

# 66 percent women get married before 18

Says survey

ALPHA ARZU

Although the country's legal age of marriage for women is 18, some 66 percent of women, who are now aged between 20 and 24, got married before the age of 18, said a recent Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS).

The survey, however, showed that over the past two decades, the percentage of women marrying before the legal age is declining gradually.

Among the women and men who are now aged between 20 and 49, 78 percent women were married before the age of 18 and 88 percent women married before the age of 20, while only five percent men were married before the age of 18 and 15 percent before the age of 20.

Of the men who are now aged between 25 and 54, only 17 percent married at or before their 20th birthday, and a little more than half married at or before the age of 25.

"It is really frustrating that the parents or guardians are not aware enough about the legal age of marriage. If this trend continues, the popula-

tion will increase rapidly because those women have more fertility years as well as the risk of unwanted child that caused mal-nutrient and underweight babies and also caused for mother's anemic diseases," said MA Qayyum, director general of the Directorate of Family Planning, while talking to The Daily Star recently.

The survey also stated that men marry more than nine years later than women.

The median age at first marriage among men is 24.5 years compared to 15.3 years of women indicating a large age difference between husbands and wives.

Urban women aged between 25 and 49 tend to marry one year later than their rural counterparts.

The median age of marriage at the divisional level shows greater variation.

The median age of 16.4 years at first marriage for women who are now at the age group of 25-49 is the highest in Sylhet and 14.7 years is the lowest for those in Rajshahi and Khulna.

Women in Chittagong enter into marriage about one

year later than women in Rajshahi and Khulna.

Level of education has a positive association with the median age at marriage.

For example, women who have completed secondary or higher education, marry two years later than those with no education.

Similarly, the median age at marriage increases with household wealth. Women from the highest wealth quintile marry two years later than those from the lowest wealth quintile.

The median age at first marriage for men also displays patterns and associations similar to those observed for women.

It shows that a difference of slightly more than one year in the median age at first marriage between urban men (26.2 years) and rural men (25 years) who are now at the age group 30-34.

The median age at marriage among men also varies at the divisional level.

Among the men aged between 30 and 34, the median age at first marriage for men is the highest in Sylhet and the lowest in Dhaka and Rajshahi.

As observed for women,

men with lower level of education enter into marriage earlier than other men.

Men who have completed secondary or higher education marry four years later than those with no education and three years later than those with primary education.

Similarly, men from the highest wealth quintile marry later than those from the other quintiles.

The average median age at first birth is about 18 years except for women who are now aged 20-24 years indicating a slight increase in the age at first birth in recent years.

When contacted, former adviser to the caretaker government Advocate Sultana Kamal told this correspondent that the government should take steps to raise awareness about the legal age of marriage in remote areas where early marriage occurs frequently.

"There is no alternative to birth registration to prevent early marriage as in that case the Kazi or guardians will not be able to show false age for marriage," said Advocate Salma Ali, executive director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association.



Foreign Minister Dipu Moni attends an Iftar-cum-dinner party hosted by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the envoys of Muslim countries at the US State Department yesterday.

SENATOR LUGAR MEETS DIPU MONI

## Help Bangladesh become middle-income country

Foreign minister urges US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior US Senator and Ranking Member of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Richard Lugar has expressed satisfaction over restoration of democracy in Bangladesh and assured necessary assistance to democratically elected government.

The assurance came during a meeting between Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Lugar, a Republican Congressman from Indiana yesterday.

When the world economy is going through instability due to the recession, Bangladesh continues to achieve five percent growth, Senator Lugar said.

The foreign minister thanked the US Congress for its contribution to restoration of democracy in Bangladesh and hoped that the US Congress would continue its support and help Bangladesh become a middle-income country by

2021, said a government hand-out.

Dipu Moni thanked Senator Lugar for formulating Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA).

Bangladesh and the US signed an agreement in 2000 under the Act, which Lugar formulated along with the then Senator Joseph Biden (presently vice president) in 1998.

The agreement aimed at reducing the amount of foreign loan alongside preserving tropical forest and making the best use of inadequate fund for international forest conservation through 'debt-for-nature'.

Dipu Moni called for waiving the loan under Tropical Forest Conservation Act and sought Senator Lugar's assistance in this regard.

She informed Senator Lugar about the steps taken by Bangladesh to face the challenges of climate change and requested him to provide additional funds for re-

excavation of river, construction of cyclone shelter centres, construction and repair of dikes, construction of dams and afforestation at the sea-coasts.

Senator Lugar expressed his interest in the proposals and said he has huge interest in tree plantation.

Bangladesh Ambassador in the USA Akramul Kader, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Ali Sarker and Deputy Chief of Bangladesh Mission Sheikh Mohammad Belal were present.

Dipu Moni later attended an Iftar-cum-dinner party hosted by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the envoys of Muslim countries at the US State Department.

The foreign minister is now on a visit to the USA on an invitation from Hillary Clinton. She will hold a meeting with Hillary today.

CPB RALLY BLAST

## CID detains BNP leader Arifur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After over seven years of the blast on Communist Party of Bangladesh's (CPB) rally, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested BNP leader Arifur Rahman from his Malibagh residence in connection with the case on Tuesday.

CID produced him -- also the councillor of ward-53 of Dhaka City Corporation -- before a court yesterday and sought a 10-day remand.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of CID Police Abdul Kahar Akand said the arrest was made following the information extracted from the other accused in the case.

Earlier, the CID detained Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) leader Arif Hasan Sumon in connection with the blasts at Paltan Maidan on January 20 in 2001 that killed seven people and injured several others.

Besides, former Huji chief Maulana Sheikh Abdus Salam was also arrested in this connection and now he is on bail.

Arifur's wife Selina Islam told The Daily Star, "A team of 12 persons, identifying them as CID personnel, picked up my husband."

Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Ferdous Ara Begum, a mother of two young daughters, has been suffering from kidney disease, says a press release.

The 30-year-old housewife is now under going treatment at Dhanmondi Kidney Hospital in the city as her both kidneys have damaged.

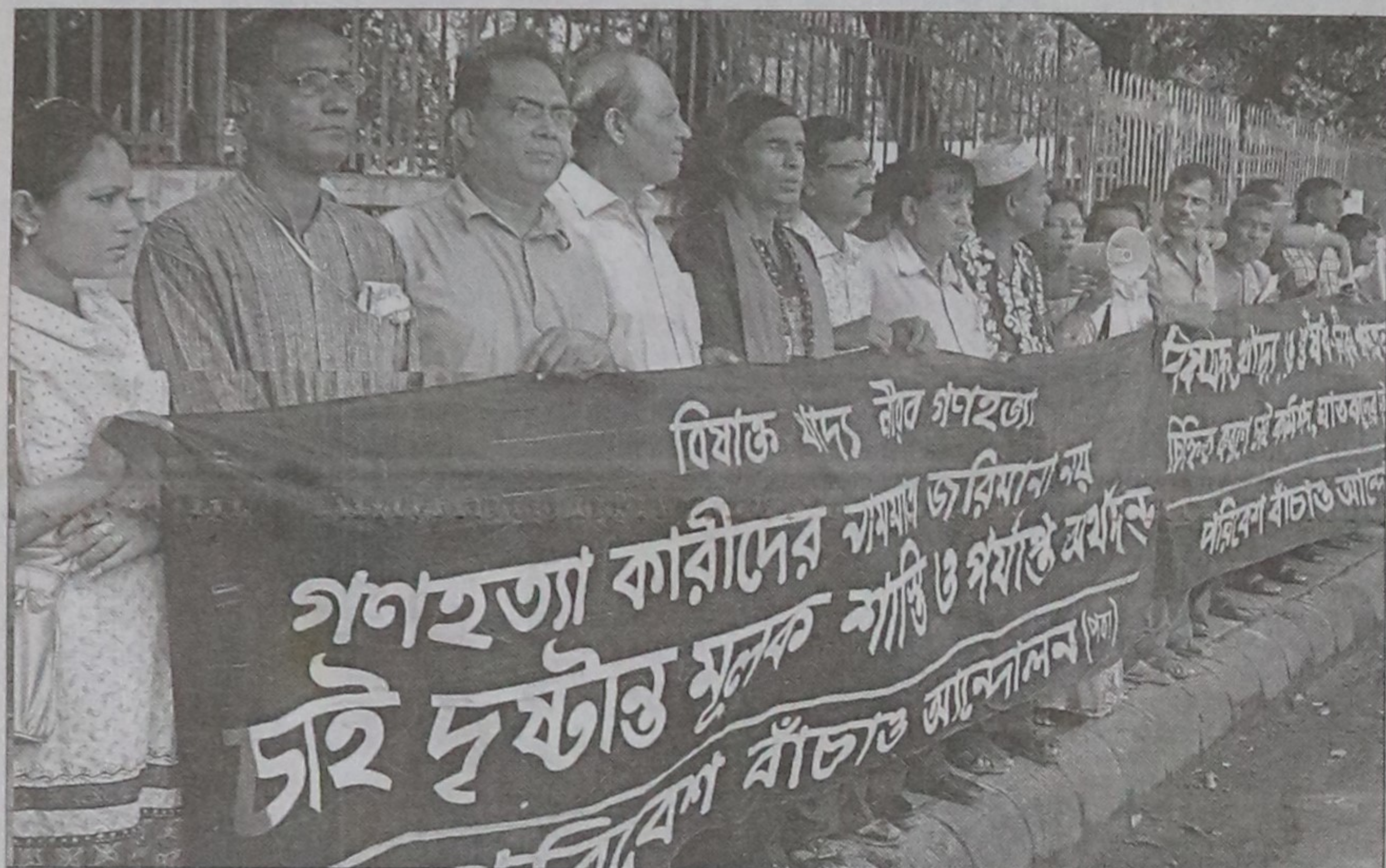
According to doctors, Ferdous Ara needs immediate transplant of his both kidneys to save her life which will cost a huge amount of money.

But it is not possible to arrange such a big amount for her husband who is an employee of forest department.

So Ferdous Ara has appealed to well-off people including the prime minister for financial assistance to save her life.

Contributions can be sent to Ferdous Ara Begum, Savings Account No 2857, Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, Pallabi Branch, Mirpur, Dhaka.

Interested persons can also contact at 01712697379.



Paribesh Bachao Andolon forms a human chain in Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding exemplary punishment to those responsible for food adulteration.

## TRIPLE MURDER CASE 4 BNP leaders get bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted ad interim bail for six months to four accused in Karwan Bazar triple murder case.

The four accused are Lutfor Rahman, also known as L. Rahman, president of Ward No. 39 BNP, Nabi Solaiman, former religious affairs secretary of Jubo Dal, and Abu Sayeed and Nurul Islam, two ward level leaders of BNP.

After hearing a bail petition jointly filed by the four, a HC vacation bench of Justice AFM Abdur Rahman and Justice Md Rezaul Hasan also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the petitioners should not be granted regular bail.

Petitioners' lawyer Barrister Anwarul Islam Shaheen told The Daily Star yesterday that if the government does not file any appeal with the Supreme Court (SC) against the HC order, there would be no bar to his clients' release from jail.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam said that his office would file a petition within a very short time with the SC to overturn the HC order.

Three people -- Faruque Mollah, Ashraf Miah and Nuruddin Sarkar Jewel -- were killed in a gun attack at Karwan Bazar on June 26.

Mobarok Hossain Mollah, brother of Faruque Mollah, filed a case with Tejgaon Police Station the same day against the petitioners and seven other unknown persons in this regard.

Advocate Habibul Islam Bhuyan appeared for the petitioners, while Deputy Attorney General Motahar Hossain Sazu argued for the government.

## Website to promote Sundarbans launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sundarban Supporters' Committee (SSC) launched a website to promote the Sundarbans yesterday.

KCC Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque inaugurated the website www.votesundarban.net at the Shahid Altaf Auditorium at Khulna City Corporation.

The KCC Mayor urged all to take advantage of internet to vote for Sundarbans to clinch its place among the seven new wonders of the

world.

Convener of SSC Liakat Ali presided over the programme while lawmaker Nazrul Islam Manju, Vice Chancellor of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology Prof Md Nawsher Ali, Panel Mayor No 1 of KCC Azmol Ahmed Tapan, Editor of The Daily Tribune Begum Ferdousi Ali and Chief Executive of NGO Rupantar Swapna Guha also spoke.

SSC Member-Secretary Rafiqul Islam Khokon moderated the programme.

## Delwar airs concern at PM's remarks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday expressed concern at the prime minister's remarks that incidents like BDR mutiny might take place again.

He also asked the prime minister to inform the nation of the conspiracy to foil democracy in detail, which the prime minister mentioned in her speech in parliament on Tuesday.

"Inform the people of the conspiracy and save them," he said while addressing a protest rally organised by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal in front of the party's central office at Naya Paltan in the city. JCD President Sultan Salahuddin Tuku presided over the rally.

Urging the prime minister to refrain from signing any 'secret deal' with any countries, Delwar said his party is ready to cooperate with the government in protecting independence and sovereignty of the country.

Protesting the vandalism of the name plaque of Ziaur Rahman road in the city, he said the BNP was in power for three times but did not change the name of Bangabandhu Avenue.

"This is nothing but autocratic attitude of the government towards the opposition," he said.

On Tuesday, the prime minister in her speech in parliament alerted the countrymen to the ongoing conspiracy of 'special quarter' and 'undemocratic forces' who are still plotting to wipe out democracy and grab power.



## Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at a few places over all the six divisions with moderately heavy falls at places in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 7:02pm today and rises at 6:46am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 36.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 24.0 degrees Celsius at Feni.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.8	24.5	81	90
Chittagong	31.3	24.8	84	85
Rajshahi	35.0	26.0	83	93
Khulna	34.5	27.2	--	82
Barisal	34.0	26.0	80	92
Sylhet	31.9	25.1	85	78
Cox's Bazar	32.0	26.0	97	80

## Workers block road for salary arrears, bonus

A CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

The agitated workers of a garment factory at Narsingdi BSCIC industrial estate yesterday put up a blockade on Dhaka-Sylhet highway over non-payment of their salary arrears and allowances.

Several thousand workers of Chowdhury Knitwear participated in the blockade programme.

Later, police detained General Manager of the factory Afsar Uddin Dewan, but the situation did not improve.

The workers alleged that the owners pledged to them several times in the past to pay their due salaries and allowances.

Recently, the owners in presence of Rab, magistrate and representatives of the administration agreed to pay due salaries and allowances by September 15.

But instead of paying the salaries, the factory was laid off for three months.

When the workers did not get their due salaries paid on Tuesday, the workers gathered at the BSCIC industrial area since morning.

Later, several thousand workers brought out a protest

procession and staged a sit-in in front of the office of the deputy commissioner.

They also submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner and sought his intervention.

Failing to get any positive response from him, they returned to the BSCIC area and put up a barricade on the highway at 2:30pm.

Several hundred passenger

buses and lorries were stranded on both sides of the road.

ASP (Circle) Bijoy Basak, who was on the spot, said an attempt was on to bring the situation under control.

The workers declared that they would continue their movement if they are not paid two months' salary, one month's overtime payment and Eid bonus.

## Criminal wounded in shootout with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A suspected leader of a criminal gang was wounded in a

shootout between his accomplices and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members at Mugga in the city yesterday.

After the shootout, Rab arrested the leader, Mohammad Selim alias Danu Selim, and his accomplice Mohammad Sumon, 14, and also recovered a revolver with two bullets from the spot.

Selim, who suffered bullet

injury, was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Rab sources said.

The sources said Selim and his three or four accomplices were trying to rob two pedestrians in front of Sepahi Mostofa Kamal Stadium around 12:30am. As the victims raised an alarm, a Rab patrol team rushed to the spot, but the muggers fired on them, leading to a gunfight.

The police said Selim is an accused in five cases.



Seasonal rickshawpullers come to the port city of Chittagong from across the country to earn a living. But they do not know proper traffic rules or follow the regulations, leading to massive congestion on the city streets. The photo was taken from Rifles Club area yesterday.