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We're forced to call strike

Water transport workers say as their work stoppage on; passengers, businesses suffer

STAR REPORT

River transport workers yesterday started a nationwide indefinite strike, after what they called was the authorities' failure to meet their demands in around seven months.

The strike brought river communications across the country to a near halt, and causing people and businesses to suffer.

Most of the passenger and cargo vessels remained docked from 12:01am yesterday, while loading and unloading of goods at two seaports and all major river ports were severely disrupted.

Less than half of the passenger launches which operate between Dhaka and other southern districts were suspended, forcing people to look for other modes of transport.

Bangladesh Water Transport Workers Federation (BWTWF) called the strike to press home their 11-point demand, which includes providing appointment letters, identity cards and service books to transport workers; Tk 10 lakh compensation if worker dies on duty; and stopping extortion and robbery in river transport.

Earlier in April, BWTWF had called a strike to press home almost similar demands, but a day later that was postponed for 45 days following a meeting between water transport owners, workers and authorities concerned.

Now, however, workers feel the authorities did not live up to their end of the bargain, forcing the protestors' hand.

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Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina receives a bouquet from senior AL leaders at the inauguration of the party's Dhaka north and south units' council in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday.

PHOTO: PID



Month of Victory starts today

BSS, Dhaka

The nation is all set to celebrate the Month of Victory that starts today, through different festivities and programmes to be held throughout the month.

On December 16, 1971, Bangladesh became independent from the Pakistani occupation forces after a nine-month-long Liberation War that cost the lives of three million martyrs and honour of half a million women.

Throughout the month, different socio-political and cultural organisations, and educational institutions will be arranging

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IS CAP OF MILITANT Prisons, police trade blame

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prisons and the police authorities apparently trade blame over how two death row convicts in the Holey Artisan attack case managed to wear prayers caps emblazoned with IS logo.

A three-member Department of Prisons committee, formed after the incident, said the caps were handed to the militants at the court.

This contradicts a police-formed committee's primary finding that the caps were brought from jail.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, head of the three-member committee, Additional Inspector General of Prisons Col Abrar Hossain, said, "There is no chance of collecting the caps from jail ... We analysed CCTV footage and found that there was no negligence on part of the jail staffers."

He claimed that one of the convicts, Rakibul Hasan Regan, told them that a man in civil dress handed him the cap at the court after the case's verdict was delivered on Wednesday.

"Though it was their prime responsibility, the police members [who took the militants to the court] did not even carry any handcuffs and helmets that day. We had to lend them those which we

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GOODS-LADEN VEHICLES ON JAMUNA BRIDGE Weight limit cut, not enough yet

Experts say it's not up to int'l standards

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) is going to enforce a reduced load limit for goods-laden vehicles on the Bangabandhu Bridge from today to enhance its durability. But the new limit is still not consistent with the recommendations made by experts over a decade ago.

In an office order issued on October 31, the BBA set a maximum load limit of 22 tonnes for two-axle vehicles (six wheels), 30 tonnes for three-axle (10 wheels), 40 tonnes for four-axle (14 wheels) and 49 tonnes for five-axle vehicles.

Previously, there was no maximum load limit for two-axle vehicles. The limit was 33 tonnes for three-axle vehicles, 45 to 49 tonnes for four-axle and 61.8-96 tonnes for five-axle vehicles, a BBA official said.

Experts and Roads and Highways Department officials consider overloading as a major cause for early damages to roads and bridges. This increases the maintenance cost of roads and bridges, they said.

The 4.8-kilometre bridge on the Jamuna river, which was opened to traffic in 1998, is a vital strategic economic road, rail, energy and telecommunication link between the northern and southern parts of the country.

But the enforcement of standard weight limit for vehicles, trucks in particular, on this important bridge has been overlooked over the years even after a five-member committee of the Buet's civil engineering department recommended in 2006 that international standard weight limit should be followed.

The BBA had formed the committee in July 2006 after the deck of the bridge devolved cracks. But according to its documents, the government never followed the recommended load limit. It enforced a much higher

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Ansar member shot dead in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A member of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP was shot dead by a group of unidentified criminals in Hashimpur Bazar area of Jashore's Sadar upazila around 8:00am yesterday.

The dead is Hossain Ali Tarafdar, 55, a sepoy of Bangladesh Ansar and VDP.

Moinul Haque, superintendent of Jashore police, said they were suspecting previous enmity to be the reason behind the murder.

The victim's sister Sharifa Begum said Hossain was posted in Dhaka's Mirpur area and recently went to Jashore to visit his village home.

Hossain was shot and killed when he was going to a relative's house, she added.

According to locals, Hossain used to be a member of Lal Pataka Bahini, a banned extremist group. In 1999, he returned to normal life by

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VR headsets for 'productive' cows!



ODDITY CENTRAL

In an attempt to reduce cows' anxiety and hopefully increase their dairy production, a cattle farm in Moscow's Ramensky district has equipped its herd with specially-designed virtual reality headsets.

Research has shown that there is a link between a cow's emotional state and it's daily milk yield. In the past, we've heard of dairy farms playing soothing classical music for their cows in order to lower their stress level and increase productivity, but as technology advances, new mood-altering solutions are introduced. For example, the RusMoloko farm in Moscow recently equipped its cattle with VR systems adapted for the "structural features of cow heads".

News of the unusual experiment at RusMoloko recently made national headlines in Russia, after a photo of a cow wearing a large virtual reality headset went viral on social media. At first, people

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Verdict today on killing of Rajib, Dia in road crash

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court is set to deliver its verdict today in the case filed over a road accident that killed two college students in the capital sparking an unprecedented road safety movement in the country.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court is scheduled to deliver the verdict at 3:00pm, said court sources.

On November 14, the court had set the date of delivering the verdict on

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 1

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	5-15	12-45	3-45	5-19	7-00
JAMAAT	5-50	1-15	4-00	5-22	7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

2 killed in 'gunfight' in Satkhira

A CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Two suspected criminals were killed in a "gunfight" with police in Satkhira town early yesterday, hours after they were arrested in a mugging case.

The dead are Mamunur Islam alias Dwip, 22, of Sadar upazila, and Sabur Sardar Saifur Rahman, 33, of Kaliganj upazila, said police.

Mirza Salauddin, additional superintendent of Satkhira (Sadar circle) police, said the duo was also accused in a murder case.

According to the cop, a team of police detained the two for their alleged involvement in looting Tk 26 lakh from a local bKash agent at gunpoint.

Around 3:00am yesterday, police conducted a raid, along with the duo, near bypass road to recover the firearm. As soon as they reached Kamalnagar intersection, cohorts of the duo opened fire, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate.

At one point, the duo

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Wagons, which were decommissioned by Bangladesh Railway, lay covered in weeds and gather rust at a storage spot of Chattogram Port Yard in the port city. None of these was even put up for auction and in this state their value depreciates every day as no maintenance work is done.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Terrorists mustn't be released early

Says UK PM as ex-terror convict, released last year early, kills two in London Bridge attack

AFP, London

Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday vowed to review Britain's sentencing system after a convicted terrorist released early from prison was suspected of stabbing two people to death in an attack around London Bridge.

Police shot and killed Usman Khan after his suspected assault that seriously injured three other people was broken up by bystanders -- one armed with a five-foot (1.5-metre) narrow tusk and another a fire extinguisher.

Video footage of the confrontation showed Khan, 28, being challenged by a man, reportedly a Polish chef, wielding the tusk -- believed to have been taken from a nearby historic hall -- and sprayed with the extinguisher.

He had been conditionally released from jail last December after serving less than half of a 16-year prison sentence for terrorism, and was wearing a suspected fake explosive device.

Moments later armed police officers arrived on the scene and shot him dead.

Investigators have said they are not actively seeking others in relation to the incident, which recalled a three-man terrorist assault two years ago on London Bridge that killed eight.

The latest attack came less than two weeks before Britain's general election, and politicians temporarily suspended campaigning.

"It does not make sense for us as a society to be putting people who have been convicted of terrorist offences... out on early release," Johnson said as he visited the scene.

"We argue that people should serve the tariff, serve the

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