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Diesel-run vehicles to be phased out

8 VIP roads to become off-limits to rickshaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A high-powered meeting on easing the city's traffic jam yesterday decided to take a number of steps, including phasing out diesel-engine vehicles, prohibiting rickshaws on eight specific thoroughfares and putting an end to haphazard roadside parking.

The inter-ministerial meeting, with Communications Minister Nazmul Huda in the chair, formed a four-member committee headed by the communications secretary to review and report on the state of diesel-driven vehicles within the next three months.

The meeting expressed grave concern over the growing traffic jam in the capital and decided on three remedial measures for immediate implementation. These are: ban on rickshaw movement on eight VIP roads, stopping illegal roadside parking and making it mandatory

for all private and public buildings, markets, residences etc to construct their own parking facilities as per the building code of Rajdhani Unnayan Kortripakha (Rajuk).

The meeting also emphasised introduction of electronic signalling system on all city roads for more efficient traffic control.

Meeting sources said there were heated debates in the meeting over the traffic situation as the ministries of communications and home affairs blamed each other for the city's traffic jams.

The meeting identified political considerations as one of the key hindrances to easing the traffic congestion. Due to interference of some political leaders, the number of rickshaws currently plying the city roads is around 10 lakh, though the maximum number was supposed to be four lakh only, it was said.

Dismissing the common allegation against police of failure to control traffic, State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar said, on the contrary, police are really serious about traffic control and working relentlessly for a smooth traffic movement.

But, he said, it was impossible to end traffic jams due to absence of an electronic traffic signalling system, excessive number of rickshaws, absence of lanes for rickshaws and other manual or slow-moving vehicles, flyovers and inadequate number of foot-over-bridges.

Babar blamed a lack of co-ordination among the bodies concerned for the city's growing traffic congestion and suggested a co-ordinated city transport management.

He claimed 'serious efforts' by police to seize illegal rickshaws have failed to make any headway due to interference and string pulling by

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An illegal structure encroaching on the Buriganga River at Kamrangir Char was knocked down yesterday, the first day of a five-day drive.

119 illegal structures on Buriganga demolished

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The district administration and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday demolished 119 illegally set up structures on the Buriganga River on the first day of a five-day joint drive.

BIWTA sources said they have identified 250 more encroachment points, on the channel and the banks of the Buriganga, and all of those will be knocked down over the next four days.

Yesterday's drive was carried out in Kamrangirchar where encroachers have grabbed most parts of the second channel of Buriganga. The team knocked down two concrete and 12 semi-concrete structures, while the remaining demolished structures were mostly tin shade shanties.

The authorities are now surveying the area to recover the usurped land of Baria in Kamrangirchar to Rayer Bazar. They are aiming to bring back navigability

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Women in the submerged Shamurbari area in Munshiganj collect floodwaters for household use, raising fears for outbreak of diseases.

Listed criminal and ICS cadre arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A joint team of Panchlaish police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a listed criminal and Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) cadre from Munshi Pukur Par in Sholak Bohar Friday night.

Delwar Hossain, 30, chief of Azrail Bahini, infamous for extortion, murder and other criminal activities, was sent to court yesterday afternoon.

Acting on a tip off, the joint team led by Rab Captain Morshed and Officer in-Charge (OC) of Panchlaish Police Station SM Naimur Rahman raided the rented house of Delwar near Munshi Pukur in the city at around 10:15pm.

The team arrested the ICS cadre, who tried to evade arrest by showing a fake passport and posing as Faisal Ahmed, from the house and took him to the Rab office in Patenga.

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DRAFT MANPOWER EXPORT POLICY

Workers to get punished for crimes, strikes abroad

RAFIQ HASAN

For the first time, the government is framing a comprehensive manpower export policy with provisions for punitive actions against expatriate Bangladeshis workers for committing crimes and other offences, breaking discipline and calling strike in the host country.

The actions include fines, blacklisting, warning, disqualifying from overseas employment and suspension for certain period, official sources said.

The Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment has already prepared the draft policy titled Bangladesh Overseas

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Employment Policy (BOEP) and is now seeking opinions of different ministries before finalising it. The policy will then be sent to the cabinet sub-committee on manpower export headed by the foreign minister for its approval.

"The main objectives of the policy are to explore, promote and develop overseas employment opportunities through institutionalising coordination and cooperation among the relevant ministries and international organisations for bringing transparency and discipline in manpower export sector," a top official said.

Under the proposed policy, the offences include desertion and taking leadership or joining a strike or a move to stop work in an organi-

sation where such activities are banned by law in the host country.

Actions will also be taken for drug addiction, trafficking of prohibited drugs, gambling, possession of deadly weapons, damaging company property, misappropriation of company funds, prostitution, violation of sacred practices of the host country and breach of employment contract approved by the government, the draft policy said.

"Complaint against a contract worker shall be entertained and commission of crime punishable under law of the host country shall be a ground for disciplinary action to be taken by the government of Bangladesh," it said.

More than 40 lakh Bangladeshis

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One buys freedom in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Mahidul Islam, who was abducted on Thursday, bought his freedom reportedly for Tk 5 lakh in the early hours of yesterday.

The abductors left Mahidul in a field of Baria in Daulatpur upazila of the district.

Earlier on July 15 a band of robbers looted the house of Ashraful Islam at village Adabaria in Daulatpur and abducted Ashraful's son Mahidul Islam, 30, who returned home from Saudi Arabia several days ago. They reportedly looted Tk 70,000 in cash and gold ornaments worth Tk 1 lakh.

The abductors later demanded a ransom of Tk 5 lakh within three days for Mahidul's release and threatened to kill him for non-compliance.

A case was filed with Daulatpur Police Station.

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Iraq justice minister escapes attack

US soldier, 2 guards killed in separate blasts

REUTERS, Baghdad

A suicide car bomber blew up his vehicle as a convoy carrying Iraq's justice minister drove past in Baghdad yesterday, killing four people but not wounding the minister, police and US troops at the scene said.

Near the northern Iraqi city of Beiji, a US soldier was killed and another wounded when their convoy was targeted in a roadside bomb blast yesterday, the US military said.

The injured soldier has been evacuated to a military medical facility, it added in a statement. Another car bomb blast in Mahmudiya, just south of Baghdad, killed two Iraqi National Guardsmen and wounded 25 people, the latest in a series of attacks targeting Iraq's security forces.

Witnesses said the Baghdad suicide bomber drove toward the convoy carrying Justice Minister Malik al-Hassan and then detonated his vehicle in a ball of flame.

"There was a blast alongside the convoy. A booby-trapped car came

alongside and blew up," said Hussein Abed, a traffic policeman who raced to the scene after the blast.

Abdul Nasser Mohammed, an Iraqi bodyguard at the scene, said four people were killed in the explosion. He pointed to one destroyed car and said: "Two were killed in this car and all we found was body parts."

Five gutted cars were littered across the road, and Iraqis collected human remains from the street. One boy scooped up pieces of flesh using two cigarette packets. An Iraqi man collected remains on a tray, mostly unidentifiable apart from a piece of foot with the big toe still intact.

"What I want to highlight is that this is clearly a terrorist attack by people who do not want to see this country move forward," said Col. Michael Formica of the US 1st Cavalry Division.

Hospital officials said at least eight people were wounded.

"We were working as painters near the ministry house when

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Mirza Azam, Nanok get bail

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted anticipatory bail for two months to Jubo League leaders Jahangir Kabir Nanok and Mirza Azam MP and city Awami League (AL) leader Syed Khokan in the BRTC bus burning case.

A division bench comprising Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Farid Ahmed gave the order and also issued a rule upon the government to show cause why they should not be granted regular bail.

Jubo League President Jahangir Kabir Nanok, General Secretary Mirza Azam MP and city AL leader Syed Khokan appeared in the court and sought bail in the case.

Eleven passengers of a double-decker bus were injured in the case.

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Tiger kills fisherman in Sundarbans

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A fisherman was killed by a Royal Bengal Tiger in Kachhikata in the Sundarbans Friday night.

Mithu Mollah, 18, son of Abdur Rouf Mollah of Harinagar village in Shyamnagar upazila, and five others went to fish in Sora canal in the Sundarbans Thursday morning.

At one stage, the tiger swooped on him and dragged him away into the deep forest, family members said quoting Mithu's fellow fishermen.

Prayer Timing		
July 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-54	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Flood misery worsens in 10 districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The flood situation worsened yesterday in at least 10 of the more than 30 districts affected by the current spell of floods that left more than four million people marooned and forced many to leave their submerged houses or live on house-tops, facing acute crises of food and drinking water.

Floodwaters rolled down from the northern districts submerging houses, crop fields and roads in fresh areas in these districts, reports received in Dhaka said.

The districts are Manikganj, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Faridpur, Mymensingh, Kishoreganj, Nawabganj and Pabna.

Two children drowned yesterday raising the flood death toll to more than 50 so far.

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8-yr old girl strangled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A student of class three was strangled to death by her mother's lover in the village of Jugirkanda under Uzirpur upazila yesterday.

Police and other sources said Swarna, 8, daughter of Nanna Gazi, a Karwan Bazar trader, woke up around 1:30am yesterday and raised a cry on seeing her mother Shamima Nasrin, 26, with Swarna's uncle Mamun Gazi, 28. Mamun then strangled Swarna with his shirt to death but before he could flee Nasrin injured him with a sharp object.

Nasrin later claimed that Mamun and his brother Masum who are neighbours and cousins of her husband entered her house forcefully and tried to rape her. But when they failed, the two brothers strangled her daughter to death.

Police recovered the body and handed it over to the relatives after post-mortem. Police also detained Nasrin for interrogation.

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Spate of kidnappings destabilise Gaza

Palestine PM resigns; state of emergency declared

AGENCIES, Gaza City

The Palestinian government called a state of emergency yesterday and summoned the cabinet for an urgent meeting as the Gaza Strip slid into chaos, after gunmen kidnapped two security officials and four French volunteers.

The wave of abductions prompted Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qorei and two

senior security officials in the Palestinian Authority to tender their resignations, although the resignations were rejected by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

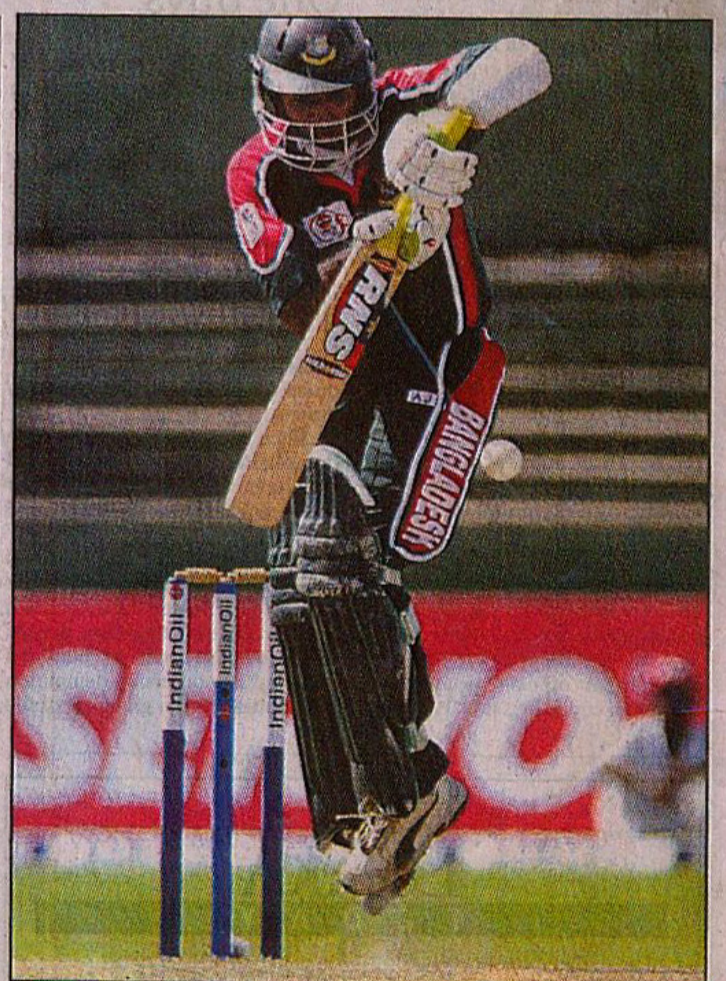
The four French citizens, who were working on an electrical project in the southern city of Khan Younis, were later released unharmed. The gunmen said they acted to draw world attention to Palestinian suffering caused by

Israel's occupation.

The rapid series of developments reflected the growing tension by militant groups and individuals seeking to strengthen their positions before Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon fulfills his pledge to withdraw Israeli forces and some 7,500 settlers from Gaza late next year.

The events also represented a serious challenge to the Palestinian

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Opener Javed Omar plays one off his pads during the Tigers' Asia Cup match against Pakistan in Colombo yesterday.

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