

## RTI ACT

## Commission warns 3 govt officials

For harassing information seekers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Information Commission yesterday warned three government officials for harassing information seekers and not providing people with information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009.

The officials are Salimullah, director general of Savar National Institute of Biotechnology (NIB), and Ranty Poddar, assistant commissioner of Gopalganj DC Office, according to a press release from the commission. Another person is the RTI-designated officer at NIB.

The commission gave the warning after a hearing under the RTI Act on the complaints submitted by some information seekers.

The NIB officials obstructed and even harassed the information seekers while the assistant commissioner of Gopalganj DC office did not cooperate with people who sought information.

It asked the NIB officials to provide information within 10 working days and the Gopalganj DC office within seven working days.

Information Commissioners Shahidul Alam Jhinuk and Masuda Bhatti issued the warning orders.

The commission resolved six out of eight complaints during yesterday's hearing.

**PRAYER TIMING**  
MAY 31

Fajr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-30	5-00	6-43	8-05
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-47	8-35

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

THIRD TERMINAL  
97pc of construction work done

Says minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil Aviation Minister Faruk Khan announced yesterday that around 97 percent of the construction work for the third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport has been completed.

Speaking at a press briefing after visiting the terminal, the minister expressed satisfaction with the progress, indicating that the terminal is expected to be fully operational by the end of this year or early next year.

"Only three percent of the work, including calibration and testing of various systems, remains," said Faruk Khan.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh is reportedly preparing its staff for efficient terminal operations.

Addressing the construction of a second runway, the minister noted improvements to the Instrument Landing System and radars on the existing runway.

Regarding luggage handling, Faruk Khan acknowledged it as a significant challenge, noting efforts to enhance the service. For ground handling, Biman Bangladesh Airlines will manage operations under a joint venture with a global service provider chosen by the Japanese consortium.

The third terminal project, costing Tk 21,300 crore, began on December 28, 2019. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina soft-launched the terminal on October 7 last year.

Under water for over  
36 HOURS!  
Unseen sufferings of dwellers in two Dhaka wards

MASHFIQ MIZAN and NAFIS ALMAS SIAM

"Where were you for so long?" The frustration was palpable in the voices of the residents. "It's been 36 hours since the rain stopped, and our homes are still underwater!"

These were the cries that greeted these correspondents when visiting Riazbag and Shipahibagh areas in Khilgaon of Dhaka on Wednesday. Even a day and a half after the rain stopped, these areas remained partially submerged.

On Riazbag Road 6, Shahidul Islam, Monir Hossain, and two others were seen clearing a drain, desperately trying to pump out the stagnant water.

We initially mistook them for city corporation workers. However, they revealed they were residents who had taken matters into their own hands.

"Our homes, alongside the roads they are on, have been underwater for almost two days. Still, no one from the city

**Beds and other furniture in our homes have been ruined. Our landlady let us stay at her place, so we have taken shelter there. The city corporation doesn't take any initiative to fix the situation, and this happens every monsoon.**

YASMIN, resident of Ward 3

corporation even bothered to visit us," Shahidul said.

The area falls under Ward 23 of Dhaka North City Corporation.

The dilapidated road leading out of Riazbag, riddled with potholes for years, was now a murky expanse of ankle-deep water. While vehicles navigated the treacherous path, a nearby slum painted a bleaker picture, with stagnant water invading nearly 100 homes inside it.

After the day-long rainfall on Monday, the slum and adjacent roads went under waste-length water, while two days later on Wednesday, the slum was still under knee to ankle-length water.



The residents, mostly women, were seen scooping out dirty water from their cramped living quarters.

Sharmin, a resident, described the harrowing ordeal. "The water started rising on Monday evening," she recounted. "By nightfall, everything was submerged. My family, including three young children, huddled together on our bed," she said.

Rahmatullah, 19, another slum dweller, said some of the quarters were entirely underwater, compelling the dwellers to take shelter elsewhere.

Bahadur Khan, another dweller, said, "No one ever comes to clear the drains or pick up the waste. The residents do these themselves. The previous councillor did some work, but the current one didn't do anything for us."

The woes extended beyond homes, as a rickshaw garage on the same road remained submerged for over a day, crippling the livelihood of its pullers.

"We couldn't take out our rickshaws and earn any income," Yunus Ali, a rickshaw puller, said, adding, "We were stranded, unable to even access food or proper sanitation."

His colleague, Abu Sayeed, echoed his



sentiment. "This is a nightmare we face every monsoon," he said.

There was ankle-deep water when we visited the place on Wednesday.

It is important to reiterate that not a single drop of rain has been recorded in the area since Tuesday morning after the relentless rain throughout Monday, a consequence of Cyclone Remal.

One of these correspondents had his own terrifying experience returning to his Riazbag home from work that night.

When he crossed Hazipara Boubazar area wading through knee-length water, and was about to enter Riazbag, he stumbled upon a scene of utter chaos. The water level was easily above waist length.

Darkness engulfed the place as power lines were severed. Vegetables, utensils, and all sorts of debris were floating in the water. Suddenly, a voice from behind said, "Don't go any further; bodies are floating in the water."

Looking back, he saw two youths barely standing on top of an elevated platform.

Though shaken, the correspondent didn't believe the duo at first. However, SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## EID JOURNEY

## Why are you poking?

Quader says 'see the development' after reporter's questions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said some people are criticising his ministry over road crashes and traffic congestion without praising the ministry's development work.

"These people are criticising with a purpose," he said.

He also criticised a section of journalists for what he claimed as "doing misdeeds in the name of journalism".

The minister was briefing reporters after a preparatory meeting at BRTA headquarters in the capital ahead of the Eid-ul-Ahza. Officials of different ministries and agencies, police and leaders of transport associations joined the meeting.

The meeting discussed that 155 spots were prone to traffic congestion across the country, and took several decisions to be implemented to make people's Eid journey safe and hassle-free.

The minister said operations of goods-laden vehicles will be suspended for three days before and after Eid. However, vehicles carrying essential goods, fuel, and medicine will remain out of the purview.

Mobile courts will conduct drives to stop overcharging, he said, adding that measures will be taken so that different industries including garment factories provide leaves to their workers in phases.

When a reporter drew his attention to the non-execution of many of the earlier decisions, particularly the phase-wise leave of garment workers, Quader said, "It [garment workers' leave] was implemented largely, if not fully, during last Eid."

Responding to another query about heavy traffic congestion the day before the last Eid due to garment factories closing, he said, "Let there be some problems for a single day."

People will go home with joy for Eid, he said, adding, "It does not matter much even if there are some sufferings."

When the reporter asked whether the government decided that people would go home amid suffering, the minister said, "Why are you poking? You see the development of the road sector. Would you deny it?"

"You don't acknowledge it [the development]. Some newspapers do not acknowledge it," he continued.

When the reporter said questions should be asked about problems as well, he said, "We know

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Lines that lead to nowhere  
Better management of TCB shops sought

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and AAQIB HASIB

Last Friday, Nargis queued in front of the TCB shop in East Shewrapara around 6:00am, hoping to secure a serial that would allow her to purchase subsidised products on Sunday. After waiting for five hours, she was finally handed serial number 126 around 11:00am.

The 28-year-old is the sole earner of her four-member household. Her husband abandoned her after remarrying. Nowadays, Nargis struggles to feed her three daughters, despite working as a househelp in four different homes.

Having secured the serial, Nargis returned home in good spirits on Friday.

Then, on Sunday, she once again queued in front of the shop around 6:00am. However, this time she was standing behind 200-300 other people who had started the line around 1:00am. When the shop finally began selling the products around 10:30am, Nargis started getting calls from her employer to come start her work.

Unable to convince them over the phone, she asked another person to hold her place in line while she spoke to her employers. In the ten minutes it took for her to go and come back, her place was lost and she had to queue all over again.

Finally, around 3:00pm, the TCB shop had run out of all their products.

Nargis, joined by two of her daughters, had only the slip with 126 written on it and no commodities.

Heartbroken by the chain of events, Nargis sat on the ground and began crying. She called out to the shop and showed her serial, but all the goods were already sold out.

Seeing their mother crying, the two young girls also began tearing up.

Having spent around 14 hours standing in queue, over two days, Nargis could do nothing but cry at the circumstances.

Even worse was the fact that because she spent so long in the line, she had not cooked any lunch for her children that day.

Like Nargis, 200 others shared a similar fate, as they were unable to secure products from the TCB shop.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Nargis said, "I was really in need of these items. This opportunity comes only once a month and I failed to secure it. I would have been able to save around Tk 300 if things had worked out."

"Normally, I can stretch out the 2kg of lentils and 2 litres of oil for the entire month. So, this has been a big loss for me," she added, still crying.

Jalal Uddin, a rickshaw puller, began queuing around 11:00am but failed to secure the goods.

"If I pulled my rickshaw instead of staying in this line, I could have earned

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## Fill vacant govt posts, issue TCB cards to RMG workers

Recommend JS bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Public Administration has urged the government to swiftly address the issue of vacant posts in various government offices.

During a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, chaired by Muhammad Sadique, the committee emphasised the urgency of filling the 3,70,447 approved but vacant positions across 58 ministries and departments.

They also suggested prioritizing recruitment in ministries and departments based on their significance, particularly focusing on Grades 13-20, which require inter-ministerial coordination for appointments.

Simultaneously, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Commerce proposed the issuance of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) smart cards to ready-made garment workers.

The recommendation, made in a meeting led by AL lawmaker Tipu Munshi, aims to provide garment workers access to TCB products at fair prices.

State Minister for Commerce Ahsanul Islam Titu highlighted that garment factory owners should submit accurate worker lists to facilitate this initiative.

Titu also noted that changes in TCB product distribution, include updating the beneficiary list of one crore families, supervised by local lawmakers.

## UPAZILA POLLS

## Third phase sees 36.24pc turnout

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The overall turnout in Wednesday's third phase of the upazila polls was 36.24 percent, which is lower than the previous phase.

The Election Commission data shows that turnout in the second phase of polls held on May 21 was 37.61 percent. It was 36.10 percent in the first phase of polls held on May 8.

During the 2009 upazila polls, 70.57 percent of voters had cast their ballots. The figure dropped to 61.23 percent in 2014.

In the first phase of the elections in 78 upazilas in 2019, the turnout was 43.31 percent. In the subsequent four phases, the turnouts were 41.25 percent, 41.41 percent, 36.54 percent, and 38.62 percent. The average turnout in those polls was 40 percent.

In the third phase of this year's upazila polls, the average turnout where voters exercised their franchise through electronic voting machines was higher than where ballot paper was used.

In the previous two phases, average turnout was higher where ballot paper was

used. On Wednesday's polls, 38.79 percent of voters cast their votes in 16 upazilas where EVMs were used. It was 35.72 percent in 71 upazilas where ballot paper was used.

In the first phase of polls, average turnout in the upazilas that used EVM was 31.31 percent and it was 37 percent in the others.

In the second phase, average turnout was 32.17 percent where EVMs were used and 38.47 percent where ballot papers were used.

EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath said a thorough analysis will be needed to know the reason behind the difference in turnouts.

In the third phase, Sathkhira Sadar witnessed the highest 58.83 percent turnout, while Lakshampur Sadar recorded the lowest 13.64 percent. Voting in both the upazilas was conducted using paper ballots.

**AL SWEEPS AGAIN**  
Like the first two phases, Awami League men won the lion's share of chairman positions during the third phase as well.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Advertisement

৪১তম বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভা  
উত্তরা ব্যাংক পিএলসি

Uttara Bank PLC conducted its 41th Annual General Meeting on 30-05-2024 (Thursday). The Founder & Executive Chairman of Aftab Group and Chairman of Uttara Bank Mr. Azharul Islam presided over the Meeting. The Chairman & Managing Director of Aftab Group and Vice-Chairman of Uttara Bank Mr. Iftekharul Islam was also present. The Managing Director & CEO of Uttara Bank Mr. Mohammed Rabiul Hossain and other Directors also attended the meeting. Uttara Bank Declared 30% (12.50% stock and 17.50% cash) dividend for the year-2023.