

## First HC judge of Bangladesh origin in UK

ANSAR AHMED ULLAH, from London

Queen Elizabeth II has appointed Akhlaq Ur Rahman Chowdhury QC, a UK citizen of Bangladesh origin, a judge of the High Court in the UK.

**Akhlaq Ur Rahman**

The UK's Courts & Tribunals Judiciary announced that the Queen has approved the appointment of Akhlaq with effect from October 2, 2017, consequential to the elevation of Sir Gary Robert Hickinbottom to the Court of Appeal.

The lord chief justice would assign Akhlaq to the Queen's Bench Division. As per norm of this appointment, he would be knighted.

Akhlaq, now 50, was called to the Bar in 1992 and awarded Queen's Counsel in 2015. He was appointed as a Recorder in 2009 and as a Deputy High Court Judge in 2016.

Akhlaq passed his Bar-at-Law in 1992 and joined law practice. He is

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Truckers have turned English Road in the capital virtually into a parking lot, making the already congested street of Old Dhaka even narrower. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## 2 beaten dead for 'stealing cattle'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A mob beat up two men to death for allegedly stealing cows at Kapasia yesterday.

The incident occurred at Barosheat Bhuiyan Bari around 5:00pm.

The dead were identified as Md Alam, 38, son of late Abdul Motaleb of Bhairab in Kishoreganj, and his alleged accomplice Abul Kalam, 35.

Covered van driver Moksed, 38, son of Rajab Ali of Imam Bari area under Keraniganj in Dhaka, was injured.

Police and witnesses said the covered van coming from nearby Kaliganj was speeding in the area around 5:00pm.

At one stage, the vehicle careered across the road and fell into a roadside paddy field near Bhuiyan Bari.

Locals rushed to the accident spot and were initially surprised hearing moos from inside the covered van.

Out of suspicion, they interrogated the driver and started beating up the three.

Sub-Inspector of Kapasia police Moniruzzaman Khan said on information, a team of law enforcers "rescued" the three and sent them to Kapasia

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## Moon ride on the cards

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vehicles is already very difficult. Besides, floodwater has submerged rail tracks at some points in the northern region, suspending train operations.

If the rail communications on those routes don't become smooth in a few days, holidaymakers who usually depend on trains will be in trouble. The Eid is only two weeks away and all trains remain overcrowded ahead of the festival.

The journey on most of the country's national and regional highways and district roads are likely to be painful. On the newly expanded Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Mymensingh highways, it will be relatively easy though there will be hurdles at some points.

Bus companies fear that many vehicles may have breakdowns on battered roads, causing tailbacks leaving holidaymakers stranded for hours.

Some major operators have already cut the number of trips in the northern and south-western routes as dilapidated roads are pushing up travel hours. Many owners are planning to reduce bus services during this Eid vacation.

"If I have 100 buses, I am selling tickets for 80, considering the road conditions," an owner of a top bus company told The Daily Star.

Ramesh Chandra Ghosh, managing director of Shyamoli Paribahan, said they were alerting passengers about the situation. "From the counters, we are asking passengers to remain prepared for possible changes in schedule," he told The Daily Star on Friday.

Buses are failing to maintain schedule as many roads are severely damaged and ferry services are hampered due to bad weather and the rise in water level of rivers, said Dulal, a counter master of Hanif Paribahan at Gabtoli.

According to reports from our correspondents in different districts, travelling to the northern and south-western parts of the country will be a real challenge this year.

Vehicles taking Dhaka-Tangail route to reach 26 districts of the two regions will face difficulties because of rains and expansion work of the two-lane highway, where congestion is common. Traffic movement will be disrupted at different points of the 50km stretch from Rasulpur of Chandra to Elenka.

Visiting the highway on August 9, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader asked the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) officials to make the road ready for smooth traffic movement in 10 days. Parts of the

road are still in bad shape.

Those heading to the port city may face traffic gridlock near the Kanchpur bridge. The road abruptly narrows down to just two lanes from eight lanes right before the bridge. There could be a similar situation near the two-lane Meghna bridge.

There will be congestions on the 12km stretch from Tongi bridge to Joydebpur Chourasta as the four-lane highway is reduced to two-lane there. Besides, haphazard parking of vehicles and dumping of waste along the highway further narrow down the road.

Buses bound for Kurigram, Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Rangpur and Dinajpur will face troubles while crossing the dilapidated Hatikumrul-Bogra-Gobindaganj road.

The travel time between the northern region and Dhaka more than doubled due to rough roads. The situation may turn worse during the Eid rush.

A good number of passengers of Bogra, Rangpur and Dinajpur are preferring trains these days.

Dhaka-Pabna highway and Bogra-Nagarbari and Rajshahi-Kushtia roads have developed numerous potholes.

The 30km Hatikumrul-Ullapara road is also full of potholes. About 1km portion of Hatikumrul is almost unusable and the RHD is placing bricks as a stopgap measure. Several bus drivers said plying of vehicles here is not only difficult but also time-consuming.

About 116km stretch out of the total 164km in Dinajpur is rundown with damages at different points following rains and flooding. Floodwater receded from the roads but RHD will take two more days to begin repair.

Vehicles heading for south-western districts will encounter problems because of battered roads. The 173km Kushtia-Jessore-Khulna road is getting worse every month.

"At least a dozen of vehicles have breakdowns on this road every day," said bus driver Mansur Ali.

Locals allege the road has been in poor conditions for years but it has not been properly repaired as the government is planning to expand it to four-lane.

Contacted, RHD Executive Engineer in Kushtia Rafiqul Islam said, "We submit a proposal every year for the expansion job. The government allocates budget for repair of the road though the work will not be sustainable."

The journey of Sylhet-bound people from Dhaka will not be very troublesome though excessive rains have denuded road surfaces at many points, said RHD Supervising Engineer in

Sylhet Chandan Kumar Basak.

Sylhet-Tamabil highway and Sylhet-Companiganj, Sylhet-Gowainghat and Moulvibazar-Rajnagar-Kulaura-Barlekha-Beanibazar-Charkhai roads have been damaged by rains and floods.

Passengers will have a moon ride on Dhaka-Barisal highway's 30km stretch from Mostafapur to Joyosree area. "Potholes on the road are hampering traffic movement," a bus company owner said.

Over the years, RHD has been fixing potholes and damaged parts temporarily but that lasts only several months. It has even repaired one road twice or thrice a year.

To make the damaged roads usable ahead of this Eid-ul-Azha, the department has begun to dump bricks, brick chips and sand as before.

Road Transport and Bridges Division Secretary MAN Siddique said they would be able to make all the roads usable if there is no rain for five to seven days before the Eid.

"We made the Eid-ul-Fitr journey comfortable for holidaymakers. And we will try to do so during Eid-ul-Azha vacation. But it will be difficult if rain continues," he told The Daily Star.

About the road conditions, he said, "It's a fact that excessive rains and flood ravaged many roads and culverts, which will require massive repairs."

Road Transport and Highway Division, which surveyed 16,621km highway and road last year, found 79.6 percent of the national highways in fair or good state while the rest were in "poor, bad and very bad conditions".

The survey conducted between February and May also found 30.79 percent of regional highways in poor, bad or very bad state and 46 percent of the district roads in similar conditions.

Bus operators believe the percentage of roads in poor conditions would be much higher now.

Besides, roadside cattle markets remain a big concern as those often create traffic congestion.

The road transport and bridges ministry in its 34-point measures ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha said lease of cattle market must not be allowed on national and regional highways or in adjacent areas. It also said cattle markets cannot be set up at the entry and exit points of Dhaka city.

The ministry mentioned the names of Maligram cattle market in Faridpur's Bhanga upazila, Dania cattle market in the capital and Tongi cattle market near Biswa Ijtema ground in Gazipur, and said these markets should not be allowed to be expanded to nearby highways.

TRouble points identified

On August 2, Road Transport and Highways Division asked its field officials to send reports on jam-prone intersections or parts of highways so that precautionary measures can be taken ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

The division received a report on August 16, said an official. "We will write to the home ministry to take necessary action so that traffic congestion could be avoided at those points," he said.

As per the report, 43 points on different highways under Dhaka division usually see traffic congestion while 39 points in Chittagong, 12 points in Rajshahi, 11 points in Barisal, three in Sylhet and four each in Khulna and Rangpur divisions.

The report also identified 22 such points in Dhaka city.

TRAIN ROUTE

Currently, five intercity trains are failing to reach their original destinations as rail tracks are affected by flood, Sitangshu Chakrabarty, station master of Kamalapur Railway Station, told The Daily Star on Friday.

Ekota Express and Drutojan Express, which are supposed to reach Dinajpur, can go up to Parbotipur.

Tarakandi-bound Jamuna Express and Agnibina Express can't travel beyond Jamalpur Sadar upazila, he said.

Dewanganj Commuter's original destination is Dewanganj but it now operates up to Melanda Bazar, he added.

He, however, hoped the situation would be normal before the Eid.

Rail communications in Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat and Kurigram have remained suspended since August 13 as railway tracks were damaged at several points, Amjad Hossain, director general of Bangladesh Railway told this newspaper on Thursday.

The affected rail routes are Parbatipur-Dinajpur-Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat-Burimari and Teesta in Lalmonirhat to Ramna Bazar in Kurigram's Chilmari, he said.

[Our Pabna Correspondent Ahmed Humayun Kabir Tapu, Natore Correspondent Bulbul Ahmed, Kushtia Correspondent Amanur Aman, Tangail Correspondent Mirza Shakil, Dinajpur Correspondent Kangan Karmakar and Sylhet Correspondent Dwaha Chowdhury also contributed the report]

## Is coconut oil healthy?

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health benefits," said Dr. Walter C. Willett, professor of epidemiology and nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

How exactly, then, does coconut oil rank among oils?

"Coconut oil is somewhere in the middle of the spectrum in terms of types of fats. It's probably better than partially hydrogenated oils (which are) high in trans fats but not as good as the more unsaturated plant oils that have proven health benefits, like olive and canola oil," Willett said.

"It's probably not quite as 'bad' as butter but not as good as extra virgin olive oil," agreed Kevin Klatt, a molecular nutrition researcher at Cornell University who is studying the metabolic effects of coconut oil.

Klatt cautions that we should not develop too strong of an opinion about coconut oil without more data. "But at the same time, you have to be evidence-based ... and (currently), the evidence reflects benefits for olive oil, fish, nuts and seeds -- so that should be the focus in the diet."

WHAT'S IN COCONUT OIL?

Coconut oil is extracted from the meat of the fruit. It contains mostly saturated fat, which is also found in large quantities in butter and red meat. Like other saturated fats, coconut oil increases LDL cholesterol, the "bad" cholesterol associated with increased risk of heart disease. In fact, coconut oil has more saturated fat and raises LDL more than butter, according to Willett.

But coconut oil does a particularly nice job of raising HDL, the "good" cholesterol, especially when replacing carbohydrates in the diet. This may be due to its high content of a fatty acid known as lauric acid.

"Coconut oil is half lauric acid, which is a little bit unique," Klatt said, as the acid seems to raise HDL more than other saturated fats and is rarely found in such high amounts in foods.

Still, though the increase in HDL seen with consumption of coconut oil may offset some of the disease risk, it's still not as good as consuming unsaturated oils, which not only raise HDL but lower LDL, according to Willett.

## Unplanned dev

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at a press briefing at Bishwa Sahitya Kendra (BSK) auditorium in the capital. The programme was jointly organised by the committee and a river-protection group called Pashur River Water Keeper.

The government has recently decided to approve all industries currently operating in the ecologically critical area (ECA) of the Sundarbans.

The decision made by the National Environmental Committee would lead to the legalisation of 150 industries set up in 63 unions of 11 upazilas of five districts around the Sundarbans. The committee at a meeting also decided to relax and change some rules and policies to allow industries, potentially risky for the environment, to run in the ECA.

The move came at a time when the Unesco recommended that the government should do a Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) of the southwest region and that no big and large structure should be constructed in the Sundarbans until the SEA is done.

Factories and industries are being established without any plan near the Sundarbans and on the bank of the

Pashur river. The factory owners are filling up canals connecting to the river, hindering the flow of tidal water, Sultana Kamal said.

"The lives of people are being jeopardised in the name of development... These destitute people are moving to cities and living in slums, from where they are once again being evicted. We did not want to see lives become endangered in this way in a country that earned its independence through war."

Syed Abul Maqsood, journalist and researcher of the national committee, alleged that the government had approved establishment of so many industries beside the mangrove forest to serve the interest of a handful of individuals and businessmen, thus putting a national asset at risk for mere personal gains.

The allocations for establishments near the Pashur river have to be cancelled as the government promised to the Unesco that it would submit a report on technicalities regarding environmental aspects of the Sundarbans and adjacent areas by 2018. Hence such establishments, by no means, should be made before the report submission, said Sharif Jamil, a member of the national committee.

## Flood hits new areas in North

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markets and populated areas.

Helal Mahmud Sharif, deputy commissioner of Rajshahi, said the number of affected unions increased to 20 from 14, affecting some 19,000 people of Bagmara, Mohanpur and Bagha upazilas.

The road from Hat Gangopara of Bagmara to Prosadpur of Naogaon, which was under knee-deep water at some places, went under waist-deep water yesterday.

"Floodwater is still rising. People are moving to safer places," said Bijon Sarker, chairman of Govindapara Union Parishad.

The DC said most of the affected people went to their relatives' homes while nearly 100 people took shelter at different schools, colleges and union parishad buildings.

The district administration distributed 27 tonnes of rice among the flood victims, but it was not enough, he added.

In Natore, the flood situation in Singra upazila deteriorated as the Atrai

was flowing 70 cm above the danger mark.

Many people left their homes for safe shelters. Aman paddy on at least seven hectares of land was damaged.

57 LAKH AFFECTED

More than 57.18 lakh people in 27 districts have been affected by flood, according to the latest government data.

At least 98 people died while crops on 4.68 lakh hectares were damaged in the flood, said a working paper presented at a meeting in the capital yesterday. The disaster management and relief ministry organised the programme, chaired by its Secretary Shah Kamal.

In Lalmonirhat, both the Teesta and Dharla were flowing well below the danger level for the last few days.

However, many people were yet to return home as their houses were damaged.

Jobeda Khatun, a flood victim from Char Shiberkuti village in the district, said, "I couldn't return home as my house was badly damaged."

She took shelter on Lalmonirhat-Phulbari road in the district's Char Kulaghat area nine days ago when her village was hit by flood.

"My little child was crying for food, but I couldn't give him enough food as I didn't have food stock," she said, adding she got a packet of puffed rice and molasses from college students and 3kg rice and one kg pulse from an NGO.

Even the government relief supplies were sparse. Of the 1,02,750 families affected by flood, only 24,200 received relief so far, said Lalmonirhat Deputy Commissioner Shafiqul Arif.

In Tangail, the flood situation was improving owing to the falling water level of the Jamuna.

The water level of the river fell by 17 cm at Tangail point in the last 24 hours. At Bahadurabad point of Jamalpur, the water level fell by 26 cm and at Sirajganj point by 19 cm, said Executive Engineer Shajahan Siraj of Water Development Board (WDB).

SCHOOL EXAMS POSTPONED

The Manikganj primary education

office yesterday postponed the mid-term exams of the government primary schools in all but Singair upazila. The decision would remain in force until further notice, said Aleya Ferdousi Shikha, district primary education officer.

More than 200 schools in the district's six upazilas were declared closed due to flood, she said.

The Padma was flowing 72 cm above the danger level after falling by 4 cm at Aricha point of Manikganj at 6:00am yesterday, said WDB Executive Engineer Hasan Mahmud.

However, the water levels of all the internal rivers, including Kaliganga, Dhaleshwari, Ichhamoti, Gazikhali and Kantaboti, in the district were increasing, he added.

In Madaripur, floodwater inundated low-lying areas of Shibchar upazila, affecting hundreds of people in Charjanajat, Kathalbari, Bandorkhola and Sannasirchar unions.

River erosion also took a serious turn in these areas. More than 100

houses, shops, mosques and other establishments were completely destroyed.

Imran Ahmed, upazila nirbahi officer of Shibchar, said the Padma was flowing 30 cm above the danger level at Shibchar point.

The ferry service at Kathalbari ferry ghat was disrupted as three pontoons were submerged yesterday.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation was struggling to keep the service running with only one pontoon. The service was also interrupted due to strong currents.

BOY DROWNS IN NAOGAON

A minor boy drowned in floodwater in Naogaon's Atrai upazila yesterday.

Police said seven-year-old Yaam of Hengalkandi village suddenly slipped into floodwater from a boat.

Locals recovered his body around 3:00pm, said Bodruddozza, officer-in-charge of Atrai Police Station.

PM TO VISIT DINAJPUR, KURIGRAM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will visit flood-hit Dinajpur and Kurigram

today, said Mir Khairul Alam, deputy commissioner of Dinajpur.

She will visit shelters at Dinajpur Zila School and Tegra High School in Biral upazila. She will distribute relief goods among the flood victims.

Later, the PM will leave Dinajpur for Kurigram.

The flood which struck Dinajpur last week left a trail of destruction.

According to government data, around 114km road under the Roads and Highways Department was affected while around 1,100km road and 100 bridges and culverts under the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) were damaged.

Aman crops on around 1.26 lakh hectares of land were inundated and fish of 12,000 ponds was carried away by floodwater. Besides, 15km rail track was damaged, causing suspension of rail communications between Dinajpur and Dhaka.

Our correspondents in Rajshahi, Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur, Jamalpur, Tangail, Manikganj and Madaripur contributed to this report.