

REUNITING FAMILIES

Jatrabari police going the extra mile to help missing children find their parents

|| SHAHEEN MOLLAH and HASAN MEER ||



Janria Janbir, who was found in Cumilla's Meghna area, reunites with her mother at the Jatrabari Police Station. Below, another child finds her family through the efforts of law enforcers.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

DHAKA VIBE

Imagine a family going home for the holidays. The jovial trio -- father, mother and a five-year-old boy -- reach Sayedabad Bus Terminal on time.

The little boy is hungry. So they decide to grab something to eat before boarding a north-bound bus. The moment they start walking towards a roadside eatery in the area, they are faced with heavy and chaotic flow of vehicles, haphazard parking-stoppage, street vendors, beggars jostling for alms and people running around with luggage.

This pandemonium is just another day at Sayedabad terminal -- one of the major gateways to Dhaka -- where hundreds of buses from all over the country either pick up or drop off passengers.

Amid the hustle and bustle, the mother suddenly realises something is not right. Her child is missing. The parents start frantically looking for their little boy.

Meanwhile, somewhere in a crowd, their child is crying his eyes out as he cannot find



any familiar face. Fortunately for him, in such unkind surroundings, a tea vendor takes notice of him and takes him to nearby Jatrabari Police Station.

"The five-year-old was reunited with his parents right away. We searched for them and started miking in the area. The father came to the station quickly," said Kazi Wazed Ali, officer-in-charge of the police station.

He said around five to six children are lost in the crowd every month in the area. They are either brought to them or on information, rescued.

A child getting lost in crowds is not an uncommon occurrence in the country. Unfortunately, human traffickers and sexual predators are on the prowl for such opportune moments to make their move, said the OC. "We have also alerted people in

the area to remain cautious in this regard."

To ensure that a mother gets reunited with her child, the police station also opened a "women and children friendly" desk this year, supervised by a female officer and constables.

Sub-inspector Laiju has been working at the desk since its inception. "It's very rewarding to see a child being reunited with his/her parents," she told this newspaper. "We also help women file complaints on various issues."

But it's not that simple all the time.

"On May 19, a vendor found a four-year-old girl crying near his shop in Jatrabari. Once he brought her to the police station, she could not say much," the SI continued. "The vendor said a woman left her there."

"In an instance like this, we try to be empathetic and patient with the child. We keep toys and chocolates at the [police] station to comfort children in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

NUSRAT MURDER

Court accepts charges against 16 accused

STAR REPORT

A Feni court yesterday took cognisance of charges brought against 16 accused in the case filed over murder of Nusrat Jahan Rafi.

After scrutinising case dockets and other documents, Judge Mamunur Rashid of the Feni Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal set June 20 for hearing on charge framing against the accused.

As complainant Mahmudul Hasan Noman was present at the tribunal and consented to accepting the charge sheet, the tribunal took cognisance of the charges, reports a correspondent in Feni.

All 21 accused were produced before the tribunal during yesterday's hearing.

The tribunal relieved five accused as no evidence of their involvement was found.

It also rejected bail petitions of six charge-sheeted accused.

Defense lawyers claimed the investigation was biased and politically motivated.

"We are satisfied with the PBI investigation. The home minister supervised the case," Mahmudul told journalists on court premises after the hearing.

He demanded immediate arrest of former Officer-in-Charge of Sonagazi Model Police Station Moazzem Hossain.

On May 29, Police Bureau of Investigation pressed charges against mastermind of the

case, Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa Principal Siraj Ud Doula, and 15 other accused with a Feni court.

Other charge-sheeted accused are: Siraj's associates Nuruddin and Shahadat Hossain Shamim; Sonagazi Municipality councillor and local AL leader Maksud Alam; Sonagazi upazila AL president Ruhul Amin; madrasa teachers Hafez Abdul Kader and Afsar Uddin; Kamrunnahar Moni; Javed Hossain alias Shakhawat Hossain; Saifur Rahman Mohammad Jubayer; Umme Sultana Poppy; Mohiuddin Shakil; Mohammad Shamim; Iftekhar Uddin Rana; Imran Hossain Mamun; and Abdur Rahim Sharif.

Twelve of the accused have already given confessional statements before a magistrate. Ninety-two witnesses have been included in the 772-page charge sheet.

Siraj plotted to murder Nusrat by setting her on fire as she refused to withdraw a case filed against him over sexual assault on March 27.

On April 6, she was set on fire at the rooftop of a madrasa building minutes before an Alim examination, by five of the accused, according to the charge sheet.

After fighting for her life for five days, Nusrat succumbed to her injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on April 10, triggering a national outrage.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

ROAD TRANSPORT ACT-2018

Govt considering transport workers' demands: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said the government is looking into whether the demands of transport workers, seeking amendment to the Road Transport Act-2018, can be met by formulating rules.

"Although the law has already been formulated, there may be rules and sub-rules [of the act]. We will look into adjustments [considering transport workers' demands] by formulating rules and sub-rules," Quader said at a press briefing at his secretariat office.

The Jatiya Sangsad in September last year passed the law following unprecedented student protests for safe roads after two college students were killed by a bus on Dhaka's Airport Road on July 29.

However, the government, as per requirement of the law, did not issue a gazette notification determining when the law will come into effect.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation observed a two-day strike on October 28-29 last year demanding changes to the law. Their demands include

revoking the Tk 5 lakh fine for causing road accidents, making all accident-related cases bailable, and reducing the mandatory educational qualification from eighth grade to fifth grade for getting a driving licence.

Responding to a question yesterday, Quader said he had already talked to the law minister and asked him to consider whether any "adjustment" can be made.

"I hope the law minister will sit with the home minister soon. We will then go for implementation [of the act]," he said.

Asked whether the government is being held hostage by transport owners and workers, Quader responded in the negative.

He added that the government did not control transport workers' protests strictly, rather tried to resolve the problem through discussion.

On April 28, a committee headed by former shipping minister Shajahan Khan submitted its report on preventing road accidents and bringing discipline in the road transport sector to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

But no visible step has been taken to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Rohingya issue to get priority during PM's China visit

Foreign minister says

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will keep the Rohingya issue on its priority list for discussion during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's planned visit to China in the first week of July, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen indicated yesterday.

"The Rohingya issue will come up as a major topic during PM's China visit," he told reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hoping that Myanmar will feel more pressure to act and take back their nationals.

Bangladesh is now hosting over 1.2 million Rohingyas and majority of them entered the country since August 25, 2017.

Bangladeshi and Chinese sides are working to finalise dates for PM's visit.

China has been advocating for resolving the Rohingya crisis peacefully through discussion between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

It's to prevent cybercrimes, not to curtail press freedom

Law minister tells EU envoy about Digital Security Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday claimed that the Digital Security Act was formulated in order to prevent cybercrimes, not to curtail the freedom of press and expression.

He was speaking at a press briefing after a meeting with a five-member delegation led by Eamon Gilmore, human rights affairs special representative of the EU, at his residential office in the capital's Gulshan.

"I categorically told them (a delegation of European Union) that the Digital Security Act-2018

was formulated for cyber security and to prevent cybercrimes. This law was not made to curb the freedom of press and freedom of speech," he said.

Anisul Huq also said BNP chief Khaleda Zia has been serving in jail as the trial court and the High Court convicted and sentenced her for misappropriating orphans' money. The government has nothing to do with her release, he added.

Anisul said he conveyed the government's stance on the Rohingya issue to the EU delegation.

The government strongly wants Rohingyas to return to Myanmar, he said.

He said he requested the EU delegation to discuss it with the Myanmar government as they will go to Cox's Bazar to visit Rohingyas today and then they will go to Myanmar.

The law minister said he informed the delegation of the government's desire for quick disposal of the Feni madrasa student Nusrat Jahan Rafi murder case, and discussed issues like the Bepza Act, children's rights law and extrajudicial killings.

142 deaths on roads in 11 days: report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 142 people were killed and 324 injured in road accidents across the country in 11 days during Eid rush, a non-government organisation said in a press release.

The casualties occurred in 95 crashes on national, regional and district highways from May 30 to June 9, according to National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways (NCPSSRR).

The organisation prepared the report based on news from online portals, newspaper websites, news agencies and TV channels.

Aside from accidents, holidaymakers' journey on roads and riverways was relatively smooth this year. However, people taking

trains faced difficulties due to technical glitches in online ticketing and schedule collapses, it said.

NCPSSRR said people faced less hassle on waterways, as there were sufficient number of launches operating from Sadarghat. However, a number of launch staff charged extra fare from passengers.

The report alleged that authorities could not stop overcharging bus companies on long routes. It also said buses, auto-rickshaws and ride-sharing service providers inside Dhaka charged two-three times higher than usual fares.

NCPSSRR General Secretary Ashis Kumar Dey said they found six major reasons of accidents including motorbikes and three-wheelers on highways, and reckless overtaking.

Expired drugs found in 93pc pharmacies of Dhaka: DNCRP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP) yesterday said it found expired medicines in 93 percent of the pharmacies in the capital where it conducted drives over six months.

Monjur Mohammad Shahrir, deputy director of DNCRP, unveiled the findings at a discussion held at AKM Giasuddin Milky Auditorium in Khamarbari yesterday.

During mobile court drives at 200 pharmacies in different areas of Dhaka between November 2018 and April 2019, the national consumer rights body found some 186 stores guilty of having medicines in stock which were past their expiry dates.

Bangladesh Supermarket Owners' Association organised the event marking World Food Safety Day, observed on June 7. "I fear that the situation of the entire country is worse, as whatever irregularities we have found so far happened in Dhaka only," he said, while talking to the Daily Star.

DNCRP awarded different amounts

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Man killed in wall collapse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed and three were injured after a part of a wall collapsed on them following an explosion at a three-storey building in the capital's Shanir Akhra area yesterday morning.

The deceased is Farid Ahmed, 55, a prayer cap seller.

He met a tragic end as a chunk of brick hit his head while he was passing the area on a rickshaw, said his wife Rawshan Ara.

Jamal Uddin Mir, officer-in-charge of Kadamtali Police Station, suspected that leaked gas from a nearby line accumulated in the sewerage line on the second floor of the building that housed a private bank.

The explosion happened at around 9:15am after the accumulated gas might have come in contact with fire or an electric spark, he said. Nazimuzzaman,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

JS budget session begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first budget session of the 11th parliament begins this afternoon.

It would be the third session of the present parliament, and the first budget session of the Awami League government that assumed office after a landslide victory in the December 30 national election.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal will place his first national budget in parliament on June 13, for the 2019-20 fiscal.

This will be the 48th budget of the country, the 11th successive by Awami League, since it assumed power in 2009.

According to the parliament secretariat, the first sitting of the budget session is scheduled to begin at 5pm with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

At 4pm, the business advisory committee of parliament will sit in a meeting with the Speaker in the chair to set the tenure and businesses of the session, where leader of the House Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to take part.

According to the constitution, the national budget will have to be passed in parliament by June 30. The budget session may continue till the first week of July, sources at the parliament secretariat said.



PHOTO OF THE DAY

RASHED SHUMON



BRINGING BACK THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE... A sea of people returns to Dhaka after spending Eid holidays with loved ones. The photo was taken yesterday at Kamalapur Railway Station.