

# BRTC service planned as 2 more roads go off-limits to rickshaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As two major city roads will become off-limits to rickshaws from February 25, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) will run adequate buses on the routes.

The stretches of roads to become rickshaw-free are Kalabagan crossing to Azimpur and Science Laboratory to College Road via Shahbag and Press Club.

"To implement the bold decision of reducing traffic congestion on the major roads, the BRTC will provide

all necessary support by introducing buses on the two routes," BRTC Chairman Taimur Alam Khondaker said yesterday.

The BRTC yesterday held a meeting with the Bangladesh Transport Foundation (BTF), a non-government organisation working to build public support in favour of the rickshaw ban.

The BTF already held six meetings with professionals, public representatives, business community leaders and rickshawpullers. A final meeting would be held tomorrow,

AKM Kamaluddin Chowdhury, chairman of the BTF, said yesterday.

Kamaluddin has proposed 50 buses on the two routes -- 35 on the Gabtoli-Azimpur route and 15 on the Science Laboratory-Press Club route.

However, the BRTC chairman did not specify how many buses would be added to the routes. Last year, 35 BRTC buses were introduced on the

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## Political leaders visit Saber, condemn police action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political leaders including Dr Kamal Hossain, Rashed Khan Menon and Anwar Hossain Manju and former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday visited the injured Awami League leaders and activists at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

They were injured in police clubbing during hartal hours.

Badruddoza visited opposition activists including central AL Organising Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Ahsanullah Master MP, general secretary of the Jatiya Samik League, and condemned the police attacks.

The former president told

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## Police inspector dies of heart attack during hartal hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An on-duty police inspector died of 'cardiac arrest' in Mirpur during hartal hours yesterday.

Abu Sayeed Khan, 55, fell sick during a skirmish between police and hartal supporters in front of Awami League office at Section 11 at about 10:20am and went to a nearby tea stall where he collapsed, said Kalam Bhandari, a cloth trader.

"I offered him a cup of tea but he

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# ROK scientists clone human embryos

AP, Washington

Researchers in South Korea have become the first to successfully clone a human embryo, and then cull from it master stem cells that many doctors consider key to one day creating customised cures for diabetes, Parkinson's and other diseases.

This is not cloning to make babies, but to create medicine.

It's sure to revive international controversy over whether to ban all human cloning, as the Bush administration wants, or to allow this "therapeutic cloning" that might eventually let patients grow their own replacement tissue.

Embryonic stem cells are the body's building blocks, cells from which all other tissue types spring. They're present in an embryo only days after conception and are ethically sensitive because culling stem cells destroys the embryo.

Scientists have used therapeutic cloning to partially cure laboratory mice with an immune system disease. And they know how to cull stem cells from human embryos left over in fertility clinics.

But attempts to clone human embryos so the resulting stem cells would be genetically identical to the patient who needs them have failed until now.

Scientists from Seoul National University say they succeeded largely because of using extremely fresh eggs donated by South Korean volunteers and gentler handling of

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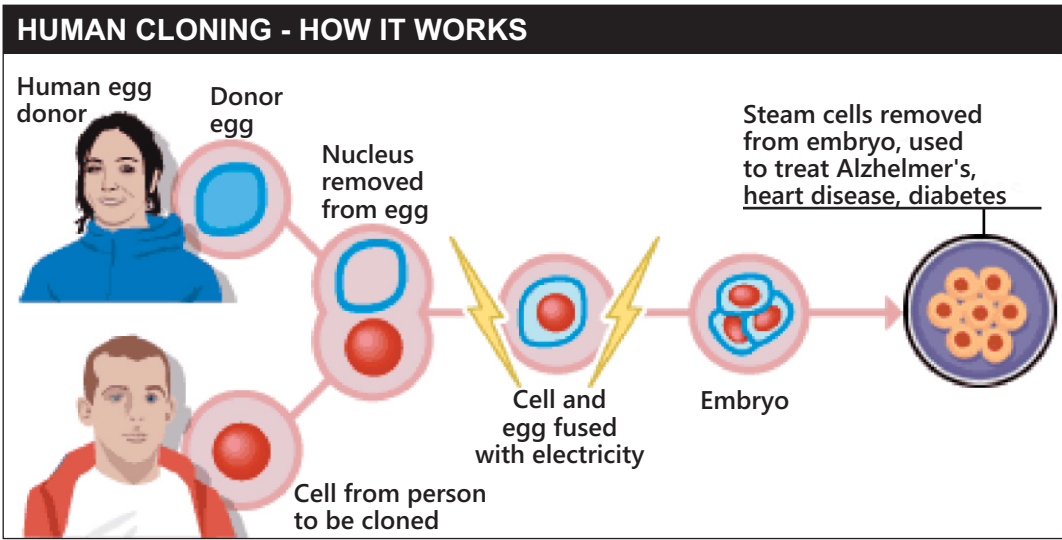
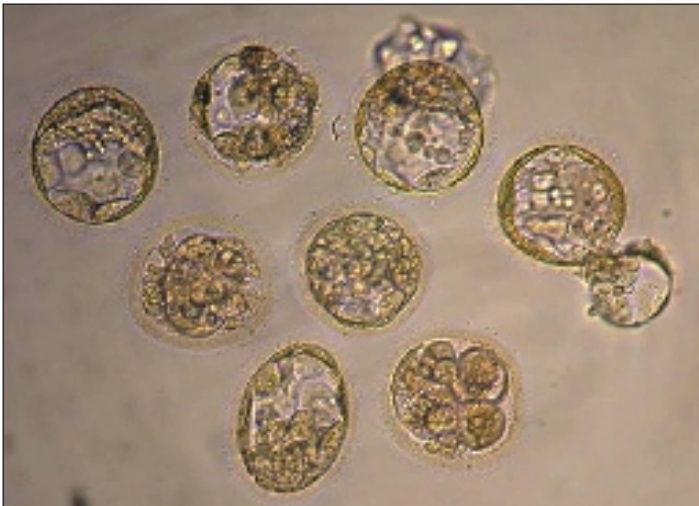


PHOTO: BBC ONLINE



This handout microscopic photo released by Seoul National University in Seoul yesterday shows eight cloned embryos that are currently in the eight-cell stage each. South Korean scientists have cloned the world's first mature embryonic stem cell line in what is seen as a breakthrough toward developing new methods of treating a wide range of degenerative ailments. But the controversial experiment announced is also likely to raise new concerns about cloning human beings, attempts at which have been widely criticised.

PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: STAR

A recent drive by Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority cleared illegal structures off the Buriganga riverbanks, but could not remove bamboo vendors who now ply their trade uninterrupted, encroaching on part of the city's lifeline.

## Thailand confirms sixth bird flu case

Migratory birds apparently from Bangladesh test H5N1-positive

REUTERS, Bangkok

A 13-year-old boy has been confirmed as Thailand's sixth human case of bird flu and the government was culling any birds testing positive in random checks nationwide, officials said yesterday.

"Yes, that is correct," Charal Trinwuthipong, chief of the Department of Disease Control, told Reuters when asked if the boy had tested positive for the deadly virus that has killed at least 19 people in Asia, including five Thais.

Another official said the boy had been in hospital since January 29 and was in critical condition.

The virulent H5N1 bird flu virus, suspected to have been spread by migrating birds, has broken out in eight Asian countries, devastating poultry flocks.

Thai officials said three migratory birds tested in the central region, an area used by birds from Bangladesh, tested positive for the

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# 10 hurt as JU students, villagers clash

JU CORRESPONDENT

Seven students of Jahangirnagar University (JU) and three outsiders were injured yesterday in clashes with villagers of adjacent Gerua apparently to avenge an alleged assault on a local youth.

The angry students set fire to five village shops, vandalised 10 other shops and some houses in Gerua Bazar area in retaliation.

The clash erupted at around 3:00pm when about 15 villagers attacked Abdul Alim, a third year student of geology and resident of Shaheed Salam Barkat (SSB) Hall, and his three friends at Hotel Al Madina in Gerua.

The attackers, who allegedly included local ward commissioner's son Zia, swooped on the four with bamboo and hockey sticks and knives when they were about to

have their lunch.

One villager stabbed outsider Rezaul Karim Likhon in the chest and Alim in the back while some others beat up two other outsiders with sticks.

The four however fled the area without taking food. They were undergoing treatment at JU Medical Centre until 8:30 last night.

Some 200 JU students rushed to the area at around 4:30pm and began vandalising shops at Gerua Bazar. The students also vandalised Hotel Al Madina and another 14 shops, mostly grocery stores, and set fire to five.

However, no shop-owners or villagers were injured as they fled the area before the attack.

As the angry students and villagers exchanged brickbats, Halim Jahangir, a student of government

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## Squabbling mars journalists' meet with PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Infighting in the pro-BNP group of journalists yesterday plunged its meeting with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia into chaos yesterday, upsetting the agenda and embarrassing her.

Sources said two newsmen used invectives against their leaders when a delegation of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) led by its President Gias Kamal Chowdhury and General Secretary Ruhul Amin Gazi paid a courtesy call on the premier at her office.

The low-ranking pair of the BFUJ -- a reporter and a photojournalist of state-owned BSS news agency -- hurled abuses at some journalist leaders who got political appointments under the present government.

The pair, trained their guns especially at Amanullah Kabir, former managing director and the chief editor of the BSS who appointed them to the news agency after the BNP-led coalition took office.

They even questioned Khaleda's

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## Nizami hits out at press

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling alliance lawmakers including a senior minister yesterday lambasted the media for publishing what they said baseless and motivated news against former agriculture minister Matiur Rahman Nizami.

They demanded punitive actions be taken against the newspapers for running a story yesterday that 'linked' Nizami to the irregularities in the appointment of block supervisors during his stint as agriculture minister.

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# Natore arson victims reel from fresh threats

ROVING CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Arson affected villagers in restive Natore still camped in the open without food and medicine amid repeated threats of violent attack from alleged BNP activists.

The main opposition Awami League yesterday said it would send a parliamentary delegation to Shahpara village and the party's district unit took a three-day programme to protest the arson attacks on adherents' in the village after the killing of a deputy minister's nephew.

Relatives quoting the affected families said the Naldanga Police Station declined to record any case for the attacks and fresh threats.

The perpetrators, who were still looking for some AL leaders, blocked the entry of journalists, human rights activists and volun-

teers to Shahpara.

AL Secretary General Abdul Jalil told the Daily Star by phone that the party was planning to send a parliamentary delegation to the village soon and asked the district unit to put up the affected people.

"The incidents in Shahpara were barbaric and the district administration was in thrall to the BNP leaders," Jalil said.

Nearly 44 houses of AL activists were burnt down in similar arson attacks on February 7 and 10 by alleged BNP men and relatives of Deputy Minister for Land Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu in the wake of the killing of his nephew Sabbir Ahmed Gama.

Natore AL General Secretary Hanif Ali Sheikh said party activist Fayed Uddin Shah, an arson victim, was preparing to go a Natore court after the local police declined to record his case.

He accused 'local BNP hit men' of threatening the arson victims with further violence.

Hanif said the AL district unit unveiled the three-day protest programme from Saturday that included a siege to local deputy commissioner's office and protest rallies and processions.

"If our demands are not met in three days, we'll take tougher actions including hartals," he said.

Natore district BNP General Secretary Shahidul Islam Bachhu yesterday claimed that it was not credible that police did not record the cases of arson victims.

He dismissed the allegation that BNP activists torched their rivals' houses, saying a mob carried out the attacks after the killing of Gama.

FUND MISAPPROPRIATION

## Bank under depositors' siege for 5 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Transactions with the Benapole branch of Agrani Bank remained stopped for the last five days as account holders kept the branch under siege to realise about Tk 3 crore that was misappropriated from their accounts by some bank officials four months ago.

About 150 clients alleged that the branch manager in collusion with some other officials misappropriated the money from their accounts.

When contacted, deputy general manager of Agrani Bank Jessore zonal office admitted the incident. He said the authorities will meet the demand of the clients within the shortest possible time and take legal action against the bank officials involved.

On the other hand, the agitating bank account holders said they will continue the siege programme until the demand is met.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses a public rally in the RC College ground at Patarhat in Barisal yesterday, which coincided with Awami League's countrywide hartal, called to kick off a drive to oust the government.