

ROAD ACCIDENT Two killed, one hurt in Manikganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Manikganj

A motorcycle rider and his pillion passenger were killed and an ambulance driver was injured when the ambulance hit the bike on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Bhatbaur area of Manikganj Sadar upazila on Friday morning.

The deceased were identified as Abdul Halim (26) and Dipak Haldar (25), said Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Golra Highway Police Station.

The Jashore-bound ambulance hit the motorcycle near a filling station, killing the two on the spot, the OC said.

Ambulance driver Roni Mia (30) was rushed to Manikganj Sadar Hospital and later transferred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the OC added.

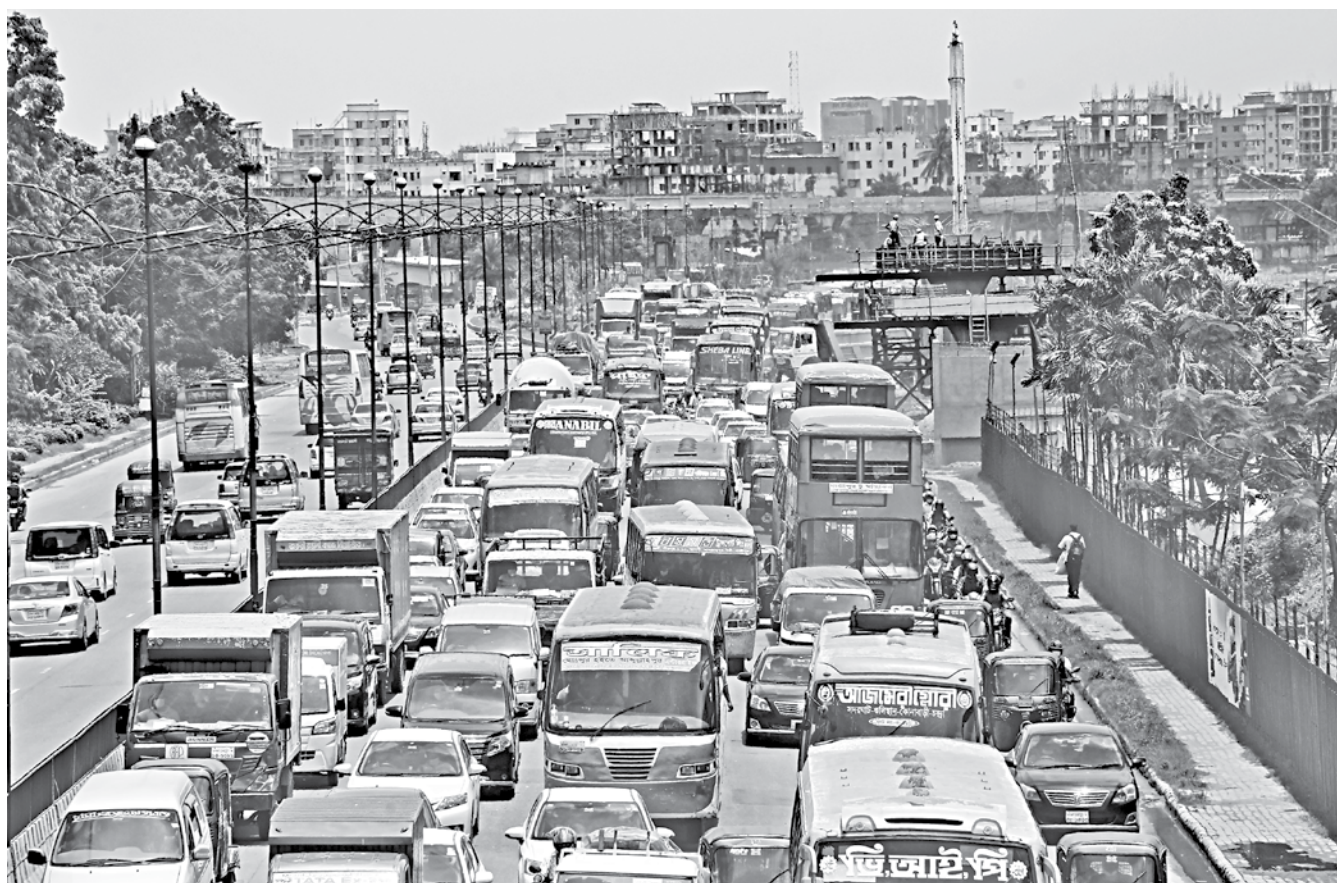


PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

The long tailbacks near Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport are an example of the relaxed nature of ongoing movement restrictions. With many establishments remaining open, traffic jams have returned to the streets of Dhaka.

'Edu minister leading sector to destruction'

Left-leaning students demand immediate reopening of educational institutes

DU CORRESPONDENT

By keeping educational institutions closed for more than 15 months, the education minister is leading the sector to destruction, leaders and activists of different left-leaning student organisations said yesterday.

At a rally at the base of Dhaka University's Raju Memorial Sculpture in the afternoon, under the banner of "Progressive Student Alliance", they called for immediate reopening of all educational institutions by working out a roadmap and vaccinating teachers, students, and staff.

Foeh Ullah, president of Bangladesh Students Union, said educational institution have been closed for about 16 months. The government has no plan on how to resume education in primary schools.

"We have seen that students were forced to attend online classes with no facilities for getting devices [phones and computers]. In this way, the education minister is leading the education sector to destruction," he claimed, adding that the budget proposed this year did not take the students into account.

They also demanded withdrawal of the 15 percent tax on private universities and colleges proposed recently at the parliament for the 2021-22 fiscal. Instead, they demanded full tuition fee waiver, considering the Covid-19 situation.

They said illegal income and wealth of owners of private universities and colleges must be confiscated, and uniform tuition fee policies at private universities must be ensured.

Convener of Progressive Student Alliance Masud Rana, President of Socialist Students Front Al Kaderi Joy and General Secretary Nasir Uddin Prince also spoke at the rally.

'Shun infighting first'

Mirza Fakhrul urges BNP leaders and activists

UNB, Dhaka

BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday urged the party leaders and activists to put behind intra-party conflicts first before launching a movement to oust the current government.

"I would like to clearly say Awami League won't be able to hang onto power as people will ensure their fall through a strong movement for their misdeeds and injustice," he said.

Speaking at a virtual discussion, the BNP leader said, "Let's quickly reorganise ourselves by resolving misunderstandings and divisions among us. We also must unite people..."

Gazipur district and city units of BNP arranged the programme marking the 40th death anniversary of party founder Ziaur Rahman.

Fakhrul called upon BNP leaders and workers to get ready for restoring democracy and establishing a pro-people government by ensuring a credible national election under a non-party administration and the neutral Election Commission through a tough struggle.

He said they will also wage a movement to completely free party chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail.

Stating that the country has been going through a critical juncture, he said BNP must play a pivotal role in overcoming it. "Amid the current political crisis, we must stand firmly and turn around to change the situation."

ILLEGAL RECRUITMENT AT PSTU VC among seven served legal notice

OUR CORRESPONDENT, PATUAKHALI

Seven persons, including Patuakhali Science and Technology University's (PSTU) vice-chancellor (VC), were served a legal notice, calling for action against those involved in illegal recruitment at the university, alleging that many had been appointed to various posts without paying heed to rules and by taking bribes during immediate-past VC Harun-ur-Rashid's tenure.

Supreme Court lawyer Jahangir Hossain issued the notice on May 30.

Other recipients of the notice are secretary of the education ministry; chairperson of University Grants Commission (UGC); PSTU's registrar; Prof Muhammad Maniruzzaman of PSTU's agricultural chemistry department; Shahin Hossain, associate professor of soil science department; and Nowrose Jahan Lipi, associate professor of agriculture department.

Among them, Prof Maniruzzaman and Lipi are married, and Lipi is Harun's adopted daughter. There are

allegations that the couple influenced university activities during Harun's tenure from 2017 to January 5, 2021.

According to the legal notice, one Debashish Mandal of Kushtia was a candidate for a lecturer post at PSTU. He was asked to pay a huge bribe to get the job, even though he had the best scores in the selection test.

Maniruzzaman and Lipi demanded a bribe of Tk 10 lakh from Debashish, who really wanted to get the job. Later, just before the interview board ceremony, the bribe rose to Tk 15 lakh.

In the end, as Debashish could not pay the bribe, they hired another new candidate named Rafiq Uddin, receiving Tk 15 lakh from him.

Contacted, Rafiq declined to comment.

Debashish later returned to his home in Kushtia on May 14, 2018 and killed himself. The notice claimed that Maniruzzaman, Lipi and Shahin had committed offences under Section 306 of the Penal Code.

The notice further said UGC's

responsibility is to ensure that rules are followed during recruitment, but it did not do so.

Furthermore, Maniruzzaman's younger brother Md Kamruzzaman and Shahin's sister Nazmun Nahar were appointed to the university. The notice demanded the two appointments be cancelled.

It also requested authorities addressed in the notice to take action against the teachers. It asked authorities to inform the lawyers concerned by 10am on June 15 about the action.

Otherwise, a writ petition will be filed with the High Court to get justice, the notice said.

Contacted, PSTU VC Swadesh Chandra Samanta confirmed receiving the notice and said, "We will talk to the law officer about the matter, and a decision will be taken."

Contacted, Maniruzzaman denied all allegations, saying that the notice was issued to harass them.

Others addressees of the notice declined to comment.

Allocate

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is different from what's seen in other areas of the country, adding, parts of coastal area go under water during high tide in May-September.

Water expert Ainun Nishat said political biases should be minimised for prioritisation and budget allocation that is absent in embankment planning.

The projects under the "Delta Plan" have been taken without consideration of local knowledge, he said.

Lawmaker Zafar Alam of Cox's Bazar-1 constituency proposed for establishing a separate "coastal development board".

Shameem Haider Patwary, lawmaker of Gaibandha-1 constituency, said collective effort was required to address coastal population's problems.

He stressed the need for "mapping" coastal areas.

Nahim Razzaq, lawmaker of Shariatpur-3 constituency, said the country lacked efficiency in comprehensive water management.

He stressed for giving importance to vegetation and forestation in coastal areas, saying those act as natural protectors during calamities.

Moderating the seminar, Coast Trust Executive Director Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said recommendations generated in the seminar will be sent to the lawmakers, urging them to raise the coastal issues before the parliament.

Lawmakers Mir Mushtaque Ahmed Robi of Satkhira-2, Nurunnabi Chowdhury of Bhola-3, and Asheq Ullah Rafiq of Cox's Bazar-2, among others, also spoke at the seminar.

Rafiq Azam

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encourage locals and help ensure the park's sustainability," said Rafiq, who is also lead designer of the project.

Considering the circumstances of the country, it is quite difficult to maintain a public space, Rafiq said. With this in mind, they have formed a committee comprising locals to look after the renovated playground.

The playground is constructed on 1.33 acres, situated in Lalbagh.

The playground's renovation is part of DSCC's 'Jol Shobuje Dhaka' project, aimed to revitalise 31 parks and playgrounds across the capital city.

The playground project is designed in such a way whereby both greenery development and rain water management is done in a sustainable manner, according to the designing firm.

Barishal polls

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said there may not be a direct correlation of poll preparations and the spike in Covid-19 cases.

"Rajshahi is not hosting any election, but their cases are increasing. In Barishal, poll preparations are underway, but there are much fewer new cases."

"Elections are going on all over the world. The pandemic has not stopped elections, because the importance of elections is different, more than corona,"

Patients struggle

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patients of the region will go if they're refused at the only dedicated hospital, Dr Suhash said they don't have a solution as of yet but know that additional Covid-19 units are needed to serve the region's people.

Meanwhile, 38-year-old Al Mamun got admitted to the unit around five days ago. An auto rice mill manager at Itagaccha area of Satkhira, he initially tried to get admitted to Satkhira Medical College Hospital, but could not obtain a bed. This correspondent met him while he was waiting outside the X-ray room yesterday.

His wife Simu Khatun said the journey to Khulna has been really stressful for them, and added to their costs, which is already getting out of hand. According to her, they have to spend over Tk 5,000 on medicines and tests everyday.

To tackle the crisis, at a meeting of Coronavirus Prevention Committee, Khulna District Unit, held at the DC office on Friday, a decision was reached to convert

he said.

Regional election official Md Alauddin said the elections are going to be held on June 21. This is excluding the twenty-six unions that have already been elected, uncontested.

Asked about the uncontested elections, the CEC said, "It's better not to hear from me, we are merely election managers. It is not up to the Election Commission to decide who the candidates will be."

Khulna Sadar Hospital into a Corona Dedicated Hospital.

Sources said the Department of Health and the Ministry of Health will provide the necessary human resources and logistical support for it.

"We've already sent a proposal to the ministry to shift our covid unit to Khulna Sadar Hospital," said committee convener Dr Mehedi Newaz.

Meanwhile on Thursday, 789 samples of antigen were tested in private clinics and in the RT-PCR of Khulna Medical College Lab, of which 236 came out positive.

In KMCH alone, 337 samples were tested, of which 114 people came out positive on Thursday, at a rate of 29.91 percent.

On Friday, it was 40.67 percent while yesterday it was 34.94 percent.

In the last 24 hours, five people have died while undergoing treatment at the hospital. One of them was Covid-19 positive while the rest carried symptoms, said doctors at the hospital.

Govt must

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form an idea about a possible massive earthquake and the casualties that might result from it," he said.

"There are two parts of building assessment: one for new buildings and another for old ones. New buildings should follow the building code, and it only takes Tk 100 per square feet to build an earthquake-resistant structure," Prof Ansary said.

"Of existing buildings in Dhaka, five lakh have no [earthquake] resistance, so it should be assessed. It's a lengthy process, but we can assess them in five years. It's high time to start the assessment process," he continued.

In 2016, a committee chaired by renowned scholar and noted engineer Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury -- who recently passed away -- suggested Rajuk to appoint different consulting firms in eight zones for assessment, but Rajuk did not take any action, he added.

Prof Mahbuba Nasreen, director of DU's Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies, said the government alone cannot assess buildings; it should engage the private sector for the job.

Shamsuddoza Sajen of The Daily Star conducted the roundtable.

Writing was

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He noticed the Eid crowd and preparations for mango trading.

Many workers returned home during the Eid holidays for mango trade while those who went to other areas for harvesting boro paddy also came back.

Brig Gen Yazdani said he had alerted the local administration first on May 17 and recommended a lockdown. Then he continued for over a week repeatedly asking the authorities to impose a lockdown.

A lockdown began in Chapainawabganj on May 24, but it was lifted after two weeks.

On May 29, the Directorate General of Health Services also recommended a lockdown in eight border districts of the country, including four in Rajshahi region.

In three districts of Rajshahi, Naogaon and Natore, the administrations did not do so for the upcoming mango season and trading.

On May 29, Rajshahi DC Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star, "Lockdown means loss. No one wants it. We must prioritise human life over livelihood, but we have to make sure of livelihood first."

Instead of a complete lockdown, the district administrations began observing nighttime restrictions from June 3.

On June 7, the district administration in Rajshahi began a programme to test people in the streets. Conducting rapid antigen tests among 297 people on the first day, they found 27 were infected.

Despite the presence of infected people in the streets, the authorities lagged behind and extended the nighttime restrictions by two hours.

That time, Rajshahi Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton told reporters, "We have to protect people's livelihood as well as their lives. The mango trade involves crores of taka and livelihood of people. We've decided to monitor the situation for a few more days."

Three days later on Thursday night, Rajshahi's Divisional Commissioner

Humayun Kabir announced the Friday's lockdown following an emergency meeting.

Even in early May, RMCH had 64 beds in five wards of its coronavirus unit.

They continued to increase the capacity till last week of May and in last seven days they further extended the unit. As of Friday, there were 297 patients against 271 beds in its 10 wards.

The number of wards and beds has been gradually increased to accommodate patients from different districts of Rajshahi region, Joypurhat, Pabna, Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga and other districts.

On Wednesday, a new ward with 36 beds was added and it became full instantly, and still the corona unit has 20 additional patients.

"We are increasing the number of beds soon," the RMCH director said.

The hospital officials said more than 40 patients are being admitted every day. On Saturday, 43 patients were admitted to the unit. However, after recovering, 25 people were released.

"We knew from experiences of other countries that the virus will spread. That's why we alerted everyone. As they did not listen, we tried to increase our capacity as much as possible," said the RMCH director.

"The 18-bed ICU of the hospital remains full. If we're given fresh ventilators now, we have no infrastructure for installing those. Each of the 271 beds has central oxygen. We have 700 oxygen cylinders and oxygen concentrators for additional 183 beds," he said.

"Our main challenge is to prepare more beds and connect those to the central oxygen supply lines," he added.

He said the decision to declare lockdown was taken too late.

"It's better to take a decision... There is no substitute for caution. Though the situation is not alright, we can and are trying to manage it," the RMCH director said.

Syria-trained

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related to Ansar Al Islam from him, he said. Shakhawat went to Turkey from Chattogram in April 2017 and then entered Syria illegally. There, he received training under HTS, added the DC.

"He came to Bangladesh on March 22 this year from Indonesia. He used to upload audio, video and other contents related to militancy and maintained the outfit's online activities," the DC said.

Investigators said Shakhawat joined Ansar Al Islam with the help of his brothers-in-law Mamun and Arif in 2012.

DC Hasan said he had also met with absconding top militant Major Zia earlier in 2013.

A case has been filed against Shakhawat with Khulshi Police Station yesterday.

During primary interrogation, Shakhawat claimed that he has degrees from India and the UK and he completed multiple IT-related diploma courses in the country.

He said he completed his MSc degree at a university in the UK in 2009-2010 and returned to Bangladesh in 2011.

In Chattogram, he met one Omar Faruk, an AC salesman, at a mosque. They became good friends.

In December 2011, Faruk introduced him to one of his friends Amzad Hossain Arif, who also gave him IT training. Ahmed Payer, additional deputy commissioner of CI, said, "We are verifying the information. We have seized his documents, laptops, phones and passport."

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