

## Launch fare hiked 30pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's decision to increase launch fare by 30 percent came into effect from yesterday.

A passenger will have to pay Tk 3 instead of Tk 2.30 per kilometre within a 100kms distance.

For extra distances over 100kms, passengers will have to pay Tk 2.60 per kilometre instead of Tk 2.

The minimum fare has been increased to Tk 33 from Tk 25.

The ministry of shipping issued a notification yesterday in this connection.

Earlier, launch owners demanded to double the fare following the recent record surge in fuel prices.

In response to their demand, the ministry of shipping on August 8 formed a seven-member committee to revise the fare.

Yesterday, the ministry raised the fare based on recommendations of the committee, read the notification.

On August 5, the government increased fuel prices by up to 51.7 percent, the highest in the country's history.

## Awami League leader stabbed to death in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A local Awami League leader was stabbed to death and a party activist injured in an attack by unidentified criminals in the capital's Jatrabari yesterday evening.

The deceased, Abu Bakar Siddique Habu, 40, was the president of AL unit-14 in ward-50, AL activists said.

Criminals stabbed the two near a hardware shop on Shaheed Faruk Road around 7:30pm and fled.

The two were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared Abu Bakar dead around 8:30pm, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in charge of the DMCH police outpost.

Injured Rubel, 30, was undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Some locals involved in BNP politics are behind the murder, alleged Sumon, who along with some other locals took the duo to the hospital.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

## Work of BRT project halted

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However, another top BRT official, who also took part in the meeting, said work would be suspended only in places where there are safety issues.

"All of us – the financier, project officials and consultants – agreed that we will resume work at the places in question after ensuring foolproof safety measures," he said.

Both officials requested not to be named.

The development came a day after a segment of a box girder fell on a car at a construction site of the project in the capital's Uttara, killing five people, including two children.

Meanwhile, a government probe committee, led by Neelima Akhter, additional secretary of road transport and highways division, in its preliminary report found that negligence on the part of the Chinese contractor, China Gezhouba Group Co Ltd, led to the tragedy, said ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, secretary of the division, at a press conference at the Secretariat yesterday.

Teague Macreem, the lead supervision consultant for the project, informed the probe committee that no work was supposed to be done on Monday, which was the National

## Please, engage with Myanmar

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military, but our home is there. We would like to return when the situation in Myanmar improves and our citizenship is granted," said Moulav Nazir Ahmed, a religious leader at the No 4 extended Rohingya camp in Ukhya.

He said they were grateful to the Bangladesh government and people for sheltering them and providing humanitarian assistance. But they want to return to their homeland and request Bachelet to engage with Myanmar authorities for a quick repatriation.

Hafez Rashid Ahmed, another Rohingya religious leader, said they could not feel assured by the ongoing discussions between Bangladesh and Myanmar that they can return to Rakhine State with dignity and equal rights.

"We will not return to Myanmar without the supervision of the United Nations," he told The Daily Star.

Mourning Day, Nuri said, citing the findings.

The contractor is supposed to get a work plan from the consultant a day ahead, but the contractor started working Monday without the plan, Nuri added.

Such work cannot be done without proper safety arrangements in place, he said, adding, "According to him [Teague Macreem], the accident happened solely because of the negligence of the contractor."

He said the contractor also did not inform the traffic department to manage traffic at the site.

Besides, the crane was operated on an uneven surface, which is why it toppled over, he said.

Citing the contractor, the probe report said the number of vehicles on the road rose sharply in late afternoon, making the crane operator anxious, and he suddenly pushed brake causing the accident, he said.

The committee held the contractor, its safety team and the crane operator, who is now absconding, responsible for the incident, said Nuri.

As per the contract, the contractor can be terminated from the project and it can be blacklisted, which will bar it from working in the country. "We will

take action upon receiving final probe report expected early next week."

Probe committee chief Neelima Akhter said the contractor had breached safety rules on several occasions, and the matter should be conveyed to the embassy concerned.

The committee has so far not named any project official responsible for the tragedy that drew widespread condemnation for safety lapse.

Some, however, questioned the appointment of Neelima, who is also the coordinator of the BRT-3 project, as the chief of probe committee.

However, the secretary said, show cause notices would be issued to all project officials concerned to find out whether there was any negligence when discharging their duties. "We will take action if anyone [of the project officials] is found guilty."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed serious disappointment over the safety issue, Planning Minister MA Mannan told reporters after an Ecne meeting.

"She is mighty angry. She has ordered a thorough investigation and action against those responsible," he said.

The project is being jointly funded by the government, the ADB, the

French Development Agency and the Global Environment Facility.

**WORK SUSPENSION**

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam visited the site and asked officials to suspend the construction work.

Although the work stopped after the mayor's visit in the morning, the formal decision to suspend the work for the entire project was made after the meeting with ADB officials.

Contacted, ADB's Dhaka office shared a statement with this newspaper, saying it was working closely with the Roads and Highways Department to ensure appropriate remedial actions and an investigation into the accident.

The international safety standards have been duly included in the contract that the contractor had signed with the RHD, it said.

Besides, a supervision consultant was also engaged to monitor the implementation of safety standards, it added.

Meanwhile, a member of the victims' families yesterday filed a case with Uttara West Police Station against unnamed officials of the Chinese contractor and the crane operator, police said.

Another Rohingya woman Gol Bahar said they would return to Myanmar if they are granted rights like those of other Myanmar citizens.

At about 10:30am, Bachelet visited the Brac Community Centre at No 4 extended Rohingya camp.

She interacted with nine Rohingya religious leaders and nine youths on repatriation and law and order of the camps where nearly a million refugees are currently living.

Mohammad Yusuf, one of the camp

residents, told the UN delegation about the various types of criminal activities including abduction, rape and physical torture of women, has come down in the Rohingya camps now.

Amina Khatun, one of them, told her that the gender-based violence, including abduction, rape and physical torture of women, has come down in the Rohingya camps now.

She also wanted to know the situation of the Rohingya camps from around 20 women.

Hafez Rashid Ahmed, another Rohingya religious leader, said they could not feel assured by the ongoing discussions between Bangladesh and Myanmar that they can return to Rakhine State with dignity and equal rights.

"We will not return to Myanmar without the supervision of the United Nations," he told The Daily Star.

However, the women still remain in



PHOTO: STAR

**Patients wait in a line outside the Dhaka Medical College Hospital to buy Tk 10 tickets to see doctors at the outdoor department of the hospital. A large number of patients from low-income families crowd the department each working day as they cannot afford visiting physicians at private hospitals. The photo was taken around 7:30am yesterday, an hour before the ticket counters opened.**

## POLICE TRUNCHEON CHARGE ON BCL MEN Barguna ASP withdrawn

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Moharram Ali, additional superintendent (crime) of Barguna police, was yesterday withdrawn hours after the home minister commented on police charging batons on BCL activists in the district on Monday.

"I saw [footage of the incident] on Facebook. A probe committee has been formed. Let the investigation be completed," said Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday.

The footage showed police charging batons on BCL men and ASP Moharram having an argument with Barguna-1 lawmaker Dhirendra Debnath Shambu.

The footage went viral on social media.

Contacted, SM Aktaruzzaman, deputy inspector general of Barishal range, said ASP Moharram was now attached to DIG's office in Barishal.

"This decision has been taken for the sake of a fair investigation. The professionalism of the police will be investigated," he said.

On Monday, a faction of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), comprising those who did not secure any post in the party's recently announced committee, attacked another BCL group.

The incident happened in front of the district's Shilpkala Academy following a programme observing the National Mourning Day.

To disperse the attackers, police charged batons at the activists. MP



Shambu and some other Awami League leaders were present there.

Yesterday, a three-member committee was formed, headed by SM Tarek Rahman, additional superintendent (administration and finance) of police, to probe if the law enforcers' response to the clash was inappropriate.

The committee has also been directed to submit its report within three days.

About BCL men vandalising a police vehicle during the clash, MP Shambu in a press briefing said he urged police to identify the culprits and take action against them.

"In fact, their [police personnel's] intention was to beat the BCL men. I tried to resist them, but there were too many policemen... None paid heed to my

commands," he said.

He said this at Barguna Press Club around 9:00pm on Monday.

He also said that he had informed the highest level of the government about the issue and demanded exemplary punishment of ASP Moharram.

Referring to the district's recently-announced BCL committee, he said it was announced without conducting any council and without any consultation with political leadership.

Meanwhile, after the National Mourning Day programme on Monday, Barguna BCL President Rezaul Kabir Reza thanked the police for dispersing the attackers.

Asked if his comments contradict the MP's statement, he refused to say anything.

## Man sentenced to death for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Pabna court yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his wife around eight years ago.

The convict, Abdullah, 25, of Pashchim Damua village in Pabna Sadar upazila, was sent back to jail after the verdict.

Meanwhile, Md Mizanur Rahman, judge of Women and Children Repression Prevention (special) Tribunal, acquitted three others from the case, said Khandakar Abdur Rakib, a public prosecutor.

The court also fined the convict Tk 1 lakh, he said.

According to the case statement, Abdullah married Rumana Parvin of the same village in 2013. He used to torture her for dowry.

As she refused to give him the demanded money, Abdullah shot his wife to death on October 30, 2014.

The victim's father then filed a case accusing four people.

## No Covid-19 deaths in 24 hours

STAR REPORT

At least 93 new Covid-19 cases were recorded in the country in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

No deaths from the disease were reported during this period, and the death toll remained at 29,314, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The Covid-19 death rate is now 1.46 percent.

The current positivity rate is 4.41 percent, while the total positivity rate stands at 13.68 percent.

With the new cases, the number of caseloads rose to 20,09,222, the DGHS release added.

A total of 2,110 samples were tested across the country during the 24-hour period. At least 228 patients recovered within the time.

The number of recoveries now stands at 19,51,965 and the recovery rate at 97.15 percent, added the release.

## Snakebite kills schoolboy in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A schoolboy died from snake bite in BSIC Industrial area of Jhenidah town yesterday morning.

The victim, Surya Biswas, 13, son of Ashraful Biswas of Chuadanga village in Sadar upazila, was an eight-grader at Moshiur Rahman Secondary School.

His classmate Sohan Hossain said the victim was sleeping in their grocery shop in the BSIC Industrial area at night. Hearing his screams in the early hours, locals rescued him.

Around 10:30am, doctors of Jhenidah Sadar Hospital declared him dead.

Falguni Rani Saha, a doctor of the hospital, said the boy's life could have been saved if he was taken to the hospital on time.

## 'Ma breathed her last in my arms'

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rescued and rushed to a hospital for treatment. Doctors yesterday said the couple was out of danger.

They went to the morgue around 10:00am yesterday, and waited till 4:00pm, to bid their family members the final farewell.

"I wasn't even able to hear my mother's last words to me. Her mouth, nose -- everything had blood pouring out," she said, unable to contain her tears.

"I couldn't do anything to save her ... How will my brother and I live without her?"

Her maternal aunt, Jhorna, died with her two children Jannath and Jakaria on her lap.

Jakaria was crushed to death while he was peacefully asleep in his mother's arms.

"My aunt enjoyed my wedding so much that even though her husband left for Jamalpur after the wedding,

she did not go. She stayed with us...

"Since the death of my father, she always helped support my family."

Jhorna's husband, Jahirul Islam, could not come to Dhaka to help collect the bodies as he fell severely ill after hearing about the deaths of his wife and children.

"Why did they toy with people's lives? We've lost everything. We want the highest form of punishment for those responsible."