



Dusk falls over Aftabnagar's greenery in the capital. Its Kashphul bear witness. The Kashphul are lucky, because they get to approach the night set to a different colour everyday. Yesterday it was candlefire.

PHOTO: PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

PHENSEDYL COMING IN FROM CHUADANGA Smugglers using modified motorbikes to smuggle it

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

They called it "Phensedyl bike".

Though it looks just like a common motorbike, these have an additional chamber inside the fuel tank that can keep around 70 bottles of Phensedyl inside.

With an aim to dodge law enforcers, narcotics traders have prepared such special arrangement in motorbikes to transport the contraband drug.

The smugglers only choose 150CC motorbikes for the purpose, as these bikes have a big fuel tank and a chamber can easily be made inside it.

Even after making a chamber in the tank, they can refill three to four litres of fuel in the tank for their journey from one place to another, without raising any alarm. Police's detective branch (DB) has claimed to have learned about these special bikes following arrest of a narcotics smuggler from the capital's Jatrabari area on Monday.

Based on a specific tip-off that a smuggler was coming to Dhaka from Chuadanga with Phensedyl on a motorbike, DB police arrested its driver Sirajul Islam.

But searching his bike and bag, they did not find any Phensedyl. The biker then brought allegations of harassment against the DB team.

The DB team then called on a motorbike mechanic and asked to dismantle the bike. Around 20 minutes later, they found some 70 bottles of Phensedyl inside a special chamber in the oil tank of the bike.

Junaed Alam Sarker, additional deputy commissioner of DB police who led the drive, later shared his experience with The Daily Star.

He said they later interrogated the arrestee on remand, and came to know that the syndicate has around 10 such special motorbikes, which they use to smuggle Phensedyl directly from the bordering point of Chuadanga district.

"The syndicate's members load the bottles into the bike from a mechanic's shop in Darshana. Later, they drive to

Dhaka and unload the package again in a mechanic's shop in Jatrabari," said the officer.

For the journey, the biker has to refill three to four times, as they are not able to refill more than four litres at a time, said the officer.

"Arrestee Sirajul is also a motor mechanic, and during interrogation, he admitted that he transported three of four such phensedyl consignments to Dhaka," he said.

Quoting the arrestee, Junaed further said that the syndicate also have some eight to ten more bikers, and send shipments from the bordering district to Dhaka five times a week. For each shipment, a biker receives around Tk 4,000-5,000, DB said.

Asked about the price of Phensedyl, ADC Junaed said the smugglers buy each bottle for Tk 600 to 700 in Chuadanga. In Dhaka, the "wholesale" price of each bottle becomes Tk 950 to 1,100, he said.

These bottles are later sold to addicts for Tk 1,700 to 1,900, he added.

DB officials said that they have come to know that peddlers used to smuggle Phensedyl to Dhaka in pick-up vans or trucks earlier, after hiding those inside vegetables or other products.

But it became risky in recent times as they have to count a huge loss when their consignments are intercepted by law enforcers.

For this reason, the smugglers have taken the strategy of smuggling small shipments to Dhaka so that they do not need to count huge loss even if gets seized, said DB police.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Gulshan Division Police, said the smugglers have recently changed their strategy to smuggle narcotics to Dhaka.

"They are now focusing on bringing small consignments instead of big ones, so that it cannot be detected by law enforcers," he said.

"We have already got details of the Phensedyl smuggling syndicate members, and are now conducting drives to arrest them," added DC Mashiur.

'Media going thru' toughest time'

Mirza Fakhrul Islam tells DUJ faction's discussion

UNB, Dhaka

Media freedom and democracy in Bangladesh "cannot be protected" without a united movement, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday.

"A message should be given to all that democracy, journalism, the country and its independence and sovereignty can't be protected without a united movement," he said.

The BNP leader said there is no alternative to changing the current situation. "The only way to remove this fascist government is a united movement and struggle. We need unity and we've been always trying to forge it. We've to move forward by creating a national unity."

He made the remarks at a virtual discussion arranged by a faction of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ).

Fakhrul said the unity of people and political parties is now imperative to "restore" democracy for which the nation fought against Pakistani

occupation forces and liberated the country in 1971.

"The current government has no political values as Awami League doesn't believe in democracy. Awami League and democracy never go together... They think they're all in all and they'll run the country and control everything," he observed.

The BNP leader said the media and journalists are going through the toughest time due to the government's "repressive and suppressive" acts. "A situation has been created here, especially creating fear and panic, that no one now dares raise voice and express their views freely."

He said there have never been so many unemployed journalists in the country. "After the introduction of Bakshal in 1975, all but four newspapers were shut. They now indirectly created the same situation. Those who now speak in favour of them and those who're on their side will only be able to run their newspapers and channels and

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Man killed by 'muggers' in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was stabbed to death allegedly by muggers in Dhaka's Dhalpur yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Akhter Hossain Sikder (50), a manager of a Jatayat Paribahan bus counter in Golapbag area.

Yasin Sultan Rakib, nephew of the deceased, said his uncle was stabbed when he was on his way to the bus counter from his Dhalpur residence around 4:45am. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), where doctors declared him dead around 6am.

The muggers stabbed him in the chest and snatched his wallet and phone. He had around Tk 20,000 in a bag, he said.

Hailing from Cumilla, Akhter used to live in a rented house in Dhalpur's Lichu Bagan area with his family.

The body was kept at the mortuary for autopsy, said Bachchu Mia, in-charge (inspector) of police outpost at DMCH.

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DHAKA-WESTERN REGIONS

Trains delayed for 4hr after derailment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several trains operating between Dhaka and the western regions of the country got delayed for three to four hours, as rail operations remained suspended for around six hours after an oil-laden train derailed in Gazipur early yesterday.

The delay is causing huge suffering to the passengers. An oil-laden train derailed on track at a place between Mouchak and Bangabandhu High Tech City in Gazipur around 3am, suspending rail operations between Dhaka and the western regions, said Mirza Mohammad Mukta, sub-inspector of Dhaka Railway Police Station.

Rail operations resumed after the oil-laden train was salvaged around 9am, he told The Daily Star, adding, "As a result, most of the trains running on these routes got delayed by three to four hours."

An official of Bangladesh Railway at Kamalapur Station said three trains --Sundarban Express, Dhumketu Express and Nilsagar Express -- which were supposed to leave Dhaka in the morning, got delayed by three to four hours.

Dhaka-bound Rangpur Express also got delayed by several hours following the derailment, he said.

Ziauddin Tariq Ali recalled

Speakers at memorial meeting urge for posthumous Swadhinata Padak for his contributions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Citizens' platform Sammilita Samajik Andolon organised a virtual memorial meeting for recently deceased Liberation War Museum Trustee Ziauddin Tariq Ali yesterday afternoon.

Tariq, a freedom fighter and social activist who was president of Samajik Andolon, succumbed to Covid-19 on September 7 at Bangladesh Specialised Hospital.

Samajik Andolon Presidium Member Dr Sarwar Ali presided over the programme, moderated by Khushi Kabir.

The programme started with one-minute silence in honour of Tariq's memory. Discussants recollected his life and works.

Dr Sarwar Ali pointed out that Tariq was a secular person who relentlessly upheld the Liberation War's spirit and worked to establish rights of ethnic and religious minorities. "His departure has created a vacuum in the secularism of Bangladesh,"

he said.

Human rights activist Sultana Kamal, lawmakers Aroma Dutta and Ashim Kumar Ukil, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad General Secretary Rana Das Gupta, noted Rabindra Sangeet artist Bulbul Islam, women rights activist Rokeya Kabir, Bangladesh Adivasi Forum President Sanjeeb Drong, former president of Bangladesh Students' Union Lucky Akter, among others, attended the programme.

Aroma Dutta recounted her memories with Tariq, as they grew up at the same town in Cumilla. "We urge the government to award him Swadhinata Padak for his outstanding contribution to the Liberation War and Mukti Gaan," she said.

Noted cultural personality Ramendu Majumder, also presidium member of Samajik Andolon, highlighted how hard Tariq worked to enrich the Liberation War Museum.

Scientists find SARS-CoV-2's genetic material in sewage

UNB, Dhaka

A team of scientists from Noakhali Science and Technology University (NSTU) and North South University (NSU) has claimed the first and successful detection of SARS-CoV-2's genetic material in sewage water.

The team is led by Prof Firoz Ahmed, chairperson of NSTU's microbiology department, said an NSTU media release yesterday.

They collected specimens between July 10 and August 29 from drains, sewage and toilets near Shaheed Bhulu Stadium Detention Centre for Covid-19 patients in Noakhali.

The team "successfully detected" several genes of the virus from the samples, it said.

While wastewater surveillance for Covid-19 around the world has focused on wastewater treatment plants, the researchers opted for drain water monitoring near isolation centres, which is first of its kind.

The study focuses on tracing genetic load, how much genetic material is found at certain points, in vicinity of isolation centres that contain constant number of Covid-19 patients. The critical observation has been variation, where small drains showed reduction of genetic load than bigger canals and main city sewers, where the team observed temporal accumulation of SARS-CoV-2 RNA.

According Prof Nazrul Islam, renowned virologist and former vice chancellor (VC) of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, it is internationally accepted that SARS-CoV-2 can be present in the gastrointestinal system. Therefore, the team's method to identify the virus' presence in sewage water could serve as a tool to prevent future spread of the disease.

Prof Nazrul considers the initiative a remarkable achievement in developing an effective waste water surveillance system in Bangladesh.

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For months, the ever-eye-catching wedding car, embellished with flowers of all colours, was nowhere in sight. But that has changed, as many have resumed holding the ceremonies in physical locations, with all its visual festivities. This photo was taken from the capital's Shahbagh on Friday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Condition of AG Mahbubey Alam improves

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health condition of Attorney General Mahbubey Alam has improved, although he is still receiving treatment at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of Combined Military Hospital (CMH).

"The attorney general's condition is now stable...I am trying to inquire about his physical condition every now and then," Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star yesterday.

Praying for quick and complete recovery of the AG, Anisul said doctors are trying their best.

Contacted, Binota Mahbub, AG Mahbubey's wife, told this newspaper that her husband's condition has improved.

"He [Mahbubey] can now talk to and recognise people," she said.

Binota requested all to pray for recovery of the state's top law officer.

Alam has been admitted to CMH for treatment after he tested positive for Covid-19 on September 4.

He was taken to the ICU on Friday morning.