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EID JOURNEY HOME Roadworks, bottlenecks, breakdowns can ruin it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ongoing road development work may lead to severe congestion between Dhaka and Gazipur on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and Elega and Hatikumrul on Dhaka-Rangpur highway during the Eid rush.

On top of this, nonautomated toll collection at Padma, Meghna, and Bangabandhu bridges and the Dhaka-Mawa Bhanga expressway could cause long queues.

Traffic could grind to a halt due to breakdowns of rickety, unfit vehicles and crashes caused by the large number of motorbikes that will be on the highways.

Unlike the last Eid-ul-Azha, the government will allow bikes on highways, but not on the Padma Bridge.

The relatively short holidays this year is likely to put extra pressure on the other transport modes and many bikers could choose to use their vehicles for the journey.

These issues came up at a meeting of the road transport and bridges ministry arranged at the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority headquarters yesterday. The meeting was on how to make the Eid trips smooth and safe.

Representatives from different ministries, local administration, police, transport association, and road safety campaigners joined the meeting chaired by Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader.

Before last year's Eid-ul-Azha holidays, people heading for the north and north-western parts

suffered immensely in congestion. According to an estimate by Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, around 1.2 crore people will leave Dhaka ahead of this Eid. Another 5 crore will make journeys from one district to another, it said.

THE CONCERNS Quader claimed that Dhaka-Chattogram and Dhaka-Sylhet highways will not see major tailbacks during the rush. "But I am fearful of the Dhaka-Gazipur corridor where construction of the BRT [Bus Rapid Transit] is going on," he said.

"This is our biggest concern. This section has to be kept passable by any means," he said.

On the Elega-Sirajganj-Bogura highway, he said development work has to be

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Liquid waste from different factories have darkened the water of the Buriganga in Postogola area in the capital. The water remains in this state until monsoon when heavy showers increases the water flow. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SCBA IFTAR MAHFIL
Over 50 pro-BNP lawyers sued over 'attack'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A criminal case has been filed against 50 to 60 pro-BNP lawyers including AM Mahub Uddin Khokon and Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal on charges of attacking, threatening and attempting to kill lawyers and vandalising furniture at an iftar mahfil organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association on April 6.

Md Robiul Hassan, administrative officer of SCBA, lodged the case with Shahbagh Police Station in Dhaka yesterday also requesting the police to arrest the accused of the case and to take legal action against them.

In the case, names of 24 lawyers, including AM Mahub Uddin Khokon and Ruhul Quddus Kazal, who were the candidates for the posts of president and secretary in the SCBA election held on March 15 and 16 from pro-BNP

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ELECTIONS IN 5 CITIES
AL to go for fresh picks in Gazipur, Sylhet

Undecided on Barishal; incumbent mayors of Rajshahi, Khulna likely to get AL tickets

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

The mayors of Khulna and Rajshahi cities are likely to get Awami League nominations to run for mayor in the coming elections.

In Gazipur, Azmat Ullah Khan, the city AL president, may be nominated by the party, while in Sylhet, Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury, who recently returned from the UK, may get the AL ticket to run for mayor.

In Barishal city, Mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah has recently been asking people for blessings. But the AL may not nominate him this time around, sources in the party say.

His uncle Abul Khair Abdullah collected a nomination form, and he has a greater chance of getting the party ticket, they add.

Current Rajshahi city Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton told The Daily Star yesterday that he met AL President Sheikh Hasina at her Sangsad Bhaban office and got the green light from her.

"I will collect the nomination paper tomorrow [today]," he added.

It is common knowledge in political circles that Khulna Mayor Talukder

Abdul Khaleque is going to get the AL nomination again.

Sheikh Salahuddin Jewel, lawmaker of Khulna-2, recently named Khaleque as the party candidate. Khaleque's nomination form was collected from the AL chief's political office in the capital's Dhanmondi by AL Organising Secretary (central) SM Kamal Hossain. As of yesterday, no one else from Khulna has collected the form.

In Sylhet, Anwaruzzaman, AL joint general secretary in the UK, has been meeting people and asking for "blessings" in the race for mayor.

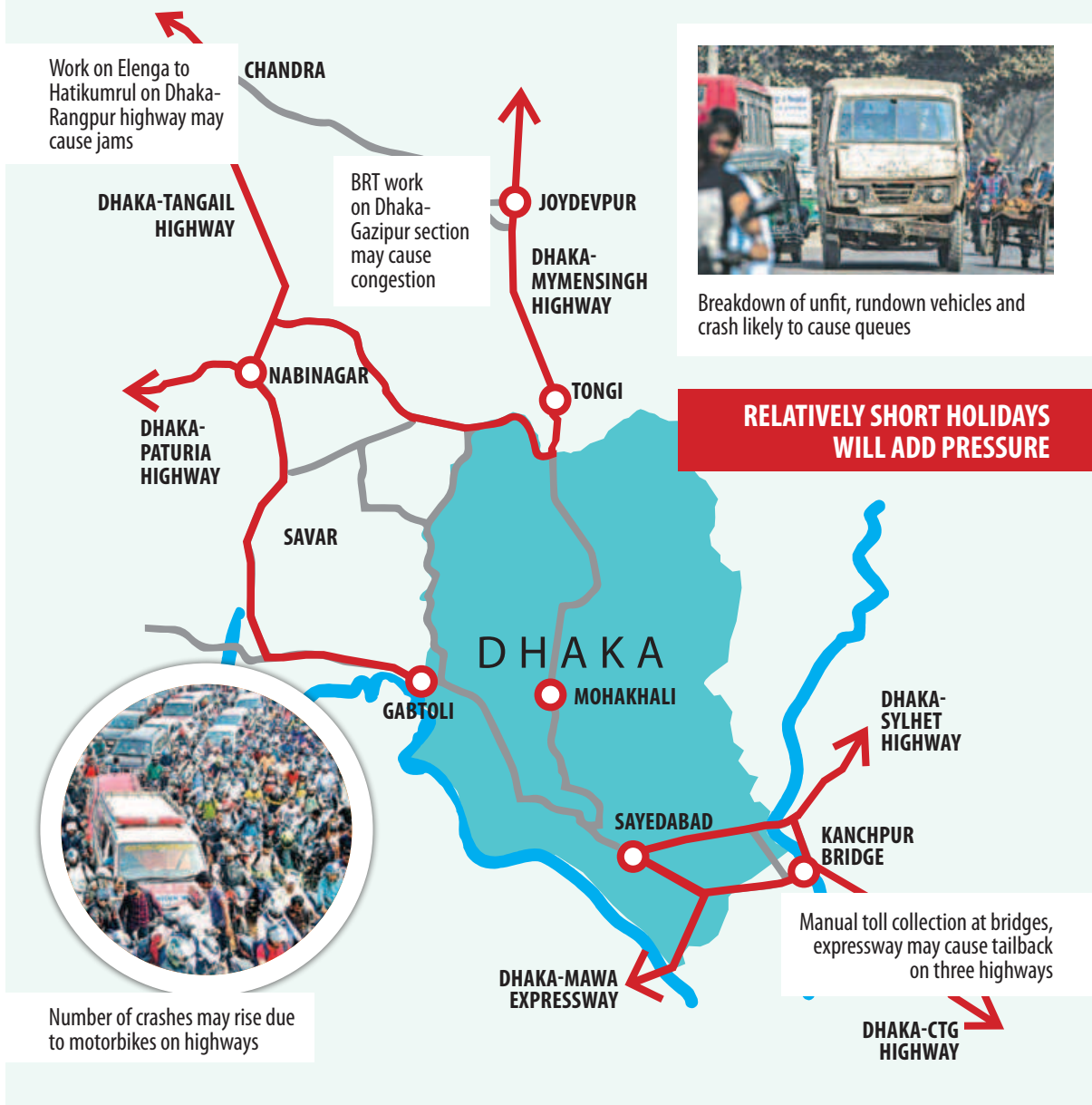
He also met the prime minister yesterday, and later said the AL "high command asked me to work for Sylhet".

AL sources say the party is in a dilemma over who to choose for Gazipur City Corporation.

Suspended Gazipur mayor Mohammad Zahangir Alam, acting mayor Ashadur Rahman Kiran and Gazipur City AL President Azmat Ullah Khan are in a race to get the nomination.

But none of them collected the nomination form after the AL started selling nomination forms yesterday.

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It's tantamount to assault on press freedom

120 citizens say about call for cancelling Prothom Alo's declaration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One hundred and twenty eminent citizens yesterday said that the demand for cancellation of the Prothom Alo declaration is an attack on freedom of the media and journalism.

They in a joint statement condemned the move to gag the media and called for scrapping of the Digital Security Act.

"We, the citizens who believe in the freedom of the press, strongly condemn any attempt to suppress the voice of the media and call for repealing the Digital Security Act and protecting freedom of expression and ensuring freedom of the media," the statement said.

The statement goes on to highlight that the charges against Prothom Alo and its reporter Samsuzzaman Shams are still sub-judice and unproven.

No group that respects democracy, human rights, and free thought can support such an attack on the media, the statement said.

They called upon people from all professions to be vocal for ensuring freedom of the media.

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An excavator yesterday removes the debris from Bangabazar, which was destroyed by a massive fire on April 4, as traders are going to start their business on Wednesday by setting up makeshift shops there.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

BANGABAZAR FIRE
Burning cigarette or mosquito coil possible cause
Says DSCC probe body

DIPAN NANDY

Investigators of Dhaka South City Corporation suspect a burning cigarette or a mosquito repellent coil caused the devastating fire at Bangabazar Shopping Complex in the capital.

They also said the fire might have started somewhere between Adarsha and Mahanagar markets of the complex on April 4. The investigators, however, ruled out an electric short circuit as a cause of the fire.

The fire destroyed around 3,000 shops and ready-made garments stored in them to ashes. Shop owners' leaders claimed that goods worth around Tk 1,000 crore were lost.

The eight-member probe committee of DSCC was supposed to file its initial report yesterday after talking to security guards, traders, shop owners, employees of the markets, and witnesses.

Several members of the committee, seeking anonymity, said the fire broke out in an embroidery factory on the second floor of Adarsha Market, adjacent to the Mahanagar Market.

They added that there was no electricity distribution box near the factory.

Except for a few places, the entire complex's power supply was turned off, they said, adding that electricity supply of the two markets was also out from 11:00pm to 7:00am.

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