

## HARASSMENT

# Woman files complaint against 2 cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman has filed a complaint against two police constables accusing them of harassing her on a street in the capital's Banani on Tuesday evening.

Confirming the matter to The Daily Star, DMP Deputy Commissioner (Gulshan Division) Md Asaduzzaman said they were investigating the incident which happened in front of the Banani Sheraton hotel during iftar.

Sadiya A Suchita, a student and a media worker, alleged that two men were ogling her when she and her husband were walking on a road.

"I could feel that they were staring at me unceasingly. Noticing the matter, my husband walked up to them and said, 'Look the other way, else I will gouge your eyes out,'" said Sadiya.

The men were police constables in plainclothes.

"Within two seconds, I saw my husband being picked up and dragged. As I rushed up to them and tried to free him, one of the constables wearing a green tee-shirt pulled my scarf while another in an orange shirt hit me," said Sadiya.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police DC Asaduzzaman said CCTV footage of the incident did not show that the woman's scarf being pulled away. "A scuffle, however, took place."

Photos from the live video showed that constable Akramul Hasan Sikder pulled the woman's scarf.

"I became a little clueless. I had no idea what to do. A man gave me my scarf and I went on Facebook Live," said Sadiya.

She said her husband was beaten up so badly that his shirt was torn.

The woman said the two constables also apologised to her on the spot.

Asked if the constables were suspended, Asaduzzaman said action will be taken after the investigation is over.

This newspaper disclosed the identity of the woman as she was willing to.



A wife and a daughter of one of the four servicemen of the Ukrainian National Guard, who were killed during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, at their funeral in Kyiv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Mariupol can fall within 'hours'

## Says Ukrainian official as warring parties agree humanitarian corridor

AFP, Zaporizhzhia

After nearly two months under siege, the southern city of Mariupol could fall into Russian hands within "hours", a Ukrainian official said, as the two sides yesterday agreed to a humanitarian corridor to allow civilians to flee the devastated port city.

As fighting raged in the country's east and south, the president of the European Council Charles Michel arrived in Kyiv, in the latest sign of strengthening ties between Ukraine and the EU.

"In Kyiv today. In the heart of a free and democratic Europe," he wrote on social media.

Michel's visit comes as the West continues to pour weapons into Ukraine amid a renewed Russian push into the eastern Donbas region where a new offensive launched this week has led to an uptick in fighting.

Hours ahead of Michel's arrival, the Pentagon said that Ukraine had recently received fighter planes and spare parts to bolster its air force, following repeated calls from Kyiv for heavier weapons.

The Pentagon declined to specify the number of aircraft and their origin.

The announcement came as the battle for Mariupol appeared to be nearing a crucial peak, after months of devastating fighting that has seen untold numbers of civilians trapped and killed.

Control of Mariupol and the separatist-controlled Donbas region in the east would

allow Moscow to create a southern corridor to the Crimean peninsula that it annexed in 2014, depriving Ukraine of much of its coastline.

In the latest ultimatum issued in its battle to capture Mariupol, Moscow made another call for the city's defenders to surrender on Wednesday by 2:00 pm Moscow time (1100 GMT) and announced the opening of a humanitarian corridor

**"We appeal and plead to all world leaders to help us. We ask them to use the procedure of extraction and take us to the territory of a third-party state."**

for any Ukrainian troops who agreed to lay down their arms.

As the deadline approached, a commander in the besieged Azovstal steel plant issued a desperate plea for help, saying his marines were "maybe facing our last days, if not hours".

"The enemy is outnumbering us 10 to one," Serhiy Volyna from the 36th Separate Marine Brigade said.

"We appeal and plead to all world leaders to help us. We ask them to use the procedure of extraction and take us to the territory of a third-party state."

Thousands of troops and civilians remain holed up in the plant.

An adviser to the mayor of Mariupol described a "horrible situation" in the encircled complex and reported that up to 2,000 people -- mostly women and children -- are without "normal" supplies of drinking water, food and fresh air.

Offering some respite, Kyiv early yesterday said it had agreed with Russian forces to open a safe route for civilians to flee the devastated city.

"We have managed to get a preliminary agreement on a humanitarian corridor for women, children and elderly persons," Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk wrote on Telegram.

Elsewhere on the frontlines, Ukraine's defence ministry reported its troops had beaten back a Russian attack in the city of Izium, south of the partly blockaded second city of Kharkiv in the east.

Kyiv also claimed enemy losses in a Ukrainian counter-attack near the town of Marinka in Donetsk.

The governor of the eastern Lugansk region, Sergiy Gaiday, said Ukrainian forces were holding their ground in the face of heavy fighting.

Russian forces, meanwhile, yesterday said its forces had launched 73 airstrikes across Ukraine, hitting dozens of locations where troops were concentrated.

In eastern Ukraine's Kramatorsk, a large city in the Donetsk region, residents were already braced for the worst.

"It's going to be a mess," said Alexander, 53. "There's nothing good to expect."

## Allegation against Hriday Mondal false: Probe body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

The allegation raised against Hriday Chandra Mondal that he insulted religion while teaching a class is false, said the probe committee looking into the matter.

Government Harganga College Principal Abdul Hai Talukder, who is the lone member of the committee, submitted its report to Director General Nehal Ahmed of the Department of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, around 5:00pm yesterday.

On April 10, the DSHSE formed the committee and asked it to submit its report within five working days.

In his reaction, Hriday, a teacher of Binodpur Ramkumar High School in Munshiganj Sadar upazila, said, "The investigation has revealed the truth. I am happy with the report. Some teachers who have a feud with me might be involved in the conspiracy against me."

## HC upholds order on banning PUBG, Free Fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday upheld its earlier order that had asked the government to ban some online games and apps, including PUBG and Free Fire.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Khizir Hayat rejected an application filed by Proxima Beta Pte Ltd, a Singaporean PUBG manufacturing company, for vacating its previous order.

Following a writ petition, the HC on August 16 last year directed the government to put a stop to all kinds of destructive online games and apps. The writ said those games and apps were causing children's moral and social degradation.

The court also issued a rule asking the authorities concerned of the government to explain why their inaction to ban online games and apps like Tik Tok, Likee, Bigo Live, PUBG and Free Fire should not be declared illegal.

Lawyer Sameer Sattar appeared for Proxima Beta Pte Ltd, while lawyer and writ petitioner Mohammad Humayun Kabir Pallob opposed the application for vacating the HC order yesterday.

## DGHS reports one more Covid death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate General of Health Services has reported one Covid-related death and 28 fresh cases for 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

With this, the death toll in the country reached 29,127 while the caseload rose to 19,52,440, according to DGHS data.

The daily positivity rate dropped to 0.55 percent from 0.90 percent the day before.

The deceased was a woman from Dhaka Division. She was aged between 51 and 60.

On Tuesday, the DGHS reported 50 cases. No death was reported that day.

The recovery rate has risen to 96.91 percent as 546 patients recovered in that 24-hour period.

In March, the country reported 85 Covid-linked deaths and 8,000 new cases while 66,639 patients recovered, according to DGHS.

## Nightmare

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routes. A total of 33 launches have been kept ready for carrying the holidaymakers, said Panna Lal Nandi, supervisor of Paturia Launch Ghat.

Despite these words of assurance, passengers and transport operators fear suffering on people's way home.

They said the number of ferries is not sufficient to carry such a huge number of passengers.

According to rough estimates of transport experts, around 1.2 crore people will leave Dhaka ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr, which will be either on May 2 or 3.

Construction works underway at different points of a 90km stretch of the Dhaka-Paturia highway are also expected to cause gridlock.

Vehicles slow down at Golra, Manikganj bus station, Baniajuri, Falsatia, Tepra and Uthuli points on the highway. It is likely to intensify during the rush, said passengers and

transport operators.

On the Shimulia-Kathalbari route, ferry services are operated on a limited scale to ensure the safety of a Padma bridge pillar.

The decision was taken after ferries collided with the pillar at least four times last year.

Normally, some 600 to 700 small vehicles ply this route daily. The number may rise to 3,500 to 4,000 during the Eid rush, said Faysal Ahmmad, manager (commerce) of BIWTC's Shimulia office.

"We are planning to further increase the number of ferries. But the decision is yet to be final," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Car driver Alauddin Hossain, who frequently drives on the route, said, "Normally, it takes around one hour to board a ferry. But it may take five to six hours during the Eid rush."

[Our correspondents from Manikganj, Munshiganj and Faridpur contributed to the report]

## Police actions were too little, too late

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"These kinds of clashes took place in the past ... in fact we have been witnessing it since the Pakistan era. And police intervened and stopped such incidents.

"I have seen in the media that police argued that they intervened later as it was a delicate matter. But their argument was not logical."

However, police claimed that they played a "neutral" role.

AKM Hafiz Akhter, additional commissioner of DB, said in case of any violence, law enforcers try to stop it first by trying to negotiate with both sides.

"In this incident, police played a neutral role from the beginning," he claimed.

The situation was relatively peaceful yesterday morning, but it turned complex later in the day when the New Market Business Owners' Association announced that shops would be reopened. This angered some Dhaka College students as their demands had not been met.

Witnesses said as shops began to reopen in the afternoon with a small presence of buyers, at least 10 crude bombs exploded in quick succession inside and outside Dhaka College, bringing traffic on both sides of Mirpur Road to a halt for about an hour from 4:40pm.

Large numbers of police took position on the road to avoid any untoward incident. The traders took to the streets in front of New Market but were removed by the police.

Gias Uddin, a police

inspector on duty in the area, said they removed shop owners and staffers to prevent further violence.

Mohammad Rifat, a student of Dhaka college, said the traders should withdraw their statement blaming students for the clashes.

The college's students said all shops in New Market will have to be closed until the issue is resolved.

After the explosions, all shops near Dhaka College remained closed.

During the clashes on Tuesday, 19-year-old courier service employee Nahid Hasan died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital after suffering injuries. Many, including 12 journalists, were injured during the clash.

Police said they have collected CCTV footage of the area and identified some perpetrators from both sides.

Sharif Mohammad Farukuzzaman, assistant commissioner of DMP's New Market Zone, told The Daily Star that three cases will be filed over the murder, police assault and violence.

**'THIRD PARTY INVOLVED'**

Traders yesterday said they would not take responsibility for the violence as other parties were involved.

At a press conference yesterday, Helal Uddin, president of the Bangladesh Shop Owners Association (BSOA), blamed the "third party" for the incident, but did not clarify who it was.

They demanded a

proper probe and action against those involved in the incident.

"The attack on the ambulance was by no means desirable. The attack on journalists was also very appalling. There were unruly crowds. There was a third party, to be sure. However, if any trader is found to be involved in the incident, action will be taken against them," he added.

New Market Business Owners' Association President Dewan Aminul Islam Shaheen said they announced that shops would reopen in New Market area from yesterday, saying they had talked to the home minister about it.

Visiting the New Market area yesterday, it was seen that white flags were flying on the roofs of Dhanmondi Hawkers Market, Noor Mansion, Gausia Market and Ismail Mansion.

"There has been a lot of damage in the last two days, and we don't want any more damage. That is why the flag has been flown on the roof as a symbol of peace," said a trader of Noor Mansion.

Traders said shops being closed before Eid-ul-Fitr was a major loss for them.

Talking to The Daily Star, BSOA President Helal Uddin claimed that shopkeepers in New Market area incurred losses running into tens of crores of taka as they could not do business for the last two days.

At a press conference last night at the Dhaka College auditorium, students placed a 10-point demand

and said strict action would be announced if the demands were not met immediately.

The demands include: identification of those who launched attacks and their exemplary punishment; bearing of injured students' medical cost by law enforcement agencies and New Market Traders' Association; proper compensation for family members of Nahid; bringing those who attacked an ambulance to book; withdrawal of DC and ADC of Ramna and OC of New Market Police Station; installation of CCTV cameras in every market and shop; formulation and implementation of a code of conduct for employees in every market; establishment of a special monitoring cell to ensure safety of buyers and protection of women from sexual harassment in the markets; and returning the college's land leased to Chandrima Super Market and New Super Market.

A video went viral on social media showing ADC (Ramna Zone) Harun-or Rashid directing police to fire rubber bullets at Dhaka College students. He was heard asking for more bullets and was also seen slapping a police member in uniform.

Contacted, DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam told reporters that he had not seen the video. "Under what circumstances did the ADC slap another police member? If Ramna DC reports, the matter will be investigated and action will be taken," he said.

## Nor'westers leave 5 dead

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housewife was killed when a tree fell on her.

The dead, Rina Akter, 40, was from Uttar Kanchannagar in the upazila.

In Bogura, a man died after a tree branch fell on him in the morning.

The deceased was identified as Md Rezaul Hossain, 45, a resident of Bhatgram village in the district's Nandigram upazila.

In Manikganj, 55-year-old Firoza Begum died from a lightning strike while she was working in a field in Daulatpur upazila's Rouha village in the morning.

**CROP DAMAGED** Half-ripe boro paddy on a vast swathe of land was flattened in Bogura by the storm.

Hamidur Rahman, a famer in Rahobol village of Shibganj upazila, said, "I

cultivated boro on 7 bighas of land. The crop on one bigha had almost ripened but flattened due to the storm. I will lose part of my crop."

Dulal Hossain, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in Bogura, said paddy on 4,377 hectares was flattened in the district due to the nor'wester.

Yesterday, the meteorological department recorded 59mm rain until noon. The wind speed hit 70km per hour mark in the capital during the storm.

Except Dhaka, storms hit Chattogram, Rangpur, Naogaon, Kurigram, Dinajpur, Kishoreganj, Brahmanbaria, Hatia and Sandwip of Chattogram, Cumilla, Noakhali, Rangamati, Faridpur and Rajbari districts.

## Govt urges EC

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Until administrators are appointed, as per the amended law, chief executive officers of the zila parishads will oversee the administrative and financial matters, it read. With this, chairmen and members of the zila parishads lost their jobs.

Ashok Kumar Debnath, additional secretary of Election Commission Secretariat, yesterday said they were yet to get the letter.

"We will receive the letter soon. And the issue will be placed before next Election Commission meeting expected to be held on April 25."

The first-ever Zila Parishad polls took place in December 28, 2016. Amid

boycotts by the BNP and the JP, the ruling Awami League-backed candidates became chairmen in 25 districts, AL leaders running as independents won in 13, and AL leaders won unopposed in 21. Polls were held in two other districts later.

According to the law, only the elected representatives of different local government bodies like city corporation, Upazila Parishad, Union Parishad, municipalities, will vote to elect a chairman and general members and women members in reserved seats in each district council.

Last week, IGRD Minister Tajul Islam said the EC could not hold elections to all union parishads due to the pandemic.