

4 killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least four people were killed and 21 others injured in separate road accidents in Chittagong, Dinajpur, Magura and Thakurgaon yesterday. Our correspondent from Chittagong reports: A freedom fighter was killed in a road mishap here in the portcity yesterday. The victim was identified as Md Abul Kalam, 55, son of Nahi Newaz, of Shyambari under Brahman Baria. Kalam was killed when a speedy truck ran over him at Taragate area near Bangladesh Tea Board office on Bayezid Road at around 4:00pm while he was crossing the busy road. Locals rushed him to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the on duty doctors declared him dead. Sub-Inspector Md Halim of Bayezid Police Station said they got an identity card in his shirt's pocket given by Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangshad showing him as a freedom fighter. Our correspondent from

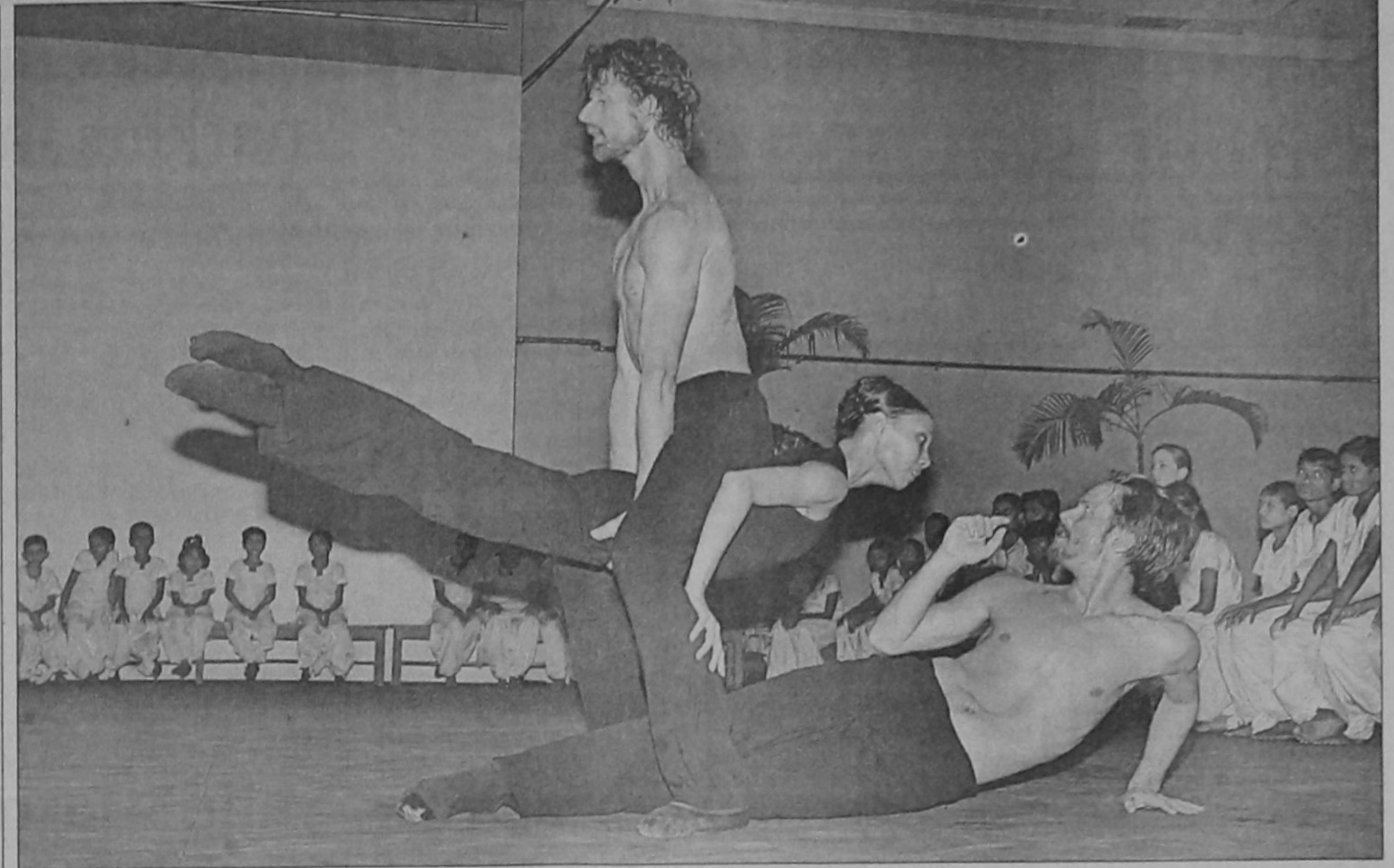
Dinajpur adds: At least one person was killed and 19 others were injured in two separate road accidents in Dinajpur yesterday. The dead was identified as Md Mahub Alam, 40, son Md Abed Ali of Shashtipara village under Hakimpur upazila in Dinajpur. Quoting witnesses police said while Mahub was riding a van, a speedy truck hit him from behind leaving him dead on the spot. In another accident, 19 people were injured when a speedy passenger bus hit another passenger bus from behind at Uchitpur village on Dinajpur-Bogra highway. Of the injured passengers 6 people were rushed to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital while rests were admitted at Phulbari Upazila Health Complex. Our correspondent from Magura adds: One person was killed and two others were critically injured in a road accident near Magura stadium on Magura-Faridpur highway yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Mohid, 28, of Natun Bazaar area in Magura town and injured were Abdul Gafur, 40, and Uzir Ali, 48. Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a Faridpur-bound truck hit a roadside shop leaving Mohid dead on the spot. Injured were admitted to Magura Sadar hospital. Police seized the vehicle and sent the body for autopsy. A correspondent from Thakurgaon adds: A minor boy was killed in a road accident on Dinajpur-Thakurgaon highway yesterday. The victim was identified as Mishu, 8, son of Dudu Miah of Khochabari under Sadar upazila of the district. Police said the accident occurred at about 5:30pm when a Thakurgaon-bound coach hit him from behind leaving him dead on the spot. Police sent the body to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Afghan Mullahs demand TV crackdown

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's Islamic clerics have called on President Hamid Karzai to clamp down on a burgeoning television industry which it accused of spreading "immorality and un-Islamic culture." The call was made during a meeting between Karzai and dozens of clerics from an influential religious council in Kabul on Friday, an official in Karzai's office told AFP under condition of anonymity yesterday. "The unrestrained programmes on TV has angered and prompted the Ulemas (scholars) to react," the conservative council comprising religious clerics said in a statement to Karzai, a copy of which was provided to AFP. "Hop... is spreading immoralities and hurts the sacred religion of Islam," the statement said, referring to an MTV-style music show on Tolo TV, one of the biggest among several private stations launched after the fall of the Taliban regime. "Afghan Star... encourages immorality among the people and is against Sharia (law)," the statement said referring to an American-Idol-type show on Tolo.



Dancers from the Netherlands Dans Theatre (NDT) perform at the Winter Garden at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday. Sheraton Hotel in association with the Netherlands Dans Theater and Dutch Embassy organised the event.



A teacher of Bakchar Government Primary School at Shyampur in Dhaka distributes textbooks among the students of class three yesterday at the beginning of new academic year.

China to launch pollution survey

AFP, Beijing

China, which is facing serious environmental problems due to its booming economic growth, will next month launch its first nationwide survey to identify pollution sources, state media said yesterday. The survey, to be completed in the first half of 2008, will assess the sources of industrial, agricultural and residential pollution, said Zhou Shengxian, director of the State Environmental Protection Administration. The results will be revealed in the first half of 2009, Zhou told a meeting of the State Council, or

cabinet, on Friday, the Xinhua news agency reported. The data "will be an important basis for environmental protection" and "an important step toward an environment-friendly society," Xinhua quoted Vice Premier Zeng Peiyan as telling the same meeting. China's booming growth has ravaged the environment, with about 70 percent of its waterways polluted and urban air quality among the worst in the world. The Asian giant is second only to the United States in greenhouse gas emissions blamed for climate change.

While the fight against pollution is officially one of the Beijing government's top goals, local authorities often tend to favour economic growth over environmental protection. In a commentary published Saturday, the People's Daily, the official mouthpiece of the Communist party, called on all regional and local administrations to fully participate in the survey. Zhou said Friday that the census results "will not be linked to any punishment or evaluation of the performance of local administrations," calling on officials to provide "true, credible" data.

Israel presses raid into northern West Bank city

AFP, Nablus

Israel expanded a massive military operation in the northern West Bank city of Nablus yesterday and placed the city centre under curfew, Israeli and Palestinian officials said. "The 70,000 people who live in the city centre and the neighbourhoods around it have been placed under a curfew," a Palestinian security official told AFP. "At least four Palestinians have been wounded by rubber bullets on Saturday and 35 have been arrested since Thursday," the official added. An Israeli army spokesman confirmed that a curfew had been imposed saying it was to protect civilians living in the crowded ancient quarter of the city. However he said only 19 people had been arrested so far. On Thursday dozens of Israeli army jeeps rolled in, aiming to arrest wanted militants in a city where the Palestinian Authority has recently deployed hundreds of forces as part of an ambitious security crackdown. Meanwhile Palestinian security forces detained at least 33 Hamas members across the West Bank, the Islamist movement said in a statement on Saturday.

Unexpectedly tough battle jars Republican camp

AFP, New Hampshire

Locked in an unexpectedly unpredictable battle over the Republican presidential nomination, top members of President George W. Bush's party plunged head-long into political campaigning yesterday, promising voters a change of course. New Hampshire holds its primary election on Tuesday, and Republicans in this small northeastern state have an embarrassment of choices. Theoretically, the candidate receiving most of the attention is Baptist former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, the surprise winner of Republican caucuses in the Midwestern state of Iowa Thursday. But maybe because of his open association with the Christian conservative camp during the Iowa contest, local opinion polls put Huckabee in the middle of the list of contenders. New Hampshire does not have as many Christian conservatives as Iowa. At the national level, former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani maintains a tenuous lead of at least three points over his Republican rivals, according to the average of recent polls produced by the Internet site RealClearPolitics. But he trails in New Hampshire

and has decided to throw into the state massive resources before Tuesday's balloting. RealClearPolitics gives a 2.5-point overall lead to maverick Arizona Senator John McCain, who is ahead of an old favourite of this race, former governor of neighboring Massachusetts Mitt Romney. The four men will spend all the time remaining until the Tuesday vote criss-crossing this small ice-and-snow-bound state. Romney, a rich Mormon businessman who saw victory slip away from him in Iowa in spite of his huge investment of time and money, is trying to make a comeback in New Hampshire, addressing about half a dozen rallies every day and saturating airwaves with advertisements, most which contain virulent attacks against McCain. McCain, a hero of the Vietnam War who is not much liked by the Republican Party hierarchy, is positioning himself to carry the state, aided by influential local newspapers, which welcome his experience in foreign and military affairs. However, Huckabee is deter-

mined to preserve and extend the momentum gained in Iowa, betting on the populist style that has served him well so far. Several hundred aging voters saw him Friday join a local rock group, The Mama Kicks, playing in an empty gymnasium of Henniker located in the middle of the snowy state. "Do you really think they have so much fun at Hillary's rallies?" he asked strumming his bass guitar to the tune of "Twist and Shout." The former Arkansas governor was referring to leading Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. Having thus displayed his easy-going side, Huckabee began promoting several points of his electoral platform that he believes will resonate in this state with a libertarian streak: replacement of the income tax with a sales tax, and boosting the rights of states in the face of the growing power of the federal government. "There's a fresh wind blowing in this country... a wind that blows for change," Huckabee told his supporters.

Vietnamese held for trafficking 23 females to China

AFP, Hanoi

Vietnamese police have arrested a man who allegedly trafficked 23 females to China after authorities received a tip-off from one teenager who escaped back into Vietnam, a news report said yesterday. The Hanoi man, identified as Nguyen Anh Tuan, allegedly befriended the women through Internet chatrooms, then enticed them to travel to northern border areas from where they were sent to China, the Than Nien daily said. Since 2005, Tuan and his accomplices had trafficked 23 females, including seven teenagers, to China, before one of them, a 17-year-old girl from northern Ha Nam province, escaped and alerted police back home, the report said. Vietnamese and Chinese police were working to bring home the other females. The Nhan Dan daily, citing police and border guard figures, meanwhile reported that 323 human trafficking cases were discovered in Vietnam in 2007, an increase of more than 40 percent on the previous year. Most Vietnamese women and children who fall victim to trafficking are sent to neighbouring China or Cambodia for arranged marriages or prostitution.

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Commuters travel in a jeep, known as Chander Gari, on Nazirhat-Fatikchhari-Manikchhari road in Khagrachhari yesterday, risking their lives. Such vehicles are the main mode of transport for local people. Accidents are commonplace, but the practice still exists.

Living on less

FROM PAGE 1
adding that in that way, it would require less rice. The touching tale of Marzina is only a fragment of the grim picture of suffering the poor people have been going through due to the skyrocketing prices of rice, making the staple food dearer with each passing day. Marzina, who had been living in a 10 feet by six feet small room by the Karwan Bazar railway tracks for years, never needed to employ such "tricks" to satisfy the hunger of her family. Almost every day she goes out to collect thrown away vegetables and fish to manage meals for the family, as her rickshaw-puller husband Zahid Mia goes about his work. "Now it is really very hard for us to feed four children...we never faced such hardships," Marzina added sadly.

While visiting some slums including Begunbari, Kamrangirchar and Karwanbazar yesterday, most of the people were found to be worried about the soaring prices of rice. Shefali Begum, a resident of Begunbari slum said that they have been cutting down on other expenses to meet the spiked prices of rice and oil. "Maybe you will not send your kids to school or buy their clothes. But you will have to eat when you are hungry," Shefali said. "Many of us collect thrown away vegetables from the Karwanbazar wholesale market and still, we are facing problems. I wonder how the dwellers in other slums are managing vegetables after buying rice at such a high rate," she added. As frustration pervades all around due to the hike in rice

prices, many slum dwellers are thronging the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) shops for getting rice at a cheaper rate. In Kamrangirchar, a long queue was found before the BDR shop at the Kamrangirchar park, which was selling rice at a reduced rate of Tk 25 per kilogram. More than a hundred people were seen waiting in front of it, some of them for as long as six hours, so that they could save Tk 30 on three kilograms of rice. "Now nobody gives rice to beggars rather people prefer to hand out Tk 1 or 2," said Rahman Mia, a groundnut vendor, in the university area. "My family in Bhairab have been asking for more money since the rice price has increased. But my income has not increased," he added gloomily.

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