

Journo beaten up by 'forest staff for taking snap of extortion'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Forest department staff and their agents allegedly beat up a journalist as he took their photo while they were extorting money from drivers on the Dhaka-Tangail highway in Kharajora of Kaliakoir in Gazipur yesterday.

People, who claimed to have witnessed the incident, said several guards of the department were realising extortion money from truckers by halting their vehicles in the name of a search near their check post.

Sagar Ahmed, Kaliakoir correspondent of the daily Alokito Bangladesh, rushed to the spot riding a motor-bike and started taking their snaps, prompting the guards to assault the journalist after taking him to the check post, they said.



The Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) digging a pit on the newly paved KB Aman Ali road in Chittagong city recently, to install sewers. Due to a lack of coordination with the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), which constructed the road, damage is being done to the street, prolonging public sufferings, causing traffic congestion, and leading to waste of public money. PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

CWasa digs freshly paved road

CCC didn't bother to synchronise construction work with water pipe installation

ARUN BIKASH DEY, City

Just when the KB Aman Ali road is getting renovated to mitigate the water-logging crisis in Chittagong city's West Bakalia, Chittagong Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) has started digging it up to install water pipelines.

It is a glaring example of lack of coordination between Chittagong Wasa and the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), which not only brings misery to people but leads to waste of a lot of money, locals alleged.

The development work of the 1.4km road, from Chwakhazar kitchen market to Rahattar Pool, was started by CCC in December last year.

Almost two-thirds of the road, which links Chwakhazar with Chittagong-Cox's Bazar Highway, has been paved after being elevated to two feet high and the 10-inch gutters of both sides of the road have been expanded to 20 inches.

Amid the CCC work, Chittagong Wasa started digging up the newly paved road on June 6 making the situation worse for thousands of residents and commuters.

Visiting the area, this correspondent found that piles of brick chips and mud on many spots of the road have blocked half of it. Besides signboards and road-safety cones which are put in the middle of the road create traffic congestion resulting in public sufferings.

Shamsunnahar, a resident of the area, remained stuck in a traffic jam recently for around half an hour on her way to hospital to visit her ailing mother.

"I do not understand why the two organisations work at the same time and why the freshly paved road is being dug up to install pipelines," she said.

"We suffer all the time even when the road is being paved and when pipelines are installed. We will suffer again when the road will be repaired," she said. "Lack of coordination between the two vital organisations is the reason of our plight."

Echoing Shamsunnahar, another resident Nirmalendu Paul said, "Where did they go in winter? Don't they have time except the rainy season for road development and pipeline installation?"

Sources of Chittagong Wasa said installation of pipelines started in 84km of roads of Chittagong city in the first week of June under the Chittagong Water Supply Improvement and Sanitation Project.

Contacted, Deputy Director of the project Ariful Islam said they issued a letter to CCC three to four months ago, seeking their permission to install the pipelines.

"We have got a demand note from CCC in May and paid the money accordingly to it before starting the installation," he said.

"We are trying to coordinate the construction work with that of CCC but unfortunately we did not get permission for road digging before the paving work," he said.

"We are discussing with CCC officials to avoid such incidents further in other areas."

Ariful said they are just digging pits in the road and a total of 26 pits will be dug through which an under-earth drilling will be done for installation of pipelines. He also expected the installation work to be completed by June.

Denying the allegation of lack of coordination, Kazi Md Shafiqul Alam, chief executive officer of CCC, said Chittagong Wasa informed them about the installation several months ago through a letter.

"It has also paid demurrage for installation of pipelines," he said.

When asked why the road is being dug up after paving, the CCC official said they are discussing the matter with Wasa officials so that this kind of problem does not occur again. However, he denied the allegation of having no coordination between CCC and Chittagong Wasa regarding the road digging for pipeline installation.

East Jafrabad

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Seeking anonymity, a Wasa official said they were renovating the existing pump in the area for the last couple of weeks, and it might take one more week to complete.

Once it is done, the problem will go away, he said.

He added that the pump's efficiency had fallen by more than 50 percent, necessitating a renovation.

Hasina writes to Suu Kyi for stronger ties

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

In a fresh diplomatic move to build vibrant relations with neighbouring Myanmar on the backdrop of its changing political situation, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sent a special envoy to convey how greatly Dhaka values the relations with Nay Pyi Taw.

Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque took a letter of the prime minister to Myanmar's State Counsellor and Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday.

The State Counsellor of Myanmar is a position, created this April to allow for a greater role for Aung San Suu Kyi within the government of Myanmar.

Diplomatic sources in Myanmar said the Bangladesh foreign secretary reached the country yesterday, on a five-day visit to discuss with top leaders ways to make the ties stronger in the spirit of peace, non-interference, and friendly approach towards each other.

Foreign Secretary Haque is scheduled to call on Myanmar's commander-in-chief of the armed forces Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Permanent Secretary U Aung Lynn. In the letter, according to official sources, there might be an invitation to Suu Kyi to visit Bangladesh.

Officials at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and foreign ministry said Dhaka was taking special steps to chart a new course in relations with Nay Pyi Taw for socio-economic development of the peoples.

A former ambassador said Bangladesh should give Myanmar special importance under its Look East Policy.

Govt to cap family car ownership

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has planned to impose a cap on the number of cars a family can buy to reduce traffic congestion in the capital, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader told parliament yesterday.

"The process is going on to finalise the draft of the Road Transport Act-2016 in place of the Motor Vehicle Ordinance, 1983. Putting the cap on buying private vehicles has been proposed in the Road Transport Act," said the minister while replying to Awami League lawmaker Abdul Latif's query. Quader said there are over 7.29 lakh small vehicles in the capital which are registered with Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

He also said now there are 21,771 public transports, including bus, minibuss, human hauler, auto-rickshaw and taxicab, with route permits in the capital.

Meanwhile, Railways Minister Mazibul Hoque yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that the construction of railway lines on the Padma Bridge would start by January next year.

Responding to lawmakers' queries, he said the government will implement the project titled "Padma Bridge Rail Connection Project" to construct 215km railway lines stretching from Dhaka to Jessore via Mawa, Padma bridge and Bhanga. Mazibul said the construction of railway lines at Dhaka-Mawa point would begin by January next year.



Firefighters in action after a fire broke out in a multi-storey building in the capital's Uttar Badda early yesterday. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Fire in multi-storey building

Cracks develop in walls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out in a multi-storey building in the capital's Uttar Badda early yesterday.

BTI Premier Plaza consists of three interconnected buildings, all 14-storey, and the fire spread from the ground to fourth floors in two of the buildings, fire service officials said.

Twenty-eight firefighting units took around six hours to douse the blaze. The loss and cause behind the fire could not be known immediately.

A five-member committee comprising fire service officials was formed to investigate the incident, Mizanur Rahman, a duty officer at the fire service headquarters, told The Daily Star.

No casualties were reported as most of the residents of the building were awake for sehri, he said adding around 120 residents were rescued from the roof after they had gone there for safety.

Badda police said several cracks developed in different walls of the building following the fire. Different agencies, including Rajuk, visited the site but are yet to opine whether the building is risky, they said adding many did not return to their flats.

Bodi claims innocence

Court fixes July 20 for hearing arguments

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Awami League's Cox's Bazar-4 constituency lawmaker Abdur Rahman Bodi yesterday claimed himself "innocent" after a Dhaka court read out the charges brought against him by 22 prosecution witnesses in a corruption case.

Judge Abu Ahmed Jomadar of the Special Judge Court-3 fixed July 20 for hearing the arguments from both the prosecution and defence.

In a written statement, Bodi, now on bail, told the court that the charges brought against him are baseless and concocted.

On August 21, 2014, the ACC filed the case on charges of amassing illegal wealth and concealing information in his wealth statement.

DHAKA-BARISAL-MORELGANJ 5 new vessels introduced

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) starts an 11-day special service today with five new passenger vessels being introduced on the Dhaka-Barisal-Morelganj route, marking Eid.

PS Mahsud, PS Ostrich, PS Lepcha, MV Madhumoti and MV Bangalee will continue to ply till July 10, said Abul Kalam Azad, assistant general manager, BIWTC Barisal office.

PS Ostrich will ply from Dhaka on July 2, 5, and 8; from Morelganj on July 10; and from Barisal on July 1, 4 and 7.

MV Madhumoti will start from Dhaka today, July 3, 5 and 10; from Hularhat on July 4 and 9; and from Barisal on July 2.

PS Lepcha will start from Dhaka today on July 1, 4 and 10; from Hularhat on July 3, 8 and 10 from Barisal.

PS Mahsud will begin journey from Dhaka on July 1, 3, 6, and 9; from Morelganj on July 2; and from Barisal on July 5 and 8.

MV Bangalee will ply from Dhaka on July 2, 4 and 7; and from Barisal on July 3, 6 and 9.

Buddhist monks spreading

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"We want to maintain a communal harmony, which is the base of this country," he said as he was looking after the preparation of the Iftar items, which included chickpeas (chhola), onion, piyaju, dates, and muri.

Suddhananda, who was awarded Ekushey Padak for his social works in 2012, likes to distribute iftar by himself and supervises the entire initiative daily. As he was talking, Iftar preparation was almost ready and was being put in boxes and placed over a big table.

He hoped that all the religious communities will come forward in their own way to help all despite their creed, caste or religion.

The monastery authority said that before starting the event, they contacted local Islamic scholars to ascertain whether there would be any problem if they conducted the event. After getting positive answers they appointed a local restaurant owner to make the Iftar in their kitchen, they said.

Mohammad Aziz, a day labourer who came to receive Iftar, told this correspondent that they were very grateful for the monastery's gesture. "They arranged this to help the poor, which is all that matters," he said.

Echoing Aziz, Sathi Akhter and Zarina Begum, who also went there for iftar, said every religion teaches us to love other human beings, and the monks' actions

Law enforcers

FROM PAGE 3

end of Awami League's misrule."

"Democracy will revive once steps are taken to trace the missing people and ensure the trial of those involved in making people disappear and in secret killings," she said.

Khaleda said she could identify with the sorrows of the victim families, as she lost her younger son.

She inquired about the present status of the families. While listening to the weeping family members, she got emotional, too.

Ahad, son of missing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader Chancal; Ridhi Hossain, daughter of JCD leader Parvez Hossain, and Shamsuddin Ahmed, father of JCD leader Nazimuddin, spoke at the discussion, calling for bringing back their near and dear ones.

STAR WEEKEND

in other news...

The Star Weekend has an array of interesting articles for you. Our spotlight this week is about the hype and zeal of Eid cinemas and how much it appeals to the general public as the perfect activity for such a festive occasion. We also have a story on the Airport Magistrates who are relentlessly fighting irregularity and corruption within the airport. Don't forget your copy of Star Weekend, coming out tomorrow, Friday!

STAR WEEKEND
The Weekend Edition

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Is about the Airport Magistrates who are relentlessly fighting irregularity or corruption within the airport.

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Is about Haz Berra, son of late Sheikh Rahimullah of the auto-rickshaw brand 'Rahimullah', who has abandoned the idea of a multi-national in Bangladesh.

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Take about the busy lanes, where no stress put on a lighter to when it comes to Eid shopping.

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Talks about the old ways of hand composition through which the large books and lengthy newspapers were composed, printed and made available to the readers in green days.