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First phase of Ijtema on January 31

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Biswa Ijtema, one of the largest congregations of the Muslims in the world, will be held in two phases between January 31 and February 9 next year.

The first phase will be from January 31 to February 2, and the second from February 7 to 9, said Home Affairs' Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam.

He made the announcement after meetings with representatives of Tablighi Jamaat at the secretariat yesterday.

According to the home ministry's November 3 notice, signed by Senior Information Officer Faisal Hasan, the home adviser had scheduled meetings with both factions of the Tablighi Jamaat - Muhammad Saad Kandhalvi and Maulana Zubair Hassan - regarding security measure during the Ijtema.

However, only the followers of Saad's faction attended the meeting.

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With a grim look, a porter waits at Karwan Bazar kitchen market footpath with his empty tukri (basket). Amzad Hossain is usually hired by shoppers at the market to carry their purchased goods. Yesterday, he could not earn a single penny from 7:00am to 12:00pm. He said he used to make up to Tk 500 daily, but now he struggles to make Tk 200, as the surge in commodity prices deters shoppers from purchasing in bulk.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Access to energy a human right

Farhad Mazhar tells seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should adopt a pro-people, environment-friendly policy to address the energy crisis, poet and thinker Farhad Mazhar said yesterday.

He also said access to energy is a fundamental human and civil right and advocated for electricity and energy to be included as constitutional rights.

Mazhar was speaking as the chief guest and keynote speaker at a seminar titled "Electricity Transition: In Which Path," organised by the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board at its Dhaka office.

Criticising the former Awami League government, he alleged that it prioritised the interests of multinational companies. "It [AL] spoke of socialism, but in practice, they implemented a neoliberal economic policy," Mazhar said.

He said the development of any new energy policy should involve local experts.

Decentralising the energy system, Mazhar argued, is

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Awami League prioritised the interests of multinational companies. AL spoke of socialism, but in practice, it implemented a neoliberal economic policy.

DMP launches app to identify accident hotspots

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Dhaka Metropolitan Police has launched a new data-driven initiative aimed at improving road safety by pinpointing accident hotspots and analysing underlying causes.

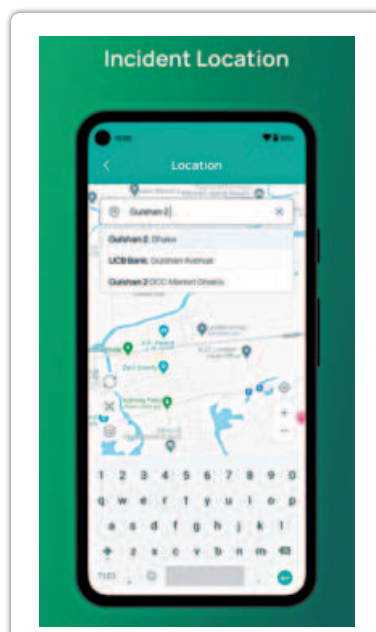
The Database and Analysis of Road Crash (DARC) application, developed in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, is a key element of the Dhaka Road Traffic Safety Project (DRSP).

The app intends to consolidate road accident data, addressing long-standing gaps in reporting and helping identify accident-prone areas for targeted safety measures.

"The DARC application allows for real-time, detailed reporting, giving us a much clearer picture of accident patterns," said Mahmudul Hasan, a member of JICA's expert team under the DRSP.

This capability enables the design of more effective solutions to reduce accidents.

The app's streamlined data fields



mean traffic officers can now input accident data on-site, minimising delays and reducing inaccuracies that have often plagued manual reporting.

Historically, accident reports in Dhaka were recorded manually by the police's crime division, although traffic officers are usually first at the scene.

The process traditionally focused only on fatal accidents, often missing non-fatal incidents and those where fatalities occur later in hospitals. These limitations have led to data inconsistencies between government departments and NGOs, hindering progress in road safety.

Modelled after the World Bank's open-source DRIVER application, DARC consolidates essential accident information - location, date, time, weather, accident type, and potential contributing factors - into a simplified format accessible via smartphone.

This shift, from 67 data fields to just eight core fields, significantly reduces the administrative burden on officers while minimising human errors.

Additionally, each data entry undergoes verification

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'Exercise caution when attending public events'

Govt issues 9 directives to civil servants to 'avoid embarrassing situations'

BAHARAM KHAN

The ministry of public administration has issued a nine-point directive urging government employees to exercise caution when attending public events. The instructions, sent by Senior Secretary Dr Mokhles Ur Rahman to all secretaries, aim to prevent potentially embarrassing situations for government officials in the current political climate.

The directive requires secretaries, department heads, and senior field administration officials to verify specific details before attending events. This

SOME DIRECTIVES

Verify event organisers	Take intelligence input
Check invitation source	Use prepared statements
Avoid controversial figures	Be careful about rumours

includes confirming the source of invitations and identifying those involved in organising the event. Officials are advised to consult with intelligence agencies if necessary for a clearer understanding of an event's background.

Sources in the ministry noted that with elected representatives absent at the highest levels, government employees, especially in field administration, are now handling enhanced responsibilities. Reports of embarrassing incidents at recent events have surfaced, prompting these new guidelines.

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BNP forms new committees in 4 cities, 5 districts

UNB, Dhaka

In a move to overhaul the party and prepare for the next national election, the BNP has announced new committees for its four metropolitan city and six district units.

The party yesterday issued a press release, signed by BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, in this regard.

Committees have been approved for the party's Dhaka north, Chattogram, Barishal and Sylhet city units, and Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Brahmanbaria, Kushtia, Mymensingh South, and Sherpur district units.

Aminul Haque, a former national football team captain, has been made the convener of the Dhaka north city BNP, while Mostafa Zaman has been named as the member secretary of the six-member partial convening committee.

Other joint conveners of the unit include

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ICT CASE HC stays probe against Shahidul Alam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed the investigation proceedings of a case filed against internationally acclaimed photographer Shahidul Alam under controversial Section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, 2006 in which he was imprisoned for 107 days.

The court also issued a rule asking the state to explain why the first information of the case against Shahidul Alam should not be scrapped.

The HC bench of Justice Md Iqbal Kabir Lytton and Justice Md Riaz Uddin Khan issued the order and rule following a petition filed by Shahidul Alam challenging the legality of the proceedings of the case.

During hearing of the petition, Shahidul's lawyer Sara Hossain told the court that the case was filed against the petitioner

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MED TECH, PHARMACY Students demand separate directorate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of medical technology and pharmacy students staged a sit-in in front of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in the capital yesterday, calling for a six-point demand that includes establishing a dedicated government directorate for their disciplines.

The protest began around 9:00am at Mohakhali's TB Gates, with students initially blocking the Gulshan Link Road.

Under the banner of the "Anti-Discrimination Medical Technology and Pharmacy Student Action Council," they chanted slogans and held placards with messages such as "Pharmacists are essential for drug formulation" and "Recruit medical technologists."

After briefly moving to the DGHS main gate, the students resumed the road blockade by 11:30am, disrupting traffic flow from Gulshan to Amtali.

Their demands include establishing a separate department for medical technologists and pharmacists, granting diploma holders 10th grade status and resuming the halted 2013 recruitment process, creating 9th-grade positions for graduate medical technologists and pharmacists, upgrading Dhaka's Institute of Health Technology (IHT) to university status, forming a Medical Technology Council and a Diploma Medical Education Board, and launching BSc and MSc programs across all IHTs, including BPharm, with scholarships and training allowances.

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Farmer Dulal Roy nurturing betel plants in his farm in Bhomra village of Khulna's Dighaliya upazila. Betel growers tend to take constant care of the plants, as they grow faster with proper care. He said betel leaves in this area have a reputation throughout the country due to their sweet and delectable taste. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN