

Paturia-Daulatdia Ferry

Strong currents disrupting services

Long queues of vehicles on both sides of Padma

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Ferry services on the Paturia-Daulatdia route were disrupted due to strong currents and increasing water-level in the Padma.

Only seven ferries, out of 16, were operational yesterday.

Authorities feared that the seven ferries might face technical trouble while operating against strong currents.

Meanwhile, several hundred vehicles were stranded on both sides of the river due to the disrupted ferry services.

Visiting the Paturia ferry terminal around 3:00pm yesterday, this correspondent saw around 300 buses and trucks waiting in line to cross the river.

Many passengers complained about being stuck at the terminal for hours.

"We reached Paturia ghat around midnight on Wednesday. But our bus could not board a ferry until yesterday noon," said Alamgir Hossain, who was traveling to Jashore from Dhaka with his family, on a Sohag Paribahan bus.

Passengers of a Green Line Paribahan bus had similar complaints. Meanwhile, truck drivers said

they were facing even more delay as ferry operators prioritise buses over trucks when the vehicles board the ferries.

Some truck drivers claimed that they had been waiting there for three days to board a ferry.

Authorities said that ferries cannot ply the usual route due to strong currents, so the ferries have to go through an alternative route, which takes twice the time to cross the river.

"That is why the number of ferry trips have come down drastically," said Zillur Rahman, acting assistant general manager (AGM) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation.

Abdus Sobhan, another AGM, said two out of the six jetties were damaged due to the strong currents and the operators are failing to anchor their ferries.

Meanwhile, M Mahbubul Islam, chairman commodore of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, yesterday visited the Shimulia-Kathalbari river route in Munshiganj and directed the officials concerned to take all necessary measures and ensure uninterrupted ferry services there, reports our district correspondent.

Focus now on deals

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preparing the framework agreement," said member of a technical committee, formed following a secretary-level Indo-Bangla meeting early August.

The agreement will be discussed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ongoing visit to New Delhi, where she is scheduled to meet her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and co-chair the Indian Economic Summit being held on October 3-4.

The agreement, however, will not be signed this time, said officials.

In 2011, Bangladesh and India failed to sign the Teesta water-sharing agreement due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute opposition during the then Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka.

Even today, the issue still remains unresolved.

In such a situation, farmers in Bangladesh's northern region depend heavily on underground water for irrigation.

Though the two countries have 54 common rivers, treaty on water sharing was signed only for one river -- the Ganges -- in 1996.

Diplomats said Dhaka is frustrated over the Teesta issue, especially when it has allowed transit facilities for transportation of Indian goods from one part of India to another through Bangladesh.

Also, Dhaka addressed Delhi's most important concern by not sheltering any Indian insurgents -- something that facilitate stability in India's Northeastern region.

Against this backdrop, Indian Water Resources Secretary Upendra Prasad Singh flew to Dhaka early August to attend a secretary-level meeting on water sharing.

Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also met his Bangladeshi counterpart AK Abdul Momen in Dhaka late August when the water issue prominently came up for discussions.

The secretary-level meet also discussed forming two technical committees -- one on conducting a feasibility study on the optimum use of water received under the Ganges treaty and the other on data collection of the six rivers.

The member of a technical committee told The Daily Star on October 2 that the committee had collected information on the water flow of the rivers. Soon, they would meet their Indian counterpart to exchange similar data.

"The agreement will be prepared based on the data," the water expert said. "We are looking at how we can modernise our system of flood

forecasting by sharing of water flow data," he added.

The two countries are also working on curbing pollution of the common rivers and "sharing the best practices" with each other, the official said, requesting anonymity.

Talking about the Ganges treaty, he said the technical committee was working on finding ways of making the optimum use of the water that Bangladesh receives from India.

"During lean season, there is a serious problem of salinity intrusion in Bangladesh's south-west region. We are studying the options. It may be building a barrage or dredging rivers that can help prevent salinity intrusion," the committee member added.

The technical committee of India would study the issue in the Indian part, he added.

Asked if Dhaka and Delhi were considering basin-wide management of common rivers, the expert said it was not fully basin management, but there were specific activities that are elements of basin management.

Eminent water expert Dr Ainun Nishat said basin-wide river management involves management of sedimentation, sharing water and flood forecast data, checking pollution, and addressing the challenges of livelihoods of the people of the river basins.

Bangladesh and India are supposed to go for such basin-wide management, but the two countries are nowhere near it. There has also been serious lack of progress on water sharing, he added.

"There were ample high-level visits between both the countries, but there's little progress. This is frustrating," he told The Daily Star.

"There are disputes over water sharing among the Indian states themselves. Therefore, Bangladesh, being a lower riparian country, should have the urge to address the water issues," said Ainun Nishat, a former member of Indo-Bangla Joint River Commission.

Prof Rasheduzzaman of international relations at Dhaka University said water was going to be the most important issue in the coming decades.

"It has to be looked at from the climate change point of view because the global temperature is rising. The Himalayas are melting too," he said.

So, all the countries of this region, including China, Nepal, Bhutan, India and Bangladesh, must cooperate with each other and go for a regional management of water, Prof Rasheduzzaman added.

Crime boss Zeesan held

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and extorted money from people and businesses, officials said.

The transnational police organisation Interpol also issued a "Red Notice" for him. The Interpol website mentions that he has murder charges against him and he is accused of possessing explosives in multiple cases.

Zeesan had formed a killing squad with members of another top criminal Sanjidul Islam Emon's gang, they added.

He controlled Dhaka's underworld and came into public focus after he allegedly gunned down two DB officers at a hotel in Malibagh in

2003.

He went into hiding afterwards. He was believed to have left the country after law enforcers launched a crackdown in 2005.

Zeesan went to India and changed his name to Ali Akbar Choudhury, officials said.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of his supposed Indian passport but could not verify its authenticity.

Zeesan's name resurfaced during the ongoing drive against illegal casinos and arrest of two Jubo League leaders GK Shamim and Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan.

Officials believe that Zeesan was in close contact with them.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at the Country Strategy Dialogue on Bangladesh at the India Economic Summit 2019 of the World Economic Forum at Hotel Taj Palace in Delhi yesterday.

PHOTO: PTID

Invest in Bangladesh

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industrial robots to Korea and four ships made in Bangladesh came to India, she added.

The premier said Reliance recently purchased a large number of refrigerators made in Bangladesh. Bangladesh also has six lakh IT freelancers -- the largest freelancing community.

"Today, Bangladesh offers the most liberal investment regime in South Asia in terms of legal protection of foreign investment, generous fiscal incentives, concession on machinery import, unrestricted exit policy, full repatriation of dividend and capital on exit, for example."

Bangladesh is setting up 100 special economic zones, with one-stop service across the country. Twelve such zones were already functioning and two were reserved for Indian investors, the PM added.

She said a number of high-tech parks were also ready for technology and innovative enterprises.

Hasina said the HSBC last year predicted that Bangladesh would be the 26th largest economy in the world by 2030.

"Many see Bangladesh as a market of over 30 million middle- and affluent-class people and a 'development miracle'. To me, our strengths are the societal values and people's trust in

Bangladesh."

She said Bangladesh is becoming urbanised fast and about 48 percent of its population will live in towns and cities by 2030.

"Most of them will be young, energetic and digitally connected. They will be agile, receptive to new ideas and will look for new ways of creating wealth."

In fact, this is already happening with over 110 million active internet subscribers in Bangladesh. By 2025, mobile internet penetration will reach 41 percent of the total population, the PM said.

She said over 30-million middle class people is indeed a huge market. "We have challenges like many other countries, but we know how to transform challenges into opportunities."

Hasina said Bangladesh's economy posted a record high growth of 8.1 percent in the last fiscal year.

"We are close to achieving double digit growth. Since 2009, Bangladesh economy has grown by 188 percent in size. Our per capita income is around \$2,000."

The PM said agriculture was no longer a subsistence sector. "Beyond self-sufficiency, we are now the fourth largest country in terms of rice production, second in jute, fourth in mango, fifth in vegetables and fourth in inland fisheries

in the world. We are decoding genome of key crops and fruits to move further ahead."

In transforming the country into "Digital Bangladesh", Bangladesh since 2009 have ensured 100 percent ICT access for people at grassroots, she said, adding that her government's focus is to use technology to solve people's development challenges.

"As a result, Bangladesh has the fifth largest internet user population in the Asia-Pacific. We are moving fast towards a cashless society. Last year, e-commerce transactions reached \$260 million."

The PM said Bangladesh is continuously learning in its journey to development. Bangladesh offers business entrepreneurs a stable and humanitarian state, where leadership is responsive and responsible.

PM's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman and WEF President Borge Brende also spoke at the programme, among others.

Earlier in the day, Hasina reached New Delhi to join the World Economic Forum (WEF) Summit and hold meetings with top Indian leaders.

A red carpet was rolled out for the PM at Palam Air Force Station. Indian State Minister for Child and Women Development Debasree Chaudhuri received her.

Man killed in 'gunfight' in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A suspected robber was killed in a "gunfight" with police at Mamarishpur in Mymensingh's Bhaluka upazila early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Saddam Hossain, 30, from Gafargaon upazila.

Mazharul Islam, officer-in-charge (Investigation) of Bhaluka Police Station, said they received a tip-off that some robbers were gathered at Mamarishpur to plan a robbery. A police team, led by sub-inspector Golam Mustafa, raided the area to arrest the gang members.

Sensing police presence, the criminals began firing at the law enforcers, who retaliated, triggering a "gunfight" around 1:15am, said the OC.

The robbers fled the area at one point and police found bullet-hit Saddam there. They rushed him to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, the OC added.

Saddam's body was later sent to the MMCH morgue for autopsy.

Police also claimed to have recovered some sharp weapons from the spot.

The OC said that two policemen, including assistant sub-inspector Md Abdul Barek, were injured during the incident and were given treatment at Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex.

Saddam was accused in four cases, including robbery, filed with Bhaluka Police Station, he added.

A case was filed with the station in connection to the incident.

SOUTH AFRICA SUMMIT

Nigeria's Buhari urges protection for foreigners

AFP, Pretoria

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday began a visit to South Africa with a call to beef up protection of foreign nationals, weeks after xenophobic attacks in Johannesburg stirred tension between Africa's leading economies.

Buhari and his counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa went into long-planned talks aimed at bolstering trade ties and political cooperation as both leaders struggle to boost their flagging economies.

But the talks were expected to be overshadowed by the violence in South Africa targeting foreigners, which included Nigerians.

Jubo League

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dozen Jubo League leaders and some influential persons over alleged links with illegal casinos and gambling.

The law enforcement agencies have been carrying out drives against casinos and gambling since September 18.

Lenders have already frozen the accounts of Jubo League's Dhaka South unit President Ismail Hossain Samrat.

Earlier, banks froze accounts of SM Golam Kibria Shamim, his wife and mother, and that of expelled Jubo League leader Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan.

The BFIU and the NBR also asked banks and non-bank financial institutions to give it details of the accounts of Mohammedan Sporting Club Director (in-charge) M Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan, online casino "kingpin" Salim Prodhan, and the capital's Gendaria thana Awami League leaders Enamul Haque Anu and Rupun Bhuiyan.

Durga Puja begins today

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and pandals to mark the festival.

In separate messages, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina conveyed greetings to the Hindu community members on the occasion.

The five-day Sharadiya Durga Utsab starts with Shashthi puja today, while the celebrations will end with the immersion of the idols of the Goddess Durga in the nearby rivers and water bodies across the country on October 8.

The incarnation (Bodhon) of the Goddess Durga was held at different temples ahead of the puja yesterday.

To mark the Shashthi today, recitation of the verses from the Holy Chandi and blowing of conch shells (Shankha) and beating of dhak-dhols (drums) will be heard at temples and pandals throughout the day.

Maha Saptami puja will be held tomorrow, Maha Ashtami, Kumari and Sandhi puja on Sunday, Maha Nabami puja on Monday and Bijoya Dashami on Tuesday.

"Though Durga Puja is a religious festival of the Hindu community, members of other communities also take part in the celebrations. This is the unique example of non-communal

Bangalee nation," reports BSS, quoting Nirmal Kumar Chattarjee, general secretary of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad.

This year, Durga Puja will be celebrated at 31,398 permanent and temporary puja mandaps across the country, said the parishad.

The number of puja mandaps this year has increased by 483 from last year's 30,915.

According to the parishad, 237 puja mandaps will arrange Durga Puja in the capital, while the number of mandaps was 234 last year.

In the city, a largest number of devotees will be seen at the Dhakeshwari National Temple, Ramkrishna Mission and Math, Kalabagan, Banani, Shakhari Bazar, and Dhaka University Jagannath Hall puja mandaps.

Security has been beefed up in and around the puja pandals throughout the country, including the capital, with the deployment of additional members of Ansar, police, Rab, and other law enforcement agencies for peaceful celebration of the festival. Besides, voluntary groups will also be at the puja pandals.

Closed-circuit television cameras

(CCTVs), archways and metal detectors have been installed at all puja mandaps.

In new dresses, a large number of devotees will through the city pandals, particularly the Dhakeshwari National Temple, and offer prayers before the Goddess Durga seeking peace, prosperity and welfare of the country and its people.

Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad and Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee this year decided that the immersion of idols of the Goddess Durga would have to be done by 10:00pm on the day of Bijoya Dashami across the country.

VANDALISM Meanwhile, 13 incidents of vandalism took place in 11 districts last month during worship, Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee leaders told a press conference at the Dhakeshwari National Temple yesterday.

Reading out a statement, the committee's General Secretary Kishor Ranjan Mondal said the security plan of the law enforcement agencies was satisfactory. But the incidents of vandalism were a matter of great concern.

Meet the owner of Uttara sector-4!

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authority can regulate, restrict and discipline public vehicular movement, they said. All of them preferred not to be named fearing reprisal from the association.

"The move is ridiculous; it will instead cause traffic hindrance and chaos," said the father of a fifth grader of a school in the area.

The letter has been issued to all the 26 educational institutions and all the commercial establishments and offices in the area asking them to obtain the stickers from the society.

It was served in the name of North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam and local police administration.

Prabir Kumar Roy, deputy commissioner of North Division (Traffic), Dhaka Metropolitan Police, however, said, "We have no knowledge of any such move. The roads belong to the government and people have every right to move there freely."

The society doesn't have the authority either to impose registration for vehicles or realise money for stickers, he said. "It will not be lawful on the part of a private society to restrict public

vehicular movement."

Prabir noted it is the jurisdiction of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). The society could have sought police help had there been any traffic disciplinary issue, he added.

According to the Samity's office bearers, the entire Uttara sector-4 is already covered by CCTV surveillance as a security measure and soon 100 more cameras will be set up.

Major (ret'd) Anisur Rahman, president of the society, said various commercial establishments, offices, schools and even hotels are operated in the residential properties in their neighbourhood, resulting in unmanageable traffic.

"We just want to restrict those vehicles without society sticker in the area though this measure will not resolve the nuisance cent percent," he said.

"We've written to the Rajuk and the city corporation time and again about unauthorised commercial use of residential properties but to no avail."

"We are trying to address the problem our way," he said, replying to a query that

drastic decline in quality of residential life due to relentless commercialisation in any neighbourhood is a common phenomenon all across Dhaka city.

Asked whether a private association like his has legal authority to impose registration, realise money and restrict public vehicular moment, Anisur said, "No."

About the vehicular restriction from next month, he said, "It has not been appropriate to have written it this way."

On the rationale of realising Tk 500 from every vehicle per year, he said it is because the execution of restricting vehicular movement in the area will require additional manpower.

As to whether they obtained the mayor's endorsement for their move, Anisur Rahman said they informed him of it verbally but there is no formal consent from the mayor's office.

Md Lokman Hossain Mollah, BRTA director for engineering, said, "The society at best can collect subscription from its members but it can in no way restrict vehicular movement on public roads nor can impose registration or realise money to that end."