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Railway goes reckless

Primitive signal system leads to frequent accidents; unsafe crossings make traffic movement in city risky

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Most routes of Bangladesh Railway are very dangerous for travelling at present as the railway still depends on obsolete and dilapidated manual and semi-manual signalling system installed as far back as 1927.

Railway officials said use of the age-old route clearance system has increased scopes for human and mechanical failures, which caused some recent accidents. Traffic density has also increased in recent years, worsening the situation.

About 40 percent of the railway's signalling system is manual and 43 percent semi-manual. The rest is operated through modern mechanisms like relay interlocking and computer-based systems.

There were three collisions last year. According to the railway information book, about 18 percent accidents in 2008 were due to "failure of human elements". The

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



The auto-signal alarm at the Karwan Bazar rail crossing is out of order for so long. The gatemen put the bar down for a traffic halt only when they hear a train coming. Right: A train rammed this car and plunged it into a ditch at the intersection yesterday due to the risky practice.

Train rams car

Fatal accident narrowly averted at city crossing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A speeding train rammed a private car yesterday morning, leaving one injured, as it attempted to cross the Karwan Bazar level crossing defying the signal in the capital.

The injured was identified as Nahian, 24, the car passenger. He was going to the North South University from his Mohammadpur residence.

Sub-inspector (SI) Abu Bakkar of Government Railway Police told The Daily Star that Kamalapur Railway Station-bound Noakhali Express train hit the private car at around 7:00am as it tried to cross the lines from the wrong side of the road violating the signal.

The train pushed the car to a distance to leave it near Begunbari, he said.

The driver of the car managed to escape while locals rescued Nahian from the spot.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BB suspends 9 officials for torn note scam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday suspended nine officials including a general manager of its Khulna branch on charges of involvement in smuggling out torn notes worth about Tk 28 lakh from the branch.

The officials include Abdus Sattar, general manager, deputy directors Mozammel Haque and Syed Hafizur Rahman, assistant directors Kohinoor Akhter, Sheuli Biswas, Sajjad Hossain, Ashok Kumar Sen, Rehana Akhter and another official-- Bazlur Rahman.

Besides, it was decided that four labourers working on daily basis at Khulna branch would be handed over to police.

BB sources said police recently recovered 28 bundles -- each containing 1,000 pieces of torn Tk 500 notes-- from public vehicles coming to Dhaka from Khulna.

Though police deposited the notes in BB head office, the bundles were smuggled out to change those for fresh notes later.

Meanwhile, the BB burns

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

CLIMATE CHANGE

PM seeks int'l help to combat fallout

UNB, Geneva

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought technological and financial supports from the international community to combat the challenges of climate change.

Addressing the World Climate Conference-3 yesterday at Geneva International Conference Centre, she explained to the world leadership Bangladesh's vulnerability to the climate change.

Hasina also apprised them of her government's plans, programs and strategies for protecting the country's people from the disas-

trous impacts of the global warming.

Earlier on her arrival at the conference centre at 9:15am (local time), World Meteorological Organisation Secretary General Michel Jarraud received the Bangladesh leader.

"I came here with deep concerns of our people, who no sooner had tasted democracy than confronted with critical, dire impacts of climate change," the PM said.

She observed that through the decades since independence, whatever progress the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

BDR MUTINY TRIAL

7 out of 10 jurists against army act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven of the 10 amici curiae have given opinions against trying BDR personnel accused of different offences committed during the February 25-26 mutiny at the BDR headquarters under the army act.

Advocate AF Hassan Ariff and advocate AFM Mesbahuddin were the last to tell the Supreme Court yesterday that it is not possible to try these offences under the Army Act 1952.

Earlier, advocate TH Khan, barrister M Amir-UI Islam, Dr Kamal Hossain, advocate Mahmudul Islam and barrister Ajmalul Hossain reasoned that the trial of BDR mutineers is not possible under the military law since the BDR personnel are not guided by the law.

Two amici curiae (friends of court)--barrister Rafique-UI Huq and advocate Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed--had said the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

China okays single-dose flu vaccine

AP, Beijing

The answer may be at hand to a crucial question about vaccination for the advancing swine flu one shot or two? Chinese officials approved a vaccine Thursday that they say prevents the new flu in a single dose.

If they're right, it would be good news. Many health researchers fear it will take two shots to protect people, vastly complicating efforts to stem the spread of the illness.

The World Health Organisation says it is encouraged after reviewing the test

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Govt to make drug available

Swine flu infects 16 more

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

The government yesterday decided to make the anti-viral drug available in the market soon to treat swine flu patients.

Meanwhile, the number of swine flu patients in the country stood at 275 after 16 more people were diagnosed with the H1N1 virus.

The Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) detected the new cases during its routine surveillance.

The health ministry at a meeting yesterday decided to give permission to the local drug manufacturing companies to market the anti-viral drugs. But it could not be sold or bought without the prescription of a registered medical practitioner.

Currently the anti-viral drug Oseltamivir is available at 15 hospitals, which are especially trained to manage swine flu

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

AMMONIA GAS

13 workers fall sick in cold storage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirteen workers fell unconscious at a cold storage at Gudaraghat Farashganj in the city's Sutrapur early yesterday due to accumulation of a huge quantity of ammonia gas.

Sources at the City Ice and Cold Storage said the workers who were working on the first floor fell sick around 12:15am because of the emission of ammonia gas.

The victims were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and then shifted to different clinics, said

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Rid Pharma officials defy court order

Warrant issued for third time as they do not show up in court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A Brahmanbaria court yesterday re-issued arrest warrant against five Rid Pharma officials for not showing up at the hearing of a case filed against them for producing toxic paracetamol syrup that claimed lives of 28 children.

Brahmanbaria District and Sessions Judge A F M Mustafa re-issued the arrest warrant against Rid's Managing Director Mizanur Rahman, its directors Sheuli Rahman, also wife of Mizanur, and Abdul Gani and pharmacists Mahbubul Islam and Enamul Haque.

The judge fixed September 30 for next hear-

ing of the case.

It was the third arrest warrant against the Rid Pharma officials. Earlier, the same court issued an arrest warrant against them on August 17 and also a Dhaka court on August 11. But the police failed to arrest any of the five Rid Pharma officials.

At least 28 children have died since July due to acute renal failure caused by Brahmanbaria-based Rid Pharma's toxic paracetamol syrup prompting the government to seal the company's factory on July 22.

An official probe on July 29 found presence of toxic compound in Rid's syrup.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

NEWS ANALYSIS

President could have saved govt's blushes

SHAKHAWAT LITON

President Zillur Rahman could have saved the government from sliding into the ongoing legal controversy over sending two district judges into forced retirement, had he not overlooked the constitutional provision on the issue.

Had he enquired into the legality of the government's move, and followed the constitutional provision, the president could also have saved the judiciary from the executive branch's undue interference, at least on that occasion.

Article 116 of the constitution says the president in consultation with the Supreme Court (SC) shall determine postings, promotions,

grants of leave, and discipline of persons employed in the judicial service, and of the magistrates discharging judicial responsibilities.

But the provision was not complied with in the case of sending Judge Abdul Gafur of Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's Court, and Judge Mohammad Shahjahan of Gazipur Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal into forced retirement on July 30, for their involvement in a demonstration at Bangladesh Secretariat on July 27.

The president consented to the government decision following Prime Minister Sheikh

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

CASE AGAINST SIRCAR HC appoints amici curiae for opinion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday appointed three amici curiae (friend of court) for expert opinion on the legality of formation of a parliamentary body to investigate corruption allegations against former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar.

The three are barrister Rafique-UI Huq, advocate Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan and Dr M Zahid.

A special division bench of the HC comprised of Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Blind, yet they set green mark

Group of blind people team up to plant trees along Nilphamari road since 2007

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

They can't see the world and all its treasures because of their visual impairment. Yet they've all the eagerness to do their bits in making the globe greener.

A group of blind people in a remote Nilphamari village got them united under the banner of an association and started planting trees on both sides of the road at Mirganj in Jaldhaka upazila in 2007 with a missionary zeal.

To them, trees are symbols of beauty that cast a soothing spell on heavy hearts like theirs who want to survive amidst all the despairs.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



Left: Vision impaired Monzurul Islam (in the middle) and two others look after the plantation on both sides of a local road in Mirganj. Middle: Monzurul is taking care of a plantlet. Right: Locals are helping the blind men detect problems with an infected tree.



PHOTO: STAR