

Shortage of public transport hurts city commuters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday restricted vehicular movement at some points of Dhaka city for Awami League's election victory celebration rally at Suhrawardi Udyan, commuters of the city had to face sufferings due to shortage of public transport.

Though intensity of the suffering was lesser than other times, many commuters -- especially patients of some public and private hospitals -- had to walk several kilometres to reach their destination.

Fearing serious traffic congestion, and also as it was the weekend, number of both public and private transport was very low, for which many commuters was seen standing at different points to get their transport.

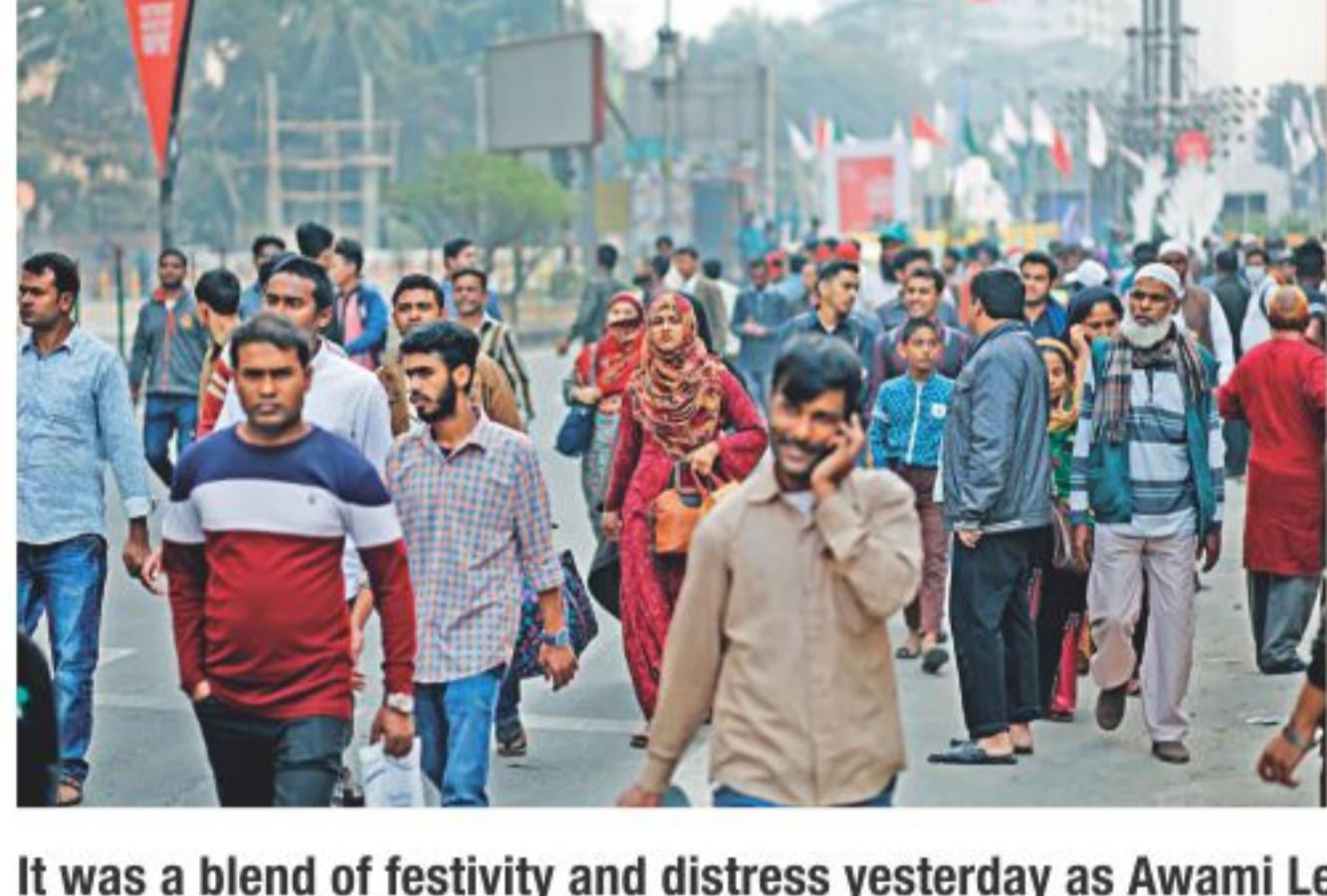
"I went to the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali for treatment of my granddaughter Shayla, but we had to walk around two hours to reach Matshya Bhaban after the treatment," said Munni Akhter.

"We did not have enough money to hire a rickshaw, as rickshaw-pullers were asking Tk 200 to 250 to reach Gulistan. We will take bus or human haulier from Gulistan to go to Kamrangirchar," said Munni at around 3pm near Kakrail mosque.

Commuters also had to spend hours on Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover due to traffic congestion, as supporters of Awami League and its front organisations joined the rally with colourful processions, blocking roads.

"I left Chashara, Narayanganj to reach Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) around 3pm and reached at around 5:10pm; the journey normally takes around one hour," said Ehsan Hasan Sohel, driver of an ambulance, who brought a woman in labour to the hospital.

Many patients of DMCH had to face similar ordeal, as processions crossed the DMCH emergency gate blocking the gate for a brief time, he said.



It was a blend of festivity and distress yesterday as Awami League celebrated their election victory at Suhrawardy Udyan while people had to suffer on Dhaka roads due to restricted vehicular movement. Clockwise from top left, a procession heads towards the venue, blocking one side of VIP Road. A man with a flower bouquet on his way to the rally. Enthusiastic participants on motorbikes with more than one pillion and without helmets in Bangla Motor area. Commuters jostle to board a bus in the area. Those who weren't that lucky had to walk on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue to reach their destination.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, RASHED SHUMON

ELECTRICITY-POWERED VEHICLES Regulations likely to see further delay

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government's move to bring electrically-powered vehicles like three-wheeler easy-bikes and electric cars under regulation is likely to be delayed further, as the ministry concerned decided to take Indian practices into account before taking final decision.

As per the latest decision of the road transport and bridges ministry, a four-member team consisting officials from Road Transport and Highway Division (RTHD) and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) will visit India to observe firsthand about registration process and operation of electricity-run vehicles, officials said.

BRTA has been asked to give a "self-sufficient" proposal after the visit by the end of this month, they said. But, it may not

happen as per the schedule, as the date for India visit of the team has not been fixed yet, BRTA officials added.

"We will go to India for spot visit and will try to know registration process of electricity-run vehicles there," BRTA spokesperson Mahbub-E-Rabbani and a member of the team, told The Daily Star on Thursday.

With the number of electricity-run vehicles increasing gradually in the country, the government has decided to bring those under regulation and BRTA, upon preparing a draft guidelines in this regard, sent it to the ministry for approval in November last year.

As per the draft, each electric vehicle has to obtain registration, fitness certificate and route permit like those required for fuel-run vehicles, officials said.

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Bigger than ever Ekushey book fair growing in all aspects

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Ekushey book fair, the country's largest book festival, is getting bigger every year in terms of participating publication houses, number of new books unveiled at the fair as well as sales.

Organisers and publishers said acceptability of the annual fair, titled Amar Ekushey Granthamela, and book lovers' rising interest in creative books are some of the reasons of the book fair getting bigger each year.

The number of publication houses and other organisations joining at the annual book fair this year increased to 550 from 299 in 2014, according to Bangla Academy, organiser of the book fair that takes place throughout February. Bangla Academy officials also said

number of new books hitting the book fair reached 4,591 in 2018 -- from 2,959 in 2014. On the other hand, estimated sales at the 2018 book fair was about Tk 70.50 crore, a big rise from Tk 16 crore in 2014.

"Last week, we finalised that a total

EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR IN NUMBERS

Year	Publications and organisations	New books unveiled at book fair	Estimated sales
2014	299	2,959	Tk 16 crore
2015	353	3,700	Tk 21.95 crore
2016	401	3,444	Tk 42 crore
2017	450	3,646	Tk 65 crore
2018	460	4,591	Tk 70.5 crore
2019	550		

1969 mass upsurge hero Asad to be recalled today

CITY DESK

Shaheed Asad Day will be observed today, commemorating the supreme sacrifice of student leader Asad during the mass upsurge of 1969.

The nation will recall Asad's sacrifice with deep gratitude through various programmes, marking his 50th martyrdom anniversary.

On this day in 1969, Asaduzzaman was killed when Pakistani forces opened fire near Dhaka Medical College Hospital during a protest against repression on the then East Pakistan [now Bangladesh] people.

Then a graduate student of history at Dhaka University, Asad was also the DU unit president and Dhaka city unit general secretary of erstwhile East Pakistan Chhatri Union.

Then President Ayub Khan was forced to step down amid a mass revolt fuelled by the incident.

Different socio-political organisations, including Shaheed Asad Parishad, have chalked out elaborate programmes that include placing wreaths at the memorial plaque of Asad in front of the DMCH and his grave at Shibpur in Narsingdi.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages paying homage to the memory of Asad, reports BSS.

They also prayed for the eternal peace of Asad's departed soul.



For the last two days, these tangled wires belonging to different utility service providers have been lying on the road beside Birdem hospital on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, obstructing vehicles and passers-by.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

AL celebrating victory to hide moral defeat: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday alleged that the ruling party is celebrating its victory to divert people's attention from "vote rigging" in the December 30 election.

"They [AL] are celebrating the victory to hide the moral defeat they suffered in the election as well as to divert people's attention to a different direction," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Fakhrul made the remarks while talking to reporters after placing a wreath at their party founder Ziaur Rahman's grave in the city, marking his 83rd birth anniversary.

"Awami League suffered a serious defeat on December 30, as they've become isolated from people," he said.

Fakhrul alleged that Awami League has

little respect for democracy, although they often talk about it.

He also said Awami League had established one-party rule "Baksal" in 1975 banning all political parties and snatching people's freedom of expression, as the party does not believe in democracy.

"On the birthday of the party founding president, we're vowing afresh to free democracy and our chairperson Kahleda Zia from jail and bring back home our acting chairman Tarique Rahman and re-establish democracy," he said.

NO RIFT IN OIKYAFRONT

Although different media are running stories on "conflicts" among Oikyfront leaders, there is no rift in their alliance, claimed the senior BNP leader.

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ATROCITIES AGAINST ROHINGYA Drum up int'l support for trial: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite complications in international laws, the genocide on Myanmar's Rohingya people could be tried in light of customary international laws, and Bangladesh government should accelerate its efforts for international support, speakers at a symposium said yesterday.

Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (Bilia) organised the events at its office in the capital.

Presided over by Prof Rahmat Ullah, dean of the faculty of law at Dhaka University (DU), Muhammad Mustafa Hossain, assistant professor of Brac University and Quazi Omar Foysal, an independent researcher, presented two keynote papers in the programme.

DUCSU POLLS VC to sit with student bodies

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities have called a meeting tomorrow (Monday) with the university's Paribesh Parishad, a platform that works on maintaining a congenial environment on campus. It is comprised of university authority and student representatives. The meeting will discuss an amendment to the existing DUCSU constitution and electoral codes of conduct.

Invitation letters for the meeting have also been sent to presidents and general secretaries of central and DU units of 14 active student organisations on campus.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof Md Akhtarruzzaman will chair the meeting, scheduled at 11am at Professor Abdul Matin Chowdhury Virtual Classroom in the Registrar Building.

Considering the overall situation, only presidents and general secretaries of active student fronts were invited, reads the letter.

The last meeting of Paribesh Parishad was held on September 18 last year.

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