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BANGABAZAR FIRE

Traders to resume business tomorrow

DSCC clearing the site of debris to help them set up makeshift shops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shop owners of Bangabazar Shopping Complex, which was burnt to the ground last week, can start their business in makeshift shops from tomorrow, said the authorities.

Dhaka South City Corporation has been removing the debris and burnt goods from the scene since Friday.

Mizanur Rahman, chief executive officer at the DSCC, told The Daily Star that they are trying their best to clear the debris before Wednesday.

Zahirul Islam, general secretary of Bangabazar Shop Owners' Association, said they have requested DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh to reopen the makeshift market.

He said they would sit with all traders on Wednesday noon to discuss how the market will run.

Zahirul added that everyone will get a shop irrespective of the number of shops owned by an affected trader.

Traders primarily said the fire destroyed around 3,000 shops and readymade garments stored in them. Shop owners' leaders claimed that goods worth around

Tk 1,000 crore were lost.

Meanwhile, the partially affected Anexco Tower, adjacent to Bangabazar Shopping Complex, was reopened yesterday.

Electricity supply to the market is yet to resume, said Nazmul Alam, owner of Abir Fashions of the tower. "We are running our business with rechargeable lights".

Meanwhile, the DSCC probe committee could not file its report yesterday.

The body, led by Marina Nazneen, executive officer at Dhaka South City Corporation Zone-I, said they have almost completed the work. "But we are yet to get the list of the affected traders. We will submit the report tomorrow [Tuesday]."

Marina added that during the investigation, they took an electrical engineer with them to find the cause of the fire.

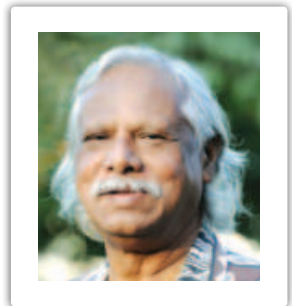
DSCC spokesperson Abu Naser said they estimated that the number of affected traders would be nearly 4,200. The affected ones of the Anexco Tower were not included as they have insurance.

In another development, two women donated Tk 91,000 to the affected traders. Apan Jewellers also donated Tk 20 lakh.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Road rollers of Dhaka South City Corporation levelling the debris at Bangabazar Shopping Complex so that makeshift shops could be set up there. Traders of the market, which was burnt to the ground on April 4, will resume business here tomorrow. The photo was taken yesterday.



Zafrullah on life support

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoshashtaya Kendra founder and freedom fighter Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury was put on life support yesterday.

Professor Brigadier General (Retd) Mamun Mostafi, who is leading a medical board formed for Zafrullah's treatment, said, "At 10:30am today [Monday], Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury was put on life support after his condition deteriorated. Now, he is under close observation at Gonoshashtaya Nagar Hospital."

Zafrullah's condition is critical but doctors are still hopeful of his recovery, he said.

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BAGERHAT COASTAL UNIONS Boro destroyed as saline water let into fields

Farmers allege influential locals cut dams, opened sluices for shrimp farms

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

Boro paddies grown by a large number of farmers in Bagerhat have been ruined after some politically influential locals released saline water into the fields for the sake of shrimp farming.

The water was released by removing dams and by opening sluice gates.

Many farmers said they had planted the Boro this season after getting support from the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), and were expecting to harvest the staple grain in around a month and half.

However, the saline water has completely damaged their standing crops, that too at a time when the government seeks to use every inch of farmland to produce food and cut dependence on the international market amid the Russia-Ukraine war.

Shrimp is grown in the southwest coastal region for export purposes. As black tiger

shrimps, which account for the majority of the shrimp exports, grow well in saline water, many owners use their influence to ensure that enough brackish water is coming to their shrimp enclosures – resulting in a conflict between them and other food producers in the region.

With local administrations taking no steps to protect the crop and the growers, this has been going on unabated particularly in Dema, Rajnagar and Perikhal unions of Bagerhat's Sadar and Rampal upazilas.

With local administrations taking no steps, farmers particularly in Dema, Rajnagar and Perikhal unions of Bagerhat's Sadar and Rampal upazilas have suffered badly.

Sabita Howladar, of Kalekharber

village in Rampal upazila's Rajnagar union, said, "We had requested them repeatedly to wait for a few days before bringing the saline water in from the nearby canal. But they didn't pay heed."

Sabita's family cultivated Boro paddy, a dry season crop harvested in April-May, on six bighas of land after taking a loan from an NGO and selling their cows to get the capital.

"After 15-20 days, we could have taken the paddy home. As they [local influentials] removed the dam, saline water entered our field and our plants started dying," she told this correspondent when he visited the village earlier this month.

Humayun, another farmer of the same village, said the farmers cultivated the paddy as the DAE provided them with seeds and fertiliser free of cost.

The farmers also took the consent of all before building the dam on the Kalekharber canal to prevent saline water from intruding the fields.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

New wage board formed for garment workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has formed a new minimum wage board to review and recommend the monthly salary for more than 4 million garment workers.

The new board was formed on Sunday, Md. Towfiqul Arif, additional secretary to the labour ministry, told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

The chief of the six-member board is Liaquat Ali Molla, a senior district judge, who is also the chief of the permanent minimum wage board of the government.

"We told the board for holding the first meeting as soon as possible," said Arif, who is acting as the coordinator of the wage board on behalf of the ministry. A gazette may be published soon, he added.

The last minimum wage for garment workers came into effect in December 2018. It fixed Tk 8,000 as the minimum monthly

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'Coherent' radio signal detected from alien planet

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



A "coherent" radio signal has been detected from an alien planet, suggesting it could be more likely to be habitable.

The signal suggests that the planet has its own magnetic field, which is thought to be central to sustaining life on a particular world.

On Earth, our magnetic field helps protect us from the high energy particles and plasma that are blasted from the Sun. As such, any alien life is likely to depend on being protected by a similar field.

But until now researchers have struggled to confirm whether distant rocky planets have magnetic fields of their own, and therefore have found it difficult to say how likely a planet might be able to support life.

Now the new candidate – YZ Ceti b, a rocky planet that orbits a star about 12 light years away – has sent a repeating radio signal that comes from the star and seems to be affected by the planet.

The radio waves the researchers detected from the planet appear to be generated when the star interacts with its planets' magnetic field. Because the two of them are so close together, the new candidate is an ideal pair to test theories about whether those magnetic fields could be detectable at such a distance.

NARCOTICS CASE Interviewee in DW docu arrested, sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nafiz Mohammad Alam, who recently appeared in a documentary of German news organisation Deutsche Welle, was arrested in a narcotics case in the capital's Bashundhara Residential Area.

Bhatara police held Nafiz, 23, from his home around 7:30pm on Sunday, Abdul Ahad, deputy commissioner of the Gulshan Division, told The Daily Star.

Police said they seized 26 bottles of foreign liquor, 32 cans of cocktails and a motorbike that had police stickers.

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A Palestinian man confronts Israeli soldiers during a protest in the village of Beita, south of Nablus in the occupied West Bank, yesterday, against a march by settlers to the nearby Israeli outpost of Eviatar.

PHOTO: AFP

Indian EC revokes TMC's national party status

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

In a setback for West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress, India's Election Commission yesterday revoked its status as a national party.

Meanwhile, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was elevated to a national party.

The EC also withdrew the national party status of Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Communist Party of India (CPI), reported our New Delhi correspondent.

Last week, the Karnataka High Court directed the ECI to pass appropriate orders regarding the national party status of AAP by April 13.

The EC said AAP has been named a national party based on its performance in assembly elections in Delhi, Punjab, Goa and Gujarat. The party is in power in Delhi and Punjab. The AAP got 6.77 percent of the total vote share in the assembly poll held in Goa in March last year. The party won five seats in the Gujarat assembly elections held last year.

The ECI, in July 2019, issued show-cause notices to

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