

MAWA EXPRESSWAY

Traffic snarls up at both toll plazas

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and SUZIT KUMAR DAS

There were long tailbacks on Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga expressway as the government yesterday started taking tolls from motorists.

Since morning, vehicles started gathering near Dhaleshwari toll plaza in Keraniganj. The tailback reached up to five kilometres at times. Some of the motorists had to wait for one and a half hours to pay the toll.

This has happened even though all of the 12 booths of the toll plaza were operational throughout the day.

Dewan Abul Kashem Mohammad Nahin Reza, executive engineer of Roads and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Covid claims 5 more lives

Virus positivity rate hovers around 15pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five people died of coronavirus in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, reported the Directorate General Health Services.

Of them, four died at government hospitals whereas another at a private hospital in Dhaka, read a DGHS press release.

One of them aged between 41 and 50 years, three between 51 and 60, and one above 80.

The total death toll now stands at 29,154 and the death rate at 1.48 percent.

Of 12,389 samples, 1,897 fresh cases were recorded in these 24 hours.

The current positivity rate is 15.31 percent and the total positivity rate 13.76 percent.

The total number of cases is 1,975,682.

At least 248 patients recovered from Covid-19 within these 24 hours.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 1,907,757 and the recovery rate at 96.64 percent.

The victims

FROM PAGE 1

and keep the people of the country safe since the Holy Artisan Bakery attack.”

He said he was glad that the United States had been able to stand by Bangladesh with capacity building, training and equipment for all these.

The US Embassy in Dhaka in a statement yesterday said, “We remember Abinta Kabir, a US-Bangladeshi dual citizen and student at Emory University, as well as her Emory classmate Faraaz Hossain, who even when given the chance to save himself chose to remain with his friends.”

The mission also remembered Tarishi Jain, a sophomore at Berkeley and graduate of the American International School in Dhaka, who had returned to Dhaka for a summer internship.

Indian High Commissioner Vikram K Doraiswami remembered all victims, including the Bangladeshi and Indian citizens.

“As a friend of Bangladesh, we feel very sad. We need to ensure stopping recurrence of such incidents through collaborative efforts,” he said.

DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam said projects like the Padma Bridge and metro rail could not have been implemented if Bangladesh had not made a turnaround after the Holey Artisan attack.

“Then the picture of the country might have been different. For security reasons, foreign engineers had expressed unwillingness to visit



Foreign envoys from several countries, including Japan, Italy, India and the US, stand in solemn silence after paying tribute to the victims of the Holey Artisan café carnage in the capital’s Gulshan yesterday. A brutal militant attack on the upscale eatery six years ago had left 22 people dead.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SALE OF SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS

Fear of loss weighs heavily on cattle farmers

HELEMUL ALAM, MINTU DESHWARA and S DILIP ROY

Cattle farmers, particularly those from flood-hit areas, are in fear of incurring losses from the sale of sacrificial animals ahead of the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha due to flooding, rising prices of cattle feed and a lower number of customers.

High prices of cattle feed and the current flooding in different parts of the country has led to the rise in rearing costs of sacrificial animals this year.

Cattle farmers in flood-hit areas are the worst sufferers as many animals reared targeting the Eid have died. Also, many others were forced to sell their cattle as they could not feed the animals due to crops being damaged by floods.

The flood-hit farmers are also not getting suitable dry places to keep their cattle.

Visiting the Gabtoli cattle market in the capital yesterday, this newspaper found that the number of bulls was about 20 percent lower than in the same time last year.

Mohammad Nasir Uddin has brought 144 bulls from Meherpur to Gabtoli market

about 20 days back. He said the sale was less this year as many farmers from around the capital were not purchasing bulls like they did last year due to flooding.

Mosharraf Hossain, another cattle trader, said around 30 percent fewer bulls were brought to the cattle market from Meherpur this year as many farmers did not rear cattle due to high prices of feed.

Each sack of cattle fodder was selling for Tk 1,800 to Tk 1,900, up from Tk 1,200 last year, said Md Shipu, a trader at Gabtoli.

Also, the cost of carrying animals to the capital from different districts by trucks has increased by Tk 6,000 to Tk 7,000 each journey compared to last year, he said.

Md Ashfaqur Rahman of the capital’s Dhanmondi has purchased a bull for Tk 1.60 lakh. He said the price of bulls is reasonable this year considering the rise in meat prices.

Each kilogramme of meat now sells for Tk 650 to Tk 700 at the capital’s kitchen markets, up from about Tk 550 last year.

FLOODS AFFECTING CATTLE FARMERS

Sadek Mia, a seasonal cattle farmer in Hakaluki Haor of Moulvibazar, said his family earns a living from raising cattle, but two out of their six cattle died on June 20 amid flooding, three days after floodwater entered their home.

“I am feeling completely at a loss. I wanted to sell cattle before the Eid to earn some money for marrying off my eldest daughter, but all hopes are gone now,” lamented Sadek.

Many farmers have taken their cattle to roads, bridges and near cattle markets due to floods.

According to data of the Sylhet divisional livestock office, at least 1,330 livestock and poultry farms have been affected by floods, causing a loss of about Tk 50 crore to farmers.

In Kurigram and Lalmonirhat, huge quantities of cattle fodder have been damaged due to deluge. Farmers in the two districts are being forced to sell cows and goats at cheap prices due to an acute shortage of fodder.

Nabir Hossain, 64, a farmer from Char Airmari in Kurigram Sadar upazila, said he incurred a loss of Tk 20,000 from the sale of his two bulls on Tuesday.

Worst-hit 4 lakh need rehabilitation

FROM PAGE 1

According to the UN and government officials, flash floods have affected at least 72 lakh people in nine districts in the north-eastern districts of the country, while nearly five lakh people have faced temporary displacement.

Among the nine flood hit north-eastern districts, Sylhet, Sunamganj and Netrakona are the worst hit areas where the government is putting special focus, the officials said.

Experts said relief dependency should be reduced as soon as possible, and employment opportunities should be created for flood-hit people as part of their rehabilitation.

“First, the loss and damage assessment should be completed along with finding out the worst affected people,” Professor Mahbuba Nasreen, former

director of Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies, University of Dhaka, said.

“The government should provide agricultural inputs or other logistics and also create alternative employment for those who need it most. The government should also extend support to the people who need reconstruction of houses.”

The Department of Disaster Management (DDM) said they are hopeful of completing the loss and damage assessments of flood-affected areas of the 17 districts by July 7.

“We are hopeful of getting the information by July 5 and then it may take a day or two to complete the assessment,” said Atiqul Huq, director general of the DDM, adding that short and long-term programmes will be taken after completing the assessment.

He said Sunamganj, Sylhet and Netrakona are the areas worst hit in the recent floods caused by heavy rains in the north-eastern region and upstream Indian states of Assam and Meghalaya, which inundated 72 percent of Sylhet division, including 89 percent of Sunamganj.

Atiqul said the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief is holding daily meetings with local and international development partners to discuss relief and rehabilitation programmes.

DDM officials said Tk 625 crore in assistance, Tk 4 crore worth of food for children, Tk 4 crore worth of fodder and 1.3 lakh food packets have been distributed among flood victims.

Kaiser Rejve, director of humanitarian and resilience programme of Care Bangladesh, said

the government should intensify ongoing relief activities and create employment opportunities for the flood-hit people.

“Both should happen simultaneously and then relief dependency should be reduced gradually,” he suggested.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office’s humanitarian coordination task team in a statement called for funds totalling \$58.4 million, or Tk 545 crore, to meet the immediate humanitarian needs, including relief and rehabilitation, for at least 1.5 million out of 7.2 million people affected by flash floods in nine north-eastern districts of the country.

It said food and nutrition assistance is most necessary, with \$18.5 million needed to support around half a million people.

Youth dies after being hit by train

UNB, Khulna

A 24-year-old man died after being hit by a train in Khulna city on Thursday night.

Alamin, son of Anwar Munshi of Khulna, was on the railway tracks near a level crossing in Daulatpur around 10:30pm when he was hit by the train, said Molla Kabir Ahmed, an inspector of railway police.

Locals took him to Khulna Medical College and Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

2 boys drown while fishing in pond

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Two boys drowned while trying to catch fish in a pond in Madhupur, Tangail, yesterday.

Jihad Islam, 12, son of Halizur Rahman, and Mohammad Tanveer, 9, son of Mostofa Ali, were the students of a local School.

The boys went to fish in a pond in their neighbourhood in the morning without informing any of their family members.

After the two boys fell in the water, another boy informed the families.

Locals pulled them out of water and took them to Madhupur Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared them dead, said Mazharul Amin, officer-in-charge of Madhupur Police Station.

20-year-old man hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A young man was hacked to death by unidentified assailants yesterday in Keshabpur, Jashore.

Chanchal Das, 20, a resident of Majidpur area, was a barber at a local salon.

Quoting locals, police said villagers found Chanchal with severe stab injuries yesterday morning at a banana orchard in the village.

He appeared to have died while the locals were taking him to a hospital, said Borhanuddin, officer-in-charge of Keshabpur Police Station.

Police sent the body to Jashore General Hospital for autopsy, he said, adding that five locals were detained for interrogation.

37 Bangladeshis detained in Malaysia

They tried to enter the country illegally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 37 Bangladeshis were reportedly detained by the Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) when they were trying to illegally enter the country by boat.

Capt Iskandar Ishak, director of the agency, said four Indonesians who tried to smuggle in the migrants on a boat, were also detained during the operation, The Star reported yesterday.

“We launched an operation after our radar detected the movement of a suspicious-looking contact entering Malaysian waters around 11:00pm on June 30.

“One of our patrol boats was dispatched to the area and we found an unregistered boat some 1.2 nautical miles in waters off Kuala Sepang,” he said in a statement.

The Indonesian coordinator and his assistants aged between 18 and 46 also failed to provide any identification documents when requested.

Stop interfering in Afghanistan

Says Taliban leader in rare appearance

AFP, Kabul

The Taliban’s reclusive supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada yesterday called for the world to stop telling them how to run Afghanistan, insisting sharia law was the only model for a successful Islamic state.

Akhundzada, who has not been filmed or photographed in public since the Taliban returned to power in August, was addressing a major gathering of religious scholars in the Afghan capital called to rubber-stamp the headline Islamist group’s rule.

Over 3,000 clerics have gathered in Kabul since Thursday for the three-day men-only meeting, and Akhundzada’s appearance had been rumoured for days – although media are barred from covering the event.

“Why is the world interfering in our affairs?” he asked in an hour-long speech broadcast by state radio.

“They say ‘why don’t you do this, why don’t you do that?’ Why does the world interfere in our work?”

Akhundzada rarely leaves Kandahar, the Taliban’s birthplace and spiritual heartland, and apart from one undated photograph and several audio recordings of speeches, has almost no digital footprint.

But analysts say the former Sharia court judge has an iron grip on the movement and he bears the title “Commander of the Faithful”.

His arrival at the meeting hall was greeted with cheers and chants, including “Long live the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan”, the Taliban’s name for the country.

Govt moves

FROM PAGE 1

At kitchen markets in the capital yesterday, a kg of fine rice sold for between Tk 64 and Tk 80. The prices have risen by 9 percent in a month, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

Prices of coarse rice remained unchanged in the last month.

Farmers bagged 1.79 crore tonnes of rice in the first two crop seasons – Aush and Aman – of

this fiscal year, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

The Department of Agricultural Extension estimates that the total yield from the Boro season would be 2.09 crore tonnes of rice this year.

Rice mill owners maintain that flood and unfavourable weather in the northeast and parts of northwest have affected rice yields.