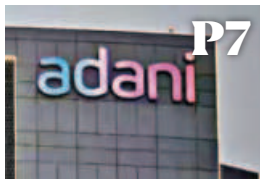




B4 LC opening drops for most commodities



P11 Bangladesh U-17s win handball title



P7 Watchdog gets 3 more months for probing Adani



P6 Cannes open its doors to the world



Scrap iron is being melted in a furnace at a factory in the capital's Shyampur. This process of producing rods creates clouds of fumes and smoke that engulf the area adjacent to Dhaka-Narayanganj road, *inset*. The photos were taken around 1:00pm on Sunday. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Old buses, trucks to be sent to the scrap yards

Gazette in this regard likely in days

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government has decided that buses and trucks will be scrapped after 20 and 25 years of being on the road.

A circular of the Road Transport and Highways Division issued yesterday revealed the move, the first of its kind in Bangladesh.

The order will come into force through the publication of a gazette.

The gazette will be issued within a few days, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder told The Daily Star.

Experts said proper implementation of the move would improve road safety.

The Road Transport and Highways Division has also prepared a draft guideline for scrapping old vehicles. In the draft, it has been mentioned that no vehicle owner would be able to register a new vehicle if they own a vehicle that has exceeded the "service life" set by the government.

The draft Motor Vehicle Scrapping Guideline-2023 said the government would be outsourcing the vehicle scrapping job to private firms enlisted with the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and under the BRTA's supervision.

The move comes more than four years after a special committee formed by the National Road Safety Council recommended setting the usable life of commercial vehicles to reduce road crashes and help bring discipline to the road transport sector.

Thousands of unfit and rickety vehicles are on the roads and the rising numbers of crashes and deaths have become a major concern.

"This is a good move for road safety but intensive monitoring and quality enforcement is the key to getting positive results," prominent transport expert Prof Shamsul Haque said.

Prof Shamsul, also the director of the Accident Research Institute at Buet, told The Daily Star yesterday that there are enough laws, rules and guidelines for the road transport sector but the problem lies in implementation and enforcement.

Due to the lack of monitoring and enforcement, one will see hundreds of unregistered and unfit vehicles even at the periphery of the capital, he said.

He, however, said the usable life of a vehicle shortens due to poor road quality, overloading, and improper maintenance. And these can lead to a vehicle having major issues even within the government-set service life of the bus or truck.

SERVICE LIFE

The BRTA in 2010 banned buses aged over 20 years and trucks over 25 years in the capital. The old vehicles then started operating on inter-district highways.

In March 2019, a committee, led by transport leader Shajahan Khan, made 111 recommendations to curb road accidents and bring discipline in the sector. The recommendations include setting the service life of buses and trucks to 20 and 25 years. It mentioned that old vehicles cause road crashes and congestion due to breakdowns.

The government formed a task force led by the home minister to implement the recommendations.

BRTA Chairman Mazumder told The Daily Star that the BRTA had sought opinions from stakeholders regarding the draft guideline. "The guideline will be finalised in the shortest possible time after an inter-ministerial meeting."

Mazumder said the BRTA would take outdated vehicles off the roads and would not wait for the approval of the guideline.

Khondaker Enayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners Association, said, "We support the decision."

Replying to a question, he said he had no idea how many outdated vehicles were in the country. "But we think there are such vehicles in the districts."

- 20 years of useable life for buses and minibuses
- 25 years of service life for trucks
- Govt prepared draft guideline for scrapping vehicles
- Govt listed private firms to scrap the vehicles
- Owners with outdated vehicle will not get registration for new vehicles

Though in power for a long time, AL still popular Says PM



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the Awami League has successfully been able to retain its popularity even though it has been in power for a long time.

"Staying in power for a long time, a very few parties or men can sustain popularity or work for the welfare of the people continuously, but the Awami League has been able to do so. We've proved

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51pc of Dhaka's poor are new

BIDS survey finds, blames Covid fallout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty-one percent of the capital's poor people had slid into poverty because of the lingering fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, according to a survey by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

The survey conducted on 2,046 households said 22.24 percent of Dhaka city's population was poor in 2022 and more than half of the poor people were "new poor".

The capital city currently has a population of over 1.02 crore, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data from last year.

Addressing the BIDS Research Almanac 2023 at a hotel yesterday, the institute's Director General Binayak Sen said, "Evidence shows that the new poor, as a new social category, is emerging as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic."

Steps must be taken to keep people

from becoming poor, he said while presenting a paper titled "Urban Poverty Dynamics During Covid-19: Anatomy of Resilience".

He added that from 2019 to 2022, the number of poor people in the capital fell by 4.3 percentage points from 26.54 percent.

Besides, the proportion of extremely poor households declined from 17.01 percent to 13.83 percent during the period.

The reduction of poverty happened due to self-employment, social safety net programmes and charity, and utilisation of savings by individuals, Binayak Sen said.

He said digital technology like mobile financial services played a positive role in creating self-employment.

During the pandemic, some researchers said the number of poor people doubled, he said, adding that their studies were done in a hurry.

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'Taqsem has turned Wasa into a den of corruption'

Says its chairman in letter to LGRD ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Wasa Managing Director Taqsem A Khan has turned the state-run agency into "a den of corruption", according to an allegation made by Dhaka Wasa Chairman Gholam Mostafa.

Taqsem runs the administration in an autocratic manner, bypassing the board, Mostafa wrote in a letter to the secretary of the local government ministry yesterday.

He brought several other allegations against Taqsem, and sought directives from the secretary.

Only five days ago, three associations of employees of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority wrote to the LGRD ministry demanding immediate action



Taqsem A Khan

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SAAT MASJID ROAD Trees felled for facelift, a new median strip

Say DSCC officials; experts slam the move, say the trees could've been easily saved

HELEMUL ALAM and DIPAN NANDY

City life comes with rapid change. But for the residents of Dhanmondi what didn't change for long were the trees and plants on the median of Saat Masjid Road. Bursting with blossoms in spring and summer, the krishnachuras and the radhachuras, among other trees, became a part of their lives.

Now the trees are almost gone, leaving residents baffled as to why a development project has to be carried out at the expense of those beautiful trees which also served as a bulwark against environmental degradation.

At a time when environmental issues

are at the heart of most policy discussions, the felling of several hundred trees by the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) on Saat Masjid Road has raised more questions than answers.



to ensure smooth traffic flow as the road now has to accommodate more buses under a new route plan.

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The parking space at the Osmani Udyan lies unusable and has turned into a hub for criminal activities since the DSCC closed it down for renovation five years ago. The failure to complete the project has now resulted in the complete abandonment of the space. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Two army men killed in KNA attack in Bandarban Says ISPR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two soldiers of the Bangladesh Army were killed and two officers injured in an attack of Kuki-Chin National Army members in Bandarban's Ruma upazila on Tuesday, said the Inter Services Public Relations in a press release yesterday.

The KNA members detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) and opened fire on the army personnel, the release said.

The release did not contain the identities of the deceased.

The incident took place when an army patrol team led by Major Monowar on Tuesday left Sungshungpara army camp after receiving

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