the municipality and factories, the canal overflowed and the untreated factory liquid spread in the arable land," he said.

"We have been protesting the pollution for eight years with rallies, processions and human chains. However, none of the authorities paid any heed," Khorshed added.

ASM Muaidul Hasan, agriculture officer of Shreepur upazila, said in a rough estimate, around 350 hectares of agricultural land have been reduced in the last 3 to 4 years in the upazila. However, a vast survey is required to determine the exact picture of land loss.

"Not all factories, but dyeing and washing factories are the main polluters in

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## 3 die in Gazipur road accidents

STAR REPORT

Three people including two college students died in separate road accidents in Kaliakoir and Sreepur upazilas of Gazipur yesterday morning.

The deceased were identified as Mia Chan, 60, a labourer of Nagarpur upazila in Tangail, Shakil Hossain, 18, of Kishoreganj and Siam, 18, of Phulbaria village in Kapasia.

Of them, the two students, Shakil and Siam, died on the spot when their motorcycle skidded and hit the railing of a bridge on Prohladpur-Gazipur road at Sreepur around 8:30am.

Confirming the accident, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police Station Md Moniruzzaman said, Shakil and Siam were students of Gazipur BGMEA College.

Meanwhile, Kaliakoir Police Station's Inspector Abul Bashar said Mia Chan, who was on a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, was going to Kaliakoir from Mawna around 9:30pm when a truck coming from the opposite direction hit the vehicle he was on.

He died on the spot. Police recovered the body and sent it to family members.

## Dhaka's air 'hazardous', most polluted

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka once again topped the list of world cities with the worst air quality yesterday morning.

With an air quality index (AQI) score of 317 at 8:00am yesterday, Dhaka ranked first in the list of cities with the worst air.

An AQI between 151 and 200 is said to be 'unhealthy', while a score between 201 and 300 is considered 'very unhealthy'.

On the other hand, an AQI score between 301 and 400 is considered 'hazardous' and is supposed to be posing serious health risks to residents.

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## No Covid death, 8 new cases in 24hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No Covid-19 death was reported in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, said a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The total number of deaths from Covid-19 in the country remains at 29,441 and the mortality rate is 1.45 percent.

At least eight new cases were reported in this 24-hour period. The total number of cases meanwhile, rose to 20,37,416, added the release.

The current positivity rate is 0.41 percent while the total positivity rate is 13.38 percent.

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## Foreigners' directive on democracy not welcome: Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the directives of foreigners will not be allowed as democracy prevails in Bangladesh.

"The talk of democracy does not suit BNP as they are the very party that destroyed it. We will continue with our democracy. The orders of foreigners will not be allowed to this end," he told an event at AL's Bangabandhu Avenue central office in the capital.

As per the directives of AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the party's relief and social welfare sub-committee organised the event to distribute warm clothes among the cold-hit people.

Quader said Hasina is trying her best to flourish democracy in the country despite various obstacles.

Terming the obsolete caretaker government system a "dead issue", he said the next general elections will be free, fair, neutral and participatory, while the government will discharge its routine work during the election.

He also urged BNP to join the next polls if it wants to change the government.

"The Awami League never hatches plots rather it has become the victim of conspiracies. The Awami League does not believe in the politics of killing but it fell



The reunion of Gregorians from around the world was held on the St Gregory School and College premises in the capital's Laxmibazar yesterday. The event was organised by The Gregorian Society (TGS). From left, veteran politician Mujahidul Islam Selim; Brother Ujjal Placid Pereira, principal of St Gregory School and College; Education Minister Dipu Moni; Yusuf Rahman, president of TGS; Prof Ikhtear Omar, renowned vocalist and academician, and Syed Ahsan Habib, general secretary of TGS, were present at the event, among others. PHOTO: STAR

**PRAYER TIMING**  
JANUARY 21

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
5:30	12:45	4:15	5:40	7:00

JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:30 5:44 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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