

Govt to import 5,000 taxis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will import 5,000 new taxis in the next two or three months in order to improve commuter service in the capital, officials said yesterday.

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader said the ministry would invite bids within May 20, relaxing requirements for importers this time.

A firm will be required to import a minimum of 250 cabs, with the engine capacity of 1500cc, he told BRTA officials at its Elenbari office in the capital.

Last year, the government set the minimum import requirement at 1,000 cabs for each firm. The importers, however, could not afford to bring 1,000 units at a time.

Soiful Haque, director engineer of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), said some 2,000-2,500 cabs of 11,260 registered ones were operating in the capital now.

The government plans to raise the total number to 18,000, he told The Daily Star. Haque said the demand for taxicabs was far higher.

Meanwhile, the minister said the government had created 11 posts of magistrate in the BRTA to check corruption and reduce harassment of service-takers.

At present only two magistrates are carrying out the job, he said. The minister hoped that the new recruitments would help improve situation significantly.

Obaidul Quader asked BRTA Chairman ALM Abdur Rahman to maintain transparency in the appointment processes and other activities in the organisation.



Hasina Khatun waits to see the body of her nephew at Adharchandra High School in Savar for the sixteenth day yesterday following the collapse of Rana Plaza on April 24.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Sampan procession held to save Karnaphuli river

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Aimed at creating awareness about saving the river Karnaphuli from pollution and illegal grabbing, a sampan procession was brought out in the river in Chittagong yesterday.

Karnaphuli Nodi Sampan Majhi Kalyan Samiti Federation and Chattagram Anchohik Sangskriti Academy jointly organised the event at around 11:00am.

Over 300 boats participated in the procession from Abhoymitra Ghat to Banglabazar Ghat of the river being imbued with the slogan, Karnaphuli Banchlay Bangladesh Banchbay (if the Karnaphuli is saved, Bangladesh will be saved).

Speakers at a rally at Abhoymitra Ghat following the procession urged the government to take necessary steps to save the Karnaphuli from pollution and encroachment.

The Halda (river) researcher and Chittagong University Associate Prof Md Monjurul Kibria, Chittagong College Prof Mohammad Idrich Ali, Chattagram Anchohik Sangskriti Academy Director Aliur Rahman, and the federation President SM Pear Ali addressed the rally.

Diamond Cement Director Hakim Ali inaugurated the procession. In this regard, a sampan khela (boat game) and rendition of local songs will be held on Charpatharghata CDA ground in the city today.

'DISTORTING ISLAM' Confiscate Qawmi, Wahabi, atheist, Jamaat publications

Demands Ahle Sunnat Wal Jama'at at leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sunni Islamist organisation Ahle Sunnat Wal Jama'at at yesterday demanded that the government confiscate all Islam-distorting publications by Qawmi madrasas, Wahabis, atheists and Jamaat-e-Islami founder Abul A'la Maududi and his followers.

Addressing a discussion Ahle Sunnat organised in the capital's Jatiya Press Club, the Ahle Sunnat leaders also demanded incorporating the Alia madrasa syllabus into Qawmi madrasas and monitoring activities of members of "Tablighi Jamaat", which preaches Islam.

Hefajat-e-Islam and Jamaat activists and teachers and students of Qawmi madrasas tarnished the image of Islam by burning religious books and damaging Baitul Mukarram Mosque and Golap Shah Mazar in the capital on May 5, they said.

They, alongside atheist bloggers who allegedly defamed Islam and Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), should be arrested and handed down the highest punishment, said the leaders.

They announced to assemble 20 lakh people from around the country at a gathering of Sunni Muslims in the capital on May 25 to, what they said, counter Hefajat's May 5 gathering and press home the demands.

Ahle Sunnat Member Secretary Mosaheb Uddin Baktiar said atheist bloggers and Hefajat men who were trying to distort the principles of Islam were the enemies of Islam and had "evil political motives".

"Sunnis, who neither belong to Awami League nor BNP, are the real followers of Islam," he claimed, urging all to follow the Sunni ideology.

Terming the Qawmi madrasas the root of all militancy, he said, parents should not push their kids towards militancy by enrolling them in Qawmi madrasas.

Ahle Sunnat Coordinator MA Matin said Hefajat-e-Islam should be banned as it has been tarnishing the image of Islam at home and abroad on the pretext of protecting it.

Ahle Sunnat Presidium Member Abul Qeshem Rezve presided over the discussion.

HEFAJAT'S ATROCITIES

Another bullet-hit man dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man, who received a bullet wound in clashes in Paltan area during Dhaka seize programme of Hefajat-e-Islam, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

The deceased Farhan Raza, 30, received the injury during the clashes between law enforcers and Hefajat men on May 5.

Farhan's brother Ferdous said Farhan was a correspondent of a Chapainawabganj-based local newspaper.

He, however, refused to make any comment about Farhan's Dhaka visit and his affiliation with Hefajat-e-Islam.

Earlier on Wednesday, Alamgir Hossain, 38, another bullet-injured in the same incident, died at the DMCH.

Road crashes kill eight

METRO DESK

Eight people were killed and 12 others injured in separate road accidents in the country on Wednesday and yesterday.

Our Tangail correspondent reports, five people, including three brothers, were killed as a truck ran them over on Bangabandhu Bridge connecting road at Tangail Sadar upazila yesterday.

They were sitting on bundles of cloth which were being ferried by a pick-up van. They fell on the road as the driver suddenly braked the vehicle.

The dead are the brothers -- Nazim Uddin, 55, Nazrul Islam, 50, and Anwar Hossain, 52, -- and Dewan Ali, 45, and Shahidul Islam Kalu, 42. The five of Kalihati upazila were cloth traders.

Our Narayanganj correspondent adds, two people were killed and 12 others injured as a truck veered out of control and hit a motorbike, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw and a bicycle on Madanpur-Gazipur road in Sonargaon upazila yesterday morning.

The dead are motorcyclist Farid Hossain, 40, and Al Amin, 24. The injured, including the CNG driver and a passenger, were rushed to different hospitals.

Our Jessore correspondent reports, a youth was killed as a truck ran him over in front of Jessore Kotwali Police Station on Wednesday night.

Sohanur Rahman Shohag, 25, of the upazila, was an honours student of English department at Jessore City College.

KAMARUZZAMAN VERDICT

Jamaat-Shibir clash with cops in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Jamaat-Shibir activists clashed with police and exploded bombs at two places in Rajshahi yesterday after announcement of the verdict in the war crimes case against Jamaat leader Muhammad Kamaruzzaman.

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police Commissioner SM Moniruzzaman said activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and pro-Jamaat Islami Chhatra Shibir barricaded Rajshahi-Naogaon road by felling logs and electricity poles around 4:00pm for half-an-hour. Law enforcers fired rubber bullets, tear gas and sound grenades to disperse the attackers.

Shibir activists put barricade on Kharkhari Bypass Road by burning tyres.

Stray incidents mark hartal in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The second day of the two-day countrywide hartal enforced by BNP-led 18-party alliance passed off amid some stray incidents in Chittagong city yesterday.

Four picketers riding on two motorbikes set fire to a bus at the 3rd Shah Amanat Bridge intersection in Bakalia area at about 5:00pm, said Mirza Saiem Mahmud, assistant commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (Kotwali zone).

During police action, the picketers hurled brick chips at the law enforcers, the police said adding that one of them was caught.

Police picked up two pro-Jamaat Islami Chhatra Shibir activists with two bottles of petrol in Gani Bakery area at around 4:45pm, said AKM Mohiuddin, officer-in-charge of Kotwali police station.

Hartal supporters brought out processions from different points in the city and ended at BNP office in Kazir Dewri area.

Throughout the day, they reportedly exploded two cocktails near the party's rally before its office to create panic.

However, vehicular traffic and train services were normal. Chittagong port functioned as usual.

No inter-district buses left the city.

Meanwhile, the hartal passed off peacefully in the 14 upazilas of Chittagong district.

Rejoinder, our reply

Elite Land Ltd authorities in a rejoinder contested a report published on The Daily Star on April 30 under a headline "Elite City housing project in Ctg illegal: HC".

The rejoinder, signed by Elite's Managing Director Md Mamun Chowdhury, claimed that the High Court bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Zafar Ahmed delivered a verdict declaring the project legal.

The verdict came on April 29 following a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) last year challenging the legality of the project's operation, starting in 2011.

OUR REPLY
Upon receipt of the rejoinder The Daily Star contacted Deputy Attorney General Mokhlesur Rahman and Bela's lawyer Iqbal Kabir Lytton.

Both of them confirmed that the HC disposed of the writ petition, which does not mean that the HC declared the project legal. The full text of the verdict is yet to be released, they said.



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