

FIRE SAFETY AT MARKETS: PART 1

New Market area: steps taken but not adequate

HEMUL ALAM and MATHEWS CHIRAN

With major fire incidents jolting the capital in recent months, citizens and businesspeople are taking initiatives to address fire safety. And while the efforts are visible, they may not be adequate.

At New Market and adjacent shopping centres, the steps taken by shop owners and market authorities are mostly logistical -- setting up of a few fire extinguishers and sand buckets. Not much else was visible during recent visits to New Market, New Super Market (South), Chandrima Super Market, Gausia Market and Chandni Chowk.

Most of the fire extinguishers were installed in March and April, according to the dates inscribed on the cylinders. However, the number of extinguishers appear to be quite low, and most salespersons do not know how to operate those.

In an inspection by this newspaper, around 70 fire extinguishers were found in New Market that has 550 shops, while only 20-odd fire extinguishers were found at New Super Market (South) that houses 1,235 shops.

The five-storey Chandni Chowk has only about 10 fire extinguishers, and some 15 were found at Chandrima Super Market.

Shakil Newaj, director (operations and maintenance) of Fire Service and Civil Defence,



SPOT THE STAIRCASE... Inside the alleyways of Gausia Market, narrow staircases are often hard to find. The situation could get much worse amid panicked shoppers in the event of a fire. Left, a newly-installed fire extinguisher shows market authorities have addressed the risk somewhat.

said all the five markets are under severe fire risk. These have no smoke and heat detector, and do not have sufficient staircases either.

There are no indicators to the staircases in the markets, and customers will have a hard time finding those in the event of a fire, he said.

The markets also do not have necessary water reservoirs or hoses to douse fire, and the authorities did not arrange any fire drills and training for the staff, which are all very necessary, Shakil added.

His concerns were found to be true, as most of the staffers of the markets said they do not even know how to use fire extinguishers or what to do during fire.

Many of them said they know how to operate those, but have no idea how to bring those down from walls during a fire incident.

"I don't know how to use it. If fire breaks out, I'm not sure what to do with it," said Md Ashraf, who has been altering jeans trousers for five

years at Chandrima Super Market.

Biplob, a tailor shop owner at Gausia Market, said if a fire breaks out in such a big market, it would be difficult to control it.

"The authorities didn't teach us how to use fire extinguishers. God forbid if a fire breaks out, none of us will be able to use them. It is like having money but you can't spend it," he said with a nervous smile.

Monir Hossain, general secretary of Business Forum of Chandni Chowk Super Market, claimed that they have trained 10 security guards, 20 cleaners and 20 staff members of the market on firefighting.

A team of Fire Service and Civil Defence recently visited the market and asked them to comply with all necessary requirements, he said.

Md Muzzammel Hossain Patwary, vice president of New Super Market (South) Banik Samity, claimed that they have a deep tube-well

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DB arrests gang of 'honey-trappers'

They used to lure men with promise of flings

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

In a shadow investigation of a car theft, detectives have unearthed a honey-trapping scam, in which a gang used to lure men with promise of a fling, before blackmailing them.

Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police have arrested five members of the gang, who have been carrying out the scheme for the last seven months, according to judicial confessions by three of the arrestees.

The arrestees were identified as Nurjahan Begum, 44; Jakir, 30; Md Manik, 23; Mausm, 22; and Sraboni, 18. All of them except Sraboni are related.

"The arrestees admitted to extorting from six people in the last seven months, after trapping them into love affairs," Sahadat Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of Pallabi Zone of DB, told The Daily Star.

DB sources said a man filed a complaint with Uttara West Police Station on May 1, saying someone took away his private car after doping his driver in Ashulia. While

investigating the case, DB police came across the syndicate, who had trapped the driver to take away the car and Tk 40,000 in cash.

The DB team recovered the private car from the syndicate, said ADC Sahadat.

According to the arrestees' statement and DB officials, Nurjahan, a vegetable seller formed the gang with support of his relative Jakir, a human haulier driver. Manik is Nurjahan's brother-in-law, and Masum is Jakir's nephew. They hail from Pirganj area of Dinajpur.

Sraboni, who hails from Nilphama, met Jakir while working in a garment factory in Ashulia, and joined the gang, said DB police quoting the arrestees.

Sraboni was abducted in early childhood from her village home and taken to India. Indian law enforcers rescued her and sent to a shelter home there. Sraboni stayed at the shelter home a long time, she told detectives during interrogation. After she came back to Bangladesh, Sraboni first worked as a domestic help in Bogura and then came to Dhaka and started working in a garment factory.

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Maintain discipline at launch terminals ahead of Eid

NCPSRR's places 10-point recommendation to govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSRR) yesterday called for strengthening mobile court drives against irregularities and mismanagements at launch terminals and waterways ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

It also pressed for deploying adequate number of law enforcers at ferry terminals to maintain discipline when huge number of home-goers will use those terminals.

NCPSRR, a non-government organisation, placed its 10-point recommendation, including the above-mentioned, before the government to ensure passengers' security on waterways ahead of Eid.

The committee placed the recommendation through a press statement and also sent it to the State Minister for

Shipping and Shipping Secretary yesterday, general secretary of NCPSRR Ashis Kumar Dey told The Daily Star.

The committee sought tough action to prevent overloading of ferries and launches at Shimulia-Kathalbari and Paturia-Doulatdia terminals.

It also demanded that district and police administration stop operation of illegal and damaged vessels in coastal, haor and hilly areas, and sought steps to introduce hourly weather updates through loudspeakers at all terminals and on TV and radio.

The committee said people of coastal areas prefer waterways to travel home ahead of Eid due to possible traffic jam and accidents on highways, which will intensify pressure on waterways during this monsoon.

So, the authorities should take steps in advance, it added.

XULHAZ-TONUY MURDER CTIC yet to receive approval for charge sheet

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTIC) unit yesterday could not submit the charge sheet against eight suspected militants of Ansar al-Islam in the Xulhaz-Tonoy murder case as they were yet to get approval from the home ministry.

Earlier on May 12, the CTIC sent the charge sheet prepared against the militants to the home ministry for its approval. But the ministry was yet to give any approval, court sources said.

However, a Dhaka court yesterday set June 20 for submitting the probe report to the court in connection with the case.

The murders were committed on instructions of Maj (sacked) Syed

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Graft trial against Moudud to continue

SC upholds HC order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court order that cleared the way to continue the trial proceedings of a corruption case against BNP's standing committee member Moudud Ahmed.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain dismissed a leave to appeal petition filed by Moudud Ahmed, challenging the HC order.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on September 16, 2007 against Moudud on charges of amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 7.38 crore and concealing information about his wealth worth Tk 4.40 crore.

On April 8 this year, the HC summarily rejected a revision petition filed by Moudud challenging the lower court order that dismissed his application for halting the trial proceedings.

In the revision petition, Moudud also prayed to the HC to stay the trial proceedings against him.

Later, Moudud filed the leave to appeal petition with the SC challenging the HC order.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud appeared for Moudud, while Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan argued for the ACC.

Meanwhile yesterday, during hearing the leave to appeal petition, the apex court asked the HC to dispose of seven writ petitions filed by Barrister Moudud regarding the assessments of his income tax as soon as possible, Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.



Garbage piled on the side of a recently-renovated road is not just an eyesore but also contributes to environmental pollution. This unplanned dump in Mohammadpur's Shahjahan Road can only be attributed to negligence and lack of awareness, since a secondary transfer station for waste, inset, stands only 200 metres ahead.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Shohoz, Brac hold motorcyclist training

CITY DESK

Ridesharing service Shohoz partnered with Brac to organise a road safety and defensive driving training session for motorcyclists from May 12 to May 15 at Brac Learning Center in Ashkona, said a press release.

To ensure international road safety standards, riders were trained through Brac's Shurakkha programme. This was the first time road safety training for drivers was organised by a ride-sharing company.

Regarding the training programme, Maliha M Quadir, managing director of Shohoz, said, "Riders play an important role in urban transport system but also become victims in traffic congestion and road crashes. So, it is very important to train riders on defensive driving and urge them to obey traffic rules. Every rider is contributing to the economy as an entrepreneur. Moreover, if they are trained properly it will have a bigger impact on improving road safety and reduce road crashes in the country."

The programme provided institution-based training for motorcycle riders. It focused on sensitising participants on road safety and defensive driving. The riders were trained in such a way that they will follow road safety rules, and demonstrate positive attitude and behaviour regarding these aspects.

The training also demonstrated how safe driving can reduce fuel, repair and maintenance costs by 30 percent.

To assess the improvement of knowledge, participants were put through a classroom-based pre and post-training evaluation using UK Driving Standard Authority's (DSA) training assessment materials. The assessment was translated in Bangla for the rider's ease. Participants were awarded certificates as well.

High Court clears way to resume trial of Annie

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared way for the lower court concerned to resume trial proceedings of a corruption case against BNP leader Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie.

The HC also ordered the lower court to finish trial proceedings of the case within six months.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice KM Hafizul Alam lifted the stay order issued by another HC bench in 2016 on trial proceedings of the case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

It came up with the verdict, after rejecting a revision petition filed by the accused seeking exoneration from the trial proceedings.

Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik

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Do not call anyone 'fake freedom fighter': HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that the word "fake" cannot be used before the term "freedom fighter".

The court also warned that if any government official or media person uses the term "fake" before the name of a freedom fighter, it will summon them if deemed necessary, Deputy Attorney General ABM Abdullah Al Mahmud Bashar and Assistant Attorney General M Saiful Alam told The Daily Star.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader passed the order yesterday after hearing a petition on issuing freedom fighter certificates. The petition was filed by a freedom fighter, Md Abdul Aziz Khandaker, challenging the legality of a notice issued by Jatiya Muktijoddha Council for scrutinising his freedom fighter certificate.

DAG Abdullah Al Mahmud Bashar told this newspaper that freedom fighters are the greatest sons of the nation and using the word "fake" before the name of a "freedom fighter" is an insult to them.

The HC bench said if any person claiming to be a freedom fighter has fake certificate, legal action can be taken against them as per law. Freedom fighters cannot be addressed as "fake" as a whole, the court said.

Abdul Aziz Khandaker, a freedom fighter from Homna Upazila in Cumilla, submitted the writ petition to the HC challenging the legality of a notice issued by Jatiya Muktijoddha Council on October 24 last year, asking him to appear before its chairman on November 4 for scrutiny of his freedom fighter certificate.

EC to update Dhaka's voter list from June 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commission (EC) enumerators will start door-to-door visits from June 23 to update the voter list of Dhaka dwellers.

"Enumerators will visit homes till July 14," Faisal Quader, election officer of Dhaka district, told The Daily Star.

Any citizen born on or before January 1, 2001 is eligible to get enlisted as a voter.

EC officials said data of citizens who were born on or before January 1, 2002, 2003 and 2004 would also be collected and they would gradually be included in the electoral roll after reaching the age of 18.

Transgender people will be able to register their names by identifying themselves as Hijra.

A draft of the updated voter list will be published on January 2 next year.

Fasting and Female Health

In Ramadan, fasting is not mandatory for pregnant and breastfeeding women, as prolonged food and fluid deprivation might affect the baby's health. Fasting should be compensated after delivery. Women, who are anemic because of malnutrition or menstrual problems, should have more iron and protein foods in iftar and sehri.

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