

6 killed, 23 hurt in road accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least six people were killed and 23 injured in road accidents in Gazipur and Natore on Friday night.

Three people were killed and 15 others injured in separate road accidents in Gazipur Friday night, according to UNB.

Police and witnesses said a Mymensingh-bound truck collided with a minibus at Nagpara in Sadar upazila on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at about 11pm leaving two people dead and 15 others injured.

The deceased were identified as Khalilur Rahman, 25, and Abdul Kader, 60.

Besides, a factory workers, Jalil, 25, was run over by a truck at Tetuibari area on Kaliakoir-Nabinagar road on the same night while he was crossing the road.

Our Natore correspondent reports: Three businessmen were killed and eight others injured in a road accident at Baroihati area on Natore-Bogra highway on Friday night.

Hanu Khan, 42, of Faridpur upazila in Pabna and Fazal Pramanik 43 of Chatmohor upazila in Pabna died on the spot while Alauddin Khan, 45, of Aigharia upazila in Pabna succumbed to his injuries at Natore Sadar Hospital.

The accident occurred at 9.30 pm when a Natore bound buffalo-loaded truck from Bogra fell into a ditch at Baroihati area in Natore Sadar Upazila after the driver lost his control over the truck.

The businessmen along with some labourers were on board the truck. The injured were admitted to local hospital.

A case was lodged with the Sadar thana. The truck driver and helper managed to flee.

Double murder Two accused placed on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons, arrested in connection with the double murder case at Sheurapara in the city's Mirpur area on Friday last, were placed on a three-day remand yesterday.

The arrested are Anwar Hossain Dukhu and Amjad Hossain.

Mirpur police produced them before the CMM's Court, Dhaka, in the morning seeking remand for seven days. The court granted only a three-day remand.

The accused were arrested following a murder case filed by the victims' elder brother Abdur Rashid with Mirpur police.

Unidentified miscreants slaughtered two brothers Mizanur Rahman, 30, and Ziaul Haq, 25 on the second floor of their residence at Sheurapara in the early hours of Friday.

Investigation Officer Sub-Inspector Mahfuzul Haq said both the accused were interrogated for about two hours yesterday but they denied their involvement in the killings.

According to local people, the accused Dukhu is a mastermind of various criminal activities at Sheurapara and its adjacent areas.

Truck strike begins on Khulna, Bagerhat, Mongla routes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna division Truck Workers' Union began indefinite strike yesterday on Khulna, Bagerhat and Mongla routes protesting toll collection and political victimisation.

The Truck Workers' Union leaders also threatened indefinite transport strike in the entire southern zone of the country from November 7 if their problems are not solved. The transport strike on Khulna-Mongla and Khulna-Bagerhat routes caused sufferings not only to the people but also hit trade activities. Over 100 trucks loaded with exportable goods and other perishable and non-perishable items remained stranded in east Rupsha. Oil tankers were not also allowed to move.

Truck Workers' Union leaders alleged that a section of ruling party 'outs' have made it impossible for smooth running of trucks and passenger buses. Because, they forcibly occupied bus terminals in Khulna, Mongla and Bagerhat with the help of terrorists. They are collecting tolls sometimes at arms points from drivers of trucks and passenger buses, Abdur Rahim Dudu, general secretary of Khulna Divisional Unit of Truck Workers' Union said. BNP leader Abdul Gaffar Biswas is president of the organisation. If necessary, transport services of entire country will be paralysed, he said.

Saifur

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fering from 'Economic Pneumonia' as the foreign currency reserve has gone down to the lowest level and export-import activities have stalled.

About the development of graded Sylhet, the minister said an engineering college will be established in the division and a flood control project undertaken to save the area from natural calamities.

Chaired by district BNP President MA Haque, the meeting was addressed by, among others, General Secretary Ariful Haque Chowdhury, town committee General Secretary Nasim Hossain and Sadar North Secretary Chamak Ali.

Sand trader

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river Buriganga and took him to a cement godown of BNP leader Habib at Pagla and shot him dead there, police and witnesses said.

They said Ali might have been killed over rivalry in trading of sand, cement and brick. Police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Victim's relatives blamed cement and sand trader Habib for the killing.

Test squad

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tour and the ATC. Bikash was a non-playing member of Bangladesh's Asian Test squad that lost to both Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Multan and Colombo inside three days.

It is a dream come true for 19-year-old Kowshik. The tearaway from Narail was the leading wicket-taker during the A team's tour of India.

And for Mahmud it was a new lease of life after being unceremoniously dumped following the Asia Cup last year.

The 32-year-old all-rounder led the Bangladesh A team to India, where he dazzled both with bat and ball.

SQUAD Naimur Rahman (captain), Khaled Masood (wicketkeeper), Javed Omar, Al-Shahriar, Habibul Bashar, Aminul Islam, Mollahmed Ashraf, Akram Khan, Khaled Mahmud, Mollahmed Sharif, Enamul Hoque, Monjurul Islam, Masralee-bin Murtaza Kowshik and Fahim Mustasir.

ITINERARY

Oct 18-12: First Test, Dhaka
Oct 15-19: Second Test, Chittagong
Oct 23: First ODI, Chittagong
Oct 25: Second ODI, Dhaka
Oct 26: Third ODI, Dhaka

Security strategy for S Asia

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increasing militarisation and recourse to policies that promote disharmony."

The foreign minister also reminded that regional cooperation must also occupy a place of utmost importance in our strategy, and with this objective kept foremost, Bangladesh took the pioneering step to institutionalise the regional cooperation in South Asia through the creation of SAARC.

"We believe we must resolutely work towards straightening the SAARC process which has the best chance of harmonious development in South Asia, we are looking for."

As the foreign minister observed, the "demise of the Cold War did not benefit South Asia in any significant way."

"Numerous factors -- some age-old and some new -- continue to bedevil the inter-state relations in South Asia. Historical antagonism, undefined land and maritime boundaries, conflicts of economic nature, sharing of common resources and above all, turbulent process of nation-building with numerous inter-state problems with cross border implications have continued to adversely impact on the security scenario in South Asia," he continued.

"This conference must address the challenges that we must face together," said the new foreign minister, who took office only three weeks back.

Badrudozza also mentioned that the nuclearisation of South Asia, trans-boundary implications of regional conflicts and "newly emerging issues" have also contributed to the deterioration in the

regional security situation.

"It is important to learn from other regions and devise ways and means to learn to live with problems through effective and timely measures to avoid the outbreak of manageable conflicts."

The foreign minister called for the enhancement of confidence-building measures including people-to-people contact.

Chairman of BISS Shafi Sami felt that it became increasingly necessary to bolster confidence-building measures in the backdrop of dismal bilateral and regional security. It would help narrow mutual differences, reduce tensions and avoid conflicts.

Sami said the SAARC was meant to generate an atmosphere for regional peace and stability through economic cooperation.

German Ambassador Dietrich Andreas suggested that confidence-building measures be shored up, and said the measures could be taken at people-to-people and party-to-party levels, and also through easy movement of students, labourers, academics, and civil and military bureaucrats.

The German ambassador said security is not any longer confined to the military environment.

The ambassador whose country is supporting, for the second year, the holding of the international conference said, "There is a genuine interest of Germany and Europe in security and stability in South Asia; at the same time, it is a normal event that representatives of that region discuss security and stability with representatives of Europe."

The German ambassador said,

"There is no reasonable alternative to peaceful settlement of disputes to compromises, if the actions of the politicians are guided by a genuine interest in the well-being of their respective people."

Dietrich observed that regional cooperation as such seems to be a positive factor for security and stability and wealth.

"Could in this context a new role be assigned to the South Asian Association for Security (SAARC)?" he asked.

The opening session was followed by working sessions. The first one was presided over by Bettzeuge, permanent representative to the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe).

Dr. Amitabh Mattoo, professor of the International Relations and director of the Core Group for the Study of National Security at Jawaharlal Nehru University, presented a paper on "Military CBMs between India and Pakistan: The Conventional and Nuclear Dimensions". Another paper on "Regional Politics and Security in South Asia: An Overview" was presented by Mohammad Humayun Kabir, acting research director, BISS.

Dr Christian Wagner from the Boon University, Germany, discussed how South Asia could benefit from the experience of OSCE.

Prof. Abul Kalam presented a paper on CBMs and Security Cooperation in South Asia, and Fahmida Ashraf on CBMs and Security Cooperation in South Asia: US Perspective.

Conspiracy to kill AL

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gas-based power plants, fertilizer factories and small and big factories and shrink investment to the detriment of country's economy.

"We had taken every step considering the interest of the people," she said reiterating her stand on gas export that it can be done keeping a reserve for 50 years to meet domestic demand.

Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Jalil, Mohammad Nasim, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Tanjim Ahmed Sobel, son of Tajuddin Ahmed, also addressed the meeting.

Referring to the killing of Bangabandhu and four national leaders in 1975, the Awami League president said politics of coup, killing and conspiracy had started in the country through those killings.

People were deprived of their rights and the country plunged into darkness after the killings, she said adding that Awami League through a long struggle had restored the voting right of the people, which has

been snatched away again in Oct 1 election.

The four-party alliance with the help of caretaker government and the Election Commission rigged the election in all possible ways to snatch away the rights of the people, she alleged. "The President was silent support of this rigging."

Hasina said the present government after taking power started killing and torturing. BNP let loose its goons belying what the Prime Minister preaches of launching crusade against terrorism.

She ridiculed the Prime Minister saying that BNP chairperson is talking against corruption when her party men are capturing institutions one after another and indulging in widespread corruption.

Pointing to the market, the Awami League chief said price of essentials has been increasing with BNP taking over power causing worries and sufferings to the commonman.

She said Awami League stood for the commonman, continue to work for them and free the society from torture, repression, deprivation and killing.

South Asia consultation

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opment partners, to members of the civil society, to community leaders and to children from the SAARC member countries.

"The South Asia consultation will prepare strategy for presentation at the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children to be held in Yokohama, Japan, from December 17 to 20 this year," Unicef country representative Shahida Azfar told a media briefing at the Unicef office in Dhaka yesterday.

"The South Asia consultation is one of the six regional consultations being organised worldwide," said KM Ehsanul Haq, secretary to the women and children affairs ministry.

Speaking at the briefing, the secretary said the government had prepared a comprehensive and cross-sectoral National Plan of Action (NPA) against sexual abuse and exploitation of children including trafficking.

He said Bangladesh was committed to implementing the draft NPA and raising awareness of children, parents and other community members about sexual abuse, especially in relation to gender issues.

"The South Asia consultation is a timely opportunity to assess and reaffirm government commitments and discuss the lessons learnt since the First World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm in August 1996," said Naseem-ur-Rehman, chief of the Unicef's communication and information section.

He hoped the South Asia consultation would enable the establishment of partnership with media and civil society, identifying their roles and developing and seeking consensus on a regional strategy, to forge ahead with the Stockholm commitment.

Dr. Waheed Hasan, deputy regional director of the Unicef Regional Office for South Asia, noted that commercial sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse were issues of global concerns, and the indications filtering in from across the world have made it clear that incidents of abuse and exploitation are on the rise.

The exact data on magnitude and extent of the problem was unfortunately not available due to the secrecy that surrounds the issues, he pointed out.

"In South Asia alone, there is an alarming increase in commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children. Most of these children are girls aged between 13 and 18, and the age of child victims is falling. At the same time, reports indicate that the number of boys being sexually exploited and abused is increasing."

Ban polythene

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factories, he said steps will be taken to absorb them in jute and textile sectors.

About three-wheeler autorickshaws, he said the prime minister has already instructed that immediate steps should be taken to eliminate emission of black smoke by these vehicles. An inter-ministerial meeting will be held soon to take a final decision. "I think elimination of autorickshaws black smoke is not a big task and we will be able to do it soon."

The steps initiated by the caretaker government to save the Buriganga from illegal encroachments will continue, he said. Steps will also be taken to free the river from pollution.

Shahjahan Siraj regretted that the Environment Ministry is not being able to discharge its responsibilities freely as more than three other ministries are involved in its activities.

He however said all obstacles to enforcement of environment-related laws would be removed soon.

Unlike the previous government, BNP government will not do politics capitalising on issues concerning rickshaws, autorickshaws and such other vehicles, he said.

Responding to a FEJB suggestion, the minister said the National Environmental Council headed by the Prime Minister would be reactivated immediately and if necessary, recast. Representation of FEJB in all committees relating to environment would be ensured.

Environment Secretary Mahfuzul Islam said, "We have to proceed considering alternative employment of the workers of polythene factories."

The others who spoke included FEJB vice chairman Anwar Hossain Manju, general secretary Mofizur Rahman, joint secretary Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Sharif Shahabuddin and Giassuddin Ahmed, Director General of the Department of Environment Hazardous Waste Chowdhury and high officials of the ministry were present.

Bin Laden's latest

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recently but he did not know exactly when.

Bin Laden's statement appeared to be aimed at Arab leaders who have called for international efforts to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Bin Laden made only brief references to Afghanistan in the short excerpts shown so far on Al-Jazeera. The station said it would show the entire video later.

"The whole West is supporting this unjust, ferocious campaign against Afghanistan, bin Laden said. "No evidence proves that what happened in America (is related to) the people of Afghanistan, and the people of Afghanistan have nothing to do with this, but the campaign is going on, exterminating civilians from children, women and innocents."

AFP, from Riyadh adds: Saudi Arabia's former intelligence chief, Prince Turki al-Faisal, said in an interview yesterday that he met prime terror suspect, Saudi-born Osama bin Laden, several times in Afghanistan.

Prince Turki also told London-based, Saudi-owned Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC) TV that Riyadh tried to have bin Laden

extradited.

Turki, who was relieved of his post "at his request" at the end of August, told MBC in a wide-ranging interview that he visited the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar twice and met Mullah Mohammad Omar, supreme leader of Afghanistan's Islamist ruling Taliban militia.

Prince Turki was tasked to follow up on the issue of Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion.

He said he met bin Laden several times when the latter was assisting the Afghan Mujahideen against Soviet troops, but added that the chief of Al-Qaida organisation had changed.

Honeymoon

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A high-profile reception was organised in Cox's Bazar in honour of State Minister for Communications Salauddin Ahmed, with about 150 arches erected there on the day of reception.

A reception was accorded at the Chittagong Railway Station square in honour of Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, adviser on parliamentary affairs.

Supporters of Oli Ahmed MP organised a reception on the day of his arrival here from Dhaka in front of the Chittagong airport.

Wahidul Alam MP who became whip was also given a reception at the railway station square on his arrival from Dhaka.

A city leader of the BNP on condition of anonymity said, "We want to see the performance of our ministers and MPs through resolving local problems not through their attending receptions."

"Those ministers and MPs are yet to concentrate on our local issues as they still enjoy a honeymoon period."

"To hold such receptions is nothing but a wastage of money and time," echoed another business leader on condition of anonymity.

Sources said some of the receptions were financed beforehand by the lobbyist groups pursuing business deals and interests. Some organisations and individual persons even ran advertisements in local dailies wishing the ministers and MPs of their choice "heartfelt congratulations".

The local dailies, however, made 'brisk business' in the advertisements.

13 hurt as JCD factions clash in Sirajganj

UNB, Sirajganj

Thirteen activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student wing of ruling BNP, were injured in an intra party clash on the Islamia Government College campus here yesterday.

Campus sources said the clash ensued between the members of Arman group and Rubai group over the selection of panel in the college students' union election. The election schedule is yet to be declared.

Both the groups chased each other, blasted crackers and pelted bricks during the 45-minute clash.

Of the injured, four were admitted to the hospital.

On information, police rushed to the spot and lobbed tear gas shells to bring the situation under control.

They also arrested JCD workers Badsha, Mamun, Firoz and Khandakar Abdul Hamid from the spot.

Police were deployed on the campus to avoid further violence.

World Bank suggestions

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reserves will accelerate."

Dwelling on the rising budget deficits, Temple said it rose from 4.1 per cent of GDP in FY '98 to 6.2 per cent and six per cent in FY 2000 and FY 2001, thus increasing the deficit by two per cent of GDP in the last three fiscal years.

"The ballooning losses of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have been significant with net losses of Tk 3030 crore last year," he pointed out. "If SOEs are taken into account, during the last three fiscal years, the consolidated deficit increased from 4.3 per cent to 7.9 per cent of GDP."

He said to meet the deficit, the government has significantly increased its borrowing from the domestic market, crowding out the private sector and incurring higher interest payment obligations. The government's net domestic financing increased from the equivalent of 1.6 per cent of GDP in FY '98 to 3.7 per cent and 3.5 per cent in FY 2000 and FY 2001. The target for FY 2002 is 2.6 per cent of GDP. On top of it, SOE borrowing also increased from 0.3 per cent and 0.2 per cent of GDP in FY '98 and FY '99 to 1.7 per cent and 1.9 per cent in FY 2000 and FY 2001. About 20 per cent of the recurrent budget now has to be devoted to interest payment.

He said there have also been unfavourable trends in the foreign financing of government expenditures as concessional development assistance has been declining and reliance on suppliers' credits increasing.

Slow pace of reforms and implementation of projects along with aid fatigue resulted in slowdown of

foreign assistance. Temple said the government has to cut expenditures on low-priority projects and administrative measures are needed to jack up revenue collection.

"Public utility bill collection has to be improved and tax measures and administrative price increases are needed," he said. "Efficient support to exports are needed without making short-term distortions."

He observed, "There has not been much discipline in ADP, as a result cut in ADP outlay will not have any serious impact on growth."

SAARC summit

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who said on Friday in reply to a question from reporters that there "is a possibility of a SAARC summit in the first week of January in Kathmandu. If that happens, all heads of states and governments will be present."

It is believed that if India does take part in the summit, there is a possibility of a meeting between Prime Minister A B Vajpayee and Musharraf on the sidelines. Barring India, other SAARC members have been keen to attend the summit which was originally slated for November 1999 but was postponed for a variety of reasons.

India's reluctance to attend the summit began to soften since the Vajpayee-Musharraf summit in Agra in July this year and this was followed by a meeting of SAARC Foreign Secretaries in Colombo in August.

BGMEA leaders urge PM

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They also appealed to the Prime Minister her government pursues duty- and quota-free access of Bangladeshi apparels to the US market.

In this regard, Khaleda mentioned her telephone conversation with President Bush in which the US leader assured all-out cooperation to Bangladesh.

She also assured that inter-ministerial meeting would be held for immediate solution of the problems of garment sector.

During the discussion on the steps to curb terrorism, the business leaders lauded the already-taken measures and said it reflected the seriousness of the government.

The BGMEA leaders also suggested that the government should take steps for opening a central bonded warehouse for all the garment industries, setting up a garment village and declare the operations of the Chittagong port essential.

They said, these steps, if taken, would help increase exports and

attract more foreign investment.

The leaders also informed the Prime Minister that they were trying to organise BATEXPO in December and invite foreign buyers to further promote their products.

LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, State Minister for Commerce Barkatullah Bhulu and PM's Political Secretary Haris Chowdhury were also present in the meeting.

Cases against BNP men

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Prof Abdul Mannan and former personal secretary to the then prime minister Sabihuddin.

The Bureau has initiated the process of withdrawing cases against Tareq Rahman, eldest son of Khaleda; Sayeed Iskandar, brother of Khaleda; Home Minister Ataf Hossain Chowdhury, Health Minister (former energy minister) Dr Khandker Mosharrar Hossain, Forest and Environment Minister Shahjahan Siraj and some other BNP ministers and leaders. The cases involve allegations of corruption, misuse of power and misappropriation of funds. Some of the cases are under trial while some are being investigated.

Sources said, the Bureau would close the cases for which no charge sheet has been filed, by filing final reports. Other cases would be withdrawn.

Meanwhile, the two special committees of BAC have visited the Secretariat and have seized over 170 confidential files.

On the basis of preliminary findings, BAC has started investigating corruption charges against

some 50 AL leaders, bureaucrats and businessmen.

In addition, the government imposed a ban on going abroad in case of 17 AL leaders and ministers who include Tofael Ahmed and Mohammad Nasim.

Home Minister Ataf Hossain Chowdhury meanwhile told the press that the Bureau was preparing to file cases against them.

Former Public Prosecutor (PP) Quamrul Islam told The Daily Star that almost all the corruption cases filed against BNP ministers and leaders were stayed by the High Court. Therefore, despite AL government's sincerity to take meaningful steps to check corruption, nothing could be achieved.

In another development, panic has gripped officials of the Bureau who had filed cases against BNP leaders on instruction from the AL government.

Bureau insiders said some of the officials have suddenly become over enthusiastic about filing cases against AL leaders while some have changed their earlier stances overnight.

Chopper downed: Taliban

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Americans have died in both these incidents. You can see the bodies of the Americans on board the helicopters with their uniforms," he said.

US bombers returned to the skies of Afghanistan yesterday in the 28th day of a campaign that has thus far relied almost exclusively on aerial bombardments.