



Due to ongoing work for underground cable lines on Tongi Diversion Road, not just a part of the footpath, a corner of the road also remains occupied by debris. As a result, pedestrians are often forced to walk on the road amid traffic. The photo was taken near Sadrasta intersection in the capital's Tejgaon yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## In line with 'linemen'

Extortionists 'working for traffic police' collect toll from drivers in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

"Linemen" allegedly working for traffic police collect toll from buses and human hauliers plying the streets of Chattogram and drivers are slapped with fines if they refuse to pay the toll, claim transport workers.

They said linemen collect between Tk 50 and Tk 100 from each vehicle or else they are fined "for violating traffic rules or not having documents".

On a recent visit to Kazir Dewri intersection in the port city, minibuses, autorickshaws, rickshaws and human hauliers were seen stopping in the middle of the street to pick up passengers but two constables there were reluctant in restoring order.

A person was seen taking money from drivers of human hauliers at Chawkbazar Gulzar intersection.

Transport workers alleged that a driver also has to pay Tk 200-300 "waybill" to the linemen on routes like Chawkbazar-Agrabad, Bahaddarhat-Kathgor, and Muradpur-Oxygen.

Transport workers' union sources claimed that the "waybill" was fixed following negotiations between the unions and traffic police.

The "waybill system" was made so that drivers are not harassed on streets by police in name of checking documents, they said. If the waybill is paid, portions of which ultimately go to traffic police, then chances of such harassments like false cases reduce, claimed a number of union members wishing anonymity.

Contacted, Azadul Islam, a traffic sergeant

who was performing duty at Chawkbazar intersection on Wednesday, denied the allegation of implicating drivers in false traffic cases. On having money collected by "linemen" he said, "It's a false allegation... I don't know anything about this."

Harun-ur-Rashid Hazari, deputy commissioner (traffic) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (north zone), admitted that there was some truth in the claims. He said some unscrupulous police officials take undue benefits from drivers.

In September 2018, four constables were withdrawn from duty for taking illegal benefits from drivers, he said. "The department had launched an inquiry in this connection. The investigation is ongoing."

The DC added, "We take action whenever we receive specific complaints but as drivers and police officials both are involved in these illegal deals, no one usually files a complaint."

"Between October and December last year, we have filed more than 37,000 cases over violation of traffic rules. About Tk 1.17 crore were realised as fines," he said.

Ten police officials were penalised during this period. Among them, one is a traffic sergeant, four are assistant sub-inspectors, two are assistant traffic sub-inspectors and three are constables.

Pay cut, suspension, cancellation of salary increments are the penalties that the officials were handed down, according to DC Hazari.

## Recalling an unsung hero

Memorial on Anil Marandi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

He struggled for the rights of indigenous people despite a life of poverty, but was not recognised before his death, speakers said yesterday at a memorial meeting for recently-passed indigenous leader Anil Marandi, founder and former president of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad (JAP).

Anil Marandi, who was among the few leaders of the "post-Ila Mitra Santal renaissance", died on January 7 at his residence in Panchgachia village of Rajshahi's Godagari upazilla.

"The fact that indigenous people lived without an identity and were deprived by the state, hurt him extremely and he often expressed this sentiment," said Pankaj Bhattacharjee, president of Oikya NAP (National Awami Party) at the event held in Biswo Shahitto Kendro in Dhaka.

Bangladesh Adivasi Forum (BAF) organised the event where colleagues of Anil Marandi reminisced about the leader.

Indigenous students, cultural activists, researchers, and communist leaders joined the event.

Pankaj Bhattacharjee said, "The spirit of Liberation War and non-communalism are shrinking day by day," and urged everybody to stay alert of it.

Recalling the 1991 Santal movement to protect Baburam village, lawmaker Fazle Hossain Badsha, general secretary of Workers Party of Bangladesh, said, "A small, lanky man led the procession in the village; it spread to the town and the villagers were saved from eviction. Anil Marandi was the man behind it... It was unimaginable that indigenous [Santals] people would wake up again."

Speakers at the programme also urged for a separate land commission for the indigenous people of the plain land, like the Chattogram Land Commission.

"Anil Marandi brought forth the struggles of indigenous people of plain lands to us," said dramatist and actor Mamunur Rashid.

Prof Mejbah Kamal of Dhaka University said, "He [Anil] didn't write poetry, but created political poetry of [indigenous] people; he thought not only about Bangladeshi indigenous people, but also about all indigenous people of the world."

Nirala Mardi, member of Adivasi Chattra Parishad, sang an indigenous song in reminiscence of Anil Marandi at the programme.

Conducted by BAF member Harendranath Singh, Rabindranath Soren, president of JAP; Numan Ahmed Khan, executive director of Institute for Environment and Development (IED); Sanjib Drong, general secretary of BAF; and Dipayan Khisa, member of United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), spoke on the occasion, among others.

## DMCH will be turned into a 5,000-bed hospital

Says health minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) will be turned into a 5,000-bed hospital, Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Malik said yesterday.

"We are designing its expansion and expect to get it approved in three months," Malik told journalists at a press conference at the health ministry, where he announced his 100-day programme as part of the ministry's initiative to improve the country's overall healthcare services.

DMCH, which was established in 1946, is considered a definitive healthcare institution in Bangladesh. Now the 2,300-bed hospital provides services to around 3,500 patients every day.

"Dhaka Medical College Hospital will be world's largest hospital," said Zahid Malik.

The minister also said the government

will provide free healthcare services to patients aged below one year and above 65, as per his party's (Awami League) election manifesto. "Details regarding this are being worked out," he said.

The health ministry will begin a stringent anti-corruption campaign in the health sector to improve governance, he said, as reporters asked him about recent corruption allegations against two employees of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Within 100 days, Zahid Malik said, the ministry will set up monitoring cells -- up to upazila level -- and will conduct regular visits to hospitals to ensure that those maintain cleanliness and provide proper healthcare to patients.

The ministry also launched a complaint

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## Kazi Mahbubullah Award for 4 noted personalities



Syed Hasan Imam



Rani Hamid



Imdadul Haq Milon



Dr Firdausi Qadri

CITY DESK

Four eminent persons of the country are to receive the Kazi Mahbubullah Award-2018 for their contributions in respective fields.

Begum Zebunnessa and Kazi Mahbubullah Janakalyan Trust announced the names of the recipients recently, says a press release.

Syed Hasan Imam, actor, elocutionist and cultural personality is to receive the award under the lifetime achievement category.

Imdadul Haq Milon, editor of daily Kaler

Kantho, and an eminent novelist has been selected for his outstanding contributions to Bengali literature.

Dr Firdausi Qadri, emeritus scientist at icddr, is receiving the honour for her research in vaccines for diarrhoea, cholera, typhoid and other diseases.

Rani Hamid, the country's first female International Master, is being awarded for her performances in local and international chess tournaments.

Each recipient will get a crest, citation and cash award of Tk 1 lakh.

## Another young life lost to road accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a span of less than two months, another student died in a road accident in Chattogram city yesterday.

This time it was Suma Barua, 18, a 1st-year HSC student at Government City College. She was crushed under a delivery truck while crossing Kotwali intersection, on way to her college.

On November 19 last year, 11-year-old Sumona Akter, an examinee of Primary Education Completion Examination, was killed while she was going to an exam centre in a rickshaw. She fell off and died after an auto-rickshaw hit the vehicle in the city's Bandartila area.

Quoting locals who witnessed yesterday's accident, Officer-in-Charge (OC) Mohammed Mohsin of Kotwali Police Station said it was round 9:45am when an Asadganj-bound truck, loaded with fertiliser, ran over the college girl while she was crossing the road.

Suma's father is Rupayan Barua, from Sitakunda upazila and a resident of Barua Para in Baher Signal area of the city's Chandgaon.

"Police detained driver Jasim Uddin, 24, and seized the truck from the spot," said the OC.

Suma died on the spot before police arrived at the scene, he said, adding that they sent the body to Chattogram Medical College Morgue for autopsy.

Jasim has a professional licence to operate light vehicles, and process was underway to take necessary legal action in this connection, OC Mohsin also said.

The news of Suma's death cast a pall over the college campus later in the day.

**MOTORCYCLIST KILLED IN SITAKUNDA**

In another incident in Sitakunda yesterday morning, a motorcyclist was killed and the pillion rider was injured when a truck rammed his motorcycle on Dhaka-Chattogram Highway in Bhatary area.

The deceased was identified as Mizanur Rahman, 30, said OC Ahsan Habib of Baro Aulia Highway Police Station, adding that they detained truck driver Afzal Ali after the incident.



Suma Barua

## Sylhet will be country's first digital city: FM

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Sylhet will be the country's first digital city and everyone will have free internet access in the city.

The minister made the remark while speaking as chief guest at a freshmen orientation programme of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in the morning.

He said skilled manpower is needed to turn the city into a digital one as well as to maintain the process, and "you [students] will have to take the responsibility to implement it".

"We have established ourselves as a developing country and have to continue this trend," he said. "We have also moved up in social index compared to our neighbours."

Sust Vice Chancellor Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed, Treasurer Prof Elias Uddin Biswas, teachers and officials were present at the programme.

## Freedom fighter Nazmul Hasan dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Nazmul Hasan, a freedom fighter and former president of Faridpur district Jatiya Party unit, died at a hospital in Dhaka yesterday. He was 67.

He was suffering from kidney diseases.

Nazmul left behind his wife, a son and daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his death. He was buried at Alipur graveyard with state honour following a namaz-e-janaza after the Asr prayers.

Officials, socio-political leaders expressed shock at his demise.

## Man killed under train in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An unidentified man was killed under a train in Faujdharhat area under Sitakunda upazila of Chattogram yesterday, said police.

Around 9:00am, locals spotted the body beside the railway track and informed police, said Sub-inspector Year Ali of Faujdharhat Railway Police Outpost.

The body was sent to Chittagong Medical College morgue for an autopsy, he added.

No further details were known immediately.

## Probe report

FROM PAGE 4

Saimun, Shafiur Rahman Farabi, Sadekur Rahman Mithu, Alimul Mallik, Towhidur Rahman, Julhaj Biswas, Sabez Ali and Jafran Hossain.

Of them, Julhaj Biswas is out on bail while the others are now in jail.

## Rab announces new battalion in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed said that a new battalion of the force has been set up in Cox's Bazar that will prioritise the prevention of drug smuggling from Myanmar into the country.

The battalion, Rab-15 is expected to begin its operations in February, upon the Prime Minister's consent, he said while speaking at a cultural function of Rab-11 in Narayanganj on Tuesday night.

Alongside the regular work, the battalion members would provide adequate security for the Rohingyas and tourists as well as ensure the protection of under-construction mega projects, said Rab officials.

Mufti Mahmud Khan, Rab's Legal and Media wing director, told The Daily Star that a battalion office has already been set up in Cox's Bazar. Fifteen police station areas in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts will be under its jurisdiction, he said.

Initially, around 250 force members are to be posted in the battalion. This number will increase gradually, he said. He added that the force members and their vehicles will reach Cox's Bazar soon.

Earlier, the area was under the jurisdiction of Rab-7, headquartered in Chattogram.

Rab was formed on March 26, 2004 constituting of public administration officials, and officers from police, army, navy, air force, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and Ansar and VDP.



A boat glides over the serene water of Surma river. Unfortunately, underneath the tranquility lies unabated dumping of waste into the river, which is gradually changing its colour to darker shades, inset. Pollution also makes way to the river through connecting channels. The photos were taken from Kazir Bazar bridge in Sylhet city recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASTI