

Eight killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least eight people were killed and several others were injured in separate road accidents across the country yesterday.

Our correspondent, Satkhira reports: A seven-year-old child was killed and five others were injured in two separate road accidents in the district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Parvin, 7, daughter of Amzad Moral of village Kumira in Patkeghata Police Station.

The injured are Rafiqul Islam, Tasirun Bibi, 55, Abul Basar, Babu, Sakib, Atiar Rahman.

Quoting local people, police said a Khulna bound mini bus knocked Parvin down on Satkhira-Khulna road when she was crossing the road at Kumira Bazar.

She succumbed to her injuries on way to hospital.

On contact, Patkeghata PS OC Azam Khan confirmed the incident.

In another incident, five people injured when a pick-up and a private car collided at Alipur Charabat Tala in Sadar upazila on Satkhira-Kaligonj road yesterday morning.

Two separate cases were filed. Sadar PS OC Shahjahan confirmed the incident.

Our Correspondent in Sirajganj adds: At least three people were killed and about 27 others were injured, five of them seriously in a road accident on Bogra-Nagorbari Highway at Binnadair area in Shahzadpur upazila yesterday afternoon.

The injured were admitted to Shahzadpur Health Complex, Bera Health Complex and Sirajganj Sadar Hospital.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred at 3:15pm when a Shahzadpur-bound bus from Pabna skidded off the road and fell into the roadside ditch when the driver of the bus lost control over the steering as he tried to avoid collision with a rickshaw van.

As a result, an Ansar member Mukul, 35, and Bhim, 25, died on the spot and 27 others injured while another passenger named Mintu was taken to Bera hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. Police recovered the bodies and sent them to hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with Shahzadpur

Police Station in this connection.

Our correspondent in Gaibandha adds: Four people were killed and 15 others sustained severe injuries in two separate road accidents at Dhaperhat on Bogra-Rangpur highway yesterday.

In the first incident, police said, a Dhaka bound truck loaded with green chilli collided with a standing truck from opposite direction on Rangpur-Bogra highway killing three passengers on the spot and injuring the truck driver.

The dead were identified as Shafiqul Islam, 16, truck helper, Taimuddin, 42 and Shahadul, 30 both chilli traders. Driver of truck could not be named he was taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

In another road accident, Nuru Mia, 50, a bus passenger was killed and 14 others injured when a passenger coach slammed with a truck from opposite direction at Chapriganj in Gobindganj Upazila on Bogra-Rangpur yesterday. The injured were taken to Gobindganj Health Complex.

Two separate cases were filed with respective Police Stations.

Rab picks up Jatiya Gono Front leader in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday picked up a leader of Jatiya Gono Front for his alleged involvement in the recent ransacking of garment factories in the capital and its peripheries, sources said.

He was identified as Aminul Haque, Rajshahi district co-ordinator of the front.

According to victim's family, a group of Rab men in plainclothes picked up Aminul, also a leader of Five Left-Party, from Bhatpara area of the city in the morning.

Local Rab office however denied the picking up of Aminul when it was contacted by his daughter Sathi.

But a source in Rab has told The Daily Star that Aminul is accused in a number of murder cases and he has connections with the extremist groups. He was also involved in recent ransacking of garment factories in and around the capital.

"Aminul is being quizzed on these issues," Rab source added.

Ontorjatra - new film by Tareque and Chatherine

Ontorjatra, a feature film by Tareque Masud and Chatherine Masud, will be released at the Star Cineplex in Bashundhara City on Friday, says a press release.

The film was made with the support of the British Council and is being presented in Bangladesh by Maasranga Productions Ltd.

Following the story of a mother and son who return to Bangladesh after 15 years abroad, the film touches on complex themes of identity, dislocation and multiculturalism.

The main performers featured in 'Ontorjatra' are Sara Zaker, Rifaqat Rasheed, Abdul Momen Chowdhury, Rokeya Prachy, Jayanto Chattopadhyay, Harold Rasheed, Nasrine Karim and Raisa Nawar. Also featured in a guest appearance are popular singer Anusheh and guitarist Buno of 'Bangla' band fame.

'Ontorjatra' is not only the first film to be shot in digital format for transfer to 35mm film, but also the first to have full Dolby digital 5.1 surround sound.

Soroptimist Club AGM held

The 23rd annual general meeting (AGM) of Soroptimist International Club of Dhaka was held at Gulshan Club in the city recently, says a press release.

President of the club Dr Shamim Matin Chowdhury addressed the lunch meeting while Secretary Nilufar and Sultana gave an account of the club activities during the year. Zebunnessa Rahman presented the treasurer's report.

The club has been involved in community welfare activities since 1981 having received charter from the Federation Club -- the Soroptimist International Club of Great Britain and Ireland.

Some of its projects are childhood TB follow-up programme (in collaboration with the Shishu Hospital), literacy centre for economically deprived children, scholarship scheme and health and environment projects.

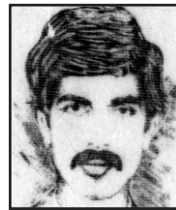
Obituary



MS Alam, founder-general secretary of Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab), passed away at Apollo Hospital in Kolkata on May 29, says a press release.

He had been suffering from cancer. His kulkhwani will be held at his residence at House # 118, Road # 15, Block # C, Banani in the city on June 2.

Death anniversary



Today is the 18th death anniversary of Shaheed Jamil Akhter Ratan, former president of Bangladesh Chhatra Maitri, Rajshahi Medical College unit, says a press release.

On this occasion, party flag and black flag will be hoisted at the party central office at 7:00am and wreaths will be placed at Central Shaheed Minar at 9:00am.

A protest procession will also be brought out on Dhaka University Campus at 11:00am to press the demand for trial of Shibir cadres who are responsible for the killing of Ratan.

Ratan was killed on this day in 1988 by Shibir cadres. Bangladesh Chhatra Maitri has been observing the day as anti-fundamentalism and anti-communalism day.



Road digging work continues at a slow speed at Dayaganj in the city, causing inconvenience to commuters as well as pedestrians.

India plans to set up 8 trade centres along Tripura border

UNB, Dhaka

India plans to build eight trade centres along its border with Bangladesh in northeastern Tripura state to boost business with its neighbour.

"We're now awaiting clearance from Bangladesh to set up the trade centres. New Delhi has approved the Tripura government's proposal for the eight new centres," Pratap Dutta, spokesperson for the Tripura Industry and Commerce Department, said yesterday.

The proposed trade centres or inland ports are likely to be set up at Ragha and Hirachara in north Tripura district, Kamalpur in Dhalai district, Bamutia, Kamala, Sagar and Boxanagar in west Tripura district, and at Srinagar and Akinpur in south Tripura district, according to an IANS report.

Agricultural products, fruits, fish, egg, milk and milk-based items, cement, coal, stones and limestone have a high demand on either side of the border. "Once the new trade centres are open, people can buy and sell commodities at ease," the official said.

The traders on either side of the border will get "international commercial cards" and local currencies of the respective countries will be allowed for trading.

"We believe that opening of border trade will help check smuggling and illegal trade along the border areas," Dutta said.

15 houses gutted in Comilla

UNB, Comilla

Fifteen houses were gutted in a fire at Kaptan Bazar in Comilla in the early hours of yesterday.

Police said the fire originated from an oven at the house of Masud at about 3:00am and soon engulfed the nearby houses.

Receiving information, fire fighters rushed to the scene and extinguished the blaze after a struggle for one and a half hours.

The house owners estimated the loss at about Tk 20 lakh.

Decision to bring fazil, kamil at par with honours, masters degrees protested

DU CORRESPONDENT

Progotishil Chhatra Jote, a combine of left-leaning student organisations, yesterday submitted a memorandum to the education ministry demanding cancellation of its decision to bring fazil and kamil degrees of madrasa at par with honours and masters degrees of university.

Earlier addressing a rally on Dhaka University (DU) campus, the combine leaders called for introduction of uniform education system in the country.

They said religion-based education is encouraging fundamentalism and communalism in the society. They also said the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government has been hatching conspiracies to destroy people's democratic spirit.

Bangladesh Chhatra Union brought out a procession on the campus to protest the decision of the government.

Rise of migrants is damaging planet

AFP, London

The growing number of people who migrate from developing countries to over-populated Western states in search of a better life is damaging the planet and could be avoided, a think-tank said yesterday.

Governments and aid agencies should encourage families to stay put by tackling environmental degradation, such as the spread of deserts, that forces many to leave, rather than promote migration, said the Optimum Population Trust (OPT), a British group that campaigns for a sustainable population.

At the same time, Britain should continue to fulfil its humanitarian obligation to genuine refugees and asylum-seekers, the think-tank said in evidence to a parliamentary inquiry on population.

Parts of the planet that have been damaged by climate change, soil erosion and water shortages merely deteriorate further once their inhabitants flee.

In addition, migrants typically increase their ecological footprint -- the damage each person inflicts on the environment -- by moving from low- to high-consuming countries.

"The priority must surely be to prevent or cure environmental damage, and help people to remain in their homes and communities, not abandon damaged areas of the planet to their fate," the OPT said in a report.

The ecological footprint of someone from Bangladesh increases 16-fold if he or she emigrates to the United States, while that of a Somali citizen rises more than 13-times when he or she migrates to Britain.

The push factors behind migration can only be solved by reducing the impact of consumption and population in richer countries and supporting environmentally-sustainable development in poorer nations, the OPT said.

"Currently, however, excess immigration into countries which are already densely populated can cause substantial environmental damage and economic costs, the effects of which may not be seen until the pressures on land and natural resources become intense," it warned.

Britain, for example is more densely populated than China.

England alone is the world's fourth most crowded country -- behind Bangladesh, South Korea and the Netherlands -- with migration accounting for more than 80 per cent of population growth.

"With parts of the country already facing serious water supply problems, population growth on this scale will make the UK increasingly vulnerable to resource and energy shortages and will increase its contribution to climate change," the think-tank warned.

5 soldiers abducted in Assam found dead

AFP, Guwahati

Five Indian paramilitary soldiers and a civilian were found shot to death by unidentified gunmen after they were abducted last week from the northeast state of Assam, police said yesterday.

A police spokesman said the bodies of the five soldiers were recovered Monday from a densely forested area in the neighbouring state of Arunachal Pradesh, about 320km east of Assam's main city of Guwahati.

"A group of woodcutters spotted the dead bodies and it was later confirmed they were the five soldiers who were kidnapped earlier in the week," George Basumatary, a senior Assam government official, told AFP.

Police said six people, including the five soldiers, were abducted by a group of unidentified gunmen May 21 from a village in northern Assam's Udalguri district, bordering Bhutan.

"The dead body of the lone civilian who was kidnapped along with the soldiers was recovered from a nearby village the following morning," a police official said.

The soldiers guard the unfenced border with the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan to prevent the movement of separatists in Assam.

The only rebel group active in the area from where the soldiers were kidnapped is the outlawed National Democratic Front of Bodoland, which is fighting for an independent homeland for the Bodo tribe.

The group, which currently is observing a ceasefire with the government, denied involvement in the deaths.

More than a dozen militant groups, whose demands range from greater autonomy to secession, operate in Assam where at least 15,000 people have lost their lives to the insurgency since 1979.

Two electrocuted while another two die in lightning

STAR REPORT

Two people were electrocuted in Satkhira and another two were killed in lightning in Chittagong yesterday.

Our correspondent in Satkhira reports: Two people including an old man and a teen-aged boy were electrocuted yesterday in two separate incidents in the district.

The deceased were identified as Osman Sardar, 55, of village Budhata in Assassuni upazila and Palash, 15, of village Hajrakati in Tala upazila.

Quoting local people, police said the old man came in contact with live wire when he was connecting electric line in his kitchen and he died on the spot.

On contact, Assassuni Police Station Officer-in Charge (OC) Shahjahan Hawladar confirmed the incident.

In another, the boy, who was speech- and hearing impaired, came in contact with a fallen live wire when he was sitting at a shop at Hajrakati market and died on the spot.

On contact, Tala Police Station OC Mahbubur Rahman confirmed the incident.

Our correspondent from Chittagong adds: At least two people were killed in lightning here in the port city yesterday.

Sources said, Abu Ahmad, 35, son of late Nazir Ali of Abu Jal Mansion at Station Road area adjoining Nupur Cinema Hall under Kotwali Police Station was killed in lightning at 1:00am yesterday.

He was rushed to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the doctors declared him dead.

Another incident of lightning occurred at Fakirabad under Bayezid Police Station where a girl named Nazma Akhter, 12, was killed at 7:30am.

The girl's father Shah Alam, a day labourer, said Nazma went to bring food for breakfast from the nearby shop when he fell victim to the lightning.

Nazma was rushed to the CMCH where doctors declared her dead at 8:00am.

NAMING HALL AFTER PM

15 injured in clash at Bhawal college

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

At least 15 people were injured in a series of clash between Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at Bhawal Badre Alam Government College yesterday over naming of a newly built female residential hall after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

The injured of both the organisations were identified as Jewel, Saiful Mullah, Mamun Mandol, Bikash, Masud, Selim Ahmad and Mahfuzur Rahman.

Witnesses said the first clash erupted when a group of ruling BNP's student front JCD members launched an attack on main opposition Awami League's student front BCL, who were protesting on the

campus.

At one stage, JCD drove the BCL out of the campus. As the BCL again entered the campus, another round of clash erupted at around 1:00pm.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

The BCL were demonstrating on the campus as the authorities named a newly built female student hall after Khaleda Zia. They demanded the hall to be named after Guljan Bibi -- mother of the founder of the college Badre Alam.

The BCL yesterday locked up principal Prof Mahfuza Rahman along with some other teachers of the college in a room protesting the authorities' decision for around two hours.

They also vandalised the college.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over Chittagong, Barisal, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and at many places over Khulna and Rajshahi divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy falls are also likely at places over Rajshahi, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions during the period, Met Office said in a forecast. It said that day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 35.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi, Jessore and Mongla and the lowest of 23 degrees at Rangamati.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:42pm today and rises at 5:11am tomorrow.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	34.5	26.5	82	67
Chittagong	29.3	23.6	87	95
Rajshahi	35.5	25.5	87	75
Khulna	34.6	24.4	80	68
Barisal	33.8	25.5	88	74
Sylhet	27.0	24.7	91	98
Cox's Bazar	30.0	24.8	93	--

Nepal Maoists call for drastic land, army and social reform

AFP, Kathmandu

Drastic land reforms, army restructuring and more social inclusion for women and ethnic minorities are needed in Nepal, a senior Maoist said Monday.

Nepal's King Gyanendra ended 14 months of direct rule in late April after weeks of pro-democracy protests by sidelined political parties in concert with the rebel Maoists.

"After the historic people's movement, the country has an immediate and important task of institutionalising a democratic republic," said Baburam Bhattarai, the rebel's second in command.

"To achieve this goal, restructuring of the army, revolutionary land reforms and special privileges for women and marginalised groups among others are necessary," he said

in a statement.

Since the king handed back power to the coalition of parties, the new government has clipped the king's powers, matched a rebel ceasefire and met a key Maoist demand for elections to a body to redraft Nepal's constitution.

"Free and fair elections to a constituent assembly should be held as soon as possible," said Bhattarai in the statement.

The rebels are calling for Nepal to become a republic, but two of the country's three biggest political parties have said that the king could be given a ceremonial role.

The Maoist leader said the new parliament and the government should be scrapped and the 1990 constitution abandoned.

"We have stressed the dissolution

of parliament, the constitution and the government and the establishment of a new interim people's representative organisation, interim constitution and interim government reflecting the new reality of the country," he said.

The new government and the Maoists have agreed on a code of conduct for the ceasefire, and the government has released hundreds of rebel prisoners.

Gyanendra sacked the government and took direct control of the impoverished nation in February 2005.

He said the takeover was needed because the political parties were corrupt and had failed to tackle the bloody Maoist insurgency that has killed at least 12,500 people since 1996.

Once former foes, the ousted political parties and the rebels formed a loose alliance late last year.