



A road being extended and repaired in South Paikpara, after locals vacated space in front of their establishments. Inset, a widened road in the area. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Locals take it upon themselves

Under initiative of ward councillor, they vacate space in front of establishments to widen roads at South Paikpara

HELEMUL ALAM

Even a year ago, it took commuters some 30 minutes to travel a 1.5-km stretch on Natunbazar Road in Dhaka's South Paikpara as the narrow road remained congested with traffic.

Fed up with the situation, locals have taken matters into their own hands.

With support of the local councillor, they not only vacated space in front of their establishments, but also bore all the expenses needed to demolish parts of already-built structures to make more space for the road.

As a result, the around 12 feet road has now become a 20 feet one, making commuting on it much faster and easier.

Natunbazar Road, also known as Pradhan Sarak (main road), is a vital stretch as it leads to the 60-foot

road and is also planned to connect the proposed 100-foot road near Ansar camp.

Not just the Kallyanpur-Natunbazar Road, a total of 17 roads out of 27 in the ward have been widened to at least 20 feet in the last two and a half years.

The initiative was undertaken by Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Councillor (ward-11) Dewan Abdul Mannan, and the residents gradually came forward in its support.

While visiting the area recently, this correspondent spoke to quite a few locals, who expressed their satisfaction over the initiative.

Md Sharif, a resident of Natunbazar area, said roads in the area used to be narrow, only six to 14 feet wide, which hampered vehicular movement and caused gridlocks.

"Vehicles like fire or garbage

trucks or ambulances could not even enter some of the narrow roads," he added.

Ibrahim Islam Ovi, a ninth grader at Hakkani Mission School and College in Paikpara, said, "Earlier, it took me 30 minutes to go to school on a rickshaw, but it takes only 10 minutes now."

Initially, the locals said, residents were reluctant about the DNCC plan, since widening the roads meant vacating a portion of space in front of their houses and shops.

But later, they not only agreed to it thinking about its beneficial aspect, but also bore the expenses needed to demolish the portions marked by DNCC.

"The owners, whose buildings were on the road, had to leave 100-square-foot space to extend it," said MM Firoz, a house owner in Natunbazar.

"It cost me around Tk 4 lakh to dismantle my boundary wall, vacate the asked space and then erect a new one," he added. "But, we are happy as vehicles such as fire or water supply trucks can ply the road easily now," Firoz added.

Some residents even spent up to Tk 10 lakh to remove and rebuild different parts of their establishments to widen Natunbazar Road. Later, DNCC workers removed the debris and repaired it.

But the change in people's mindset did not come easily as they had to sacrifice a portion of their already-built establishments.

This is where the councillor stepped in and made it possible.

While talking to The Daily Star, Councillor Dewan Abdul Mannan said, "Initially, I did not get proper response from the residents."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Political parties are patronising communal forces

Citizens' platform fears attack on minorities surrounding polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday apprehended that attacks on minority communities may increase centring on the December 30 parliamentary election, due to the patronisation of Islamic communal forces by major political parties.

They blamed two major political parties -- Awami League and BNP -- for patronising Qawmi and Jamaat men respectively, who "perpetrated attacks on minority communities" in many places in the country.

They urged countrymen not to cast vote for any candidate involved in torturing minorities.

Nagorik Samaj, a platform of citizens, organised the roundtable on "National parliament election: question of minority communities' security" at the capital's Cirdap auditorium yesterday.

Speaking at the roundtable, Khalequzzaman, general secretary of the Socialist Party of Bangladesh (SPB), said the party (AL) which is colluding with Allama Shafi (ameer of Qawmi madrasa-based platform Hefazat-e Islam) centring on the elections cannot claim themselves to be a pro-Liberation War force.

Noted social activist Khushi Kabir alleged that "Islam as state religion" and "Secularism in the basic principle" cannot run together in the constitution.

"AL during 1971 and AL in 2018 are not same; the party has to prove that they are patronising ideology of the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Cholera vaccines for Rohingyas, host community

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Nearly 330,000 Rohingya refugees and Bangladesh host community will be vaccinated against cholera in a month-long campaign beginning today in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and its nearby areas.

Led by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and with support of the World Health Organization, Unicef and partners such as Gavi, the vaccine alliance, the campaign aims to reach people who missed some or all previous cholera vaccination opportunities, said a joint press release of WHO-Unicef yesterday.

Nearly 2.2 million doses of oral cholera vaccines have been dispensed among Rohingya refugees and their host population through three vaccination campaigns since November 2017.

Also, continuing efforts are being made to improve access to clean water and sanitation and promote hygiene to control the transmission of cholera and other waterborne diseases.

Social, legal changes hardly enabled women to break barriers

Speakers tell MJF-Star discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Non-recognition of women's unpaid work has a great influence on their social and familial status tied to discrimination and violence against them, speakers said yesterday.

Many social changes have been initiated over the years, like decline in child marriage rate, and many laws have been enacted in favour of women, but that has hardly enabled women to break the barriers confining them to exploitation, slavery and abuse, they said at a roundtable discussion jointly organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and The Daily Star.

The discussion focused on how to determine the value of women's household and care work, in order to change popular age-old beliefs surrounding women's role at home, and at community and social levels.

Referring to a study on women's contribu-

tion to the economy by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Banasree Mitra Neogi of the MJF said the government should try to measure the value of women's unpaid work like it had been done in the study, to make people aware of the unfairness women are subjected to.

According to the study, a female person on an average gives 7.7 hours of unpaid labour a day while her male counterpart gives only 2.5 hours. It also estimated the value of women's unpaid household work at 76.8 percent of GDP of the 2013-14 fiscal.

And if the woman in a family went to do the same thing in another family for a negotiated pay, the value of women's unpaid work would be equivalent to 87.2 percent of GDP.

Bearing an unequal burden of such unrecognised family work, many women fail to explore the opportunities to enter the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Odhikar itself became victim of rights violation

Claims Adilur Rahman Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights body Odhikar has apparently become a victim of rights violation itself, said its secretary Adilur Rahman Khan yesterday.

Cancellation of Odhikar's registration as election observer in the upcoming national polls and some "motivated" news based on intelligence reports against it are in a way such acts of intimidation to overthrow the organisation, he said.

Adilur was speaking at a press conference at the organisation's Gulshan office.

The Bangladesh-based human rights organisation said it was earlier a listed election monitoring organisation with the Election Commission (EC).

On Tuesday, EC cancelled its application, saying the organisation was not registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau anymore.

Adilur claimed that their registration has not expired, but rather been withheld since 2014. The EC arbitrarily cancelled their registration to obstruct the organisation from monitoring the election, he alleged.

Recently, some media outlets published reports on Odhikar, saying the "organisation has again been involved in murky activities".

Odhikar termed the reports false and motivated. Adilur said among the three reports, only one media house contacted

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Stop activities against national interest

Dev watchdog urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Committee for Protection of Oil-Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports yesterday demanded that the government stop activities, particularly in the country's power sector and ports, undertaken against national interests.

"We are concerned to see that while focus over [11th parliamentary] election is growing across the country, activities against national interest continue," it said in a press statement.

The government is allowing India to use the Chattogram port without maintaining any transparency. Now, it is attempting to build a floated LNG terminal there without conducting feasibility study, which will put the port under threat, it said.

Besides, the authorities signed a contract with Russia-based company Gazprom to dig gas wells in three gas fields, although the company charges three times than the government-run Bapex.

Gazprom previously dug 15 wells in different parts of the country, but no gas were found there, said the joint statement by convener Sheikh Md Shahidullah and member secretary Anu Muhammad of the committee.



Speakers at a roundtable on "Recognition of Women's Unaccounted Work: Implication for Reduction of Gender-based Violence" at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and The Daily Star organised the discussion.

PHOTO: STAR

Ensure quality of madrasa education

Prof Tazeen Murshid says at solo lecture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The present state of madrasa education will not help flourish intelligentsia in the society if it does not focus on knowledge-based education, speakers at a programme said yesterday.

Reading Club Trust and Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation organised its 27th monthly solo lecture, titled "The Evolution of Muslim Intelligentsia in Bengal in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century" at RC Majumdar Auditorium of Dhaka University.

The government recognised the highest degree offered by non-government Qawmi madrasas as equivalent to postgraduate degree recently.

Prof Tazeen M Murshid, a former visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York, said alongside recognising madrasa education, it has to be ensured that its standard is equivalent to other education systems.

"Sometime the government takes decision on political grounds, whether it is for the future and development of the country or not," she said, while responding to a query after the lecture.

The government can form a committee to oversee the equivalency



Prof Murshid delivers a lecture, organised by Reading Club Trust and Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Foundation, at Dhaka University.

PHOTO: STAR

procedure to this end, she suggested.

In her lecture, Prof Tazeen said flourishing of Muslim intelligentsia between the late 19th and early 20th century was related to emerging of a new middle class in Bengal.

This class emerged due to a favourable policy of the then colonial rulers, who were in need of a close ally to continue their ruling, she added.

Chairing the programme, Dr Golam Murshid, chief editor of Bangla Academy's "Bibortonmulok Bangla Obhidhan", said the present state of madrasa education may help students get jobs while many poor students will also be benefited due to cost-free education.

However, will it add any quality [to the overall education system of the country]? he questioned.

Son-in-law the mastermind

Hired bus driver, associates for Tk 10,000 to kill Jarina in moving bus, says PBI chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The murder of Jarina Khatun on a moving bus in Ashulia was orchestrated by her son-in-law and his family members, following a family feud, said police.

As part of the plan, they contracted the bus driver and his three associates for Tk 10,000, and accompanied the victim and her father to the bus stand to be boarded on the Tangail-bound bus.

Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) came up with the findings yesterday, a day after the arrest of Jarina's son-in-law Noor Islam, 29, his mother Amena Begum, 48, and the matchmaker Swapan, 35, from different areas in Dhaka.

Police seized the bus and identified the four staffers, who are still on the run, said PBI Deputy Inspector General Banaj Kumar Majumder while briefing reporters at its headquarters in the city.

Jarina, 45, was killed in the moving bus after her 75-year-old father Akbar Ali Mondal was pushed off the vehicle on Dhaka-Tangail highway in Ashulia on November 9. They were supposed to return to Tangail after visiting her daughter Rozina, who recently became a mother.

The mastermind, Noor, filed a case with Ashulia Police Station the next day.

PBI suspected that Jarina was strangled to death. They are waiting for the autopsy report to confirm the cause of death.

The PBI chief said there was a conflict between Rozina and her in-laws ever since she had been married to Noor five years ago.

They used to get angry at Jarina as she used to visit her daughter whenever she had a fight with her husband. Noor and his family always blamed Jarina for the conflict.

As Jarina and her father came to Noor's house on November 9 following a family feud, Noor and his family members devised the plan.

Noor put the plan into motion by hiring the driver and his associates. On that afternoon, Noor and Swapan accompanied Jarina and her father to the bus stand and asked them to board a bus, which the four staffers parked there beforehand. The bus set off without any other passengers, PBI official said.

Jarina's father Akbar Ali, present at the briefing, said he asked them if they would take any other passengers but they did not reply.

"After a while, they started beating me... my daughter tried to save me, they started beating her too. At one stage, they slowed down at a quiet place and pushed me off the bus," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

38 of BNP sent to jail after curtailed remand

JNU CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent 38 BNP leaders and activists to jail after police said no more remand was needed for them in three cases filed over Wednesday's violence.

The 38 are among 65 people arrested following a clash between BNP men and police in Nayapaltan.

After producing the 38 accused before the court, police said they gleaned enough information in two days from them.

On Thursday, a Dhaka court placed them on a five-day remand each and allowed police to interrogate 27 others at the jail gate for three days in the cases.

Later, police arrested seven other BNP leaders and activists including its executive committee member Nipun Roy Chowdhury in the cases. They are on five-day remand each since Friday.

Senior BNP leaders Mirza Abbas and Ruhul Kabir Rizvi are among 488 people named in the cases as accused.