



Proudly wearing teep on their foreheads, a group of women form a human chain yesterday, protesting the harassment of a teacher allegedly by a police official on Saturday. This photo was taken in Shahbagh area.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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HARASSMENT OF TEACHER Police yet to identify the 'cop' Outrage all around; arrest of harasser demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police could not yet identify the "cop in uniform" who harassed and hurled abuse at a female teacher of Tejgaon College after seeing a "teep" on her forehead while she was going to the campus on Saturday morning.

Multiple teams of police are working to identify the man, Biplob Kumar Sarkar, deputy commissioner (Tejgaon division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star yesterday. "The woman mentioned six digits of the motorbike. Based on that, we identified two motorbikes in the Dhaka Metro series -- L and H," he said.

One of them said, his motorbike with the "L" series got stolen in 2016 in Gulshan when he went there for visa-related work. He also filed a general diary with Gulshan Police Station.

The "H" series motorcycle is registered to an individual in Mirpur. When police went to the address, they found that he had moved nearly three months ago. The landlord told the police that he was not a cop.

The Tejgaon DC said they are also looking into motorbikes, registered outside of Dhaka.

He said they were collecting CCTV footage of all streets leading away from the place of occurrence. It was seen that the accused went towards Bangla Motor.

In a general diary filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, Lata Samaddar, a lecturer of theatre and media studies at Tejgaon College, said the incident took place in front of Shezan Point shopping mall around 8:30am.

Momen- Blinken talk today

DIPLOMATIC
CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet today, marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relationship between the two countries.

The meeting, scheduled at Blinken's office in Washington at 1:00pm Washington time (11:00pm Dhaka time), will entail all aspects of bilateral relationship and discuss how the countries will take forward the relationship in the next 50 years.

The historic meeting at the invitation of Blinken comes at a time when the bilateral relations witnessed some strains following the US sanctions on Rab and seven of its current and past officials for human rights violations.

Dhaka was also frustrated when the Biden administration did not invite Bangladesh to the Democracy Summit late last year.

It also comes two weeks after the US-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue between US Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin

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999 IS NOT A JOKE

National hotline facing barrage of prank and irrelevant calls, creating obstacles to service delivery



- From its inception on Dec 10, 2017 to Jan 31 this year, hotline received over 3.53cr calls
- 67.44pc calls either blank calls, prank calls, missed calls, test calls or repeat calls
- Prank calls create system congestion, deprive those who need service
- Job more stressful for female operators
- Lack of awareness among people about service's sensitivity



SHARIFUL ISLAM

Sitting at his desk with headphones on, helpline (999) operator Anik Sen heard the cry of a baby right after he pressed the receive button to attend a distress call.

"Someone might be in danger," he thought immediately, but his concern faded when he heard a woman on the other side asking the baby to stop crying and talk over the phone.

Flabbergasted, Anik asked the reason for the call. "I made the call to calm my baby down," she replied, rather nonchalantly.

As shocking as this may be, this was no isolated incident, as operators of the hotline face calls like this every day. They termed this one of the biggest impediments to providing support to people in actual distress.

Around 67.44 percent of the calls made

from December 2017 till January this year were either blank calls, prank calls, missed calls, test calls or repeat calls, according to National Helpline Centre sources.

For female operators at the helpline centre, the job is even more stressful. "A few days back, as soon as I received a call, the caller said 'Apu, I want to marry you' and started laughing..." said Tasnia Akhter, a female operator at 999.

Sometimes the callers even hurl abusive words at us, she added.

The two first respondents at the helpline desk -- an integrated service of police, fire and ambulance -- said the high number of such "prank calls" creates unnecessary congestion in the system and ultimately deprives the ones who really need the service.

They said adolescents are the biggest abusers of the service. "Sometimes, teenagers call and say there

is a fire incident somewhere, which later turns out to be a hoax. To make things worse, sometimes they'll keep calling, seven to eight times within a few minutes, blocking the lines," said Tasnia.

Officials at the centre said they received around 1.64 lakh calls made by adolescents in 2020, which rose to 2.35 lakh last year.

They blamed the lack of awareness among people about the sensitivity of the service.

Many people even call the hotline to complain about the price hike of essentials, for information about Covid-19 vaccines and seeking help for a problem with their mobile phones, said officials at the emergency service centre.

Last year, a law was enacted to take legal action against abusers of this kind through mobile courts, but no one has been punished yet.

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Coming back to life After a 2-year halt, Chawkbazar iftar scene abuzz once again

HELEMUL ALAM

Anik Mridha, a resident of Uttara came to Chawkbazar around 2:00pm yesterday to purchase his favourite iftar item "Boro Baper Polay Khay".

Though he used to come to Chawkbazar every year to purchase Boro Baper Polay Khay since 2012, the last two years have been an exception due to the pandemic.

"This is a very special item which I can't get in other areas. I've come to purchase it here along with my father like I did every year before the pandemic," said Zara, a resident of Malibagh Chowdhurypara, a college student.

The several hundred years old Chawkbazar iftar market, the largest in the capital, not only attracts Dhaka residents but also people from all over the country.

Almost 100 makeshift shops have been set up at Chawkbazar this year which sell items prepared with meat, vegetables, sweets, milk and other ingredients.

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Conduct survey on mosquito density at Dhaka airport: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned to conduct a survey on the density of mosquito and larva in the capital's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport area.

The court also ordered the chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) to submit a report on this issue by June 8.

The bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil passed the order during hearing a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Tanvir Ahmed in March 2019, seeking its directive on the officials concerned to take steps for tackling the mosquito menace in the airport area.

During the hearing, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh lawyer submitted a report on the survey of 2019 to the HC.

Petitioner Tanvir told the court that the CAAB has not conducted any survey on the density of mosquito in the airport area for the last three years.

Following the same petition, the HC on March 12, 2019 issued a rule asking the officials to explain why their inaction to eradicate mosquitoes at the airport and its surrounding area should not be declared illegal.

Secretary to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation and ward councillors concerned were made respondents to the rule.

Deputy Attorney General Tushar Kanti Roy represented the state during the virtual hearing of the petition yesterday.

Who damaged Novera's sculpture?

Probe report submitted in 2020, but no action taken against those who ruined famous work of art

TARUN SARKAR

More than three years have passed since a prominent sculpture by renowned sculptor Novera Ahmed was damaged inside Bangladesh National Museum. But even though so much time has passed, perpetrators behind the incident are yet to be brought under law.

Protesting the government's inaction, members of a conservation committee tasked with preserving Novera's sculptures have kept their works suspended ever since.

Amid such a situation, voices of Novera's admirers are getting louder, demanding immediate steps from the government to end the deadlock.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Considered one of the first modernist sculptors of the country, Novera Ahmed has 43 of her creations preserved at Bangladesh National Museum. Of them, 41 are quite old.

With an aim to conserve these sculptures, authorities of the museum formed a four-member conservation committee in 2015, with Prof Lala Rukh Selim of Dhaka University's Department of Sculpture at the helm.

The same year, the committee got

going with the project and completed works for 35 sculptures by 2018.

"The remaining six sculptures are quite large in size, with multiple cracks on them that developed over the years," said committee member Nasimul Khabir, assistant professor of the department.

"We thought the cracks might intensify if we conduct the works under the open sky," he said, adding that this is why they were taken to the museum's

conservation laboratory.

"Temperature must be kept at a certain level to work on sculptures like this. But one day in June, 2018, the air conditioner of the laboratory suddenly went out of order," said Nasimul.

"Despite repeated requests, the museum authorities did not repair it, and we refused to work in the absence of air conditioners," he informed.

A few months later, committee members went to the laboratory and found out one particular sculpture -- named Poribar -- was distorted and damaged, as someone or a group conducted unsanctioned conservation work on the important piece.

Previously known as "Cow and Two Figures", the sculpture is a significant creation in the history of the country's modernist sculpting, Nasimul said.

"We don't know who did it. It was done without consent from the conservation committee, and we've decided to suspend our work ever since. We demand punishment of those involved, and we will not resume our work until this is done," said committee head Lala Rukh.

"If the perpetrators are spared, they

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