

No honking in airport area starting Oct 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Starting from October 1, the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and its surrounding areas will be declared horn-free and single-use plastic-free, with mobile courts in operation to ensure compliance.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) made the announcement in a press release yesterday.

Stainless steel bins and biodegradable or reusable materials will replace plastic dustbins and polythene in the area.

CAAB also announced its plan to make the airport and surrounding areas free of noise pollution.

This initiative will cover a three-kilometre stretch from Le Méridien Hotel to Scholastica School, prohibiting vehicles from using horns.

Awareness banners and billboards will be placed to remind drivers not to honk, and promotional activities

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



A line of buses blocks the entrance to the Mohakhali flyover connected to Banani. Even though these buses are not heading onto the flyover, they irresponsibly block the entrance, causing a huge tailback. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

‘Expedite repatriation process of our stolen assets’

TIB urges host countries like UK, US, Canada

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday called upon governments of the host countries of Bangladesh's laundered money like the UK, US, Canada, Dubai and Singapore to proactively identify and freeze any illegal assets owned by Bangladeshi nationals or entities in their respective jurisdictions.

The anti-graft watchdog also called upon governments to take immediate actions to dismantle and hold to account syndicates facilitators of accumulation of money and wealth through illicit transfers.

In a statement yesterday, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman also urged host countries to cooperate with the government of Bangladesh to start and expedite the process of repatriation of the stolen assets and hold the money launderers to account through the available international processes including mutual legal assistance and technical support.

Host countries should do this as part of their international

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Debt, desperation and displacement

The vicious cycle of borrowing and repaying in Dhaka slums

To repay, I took a microcredit loan and turned to lenders with 15-20 percent monthly rates to pay the microcredit installments. With no profits and lenders taking earnings, my debt ballooned to Tk 20 lakh.

KABIR HOSSAIN
A resident of Bhashantek slum



As per the law, lending money with exorbitant interest rates by the informal moneylenders is illegal, and the High Court has multiple times ordered the authorities to take measures to address this issue.

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and NILIMA JAHAN

Just six years ago, 37-year-old Kabir Hossain, a butcher from Bhashantek slum in the capital, enjoyed a comfortable life with his family of six.

By 2018, he owned Tk 12 lakh in cash, a meat shop, a motorcycle, and a leased car.

However, by 2020, he found himself indebted to 30 creditors, owing a total of Tk 20 lakh. Of this amount, only around Tk 5 lakh was the principal; the remainder consisted of high-interest charges from loan sharks.

To manage these debts, Kabir borrowed from microcredit organisations, only to fall into a cycle of borrowing to repay, further escalating his debts.

Facing mounting pressures, Kabir eventually fled his home, leaving his family to sell their belongings to survive.

Like Kabir, many slum dwellers in the city are enduring a miserable phase with mounting informal loan burdens.

While banks and Non-Bank Financial

Institutions (NBFIs) typically offer loans with annual interest rates ranging from 10-15 percent, these loan sharks provide loans at much higher rates, often between 15-20 percent per month.

The Daily Star found that such loans, in different slums of the capital, are known as “emergency loans”, and are taken for urgent needs like paying microcredit loan installments, medical expenses, business stock purchases and spot gambling.

“After several months of constant losses that depleted most of my savings, I borrowed Tk 1.5 lakh to expand my business, agreeing to supply 15kg of meat monthly. However, I couldn't repay the amount on time, and had to keep supplying meat, which caused further losses,” Kabir shared.

“To repay, I took a microcredit loan and turned to lenders with 15-20 percent monthly rates to pay the microcredit installments. With no profits and lenders taking earnings, my debt ballooned to Tk 20 lakh,” he explained.

“At one point, a lender detained and beat me for money, but my father-in-law bailed me

out,” he added.

“In 2019, I fled due to constant pressure, because they would crowd my house demanding money. A year later, upon my return after an arbitration, I resumed business, but if they didn't receive payment, they would take away my meat, preventing any profit,” he explained.

“I then tried selling vegetables, but it wasn't profitable enough to repay loans,” he said.

“Failing, I had no choice but to send my 11-year-old son to work at a hotel for Tk 6,500 per month. We had to sell everything – fridge, TV, furniture, plates, and glasses.”

After Eid-ul-Azha this year, Kabir fled the slum again due to lender pressure. Despite promising to repay through sacrificial animal butchering, he couldn't earn enough to satisfy the creditors.

Two days before Eid, Kabir's son broke his hand while working, needing Tk 40,000 for surgery. Hindered by lenders, Kabir risked permanent damage to his son's hand.

According to Johura Hossain, Kabir's wife,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Vehicles pass through thick dust on the Dhaka-Narayanganj old road in the Pagla area, causing hardship for locals, drivers, and pedestrians. The dust clouds reduce visibility and pose health risks, highlighting the urgent need for action. The photo was taken recently.

Didn't need army magistracy power in peaceful areas

Fakhrul tells discussion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Giving magistracy power to the Bangladesh Army in areas where the environment is peaceful and where political leaders are addressing people's issues is unwise, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday.

He made the remark while speaking at a views exchange meeting at the Thakurgaon Press Club.



Highlighting the administration's failure to maintain law and order, Fakhrul supported the interim government's decision to give the army the magistracy power in areas that have gone out of control.

However, he requested that the interim government reconsider this decision and warned of actions that may have a boomerang effect on both law enforcers and the people.

Fakhrul stated that following the fall of the Hasina government, the interim government formed with the support of the countrymen is trying to ensure a trial for the crimes committed by the previous administration.

Fakhrul hoped for peaceful and acceptable elections with the participation of all parties.

“We believe in restoring democracy, and the only solution to resolve problems would be by allowing political leaders to work,” he concluded.

On Tuesday night, the government gave magistracy power to commissioned army officers with immediate effect for 60 days to improve law and order situation in the country.

METRO RAIL

Kazipara station reopens today

Services to remain available on Fridays from now

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The metro rail authority is going to reopen the Kazipara station today with special arrangements, two months after the suspension of the operation of the station.

However, the Mirpur-10 station is to remain closed, and the authority could not give any possible date to reopen it.

In another development, the authority will start the operation of metro rail on Fridays from today to meet the passengers' demand.

Mohammad Abdur Rouf, managing director of the Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), gave the announcement at a press conference at DMTCL's headquarters yesterday.

Unidentified people went on a rampage at Mirpur-10 and Kazipara metro stations on July 19 amid the student movement for quota reform, which later turned into a people's uprising and ousted the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

The then Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader had said the reopening of metro stations is not possible within even a year.

Following the ouster of the AL government, metro rail operations resumed on August 25, but the two stations remained closed.

Abdur Rouf said they have prepared the Kazipara station by bringing some equipment from Mirpur-10 station and DMTCL training centre, alongside using some local equipment.

He said the original glass used at the station was brought from abroad, but they have now used local glass.

The MD said they had to spend Tk 20.5 lakh,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Chief justice to outline roadmap for judiciary tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed will address the lower court judges tomorrow (Saturday) to outline a roadmap for the country's judiciary.

The programme will be held at the Supreme Court where the chief justice will also elaborate on various issues related to the judiciary.

Around 2,000 judicial officers will participate in the programme which will start at 10:00am, said an SC press release yesterday.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul and judges of the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the SC, among others, will attend the event.

AL presidium member Zafarullah held in Gulshan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Awami League presidium member Kazi Zafarullah was arrested in Gulshan area early yesterday.

He fell ill after he was arrested, but he is well now, police said.

A team of police arrested him in a murder case filed with Paltan Police Station, said Talebur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Zafarullah fell ill after he was taken to the DB office. He was later taken to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases.

Several cases were filed against Zafarullah after Sheikh Hasina fled on August 5.

S ALAM

Petition seeks restrictions on property transfer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer has filed a petition with the High Court seeking its order on the authorities to attach all immovable properties owned by S Alam Group, its shareholder directors and their family members and to impose restrictions on transfer or sell of those properties.

Barrister Md Rukunuzzaman submitted the petition on September 17, praying to the court to direct Bangladesh Bank to provide information regarding total credit facilities availed by S Alam Group, its shareholder directors and other business concerns from the financial institutions or banks and the present status of outstanding liabilities and to bring laundered money back to Bangladesh from abroad.

In the petition, he urged

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7