

Watch out for closed city roads today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Major routes adjacent to the National Parade Square in the capital will be off limits to traffic today due to parade of the armed forces at the ground marking the Victory Day.

Vehicles have been asked not to use some other roads in and around the Bangabhaban from noon as the prime minister, ministers and other dignitaries will use those roads to meet the president at his official residence, said a Dhaka Metropolitan Police press release yesterday.

Vehicular movement will be off limits from 7:00am to 1:00pm on the following routes -- Khejur Bagan intersection-Begum Rokeya Sharani-Mirpur 10 roundabout, Shyamoli Shishu Mela intersection-Agargaon intersection-Rokeya Sharani, Prime Minister's Office-Agargaon Link Road, Bijoy Sharani intersection-Aeroplane crossing, Crescent Lake-Gono Bhaban crossing and Defence Ministry-Gono Bhaban School crossing-BICC intersection.

The DMP also asked vehicles not to use the routes in and around the Bangabhaban from noon until the programmes were completed. The routes are Zero Point-Gulistan underpass-Rajuk crossing, Ahad box-Ittefaq intersection, Alico gap-Dilkusha commercial area-Rajuk crossing, North Park Road-Ittefaq intersection and Shapla Chattar-Dainik Bangla-Rajuk-Gulistan.

Besides, vehicles have been asked not to use Dhaka to Savar National Memorial route from 3:30am to 9:30am to facilitate the movement of VIPs, VVIPs and guests to place floral wreaths at the National Memorial, the release added.

Pak SC rejects bid to bar Imran Khan

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's Supreme Court yesterday dismissed a petition to disqualify cricket hero and opposition leader Imran Khan from parliament for not declaring assets, months after former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was removed by the court on a similar charge.

The ruling was hailed as a vindication by Khan's opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party but drew questions from Sharif's ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, which had filed the case.

The two parties will contest general elections in 2018, along with the Pakistan People's Party and several smaller parties.

"No dishonesty or omission can be attributed to (Khan). This petition has no merits and is hereby dismissed," Chief Justice Saqib Nisar told the court.

Khan had led the legal drive that led to Sharif being disqualified in July over unreported income and the opening of a criminal corruption case against the former prime minister.

A lawmaker from Sharif's ruling party filed a separate complaint late last year alleging Khan and PTI secretary general Jahangir Tareen owned offshore companies and had not disclosed their assets.

Govt to file

FROM PAGE 16

"We are now scrutinising the grounds of the review petition. The number of the grounds may be changed when the petition will be filed after finalisation," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

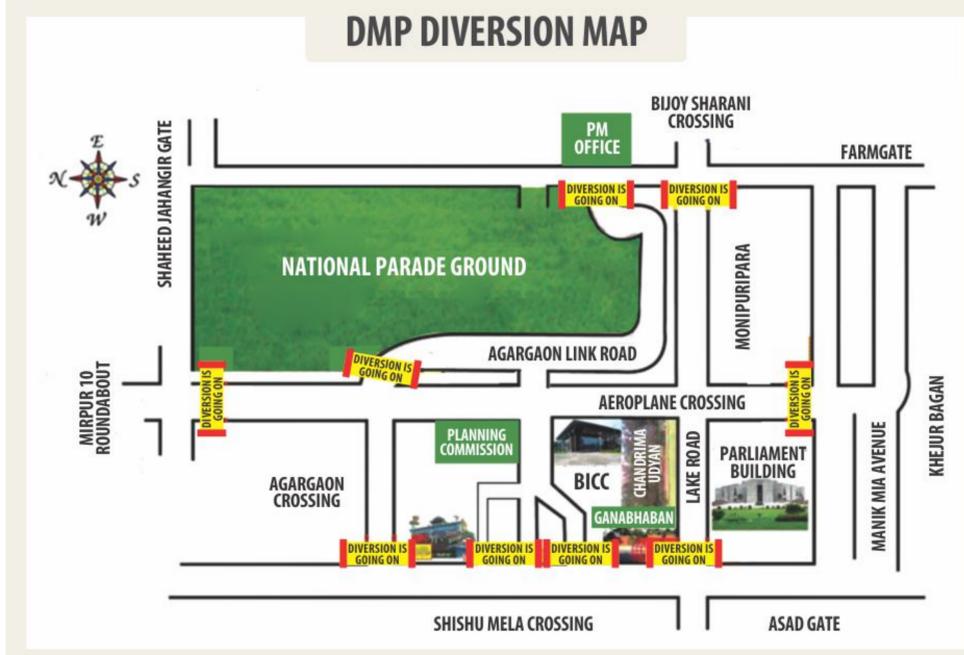
The top law officer of the state, however, refused to disclose the contents of the petition before filing it with the apex court.

His office had collected the certified copy of the Appellate Division judgement on November 26 for submitting the petition.

According to the SC rules, review petition has to be filed within 30 days of receiving the certified copy. The attorney general earlier told this correspondent that the government in the petition would pray to the apex court to restore parliament's power to remove SC judges.

In the full verdict released on August 1, the apex court said the provision of Supreme Judicial Council for the removal of SC judges for misconduct or incapacity has been reinstated in the constitution. An 11-member committee, led by the attorney general, was formed in October for filing the review petition.

The dismissal of the 16th amendment to the constitution has been widely talked-about among politicians from the ruling party as the SC in its full verdict made some observations critical of the country's present political culture.



Farmers Bank

FROM PAGE 1

secretary of the finance ministry's Financial Institutions Division and the BB governor on December 12.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter.

Talking to this newspaper, Dipak Kanti Paul, managing director of the BCCFE, said, "We have sought help from the Bangladesh Bank and the finance ministry to get back the money."

Another government agency, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), deposited Tk 4.8 crore with Farmers Bank under fixed-term deposit schemes. BIWTC's deposits of Tk 1.07 crore with the bank became mature early this month.

"But the bank is dilly-dallying to pay the money," said a BIWTC official, seeking anonymity.

"Finally, we have requested the central bank and the finance ministry to address our concern."

Many individuals are also worried about their deposits with the bank.

A number of them told this newspaper that they deposited money with Farmers Bank as it offered returns much higher than those offered by other banks.

Seeking anonymity, one of the depositors said she opened an account with the bank under a deposit scheme of Tk 10,000 a month for three years. She was offered 11.5 percent interest on the deposit -- much higher than the market rate of 7 to 8 percent.

"I have already paid 11 instalments [out of 36]. But I am concerned whether my money is safe with the bank," she said.

As of December 13, Farmers Bank had deposits of Tk 4,700 crore, down from Tk 5,660 crore on October 30.

Of the deposits, Tk 1,900 crore came from different institutions, mostly public ones.

Withdrawal of deposits of nearly Tk 1,000 crore over the last one and a half months led to deterioration in the bank's financial condition. Depositors lost their confidence in the bank as allegations of corruption and irregularities surfaced against the bank's management.

Eunusur Rahman, senior secretary at the Financial Institutions Division, said they received a number of complaints about Farmers Bank's failure to pay its depositors.

"We have informed Bangladesh Bank of the complaints," Eunusur said yesterday.

Seeking anonymity, a BB official said the regulator will look into the matter.

Elderly woman

FROM PAGE 16

told The Daily Star. He, however, said police did not find any evidence of outsiders entering the flat.

The victim talked over the phone minutes before the incident, the officer added.

Around 8:00am, the couple's part-time maid Khurshid Begum Sathi informed other residents of the building that the couple was not opening the door.

When some of the residents started knocking on their door, Anil opened it. The residents saw Milu's body in a pool of blood in the living room and called the police.

Police reached the scene and sent the body to Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

Milu owned two apartments on Green Road.

Mazharul Islam, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station, said they were investigating whether the woman was killed over her property or some other family feud.

He added that a knife was found on the scene.

Her husband Anil and the maid Sathi were being interrogated.

The victim's nephew Shojib Gomes told The Daily Star that the couple came home from Canada in October and was planning to go back next year after selling their properties in Bangladesh.

He added that he was unaware of any enmity they might have had with

Last month, Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, chairman of Farmers Bank, and Md Mahabubul Haque Chisty, chairman of the audit committee, resigned from the bank's board of directors upon instructions from the BB.

Allegations of irregularities at the bank surfaced within a year after it began operation in June 2013 with Tk 400 crore in capital.

Between September and November 2015, the BB conducted special inspections at the bank's three branches in the city's Gulshan, Motijheel and Shyampur, and found gross violations of banking rules in disbursing loans of Tk 400 crore.

According to BB inspection reports, some of the directors, including Muhiuddin and Mahabubul, were allegedly involved in sanctioning these loans in violation of the credit rules.

Making the most

FROM PAGE 16

Indeed there are younger village women also involved in the industry. Kantha production can equally appeal to the newlywed wife wishing to bring extra income into their household, in the quest for solvency.

An ordinary kantha will sell for up to Tk 600 while one of quality can fetch Tk 1,500. Each requires most often second-hand cloth pieces, as well as different coloured threads to enhance the finished product's appeal. Among the buyers are the more affluent families in the village, who often supply the cloth in advance.

"Sometimes we also get orders from handicraft dealers," says Anwara. "They usually ask for the best quality kanthas and pay more. Some of those products will even be exported and sold abroad."

She says that it's possible to produce three or four kanthas in a month, but that a quality piece could take between a fortnight and a month to finish.

"Many non-government organisations give us production orders," says neighbour Rozina Begum, 30, who also sews. "The remuneration they offer is good and they take delivery from the door. Sewing is really useful for women wanting additional income."

Another advantage of sewing is that it's a social activity. Commonly they can be found together, sitting on mats under a tree or in somebody's yard, chatting about family and community issues as they sew.

anyone.

"We have not been able to find their passports and travel documents in the apartment," he said.

Biplob Kumar Sarker said Anil's clothes were bloodstained and there were scratches on his face and hands.

Anil was not in good health and seemed to suffer from poor memory as he gave contradicting statements, the officer said.

Anil told police that he did not see anyone in the apartment as he was in the bathroom at the time of the incident, an account that contradicted with what he told reporters.

"We will also see whether Anil killed his wife due to any influence of the medication he was on. Police will examine his medicines."

THREE MORE DEAD IN THE CAPITAL

Police recovered a beheaded and limbless body of a man from a suitcase abandoned on the street in the capital's Kallyanpur yesterday morning.

Selimuzzaman, OC of Darussalam Police Station, told The Daily Star that locals found the suitcase and informed the police.

Motijheel police recovered the body of street vendor Ziarul Islam, 25, from the water tank of a bank.

Omar Faruque, OC of Motijheel Police Station, said the cause of his death was unknown.

On Thursday afternoon, police recovered the body of a seven-year-old boy in Uttar Khan area.



Serve the poor

President urges physicians

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid yesterday urged the doctors' community to render dedicated healthcare services to the patients particularly to the poor section of the society.

The president made the call while addressing the inaugural ceremony of 6th International Conference on "Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery & 4th Dhaka Live 2017" organised by Labaid Cardiac Hospital at Hotel Pan Pacific Sonargaon in the capital.

Chaired by Prof Dr Abdus Zaher, the conference was also addressed, among others, by State Minister for Health Zahid Maleque as guest of honour, and managing director of Labaid Cardiac Hospital, also chief patron of the conference Dr AM Shamim.

Mentioning that heart disease is one of the leading causes of death not only in our country but also in South Asian countries where one-fifth of the world population is living, the president said the modern medical sciences have discovered many new tools both for diagnosis and treatment of heart disease and this inventions are immensely contributing to saving many lives.

"But we observe that the general public cannot get the benefits of the modern medical sciences as the treatment of cardiovascular disease is highly expensive and most of the people of South Asian countries have no ability to spend such a huge amount of money for treatment," he observed.

Human

FROM PAGE 2

sent tens of thousands of Rohingya from Bangladesh to Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country in Southeast Asia, usually between November and March when seas are calmest.

But these networks were targeted by Bangladesh in 2015 after Thai authorities discovered mass graves and boats overcrowded with thousands of migrants drifted at sea while Southeast Asian nations squabbled over a solution.

Bangladesh police said they were questioning the alleged people smuggler to determine whether he was part of a larger regional trafficking ring.

Bangladesh has arrested dozens of suspected traffickers and broken up networks since the 2015 crackdown, but authorities fear these networks could be revived during the latest Rohingya crisis.

The refugees living in camps in Cox's Bazar are prohibited from leaving the area, but already aid groups and officials say trafficking networks are targeting the stateless minority.

Bangladesh in recent months has stepped up patrols in coastal areas and fishing villages where traffickers moor their vessels, police say.

"We have zero tolerance toward human trafficking. We are working day and night," Iqbal Hossain, head of police in Cox's Bazar district where the Rohingya camps are located, told AFP.

He said police were not aware of a single journey undertaken by a people smuggling vessel in Cox's Bazar in the previous two years, citing the success of law enforcement efforts.

CARDIAC DISEASES World class treatment available at home

Say physicians

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty-five-year-old MA Baki was admitted to Labaid Cardiac Hospital with cardiac problem a few days ago. He was then diagnosed with rare disease -- Coronary Total Occlusion.

Yesterday, two renowned cardiac surgeons Parveen Chandra of India and Mahbubur Rahman of Bangladesh performed his surgery at the hospital.

Physicians attending the 6th international conference on "Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery and 4th Dhaka Live 2017" witnessed the operation via videoconference from a city hotel. They had also an opportunity to interact with the two doctors during the surgery.

"It gives the doctors to have a hands-on experience of such a critical operation," Dr AM Shamim, managing director of Labaid Group, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Labaid Cardiac Hospital organised the three-day conference beginning on Thursday.

Renowned cardiologists from home and abroad, doctors and other healthcare professionals are taking part in the conference and sharing updates on heart health.

Like Baki, there would be 22 complicated and rare cardiac surgeries by renowned cardiologists in the hospital, and the participants will gain experience by witnessing those via videoconference.

Thirty-two foreign doctors and around 1,200 local cardiologists have so far participated in the conference, which was first held in 2005.

In the conference, foreign consultants and experts are making their presentations and talking about the new technology and its usage, said Shamim.

Organised for updating the country's physicians on modern cardiac treatment, the conference will help build a relationship between the foreign and local experts and share knowledge between them.

Shamim said he believed that all kinds of cardiac disease treatment were possible in the country. Labaid Hospital as well as many other hospitals was now providing world class cardiac treatment.

Of the country's 1,200 cardiologists taking part in the conference, 80 percent are working at different government hospitals and they are working outside Dhaka. So, when they acquire knowledge on the new medical technology, they can spread it across the country, he said.

Shamim said, "Labaid may treat 500 patients in a month, but this initiative [conference] will help provide modern treatment to around 50,000 people. Our aim is to ensure better and modern treatment facility of the cardiac patients in Bangladesh."

Nasa, AI find solar system

FROM PAGE 16

space agency said Thursday.

"Our solar system now is tied for most number of planets around a single star," NASA said in a statement.

However, none of the planets are expected to be hospitable to life.

The eight-planet system -- the largest known outside of ours -- orbits a star called Kepler 90 some 2,545 light-years away.

"The Kepler-90 star system is like a mini version of our solar system," said Andrew Vanderburg, an astronomer at the University of Texas at Austin.

"You have small planets inside and big planets outside, but everything is crunched in much closer."

The newly identified planet, Kepler-90i, is a rocky planet like Earth, but orbits its star once every 14.4 days, meaning a full year there is the same as two weeks on Earth.

"Kepler-90i is not a place I'd like to go visit, though," said Vanderburg.

"Its surface is likely far too hot." NASA calculated its average temperature at about 800 degrees Fahrenheit (426 Celsius) -- as hot as Mercury, the closest planet to the Sun.

Scientists found it by using machine learning from Google.

The process involved teaching a computer to scan a trove of 35,000 possible planetary signals collected from Nasa's Kepler Space Telescope for signs of planetary transits.

Transits are the dimming of light when planets pass in front of a star.

The Kepler Space Telescope launched in 2009, and has scanned some 150,000 stars.

Astronomers have already confirmed the existence of some 2,500

far-away worlds using Kepler data.

"I became interested in applying neural networks to astronomy when I learned that the Kepler mission had collected so much data that it was impossible for scientists to examine it all manually," said Christopher Shallue, a senior software engineer with Google's research team.

"Instead scientists selected the strongest signals, which are the most likely to be actual planets, to receive the most attention."

Shallue likened this process to "looking for a needle in a haystack."

"Machine learning really shines when there is too much data for humans to examine for themselves."

More planets are expected to be found, because researchers plan to apply their neural network to Kepler's full set of more than 150,000 stars.

"There is a lot of unexplored real estate in the Kepler 90 system," said Vanderburg.

"It would almost be surprising to me if there weren't any more planets in around that star."

One day, artificial intelligence might even be used to search specifically for more Earth-like planets, which have proven difficult to pin down.

"For the first time since our solar system planets were discovered thousands of years ago, we know for sure that the solar system is not the sole record holder for the most planets, and we have just scratched the surface," Vanderburg added.

"Maybe there are systems out there with so many planets that they make our eight-planet solar system seem ordinary."

The findings are published in The Astronomical Journal.

UN worried over safety

FROM PAGE 16

low for January is 15 degrees Celsius. The lack of adequate clothing and shelter insulation makes refugees vulnerable to even modest declines in temperatures, especially at night, he said.

According to the spokesperson, children, who are 55 percent of the Rohingya refugee population, are particularly vulnerable. "So are the women and they represent more than half of all refugees in Bangladesh."

An estimated 10 percent are either specially abled, have serious medical conditions or are older persons at risk.

Around 650,000 Rohingya refugees have fled Myanmar for Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, since late August. At present, a steady but smaller number of refugees continue to cross from Myanmar. Currently some 100 a day are entering Bangladesh, Babar told journalists.

He said the UNHCR had been working to bolster the quality of shelters in the camps by supplying high quality materials as well as expanding technical support for construction and drainage.

According to him, the agency last month distributed over 15,000 new shelter kits, one-third of the 45,000 targeted in the second phase of its shelter strategy. The full shelter kit includes bamboo poles, ropes, plastic ties, tools and tarpaulins.

Some families, notably female-headed households with small children, were receiving extra assistance to carry the kits and set up their shelters.

The UNHCR has also distributed more than 40,000 core relief items over the last 30 days alone. The items include blankets, kitchen sets, solar lights, plastic sheets, mosquito nets and jerry cans.

Another two massive airlifts arrived

in Bangladesh last week carrying 26,500 kitchen sets, some 15,000 solar lamps and five pre-fabricated warehouses. Since the beginning of the crisis, the UNHCR has organised 17 airlifts, bring more than 2,100 tonnes of aid relief items, worth over \$9 million. Additional aid was shipped by sea in three consignments.

The UNHCR also began distributing cooking fuel in the form of compressed rice husks (CRH). Last week, the UNHCR and its partners distributed the husks to over 18,000 families in Kutupalong and Nayapara settlements. Each refugee household receives 19 kg of the fuel.

The husks have been supplied as a replacement to firewood for cooking. Refugees have been sending youngsters into adjacent forests to gather wood, which puts the children at risk and has been degrading the environment by stripping back swathes of woodland every day. The UNHCR will continue these distributions and plans to supply 85,000 families by the end of the year.

Meanwhile, the UNHCR turned part of its Transit Centre in Kutupalong into a treatment and isolation facility in its immediate response to reported diphtheria outbreak in Cox's Bazar. The centre currently accommodates 375 patients managed by Médecins Sans Frontières.

Alongside the WHO and the Unicef, the UNHCR is supporting the diphtheria vaccination campaign by Bangladeshi health authorities for all children under six.

The UN agency was also procuring antibiotics to treat 8,000 people and training refugee volunteers to disseminate information on diphtheria, detect symptoms of the disease and direct patients to health facilities.