

Screams fill the air at DMCH emergency wing

STAR REPORT

Suddenly, screams and cries reverberated through the emergency wing of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 2.35pm yesterday.

Eleven unconscious patients, all aged 20-plus, including one woman, were being 'unloaded' from a truck at the entrance to the hospital, where a big crowd gathered.

The passengers injured in a road accident on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway at Salepur were carried straight to the casualty ward. For some, there were trolleys available, while others had to be manually carried to the ward all the way from the gate of the hospital.

The medical interns were appalled at the unpleasant scene. But nurses and ward boys from other wings rushed to the spot to help them.

An on-duty doctor examined one after another and sent the patients with head injuries to the neurosurgery ward. Two with fractures in the limbs were shifted to the Pangu Hospital. The injured did not receive proper treatment even half an hour after their arrival.

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Muhuri murder  
Shibir activist, auto-rickshaw driver arrested

UNB, Chittagong

An auto-rickshaw driver was arrested from Andarkilla area in the town on Sunday in connection with the killing of principal of Nazirhat College Gopal Krishna Muhuri.

Police said Giasuddin, 35, resident of a slum adjoining to C and B colony in Rahmatganj, had links

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2 kg of heroin, revolver recovered

9 arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered two kilos of heroin, a foreign made revolver and arrested nine persons from the city over a 24-hour period ending yesterday.

DB Police yesterday evening recovered two kilos of heroin and arrested four persons in this connection from the eastern side of Road No. 14 at Baridhara. The arrested are Aminul Islam alias Shabuj, 30, Nur-e-Alam, 26, Mosharraf, 28, and Delwar Hossain, 27.

In another drive, Tejgaon police recovered a foreign made revolver and six rounds bullet from the western side of Mohakhali bus stand on Sunday night. They also arrested Md. Tofael, 24, and Habibul, 26, in this regard.

Demra police yesterday arrested three members of a baby taxi hijacking team and recovered a hijacked baby taxi from in front of Dania College on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway. The arrested are Mizan alias Bilal, Sujon and Karim.

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Business 6&7

BGMEA seeks more devaluation of taka

Argentina devalues currency, adopts dual exchange rate

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Sun Rises Sun Sets

Jan 8 5-27 pm

Jan 9 6-43 am

Prayer Timings

Jan 8

Fajr 5-30 6-00

Zohr 12-45 1-15

Asr 4-00 4-15

Maghrib 5-34 5-39

Esha 7-15 7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

## 28 die as bus dips into ditch on Dhaka-Aricha road

RAZIUR RAHMAN

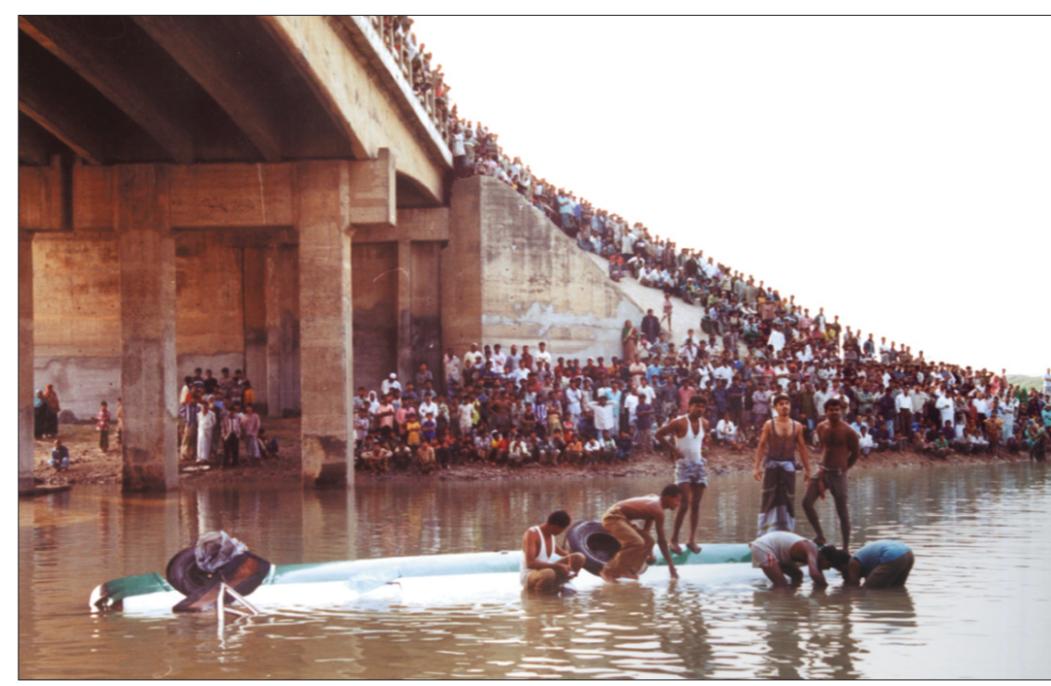
At least 28 people, including two children and three women, were killed and 11 others critically injured yesterday when an over-crowded bus skidded off Shalepur Bridge at Aminbazar on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway into a ditch.

The mini-bus of Janasheba Paribahan, with nearly 50 passengers on board against a capacity to carry 31 passengers, was speeding towards Gabtali Bus Terminal from Dargram in Shaturia under Manikganj district.

Shalepur Bridge, which falls under Savar police station, is about one and half kilometres north of Gabtali Bus Terminal. Divers of Fire Service and Civil Defence recovered 25 dead bodies, including two children and three women, during the rescue operation between 2:15pm and 5:00pm. Three more passengers succumbed to their injuries at nearby clinics.

"Most of the passengers were trapped inside the bus as it tumbled

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Divers probe around the bus, which fell off a bridge near Aminbazar yesterday, in search of victims as people watch anxiously.

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## Govt to engage senior leaders to talk AL into joining JS

Khaleda at press conference

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has reiterated her call to opposition Awami League to attend parliament session.

"We are making the call to the opposition to join the parliament session. We will engage senior leaders to talk to them if needed", she said at a press conference at the Prime Minister's residence yesterday upon her return from the SAARC Summit at Kathmandu on Sunday evening.

She faced a volley of questions at her first press conference after winning the October 1 general election last year.

The prime minister talked at length on post polls politics, the hartal call given by Awami League on Tuesday, war of words between immediate past President Shahabuddin Ahmed and AL, price hike of power, oil and gas, law and order, export of gas, 'transhipment' of some Indian



items, outcome of the SAARC Summit and her initiatives for defusing the Indo-Pak tension.

On the hartal, she said people will not accept it because "those who called it had said they would never call hartal".

On price hike of utilities, she said there was "no alternative" for her government. "The AL government had taken the decision to raise power rates. Oil prices had to be raised in the interest of the nation. We are importing oil by spending foreign exchange but those were being smuggled out of the country".

Defending devaluation of Taka against the US dollar, Khaleda said, after the September 11 terrorist attack in the US, the global economy is going through a bad period having effects on the Bangladeshi economy. "Besides, we also inherited a poor economy due to bad management by the previous government. It left us with no alternatives".

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## Cabinet okays scrap of PSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a major policy decision, the government yesterday approved scrapping the controversial Public Safety Act (PSA).

The decision to repeal the PSA, introduced by the previous Awami League government in February 2000 amidst widespread protest and criticism, was made at the regular weekly cabinet meeting.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia chaired the meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office last night.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed placed the draft of the repeal bill at yesterday's meeting, which was overwhelmingly endorsed by his colleagues.

Repeal of the 'black law' was one of the BNP's vital election pledges. Scrapping of the PSA, the Special Powers Act (SPA) and other black laws, introduction of an

ombudsman, separation of the judiciary are also among the BNP's top poll commitments.

The repeal bill will be placed in the upcoming Jatiya Sangsad session beginning January 31.

Thousands of cases filed under the PSA in the last two years, mostly on political grounds and pending with various courts, will be dismissed after the passage of the repeal bill by the parliament.

The draft bill proposes that all cases filed under the act, including the under investigation and on-trial ones, will be dismissed instantly.

Those now in prison under the PSA will however not get instant benefit. But they would be allowed to file mercy petition with the president as per Article 49 of the constitution.

Sources said the government has decided to consider the mercy petitions of those jailed on political grounds.

According to an official estimate,

some 15,000 people were detained under the PSA in last two years. Of them, about 3000 have already been jailed by courts and thousand others have either got bail or evaded arrests. Except imprisoned ones, all detainees under the act will be released immediately after the Sangsad passes the repeal bill.

In another development, the government made the law regarding the appointment of an ombudsman effective from Sunday, after long 21 years, through a gazette notification. A bill with some minor changes will be placed in the upcoming parliament session for appointment of an ombudsman.

According to official sources, the government is also mulling over the repeal of the SPA and has decided to scrap the repressive articles of this black law, also introduced by the Awami League in 1974. Excepting some 'necessary articles' of the SPA, the entire law will be repealed soon, they added.

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## CEC reviews by-polls preparation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed yesterday directed the officials concerned to maintain neutrality in the by-election in five constituencies on January 17.

Speaking at a meeting on maintenance of law and order during the by-election, the CEC also warned that tougher actions would be taken against those failing to discharge responsibilities as per the law.

The by-polls will take place in Munshiganj-1, Narail-1 and -2, Barguna-3 and Faridpur-4 constituencies vacated -- one by President APM Badruddoza Chowdhury, three by Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina and one by Awami League Presidium member Abdur Razzak.

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## Govt to go for drastic move to streamline city traffic

Major roads to become off-limits to rickshaws, police to share fine proceeds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is taking drastic measures to improve traffic situation and reduce environmental pollution in the city caused by vehicles.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Traffic Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Abu Musa Mohammad Fakhrul Islam Khan said yesterday rickshaws would be 'banned or segregated' on all major thoroughfares of the city shortly.

Use of vehicular horns would be banned on the Panthapath between Sonargaon Hotel and Russel Square and on the road between Jahangir Gate and the Prime Minister's official residence via Crescent Lake from February 1. The ban would be strictly enforced and traffic officials would be instructed to prosecute or fine those violating traffic rules.

The DC was having a discussion with journalists at a city hotel. He said his department was acting on 'green signal' from the ministers concerned to rid the city of traffic problem and pollution.

All truck terminals of the city would be relocated soon and illegal parking of buses and trucks blocking major roads would be put to an end.

To prevent corrupt practices and give incentive to traffic policemen, he

said, a move is underway to give them 40 per cent of the money realised as fines for traffic offences.

Steps have already been taken to relocate Tejgaon truck terminal to a nearby place belonging to Bangladesh Railway and 'recover' two major thoroughfares connecting Sat Rasta in Tejgaon with Karwan Bazar.

Relocation sites have also been fixed for Gabtali, Syedabad, Armanitola and Mohammadpur truck terminals. This would help 'recover' roads and eventually help smooth traffic movement.

Most importantly, the DC said, his department has finalised moves to relocate the bus terminal blocking entire stretch of TBC road behind the Nagar Bhaban. The terminal would be shifted to a site near Kanchpur Bridge and the road would be made off limits for rickshaws to ensure easy traffic on Chittagong Road. He also said the government has decided to ban rickshaws on all the access and exit roads of the city.

Most of the city's bus stoppages would also be rearranged. Old passenger sheds would be demolished, new ones would be built at suitable places and no shops would be allowed there.

Most of the drivers of vehicles have fake driving licences. The traffic wing

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## Three tremors in six hours in Ctg

BSS, Clg

Chittagong and its adjoining areas experienced three minor earthquakes yesterday in six hours, the seismic observatory centre sources said.

An earlier report said the tremor was felt at Kutubdia Island of Cox's Bazar district yesterday.

The first "very minor category tremor" lasted for only 11 seconds beginning 12:46 minute and 51 second BST (Bangladesh Standard Time). The magnitude of the tremor was 2.79 on Richter scale and its epicentre was 90 kilometres from Chittagong, sources said.

The second tremor measuring 2.79 on Richter scale, jolted Chittagong and its adjoining areas at 1:35 minute and 6 second. The mild tremor also lasted for only 11 seconds and its epicentre was also 90 kilometre from Chittagong.

The third minor quake, which lasted only for seven seconds, hit the port city and its adjoining areas at 6:47 minute and 7 second, sources said.

The seismic observatory centre was examining the magnitude of the third tremor and its epicentre till filing of this report at 9:20 pm.

However, directions of the quakes could not be ascertained as the country's lone seismic observatory centre in the city's Ambaran area fails to

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US Congressmen due in city Jan 11

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Two influential US Congressmen will arrive in the city on January 11 on a four-day visit to Bangladesh.

The team is coming on a fact finding mission relating to trade and investment.

The visit of the Congressmen, both Democrats, is seen as very important as they will study the scope for Bangladesh's exports, with particular reference to ready-made garments.

The two --Joseph Crawley and Jim Doran-- are in the 17-member Bangladesh caucus in US Congress.

During their stay here, they will make courtesy call on President Badruddoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan. They will also meet business leaders, particularly members of the BGMEA.

date of the charcoal discovered at Wari-Bateshwar has revolutionised the early historic archaeology of eastern India as a whole, they said.

There was a trade centre at the village in early historic period dating before Pundrabardhan (Bogra), which possibly had contact with contemporary South Asian and Roman civilisations.

The excavation revealed that Buddhism was practised there