

# Some efforts, little change

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the spot as a Jabal-e-Noor bus ploughed through a crowd while competing with another bus of the same company. It was later revealed that a third bus was also involved in the race.

The accident ignited fury among students, mostly in their mid-teens, who defied pouring rain to take to the streets of Dhaka city with slogans "we want justice", bringing traffic to a standstill.

Following the movement, the government, and transport owners and workers took up several measures to improve the situation on roads.

But still things have not changed that much with the authorities pointing out that the problems and mismanagement that continued for years cannot be removed overnight.

**YESTERDAY'S TRAFFIC SITUATION**

Around 2:30pm, scores of people were seen waiting for buses at Farmgate, one of the busiest areas in the city.

Whenever a bus came, people tussled to get into it.

Though there are three footbridges in the area, many crossed the busy road, ignoring the risk of being hit by a vehicle. As the number of buses was small due to the ongoing police drive, people had to pay two or three times the usual fares for CNG-run auto-rickshaws to reach their destinations.

Earlier, two bicyclists were using the wrong side of the road at the Science Laboratory intersection around 10:00am. Traffic police stopped them and forced them to use the right lane. In a rare display of discipline, bikers were seen moving in lines.

The picture was different in Kazipara and Shewrapara areas.

Around 1:00pm, a correspondent of this newspaper found rickshaw-pullers pulling haphazardly without maintaining any line, leading to traffic congestion in the two areas. Buses were picking and dropping off passengers here and there. There was no discipline at all on the road, part of which has become off-limits for construction of metro rail.

Zina Tasreen, a private service holder who frequently uses the Airport Road, said, "Buses are still racing on the road. Bikers still drive roughly, spilling into the pavement and barging into pedestrians."

She said she saw people crossing the road amidst speeding traffic instead of using nearby footbridges.

However, Biplob Rahman, another

private service holder who regularly uses public transport in Mirpur area, said, "I saw some people using zebra crossing. Some others refrained from using mobile phones while crossing roads," he said.

"I even heard a rickshaw-puller asking another to follow the right lane, which is quite rare," he said.

**CASES AGAINST RULE BREAKERS**

In the first five days of the Traffic Week, police collected more than Tk 3 crore from different vehicles for violating traffic rules across the country.

The Traffic Week that began on August 5 ends tomorrow.

"We fined different vehicles Tk 3,11,31,698 till today [Thursday] for violating traffic rules," Mohammad Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general at the Police Headquarters, told this newspaper.

Over the last five days, the traffic police filed cases against 97,046 vehicles for breaking traffic rules in six metropolitan police areas, and eight ranges and highway ranges, he said.

Besides, law enforcers seized 3,255 vehicles, and legal action has been taken against 34,321 drivers for breaching traffic rules such as driving vehicles on the wrong side, using hydraulic horns and for not carrying documents while driving, mentioned the official.

"Violation of traffic rules is an old problem in the country. Police are trying their best to improve the situation. However, it is not possible to solve the problem overnight," he added.

Meanwhile, three mobile courts of the BRTA filed cases against 53 vehicles in the capital and nearby areas, and realised Tk 1.1 lakh in fine from traffic rule violators.

They also jailed 19 middlemen for various terms.

Talking to The Daily Star, BRTA spokesperson Mahbub-e-Rabbani said a huge number of people thronged different BRTA offices across the country to update their vehicle-related documents.

"We see a change among people. Bus owners are also trying to fix their problems following the protests," he added.

**ASSOCIATIONS CHECK DOCUMENTS**

As per their earlier decisions, representatives of transport owners and workers associations checked driving licences, registration and other documents of buses before allowing those to leave

terminals in the capital.

Around 1:30pm at Mohakhali Bus Terminal, a correspondent of this newspaper saw two transport association members checking six types of documents -- licence, blue book, tax token, fitness clearance, route permit and insurance.

Tariqul Islam Tareq, office secretary of Mohakhali Bus Terminal Owners' Association, said that till 2:00pm, they had checked documents of 300 vehicles and found that 260 of those were okay.

Around 40 vehicles were not allowed to operate as their documents were not updated, he said.

At an emergency meeting on Wednesday, Dhaka Road Transport Owners' Association, a platform of Dhaka-based 2,400 bus owners, decided to check the documents so that no unfit bus can operate in the city.

Abul Kalam, president of the association, claimed that documents of most of the buses at Mohakhali terminal were okay but there were problems with drivers' licences.

Almost 70 percent of the drivers had licences either for light or medium vehicles, meaning they were not eligible to drive buses, he pointed out.

Karam Ali, general secretary of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers' Union, said they also checked documents at Sayedabad and Gulistan bus terminals.

Khondaker Enayet Ullah, general secretary of Bangladesh Road Transport Owners' Association, said they cancelled membership of five bus companies for violating the decision to discontinue the practice of daily contracts with bus drivers and helpers.

"They [five companies] were still operating buses under daily contracts, defying our decision [made on Wednesday]. So, we cancelled their membership," he added.

The companies that have more than 400 buses are: Azmeri, Skyline, DMK, Supravat and Gabtoli-Sadarghat Paribahan (bus number 7).

Many bus owners rent out vehicles to drivers under daily contracts. In this practice, a driver pays a specific amount to the owner and to maximise profits they often drive recklessly to make as many trips as possible in a day.

Enayet said that to implement their decisions, they yesterday formed four teams that start working today.

# Oscars to add 'best popular film' award

AFP, Los Angeles

Organisers of the Oscars -- under fire for plummeting ratings and accused of elitism -- on Wednesday announced the creation of a new category to honour top blockbusters and said they would shorten the ceremony to attract more viewers.

"Change is coming to the Oscars," tweeted the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which has traditionally put together the glittering awards gala each year in late February or early March.

Earlier this year, the 90th Oscars on March 4 lasted nearly four hours, and posted all-time low television ratings with 26.5 million viewers.

For 2019, organisers are hoping to produce a "more accessible" three-hour show -- by presenting some of the awards during commercial breaks, Academy president John Bailey and chief executive officer Dawn Hudson told members.

Edited excerpts of those presentations will then be shown during the broadcast.

They will also create a new award for "outstanding achievement in popular film" -- a response to accusations that for the past decade or more, the Academy has honoured art-house fare only seen by limited audiences.

The Academy did not offer specifics about how the category will be defined.

The final reform will be to hold the ceremony earlier in the calendar year -- in 2020, it will shift to February 9. In 2019, the date already set -- February 24 -- will be maintained.

Industry observers have complained that sometimes, the Oscars come nearly two months after the Golden Globes, making Tinseltown's awards season a marathon of gowns, glitz -- and stress.

"We have heard from many of you about improvements needed to keep the Oscars and our Academy relevant in a changing world," Bailey and Hudson said in a letter to members, a copy of which was sent to AFP.

# BB blocks

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The BB may also punish the audit firm for helping Crescent misappropriate taxpayers' money, the official told this newspapers, seeking anonymity.

Syful Shamsul Alam & Co may be dropped from the list of 75 chartered accountancy firms approved by the BB to carry out audit on banks and non-bank financial institutions.

According to the Bank Company Act 1991, a chartered accountancy firm will be delisted for two years if it commits any wrongdoing while carrying out audit.

A bank or non-bank financial institution has to take approval from the BB to appoint any of the 75 firms to carry out audit on its financial health.

A report of the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) says Syful Shamsul Alam & Co issued audit certificates, mentioning that Crescent was qualified to enjoy the cash incentive though Crescent failed to repatriate the export proceeds from abroad -- a major violation of the banking rules.

As per a BB circular issued in December 2001, exporters cannot collect the incentive, meant to encourage exports, until the entire export earnings are credited by the importer to the exporter's bank.

But that didn't happen in the case of Crescent. Yet, the audit firm certified the exporter for the cash incentive.

The auditor issued faulty audit certificates in favour of the business group between 2016 and 2017, says the BFIU report.

Janata Bank appointed Syful Shamsul Alam & Co to carry out an audit on its financial operation between 2016 and 2017.

Crescent received a total of Tk 1,074 crore in cash incentive against its exports between 2013 and February this year, and a chunk of the cash was given to it though 653 of its export bills that Janata bought remain overdue.

The investigators found that Crescent showed export proceeds against 117 export bills but the proceeds came not from the issuing banks but from some third parties that have no relation with the importers' banks.

The export proceeds of these 117 bills were sent from different remittance companies in the UAE.

The investigators suspect that the money was actually sent from Bangladesh to the UAE and then brought back to show as export proceeds with the intention to avail cash incentive.

Contacted, Md Syful Islam, managing partner of Syful Shamsul Alam & Co, said his firm had carried out the audit based on the documents provided by Janata Bank.

"The bank misled our firm by providing false information about Crescent Group," he claimed.

# Two 'drug dealers'

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the criminals dead and three policemen injured.

The body of the "drug dealer" was kept at Chandpur Sadar Hospital for autopsy, the OC claimed, adding that police recovered one pipe gun, six bullets and 83 yaba pills from the spot.

In Rajshahi, Manik, 30, of Natun Para in Charghat upazila, was killed in a "gunfight" with police at Muktarpur village, according to UNB.

After receiving a tip-off about a group of drug traders gathered in the area, a team of police conducted a drive there at around 2:45am, said Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Charghat Police Station.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the criminals opened fire on police, forcing them to fire back. At one stage, Manik was caught in the line of fire and sustained bullet injuries.

He was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, UNB adds.

Police officials claimed they recovered one pistol, one bullet and 50 bottles of Phensidyl from the spot.

With these, at least 212 suspected drug dealers and peddlers were killed

since the anti-narcotics drive began on May 4. Most of them were killed in so-called "shootouts" involving police or Rab.

Meanwhile in Dhaka, an alleged drug dealer was held with five kilogrammes of heroin from the city's Gabtoli area.

A team of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CITC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) arrested Nizam, 35, with the heroin worth around Tk 2 crore from Gabtoli Bus Terminal last night, said DMP Deputy Commissioner (Media) Masudur Rahman.

During primary interrogation, Nizam revealed that he had been bringing heroin to Dhaka from Chapainawabganj district border, he said.

Nizam was allegedly also involved in illegal arms trading.

In Chittagong, Department of Narcotics Control officials and Rab, in separate raids yesterday, arrested five people and seized 7,575 yaba pills. In Sylhet, Rab seized around 18,365 yaba pills and arrested one "drug dealer" from Zakigangi upazila on Wednesday night.

# Child, pregnant mother

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It was a show of force and defiance by Palestinian militants ahead of a meeting of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet, where terms for a possible truce were likely to be on the agenda.

The flare-ups, which follow months of tensions due to protests and clashes along the Gaza border, have raised fears of a fourth war between the two sides since 2008.

Nickolay Mladenov, the UN envoy for the Middle East conflict who has been seeking to negotiate a long-term truce between Israel and Hamas, said he was "deeply alarmed."

"For months I have been warning that the humanitarian, security and political crisis in Gaza risks a devastating conflict that nobody wants," he said in a statement.

Beginning on Wednesday night and into yesterday, fireballs and explosions shook the Gaza Strip while plumes of smoke rose from the enclave.

In nearby Israeli communities, residents were sent scrambling to bomb shelters.

Most of the rockets fired by Palestinian militants landed in open areas, but at least two hit the Israeli town of Sderot near the Gaza Strip and sirens sounded throughout the night and into the morning.

Medics reported at least four wounded taken to Israeli hospitals, including a 30-year-old Thai woman in moderate to severe condition after being injured in the Eshkol region bordering the Gaza Strip.

Israel's military reported seven civilians wounded.

Before the Gazan decision to halt fire, rockets and mortars targeting Israel had continued sporadically yesterday morning as had Israeli strikes in parts of the Gaza Strip.

"I rented this house to civilians and I'm surprised that this house was bombed," said Abdul al-Hakeem Abu

Amra, the owner of the house where the woman and child were killed.

In Sderot, the Israeli city near the Gaza Strip, a gaping hole could be seen in front of a small, three-storey building. A car parked nearby was smashed.

Israel's army said it targeted more than 150 Hamas military locations, including militant compounds and weapons manufacturing sites.

A statement from the military wing of Hamas claimed responsibility for the rockets.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas called on the international community to "immediately and urgently intervene."

The flare-up that began Wednesday night followed an incident the previous day.

In that incident, two fighters from Hamas's military wing were killed by Israeli fire along the border. Israel initially said the two fighters were shooting at Israeli soldiers, but Hamas said they were involved in a training exercise that senior officials were attending.

Israeli media reported that army officials later acknowledged a mistake had been made and the militants had not been firing at soldiers, though the military would not confirm that information to AFP.

Hamas warned Israel it would pay for the attack, and on Wednesday the army said shots were fired at civilian engineers working on an underground barrier along the border, prompting the military to respond with tank fire.

That was followed by the rockets and then the Israeli strikes.

Protests and clashes along the Gaza border began on March 30 and peaked with the May 14 move of the US embassy for Israel to the disputed city of Jerusalem.

At least 165 Palestinians have killed by Israeli fire since March 30. One Israeli soldier has been shot dead by a Palestinian sniper.

# Govt working

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said Bangladesh is having discussions with Myanmar. The biggest worry for the government is weather.

She said the influx of 1.1 million Rohingyas has created a burden on Bangladesh and locals are also suffering as the Rohingyas have occupied their land in Cox's Bazar.

Turning to terrorism, Hasina said her government has successfully combated terrorism and engaged the people from all walks of life in the movement against the social menace.

"It almost turned into a social movement. We don't want to allow our children to indulge in terrorism."

Talking about the election, she said more than 6,000 elections -- local body polls and parliamentary by-polls -- were held during the current term of her government and all the elections were free and fair.

About sports, the PM said Bangladesh Women Cricket Team has recently clinched the Asian Championship, while the Bangladesh National Cricket Team is also doing well. The government is promoting sports as a whole, she added.

The Commonwealth secretary general stressed the need for trade facilitation among the Commonwealth countries.

She said it will have to reduce trade barriers among the Commonwealth countries and enhance the connectivity for the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) network.

Patricia said the Commonwealth is ready to extend cooperation in upholding the democratic process in Bangladesh.

Talking about cricket, the Commonwealth secretary general

emphasised the need for the formation of Commonwealth Cricket Club and introduction of Commonwealth Cricket League with the participation of both male and female teams, the PM's press secretary quoted Patricia as saying.

She said the participation of women in the Commonwealth League will enhance their confidence and determination.

Patricia highly appreciated the women empowerment in Bangladesh and said women should be involved in trade. She also suggested engaging women and girls in the SMEs.

Mentioning that the displaced Rohingyas are burden on Bangladesh, she also praised the PM for hosting 1.1 million Rohingyas and called it a "great compassion".

Patricia also appreciated the role of Bangladesh in combating terrorism and presented a copy of the Commonwealth Charter to the premier.

PM's Principal Secretary Nojibur Rahman was present.

# 3 killed

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metres away injuring three others.

Jahangir Hossain, 36, and Motaleb Hossain, 38, were assistants at Lalmonirhat District Land Registry office while Dulal Hossain, 42, was the rickshaw puller. They were killed at the scene.

As the truck went on after hitting the second rickshaw, police chased and caught it around five kilometres away in Mahendranagar area, said Mahfuz Alam, officer-in-charge of Lalmonirhat Police Station.

The driver managed to flee, he added.

# Badiul bins propaganda

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For example, an online news portal on August 6 quoting police reported that Dr Kamal Hossain, Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, M Hafizuddin Khan and Justice Abdur Rouf were present at the dinner, read the statement.

But, it said, only Marcia Bernicat, Dr Kamal Hossain, his wife Dr Hameeda Hossain and M Hafizuddin Khan were there. "Apart from these four persons, my wife, son, daughter-in-law, two daughters and I -- a total of ten -- were present at the dinner."

The statement said that after the dinner, when the ambassador wanted to get into her vehicle, a group of miscreants -- estimated to number 30 to 40 -- attacked her motorcade.

They also attacked Badiul's son

Mahbub Majumder, coach of the Bangladesh Math Olympiad.

The miscreants, who were carrying pistols and sticks, chased Bernicat's vehicle and threw brickbats. Some of them were also heard talking of setting fire to the ambassador's vehicle, Badiul said.

As the motorcade drove off, the miscreants hurled brickbats at the second floor of his residence and broke the windowpanes. They even tried to break open the gate of the residence, he added.

They stayed in front of the house for nearly half an hour and hurled abuses at Badiul and even threatened to "see" them during the daytime.

"Instantly, we called the national emergency service at 999. Based on the call, police came but did not talk to us

and just left without arranging any security for us," he said.

The next day, Badiul and his three colleagues submitted a complaint to Mohammadpur Police Station's officer-in-charge detailing the attack. He requested the police to accept the complaint as a case and provide necessary security to his family.

The statement mentioned that police said they would discuss the matter with the higher authorities and then make a decision. Later, he came to learn it was accepted as a general diary.

"I strongly protest the attack and propaganda, and call upon all to behave responsibly. At the same time, I demand quick trial of the matter and ensuring security of me and my family," it added.

# End violence on journos

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several of which were reportedly carried out by supporters of your party as well as, in the case of journalists covering the ongoing student protests, by security forces," Ravi R Prasad, head of advocacy of International Press Institute (IPI), said in the letter published on its website on Wednesday.

The IPI, a global network of editors, media executives and leading journalists, also urged Hasina to take robust steps so that all charges against Shahidul are dropped.

Describing the arrest and prosecution of Shahidul as a clear infringement of freedom of expression as guaranteed under international treaties signed by Bangladesh, the IPI noted that Shahidul has been charged with spreading propaganda and false information against the government through Facebook posts and an interview he gave to Al Jazeera.

These charges, the letter said, which are based on the controversial section 57 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, appear to be an act of retaliation for Shahidul's critical views.

The writers of Bangladesh's constitution recognised the importance of a free press by guaranteeing press freedom, the IPI mentioned.

The letter also mentioned that the IPI network, whose head office in Austria, is extremely concerned over the Bangladesh government's move to replace the ICT Act with the Digital Security Act, provisions of which are equally or more draconian and will restrict the right of journalists to

expose acts of corruption that Hasina's government has promised to eradicate.

"The bill if approved by parliament in the current form will have a serious, oppressive impact not only on journalists but also on all citizens of Bangladesh," the IPI said.

In a joint letter to the PM, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN) have said, "The disturbing circumstances of the arrest and detention of Shahidul has generated considerable outrage and can only be regarded as an authoritarian attempt to suppress an important critical voice in Bangladesh."

The IFJ and SAMSAN remain gravely concerned by the attacks on the journalists and photojournalists covering the students' demonstrations by masked men on the streets of the capital, said the letter signed by Anthony Bellanger, general secretary of IFJ, the world's largest organisation of journalists, headquartered in Belgium.

It urged immediate and unconditional release of Shahidul, asking security agencies to ensure safety and security to protect media, journalists, photojournalists and media staff covering demonstrations, and urgently investigate and arrest those responsible for the attacks on journalists and photojournalists.

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development has condemned the arrest and alleged torture on Shahidul and urged the Bangladesh government to release him immediately.

The regional human rights group also condemned the crackdown on the student protest.

"It is high time for the government of Bangladesh to address the agitation in a peaceful manner, avoiding further injury and damage to journalists and protesters," the rights body said in a statement yesterday.

In a statement yesterday, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad also denounced the attacks on journalists and demanded punishment of the culprits.

**DRU RALLY**

Journalist leaders of different associations yesterday demanded legal action against the perpetrators who carried out the attacks on journalists, and protection of journalists in any circumstances, BSS reports.

They made the demands at a rally organised by Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) on its premises.

Leaders from Dhaka Union of Journalists, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, Crime Reporters' Association of Bangladesh and DRU Multipurpose Cooperative Society took part in the rally.

In another development, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu yesterday said the journalists, who were injured while covering the recent "road safety" movement, would be given treatment free of cost.

"Those who are responsible for the attacks on journalists will be brought to book immediately," he said.

The minister was talking to a delegation of journalists, including Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists President Mollah Jalal and Dhaka Union of Journalists President Abu Zafar Surjo, at the conference room of the ministry.