

# WATCH YOUR STEP!

Road 800m, lidless manholes 10, woes manifold

RAFIUL ISLAM

Maneuvering through the 800-stretch of a connecting road in South Matual is tantamount to partaking in extreme sports, with danger lurking every few steps.

In just this short part of the small but busy road, locally known as “College Road”, at least 10 manholes are missing lids or have had their covers damaged.

As authorities continue to turn a blind eye, accidents have become rampant on the road, causing severe injuries commuters, locals alleged.

“One or two accidents per day is the norm here,” said Mozammel Haque, owner of a grocery shop in the area. With his shop located beside one such lidless manhole, he has become an involuntary observer of the debacle.

“The manholes are right down the middle of the road. Bikers and passengers of auto-rickshaws are the biggest victims,” he told The Daily Star recently.

Contacted, local representatives of Dhaka South City Corporation spun a different tale. They said they regularly visit the place and replace the damaged covers, but find them damaged again soon.

Beyond falling into the manholes, locals said accidents also occur on the road when commuters suddenly notice the holes and take sharp turns trying to avoid them, causing chaos on the road.

Another shop owner of the area recalled a recent incident. Two bikers skidded off the road when the vehicle’s front wheel got stuck in one of the pits. One of them sustained severe head injuries.

The risk escalates at night. “I narrowly escaped harrowing

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# Scorched lives not anymore

Drik pays homage to Hashem Foods Factory fire victims



PHOTO: STAR

NAHALY NAFISA KHAN

On the second floor gallery of the Drik Path Bhaban at Panthapath, texts are displayed on a curving wall to the left, beside a list of industrial tragedies that took place over the last two decades. The wall leads to a corridor with a photograph of a giant, burnt lock capturing the spectator’s attention right away.

This photograph, taken by Shahidul Alam, portrays the narrative of the workers dying inside the locked floor of the Hashem Foods Factory in Narayanganj, due to the authority’s negligence.

This was the sight at a mixed media exhibition titled “Scorched Lives at Hashem Foods”, paying homage to the victims of the Hashem Foods Factory fire, recently organised by media house Drik.

The exhibition was inaugurated on September 4, 2021, commemorating the 32nd founding anniversary of Drik.

On July 8 this year, a fire broke out at the Hashem Foods Factory, killing more than 50 workers working in the seven-story factory

building in Rugganj.

“Drik has been running a series titled ‘Aar Na’ (Not Anymore) in response to different industrial disasters that took place over the last 10-12 years. This exhibition is a continuation of that series,” said eminent photographer and founder of Drik, Shahidul Alam, during the opening ceremony.

“We focus on such incidents to voice our demand that these incidents do not happen ever again.”

The exhibition is displaying 36 photographs by Shahidul Alam, Parvez Ahmed Rony, Suman Paul and Istiak Karim, who worked on the site of the disaster.

In addition to the photographs, there is also an installation, a cage serving as a replica of the industrial fire, accompanied by audio-visual elements, which include a video of the burning establishment and two heart-wrenching soundtracks of crackling flames and crying victims pleading for rescue.

The exhibition is open for spectators provided they follow the Covid-19 safety guidelines until September 20, from 3pm to 8pm.

# Govt to build 3,040 flats for cleaners

PM tells Ecne meeting not to take rent from conservancy workers

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed not to take rents from the conservancy workers against the proposed residential flats the government is going to build for them.



The government decided to construct some 3,040 residential flats for the conservancy workers of 66 pourashobhas (municipalities).

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) yesterday approved a project in this regard involving Tk 1,142.27 crore.

The duration of implementing the project is between January 2021 and December 2024.

At a press briefing following the Ecne meeting, Planning Minister MA Mannan said the prime minister urged for not taking rents from the conservancy workers for those flats the way rents are taken from the government staff.

State Minister for Planning Shamsul Alam informed the briefing that the officials of the local government ministry at the meeting said there would be some monthly maintenance expenses after those flats would be handed over.

Though the prime minister was initially fully against realising any money from the cleaning workers, but following the

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# Guile, greed and bloated bank accounts

Three arrested for duping people of over Tk 10cr

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Sohidul Islam is a mason by profession, who works on various contractual jobs at construction sites.

From March 15 last year to August 28 of this year, one of his bank accounts showed that he had a transaction of around Tk 2.37 crore.

Sohidul has five accounts in three banks and the total transaction of these accounts in last one year is around 5.27 crore.

Similarly, Sajib Ahmed is an egg trader. He maintains around 21 accounts in different banks, which show a transaction of around Tk 3.02 crore in one year.

And finally, Sharif Hossain, an auto-rickshaw driver, has around 31 bank accounts and in the last three to four months, he made a transaction of around Tk 50 lakh.

Now the question arises, given their professions, how did they manage to tuck away that much money in so many bank accounts?

Turns out, both Sajib and Sharif were actually working for a woman named Morzina Akhter. She used to pay them Tk 1,500 each as commission for a transaction of Tk one lakh each time.

And Sohidul was their leader.

This ring was collecting this huge amount of money through cheating people across the country.

Police’s detective branch (Gulshan Division) came up with the information following the arrest of Sajib, Sharif and Morzina from different areas of the capital on September 3.

Sohidul is on the run.

Detectives also seized around 47 cheque books, ATM cards and details of 70 bank

accounts from their possession, Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (Gulshan division), told The Daily Star recently.

This newspaper also has copies of their bank accounts, which show the transactions.

Investigators said to trap people, they first became friends with various professionals on social media identifying themselves as foreign nationals.

Then they used to send them “expensive gifts” from abroad, which, according to them, used to “get stuck” at the customs.

Afterwards, a syndicate member, identifying him or her as a customs officials called the target and asked to pay a fee to release the gift package from the customs warehouse. That person also used to give the victim an account number to deposit the money.

Abul Bashar, a victim from Jhenidah, told law enforcers that he had deposited around Tk 3 lakh to different bank accounts given by the syndicate.

DC Mashiur Rahman said the syndicate have deceived around 100 people so far.

“The gang also forged documents to send to the victims. They used to communicate with each other through video calls using online applications,” he said.

Mashiur further said bank officials need to be more vigilant. “How can a mason or egg trader have transaction of over crores of taka? They should have monitored that or questioned about it.”

Contacted, Abu Hena Md Razi Hasan, head of Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), told The Daily Star yesterday that it is the responsibility of the banks concerned to inform us if a suspicious transaction is found in any account, so that

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# Covishield to be delivered when ‘situation improves’

Says info minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, who is visiting India -- ahead of his proposed meetings with Indian foreign, and information and broadcasting ministers -- has said that New Delhi assured Dhaka of more deliveries of Covid-19 vaccines “when the situation further improves here [in India].”

“The Indian government has assured us that they would provide vaccines that are in the contract... when their situation improves,” he told reporters in the Indian capital on Monday.

Hasan Mahmud, who inaugurated the Bangabandhu Media Centre at the Press Club of India (PCI) on Monday, said Indian authority

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The port city's hunger for good, juicy palm fruit is met all the way from Gazipur. Every day during peak season, a huge supply of the popular fruit reaches the city on trucks that carry up to 3,000-4,000 units. Depending on size and quality, they are sold for Tk 5 to Tk 60. This photo was taken recently from Station Road area.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

# ‘Remove us from red-listed countries’

Momen asks UK foreign secretary

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has requested London to remove Bangladesh from its red-listed Covid-19 countries, which will allow stranded British Bangladeshis to go back to the UK.



Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen made the request during a virtual meeting with British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab on Monday, according to a statement from the Bangladesh High Commission to the UK.

The foreign minister said given Bangladesh’s robust vaccine roll-out and as the Covid-19 infection rate significantly declined to 9.82 percent, the UK should consider removing Bangladesh from its red list, the statement added.

Momen held the meeting virtually from the Netherlands, as the scheduled meeting on September 2 was postponed, as the UK secretary had to travel to Doha for an emergency meeting on Afghanistan.

Dominic Raad said Britain does politically appreciate the overall pressure on the government regarding red-listing and remains well aware of decreasing Covid-19 infections in Bangladesh.

However, such decisions are reviewed by public health experts on a regular basis, he added.

He said given the long-standing friendship between the two countries, and as more frequent genomic sequencing data is uploaded by Bangladesh, the British government will review Bangladesh’s inclusion in the red list.

Among others, Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Saida Muna Tasneem participated in the meeting, said the statement.