

Road accidents kill 6

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and 50 others injured in separate road accidents in Gaibandha and Comilla yesterday.

OUR CORRESPONDENT from Gaibandha reports: Two people were killed and 15 others injured in a road accident on Rangpur-Bogra highway at Hawyakhana in Gobindagnaj upazila early hours of yesterday.

The accident occurred a passenger coach hit a roadside tree and fell into the ditch, leaving its driver and

helper dead on the spot and 15 passengers injured.

Police said the accident occurred when the driver of the Dhaka-bound night coach from Lalmonirhat lost control over the steering while crossing Katakhlir bridge.

The dead were identified as driver Idris Ali,48, inhabitant of Dhaka and helper Mahabub Alam, 30, of village Hatibandha in Lalmonirhat.

Police rushed to the spot and rushed the injured passengers to Gobindagnaj Health Complex.

UNB from Comilla reports: Four people were killed and 35 others injured in a collision between two buses in Daudkandi on Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday afternoon.

Police said the buses collided head-on at Maikpara at about 2:00pm, killing four people on the spot.

The identities of the deceased -- two women, a man and a child -- could not be known immediately.

Of the injured, 10 were admitted to different hospitals in critical condition.

AL, BNP to stage demonstration during CA's address at UNGA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US chapters of BNP and Awami League (AL) will stage demonstrations in front of the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York on September 27 when Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed will address the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly.

They will stage the demonstrations demanding immediate release of former prime ministers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina and other detained political leaders, and announcement of a election schedule, according to a report of New York-based news agency News World.

BNP took the decision at a meeting chaired by US unit Vice President Sulaiman Bhuiyan at a restaurant at Jackson City in New York.

General Secretary of AL US unit Sazzadur Rahman Sazzad said they would stage demonstrations at two other places--Columbia University and Asia Society--while the chief adviser will address the UN General Assembly.

Fazal M Kamal joins bdnews

Fazal M Kamal, a former editor of the Holiday and the Bangladesh Times, yesterday joined bdnews24.com as executive director for News and Public Affairs, says a press release.

Kamal served as a diplomat in New Delhi and London and was also principal information officer to the government.

Before joining bdnews24.com, he was the chief executive of Adcommn.pr, the public relations and public affairs consultation wing of Adcommn.

Kamal, who was the first Bangladesh correspondent for Time magazine, has worked in senior positions with an array of high-profile business, non-governmental and civil society organisations.

Meena Day today

With a view to highlighting child issues and recognising the importance of children, Meena Day will be celebrated across the country today, says a press release.

The day is celebrated every year in the country since 1998 after Meena became the most popular animated girl character who stands for child rights and gender equality.

This year the Day focuses on birth registration for all children.

Birth registration is an important issue as it gives children access to education, healthcare and other important services.

Several programmes and events have been chalked out to mark the Meena Day.

The Directorate of Primary Education will organise a programme at LGED auditorium with the participation of around 400 children and high profile government officials at 10:00am. The programme will include a performance by children and screening of Meena television episodes.

The Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE), under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, will organise a programme from 10:00am to 2:00pm at the Public Library auditorium. Young learners of the

working children's project will participate in the programme.

In the afternoon, Shishu Academy will organise a cultural programme for children to celebrate the Day. Shishu Academy will also organise drawing competitions and theatre activities in all the 64 districts.

Meena drama shows will be staged in different points of Dhaka city by theatre groups and a truck carrying life-sized puppets of Meena, Raju and Mithu accompanied by a group of child performers.

UNICEF developed the Meena Communication Initiative (MCI). The Initiative is aimed at changing perceptions and behaviour that are detrimental to the survival, development and protection of girls in South Asia.

Housewife killed after gangrape in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Release of Khaleda demanded

More than 500 agriculturists of Agriculturists' Association of Bangladesh (AAB) yesterday demanded immediate release of Khaleda Zia, says a press release.

In a statement signed by AAB Organising Secretary Md Shamimur Rahman Shamim, the agriculturists termed the arrest of Khaleda as sorrowful and said the case filed against her is conspiratorial and false.

They also demanded withdrawal of the case.

Signatories to the statement include Dr Nurul Islam, Prof Abdul Huq, Prof Moynuddin Ahmed, ABM Mofizur Rahman, Prof Khandkar Sirajul Islam and Prof Shahjahan.

A housewife was slaughtered in front of her two minor children in Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital yesterday.

The victim was identified as Sakhina Begum, 27, wife of Mintu Mia, a transport worker of Hasnabad Balurmath.

Police recovered the body from her residence at around 6:00am and sent it for autopsies.

Quoting the neighbours Mintu said his wife was gangraped and then slaughtered by a gang of four miscreants.

Police said the incident might take place as a backlash of previous enmity as the victim's husband informed his landlord that Nuruzzaman, a neighbour, along with three others brought a woman to his (Nuruzzaman's) house one week ago for evil purpose.

As a result, the landlord drove away Nuruzzaman from his house, the police added.



Twenty-one fishermen of 'MV Mayer Doa' who were missing in the sea near Mongla Port were rescued by 'MV Riyadh' and later brought to Chittagong yesterday.

Spain, US sign 'permanent' anti-terrorism agreement

AFP, Madrid

Spain said yesterday it had signed a "permanent cooperation agreement" with the United States to boost the fight against terrorism and prevent attacks.

The agreement "will lead to the reinforcement of capacity in both nations to prevent terrorist attacks and also to hunt people suspected of terrorism," the Spanish interior ministry said in a statement.

The accord was signed by Spanish Secretary of State for Security Antonio Camacho and the US ambassador to Madrid Eduardo Aguirre.

Under the agreement both countries will "exchange information" about people suspected to have links to terrorist organisations.

The agreement stipulates a "permanent cooperation" between Spain's national anti-terrorism agency, CNCA, and the US Terrorist Screening Center.

Details of the agreement were not made public.

WEATHER TODAY

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions and at many places over Dhaka, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Rajshahi divisions, Met Office said in a forecast.

Highest temperature 33.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 23.5 degree Celsius at Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:53pm today and rises at 5:48am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	29.1	27.0	64	90
Chittagong	26.6	24.5	87	93
Rajshahi	27.5	25.5	77	98
Khulna	26.0	24.0	100	100
Barisal	26.0	25.0	100	95
Sylhet	33.6	26.5	50	64
Cox's Bazar	27.2	24.0	91	88

Three diplomats visit Bogra today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Swedish, Danish and Norwegian Ambassadors will visit Bogra today to observe the voter registration activities, according to the District Election Office (DEO).

The voter lists with photograph and National Identity Card (ID) activities began on September 11.

District Election Officer Abdul Hamid told local journalists that 23 centres at 21 Wards in Bogra Municipality are busy with these activities and more than 81000 voters have been registered in the last 11 days.

DEO sources said more than 1.77 lakh people filled up their registration forms till September 18 and the activities will continue till October 10.

To assist the district administration and the army, Election Working Group (EWG) is mainly focusing on creating awareness through organising special meetings, mass gathering, different types of promotional activities and distributing leaflets, sources said.

Sources at Light House, a local NGO and EWG member, said that the envoys would meet the EWG team at the conference room of the deputy commissioner and attend a press conference at Bogra Circuit House.

Fresh remand of BCU leader Manabendra condemned

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) and its different wings yesterday condemned the fresh remand of its leader Manabendra Dev and demanded his immediate release, says a press release.

Manabendra, president of Dhaka University unit of BCU, was picked up by the joint forces on September 17 from his residence in the city and was placed on a four-day remand.

Afterwards, the court on September 22 granted a fresh remand for three days.

He was shown arrested in an army car vandalism case (case no 64) during the recent violent clashes on and around the DU campus last month.

Quoting Advocate Ziad Ali Mamun, the lawyer of the accused, the press release said after the end of the four-day remand, the investigation officer of the case sent Manabendra to an unknown place instead of taking him in police custody, where he was severely beaten.

BCU central unit President Samsul Alam Sazzan said investigators did not press charges against Manabendra in any of the cases filed for violent demonstration on the DU campus in August. There is no case against him in any police station.

He demanded his immediate release.

Sanskritik Union and Raju Bitorko Ongon also demanded the release of Manabendra.

2 Dhaka-bound trains start operating up to Cantt Station

Dhaka-bound trains Padma Express from Rajshahi and Sundarban Express from Khulna started operating up to Dhaka Cantonment Railway Station since Saturday as the setting up of dual-gauge rail-line up to the station had been completed, says a press release.

Earlier, the trains operated up to Joydevpur Railway Station.

The passengers have to collect advance tickets from Dhaka, Banani and Airport Railway stations and get on board from Cantonment Railway Station. Tickets for the trains would not be available at Dhaka Cantonment Railway Station.

The trains would stop at Airport Railway Station for a break.

English language lab opens at DIU

The inaugural ceremony of the English Language Laboratory of Daffodil International University (DIU) was held on September 22, says a press release.

The purpose of the laboratory is to create English language oriented environment to enrich students' English language vocabulary and improve writing skills.

IELTS and other standard courses will be conducted through this laboratory under the supervision of distinguished faculty members.

Prof Dr Aminul Islam, Vice Chancellor of Daffodil International University formally inaugurated the laboratory. Prof M Shahjahan Mina, Pro Vice Chancellor of the university presided over the ceremony. Prof Dr Mizanur Rahman, Registrar, Head of BBA, B Com, Journalism and Mass Communication and English departments were also present on the occasion.



Incassant rains caused by low depression disrupts brisk business of footpath hawkers in the city yesterday. The photo was taken from in front of Baitul Mokarram.

Vandalism by RMG workers condemned

Bangladesh Trade Union Centre (BTUC) yesterday condemned the vandalism unleashed by the workers at different garment factories at Tejgaon in the city on Saturday, says a press release.

BTUC President Md Nurul Islam and General Secretary Dr Wazedul Islam Khan in a joint statement yesterday said that the chaotic situation at different garment factories in Tejgaon is opposed to trade union movement and a barrier for the development of the industry.

The release also added that the justified demands of the workers should be solved in time through discussion.

Youth strangled in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of an unidentified youth from the National Botanical Garden in the city yesterday.

Being informed by the locals in the morning that a body was floating in a lake of the garden, police rushed to the spot and retrieved the body.

They sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Morgue in the afternoon for autopsy.

Shah Ali police said a towel was tied around the neck while some bricks were tied to the body so that it cannot float.

Morgue sources said the youth, aged around 25, was strangled with the towel.

Child rights week programmes begin today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nari O Manabadhikar Foundation (NAMAF), an alliance of women rights organisations, will organise different programmes in different districts to mark the 'Child Rights Week 2007' that begins today.

The weeklong programmes including discussion, seminar, children rally, human chain and press conference will be held in Dhaka, Gazipur, Jessore, Narail, Magura, Jhenaidah, Kustia, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Khulna, Satkhira and Patuakhali districts.

The programme will end with holding a joint press conference on October 1 in Dhaka.

Concern over vandalism by RMG workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different trade and rights organisations yesterday expressed grave concern over the tension that shrouded the garment sector after Saturday's vandalism by RMG workers and demanded the owners pay the bonus and arrears of the workers immediately.

They also demanded realisation of the six-point of the garment workers and unconditional release of the arrested workers.

President of Bangladesh Trade Union Federation Abul Kalam Azad and General Secretary Foyjul Hakim in a joint statement condemned the comment of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) leaders on the demonstration of the garment workers.

The leaders said whenever the workers wage a movement to get their dues, the owners sniff conspiracy.

Gonotantrik Baam Morcha in its meeting yesterday said the government has been trying to conceal the main reason of the problem thinking it as a conspiracy that would fan the problem further.

Leaders of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) said the owners-workers conflict should be resolved through mutual understanding. But vandalising factories is not acceptable at any reason.

BCI also urged the government to take necessary steps so that such unwanted situations don't take place again.

US watching closely Myanmar protests

AFP, New York

The United States is "watching very carefully" the rising protests for democracy in Myanmar, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said yesterday, calling the Southeast Asian state's ruling military junta "brutal."

"Certainly, we are watching very carefully and the President (George W Bush) has been very outspoken about what is happening in Burma (Myanmar)," Rice told reporters with her Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi beside her, ahead of their talks on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Asean urges calm

Another report from MANILA adds: Asean secretary general Ong Keng Yong yesterday said he hoped for calm in Myanmar as 20,000 people took to the streets of Yangon in the biggest challenge against the military regime in nearly 20 years.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations chief Ong said foreign ministers from the 10-nation grouping were monitoring the situation in the Asean member state ahead of a special meeting at the United Nations in New York in the coming week.

"I hope the protests would remain peaceful and calm," Ong told AFP.

He said Asean foreign ministers were "doing all they can" to ensure the situation remained peaceful.

"We want national reconciliation, we want dialogue with the military, we want freedom for Aung San Sun Kyi and other political prisoners," one protest leader cried

into a microphone in Yangon, Myanmar's main city.

Asean accepted Myanmar into the grouping in 1997 in hopes of constructively engaging the rogue state and steering it towards democratic reforms. But the strategy has backfired, and the bloc has often been criticised for its soft approach on the military rulers.

Asked whether the recent developments would cast a shadow over an annual ASEAN leader's summit to be held in Singapore in November, Ong said: "I think the leaders would know how to handle the situation."

Asean groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Roundtable

Shushashoner Janney Nagarik (Shujan) organises a roundtable on 'The electoral reforms proposed by the Election Commission'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

Rotary Dhaka North

The regular weekly meeting of Rotary Club of Dhaka North will be held. Venue: Radisson Water Garden Hotel. Time: 5:00pm.

Asian 'child slaves' at British cannabis farms

AFP, London

Criminal gangs are trafficking hundreds of children into Britain and forcing them to work in cannabis factories, with at least one child per week being found by police, a report said yesterday.

Campaign group End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) said there had been a five-fold increase in the practice in the last year alone.

Children as young as 13, many from Vietnam, were being brought to Britain to work as "slaves" for organised criminals to push production of the drug here to record levels.

They are forced to tend cannabis plants grown in suburban houses and often forced to sleep in cupboards, with little chance of escape for fear of being caught.

"There is clear evidence that there are young people who are trafficked, bought and sold, for the purpose of forced labour in cannabis production in the UK," ECPAT's director Christine Beddoe told the Independent on Sunday.

"In the past 12 months there has been a 500 per cent increase in the number of cases being reported to us. We now get told about one young person every week being removed from a cannabis factory."

"But nobody knows the true scale of the problem."

Police believe the problem has emerged after organised crime gangs, many of them Vietnamese, moved to dominate the British cannabis market after the narcotic was downgraded from a Class B to Class C drug in 2004.

Declassification increased the potential rewards of growing and selling cannabis but decreased the risk of punishment. One police officer was quoted as saying cannabis was the "cash machine of organised crime."

The newspaper said one three-bedroom house converted into a cannabis factory can yield up to 300,000 pounds (430,000 euros, 606,000 dollars) a year.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has indicated he is in favour of reversing the downgrade.

Peter Stanley, from the campaign group Stop the Traffic, was quoted as saying criminals were effectively picking the children "to order."

"There is evidence that particularly south-east Asian villages are targeted for specific trades, with Vietnam now known to specialise in boys for cannabis factories," he said.

The campaigners said trafficked children found by police on raids at cannabis factories need better protection, as many have disappeared without trace soon after being taken into the care of social services.

They also said there was evidence many of those prosecuted in connection with such cannabis farms were in fact originally trafficked as children.