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# Service 'local', fare special

Dhaka's bus service yet to get into order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite transport owners' vow to stop "seating service" from Saturday and charge passengers the BRTA-fixed fare rates only, commuters had to pay extra for their trips in the capital yesterday.

"They loaded buses with passengers but did not reduce the fare. Their income has doubled, so has our suffering," said Mamtazuddin who travelled from Jatrabari to Shahbagh at Tk 20 on Shikhar Paribahan.

The fare was Tk 10-12 more than usual bus fares for the route.

To monitor whether buses were charging extra or operating in the name of so-called sitting service, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) in association with Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Malik Samity's vigilance teams conducted mobile courts at five points in the city.

However, many buses used other routes to avoid the courts, which intensified transport crisis in the city.

"They will operate buses at their whim ... It's a complete anarchy," said Azmat Zaman who had to wait for a bus for about an hour at Sayedabad.

Transport owners on April 4 announced that "seating", "gate-lock", "nonstop" and "special services" would stop operating in the capital after April 15.

However, many buses maintained their self-devised services.

Trans Silva, a bus of a privately-run transport service, which plies Jatrabari-Gulistan-Shahbagh-Mirpur-1 route, was seen not letting any passenger for Gulistan board the bus.

Mamun, driver of the bus, could not show the government-fixed chart of bus fare to this correspondent.

At a meeting on Saturday with officials of BRTA, transport owners agreed to follow the fare chart set by the government.

Dhaka Metro's Regional Transport Committee, in

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A Dhaka Sarak Paribahan Malik Samity representative to a mobile court checks the fare chart of a minibus near the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, yesterday. Passengers get their fares back from a bus conductor, inset, after mobile court checks delayed their journeys and passengers opted to disembark.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

# 2 girls 'raped' in Jatrabari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two girls aged between 10 and 11 years were allegedly raped in the capital's Jatrabari on Saturday night by four youths, one of whom was arrested early yesterday.

One victim, a class-V student, was brought in bleeding from the nether regions, Dr Bilkis Begum, coordinator of One-Stop Crisis Centre of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, told The Daily Star.

Bruises on the other, the former's schoolmate studying in class IV, indicate she too had been violated, she said, adding that forensic tests would be conducted today for a confirmation.

The arrestee, Yasin, was

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 17

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-35 12-45 4-45 6-24 7-45  
JAMAAT 5-10 1-15 5-00 6-28 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

# FIVE YEARS ON Cops searching; Ilias still missing

RASHIDUL HASAN

Every month since May 2012, the capital's Banani Police Station has been submitting a report to the High Court, stating that it is still trying to know the whereabouts of missing BNP leader M Ilias Ali.

The police station also conducts "search operations" in different parts of the country almost every month to trace Ilias, officials say.

"We carried out such a drive last month as well but could not find him," Officer-in-Charge BM Forman Ali of the police station told The Daily Star yesterday.

"What else can we do?" he asked.

However, the family members are not satisfied at all.

Expressing deep frustration over the way probe is being conducted, Ilias' wife Tahsina Rushdir said law enforcers contacted the family only during the first one or two months after her husband's going missing.

"After that," she said, "none from law enforcement agencies contacted us or informed us about the progress."

Rushdir said: "It is the state's responsibility to ensure security of all the citizens."

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# Govt plans Boro boost for farmers

Decides to buy more food grains at higher price

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday set a food grain procurement target of 16 lakh tonnes in the current Boro season with a higher price offer for both rice and paddy but kept the purchasing price for wheat the same as last year's.

As against last year's purchase target of 15 lakh tonnes in rice, paddy and wheat during the post-Boro harvesting season, the government this time would buy 16 lakh tonnes of food grain -- seven lakh tonnes of paddy, eight lakh tonnes of rice and one lakh tonnes of wheat.

An inter-ministerial food planning and monitoring meeting held at the food ministry yesterday decided to offer the farmers an enhanced price of Tk 24, Tk 33 and Tk 34 for per kilogramme of paddy, non-parboiled and parboiled rice respectively.

These price offers are Tk 2 higher on average from last year's offers. The meeting acknowledged that the cost of Boro production has increased and the farmers need the incentive to cushion the increased cost of production.

However, the government has kept the wheat purchase price at Tk 28, same as last year's, and halved the purchase target from last year's two lakh tonnes to one lakh tonnes this year.

Though Bangladesh has achieved self-sufficiency in rice production, up to 80 percent of the country's wheat needs is covered through public and private sector import.

As against a production target of 1.91 crore tonnes of Boro rice this year, the government's procurement is 15 lakh tonnes.

Though the public sector Boro buying hardly constitutes 8 percent of the total output, it sets the price tune in the market thereby, making sure farmers get fair prices in the open market as well.

Following the meeting, Food Minister Quamrul Islam told newsmen that payment of food purchase would be made directly to the farmers' accounts to thwart any move to buy food grain from the middlemen.

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# Cyclone forms over the Bay

UNB, Dhaka

Cyclonic storm "Maarutha" over the east-central Bay of Bengal and adjoining area moved further northeastwards.

Around 6:00pm yesterday, the storm was centred about 540km south-southeast of Chittagong port, 455km south-southeast of Cox's Bazar port, 695km south-southeast of Mongla port and 605km south-southeast of Payra port, said a Met office bulletin.

Last night, it was likely to move in a further north-easterly direction and cross Myanmar coast near Sandaway.

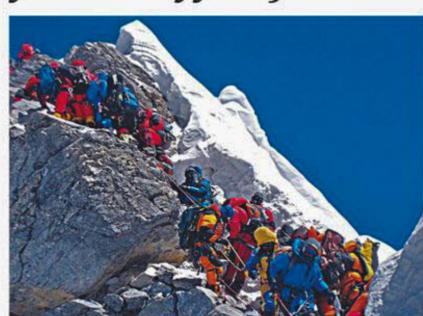
Maximum sustained wind speed within 54km of the cyclonic storm centre is about 62 kp/h to 88 kp/h in gusts or squalls. Sea will remain very rough.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Mongla and Payra have been advised to keep

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# Mt Everest braces for 'traffic jam'

PTI, Kathmandu



Nepalese officials are bracing for a "traffic jam" at Mount Everest this season due to a surge in the number of climbers eyeing to conquer the world's tallest peak.

This time, there would be around 400 climbers who will embark on the journey to scale the 8,848-metre-high Mt Everest from mid-May, according to the Department of Tourism.

As climbers are accompanied by high altitude workers, whose number is usually more than that of climbers, there could be around 1,000 individuals on their way to the summit, creating a queue whose snail-paced movement will be punctuated by frequent halts, The Kathmandu Post reported.

Expedition teams have started arriving at the base

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# Mujibnagar Day today

BSS, Dhaka

The nation is set to observe the historic Mujibnagar Day today.

On this day in 1971, the nation witnessed the oath-taking of the country's first government.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages recalling the able leadership, proper directives and war strategies of the Mujibnagar government to take the 1971 Liberation War towards its successful culmination.

The government has chalked out elaborate programmes in Mujibnagar in Meherpur and the capital to mark the day.

The programme will begin with the hoisting of the national flag at dawn atop the memorial monument at Mujibnagar.

A discussion will be held at the Sheikh Hasina Mancha at Mujibnagar around 10:30am. Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul

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