

Road accidents

FROM PAGE 1

Reza, 35, businessman Shahidul Islam Sagar, 32, Shihab, 25, motorcyclist Wazid Ali, 60, and his son Mominul Islam, 19.

Police said three were killed when a Gaibandha-bound bus slammed into an electric pole. Wazid and his son Mominul were killed when a speeding three-wheeler hit them.

KURIGRAM

Motorcyclist Nur Amin, 17, son of Amir Uddin of Harisur village, was run over by a picnic bus at Sadar upazila in the district, says our Kurigram correspondent.

DINAPUR

Our Dinajpur correspondent adds: Two bicyclists -- Abu Shahadat Suman, 18, son of Farukur Rahman, and Shahidul Islam, 20, son of Mohammad Babul, of Gatpara village -- were killed when a speeding truck hit them at Birampur upazila in the district.

MYMENSINGH

At least three were killed and 25 others injured when a truck skidded off the road on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Churkha on Saturday, says our Mymensingh correspondent.

One of the victims was Shaheb Ali, 60, while identities of the others could not be known immediately. Of the injured, 22 were admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

In another accident, a minor girl - Sonia, 8, daughter of Ratan Mia -- was killed as a pick-up van ran over her at Major Viti in the municipality area on Wednesday.

JAMALPUR

Three people were killed and 10 injured when a bus careered across the road and fell into a roadside ditch

from the Jheni Bridge on Thursday, reports our Jamalpur correspondent.

Police said the Madaganj-bound bus from the district headquarters smashed down the railing of the bridge and tumbled into the 20-foot-deep ditch.

GOPALGANJ

Three people died and 30 suffered injuries in a road accident in Kashiani upazila on Wednesday, reports our Gopalganj correspondent.

Witnesses said the accident occurred at noon when speeding three-wheeler Nasimon collided with a bus at Gorakhola on Dhaka-Khulna highway.

CHITTAGONG

One person died and nine others were injured when a night coach of Al-Amin Transport skidded off the road into a ditch around 5:00am, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

A minor girl -- Jahanara, 6, daughter of Babul Chand -- died when a human-hauler knocked her down at Bayezid Bostami in the city around 10:00pm on Saturday.

SYLHET

Two people were killed in separate road accidents in Baniabazar upazila on Wednesday, writes our Sylhet correspondent.

Abdul Khalek, 40, of Boro Shaleswar village was killed as a bus ran over him in front of Sheela Palli Bidyut Sub Station.

Hasan Ahmed, 25, died on the spot when a bus rammed his motorcycle from behind in Baroirgram village.

Turkey stages new air attack on Kurd rebels in Iraq

AFP, Ankara

Turkey's military said it attacked Kurdish separatists in northern Iraq Saturday for the third time in less than a week, bombing and shelling positions and warning more will follow.

"Turkish aircraft attacked between 1:35 pm and 2:00 pm (1125-1200 GMT) major positions of the terrorist organisation" PKK, before Turkish artillery shelled the area for 15 minutes, the military said in a statement on its website.

It gave no details on targets, saying more information would be given next week and that it would carry out more operations despite harsh winter conditions in the mountainous region.

The Turkish television channel NTV said the raids were in the Amadiyah area of northern Iraq.

"It will become well understood how effective the operations against the terrorist operations are," the military's statement said. The PKK "no longer has a chance of success" against the Turkish army.

Actions over recent weeks had left "hundreds of terrorists" dead, it added.

In northern Iraq, Jabbar Yawar, spokesman for the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga security force, said Turkish warplanes had hit isolated Kurdish villages.

"In the afternoon Turkish warplanes entered northern Iraqi airspace in an area called Al-Amadiyah. Later at around 4:00 pm they bombed Iraqi Kurdish villages. We do not know the extent of damage. But these areas are largely deserted and are along the border with Turkey," Yawar told AFP.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), listed as a terrorist group by Turkey and many other countries, has waged a bloody campaign for Kurdish self-rule in southeast Turkey since 1984. The conflict has claimed more than 37,000 lives.

Turkey has been stepping up pressure since its parliament approved in October cross-border raids on PKK bases, with Ankara saying the Iraqi government and its US backers were not doing enough to halt PKK attacks.

Asked for a reaction, State Department spokeswoman Nicole Thompson said in Washington: "The US does view the PKK as a terrorist group and is against any acts of violence against Turkey or Iraq. It will continue to work with the governments of Turkey and Iraq on how they can work together to deal with the PKK."

City still

FROM PAGE 1

Although the civil courts remained closed, activities at the criminal courts recommenced yesterday with a thin attendance.

The picture was the same at the Secretariat and the ministries, although the advisers and the top officials were present. Attendance in other government offices in the capital was also thin.

Only a few staff turned up and stayed in their offices for some hours and they were seen busy exchanging Eid greetings.

The cultural affairs ministry and the authorities concerned, however, were busy as two rare terracotta artefacts were stolen from Zia International Airport on Friday en route to France.

Although the insurance companies, semi-government offices, autonomous bodies, multinational companies and the offices of local business complexes in Motijheel commercial area resumed work yesterday, the business hub of the capital witnessed a rather dull workday due to absence of staff in offices.

The city dwellers thronged the amusement parks and the zoo to enjoy the holidays. With a thinner flow of traffic since Saturday, they seem happy to move around, as the nagging traffic gridlock was absent.

CA calls

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Health Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Dr ASM Matir Rahman, Army Chief Gen Moen, Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia SM Ikramul Haq and Secretary to the chief adviser Kazi M Aminul Islam were also present.

Mainul admits

FROM PAGE 16

Wage Board award after it was approved by the chief adviser on recommendation from a review committee consisting of finance, information and law secretaries, he told reporters at his secretariat office.

Commenting on the oblique remarks made against him by the leaders of journalists, employees and workers' union following publication of the gazette, Mainul said "They attacked me personally. It was not fair at all. I didn't expect such remarks from them."

Indicating an editor-cum-union leader, the adviser said it has to be looked into whether the editor implements the wage board award in his newspaper. "I've heard that the salary of 14 months remained unpaid in his newspaper."

Sounding highly critical about the Wage Board, he said public money amounting to Tk 10 million have been lost in the name of Wage Board.

Mainul wondered how many newspapers had implemented 40 percent Dearness Allowance (DA) in interim award before the publication of the new Wage Board award.

"What is the utility of forming the 6th wage board for three or four newspapers?" he added.

Public servants

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Secretariat in the capital yesterday, some officials said they were not aware of the government requirement at the time of joining the service. "No one told me about it then," a mid-level official of the establishment ministry said on condition of anonymity.

"Although many declare their wealth to the government at the time of joining or later, a large number however don't have their wealth recorded with the government," the establishment secretary told The Daily Star.

Public servants whose gross annual salaries are Tk 1.5 lakh or above are also required to file income tax returns using a Tin (taxpayer identification number) and must have their wealth recorded with the National Board of Revenue.

"But a large number of government servants whose gross annual income is less than 1.5 lakh taka, and who don't declare their wealth to the government in compliance with the 1979 Conduct Rules, have no record," an additional secretary to another ministry said, seeking anonymity.

And that is the main reason for many public servants to go untraced even after amassing a huge amount of wealth illegally, the additional secretary said citing examples of some metre readers of government utility agencies amassing wealth worth crores of taka.

"If we succeed, we'll have a database of wealth statements of all who are in the civil service," the establishment secretary said adding that the response so far is 'good'.

WHAT TO DECLARE

Immovable properties of government servants that need to be declared are cultivable and uncultivable lands, buildings, dwelling places, and industries.

Movable properties that need to be declared are jewellery, stocks, insurance policies, shares, cash and bank balances, motor vehicles, and electronic goods such as computers, televisions, air-coolers, refrigerators, ovens, etc.

The government servants will have to mention the dates of acquiring the properties, nature, position and volume of the properties, how and when those were acquired, the source of money with which they were purchased if applicable, and under whose name. Those are registered.

HOW TO DECLARE

The cadres and class I non-cadre

employees will have to make the declaration to the secretaries to respective ministries.

Class II gazetted and non-gazetted employees, and class III and class IV employees of different ministries and departments and other offices will have to submit their statements to their appointing authorities.

Asked, whether those who are working in different offices under contractual appointments also must declare their wealth, a high official of the establishment ministry said, "We'll have to examine that."

Regarding whether those public servants who have been in the service for a long time without declaring their wealth at the time of joining, need to mention now the amount of wealth they had back then, he said, "Many might have forgotten what they had at the time of joining. We can accept their present declaration as a basis, but they'll need to update those from now on."

Aug 21 attack

FROM PAGE 1

submitted a petition before the court for issuance of the order.

In his forwarding report, Kabir said Tajuddin was the mastermind and conspirator behind the grenade attack on the rally and had supplied the grenades used in the attack.

He said he had taken several initiatives to arrest Tajuddin but they were unsuccessful. During the investigation of the case, they came to know that Tajuddin had left the country to avoid arrest.

Earlier, Harkat-ul-Jihad (Huji) leader Mufti Mohammad Hannan and five others of the banned outfit made confessional statements that they carried out the August 21 grenade attack with the intent to kill now detained Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

A group of criminals had carried out the attack that left 24 Awami League leaders and workers dead and at least 300 injured.

Following the attack, police arrested 23 people from different places on different dates and three of them including Luj Miah had given confessional statements to a magistrate. They said the "seven-star group" had carried out the attack on the rally.

All the arrestees, except the three who had confessed to their guilt, were granted bail later from higher courts on different dates.

Says Mainul

FROM PAGE 1

only when they would think the time is ripe and doing so is needed for the sake of national peace and stability.

Talking to reporters at his ministry, Mainul said many qualified people are there to lead the nation. There must be a qualitative change in politics.

But the language the politicians still use suggests that hardly any change has taken place, he noted.

"Let the politicians commit themselves to not going back to the situation preceding January 11," he said.

Coming down hard on politicians, Mainul said people have been struggling for democracy since the British rule. But politicians do little to help the cause. Instead, they become rich overnight and this is not right.

"Jealousy and hatred will have to be shunned for implementing objectives of the Liberation War and building up the nation," he said.

The adviser said, "We want to listen less about election from those who failed even to prepare an acceptable voter roll."

Everything would slip back to

square one if election schedules are announced without considering the nation's future. "We want elections to be held in a peaceful atmosphere," he added.

Admitting that the caretaker government could not solve all problems, he said: "But at the same time it is also true that general people don't want to go back to pre-11/11 days."

UNB adds: Asked about the British high commissioner's remarks that they had sought clarification from the government as to when it would withdraw the state of emergency, he said what foreigners want to know is not important.

"If there is no peace and discipline, it would be futile to dream of a prosperous future."

Referring to lifting of emergency in Thailand, he said 121 lawmakers including former Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra were not allowed to contest the election; still there was no violence.

Recalling the political culture during the Pakistan period, he said there was no jealousy and hatred at that time. Despite being a nation speaking one language, politics here is dominated by conflicts.

Language Movement

FROM PAGE 1

He will be laid to rest at Banani graveyard today.

Prior to this, Mahubul ul Alam's body will be kept at the Central Shaheed Minar from 11:00am to 12:30pm, where people from all walks of life will pay their tribute to the poet. Later, his body will be taken to Bangla Academy premises.

His namaj-e-janaza will be held at Dhaka University Ja'ame mosque after the Jehr prayers.

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, Workers' Party of Bangladesh (WPB), Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri and other organisations condole the death of the great soul.

In a statement, WPB President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Binol Biswas said that Mahubul ul Alam was not only a language movement veteran or litterateur, he was also a freedom fighter and one of the front leaders in the movement for trying the war criminals.

Bangladesh has lost a great patriot due to his death, they said expressing sympathies for the bereaved family.

He was one of the pioneers of non-communal and democratic

War criminals

FROM PAGE 1

Day celebrations at the presidential palace citing the same reason.

"We had already said we would boycott any state event where war criminals are invited, regardless of the occasion, be it Eid or Victory Day," said former army chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Harun-ar-Rashid, coordinator of Sector Commanders Forum, a group of Liberation War sector commanders.

Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Md Mojahid, Assistant Secretary General Md Kamaruzzaman and leader ATM Azharul Islam attended the function.

AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star the central committee took the decision to boycott the reception.

"We expected that as a symbol of national unity, our president would not invite them [war criminals] and it is the people's desire as well," Suranjit said.

He added that they could not attend a function where the "defeated enemies" were also invited.

They also responded to the sector commanders' call to boycott the function, he said.

Eid-ul-Azha

FROM PAGE 1

Khoka, judges of the Supreme Court and people from all walks of life offered Eid prayer at the Eidgah Maidan.

Acting Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Mufti Moulana Nuruddin was the imam of the Eid prayer at the National Eidgah.

A special munajat was offered seeking divine blessings for peace and development of the country, welfare of the people and greater unity among the Muslim Ummah. After Eid prayers, President Iajuddin exchanged Eid pleasantries with the devotees.

The government announced a three-day public holiday from Thursday.

National dailies published special supplements highlighting the significance of the festival while Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and private TV channels aired various programmes.

President Iajuddin and his wife Prof Anwar Begum hosted a reception and exchanged Eid greetings with distinguished personalities and diplomats of different countries at Banghaban.

Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar, Chief Justice M Ruhul Amin, advisors Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, M Anwarul Kabir and CS Karim, Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Sawar Jahan Nizam, Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Shah Mohammad Ziaur Rahman and Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Lt Gen Masud Uddin Chowdhury, among others, joined the reception.

Ambassadors and high commissioners of different countries, judges of the Supreme Court, secretaries, leaders of different political parties, top civil and military officials, vice chancellors of universities, editors and senior journalists and distinguished persons were also present.

6 drown

FROM PAGE 1

The carnage raised the spectre of a bloody run-up to controversial national elections on January 8, with Musharraf -- a pivotal figure in the US-led "war on terror" -- battling to contain Taliban and al-Qaeda-linked militants.

The president condemned the "distorted thinking" of the militants and ordered the security and intelligence agencies to "track down the masterminds behind this abhorrent act," the official Associated Press of Pakistan said.

"Fifty-four people were killed," district police chief Feroz Shah told AFP. He said the attacker was believed to have been carrying six to seven kilograms (13 to 15 pounds) of explosives.

The wounded were shifted to hospitals in Charsadda, the town where the attack occurred, and the nearby provincial capital Peshawar.

It was the deadliest attack in Pakistan since October, when twin suicide bombings killed 139 people at a parade in honour of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto.

Frida's blast ripped the limbs off worshippers and spattered the mosque with blood and pieces of flesh. Doors and windows of the mosque were smashed by the impact.

"I lost my two brothers," said Jehangir Khan, fighting back tears as wails of mourning and the sounds of sirens reverberated across the site. He said he had helped retrieve six bodies of children.

Another witness, Janjrez Khan, said the bomber detonated as the prayer leader said "Allahu Akbar," or God is Greatest.

It was not immediately known how the blast missed Sherpao, who as interior minister had command of the country's paramilitary forces and was in effect the public face of the government's fight against Islamic militants.

"Naturally, Atfah Sherpao was the target," his spokesman Salim Shah told AFP. Officials said one of his sons was wounded and taken to hospital.

Musharraf dissolved his cabinet in November and appointed new ministers under a caretaker government ahead of the January elections for parliament.

Until then, however, Sherpao was the leading civilian in the government campaign to clamp down on the militant attacks that have threatened to destabilise this nuclear-armed Islamic nation of 160 million people.

Sherpao was slightly wounded in an April suicide bombing, just after delivering a speech at a public rally.

More than 750 people have been killed in militant attacks this year -- and more than half of those since July.

2 Paris-bound statues

FROM PAGE 1

Khan, former director general of the National Museum, said, "Those are masterpieces and very valuable to our cultural heritage and social history."

Different sources said it was almost impossible to make off with the container box (wooden box number five) of the Vishnu statues weighing 64 kilograms without a car.

Abdullah Al Hasani, general manager of cargo terminal at the ZIA, told The Daily Star last night that vehicles of Civil Aviation Authorities, Bangladesh Biman, Air France, Voyager Airlines, police and other government agencies were working during that time.

"All those vehicles had permission to be there," he added.

Abdul Kuddus, senior conservation officer of Varendra Museum, first noticed that one out of the 13 boxes was missing in the cargo flight at around 1:00pm, said sources at the cultural ministry and law enforcers.

Kuddus was supposed to travel with the artefacts as the government courier.

At around 8:00pm, the empty box of the Vishnu statues was found floating in a ditch beside the runway.

The law enforcers have so far detained 11 people for quizzing in connection with the heist.

Earlier on Friday evening, Homebound, the shipper agent hired by the French government, carried the 145 artefacts in 13 boxes from the National Museum at Shabbagh to the cargo village at the ZIA.

The customs authorities checked those by opening the boxes one after another as it was not possible to scan those big crates handled over to the Air France officials at around 2:00am Saturday.

The cargo flight of Air France was supposed to leave for Paris at 5:15am but it could not arrive in Dhaka on schedule due to fog.

Shortly after it landed at the ZIA at 11:20am, the staff of Voyager Airlines, the company that conducts loading and unloading for Air France, had begun their work. The airline crew had asked them to finish the job within one and a half hours as they would go for the 12-hour rest that they usually take after working 12 hours at a stretch.

The artefacts, however, were put on the aircraft by that time.

Meanwhile, Kuddus was told that the plane would take off at 00:00 hours.

"Then he went to check whether the relics were taken aboard properly or not. There, he found one of the boxes missing," said Ayub Quadri while talking to The Daily Star. The other boxes were already there.

"It all happened after our officials had handed over the artefacts to the Air France authorities," said the adviser.

Dr Swapan Kumar Biswas, acting keeper of the National Museum, has filed a general diary with the Airport Police Station.

Witnesses said divers were conducting search at the waterbody where the empty box was found.

Meanwhile, Air France Cargo in a letter has notified the general manager of cargo terminal and director at the ZIA of the developments.

THE FRENCH EMBASSY

STATEMENT

The embassy release said although the enquiries are ongoing, the possibility of a mere theft by petty criminals cannot be discounted.

It said loose procedures geared towards garment exports have led to

such valuable crates being left unattended on the tarmac of the airport in an area where neither the lending nor the borrowing institutions have any control.

If the consignment had left on time, and without the very professional attitude of the Bangladesh courier, the disappearance would have been detected only in Paris, with the corresponding accusations being directed against the French Republic by a small but vocal group of persons.

The statement said France condemned such acts in the strongest term, saying that this mutually beneficial exhibition is the result of a long standing cooperation, it is routine, transparent, approved all heartedly by the government, endorsed by a very large majority of the leading citizens of this country and has been twice cleared by the Supreme Court.

"It is time for the few opponents to this event to recognise they are a tiny minority and act accordingly. The French Embassy will continue to answer any questions regarding this exhibition," the release added.

REACTIONS

Several art connoisseurs, who had all along been protesting the government move to send 187 artefacts to Guimet National Museum for Asian Arts in France for an exhibition, yesterday demanded immediate arrest of those who were responsible for sending the artefacts.

They made the demand at a press conference at the Gallery Chitrokr in response to the Vishnu statues' going missing while under Air France's custody.

The speakers said they had been expressing concern that once the age-old objects leave the country some of them might not be returned, and they have been proved right even before the artefacts had made it to Paris.

Describing the entire process as the biggest cultural disaster, they said it is a matter of great sorrow that the government did not pay heed to the civil society members and distinguished academics, artists, archaeologists and art connoisseurs before.

"Our suspicion has come true," said Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury. "We still believe we are going to be cheated if we send those artefacts," he added.

Dr Shamsuzzaman Khan, former director general of Bangladesh National Museum, said the Guimet Museum had cheated the government of Turkey as it did not return the original tiles collected from the grave of an Ottoman emperor.

"As the government is sending the artefacts, at least half-a-million visitors of our museums would not get the chance to see them," he said. "The government should have conducted the exhibition in the country rather than sending the precious works of art to Paris," he added.

Architect Rabul Hussain, archaeologists AKM Zakaria, Foyez Ahmed, artist Nasar Hossain, and Kamal-Ahmed Eusee were present at the press conference.

It is known that 187 pieces of antiquities including 128 life-size statues, terracotta and copper plaques, Prajna Paramita scripture and coins from Pala, Sen, Gupta and Maurya dynasties, were selected for the exhibition.

Earlier, the High Court issued a two-month stay order on sending the artefacts to Paris. But later, as the Supreme Court vacated the stay, the government started the shipment procedure.

63 killed in Pak

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