

6 killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and 20 others injured in separate road accidents in Jessore, Bhola and Manikganj yesterday.

Our correspondent from Jhenidah adds: Three people were killed in a road accident on Jessore-Benapole road near Sharsa Police Station in Jessore yesterday.

The dead were identified as Sirazul Islam Gayen, 45, Hazrat Gayen, 42, and Moti Gayen, 40, of Kanya Dah village under Sharsa upazila. They all are fish trader.

dent occurred when a Benapole-bound passenger bus rammed a Nasimon, a human hauler, leaving two dead on the spot and another died on the way to hospital.

UNB from Bhola adds: Two people were killed and 20 others injured in separate road accidents in the district yesterday.

Police said Munia Begum, HSC student of Dashmina College, was run over by a truck at Shashibhusan village in Charfash-ion upazila while she was learning motorcycle driving.

In another incident, Rashed, 12, was crushed under the wheels of a

truck in the Bhelu Miah area in Sadar upazila.

Besides, 20 people were injured when a bus plunged into a roadside pond at Udoypur crossing at about 3:00pm.

Our Manikganj correspondent adds: A rickshaw puller was killed in a road accident on Dhaka-Aricha highway at Jagir in Manikganj yesterday.

The identity of the dead aged about 45 could not be known immediately.

Locals said the accident occurred when a speedy vehicle hit his rickshaw leaving him dead on the spot.

7 get life for killing woman in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A Barisal court yesterday sentenced seven people to life imprisonment for killing a woman.

District and Sessions Judge Md Shahidullah handed down the verdict to Abdus Sattar Molla, Sheikh Dulal, Sheikh Nazrul Islam, Md Kamal Howladar, Babul Md Kamal, Delwar Hossain Talukder and Noni Gopal Samaddar.

They were also fined Tk 50,000 each. If they fail to pay, they will have to serve three more years in jail.

Of the convicts, Delwar Hossain and Noni Gopal were tried in absentia.

According to the prosecution, the convicts led by Sattar Molla of Chuaripara in Banaripara attacked the house of one Abu Saleh Ahmed on the night of July 7, 2000 to kill his nephew Parvez Molla who married Sattar's daughter Tania against the wishes of her family.

Julekha, a married daughter of Abu Saleh, and Parvez were seriously injured during the attack.

Local people rushed them to Banaripara Upazila Health Complex. Later, Julekha was shifted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital where she died in the morning.



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, third from left, unveils the cover of a book titled 'Andhakarey Kalo Beral' by Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, second from right, at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are Manab Zamin Editor Matru Rahman and Advocate Chowdhury Raushan Jahan. Columnist Syed Abul Maksud, extreme right, is also seen.

Mekong summit begins

AFP, Vientiane

The prime ministers of China and five other Mekong River countries yesterday kicked off a two-day summit in the Lao capital on closer regional integration.

"The development of this sub-region involves six countries, therefore it is a win-win development," China's Wen Jiabao told a youth forum ahead of the formal meeting. "It is a cross-border development featuring mutual assistance."

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) groups China's southern Yunnan and Guangxi provinces with Thailand and its poorer neighbour Cambodia, communist Vietnam and Laos, and military-ruled Myanmar.

Initiated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the group was founded in 1992 to boost economic growth and reduce poverty in the countries that share the Mekong, Southeast Asia's largest river.

Regional cooperation has focused on developing transnational highways, working on a common power grid, streamlining trade agreements, and developing fibre-optic links to enhance telecommunications.

Wen said "the development of our subregion is also a development balancing man and nature... We should promote economic growth and protect culture, pay attention to environmental protection and achieve sustainable development."

Also at the summit were Thailand's premier Samak Sundaravej, Vietnam's Nguyen Tan Dung, Cambodia's Hun Sen, Myanmar's Thein Sein, the Lao head, Bouasone Bouphavanh, and ADB president Haruhiko Kuroda.

The Mekong region was for decades isolated and impoverished by post-colonial struggles and the Vietnam war that in the 1960s and 1970s spilled into Laos as well as Cambodia, which then fell under the bloody reign of the Khmer Rouge.

The launch of the GMS group in 1992 "really marks the end of a period of a series of conflicts, and a yearning for prosperity," said Arjun Thapan, director general of the ADB's Southeast Asia Department.

"By the close of the 80s and the early 90s there was a desire by all six countries to come together and put the past behind them and work towards a common agenda of economic prosperity," he told AFP. At the first meetings, he said,

"we had very formal, stylised kind of discussions -- flags up on the table and nobody talking to each other, all talking through ADB. Today, we are the bystanders, we are the observers."

Over recent years, average economic growth in the region has topped six percent per year.

Exports, excluding China's, have grown from 37 billion dollars in 1992 to 179 billion dollars in 2006, said the ADB. Foreign direct investment more than tripled to seven billion dollars in 2005.

Sculpture on liberation war at JNU

A sculpture styled "Genocide of 71 and preparation of Liberation War" will be inaugurated at Jagannath University (JNU) today, says a press release.

Prof Sirajul Islam Khan, vice chancellor of JNU, will inaugurate the sculpture, which was built by Sculptor Bhaskur Raza.

It is the only cluster sculpture in the country built on the theme liberation war.

'Indian cops covered up British girl's killing'

AFP, Panaji

An Indian government-run women's rights body yesterday accused police in the resort state of Goa of trying to cover up evidence in the controversial killing last month of a British teenager.

Local police initially said Scarlett Keeling, 15, had drowned after her body was found on a popular beach in Goa on February 18, but pressure from her mother and the media forced them to reopen the case.

Police this month arrested a bartender for murder, and an alleged drug dealer for conspiracy to murder, alleging the two gave the girl a cocktail of illegal drugs, before one of them repeatedly raped her and left her for dead.

"It is not an act of two persons. Four to five people are involved in the act," Nirmla Venkatesh, a member of the National Commission for Women, told a news conference in the local capital Panaji.

"She was brutally raped and there is every possibility that her head was dipped in the water," she added, alleging that police had destroyed evidence.

"Police are trying to hide or close the case. We will never allow this to happen."

Police have said that an unconscious Keeling was dumped in shallow water, where she drowned, but a forensics report released a week ago suggested that she was forcibly drowned.

No mercy scope if jailed

FROM PAGE 1

advocate MR Hasan, advocate Anisul Huq and Brigadier General Nur Mohammad.

The commission will complete and conclude each case of voluntary disclosure within seven days from its beginning "unless there is a compelling reason for extension of time". The extension however cannot be more than seven days.

The commission will comprise three members including a chairman, all to be appointed by the president in consultation with the government, says the draft.

"Here government means head of the government," Anisul Huq told The Daily Star on Saturday.

Those who are eligible to be members are a former chief justice, a retired judge of the Appellate Division, a retired officer of the armed forces not below the rank of major general, a retired public servant who held the post of secretary to the National Board of Revenue, chairman or member of the Anti-Corruption Commission, director general of erstwhile Bureau of Anti-Corruption, inspector general of police, and an eminent citizen.

Meanwhile, a retired judge of the High Court, a retired civil servant not below the rank and status of additional secretary, a retired officer of the armed forces not below the rank of brigadier general, and an eminent citizen can be appointed to the sub-commission.

The president will appoint one of the members as the chairman of the commission or sub-commission. The commission may recommend that the government form sub-commissions not more than six, which will follow the commission's decision for receiving, recording and processing voluntary disclosures to minimise the commission's workload, says the draft.

The sub-commissions will not have the power to pass decision or refuse any voluntary disclosure.

The government, on receiving recommendations of the commission, will immediately form three sub-commissions each having two

members including a chairman.

No member of the Truth Commission or the sub-commission will be above 72 years.

People who won't be entitled to join the commission or sub-commission include those having reputation of being corrupt, convicted of any criminal offence by any court excepting any traffic offence, member or ex-member of political party (who has not passed 10 years since ceasing to be a member), one against whom disciplinary proceeding is pending before any forum, and an un-discharged bankrupt.

Though the commission will deal corruption and corrupt practices, it will not deal with a voluntary disclosure of offences involving arms, drugs, human trafficking, prostitution, violence, murder, rape, etc, the draft categorically mentions.

On independence of the commission, the draft says, "The commission shall function independently in discharge of its responsibilities and exercise of powers free from any interference from the government or any other person or authority or body."

On indemnity, the draft reads: "No member or staff of the commission or a sub-commission or person performing any task on behalf of the commission or a sub-commission shall be sued or prosecuted or be liable for anything done or caused to be done in course of performing his functions as a member of the commission or a sub-commission."

Talking on the bar to disclosure by persons convicted for a term not less than two years for corruption or corrupt practices, MR Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday: "There will be restriction on the Truth Commission to receive disclosure of such people for five years since completion of punishment."

A main principle for dealing with voluntary disclosure is to take measures to minimise the inconvenience to the persons making the disclosure and, when necessary, to protect their privacy to ensure the safety of them and their families and to protect them from intimidation.

There will be no scope of appealing against the Truth Commission's order. "This is a one-stop place," observed Anisul Huq. The government in consultation with the commission may make rules for the commission, which will get its necessary manpower and budget from the government.

Saying that the commission will be independent, Anisul Huq said it would chiefly have association with the home and law ministries.



Journalists and employees of the daily Uttaranchal observe a token hunger strike at Bogra Press Club auditorium in Bogra on Saturday demanding payment of salary arrears.

ACC allowed to interrogate

FROM PAGE 16

Selim needs to be interrogated and his statement about corruption, misuse of his power and his ill-gotten wealth need to be recorded for proper investigation into the matter.

Selim is shown arrested in connection with an extortion case. On June 13 last year, Azam J Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Private Ltd, filed the other case with Gulshan Police Station against Hasina and Selim for extorting over Tk 2.99 crore.

CASES AGAINST FIROZ After scrutinising the case dockets and other relevant documents, Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court issued the arrest warrants against Dr Firoz Mahmud Iqbal and his wife, as the couple have been absconding since the cases were filed against them.

On March 24, ACC Assistant Director Jahangir Alam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court showing 24 people as prosecution witnesses in the case.

The IO prayed for issuing arrest warrant against Dr Firoz and the order to attach his properties, as Firoz has been absconding since the case was filed.

ACC Deputy Director Iqbal Hossain filed the case against Dr Firoz with Tejgaon police station on November 13 last year for wasting government money through abuse of power.

The complainant mentioned in the first information report (FIR) that Firoz used three vehicles of the Essential Drugs Company Limited (EDCL) and two vehicles of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) for his personal use between June 2003 and October 2006, causing a loss of Tk 34.90 lakh to the state exchequer.

CHARGE SHEET AGAINST FIROZ COUPLE

The same IO pressed charges against Dr Firoz and his wife Mosammat Intiaz Begum in another case filed against them for amassing wealth illegally.

The IO prayed for issuing arrest warrants against the couple and the order to attach their properties, as they have been on the run since the

case was filed with Ramna Police Station on November 13 last year.

The complainant said Dr Firoz amassed wealth worth Tk 14,77,236 illegally. Intiaz Begum was indicted in the case for abetting her husband.

VERDICT AGAINST PABAN Judge Mohammad Shafiul Azam of the Metropolitan Special Tribunal-12 will deliver the judgment in the case against Paban and four others at 2:00pm today, court sources said.

On October 29 last year, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested Paban after raiding a Japan Garden City apartment in city's Mohammadpur area following information gathered from three of his associates arrested earlier.

Later, Rab seized two illegal foreign-made firearms -- a pistol and a revolver -- along with nine bullets and a motorbike from Dhaka Flood Protection Embankment at Panchabat near Pallabi.

Paban's associates -- Anwar Hossain, Masud Ali alias Apu and Delwar Hossain alias Ratan -- were also arrested while his cousin Nahid alias Mota Nahid remain at large.

German parliamentary team stresses

FROM PAGE 1

Wrapping up the four-day visit of the delegation of the Committee for Economic Cooperation and Development of the German Bundestag.

The delegation flew in on March 26 and met the foreign affairs adviser, Economic Relations Division secretary, senior leaders of Awami League and the reformist group of BNP, donors of bilateral and multilateral development cooperation, NGOs and rights organisations.

Hoppe said democracy can only work if the parties intending to run for elections have internal democratic structure. He stressed the need for having the will to allow internal democratic reforms within the parties so that candidates are not nominated by party leadership.

Party convention should be held and leadership and candidates should be elected by the grassroots level. "To be frank, this was not the case in the past where the leadership determined from above who the candidates should be," he said.

Introducing a law for political parties would be helpful to make parties willing to contest elections register and meet some standards for registration, he noted.

The state of emergency will have to be lifted or relaxed "so that the parties can elect their candidates democratically, candidates can come up and mobilise for an election campaign", Hoppe said, adding, "Democratic structure cannot work if the work of a party is locked and impeded."

Asked about German response to election not being held in Bangladesh as promised, Hoppe expressed optimism that the polls would be held in time, but said, "If we are to speculate what if not, Germany would have to enter into critical dialogue [with the Bangladesh government] and ask for reasons."

He said, "If, for instance, parties were to be the reasons--if they did not wish to pursue internal democratic reform or if there was a danger of falling back into a situation the way it was before the state of emergency was declared--then we would show some sort of understanding why the elections would have to be postponed."

When his attention was drawn to a foreign office request for foreign diplomats not to talk on internal affairs, Hoppe said, "We are democratically elected representatives from Germany. Being able to express one's opinion freely and openly is also part of a dialogue. This is part of democracy."

Asked how long Germany will continue its support to an unelected government, he said, "We cooperate with our project partners on the ground that they support the poorest of the poor. If the government makes a mistake and does not go by the rule, it would be a mistake for us to stop our cooperation."

"We did not get any impression that the government is trying to practise some sort of dictatorship; they rather wish to undertake reforms and pursue democracy, have an election by the end of the year."

Deeply impressed with a strongly committed civil society and NGOs fighting for the rights of women, the poor and victims of acid violence, Hoppe urged the caretaker government and future governments to hold dialogues with NGOs so that they can make positive contribution to the society's development.

On sustainable development and economic growth, he said, "What is particularly important to us is that this economic growth also benefits the poorest of the poor."

A well-functioning independent human rights commission is of utmost importance for Bangladesh, he said. Citing examples of eviction of

farmers and people from their land for shrimp cultivation and major coal projects without resettlement and compensation, Hoppe said, "There cannot be infringement of rights of people in the name of economic progress."

German Ambassador to Bangladesh Frank Meyerke was present at the press conference.

US cardiologists target stress as key foe

AFP, Chicago

US cardiologists are targeting stress and anxiety as key factors contributing to cardiovascular diseases, according to studies made public at a scientific conference here.

People who cut their stress levels and keep them under control face a 60-percent lower chance of suffering a heart attack or stroke than constant worriers, said a report unveiled Saturday at the 57th annual conference of the American College of Cardiology.

Out of 516 heart patients examined during the three-to-four-year study, 44 suffered non-fatal heart attacks while 19 people died, said Yinyong Young-Xu of the Lowry Cardiovascular Research Foundation of Massachusetts, the lead author of the study.

The link between anxiety and the number of fatal and non-fatal heart attacks suffered by patients under observation has remained unchanged compared to other factors affecting the heart such as age, marital status, blood pressure and smoking.

"Psychological stress, but it depression or anxiety, has been linked to the progression of atherosclerosis, development of arrhythmias," he said.

"These findings should reinforce to cardiologists a need to attend to the whole patient by paying attention to psychological problems in addition to cardiovascular disease," he urged.

In the course of the study, patients were divided into three groups according to their baseline level of anxiety -- high, intermediate and low.

Heart conditions in the study included irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia), atherosclerosis (the hardening of arteries), and atherosclerosis (blood accumulation leading to clotting).

Researchers asked patients about their feelings and moods, sleep patterns, irregularity in bowel or stomach functions and other stress markers.

In addition to anxiety, the questionnaire also measured depression, hostility and physical complaints.

Scientists have concluded that constant stress and anxiety can even affect the rhythm of the heartbeat, heightening the risk of heart disease.

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