



Despite the red light at the back signalling pedestrians to halt movement, people cross the road near Green Herald School at Asad Avenue. The pushbuttons for pedestrian crossing were installed here last year, but the initiative has yielded little success for traffic management.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

PUSH BUTTON SIGNALS FOR PEDESTRIAN CROSSING DNCC pursuing it despite little evidence of utility

MATHEWS CHIRAN

People holding out their hands to stop speedy vehicles, buses stopping randomly to take in passengers, cars zooming past pedestrians crossing the road – this is the chaotic scenario at the road crossing in front of Brac University at the capital's Mohakhali.

But it should not be that way. Last year, after spending Tk 6,68,724, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) installed pedestrian crossing buttons to resolve all these issues.

This new technology enabled pedestrians to press buttons installed on both sides of the road to indicate that they want to cross. A countdown would begin for a certain period, showing red signal for vehicles to stop, and simultaneously, green signal for passengers to cross.

However, since installation, the system has been of no use. During a recent visit, this correspondent found the countdown timers not working, and some bulbs for the signals gouged out from the sockets.

"I don't know what it actually does. I never saw this being of use since installation," said Abdul Aziz, a security guard for an ATM just beside the button.

This situation is similar for pedestrian crossing buttons at the road in front of SFX Greenherald International School at Mohammadpur. DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam inaugurated the system there, which was installed at a cost of Tk 6,46,594, in the same year on October 24.

After a month of its inauguration, this newspaper did a story on the technical malfunctions of the system. As the buttons did not work properly, DNCC and Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) kept staff to help people cross the road.

Despite the dismal performance of this system, DNCC recently installed another set of buttons, spending Tk 7,71,000, in front of Mirpur Commerce College.

Although the recently installed ones do not have apparent technical errors, people are not using the buttons properly.

Despite all this, DNCC is planning to install such buttons in 20 other points of the city, spending Tk 2,05,00,000.

The proposed 20 points were suggested by DMP. Authorities have already decided to install the system at Kuril Intersection, in front of Milestone College at Uttara Sector-11,

and in front of Gulshan Commerce College on Pragati Sarani.

DNCC's traffic engineering department implemented the system. DNCC officials said the technology is new, so it is difficult for them to make it work properly. Notable, they said the same thing last year, when this reporter pointed out the malfunctions. Also, while inaugurating the system at Mohammadpur a year ago, Mayor Atiqul had announced that those who would not abide by the signals of the button system would be punished under law. However, that did not happen.

According to DNCC, Mesarse Shine Enterprise, a local contractor, along with DNCC was responsible for setting up the buttons in Mohakhali and Mohammadpur, while Mesarse SM Rahman International was the contractor for Mirpur.

Engineer Khorshed Alam of Mesarse Sine Enterprise said they had to use local components due to DNCC's small budget, which resulted in the system suffering from errors while calculating timings.

According to him, DNCC has now directed Mesarse Shine Enterprise to buy components from abroad

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Padma Bridge in one year: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said it would take 10 to 12 months to complete other works of the long-cherished Padma bridge after installation of the last span.

Quader, also the general secretary of ruling Awami League, also hoped that the 41st and also the last span would be installed by Thursday. The first span was installed in September 2017.

He was speaking at a press conference on contemporary issues at his secretariat office. Asked whether the bridge would be opened for public on Victory Day next year, Quader said the prime minister is against the concept of inaugurating something on special day.

The 40st span of the Padma bridge was installed on December 4, making 6km stretch of the main structure visible. Only one more span is needed to complete the 6.15km-long bridge.

The current deadline of the fast-track project is June 2021, meaning project is likely to see another revision for time extension. The project cost rose to Tk 30,193 crore after several revisions.

Construction of the bridge started in November, 2015, to connect the country's southwestern region with the capital via road and rail.

Once in service, the 6.15km bridge will connect the capital with 21 southwestern districts. It is expected to boost the country's

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Ivermectin effective in treating mild Covid-19

Finds icddr,b study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Covid-19 patients that received a five-day course of the anti-parasitic drug ivermectin have shown an early viral clearance and improvements of blood biomarkers compared with other two control groups, researchers found in their study at icddr,b.

Investigators found the anti-parasitic drug to be safe and it has shown, at best, a modest benefit for mild case of coronavirus in the study under which patients were enrolled between June 17 and September 8 this year.

The study findings have been published in the International Journal of Infectious Diseases (IJID) on December 2, 2020.

Experts lauded the first-ever randomised clinical trial on the drug, saying it can be helpful for physicians to treat Covid-19 patients.

They, however, suggested not to take the drug without physicians' advice.

icddr,b, formally known as the International Center for Diarrheal Disease and Research, Bangladesh revealed the study findings supported by Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd at an event in Dhaka yesterday.

During the presentation, Dr Wasif Ali Khan, the chief investigator of the study said, "Despite a small sample size, the results provide evidence of potential benefit of early intervention with ivermectin for the treatment of adult patients diagnosed with mild Covid-19. The findings also conform to other global studies on ivermectin as a treatment for Covid-19."

The randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial evaluated orally administered ivermectin alone (12mg once daily for 5 days), ivermectin single dose (12mg) in combination with doxycycline (200mg stat doxycycline on day one, followed by 100mg 12 hourly for next four days) compared with placebo among 68 hospitalised patients of Covid-19 in Dhaka.

Patient distribution was 22, 23 and 23 in each group respectively who were from Mugda Medical College Hospital, Kurmitola General Hospital, and Dhaka Medical College Hospital in Dhaka.

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Woman mobbed for smoking in public

Video goes viral; women in Rajshahi say it's not an isolated incident

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

[WARNING: Smoking is injurious to health.]

A young woman, sitting with a man, was smoking near Rajshahi's Circuit House Road -- a public space -- on Sunday afternoon when a man appeared and started shouting at her, asking to leave immediately. Soon, some other men joined him in rebuking her for "smoking in a public place".

A video of the incident that went viral on social media showed the man repeatedly and rudely telling the woman to put out her cigarette and leave. The woman tried to argue, asking the man what she had done wrong, and pointing out that there were several men nearby who were also smoking.

The mob that formed around the woman and her friend started getting louder and at one stage she had to leave, humiliated.

While she was leaving, someone in the mob was heard saying that "this kind of insolent behaviour is a reason for rape".

The video also shows a youth standing up for the woman and questioning the men verbally abusing her, asking whether they have any authority to stop her from smoking. He also faced the mob's wrath.

According to women's rights activists in Rajshahi, this was not an isolated incident; rather, it was part of a growing, disturbing trend happening in different city areas over the last few years.

Men, either in groups or alone, are harassing women for not following what they refer to as "socially acceptable behaviour", they said.

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6-YR-OLD HRIDOY MURDER HC acquits three death row convicts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday acquitted three people who were sentenced to death by a trial court in a case filed for abducting and killing a six-year-old in Cox's Bazar in 2013.

HC acquitted Abdul Khaleque, Bahadur Miah and Abdus Shukkur of the charges of abducting and killing Md Hridoy, as allegations against them were not proven.

The HC bench of Justice Krishna Debnath and Justice ASM Abdul Mobin gave the verdict after hearing the appeals filed by accused Khaleque and Bahadur, death reference (lower court record) of the case and examining relevant documents and evidence.

They are now in the jail while Shukkur is on the run, Mohammad Shishir Manir, a defence lawyer for the two, told The Daily Star.

He said the HC bench acquitted the three as it was proven that Khaleque and Bahadur were tortured and forced to give confessional statements to the magistrate concerned.

Shishir Manir said there is no other evidence and documents in the case to prove the allegations against the three.

VIOLATING 2017 DIRECTIVE SC summons ex-DG of pry education

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday summoned the then director general of the directorate of primary education Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, now defence secretary, and four other government officials to appear before this court on December 14 for not complying with its 2017 directive over appointing a qualified candidate to the post of primary school teacher.

An Appellate Division bench led by Justice Muhammad Imman Ali passed the order while hearing a contempt of court rule issued by this court earlier against the officials.

The apex court had issued the rule on March 2 this year following a contempt of court petition filed by a Beauty Begum, who stood first in the test for the post of primary school teacher in Gaibandha in 2008.

Four other officials are deputy director of the directorate of primary education Md Ramzan Ali, district

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BIWTA recovers land 'grabbed by Haji Salim'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday demolished part of a petrol pump illegally constructed on land surrounding Buriganga River. The land was allegedly occupied by lawmaker Haji Mohammad Salim.

BIWTA also recovered a piece of land surrounding Buriganga, allegedly occupied by the lawmaker, locals said.

Modina Petrol Pump was running occupying part of BIWTA's land, and they have demolished illegal parts of the structure, said a BIWTA official.

The BIWTA team, led by its executive magistrate Mahubul Jamil, also demolished 171 illegal structures from Buriganga riverbank at Old Dhaka's Islambagh and Kamalbagh areas.

Kamalbagh residents had removed their belongings before the second day of the drive. People were seen removing machinery from their shops.

Earlier on Sunday, associates of Haji Salim had pre-emptively torn down parts of an illegal structure ahead of yesterday's drive at Old Dhaka's Shoari Ghat.

The Dhaka-7 MP had allegedly occupied land and put up a signboard of "Modina Water Tank" there, locals said, adding that his associates had torn down parts of a warehouse and some water tank models at the area.

The BIWTA team also demolished the front side of "Chand Sarder Cold Storage", allegedly owned by the lawmaker, who constructed illegal structures in front of the storage on the riverbank.

BIWTA Joint Director AKM Arif Uddin said they started a massive drive to recover land surrounding four rivers around the capital on January 29 last year, and have demolished around 8,000 illegal structures in different phases.



Many illegal tin-shed structures were demolished in yesterday's drive by Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority at Old Dhaka's Islambagh and Kamalbagh areas near Buriganga River. Shopkeepers and residents had taken their belongings out before the eviction took place.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



No matter the size of his business, for kids, this man is the embodiment of everything good and happy. In fact, one does not even need to buy from him to share this happiness. For those who have the eye for it, just a glimpse of his bizarre balloons wind-surfing from the back of a hired auto-rickshaw suffices. This photo was taken on Friday from Keraniganj.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Sangram editor walks out on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editor of Bangla daily the Sangram, Abul Asad, got released from jail yesterday following the bail order from the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Asad's lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir told The Daily Star that his client walked out of Kashimpur jail last evening and they have talked to each other over phone.

He said Asad was arrested on December 13, 2019 in a case filed under the Digital Security Act on charges of "circulating provocative report and sedition".

The High Court on September 23 this year granted bail to Asad following a bail petition filed by him in connection with the case.

The state later moved a petition before the Appellate Division challenging the HC bail order. On November 5, the Appellate Division dismissed the state's petition and upheld the order, Manir added.

Police detained Asad on December 13

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Partnership between pvt sectors of both countries can be a game-changer

Says Bangladesh envoy to Netherlands; virtual investment summit begins today

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh seeks Dutch investments in agriculture, water and light engineering -- the areas where The Netherlands has superior technologies that Bangladesh needs for boosting productivity and exportability in eco-friendly way.

"Large share of Dutch economy is based on agriculture. It also faces serious challenges of climate change, but the country has been doing extraordinarily well in these sectors due to its technological innovation," said Riaz Hamidullah, Bangladesh Ambassador to The Netherlands.

He said this just ahead of two-day Bangladesh-Netherlands Investment Summit 2020 beginning today.

The Bangladesh embassy in The Netherlands with support from the Dutch government is organising the event that will feature three themes -- Agriculture & Agro-Food, Water and Maritime and Light Engineering.

Private sector business from The Netherlands and Bangladesh will participate in the virtual event where more than 50 Dutch companies have already registered, Riaz Hamidullah told this correspondent yesterday.

Explaining the background of the event, the ambassador said Bangladesh

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