



## Talks ongoing to generate hydrogen power from seawater: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that discussions are going on about the production of hydrogen electricity from seawater.

She said this in response to a query by Awami League lawmaker Anwar Hossain Khan.

Referring to the new concept of hydrogen power generation from seawater, the premier said discussions are underway with all the concerned

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Be it browsing through books at a stall or hanging out with friends, the Ekushey Boi Mela has something for everyone. The month-long congregation of book lovers started yesterday at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan and Bangla Academy.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Finally, the wait is over

Amar Ekushey Boi Mela kicks off

DIPAN NANDY

For the first time in three years, February 1 marked the opening day of the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, commemorating the memories of the Language Movement martyrs. The fair will continue till February 28.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the book fair in person after three years, with the apt theme of "Read books and build Bangabandhu's Bangladesh".

After the inauguration ceremony, the doors of Boi Mela were opened for the public at 5:30pm, when people of all ages and all walks of life gathered at the Suhrawardy Udyan premises, where the fair is being held.

Mahbub Jamil Pulak, who visited the fair on its opening day, said, "I'm an avid music lover and so, I'm looking for books related to music. I bought Joy Shariar's 'Rupali Guitar', written about rock legend Ayub Bachchu and 'Niloy Da' about celebrated musician Niloy Das, edited by Milu Aman and Haque Faruk."

"I'm happy to be back at the fair without any restrictions. I will come back again to purchase books by my favourite writers," he added.

Another visitor Jannatul Nayem Annanya, who came to the fair with her friends, said, "This is the first time that I'm visiting the fair on its opening day. The premises look vibrant with all the new books."

Publishers, on the other hand, are expecting some good sales as readers can now visit the fair without any restrictions in place.

"Our book fair business has been in a bad shape for the

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## CURBING AIR POLLUTION

### 'Govt must implement HC directives'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must implement the 12 High Court directives to curb air pollution immediately, including spraying water on the roads and banning black smoke-emitting vehicles, demanded environmentalists.

They made the demands at a discussion, titled "Urgent measures needed to curb air pollution in Dhaka", held yesterday at Dhaka Reporters Unity premises.

Save The Environment Movement, Work for a Better Bangladesh (WBB Trust), Jonoudoyg, Nagorik Adhikar Sanrakshan Forum (Nasal), Green Force, DU Poribesh Sangsad, and environmentalists from Bangladesh Safe Water Movement's jointly organised the discussion.

Speakers said air pollution in the capital has reached a dangerous level. According to AirVisual's air quality index data, 23 days out of the first 24 days of January saw Dhaka's air quality at an alarming level. The air quality index indicated that the air quality was at a hazardous level of 301+ with the highest level of air pollution recorded at 635 on 12th January.

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## Don't eat food from strangers

5 members of dope gang arrested in Dhaka

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

They sell Ayurvedic medicines on buses and trains. Some members of the gang travel on specific vehicles in the guise of passengers. In the middle of the journey, the other members get on board and pitch benefits of the medication. To make the pitch more credible, the "commuters" begin hyping up the medicines, saying "I took it before and it was helpful".

Because of all the "positive feedback", some travellers fall right into the trap and buy the products. The catch is that these seemingly innocuous ayurvedic medicines are mixed with powerful sedatives. As a result, commuters become unconscious shortly after consuming those. And then, the gang starts snatching away valuables from the targets.

Mizanur Rahman Molla alias Molla Mizanur, the leader of the dope gang, described the techniques while talking to this newspaper recently.

Mizanur, also known as "Guru" among his associates, has been involved in such activities for over one and a half decades on Dhaka-Chattogram and Dhaka-Sylhet highways, and different routes of north Bengal.

Law enforcers have arrested him six times so far, but Mizanur returned to this life of crime after securing bail every time.

Recently, the detective branch (DB) of police arrested Mizanur again, alongside four others -- Sumon, Sarwar, Abul Basar, and Nure Alam --

from different areas of the capital on Sunday.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (Lalbagh division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that they are now interrogating the arrestees to learn about other dope gangs.

Generally, these gangs usually operate during summer, but this year, they started looting people before the end of winter, he said.

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Detectives came to know about the gang's activities and arrested the five while investigating a recent complaint of a district additional judge.

The additional judge was going to Dhaka from Chattogram on a public bus. As he did not reach home in time, his relatives started to search for him.

Finally, he was found unconscious

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## DHAKA AIRPORT Runway to be closed 5hrs daily for two months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The runway of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport will remain closed for five hours each night for the next two months starting today for renovation of the runway's lighting system.

Kamrul Islam, executive director of HSIA, told The Daily Star that flight operations at the country's largest airport will be closed from 2:00am to 7:00am every day till April 2.

Flights of different airlines have been shifted to other times of the day, he added.

Usually, seven to eight flights operate in this window, and shifting of those flights will create additional pressure.

To handle this pressure, the authorities have asked for better coordination, so that passengers do not have to be stuck at the airport for a long time.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) took the initiative to upgrade the instrument landing system (ILS) of the airports in Dhaka, Chattogram,

Sylhet and Cox's Bazar to Category-2, so that flights can land at those airports despite fog.

Kamrul said the airport

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## Dhaka, Tokyo vow deeper ties

BSS, Dhaka

Japan's new ambassador to Bangladesh Iwama Kiminori yesterday said the relations between the two countries will be strengthened further in future.

He made the remarks while paying a courtesy call on Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader at his secretariat office in Dhaka.

"Japan and Bangladesh are very good friends -- the two countries are working together to further strengthen this relationship," the envoy said.

They discussed various issues related to the interests of the two countries.

The envoy said Japan is cooperating with Bangladesh in the construction of various infrastructures including metro rail "and it will continue in the future".

Senior officials of the ministry and secretariat were present at the meeting.

## BANGLADESH-KOREA TIES This year will be a milestone: envoy

UNB, Dhaka

South Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Lee Jang-keun yesterday said this year will be momentous in terms of Bangladesh-Korea relations and efforts are underway to further strengthen the relationship.

"We want to make it a milestone year," he said while speaking at a programme at the South Korean embassy in Dhaka.

The ambassador thanked the Korean community in Bangladesh for celebrating 50 years of Bangladesh-South Korea diplomatic relations.

To celebrate and propel economic success and celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties, the Korean Community Association is gearing up for "Korea Week 2023" -- to be held at the International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) and Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka from February 25 to March 3 with the theme "Stay Strong, March Together".

## Democracy has won Says Quader after by-polls to 6 constituencies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said democracy has won as the by-elections to six constituencies were held in a free and fair manner.

"The elections in all the six constituencies were held in a peaceful atmosphere. Who will win or lose the election -- that was not our main concern. Our goal was to conduct free and fair elections. This by-elections prove the victory of democracy in the country," said Quader.

He made the remark while addressing the "peace rally" organised by Dhaka city (south) unit AL, protesting the BNP-Jamaat's "terror and anarchy", at the capital's Jatrabari intersection.

As BNP leaders and activists marched from the capital's Mugda to

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## 'An anti-people decision'

Gano Forum urges govt to scrap move to hike electricity price

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken an anti-people decision by increasing the electricity price twice in a month without holding any mass hearing, said Dr Kamal Hossain, president of Gano Forum.

In a joint statement, he said people are already reeling from the unbridled price hike of essentials and inflation.

The government on Tuesday increased the electricity price by 5 percent at the retail level -- the second hike in 19 days, as it steadily retracts subsidies from the power sector while piling the burden on common people already struggling with inflation.

On top of that, the continuous price hike of power, gas and energy due to the wrong decision and inappropriate planning in the energy sector will further cause untold sufferings to people, reads a press release.

Dr Kamal has asked the government to form an inquiry commission comprising experts to take an appropriate plan to prevent corruption and wastage in the energy sector.

In the statement, the party has called upon the government to scrap its decision. Gano Forum General Secretary Mizanur Rahman is another signatory of the statement.



In order to create awareness on anti-microbial resistance, Directorate General of Drug Administration organised an art competition for students of Viharunnisa Noon School and College at its main campus in the capital's Bailey Road yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS