



Standing amid a storm of dust and sound all day, traffic constables develop a host of chronic illnesses, including difficulty to sleep. The photo was taken yesterday from Bijay Sarani.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## CONSTABLES can't seem to catch a break

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Six months ago, 52-year-old constable Md Iqbal started working in the traffic department of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

In this short period, he has already developed knee pain, back pain and hearing problem. His muscle pain is so severe that he hasn't been able to get a good night's sleep.

Talking to this correspondent at the Farkirkopool intersection, Iqbal said he doesn't get an opportunity to sit for a single moment during his eight-hour-long duty.

"I've developed this constant ringing sound in my ears. I can't watch TV or hear what people are saying unless they speak to me loudly," he complained.

In mid-September, Iqbal visited the Central Police Hospital, where doctors prescribed him a month's medicine, including calcium for his knee and back pain.

Traffic constable Khalilur Rahman, stationed at Chankharpool intersection, said he has been suffering from breathing problems for a long time.

"It's difficult for me to keep my face mask

on for long periods, but I don't have an option to remove it, as the area is very dusty. Recently, I've started to develop chest pain as well," said Khalilur, who has been working at the traffic department of DMP since 2017.

Iqbal and Khalilur are not the only traffic police to be suffering from chronic illnesses.

According to a recent study, 84 percent of Dhaka traffic police officers are suffering from respiratory diseases, while 64 percent have lost their hearing ability. Most of these illnesses are caused or aggravated by air and noise pollution.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## MORE NEWS

### Student killed in Munshiganj road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A school student was killed as a bus hit him on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Gazaria upazila of Munshiganj yesterday.

The deceased -- Md Redwan Shaheen (13) -- was a class VI student of Bhaterchar DA Mannan Pilot High School, said police.

The accident happened around 9:30am while Redwan was crossing the road in Anarpura area.

Redwan was declared dead at Gazaria Upazila Health Complex.

### Transgender people to get vaccines tomorrow in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Transgender people in Chattogram will receive Covid-19 vaccines at the civil surgeon office tomorrow. They will be administered the AstraZeneca jabs, said Civil Surgeon Dr Elias Chowdhury.

"We have a list of 550 transgender people who will receive the vaccines," he told The Daily Star yesterday.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bangladesh Poribesh Bachao Andolon and many other organisations formed a human chain in front of the national museum in Dhaka yesterday, demanding a stop to passengers' suffering, adequate number of public transport vehicles and punishment for those behind bus fare hike.



From risks of accidents to skin diseases, residents of Ujir Ali Shah Lane are facing major problems due to waterlogging caused by CDA's embankment.

## Brahmaputra dying a slow death

Years of grabbing, mismanagement left the 'lifeline of Mymensingh' at mercy of time

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

For the longest river in the country, the Brahmaputra is in quite the awful state. Years of rampant river grabbing and sand lifting has put its existence in such a crisis that even its tributaries are in danger today.

The 283-kilometre river stretches all the way from Jamalpur's Dewanganj to Bhairab in Kishoreganj. Historically, it has kept innumerable smaller rivers along its passage alive.

But with Brahmaputra's natural flow severely affected, it remains to be seen what the future holds for all water bodies in the region, and consequently, its people as well.

According to Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) sources, there are some 47 rivers, small and large, in

Mymensingh region, though many of them have ceased to resemble rivers and look more like canals now.

Of the rivers, Sutia, Shila, Banar, Khiru, Laithi, Norosunda, Kanchamatia, Aymon, Jhenai, Rangsa, Arial Khan, and more depend on the natural flow of the Brahmaputra. But with the river's flow drying up, all of these smaller rivers are losing their navigability.

There was once a time when the Brahmaputra was 12-14 kilometres wide across different points. Today, it has come down to merely 100 to 200 metres, said Nurul Amin Kalam, secretary of Mymensingh Zila Nagorik Andolion, a local citizens' body.

He identifies a six-kilometre char at the upper basin of Brahmaputra at Dewanganj

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Along with river grabbing and sand lifting, Brahmaputra is also subjected to indiscriminate garbage dumping.

PHOTO: STAR

## Debacle over Ducsu

Student leaders criticise VC for his stance on holding elections

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Sincere support from "all quarters" is required to hold the next Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducsu) polls, university Vice Chancellor Prof M Akhtaruzzaman said yesterday.

However, his statement has come under fire from ex-Ducsu members and leaders of different student organisations. Talking to this newspaper, they said since DU is an autonomous institution, the administration can hold the polls anytime, as long as it's in line with the Ducsu constitution.

Addressing a press conference on the campus, VC Akhtaruzzaman said, "Sincere support from 'all quarters' is required for the Ducsu polls, along with strengthening the culture of exercising democratic values [at the campus]."

"This is a massive task for all of us. To achieve it, there should be sincerity and commitment from all," he added.

The press conference was held at the campus to brief the media about DU's preparations for the upcoming celebrations of the university's

After 28 years, Ducsu's latest polls was held on March 11, 2019. The tenure of that committee ended on June 23 last year. However, the next election is yet to be held.

birth centenary and the country's golden jubilee of independence, starting from December 1.

Talking to this correspondent later, the VC said by "all quarters" he referred to everyone, including the country's political parties.

After 28 years, Ducsu's latest polls was held on March 11, 2019. The tenure of that committee ended on June 23 last year. However, the next election is yet to be held.

Meanwhile, criticising the VC's remarks, student leaders said they don't want any excuses when it comes to the polls.

They said while it's understandable that the election was not held on time during the pandemic, now that the situation has improved, there's no reason for the delay in holding it.

They added that they have raised the issue several times but the university administration didn't take effective steps in this regard.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nurul Haque, vice-president of the immediate-past Ducsu, said DU is an autonomous institution. If the administration really wanted to hold the polls, it could hold it anytime.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Photography exhibition launched in Dhaka

Marking 70 years of British Council's operations in Bangladesh



British Council Chairperson Stevie Spring CBE, State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khaled, noted actor and cultural activist Sara Zaker, Board of Trustees of Liberation War Museum, and senior officials of the British Council visited the photo exhibition at the museum yesterday.

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A photography exhibition with rare photos -- "UK 1971: People's Solidarity with Bangladesh's Liberation" -- was launched yesterday, marking the 70 years of British Council's operations in Bangladesh and the country's golden jubilee of independence.

The exhibition at the Liberation War Museum in Dhaka displays 40 photographs, highlighting the public movement in the UK, in support of the war. From Nottingham to Birmingham to London, this archival collection documents Bengali diaspora as they raised their voices in

## 3 sisters who fled home handed over to grandmother

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three teenage sisters who fled from their aunt's house Dhaka's Adabor, have been handed over to their paternal grandmother.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Nirvana Koiri Jesi made the decision, after the three were produced before a Dhaka court yesterday, Mritunjay Dey Sajal, additional deputy commissioner (Mohammadpur) of Tejgaon Division Police, told The Daily Star.

After rescuing the three girls from Jashore, Tejgaon Division Deputy Police Commissioner Biplob Kumar Sarkar said the sisters had gone to their father's home in the district.

They decided to leave their aunt's house without informing anyone, as they were discontented there and were not allowed to communicate with their father, the official said at a press conference at his office yesterday.

The sisters, aged between 15 and 18, had been living with two of their aunts, after their mother died of cancer in 2013, he said.

In 2012, their parents got separated, the official added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



With infection rates going down, children have been going out and about more often, after spending too many days within the vicinity of their own homes. As yesterday marked World Children's Day, here's to hoping for a better world for their future -- a hope that rings particularly urgent after the reality check of the Covid pandemic. This photo was taken from Sylhet's Tilagar area.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR