

# French aid workers among 8 killed by gunmen in Niger

AFP, Kourou  
 Gunmen on motorcycles killed eight people including a group of French aid workers as they visited a part of Niger popular with tourists for its wildlife, officials said.  
 "There are eight dead: two Nigeriens including a guide and a driver, while the other six are French," the governor of the Tillaberi region told AFP on Sunday.  
 France confirmed its nationals were among the dead, without giving a figure.  
 French aid group ACTED said

several of its workers were among those killed during a tourist outing.  
 "Among the eight people killed in Niger, several were Acted employees," said the NGO's lawyer Joseph Braham.  
 It is believed to be the first such attack on Westerners in the area, a popular tourist attraction in the former French colony thanks to its unique population of West African or Niger giraffes.  
 "We are managing the situation, we will give more information later," governor Tidjani Ibrahimi Katiella said, without indicating who was behind the attack.

# Activities aplenty

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 Azha that year.  
 The committee had found that small and slow-moving vehicles were responsible for three of the four accidents and the negligence of a bus driver in the other.  
 Apart from recommending legal action against the responsible persons, other suggestions from the committee included stopping operation of illegal battery or CNG-run auto-rickshaws and three-wheelers on highways.  
 But the authorities concerned seemed to have taken no measures in the light of the recommendations over the last two years as three-wheelers were involved in both accidents on Saturday.  
 Experts believe that noncompliance of their recommendations is the major setback in ensuring discipline and safety on the roads.

traditional methods.  
 The government had banned three-wheelers, including those made locally, and other slow vehicles on 22 national highways in August 2015, and on several occasions issued directives to implement the ban.  
 But these vehicles keep operating -- causing frequent accidents -- allegedly with the blessings of local representatives. Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader on several occasions admitted as much.  
 Kazi Md Shifun Newaz, assistant professor of Accident Research Institute of BUET, was member of the committee.  
 Asked whether their recommendations were implemented, he said, "We had given several recommendations following investigation. I don't know whether those recommendations were implemented or not."  
 "But we see similar types of reasons for almost all accidents. Such accidents might not have happened had the recommendations been implemented. I don't see any effective measures to implement those," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

A passenger's welfare platform said on Sunday that the number of deaths in road crashes during this year's Eid holiday rush increased even with a reduction in public transport operation due to the Covid-19 pandemic.  
 At least 242 people died in 201 accidents across the country over the 13 days of the Eid rush to travel home and come back to Dhaka, said Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity.  
 According to the corresponding report of the organisation after last year's Eid-ul-Azha, at least 224 people were killed in 203 road crashes in 12 days of holiday rush.

Another committee member, wishing not to be named, said, "Some recommendations may have been implemented. Other recommendations, like creating service roads, would take time to implement."  
 Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of Jatri Kalyan Samity, said the authorities concerned do not take the necessary steps to implement the recommendations of probe committees.  
 "Most problems [that cause accidents] have already been identified. Solutions are also known. What is needed is to take action," he said.

## RECOMMENDATIONS NOT IMPLEMENTED

On August 25, 2018, the ministry had formed a probe committee to identify the reasons behind the accidents that took place in Narsingdi, Feni, Natore, and Kushtia during the Eid rush of that year.  
 Led by Safiqul Islam, the then additional secretary of the ministry, the committee submitted its probe report. As all four incidents were almost the same, they discussed the Natore accident in detail.  
 At least 15 people were killed and 20 others injured as a bus collided head-on with a human hauler on the Natore-Pabna highway in Natore on August 25, 2018.  
 The Daily Star obtained a copy of the probe report.

The committee had found the human hauler was modified, overloaded and its driver had no licence. It also blamed the operation of slow-moving and small vehicles on the highways for the fatal accident.  
 Accordingly, the committee recommended taking action against the human hauler owner as the driver died in the crash. It also called for taking action so that no slow-moving and small vehicles can run on highways.  
 The committee also said that while vehicles like auto-rickshaws and human haulers are necessary for rural areas, ensuring road safety is not possible if those are allowed to ply the highways.  
 It also advised that the roads and highways department carry out a survey about whether "suitable service roads" can be made in several important areas.  
 The committee had also recommended making short video clips on driving basics and to circulate those on social media as it was not possible to train a huge number of drivers through

COMMITTEE FORMED AGAIN  
 The ministry yesterday formed a five-member committee to investigate the accidents in Mymensingh and Chuadanga.  
 The committee was formed a day after Obaidul Quader directed the authorities concerned to form a probe committee to investigate accidents that took place while people were returning to Dhaka after Eid.  
 The committee, led by the ministry's Joint Secretary Jesmin Naher, was asked to submit its report within a week, Additional Secretary Yousub Ali Mollah said.  
 The committee will have representatives from Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, Highway Police, and local administration and police in respective districts, he added.

# Decision on phase-III trial

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 about the progress and collection of Covid-19 vaccine for Bangladesh after a meeting at the ministry yesterday.  
 Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of the health directorate, Maj Gen Mahbubur Rahman, DG of the drug administration, Ashadul Bari, chief scientific officer of icddr, Ferdoushi Kadri, scientist of icddr, among others, attended the meeting.  
 Meeting insiders said discussions were held on the Covid-19 vaccine and the steps ahead of Bangladesh to get it immediately.  
 There was "no discussion" regarding the phase-III clinical trial of Chinese vaccine by the icddr, they said.  
**2 WAYS TO GET VACCINE**  
 As a low-income country, Bangladesh will get Covid-19 vaccines from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisations (GAVI).  
 The second option is bilateral agreements with any inventor company.  
 Experts say allowing trial of a vaccine may make it easier for the country to get it.  
 The trial of Chinese vaccine is, however, still uncertain due to "unknown" reasons and is waiting for decision from the government high-ups, sources said.  
 Meanwhile, Bangladesh has received confirmation from GAVI that it will supply Covid-19 vaccines to the country as soon as it is available in the market, say officials.  
 "We had sent our expression of interest and the GAVI has accepted

it. The GAVI will now decide the protocol to supply us the vaccines in its next board meeting this month," Shamsul Alam, director of the health directorate's maternal nutrition & child healthcare programme, told this newspaper.  
 Officials said Bangladesh could get the vaccines from GAVI either free of cost or at a low cost and it would be decided by GAVI.  
 The GAVI will supply vaccines to 92 poor and low-income countries under this management.  
 Officials said GAVI can supply vaccines in bulk or in ready-to-use form.  
 The health secretary said his ministry was also discussing with local companies which have vaccine plants to help them if needed.  
 A meeting will also be held with different local vaccine producers soon, Shamsul told this correspondent. "The ministry called today's [yesterday] meeting and will organise the next meeting."  
 Speaking at yesterday's meeting via video conference, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said, "The government's aim is to ensure that Bangladesh get the [Covid-19] vaccine when it will be available in the market."  
 On July 18, Bangladesh Medical Research Council permitted the icddr, to run the trial of the Chinese vaccine in seven hospitals.  
 But the trial became uncertain after the health minister and the secretary said the government would take time to decide on the trial.



The sign hanging from the balcony of a building in Uttar Mugda in the capital says the house and a warehouse will be leased out. A branch of a private school named Dhaka Standard School, housed in the building, was closed recently due to fund crisis. The school authorities said parents were failing to pay fees since their income was slashed by the pandemic.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

# 'Drama by cops' gone wrong

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 Joint Commissioner Monir told The Daily Star that the probe report has been submitted before the DMP commissioner.  
 Contacted, DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday, "The bomb was not handled properly at the police station and they acted unprofessionally."  
 DMP's Mirpur division DC Mostaq Ahmed, Additional DC (Pallabi) Mizanur Rahman, Assistant Commissioner (Pallabi) Firoz Kawsar, Pallabi Police Station Officer-in-charge Nazrul Islam, Inspector (investigation) Abdul Mabud and Inspector (operation) Emranul Islam have been transferred.  
 DMP boss Shafiqul Islam said the transfers were not punitive.  
 "I need to go through the probe report and separate punishment awaits whoever is responsible," he added.  
**SOURCE OF BOMB**  
 Investigators said they identified two suspects named Jamil and Mamun. They are brothers and are believed to be hiding somewhere in India and Nepal.  
 "The two brothers took a contract to kill either Pallabi Jubo League General Secretary Jewel Rana or Councillor of Ward-6 Taizul Islam Bappi," said a police official, involved with the investigation.  
 Police then started investigation and arrested Shahidul Islam, Mosharrif Hossain and Rafiqul Islam on July 28

and July 29. They are associates of the suspect Jamil, sources said.  
 "After the arrests of these three, Councillor Bappi made a deal with a section of Mirpur division police, offering around Tk 2 crore, so that the arrestees are produced as members of Jewel Rana's gang," said the official.  
 Both Bappi and Jewel Rana are close aides of ruling party lawmaker Elias Mollah, he said.  
 "But, Bappi wanted to get rid of Jewel Rana as he was trying to run for the post of the councillor. Besides, Bappi wanted to establish supremacy and take control of Pallabi areas. For that reason, Bappi wanted to drag Jewel's name into criminal activities," according to police sources.  
 As per the deal, a police team took the arrestees near Kalsi graveyard area and collected a firearm from Bappi. Police also collected the bomb and some bullets from his associates.  
 The officers then took the bomb, firearm and ammo to the police station. They were arranging them at an officer's room when the bomb went off, said multiple officials involved with the investigation.  
 A high official of DMP, requesting anonymity, said the six top officials of Mirpur division were transferred right after the investigators learned about the plot and the deal.  
 The Special Action Group (SAG) of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTIC) unit is now investigating the cases filed after the blast.

SAG Deputy Commissioner Abdul Mannan told The Daily Star yesterday that some issues had come forward and they found a number of people's involvement.  
 But he refused to disclose further details for the sake of the investigation. "We are now analysing the facts."  
 Contacted, Councillor Bappi said he had a very good relationship with Jewel.  
 "I am not involved in any kind of plots. Some people might be spreading rumors against me to smear my image in politics and destroy my relationship with Jewel," he said.  
 Bappi further said that he has come to know that someone wanted to kill both of them.  
 Without disclosing the name of who he thought might have wanted him dead, Bappi said, "Police are investigating the case and we are expecting a fair investigation."  
 The Daily Star also tried to contact Jewel, but his phone was unreachable.  
 Regarding the person, who might have hired Jamil and Mamun to kill someone in the first place, a high official of DMP, involved with the findings, said their investigation was stuck because they were out of the country.  
 "We are now trying to find his associates and collect information about their activities. Once they get arrested, we would be able to say further about the matter," the official added, requesting anonymity.

# Four accused give 'vital info'

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 Upon a prayer from the IO of the case on August 6, a Cox's Bazar court placed the three on a seven-day remand.  
 At a press briefing yesterday, the Rab director said the court gave an order to complete interrogation and remand of the three accused within 10 working days. Rab yesterday prayed to the court to lift the time limit and the court granted it.  
 "Rab wants to give assurance that it will investigate the case impartially without any interference," he said.  
 He said they would also interrogate Shahedul Islam Sefat, who was released from prison on bail yesterday, and Shipra Devnath. Sefat and Shipra, both students of a private university, went to Cox's Bazar from the capital with Sinha to make travel documentaries.  
 Asked why police didn't show Sefat's laptop and camera in the seizure list, Ashik Billah said they would ask Shifat whether those items had been seized from him.  
 The Rab official said that if Sefat makes such a claim, they would also quiz the policemen involved in preparing the seizure list.  
 He further said their main objective is to find out the real culprits and the reasons why such an unexpected incident had taken place.  
 Replying to a query, he said both

Sefat and Shipra are safe and now staying in their relatives' houses.  
 Ashik said he didn't know anything about Shifat being whisked away from the jail gate in a vehicle without any number plate upon his release.  
 Sefat, who was accompanying Sinha, is a key witness in the case. He was present at the scene when Sinha was shot. He had been in police custody after the incident on July 31.  
 The following day, he was shown arrested in two cases filed by SI Nandadulal, who was later made an accused in the Sinha murder case.  
 Yesterday, Rab official Jamil UI Haque, the IO of the case and assistant superintendent of police, filed a petition with the Teknaf Upazila Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court, seeking 10-day remand for four of the accused -- suspended ASI Litan Miah and constables Kamal Hossain, Abdullah Al Mamun and Safanur Karim.  
 The court will hear the petition tomorrow, said Ashik.  
 Earlier, a Cox's Bazar court had allowed the IO of the case to interrogate the four accused for two days at jail gate.  
 Maj (ret'd) Sinha, 36, had been making travel documentaries for a YouTube channel called "Just Go". On July 31, he was returning to Cox's Bazar from Teknaf. His car was stopped at Shaplapur on Marine Drive.

Police claimed that they tried to search the vehicle, and Sinha aimed his pistol at them prompting them to shoot back in self-defence. They also claimed that they seized drugs from the vehicle.  
 However, witnesses gave a different account of the incident. They said Sinha got down from his car, put his hands over his head, and then police shot him.  
**RAOWA DEMAND**  
 Retired Army Officers' Welfare Association (RAOWA) Chairperson Maj (Ret'd) Khandaker Nurul Afser yesterday said the superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar must also be brought to book.  
 "Since a RAOWA member has been murdered, we will implore all levels of the state so that the investigation is fair and justice is served," Afser told journalists at the house of slain Maj (ret'd) Sinha yesterday.  
 The RAOWA chairperson paid a visit to Sinha's mother Nasima Akhter to offer his condolence.  
 Nasima echoed similar thoughts and also expressed satisfaction over the prosecution of ex-OC of Teknaf Police Station Pradeep and Inspector Liaquat Ali.  
 While this is a satisfying step in the positive direction, the system must be changed to make society more humane, she said.

# Be ready to deal with long-lasting flood

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 aware especially of the flash flood in mid of the Bangla month Bhadra [at the end of this month] which may prevail for a longer time."  
 The PM asked the authorities concerned to quicken the rehabilitation since the water level of the major rivers such as the Padma and the Jamuna have continued to decline for the last few days, Anwarul told the briefing at the secretariat.  
 A rehabilitation programme, which has been taken to this end, would be implemented in three phases, he added.  
 The cabinet secretary said the LGRD ministry has been tasked with reconstructing or repairing the damaged infrastructures and the water development board with repairing the embankments damaged by the floods.  
 He said a huge allocation has been made in this regard.  
 Hasina also asked the authorities concerned to take special care of the production of the Ropa Aman (T-Aman) to ensure food security.  
 "The prime minister directed us to

take special care on the production of Ropa Aman as the seeds of Aman were destroyed due to the ongoing floods," Anwarul said.  
 She also advised the authorities concerned to plant water tolerant varieties (of paddy) comparatively on higher places as Aman seeds were destroyed.  
 The cabinet secretary said the agriculture ministry has received a huge allocation to this end.  
**'MAKE PEOPLE AWARE OF USING MASK'**  
 Meanwhile, the government has asked the field-level administrations to conduct mobile court operations alongside gearing up awareness campaigns to make people aware of using masks to stem the spread of the Covid-19.  
 "We have held talks at the cabinet meeting about measures to check the spread of coronavirus," said the cabinet secretary.  
 He said they have asked the field-level administrations to take appropriate measures for enforcement of law and

conduct massive awareness campaigns to encourage people to follow the health guidelines properly, particularly about wearing masks.  
 Anwarul said nowadays it is seen that awareness on wearing masks among many people has declined.  
 "We will have to make the people more aware of it. So we have asked the field administrations to visit the spots physically and make people aware by using loudspeakers and installing billboards."  
 Mobile court could be operated in some cases and the media should cover the drives properly to help make people aware, the cabinet secretary said.  
 "If the people come to know that some people have been punished through mobile courts in buses, markets and other places for not wearing masks, they will become aware of it," he said.  
 Referring to the Sunday's secretary-level meeting, he said they have given necessary directives to the authorities regarding measures to check the spread of the virus.

# Face covering must in offices, places of worship

## Govt issues directives on wearing masks

Bss, Dhaka  
 The government yesterday issued several directives regarding wearing mask for overall public safety in the country during the current Covid-19 pandemic.  
 Officers, employees and service recipients in government, semi-government, autonomous and private offices will have to wear masks and the authorities concerned will ensure it, said a handout of Press Information Department (PID).  
 Recipients of services at all healthcare centres, including public and private hospitals, must wear mask and the hospital authorities will ensure it.  
 The use of masks must be ensured at all places, including educational institutions, mosques, temples and churches. The local administrations and steering committees will make sure the directive is followed.  
 Buyers and sellers at shopping malls and shops must use masks while the local authorities and the market management committees will ensure the matter for public safety.  
 Buyers and sellers will use masks in markets or haat-bazaars.  
 Buyers and sellers should not buy or sell any product without wearing masks. The local administrations and haat-bazaar committees will strictly monitor the matter.  
 Public transport drivers, their assistants and passengers must wear masks. A passengers must wear a mask before boarding a public transport while the authorities concerned, law enforcement agencies and the owners' associations will ensure the matter.  
 Workers at all industrial factories, including garment factories, pedestrians, hawkers, rickshaw-pullers, van drivers and persons working in hotels and restaurants should wear masks.  
 During holding public gatherings or social ceremonies, all will have to ensure complying with the rule of wearing masks for overall public safety.

Mauritius races to clean up oil as ship leaking fuel breaks up

AFP, Port Louis  
 Salvage crews yesterday raced against time to prevent a second disastrous oil spill off the picture-perfect coastline of Mauritius, with a damaged tanker carrying thousands of tonnes of fuel at risk of splitting apart.  
 The bulk carrier MV Wakashio ran aground on July 25 with 4,000 tonnes of fuel aboard and began seeping oil last week, staining coral reefs, mangrove forests and tranquil lagoons in an unprecedented environmental catastrophe for the archipelago nation.  
 More than 1,000 tonnes has already oozed from the ship, its Japanese operator says, causing untold ecological damage to protected marine parks and fishing grounds that form the backbone of Mauritius' economy.  
 Fuel was being airlifted yesterday by helicopter to the shore, but efforts to pump more from the hold were being thwarted by rough seas and strong winds.

# Bangladesh

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 have conducted 1273,168 tests so far, including the latest 12,849, and found 20.46 percent of the samples to be positive.  
 Nasima said 2,067 more patients have recovered during the 24-hour period, bringing the total number of recoveries to 150,437.  
 The fatalities include a child below 10. Twenty-three of the deceased are aged between 51 and 70 years.  
 Novel coronavirus cases were first reported in China in December last year. In March, the World Health Organization declared it a pandemic.  
 There are now over 19.7 million confirmed Covid-19 cases globally, with more than 729,000 fatalities and 12 million recoveries, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.  
 The United States currently has the highest number of confirmed cases (5044,864) and deaths (162,938). Brazil is the second worst-hit country with 3035,422 cases and 101,049 deaths.  
 Neighbouring India has the third-highest number of coronavirus cases (2215,074) and fifth-highest death toll (44,386), according to JHU.  
 Bangladesh has been recording a high number of cases in recent weeks. Many fear that the number will increase if more tests are conducted.  
 The government has requested the people to properly follow the health guidelines.  
 DGHS official Nasima reiterated that taking precautions is the only way to tackle Covid-19 for now. She urged everyone to follow hygiene rules.