

Commuters suffer as gridlock chokes city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The capital yesterday experienced a daylong traffic jam stretching from almost its one end to the other and creating chaos on all the major thoroughfares as commuters suffered badly on the third day of the Traffic Month.

Thousands of vehicles got stuck in gridlock for hours on the streets from Jatrabari to Banani with lakhs of commuters having to wait not knowing when it would end.

"I am totally helpless," said a traffic sergeant at Karwan Bazar roundabout where vehicles stood still in all directions. "You go wherever and however you want," he shrugged to this correspondent expressing his helplessness.

Narrating his plight, a commuter said, "It took me more than an hour to come from one road to another hardly a kilometre away at Dhanmondi."

Experts blamed this situation to 20 years of mismanagement in Bangladesh Road and Transport Authorities (BRTA) and traffic department, government's faulty policy on car import and Rajuk's failure to build new roads.

On yesterday's jam, police however said apart from the usual reasons, demonstrators blocked different points on some streets worsening the situation.

Admitting experts' views on traffic jam, Monjurul Kader, joint commissioner (traffic) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), told The Daily Star that several groups demonstrated on the city streets yesterday, adding to the traffic chaos.

Besides, lack of foot over-bridge and repair work on some roads are responsible for the huge traffic, he said.

Long traffic queues on the roads and hundreds of city service buses,

private cars, covered lorries, three wheelers and taxicabs haphazardly inching forward were the common scenarios across the city.

Traffic policemen at times tried their best to prevent pedestrians from swarming the main roads and to control the traffic system but they gave up their efforts, looking helpless.

The atmosphere became too unhygienic as hundreds of stranded vehicles emitted fumes and impatient honks of vehicles came from all sides.

Many of the frustrated bus drivers tried to make U-turns to move to other directions while passengers got off the vehicles and started walking.

Even ambulances could not make their way and got trapped in

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CASES AGAINST COPS Court orders judicial enquiry

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered judicial inquiry after two Jubo Mahila League leaders filed separate criminal cases against the inspector general of police (IGP) and some 715 police personnel for attacking the opposition activists during their Prime Minister's Office siege programme on September 12.

Jubo Mahila League President Nazma Akhter and its General Secretary Professor Apu Ukil filed the cases with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court against the accused for their alleged involvement in the attacks.

Taking the complainants into cognizance, Metropolitan Magistrate Syed Mohammad Mojibul Haq ordered the judicial probe into the matters.

The accused include IGP Anwarul Iqbal, Deputy Director of

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A mobile court seizes rotten eggs for use in making cakes and biscuits at Ahad Bakery at Siddheswari in the capital yesterday.

Govt unleashing repression on minority people Alleges opposition chief whip in JS

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid yesterday accused the government of unleashing attack and repression on the minority people to instil fear among them so that they do not cast votes in the next general elections.

Rising on a point of order in parliament, he alleged that the government, soon after assuming power, had launched attacks on the members of the minority community.

"Now at the time of departure, the government again started repression to instil fear among them (minority community) so that they don't come to the polling centres to cast votes," he said.

Shahid further alleged that the image of Hindu goddess Durga was damaged in Srimangal and a jour

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Customs seizes goods imported under false declaration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials seized motor vehicle spare parts and photocopy machines worth Tk 75 lakh from Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Kamalapur yesterday as those were imported under false declaration.

Sources said Ishra Trading of 1314, Rokeya Sarani imported the vehicle spare parts and 42 reconditioned photocopy machines from Singapore though there is a ban on import of such goods.

Acting on secret information, customs officials opened up a 20-foot-long container in presence of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) chairman and other high officials and found the illegally imported goods.

Sources said the company

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Customs officials seize photocopyers and vehicle spare parts worth Tk 75 lakh at Kamalapur Inland Container Depot in the capital yesterday. The machinery was smuggled under false declaration of scrap metals.

Junta threatens to freeze Thaksin assets

AFP, Bangkok

The head of Thailand's new junta-appointed anti-corruption panel threatened yesterday to confiscate the assets of overthrown premier Thaksin Shinawatra if he tried to move them overseas.

The warning came as Thaksin's wife left Thailand in the early hours to be reunited with her husband in London, where he took refuge after tanks rolled into the Thai capital last Tuesday.

Pojaman Shinawatra -- widely believed to have exerted great influence over his activities -- flew out just two hours after the generals announced their latest corruption probe.

"As of now, there have been no assets confiscated," said Sawat Chotipanich, head of a high-powered committee set up by the military late Sunday to probe the

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Pope assures Muslims of respect, dialogue

REUTERS, Castelgandolfo, Italy

Pope Benedict assured Muslims yesterday that he respected them and was committed to dialogue, in an unprecedented encounter to defuse anger at his use of quotes saying their faith was spread by the sword.

In a speech to diplomatic envoys from some 20 Muslim countries plus the leaders of Italy's own Muslim community at his summer residence south of Rome, the Pope said both Christians and Muslims had to reject violence.

Several of the envoys who attended said they considered the meeting had gone a long way to help end the controversy that began two weeks ago with a speech by the Pope at a university in his native Germany.

"I think this meeting has resolved many problems... we can close this controversy," said Khalil Altoubat, a member of the Italian Muslim community's liaison group with the government.

The Pope did not specifically mention the quote that angered Muslims worldwide, saying the circumstances that made the meeting necessary "are well known".

"Christians and Muslims must learn to work together... in order to guard against all forms of intolerance and to oppose all manifestations of violence," the 79-year-old Pope said at the meeting in a frescoed hall of the papal summer palace.

It was the fourth time he has tried to make amends, without actually apologising directly, for his speech on September 12.

The Pope is facing the toughest international crisis since his election in April, 2005, and the severity of some reactions has raised doubts about a planned trip to Turkey in November.

Mario Scialoja, an adviser to the Italian section of the World Muslim League who attended the audience, told Reuters afterwards he thought it was a "very good and warm speech".

"He recalled the differences but expressed his willingness to continue in a cordial and fruitful dialogue," said Scialoja, who added that he "had not been expecting another apology".

The atmosphere at the 30-minute meeting, which was broadcast live on Vatican television and

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Saifur 'fed up' with donors' allegations about graft

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday asked the donors not to interfere in the internal affairs of Bangladesh.

"I am fed up with the remarks of donors about corruption and don't want to hear anything more from you," the minister told the newly appointed Danish Ambassador Einar H Jensen at his office.

The envoy called on the minister to discuss matters of various Danish-aided projects and other issues.

"I told him to speak less regarding the internal affairs of the country - we don't like this kind of remarks now, we liked those in the past," he told reporters about what transpired in the discussion

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ATTACK ON AFTAB Cops suspect professional criminals

DU CORRESPONDENT

Prof Aftab Ahmed might have been shot by professional hired guns.

"Circumstantial evidence and witnesses' statements suggest a professional killer group attempted to kill him", Sub-Inspector (SI) Akhter Morshed, Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, hypothesized while talking to The Daily Star.

The group involved in the attack could be based in Tejgaon or Mirpur, the SI added.

The Detective Branch (DB) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) are also on the case alongside the police, sources said.

DB has already sent out several teams outside the capital to arrest suspected perpetrators of the attack, DB sources said.

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Hundreds of people wait for hours for transports at Farmgate yesterday as gridlock forced city service buses to arrive late.

Musharraf rejects coup rumours as 'absolute nonsense'

AFP, New York

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf yesterday rejected rumours of a coup which were sparked by a nationwide blackout and further fuelled by a medical check-up that he underwent in the United States.

Speculation about a takeover

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Sehri, Iftar timings			
Ramadan	Sept	Sehri	Iftar
2	26		5-54
3	27	4-29	5-53
4	28	4-30	5-53

Prayer Timing		
September 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-29	5-42
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-54	6-10
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation