

JESSORE-BENAPOLE ROAD EXPANSION

Century-old trees to stay

MOHSIN MILON, Benapole

The government has decided to expand the Jessore-Benapole highway without felling the century-old trees along the road, apparently bowing to locals' demand.

The Road Transport and Highways Division (RTHD) has informed the Roads and Highway Department's (RHD) Jessore office about its decision taken recently.

"We will expand the road as much as possible without felling any trees," said RTHD Secretary MAN Siddique.

He, however, added that the road would need to be expanded into a four-lane one in future, and there would be no alternative to cutting down the trees for smooth movement of increased number of vehicles.

The government had earlier taken a decision to chop down around 5,000 different species of trees -- rain tree, shishu and koroi -- triggering protests among environmentalists and the common people.

The decision came in the wake of increased traffic movement due to increased import and export through

Benapole, the country's largest land port.

Environmentalists and locals said felling of trees would put an adverse impact on the environment.

In support of their demand, the protesters cited the example of road expansion on the Indian side by keeping the old trees, which apparently convinced the government.

RHD sources in Jessore said the Executive Committee of National Economic Council at a meeting in March approved two projects involving over Tk 650 crore for expansion and sustainable development of Jessore-Khulna and Jessore-Benapole highways.

Under the two projects, over 38 kilometres of road from Daratana in Jessore town to Benapole check post was scheduled for renovation.

There are 2,312 rain trees, shishu and koroi trees, 1,187 electric poles and 52 telephone poles on both sides of the highway.

Besides, a 38km stretch of Jessore-Khulna highway from Palbari crossing to Rajghat in Jessore would be renovated.

There are 2,555 rain trees, shishu

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Some of the century-old trees along the Jessore Road (Jessore-Benapole highway). The photo was taken in Jhikargachha area of Jessore recently.

PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Water transport workers call off their strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Water transport workers called off their scheduled countrywide indefinite work abstention that was supposed to start at 12:00am today to press home their 21-point demand, including the release of their co-workers in jail.

Shah Alam Bhuiyan, president of Bangladesh Noujan Sramik Federation, told The Daily Star around 10:50pm yesterday that they cancelled their programme following assurances from the government and launch owners that they would meet their demands.

A tri-partite agreement was signed between the federation, the government and the launch owners at the labour department yesterday. The labour secretary was present there, he said.

Around 3:15pm yesterday, Chowdhury Ashique Alam, general secretary of the federation, said they decided to enforce the work abstention as they did not get any assurance regarding their demands.

On July 12, Shah Alam Bhuiyan at a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club announced that they would go for the work abstention if their demands were not met by yesterday.

On that day, Bangladesh Noujan

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Israel under fire

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"An initial investigation indicated that three people were wounded, one an Israeli who was taken to hospital," a statement said, adding that two Jordanians were wounded and one later died of his injuries.

An investigation into the shooting was under way.

Israel and Jordan are bound by a 1994 peace treaty, but tensions have been high over the new security measures at the sensitive Jerusalem site in annexed east Jerusalem.

The metal detectors remained in place on Sunday, though cameras had also been mounted near at least one entrance to the compound in Jerusalem's Old City -- a possible indication of an alternative.

Tensions have risen following the July 14 attack that killed two policemen.

Israeli authorities say the attackers smuggled guns into the site and emerged from it to shoot the officers.

SECURITY ASSESSMENTS

Palestinians view the tougher security measures as Israel asserting further control over the site. They have refused to enter the compound in protest and have prayed in the streets outside.

"Since the start of the events, I have held a series of assessments with security elements including those in the field," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at the start of Sunday's cabinet meeting.

"We are receiving from them an up-to-date picture of the situation, as well as recommendations for action, and we will decide accordingly."

Israeli Major General Yoav Mordechai -- head of COGAT, the defence ministry agency responsible for civilian affairs in the Palestinian territories -- signalled that changes to the policy were possible.

"We are examining other options and alternatives that will ensure security," Mordechai said in an interview with Al-Jazeera.

Poor show in English

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significant fall in the pass rate.

Explaining the new evaluation method, Nahid said chief examiners in consultation with senior examiners set model answers of the questions.

Considering the model answers as the standard, the examiners checked the answer scripts. "This method has been appreciated by everyone."

The measure was taken following a research conducted by the Bangladesh Examination Development Unit on the existing evaluating system. "We have been working for the last three years to develop a standard procedure to evaluate answer scripts.

"Earlier we found that the examiners did not evaluate the answer scripts properly. The usual practice was that

group performed badly. Some 42,393 students sat for the examinations from this group and the pass rate is only 38 percent.

Board Chairman Prof Abdul Khaleque, however, blamed students' poor performance in English only for the fall in overall results.

"I have already asked my officials to look into the other reasons behind the drop. After assessing the reasons, we'll be able to say what went wrong," he said.

The education ministry has already asked the board chairman to inform it of the issues that contributed to the poor results.

GIRLS DID BETTER

Like this year's SSC exams, girls have done better than boys as their pass rate is 2.28 percentage points higher than

HSC RESULT CHART				
BOARDS	PASS RATE 2017	PASS RATE 2016	GPA-5 2016	GPA-5 2015
DHAKA	69.74	73.53	18,930	28,110
RAJSHAHI	71.30	75.40	5,294	6,073
COMILLA	49.52	64.49	678	1,912
JESSORE	70.02	83.42	2,447	4,586
CHITTAGONG	61.09	64.60	1,391	2,253
BARISAL	70.28	70.13	815	787
SYLHET	72.00	68.59	700	1,330
DINAJPUR	65.44	70.64	2,987	3,899
TOTAL	66.84	72.47	33,242	48,950

the listed examiners first collected scripts from the boards, checked those and returned to the boards. There was no monitoring mechanism or any specific rule to check the scripts," Nahid said, elaborating further.

As part of the effort, the government arranged training for the chief examiners who then trained other examiners following the guidelines, he added.

As many as 6.25 lakh boys and 5.38 lakh girls from 8,771 institutions took this year's HSC and its equivalent examinations beginning on April 2. Of them 8.01 lakh students passed.

POOR PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH

Students performed badly in English, said chairmen of several education boards.

More than 2.17 lakh students failed this subject alone, according to the data provided by the boards.

In Dhaka board, the success rate in this subject came down to 76.66 percent from last year's 86.46 percent. The pass rate in English in Jessore board this year shows a fall of 17 percentage points.

"The questions were comparatively hard in my board and that's why many students flunked this subject, pulling down the tally of total students passed," said Prof Mahabubur Rahman, chairman of the board, told The Daily Star.

"English has always been considered the major factor in results. Many students flunked this subject, pulling down the tally of total students passed," said Prof Mahabubur Rahman, chairman of the board.

SHOCKING PERFORMANCE OF COMILLA STUDENTS

A startling low pass rate of students under Comilla board pushed down the overall pass rate. Only 49.53 percent students came out successful causing this board to be at the bottom of the result chart.

A little over 1 lakh students took part in the exams. Only 62 percent of them passed English, according to the data.

Apart from the poor performance in English, students in the humanities

their counterparts'.

"This is very encouraging for us that girls are doing well," the minister said.

However, girls lagged behind boys in the context of achieving the highest grade. A total of 20,535 boys secured GPA-5, while 17,434 girls got the highest grade.

SCIENCE STUDENTS LEAD

As usual, students from the science group under eight general boards did the best with a pass rate of 83.14 percent, followed by 69.65 percent in the business studies group and 58.14 percent in the humanities group.

"Several years ago, the number of students studying science was declining, which was alarming. But the trend has been reversed as we see the number of students studying science is on the rise," Nahid said.

This year 532 institutions saw a cent percent pass rate while no students passed from 72 institutions.

Sylhet board topped the chart in terms of success rate with 72 percent.

The colleges across the country wore a festive look. Students and their parents, who had been tensed for some time, erupted into cheering as soon as they received the results.

Some danced while some took selfies showing victory signs. However, some students were seen breaking down in tears for not getting expected results.

"Failing the examinations does not mean the end of life. Those who have failed take better preparation," Nahid said.

EC to invite

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hatching conspiracy to hold one-sided election.

As per the roadmap, the EC will also hold talks with journalists in August and with 40 registered political parties from August to September.

Besides, the EC will hold separate dialogues with election observers, women leaders and election management experts in October.

Govt gets one more week

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Division headed by the chief justice adjourned the hearing for one week.

Last week, Law Minister Anisul Huq met the chief justice at his SC office twice [July 16 and July 20] for finalising the rules and issuing the gazette, as the court on several occasions had expressed dissatisfaction at the government's failure to do so.

After the second meeting, the minister told reporters that there was significant progress and expressed the hope that the notification would be issued within a week.

The judiciary was officially separated from the executive in November 2007, but the conduct rules for lower court judges have yet

to be finalised.

The government drafted the conduct rules and sent those to the SC for its opinion around two years ago. The apex court revised the draft in light of the 1999 verdict in the judiciary separation case and asked the government to issue a gazette notification after finalising the rules.

During hearing on the Masdar Hossain case, the SC on April 4 expressed dissatisfaction at non-issuance of the gazette notification.

The chief justice that day said they [judges] get hurt when the government refers to the president, who is respected and acceptable.

Earlier on March 28, the SC expressed discontent at the govern-

ment for seeking more time for issuing the gazette notification.

The attorney general the same day submitted an application to the SC, saying: "The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs expects that necessary steps will be taken by the honourable president in respect of the proposed rules within four weeks."

On December 12 last year, the SC said the president was misinformed about the issuance of the gazette notification.

It came up with the observation a day after the law ministry issued a notification saying the president had decided not to issue a separate gazette notification on the conduct rules.

He can't see with right eye

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little. But then he said he couldn't anymore," said Dr Iftekhar Md Munir of the National Institute of Ophthalmology, where he is being treated.

"This is a positive development [that his left eye is responding to light]. If he doesn't see any light, we won't have anything to do," he said. "We can say that we are hopeful about his left eye. He might need another surgery later."

Both of his eyeballs have been damaged but the nerves that connect eyes with the brain are intact, said Iftekhar, citing MRI report.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid visited Siddiqui at the hospital yesterday and consoled his family members. He also talked with the doctors to learn about his condition.

The third-year student of political science suffered injuries in both eyes when police lobbed a teargas shell on the students of seven colleges, who were demonstrating for the announcement of their examination schedules at Shahbagh on Thursday.

Police claimed he was wounded when hit by objects thrown by the demonstrators.

A video clip available on social media shows that a scuffle broke out when police tried to snatch away a banner from the students. Siddiqui was standing aside. As he ran to the front, a policeman fired a teargas shell and he collapsed to the ground.

Following the protests on Thursday, the authorities of the colleges -- Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Begum Badrunnesa Government Mohila College, Mirpur Government Bangla College and Government Titumir College -- announced the exam schedules.

The colleges became affiliated with Dhaka University on February 16. After visiting Siddiqui, the education minister told reporters that he already informed the PM about the situation regarding the seven colleges.

He added they were taking initiatives to solve the problem.

STUDENTS' PROTEST FOILED

Chhatra League men foiled the human

chain by the Titumir College students, demanding proper treatment of Siddiqui, yesterday.

The BCL men termed their programme "anti-government" and warned the students against continuing with their movement or else they (the BCL) would have the protestors arrested by labeling them as Jamaat-Shibir supporters.

Over 100 students of Titumir College gathered in front of the college in Mohakhali around 10:00am.

But a group of BCL men and police did not allow them to assemble there. The students then moved to Amtoli in the same area and formed a human chain, demanding withdrawal of the case against the students, punishment of the law enforcers involved in committing excesses and proper treatment of Siddiqui, demonstrators said.

They also demanded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's intervention in his treatment.

The BCL men led by Titumir College unit President Kazi Mirazul Islam Dollar and General Secretary Manik Hossain asked them to clear the area immediately, several students alleged.

"The Chhatra League men also threatened to label us as Jamaat-Shibir supporters and have us arrested," said a protester, asking not to be identified, fearing retribution from the pro-ruling Awami League student body. "Some of us were taken inside the college forcibly."

"We came to the college for a peaceful and logical protest for our friend. But they did not allow us to gather," said another student.

Dollar denied all the allegations, saying they simply asked the students not to hold the protest programme as some "opportunistic groups" may create unrest centring on the issue.

He said the college authorities along with the students were raising fund for Siddiqui. "Those who are protesting outside the campus may have some other motivation against the government."

Students of Kabi Nazrul Government College also said police obstructed their protest programme on their campus.

'NOT OUT REPRESENTATIVES'

In another development, the agitating

students claimed that the students' representatives who met with DU Vice-chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddiqui yesterday did not represent them.

Students of the seven colleges alleged that the principals of their institutions handpicked some "representatives" for the meeting, instead of sending the "actual representatives".

Rasel Sarker, a master's student at Dhaka College, said those who took part in the meeting were not involved in organising the protest to press home an eight-point demand, including the announcement of their exam dates.

Riaz Mahmud, an organiser from Titumir College, gave similar statements.

After over an hour-long meeting with the VC that began around 2:00pm, the representatives, however, said they did not receive any clear assurance of having their demands met.

POLICE FORM PROBE BODY

Police yesterday formed two committees to investigate Thursday's incident.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police formed a three-member committee led by its Joint Commissioner (operation) Mir Rezaul Alam.

Its Ramna Division, under which the incident happened, formed another committee led by Additional Deputy Commissioner Nabil Kamal Shaibal.

The committees have been asked to submit their reports in three working days.

'EVERYTHING'S BLEAK NOW'

Siddiqui, from Tarakanda in Mymensingh, lost his father when he was just three. His elder brother Nayeab Ali left studies after HSC to support the poor family.

Nayeab, a day labourer, had high hopes about his brother and thought the family would see better days after Siddiqui's graduation.

The family had to sell the last piece of its land to pay for his education, Siddiqui's mother Solema Khatun, 60, told reporters on Saturday.

Talking to reporters yesterday, Nayeab said Siddiqui told him to wait for two more years as he would be graduating by then.

"He was supposed to take charge of the family ... but everything is bleak now," he said, seeking the prime minister's intervention.

ASK slams Savar MP

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"ASK demands responsible statement from such people who are also involved in the law-making process," it said, adding that every person has the right to justice.

According to Bangla daily

Manabzamin, Enamur of Dhaka-19 (Savar) constituency in an interview over the phone on July 18 said there were many cadres and goons in his area but all had become silent. No one dares to do anything as five people had been killed in crossfire as per his wish

and 14 more were on a list he prepared, the daily quoted him as saying.

Following huge criticism, Enamur withdrew his statement and apologised for his "unexpected, indecent and condemnable" speech. The lawmaker also published a newspaper ad to this end.