



People walk to their destinations as huge tailbacks were caused due to vehicle searches by police at Amin Bazaar on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway. The security measures were taken ahead of the Awami League and BNP rallies yesterday. *Right top*, around 20 people scrambling to board a single pick-up, as no other transport was available. *Right bottom*, people waiting for buses in the capital's Shyamoli. Afraid of violence, many public transport owners took their buses off the city streets. PHOTOS: PALASH KHAN AND PRABIR DAS

ENTRY POINTS TO CAPITAL

Checkposts lead to long tailbacks

Many allege excesses by law enforcers ahead of AL, BNP rallies; people suffer for lack of transport inside city

STAR REPORT

Travellers faced immense sufferings yesterday due to a gridlock at a point of entry to the city and a shortage of public transport centring rallies of Awami League and BNP.

Dhaka-bound people on the Dhaka-Aricha highway suffered the worst as a long tailback was created after police set up a checkpoint in Savar's Amin Bazar area.

Cops were seen searching vehicles, passengers and pedestrians. They even checked some peoples' mobile phones.

Many travellers said they were stuck in traffic for hours, while some others resorted to walking to their destinations.

"I have been in Salehpur bridge area for around two hours. My sister, who lives in Mirpur, is severely ill. I have to go to her as fast as possible. I started walking as I have no other way to get there," said Abdur Rahim, a bus passenger, around 12:30pm.

Kamal Hossain, 45, a private organisation employee, said when

the bus he was on reached Amin Bazar, police halted the vehicle and the passengers were asked to get down.

"I had no choice but to walk," he told The Daily Star.

Deepak Chandra Saha, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station, said, "This is part of our regular search. It was intensified to prevent any untoward incident in the capital ahead of the rallies."

The BNP alleged that police in the morning halted 40 minibuses hired by the party activists to join the rally, but police denied the allegation.

Three youths, two of whom were siblings, on their way to the capital to catch a flight, were held by cops during the search, alleged their families.

But OC Deepak refuted the claim. The BNP also alleged that police picked up 40 of its activists at Birulia and Amin Bazar checkpoints. Police dismissed this allegation as well.

In Narayanganj, checkpoints were set up at Signboard, Mouchak, Kanchpur and Madanpur points

-- gateways to the capital through the Dhaka-Chattogram and Dhaka-Sylhet highways.

Aminul Islam, who was travelling from Cumilla's Daudkandi to Dhaka, said, "Police halted our bus at three points -- Kanchpur, Chittagong Road and Signboard."

In Gazipur, police set up checkpoints at Chandra and Joydebpur intersections, Kapasia bridge and Haldoba points.

Congestion was created at Kaliakoir Bazar as AL activists held a rally blocking road, said witnesses.

In Munshiganj, bus owners suspended services to Dhaka.

Meanwhile, a lack of public transport caused trouble for commuters in the city.

Around 10:30am at Shyamoli bus stand, Fatema Tuz Zohra had been waiting for a bus over one and a half hours to go to Jatrabari.

"There is no bus. I have never seen such light traffic. I'm worried about returning home," said Fatema, who took her one-year-old daughter

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

IMPORT OF FOOD GRAIN

Govt shortens window to submit tender

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has cut down the tender submission time by nearly two-thirds to 15 days for speedy import of 11 lakh tonnes of food grains even though there is ample stock in the silos.

According to the government's procurement rules, a bidder has to submit a tender to import food grains within 42 days of publishing an advertisement in a newspaper.

That window has now been shortened to 15 days at yesterday's meeting of the cabinet committee on economic affairs chaired by Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal.

The facility was sought so that food grains can be imported speedily in future, said a food ministry official.

At present, there is sufficient stock of food grains in the government silos. As of Tuesday, the government had 18.96 lakh tonnes of food grains in its warehouses.

Also at yesterday's meeting, the committee approved the import of 11 lakh tonnes of food grains: five lakh tonnes of rice and six lakh tonnes of wheat.

Of the five lakh tonnes of rice, three lakh tonnes will be imported by the directorate general of food under a government-to-government (G-2-G) arrangement and the remaining two lakh tonnes through an international tender process.

Of the six lakh tonnes of wheat, 4.5 lakh tonnes will be brought under a G-2-G arrangement and 1.5 lakh tonnes through an international tender process.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Bangladesh to import LNG from Malaysia

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is going to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Malaysia as the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved in principle a proposal of the state-owned Petrobangla in this regard.

"Malaysian company Perintis Akal Sdn Bhd will supply the LNG on a long term basis and Petrobangla will buy it under the Speedy Supply of Power and Energy (Special) Act 2010," said Sayed Mahbub Khan, additional secretary of the Cabinet Division, while briefing on the outcomes of the meeting.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal presided over the meeting held virtually, also attended by State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid.

However, no detail was disclosed about the proposal. It will be placed in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase for a final approval, sources said.

If approved, Malaysia will be the third country, after Qatar and Oman, from which Bangladesh will import LNG from on a long term basis.

Man dies from electrocution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man died from electrocution after a live wire fell on him in old Dhaka's Chawkbazar area early today.

The deceased, identified as 19-year-old Biplab, was a helper of a truck.

The incident took place around 2:00am while unloading a truck in the Urdu Road area, said Shuvonkar Roy, a sub-inspector of Chawkbazar Police Station.

Biplab was standing beside the vehicle when an overhead wire fell on Biplab, leaving him unconscious, he added.

He was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead around 2:45am, the SI said.

The body was sent hospital morgue for autopsy.

JOURNO NADIM MURDER CASE

One more accused arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Police have arrested another accused in a case filed over the murder of journalist Golam Rabbani Nadim in Jamalpur.

Aslam Miah, 35, of Jamalpur's Bakshiganj upazila, was arrested from Kurigram's Roumari upazila yesterday, reports our local correspondent quoting Sohel Rana, officer-in-charge (OC) of Bakshiganj Police Station.

With his arrest, 17 people have so far been arrested in the case, said police.

Aslam was a close aide of the now expelled chairman of Sadhupara Union Parishad and the prime accused of the case Mahmudul Alam Babu.

Aslam directly took part in the killing, said OC Sohel Rana.

Nadim was the Jamalpur district correspondent of Banglanews24.com and also the Bakshiganj upazila correspondent of Ekattor TV.

He died on June 15, a day after being attacked by supporters of Mahmudul Alam Babu.

No polls unless under Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

Dohar, Nawabganj, Keraniganj, and Gazipur.

Some of the senior party leaders were irked by too many banners and festoons in front of the stage. They repeatedly asked the activists to put the banners down, and at one point, said those carrying banners would be expelled.

Local leaders hoping to be MPs and members of different committees mostly brought the banners as part of their self-promotion activities. They even scuffled next to the stage.

At the beginning of his speech, AL Office Secretary Biplab Barua said, "You have covered the stage with banners, please take these down."

Mahbubul Alam Hanif, another

joint general secretary, urged the BNP to take part in the election to test its popularity.

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said the capital will be under AL's control till the election.

"In January, we will show what a proper election is," he said.

AL presidium members Begum Matia Chowdhury, Abdur Razzaque, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Qamrul Islam, Dr Mustafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Abdur Rahman, AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim, and organising secretaries Ahmad Hossain, BM Mozammel Haque, among others, addressed the rally.

Rohingyas for stronger US role in repatriation

FROM PAGE 1

Myanmar six years back, but said they were now leading a miserable life in camps.

Despite repeated efforts, repatriation has not been possible yet, with the Rohingyas saying the situation in Rakhine was not safe and they had no guarantee of citizenship.

Myanmar faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice, while the US determined atrocities against Rohingyas as genocide.

The delegation, which flew to Cox's Bazar yesterday morning, reached the Rohingya camps in Ukhia around 10:50am.

The delegation members, who also include Donald Lu, assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia, visited a Rohingya registration centre, a food distribution centre and then held meetings with Rohingya men and women at a community centre for an hour.

"The Rohingyas expressed their desire to return to Myanmar as soon as possible, describing the camp life as like life in prison," said Md Yusuf, a Rohingya leader.

The Rohingyas also urged the US to put pressure on Myanmar for speedy

repatriation. The delegation also talked to the Rohingyas about their education system, food and security in the camps.

Mohammad Ismail, another Rohingya who joined the meeting, said they informed the delegation that the education system in the camp is limited and there is no opportunity for higher education.

They also shared their concerns over security, saying that the measures for security are not enough, he added.

Another Rohingya Mohammad Idris said they expressed their dissatisfaction over cutting the food ration and demanded that the amount be increased to the previous level.

Food ration per Rohingya a month was cut to \$8 in May this year from \$12.

During the delegation's visit, a group of Rohingyas led by Mohammad Zubair, chairman of Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Right, submitted an application to Zeya, demanding speedy repatriation of the Rohingyas to Myanmar.

The application said Rohingyas lived in Myanmar for centuries, but their ethnicity was not recognised by the Myanmar junta.

"Yet, the world is silently watching those games without making a noise... So, we Rohingyas hope that the US will continuously stand by us and work for the Rohingyas," it said.

The US delegation also met Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, the refugee, relief and repatriation commissioner, at his office in Cox's Bazar in the afternoon before flying to Dhaka.

Mizanur later told journalists that the delegation discussed the cuts in food ration and assured of continuing humanitarian assistance.

He added that they also talked about dignified and voluntary repatriation and improving law and order as well as checking Rohingya trafficking.

The delegation flew to Dhaka in the evening.

Today, Zeya is scheduled to hold meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her Private Sector Industry and Investment Adviser Salman F Rahman, Law Minister Anisul Huq, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, and civil society groups to discuss democracy, human rights, labour rights and freedom of expression.

Quit, pave way for free, fair election

FROM PAGE 1

Urging the government to step down immediately, he warned that if it didn't do so, it would not manage to have any escape route.

The BNP leader said they announced the initial programme of their one-point movement and that they will come up with fresh programmes in line with people's expectations if the government does not quit.

"We will topple this fascist and illegitimate government and establish one of people through an election under a non-party government. We must be victorious."

Fakhrul urged the law enforcers and the government employees to discharge their duties neutrally upholding their oath of office. "Otherwise, you will be accused of breaching oaths."

He alleged that the government has been indulging in unbridled corruption and misdeeds as it has no accountability to the people.

The government tried to obstruct party leaders and activists from joining the rally by creating obstacles in different areas, he added.

The BNP secretary general remembered those leaders and activists who have been "disappeared forcefully" and killed during the anti-government movement.

Standing committee member Mirza Abbas slammed the Awami League for holding a "counter rally" in the capital in the name of a "peace rally".

"Their programme did not draw public support as they are holding the 'peace rally' keeping the country's people unhappy..." he said.

BNP leaders and activists from different parts of Dhaka and adjacent districts started pouring into the rally venue with processions since 8:00am. They carried banners, festoons, placards, and portraits of the top party leaders.

A stage was set up on several trucks parked side by side. More than

100 loudspeakers were used at the rally which began around 2:00pm. Some CCTV cameras were installed near the stage.

Senior BNP leaders also spoke at the meeting, conducted by Dhaka north city BNP Member Secretary Aminul Huq and acting president of Dhaka south city BNP Tanvir Ahmed Robin.

Amanullah Aman, convener of Dhaka north city BNP, led the party men take an oath that they would not return home without ousting the government.

Mobile internet services (3G and 4G) were snapped in the rally venue area during the meeting.

A large number of law enforcers were deployed at Nayapaltan to maintain law and order.

A fewer number of public transport plied the city streets throughout the day yesterday.

PASSENGERS SUFFER

Dhaka-bound passengers endured immense sufferings on the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar's Aminbazar area yesterday as police set up checkpoints there.

Police searched a large number of vehicles and frisked passengers and pedestrians at the checkpoints which were operated from 8:00am to 3:00pm. Law enforcers were also seen checking mobile phones of many.

Shahidul Islam, additional superintendent of police (Savar circle), however, denied the allegation of checking mobile phones.

Meanwhile, Savar police in the morning intercepted 40 minibuses in Jahangirnagar Society Gate area. The vehicles were rented for carrying local BNP leaders and activists to the rally venue in the capital.

Khorshed Alam, former joint secretary of Dhaka district BNP, said they hired 70 minibuses to transport party men to the capital. A team of Savar police, led by Inspector (investigation) Abdur Rashid, intercepted 40 of those around 10:00am, he alleged.

OC Depok Chandra Saha of Savar Police Station claimed that they didn't detain anyone or intercept any vehicle bound for the BNP's rally.

The BNP announced a 10-point demand from its rally in the capital on December 10 last year. The party and its allies launched a simultaneous movement from December 24 to press home the 10-point demand.

After observing different programmes for seven months, the party yesterday announced the one-point movement.

Our Savar correspondent also contributed to this report.

N Korea fires long-range ballistic missile

AFP, Seoul

North Korea has fired a long-range ballistic missile, the South Korean military said yesterday, days after Pyongyang threatened to down US spy planes that violated its airspace.

Relations between the two Koreas are at one of their lowest points ever, with diplomacy stalled and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un calling for increased weapons development, including tactical nukes.

In response, Seoul and Washington have ramped up security cooperation, vowing that Pyongyang would face a nuclear response and the "end" of its current government were it to ever use its nuclear weapons against the allies.

South Korea's military said it had detected the launch of a long-range ballistic missile fired from the Pyongyang area around 10 am (0100 GMT). "The ballistic missile was fired on a lofted trajectory and flew 1,000 km (620 miles) before splashing down in the East Sea," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.