

# Sudden move

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number of public transport there.

At the same time, the number of cars and motorcycles might increase on the roads, worsening the traffic situation. The rickshaw pullers in those areas are also going to suffer as well, they added.

An organisation of rickshaw owners has already threatened to go for legal actions if the authorities ban the rickshaws today. It said rickshaws were given licences for the last time in the country in 1986, but the number of the three-wheeled passenger carts has increased many times since then, mainly in the absence of regulations and amid a dearth of public transport.

Currently, there are nearly four to five lakh illegal rickshaws in the capital having around two crore people. These rickshaws are often blamed for the city's perennial traffic chaos.

On July 3, a special committee led by Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sayeed Khokon decided that the three streets would be made off limits to rickshaws. The decision was made to ease traffic congestion in the areas.

Those roads stretch from Kuril to Sayedabad via Rampura and Khilgaon; Gabtoli to Azimpur via Asad Gate; and Science Laboratory intersection to Shahbagh intersection.

The committee was formed at a meeting of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority on June 19 seeking to remove illegal vehicles, including unauthorised rickshaws, battery-run rickshaws, auto-rickshaws and vans, from the streets and free the footpaths within two months.

The move came at a time when traffic congestion, according to the Accident Research Institute (ARI) of Buet, eats up around 5 million working hours every day in Dhaka and the average speed of vehicles during rush hours has come down to just 5kmph.

The congestion causes an annual loss of between Tk 20,000 crore and Tk 55,000 crore, the ARI said last year, citing findings of organisations working on the issue.

## 'HASTY MOVE, PEOPLE TO SUFFER'

Talking to The Daily Star, many who use the three roads frequently said the decision to ban rickshaws on them would only add to their woes.

"I don't know how will I go to my university if the rickshaws are not allowed [on the streets]. The distance is short and there is hardly any bus that takes me to my university," said Mahin, who travels to his university in Bashundhara Residential Area by rickshaw from his home in Nadda.

Raisa Akther, who lives in Azimpur area, also takes a rickshaw to go to Dhaka City College to attend classes. She tries to ignore buses which often remain overcrowded and hard to board during rush hours.

"Sometimes, you know, it's not easy to travel in public buses," she said, adding that the authorities should keep a dedicated lane for rickshaws on every road.

The authorities had declared the street from Gabtoli to Russell Square in Dhanmondi and Russel Square to Azimpur as rickshaw free zones in 2002 and 2004 respectively.

Talking about the issue, transport expert Prof Shamsul Haque said unregulated operation of rickshaws on major roads causes congestion and brings down the speed of public transport. That is why the thoroughfares should be made off limits to the slow vehicle, he said.

"So the initiative [to free major roads of rickshaws] is good. But implementation of the decision is very difficult and complex. Such a plan should be implemented in phases taking more time," he said.

Prof Shamsul, also a former director of the ARI, said implementation of the hasty decision would cause sufferings to the people who take rickshaws for short distances. "They will not find buses as an alternative means of transport," he said.

He said the authorities should have followed an example of Kolkata which banned rickshaws on its main roads some ten to 15 years ago.

Before implementing the ban, he said, the authorities in one hand raised awareness about the nuisances caused by rickshaws on the road and on the other, they ensured alternative ways of transport for the people.

During that time, the rickshaw pullers also got time to look for other means of livelihood, he said.

Maruf Rahman, a project officer of Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust, said the authorities took the decision without doing any research or taking past experience into consideration.

If rickshaws, a mode of transport meant for short trips, are banned, the number of cars will go up on the streets, he said referring to similar decisions in the past.

He termed vehicles like cars one of the major causes of traffic jam.

According to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, the number of cars registered with it has declined in last one and half year. However, the number is still much higher than that of public transport like buses and minibuses.

Some 4,500 to 5,000 buses and minibuses are operating in the capital and its adjacent areas, according to transport operators, which many found insufficient to meet commuters' demand.

"So the initiative [to ban rickshaws] would rather cause public suffering and intensify the congestion," Maruf added.

He further said at a time when inclusive development is getting priority across the world, the authorities should have considered making rickshaws a part of an integrated multi-modal transport system for short trips.

Talking to this correspondent, Momin Ali, joint secretary of Dhaka City Corporation Rickshaw Malik Samity, a platform of rickshaw owners, said some four to five lakh rickshaws were running in the city illegally thanks to the owners' political clout and that the authorities did not take any action against them.

"Now the authorities are going to impose wholesale ban on rickshaw [on three roads], which is not acceptable," he said, adding that only rickshaws were not responsible for traffic jam.

Momin said they would write to Sayeed Khokon requesting him not to put restrictions on rickshaws unless there would be separate lanes for them on the roads.

"If the authorities do not pay heed to our plea, we will go to the High Court," he told The Daily Star on Friday.

## WHAT AUTHORITIES SAY?

Contacted, Khandakar Rakibur Rahman, member secretary of the 12-member special committee, said they would not take any drastic decision. All illegal vehicles would be removed from roads gradually, he said.

"We are going to implement the decision for the greater interest. So people have to suffer a little for that greater interest," Rakibur, also executive director of DTCA, told this newspaper yesterday.

On implementing the decision within such a short period, he said, "The government did not take any action [in this regard] for a long time. Will not the government go for any action?"

Meanwhile, Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam yesterday requested all to endure some sufferings for the greater interest of the country.

Speaking at a meeting at his office, he said it was not possible to remove all the rickshaws within a day or two.

Saying that it would take two months to implement the decision in case of Pragati Sarani, the mayor assured that alternative means of transport would be ensured on the road.

# Wari girl raped

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The platform prepared the report based on reports published in 15 national dailies between January and June and termed the rise in rape incidents "very alarming".

According to Prof Nasreen, children are most vulnerable as they are unable to resist and can be easily intimidated by the perpetrators.

"Children don't get equal protection in the stratified society like ours. So parents and community people should be more conscious and the government must take punitive actions against the offenders," she said.

The suspected rape and murder of Samia shows how vulnerable children are. A nursery student at a local school, she had gone out of her home around 6:40pm on Friday to play with other kids, family members said.

But as she did not return even well into the evening, the family started looking for her.

"We looked for her in every flat, but did not find her," said her father Abdus Salam, a businessman.

The search went on for about one hour and then the family went to the rooftop.

Once they went inside the empty flat on the top floor, they found her

blood-stained body on the kitchen floor, with a rope around her neck.

"I can't even imagine who could do such a cruel thing. I don't have any enemy. I want exemplary punishment to the killers," said Salam, who filed a case in this connection.

Police detained six people, including the security guard and three youths who rented a flat on the sixth floor just this month, for interrogation, police said.

"A child is not safe even in her building. What society is this?" asked Jaynab Begum, a shocked neighbour.

Locals are planning to organise a protest in the area today.

## PM returns

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signed nine instruments, including two loan agreements, for further strengthening cooperation on power, water resources, culture and tourism sectors as well as for providing 2,500 tonnes of rice for the displaced Rohingya.

Meanwhile, PM's Speechwriter Nazrul Islam yesterday said the prime minister would hold a press conference at the Gono Bhavan at 4:00pm tomorrow to brief journalists about the outcome of her visit to China.



China's Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui bid farewell to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Beijing Capital International Airport yesterday. Hasina returned home wrapping up her five-day trip.

PHOTO: PID

# Half-day hartal

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sufferings, they said.

According to the new tariff, households using a single burner will pay Tk 925 instead of Tk 750 per month. In case of having double burners, citizens will pay Tk 975 instead of Tk 800.

This time the gas tariff for power plants was increased by 40.82 percent, for fertiliser factories by 64.21 percent,

for Compressed Natural Gas users by 7.5 percent, for captive power plants by 43.97 percent, for industries by 37.89 percent, for tea estates by 44.20 percent, for commercial users by 34.98 percent, and for households using burners on metres by 38.46 percent.

Protesting the "anti-people budget for 2019-20 fiscal", the LDA is going to observe the strike between 6:00am and 2:00pm today.

Several opposition political parties including Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Gonoforum and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD Rob), extended their moral support to LDA's strike.

The LDA includes Communist Party of Bangladesh, Socialist Party of Bangladesh, Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh, Ganasamhati Andolan and Ganatantrik Biplobi Party.

# Organised crime at the core

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control over the district's student politics, said party insiders and locals.

To build up a counterforce to Chhatra League, Shambhu's son Sunam Debnath, also science and technology affairs secretary of district AL, started backing a bunch of druggies.

On behalf of Sunam, Nayan used to take care of drug trade and bike smuggling while John oversaw the cable TV network and extortion from bus, truck and cargo terminals, locals added.

"Sunam formed the gang to gain more power and run the trade of narcotics and smuggling," Jubayer Adnan, district Chhatra League president, told The Daily Star on Thursday.

This is not the first time Jubayer raised voice against Sunam.

On April 28, 2018, in a press briefing at Barguna Press Club, he alleged that Sunam was leading a gang involved in mugging, robbery, abduction and extortion.

Nayan was one of Sunam's close associates, he added.

Asked about his alleged involvement in illegal business, John said he was trying to enter politics taking blessings from Dhirendra Debnath Shambhu.

"As I have good relations with Sunam Debnath and the top party leaders, the rival groups are trying to tarnish my image with misleading information," he added.

The Daily Star called Suman on his cell phone around 30 times but he did not pick it up. These correspondents also visited his party office but he was not available there.

Contacted, Dhirendra told this newspaper that his son is a very gentle and well-educated person who has been working as a lawyer at Barguna court for the last 10 years.

"None of my family members is involved in any kind of criminal activities and my son Sunam has no link with narcotics," he said, adding that a vested group is spreading propaganda against them.

Regarding the June 26 murder, the lawmaker said Rifaf was not involved in any kind of criminal activities and his son had good relations with him.

The killing might be linked to some issue related to a girl, he said, adding that police are investigating the case to unearth the mystery.

## RISE OF 007

Nayan started to lead the narcotics trade in late 2015. He was first arrested by police over a clash with local councillor, according to his family members.

Nayan started to change and became addicted to drugs after the death of his father Siddiqur Rahman in 2008.

He eventually got involved in mugging and theft. Along with some other junkies, he began to steal laptops, cell phones and motorbikes from locals, especially college going students.

However, they used to return the belongings to the owners after getting paid. They claimed Tk 5,000 for a laptop, Tk 500 to Tk 1,000 for cell phone and Tk 10,000 or more for motorbike.

Nayan was arrested a number of times and got released from jail within hours on every occasion.

Faruk Shikder, a councillor of Barguna municipality, said he handed Nayan to police over extortion one and

a half years back. "But surprisingly, I found him moving around my residence a day after his arrest," he said.

"I also got a phone call from an influential leader who asked me the reason behind handing Nayan over to police."

Faruk, however, refused to disclose the political leader's name.

Between 2015 and 2017, Nayan started dominating the illegal business with support from Rifaf Sharif, and two brothers Rifaf Farazi and Rishan Farazi.

During this period, seven cases over narcotics, arms and criminal offences were filed against him, said locals and investigators.

Rifaf Sharif, 25, killed in the gruesome attack by Nayan and his gang members, was also an accused in five cases, while Rifaf Farazi was wanted in four separate cases, according to police record.

A fan of James Bond movies, Nayan along with Rifaf Farazi opened a Facebook messenger group named "007", code of the fictional secret service agent.

Formed on March 27, 2017, the group had 366 members until the killing of Rifaf Sharif but not all of them were regularly active, investigators said.

They added that majority of the members of the group were teenagers and they include students from class six to HSC.

Police have identified 120 youths, who were active in the group and took part in discussions, said an official, requesting anonymity.

Some members told this newspaper that they received instructions from Nayan and Farazi in this group to attack someone or help fellow members whenever necessary.

FREE NARCOTICS  
Nayan and his gang members used to target the students who came to the district from different parts of the country and stayed in hostels.

They would first try to lure smokers into the group providing them different types of drugs for free, according to several students of Barguna Government College.

Another strategy was staging fake attacks. A group of his aides would attack college or school students and he would appear on the scene as the saviour.

Later, he would ask the students to join him saying none will dare touch them ever.

Once the students joined the group, they were offered free yaba, marijuana and Phensedyl.

Nayan never took any money from the gang members for the drugs on condition that the students will have to sell narcotics to others.

According to locals, yaba became a popular narcotic in the town now but there is also a huge demand for Phensedyl. These narcotics enter the district from Jashore and Satkhira.

For bike smuggling, the Bond gang used to bring unregistered motorbikes from Satkhira border. Their favourite was sports bike which sold between Tk two lakh and Tk four lakh, according to sources.

The gang members used to bring those bikes by driving it directly from Satkhira.

A local youth, who was aware of the gang's activity, said sometimes Nayan brought the motorbike parts separately from the border and assemble those at his residence.

Nayan always rode sports bikes worth at least Tk 3 to 5 lakh and frequently changed models, said some of his close associates.

## THE MURDER PLOT

Locals and investigators said both Nayan and Rifaf were close friends.

"Last year, after the chairman election [in Barguna Sadar upazila], Nayan stopped communicating with dada," said Nayan's mother Shahida.

She, however, did not explain who is this "dada".

But sources said a feud began after Nayan decided to leave Sunam Debnath and wanted to go his own way.

Rifaf Sharif, however, was not happy with this decision and chose to side with John, backed by Sunam. It all turned the two friends into foes.

Nayan even handed Rifaf to police in May in a narcotics case, said the gang insiders. Coming out of jail, Rifaf started working with John, sources said.

A high official of police, involved in the Rifaf murder investigation, told The Daily Star that some members of Bond gang during interrogation said they had plan only to break Rifaf's legs.

"But the gang members took local arms with them as they had information that if they attack Rifaf, John's men may intervene."

The gang members killed Rifaf taking an on-the-spot decision, the official added.

Rifaf came under the attack when he and his wife Ayesha Siddika Minni were leaving the Barguna college premises on June 26 morning.

Asked about the murder, John said he had a casual relation with Nayan and they did not support him in the narcotics trade. "I work closely with Sunam Dada but had no relation with Nayan."

Nayan might have attacked Rifaf over an issue centring a woman, he said, adding that he doesn't have the details.

But this newspaper got some still pictures showing John and Nayan visiting different places, attending picnics together.

Besides, John studied in the school from where Nayan passed SSC.

Md Maruf Hossain, Barguna superintendent of police, however, said the murder was an outcome of social degradation. Some drug addicts and children of broken families were behind it, he said.

"We have already arrested a number of youths involved in the murder and the rest will be caught soon."

About the gang culture, the SP said they already have taken initiatives in this regard. Police are not allowing any teenagers to ride motorbikes without proper documents or in an "uncivilised manner".

[M Jahirul Islam Jewel, our Jhalakathi correspondent, contributed to the report]

# 2 held for rape in Thakurgaon, Kushtia

Another madrasa teacher sued for violating 11-yr-old

STAR REPORT

Police arrested a teenager for allegedly raping a speech-impaired girl in Kushtia on Thursday while law enforcers on Friday arrested the mother and sister of a youth who allegedly raped a 10th-grader in Thakurgaon.

The victim and accused are of the same village in Khoksa upazila. The accused on June 26 took the girl to a jute field and raped her. The victim's mother caught the accused re-handled, Khoksa Police Station's Sub-Inspector Proshanta Kumar Saha told The Daily Star.

The mother went to local influential people seeking justice but they opted to waste time, said the mother while talking to this paper.

On July 1, they arranged an arbitration where local municipality councillor Imran Hossain and local Jubo League leader Al Amin were present.

"They asked my daughter to narrate the incident in front of all. As my daughter cannot talk clearly and she was shy, she could not narrate the incident properly. When I tried to narrate the incident, they stopped me," the mother said.

The accused was completely denying the incident, she said.

The arbitration ended with the teen being slapped, punched, and rebuked, said the mother, adding that the teen was termed "adolescent" by the influential people.

The arbitration was filmed by someone and released on social media.

This made the girl even more embarrassed. She left her house and took shelter in one of her relative's house.

Police intervened after seeing the video.

The victim's mother filed a case on Thursday and police arrested the teen later that day at his house, said ABM Mehedi Masud, OC of Khoksa Police Station.

The teen was sent to Sheikh Russel Safe Home in Kushtia by court on Friday and the victim was sent to Kushtia General Hospital for medical tests.

Imran Hossain and Al Amin said they only heard the victim and had not made any decision in the arbitration.

Meanwhile, a madrasa teacher was sued yesterday on charge of raping one of his students -- an eleven-year-old girl -- in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila 10 days ago.

Accused 40-year-old Mohammad Farazi is also the founder of the madrasa in Uttar Char Biswas village. He is on the run, said police.

On June 26, the fourth grader along with others was in class at the madrasa set up in Farazi's home. At one stage, Farazi took the girl to another room where he raped her, said the father of the victim.

Later that day, the girl went home and told her mother about the incident.

The victim's father filed the case with Galachipa Police Station yesterday.

The father said the accused was an influential man in the area and that the filing of the case was delayed due to pressure from him.

OC Akhter Morshed of the police station said the girl was sent to Patuakhali General Hospital for medical tests.

Thakurgaon police on Friday arrested the mother and sister of a youth, who allegedly raped a 10th-grader at Kazibasti village in Baliadangi upazila on Thursday.

Accused Sujan Ali, 20, is now on the run, said police.

Talking to The Daily Star, Baliadangi Police Station's Sub-Inspector Amzad Hossain said the girl on Thursday afternoon was returning

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## Prices of egg

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and may continue to rise further. He added that the price hike had nothing to do with the budget and Eid.

Onion wholesaler Hridoy Mollik in Karwan Bazar said many traders were out thousands as piles of onion had rotted due to the weather.

## Historic Sharma

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century and put on 124 runs for the fifth wicket with Lahiru Thirimanne (53) to give Sri Lanka a respectable total after they were reeling at 55-4.

Jasprit Bumrah returned impressive figures of 3-37 in his 10 overs as India, who had already qualified for the semifinals, restricted Sri Lanka with some quality bowling.

The 1996 champions finished their World Cup campaign with three wins, four defeats and two games ending in no result.

Captain Dimuth Karunaratne said Sri Lanka would take stock as they try to build for the future.

"After this World Cup we have to think about what we have to do and what we got wrong. We will talk to the selectors and find some new talent," he said.