



Dhaka-Tangail highway sees long tailbacks during the last couple of days as vehicular movement sharply increased due to rush of home-bound passengers and transport of a large number of sacrificial animals before Eid ul Azha. The photo was taken from Elenga in Kalihati upazila of Tangail district yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

FREQUENT TAILBACKS AT DHERUA ON DHAKA-TANGAIL HIGHWAY

Trains are the main culprit

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Vehicular movement on busy Dhaka-Tangail highway remains suspended about four hours daily at Dherua level crossing in Mirzapur upazila of Tangail as 12 trains cross the point at least 22 times during up and down trips daily.

Consequently, long tailback regularly appear on both sides of the crossing, much to the nuisance of drivers and passengers on the important road that also serves as link between capital Dhaka and the northern districts.

After construction of Bangabandhu Bridge on the Jamuna River in 1998, rail track was constructed from there to Joydevpur via Tangail to introduce direct train communication between Dhaka and the northern districts.

The rail track, opened for train

communication in 2003, crosses the two-lane Dhaka-Tangail highway at two places -- Kaliakair Bypass in Gazipur district and Dherua in Mirzapur upazila of Tangail district.

That time the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) constructed a flyover on the level crossing at Kaliakair but no such arrangement has been made at Dherua.

"During 22 up and down train trips through Dherua level crossing, vehicular movement on Dhaka-Tangail highway needs to be shut as many times. The gates of the level crossing are closed for around 10 minutes each time and so, around three hours and 40 minutes is spent for the purpose," said Motaieb Miah, one of the six gatemen working at Dherua level crossing.

"Two of us work in each shift and we have to struggle to maintain the level crossing due to huge pressure

of vehicles on the highway. The vehicular movement almost doubles before Eids," said Suruj Miah, another gateman.

Around 10,000 vehicles including passenger buses and goods-laden trucks of 23 districts including 16 northern districts ply the highway, said sources at the Toll Plaza of the Bangabandhu Bridge.

Besides, local vehicles and vehicles to and from Jamalpur and Sherpur districts ply the highway, they said.

Sanwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Gorai highway police station, said they have to work hard to keep traffic normal as vehicles of 38 routes ply the narrow highway and tailbacks are created at different spots even on usual days.

"My bus often halts at Dherua level crossing and faces tailback on Dhaka-Tangail highway. The tail-

back can be eased if a flyover is constructed on the crossing," said Joaher Ali, a bus driver of Nirala Paribahan in Tangail.

Meer Lutfar Rahman, general secretary of Tangail district road transport workers association, said, "To ease tailback and reduce accidents on the highway, we at several meetings recommended constructing a flyover at Dherua, removing all the unplanned speed breakers and finally turn the two-lane highway as a four-lane one with road dividers."

Ahmed Hossain Masum, divisional engineer of Railway (Pakshi), also emphasised constructing a flyover at Dherua level crossing.

However, Shawkat Ali, executive engineer of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in Tangail, said the department so far has not taken any plan to construct a flyover at Dherua.

KILLING OF SARAIL AL LEADER

Hartal called off, dist AL suspends all 22 accused party men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Slain Awami League (AL) leader Iqbal Azad's supporters who called a half-day hartal in Sarail upazila yesterday, withdrew it on Tuesday night.

Azad's family members decided to withdraw the programme considering the ongoing Durga Puja and upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, locals said.

Villagers were informed of the decision to call off the hartal through loud speakers in different areas at about 11pm.

Earlier, the supporters of Iqbal Azad on Tuesday called the hartal, demanding arrest of his killers.

They announced the hartal programme after

Azad's namaj-e-janaza was held at Kuttapara playground in the afternoon.

AKM Iqbal Azad, vice president of Sarail upazila unit AL, was killed in an attack allegedly by his rivals in tempo stand area in the upazila on Sunday.

The attackers dragged him out of his car and stabbed him with sharp weapons when he was coming to Sarail upazila town from Kuttapara village.

The incident sparked waves of protests in the upazila.

Meanwhile, advocate Md Ashraf Uddin Manto, joint convener of Sarail upazila Jubo League, yesterday said they urged the authorities concerned to close officer-in-charge (OC) of Sarail PS

Md Gias Uddin soon as he is yet to arrest the killers.

On the other hand, district AL committee in an urgent meeting presided by its acting president Advocate Emdadul Bari, suspended 22 Sarail AL leaders who were accused in the Azad murder case.

Contacted, Md Helal Uddin, senior vice-president of district AL, said they have also sent a letter to the central committee to expel all the 22 accused AL leaders and activists from different posts of Sarail upazila AL and other party organisations.

The suspended leaders include Sarail upazila AL president M A Halim, general secretary Rafique Uddin Takhur and organising secretary Md Mahfuz Ali.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Uttara Gonobhaban, once the royal palace of the maharajas of Dighapatia in Natore, and now functioning as the provisional official residence of the head of government in the northern region, awaits opening to the public today.

Uttara Gonobhaban opens to public today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Uttara Gonobhaban at Dighapatia in Natore district is opened for the public from today.

State Minister for Youth and Sports Ahad Ali Sarker is expected to open the gonobhaban (Dighapatia Rajbari) to the visitors at a function in the morning.

Mohammad Zafarullah, deputy commissioner (DC) of Natore, said the gonobhaban will remain open everyday from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm.

The visitors can see the impressive beauty of the royal palace, buying ticket for Tk 10, the DC said, add-

ing that a visitor can stay 40 minutes inside the palace compound.

Local administration has installed necessary instruments, including CCTV cameras and metal detector, for security reasons.

Uttara Gonobhaban, which was known as Dighapatia Rajbari during the British and Pakistan periods, was the palace of the Maharajas of Dighapatia. The government is now using the palace as official residence of the head of government of Bangladesh in northern region.

Situated beside the Natore-Bogra highway,

some 2.4 kilometres off Natore town, the building is historically and archaeologically important.

Raja Dayaram Roy constructed the main structure of the palace, but Raja Pramada Nath Roy rebuilt the whole palace complex after the catastrophic earthquake in 1897.

The Dighapatia Palace was made Dighapatia Governor House on July 24 in 1967 by the governor of erstwhile East Pakistan. After the country's independence, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the Dighapatia Governor House as Uttara Gonobhaban on February 9, 1972.



PHOTO: STAR

Schoolchildren and women wade through muddy water at Kalibaripara in Gaibandha town as the backward area, lacking proper drainage system, sees persistent waterlogging for the last four months.

Waterlogging makes life of hundreds miserable

REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Hundreds of people of Kalibaripara in ward No 7 under Gaibandha municipality are passing miserable days due to persistent waterlogging for the last four months.

Lack of electricity, pure drinking water, and connecting road add to the sufferings of residents, who are mostly poor.

In absence of proper drainage system, the area went under knee to waist deep water in the rainy season, forcing the residents to use banana tree rafts to get to the nearby road.

Patients requiring urgent treatment suffer most.

The stagnant water often

serves as breeding ground for mosquitoes and the dirty water causes health hazard in the neighbourhood, making the locals suffer from diseases.

"In the rainy season we could not attend most of the classes as we had to cross waist-deep water to go to school," said Sabuj Mia, a student of class five.

After sunset the area plunges into darkness, as the residents are still dependent on kerosene lamp or hurricane due to lack of electricity supply. A few relatively solvent people drew temporary power lines from distant areas with the help of bamboo poles set at their own cost.

Despite repeated appeals to the authorities, the problems have remained unheeded.

"During elections the aspiring candidates come here and make commitment to solve local problems. But after the election they are no longer available and the situation remains as before," said Hakimuddin, a rickshaw puller.

"We have taken plan to mitigate the sufferings of locals by solving the long-standing problems including water stagnation in the area. The situation will improve before the next rainy season," said Shamsul Alam, mayor of Gaibandha municipality.

Punish killers of Kabid, demand journalists

Human chain in Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Local newsmen formed a human chain on the premises of Narsingdi Press Club yesterday morning protesting the killing of journalist Talhad Ahmed Kabid on Tuesday night and demanding immediate arrest of the killers.

Later, they held a rally at the venue with Sarkar Adam Ali, former president of the press club, in the chair.

At the rally, the journalists demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers. Otherwise, they threatened to launch a tougher agitation programme after Eid-ul-Azha.

They also announced a three-day programme to mourn the death of Kabid from today.

Police yesterday detained Kabid's brothers--Masud

and Sayeed--for interrogation in connection with the killing, said Md Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Sadar Model Police Station.

Kabid was laid to rest at his family graveyard at Shalidah in the town after Asr prayers yesterday.

Unidentified assailants shot dead Talhad Ahmed Kabid, 30, a correspondent of Dainik Narsingdi Bani, in the town at around 7:00pm on Tuesday.

Locals said the gunmen stormed into Kabid's mobile phone shop in the area and sprayed bullets on him. He was rushed to Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Different political parties and socio-cultural organisations have condemned the killing of journalist Kabid and demanded arrest of the persons involved.



Women tinge one another with vermillion and right, devotees immerse the idol of Goddess Durga in the Padma River during Bijaya Dashami in Rajshahi yesterday, marking the end of the five-day celebrations of Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of Bangali Hindus.



PHOTO: STAR