



When cops turn part-time robbers

Some police members, immigration officials form syndicate to rob migrants

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

On the night of January 23 last year, Abdullah Munshi landed at Dhaka airport from Dubai and took a CNG-run autorickshaw to go to his brother's house in Khilgaon around 11:00.

As the autorickshaw came near the Army Stadium in Banani, a microbus waylaid it coming from behind. Four men stormed out of the microbus and signaled the autorickshaw to stop, identifying themselves as police personnel.

They then dragged Abdullah, 24, out of the autorickshaw, cuffed his hands and forced him into the microbus. Inside the microbus, now running, they blindfolded him and started hitting him indiscriminately. They also threatened to kill him if he screamed.

The four cops eventually released the migrant worker around 1:30am near Purbachal, after looting two gold bars and ornaments weighing 334 grams worth about Tk 22.5 lakh, a cell phone and a laptop, according to the complaint Abdullah filed.

Banani police, which investigated the case, found his allegations to be true. The four constables – Rabul Bepari, Md Abdur Razzak, Uzzal Chandra Barman and Md Azad – were later arrested.

In 2022, at least 1,731 police personnel faced departmental actions, with majority of the offenders getting away with suspension or transfer.

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Three-year-old Srijon has been needing supplemental oxygen for three days due to respiratory issues. The number of patients in Dhaka Shishu Hospital has been increasing every day, as many children across the capital have contracted cold-related diseases as temperatures around the country have been considerably low over the past week.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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Mercury to fall during daytime

Cold wave continues to batter the north

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As a mild to moderate cold wave yesterday swept across 26 districts of the country, Chuadanga recorded 6.6 degrees Celsius temperature, the lowest this winter.

Dhaka also recorded the lowest of this winter, 11 degrees Celsius, yesterday.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), mild to moderate cold wave that Dhaka, Rangpur, Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and Moulvibazar, Barishal, Bhola, and Cumilla districts experienced may continue and temperature may drop in some places.

"Though night temperature across the country may rise slightly on Wednesday, day temperature may fall further," said

Covid infection rate sees sharp rise in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daily positivity rate of Covid-19 has surged to 8.62 percent in the last 24 hours till yesterday, up from 5.14 percent just the day before.

However, no Covid-related death was reported in the country during this period.

Meanwhile, 35 new cases have been reported, taking the total number of confirmed cases to 20,46,823, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

According to DGHS data, there has been a sudden rise in the daily infection rate, with 5.92 percent on Sunday and 5.83 percent the day before. On December 23 last year, it was 1.36 percent.

The total positivity rate currently stands at 13.09 percent, the same as last month.

In a press release, the health directorate said the number of deaths remains at 29,481 and the overall fatality rate at 1.44 percent.

So far, DGHS has reported four Covid-related deaths this month.

Twenty-two more patients recovered in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 20,14,201 and the recovery rate to 98.41 percent.

Due to a sudden rise in Covid infection since the start of this year, the government has decided to start administering vaccines again.

Urging people to use masks as a precaution at high-risk places such as hospitals or medical centres, DGHS in a press release said the infection of coronavirus's new subvariant JN.1 has increased in several countries.

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UTTARA-MOTIJHEEL METRO Buses beginning to feel the pinch

SUKANTA HALDER and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Ever since the metro trains started operating between Uttara and Motijheel all day, buses have been seeing fewer passengers.

Many bus owners and transport workers said they were counting losses.

Metro has been operating between Uttara and Motijheel since early November last year. But the trains only operated from 7:10am to 11:30am. The time was extended to 8:40 at night on January 20.

"The impact of metro on our business was not significant until the trains started operating all day. Now we are losing money," said Maksudur Rahman, owner of a bus of Bikalpa Paribahan.

Bikalpa, which used to operate 35 buses on the Motijheel-Mirpur-12 route, extended its route up to Jatrabari in November in the hope that its business would remain unhurt.

The company yesterday operated only 27 buses, keeping the rest parked.

Maksudur said he used to earn over Tk 1,500 every time his bus went from Motijheel to Mirpur-12 on weekday evenings. "Now I only make Tk 1,100-Tk 1,300 or even less."

Maksudur said he bought the bus in 2019, borrowing from a bank.

He is now considering whether to operate his bus on a different route to be able to repay the loan.

Mohammad Jashim, who owns four buses of Mirpur Super Link which operates on the Azimpur-Mirpur-12 route, said that the impact of metro rail was beyond imagination.

He used to earn Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,300 when each of his buses went from Mirpur to Azimpur during the morning peak hours. "It

At peak hours in the morning, 1,800-2,000 people travel from Uttara to Motijheel on each train. This has impacted the business of buses.

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Yunus not being given docs needed to appeal: lawyer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus's defence lawyer yesterday said despite repeated requests, the labour court, which convicted and sentenced his client to jail, has not given the documents required for Prof Yunus to appeal.



Speaking to journalists on the Supreme Court premises, lawyer Abdullah Al-Mamun said not providing the documents was a form of harassment of his client and that Yunus was being deprived of his fundamental rights.

"We have asked the Third Labour Court of Dhaka for the certified copy of the judgement and order and other relevant papers containing the statements of witnesses and cross-examinations and arguments on which the court has delivered the verdict against Prof Muhammad Yunus and three others on January 1.

"The papers are very much needed for filing an appeal with the Labour Appellate Tribunal against the Third Labour Court verdict. Our lawyers requested the court officials every day for the required documents. But they are not giving those documents saying that either the judge or the registrar or the serestadar [administrative official] of the court is absent," he said.

The lawyer said under section 217 of the labour law, Prof Yunus is supposed to get 60 days to file an appeal.

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BNP in two minds about local polls

The party yet to decide whether to bar its activists from contesting election

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP will not participate in the upcoming upazila polls as per its previous decision, but it has two different thoughts on the elections.

The party's first thought is to boycott the polls to make sure the turnout of voters remains low like it happened in the January 7 national polls. The BNP also mulls over not being harsh on the party leaders who would participate in the local government polls, said party sources.

They said the party high-ups will observe the situation for a few days. If the grassroots leaders want to run in the polls as independents, they will not be stopped or expelled.

The ruling Awami League on Monday decided that it would not allow its leaders to use its electoral symbol "boat" in the upazila elections. After the announcement, The Daily Star talked with some central and upazila-level BNP leaders to know their views on the upazila election.

The BNP has been staying away from all polls since 2019 and it expelled the leaders who contested elections going against the party's decision.

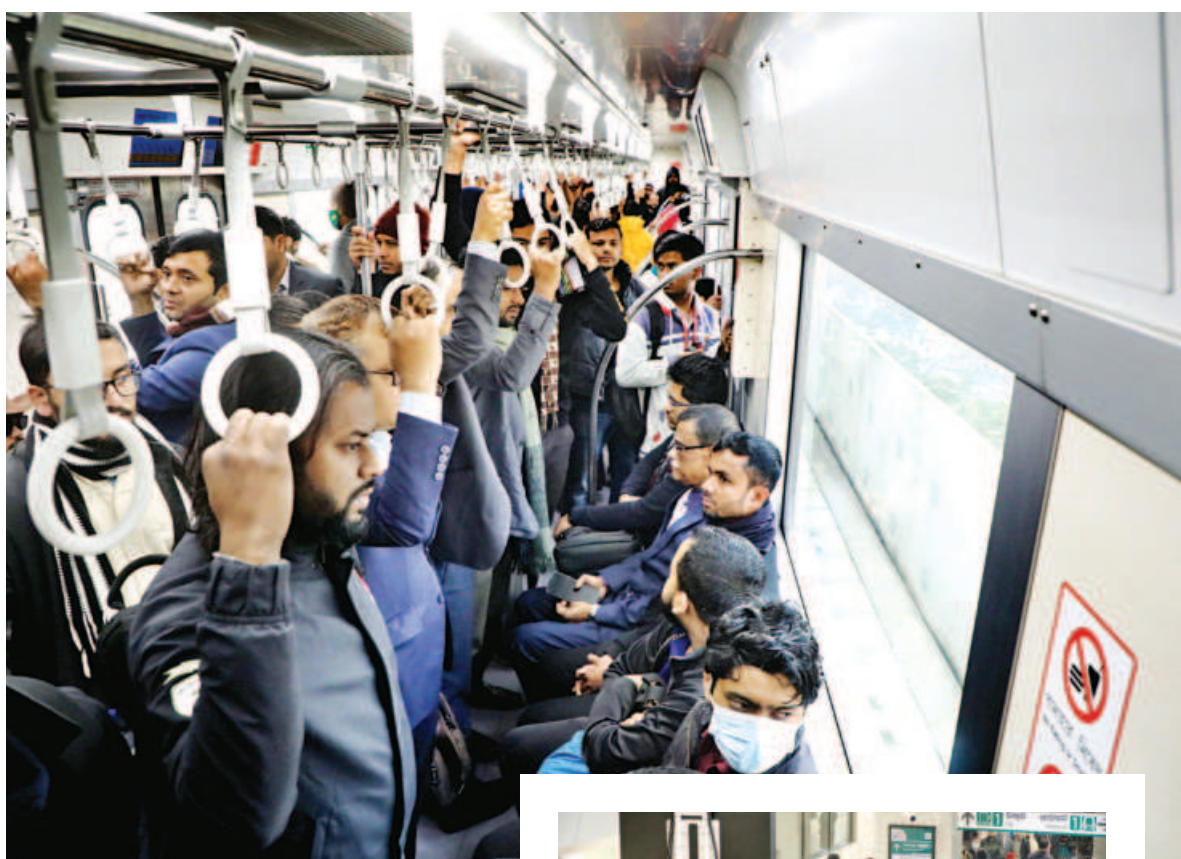
Many party leaders are in favour of contesting the upazila polls. They believe as senior party leaders, including Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, may walk out of jail on bail before the announcement of the polls schedule, the issue may be discussed seriously then.

The upazila polls issue was discussed recently in the party's standing committee meeting, but no decision was made, said party insiders, adding that the opinion of the grassroots leaders will also be taken into consideration.

"What will be our achievement through boycotting the polls if we cannot ensure a poor turnout?"

An upazila-level BNP leader

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A jam-packed metro rail car around 8:45am yesterday. To avoid traffic congestion during the rush hours, many opt to travel by metro rail. Inset, commuters waiting in lines to exit the Secretariat Metro Rail Station around 9:00am. Buses have lost passengers on the Uttara to Motijheel route after metro rail started fully-fledged operation since January 20, said bus owners.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



BUSINESS

Industries reeling from gas crisis

The severe gas crisis is increasing the cost of manufacturing of goods for both local and export markets, which may ultimately hit the pockets of consumers in the form of higher prices and the economy since overseas sales could see further slowdown.

Owing to lower generation of gas locally, factories in all sectors of the economy have long complained of inadequate energy supply. But the supply situation has worsened in the past two weeks.

STORY ON BI

HASAN AHMED
5 March 1964 - 24 January 2022
Former Managing Director & Director

Today 24th January 2024 is the 2nd death anniversary of Mr. Hasan Ahmed. His bereaved mother, brothers, sisters, officers and employees of the company seek forgiveness from Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala for his departed soul.

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