

14 killed, 98 injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least 14 people were killed and 98 others injured in separate road accidents in Dhaka, Sylhet and Manikganj yesterday.

BDNEWS adds: Six people were killed and 70 others injured when five motor vehicles collided at Taltoia on the Ashulia-Tongi road at about 5:00pm yesterday.

Witnesses said a passenger-laden Max fell into a ditch when a bus hit it and three other vehicles, including a car, also rammied the bus.

The driver of the human hauler and three others died on the spot while two others succumbed to their injuries at local hospitals and clinics.

The identity of the dead could not be known immediately.

The other vehicles were also damaged seriously. The road accident disrupted communications on the highway leading to a severe traffic jam.

Police and locals said the injured were rushed to different local hospitals and clinics, and several others to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Meanwhile, a truck driver was crushed under the wheels of a truck at Postagola under Shyampur Police

Station early yesterday.

Police said a speeding truck ran over Babul, 30, son of Gani Khan, when he was crossing the road near Islami Bank at about 5:30am.

The body was sent to Mitford Hospital for autopsy.

Meanwhile, a child was killed when a human hauler ran over him at Monu Bepari Dhal area of Jinjira in Keraniganj yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Azhar Islam, 7, son of Ibrahim of Monu Bepari area.

Witnesses said a Kholamora-bound human hauler coming from Nayabazar at around 9:00am hit the child leaving him dead on the spot.

Another report from Manikganj adds: At least 20 Ijtima devotees were injured early yesterday in a road accident on the Dhaka-Aricha highway at Uthlin in Manikganj.

Witnesses said the accident occurred when an Ijtima-bound bus carrying 60 devotees collided with a truck.

The injured were rushed to the Manikganj Sadar Hospital and Uthli Health Complex.

Our STAFF CORRESPONDENT from Sylhet reports: At least six people were killed in separate road accidents in Sylhet yesterday. Of

them, three people were killed as a speeding truck collided with an auto-rickshaw from opposite direction on Sylhet-Badaghat road at about 9:30am.

The dead was identified as auto-rickshaw driver Abdul Jalil, 25, of village Kumargan and passengers--Kawzar Ahmed, 26, of village Shiberbazar and Nazir Ahmed, 28, of village Noapara under Sylhet Sadar upazila.

Police seized the truck and the auto-rickshaw. The locals put up a barricade on the road for about two hours following the accident. The police later cleared the road. The truck driver managed escape.

Three others were killed and eight others injured in a separate road accident when a Sylhet-bound speedy bus from Habiganj collided with a truck at Suargan on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway.

The dead were identified as Sohail Ahmed, 25, of village Kazirgan of Biswanath upazila, Sirajul Islam, 45, a gatekeeper of private bank at Tajpur and an unidentified man aged about 45 years, local people said.

The injured were rushed to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

Asma Kibria urges people to observe 'Blue for Peace' programme today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asma Kibria, wife of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, yesterday urged the people to observe the 'Blue for Peace' programme across the country from 10:00am to 10:30am today to protest all political killings.

To commemorate the first death anniversary of Kibria, Asma Kibria and her family members along with the members of the civil society will line up in front of her house at Dhanmondi in the city today as part of the programme.

In a statement yesterday, Asma Kibria requested the people to line up along roads anywhere during that time wearing blue dress or carrying anything blue in support of the 'Blue for Peace' programme.

Kibria, also an Awami League leader, was killed in a grenade attack at Habiganj on January 27 last year.

Initiated by Asma Kibria, the 'Blue for Peace' programme is being held every Thursday to press for the demand for trial of the killers of Kibria and others who were the victims of political killings.

This peaceful demonstration will continue until the perpetrators of the killings are brought to justice, Asma said in her statement.

Women police barrack inaugurated at Rajarbagh

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A women's police barrack offering accommodation for 500 personnel, the first of its kind in the country, was inaugurated at Rajarbagh Police Line in the city yesterday.

State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar formally inaugurated the barrack constructed at a cost of Tk 50 million with the financial assistance of the United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP).

Inaugurating the dormitory, Babar said the man arrested in West Bengal is not the Jama'atul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) chief Shaekh Abdul Rahman. He was Abidur Rahman, another JMB adherent.

He said opening of the women police barrack has ushered in a new horizon for the women police who will now be able to work with much ease.

He asked them to work with honesty and sincerity. There are about 1000 women police in the country. Of them, about 400 work in Dhaka.

Earlier, the women police had no dormitory. Most of the women police had to reside at their personally managed residences and some others at an abandoned building inside the Rajarbagh Police Line.

The function was also addressed by IGP Abdul Quayum and director general of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) Aziz Sarkar with Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police SM Mizanur Rahman in the chair.

'Raise awareness among youths to prevent HIV/Aids'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday called on the religious and community leaders, parents and policymakers to play an effective role in raising awareness about HIV/Aids among the youths to prevent the spread of the infection.

They said the country is more vulnerable to the deadly disease because of the neighbouring countries where the prevalence of HIV infection is much higher.

They also called on the people of all strata to come forward to combat the transmission of the infection.

Padakhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra organised the workshop on 'Advocacy and sensitisation of the religious and community leaders, parents and policy makers on HIV/Aids' at the Cirdap auditorium in the city, with Md Aminul Islam Bhuiyan, additional secretary of the health ministry, as chief guest.

The workshop was addressed by Dr Md Abdus Selim, programme manager of STD/Aids programme, Edward Olney, country representative of Save The Children, USA, Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Dr ASM Matir Rahman and Executive Director of Padakhep Iqbal Ahmad.

Dr Abdus Selim emphasised the role of media in checking the spread of HIV/Aids, pointing out that 87 percent of adolescents has become aware of Aids pandemic through electronic and print media.

Iqbal Ahmad called on the NGOs working at the grassroots level to be more active to combat the disease.

Representatives from 36 NGOs and officials of government and private organisations took part in the workshop.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia waves to the crowd at a huge public meeting at Niaz Mohammad High School ground in Brahmanbaria yesterday.

PHOTO: PIO

BADC exempted from paying Tk 2,043cr in liability Govt to pay back the money to donors

UNB, Dhaka

The government bailed out the moribund Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) from a big burden of paying Tk 2,043 crore in Debt Service Liabilities (DSL) to foreign donors, incurred by the state-owned entity way back since 1961.

Officials said the cabinet committee on economic affairs at a meeting yesterday took the decision lifting the staggering financial load from the frail shoulders of the BADC onto the government.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman chaired the meeting at the Secretariat.

As per the decision, the government itself is now responsible to pay back the money to the multilateral donor countries and agencies from which the assistance had come under different projects on irrigation and fertilizer import.

Sources in the crisis-ridden corporation said they had been requesting the government for the last 10 years to grant them immunity from the huge sums of DSL.

Saifur emerging from the meeting told the journalists that the BADC was exempted from DSL as it has not the capability to pay the money.

"How they will give the money... they themselves are plunged into various problems," he said about the agricultural development corporation that once faced with the stark fate of getting extinct.

Replying to a query, he said the government is thinking about striking a balance in the price of fuel oils on daily basis.

"It is under process," he said and justified external market situation to justify a possible government option for increasing oil prices further.

"Oil is being sold on the international market at 69 US dollar per

barrel, but we are selling at 40 US dollar only. The government cannot provide such gigantic subsidy."

He said if the oil prices on the world market come down, the government will reduce the price on a par with the international rates.

The government has finalised the draft of the Public Procurement Act (PPA) that will be placed before the cabinet for endorsement very quickly, he added.

The cabinet committee meeting also approved in principle the hand-over of CSD to BEPZA and modalities for resolving the crisis in the textile mills sold out by the Textile Ministry and the Privatization Commission.

The meeting, however, referred to the next meeting for detailed discussion on the decision taken to vest authority in the Textile and Jute Ministry to sell out the mills under the ministry instead of the Privatisation Commission.

Sub-regional parliamentary seminar on Aids begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Second Sub-Regional South Asian Parliamentary Seminar on HIV/Aids begins in the city today.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the two-day seminar at Sonargaon Hotel, organised by the Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), an international organisation.

Renowned health expert and Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for HIV/Aids in Asia and the Pacific Nafis Sadik will read out the keynote paper.

About 50 parliamentarians from 13 countries will take part in the seminar to discuss how can the HIV epidemic in South Asia be characterised and how can the parliamentarians and community leaders fight stigma of HIV and discrimination.

Four working sessions on HIV in South Asia, political commitment, care and treatment and resource mobilisation will be held during the seminar, said Zahir Uddin Swapan MP at a press briefing at the National Press Club yesterday.

Ziaur Rahman Khan MP, co-chairman of the organising committee, said HIV/Aids is one of the highly prioritised problems across the world and it needs to be addressed at policy level.

The seminar will also reassess the achievement of the first Sub-Regional South Asian Parliamentary seminar on HIV/Aids held in Islamabad last year, he added.

Chief Whip of the Opposition Abdus Shahid MP, Ruhul Kuddus MP and Sazia Rafi, secretary general of PGA, were also present.

President, PM greet Indian counterparts

BDNEWS, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia greeted their Indian counterparts on the occasion of the Republic Day of India to be observed today.

Iajuddin in a message to Indian President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam on the occasion extended his heartfelt greetings and felicitations.

The president in his message said as close neighbours, Bangladesh and India enjoy friendly relations that are characterised by the spirit of understanding and cooperation. He said "we believe that through sustained efforts we shall be able to take our relations to new heights in the days ahead".

Khaleda in her message to Indian Premier Dr Manmohan Singh said "on behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh and on my own behalf, I would like to extend to your excellency and through you to the friendly people of India our sincere greetings and felicitations on the republic day of India".

She said Bangladesh attaches great importance to her relations with India. We are confident that the friendly relations existing between the two countries will be further strengthened in the days ahead. She said "I look forward to working in concert with you to realize our shared vision of the mutual benefit of four peoples".

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of Shirea Hossain, wife of former IGP Md Ismail Hossain, will be held at Azad Mosque in Gulshan in the city after Asr prayers tomorrow, says a press release.

All have been requested to attend.

Shirea passed away in Madinah in Saudi Arabia on January 19 after completing Hajj and buried at the Zannatul Baqi in Madina.

SILVER JUBILEE OF NIJERA KORI 2-day cultural programme begins Jan 27

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nijera Kori, an NGO working for the welfare of the landless people, will hold a two-day cultural programme beginning on January 27 in the city as part of its silver jubilee celebrations.

Landless people from across the country, who are associated with the organisation, will perform at the programme, including dramas and songs, said Khushi Kabir, coordinator of the NGO, yesterday.

The programmes will be held at Rabindra Sarobar at Dhanmondi, beginning at 3:00pm daily.

The yearlong silver jubilee celebrations began at Nungola in Bogra on June 9 last year, Khushi Kabir told journalists at a view exchange meeting at the NGO's office in the city.

Nijera Kori has been working to raise awareness among the landless and rootless people about their rights and to help organise them so that they can realise their demands on their own, she said.

The organisation operates its activities throughout 1,323 villages in 17 districts.

Masud Bibagi, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Hasina Akhter, Rezanur Rahman and Manisha of Nijera Kori also spoke at the function.

Robbers kill housewife

Loot valuables worth Tk 2 lakh in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Armed robbers killed a middle-aged housewife and wounded five others of a family and looted valuables worth around Tk 2 lakh at Patiya in Chittagong in the early hours of yesterday.

The dead was identified as Fatema Khatun, 45, while the injured are Alamgir, 18, Jashim, 16, Jahangir, 24, Ajim, 32 and Abdur Rahman, 60.

Sources said some 25 robbers entered the house of Abdur Rahman at Shiklabaha of Patiya upazila at around 2:00am.

They looted cash money of around Tk 10 thousand and five tolas of gold ornaments keeping the family members at gunpoint.

As the housewife tried to resist, the robbers shot her from close range. She died on way to hospital.

The robbers also opened indiscriminate fire injuring Alamgir and Jashim and beat up other three including the housemaster.

The gang later entered the neighbouring house of Kamal, an expatriate, and looted goods worth Tk 2 lakh from both the houses, sources said.

Deliver anti-militancy sermons at Ijtima Babar urges ulemas

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Against the backdrop of country-wide bomb attacks, State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar yesterday urged the Ulemas (Islamic scholars) to deliver anti-militancy sermons at the three-day Bishwa Ijtima at Tongi beginning tomorrow.

A five-tier security layer, meanwhile, was set up at the entrances deploying over 22 thousand security forces from the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), Police, Armed Police Battalion (APBn) and Ansar in and around the Ijtima ground to ward

off any subversive act.

The state minister made the call when he, accompanied by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Abdul Quayum, Rab-DG Abdul Aziz Sarkar and DMP Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman, went to the Ijtima ground to witness the preparations and security measures.

According to the witnesses about two-square kilometres of the Ijtima ground have been brought under the tight security net of Rab and other forces.

Although, the Ijtima will begin tomorrow, the participants have already started arriving at the Ijtima ground from different parts of the country as well as from different countries.

Besides, the security measures, the government have taken different other measures for the welfare of the participants. Bangladesh Railway will run special trains while roads and river-ways authorities will also take additional measures for them.

According to sources, Rab members aided by the army personnel will also set up bomb disposal units. Helicopter will patrol over the sky of Tongi and 54 CCTVs, 20 video cameras and observatory towers will also be set up around the venue.

Sources said of the 22,000 forces deployed around Ijtima ground, at least 1683 Rab members would be deployed with two helicopters and bomb disposers. They will keep strict watch by setting up eight observatory towers, some control rooms and sub-control rooms at different points of the Ijtima ground.

The victims were identified as Abu Bakar, 18, and Sadekur Rahman, 17, of Khudir Kuti village in Ulipur upazila.

BDR sources said BSF troops trespassing into Bangladesh territory abducted them On Monday noon from Narayanpur border in Nageswari upazila.



PHOTO: STAR

Edward Olney, country representative of Save The Children, USA, speaks at a workshop at the Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Iqbal Ahmad and on his left are Md Aminul Islam Bhuiyan and Maj Gen (Retd) Dr ASM Matir Rahman.