



Speakers at a roundtable titled "Health Expenditure: A Critical Challenge in Ensuring Health Care in Bangladesh," jointly organised by Civil Society Forum (CSO) and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Syed Ashfaul Haque gets bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted bail to Syed Ashfaul Haque, former executive editor of The Daily Star, and his wife Tania Khondoker in a case filed over the death of Preeti Urang, a teenage domestic worker who fell from their flat in Dhaka's Mohammadpur in February this year.

Ashfaul has been in jail since his arrest on February 6, the day Preeti fell and died. He and his wife were previously denied bail three times by the lower court.

The HC bench of Justice Md Rezaul Hasan and Justice Fahmida Quader delivered the bail order after holding a hearing on a High Court rule on the matter.

The HC also observed that remand should not be used as a tool by the police. It also said the court should not grant police remand just because they ask for it.

Besides, the court said the petitioners (Ashfaul and Tania) were taken on remand twice but the police could not get any additional information from them.

Ashfaul's lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that Ashfaul will come out of jail once the jail authorities receive the written copy of the verdict.

On April 22, the HC bench issued a rule asking the state to explain in

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Eid journey may not be hassle free

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Roadside cattle markets and unfinished road expansion work, alongside closing all the garment factories on the same day, are likely to cause suffering to Eid holidaymakers, particularly the north-bound people.

Unfit vehicles breaking down and road crashes on highways, which usually see a rise during Eid rush, may intensify their sufferings.

Eid-ul-Azha will be celebrated on June 17. Highway Police identified 118 congestion prone stops on different highways; of them, 35 lead to the north.

Meanwhile, trains heading for northern destinations are likely to be delayed due to ongoing works on the east and west sides of Bangabandhu Bridge.

The situation will worsen once pressure of passengers increases manifold following closure of offices and factories.

During an Eid preparatory meeting on May 30 at BRTA headquarters, officials said there are over 200 roadside cattle markets across the country, which often cause traffic congestion.

Besides, the speed of vehicles that carry sacrificial animals is relatively slow, which causes traffic congestion, officials told the meeting headed by Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader.

Md Shahabuddin Khan, additional inspector general of highway police, said there are 202 cattle markets beside the highways, of which 60 are very important.

They have already talked to district police and the market authorities to keep the nearby roads congestion-free, he added.

Mosharref Hossain, general manager of Hanif Paribahan, said they are expecting a huge passenger pressure from June 13 to 15.

He said it's almost certain that the highway from Nabinagar to Chandra will see huge traffic congestion on Saturday, the day all garment factories will be closed.

A huge number of garment workers will add to the chaos, he said. Besides, many city buses will hit the streets to serve the passengers, intensifying the problem, he added.

Shahabuddin Khan said they always request garment authorities to close factories in phases but more than 80 percent of factories will close on the same day.

"This time, we have asked the factory owners, particularly BGMEA, to arrange transport at their factories so that workers can get into home-bound vehicles from there," he said.

Mosharref Hossain said the expansion work of Dhaka-Rangpur Highway from Elenga to Hatikumrul is still underway, which may cause traffic congestion, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Waliur Rahman, project director of the road expansion works, said vehicles breaking down near Bangabandhu Bridge was the main reason behind the congestion in the last Eid rush.

REASONS FOR TRAFFIC CONGESTION ON ROADS

- 200 roadside cattle markets
- Garment factories closing all in one day
- Unfinished road expansion works
- Unfit vehicles breaking down on roads

REASONS FOR SUFFERING ON RAILWAYS

- Ongoing dev work on Bangabandhu Bridge east and west stations
- Lack of capacity of single line on Joydebpur-lshwardi route
- Speed, weight restrictions on the bridge

At least 83 events of vehicle breakdowns, road crashes, and similar incidents took place near Bangabandhu Bridge in six days during the Eid rush, he said.

The road from Elenga to Bangabandhu Bridge will be used as a one-way road once the pressure of vehicles intensifies and in that case, a nearby road will be used as a bypass road for the vehicles heading for Dhaka, he added.

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RIISING MEDICAL EXPENSES

The poor sink deeper into poverty: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The poor are getting poorer due to increasing out-of-pocket healthcare expenses, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

An overhaul is needed in the health sector, they added, demanding a strong political will to make health services more responsive to the public's needs.

They made the remarks at the roundtable titled "Health Expenditure: A Critical Challenge in Ensuring Health Care in Bangladesh", jointly organised by The Daily Star and Civil Society Forum (CSO) at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

In a keynote presentation, Sayed Rubayet, convener of the CSO Forum, said Bangladesh has the highest out-of-pocket health expenditure -- 73 percent -- among

neighbouring countries.

He added that over 8.61 million people in the country were pushed below the national poverty line due to out-of-pocket payments in 2016.

Due to the sorry state of country's health care, Bangladeshis accounted for 57.5 percent of medical tourists in 2019 alone, said Rubayet, also the country director of Ipas Bangladesh.

Number of Bangladeshi medical tourists surged by 83 percent from 2017 to 2019, he added.

Echoing Rubayet, Mohammad Mainul Islam, professor of Population Science Department at Dhaka University, said education and health are fundamental sectors requiring increased investments.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Overhaul of health sector
- Political will
- Increased investments
- Utilisation of allocated budget
- Health insurance for all

No market at Anwara Park

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam has assured that no market will be built on Anwara Park in the capital's Farmgate area, following Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's instructions.

"At a meeting with the prime minister, she was informed about the plan to build a market on park. She instructed that no market will be built on the park. The Prime Minister's decision is final," Mayor Atiqul said at a rally held in front of the DNCC building, organised by the park protection committee yesterday.

"The prime minister emphasised that the Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL) do not need income from the market; they are already earning income from passengers," he added.

The mayor expressed his support for the movement and announced that authorities had already been informed of the prime minister's direction.

The Public Works Department owns the park, while DNCC maintains it. Since 2018, a section of the park has been used by DMTCL as a project office and storage for metro rail construction materials. DMTCL reportedly aims to construct a commercial plaza on the park grounds now.

The rally saw solidarity from at least 30 organisations.

Every village will be under civic amenities: PM

Hasina provides 18,566 more houses to homeless as Eid gift



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government is working to ensure civic amenities for all the rural people.

"We'll bring every village under the coverage of civic amenities and the people of every village will enjoy those," she said.

The premier said this while handing over 18,566 more houses among the homeless and landless families across the country under Ashrayan-2 project.

She opened the distribution of the houses along with ownership documents through a videoconference from her official residence Gono Bhaban, connecting to Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat, Eidgaon upazila of Cox's Bazar, and Char Fashion upazila of Bhola.

Talking about the cyclone Remal-hit people, Hasina said thousands were affected by the cyclone. The government has already prepared area-wise lists of the houses which were completely or partially damaged, she said.

She said the government will construct new homes in case of completely damaged houses, and will extend support to reconstruct the partially damaged houses.

VOTER LIST

HC asks for list of Rohingyas included in it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday sought a list of Rohingyas, who have been made Bangladeshi voters illegally across the country.

The officials concerned including chief election commissioner; LGRD secretary; secretary at the EC and registrar general of birth and death registration have been asked to submit the voter list of Rohingyas by August 8 to the court.

The HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque passed the order during hearing of a writ petition filed by a local voter of Cox's Bazar.

Petitioner's lawyer Mohammad Siddique Ullah Miah told reporters that the Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar have no right to become voters in Bangladesh. But many of them have illegally become Bangladeshi voters, which is a threat to security, he said.

DNCC issues birth certificates to 49 Rohingyas

Registrar general seeks answer; mayor refutes allegation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-nine Rohingyas have recently been issued birth certificates by the health department of Dhaka North City Corporation.

It was informed in a letter given on June 5 to DNCC's chief executive officer from the Office of the Registrar General of the Birth and Death Registration Branch of the Local Government Department.

The Special Branch (SB) of Bangladesh Police has informed about the birth registration of 49 Rohingya citizens, said the letter.

These illegally registered birth certificates have been suspended from the BDRIS system.

The letter also says the registrars and registration assistants who were in charge while issuing those birth certificates, should appear at the registrar general's office within five working days and give an explanation. If not, action will be taken against them as per law.

The secretary of the organisation, Mohammad Masud Alam Siddique, wrote a letter to the chief health officer of DNCC on Sunday in this regard.

When asked about this, DNCC Mayor Md Atiqul Islam said birth registration numbers given by the registrar general's office have been verified and not a single one was issued by DNCC.

He said those who were involved in the illegal

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Demanding that Anwara Park in Farmgate is not turned into a market, a group of people formed a human chain in front of the DNCC building in Gulshan-2 yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR