



A man checks out his reflection in a small mirror after getting a shave at a streetside barbershop near Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Four months after the country ground to a halt, such scenes are becoming more common, signalling a return to normal life for many. However, the writing on the wall serves a reminder that our way of life may never be the same again, long after the worst wave of the pandemic is over. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

EID RUSH

Homebound journey to south could be choppy

Strong river currents could disrupt ferry service severely, say officials

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

People homebound during Eid to the southwestern region of the country are likely to face hassles this time, as authorities are failing to operate most of the ferries on Shimulia-Kathalbari route due to strong current in the Padma River.

As a result, many people are taking the alternative route -- Paturia-Dauladia route --resulting in huge pressure of vehicles there and causing tailback of waiting vehicles.

With the number of vehicles expected to increase ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, the situation is likely to deteriorate, officials said, as there is little possibility for the current to subdue before the end of rainy season.

"We will increase number of ferries before Eid but if this situation -- strong current on the river -- remains the same till Eid, people will have to face untold sufferings," Khaja Miah, chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), told The Daily Star yesterday.

Following experts' recommendation, the health ministry has asked the home ministry not to let people leave Dhaka and three other major cities ahead of the three-day Eid holiday, but the government decided to allow all public transport to operate maintaining health safety guidelines.

People often face suffering at the Shimulia-Kathalbari and Paturia-Dauladia ferry terminals -- that link Dhaka and the country's southwest -- ahead of every Eid, due to huge pressure of vehicles.

However, this time, people are already suffering at the terminals, officials said.

A total of 13 ferries were supposed to operate on Shimulia-Kathalbari route usually, but only three left Shimulia till 5pm yesterday due to strong currents on the river, a BIWTC staff at Shimulia terminal said.

The situation on Friday was worse. The Shah Mokhdum ferry took more than 15 hours to reach Kathalbari from Shimulia while another ferry, Camellia, returned to Shimulia Ghat after six hours of failed efforts to cross the river, he said, wishing not be named.

He said they were facing problems in operating the ferry due to strong current for quite a long time, but the situation turned severe from July 16.

"We can't operate any small ferry due to strong current," he added.

"If the situation continues till Eid, people will face further sufferings," he said adding, "We don't think the situation will improve until the end of rainy session."

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Normalcy returning to M'singh Medical College Hospital

Number of non-Covid-19 patients on the rise; people express satisfaction with treatment

AMINUL ISLAM, M'singh

The number of patients at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) is gradually increasing following the withdrawal of shutdown last month.

Back in the pre-shutdown days, the hospital's outdoor department saw around 4,500 patients per day. While the numbers are nowhere near that yet, signs of a gradual return to normalcy can be observed. Post-shutdown, the outdoor has seen around 700 to 800 patients a day -- a stark improvement on the 200 to 250 daily visits during shutdown, said hospital sources.

Like outdoor, the emergency department's visits have also increased in the last month and a half.

Pre-pandemic, the emergency saw more than 700 patients per day, which came down to 150 to 175 during the shutdown. The rush at the emergency has increased to around 300 daily visits now.

In addition, doctors are also earning plaudits for their services, as patients have expressed satisfaction with treatment services.

Rajiu Sheikh, an honours student at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, came to the outdoor for his brother's follow-up treatment.

"My brother, a truck driver, got injured in a road accident on June 28 and was immediately brought to MMCH. Doctors at the emergency took care of him and released him on the same day," he told this correspondent.

"Doctors also suggested that we visit the outdoor for follow-ups," he added.

Mina Rani (55) came to the hospital all the way from Netrakona's Kalmakanda. She accompanied her husband, who had suffered a stroke.

Mina was in anxiety over whether the hospital would admit her husband, especially since she cannot afford private hospitals. Fortunately for the couple, after examining at the emergency department, her husband was admitted to the hospital. "I am relieved that we can receive the service during such a critical time," she said.

As the number of patients are still comparatively low, patients can take their treatment maintaining social distancing too, said Taslima Akter, who came to MMCH's outdoor with her two and half-year-old son, who is suffering from a kind of skin disease.

Some 20 doctors are assigned for duty for outdoor patients while nine work at the emergency department by rotation, said Dr Md Zakiul Islam, assistant director of MMCH.

Like patients, the hospital staff has had its fair share of woes during the pandemic. Of the 365 medical staff who tested positive in Mymensingh district (as of July 14), 315 including 66 doctors, 123 nurses and 126 other staff are from MMCH alone, said Dr Laxmi Narayan Majumder, deputy director of the hospital.

Out of the infected medical staff, 52 doctors, 83 nurses and 88 staff members have been recovered and joined duty, said the deputy director.

The scenario has improved after the hospital authorities set up a "Triage Booth" at the entrance of the emergency department at the beginning of June. The booth is used to know the history of patients with a view to sorting them in three zones of Covid-19 risk -- red, yellow and green, assistant director Dr Zakiul said.

"After introducing the booth, the rate of infection among hospital staff has come down remarkably," he said.

FE news editor Abdullah Hasan laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdullah M Hasan, a senior journalist and news editor of The Financial Express, has been laid to rest yesterday.



He was buried at Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard around noon.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at Takwa mosque in Dhanmondi and the second and last at Jatiya Press Club.

Abdullah died from coronavirus on Friday evening while undergoing treatment at Labaid Specialized Hospital in the city. He was 72.

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WAR CRIMES TRIAL

'Azhar may file review petition today'

Defence says it depends on SC releasing the verdict's certified copy

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Convicted war criminal ATM Azharul Islam's lawyers have prepared a 23-page review petition containing 14 grounds for seeking reconsideration of the Supreme Court verdict, that upheld his death penalty for his involvement in genocide and crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War.

The review petition will be filed with the apex court today if the SC administration releases the certified copy of the verdict, Advocate Shishir Manir, a defence lawyer for the Jamaat-e-Islami leader, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We have prepared the review petition for him, based on the Advocate On Record certificate over the Appellate Division verdict,

including 14 grounds on which the Appellate Division may consider to exempt him from the charges brought against him," Manir said, adding that the SC administration is scheduled to give them the certified copy today.

"One of the four judges of the Appellate Division bench has disagreed with other three judges who upheld the death penalty. The reasons assigned by the judge in passing dissenting opinions have been included as the main grounds of the review petition," he added.

Citing the grounds, Manir also said the statements of the witnesses do not fully support the incidents of charges brought against Azharul.

Meanwhile, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam earlier told The Daily Star that his office will oppose the

review petition when the Appellate Division holds hearing on it.

If the SC dismisses the review petition, Azharul will have no option but to seek clemency from the president confessing to his guilt, he said.

If the SC dismisses the review petition and the president rejects the mercy petition [if he seeks review and mercy], there will be no legal bar for the authorities concerned to execute the death sentence, the attorney general said.

The SC on October 31 last year upheld his death sentence. A four-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, by a majority view delivered the verdict around five years after the

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GCC ENGINEER MURDER

Family seeks probe, arrest of masterminds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family members of the murdered Delwar Hossain, executive engineer of Gazipur City Corporation (GCC), yesterday demanded arrest of masterminds behind the murder and an in-depth investigation to ensure justice.

Delwar's wife and three sons made the demand at a press conference at an auditorium of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) in the capital.

Reading a written statement, Delwar's wife Khadiza Akhter said, those who were directly involved with the killing have already been arrested but the masterminds are still trying to influence the investigation to avoid arrest.

"I demand justice for my husband through the punishment of all killers and conspirators behind the murder," she said, terming Delwar an honest officer.

Khadiza alleged that some employees of GCC and unidentified people are calling her cell phone number,

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TWO DECADES OF BANGLADESH PORIBESH ANDOLON

Continuing the fight to protect the environment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers during a webinar yesterday said the country's green rights campaigns like Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) have vital contribution raising mass awareness on the importance of nature and environment.

Besides, such campaigns often spearheaded by Bapa also helped the government to take new decisions and policies to protect the environment, they said.

Bapa organised the webinar on the occasion of its 20th anniversary.

The leading environmental platform started its journey on July 20, 2000 through

a press conference. Since then, it took the country's green rights campaign to a new height, said the speakers.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, a noted environment lawyer, said Bapa's major success is that it did not limit itself within Dhaka city but spread its activities all over the country.

It successfully raised awareness about the importance of the river Buriganga through campaigning, which is a major achievement of the platform, she said.

Presenting a keynote paper, Bapa Vice President Nazrul Islam said the platform has been running its activities through voluntary service.

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No case filed over Khulna murders yet

Expelled AL leader's brother, who opened fire on villagers, arrested

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Over 48 hours have passed since three people were shot dead and another was beaten to death over the management of a local madrasa committee in Atra-Gilatola Eastern Gate area of Khulna city on Thursday, but no case has been filed yet.

Police, since Saturday morning, have been saying that filing of a case is underway, without divulging any further details.

Meanwhile in a latest development, law enforcers yesterday arrested Sheikh Jafrin, younger brother of Awami League leader Sheikh Zakaria, in front of whose house the incident took place, from Jashore for his alleged involvement, said Kanai Lal Sarker, additional deputy commissioner of Khulna Metropolitan Police.

In addition, AL yesterday expelled Zakaria, who is on the run.

According to locals, Zakaria and his brothers Sheikh Milton and Jafrin have been at loggerheads with the villagers of Moshiali for a long time over various issues, including forming the madrasa committee. They alleged that all the brothers were involved with the ruling party politics and very influential.

On Thursday evening, police arrested a man named Mujibur Rahman Sheikh from Zakaria's business establishment in the area with a weapon.

Villagers claimed that Mujibur was framed.

Around 8:30pm, a group of them went to Zakaria's house to protest the incident.

At one point of a heated exchange, Zakaria and his

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A group of medical representatives from pharmaceutical companies hang out at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday, cavalier to the risks of contracting Covid-19. While they are wearing masks, and some are even wearing hairnet -- which does not necessarily provide any essential protection from the virus, social distancing seems to be the least of their concerns. They have to visit doctors, hospitals and pharmacies as part of their job, and are presumably at a higher risk than some other professionals.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Couple held for torturing house help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday detained a couple from the capital's Rupnagar area on charges of torturing their domestic help. During the drive, police also rescued the victim, a minor, with injury marks on various parts of her body.

Asia (10), was admitted to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital for treatment, police said.

A team of Rupnagar police raided the house around 11am after being tipped off by neighbours that the couple kept the girl confined, and tortured her regularly, said Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Rupnagar Police Station.

Police detained Shahnaz and Sajjaduzzaman from the house, who had employed Asia a year ago, the OC said.

The victim's body bore numerous torture marks, including burn marks on her legs, the official said quoting the victim.

Police have informed Asia's parents, who live in Hatiya upazila of Noakhali.