

BHOLA LAUNCH TERMINALS

Lack of waiting rooms, toilets adds to passengers' misery

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Thousands of passengers in Bhola face serious problems at launch terminals and boarding points because there are not enough waiting rooms and toilets.

When it rains, people often have to shelter in roadside shops or stalls. Many are forced to use unsafe and dirty places to relieve themselves.

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has acknowledged the fact.

During the recent Eid holidays, Ilisha Ghat – the biggest terminal in Bhola – was crowded with passengers. Many got wet in the rain and couldn't find a place to rest.

Things get worse in the monsoon when people disembark from launches in heavy rain with no shelter. More than 50 launches leave from Ilisha Ghat every day, connecting Bhola with Barishal,



Dhaka, Chattogram, Lakshmipur, and other places. Over one lakh passengers use this route daily.

Other terminals in the district are also in poor condition.

Aklima Begum, travelling to

Dhaka from Maju Chowdhury Ghat, said she had to run into a shop to avoid the rain. Rezaul Islam, travelling to Chattogram with his family, had a similar experience.

BIWTA said Bhola has five terminals with toilets and waiting rooms, but these are poorly maintained, dirty, and not enough for the number of passengers. There are no such facilities at 19 other boarding points.

Dewan Abdur Rashid Nilu, a leader of the Barishali unit of Noujatri Oikya Parishad, urged the authorities to improve terminal facilities to meet basic needs.

Selim Reza, Bhola river port officer of BIWTA, said they plan to build modern toilets and waiting areas at Ilisha, Monpura, and other terminals under a World Bank-funded project.

"These changes will help reduce the passengers' suffering," he said.

Ward-based

FROM PAGE 3

"In addition, special emergency response teams have been formed in each ward. These teams are prepared to respond swiftly to any waterlogging that may arise due to rainfall," the release added.

It further said, "Our teams are monitoring the situation in every ward. We urge citizens to report immediately if they notice any waterlogging or blocked drains in their area."

Seeking public cooperation, DSCC requested that residents contact the central control room immediately if waterlogging is witnessed in any part of the city. For this, the control room hotline 01709900888 has been made available and will remain open 24/7 to provide assistance.

July killings strategic

FROM PAGE 3

definitely identified. However, eight of those were found to be carried out by armed Awami League activists, according to Sapran.

The organisation found that 33 of the 54 headshot victims were active participants in the July uprising. Sixteen were identified as bystanders or onlookers, while the roles of five victims could not be confirmed due to a lack of verifiable information.

Unarmed protesters and civilians were often shot point blank, suggesting a clear intent to kill, said Zeba Sajida Saraf, a researcher at Sapran.

She said the conclusions were drawn based on forensic evidence, verified cases, and international human rights reports, and aimed to highlight a pattern of state violence.

The shots were deliberately aimed at the

heads of civilians, often at close range and without provocation. These killings were not incidental, but part of an intentional strategy by security forces to terrorise the population, even within residential areas," the paper stated.

Bokhtiar Ahmed, a professor at the Department of Social Science and Humanities at Independent University Bangladesh, said, "The state itself became a murderer over the past 15-16 years gradually."

He noted that extrajudicial killings have been normalised under the authoritarian government by putting different tags on the victims, with many accepting the violence when it targeted criminals or opposition activists.

Rezwan Karim Snigdha, associate professor of anthropology at Jahangirnagar University, said the head is a symbol of

dignity, and headshots are intended to destroy both the dignity and ideology of protest.

"Every killing sent a message that the protesters meant nothing to the government," she said.

Zina Tasreen, a senior journalist at The Daily Star, said there is no doubt that police used disproportionate force during the movement, but not all shootings could have been carried out by them.

"Other state organs must have been involved, and it should not be glossed over."

At the event, Solaiman Topu, brother of Atiqur Rahman, who was martyred during the uprising, and Sirajul Islam, brother of martyr Sajidur Rahman Omor, shared their heartbreak experiences of finding out about the death of their loved ones during the uprising.

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Country gets first robotic rehab centre

FROM PAGE 3

Established with technical and material assistance from China, the centre has been equipped to meet international standards in robotic rehabilitation.

Chinese authorities have donated robotic equipment worth around Tk 20 crore, making this one of the most advanced centres of its kind in South Asia.

According to BMU sources, the centre houses 62 high-precision robotic devices -- including 222

powered by artificial intelligence (AI). These robots can provide tailored physiotherapy, neurological rehabilitation, and long-term care, adjusting precisely to each patient's condition.

Ahead of the pilot rollout, a seven-member team of biomedical engineers from China trained 27 Bangladeshi doctors and physiotherapists, equipping them with the essential technical skills.

Once the trained personnel gain sufficient experience and the pilot

phase proves successful, the centre will shift into full scale operation.

Moreover, the centre is designed to serve patients affected by conditions such as stroke, paralysis, nerve injuries, chronic pain, frozen shoulder, and trauma-induced impairments.

Notably, injured individuals from the recent July uprising who are dealing with prolonged physical injuries will receive free robotic rehabilitation services here.

BMU officials clarified that while the primary

services will be limited and targeted, the centre will eventually open its doors to the general public in phases, following a structured policy.

Efforts will also be made to ensure that treatment costs remain within the reach of patients' financial capabilities, they added. Besides, this robotic rehabilitation initiative will not only mark a technological milestone in the country's medical landscape, but also bring renewed hope to thousands suffering from long-term physical and neurological issues.

Online registration for Bangladeshi expatriates was first launched in the UK on February 12, 2020.

EC to register voters in 5 more countries

FROM PAGE 3

Kuwait, Qatar, Malaysia, Australia, and Canada.

The process is also set to begin in Japan on July 15.

The commission has already identified a substantial Bangladeshi expatriate population across

40 countries, according to information compiled from different sources.

These include the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, and the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), among others.

Saudi Arabia hosts the largest number of Bangladeshi expatriates, with 40,49,588 individuals, while New Zealand has the

smallest, with 2,500.

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