



30km tailback

Hundreds of vehicles get stuck on Dhaka-Tangail road

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Thousands of passengers suffered immensely on the Dhaka-Tangail highway for hours yesterday as hundreds of vehicles got stuck in a 30-kilometre tailback, which was cleared later on the day.

The tailback was created around 3:00am and continued for nearly eight hours, causing sufferings to the commuters, especially bus passengers.

The tailback stretched from Chandra intersection in Gazipur to Baoikhola in Basail upazila of Tangail after two goods-laden trucks went out of order in Postkamuri and Jamurki areas in the same upazila around 3:30am and 5:00am respectively, police said.

Earlier, another truck broke down in Dhalla area in Mirzapur around 3:00am and the situation worsened when a passenger bus collided with a pick-up van in Kharajora area in Kaliakoir upazila of Gazipur around 4:00am.

"I started my journey for Dhaka from Elenga of Tangail around 2:00am and could reach only Jamgara area in Ashulia around 11:30am due to traffic congestion at different places in Mirzapur and Kaliakoir upazilas," said bus passenger Sumon Ghosh.

Vehicular movement remained completely halted on the highway till yesterday noon, said Officer-in-Charge Khalilur Rahman Patwari of Gorai Highway Police Station.

The vehicles started moving slowly after removal of the wreckage from the highway around 11:00am, the OC added.

Traffic congestion is created almost every day due to break down of unfit vehicles, he said.

Hundreds of vehicles were stuck in Mirzapur upazila of Tangail for nearly eight hours yesterday due to a 30-kilometre tailback on Dhaka-Tangail highway.

PHOTO: STAR

Farmer hacked to death in Pirojpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Miscreants hacked a farmer to death at Bhandaria upazila in the district on Monday night.

The deceased is Jalal Howlader, 45, son of Abdul Kader Howlader of Uttar Poykkhali village in the upazila.

Meanwhile, police arrested main accused Imran Hossain, 22, son of Jahangir Hossain the same night from his house at Sardarpara in the upazila, said Md Kamruzzaman Talukder, Officer-in-charge (OC) of Bhandaria Police Station.

"Primarily we suspect that the incident might have occurred over financial matter," said the OC.

Police produced the arrestee before a court here on Tuesday that sent him to jail, he said.

Jalal went out of the house around 7:00pm on Monday after an anonymous phone call to him, the OC said quoting victim's family members.

The criminals hacked Jalal in his chest leaving him in a garden in the village. Locals rushed to the spot hearing Jalal's screams and took him to Bhandaria Upazila Health Complex where the on-duty doctor declared him dead.

Victim's wife Parul Begum filed a case with Bhandaria Police Station accusing two named and three unnamed men.

Land for growing paddy decreasing in Jhalakathi

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL, Jhalakathi

Agricultural land for growing paddy is decreasing rapidly in the district as many farmers have started using the land for different purposes.

They are converting the land into ponds, fish enclosures and tree gardens for earning more profit, some farmers of Bagri in Rajapur upazila said.

"Most of the farmers in the district are landless and work on other people's land, so they have nothing to say about conversion of the land by the owners," said Abu Bakar Siddik, deputy director of Jhalakathi Department of Agriculture Extension.

There are 15,942 landless farmers and 48,223 farmers with little land out of 1,03,460 farmers, and 54,000 hect-

ares of cultivable land in the district, Siddik added.

"I used to grow paddy on five acres of land four years ago, but the owner has converted four acres of the land for other purposes," said Hemayet, a landless farmer of Angaria.

"I am shocked seeing the transformation of the lands," said Md Riya Ullah Bahadur, upazila agriculture officer in Rajapur.

"We are compelled to stop cultivating paddy as it often brings loss," said Khokon, a farmer in Indrapasha, adding that he was going to plant trees on paddy fields for more profit.

"Farmers are now cultivating crops other than paddy as paddy brings less profit or even loss," said farmer Rafiqul Islam of Gabkhan in Jhalakathi Sadar.

About two percent of agricultural land is being lost every year in the district, according to the district agriculture office.

"Converting land and planting woody trees is a great threat for the agriculture, food safety and the land itself," said Md. Jamal Uddin, chairman of the Department of Soil and Environmental Sciences of Barisal University.

"We have very limited land, so we should give emphasis on saving the land from any conversion," he said, adding that if the land changing continues, agricultural production will face a great crisis.

There is a policy that says no one can change the nature of agricultural land, but it is hardly followed, said Md Zakir Hossain, ADC (revenue) of Jhalakathi.

Call to change attitude towards women

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ranagmati

If there is no respect and values for women in the society, equal rights will not be ensured, said Goutam Dewan, president of Chittagong Hill Tract Citizen Committee.

He said this as a chief guest at a rally held on the occasion of International Women's Day in the town yesterday. Parbattya Chattagram Mahila Samiti organised the programme.

"Women will get equal rights and priority in the society when we change our attitude towards them", Goutam said.

Jyotindro Bodhipriyo Lama alias Santu Lama, chairman of Chittagong Hill Tract Regional Council, Mangol Kumar Chakma, secretary of information and publicity of Parbattya Chattagram Jana Samiti, central committee, and Bijoy Ketan Chakma, president of M.N Lama Memorial Foundation, were present.

Bodhipriyo Lama said if equal rights for

women are ensured in the country, the society will see development.

Many women in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are victims of violence, torture, rape and killing, he said.

Meanwhile, speakers at a rally organised by Hill Women's Federation, an organisation of CHT, urged the government to ensure security of the indigenous women, reports our Khagrachhari correspondent.

They came up with the demand at the programme held to observe the 29th anniversary of the organisation and International Women's Day as well.

Kalpna Chakma, former organising secretary of the organisation, was abducted in 1996 but the government did not do anything yet in this regard, said the speakers.

Recently, college student Iti Chakma was killed at her house in Khagrachhari town but police are wasting time in the name of investigation, they said.

Schoolgirls bid 'no' to early marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Over 400 young learners of Hasina Momen Girls' High School in remote Bhangura upazila of Pabna yesterday pledged not to get married before reaching 18.

Marking International Women's Day, development organisation Brac arranged the programme where speakers urged fully abolishing early marriage for the healthy future of the female students and the society as a whole.

Local female community leader Mishti Khatun chaired the programme while Md Ainul Haque, chairman of Ashtomonisha union parishad, spoke as the chief guest.

Headmaster of the school Md Abdul Khaleque, teachers Abdur Rahim and Jarina Sultana and Brac officer Goutam Chandra spoke on the occasion.

Many girl students fail to complete schooling up to the SSC due to early marriage and unaware parents hardly consider the health issues while marrying off their underage daughters, especially in rural areas, the speakers said.

Earlier the girl students accompanied by locals formed a human chain in front of the school, carrying banners and festoons with the slogan 'no marriage before 18 in any situation'.



NO TO CHILD MARRIAGE: Students of Hasina Momen Girls' High School in Pabna's Bhangura upazila pledge not to get married before 18 as they take part in a programme organised by Brac marking International Women's Day yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SHORTAGE OF DOCTORS IN MOHESHPUR HEALTH COMPLEX Patients' plight gets worse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thenidah

Shortage of doctors and other staff in Moheshpur Upazila Health Complex is depriving the people of the upazila of proper treatment.

On a visit to the hospital recently, this correspondent found that there are only three doctors, including the upazila health and family planning officer, posted there. One doctor was absent while another was watching TV in his office, though he was scheduled to be at the emergency department. Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Prafullah Kumar Majumdar was busy doing his official works.

Hospital sources said there are only

three doctors against 21 positions, 15 nurses against 17 posts, two sweepers against seven and 29 field workers against 34 positions. There is no surgeon against seven positions.

Sub-assistant Community Medical Officer Sayed Ali Ahmed, Diploma in Medical Faculty (DMF), provides treatment to children while another DMF Mahmuda Nargis gives treatment to other patients. They can provide only primary treatment.

Sayed said he was treating patients on order from the higher authorities. Mahmuda said she treats the ordinary patients but refers the complicated cases to other hospitals.

Kamrunnahar of Natima village said, "I have been coming with my baby to this hospital for a couple of months, but the baby's condition has not improved, so I am going to another hospital."

Swapna Khatun of Swasta village said, "There was no doctor to treat me, so I have to go back."

Abdul Latif of Shyampur village said, "I sustained an injury on my mouth, but there was no doctor at the emergency department. I got admitted to the hospital and a doctor saw me the next day and gave a prescription."

Dr Prafulla said proper treatment cannot be provided at the hospital due to lack of doctors.



In absence of a doctor qualified for the purpose, a sub-assistant community medical officer gives treatment to a baby at Moheshpur Upazila Health Complex, exposing the dire strait of the hospital meant for rural people. Right, beds of the treatment centre lie vacant as hardly any patient now gets admitted there.

PHOTO: STAR

Khasi man kills self out of shock after wife's death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

An elderly man from Khasi community committed suicide on Monday apparently out of shock after the death of his wife three days ago in Guainghat upazila of Sylhet.

The deceased, Shyamol Nayar, 70, was a resident of Noksiar punjee area in the upazila.

Deceased's son Sefal Lymba said his father allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself in the head with his licensed pistol on Monday night.

"There was a sense of grief that never left my father since the death of my mother Anjoli Lymba, 65, due to old age complications last Friday," Sefal said.

Officer-in-Charge Delwar Hossain of Guainghat Police Station said police recovered the body and sent it to MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Councillors on strike in Thakurgaon, Panchagarh

People suffer as they start work abstention to realise their eight-point demand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

People of three municipalities in Thakurgaon and another in Panchagarh have been suffering due to the indefinite work abstention by the councillors.

They started the work abstention programme yesterday to realise their eight-point demand and protest the inequality between their honorarium and that of zila parishad members.

The councillors said the local government ministry fixed monthly honorarium for the members of zila parishad at Tk 35,000 while it was only Tk 8,000 for municipal councillors.

Thakurgaon district unit president of Bangladesh Municipal Councillors' Association Nazrul Islam said their honorarium is much lower than that of the members of zila parishad, though they were elected directly by the people. He demanded reconsideration of the honorarium immediately.

The people of the municipalities faced many difficulties on the first day of the work abstention by the councillors.

Nazmun Nur, 35, of Hazipara in Thakurgaon municipality, told this correspondent that she came to the municipality for nationality certificate, but failed to get it as the councillor was not present to recommend her application.

Happy Rahman, 32, of Hallpara of the municipality said she did not get a birth registration certificate for the same reason.

Ward councillor's recommendation is needed for identification of a citizen for many purposes, especially for getting nationality certificate and birth registration certificate.

General Secretary of Panchagarh district unit of Bangladesh Municipal Councillors' Association Mazedur Rahman Chowdhury told this correspondent over cellphone that they are observing the programme to realise their eight-point demand and protest against discrimination in honorarium.

The mayor of Panchagarh Municipality told this correspondent over cellphone that he thinks the councillors' work abstention programme is logical.