

# 14 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least 14 people were killed and 49 others injured in separate road accidents in Pabna, Khagrachhari, Chittagong, Natore and Satkhira yesterday and on Saturday.

Our correspondent from Khagrachhari reports: At least three people, including a baby, was killed and 30 others were injured in a road accident in the Koilarmuk area under Ramghor upazila in Khagrachhari yesterday.

The dead were identified as driver Mohammad Aminul Hoque, 45, Babu, 6, and other's identity could not be known immediately.

Ramghor police sources said the accident occurred at about 1:00pm when a Feni-bound passenger bus from Laxmichhari upazila turned upside down and fell into a roadside ditch as its driver lost his control over the steering, leaving three dead on the spot.

The injured passengers were rushed to Ramghor Upazila Health Complex, Fatikchhari, Mirrersara and Feni Upazila health complex while seriously injured five were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), sources confirmed.

Meanwhile, one person suc-

cumbed to his injuries in CMCH.

The person identified as Aktarul Alam alias Arju Mia, 26, of Muslimpara village under Matiranga upazila in Khagrachhari, was seriously injured in a road accident on January 8 at 10 No-Muslimpara in the hill district.

Our correspondent from Pabna reports: At least four people including two children were killed and 15 others injured in two road accidents in the district.

Police said three passengers including two children died when a night coach skidded off the road and fell into a roadside-ditch on Dhaka-Pabna highway in the early hours of yesterday.

The victims were identified as Md Ashik, 2, son of Hamidul, Roki, 16, son of Shahid Pramanik, and an unidentified man aged around 50.

Locals said the accident occurred when the Dhaka-bound coach of Mahanagar Paribahan reached at Chakka at around 1:00am.

The driver lost his control over the steering when he suddenly found a barricade on the highway and fell into the ditch.

The injured were admitted to Santhia and Bera hospitals.

Meanwhile an unidentified

minor boy, 9, was killed when an overloaded truck ran over him on Pabna-Nagarbari highway at Nandiaran on Saturday afternoon.

Quoting locals police said the Kashinathpur-bound truck knocked him down at about 2:00pm leaving him dead on the spot.

The driver fled the scene after the accident.

UNB from Chittagong adds: Two security guards were crushed under the wheels of a trolley near the toll plaza of Chittagong Port container terminal yesterday morning.

Police said the goods-laden trolley while coming out of the terminal ran over Ishak Brothers' security guard Ahmed Shafi, 45, and another guard M Ismail, 36, of nearby Who Plaza at about 11:30am, killing them on the spot.

Police sent the bodies to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

BSS from Natore adds: Three people were killed and three others injured in a road accident on Natore-Pabna highway at Garmati under Baraigram upazila in the district on Saturday.

Police said the accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound passenger bus hit a tempo. The passengers of the tempo received

injury seriously.

The injured were rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where three died. The two of the dead were identified as Shamsul Alam, 60, of Garmati village and Jallil, 16, of the same village. Other's identity could not be known immediately.

Our correspondent from Satkhira adds: A motorcycle rider was killed and a woman injured seriously in a road accident on Satkhira-Kaliganj road near Alipur check post in Sadar upazila on Saturday evening.

The deceased was identified as Amjad Hossain, 32, son of Alfaz Uddin of village Dhulihar in Sadar upazila and the injured as Jharna Deb Nath, 28, of the same village.

Quoting local people, police said the accident took place when a motorcycle collided head on with a Satkhira-bound bus near Alipur check post, leaving the two injured seriously.

The injured were taken to Satkhira Sadar Hospital in critical condition. Later Amjad succumbed to his injuries on the way to Khulna Medical College Hospital while he was being shifted as his condition deteriorated.



Guardians wait outside the gate of a school in the port city with umbrellas yesterday since it was drizzling throughout the day.

PHOTO STAR

# Myanmar poll date meaningless without Suu Kyi

AFP, Bangkok

Myanmar's unexpected announcement of a timetable for elections in 2010 could prove meaningless with Aung San Suu Kyi and other top democracy leaders locked away, analysts said yesterday.

The military announced late Saturday that it would hold a constitutional referendum in May to set the stage for elections in 2010, in a move that Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) called "surprising."

If held, the polls would be the first since 1990, when the NLD won a landslide victory -- even though Aung San Suu Kyi was already under house arrest. She has been confined to her home in Yangon for 12 of the last 18 years.

Analysts said the regime's announcement raised more questions than answers, especially

about what role pro-democracy forces would be allowed to play in elections in a country ruled by the military since 1962.

Sean Turnell, an expert on Myanmar at Australia's Macquarie University in Sydney, said he was sceptical elections would be meaningful because so many pro-democracy activists have been arrested.

"The opposition movement is the weakest at the moment because so many of them are all locked up," Turnell said.

Amnesty International estimates the regime holds at least 1,850 political prisoners, including about 700 arrested during the junta's deadly crackdown on anti-government protests in September 2007.

The protests led by Buddhist monks were the biggest challenge to military rule in nearly 20 years. At least 31 people were killed and

74 went missing when security forces violent broke up the crowds, according to the United Nations.

Apart from Aung San Suu Kyi and senior NLD members, the junta has also arrested top student leaders who rallied against the junta in 1988 in a far larger uprising that resulted in more than 3,000 deaths.

Many leaders of that uprising had been released over the last four years and had returned to political activism, only to be thrown back into prison.

"With Aung San Suu Kyi and so many democracy leaders under detention, it will be very difficult for opposition groups to organise for elections," said Aung Naig Oo, a Thailand-based Myanmar analyst.

Turnell said the junta should release Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners to "make elections meaningful."

"Unless they are released, it will

be totally unmeaningful," the academic said.

Trevor Wilson, a former Australian ambassador to Myanmar, agreed.

"They cannot have elections while so many people are in prison for carrying out peaceful political activities," Wilson said.

"They need to free political prisoners. We have to insist they do."

Even if Aung San Suu Kyi were released, the constitution the junta proposes to bring to voters in May would bar her from running for president.

Win Min, a Thailand-based Myanmar academic, said the absence of Myanmar's most prominent opposition leader would undermine the legitimacy of any polls.

"She is a true hero of people, and excluding Aung San Suu Kyi undermines the elections," Win Min said.



PHOTO STAR

Leaders of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal hold a joint meeting at KC Memorial Clinic at Baridhara in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 3)

## Sultan Mela begins in Narail tomorrow

BSS, Narail

The seven-day 'Sultan Mela' will begin at Sultan Mancha at Narail Government Victoria College in Narail tomorrow.

The Sultan Mela (fair) will be held to mark the 83rd birth anniversary of renowned artist SM Sultan.

SM Sultan Foundation, district administration and SM Sultan Mela Celebration Committee will jointly organise the Sultan Mela.

Khulna Divisional Commissioner Md Yunusur Rahman will inaugurate the fair as the chief guest while DIG of Police of Khulna Range Md Asaduzzaman Mia and Khulna regional chief of Gramaphone Helaluddin Ahmed Chowdhury will attend the function as special guests.

Narail Deputy Commissioner Md Abdul Kayun Sarder will chair the inaugural ceremony.

The seven-day programme included art, exhibition, painting competition, sports competition, seminar on Sultan's life and cultural functions.

Primary and Mass Education Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury will attend the concluding ceremony as the chief guest on February 18.

This year's 'Sultan Padak' will be given to Abdur Sakur Shah, Director of Institute of Fine Arts, Dhaka on the concluding day of the fair, sources said.

## Training course on news presentation concludes

The concluding and certificate awarding ceremony of a month-long training course on TV news presentation, organised by Bangladesh Institute of Journalism and Electronic Media (BIJEM), was held at BIJEM conference room in the city on Saturday, says a press release.

The chairman of Index Group and an architect Md Mazherul Quader was present as the chief guest and distributed certificates among the participants.

He said currently news presentation is a subject of art and creativity. Through planned training, continuous practice and correct pronunciation can make an expert news presenter.

Mirza Tarequl Qader, Executive Director, BIJEM, presided over the function.

TV news presenters, journalists and phoneticians conducted the training course.

A total of 39 participants from different universities took part in the course.

## Malaysia offers to help Thai Muslims in restive south

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia has offered to work with Thailand's new government to aid Muslims in the restive south, which has been wracked by an insurgency for more than four years, state media reported yesterday.

Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he looked forward to meeting his new Thai counterpart Samak Sundaravej to discuss how to help locals and restore peace to the area, which he said would benefit both countries.

"We have expressed our willingness to cooperate with Thailand to help the Muslims in the south," along the border with Malaysia, Abdullah was quoted as saying by Bernama news agency.

"I want to discuss this with the new Thai prime minister. I think it is a good thing that we give attention to the situation in southern Thailand."

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