

Where vehicles die

FROM PAGE 12

none ever came to take it back.

During a recent visit, these correspondents found most of the 10 cars lying aground in the station in dilapidated conditions. Police could not give any details immediately about most of those.

“How long can these vehicles be kept guarded? When it is dark, people take off parts of the vehicles,” said a constable of the police station.

Not only in Shah Ali Police Station, hundreds of vehicles, seized as evidence and worth crores of taka, have been left to gather dust and rust on the road in front of police stations or on its premises or surrounding areas in Dhaka and elsewhere for years.

Come hail or storm, rain or sun shine, none is there to take care of these until the cases are settled. Eventually, plants start growing and the vehicles become breeding grounds for mosquitos.

The Daily Star correspondents recently visited at least 12 police stations in Dhaka, three in Chattogram, two in Khulna metropolitan cities and 16 other police stations in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Bogura, Kushia, Jhenidah, Dinajpur, Faridpur and Bagerhat and found the similar pictures.

An officer of Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station recently said there are more than 150 vehicles, including motorcycles, seized as evidence in his police stations. They have kept the vehicles on the compound of the station and some on nearby places due to lack of space.

“We have to deploy extra manpower to guard these,” he told The Daily Star.

During a recent visit to Banani Police Station, it was seen that the seized vehicles covered with dust and dirt were lined up on a narrow street in front of the police station. Parts of

many vehicles are missing.

Movements of other vehicles on the streets are being disrupted because of these cars, locals said.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of police officers said most of these vehicles were damaged in road accidents, some were used in crime while some were recovered from miscreants.

Md Walid Hossain, immediate past deputy commissioner (Media and Public Relations) of DMP, recently said bigger items, which are pieces of evidence, like motor vehicles and other things, are kept on the roads and nearby areas outside some police stations due to lack of space.

So, the evidence gets damaged and causes obstructions to movement of people and vehicles, he added.

Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu said the courts have not impound for the cars. “After completion of trial of the cases, police can remove those with court orders,” he added.

Abu Rayhan Muhammad Saleh, joint commissioner traffic (north) of DMP, said, “The vehicles we seize are dumped at certain dumping ground where usually from where owners take away their vehicles.”

Things are done differently in developed countries.

In many countries, including the US, a car is impounded by agents employed by the law enforcement agencies. They are authorised to pick up and impound a vehicle and the owner is charged towing fees and a daily rent for the spot it occupies.

This ensures an owner a process to get the vehicle back in more or less the condition it was picked up as the impound lots are usually well-guarded multi-story car parks or at least a shed protecting the vehicles from the elements.

Cambodian PM greets

FROM PAGE 1

and the people of Kingdom of Cambodia congratulatory message on the commemoration of the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of the independence of Bangladesh,” he said in a video message.

The message was run during the second day of the 10-day celebrations programme. The theme of the day's event was -- “Mohakaler Torjoni”.

Hun Sen appreciated the government and the people of Bangladesh for its remarkable achievements over the past decade by following the pragmatic visionary leadership of late Bangabandhu.

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa will arrive in Dhaka this morning on a two-day visit to join the twin celebrations.

He is scheduled to arrive at 10:00am. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will receive her Sri Lankan counterpart at the airport, officials said.

Rajapaksa will place wreath at the National Memorial in Savar at 11:00am, sign the visitor's book and plant a sapling there. He will join the celebrations at the National Parade Square at 4:30pm.

Yesterday, Cambodian premier Hun Sen in his message said Bangladesh under the wise leadership of President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has achieved high economic growth, social progress and improved the quality of life of the Bangladeshi people, the Cambodian premier said.

This spectacular success has enabled Bangladesh to meet the eligibility criteria for graduation from the group of least developed countries in 2021, he added.

The PM highlighted the historical friendship between Cambodia and Bangladesh which was founded by the close ties between the late King-Father of Cambodia Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk and Father of the Nation of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman during their meeting at the conference of the non-aligned countries in Algeria in 1973.

“On this auspicious event, I would like to reaffirm my strong commitment to further deepen the bilateral relations and close cooperation between

Cambodia and Bangladesh and to develop a stronger mutually beneficial partnership at the regional and international frameworks,” Hun Sen said.

CELEBRATION CONTINUES
The second day of the 10-day celebration programme began yesterday with the presentation of title animation video on the theme -- “Mujib Chirantan”.

National-level singers along with young artistes sang the Mujib Borsho's theme song titled “Tumi Banglar Dhrubo Tara and Banglar Batighar” written by poet Kamal Chowdhury and composed by Nakib Khan.

Later, Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, chief coordinator of the birth centenary celebration national implementation committee, delivered the welcome speech.

An audiovisual presentation based on “Mohakaler Torjoni” was made which was followed by a discussion on the theme by eminent educationist Alamgir Mohammad Sirajuddin.

Sirajuddin said Bangabandhu had declared independence as per his commitment and after that he was arrested by the Pakistani army.

During the cultural part of the programme, a recorded cultural ceremony of Vietnam was screened.

The cultural event ended with orchestra music, songs written on Bangabandhu, light and sound show based on Bangabandhu's March 7 speech and a chorus song by artistes of two generations.

VISIT BY FOREIGN LEADERS
Sri Lankan PM Mahinda Rajapaksa will attend a cultural programme and banquet hosted by his Bangladeshi counterpart at the Grand Ball Room of Hotel InterContinental Dhaka at 7:30pm today.

Tomorrow, he will pay homage to Bangabandhu by placing a wreath at his portrait on the premises of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in the capital's Dhanmondi at 10:00am. He will visit the museum and sign the visitor's book there.

Rajapaksa will meet Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office. Several MoUs will be signed between the two countries.

The Sri Lankan premier will pay a courtesy call on President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban at 5:00pm.

AstraZeneca jab safe

FROM PAGE 12

disorder,” Cooke said.

“Based on the evidence available... we still cannot rule out definitively a link between these cases and the vaccine,” she said, adding that the EMA recommended adding a warning to the vaccine's product information.

The UK health regulator yesterday also said there were no links between blood clots and the AstraZeneca jab, or the Pfizer vaccine.

“There is no evidence that blood clots in veins is occurring more than would be expected in the absence of vaccination, for either vaccine,” said June Raine, chief executive of the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

And the World Health Organization (WHO) said again yesterday it was better to take the AstraZeneca vaccine than not, after saying it was looking into available data on the shot.

'SITUATION CRITICAL'
The furore around the jab has marred the global vaccine drive aimed at ending a pandemic that has killed more than 2.6 million people, and

comes as several countries report jumps in new cases.

France recorded its highest daily caseload in nearly four months Wednesday, with the authorities set to announce new measures yesterday.

“Let's be clear, we're in a third wave mostly down to the rise of this famous British variant,” French President Emmanuel Macron said, referring to the more-contagious variant first detected in the UK.

“The situation is critical. It's going to be very hard until mid-April.”

Bulgaria and Ukraine readied for tougher restrictions to stem rising cases, while the WHO issued a grim update on rising infections in Central Europe and the Balkans.

'ITALY'S WUHAN'
So far, more than 399 million coronavirus vaccine doses have been administered globally, mostly in wealthier nations that have secured contracts with drug makers.

AstraZeneca's shot, among the cheapest available and easier to store and transport than some of its rivals, has been billed as the vaccine of choice for poorer nations.



A security personnel is seen near a damaged vehicle after a blast in Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday. Four people were killed and nine wounded when the roadside bomb hit the bus carrying Afghan government employees.

PHOTO: AFP

Ctg to have one station at Pahartoli

FROM PAGE 12

shows.

The feasibility study of the first high-speed rail, commissioned by Bangladesh Railway, has already been completed. The route has also been selected and a draft report on the detailed design of the “passenger-dedicated” railway project has already been submitted.

Meanwhile, two Chinese companies have expressed interest in forming a joint venture to construct, operate, and manage funds for the line.

Once finished, the journey from the capital to the commercial capital will be slashed to just 73 minutes.

An uninterrupted journey between Dhaka and Chattogram will take only 55 minutes.

The trains, which will run at a top speed of 300km/hr, will have the capacity to carry approximately 50,000 passengers each way daily.

It will, however, not be cheap. With fares expected to be around the Tk 2,000 mark, more than three times the fare of an AC seat on existing Bangladeshi inter-city trains.

However, some transport experts termed the project “highly ambitious”

and questioned the capacity of BR to operate the high-speed train, when it has not yet introduced electric trains.

NEW OPTIONS

The consultants, appointed for the feasibility study and detail design of the project, gave two options -- setting up one station or two stations as traffic hub for high-speed rail in Chattogram.

In their power-point presentation, they mentioned different aspects of setting up one station for high speed near the existing station or Pahartoli.

They said if the station for high-speed rail was built near the existing rail station, it would be more convenient for passengers.

But passenger distribution would be centralised, causing pressure on the urban transport, they said.

Besides, there is a high-density of residential buildings around the existing station and the proposed Cox's Bazar high-speed line would have to go through the urban areas, which would require large degree of demolitions and project implementation would be difficult, they said.

On the other hand, if the station is built on the right side of the existing Pahartoli station, the extension of

high-speed rail to Cox's Bazar would start from Pahartoli.

In that case, construction work would be easier and the main line would be shorter, they said.

But, the new station would be little far away from the city and the existing urban road connection would not be able to meet passenger demand, they said.

The existing 4.3km trunk road will need to be widened to six lanes, they said.

The total cost of the project with the station near existing station would be \$11.063 billion while the Pahartoli's option would require \$11.114 billion. The project cost with two stations in Chattogram would be \$11.113 billion.

The another option, the consultant recommended for, is to build two stations in Chattogram—first one near the existing station in Chattogram for now and keep option at Pahartoli station for building another transport hub when the speed train line would be extended up to Cox's Bazar.

The total cost of the project with this option would be \$11.093 billion. The meeting decided to build one station at Pahartoli, sources said.

Why silent on Sunamganj mayhem?

FROM PAGE 12

campus yesterday afternoon to protest the attack on minorities.

“Minority people of Shalla could earlier sense that the attack might be launched on them. Why did the administration not take any effective measures to resist the attack despite knowing it? Should we assume that communal people have entered the administration?” the BCL leaders questioned.

Earlier on Wednesday morning, several hundred supporters of Hefajat-e Islam attacked, vandalised, and looted at least 75 Hindu houses in Sunamganj's Noagaon village over a Facebook post criticising a Hefajat leader's statement.

Meanwhile, a case was filed in connection with the violence around 4:30pm yesterday, close to 30 hours after the incident.

But none was arrested as of 8:30pm last night when this report was filed, said police.

Contacted, Shalla Police Station's Officer-in-Charge Nazmul Haque said some 70 named and 630 unnamed persons have been made accused in the case.

Without disclosing the identity of the plaintiff, the OC said, one of the victims has filed the case.

Although additional law enforcers have been deployed in the area to avoid any further untoward incident, people of the minority communities are still in a panic.

“We are afraid as no attackers have so far been arrested. We want justice,” said Anil Chandra Das, a freedom fighter and resident of the village.

“The role of administration and law enforcement agencies is suspicious to us as none has been arrested till now,”

said advocate Bishwajit Chakraborty, general secretary of the district unit Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Unity Council.

Rab Director General Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun visited the spot and assured victims to take legal actions against the attackers.

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner Zahangir Hossain said, “We have taken all necessary measures to ensure security to the villagers, who have already returned home.

“Besides, we will also provide financial assistance to the victims to repair their houses.”

Meanwhile, different organisations and people from different walks of life across the country protested the incident and demanded trial of the attackers.

ATTACK WAS PREDICTED

On Monday, Hefajat unit of nearby Derai upazila, organised a rally where the organisation's Ameer Junayed Babunagari and Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque spoke.

At the rally, Mamunul criticised the celebration of Bangabandhu's birth centenary and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit marking the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence, according to local media reports.

The following day, Jhumon Das Apon, a youth from Noagaon village, made posts on his Facebook wall, slamming Mamunul for trying to create a religious division, police said.

At this, Hefajat supporters became agitated.

Locals of Noagaon village caught Jhumon at a bazar on Tuesday night and handed him over to police. But the tension was prevailing in the area.

Officials of the law enforcement

Cops recover

FROM PAGE 12

added.

According to the police official, Sandeep went to Sunamganj for business a day before. Returning home, he found the main door of the house open around 6:00am yesterday.

As he entered the house, he found the bodies of his wife and daughter under the bed, the SI said, quoting Sandeep.

Parvej Alam Chowdhury, assistant superintendent of police in Habiganj, said a police team, including him, visited the spot on information.

“The incident must have happened between 4:00am and 6:00am as Anjali talked to her husband around 4:00am over the phone for the last time,” he said.

Meanwhile, a neighbour of the family named Amir Ali, who lived on the second floor of the same building, was being questioned in police custody, he added.

Amir was found injured and had been taken to a hospital. He alleged that a thief injured him while stealing a sewing machine around 3:00am the same night.

A case will be filed in this regard, ASP Parvej said.

Rab says SC lawyer's claim fictitious

FROM PAGE 12

indiscriminately and my whole body bears the marks of torture,” he said.

Ibrahim said he has no personal enmity with any Rab members. They did it being influenced by a third person.

In a press release, Rab yesterday claimed that Ibrahim and his associates created obstacles to the force performing its duties and attacked a Rab-10 team when it went on Khaje Dewan Lane in Chawk Bazar at 5:30pm on March 11 to collect intelligence about a drug dealer.

When the Rab team went there, Ibrahim and his associates wanted to know the identities of the Rab men. The elite force members showed their ID cards and jacket, it added.

Even then Ibrahim and his associate engaged in a heated altercation with the Rab members.

As the Rab members were going to a nearby place where they parked their motorcycles, Ibrahim and his associates shouted “Fake Rab” and carried out an attack from behind. They punched the Rab members indiscriminately leaving them injured, the Rab release added.

Locals came to aid of Rab men. The Rab members arrested Ibrahim with the help of locals but his associates managed to flee.

Around 12:40am on March 12, Rab filed a case with Chawk Bazar Police Station and handed Ibrahim over to the police station, Rab claimed.

The Rab also claimed that Ibrahim's claim that he was picked up from Supreme Court premises on March 10 was baseless as he was arrested from Khaje Dewan Lane in front of many people in broad daylight. This is proved by witnesses

accounts and technology.

Rab also claimed that the allegation of torture brought by him in social media was imaginary and motivated as he was handed over to Chawk Bazar Police Station at 12:40am the next day.

The press release also said the authorities concerned was looking into how he issued a statement using social media while under custody of a law enforcement agency on March 12.

Asked about the matter, Inspector (Investigation) of Chawk Bazar Police Station Kabir Hossain last night said there was no scope for anyone to issue such a statement while under police custody.

“He did not give any such statement while in our custody,” he added.

He claimed that Ibrahim was out on bail.

Dhaka talks

FROM PAGE 12

president and his advisers.

He further said Awami League's stand (vis-a-vis constitution-making) was clear and the whole world knew why the people of Bengal had made sacrifices. He, however, pointed out that it was not an easy problem and sufficient time was needed to solve it.

Later in the evening three advisers of the Awami League chief had a meeting with the advisers of the president.

On the 18th day of the non-cooperation movement, most of the schools, private offices and institutions remained closed in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Black flags were hoisted atop houses and offices.

FIRING AT JOYDEBPUR

Curfew was imposed this evening in Joydebpur town following a clash between the local people and the army personnel, which resulted in the deaths of at least three persons.

The problem was triggered when locals of East Pakistan put up a barricade on the road to prevent a military commander from returning to Dhaka, who had earlier travelled to Joydebpur. The news of the attack angered the people of Dhaka. They immediately brought out spontaneous processions in the city.

Bangabandhu strongly condemned tonight the firing on the unarmed people at Joydebpur. Talking to newsmen, he said, “If they think they can suppress people's struggle by bullet and force, they simply live in a fool's paradise.”

The Awami League chief said he wondered how the army could go to the Joydebpur Bazar when martial law authorities had stated that troops had already been withdrawn to the barracks.

'HANDOVER POWER TO BANGABANDHU'

NAP (Bhashani) Chief Maulana Bhashani today urged Yahya to immediately hand over power to the leader of the majority party, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This is the only solution left to keep the two wings united, he added. Speaking at a meeting with journalists in Chittagong the Maulana said if Yahya didn't accept this proposal Bangabandhu should immediately declare independence.

Shamsuddoza Sajeen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajeen1986@gmail.com

Suspect dies

FROM PAGE 12

local chairman and Jewel's family members and tried to convince him to surrender.

At one point, Jewel poured petrol on him and set himself on fire, the OC said, adding that the petrol was collected from a motorcycle stolen allegedly by Jewel, said the OC.

Jewel died on the spot. Later, police recovered the body and sent it to the morgue of Sirajganj General Hospital. The law enforcers also claimed to have recovered charred remains of three stolen motorcycles from the spot.

Contacted, Abdul Mazid, chairman of Mesra union, confirmed the incident.

The Daily Star tried to contact Jewel's family members for comments, but could not reach them over phone.

'Cosmic web'

FROM PAGE 12

billions of previously invisible -- and unsuspected -- dwarf galaxies spawning trillions of stars.

The findings were reported in the journal Astronomy & Astrophysics. “After an initial period of darkness, the Universe erupted with light and produced a huge number of stars,” senior author Roland Bacon, a scientist at the Centre for Astrophysics Research in Lyon, told AFP.

“One of the big questions is what ended that period of darkness,” leading to a phase in the early Universe known as re-ionisation, he said.

Until now, astronomers had only caught partial and indirect glimpses of the cosmic web via quasars, whose powerful radiation, like car headlights, reveals gas clouds along the line of sight.