

Get fitness

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certificates were running right under its nose.

Lawyer Rafiul told the court that in the current year, the BRTA had filed 39,837 cases and fined a total of Tk 6.72 crore for running vehicles without valid fitness documents.

Unfit vehicles are considered to be a key reason behind road accidents. Road safety came to the fore after students took to the streets twice over the last one year demanding safer roads.

The court also asked why it should allow unfit vehicles to run as they cause road accidents.

The BRTA has much power, including running mobile courts against unfit vehicles, but it does not exercise the powers in this regard, the court said.

Earlier on June 24 this year, BRTA submitted another report saying more than 4.58 lakh unfit vehicles were on the road and 1.68 lakh of them were operating in the capital.

The vehicles are among 40.18 lakh registered with the BRTA, the report said.

As per the law, all vehicles, except for motorcycles, must have their fitness checked and their certificates renewed from the BRTA every year.

According to the BRTA report, some 13.91 lakh vehicles are required to have the fitness certificates renewed annually. The report, however, did not mention anything about the high number of vehicles that were not registered with the BRTA.

On that day (June 24), the HC bench observed that unfit vehicles were being driven by drivers without valid licences under the very nose of the law enforcers.

Following a report published by The Daily Star on March 23, the HC bench on March 27 issued the suomoto rule asking the authorities concerned to explain as to why their inaction to stop unfit vehicles from running and drivers without valid licences from driving should not be declared illegal.

Supreme Court lawyer Syed Mamun Mahbub had read out the newspaper report before the court. As per the report headlined “No fitness docs, yet running”, more than 70,000 vehicles did not have their fitness certificates renewed in 10 years, and many of them were on the road.

In the rule, the court had asked why directives should not be given to implementing the relevant laws, including the Motor Vehicles Ordinance 1983.

It also asked authorities concerned to submit a report before it on unfit vehicles, vehicles that are not registered with the BRTA and drivers without valid licences.

Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik appeared for the state.

Milky Way's

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“bluer” and containing less metal, one “redder” containing more.

After studying their movement and composition, the team determined that both sets of stars were equally old, but the bluer ones had been set into a “chaotic motion” -- evidence of the Milky Way swallowing a smaller galaxy in the distant recesses of time.

“The novelty of our work is that we have been able to assign precise ages to the stars that belong to the galaxies that merged and, by knowing these ages, when the merger took place,” Carne Gallart, lead author of the study published in Nature Astronomy, told AFP.

She said the collision, around 10 billion years ago, would have taken millions of years to unfold.

“It’s a very gradual process -- it’s not something like a car crash -- it’s something that has an effect on the galaxy as a whole. It’s very massive so it happens slowly in human terms, not so slowly in cosmic time.”

The team believes remnants of the dwarf galaxy, known as Gaia-Enceladus, eventually formed the halo of the present-day Milky Way.

They also determined that the collision contributed to “violent bursts” of star formation for around another four billion years, after which gas from those formations settled into the Milky Way’s thin disk that runs through the centre of the galaxy.

The Milky Way contains at least 100 billion stars and its centre contains an intense radio source believed to be the supermassive black hole Sagittarius A*.

Fire in Ctg

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Shaon told journalists that the explosion in the shop took place when one of them tried to switch on a light.

Officer-in-Charge of Ramna police station Kazi Mainul Haque said, “The two own the fast food shop, which had been closed for around 10-12 days. We suspect that gas had accumulated in the shop, leading to the explosion.”

Shaon sustained burns to 24 percent of his body and Mostofa 11 percent, an on-duty doctor at the burn unit of DMCH told The Daily Star.

Our CU correspondent contributed to this report.

Relief materials scanty

Say flood victims

STAR REPORT

Flood victims from different districts alleged that the government allocated relief materials were quite insufficient, as many were still suffering from a crisis of food.

Some victims alleged that the people’s representatives from different local government bodies, like union parishads, were preparing the list for relief allocation with a bias.

However, the disaster management and relief ministry’s senior secretary Shah Kamal denied the allegation and said, “I have not got any such complaints [about a bias] so far. Deputy commissioners of respective districts are properly monitoring relief activities so that the materials are being distributed to the actual victims.”

According to an updated report by the National Disaster Response Coordination Centre (NDRCC), the government has so far allocated over 24,450 tonnes of rice, around Tk 4 crores cash; over 1.04 lakhs packets of dry food, 8,000 tent sets, 2,300 bundles of tin, as well as Tk 69 lakh for house reconstruction.

Over four million people in 17 districts are still affected by the flood, while floodwater has started receding in 11 districts, the report said.

According to a bulletin of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), the flood situation in Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Bogra, Tangail, Sirajganj, Manikganj, Rajbari, Faridpur and Munshiganj districts may improve today.

Meanwhile, the water levels of the Teesta, Dharla, and Surma-Kushiyara rivers may rise and heavy rainfall may occur at the northern parts of the country, the bulletin said.

However, flood-hit people were still suffering from a lack of relief materials.

In Sirajganj, over 3.28 lakhs people are still affected by flood, according to the NDRCC.

“My house has been inundated by flood water. But many people, including me, did not get relief materials,” said Lal Mia, a resident of Shahzadpur upazila’s Andharmanik village.

Although local administration officials claim they have distributed 10kg rice to each family, many victims said they got only 8kg each.

Contacted, Sirajganj deputy commissioner (DC) Faruk Ahmed said they had distributed 398.3 tonnes of rice, 3,250 packets of dry food and Tk 7 lakh in cash were distributed among the victims. Each flood-hit family got either rice, dry food or cash money.

Asked about distributing 8kg rice instead of 10kg, the DC said he did not get any such complaint.

In Lalmonirhat, local administration claimed that they had distributed 410 tonnes of rice, Tk 8.35 lakhs in cash and 3,300 carton dry food among the 1.10 lakh affected people.

“We have returned to our home which remained inundated for 10 days. Those 10 days we spent on the road, under the open sky, but we did

not get any relief,” said Hasem Ali, 56, a resident of Sadar upazila’s Char Budharu village.

In Bandarban, local administration said they distributed relief to around 40,000 affected people.

Around 450 tonnes of rice and Tk 7.50 lakh and 4000 packets of dry food were allotted for 9,242 flood affected people, according to local administration.

The Daily Star correspondent visited some affected areas in Sadar upazila yesterday and found that many were yet to get relief materials.

Contacted, ADC (general) of the district Md Shamim Hossain said they were trying to bring all the affected families under relief facilities. If anyone was deprived of relief, they should come through local people’s representatives to get it.

In Gaibandha, around 5.85 lakhs people are affected by flood.

Contacted, Gaibandha DC Abdul Motin said, “We distributed around 1,070 tonnes of rice and 6000 packets of dry foods. All the victims were provided with either rice or dry food.”

One of the correspondents visited around 30 flood-hit villages in Phulchari upazila, where relief was being distributed according to the list prepared by the local people’s representatives.

However, speaking to over two hundred flood-affected people, the correspondent found that around half of them did not get any relief.

(Our correspondents in these districts contributed to the report.)

4 ‘suspects’ killed

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The dead is Hamidul Islam, 30, of the same village, said police.

Shah Dara Khan, officer-in-charge of Meherpur Sadar Police Station, claimed a police team went to the viallge around 3:30am yesterday on information that two groups of drug traders were engaged in a “gunfight”.

As soon as police reached the area, the criminals fled the scene. The law enforcers then found a bullet-hit body on the spot, he further claimed, adding locals identified the dead as Hamidul.

The body was sent to Meherpur General Hospital for autopsy. After the procedure completed, the body was handed over to family members.

Police also claimed to have recovered a shooter gun, two bullets and 12 bottles of phensidyl from the spot.

However, seeking anonymity, one of the victim’s cousin, alleged that Hamidul was detained three days before he was killed.

Asked, the OC denied the allegations and said, “We wanted to get Hamidul alive but we found his dead body today.”

In a similar incident, another suspected drug peddler was killed in Cox’s Bazar.

The dead is Nazrul Sikdar, 37, of Rajapalang union.

He was killed in a “gunfight” between two groups of drug traders, police claimed, adding “gunfight” happened over disagreement of sharing money.

Sub Inspector Sidhartha Shaha of Inani Police Outpost said on information they recovered bullet-hit Nazrul around 9:00am in Jaliapalang sea beach area of the district’s Ukhia upazila.

Police rushed him to Ukhia Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, he added.

Abul Mansur, officer-in-charge of Ukhia Police Station, said Nazrul was accused in three narcotic cases.

The OC also claimed to have recovered a locally made gun, one round of bullet and 500 yaba pills from the spot.

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify any of the law enforcer’s claims.

Our Bagerhat, Kushtia and Cox’s Bazar correspondents contributed to the report

Multidrug

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malaria across Asia to Africa from the late 1950s to the 1980 - has hampered efforts to eliminate it.

The first-line treatment in many parts of Asia in the last decade has been a combination of dihydroartemisinin and piperaquine, also known as DHAPPQ.

Researchers found in previous work that a strain of malaria resistant to this combination had evolved and spread across Cambodia between 2007 and 2013. This latest research, published in the Lancet Infectious Diseases journal, found it had crossed borders and tightened its grip.

Miotto said further work was now needed to establish how far this resistance had spread and whether it had evolved further - and eventually to understand which drugs would work against resistant malaria parasites.

“Other drugs may be effective at the moment but the situation is extremely fragile,” he said.

Railway not responsible for casualties

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rail communications?” asked Sujan, referring to unauthorised level crossings as obstacles to rail communications.

At a press conference in the capital’s Rail Bhaban, he said they would serve notices to government organisations that built level crossings without the railway’s approval. The notices would ask them to ensure security of users of the crossings.

The minister made the comments at a time when Bangladesh Railway drew huge criticism for a number of unprotected and unauthorised rail crossings across the country, where people had been killed and injured in accidents. At least 11 people, including a newlywed couple, lost their lives when a Dhaka-bound train rammed their microbus at an “authorised” but “unmanned” level crossing in Sirajganj’s Ullapara last week.

About 2,000 level crossings out of 3,200 across the country are unauthorised, the minister said.

However, the BR’s latest data prepared in August last year shows there are 1,085 unauthorised level crossings, mostly built by different

government organisations without approval.

Besides, only 466 gates of the 1,412 authorised level crossings have gatekeepers, it said.

Rail-related fatalities are on the rise as over 80 percent level crossings, authorised and unauthorised, are unprotected.

According to Buet’s Accident Research Institute (ARI), 122 people were killed and 296 others wounded in 103 rail-related incidents as of July 15 this year.

Some 244 people lost their lives and 228 others were injured in 235 rail-related fatalities last year, it said.

Most of the incidents happened when trains ran over people or hit vehicles at unprotected level crossings and on rail lines, said an ARI teacher.

When an appeal for setting up a level crossing is approved, the railway authorities can build a gate and appoint gatemen, Sujan said.

If the LGED and the Roads and Highways Department construct level crossings without the railway’s approval, then the authorities concerned have to ensure safety of users of the crossings, the minister

added.

As per the relevant laws, the railway is only responsible for ensuring security of rail passengers and rail communications, he said.

Asked why the railway did not take any action against the authorities that built unauthorised level crossings, the minister said they filed cases but withdrew those later as those were also government organisations.

“We will send notice to everyone [who built unauthorised level crossings] to take steps to ensure security as those [unauthorised level crossings] put rail communications at risk,” he said.

The minister said they would improve the necessary law and security measures as the number of trains was increasing.

Atiqur Rahman, project officer of Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust, an NGO, said the railway could not avoid its responsibility for fatalities at unauthorised level crossings.

“It is not possible to set up an unauthorised level crossing in a day. The railway is entrusted with preventing building of such illegal structures. As the railway failed to

prevent these, it has to take the responsibility,” said Atiqur, who has experience of over eight years in the rail sector.

He said instead of avoiding responsibility, the authorities should assess the necessity of those unauthorised level crossings, regulate them, and appoint necessary manpower.

He also stressed the need for creating awareness about safety at level crossings.

Meanwhile, the minister said the accident in Moulvibazar’s Kulaura on June 23 could have been avoided “if we were more cautious”.

Sujan said they received reports of two probe committees and suspended two officials for their negligence in maintaining the lines.

Besides, notices have been served asking them why they should not face disciplinary action, the minister said, adding that several officials of railways’ east zone, including its chief engineer, were also transferred.

A divisional executive engineer has been transferred in connection with the derailment of an oil-carrying train in Rajshahi’s Charghat this month.

Trump was not asked to help

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Trump set off a political storm in India by claiming during a meeting on Monday with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan in Washington that Modi had asked him two weeks ago to mediate in the Kashmir dispute.

“I’d like to categorically assure the house that no such request was made by the prime minister to the US president,” Foreign Minister S Jaishankar told the Indian parliament, barely able to make his voice heard over the opposition tumult.

Jaishankar insisted the conflict could only be settled bilaterally and that Pakistan had to end “cross-border terrorism” before any talks.

Trump’s comments touched on one of the most sensitive topics for New Delhi.

India has disputed Kashmir with its neighbour since their independence

in 1947. Both control parts of the former Himalayan kingdom, but claim it in its entirety.

They have fought two wars over the region and tens of thousands, mainly civilians, have died since an insurgency erupted three decades ago in Indian-administered Kashmir.

Indian opposition leaders demanded that Modi make a personal statement to parliament to confirm that there was no change in New Delhi’s longstanding policy of only direct talks with Islamabad.

“President Trump says PM Modi asked him to mediate between India & Pakistan on Kashmir! If true, PM Modi has betrayed India’s interests & 1972 Shimla Agreement. A weak Foreign Ministry denial won’t do. PM must tell the nation what transpired in the meeting between him and (Trump),” tweeted Rahul Gandhi,

who resigned as Congress president last month.

The opposition staged a walkout in the Lok Sabha and protested in the Rajya Sabha, saying just a statement from the foreign minister was not enough on something that involved two heads of state.

Imran Khan -- on an official visit to the United States -- stirred the controversy further by saying Kashmir could only be resolved with outside help.

“Bilaterally, there will never be (an end to the Kashmir conflict),” Khan told Fox News, adding that Pakistan and India were “poles apart”.

“I really feel that India should come... (to) the table. The US could play a big part, President Trump certainly can play a big part.”

Some US politicians quickly distanced themselves from Trump’s

comments.

Brad Sherman, a Democratic Congressman and member of the House foreign affairs committee, said he apologised to the Indian ambassador in Washington for Trump’s statement.

“Everyone knows PM Modi would never suggest such a thing. Trump’s statement is amateurish and delusional. And embarrassing,” he tweeted.

The State Department also sought to calm the storm.

“While Kashmir is a bilateral issue for both parties to discuss, the Trump administration welcomes #Pakistan and #India sitting down and the United States stands ready to assist,” tweeted Alice Wells, the Acting Assistant Secretary of the department’s Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs.

Key suspect in Renu killing held

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that Renu was a child kidnapper. A group of people then attacked the single mother, he said, quoting Ibrahim.

Police have so far arrested six people in this connection. Some of them after scrutinising amateur video that had gone viral.

Meanwhile, more incidents of mob attacks have been reported.

In Gazipur’s Sreepur upazila, the wife of a man allegedly framed him to be a child kidnapper to have him beaten up by a mob.

According to police, victim Shahidul Shikder, 35, narrowly escaped with injuries.

Shahidul’s wife Tania Akhter and her friend Priya yesterday grabbed him in Nayanpur area of the upazila and shouted “child kidnapper”. Aminul Islam, sub-inspector of Sreepur Police Station, said.

People then started beating up Shahidul.

The women were taken to police station for interrogation but later released as none filed any complaint, he added.

Another man in Jatrabari area of the capital narrowly escaped a mob attack on Monday after he was branded child kidnapper.

Chased by a mob, Khokhon Mia jumped into a waterbody after her landlady allegedly labelled him a child kidnapper.

A teacher of a nearby school helped him to hide from the mob, he said.

Khokhon claimed that he had not paid his rent in two months and the landlady was angry.

Police arrested landlady Hasna Begum alias Ayesha, 40.

Some neighbours of Khokhon said the mob chased him as he had “tortured Ayesha”.

Khokhon, however, denied the allegation.

To add to this, three people were rescued from mob beating in Cumilla Sadar upazila on Sunday.

Similarly in Kushtia, five faced beating since Sunday.

Police have arrested 30 people in connection with such incidents across the country.

‘NONE WILL BE SPARED’
Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan

Kamal yesterday said those who were involved in mob beating would be brought to book.

“None will be spared,” he told a press conference at his office.

The minister said six people had been killed and 15 wounded in such incidents.

Eighty-one people have been arrested, nine cases filed and 15 general dairies (GD) registered in this regard, he said, reported BSS.

GOVT TO PROBE

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said the government would investigate the incidents of mob beating and bring the people responsible to the trial.

“Any kind of beating, mob beating or personal beating, is an offence. The persons arrested in connection with such incidents will be tried under the existing laws,” he said.

The minister further said while talking to reporters after attending a meeting with the civil society members about United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT) in a city hotel.

Singapore makes its biggest ever illegal ivory seizure

AFP, Singapore

Singapore has made its largest ever seizure of smuggled ivory, impounding a haul of nearly nine tonnes of contraband tusks from an estimated 300 elephants, authorities said yesterday.

The illegal cargo, discovered Monday in a container from the Democratic Republic of the Congo being shipped to Vietnam via Singapore, also included a huge stash of pangolin scales -- the third such seizure in as many months.

Officials said both the ivory and pangolin scales were in a container declared to be loaded with timber destined for Vietnam and passing through Singapore, a major transshipment hub for global trade.

On inspection, authorities found 8.8 tonnes of elephant ivory, the National Parks Board, Customs and Immigration and Checkpoints Authority said in a joint statement.