



Gridlocks are no stranger to port city residents. But as development works are ongoing in different parts of the city, many roads have either become narrow or almost unusable. And city dwellers are worrying that Ramadan may exacerbate the situation. This photo was taken in Dewanhat Circle area.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Port city fearing Ramadan traffic

Dev work, bad road conditions raising worries of congestion

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, *Ctg*

City dwellers of Chattogram are fearing massive traffic congestion during Ramadan, due to ongoing development projects and the sorry state of roads.

To take measures for the potential problem, a coordination meeting on traffic management was held at Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) Headquarters on March 27, where several decisions were taken.

The primary and mass education ministry has decided to continue academic activities till 20th of Ramadan between 9:30am and 3:00pm.

Besides, the education ministry has decided to continue classroom activities till April 26, to cover learning losses due to Covid-19.

Chattogram Development Authority has been building the 16.5 kilometre elevated expressway from Lalkhan Bazar to Airport Road.

After construction started, roads have become narrow in some of the busiest areas. Dust and traffic congestion are causing serious sufferings for commuters.

Meanwhile, Chattogram Wasa has been installing pipelines across the city by digging and cutting roads, including some key intersections. Different roads and areas -- including Agrabad, EPZ, Customs, Lalkhan Bazar, Arakan Road, and Kalurghat -- are now in sorry state.

Traffic police also expressed their concerns, as the situation would worsen during rush time in Ramadan.

CMP Traffic North Zone Deputy Commissioner Joynul Abedin Tito said, "We have talked with school,

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Affordable drinking water for all

Water ATM opens in Rajshahi city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

A new water ATM system was inaugurated in Rajshahi city yesterday to provide drinking water at a low price and address the city dwellers' problem of accessing drinking water.

Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton inaugurated the system at Shahmakhdum Dargah point. Water ATM booths have also been installed in Laxmipur, Martyred Qamaruzzaman Zoo and Bahrapur intersections.

A booth will supply 20,000 litres of water from 8:00am-8:00pm each day.

Under the service, one litre of water will cost Tk 0.80 and 62 litres will be available at Tk 50.

RCC will expand the network of water ATMs to ward level depending on the pilot's success, said the mayor. There would be an operator at each booth who would distribute ATM cards to residents. An ATM card will cost Tk 50 and 62 litres of water would be available at every recharge of Tk 50.

ICLEI, a global network of local governments, has been implementing the project, said Abdullah Al-Kafy, project officer of ICLEI South Asia.

He said German development agency GIZ is funding the Tk 95 lakh project.

Depot to be built on mosque, graveyard land

Railway authorities, staffers face-off as site contains graves of employees, family members

SIFAYET ULLAH, *Ctg*

Railway authorities have leased out 21.29 acres of land to a private company for building an Inland Container Depot (ICD) in port city's Halishahar Chattogram Goods Port Yard (CGPY) area. However, the land was already home to an old graveyard and mosque, which the railway was well aware of before deciding to lease it out.

Moreover, the burial site hosts graves of railway staffers and their family members, which is why its leasing has triggered discontent among the staffers.

Of the 21.29 acres, the graveyard takes up around 0.6250 acres of land, while the mosque is on around 0.3425 acres. There's also an old shrine at the spot.

Known as "Bangladesh Railway CGPY Graveyard", the near 30-year-old site has around 450 graves. Apart from these, there are three water bodies on the land as well.

Agitated by the decision, railway employees have already submitted a letter to higher authorities, going as far as submitting a memorandum to Minister Nurul Islam Sujon during his visit to the project area in February.

Now, a tense situation prevails in the area, as the construction company is conducting a soil test inside the graveyard.

According to railway sources, an agreement to build a container depot



on the land was inked between Container Company Bangladesh Limited (CCBL), a concern of Bangladesh Railway, and Saif Powertec on October 19 last year.

As per the agreement, E-Engineering Ltd JV has started to develop the spot by dumping soil.

According to the Acquisition and Requisition of Immovable Property Ordinance Bill 2017, "Land used as a religious spot for worshipping and graveyards or crematoriums cannot be acquired. However, such properties can be acquired for the sake of public interest through reconstructing or transferring the establishments at the cost of the person or

organisation who wants the land."

Abdul Malek, yard master of CGPY, told The Daily Star, "We are not opposing the ICD terminal, but we've demanded to exclude the graveyard, the shrine and mosque from the agreement. The staffers are worried about the fate of the burial place of their dear ones."

Malek is also president of CGPY graveyard committee, which took charge last year.

Meanwhile, Central Railway Building (CRB) sources confirmed that the graveyard and mosque land are mentioned in the deed between Saif Powertec and BR.

The origins of the graveyard can be traced back to 1995, when Chattogram port authorities refused to bury a railway employee at the port graveyard on the ground that he's an "outsider".

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Students, teachers protest attack on college principal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

The students and teachers of Abdul Karim Mridha College in Patuakhali town yesterday protested a recent attack on its acting principal ANM Saifuddin Shahin.

From the college campus, the demonstrators brought out a procession that marched different roads and ended in front of Patuakhali Press Club.

They also held a meeting on the spot. College students Al Amin, Tanvir Hossain Naeem, Maria Akhter and Sabiha Akhter, among others, spoke.

On March 31, around four to five people -- including college committee member Abdul Gaffar Mridha -- entered the principal's room and attacked Saifuddin, who is also social affairs secretary of the central committee of Swadhinata Shikkhak Parishad, over internal issue, campus sources said.

During the attack, they punched, kicked, stabbed and slapped Saifuddin. The attackers later took Tk 1.5 lakh in cash and various government documents from his drawer and threatened to kill him. He filed a case with Sadar Police Station over the incident the next day.

Nazmul Alam, secretary of the College Teachers' Council; and Swapan Kumar Khaskel, assistant secretary general of the district Swadhinata teachers' council, strongly condemned the attack, and demanded arrest of the culprits and exemplary punishment for them.

This correspondent tried to contact Mridha but found his cellphone switched-off.

OC Moniruzzaman of Sadar Police Station said they were trying to arrest the accused.

Slow decline of 100-yr-old craft

Barishal's 'tal pakha' artisans yet to recover from pandemic lows

SUSHANTA GHOSH, *Barishal*

There's a small neighbourhood around 10 kilometres away from Barishal city, which is popularly known as "Tal pakha village".

For around a hundred years, six families under Wazirpur upazila's Morakathi area have been dedicated to this craft, with the demand for these palm fans spreading beyond Barishal due to its traditional artistic value.

But with time, the demand has started to subside, owing to lack of fairs and most households having access to electricity.

Sultan Hawladar, a palm fan artisan of the village, said their sales have halved



PHOTO: TITU DAS

during the pandemic, whereas before, they used to earn Tk 1,000 per day.

He cited one major reason: the suspension of Pahela Baishakh fairs -- the biggest source of their revenue -- for the last two years. What's worse, the same is fated for this year as well.

Hanufa Begum, another artisan from the village, said she has been weaving palm fans since she came to the village as a bride 30 years ago, after learning the craft from her mother-in-law.

Villager Aynal Haque Hawladar said even though the demand for these fans has declined and palm trees have decreased, at least

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INTO THE WILD... Nineteen endangered Himalayan vultures were rescued and released in Singra forest from the Vulture Conservation Centre in Dinajpur yesterday. These avians are facing extinction due to deforestation. As a result, they often swoop to surrounding localities in search of food, and get caught by locals. Before releasing them, a numbered tag was attached to their wings for tracking.

PHOTO: STAR

Shipbreaking workers place 12-point demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ship-breaking Workers Trade Union Forum (SWTUF) yesterday placed a 12-point demand including at least Tk 10 lakh compensation to the families of workers killed in workplace accidents.

They placed the demand at a press conference at Chattogram Press Club in the port city.

Tapan Dutta, convener of the forum, spoke on behalf of the organisation at the press conference.

Their other demands include ensuring safety of workers, modernising all yards, making the ships toxic waste free before salvaging them and implementing the wage board announced in 2018 for workers.