



# Chaotic traffic makes commuters suffer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands suffered yesterday due to a thin presence of public transport centring Awami League's grand reception to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka.

People were seen waiting for hours for buses since noon while many had to walk miles to reach their destinations.

Failing to find any transport, Rahmat Ullah walked from Mohakhali to Paribagh. "I was waiting for a bus for over 30 minutes. I need to go to Gulistan. Now, I have no other option but to walk again."

Many patients from different areas also faced hurdle to reach Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said patients and their attendants.

It took Fatima, who is suffering from blood deficiency and other health issues, three hours to reach DMCH from a hospital in Uttara on an auto-rickshaw.

"We got stuck in a jam for a long time while people in droves were heading towards the venue," her uncle Saidul Islam told The Daily Star at DMCH.

Meanwhile, fearing gridlock on Uttara-Farmgate road, family members of Amir Hossain, a patient of liver cirrhosis, chose Beribandh road from Tongi to reach DMCH.

"Fortunately, there was no gridlock on the road, though I had to drive almost twice the distance," said Abdur Raj, the driver of the auto-rickshaw carrying Amir and his family members.

Abu Raihan, a trader in Farmgate area, began his journey on a bus from Uttara around 1:00pm. He reached Paschim Razabang around 4:30pm. "Law enforcers blocked the roads at various points. I had

to wait for an hour on Mohakhali flyover," he said.

Awami League yesterday accorded the reception to Sheikh Hasina for Bangladesh's graduation to a developing nation, launching of Bangabandhu Satellite-1, receiving Global Women's Leadership Award as well as receiving Doctor of Literature (DLitt) degree from Kazi Nazrul University of West Bengal's Asansol.

Yesterday, most of the available city buses were jam-packed with ruling party men who were moving towards the venue, creating gridlock on the surrounding roads.

Many of them, carrying banners and placards, reportedly forced passengers to get off the buses in the middle of their trip in different areas.

They also forced the drivers to drive them straight to Suhrawardy Udyan without making any stop, wrote several sufferers on social media.

A leader of Dhaka Road Transport Owners' Association told The Daily Star that a large number of city buses were booked by the ruling party men for the reception, which created a vacuum in the transport system.

Number of cars was also thin on the city roads as it was a holiday and many also chose not to come out of their homes.

Meanwhile, finding no other alternative, many Dhaka dwellers were seen taking rickshaws, which even plied the restricted streets.

Kazi Alamin, a private job holder, said he had to pay a rickshaw-puller Tk 230 to go to Chankharpool from Mirpur. "It took me a long time, but at least I made it," he said.

Many also frequented the "Traffic Alert" group on Facebook to know about the latest scenario of the roads before heading out.



These photos of processions heading towards Suhrawardy Udyan and commuters were taken from Bangla Motor and Shahbhagh. PHOTO: STAR

## Stop polythene use, encourage green alternatives

Activists urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Green activists yesterday demanded that the government strictly implement laws to ensure ban on polythene and bring the law-breakers to book in order to save the environment from plastic pollution.

Speaking at a seminar, jointly organised by nine government and non-government organisations -- including Department of Environment and Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) -- at Bon Bhaban in Dhaka's Agargaon, they also called for ensuring usage of alternatives like jute and jute polymer bags, and promote those through pro-

viding incentives.

In addition, they urged both the government and people to ensure recycling and reuse of plastic products.

Bapa Joint Secretary Mihir Biswas said the government banned polythene in 2002, but use of this product that is harmful for the environment is still rampant. Plastic pollution has reached the Bay of Bengal after wreaking havoc on the rivers and canals, he added.

If the government does not become cautious now, it will keep affecting the environment more and more, he said while presenting a keynote paper.

Dhaka University Professor Khandaker Bazul Haque said, "We are responsible for destroying our own environment. We are heavily inclined towards plastic products due to their affordability but now, it has become a trap for us."

Noted writer and columnist Syed Abul Maksud said import of [plastic] raw materials should be stopped along with enforcing laws. Above all, people need to be more aware, he added.

Department of Environment Director General Sultan Ahmed and Bapa General Secretary Abdul Matin, among others, spoke at the seminar.

## Monitor how farms are fattening cattle

Poba urges govt ahead of Eid-ul-Azha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poribesh Bachao Andolon (Poba) yesterday urged the government to monitor how farms are rearing and fattening cows ahead of Eid-ul-Azha so that people can slaughter healthy animals during Eid.

The green organisation observed that the process of rearing cows has become unhealthy nowadays as some dishonest traders and farmers fatten their animals by feeding excessive amount of chemicals and medicines which are harmful for the human body, said a press release.

Poba made the remarks through organising a roundtable discussion at its office in Dhaka's Kalabagan.

At the discussion, Poba officials demanded that the authorities concerned do not set up cattle market on playgrounds, parks, roadsides and so on.

They also called upon people to slaughter cattle only at designated places to keep the environment clean.

They suggested encouraging traders to collect some non-consumable parts of animals like horn, fat and testicle because those have economic value.

A particular medical team should be assigned at all the cattle markets to identify sick and unhealthy ones, they recommended.

Poba President Abu Naser Khan, General Secretary Abdus Sobhan and its other officials spoke at the event.

## Two workers die after falling off DU hall

DU CORRESPONDENT

Two construction workers died after falling off a nine-storey building on Jagannath Hall premises at Dhaka University yesterday.

The deceased were Swapan, 24, and Maidul Islam, 26, said Sub-inspector Bacchu Mia of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police outpost.

The incident occurred when a hanging platform they were standing on, snapped around 5:00pm, said a coworker.

Swapan died on the spot while Maidul was declared dead after he was taken to DMCH.

## Youths can develop nation more efficiently

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion said the present dominance of young people in the overall population of Bangladesh can more efficiently contribute towards developing the nation.

Centre for Bangladesh Studies (CBS) organised the discussion titled "New Generation: Present and Future of Bangladesh" at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in the capital yesterday.

They said despite setbacks and corruptions in different sectors, innovative ideas and sector-based expertise from youths can overcome such obstacles.

Sheikh Rokon, secretary general of Riverine People, a voluntary organisation, suggested youths can save the rivers through their innovative efforts as pollution and dying of rivers remain a big concern for Bangladesh at present.

"If 100 youths start campaigning on social media to save a river, their small effort will help to wage a bigger movement to save all others," he said.

Ahbab Yusuf Khan, a young economist, said youths should challenge the government's present policy for the financial sector to bring a positive change.

Jyotirmoy Barua, a lawyer of the Supreme Court, said country's legal system has to be inclusive for everyone.

## 'Barred from flying to US' Imran H Sarker claims

DU CORRESPONDENT

Ganajagan Mancha spokesperson Imran H Sarker yesterday alleged that he was barred from boarding a plane to the United States to attend events of the State Department and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

Imran went to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 4:00pm on Friday and was waiting to board an Emirates plane, which was scheduled to leave around 7:30pm, after acquiring the boarding pass and immigration clearance.

But immigration police stopped him around 5:00pm, Imran told The Daily Star.

"An immigration official stopped me and said they had some formalities to complete. They kept me waiting and assured me that the plane will not fly without their permission. But 10 minutes before the plane was scheduled to fly, they said I could not leave because of orders from high-ups," he said.

The official, however, did not provide an acceptable answer about the move, said Imran.

Imran was also asked to sign a paper declaring that he could not leave owing to family matters or arriving late to board the plane, he said, adding that he did not sign the paper.

The US Department of State invited him to its International Visitor Leadership Program, he said.

Imran described the incident as "unprecedented autocratic behaviour of the government".

Talking to the newspaper yesterday evening, the officer-in-charge of immigration police refused to make any comment and said that another officer was on duty on Friday evening.

When asked about the name or phone number of the officer, who can talk regarding the issue, the OC said, "I do not know anything about it."

## Hajj Pilgrims Replacement facilities increased to 8pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government last night increased the rate of pilgrim's replacement quota for ticket confirmation for hajj agencies to 8 percent.

Religious Affairs Minister Motiur Rahman announced this at a press conference at his Minto Road residence.

According to the existing Hajj Policy-2018, four percent pilgrim replacement was possible.

"We've increased the replacement quota upon request from the Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh," the minister said, adding that there will be some conditions.

He also said all the hajj agencies will have to apply in writing on the respective agency's stamped pad within July 24 along with a list of aspirants who want to replace pilgrims incapable to attend hajj. They will also have to submit medical certificates from doctors, said the minister.

The agencies will have to submit an affidavit on a non-judicial stamp of Tk 300 that no wrong information was provided by the agency, he added.

The minister, however, warned that the license of the hajj agency that will file applications with wrong or forged information will be cancelled.

Hajj is scheduled to be held on August 21, subject to moon sighting. The first hajj flight, carrying 419 pilgrims, left for Saudi Arabia on June 14.

This year, a total of 1,27,198 people will go to Saudi Arabia for performing hajj. Bangladesh Biman will carry 63,599 pilgrims, operating 187 flights. Of them, 7,198 will go under government management and the rest 56,401 under private management. The pilgrims will go to Saudi Arabia through 528 hajj agencies. The hajj flights will continue till August 15.

## Notable improvement in agriculture

Says ADB report about Bangladesh

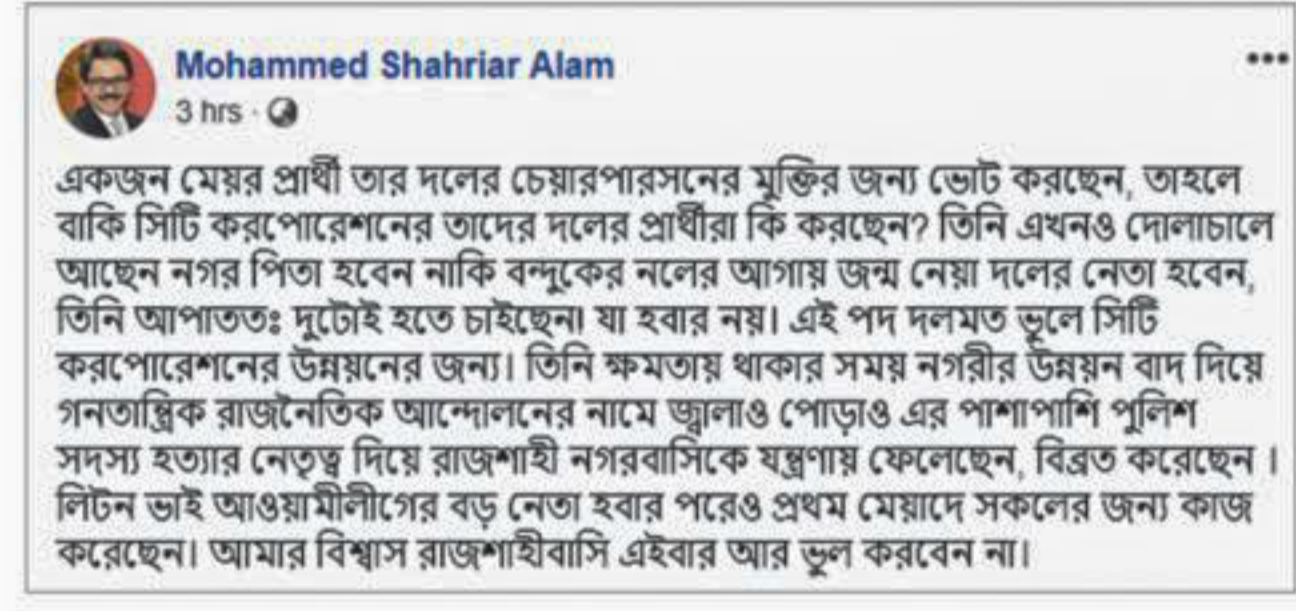
UNB, Dhaka

Agriculture recorded notable improvement over the last year in Bangladesh, surpassing expectations and driving growth, Asian Development Bank said recently.

Growth in Asia and the Pacific's developing economies for 2018 and 2019 will remain solid as growth continues apace across the region, said a new ADB report.

South Asia, meanwhile, continues to be the fastest growing sub-region, led by India, whose economy is on track to meet the fiscal year 2018 projected growth of 7.3 percent and further accelerating to 7.6 percent in 2019, as measures taken to strengthen the banking system and tax reform boost investment.

In a supplement to its Asian Development



## To campaign or not on social media

State Minister Shahriar Alam seeks vote for Rajshahi AL mayoral candidate on Facebook

ANWAR ALI, RAJSHAHI

Unlike some ruling party stalwarts, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam refrained from physically electioneering for AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, but he campaigned for his party's mayoral candidate on Facebook.

In two poetic lines, Shahriar wrote in a Facebook post on July 16 that Rajshahi would be the best, abounding with work and development and asked his friends and followers to vote for Liton. Around 1,400 followers liked the post and 54 of them shared it.

The next day, he shared a photograph that shows a woman with a child in her arms blessing Liton, who was surrounded by a number of followers distributing leaflets.

"Liton bhai for present and future generations," Shahriar captioned the photograph. More than 1,500 people liked the post and at least 115 shared it.

Talking to The Daily Star over phone yesterday, Shahriar said he was unaware that campaigning on

Facebook was prohibited.

"I stand by my Facebook campaign until I know it's prohibited by electoral rules," he said. "If the Election Commission rules it illegal, I would react as a responsible person belonging to the government," he added.

Contacted, Retuning Officer Syed Amirul Islam said any sort of electioneering by ministers or lawmakers is prohibited. He, however, said he had no clear concept of campaigning on Facebook. "In the electoral laws, none of the social media has been mentioned," he noted.

He said during the recent visit of the Election Commissioner, the issue was raised. "The Election Commissioner also could not give a precise answer," he said.

In another Facebook post yesterday, the state minister campaigned for Liton again and this time, criticised the election strategy of BNP's mayoral candidate Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul without naming him.

The returning officer said the minister must not criticise another candi-

date.

Asked, Hamidul Haque, a senior lawyer of Rajshahi, said campaigning by the ministers and lawmakers on Facebook would be illegal as well. "Social media is a powerful platform for campaigning in this digital age," he added.

However, the returning officer said he had verbally warned Liton and his election agents about participation of ministers and lawmakers in campaigns.

Despite his warning, newly-elected mayor of Khulna Talukder Abdul Khaleque was still in Rajshahi electioneering for Liton.

He was yet to take over as mayor, Khaleque argued when asked about it.

The returning officer said Khaleque's participation would be illegal as he has already been sworn in.

He said warning was also issued for lawmakers Omar Faruk Chowdhury, Ayan Uddin, Abdul Wadud Dara of Rajshahi and Shafiqul Islam Shimul of Natore for campaigning in favour of Liton on July 16-18.