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GRIDLOCK ON DHAKA-NABINAGAR HIGHWAY

Errant bus drivers to blame

They avoid using bays, service lanes built under Tk 696cr project

TUHIN SHUBRA ADHIKARY

The government's move to ensure uninterrupted traffic movement on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway is facing a setback as drivers are not using the designated bus bays and service lanes built under a Tk 696 crore project.

To pick up and drop off passengers, buses continue to stop at will on the main road's Dhaka-Nabinagar portion, causing frequent traffic congestion.

Congestion is also seen on a regular basis near markets and garment factories along the busy highway.

The situation turns terrible in areas, including Hemayetpur, Savar, Radio Colony, C&B Bus Stand, and Nabinagar, during rush hours in the morning and evening on all weekdays.

In the meantime, people using the highway suffer immensely.

Siddiqur Rahman, a private job holder, told The Daily Star that the congestion turns horrific on Thursday, before the start of the weekend.

"It took around one and a half hours just to cross a one-kilometre distance near Hemayetpur," he said, adding that he was returning to Dhaka from Savar last week.

A Jahangirnagar University teacher, who frequently travels between Dhaka and the JU campus, also said the journey becomes nightmarish, especially on Thursdays.

"It is mainly because a huge number of people leave Dhaka for their village home for the weekends," said the teacher.

Asked, Roads and Highways Department officials said it was the duty of the police and the local administration to ensure that buses use the bays to stop.

Highway Police said to act, they were waiting for the project to end.

THE PROJECT

In January 2019, the RHD took up the project to build dedicated service lanes and bus bays at all major bus stops and market areas from Gabtoli to Paturia Ferry Terminal.

The highway stretching from Gabtoli to Nabinagar is four-lane while from Nabinagar to Paturia it is two-lane.

The project's aim is to ensure non-stop traffic flow on the highway. Slow vehicles are supposed to use the service lanes.

The physical work began in 2020. More than half the work is already over. Necessary structures have already been built at most bus stops and market areas on the Dhaka-Nabinagar portion.

Visiting the highway on Tuesday, this correspondent saw buses were not using the bays. Rather, they were picking up and dropping off passengers right on the road.

Also, after the end of their work, thousands of RMG workers came out of factories at places and crossed the road together.

These led to terrible traffic jams in the areas.

Near the Hemayetpur bus stand, dozens of easy bikes and battery-run rickshaws were parked on the service lane, making it difficult for buses to stop there.

Buses also stopped right on the highway near other stands where there were no easy bikes or battery-run rickshaws, which are banned on highways.

This correspondent saw at least 15 buses of different companies, including Itihash, Thikana, Nijhum, Shuvojatra, Moumita, Nilchal, Bahar, D-Link and Savar

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Traffic builds up behind a bus picking up and dropping off passengers on Dhaka-Aricha highway in the Radio Colony area of Savar. The service lane for buses to stop for passengers remains virtually empty. The government's move to ease traffic jams by building bus bays and service lanes on the highway has so far not had the desired effect because of such actions of bus drivers. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

UKRAINE TRAIN STATION ATTACK

'Russian strike' kills 50

Dozens wounded; civilians race to leave Donbas region

AGENCIES

A rocket attack on a train station in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk killed dozens yesterday, as civilians raced to leave the Donbas region in the crosshairs of the Russian army.

At least 50 people were killed, including five children, and 98 were wounded, said regional governor of Donetsk, Pavlo Kyrylenko, in one of the deadliest strikes of the six-week-old war.

President Volodymyr Zelensky claimed that 300 were injured, saying the strike showed "evil with no limits".

Moscow, however, accused Ukraine of staging Kramatorsk attack.

"The purpose of the Kyiv regime's attack on the railway station in Kramatorsk was to disrupt the mass exit of residents from the city in order to use them as a 'human shield' to defend the positions of Ukraine's armed forces," Russian defence ministry said in a statement.

The ministry claimed that the attack was carried out by Ukraine's forces from the town of Dobropillya, some 45 kilometres southwest of Kramatorsk.

AFP journalists on the scene saw the bodies of

at least 30 people grouped and lying under plastic sheets next to the station, before being loaded onto a military truck.

Blood was pooling on the ground and packed bags were strewn outside the building in the immediate aftermath of the attack.

The remains of a large rocket with the words "for our children" in Russian was lying just adjacent to the main building.

"I'm looking for my husband. He was here. I can't reach him," a woman told AFP, sobbing and holding her phone to her ear.

Suitcases, stuffed animals and bags were scattered around the station and across the platform, interspersed with human remains.

The bombing came as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell headed to Kyiv yesterday in a sign of solidarity with Ukraine.

Meanwhile, near the capital Kyiv, residents and Ukrainian officials returning after a Russian withdrawal from the area were trying to piece together the scale of the devastation.

On Thursday, the EU approved an embargo on Russian coal and the closure of its ports to Russian

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Birds are more colourful near the equator

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



Birds that live near the equator are more colourful than those closer to the poles, a new study suggests.

The findings prove a long-held theory that was first suspected by Charles Darwin and Alexander von Humboldt in the 18th and 19th centuries.

It had remained unproven until now because of the large amount of data and advanced imaging technology needed.

But the study found that tropical birds near the Equator are around 30% more colourful than non-tropical birds that live closer to the north and south poles.

Dr Chris Cooney, lead investigator from the University of Sheffield's school of biosciences, said: "This work reveals the broad pattern that bird species tend to be 30% more colourful towards the equator and identifies some general explanations for why this pattern might occur."

"This is exciting because it helps us to better understand the factors promoting and maintaining biodiversity at global scales."

"However, these broad-scale associations with

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Taijul, Khaled pull things back

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh would be relatively satisfied after the way the visitors staged a brilliant fightback, courtesy of Taijul Islam's three-wicket haul and Khaled Ahmed picking up two, as South Africa ended up 278 for 5 after the first day of the second Test in Gqeberha yesterday.

Taijul, who was among the two changes from the first Test, remained instrumental and caused trouble for the Proteas batters as the left-arm spinner ended up with figures of three from his 32 overs while conceding 72 runs.

Electing to bat first, South Africa batters dominated over the visitors, led by the Proteas skipper Dean Elgar showing stability alongside Sarel Erwee as the opening pair added 52 runs.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



At the Jamdani Saree market in Narayanganj's Rugganj, shopkeepers showing some of their wares to Subarna Rahman Soma, who went there from Uttara to stock up on the traditional attires for her online business early yesterday. The market has returned to life after two years of slow business due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It opens every Thursday from midnight and the jamdanis, ranging from Tk 4,000 to Tk 20,000, are usually sold out within two to three hours.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

HRIDAY MONDAL'S ARREST DU teachers voice concern

Prof Zafar Iqbal demands his immediate release

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Teachers' Association yesterday expressed concerns over the arrest of a maths teacher of a school in Munshiganj.

Hriday Chandra Mondal, assistant teacher of Binodpur Ram Kumar High School, was recently sent to jail on charges of "hurting religious sentiments".

In a statement, signed by Duta President Rahmat Ullah and General Secretary Nizamul Hoque Bhuiyan, the association yesterday demanded that Hriday be released immediately.

"The allegation of defaming Islam against Hriday Chandra Mondal has been framed in a planned manner by a vested quarter," said the statement.

Citing sources, it said in the 21 years Hriday has been teaching at the school, not a single allegation of hurting religious feelings was raised against him.

In recent times, a group of people has been using religious issues to "serve their own interest", said the statement. "This incident could

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5