



Around 1,200 volunteers of BD Clean along with DNCC began cleaning Mirpur's Paris Canal yesterday. The initiative hopes to restore this canal to its former glory, removing all illegal structures and wastes that have left the waterbody on the brink of death.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Paris canal gets new life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Once upon a time, launches used to ply Mirpur's Paris canal. In recent times, however, the condition of this canal deteriorated to such a level that even a person could not move through it on foot due to piled up garbage.

Addressing the situation, Dhaka North City Corporation started cleaning the canal with the support of 1,200 volunteers from BD Clean yesterday.

The cleaning began at 10:00am.

Mayor Md Atiqul Islam also participated in the cleaning drive.

"As previously announced, I have started cleaning the Paris canal. The first phase will ensure the flow of water in this canal. After visiting the spot two days ago, I ordered everyone to remove all illegal structures from the canal. This campaign will continue until the canal is cleaned," he said.

The mayor also urged people not to dump waste in the canal.

"Volunteers have come forward to clean this canal on the weekend. These children should be playing sports in the field on their holiday, but they are cleaning the Paris canal. I appeal to locals to learn from them and stop throwing garbage in the canal," he added.

In response to a journalist's question, the mayor said, "We have already started measuring the canal. We will demolish all buildings found under the demarcated area of the canal. There are some slums on this canal land, and I have given slum dwellers a month's time to leave."

"In the second phase, a walkway will be constructed in the 40 feet area of the canal. Later, if there is more space on two sides, I will create an aesthetic park here," he added.

BNP slams Russia envoy's remarks on Jan 7 polls

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday termed Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Alexander Mantyskiy's statement on 12th parliamentary election unexpected, as the party thinks it has hurt the democratic sentiment of the people of Bangladesh.

In a statement signed by BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, the party called upon Russia to show due respect to the aspirations and democratic values of Bangladeshi citizens.

"We have noticed that the Russian ambassador described BNP's statement on Russia's role in the election as false and misleading. He also claimed that the people of Bangladesh elected the (current) government as 41.8 percent of people

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PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 3

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:15 5:52 7:15
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:30 5:56 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

FRIDAY, fun day!

Children have a blast at book fair

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Provangshu Sarkar, a government employee, knew exactly where he wanted to bring his wife and two little ones for a special outing; the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela. He came to Dhaka all the way from Sreemangal solely for the purpose of attending the book fair.

Provangshu is not alone. Like him, hundreds visited the fair yesterday, holding their children's hands, some carrying them on their shoulders. Smiles stretched across faces as children clutched colourful balloons. The air thrummed with excitement as the curious minds navigated stalls overflowing with storybooks.

The "Shishu Prahar," dedicated children's hours spread at three different slots (from 11:30am, 3:30pm and 6:30pm) throughout the day, had transformed the Boi Mela into a magical wonderland of words.

"I shared stories with my children about the book fair several times. I brought them today [yesterday] to introduce them to different genres of books. It's crucial to encourage children to develop the habit of reading books from their early years; otherwise, they might be confined to digital devices," said Provangshu.

Laughter echoed through the Suhrawardy Udyan as Halum, Ikri, Shiku, and Tuktuki — mascots

from Sisimpur (Bangladeshi adaptation of Sesame Street) greeted wide-eyed children at the Shishu Prahar.

Their playful skits and interactive games send waves of excitement through the young crowd.

Tuktuki, the bookworm, urged everyone to read, while Ikri, the curious one, encouraged the habit of asking questions. Halum, a fan of fish

for herself from the Sisimpur stall, which the little bookworms like her called "Halum and Ikri" stall.

Sakila Sathi, a former Dhaka University graduate, came to the fair around 11:00am with her two children Aariq Raiyan, 10, and Ymaer Raiyan, 7. They are students of Willes Little Flower School and College.

"I bring them to the fair every year to cultivate their love for



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

for healthy brain growth, shared dietary advice, and Shiku, the inventor, sparked imaginations and offered creative guidance.

Joyful shouts of "yes!" filled the air as children embraced the mascots' messages.

Menal Mehrish, a second grader at YWCA Junior Girls High School got a colourful book

reading," said Sathi.

Throughout the day, the number of visitors steadily grew, and by afternoon, book enthusiasts could be spotted throughout the fairgrounds, eagerly purchasing their favourites.

Raima Tabassum shared

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Government concerned about price hike, not BNP Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the government is not worried about what BNP says over Jan 7 polls; rather, it is concerned about the price hike of essential commodities.

"There is volatility in commodity prices worldwide. We are also concerned about it. We have been working to check the price hike of essentials," he told a press conference at AL President's Dhanmondi political office.

However, he claimed, the country's people are in good condition despite the global volatility as Bangladesh is self-sufficient in food, which is a good sign amid the situation.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said BNP did not participate in the elections and failed in their movement too.

"BNP workers were longing for power. However, people did not respond to their movement. BNP did not participate in

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VIOLENCE ON MINORITIES It's ingrained in our political culture: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The continuous pattern of election-centric violence against minorities is embarrassing for the nation, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

It has been ingrained in our political culture. The removal of this shameful stain is crucial. The safety of minorities is not just their concern; rather, it's a critical national issue. Everyone must work together to ensure a prompt solution in this regard, they said.

Speakers made the remarks at a roundtable titled "Election-Centric Violence, Security of Minority Communities, and Accountability of Relevant Authorities," held by Arpita Sampatti Pratyarpan Ain Bastobayon Jatiyo Nagorik Samonway Cell at Jatiya Press Club.

Rights activist Sultana Kamal said, "The new generation should take on the responsibility to stop the violence against minorities. But we have to look after the new generation and what they have learned from society."

Advocate ZI Khan Panna said, "Currently, there is no law for the weak. There are laws for the strong. That's why you will see that strong minorities are not attacked, but the weak are. We have become accustomed to seeing this. Intellectuals won't be able to improve this situation; rather, the young generation can overcome it."

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METRO DAY OFF

Business picks up for buses on weekend

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Usually, Fridays mean less passengers on Dhaka's roads, making business difficult for buses. However, the game has changed since metro trains started operating between Uttara and Motijheel all day.

Since January 20, when the metro trains started operating from 7:10 in the morning to 8:40 at night, buses departing from Mirpur have experienced a decline in weekday passengers, causing a significant reduction in their earnings. On the



contrary, the two Fridays since January 20 have witnessed a notable increase in passenger turnout compared to weekdays.

This has encouraged many buses to increase their trips on Fridays.

Liakat Ali Khan, who supervises around 75 buses of Shikor Paribahan on the Pallabi-Jatrabari route via Farmgate and

Gulistan, said the owner has set a daily collection target of at least Tk 9,000 for each bus. Some buses of the company managed to collect amounts ranging from Tk 10,000 to Tk 12,000 on the last two Fridays.

This starkly contrasts with weekdays when the collection per bus dwindled to as low as Tk 7,000 to Tk 8,000 in some instances.

Sheikh Sumon Hasan, overseeing 50 buses of Bihanga Paribahan on the Pallabi-Sadarghat route, said they have scaled down daily operations to 30 to 40 buses due to decreased passenger numbers. Yet, on Fridays, all 50 buses are deployed as there is an increase in passengers.

Sheikh Mohammad Jasim, who owns four buses of Mirpur Super Link, Murad Hossain, a driver of Bikalpa Paribahan that plies on Mirpur-12-Jatrabari, and at least a dozen of transport workers and owners these correspondent talked to echoed him.

Living in Shewrapara, Mirpur, Lavlu Talukder, a vegetable trader at Karwan Bazar, said despite paying double the fare compared to a bus, he chooses to travel on the metro rail to save time.

However, with the metro trains not operating on Fridays, he resorts to taking bus trips to reach his workplace.



People browse through products at a stall at Dhaka International Trade Fair. Inaugurated on January 21, the fair has become a hotspot for people to visit during weekends. Housing stalls from six foreign countries, DITF is taking place at Bangabandhu Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Centre at Purbachal and remains open from 10:00am-9:00pm on weekdays and till 10:00pm on weekends. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS