



Huge quantities of jute and paddy are kept for sale on Pabna-Rajshahi highway at Tebunia Bazar in Pabna, creating serious problem for vehicular movement. The seasonal market, sitting each Sunday and Wednesday from mid-August to mid-November, continues the nuisance while the authorities concerned are turning a blind eye.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Jute market blocks Pabna highway twice a week

The overflowing traditional market occupies part of the road

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU with ANDREW EAGLE

A highway is supposed to be a major road for convenient transport between towns. But the Pabna to Rajshahi highway transforms twice a week into a congested mess at Tebunia Bazar, when an overflowing traditional jute market occupies part of the roadway. For farmers, commuters, students and the travelling public, it's a nightmare.

Operating from 5:00am until noon each Sunday and Wednesday from mid-August to mid-November, the large number of jute-laden four-wheelers and horse-drawn carriages create havoc, not to mention the crowds of buyers and sellers. For through traffic there is very little road space left. According to traders, tailbacks stretching over a kilometre are not uncommon.

"The road is so jam-packed it is difficult even to cross it," says a professor of Tebunia Samsul Huda Degree College. "Students sometimes miss classes because of the disruption."

But it's not only the students of the several nearby institutions who suffer. In the vicinity of Tebunia Bazar there are also banks, government and non-government offices, as well as innumerable businesses forced to endure the regular chaos.

Even those involved in market trading suffer. "We often have to sell our crop at reduced prices," says one jute farmer, Mokhtadir Rashid, 55. "The market is so cluttered and inconvenient that there isn't always the opportunity to negotiate properly with buyers."

Those with permanent shops nearby say that they hardly see customers on market days, since all are keen to avoid the area.

"We have a plan to relocate the market to a suitable place," assures Pabna District Council's Chairman Rezaul Rahim Lal, "but it will take time. After discussing the matter with locals and jute traders we will take action to ensure the smooth movement of passengers and others using the highway."



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Hasina lucky

FROM PAGE 20

in person "at this old age" despite being very busy.

"I am a citizen who respects law, court and the judiciary. I... appear before the court even at this old age. But the court sometimes issues arrest warrants for me if I remain absent on one or two occasions."

In the statement, she narrated her dedication to the country and democracy, and also focused on her struggle as a politician.

She alleged that her civil rights were repeatedly taken away and "ugly propaganda and falsehood" were spread against her all the time.

"No matter how insignificant a person I am, the extent of the ruling quarter's behaviour towards me -- the causes, background and context behind it -- is not insignificant. It cannot be seen separately from the poor state the nation is in."

She also termed the current government "illegal", saying that Bangladesh does not have an elected government and parliament in the real sense.

"Everything is being run unilaterally in a one-party system. Democracy, for which people have sacrificed a lot, is exiled today."

Khaleda said most of the members of parliament were elected unopposed, adding that the rest were "elected without votes". Not even five percent of the voters had cast their votes in the last general election. "The farcical parliament and the government formed through it can never be legal."

She also said there is no effective opposition. Awami League had been defeated in most of the city corporation elections. But the government had suspended elected city mayors on different pretexts after filing false cases.

Khaleda then told the court that many cases were filed and arrest warrants were issued for her, and how she was evicted from her home where she lived for decades.

In an emotion-choked voice, the former premier said that while in confinement, she got the news of her younger son's death. Besides, a case was filed against her and her party leaders on charges that they had torched vehicles and killed people with explosives.

The BNP chief also narrated how she was confined along with party leaders to her Gulshan office. "Is it civil and humane?" she questioned.

"Repeated attempts were made to kill me; the world community saw it. Armed and terror attacks were carried out on my motorcade, which left many of my party leaders injured. But none of the attackers were arrested and no trial of those attackers had taken place."

Citing her sufferings and sacrifices during the Liberation War in 1971, she said it was her husband Ziaur Rahman who declared the independence of Bangladesh.

"I, along with my two children, was confined in Dhaka during the Liberation War in 1971 and bombs were thrown but we survived by the grace of Almighty Allah. Later, I became the prime minister of Bangladesh for three terms."

At 11:56am, Khaleda appeared before the court set up in the capital's Bakshibazar area and placed her statement.

At one stage, prosecution lawyer Mosharraf Hossain Kajol termed the statement "political and not related to the case".

After about an hour, Khaleda said she was not feeling well and that she would like to proceed with her argument on another day. The court fixed November 2 for the next hearing.

Judge Md Akhtaruzzaman of the Special Judge's Court-5 of Dhaka recorded her statement.

Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 2

more sober, realistic [and] locally sensitive approach."

His remarks came a day after the Rohingya issue had figured in talks between Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in New Delhi on Wednesday.

An estimated 40,000 Rohingya refugees are staying in Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh states and southern city of Hyderabad and in and around Delhi. Over six lakh Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh escaping violence in Myanmar's Rakhine since August 25.

India's home ministry in a communication to all states said the rise of terrorism in last few decades has become a serious concern for most nations as illegal migrants are "prone to getting recruited by terrorist organisations". The ministry asked the state authorities to form a task force each to identify Rohingyas.

Jaishankar earlier spoke on India-Japan cooperation in the Bay of Bengal and Asia-Pacific regions.

"India's behaviour in the South Asian and Bay of Bengal regions does not mean that it is a leading power but shows that it is an 'aspiring leading power' which has regional responsibilities to shoulder," he said.



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