

Release them

FROM PAGE 1
Shafiquel added that he too was a member of the Awami League in Comilla.

"I don't know where I should go.... None of the ruling party men I have contacted helped me," he said, adding he had also contacted the DU authorities to no avail.
Saleha Begum, mother of arrested quota reform leader Muhammad Rashed Khan, said, "Please release my son before Eid. Let me celebrate the Eid with him."

Since Rashed was arrested on July 1, she has been travelling from Jhenidah to Dhaka to join public events and demand his release.

Saleha said her son was never against the government.

Rights activist Nur Khan said "arbitrary" detention and arrest of students caused widespread fear. "The nation needs to be free from the fear."

Eastern University teacher Rezaur Rahman Lenin said around 200 students were picked up and nearly 100 cases filed during the two widespread demonstrations.

Saiful Azam, a final year student of the University of Asia Pacific, said he and several other students of the university were attacked on August 5 while demonstrating on Green Road for road safety.

But instead of finding out the attackers, police picked up some of the students that evening and released them later.

Nur Khan, who helped organising the human chain, said some families of the arrestees did not attend the programme fearing reprisal.

Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna said no political slogan was chanted during the road safety demonstrations.

"Yet, the government was afraid of their agitation," he said.

He also pointed out that those who attacked the students and journalists during the demonstrations remained untouched.

Gonosasthaya Kendra founder Zafrullah Chowdhury said students being tied with ropes was not the sign of a civilised society.

"Attempts are on to keep people mum," he said.

Dream house

FROM PAGE 16
Agriculture, fisheries and poultry production can be ensured inside the house through special arrangements.

Through hydroponics and aquaculture and the utilisation of vertical farming method, around 4,500 vegetable plants and 1,000 fish can be produced inside the house.

There are also facilities to rear 216 chickens, said members of the team.

The house is environment friendly, said Nandan Mukherjee, the main designer and head of the project, and a Bangladeshi researcher of UK's University of Dundee.

All the bio-waste from the chickens and those living in the house would be turned into gas through bio-digesters and can be used for cooking, he added.

The energy demands of the house have been cost-effectively and sustainably met through the implementation and integration of solar panel, solar concentrator, wind mill and mechanical energy.

The most modern technology has been used to store and supply rain water. Even if it doesn't rain for 167 days, there is a reserve tank beneath the house that can store 17,000 litres of water.

"Simply speaking, there are round-the-clock facilities of pure water, energy and gas supplies in an environment-friendly floating house. The house is self sustainable, hence the inhabitants will not face any kind of crisis during the time of a natural calamity," said Dr Nishat.

He added that anyone would be able to build such houses as the procedure and design would be published on the GRP website.

Scientists

FROM PAGE 16
Mapping a comprehensive wheat genome was an "immense challenge" that took 13 years, because bread wheat contains five times more genes than a human, said the report in the Journal Science.

The type of wheat detailed by 200 scientists from 20 countries is Chinese Spring (Triticum aestivum) a variety of bread wheat which is the world's most widely cultivated crop, said the study led by the International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium (IWGSC). "Wheat productivity needs to increase by 1.6 percent a year to meet the demands of a projected world population of 9.6 billion by 2050," said the report.

The wheat genome contains 107,891 genes, and its complex genome contains 16 billion base pairs, which are the building blocks of DNA.

Humans, by contrast, have about 20,000 genes and three billion base pairs.



Trucks line up at Shimulia Ferry Terminal in Munshiganj. The tailback was created at the terminal as ferry service on Shimulia-Kathalabari route was disrupted due to poor navigability in the Padma. *Inset*, light vehicles wait in queues to board a ferry. The photos were taken around 1:30pm yesterday.

Home trips begin with hassles

FROM PAGE 1
service, carrying only small and light vehicles such as private cars and bikes.

"We're working to assess the situation. But it seems that the route is not ready for big ferries to operate," said Shah Md Khaled Newaz, assistant general manager of BIWTC, the river port authority.

As a result, long-haul vehicles are taking the Paturia-Daulatdia route. At around 2:00pm yesterday, more than 600 vehicles were stranded on either side of the Padma.

Apart from heavy traffic, strong current in the river is posing as another big challenge, forcing ferries to wait or take a detour, requiring double the time to cross the river.

Abdus Sattar, manager (marine) of the BIWTC's Paturia office, said usually ferries took 35-40 minutes to cross the river. Now they are taking around 80 minutes.

As a result, the number of trips has decreased, contributing to the tailback on the highway. Hundreds of people heading for southern districts were seen stuck in tailback yesterday.

SM Ashikuzzaman, general manager (commerce) of the BIWTC, said 20 ferries were in operation on the Paturia-Daulatdia route now. Two more are expected to join the existing fleet in a couple of days.

Dhaka-Chittagong highway saw one of the worst tailbacks, stretching about 20km from Kanchpur Bridge to Meghna Bridge.

Our Comilla correspondent took a bus at Sayedabad in the capital at 10:00am yesterday and it took him a full one hour to cross the Kanchpur Bridge. He reached the Meghna Bridge

ACTIONS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT
No cattle market on highways or nearby places
Ban on truck, lorries, covered vans three days before eid, excepting those carrying cattle, perishable goods, medicines, export products
Ban on slowing-moving, unfit vehicles
Toll plaza booths remain open for 24-hours
Immediately removing breakdown vehicles from roads
Deployment of additional police at bus and ferry terminals, troublesome road points

around 2:00pm.

But as the home rush is expected to increase, Eid travellers are likely to face even more ordeal on the road if the authorities fail to control vehicular movement at some key points of the highways.

Narrow roads and bridges, unplanned intersections, toll plazas and weight bridges, illegal roadside markets and the authorities' inability to control so many vehicles are responsible for the situation.

The government has chalked out a number of measures to maintain discipline on the roads. Additional police will be deployed on different highways as well as bus and ferry terminals. Also, a control room will be set up at the Road Transports and Highways Division in Dhaka to ensure

smooth traffic.

The Police Headquarters at a meeting with leaders of transport owners on Thursday decided to prevent unfit vehicles from plying the roads and control reckless driving.

Train journey was relatively hassle-free. Most trains, except for two in the morning, left the Kamalapur Railway Station on time.

Private launch owners will start a 15-day special launch services from Dhaka starting today.

Under the service, 30 triple-deck private launches will ply Dhaka-Barisal route till September 1, said Saidur Rahman Rintu, vice-president of Barisal Launch Owners Association. **DHAKA-CHITTAGONG HIGHWAY** People were subjected to a 23km-long tailback between Kanchpur and Meghna Bridge on the highway, considered the economic lifeline of the country.

Buses that left the capital's Sayedabad for Chittagong around 10:00am reached Mugarpara area of Sonargaon after two hours, our Comilla correspondent reports.

Another 3km-long tailback was caused between Meghna-Gumti toll station and Daudkandi, said Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Daudkandi Highway Police Station.

The rush of Eid holidaymakers and freight trucks has caused the tailbacks, he added.

DHAKA-MYMENSINGH HIGHWAY Workers of a garment factory blocked the highway in Hotapara area of Gazipur for around seven hours from 9:00am demanding Eid bonus and holidays.

Tailbacks on either side reached

nearly 10km, causing immense suffering to travellers.

"I got stuck in traffic in Rajendrapur area around 11:00am and had barely moved since," Alamgir Hossain, a bus passenger told this newspaper at 2:30pm.

The road was cleared around 4:00pm.

DHAKA-TANGAIL-RANGPUR HIGHWAY

A number of bottlenecks are feared to cause suffering on the road. Vehicles have to slow down at several points between Chandra and Elenga Bazar amid road expansion work.

Roads and Highways Department officials said expanded parts of the road and overpasses at intersections that were opened to traffic would ease congestion.

Authorities will deploy 700 policemen to control traffic on the highway that connects the north-western districts with Dhaka, said Sujit Kumer Roy, superintendent of police in Tangail.

Around 15,000 vehicles use the highway every day. But during the Eid, the number increases to 30,000 to 40,000, according to highway police.

DHAKA-SYLHET HIGHWAY Holidaymakers leaving for Sylhet may suffer in tailbacks while leaving Dhaka and its outskirts.

Among the dreaded points is Narayanganj's Bhulta intersection where a flyover is being constructed.

[Our correspondents in Manikganj, Tangail, Bogra, Munshiganj, Sylhet and Comilla contributed to this story.]

Pak MPs

FROM PAGE 1
vote, broadcast live from the lower house of parliament.

He had needed 172 votes for a majority. His only rival, Shahbaz Sharif of the ousted Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), won 96 votes, Qaiser said, with some opposition parties including the third-largest Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) abstaining from the vote.

The result brings him one step closer to ending decades of rotating leadership between the PML-N and the PPP, punctuated by periods of military rule.

Khan, clad in a waistcoat and traditional white shalwar kameez garments, smiled broadly and could be seen wiping tears from his eyes while clutching prayer beads as the count was announced.

He had appeared relaxed before the vote, smiling and shaking hands with other parliamentarians, including Sharif.

The former cricketer, who captained Pakistan to World Cup victory in 1992, won the July 25 election but fell short of an outright majority, forcing him to partner with smaller parties and independents in order to form a government.

Some television channels flashed archive images of Khan during his 1992 triumph as the vote was announced.

The election was branded Pakistan's dirtiest", after widespread claims through the campaign that the powerful military was trying to fix the playing field against the PML-N and in Khan's favour.

Rival parties have alleged "blatant" vote-rigging, with several parliamentarians shouting protest slogans inside the assembly ahead of the vote. The army and Khan have denied the claims.

THE WORK BEGINS

Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party campaigned on promises to end widespread graft while building an "Islamic welfare state".

The party has already formed a government in its stronghold of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, and an alliance with regional parties in the southwestern province of Balochistan.

It is expected to form a coalition government in powerful Punjab province, formerly a PML-N stronghold, in coming days. Sindh province remained in the hands of the PPP.

PTI candidates were also voted speaker and deputy speaker of the National Assembly this week, putting Khan in a strong position to carry forward his legislative agenda.

He will face myriad challenges including militant extremism, water shortages, and a booming population negating growth in the developing country, among others.

Most pressing will be a looming economic crisis, with speculation that Pakistan will have to seek a bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

He will also have to contend with the same issue as many of his predecessors: how to maintain a balance of power in civil-military relations.

Businesswoman held, remanded

FROM PAGE 1
movement, shared some "provocative and false contents" on Facebook for "diverting the demonstration to a different direction and deteriorating law and order".

Rab, however, did not specifically say what those contents were.

"Even after the government agreed to accept the demands of the protesters, Faria and her aides continued to try to create unrest," Rab said in a press release yesterday.

Members of the force seized Faria's mobile phone, collected a printout of her Facebook profile and recovered an "audio clip" during the arrest, according to the release.

The other accused in the case has

been shown fugitive.

This correspondent visited Faria's home on Haji Afsar Uddin Road for comments but none of her family members was there. Asked, the caretaker said they were outside.

Contacted over phone, Faria's husband Mohammad Reasat said he was not in a position to make any comment on the matter.

Hailing from Khulna, Faria did her graduation in computer science and engineering from North Western University in the district.

With Faria, at least 26 people have been arrested under the section 57 of the ICT Act on charges of spreading rumours, propaganda and fake news centring the nationwide student movement.

They were shown arrested in 12 cases - nine filed with different police stations in Dhaka and one each with police stations in Chittagong, Sirajganj and Bogra.

Noted photographer Shahidul Alam is among the arrestees. He is now in jail.

Police said they have gathered details about a hundred social media accounts which "incited violence" centring the movement.

Another 81 people, including 22 private university students, were arrested in 43 cases filed under Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Special Powers Act over violence during the road safety protest.

The 22 students have been repeatedly denied bail by courts.

Apart from all these arrestees, many

road safety and quota reform protesters were detained, interrogated and then released upon taking undertakings.

On July 29, school and college students began an unprecedented movement demanding concrete government steps to improve road safety measures following the deaths of two of their peers in a road crash in the capital.

Since then, students took to the streets for eight days in a row -- blocking streets for hours -- before things rolled over to violence.

The protesters came under attacks by the police and alleged ruling party activists on August 4 and 5.

The government and the ruling Awami League claim some vested quarters tried to capitalise on the

student protests and create unrest by spreading rumours.

However, police have failed to arrest any of those who beat up and injured dozens of students and journalists during the movement.

Victims and eyewitnesses said the attackers belong to the ruling Awami League and its affiliated organisations, including Chhatra League -- something the AL has denied.

In many cases, such attacks happened in front of the police, as seen in videos and photos published in the media. In other cases, police and the attackers, some wearing helmets and carrying sticks, metal bars and machetes, were seen launching joint attacks on the protesters.

2m Muslims gather in Makkah

FROM PAGE 1
remaining firm in the face of any dissent.

One of the five pillars of the world's fastest-growing religion, the hajj is expected to draw two million people from around the globe this year.

By Thursday, more than 1.6 million people had already arrived in Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage, which runs from Sunday to Friday.

Thousands could be seen arriving in Makkah, with groups from different countries wearing distinct colours to set them apart.

Some pilgrims pushed their elderly relatives on wheelchairs while others stopped to call family members back home on video chat or buy ice cream as temperatures soared above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

For many, it is their first time away from home.

Every Muslim is required to complete the hajj at least once in their lifetime if

they have the means to do so.

SMART HAJJ

Many were visibly moved to be so close to Islam's holiest site -- the Kaaba, a black masonry cube in the centre of Makkah's Grand Mosque.

"I feel as light as a feather," said Senegalese Fame Diouf, who travelled from Amsterdam. Laughing, she recounted the story of how she couldn't stop crying near the Kaaba.

"This was my dream from childhood," said Raja Amjad Hussein, who made the trip to Makkah from Pakistan.

"I can't explain. I have no words," the 40-year-old told AFP.

"For many Muslims this is the big, the biggest, dream of life, to see Kaaba and pray for yourself and the whole Muslim nation."

No matter their race or nationality, for every pilgrim hajj begins with "Ihram", the donning of an all-white outfit.

For men, this is a seamless tunic worn over baggy pants; for women, a

loose dress with only the face and hands exposed.

Pilgrims then perform rituals around the Kaaba and on the Mount Arafat plain east of Makkah.

The hajj ends with Eid-ul-Azha, a three-day feast which starts with the "stoning of the devil".

Eid-ul-Azha also includes the slaughter of sheep, with the meat distributed to Muslims in need. The ritual symbolises Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, on the order of Allah.

The hajj presents the Saudi authorities with major logistical challenges.

The Pew Research Center says the number of Muslims in the world is expected to rise from 1.8 billion in 2015 to three billion in 2060.

This year, the Saudis have launched a "smart hajj" initiative, with apps to help pilgrims with everything from travel plans to medical care.

Asefny, for example, is an app

launched by Saudi Arabia's Red Crescent to help pilgrims request emergency medical attention.

Authorities are able to locate those in need through the app.

The Saudi hajj ministry also runs the Manasikana app, which provides translation for pilgrims who do not speak Arabic or English.

CONTROVERSY

The 2018 pilgrimage comes amid a widening crackdown on political dissent in Saudi Arabia, an absolute monarchy aggressively pursuing a campaign to clean up its image as one of the world's most restrictive countries.

It also comes more than a year into the worst political crisis to grip the Gulf, pitting regional heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Qatar against one another.

Saudi Arabia -- the world's largest exporter of oil -- and its allies accuse Qatar of cosying up to both Sunni Islamist extremists and Shia Iran,

Riyadh's greatest rival.

They have cut all ties with Qatar and banned all flights to and from Doha. Qatar denies the charges.

Qatari pilgrims are still permitted into Saudi Arabia for hajj.

Iranian pilgrims are also in attendance this year. Tehran had temporarily suspended sending its citizens to hajj following a 2015 stampede that left around 2,300 pilgrims dead, including hundreds of Iranians.

Saudi Arabia has drawn harsh criticism for a crackdown on political dissent since the appointment last year of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whose modernisation campaign has grabbed headlines around the world.

More than a dozen women's rights campaigners were detained and accused of undermining national security and collaborating with enemies of the state in recent weeks.

Some have since been released.