

Headmaster beaten up by AL men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A headmaster was beaten up by some local Awami League men in Barishal's Wazirpur upazila on Friday afternoon over the possession of Puttari Beel.

At least five other people, including a journalist, were injured when the assaulters attacked them and vandalised the poultry feed shop of Uzzal Kumar Mandal, headmaster of Rajihar Secondary School in the district's Agailjhara upazila.

Witnesses said a group of about 25 people, led by Satla Union AL Organising Secretary Mashiur Mia and his brother Monir Mia, a local Jubo League leader, carried out the attack with sticks and iron rods.

Speaking at a press conference at Barishal press club yesterday, the headmaster alleged that Mashiur and Monir had been occupying Puttari Beel for the last 15 years.

Uzzal said he along with other lessees of the water body released fish fries into it on Friday morning, which angered the siblings.

"Around 1:00pm, some 25 men, led by the two brothers, carrying sticks and iron rods vandalised my business, Eva Enterprises, at Patibari Bazar of Satla union. They beat me up and injured five other people, including local UP member Amar Mallik and journalist Nikunja Bala Palash. They also looted Tk 5 lakh from my business," the headmaster said.

He said he filed a complaint with Wazirpur Police Station in connection with the incident on Friday, but police were yet to record it as a case.

Journalist Nikunja Bala said the assaulters attacked him and vandalised his mobile phone while he was filming the incident with the device.

Despite several attempts, The Daily Star could not reach Mashiur and Monir over the phone for comments as they did not respond to calls.

Momin Uddin, officer-in-charge of Wazirpur Police Station, said he received a complaint over the attack, and that an investigation was underway.

Satla Union Parishad Chairman Shaheen Howladar, also the union AL general secretary, said the attack was led by Monir and his brother Mashiur.

"I have already informed district Awami League President Abul Hasanat Abdullah MP about the incident," he added.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Burnt belongings in the house of Dipali Rani. Even the tin roof got charred after the house was set on fire by a mob on Friday.

Trip back to Dhaka turns bitter

Thousands stuck in snarl-up for hours on Dhaka-Tangail highway, Bangabandhu bridge link road

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Thousands of people suffered for hours in tailbacks on Bangabandhu bridge link road in Tangail for the fourth straight day yesterday.

Moreover, two crashes in Mirzapur created gridlock on Dhaka-Tangail highway that lasted almost throughout the day.

On the Bangabandhu bridge link road, the tailbacks that began Friday morning were not cleared even at night.

Garment worker Bilkis Akter, who was returning to work in Dhaka with her son, said her child suffered a lot in the heat without food and water as her bus remained stuck in Elega, Tangail, for hours.

Highway police said there were too many vehicles on the road as people were heading back to Dhaka from the northern districts after Eid vacation. Besides, crashes and vehicles breaking down on the road created major

bottlenecks on the narrow link road.

Contacted, officials at Bangabandhu Bridge Traffic Control Room said the traffic was so heavy that even diverting some of the Dhaka-bound vehicles

entering the two-lane link road from the four-lane Dhaka-Tangail highway face major bottlenecks."

He added that the narrow stretch of the road was a major cause for tailbacks.

On Dhaka-Tangail highway in Dulla Mansur area of Mirzapur, a major crash involving a bus and truck around 4:30am kept the road almost blocked until 7:15am when the totaled vehicles were towed away.

But the tailbacks reached miles in the meantime.

Before traffic flow could become normal, a woman and two children were crushed to death by a bus around 11:45am near Pakulla Bus Stand, which is a few kilometres away from Dulla Mansur area.

Locals kept the road blocked soon afterwards and vehicles could not begin to move before 2:00pm, police said.

Congestion on the highway persisted until the evening.



to Bhuapur link road couldn't ease congestion between the eastern side of the bridge and Elega, Tangail.

Ataur Rahman, in-charge of Elega Highway Police Outpost, said, "Motorists

1,600-year-old

FROM PAGE 12

There was a time when many believed that the rust-resistant pillar was made out of some mysterious, non-earthly metal, while others speculated that whoever made it used a futuristic technique that was lost in the mists of time. That second theory is technically true, as metallurgists at Kanpur IIT demonstrated in a paper published in the journal Current Science.

R Balasubramanian, co-author of the study, called the pillar "a living testimony to the skill of metallurgists of ancient India," explaining that the wrought iron structure features a protective layer called "misawite", an amorphous iron oxyhydroxide that forms a barrier by adhering next to the interface between metal and rust. The formation of misawite is caused by the high phosphorus content in the iron.

Miracle baby

FROM PAGE 1

Station, quoting locals.

"Ratna gave birth on the spot in critical condition," he said.

Locals rushed to the spot and rescued the newborn. They took the baby to the Trishal Upazila Health Complex and later to a private hospital.

An injury on the baby's right shoulder was detected after an X-ray, said Jahangir's brother Sharif Uddin.

"But she is out of danger now," he added.

Ratna and Jahangir, who used to work as sub-contractor, left behind an eight-year-old daughter Jannat and a six-year-old son Ebadat Hossen.

"Our family has been ripped apart," said Jahangir's sister Masuda Akter.

Coincidentally, Jahangir's brother Shamsul died in the same way in 2015 in the same area, according to Masuda.

Police seized the onion-laden truck but the driver managed to flee the scene, Mainuddin said, adding that the dead bodies were handed over to the family members.

'They attacked us because we are Hindus' PMO steps in to find ways

FROM PAGE 1

After the attack, an eerie and empty silence took over after the 108 Hindu homes in Sahapara village.

Beauty Rani, a former female member of the reserved seat in Dighalia Union Parishad, said most of the able-bodied people have left the village after the attack.

"Almost all houses are locked. Only the elders of some families are home. They too are scared."

Visiting the village, this correspondent came across only two old men in a small house. One was 65-year-old Shibnath Saha, president of the village's Radha Govinda temple.

"Police are on guard in the village, but we cannot trust them. After detaining Ashoke on Friday, the officer-in-charge and upazila nirbahi officer told everyone that they were deploying additional forces and that our community would be safe. The attack took place within a few hours."

Beauty Rani echoed the same. "When we were being attacked, the police were there. They were watching from a distance and no one came to our rescue. The police can no longer be trusted and that is why people are leaving the village."

Gopal Saha, a fertiliser dealer at Dighalia Bazar, described how he was assaulted by the mobs.

"I have been doing business in the market for 22 years. The only reason they beat me up was that I was Hindu. The accused boy's house is far away from mine. How is this my fault? ... As a Hindu, I don't feel safe in this village anymore."

Azgar Ali, union parishad member at Dighalia, said, "I went to the spot and tried to bring the situation under control. Police are examining the evidence to see if a case under the Digital Security Act can be filed against the student."

"In addition, the government is giving Tk 26,000 to the affected families, with the promise that the houses that were vandalised will be repaired."

Haran Chandra Pal, inspector (Investigation) of Lohagara Police Station, said legal action will be taken against the attackers, adding that none of them has yet been identified for arrest.

PROTESTS EVERYWHERE

Rights bodies across the country condemned the communal attack.

Mashrafe Bin Mortoza, parliamentarian and ex-captain of the Bangladesh cricket team, who represents Narail, in a Facebook post said, "The Narail I know, the Narail I grew up in - this is not that Narail."

Meanwhile, Ain o Salish Kendra

in a statement, said, "This is not a new incident. We have seen such attacks before - these keep repeating because there is no independent investigation and no probe [is done] in due time."

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpighoshti also issued a statement saying the impunity given to perpetrators of communal violence paves the way for more such attacks.

Chandra Nath Podder, general secretary of Bangladesh Puja Uddhayan Parishad and a mathematics professor at Dhaka University, had visited the spot.

"What kind of people do this? Are we living in a civilised society? I demand a prompt investigation."

Meanwhile, 21 eminent citizens, including artists Ramendu Majumdar, Mamunur Rashid, Ferdousi Majumdar, Sara Zaker, M Hamid, and Shimul Yousof; historians Shahriar Kabir and Muntasir Mamoon; and writers Selina Hossain and Abed Khan, among others, condemned the attack in a statement.

"Within a month, Narail has seen two communal attacks. The local administration and political elites in the area can barely criticise these attacks, let alone prevent them," they said.

Road crashes claim 29 lives in a day

FROM PAGE 1

Quoting locals, police said a Dhaka-bound bus was running against traffic on Hatikumrul-Bonpara highway. The vehicle collided head-on with the two trucks around 1:00pm, causing the casualties.

In Bogura, four people lost their lives in a car-pickup head-on collision in Kalerpukur area of Kahaloo upazila in the morning.

The deceased - Md Tanser, 70, his son Md Tagor, 35, their neighbour Abdur Rahman, 35, and car driver Md Sumon - were residents of Naogaon's Dhamoirhat upazila.

The victims were traveling to Bogura from Naogaon on the car, said Md

Ambar Hossain, OC of Kahaloo Police Station.

In Habiganj, three people were killed in a head-on collision between a CNG run auto-rickshaw and a bus in Nabiganj upazila yesterday afternoon.

The dead were identified as Bokul Begum, 62, of Betapur village in Nabiganj, Ehiya Chowdhury Zaved, 24, of the same village and auto-rickshaw driver Rabban Miah.

Police said the Sylhet-bound bus collided head-on with the auto-rickshaw on Dhaka-Sylhet highway around 5:00pm.

In Brahmanbaria, two people were killed and four others were wounded in a head-on collision between a car

and a CNG run auto-rickshaw in Sadar upazila's Ujanishar area yesterday noon. The deceased are: Chan Badsha, 50, driver of the auto-rickshaw, and its passenger Billal Hossain, 45.

The four injured include three family members of Billal and a police constable.

In Dinajpur, a motorcyclist was killed after a speeding truck hit his vehicle in Khansama upazila around noon.

The deceased, Zakir Hossain, 26, was from Memberpara village in the same upazila.

Quoting locals, police said the accident took place when Zakir was returning home from his shop at Amtali Bazar on his motorbike.

Five more die from Covid-19 in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, taking the total fatalities from the virus in the country to 29,230.

At least 1,007 new cases were logged after testing 7,351 samples across the country during the same period, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

With the new infections, the total number of Covid cases rose to 19,95,440.

The current daily positivity rate is 13.70 percent and the total positivity rate is 13.77 percent. The death rate now stands at 1.46 percent, added the release.

At least 1,854 Covid patients have recovered during the 24-hour period. This took the total number of recoveries to 19,22,977. The recovery rate is 96.37 percent.

Transport worker dies in 'police custody'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A transport worker died in "police custody" after being beaten up allegedly by a cop in Magura's Sreepur upazila yesterday afternoon.

The victim, Abdus Salam Sheikh, 52, was a resident of Roynagar village in Sreepur. He was a staffer at a ticket counter of K-line Paribahan in Wapda area.

Locals said a passenger bound for Chowgacha in Jashore had an altercation with Salam at the counter around 1:30pm. He later lodged a complaint with Nakol police camp against Salam.

Around half an hour later, Sub-Inspector Jamal Uddin went to the counter and took Salam to the police camp, they added.

Aliar Rahman, a witness, said Salam became sick after the SI kicked in his chest thrice at the ticket counter.

He died on the way to Magura Sadar Hospital, the witness added.

Following the incident, Jamal was closed to police lines.

Three wanted on charges of gang rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A case was filed against three men for raping a woman in Narayanganj's Fatullah yesterday.

The accused were Ajay Mondol, 26, Shaon, 27 and Md Rony, of the upazila's Bairagi Bari.

Mohammad Rezaul Haque, OC of Fatullah Police Station, quoting the FIR, said the woman, a resident of Keraniganj, was on her way to her friend's house in Bairagi Bari village on Friday night.

"The three accused waylaid her at knife-point, took her to Shaon's house and raped her." They released her after she got ill.

Once released, she filed a case against the three immediately, the OC said.

He added that drives are going on to arrest the accused, while the victim was sent to hospital for treatment.

FROM PAGE 1

Top officials from the Road Transport and Highways Division, Bridges Division, Roads and Highways Department, Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) and Orion Group - the operator of the flyover - have been asked to join the meeting at the PMO, officials said.

"There are only three toll collection booths on the flyover against the minimum requirement of nine. The meeting is expected to discuss how the number of booths can be increased and also whether an alternative road can be built to address the problem," RHD Chief Engineer AKM Manir Hossain Pathan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the long-cherished Padma Bridge on June 25, establishing a direct link between the capital and 21 southwestern districts.

Opening of the infrastructure has increased traffic on the Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway.

Total 1,500-2,000 vehicles used the Shimulia-Kathalbari ferry route daily on average. The number doubled during Eid rush, according to officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation.

However, total 51,316 vehicles used Padma Bridge on June 26, the first day of opening the bridge to traffic. The authorities later banned motorbikes on

the bridge.

Total 14,410 vehicles used the bridge on June 30, while the number went up to 31,723 on July 8, two days before the Eid, and 29,757 on July 15, according to BBA.

Transport expert Prof Hadiuzzaman said although the number of vehicles entering the capital has increased as expected, the Hanif flyover, which is used as the main entrance to the city by vehicles travelling via Padma Bridge, does not have the capability to cope with the pressure.

The government should have built a ring road around the capital to cope with the additional traffic, he observed. Hadiuzzaman said people who would visit the northern part of the capital could have bypassed the city had there been a ring road.

The Revised Strategic Transport Plan 2015-2035 was adopted for building three ring roads - inner, middle and outer - so that a good number of vehicles can reach their destinations bypassing the capital.

The RHD even carried out a feasibility study around four years ago to build the inner ring road around the capital, but the project is yet to be implemented.

"A lack of coordination among the government agencies concerned is visible here. The authorities should have built the ring road along with the Padma Bridge," Hadiuzzaman said.

Asked about the matter, the RHD chief engineer said they were considering building the ring road as soon as possible and that talks with foreign lenders were underway.

Hadiuzzaman said manual toll collection for Padma Bridge and the expressway is also another major reason for the gridlock.

So, the authorities should go for an automated toll collection system - touch and go or electronic toll collection - at the earliest, he added.

The RHD chief engineer said the toll collection problem at the expressway will be solved within two-three months.

Earlier, the BBA had said it would take them about six months to install an automated toll collection system at the bridge.

Our district correspondents contributed to this report.