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Unfit yet in operation

Faulty commercial vehicles increase risk of accidents

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

On March 1, Ranjan Das came to the BRTA in Mirpur from Comilla for a fitness test of his human haulier. The test, done at the automated Vehicle Inspection Centre (VIC) on the BRTA compound, found problem in the brake.

So denied the fitness certificate, Ranjan, who doesn't even has a professional driving licence, drove back to Comilla, about 90km from Dhaka.

"I don't find any problem while driving. But the machine has detected problem in the braking system.... I have to come again from Comilla for the test after fixing the problem," said Ranjan, aged about 40, who only has a learner driving licence.

But it's not just about Ranjan's vehicle. Over the last four months, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority in Mirpur has tested 1,268 commercially-run vehicles at its VIC. Only 300 of them passed the test while the rest 968 have various fitness problems. At least 75 percent of them have problem in their brakes and headlights, BRTA data show.

Most of these vehicles are plying the streets, posing serious risk of accidents, said sources in the BRTA and transport sector.

But then again, this is only the tip of the iceberg. At least 11 lakh motorbikes, private cars and commercially-run vehicles are registered with the BRTA in the capital's Mirpur and Uttara, and Ekuria in Keraniganj.

Mirpur has the only VIC in the country, but only the commercially-run vehicles go through automated checking system. Other private vehicles are checked manually, which is not scientific and foolproof.

In other BRTA outlets across the country, all vehicles are tested through manual inspection. This means thousands, if not lakhs, of vehicles may have fitness problems that remain undetected.

75% commercial vehicles have faulty brake system, headlights

Only 300 vehicles found fit out of 1,268 checked in 4 months

BRTA can test only 20-25 a day while 100 vehicles queue up

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WHEN WILL WE LEARN?

Seemingly oblivious to the train bearing down fast, pedestrians walk on the track near the city's BFDC level crossing in Tejgaon around noon yesterday. Deaths on train tracks have become common in recent days. An Armed Police Battalion official was run over by a train near the battalion's Uttara office on March 6. Inset, a biker gambles with death as he ducks under the lowered barrier to go across the tracks.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'3 more dens in Chittagong'

Two arrested militants tell cops; 76 held in block raids

STAR REPORT

Militant outfit "Neo JMB" has at least three more dens in Chittagong, and has chosen the district as its base, finding it difficult to operate in the capital.

Investigators have gleaned the information from two detained suspected militants -- Mahmud Hasan and Ahmed Azwad Imtiaz Talukder alias Omi - who attacked police at a checkpoint in Comilla on Tuesday.

Acting on information from the duo, police on Wednesday busted a training centre of the militant outfit in Chittagong's Mirsharai upazila and seized a huge cache of grenades and explosive materials.

"Omi told us that they now consider Chittagong as their base," an official of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told The Daily Star on Thursday on condition of anonymity.

During a block raid on July 26 last year, police busted the Kalyanpur militant den in the capital where nine militants were killed.

On Thursday night, Chittagong police launched a 10-day block raid across the district to track down the hideouts of "Neo JMB", an offshoot of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), reports our Chittagong correspondent.

YANGHEE LEE

THE UN'S SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR

TOLD THE BBC

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Church guard attacked in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Unknown assailants hacked an on-duty night guard of a church in Pabna's Chatmohar early yesterday.

The victim, Gilbert D'Costa, 65, of Lowtia village in the upazila, has been working at the Mathurapur Catholic Church for the last eight years, said his family.

He was now undergoing treatment at Pabna Medical College Hospital. His condition was critical.

Police detained three people for their alleged involvement in the attack. They suspect that previous enmity might be the reason behind the attack.

Around 2:30am, three

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Some teachers involved in question leak: Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday held a section of teachers responsible for the question paper leak, and said the questions were being leaked and shared on social media just after handing those over to the teachers on the exam day.

"After handing over the question papers to the teachers in the examination hall, we feel secured and safe. But, the questions were being shared on Facebook 40 to 50 minutes prior to the exams... So, who are leaking the questions?" he asked.

"We don't want such teachers who destroy the morals of our children; we want teachers with values and norms," said Nahid.

The minister made the remarks at a human chain organised by Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club to raise awareness against corruption.

Holding banners and placards, school students, teachers, government and non-government officials participated at the human chain.

ACC also held similar events at different city points and districts.

"We are in such an environment that we can neither disclose anything nor accept. But we will not tolerate these further," the minister said. "We are maintaining zero tolerance against corruption, but we're not saying that there is no corruption in the education ministry."

The minister said there were few teachers who compel the students to take tuition instead of giving them proper education in the classrooms. Those teachers do not have the right to stay in their positions, he said.

PHOTO ON PAGE 3

DEATH OF MOTORCYCLIST
Mob sets fire to police microbus after accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

An angry mob torched a police microbus after a bike-riding youth was killed in a road accident in Comilla's Balutupa area early yesterday.

The dead, Abu Taher, was from Shahpur village in Comilla Sadar upazila.

Witnesses said the accident occurred when the microbus was chasing the motorcycle. The microbus carrying four policemen from Comilla Sadar South Police Station crashed into a roadside tree.

Constables Mizan, Khorsand and Kalam were soon encircled by local people. However, Assistant

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Sri Lankan batsman Upul Tharanga plays a forward-defensive shot during his knock of 115 in his side's second innings against Bangladesh in the first Test at the Galle International Cricket Stadium yesterday. The hosts declared with a lead of 456, to which Bangladesh responded with 67 for no loss at stumps on the fourth day.

PHOTO: AFP

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Fifth-day challenge for Tigers

SAKEB SUBHAN from Galle

Like their previous three away Tests, the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle awaits a final day denouement today with Bangladesh having 10 wickets to try and salvage a draw and needing 390 runs to pull off an unlikely victory. 11 overs were left in the day when play was called off due to bad light yesterday with Bangladesh's opening pair of Tamim Iqbal and Soumya Sarkar unconquered on 67 after Sri Lanka had set them a target of 457 by declaring four overs after tea.

A sobering reminder of the tall nature of the task in front of Bangladesh is that the highest successful chase at Galle is 99 for three by

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