

Road crashes kill 6

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and 32 others injured in separate road accidents in Madaripur, Chapainawabganj and Pabna in the last two days.

A correspondent in Madaripur reports: Four people were killed and 30 others were injured when a bus overturned on Dhaka-Patuaakhali highway at Shibchar on Sunday night.

Witnesses said the Dhaka-bound bus overturned after hitting a truck from behind at Bakhor Kandi at around 11:30pm, killing Md Jewel, 32, and Md Halim, 20, and injuring 32 others.

Local people rushed the

injured passengers to Shibchar and Faridpur hospitals where two of them died. One of them was identified as Md Liton, 32, but the identity of other victims aged about 40 could not be known.

The condition of five injured people was stated to be critical. The police seized the bus, but its driver and helper fled away.

Our correspondent in Chapainawabganj reports: A man was killed when a Mishuk collided head-on with a motor vehicle, locally known as Bhut Bhuti, on Chapainawabganj-Rahanpur road at Khairabad at around 9:30 am yesterday.

The victim, Mamun, 22, who

was travelling in the Mishuk, died on the spot.

The police sent the body to Sadar Hospital for autopsy. Our Correspondent in Pabna adds: A 13-year-old boy was killed and two others were injured when a speeding bus rammed a passenger van of Pabna-Nagarbari highway at Ahmedpur village on Sunday afternoon.

The boy was identified as Md Tarek, son of Abdul Barik of village Birampur in Sujanagar. Injured Majnu, the van driver, and Raushan, a passenger, were admitted to hospital.

The police seized the bus from Kashinathpur, but the driver managed to escape.

UAE jails 45 Indian workers

AFP, Dubai

A Dubai court has sentenced 45 Indian construction workers to six months in jail followed by deportation over a violent protest to demand wage increases, a local newspaper reported yesterday.

The Court of Misdemeanour found the workers guilty of endangering public security, damaging property and inciting other workers to strike over pay rises, the Gulf News daily quoted a senior court official as saying.

"There are legal channels and legitimate methods for workers who deem they are underpaid to claim their rights instead of rioting violently and unlawfully," Judge Jassem Baqer, Head of Dubai Criminal Court, told the daily.

"This is a first-of-a-kind ruling," the judge said.

The newspaper did not say when the ruling was handed down.

But it quoted court records as saying that some of the accused confessed to orchestrating violence and inciting others to riot by distributing and posting pamphlets at workers' accommodation.

India wants

FROM PAGE 16
election for restoration of full democracy," Patil said in her maiden address to both the Houses of Parliament as the country's first woman head of state.

She said India sought to promote an environment of peace and stability 'in our region and in the world to facilitate accelerated socio-economic development and safeguard our national security.'

"The government has made vigorous efforts to develop friendly and cooperative relations with all our neighbours and strengthen engagement with major powers," the Indian president said.

She said since the 14th SAARC summit was held in New Delhi in April 2007, India has made every effort to strengthen SAARC. Progress has been achieved towards the establishment of the SAARC Development Fund, the South Asia University and the SAARC Food Bank, Patil pointed out.

As part of India's goal for a peaceful, stable and prosperous neighbourhood, India is committed to extending full support to Nepal's development during its political transition, she said adding that New Delhi also stands ready to assist the Nepalese people's choices in the transition to a democratic, stable and prosperous state.

Referring to Sri Lanka, she said there has been an unfortunate escalation of violence on the island nation but 'there can be no military solution to the ethnic issue'.

"It is necessary to find a negotiated political settlement within the framework of a united Sri Lanka that is acceptable to all sections of society," Patil said.

Turning to Pakistan, she said a stable and prosperous Pakistan is in the interest of the entire South Asian region.

"When conditions permit, we will resume our dialogue process with Pakistan, aimed at building mutual confidence and resolving outstanding issues, premised on an atmosphere free from terror and violence," she added.



A seven-day solo sculpture exhibition titled 'Rejuvenation of womanhood' of Habiba Akhter Papia begins at the Institute of Fine Arts on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

US ready for 'binding' cut in greenhouse gases

AFP, Paris

United States is ready to accept "binding international obligations" to reduce greenhouse gases, which could be announced as soon as July, a senior White House official said yesterday.

"The US is prepared to enter into binding international obligations to reduce greenhouse gases as part of a global agreement in which all major economies similarly undertake binding international obligations," said Daniel Price, assistant to President George W Bush for International Economic Affairs.

The agreement could be announced "in conjunction" with the G8 summit of the world's most industrialised nations in Japan in July, Price told journalists, without fixing a date.

"We would like to reach an agreement on a long term global reduction goal -- this is a collective goal," Price said.

Price, accompanied by James Connaughton, chairman of the White House's Council on Environmental Quality, is in Paris to lay the groundwork for a meeting here of "major economies" that account for 80 percent of the greenhouse gases that drive climate change, expected for mid-April.

The group of 17 -- including the G8 nations, the EU and major developing economies such as China and India -- met at Bush's behest last September in Washington, and then again in January, in Hawaii.

The United States refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the UN

agreement mandating emissions reductions for industrialised nations, because it did not cover developing nations.

"An effective framework requires the participation of all major economies, developed and developing alike," Price said. "Europe and the US could turn out the lights today and come 2030, come 2050 we would not have addressed the problem of climate change."

Price said he was "frustrated" at repeated criticisms that the United States had launched their initiative - which focuses on technology-driven solutions to climate change - to compete with UN-sponsored negotiations.

"The major economies process is intended to supplement, complement and support the UN negotia-

tions. It is not an alternative to those negotiations," he said.

He said the United States has already shown its willingness to engage in binding agreements, pointing to a handful of binding national programmes implemented since 2001 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency.

A mandate to increase production of renewable fuels by 50 percent before 2022, for example, would replace 15 percent of current oil fossil fuel consumption with renewable alternatives, he said.

"It is constantly suggested that the US favours only aspirational goals, non-binding goals, voluntary measures," he told journalists. "Let me be very clear: that is simply not true."

Indonesian cops turn to silver screen to improve image

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia's police are to light up the silver screen in a new action-comedy film aimed at improving their reputation for inefficiency and corruption.

Top-ranking officers will appear alongside several film stars in the movie, which will be shown in cinemas nationwide, police said yesterday.

"We want to straighten slanted views (held by the public) while at the same time conducting internal

improvements," national police spokesman Sismo Adiwinoto told reporters.

Aryanto Sutadi, who heads the police legal division, said the movie would portray crooked officers being punished and would "show how the police handle cases."

The film is being privately funded and will be released commercially.

Adiwinoto said the police would only contribute staff and the use of items such as helicopters and ships.

Hannan starts talks with pro-Saifur group

FROM PAGE 16
standing committee as a member on October 29 last year.

"Hannan Shah has received direction from the detained party chief for bringing unity in the party," a leader close to him told The Daily Star.

Pro-Khaleda faction has however got divided over Hannan's initiative as a number of leaders including Khandaker Delwar Hossain oppose the move. They don't want any discussion with Saifur-led leaders before cancelling the decision of the October 29 meeting that made Saifur acting chairperson.

However, BNP Office Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told The Daily Star last night there is no division or difference of opinion in the party regarding unity.

"The secretary general did not give any precondition but a BNP leader must accept the decision of Khaleda Zia that made Delwar Hossain secretary general and expelled three leaders," he added.

He went on to say that the decision of the October 29 meeting should also be cancelled.

Asked about the discussion between Hannan Shah and Mofazzal Karim, Rizvi, who is close to both Delwar and Hannan, said he does not know anything.

Hannan, an adviser to the BNP chairperson and also a vocal leader of pro-Khaleda faction, on Sunday told reporters he is ready to sit with the reformists without any condition and hoped for forging unity in

the party.

Earlier, Khaleda-appointed Secretary General Delwar several times categorically said pro-Saifur faction must cancel the October 29 meeting's decision and accept the chairperson's expulsion order.

Party insiders said most of the leaders of pro-Khaleda faction including Nazrul Islam Khan, Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Selima Rahman and Mohammad Shahjahan also extended support to Hannan.

They also said Hannan wanted

to bring back the party leaders excluding three expelled leaders Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Ashraf Hossain and Mofiqul Islam Tripti and that is why he started discussion with pro-Saifur leaders.

Meanwhile, a group of former student leaders also decided to take a separate initiative to unite the party.

According to their plan they will hold talks with leaders including Delwar, Hannan and Goyeshwar soon and then sit with pro-Saifur leaders.

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