

Ban on rickshaws a wrong decision

Speakers say at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ban on rickshaws on a number of city streets has increased the suffering of lower and middle income people instead of easing traffic jam, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

Termining the ban prescribed by the World Bank and IMF a wrong decision of the government, they said motorised vehicles, including buses, private cars and CNG-run three-wheelers, have now replaced the rickshaws, rendering about two lakh rickshaw-pullers jobless.

The ban on rickshaws has affected women, children and elderly people most as they face much trouble while travelling to different places, they added.

The Neeti Gobeshona Kendra organised the discussion on "Eviction of rickshaws from the thoroughfares of Dhaka: Impact on the lives and livelihood of rickshaws-

pullers and ways to resolve the problem" at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

The speakers urged the government to reverse the decision and introduce separate lanes for rickshaws in all the main streets for the greater interest of city-dwellers and the environment.

Speaking as the chief guest, Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley, chairman of the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh, said the transportation cost and traffic jam can be reduced greatly by controlling motorised vehicles and providing training for the rickshaw-pullers.

Following the restriction on movement of rickshaws, travel cost has increased around 10 to 15 per cent, it takes more time to reach the destinations and the income of 50 per cent rickshaw-pullers has decreased, said Sheikh Towfiq Mohazzemul Huq, senior policy

analyst of Neeti Gobeshona Kendra, in his keynote paper.

Dr Shamsul Bari, chairman of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB), said the World Bank has provided 7.5 crore dollars for the rehabilitation of affected rickshaw-pullers. But there should be a social monitoring system to observe its proper use, he added.

Renowned economist Prof Anisur Rahman said the government should not launch any new system only for the benefit of some upper-class people. The decision to evict rickshaws from the roads is not a good idea for development, he added.

Women's rights activist Hamida Hossain, Prof Khandakar Sakhawat Ali, Dr Korban Ali, Prof Shakhawat Ansari and Prof SM Atiqur Rahman also spoke at the meeting moderated by Shihab Uddin Ahmed, chairman of Neeti Gobeshona Kendra.

FAST UNTO DEATH 3 teachers fall seriously ill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three hunger strikers fell seriously ill yesterday, the third day of the fast-unto-death programme of the community primary school teachers who are demanding 100 per cent salary as per the National Pay Scale.

Wearing shrouds, dozens of teachers from different areas of the country are taking part in the programme at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city under the banner of Bangladesh Community Primary Teachers' Association.

"Though many of the demonstrators have become seriously ill, we did not receive any response from the government with regard to our demands," Association Secretary General Hafizur Rahman told The Daily Star.

The government still remains indifferent, although the ruling party leaders promised before the last general elections to meet the demands, he said.

The ailing teachers, lying with saline needles stuck to their hands, demonstrated their firmness to continue the fast until their long-standing demands are fulfilled.

"I would rather die than pull out of the programme," said Aslam Ali from Jessore, one of the ailing teachers.

Against the backdrop of price hike of essentials, it is not possible for the schoolteachers and their families to survive with the meagre allowance of Tk 750, he added.

Two other ailing teachers, Mahmuda Akther from Gaibandha and Ragib Hasan from Magura, also echoed the same views.

The Association also demanded that the teachers get all kinds of allowances and opportunities enjoyed by the government primary teachers.

There are 3,778 community primary schools across the country with more than 10,000 teachers.



Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil addresses a 14-party meeting at Mukhtangan in the city yesterday protesting the police action on opposition activists during the long march. Former mayor of Dhaka and AL leader Mohammad Hanif is also seen in the picture.

TB kills 70 thousand a year Speakers tell Ctg roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Tuberculosis (TB) claims the lives of 70 thousand people and affects another three lakh people every year in the country, speakers at a roundtable here revealed yesterday.

Around half of the adult population of the country are infected by the virus, they said.

Terminating TB as a serious threat to public health, the speakers underscored the need for social mobilisation with communication channels and urged for more media support as well as awareness campaign to help control the disease.

Chittagong Press Club (CPC) and Brac jointly organised the discussion styled "TB Control Programme: Media Support" yesterday morning at the CPC auditorium with its president Abu Sufian in the chair.

About 60 journalists of different newspapers and TV channels, other professionals and NGO activists participated in the roundtable.

Additional Divisional Commissioner Golam Quddus, Civil Surgeon of Chittagong Dr Khurshid Jamil Chowdhury, CPC General Secretary Kalim Sarwar, Senior Health Coordinator of Brac Abdus Salam and Brac official Mahfuza Jasmine spoke at the

function. Dr M Akramul Islam, Brac programme manager, made a multimedia presentation on the topic.

The speakers observed that case detection rate in Bangladesh is still behind desired level saying that detection rate is needed to be increased by at least 70 percent by the year 2015 in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG).

"Although the country touched the MDG target (85 percent) in achieving treatment success rate in 2003, it needs strong measures to maintain the success rate in future," they said.

Rashid, also former Member of Parliament (MP) from Ramgarh thana of Laxmipur district, was one of the organisers of the War of Liberation and member of Central Executive Committee of Awami League (AL). He was also the close associate of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held at his elder son's house at House 15, Road-1, Bolck-1 at Banani in the city.

Friends, relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the milad to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Death anniversary



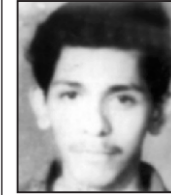
Today is the 6th death anniversary of Abdur Rashid, one of the members of the constitution formulation committee, says a press release.

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Nahidul Haque Khan Titu



Today is the 10th death anniversary of Nahidul Haque Khan Titu, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence at 574, Uttar Shahjahanpur in the city after Asr prayers today.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the milad to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Titu, a student of Rajshahi University, was shot dead during the non-co-operation movement on this day in 1996 by the miscreants.

Begum Hamida Huq

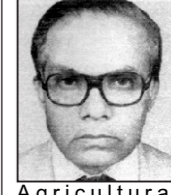


Today is the 9th death anniversary of freedom fighter Begum Hamida Huq, says a press release.

Hamida Huq, wife of Rafiqul Huq Dadubhai, Chief Sub-Editor of the Daily Jugantor, passed away at a hospital in New York on this day in 1997.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani, milad and a doa mahfil will be held at her residence at Shantinagar in the city and in Rangpur.

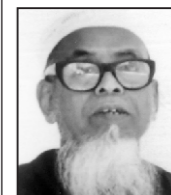
Dr M Amirul Islam



Today is the 5th death anniversary of Dr M Amirul Islam, a noted scientist and former Vice-Chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh and the founder Director of Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), says a press release.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held at his residence at 69, Tejgunipara, Tejhona in the city after Asr prayers on February 10.

Chehlum



Chehlum of Alhaj Md A Gafur, a social worker of village Chak Gobindain Pabna, will be held at his village home after Juma prayers tomorrow, says a press release.

He passed away due to old-age complications on December 28 at the age of 95.

He left behind three sons, three daughters, grandchildren and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

Father to die for killing daughter, son

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A father has been sentenced to death for killing his minor daughter and son.

In the same verdict, the Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal here yesterday sentenced two brothers of the killer father for killing his wife.

Judge Mostaque Ahmed handed down the capital punishment to retired army sergeant Abdul Karim for killing his daughter Nasrin Sultana, 12, and son Shahriar Sakib, 7 during a family feud at his Choudhagram village home in Comilla in 2002.

His brothers Abu Bakar and Abdus Shukur were given life term and fined Tk 50,000 each for killing his (Abdul Karim) wife Shamima Yasmin Shahana.

Abdus Shukur, a marine engineer, is absconding while the two others are in jail.

According to court sources, Abdul Karim's relations with his brothers became strained after he married Shamima. He also had land dispute with his brothers at their Raj Ballabh village.

On November 20, 2002, the three brothers had a quarrel, leading to a clash.

At one stage, Bakar and Shukur hit Karim's wife Shamima on the head, killing her on the spot.

Murder of his wife turned Karim violent and, in a fit of rage, he hit his daughter and son on the head, killing them on the spot.

3 die in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least three people, including a woman, were killed and 20 others injured in separate road accidents in Savar and Sirajganj yesterday.

Our Correspondent from Sirajganj reports: A woman was killed and 15 others were injured in two separate road accidents in Sirajganj yesterday.

Police and witnesses said Morzina Khatun, 40, of Bhoron Shahi village in Dhunot upazila of Bogra died on the spot and her child, aged about five, was injured seriously when a motorbike hit her from behind at Rohabari in Kazipur upazila at 9:30am.

In another accident, at least 14 labourers were injured when a Bogra-bound coal-laden truck skidded off the road and fell from a bridge after breaking the railing while the driver lost his control over the steering at Dhopakandi on Dhaka-Bogra highway.

BDNEWS from Savar reports: At least two people were killed and five others injured in a road accident at Dhamrai Bathuli stand on Dhaka-Aricha highway yesterday.

The dead were identified as Shubal Chandra Roy, 40, and Abdul Kuddus, 38. Both the victims were raw materials traders.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a speedy coach rammed a Dhaka-bound pickup van at 2:00pm.

BNP leader shot dead in Shariatpur

UNB, Shariatpur

Unidentified assailants shot dead a local BNP leader and Gram Sarkar chief at Kaneswar village in Damudya upazila of the district on Tuesday night.

The dead was identified as Mannaf Fakir, 60, president of the BNP ward unit in Kaneswar Union and chief of the local Gram Sarkar.

Police and hospital sources said seven others, including Fazlul Huq Sardar, vice-president of the BNP upazila unit, were injured in the attack.

A gang of 10 to 15, wearing masks, stormed the house of Fazlul Huq Sardar at about 8:00pm on Tuesday and shot him. They also shot Mannaf Fakir, Sardar's neighbour, when he came out of his

house.

As other villagers also rushed to the spot on hearing a hue and cry, the gang sprayed bullets on them, leaving six people injured.

Seriously injured Fazlul Huq Sardar, Mannaf Fakir and Deen Mohammad Dilu were rushed to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital where Mannaf died yesterday morning.

Four other injured were admitted to Damudya Health Complex. They are Masud, 18, Akram, 35, Sultana, 40, Halima Akhter, 30.

The killing sparked off protests. The supporters of Mannaf brought out processions and held rallies in the area.

They also put up barricades on Shariatpur-Damudya and Shariatpur-Gosairhat roads, disrupting traffic for a few hours.



Prof Dr M S Ilyas Dhami, acting vice-chancellor of State University of Bangladesh, speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.



Light fog likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Light fog may also occur over the river basins of the country during early morning. Met Office said predicting slight rise in night temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 32.3 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 11.5 degree Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:50pm today and rises at 6:35am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.7	16.1	69	37
Chittagong	31.4	17.6	77	65
Rajshahi	30.0	14.0	76	64
Khulna	30.2	15.5	72	66
Barisal	31.2	14.8	90	68
Sylhet	32.2	16.0	50	45
Cox's Bazar	32.3	17.6	59	--

2 gangs' rivalry leads to Badda murders

FROM PAGE 16

Law enforces arrested Mohsin, Rana and Sohel, and held several others in the area for quizzing in this connection.

Investigators have confirmed that the murders took place over enmity between the two groups.

Police said at least three of four killed were criminals, who worked as gunmen and were engaged in killing, extortion and drug peddling in the area.

Alauddin group that once dominated the area gunned down Mamun's father Lutfar Rahman, a land broker, and then killed two associates of Mamun.

In a revenge attack two and a half

years ago, Mamun's group sprayed Alauddin with bullets, which made him crippled.

Alauddin is accused in at least five cases for murders, attempt to murder, and extortion, said police.

As Alauddin's gang became weak, Mamun-Leon group became dominant in the area, said locals.

Mamun is also accused in several murder cases including those for killing schoolboy Rifat and a rickshaw-puller.

Mamun killed Rifat, a student of class seven of Shaheen School and College, after the latter's father refused to pay toll three years ago.

"Mamun group committed the

Tuesday's murders to take hold of the area," Officer-in-Charge (OC) Abdul Malek of Badda Police Station said last evening.

"We captured two goons of Mamun group, who admitted of carrying out the attacks in which Mamun also took part," the OC said referring to the statement of arrested Sohel.

Mamun was arrested in March last year, wherein Alauddin and his gang played a role, said OC Malek.

The law enforcers had been raiding different spots to hunt down Mamun but no case was filed in connection with the killings as of last evening, Badda police said.

National Biosafety

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh is a signatory, and has been lying with the Prime Minister's Office for final approval for over six months now, sources said.

But as the guideline did not suffice to fully gear up Bangladesh in adopting and cultivating GM crops, the initiative to develop a National Biosafety Framework was taken up under joint funding of the Global Environmental Fund (GEF) and the government of Bangladesh.

Experts attending yesterday's meeting told The Daily Star that finalisation of the NBF will take care of all the issues concerning updating the quarantine law, biodiversity loss, biohazard risk management and food safety.

Besides, it will allow Bangladesh to have all its biosafety regulatory setups ready including a 'Biosafety Clearing House' (BCH) for ensuring safe trans-boundary movement of GMOs (genetically modified organisms).

Meanwhile, Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project II (ABSPII), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is already rendering support to Bangladesh in its pursuit of biotechnology. Cornell University of the USA is managing the project.

The ABSPII, implemented by a consortium of public and private sector institutions, focuses on safe and effective development and commercialisation of GM crops as a complement to traditional and organic agriculture in developing countries. The project will help boost food security, economic growth, nutrition and environmental quality in East and West Africa and in Indonesia, India, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

A handful of countries including the United States, Brazil, Argentina and China are now vigorously pursuing GM crops while a large part of Europe remains skeptical about the new technology fearing long-term side effects.

Policy too restrictive

FROM PAGE 1

no compromise would be made in the policy at the cost of national interest, rather strategies are to be formulated so that both sides benefit from deals under it.

The Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources and Petrobangla organised the consultative workshop on the draft coal policy, facilitated by Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC) and attended by experts, academics and representatives from private and public sectors.

The proposed quota in the policy that would limit the quantity of coal for export—initially to two tonnes for every one tonne sold domestically and progressively to one tonne for one tonne—could place a potentially serious burden on the financing of a coal mine, said a statement of Asia Energy, which is seeking government approval for Phulbari coal mining.

Such a restriction could render a mine sub-economic, especially because the policy proposes that all locally used coal should be sold in local currency, while the enormous capital costs of mining are mostly in foreign currency, it said.

Moreover, the proposed variable royalty of 16 percent on coal for export on top of corporate taxation and import duties on equipment is extremely unattractive, Asia Energy viewed.

Under the existing legislation, Bangladesh levies six percent royalty on all coal mined in open pit system.

The company was critical of the proposal of mandatory construction of coal-fired power stations by the mine developers, saying, "This will add

significant technical complexity and financial risk to coal mine projects."

The policy should attract the best coal mining companies to develop coal-mining sector to encourage IPPs to become involved in developing coal-fired power plants, it suggested.

Adwch International, a power development company planning to be a partner of Asia Energy in constructing and operating a 500 MW coal-fired power plant at Phulbari, thinks the plant operators expect to freely negotiate coal prices for long term supplies directly with the coal mine operators rather than being regulated by a third party.

Aldwch's Project Director Crispin Holliday in his statement said power plant size, capacity factor and tariff arrangements should be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, considering technical and open market commercial factors.

"Private investors would like to see the coal policy building on the principles enshrined in the existing documents including the National Industrial Policy and the Foreign Private Investment Act, particularly in providing a sustainable environment based on free market principles and light handed regulations," he noted.

Mahmudur Rahman said the policy would be finalised through a consultative process and made transparent to ensure energy security of the country and attract foreign investment in coal sector.

"Coal sector is new in Bangladesh. We also do not have enough capacity for mining. So, I would encourage International Oil Companies (IOCs) to

discover and extract resources from the virgin fields," said the adviser, who was the chief guest at the programme.

Energy and Mineral Resources Division Secretary ANM Nasiruddin pointed out a number of conditions for coal mining that include priority of local demand, reasonable price, job creation, import substitution and financial guarantee in case of any disasters before the companies involved leave the country.

"We want foreign investors will prioritise local companies as support service providers in mining," Nasiruddin said. He hoped foreign companies would be practical and would not put forward conditions as was done by some companies in the past.

Dr Badrul Imam, professor of geology at Dhaka University suggested avoiding aggressive approach in case of open pit mining. "After one mining, the companies should wait and evaluate the impact of the open pit method. Then they should take steps for the next one," he said.

Asia Energy has been lobbying for open pit mining in Phulbari coal field, claiming it ensures 90 percent extraction of coal while underground mining ensures 20-25 percent and runs the risk of subsidence leading to huge loss of lives.