



HIGHWAY HAZARD, AS ALWAYS

Pictures say it all. *Clockwise from top left*, a muddy stretch of Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Trishal; the highway narrowed due to construction of a culvert at Mashkanda in Mymensingh sadar; a crater developed on the road at Chandra in Gazipur; a run-down part of Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Sitakunda.

PHOTO: STAR

No relief on highways

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materials and dug-up mud will force the vehicles to slow down, making the journey unusually longer.
Truck driver Jahangir said it takes him seven to eight hours to reach Feni from Chittagong due to the battered condition of the road. "But eight hours should be enough to reach Dhaka from Chittagong."
The road from Sitakunda to Chittagong gate is in a pitiful state, reports our Chittagong office.
Relating his last year's experience, Probal Barua, who frequently travels from Dhaka to Chittagong, said the journey on the highway took up to 15 hours ahead of Eid.
The journey on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway may be the same as that of last year when it took up to 12 hours. The reasons were similar to those of this year -- potholes at numerous spots and problems caused by the ongoing expansion

work.
Even if passengers overcome the hazardous stretch from Uttara to Joydevpur, they will experience a bumpy travel. Sitting in the vehicle is difficult at some points, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.
Four separate routes lead to the Dhaka-Sylhet highway. The most dreadful is the one from Tongi station towards Narsingdi. One can also use the 33-foot under-construction Purbachal road or the road from Jatrabari and Banasri to Sultana Kamal bridge. Whichever road is taken, commuters will have to negotiate the troublesome Bhulta crossing.
Amin Bazar and Savar Bazar will be the major bottlenecks for those travelling to the southern and northern districts.
The Nabinagar-Chandra road was expanded recently but both sides of it have been occupied at different



points, which will slow down vehicular movement. Besides, the two-lane road from Chandra to Bhupur near Bangabandhu Bridge will struggle to cope with the heavy traffic. Potholes at some points on the road will add to the woes of the home-goers, reports our Tangail correspondent.
However, the journey, after the Bangabandhu Bridge is crossed, is expected to be comfortable since the roads in the northern districts are in good shape.
But trips to the southern districts will be distressing. Vehicles using the Paturia-Daulatdia ferry terminal may have to wait for ferries for hours. Those heading for Jessore and Khulna will have to take the battered Kushtia-Khulna road, our Kushtia correspondent says.
A smooth ferry service through Mawa-Kaorakadi will ease movement of traffic bound for Barisal,

Copalganj and Bagerhat.
The roads connecting Barisal with other districts are riddled with potholes. The 48-km Barisal-Burgata road that connects Dhaka is in a sorry state as it has not been repaired for years, reports our Barisal correspondent.
Train and launch passengers will also suffer. Those heading for the Sadarghat launch terminal will be caught in congestion at Gulistan for hours. As for railway passengers, many of them often cannot get into the trains even after buying advance tickets as the stations and the trains remain jam-packed.
Though people do manage to cross the exit points, they will face hassles on the highways if all the roads are not repaired soon, according to Professor Shamsul Haq, a transport and urbanisation expert.
"If there is an accident or a vehicle

breaks down on a road, it will create a long tailback," said Prof Haq, who teaches at Buet's civil engineering department.
"It will become a disaster for all if it rains," he said, adding that the government should go for a sustainable solution to this problem rather than repair roads every year.
The communications ministry is in a hurry to repair the potholes and damaged parts of the highways with brickbats and sand on a temporary basis.
The ministry has cancelled holidays for all staff of its Roads and Highways Department to keep the roads usable. It has put restrictions on a plying of trucks, save those carrying essential goods, to ease traffic movement. The expansion work of Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Mymensingh highways will remain suspended after July 20.

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader, who has been crisscrossing the country to see road conditions and development works since taking office in 2011, said all highways across the country would be in a better condition by July 20.
On Sunday, he told The Daily Star that incessant rain and overloading were responsible for the poor state of the roads. "The situation will not be as bad as it was under the previous communications minister."
This year, roads are in better conditions than in the past, he added.
But the latest survey carried out by the Roads and Highways Department on its 21,000-km roads contradicts his claim.
According to the survey, about 41 percent of national highways are in a bad state. Of them, 12 percent, full of potholes, are in the worst condition.

PM to meet Cameron on July 22

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to have a bilateral meeting with her British counterpart David Cameron on July 22 during her three-day visit to attend the first-ever G8 Summit in London.
She has been invited by Cameron to attend the summit, hosted by the UK government and Unicef.
Diplomatic sources told The Daily Star yesterday that the UK side has confirmed the schedule for the Hasina-Cameron meeting on the sidelines of the G8 Summit on July 22, when the two leaders will discuss issues of common concerns.
The invitation and subsequent meeting are considered important since the United Kingdom and the European Union expressed disappointment over the January 5 parliamentary polls that saw 153 seats elected uncontested amid a boycott

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Police behaviour shames the state

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home in the city was raided and the vile way in which he was beaten in his bathroom before being taken to the Mirpur Police Station and killed in medieval fashion. The medieval, one might add, is not merely in the torture Sujana, a trader in garment waste, was subjected to. It was also in the despicable way in which he was brutalised before his wife and child. Here were three helpless individuals being humiliated by the machinery of the state. In the end, that machinery put the life out of one of them.
The need now is clear and urgent. Sub-inspector Jahidur Rahman Khan, who put Sujana through all that undeserved punishment and who clearly has shamed this nation by his inexcusable behaviour, must be brought under the pale of the law. It will not be enough to "close" him, in police parlance. Neither will it satisfy citizens to be told that investigations are on into the allegations against the SI. This SI has insulted the uniform he wears and has humiliated the department he serves. It becomes the responsibility of

his superiors to see to it that he pays for his criminal act in the same way that it becomes the responsibility of other senior, responsible police officers to take action against any of their subordinates who have wounded, maimed or pushed individuals like Sujana to death.
As we write, we also remain aware of the pain Sujana's family goes through. His widow Momtaz Sultana Lucy has alleged that Sujana had been paying between Tk 5,000 and 25,000 a month to local thugs and the police. Such allegations are not uncommon; and suspicions of a nexus between local goons and corrupt policemen have always been there. It now becomes the job of the state, through constituting a proper, high-powered inquiry committee, to go into Lucy's allegations, indeed into similar accusations made by others in recent months. The patience of citizens wears thin.
This is not the first time that a citizen has died through police brutality. Reports of perfectly healthy men being detained by the police, taken to police stations and then emerging as corpses

have constantly landed on newspaper desks. And the result? Hardly anything of consequence. Rare is the instance when a police officer patently guilty of causing a citizen's death has been punished in adequate measure. Rare too is the instance of aggrieved families being able to come by justice once their sons and brothers and fathers and husbands have died at police stations or at hospitals after they have thoroughly been brutalised by men who, as law enforcers, have cheerfully chosen to be law-breakers?
Action must be taken swiftly against SI Jahid. There are allegations against him of being responsible for the custodial death of a young man in Pallabi in February this year. And now the 35-year-old Sujana is dead, because of Jahid's brutality. The additional deputy commissioner of police (Mirpur division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police heads a three-member probe committee to look into the circumstances leading to Sujana's death.
The circumstances are out in the open. A young man has his home invaded by the police, beaten up

before his family, taken to the local police station, beaten up even worse and dies. Will the committee take notice? Does the ADC need more information?
Custodial deaths are a broad hint of the collapse of civilised order in a state. And in conditions where citizens must live in endless fear of the police, the truth is writ large: it is an entire nation which remains intimidated by the very forces that must guarantee its safety.
It is time to call for sweeping reforms of the police. The cliché that the police are friends of the people has lost meaning. A wholesale change in the police department, in its hierarchy, is called for. If senior police officers cannot keep their subordinates on the leash, if they cannot penalise them against charges of corruption, they must leave or be asked to leave.
There are good, well-meaning, professional policemen around. Unfortunately, it is the bad ones around them, with their ugly behaviour, that have the upper hand. Must these bad eggs remain in the basket?

We are all world

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Captain Philipp Lahm hoisted the World Cup trophy to a giant roar from the crowd.
"What a mood here, thanks so much to everyone," Lahm said as he passed the golden statuette to his fellow players.
Team members wearing black shirts emblazoned with the number one took the stage in groups to greet ecstatic supporters.
They carried a giant banner reading "Obrigado Fans", "thank you" in Portuguese in a nod to tournament hosts Brazil, and "the fourth title is ours".
Mario Goetze, who scored the only goal in Sunday's nail-biter final against Argentina, called the Mannschaft's win "a dream".
"We played an amazing tournament," he said. "It's an incredible feeling."
Midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger appeared with the black, red and gold German flag draped from his shoulders, with a bandage still affixed below his right eye from an injury he suffered in a clash during the final.
The extra-time victory against Argentina earned a fourth title for the German team and the first for the country since national reunification in 1990.

Rejoinder, our reply

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He also said that the report was made on Khalilur Rahman's (a client of the bank) false claim. He said Rahman is a loan defaulter of Premier Bank.
Haroon also claimed that no officials of Premier Bank were involved in this money withdrawal allegation from a client's account.
The Premier Bank rejoinder, issued by its managing director Majedur Rahman, also protested against the news report.
The bank said the report alleging embezzlement of money by some bank officials in the account of Khalilur Rahman, proprietor of M/S Rumi Enterprise, is baseless and ill-

motivated. It said Khalilur Rahman, proprietor of M/S. Rumi Enterprise availed a large amount of loan from the bank and he failed to repay the loan and, accordingly, the account was classified as a defaulter borrower. The bank also filed suits under Artha Rin Ain and Negotiable Instruments Act for recovery of the loan.
Premier Bank also said Abu Haniff Khan, additional managing director of the bank, has been implicated falsely. Khan had been in service with the bank from July 28 2005 to October 29 2007 and he was not in Bangladesh from October 08 2008 to December 08 2008. He again joined the bank on February 05 2009 and has been in service till date.

OUR REPLY
The Daily Star has published the news report based on the findings of the Bangladesh Bank (BB) and Anti-Corruption Commission reports.
The BB probe report found anomalies on the part of the bank officials concerned. The report also questioned how a bank could disburse such a big amount of money despite 'mismatch' in signature with the actual account holder. Our correspondent talked to a deputy governor of BB, who also admitted that they found huge elements of corruption in the issue and, accordingly, they have referred the case to the ACC for further investigation.
Then the Daily Star talked to ACC

officials, including its chairman, before filing the report. ACC Chairman M Bodiuzzaman told this correspondent that the ACC had evidence of Tk 62 crore embezzlement from the account holder's money. The chairman said the ACC was sure that bank officials were involved in the scam, but could not confirm BH Haroon's involvement. And, accordingly, The Daily Star mentioned it in its report.
Different documents, including Khalilur's letters to the finance minister, Bangladesh Bank Governor and the chairman of the Anti-corruption Commission showed that Haroon pocketed his money by abusing his power as vice chairman of

the bank. Those documents showed that the then branch manager of Bangshal and some other officials at the head office collaborated with Haroon.
The Daily Star also found that Khalilur and Haroon are from the same area in Jhalakathi, and they have known each other for 25 years. Khalilur, also joint secretary general of Jatiya Party (Manju), had partnership in construction business with Haroon and his brother Mojibul Haque Kamal for 12 years.
In the report, The Daily Star raised two vital issues -- video footage and loan adjustment -- which neither Haroon nor the bank responded to in their rejoinders. When told that

there must be video footage of who took the money from the bank, Shamsuddin Chowdhury, the then manager of Bangshal branch said, "Yes, there should be..."
It was also a big surprise why the bank did not adjust its Tk 4.5 crore loans to Khalilur Rahman, who had Tk 134 crore in his account. When The Daily Star asked BH Haroon and the bank's top management why Khalilur's loans had not been adjusted from his account, they failed to come up with an answer.
Haroon also claimed that no bank officials were involved in this case. But he did not make it clear as to how he was sure about that without carrying out any investigation.