

## 'Prioritise public transportation, not motorcycles'

Jatri Kalyan Samity urges govt to not allow 350CC bikes on road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity yesterday demanded that the government give priority to public transport instead of "accident-prone" motorcycles.

They also urged the government to cancel its decision to lower motorcycle registration fees, and to halt the move to allow operations of higher engine capacity motorbikes in the country.

Currently, the country's transport authorities allow highest 165CC bikes to operate.

The passengers' welfare platform made the demand in a press release, signed by its secretary general Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury.

The government on February 2 issued a circular, slashing motorcycle registration fees by half, a demand long being made by two-wheeler makers.

Besides, several newspapers reported that the government is also considering to allow 350CC bikes to ply the roads.

The Samity said when some three to four lakh motorbikes are hitting the street every year, the number of public transportation is decreasing gradually.

Out of the total 44 lakh registered vehicles in the country, 31 lakh are bikes, it said.

Besides, there are some three to four lakh unregistered bikes in the country, it added. But, only 18 lakh bikers have driving licences, it said.

Citing its document, the organisation said motorcycles were involved in 24.8 percent of road crash last year while the rate was 21.4 percent in 2019.

Lack of public transport, harassment of passengers, anarchy over fare, poor service and lack of employment facilities are leading people to choose bikes. Besides, many are operating bikes under ride sharing platforms, it added.

But, this cannot be any way to develop public transport system, the organisation said urging the government to impose restriction on bikes, easy bikes and battery-run rickshaws.

## Navigating Dhaka by bus with Google Maps

A welcome service for commuters in the capital, but not without some bumps

SHOIB AHMED SAYAM

Dhaka is not a big city, but it is not an organised city either. Old Dhaka was fondly called 'Bayanno Bajar Teppanno Goli'r Shohor' (a city of 52 bazaars and 53 lanes) by many, and many parts of new Dhaka can also be confusing to commute for the uninitiated.

But like most aspects of life, technology has also made finding one's way around easier, with services like Google Maps, that gives you reliable walking and driving directions, including a live update of traffic conditions. However, for those willing or requiring to use public transport, Dhaka was not all that helpful at least in Dhaka... until recently.

With the introduction of bus routes for the capital on Google Maps in December, commuters on public transport should get a little less confusing. However, with so many routes and different buses to go along with them, it is worth wondering how useful the new feature is.

To test it out, this correspondent decided to ride the bus for multiple destinations in a day, using Google Maps. With the start point being Banasree, the destinations were Uttara, Mirpur, Shyamoli, Kalabagan, Farmgate and back to Banasree.

After going to Maps' public transport menu, selecting the start point and destination shows multiple options. Each option takes a different route to reach the same destination, and shows all buses that ply on the route.

Right here, the biggest issue when it comes to using public

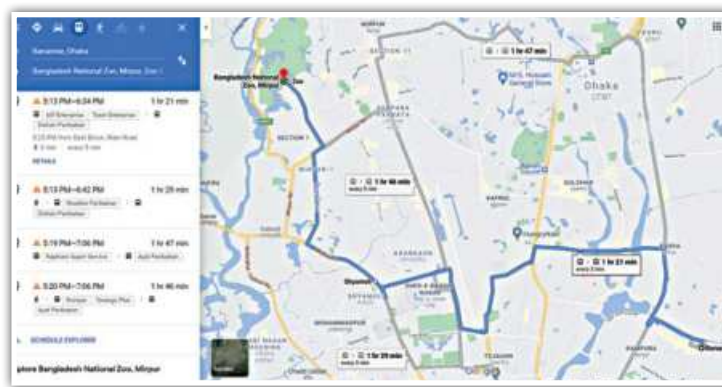


Bus service in Dhaka has a lot to improve in general, but for thousands of daily commuters, they are still the prime option. Having the information on which vehicle to take at your fingertips will only make it more accessible. Below, a Google Maps search from Banasree to Mirpur Zoo shows four options, including service providers' names and routes.

STAR FILE PHOTO

transport is resolved. It is a daunting task to know and remember all the routes and buses for a specific destination, but now, Maps can do all that for you.

The top option is shown as the recommended route. However, that is not always the best way to get to the location. The app seemed like it calculated the recommended one based on the least time required. On the surface this might seem appealing, but the journey may be broken into different sections,



which means the commuter has to take the hassle of changing buses. So, even if other options on the list may take more time, they might be worth looking through.

When it comes to accuracy of information, Maps does fairly well. Names of all the buses are exactly what they are supposed to be. Estimated time, on the other hand, is not that reliable, but that is a given when Dhaka's unpredictable traffic is considered.

The route maps were mostly spot on, but still, there were some discrepancies. While going from Uttara to Mirpur, all options showed that one had to shift buses. But a bus, Parishan Paribahan, goes there directly. Sometimes, Maps directs the commuter to walk long distances to board buses. It basically tries to be an ideal citizen and use bus stops, sometimes "invisible ones", when showing routes. Therefore, whether one needs to actually walk can be based on personal knowledge and discretion.

While going from Farmgate to Banasree, this correspondent encountered another problem. Maps might not show all options for a destination. The bus Shadhin Paribahan plies this route, but Maps did not list it, and showed other, much more convoluted, options. This might have been an isolated incident, or Maps thought the bus stopped its service, since it was past 10pm.

Maps is, overall, a great tool to manoeuvre through Dhaka's public transport. It might not be perfect in all aspects and every single time, but it provides all that is needed for one to use buses more often.

## Launch 'turned into a floating brothel': Rab

96 arrested from vessel on Buriganga for 'taking drugs, gambling'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) has claimed to have arrested 96 individuals on charges of taking drugs and gambling in a launch on the river Buriganga on Friday.

This group has been committing such crimes in the name of "river cruise" for a long time, Rab-10 Commanding Officer Mahfuzur Rahman told The Daily Star.

They also seized the launch named MV Royal Cruise-2, said the Rab officer.

The arrest was made following a daylong drive on the river, he said.

Rab said the arrestees hired the launch in the name of river cruise to Chandpur. Around 49 females were among them, said the elite force.

Many took yaba pills while some drank liquor during their journey, they added.

Rab claimed to have recovered 130 yaba tablets, 105 litres of local liquor, two bottles of foreign liquor, and lubricant from the launch.

"They turned the launch into some sort of floating brothel," said Mahfuzur Rahman.

Several of the arrestees told Rab that they chose the technique after law enforcers strengthened their vigilance in city clubs following drive against casinos, said the Rab officer.

## Chobi Mela Shunno underway in capital

UNB, Dhaka

International photography festival Chobi Mela's 11th edition kicked off at the capital's Drik Path Bhaban on Friday.

Organised by Drik Picture Library and Pathshala South Asian Media Institute, the special hybrid edition of the biggest photography festival in the country is being called "Shunno (Zero)" this year.

Marking the inauguration, an opening rally was organised on the premises of Drik Path Bhaban on Friday afternoon.

Eminent international photojournalist, founder of Drik and Pathshala, and Chobi Mela chief advisor Shahidul Alam, the current edition's festival director Tanzim Wahab, and curators Sarker Protick and Nazmun Nahar Keya spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

"From only one digitally printed photograph, showcasing Bangabandhu with our incumbent prime minister in the first edition of this festival back in 2000, to all the digitally printed photographs being showcased this year -- Chobi Mela has gradually become one of the biggest photography festivals in the world," said Shahidul in his inaugural address.

Tanzim said, "We are calling this special edition 'Shunno' to honour the fact that this is a new beginning for all of us, in these unprecedented times. The pandemic-driven last year took away many people from us, including architect Bashirul Huq and Sayeeda Khanam, the first female photographer of the country. Commemorating their legacies, we are holding two exhibitions focused on their works this year."

Chobi Mela Shunno is being joined by 75 artists from countries representing South Asia this year. Alongside host nation Bangladesh, artists from India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are virtually participating at the event.

The photographs are being showcased under eight projects in eight segments -- namely Off-Limits, The Rebel with A Smile, Wishing Tree, Frozen Song, Crossroads

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## Army chief returns home from USA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chief of Bangladesh army staff General Aziz Ahmed returned home on Friday morning, wrapping up his official trip to the United States of America.

He reached Bangladesh at 10am, said an ISPR press release yesterday.

It said General Aziz left Dhaka for the US on January 29, following an invitation by his US counterpart.

During his visit, General Aziz met senior officers of the US Army and visited various military installations and training facilities. He also met important personalities related to UN peacekeeping mission, said the press release.

On February 2, he paid a visit to the deputy assistant secretary to the Office of the Secretary of Defence for Policy South and Southeast Asia and the representative of Defense Security Cooperation.

During the meeting, various issues related to bilateral cooperation between the two countries were discussed, the release

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## DRAINAGE, WATERLOGGING OF DHAKA

## Connect, revive canals: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Creating a network among canals and reviving water retention ponds are necessary to improve the capital's drainage and waterlogging problems, said speakers at a programme yesterday.

They also said political will and proper implementation of plans are needed to make Dhaka liveable again.

Urban Development Journalist Forum, Bangladesh (UDJF) organised the programme -- "Drainage Management and Canal Improvement in Dhaka" -- at Cirdap in Dhaka.

Dhaka, a yearly publication, was also launched at the event.

Presenting the keynote paper, Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP) president Akter Mahmud said there were no shortage of plans to improve the drainage system of Dhaka, but very little have been implemented.

"Over the years, canals have disappeared through encroachment. Water retention areas have been filled up. Water channels have been blocked. Therefore, when it rains, water cannot recede properly," he said.

Architect Iqbal Habib said Rajuk failed to manage usage of land properly in the city and therefore, most of the waterbodies have been occupied and many are disappearing.

"Related government bodies should help the city corporations with proper logistical support and plan to make the drainage system work and the canal network active," he said, referring to the recent takeover of the city canals by the two city corporations.

He also said along with recovering canals, creating a proper network for water flow is necessary to improve the drainage system.

Samakal special correspondent Amitosh Pal said, "There was a time when Wasa and the city corporations blamed each other for waterlogging. Now, the drainage and canals have been handed over to the city corporations. It took three years to do that. How long will it take to implement the plans?"

The Daily Star journalist Helemul Alam Biplob said, "Wasa used to clean the drains and waterbodies right before rainy seasons. But those should be cleaned regularly. As the city corporations are now responsible for the canals they should look into it."

He also stressed the importance of proper excavation of canals. BIP general secretary Dr Adil Mohammed Khan said a political will

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## Six 'muggers' arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives yesterday claimed to have arrested six members of a criminal gang in connection with mugging Tk 35 lakh in Shahbagh area on February 7.

They arrestees are: Mazharul Islam Rakib, Jahirul Talukder, Abdul Bakar Siddique Khoka, Selim alias Lengra Selim, Md Lalon and Selim Mia.

Detectives said they recovered two machetes, two knives and Tk 2.5 lakh during their drives in Dhaka and nearby districts on Thursday and Friday.

AKM Hafiz Akhter, additional commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the gang intercepted one Shahidul Islam near an auto-stand in Shahbagh when he was carrying Tk 35 lakh on a rickshaw from his old Dhaka office to deposit the money to a bank around 3pm on that day.

They beat up Shahidul and made away with the money.

A day later, he filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station in this regard, he told a press conference at DMP media centre yesterday.



Shujon had found a way to turn his fascination with folding flat sheets into three-dimensional objects into a profession, becoming a professional origami artist of sorts. During better times, he would get called from all over the city to decorate weddings with his wide array of intricate designs. But then came the pandemic, and even as life returned to a semblance of normalcy, business was not the same any more for him. These days, Shujon goes around Dhaka crafting his date-leaf designs and selling them, in equal parts performance and hawking. With today's festivities of Puhela Falgun and Valentine's Day, he was hoping his items would sell a little more than they usually do. The photo was taken yesterday at Hatirjheel.

PHOTO: EK ENAMUL HAQ



## WORLD RADIO DAY

## Betar's role in 1971 recalled

Bss, Dhaka

The role Bangladesh Betar played during the country's independence movement is written in golden letters, said Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday.

"People who listened to Swadhin Bangla Kendra know how their programmes inspired the freedom-loving persons," he told a discussion at Bangladesh Betar in the capital's Agargaon.

Bangladesh Betar organised the discussion and rally marking World Radio Day with the theme "New World New Radio".

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