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Monitor septic tank, ventilation

Recommend experts to ensure safety of capital's buildings

HELEMUL ALAM

A lack of maintenance of septic tanks and buildings, coupled with blocked ventilation ways are putting the capital's buildings at huge risk of explosion. This newspaper yesterday reached out to multiple urban planning experts following the Gulistan explosion, who all echoed the same.

They suggested reducing dependency on air conditioning, ensuring a ventilation system in every septic tank and introducing a yearly inspection system by the authorities concerned to get rid of such risks.

According to the Bomb Disposal Unit of DMP's CTTC unit, the gas accumulated in an airtight room (underground), consequently making the room a gas chamber, which might have been the case with the March 7 explosion in Siddique Bazar.

The gas might be accumulated from the water tank, septic tank, concealed or disconnected gas lines, leaked sewerage pipelines or from a large generator, they observed.

The explosion on the second floor of a building in the capital's Science Lab area resulted in the death of three persons on March 5. This explosion was also due to accumulated gas, suspect two experts after primary investigation.

Rahmat Ullah Chowdhury, in charge of the Bomb Disposal Unit of DMP's CTTC unit, after the incident said the gas could have been accumulated from any concealed gas pipeline or sewerage system.

"An explosion may occur if there is 5-12 percent of the gas in the air of a confined space. There will be an

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Abdul Mannan was seen roaming the site of the devastating blast in the capital's Siddique Bazar yesterday, desperately trying to find his son-in-law Mehedi Hasan Swapani, who had a shop in one of the buildings. Meanwhile, officials were busy with their rescue efforts, after they cordoned off the site. Nearbly, family members were visibly in anguish; some kept crying out for their loved ones, while others were lamenting in silence.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, PRABIR DAS



Global leaders express 'deep concerns' for Dr Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty global leaders expressed their "deep concerns for the well-being" of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Muhammad Yunus in an open letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"It is painful to see Prof Yunus, a man of impeccable integrity, and his life's work unfairly attacked and repeatedly harassed and investigated by your government," they said in the letter that also appeared as a full-page ad in the Washington Post on March 7.

They said, "It is out of this deep respect for your country that we write to urge you to take positive steps to support and recognise the great contributions of one of your most notable citizens, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Muhammad Yunus."

"We have deep concerns for Professor Yunus' well-being and his ability to contribute to humanitarian advancement in Bangladesh and around the world. As we are sure you are aware, Muhammad Yunus' contributions to Bangladesh, especially to the very poor and the most vulnerable, and also to the world, are recognised and honored around the globe."

The letter mentioned that Prof Yunus is one of seven people in history to have received the Nobel Peace Prize, the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the US

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HAJJ REGISTRATION DEADLINE Poor response leads to 'final' extension

RASHIDUL HASAN

Even after extending the registration deadline two times, the government is still not getting the expected response for performing hajj, making hajj agencies concerned about not fulfilling the quota of sending 1.27 lakh Bangladeshis for the pilgrimage this year.

According to officials at the city's Ashkona Hajj Camp, 64,699 people have registered as of yesterday.

Of the total, 9,253 registered under the government's hajj management and the rest 55,446 under private agencies.

Due to the poor response, the government on Tuesday extended the registration deadline for the third and final time till March 16, the religious affairs ministry said in a circular yesterday.

Leaders of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB) and Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB) fear that due to the low numbers the quota will not be fulfilled.

Several officials at Ashkona camp also doubt whether Bangladesh will be able to meet the quota this year, because of the high cost of the hajj package.

"Our business will be affected severely if we cannot fulfil the quota. Besides, failure to fulfil it will also have a negative impact on our country," said Abdus Salam Aref, general secretary of ATAB.

HAAB and ATAB leaders said despite the huge interest to go for the pilgrimage, fewer people have registered due to the high costs.

A Bangladeshi will have to spend around Tk 7 lakh to perform the ritual under private

and government management this year, up by around Tk 1.61 lakh from the previous year.

and government management this year, up by around Tk 1.61 lakh from the previous year.

HAAB and ATAB leaders said a Bangladeshi pilgrim will have to spend around Tk 8 to 9 lakh on average to complete all formalities of hajj this year, for which many are finding it difficult to gather the money.

HAAB, a platform of around 1,500 private hajj agencies, said this year's airfare is high, for which the cost of the hajj package has increased significantly.

"The airfare of Biman was Tk 1.40 lakh last year. But this year, it is around Tk 2 lakh, which is very high," said HAAB President M Shahadat Hossain Taslim.

Sources at HAAB and ATAB said in India, the airfare is around Tk 1.25 lakh, and in Pakistan, it is less than Tk 1 lakh.

"In previous years, people thronged agencies for registration. But this year, we are running after people; we are not getting the due response," Md Khorshed Alam, managing partner of Al-Madina Travel & Hajj Kafela told The Daily Star.

"In most cases, people are telling us that they are finding it difficult to manage the huge amount of money fixed for the package," he added.

HAAB president Taslim said people from villages generally perform hajj in large numbers. "As the cost of the package has increased, village people in many cases are having trouble."

This year, the hajj will be held on June 27, depending on the sighting of the moon.

'Chhatra League gets impunity, while victims suffer'

Say speakers on sexual harassment in universities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sexual harassers from Chhatra League (BCL) in different universities are getting continuous impunity against their offences, as the university authorities don't take action against them. Rather, they oust the victims out of the halls, said speakers yesterday.

They made the remarks at a procession organised by Nari Sanghati, marking International Women's Day 2023, in front of Raju Memorial Sculpture in Dhaka University's TSC area.

Author and anthropologist Rahnuma Ahmed said, "Bangladesh's minister of education is a female. If sexual assaults occur in any other nation, the responsible minister resigns."

Bangladesh has had a female-led government for around 35 years. Yet we are unable to provide a woman with a protected environment."

"Why does a female student need to enter

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Historic March 7 observed

STAR REPORT

The nation yesterday observed the historic March 7, marking the landmark speech of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Marking the day, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid rich tributes to the architect of independence of Bangladesh.

Besides, Awami League and different socio-political and cultural organisations chalked out elaborate programmes on the occasion.

Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television as well as private television channels and radio stations aired special programmes while national dailies published special supplements marking the day.

TORTURE ON DU STUDENT HC upholds 3 years' jail of ex-Khilgaon OC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday upheld the lower court verdict that sentenced former officer-in-charge of Khilgaon Police Station Md Helal Uddin to three years in jail for torturing former Dhaka University student Md Abdul Kadar in 2011.

The HC also ordered Helal, now on bail, to surrender to the trial court concerned in three months after the judgement reaches there.

The HC bench of Justice Fatema Najib delivered the verdict. The victim -- Md Abdul Kadar, now a lecturer of the chemistry department in Cumilla Victoria Government College -- expressed satisfaction at the HC judgement.

On July 16 in 2011, some plainclothesmen from Khilgaon Police Station stopped Kadar at Segunbagicha while he was returning to his dormitory from a relative's house in Eskaton.

They beat Kadar, then a DU student of biochemistry and molecular biology, with sticks, according to the case filed by him in January 2012.

Later, police implicated Kadar in three false cases filed with Mohammadpur and Khilgaon police stations. But following media outcry, the HC on July 28, 2011, ordered police to probe into the incident. Kadar was acquitted of all charges in 2012.

WB GROUP PRESIDENCY Bangladesh endorses Ajay Banga

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has endorsed the US nominee Ajay Banga for the position of World Bank Group president, in the context of the long-standing friendship and cooperation between Bangladesh and the US.

"Bangladesh believes that Mr Banga's vast experience would positively contribute to the works and the future of the World Bank Group," said foreign ministry in a statement yesterday.

Indian-American executive Ajay Banga has been nominated by US President Joe Biden to become the new president of the World Bank. His election to the position will be a mere formality since the presidency has traditionally been held by the US.

All 13 presidents of the World Bank so far have been US citizens; the only exception being Bulgarian national Kristalina Georgieva, who served as the acting president in 2019. The new president is likely to be in place by early May.



Joy Bangla Concert: an energetic comeback

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youthful, vociferous crowd was in attendance at the much awaited Joy Bangla Concert 2023 yesterday. The flagship event could take place after a two-year hiatus at Army Stadium in the capital.

The concert started after paying respects to the lives lost to the explosion at a commercial building in Gulshan on March 7.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended the event.

After the concert started, the renewed vigour was immediately evident in young bands like Arekta Rock Band and Karnival.

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Joy Bangla Concert made a comeback after a two-year hiatus with performances from bands like Karnival, Meghdol, Lalon, Chirkutt, Cryptic Fate and Artcell. The standout rendition was Cryptic Fate's interpretation of "Teer Hara Ei Dheuer Shagor". The concert is usually arranged every year to commemorate the country's independence and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's historic March 7 speech.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHE

PRAYER TIMING MARCH 9

Faqr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-15 12-45 4-30 6-05 7-30
JAMAT 5-50 1-15 4-45 6-10 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION