

# Opposition demands

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dialogue on October 26 to draw up an outline of a free and fair election.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said the concept of caretaker government has to be reformed as it gave rise to criticism of general elections held under it.

"Caretaker government was conceived to ensure holding of free and fair general elections but after three general elections, we have found many flaws in the activities of caretaker governments," said Jalil.

He also criticised the then president Shahabuddin Ahmed for not consulting political parties in appointing advisers to the caretaker government in 2001, and also for making some retired civil servants advisers.

Jalil demanded a separate secretariat for the EC so that it could discharge its duties independently.

Criticising the government for breaching the age limit of Supreme Court (SC) judges, he said, "The government has increased their age limit to 67 from 65 to appoint a person of its choice as the head of the next caretaker government."

The AL leader also said due to flaws in the electoral process, the present parliament has become a place of businessmen, who comprise 60 to 70 percent of its members.

Jalil said there should be a 'single transparent ballot box' in each polling centre in the next general elections to avoid rigging. And no elections can be held under the present chief election commissioner (CEC), he added.

Workers Party President Rashed

# IO hits back

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ment a year later.

"I would have helped the prosecution if I were in Dhaka. Even after my retirement, the state side could have taken my help. But I was kept away and they did not keep me involved in the case," the former CID officer alleged.

"The witnesses make their statement first to the IO and then before court. If the IO is present during their depositions, it helps trial," Kahar said. "Even I did not get co-operation during my deposition as IO of the case."

Asked whether he was transferred and sent to forced retirement for the change in the government, he said, "There might be political reasons behind it."

A Dhaka court Wednesday sentenced three to death and awarded life imprisonment to 12 for killing Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, M Mansur Ali and AHM Qamaruzzaman who led the Bangladesh government in exile during the Liberation War.

While pronouncing the verdict, the judge of the case blamed the IO for faulty investigation and said all the killers of the four national leaders could not be awarded capital punishment due to his (IO) negligence.

After the long-awaited judgement Public Prosecutor Abdullah Mahmood Hassan also said there was severe weakness in the investigation process and the verdict might have been tougher had the IO not acted on his whims.

Kahar began to investigate the case on August 18, 1996, a day after receiving green signal from the then home ministry. He submitted chargesheet on October 15, 1998.

The investigation officer denied all the accusations against him and said, "I conducted the probe with utmost sincerity and impartiality, consulting the then PP's and state counsels."

Talking on the judge's observation about flawed investigation, he said, "It is unlikely that an IO would be able to perform his duties smoothly 21 years after an incident."

"If there were such flaws in my investigation, how could the court

# NU to turn

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Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). So, it should have been named after Ziaur Rahman when it was established in 1992.

During the previous rule of Awami League, Professor Aftab Ahmad, originally a teacher of political science at Dhaka University, had attracted widespread criticism by proposing changing the national anthem.

**Criminal**

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pistols on October 9. The cadres told Rab that Zamir owned the arms.

Locals suspected Zamir surrendered to a magistrate's court and sought bail in a bid to avoid 'death in crossfire'.

The court rejected the bail petition and sent him to jail.

**2 AK47**

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sanctuary for arms traffickers. Two US arms specialists visited the area in February in the wake of seizure of huge arms and ammunition.

As many as 536 grenades, 32 anti-tank mines, seven anti-personnel mines and six 40mm rocket launchers, among other arms and ammunition, were seized from Nikhongchhari since August last year.

# Banks asked to send staff on leave to check fraud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The central bank has directed all commercial banks to give mandatory leave for 15 days at a stretch to all officials and employees including the managers of their branches every year to check fraud.

During such rotational leave, a system will be developed to review all loans and advances authorised by each branch, said a circular sent to the managing directors of all banks Wednesday by Bangladesh Bank's (BB) money laundering division.

This circular came in the wake of some recently detected frauds. The BB identified 46 accounts with seven banks that had huge loan sanctions against fake savings instruments and fixed deposit receipts. The central bank has already sent files on the fraud to the Bureau of Anti-corruption.

During the yearly leave, all papers and accounts under the disposal of the branch managers will be examined, BB sources said.

The circular also asked for developing a system of transfer for the branch managers and other officials in every two to three years.

The central bank has also asked the banks to verify whether any loans were sanctioned against fake savings instruments and fixed deposit receipts and inform the money laundering division about it by November 18.

Before sanctioning loans against savings instruments or fixed deposit receipts, the banks must verify authenticity of such instruments through their head offices and regional or zonal offices.

# BSF kills one Bangladeshi at Tentulia

UNB, Panchagarh

A Bangladeshi national was shot dead by the Border Security Force (BSF) of India on Bangla Bandha border in Tentulia upazila yesterday.

The BSF personnel of Hatiram outpost opened fire when some youths of village Jagirgot were working on their croplands along the border at noon.

One of them, Faizur Rahman, 24, suffered bullet injuries and died on the spot, while others managed to escape unhurt. The BSF men took away the body.

The BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) authorities contacted the BSF for holding a flag meeting.

# McCullum

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onside but instead gave a return catch to Vettori.

Rafique's feat was the only bright spot for the home supporters on the day. Oram became his 50th victim in the spinner's 13th Test when he edged to Manzarul Islam at slip who took a sharp catch.

McCullum shared two more significant partnerships to shape the team's total.

The right-hander, who took 158 balls to complete his century in the last over before lunch by driving Rafique to the long-on fence, put on 71 runs with Vettori (23) and 57 with James Franklin (23).

Vettori was brilliantly caught one-handed by Nafees at forward short-leg off left-armer Manzarul while Franklin skied a pull off Tapash Baisya to the square-leg fielder Saleh.

23-year-old McCullum gave a chance on 119 but Nafees floored him at mid-wicket off Rafique.

McCullum kept the pressure on, lofting Mohammad Ashraful and Rafique for two sixes.

Having played an entertaining innings spanning 340 minutes and 243 balls, McCullum mistimed a flick and Alok Kapali took an easy catch at short extra-cover to give Rafique his fifth wicket of the match.

The umpires extended the second session by half an hour but the home side could not separate the last two batsmen before tea as Paul Wiseman (28) and Ian Butler (15) added 31 runs. The innings finally folded in the first ball after the interval when Rafique clean bowled Wiseman to end with 6-122.

# Rivals slaughter

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alleged cadre of Jasad Gono Bahini (JGB) at about 3:00am and picked him up at gunpoint.

They then went to the Solua waterbody and caught Noor Ali and Sher Ali, both JGB cadres, who were fishing there.

The killers butchered the three one after another. Noor Ali and Sher Ali died on the spot, while Mannan was still alive when locals rescued him in the morning. But he died on the way to Rajshai Medical College Hospital.

Police sent the bodies to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy. They said the slayings might be a sequel to the fierce rivalry between the outfits over occupying the Solua waterbody and the adjacent area.

On October 18, four cadres of JGB were killed in a gunfight with police at Chapagaachi area in sadar upazila of the district.

Sources said at least 100 people have been killed in the last nine months, compared to 55 in the preceding three months.

About seven underground political outfits with at least 1,000 armed cadres in 15 factions operate in the district.

The nine camps of joint forces set up to contain violence in the district have failed so far to make any impact, locals alleged.

# RMG loses edge on no care

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Cotton Bangladesh, a quarterly magazine, says the absence of a national policy on cotton and CDB's neglect contributed to the underdevelopment of cotton, a potential sector for Bangladesh.

Readymade garments will face a sharp competition in the post multi-fibre agreement (MFA) period because of high-priced cotton imports and lack of backward-linkage industry, says Bangladesh Cotton Association Vice-Chairman Abul Kashem Ahmed.

The prices of cotton will be at least 15-20 percent less if it is produced locally and could cut the production cost of readymade garments significantly, says an official with Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), adding: "It will make the garment sector more competitive."

Each pound cotton from the global market costs 65 cent on average and the textile industry will have to import about 20 lakh bales of cotton a year at more than \$400 million, the official said.

Bangladesh produces less than 1 lakh bale of cotton that translates into 5-8 percent of total consumption a year, he added.

CDB Executive Director Abdul Baten says the board asked the agriculture ministry to appoint adequate numbers of researchers for intensive research in a proposal

# Stay alert against all evil forces

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Hindus in Bangladesh.

This was a long cherished demand of the Hindus, the function was told by State Minister for Water Resources Goutam Chakraborty, who is also the convenor of Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Kalyan (welfare) Front.

Responding to the demand of the Hindu leaders, the prime minister assured that every year such a function would be held to exchange greetings on the occasion of Durga Puja.

Leaders of different organisations like Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Kalyan (welfare) Front, Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Front, Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad, and the government patronised Bangladesh Hindu Dharmiyio Kalyan Trust were present in the function.

The leaders presented the prime minister with a bouquet and had group photo session with her.

Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister said religious, cul-

# Hasina rejects

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before leaving for the United States.

"Jail is supposed to be the most secured place in a civilised society," Hasina said. "If anyone is killed inside jail, the responsibility rests with the state to bring the perpetrators to justice and prove the crime. But ironically, the state here has shielded the killers."

She accused Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of interfering in the trial by rewarding one of the prime accused with promotion when the trial was still on.

Talking about the skyrocketing prices of the essentials, the opposition leader reiterated her party's demand that the government step down for the welfare of the people.

She said, "The BNP-Jamaat-led coalition has proved its inability to govern the country and failed in every aspect."

She said the present government has failed to contain the price hike because the prime minister and her family members, ministers and the ruling alliance lawmakers are involved in the profiteering at the expense of the people's misery. The former prime minister claimed her government had been successful in keeping the prices of essentials normal all along, even in Ramadans.

Referring to Bangladesh's

# 4,000 lives

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Lack of proper knowledge of road safety among people is one of the major causes of these road accidents, the speakers said.

Ahead of Road Safety Day today, Brac and road safety cell of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) organised the seminar. UK based Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) presented an 'international guideline' principally aimed at transport safety practitioners.

Addressing as the chief guest, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda said the road safety issues are largely neglected in the country, and the government, NGOs and different communities should work together in this sector.

"The relatives of road accident victims can file case demanding compensation, but because of the court fee most of them do not go through this process," he said. He suggested change of the system in which the complainants can pay the court fee after

that he says the government is considering. An inter-ministerial committee is drafting a bio-safety policy, he mentioned.

In the absence of care for cotton, the production of other crops like flower, maize, banana, papaya and other vegetables became more popular to farmers as most of them can grow thrice a year and meet the direct demand of food, Baten said.

In a calculation, he showed maize of Tk 50,000 could grow in one hectare land in four to five months with Tk 28,000 in production cost and the cotton of Tk 54,000 can grow in the same land in six to seven months at the production cost of Tk 25,000.

Despite more profit in cotton production, farmers grow maize or other food crops as cotton takes more time, Baten said, adding: "We need more research to find the ways to cut the cotton production time and invent pest-resistant varieties."

Cotton also faces competition on the global market as the most intensive cotton-growing countries, especially the US and EU countries, hugely subsidise the farmers, said CDB's Senior Marketing Officer MG Rasul.

Citing the US government's \$12.47 billion subsidies to farmers between August 1999 and July 2003, Rasul said the US kept itself as the world's second-largest producer only because of its subsidies.

tural and social festivals enhance mutual interaction and cordiality among various sections of people.

"This festival will help us to come closer and inspire us to work together for national development," the prime minister told the function.

Conveying her greetings, the prime minister thanked the Hindu community leaders for putting on hold the use of microphone and playing of bands and music during the festival in times of iftar and tarabi prayers by their Muslim brethren.

Listing various development programmes and welfare activities of the government for the Hindus, she said nearly 20,000 puja mandaps have been set up across the country this year breaking all previous records. Steps have also been taken to celebrate Durga Puja peacefully.

She said this year's Durga puja has a different significance as the festival of the Hindus was being celebrated during Ramadan, the holy month of fasting by Muslims.

"Two communities of this country are performing religious rituals at the same time; I hope this will further

recor of being the most corrupt country for four consecutive years, she said it is the result of alliance government's rule, as they seem to have no other business but making money through corruption.

During the month-long visit in the US, Hasina will attend an international conference of women in New York. On her way, she will have a two-day stopover in London and attend party programmes.

She is expected to return home on November 21.

Hasina once again blaming the August 21 grenade attacks on the present government said, "Can she deny that she had engaged Rashid-Dalim clique to bring about the incident? Can she deny involvement of herself or any member of her family or the cabinet in the carnage?"

Senior party leaders including Zillur Rahman, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed , Suranjit Sengupta, Abdur Razzak, Motia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Obaidul Quader were present at the airport to see off Hasina.

AL Presidium Member Kazi Zafrullah and former diplomat Ziauddin accompanied the AL chief

to the US.

The US share in world exports, which was 17 percent in 1998-99, increased to 42 percent in 2002-03 and reduced domestic cotton consumption. The EU countries also pay cotton farmers \$1.07 billion a year in subsidy, says a Wall Street Journal report.

Those countries also do many researches and develop a high-yielding variety of cotton that reduces pesticide and production cost, Rasul said.

"Control of pesticide reduces at least 40 percent of production cost and if we can do it successfully, we can profit from more production."

Baten says the government keen to produce more cotton initiated a project in 2001 with the financial support of the European Union and technical support of the Food and Agriculture Organisation for reducing pesticide use.

Under the project scheduled to end in October, the CDB trained cotton farmers in the south and is motivating them to spread their knowledge to others.

A soil survey in the 1960s revealed Bangladesh has about 1.50 lakh hectares of cotton cultivable higher land, which another survey in 2003 said decreased to 1 lakh hectares.

enhance mutual cordiality and harmony."

She reiterated that no one in Bangladesh is a minority. "All are citizens of Bangladesh and their destiny linked with this country and its soil."

Goutam Chakraborty thanked the prime minister for the day's function.

"You've created a new history today," he said hoping that all governments in future would follow the tradition that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia introduced.

The minister thanked the government and the Muslims for cooperating in celebration of Durga puja across the country peacefully.

Thanking the prime minister for her effort and initiative, Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad President Maj Gen (ret'd) CR Dutta invited her to visit puja mandaps.

The event at the ICC would raise the morale of the Hindus, he said.

Mentioning some problems, Dutta said the prime minister is the only person who can solve the problems.

# 3 busy lobbying

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The BNP had command had earlier assured Obaidur Rahman that he would be made a minister if acquitted of charges in the jail killing case, party sources said.

They also hinted at a possible reshuffle in the cabinet soon to include Obaid in it.

Several ministers and top leaders of the BNP congratulated Obaid on his acquittal.

Meanwhile, leaders of three factions of the JP led by HM Ershad, Anwar Hossain Monju and Nazir Rahman Manjur said they are not sure which faction Shah Moazzem now belongs to. Some sources however claimed he recently expressed his allegiance to the leadership of pro-government Bangladesh Jatiya Party led by Nazir.

Shah Moazzem Plans to join the BNP along with his followers and contest the next general election from Munshiganj-1 constituency. Although there is opposition within the BNP about his joining it, a section of the party leaders think he would be a suitable candidate for the Munshiganj-1 seat against Mahi B Chowdhury, MP, some sources said.

Khairuzzaman is likely to be appointed an ambassador.

# New anti-mosquito

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must continue, the DCC's new chief health officer explained.

Azizul, who is on deputation from the Army Medical Corps, said the expenditures on the purchase of adulticide and the fogging machines were simply a waste of public money.

"I believe continued spraying of larvaecide in the city areas can considerably contain growth of mosquito population, and it is much cheaper and 10 times more effective than the previously used adulticide," he said.

On the price of adulticide, Azizul said, "My predecessors had purchased adulticide at a rate as high as Tk 384 a litre whereas we recently found the same insecticide available at Tk 282 a litre. Each time the DCC buys at least 55,000 litres; so you can imagine how much public funds we wasted earlier."

He also pointed out that it takes at least five months' preparations to buy such a huge quantity of adulticide (55,000 litres) and the stock hardly lasts four to five weeks.

The DCC has enough stock of larvaecide for the rest of the year. Besides, it has purchased 5,800 litres of Malaria oil B and 585 litres of Anvil for aerial spraying in case of emergency, DCC sources mentioned.

# Millions desperate

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Daily Star: "The blocked channels in Fatulla, Pagla, Postogola and Shyampur, which once streamed into the Buriganga, have to be opened."

At least four permanent pump houses and five regulator sluice gates are needed in the area to cut waterlogging, Akhter Hossain said, adding only one pump house in Shimrail in Narayanganj is now in operation to pump the DND water into the Shitalakkhya.

Twenty pumps under Wasa are in operation in different places of DND with the capacity of pumping out 5 cubic feet a second.

Asked, Rajuk Chief Engineer M Emdadul Islam said: "We started a project three months ago to lay out a new detailed plan on the DND and its environs, which is different from the 1999 small-scale DND project." The 1999 plan stalled in strong public opposition.

The new plan will be finalised in two years with the participation of local residents to avoid disputes, he said.

Kazi Golam Mustafa, chief engineer (central zone) of Bangladesh Water Development Board, said 1,300 hectares of the 5,679 hectares land in the area are still cultivable.

"About 85 percent of the land was used in constructing houses, mills and factories and roads, while 15 percent is still cultivable."

About 370 lakh cubic metres of water were logged inside the DND during Bangladesh's record downpour on September 11-17, which was pumped out to 250 lakh cubic metres. But another spell of rain added 130 lakh cubic metres of

# Check extortion

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also asked for immediate actions against extortion from businessmen and the freight trucks plying the highways. The rampant extortion accounts for the rise in prices of essential items, they observed.

They said raiding the warehouses and kitchen markets would not help in controlling the price spiral. The law enforcers should better go all out against the middlemen who deprive farmers of fair prices while extract excessively from the end-users.

The government needs concerted efforts involving the concerned ministries and law enforcing agencies to address the price hike issue, they said.

The business leaders, however, lauded the government for posting Rab and other law-enforcers at the shopping malls. They said the law-enforcers' presence has improved the security situation at the markets with the Eid approaching.

They said silent extortion is still going on though law and order has improved and direct toll collection in some cases has been reduced by the law enforcers' prompt actions.

They also urged the government to help rid the business community of phone threats.

FBCCI President Abdul Awal Mintoo led the delegation of businessmen. Coming out of the meeting, he told The Daily Star that the state minister has assured them of clearly defining the roles of Rab and other law enforcing agencies in checking the price spiral.

"The minister has also assured us that the ministry will take an integrated role to contain the spiral of prices. He has sought cooperation from businessmen in stopping the silent extortion," Mintoo said.

The minister has asked the inspector general of police (IGP) to take steps to ease traffic congestion in the city especially in Motijheel and stop terrorism centring the garment wastes ahead of Eid. He also said that the government is already procuring vehicles for police to patrol the highways for checking extortion.

Secretaries in charge of home

# Mahanabami

**FROM PAGE 1**

beautiful girl between six and 12 is adorned in flowers and jewellery, alta and tilak and worshipped in front of the idol of goddess Durga.

People from all walks of life visited different Puja mandaps in the city including those at Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University, Ramna Kali Mandir, Siddheswari Kali Mandir, and temples in Tanti Bazar, Shankhari Bazar, Bangla Bazar, Mohakhali and Farm Gate areas.

Leaders of all political, social and cultural organisations and members of civil society visited Durga Puja mandaps and exchanged greetings with Hindus.

Kumari Puja was also held at Ramkrishna Mission at Misson Para in Narayanganj amid much fanfare, our Narayanganj correspondent reported.

Many programmes including aroti, blood donation, distribution of prasad, and offering anjali are being held at the Puja mandap premises every day. Fairs have begun at adjoining places of the Puja mandaps.

Durga Puja, the greatest extravaganza of Hindus, is the worship of 'Shakti' or the divine power symbolised by Devi Durga. The worship is the symbol of the fight between the good and evil, the dark forces eventually succumbing to the divine.

water to waterlogging.

Urban expert Professor Nazrul Islam said the runaway construction of houses and other structures worsened the situation.

"If Wasa takes the responsibility to resolve the drainage problem, it will be better," he said, adding Wasa has enough expertise.

Referring to fast-track urbanisation in Dhaka without preserving canals and other water bodies as devastating, he said there were several canals in the DND.

He suggested new canals should be excavated zoning the DND into three parts -- east, west and south -- to minimise waterlogging.

Golam Mustafa recommended that the DND should be brought under Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to provide urban amenities because of high population concentration leading to fast urbanisation of DND area, which was once home to only 20,000 people.

Ruling BNP lawmaker Salauddin Ahmed of Dhaka-4 constituency that covers most of DND area said a step would be taken by the year-end to retrieve and excavate the grabbed canals and channels in the DND for easy flow of rainwater.

M Giasuddin Ahmed, lawmaker of the Narayanganj-4 constituency that straddles part of DND area, said he sent a proposal to government high-ups to hand the charge of DND to Wasa to manage drainage better, adding a new survey is crucial to drainage management.

The DND dam was built between 1962 and 1968 as part of an irrigation project to farm land three times year, WDB officials said.

# Alo reporter abused by SI in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna correspondent of Prothom Alo Shamsuzzaman Shahin was abused by a police sub-inspector (SI) yesterday at Rupsha east ferry ghat in Rupsha in the district.

Shahin locked in an altercation with SI Daud Ali over parking of his motorcycle when he was going to Khulna bureau office of Prothom Alo. SI Daud of Rupsha Police Station threatened to break him at the waist, using abusive words against the daily.

At one stage, Havilder Giasuddin of Rupsha police outpost made an attempt to hit Shahin with his rifle. But Shahin escaped unhurt as some people intervened and rescued him from further police assault.

The Prothom Alo bureau office in a statement said some officers of the district and Rupsha police are irate over publication of news of mass arrest, illegal toll collection, excesses during anti-crimine drives and torture of innocent arrestees during interrogation.

# 14 die

**FROM PAGE 12**

Mymensingh Medical College Hospital in a critical condition, while others given first aid.

In Gazipur, Sharif, 20, a pedestrian, was run over and killed by a truck near Konabari patrol pump. Bishwanath, 40, travelling in a rickshaw was hit and killed by a truck at Bhogra. A tempo overturned on a road at Chowdhurybari, killing garments worker Bilkis, 25, on the spot and injuring eight others.

Our Kushtia Correspondent reported that six people were killed and 20 others injured in road accidents in Kushtia and Jhenidah yesterday.

In Kushtia, One Iswarul Islam, 19, son of Somser Mondol of Choudhury village under Mirpur upazila was killed when a Dhaka bound bus hit him on Kushtia-Meherpur road at Nimitla at about 7:30pm.

Russell, 7, son of Sahnurul Ali of village Bahadurpur in Bheramara upazila was killed when a locally made vehicle, Karimon Paribahan, hit him at the village at about 2:00pm.

An unidentified person was killed and 10 were injured when a minibus hit a rickshaw van at Gopalpur in sadar upazila at about 7:30pm.

Police said a bus of Rony paribahan from Kushtia hit a rickshaw van from behind, leaving one Badsha Hossain, 25, of village Ponti in Gopalpur upazila dead and injuring 10 other passengers of the van.

Two persons were killed when a Kushtia bound truck from Jessore hit them from behind at Sheikhpara Bazaar in Saikupa upazila of Jhenidah about 10:00am. The dead are Shamsuddin Biswas, 48, of Singhnagar and Zakir Hossain, 27, of village Tribeni of the upazila.

The driver and helper of the truck managed to flee, leaving the truck at Madhupur bazar. Police seized the vehicle.