The hustle at Farmgate

Shortage of buses aggravate pre-iftar rush

| SHAHEEN MOLLAH |



HAKA

Already a crowded spot, pre-iftar rush and shortage of buses have turned Farmgate into dire straits for commuters. The photos were taken earlier this week.

PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

It is already one of the most crowded spots in the city on any given late afternoon of the year. Factor in the added rush of thousands of commuters to get home for iftar with family in the month of Ramadan and a massive blockage to the metaphorical artery of the city's road transport system, Farmgate has become dire straits for the working class posted in the vicinity. A couple of hundred

metres from the office of this newspaper, two youths were seen last Thursday afternoon haplessly waiting for a bus at the intersection -- alongside a few hundred others -- with heavy bags on their shoulders. As a bus approached, scores

of people dashed towards it, almost like a mosh pit at a rock concert. But only the most agile few could get on the already jam-packed bus; Mosaddek Hossain and Milon Mia could not.

"This is the fifth bus I have failed to board in the last one hour," said Mosaddek, a telecommunications technician who was trying to reach Uttara.

"This is absolutely unbearable. Commuters like us have to suffer due to the insufficient public transport!"



vehicle.

said Milon, adorning his reaction with profanities.

Buses are the begrudging choice of transport for the lower middle-income class, as affording CNG auto-rickshaws or ridesharing services are beyond their pay-cheques. But with the Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue narrowed greatly because of construction for metro rail and many buses diverted from the road to mitigate that, the number of buses has fallen, aggravating the crisis.

The worst sufferers of the lot are women, for whom it's less of an option than their male counterparts to elbow others

out or hang on to the door of a loaded bus with one hand,

However, auto-rickshaws are scarce and many women don't consider bike rides safe.

half of their body outside the

"I have tried ridesharing bikes to go home after office hours. But I don't feel completely safe. It is hard to get hold of CNGs, and even if I find one, the drivers Star. charge ridiculous fares," said Sharmina, who is a librarian at the nearby University of Asia Pacific.

Contacted, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Traffic West) Dr Manjur Morshed said the

on the route as the thoroughfare has been narrowed due to the construction work for metro rail service. Besides, diversions have

number of buses has decreased

been implemented to facilitate the work process, reducing the number of buses on the route, he said adding that gridlock elsewhere in the city also deters timely arrival of buses.

He also said they have instructed some bus operators to increase the number of buses on this route during rush hours, to ease up the inconvenience.

In a recent survey report, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity said 95 percent of passengers have been suffering in some form or the other in the month of Ramadan.

"There is no proper plan and statistics regarding the number of passengers and buses by the concerned authority," Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of the organisation, told The Daily

"It is important to know which road requires more buses at what time of day, and how many passengers wait at a particular station. Such estimations will help authorities take proper steps," he added.

Militants have no religion, country, border: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government wants to attain economic development, keeping the country free of terrorism and militancy.

"It's very unfortunate that terrorism and militancy have now become a global problem. Those who are involved in militancy have no religion, country and border... They're just militants... We want to keep Bangladesh free from these [menaces]," she said.

The PM said this while speaking at a programme when leaders of the Buddhist community greeted her on the occasion of Buddha Purnima at her official residence Gono Bhaban. Sheikh Hasina said, "We have to free the

country from poverty. Currently, there's 21

percent poverty and the rate of ultra-poor

is 11 percent... We'll ensure a povertyfree country; the government is working towards that goal," she said. The prime minister said the government wants development of all, irrespective of religion and caste. The government believes in communal harmony, she said, adding,

of all religions together," she said. Hasina said the responsibility of the state is to make sure that all people can practise

"In Bangladesh, people celebrate festivals

their religions peacefully and freely.

She said, "The Creator will decide what's good or bad, and what's right or wrong. The Almighty didn't give that responsibility to humans.

The Baily Star | 3

The prime minister said the government will ensure that people of Bangladesh can perform their religious rituals with dignity and sincerity.

Former Industries Minister Dilip Barua also spoke at the programme while special assistant to the prime minister, Barrister Biplab Barua, conducted it.

Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs Minister Bir Bahadur Ushwe Singh; State Minister for Religious Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah; Dipangkar Talukder MP; Bandarban Zila Parishad Mohammad Chairman Kyaw Shwe Hla; Rangamati Zila Parishad Chairman Dhumketu Chakma; Khagrachhari Zila Prishad Chairman Kongjuri Marma; Bangladesh Buddha Kristi Prochar Songha President Sanghanayak Shuddhananda Mohathero; International Buddha Bihar Principal Dhormamitra Mohathero; Shakkyamoni Buddha Bihar Principal Proggyananda Mohathero; Nobo Shalbon Bihar Principal Shilvodro Bangladesh Mohathero; Buddhist Federation General Secretary Sunanda Priyo Bhikkhu; and BSMMU VC Prof Dr Kanak Kanti Barua were also present.

Treat working children humanely: Mujibul Haque



Discussants at the roundtable at The Daily Star Centre.

PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lazina Akter, a 13-year-old girl in Dhaka's Kamrangirchar, has been working as a seamstress for the last four years. Daughter of a widow, she usually embellishes dresses with beads and laces to assist her mother, who works as a domestic help, in bearing the family expenses.

While working, the teenager often hurts herself -- fingers getting pierced by needle and skin peeling off because of glue. She does not mind, however, as whatever little she earns helps her to continue studies.

"My mother already works very hard; she'd have to work even more to pay for my studies if I didn't work," Lazina, an eighth grader at a private school in Kamrangirchar,

"The work I do is risky, but I have no other option. Children like me wouldn't have to engage in physical labour had the government provided assistance," she added. She also demanded that the authorities concerned provide allowance to the families with working children and bear all educational expenses.

Like Lazina, 40 children from different parts of the city yesterday placed their demands at a dialogue between them and relevant government representatives. Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum

organisations, in association with Islamic Relief Bangladesh organised the event at The Daily Star Centre. Speaking as the chief guest, Mujibul Haque, former state minister for labour and employment, said the number of

(BSAF), a platform of 269 non-government

around 20 years ago; it has declined in recent years. The situation will further improve as the government has taken many initiatives to

child workers was very high in Bangladesh

improve lives of these children, he assured. "I tried my best to stop child labour when I was in the cabinet, but I couldn't because many families depend on the children's income," said Mujibul, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the labour ministry.

He urged employers not to recruit SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

RESERVED SEATS IN PARLIAMENT

BNP's Rumeen Farhana submits nomination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP's Assistant International Affairs Secretary Rumeen Farhana submitted her nomination paper to the Election Commission yesterday for a reserved seat for women in the parliament.

Yesterday was the last day for BNP to file nominations for this seat.

The reserved seats for women are allocated to political parties in proportion with their number of seats in parliament. BNP and its Jatiya Oikyafront ally Gono

Forum rejected the December 30 election results, citing irregularities and vote rigging. BNP standing committee had also decided not to join parliament but later changed its stance and five of its MPs took oath.

67pc of Padma Bridge completed: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-seven percent of the overall work of the long-awaited Padma Bridge project has been completed, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

Seventy-six percent work of the main bridge and 55 percent work of river training have been completed till April 30, he said. Work on all connecting roads have also been completed, he added.

Quader, also general secretary of Awami League, shared the update while briefing journalists on different projects at Setu Bhaban in the capital's Banani.

The minister said 12 among the 41 spans of Padma Bridge have already been established and the 13th will be installed in one or two days.

Once constructed, the bridge will

connect the capital to 21 southern districts

through road and railway. According to documents the authority provided to the journalists yesterday, work on 236 piles out of 262 have already been completed and the rest will be completed within July.

Among 42 piers, work on 25 have been fully completed and six others will be completed within June, the documents

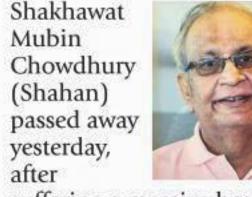
Three kilometres of river training, out of 13km, have so far been completed and four more will be done within December, it said.

The minister said another important project -- Karnaphuli Tunnel -- witnessed 38 percent progress till April 30.

The tunnel -- starting at the Naval Academy point in Patenga -- will connect SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Shakhawat Mubin passes away

CITY DESK



suffering a massive heart attack. He was a business executive and younger brother of former foreign secretary Shamsher M Chowdhury, according to a press release.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held tomorrow after Zohr prayers at Taqwa mosque in Dhanmondi. He will be buried in Azimpur graveyard.

Budgetary allocation for municipalities inadequate

Mayors tell dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's municipal mayors yesterday urged the government to increase their allocations while passing the national budget in the parliament, for ensuring development and wellbeing of an ever-increasing urban population.

Speaking at a pre-budget dialogue on "pro-poor urban development" at the capital's Brac Centre Inn, they also called upon the government to disburse their budget allocation directly instead of via different "bureaucratic channels".

association with Brac in Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB) and Power and Participation Research Centre

(PPRC) arranged the dialogue ahead of next month's national budget.

Inadequate allocation, manpower shortage and outdated laws are among challenges to address the needs of urban population, mainly the poor, the mayors said.

MAB Joint Secretary General and Madaripur Municipal Mayor Khalid Hossain said the country's 327 municipalities have only 43,110 permanent and 22,444 temporary employees, who are responsible to provide services to over 2.16 crore dwellers.

In 2017-18 fiscal alone, the municipalities had due of Tk 762.25 SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

All city buses to come under ticketing system: DSCC mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday said that all city buses will be brought under ticketing system, to solve passengers' suffering, after

Eid-ul-Fitr. "We will introduce the system after Eid. No city dweller can commute on public buses without ticket," the mayor told reporters after a meeting with Bus Route Rationalisation Committee at his office

yesterday. He said plan will be undertaken to set bus counters at different points across the capital through field visit after coordination

with the Design and Technology Centre (DTC), Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC), Dhaka South and North City Corporations and transport owners. FUNDRAISER Ticket counters of all public transports

will be set up at specific spots so that pedestrians' space is not occupied, he added.

Circular bus service in Uttara will be introduced from May 27, he said.

Later, similar bus services will be introduced in Motijheel and Sadarghat to Time: 1pm ensure smooth services for commuters, the mayor said.

DHAKA TODAY

CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP Organiser: Safa Art Gallery & EMK Center

Venue: EMK Center Time: 10am

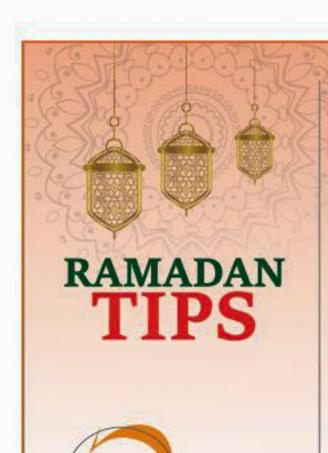
Fundraising for the Underprivileged Ahead of Eid Organiser: Synergy Student Association Venue: Synergy Student Association, Khilgaon

WORKSHOP **Hip Hop Dance**

Organiser: Anonymous Crew Venue: EMK Center, Dhanmondi Rd 27 Time: 11am

COUNSELLING Benefit of Genetic Testing (Open

for All) Organiser: NeuroGen Venue: NeuroGen, Solid Point Karim Tower, West Panthapath Time: 10am

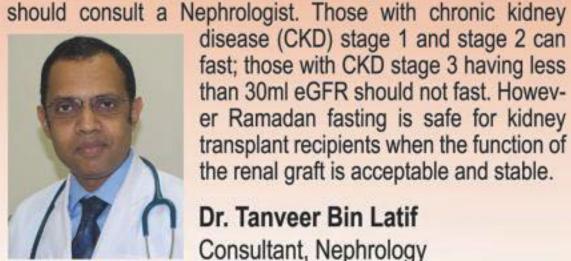


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