

# Road accidents kill 9, injure 40

## STAR REPORT

At least nine people were killed and 40 others injured in separate road accidents in Dinajpur, Faridpur, Bagerhat and Jhenidah yesterday.

UNB from Dinajpur reports: At least four people were killed and 25 others injured in a road accident at Gabura, about 5km north of the town yesterday afternoon.

The accident occurred when a bus hit three vans, turns upside down and fell into a ditch, leaving three van drivers and a bus passenger dead on the spot. Fire Brigade personnel said. Identity of the dead could not be known immediately.

Survivors said a Dinajpur-bound bus from Parbatipur hit hard three vans while trying to give

side to another vehicle and skidded off the road.

Injured passengers of the bus were rushed to local clinics and Dinajpur Sadar Hospital.

A Faridpur report adds: Three people were killed and 15 others injured when an Atrashi-bound bus fell into a roadside ditch at Talmar Square near Nagarkanda on Dhaka-Barisal highway yesterday.

One of the deceased was identified as Dilip Shikder, 45.

Police said the bus plunged into the ditch as it tried to give passage to another vehicle, leaving the three people dead on the spot.

Ten of the injured were admitted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

The bodies were taken to the

hospital morgue for autopsy.

Another report from Bagerhat says: A man was run over by a microbus at Bhaga in Rampal upazila yesterday.

Local sources said Salam Sheikh, 52, of Bhaga village, died on the spot when the microbus ploughed through his bicycle and ran over him near Bhaga Madrasa at about 9:00am.

The body was sent to hospital for autopsy.

Our correspondent from Jhenidah adds: One person was killed in a road accident on Kanchandpur-Jibannagar highway in Jhenidah yesterday.

The deceased was identified as passenger Rafiqul Islam, 27, son of Md Sabur Ali of Talsar village under

Kanchandpur upazila and the injured is driver Rafiqul Islam, 32, son of Md Ahmad Ali of the same village.

Police said the accident occurred when Rafiqul Islam, 27, was driving a Nasiman, a human hauler, towards Kanchandpur instead of its driver Rafiqul Islam, 32. The human hauler turned upside down on the road as Rafiqul lost his control over the steering, leaving him seriously injured. He was rushed to Kanchandpur Health Complex while driver Rafiqul was given first aid.

Passenger Rafiqul was rushed to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital as his condition deteriorated where he succumbed to injuries.

The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

## Jute mill workers give ultimatum to BJMC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Retired jute mill workers yesterday gave an ultimatum to Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) to meet their five-point demand, including payment of dues and arrears, by February 24 or face tougher agitation.

The workers of seven jute mills of Khulna-Jessore industrial belt announced their programmes during demonstrations in front of the jute mills.

Their demands include reopening of closed jute mills.

A group of workers would commit self-immolation on February 26 if the demands go unheeded, said Patkal Sangram Parishad leader Sheikh Abdul Rahman.

Meanwhile, laid-off workers of Alim Jute mills staged a demonstration in front of the main gate yesterday demanding reopening of the mill and payment of arrears.

The demonstration will continue until the reopening of the jute mill, said CBA leader Hamid Sarder.

Similar demonstrations will also take place everyday in front of all six jute mills of Khulna-Jessore industrial belt.

## UP chairman arrested for VGF rice graft

UNB, Jhenidah

A Union Parishad chairman was arrested on Friday on charges of misappropriating VGF rice.

The arrestee was identified as Chand Ali, chairman of Nityanandapur Union Parishad in Shaiklupa.

Sources said local people informed Shaiklupa Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mahmudul Hossain Khan that chairman Chand Ali sold out some VGF rice in the black market.

The UNO visited the UP office in the morning and found that three 50kg bags of rice, out of 78 bags allocated for VGF cardholders, are missing.

Later, the police arrested the chairman.

## Fertility centre opens at Apollo Hospitals

Apollo Fertility Centre, equipped with all the world-class facilities to meet up the personalised demand of the infertile couples, was inaugurated at Apollo Hospitals Dhaka on Thursday, says a press release.

The centre will provide a wide range of services for the infertile couples in a caring and congenial environment.

Dr Ed L Hansen, CEO, Apollo Hospitals Dhaka, gave the welcome address in the inaugural ceremony while Dr Minnal Kumar Sarker, Consultant and Coordinator, OBS/Gynecology and ART, Apollo Hospitals Dhaka delivered a keynote speech.

## Project to supply arsenic-free water

BSS, Rajshahi

Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) has undertaken a project to supply arsenic-free drinking water among the rural people through pipeline.

The main objective of the project is to supply round-the-year potable water to every household of the rural people in targeted area, official sources said.

The Tk 99.40 crore project titled 'Drinking water supply from irrigation deep tube-well' approved in the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecnc) meeting on August 28, 2007 is scheduled to be implemented in 25 upazilas under Rajshahi, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj by 2012.

In addition to the extension of 40 water supply installations, 750 more installations will be constructed along with arrangement of need-based water-testing equipment and chemicals under the project.

Project Director Engineer Aminul Islam told BSS that there is



Students of Bangla department form a human chain on the Dhaka University campus yesterday demanding that the killers of fellow student Fatema-Tuz-Zohra Ete be brought to book.

## French FM urges Israel to lift Gaza blockade

AFP, Jerusalem

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner urged Israel to lift its blockade of the Gaza Strip and to freeze its policy of building settlements in the West Bank, at the start of a visit to the region yesterday.

Kouchner visited east Jerusalem and met UN emergency relief coordinator John Holmes before travelling to Bethlehem in the West Bank to meet officials.

Later he will meet Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas in Ramallah and is expected to have talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Defence Minister Ehud Barak in Jerusalem today.

"The economic and humanitar-

ian situation in Gaza is especially

bad. The blockade directly affects the entire economy and living conditions as well," Kouchner said in an interview with Al-Quds newspaper, published yesterday.

"We call for the Gaza blockade to be lifted -- there must be free movement of both people and goods," Kouchner told the main Arabic daily in the Palestinian territories.

Israel has kept Gaza under effective lockdown since last June following the territory's takeover by the Islamist movement Hamas, which on January 17 it heightened the blockade before easing it again slightly.

The Israelis say the measure is in response to rockets being fired at it by Palestinian militants inside the impoverished coastal territory.

In the interview Kouchner also called on Olmert and Abbas to respect their commitments agreed at the relaunch of Middle East peace talks in the United States last November.

Kouchner's arrival overnight on Friday came just hours after eight Palestinians, including a leading Islamic Jihad militant and mem-

bers of his family, were killed in what medics and witnesses in the Gaza Strip said was an Israeli air strike.

A military spokesman in Tel Aviv denied Israeli involvement in the blast.

Both Israel and the Palestinians relaunched the US-sponsored peace process after a near seven-year hiatus with the aim of reaching an agreement by the end of 2008.

President George W Bush has said he would like to see an accord before he leaves office in January next year.

"Israel must completely freeze settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, dismantle all those deemed illegal, and reopen Palestinian institutions in east Jerusalem, namely the chamber of commerce," Kouchner told the daily.

"It cannot be said enough that the settlements are an obstacle to peace," he added.

On Thursday five firms won bids from the Israeli authorities to expand the Har Homa settlement in east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians consider to be the capital of their future state.

## College girl commits suicide jumping under train

UNB, Narsingdi

A female college student allegedly committed suicide by jumping under a train in Tan Ghorashal area of Palash upazila on Thursday.

The girl was identified as Nadira Tabassum Tumpa, 18, first year student of Ghorashal Musabini Hakim College and daughter of Syed Ashraf Uddin of Phuldir Tech village.

Witnesses said Tumpa jumped under the train following a heated exchange of words with her boyfriend. She died on the spot.

Hearing the incident, agitated students of the college rushed to the spot and hurled bricks at the Dhaka-bound Subarna Express train from Chittagong at around 12:00 noon, leading to the disruption in train service on the route for about two hours.

## Rajshahi Metro Press Club executives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Bulbul Chowdhury of Rajshahi bureau chief of the daily Jugantor and Anisuzzaman of the daily Janakantha were elected president and general secretary of Rajshahi Metropolitan Press Club on Friday.

Other elected office bearers are: Kazi Gias (Industrial News Agency) and Asaduzzaman (Amar Desh)-vice-president, Abdul Jabid Apu (Samakal) and Abbas Uddin Sarkar (Weekly Dharani)- joint secretary, Kazi Shahed (Samakal)- treasurer and Azizul Islam-office secretary.

Akbarul Hasan Millat (Sonali Sangbad), Abul Kalam Azad (Samachar) and Abdullah Iqbal (Jugantor) were elected unopposed as executive committee members.



Prof M Shamsul Haque speaks at a roundtable on 'Improvement of Bangla language in the post-independence period' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. BSB-Cambrian and the Amar Desh organised the event.

## Malaysia police fire teargas at flower protest

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian police yesterday fired teargas and water cannons to disperse ethnic Indians clutching flowers and gathered in the capital, in the latest crackdown on public protests, witnesses said. Some 300 people defied a police ban and attempted to gather in Independence Square in downtown Kuala Lumpur to protest alleged discrimination, before police moved in, an AFP correspondent witnessed.

"It is an embarrassing attack on the Indian community and on people who just wanted to hand over flowers to the prime minister," said R. Thanenthiran, one of the rally organisers.

The flower protest is the latest in a series of demonstrations in recent that have rocked the multicultural nation, which is now gearing up for general elections on

March 8.

More than 20 people were detained, police said, after supporters of Indian rights group Hindraf turned up near Dataran Merdeka or Independence Square. Police had earlier refused a permit for the gathering.

Indian youths dressed in saffron coloured t-shirts with the Tamil words "Makkal Sakti", or People's Power, chanted slogans calling for justice and an end to alleged discrimination against ethnic Indians in the country.

More than 200 police approached the crowd before spraying them with water cannons and firing tear gas shells above their heads, the AFP correspondent witnessed.

"We wanted to have 200 children also peacefully give Abdullah flowers but we were tear-gassed and water-cannoned by police," Thanenthiran said, referring to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi.

Thanenthiran said organisers decided it was unsafe for the children to take part in the protest and they were bused away from the scene.

"We came with a gesture of peace and love and the Malaysian government did not have the courage to accept the roses," Hindraf chairman P. Waythamoorthy told AFP. Prime minister Abdullah had not indicated before the protest that he would accept the flowers.

The protest comes after the detention of five Hindraf leaders who enraged the government in November by leading a mass rally protesting alleged discrimination against minority Indians.

The protest highlighted the grievances of Malaysia's Indians -- descendants of labourers brought over by British colonial rulers in the 1800s -- who say they are marginalised in terms of education, wealth and opportunities.



Apollo Fertility Centre was inaugurated at Apollo Hospitals in the city recently.

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