



Ignoring a DMP warning sign asking buses not to stop and take or drop passengers at Shahbagh intersection, a double-decker and another bus stop and take in passengers. Right, careless pedestrians cross the busy intersection while vehicles are moving on the street. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Total chaos

FROM PAGE 1
Shahbagh intersection.
As Sonali was trying to cross the street, a bus of Jatrabari-Farmgate-Gabtali route ran over her in the morning, leaving her dead on the spot.
Khadija, who came to the city from Comilla, was crushed to death under a bus at Shahbagh intersection while trying to cross the street along with her sister and brother-in-law.
Talking to these correspondents yesterday noon, traffic sergeants at Shahbagh police box expressed their helplessness in controlling traffic in the area.
Wishing anonymity, a traffic sergeant said they tried to make people follow the rules while using roads.
Instead of using designated stops in front of the BSMMU hospital, he said, buses would stop or slow down in the middle of the busy intersection to pick up or drop off passengers.
Abdus Salam, driver of a Gabtoli-Gulistan route bus, alleged that often passengers hurriedly come to the middle of the road and try to board moving buses.
"This [act of passengers] forces us to stop the bus in the middle of the road and violate traffic rules," he said while waiting for passengers at Shahbagh

intersection.
Shakil, a helper of a Mirpur-bound bus, said due to limited seats, he often kept the gate of the bus closed and refused to take passengers.
"Still, many people force me, hit hard on the gate, and run along with the slowly moving bus for several yards on the road at Shahbagh intersection to get on," he said.
Contacted, Khan Muhammad Rezwana, deputy commissioner of traffic (south division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they would launch an awareness campaign next month on using foot bridges.
They would distribute leaflets among people and also arrange programmes at schools in this regard, he said.

Farmers Bank

FROM PAGE 1
Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, also a senior leader of the ruling Awami League, of these irregularities.
The BB also asked the bank to punish the corrupt bankers, but the board of the bank turned a deaf ear to the advice.
Depositors are at risk as the bank failed to follow rules and regulations in sanctioning and disbursing loans, a BB official said yesterday.

Biggest ever yaba haul

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Ali operated his illicit business under the guise of a developer named Ekushe Properties while the two others are his close aids. One of the accomplices, Mohammad Mohiuddin, has been studying to become a chartered accountant.
A team of Rab-7 on Saturday spotted two unnamed trawlers in deep sea around 100 miles north of Patenga and began chasing them with a speedboat.
Law enforcers finally caught one of the trawlers near Patenga coast the next afternoon, in which they found 27.5 lakh pieces of yaba. Ali, 52, and his accomplice Hamid Ullah, 32, were arrested then for smuggling the drugs.
Quizzing them, Rab members learnt that Ali's another aid Mohiuddin was on the way to Dhaka city with another consignment of yaba tablets.
Hunting him down, law enforcers caught him with 50 thousand yaba pills at the airport rail station in Dhaka early yesterday.
The street value of the contraband drugs is Tk 113 crore, Benazir said.
"In my knowledge and probably in the history of Bangladesh, it is the largest ever haul," the Rab chief said.
With the latest seizure, Rab recovered around 92 lakh pieces of yaba from across the country since January

last year while Border Guard Bangladesh seized around 50 lakh pieces of yaba in the last one year.
A BGB official wishing anonymity said almost 99 percent of the drugs seized by border guard personnel were found along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.
More syndicates like the one led by Ali are active in the business of smuggling and circulating yaba pills, according to Rab.
Their operation is not limited to yaba business, Benazir said, adding that they had been involved in smuggling of firearms too, posing a serious threat to the national security.
According to the information extracted from the arrestees and the intelligence, one Myanmar national named Bomong and Rohingya national Ayatollah are main kingpins who supply contraband items to the syndicates.
Bomong runs the business from Myanmar while Ayatollah visits Bangladesh at times.
Rab suspects that Ayatollah has already obtained Bangladesh citizenship and national identity card.
Benazir also said Rab had identified a godfather and at least three more Chittagong-based syndicates.
He, however, did not disclose the name of the godfather and those who

lead the syndicates.
The Bangladesh-Myanmar bordering area is the main centre of yaba smuggling.
Smugglers earlier used coastal routes for the smuggling, but as the law enforcement agencies intensified vigilance in coastal areas of Teknaf and Cox's Bazar, they began taking a detour through deep sea to Barisal and Khulna, Rab said.
If the capacity of Barisal and Khulna battalions is increased, Rab could be more successful in dealing with yaba smugglers, robbers and pirates who hold people hostage in deep sea for ransom, Benazir said.
They should be provided with speedboats like the one with which Rab conducted Saturday's drive. The rough aquatic sea search and rescue boat that can obtain speed as much as 35 nautical miles per hour was recently given by the relief and disaster management ministry.
Replying to a query, the Rab chief said legal action was not enough to curb drugs smuggling, rather a social movement should be waged to dissuade people from taking drugs.
Speedy trial and punishment of yaba traders and smugglers are also imperative to fight the social menace, he added.

Daud merchant to be sent back to India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said Indian criminal Abdur Rauf Daud Merchant, a suspected associate of underworld don Daud Ibrahim, would be repatriated.
An initiative had been taken to send Daud Merchant back as his jail terms expired, the minister said while briefing reporters at his Secretariat office.
Police arrested Daud in 2009 for intruding into Bangladesh.
The minister said it was not like bringing anyone back by extraditing someone.
"There are some foreign nationals in Bangladesh jails who have served their sentences. We are contacting the embassies concerned to send them back," the minister said.
They would be sent back on completion of the process, he added.
Daud was rearrested outside Kashimpur Central Jail in Gazipur as soon as he was released on bail in December 2014.
He was hauled before a Dhaka court and put on a three-day remand in a case filed under section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Cabinet's no to retirement age extension

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cheating to obtain freedom fighter certificates to get job extension.
Such misuse of the certificates would have gone high, if the retirement age was extended, said the minister, asking not to be named.
Under the current rules, freedom fighters, their children and grandchildren enjoy 30 percent quota in government jobs. In addition, war heroes' children and grandchildren get special quotas in public schools, colleges and universities.
Contacted, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque declined to make any comment about the cabinet decision.
Briefing reporters after the meeting, Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Shafiq Alam said the Liberation War Affairs Ministry in July 2006 sent a proposal to the Prime Minister's Office to raise the retirement age of freedom fighter public servants to 65 from 57 at the time.
But the then BNP government and later the caretaker government did not

do so.
Later in 2013, freedom fighter Jamal Uddin Shikdar moved the High Court, which issued a rule on the government, asking why freedom fighters' retirement age should not be made 65. It also ordered the government to place the proposal before the cabinet within 60 days of the order for cabinet decision. Later, 680 freedom fighters became parties to Shikdar's petition.
In response, the government moved the Appellate Division against the High Court order. On November 16 last year, the apex court ordered the government to comply with the HC directives.
In line with the order, the issue was placed before the cabinet yesterday.
Though the government did not approve the 2006 proposal, it extended the service age of the freedom fighter public servants twice since 2010.
In April 2010, it was raised by two years from 57. Then in November

2012, freedom fighters' retirement age was made 60.
Following the 2012 extension, many public servants collected freedom fighter certificates through forgery only to have their service tenure extended.
In the last five years, around 11,150 people obtained the freedom fighter certificates.
But fake freedom fighters soon came under scanner amid widespread allegations.
In 2014, the Liberation War Affairs Ministry found that many obtained the certificates through forgery and without following the proper procedures.
Since then the ministry has revoked at least 1,300 such certificates, around 250 of them obtained by government officials, Sufi Abdullil Maruf, public relations officer of the ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.
Four of the government officials were secretaries. They are the then health secretary Niaz Uddin Mia, the

then Public Service Commission secretary AKM Amir Hossain, former Liberation War Affairs secretary KH Masud Siddiqui (then an OSD), and former joint secretary to the Liberation War Affairs Ministry Abul Kashem Talukder (then an OSD). All of them collected the certificates in 2013.
The certificate of former PMO secretary Molla Waheeduzzaman, now chairman of the Privatisation Commission, was withheld because he obtained it without following rules. Waheeduzzaman now enjoys the status of a state minister.
Besides, the ministry revoked certificates of 2,367 members of a special guerrilla force formed by the NAP-Communist Party-Chhatra Union combine in 1971.
After the 2012 extension, the number of freedom fighters in government service stood at around 11,000. Of them, those in the final years of their jobs now were at best 15 or 16 years old during the Liberation War in 1971.

Solution in short time

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He, however, said they did not compromise on their demands. "We have not made any unjust demands. We have voiced our legal demands."
The teachers sat with the prime minister on the sixth day of their stoppage at all 37 public universities for the removal of "disparities" and the retention of the selection grade and time scale, following an invitation from the Prime Minister's Office.
The strike led by FBUTA has crippled academic activities at the universities.
During the break for Maghrib prayers, Hasina had an unofficial meeting with eight members of the federation, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Ehsanul Karim told The Daily Star.
The prime minister told teachers that she would work a way out for promotion from grade-3 to grade-1, he said adding she also assured them of reviewing the other demands.
FBUTA leaders said the premier had discussed their issues in a cordial atmosphere for around one and a half

hours.
"We put forward the reasons why we have launched this movement for several months," said Prof Maksud Kamal.
He said the prime minister asked top government officials, present at the meeting, to solve the problem as quickly as possible.
Asked when exactly they would return to classes, he said everything depended on how fast the problem was solved.
The talks were held on the sidelines of a rice cake festival which, hosted by Gono Bhaban, was attended by people from different professions.
Teachers under the banner of FBUTA have been protesting the eighth pay scale since May last year, pressing for a four-point charter of demands including formation of a commission to initiate an independent pay scale for public university teachers.
Meanwhile, teachers of non-government educational institutions yesterday threatened the government to go for a strike if their demand for

Is making profit BPC's only job?

FROM PAGE 1
world's leading oil producer Saudi Arabia continues to keep its production high to keep oil price low. This has not only hit shale oil production negatively—but also hurt Saudi Arabia's own economy. The IMF estimated last year that Saudi Arabia needs a global oil price of around \$106 a barrel to balance existing levels of expenditure with revenues.
The price of oil this week has hit a low of \$25 dollars per barrel. While the oil producing countries would like to see the price go up, international analysts say the worst for them is yet to come.
According to reports from the British newspaper Telegraph, the price of oil is heading towards \$10 a barrel. This prediction has been made by Standard Chartered, Goldman Sachs, RBS and Morgan Stanley.
Now Iran has entered the market, contributing to oil price drop. As sanctions on Iran were lifted, the country, that had been selling its oil to a handful of countries, would now be able to export worldwide.
British newspaper Independent reported Sunday that the Saudi Arabia stock market has crashed as sanctions

on Iran were lifted. Iran's plan to ramp up daily exports from one million barrels currently to 3.4 million barrels in seven months' time will see a new glut of oil in a flooded market and threatens to drive the price to its lowest level in decades.
So what does it mean to our country?
The global oil price slump has made the government and the BPC very happy because the BPC is set to make Tk ten thousand crore profit this fiscal. It had also made good profit last fiscal year and cleared its cumulative losses of around Tk five thousand crore.
But the government owned BPC and the government are not lowering the high oil price any time soon. BPC argues that it has accumulated losses of Tk 44,528.99 crore between 2001 and 2015. At the same time, the government has also given hefty subsidy to oil based power generation. So if they have incurred so much loss, why not let them make some profit?
According to the BPC website, during this same period, BPC paid Tk 47,218 crore to the national exchequer as taxes and duties. We can surely argue that this profit (as payment to the

| ENERGY PETROLEUM PRICE IN SAARC COUNTRIES | |
|---|-----------|
| | per litre |
| Maldives | \$0.59 |
| Afghanistan | \$0.64 |
| Pakistan | \$0.73 |
| Sri Lanka | \$0.89 |
| India | \$0.94 |
| Nepal | \$0.94 |
| Bhutan | \$1 |
| Bangladesh | \$1.17 |

SOURCE: GLOBALPETROLPRICE.COM

antly. It's like the government is taking the money from its coat pocket and putting it in pant pocket.
The government could have taken financial measures while the BPC was incurring losses. For instance, why make the BPC pay duties or taxes for oil import when the price is too high? To pay this tax and to purchase oil, the BPC turned to borrowing from banks and it has not paid back its arrears completely. There are many organisations like Bima that had not paid BPC all its arrears. A financial chaos prevails and we see no measures being taken there.
Consider a financial measure the government took this year. Till this fiscal year, there was no import duty on rice. This year there is a tax to discourage rice import as we are now self-sufficient. The government on and off waives duties on sugar import because we do not produce enough sugar. So why does the government remain adamant on collecting import duties from oil which we do not produce?
But all things aside, the biggest issue here is whether the government policymakers see the deep impact of oil price on our everyday lives and our personal monthly budget and how a

proper oil price adjustment can make our economy and individual lives even more vibrant.
The price of diesel—the dominant fuel used in the transport sector among others—was just Tk 15.65 per litre in 2000. Its price was hiked up to Tk 61 in 2012 to cover the loss incurred by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) due to costly imports.
This significant rise in price was felt immediately as the cost of transportation went up. The present rate of bus fare—which is supposed to be one of the cheapest means to commute—is Tk 1.70 per kilometre, and for minibuses Tk 1.60 per kilometre (plus there is a minimum charge). Commuting from Uttara to Farmgate can cost you Tk 20 minimum to Tk 40 maximum (on luxury buses). Just a few years back, this fare was just half.
Similarly if you took an inter-district bus ride to, say Mymensingh three years back, you could do it for Tk 150 maximum. Now you have to pay Tk 250.
Now just imagine the transport cost implications on everyone's life in our country. From commuting to office or school to doing your groceries, you are

actually spending more money than you should be.
The vegetable, fish, rice or chicken that come to Dhaka from the producers everyday are all bearing the extra cost of an artificially bloated fuel price that is passed on to the consumers.
Just imagine, if these costs were slashed by half how productive our lives would have become. We would have more money to spend for other things—not just commuting between Uttara and Jatrabari.
According to the Centre for Policy Dialogue, fuel price cuts will have positive impacts on consumers, producers, investment and economic growth. Only the government's profit will go down. At a recent media briefing, the CPD also projected that a 10 percent reduction in fuel prices would help the GDP grow by 0.3 percent, and increase export by 0.4 percent and household consumption by 0.6 percent. And inflation will decline by 0.2 percent.
We do not want any government organisation to run on losses. But the BPC is making profits in such a ridiculous way that it would make the world's greediest corporations blush. The government's job is not to make