



People walk on a makeshift bridge over Kalyanpur canal to go to the other side. To save a few minutes, locals have set up multiple such bridges without any safety measures. Meanwhile, the condition of the waterbody continues to deteriorate as garbage dumping and encroachment go on unabated. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## One judge, 6,900 cases

HC hamstrung by judge shortage; law minister says new appointment soon

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The High Court and Appellate divisions of the Supreme Court have long been facing an acute shortage of judges.

While three judges have recently been appointed to the Appellate Division to resolve the issue to some extent, no visible step has yet been taken for the High Court Division in this regard.

Due to the scarcity of judges, the backlog of cases with the HC keeps piling up, thereby causing immeasurable sufferings to the litigants, according to legal experts.

The number of High Court judges now stands at 84 after three judges were elevated to the Appellate Division. The number of High Court judges was 100 in June 2012.

Among the total 84 HC judges, three have been excluded from judicial functions for about five years, as an inquiry centring them is pending.

Besides, three other judges are running the International Crimes Tribunal to deal with 1971 war-crimes related cases.

Now, 78 judges are functioning for hearing and disposing of the HC cases. Each of them is burdened with more than 6,900 cases on average as about 5.43 lakh cases are pending with this court.

Considering this situation, the government is planning to appoint some new judges to the High Court Division in

order to resolve the crisis of judges and to increase the rate of case disposal, Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star.

The president will make the appointments of new High Court judges. He will decide on how many judges will be appointed for the HC, he added.

Meanwhile, the lower court judges are also burdened with a huge number of cases as there are just above 1,800 judges to deal with more than 37 lakh cases pending with the courts across the country, SC sources said.

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Contacted, senior lawyer and Dhaka Law Reports (DLR) Editor Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan said due to the shortage of judges the number of case backlog is increasing.

More competent judges must be appointed for both the Appellate and High Court divisions to increase the rate of case disposal and decrease the sufferings of litigants.

## Beating the heat with 'COOL' INITIATIVES

Dhaka residents band together to help those in need during heatwave

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

April 22 was one of the hottest days Dhaka has ever experienced in the last 65 years. While many city dwellers preferred to stay in the comfort of their homes, some students of the department of philosophy at Jagannath University had other plans.

They hired a cart, purchased ingredients for preparing iced lemon juice and started distributing it free of cost to rickshaw pullers, street children, transport workers and anyone who wants to have a healthy drink in searing heat.

At first, people walking around the university gate could not comprehend what was going on there. But, when they realised, many, mostly street children and working class people, gathered around the cart to have a sip.

Kolme Azad Kongkon, one of the



A group of men offering free drinks to day-labourers and rickshaw pullers amid the heatwave. Meanwhile, rickshaw-pullers smile wearing custom made mathals (lightweight bamboo leaf hats), which ensure both comfort and protection from sunlight. Birds were not forgotten either, Jahir, a paint worker by profession, installs 20 water pots for the avian friends in several trees at selected locations in five villages of Jhenaidah.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, STAR



organisers of this initiative, said, "We had been thinking how we could help poor, working class people who have to work in an outdoor environment for a long time amid this heatwave."

"So, we came up with this initiative and convinced our classmates to contribute. And, thanks to all my friends, we could offer healthy drinks to more than 100 people," she added.

Inspired by them, students from several other departments also took similar initiatives -- offering drinks

to passers-by, admission seekers and guardians.

Md Shahjahan Badsha, an organiser of one such initiative, said, "We are students. We ourselves have limited pocket-money. But the satisfaction and gratitude we saw on the face of thirsty people after having a drink is absolutely priceless."

Jagannath University students are not alone in their selfless efforts to help the most vulnerable.

Students from Dhaka University



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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, STAR

and Dhaka Medical College Hospital helped patients and attendants at the overcrowded and poorly ventilated corridors and staircases of the hospital.

They provided lunch packs and bottled mineral water to these poor patients and their relatives. They also gave financial support to some of them for purchasing medicines.

One of the organisers, who is also a student of DMCH, said, "You will not find many sources of healthy food and safe

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## KITCHEN MARKETS

### Veggie prices shoot up

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MD ABBAS

Along with price hikes of chicken and fish, some vegetables also saw rising prices in the kitchen markets of the capital yesterday, adding to the never-ending burden on the pockets of low-income groups.

Visiting Kochukhet, Shewrapara, Ibrahimpur, and Karwan Bazar, this newspaper found that brinjal, papaya, drumstick, snake gourd, pointed gourd, cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, and green chilies have seen a price rise of Tk 10-20 per kilo compared to last week.

Long brinjal is being sold at Tk 80-100 per kg, up from Tk 60-80 per kg; while regular brinjal is being sold at Tk 60-80, up from Tk 50-60. Pointed gourd per kg is being sold at Tk 60-70, an increase from Tk 50-60 last week. Cauliflower and cabbage are going for Tk 40-60 per kg, compared to previous price of Tk 30-50.

Simultaneously, per kg of drumstick is available for Tk 140-160, up from Tk 120-140 last week; while each kg of snake gourd is being sold at Tk 60-80, up from Tk 50-70. Each kg of papaya is selling for Tk 80, up from Tk 60-70.

Meanwhile, carrots and green chilies saw a significant surge in prices, with per kg of carrots



being sold at Tk 120-130, up from Tk 80-90; while green chilies are being sold at Tk 140-160, up from Tk 100-120 last week.

Abdul Ali, a vegetable trader at Karwan Bazar, said the prices are high as it is not the season for some of the aforementioned vegetables.

This fresh hike in vegetable prices severely

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## Honouring a fallen son

Last salute to BAF officer Asim Jawwad

RAFIUL ISLAM

It was around noon. The rotors of a special helicopter churned through the heavy gloom at Shaheed Miraj-Tapan Stadium in Manikganj.

Squadron Leader Asim Jawwad, a sword of honour winning pilot in Bangladesh Air Force, landed in his hometown from Chattogram in his favorite chopper.

But he was not on the pilot's seat.

Instead, his lifeless body arrived in a coffin, draped in the national flag, where a sea of grief-stricken family members and locals were waiting. Many were seen shedding tears.

Immediately after the landing, his father Mohammad Amanullah, wife Antara Akhtar and two children -- six year old daughter and one-year-old son -- descended from the aircraft with the help of BAF members.

Jawwad's mother Nilufar Khanum was not in any state to make a journey to Chattogram in order to receive the remains of her beloved son and bring him



home.

She has been in an inconsolable state since the news of the tragedy reached her home in Manikganj on Thursday. She could not even walk. Jawwad's relatives carried her on their shoulders. She kept on crying, "My son, my son".

She was taken inside the chopper before BAF officials brought out the body on their shoulders to keep in a freezing van kept outside.

Jawwad died after a YAK130 trainer fighter jet of BAF crashed into the Karnaphuli river in Chattogram's Patenga on Thursday morning when it was returning to base post-training.

He along with another pilot Wing Commander Sohan Hasan Khan ejected from the plane and landed in the river with emergency parachutes. Pilot Sohan survived but he could not.

A 35-second video clip of the incident showed that fire broke out in the tail of the fighter jet. Within seconds, the two pilots

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

These men row their boat on the Karnaphuli river, hoping to cross the finish line and win the Sampan race. Protesting the pollution and encroachment of the river, the race was organised by Karnaphuli Sampan Majhi Kalyan Samiti. The photo was taken yesterday.