

Back to bedlam

Traffic congestion, noise, crowding returns to Dhaka as lockdown is lifted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After a period of pandemic-induced calm, Dhaka is back to its usual chaotic self.

From commuters' desperate attempts to get on buses, traffic congestions at intersections in the morning rush hours, reckless driving, illegal parking, incessant honking, and seemingly never-ending screams of bus helpers -- the same old picture was found in most of the parts of the capital as public transports resumed operations.

Correspondents of this paper found traffic congestion in Mirpur, Farmgate, Tejgaon, Shahbagh, Kakrail and Gulistan. Though there was light pressure from vehicles in the morning, it increased as the day progressed.

Besides, almost all factories, offices, and shopping malls started operating after the end of the nationwide 19-day lockdown, imposed on July 23.

Meanwhile, launch and train services also resumed yesterday.

Many who had left Dhaka to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha at their village homes and could not return due to the "strict lockdown", started returning to the capital yesterday through bus, train, and launches.

However, amid the chaos, commuters hardly maintained health safety guidelines.

"It almost feels like people think the virus went away with the lifting of restrictions," said Arifur Rahman, a motor-parts trader at Banglamotor.

Hanging masks under chins was a common sight all around the city. Though some bus helpers used to spray hand-sanitisers before boarding passengers in the past, this was hardly seen yesterday.

Health experts fear the situation may worsen due to the mass movement and failure to comply with health guidelines this way.

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The capital was back to usual form yesterday, with traffic congestions a common feature across the city. Crucially, adherence to health guidelines was missing for most parts, which experts say may lead to a worsening situation down the road. This photo was taken from Kakrail area around 1:30pm.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Cases of dengue hospitalisation cross 5,000 mark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of dengue patients hospitalised in the country this year crossed the 5,000-mark yesterday.

At least 213 people with dengue fever were admitted to hospitals across the country in 24 hours till 8am yesterday, of which only 25 are from outside Dhaka, according to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With them, a total of 5,192 patients have been diagnosed with dengue this year, DGHS data shows. Of the total infected, only 239 are from outside Dhaka.

Among 5,192 infected, 2,534 were diagnosed in the running month till yesterday morning.

At least 2,286 people were hospitalised in different hospitals across the country in July, while 272 were hospitalised in June and 43 in May.

Although most patients who were hospitalised have been released, 907 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals across the country, 66 of whom are from outside the capital, the DGHS data shows.

Meanwhile, Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister

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Pandemic has left youth in the lurch

Speakers tell virtual dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ongoing pandemic is leaving an adverse effect on education, employment and mental condition of the country's youth population, adding a new form of disengagement to the youth cohort.

Moreover, the pandemic has brought the "digital divide" issue to the fore as one of the major indicators to identify who is more economically and socially "disengaged" and to what extent.

The issues were discussed at a virtual dialogue on "Disengaged Youth" in Bangladesh: Who, Why and How? organised jointly by Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh and UNDP Bangladesh on the occasion of International Youth Day 2021, said a press release of the platform.

Speakers at the event said the situation is even worse for those belonging to the lower-income tier.

In his remarks, Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, convener of Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh and Distinguished Fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), stressed for exploring

who belong to the disengaged community of youth and to what extent.

He emphasised exploring an effective solution besides the existing youth-centric institutions and policies that "have not yet been visibly successful in capturing the youth's aspirations and challenges in Bangladesh".

Sudipto Mukerjee, resident representative of UNDP Bangladesh, mentioned that the youth community needs to come forward to achieve responsible consumption and production.

He stressed the need for finding more innovative ways to accelerate efforts to address the skills and information gap, which have become more visible due to the pandemic.

TIB URGES VACCINATION OF STUDENTS ON PRIORITY BASIS

Meanwhile, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday called upon authorities concerned to inoculate students and relevant others with Covid-19 vaccine in shortest possible time and on priority

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'Overnight queues proved futility of vaccination drive'

GM Quader slams govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Numerous people's wait in queues overnight for jabs proved how futile the mass vaccination campaign was, said Jatiya Party Chairman and Deputy Leader of the Opposition GM Quader yesterday.

He said such incidents are unprecedented in the world and there can be no more embarrassing news for the nation.

During a programme at his Banani office, GM Quader said different countries are normalising the Covid-19 situation with their mass vaccination programmes being successfully implemented.

"However, hundreds of people have spent the whole night for a single dose of vaccine in our country," said the JP chairman.

He said, "Even elderly people had to do the same amid immense sufferings because, in the last few days, they did not get vaccines even after visiting different centres."

He said at least 27 crore doses of vaccine would be needed to make the vaccination programme a success.

GM Quader said vaccines would have to be collected quickly from various sources. Moreover, the mass

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PANDEMIC FALLOUT

Indigenous women found little support from govt: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite the pandemic negatively impacting the lives and livelihood of indigenous women, very few received any assistance from the government and have been deprived of any special incentive in the current budget, said speakers at a webinar yesterday.

Many indigenous women witnessed a drop in income due to closure of parlours and tourism businesses, they said.

Meanwhile, many could not sell agricultural products in the market or run their small businesses, which made the women vulnerable, they said, adding that domestic violence against indigenous women also increased in this period, due to income reduction and job cuts.

Titled "Livelihood Crisis and Security of Indigenous Women in Covid-19", the webinar was organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

Falguni Tripura, coordinator of Bangladesh Indigenous Women's Network, presented the keynote address and said an indigenous woman is a victim of multifaceted discrimination. They are discriminated against for being a woman, an indigenous person, and an indigenous woman.

In addition, due to various discriminatory policies and the existing patriarchal system of society, indigenous women are not involved in decision-making processes, she said.

She also mentioned that 72 percent of indigenous women working in the informal sector lost their job in the pandemic, while 92 percent faced income reduction.

Those who migrated to the village had to maintain their livelihood by working as day labourers. Those who returned to the city could not manage a decent job, she added.

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Piyasha sent to jail after 4-day remand

Court also sends Porimoni's associate Jimmy to prison

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent model and former TV presenter Faria Mahub Piyasha to jail after rejecting remand and bail prayers in two separate narcotics cases.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Baki Billah passed the order after CID inspectors Abdul Latif and Md Rafiqul Islam submitted two prayers seeking five-day remand in two cases filed against her.

She was produced before the court on completion of her four-day remand.

The same court yesterday sent Junaid Karim Jimmy, actor Pori Moni's associate, to jail after rejecting both remand and bail petitions in a narcotics case.

CID inspector Md Salauddin Karim produced Jimmy before the court with a five-day prayer. He was produced on expiry of his three-day remand in the case.

Jimmy was detained from Gulshan Shooting Club area on August 6. Police recovered 225 pieces of yaba pills from his possession.

Later, police filed a case against Jimmy and one Sazzad with Banani Police Station under the Narcotics Control Act.

Hapless pursuit of a hospital bed

Covid-19 situation in Ctg severe as health facilities at capacity

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Tofazzal Hossain took his mother to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) earlier this week, as she tested positive for Covid-19 and was suffering from breathing issues.

But no bed at the Covid-19 ward was vacant, and so, she had to lie down on the floor.

Tofazzal talked to this correspondent when he went to a pharmacy in front of the hospital to buy some medicine for his mother.

"The situation is horrible. We went to Chattogram General Hospital [CGH] first but did not get a bed. The staff of CGH advised us to come to CMCH, but the situation is the same here," said Tofazzal, who hails from the port city's Halishahar area.

"The CMCH authority admitted my mother but could not provide a bed. She finally resorted to lying on the floor like many other patients," he said. "However, she has been given oxygen support."

Palash Nandi had taken his

father, who tested positive for Covid-19 on Sunday, to CMCH from Hathazari upazila.

"At first, we thought of admitting my father to a private hospital and went to three private facilities, but there was no empty bed at any of them," he told The Daily Star. "So, we came here, but still couldn't get a bed. My father is now lying on the floor of the ward."

"Many patients have to share the same oxygen port of the central line. At times, when a patient feels better, they leave the port for another patient. This rationing system is due to patients outnumbering the beds and oxygen ports. Those who have not experienced this will not understand the severity of the situation," said Palash.

As the number of Covid-19 patients in Chattogram is increasing, almost all general and ICU beds at all government and private hospitals in the port city have been filled up, so patients are rushing from one hospital to another in search of a bed.

All previous records of Covid-19 infections and deaths in Chattogram district were broken in July, and the situation is only getting worse in August.

A total of 772 Covid-19 cases were detected from 2,883 samples in 24 hours till yesterday, said sources in Chattogram Civil Surgeon office. A total of 12 patients died during the period.

The situation was much better even in June.

According to officials of Chattogram Civil Surgeon office, a total of 5,259 patients were detected in June, while the number increased by fourfold in July, with 23,235 detected infections, the highest number in Chattogram since the onset of the pandemic.

The same scenario was observed regarding deaths. A total of 79 patients died in June, while 261 died in July.

A total of 92,679 patients tested positive for Covid-19 and 1,094 patients died till yesterday, said Dr Sheikh Fazle Rabbi, civil surgeon of

Chattogram.

Contacted, Prof Sujat Paul, head of medicine and Covid-19 ward of CMCH, said the ward has 300 beds, but the number of patients was 330 yesterday.

"As a government hospital, we cannot refuse any patient, and so, we have to accommodate them on the floor," he said. "None of the 10 ICU beds was vacant. We had extended the ward to accommodate 300 beds from 200, but now, that too is insufficient."

Contacted, Dr Abdur Rob, a senior consultant of medicine and head of Covid-19 ward at CGH, said patients outnumbered beds in the ward.

"We have added 15 beds this week to cope with the increasing number of patients, but now, the 185-bed ward seems to be insufficient," he said. "Another 60-bed unit of the ward has been opened at Holy Crescent Hospital, but that too is almost occupied."

Dr Rob said all 18 beds of CGH's ICU were filled up.

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Lower courts reopen after four months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After more than four months, regular functions of lower courts across the country have resumed yesterday.

Under the directive of Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, Supreme Court Registrar General Md Ali Akbar issued a notification to this effect yesterday.

The subordinate courts and tribunals can fulfill their judicial activities both physically and virtually, as they deem fit, according to the notice.

The courts will begin operations while maintaining physical distance and other health guidelines, the notice said. Judges and magistrates concerned will take necessary steps to this effect after consulting with presidents and secretaries of district bar associations.

The subordinate courts' regular functions remained suspended since April 5 due to the recent surge of Covid-19 infections, but they were allowed to run judicial activities at a limited scale.

Meanwhile, all 53 benches of the High Court began their judicial functions through virtual systems yesterday, while the Appellate Division has been discharging theirs using information technology since August 8.

Two cases filed for slander of persons with disabilities

Top management of Channel i accused

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Two cases were filed yesterday against 11 people, including Channel i Managing Director Faridur Reza Sagar and Director and Head of News Shykh Seraj, under the Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act.

Bashir-Al-Hossain (45) a physically challenged person from Gazipur, filed the cases with the court of Dhaka's Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Tofazzal Hossain.

Parvez Sumon, bench assistant of the concerned court, shared the information with The Daily Star.

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Workers at Barishal River Port were busy cleaning Dhaka-bound launches with jets of water since yesterday morning, as the lockdown was lifted -- allowing all public transport to resume operations.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Address migrant workers' wage theft claims: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a webinar yesterday urged the government to address migrant workers' wage theft claims at regional forums as well as during bilateral meetings with host countries.

Besides, the issue of wage theft can be addressed before the host countries via international and UN agencies working on migration, they said.

Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants (BCSM), and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) jointly organised the webinar which saw the national launch of the study report "Addressing Systemic Challenges of Wage Theft: Bangladesh Covid-19 Returnees from the Gulf States".

Surveyed by BCSM member organisations with support from Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), the report was earlier shared regionally at a webinar on July 18.

According to its findings, 1,160 Bangladeshi migrant workers who have returned home from six Gulf countries after February 2020 have lost on an

average about Tk 1.8 lakh in wage and other entitlements amid the pandemic.

Of the returnees, 67.7 percent said they did not receive due wages regularly after February, 2020, says the report.

The highest amount of loss a returnee migrant incurred was \$7,063 and the lowest \$35, it says.

Seven BCSM member organisations, including RMMRU, conducted the survey in 45 districts between March 25 and May 6 this year.

The Bangladeshi migrants, 14.7 percent of whom are female, returned from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait.

Addressing the webinar, BCSM Chair and RMMRU Executive Director Prof CR Abrar said the government needs to come forward to address migrant workers' wage theft claims.

He said, if necessary, the government can collaborate with the civil society groups in this regard.

Nurul Islam, former director of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, said the issue of migrant workers' wage

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