

# Heavy vehicles still using risky bridge in Savar

EMRAN HOSSAIN

It was around 3:30pm. A brick-laden truck was crossing the squeaking and rattling Bhakurta Steel Bridge over the Turag river in Savar.

But suddenly, a labourer, who was standing on the loads of the flat bed facing the opposite direction of travel, had his head hit by a concrete bar erected at its end. The bar had a sign that forbids heavy vehicles from using the bridge.

As the man screamed for help, the driver pulled over and then drove to the main road probably to take the injured to the nearest hospital.

The incident happened on March 7, just five days after The Daily Star published a photo of the rickety bridge. Its caption said buses and trucks use the bridge every day, ignoring the warning sign and posing risks.

Apparently, nothing has been done to repair the bridge since this correspondent made an earlier visit to the

spot on March 1.

Heavy vehicles were still using the worn-out bridge that had a total of 240 steel plates. There were steel patches almost all over.

Also, two concrete bars with the warning signs on both sides of the bridge may cause further accidents at night as there was no street light.

Contacted, Amir Hossain, secretary of Bhakurta Union Parishad, said local UP Chairman Anwar Hossain and officials of the LGED upazila office took the initiative for erecting the bars on pillars a couple of years ago.

The move aimed at preventing heavy vehicles, which are also over 12-feet long, from using the bridge.

Over the last decade, Tk 1 lakh to 2 lakh has been spent every year to have the bridge repaired, he added.

UP Chairman Anwar Hossain claimed that they do repairs of the bridge almost every month.

Although there was no assessment of how unsafe the bridge was, LGED's

Savar upazila engineer Khandker Asaduzzaman said, "I asked others not to let heavy vehicles use it."

Sharful Anam Khan, Dhaka's divisional executive engineer, said they had replaced four steel plates with stronger ones and some of the nuts and bolts last month.

The LGED planned to continue its regular repairs of the bridge, he said.

Hundreds of CNG-run auto-rickshaws, human hauliers, minibuses, pick-ups, motorcycles, cars and trucks use the bridge daily, according to locals.

UP Chairman Anwar Hossain said the shipment from at least 40 brick kilns in Bhakurta union depends entirely on the bridge.

The 379-foot bridge connects 27 villages of Bhakurta union, with about 30,000 residents, to the upazila town in Savar.

People from Kolatia, Taranagar, Hazratpur, and Ruhitpur of Keraniganj are also heavily dependent on it.



A truck crosses the rickety Bhakurta Steel Bridge over the Turag river even though a large sign on the bridge forbids heavy vehicles from using it. The Daily Star published a similar photo of the bridge at the beginning of this month, mentioning the risks involved. But the authorities have apparently done nothing yet to repair it.

PHOTO: EMRAN HOSSAIN

## Five 'JMB' men held in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion claims to have arrested five members of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in a raid at capital's Demra last night.

The arrestees are Hujaiifa Akand alias Shaheen alias Siyam, 25, chief of Mymensingh JMB, and operatives Yasin Ali alias Shafique, 31, Mamunur Rashid, 23, Abul Hashem, 32, and Shafiqul Islam Khalid, 30, said a Rapid Action Battalion press release.

Rezaul Karim, an assistant director of the Rab-10, said a team of the elite force raided a building in Katherpool area around 9:00pm. They had information that some militants had gathered there to carry out subversive activities.

They arrested five JMB men and recovered bomb-making materials along with books provoking extremism in the drive, he said.

The press release claimed that during primary interrogations, the arrestees admitted to planning to carry out attacks and subversive activities in Dhaka and elsewhere.

## UK team firm

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Prime Minister's Office, told The Daily Star that the UK did not change its policy and it was unlikely that it would change in the near future.

The source said the team from the British government, which is looking into the airport security on behalf of the entire European Union, was very serious about the security issues at the airport and the March 31 deadline.

"The UK team wants to see that the things are done by March 31," said a meeting participant.

There is no immediate chance of withdrawal of the ban on direct cargo to the UK from Bangladesh, the source said.

Asked whether the UK would ban direct passenger flights too, the official said there was no guarantee that it would not.

The government yesterday began all-out efforts to meet the UK security expert's requirements.

Upon the UK team's proposal at the meeting, the government formed a seven-member steering committee led by the civil aviation minister to upgrade the security system of the airport to international standards.

The committee will hold a review meeting on March 20.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon led the Bangladesh delegation at the meeting while British High Commissioner in Dhaka Alison Blake led the seven-member UK team.

**FOREIGN COMPANY FOR SECURITY MANAGEMENT**

About the meeting, Menon said the UK team has handed over a list of short-, mid- and long-term requirements they deem necessary for the restructure of the airport's security system and cargo-complex.

The team also recommended some companies that have security-related expertise.

After the meeting, Bangladesh officials held another meeting with UK expert John Lovesy and decided to hire a company, the ministers said.

"As an outcome of the meeting with Lovesy, if any international expert visits Bangladesh tomorrow [today], we may sign an agreement for quick implementation of the security requirements," Menon told journalists at his temporary office at the airport yesterday afternoon.

A source said the minister instructed the civil aviation secretary to select British company G 4 as preferred by the UK team and make them a phone call to visit Bangladesh by today and sign an agreement.

"We hope we will be able to meet all their requirements within the stipulated time," Menon added.

Asked about the list of existing problems, the minister mentioned shortage of cargo scanning machines, shortage of skilled manpower, and lack of screeners to operate the scanning machines.

He, however, said the UK admitted that 70 percent of their requirements had been fulfilled.

Menon said as per their suggestion, 15 people have already been trained while another 15 were training.

"We have already hired a trainer as suggested by them. It costs us 400 pounds to train each person, but we are not worried about the money," he added.

About the long-term require-

ment, the minister said the UK team asked for sustainable capacity-building and supervision regarding security.

A participant said the British government was supporting and working with positive attitude so that Bangladesh could overcome the problem soon.

Another source said the issue of the three-term work plan was not discussed elaborately as the British team did not give it much attention since it was an old issue.

Prime Minister's Security Adviser Maj Gen (retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, PMO Secretary Suriaya Begum, Civil Aviation Secretary Khorshed Alam Chowdhury, representatives from home and foreign ministries, Caab, and the Biman chairman attended the meeting.

**CAAB CHAIRMAN REMOVED**  
Air Vice-Marshal Ehsanul Gani Chowdhury was made the new chairman of Caab. He replaces Air-Vice Marshal M Sanaul Huq.

Issuing a gazette notification, the public administration ministry yesterday confirmed the appointment of Ehsanul, who was air officer commanding at Bangladesh Air Force base Zahurul Huq in Chittagong.

M Sanaul Huq has been placed at the armed forces division, it mentioned.

**VALIDATION TEAM STARTS WORK**

A British expert yesterday started the validation work of Caab and Biman in Dhaka. He will validate the functions of Caab and Biman for five days, said a top Biman official.

The validator is a computer programme which mainly assesses an action, decision, plan, or transaction to establish that it is correct, complete, and being implemented as intended, and also delivering the intended outcome.

The audit is being conducted under the European Union's ACC3 regulations, added the Biman official.

Under the ACC3, introduced on February 1 of 2012, all air carriers carrying cargo or mail from non-EU countries to the EU must be registered as an "Air Cargo or Mail Carrier" operating into the EU from a Third Country Airport (ACC3) by an EU member state based on a valid security programme.

ACC3s must ensure that all cargo and mail carried to the EU is physically screened or have come from a secured supply chain which is EU aviation security validated.

For each carrier, ACC3 validation is required for an airport which serves as the Last Point of Departure (LPD) for flights into the EU, according to the EU regulations.

The UK-bound air carriers from Dhaka have already started re-screening of the cargo in third country airports as per the rules of the ban on direct cargo from Dhaka.

"Davis O' Sullivan, the British expert who has been working on behalf of the EU will validate the security measures for the next five days. Yesterday, he visited the cargo complex at the airport in Dhaka and spent the whole day there," the Biman official said asking not to be named.

He said earlier in pre-validation inspection, the expert made some recommendations which Biman had implemented.

"If the audit findings are positive, the temporary cargo ban to the UK from Dhaka might be lifted," the official hoped.

## Forensic team examining

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malware, which sent a total of 35 transfer orders to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York where the BB has an account. The next two days -- Friday and Saturday -- were weekend in Bangladesh.

But eight officials of the BB, as they do by rotation, came to the office for carrying out foreign exchange transactions both on Friday and Saturday but found their computers inoperative, the BB informed the Banking Division officials.

However, the BB officials did not inform the higher authorities about the computer malfunction, said an official.

He said the BB high-ups came to know about the issue on Sunday and its IT department fixed the problem by restarting the system.

The powerful malware not only hacked into the system, but also destroyed the system on the computers itself, which are used by the officials to make transfer orders. Data on the printers were also destroyed by the malware.

The Banking Division expressed resentment over the BB not informing it about the case immediately and also over the fact that the bug was able to penetrate the supposedly powerful IT system in the first place, the official added asking not to be named.

To this, BB officials said the malware was powerful enough to outsmart the BB security wall.

After a meeting with deputy governors, Banking Division Secretary Aslam Alam told reporters that the central bank appointed a forensic team to investigate the case, whose probe was already underway.

"The investigators are checking all computers of the BB," he said, adding, no doubt that there were flaws in BB's IT system.

After the heist, the government came to the realisation that the country's biggest risk lies in IT security, he said.

"IT security is not only about the Bangladesh Bank, but also about all financial institutions. Every bank has IT security systems in place. We have to examine anew how secure they are."

The BB will hold an emergency board meeting tomorrow, where the whole issue will be discussed and the next course of action determined, he said.

Speaking to the media, Deputy Governor Abu Hena Mohammad Razi Hassan said it would take two more weeks to complete the investigation.

An analysis of the IT security system of the central bank as well as the whole banking sector would be conducted and

the systems of each bank would be checked.

He said the FBI had a strong cyber security unit and the capability to see what is happening around the world.

A negotiation with the FBI is underway. "We have had a preliminary discussion with them. We have to send the FBI a formal request."

Hassan said some issues related to the due diligence by the New York Fed over the fund transfer are yet to be looked into.

He said the Fed enquired about some transfer orders purportedly sent from the BB. As a result, the payment of most of the funds was stopped. The Fed also wanted to know about the five transfer orders that slipped through.

"After getting no response from our side, those payments were made... There is a need to look into the issue. It now remains to be seen whether due diligence was done."

On bringing back money that ended up in the Philippines and Sri Lanka, he said the accounts which have been frozen in the Philippines hold only \$68,000 although \$81 million was wired into the country.

The money had gone out of the banking channel, he said.

## Muhith fumes at central bank

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appears that our cyber protection programme has flaws. It appears. I can't say definitely."

The New York Fed said there was no flaw in its system. "We have to look into the matter," said Muhith.

Asked whether the government would seek assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the US, Muhith said he couldn't comment about it at this moment. "We will take

steps depending on the situation."

Meanwhile, a team of the Banking Division led by its Secretary Aslam Alam held a meeting with the four BB deputy governors yesterday.

Later, Aslam told reporters that the central bank didn't officially inform the finance ministry about the theft, one of the biggest cyber heists in the world.

The BB board had a meeting on February 23, and the audit committee held two meetings on February 28 and

March 1, he mentioned.

"But the issue was not raised at those meetings," said Aslam.

The Banking Division team wanted to know why the BB didn't tell the finance ministry about the issue.

The banking secretary said the BB deputy governors told him that the bank initially tried to get the full picture of the incident through investigations.

"I am not satisfied with their response. The BB should have informed

us immediately."

Speaking to the media, Deputy Governor Abu Hena Mohammad Razi Hassan said the BB would issue a statement in a day or two, explaining the reasons behind the delay in making the matter public.

The statement will also explain why the finance minister or the banking secretary was not told about the matter, he said.

## Inu fails to convince dissidents

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party's split. "His [Inu's] attitudes came under question several times after his becoming a minister," he said at a press conference at parliament building yesterday afternoon.

"Inu would create barriers for his general secretary Sharif Nurul Ambia to work properly."

Badal said four out of six MPs and 10 of the 14 standing committee members were with their faction. Ambia and Proddhan were present at the press conference.

However, lawmakers Tansen and Lutfa Taher, who Badal claimed were with the rebel faction, could not be reached on their phones for comments despite repeated attempts.

JSD Standing Committee Member Prof Anwar Hossain said Lutfa Taher, widow of Anwar's brother Col Abu Taher, has been made vice-president of Inu-led committee and she was with the main party.

**'REBEL COMMITTEE UNCONSTITUTIONAL'**

Termining the Ambia-led committee unconstitutional, Inu said, "The party charter has no provision for forming a committee on the roads after boycotting the council session."

He was addressing a press conference at the JSD central office on the Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday afternoon.

On the proposal to quit the government, the JSD chief said his party would remain in the ruling alliance to continue its fight against militancy.

He then urged the rebel leaders to return to "the main party" to work unitedly to this end.

All the rebel leaders were given "important posts" in his party, Inu said. "I hope they will return and all

their confusions will be dispelled."

The JSD was founded in 1972 under the leadership of Sirajul Alam Khan by breaking away from Bangladesh Chhatra League, AL's student front.

The first major split the party experienced was in 1980 when Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan broke away and formed Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD).

The next major crack came in 1985. Senior leader ASM Abdur Rab and his followers left the JSD and formed a new party -- Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rab).

JSD CHARTER AMENDED FOR INU  
In the council, the JSD amended its constitution to make way for Inu, information minister of the current government, to become the president again.

He was first put at the party's helm through the 2002 council of the JSD and then re-elected president in the next council in 2010, according to new General Secretary Shirin Akter.

In the 2010 council, the party brought an amendment to its charter, barring anyone from becoming president twice in a row.

The councillors on Saturday unanimously approved the new amendment that annulled the previous one, and elected Inu the JSD chief once again.

According to council sources, JSD standing committee member Mustak Hossain raised a proposal that the party quit the government, saying it was losing its own identity and popularity.

The proposal was rejected by the councillors.

Mustak later joined Ambia and Badal in the rebel faction. He, however, was made a standing committee member in the Inu-led JSD.

## HC clears

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said, terming it a "violation" of rights to privacy.

Meanwhile, lawyers and rights activists expressed skepticism about how the information would be used to the advantage of city dwellers.

"Despite today's ruling by the court, I feel that collection of the information without sanction of a law is a violation of citizens' rights under article-43 of the constitution," said eminent lawyer Shahdeen Malik.

Police do not have the means to transform the huge volume of information into a database, he said.

"It is difficult to see how this information can be meaningfully used."

There are real apprehensions that the information could be misused and abused, Malik said.

Rights activist barrister Sara Hossain said the existing laws of the country do not ensure protection of data and information.

"It is a matter of great apprehension that personal information would be at the risk of being leaked and ending up at any quarter."

Sara also observed that police had already been enjoying a lot of power and that there were instances when some members of the force harassed people, abusing their power.

Talking to journalists at the DMP media centre yesterday, DMP Additional Commissioner Monirul Islam said there were scopes for legal action against those who would not provide their information to DMP officials.

"But since we are doing this to ensure people's security, we hope they would willingly comply," he added.

It would take about six months to develop a database with the information, he said, adding that until the database and software were developed, hard copies of the information would be preserved by police.