

Waterbus service to be introduced in August Says minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Waterbus service will be introduced in the circular waterway around the city in August with a view to easing traffic jam. Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan said yesterday.

He also said the inland container terminal at Pangoan near Keraniganj will start its operation at the beginning of next year.

The minister said this to reporters after visiting the under-construction container terminal project, said a press release.

He also inspected the activities of recovering occupied lands along the Buriganga River and visited different under-construction projects by a launch.

The launch began its journey from BIWTA landing station at Aminbazar, which ended at the inland container terminal.

The minister warned that stern action will be taken against those who have illegally occupied lands along the Buriganga river or have been polluting the river water.

Shipping secretary Abdul Mannan Hawlader, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Chairman Abdul Malek Miah, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) Chairman Golam Mostafa Kamal and a number of BIWTA officials were present during his visit.

Maternal mortality rate in char areas still high

Lack of access to healthcare blamed

MAHBUBA ZANNAT, back from Shibchar, Madaripur



PHOTO: STAR

Reshma and her mother-in-law Rahela.

The maternal mortality rate in many char areas in the country still remains high due to absence of healthcare facilities and shortage of family planning workers.

The government officials admitted that they often fail to provide adequate healthcare services for the people in those areas because of poor health infrastructure and manpower shortage.

One or two mothers die during childbirth here every month, said Abdul Malek Talukder, an elderly resident of Daliluddin Sarkar Kandi village in Char Janajat union under Shibchar upazila.

He recalls: "It was evening on a Monday this month when Sabina, 26, started groaning in labour pains. After her relatives failed to assist her in giving birth, a trowler could be managed to take her to a nearby healthcare centre.

"At about midnight, the trowler left for Dhaka carrying Sabina. But at dawn we got shocked to see that it is coming back. When the trowler came close, we found Sabina lying dead. She died just because of lack of a skilled birth attendant," said the elderly man.

Just a week before Sabina's death, Rojina, 22, daughter of Khabir Hawlader, died along with her baby after suffering from agonising labour pains for three days.

Just because of the lack of access to comprehensive healthcare, women are dying from pregnancy-related complications without receiving minimum healthcare service, local people said.

There are no healthcare centres, no maternal and child welfare centres, no skilled birth attendants and not even a family welfare assistant to visit and counsel mothers, they said.

No family welfare workers bother to come to the village by crossing the river Padma and

there is nobody except one health assistant to take care of health-related issues of some 15,000 people in Char Janajat union, said union Chairman Bazul Rahman Sarker.

"If there had been only an MBBS doctor in the union, the situation would not have been different and the mothers would not have died young," the chairman said, adding that the union health and family welfare sub-centre is still under construction and out of the two community clinics here, only one is running partially due to lack of manpower.

Unfortunately, the government health

officials are quite unaware of the real situation in the char areas.

"The maternal mortality rate in Shibchar upazila is zero," said Acting Upazila Health and Family Welfare Officer Motiar Rahman.

"There are five or six family welfare assistants and health assistants in every union and they are locally appointed. So, there is no scope for them to remain absent," he said, adding that he is not aware of recent death of mothers in the locality.

At another village Fazul Sarkerer Kandi, popularly known as Bhumihiner Char, the

mothers never received any antenatal care. Even they can't imagine a skilled birth attendant attending to them to ensure safe delivery.

Harun Mollah's first wife died four years ago during childbirth. His second wife Reshma is now eight months' pregnant. But she has not received any antenatal care so far, because there is no such facilities in the village.

"It takes one and a half hours to go to the upazila health complex, the nearest health centre. So, I did not go there. My mother-in-law Rahela assisted me during my first childbirth. She also would do it this time," said Reshma.

But Rehala had no training on birth assistantship. "Nobody taught me how to assist somebody in childbirth. I have to work as traditional birth attendants out of necessity. So far, I have helped mothers give birth to some 200 babies," she said.

Director General (DG) of Family Planning Mohammad Abdul Qayyum said there is acute shortage of family welfare assistants and family welfare visitors, the main workforce at grass-roots level in the health sector.

One family welfare assistant was supposed to work for 600 eligible couples in a locality in the 80's. Today the population has almost doubled in a locality, but the number of family welfare assistants remains the same.

At present, some 650 posts of family welfare visitors are lying vacant and some of them are retiring from job every day.

"There are many NGOs working on safe motherhood issues. But very few NGOs are working in remote char areas," the DG said.

The government aims to reduce maternal mortality rate to 143 from 320 per thousand live births by 2015 to attain the Millennium Development Goal 5, he said, adding that but it would not be possible to do so without ensuring healthcare services for a large number of people living in char and other remote areas.



Zainul Abedin's anniversary of death today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 34th death anniversary of Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, a renowned artist and founder principal of Institute of Fine Arts (now Fine Arts faculty of Dhaka University), says a press release.

On the occasion, wreaths will be placed at his grave on the Dhaka University mosque premises at 9.00am.

Teachers and students of the then Institute of Fine Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University and all artists and cultural activists have been requested to join the programme.

Sultana Helen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



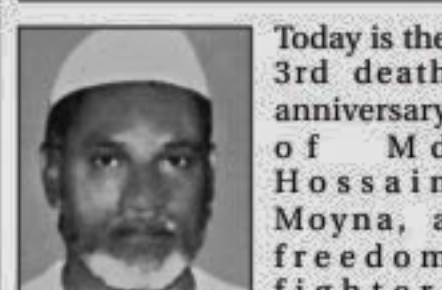
Today is the 5th death anniversary of Sultana Helen, wife of Syed Abdul Momen, a resident of West Tejuria Bazar and daughter of Nurul Islam of Khagutia village in Sonargaon, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be at her brother's residence at Dhanmondi in the city after Asr prayer.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the milad and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Md Hossain Moyna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 3rd death anniversary of Md Hossain Moyna, a freedom fighter, founder Shaheed Anwar Primary School at Lalbagh in the city, says a press release.

On this occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence at Lalbagh in the city.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the doa and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Nasima Nargis Ahmed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 8th death anniversary of Nasima Nargis Ahmed, wife of late Ashrafuddin Ahmed, says a press release.

She was a member of APWA Narayanganj Mahila Samity and executive council member of Khulna Lioness Club.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at her Pallabi residence in the city.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the milad and pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Qulkhwani

METRO DESK



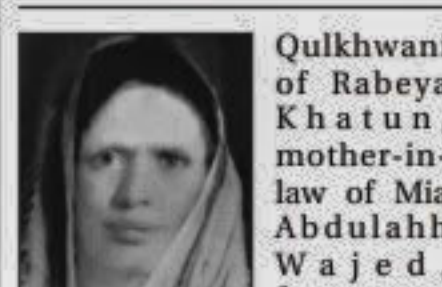
Qulkhwani of SN Sharifa Rahman, daughter of late Akbar Ali, will be held at her daughter's residence at Flat B4, Triumph Tower, 6/1 Eskaton Garden in the city after Maghrib prayers today, says a press release.

Relatives and well-wishers are requested to attend the doa mahfil and pray for peace of her departed.

Sharifa passed away due to cancer syndrome at the age of 60. She left behind her two sons and a daughter to mourn her death.

Rabeya Khatun

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Qulkhwani of Rabeya Khatun, mother-in-law of Mia Abdulahh Wajed, former lawmaker and chairman of Millat Group, will be held at her daughter's residence at House # 2, Road No # 13/B, Sector # 6 at Uttara in the city after Juma prayers today, says a press release.

He conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

Use of surface water, agri development to get priority

Says food minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Use of surface water and agricultural development in critical zones such as the southwestern coastal belt will be the top priority in the Food Security Investment Plan, Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque said yesterday.

"The development partners also agreed on these priorities, as we said people in such areas generally have low income," he said at a press briefing after the conclusion of a two-day high-level meeting.

The government hosted the Bangladesh Food Security Investment Forum in the capital's Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel with the participation of economists, agriculturists, food security experts and policymakers from across the globe.

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, International Food Policy Research Institute, Food and Agriculture

Organization, US Agency for International Development, European Union and UK Department for International Development supported it.

The participants made suggestions for finalisation of the Country Food Security Investment Plan (CFSIP) to ensure food security and nutrition in Bangladesh through agricultural development.

Commenting on the crucial issues discussed in the forum, Razzaque said they highlighted that the southwestern coastal belt, and haor, hilly and char areas should get the highest priority to receive investment.

Crops in these areas often get damaged due to flash and monsoon floods and natural disasters. Besides, the problem of salinity in the coastal belt poses a serious threat to agricultural development, experts have said on various occasions.

Management of water resources and use of surface water for agriculture also

figured prominently in the forum, the food minister said.

"The development partners agreed to invest in these areas on a priority basis," he said.

The level of underground water in northern districts fell considerably making it difficult to extract water by tube-wells. Besides, extensive extraction of underground water also poses the risk of contamination of water with arsenic, experts have observed.

The participants urged the development partners and multilateral financial organisations to mobilise and provide adequate financial resources for implementation of the CFSIP, the minister said.

They also suggested that the CFSIP should be finalised by the end of 2010, Abdur Razzaque said.

The minister said he believes the development partners are sincere this time in keeping their commitments.



PHOTO: PID

President Zillur Rahman exchanges greetings with members of the Buddhist community on the occasion of the Buddha Purnima at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday. On his right is Industries Minister Dilip Barua.

Contribute to nation-building CJ urges all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim yesterday urged the people of all faiths to contribute to nation-building activities from their own positions by rising above division.

He also called on all to refrain from any sinful and jealous acts in order to maintain peace and communal harmony in society.

The chief justice made the call while addressing as the chief guest a discussion on 'Buddhism and World Peace' organised by Bangladesh Buddha Kristi Prachar Sangha on the occasion of Holy Buddha Purnima at Dharmarajik Buddha Mahabihar International Upasalanaya at Sabujbagh in

the city. Buddhism is a religion of equality, harmony and peace, he said, adding that if the people follow the ideology and philosophy of Lord Buddha, peace will reign in society.

Justice Fazlul Karim also said that honesty, sacrifice and truthfulness of the people can help build a beautiful and prosperous country.

Presided over by Shuddhananda Mahathero, president of Bangladesh Buddha Kristi Prachar Sangha, the meeting was also addressed by Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Rajet Mitter, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarath Kumara Neragoda and Principal of Notre Dame College Benjamin Costa.

Orientation for heart patients on June 4

UNB, Dhaka

A daylong health orientation for heart block patients will be held free of cost at LGED auditorium at Agragano in the city on June 4.

Dr Haridwar Anant Patil, a preventive heart disease specialist at Spondon Heart Care Clinic of Mumbai, India will conduct the orientation.

Health related issues such as ECP therapy, Chellation therapy, Alpha meditation, yoga and diet management will

be discussed at the orientation organised by the Holistic Health Care Centre, a pioneer organisation for treatment of heart diseases without drugs and surgery.

Dr Patil will also examine patients suffering from coronary artery blockage at the Holistic Health Care Centre at 57/15 Panthapath free of cost on June 3.

Interested persons have been requested to contact the Holistic Health Care Centre on 8112825 or 01921849699.

16 killed, 86 injured in road accidents

METRO DESK

At least 16 people were killed and 86 others injured in separate road accidents in Tangail, Brahmanbaria, Faridpur, Netrakona and Jhenidah yesterday.

Our correspondent from Tangail reports: Five people were killed and 10 others injured in a road accident near Ashkepur bypass early hours of yesterday.

Three of the deceased were identified as Babul Akhter, 42, of Naogaon, Ranju, 25, and Majnu Ahmed, 24, of Joypurhat. Identity of two others could not be known immediately.

Witnesses said the accident occurred when a Joypurhat-bound bus hit a stationary truck at about 3:30am, leaving four people dead on the spot and injuring 11 others.

The empty truck fell into a roadside ditch.

Police and fire fighters rescued the injured and rushed them to Tangail General Hospital where an unidentified person succumbed to his injuries.

All the dead and injured were passengers of the bus. The bodies were sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Our correspondent from Brahmanbaria says: Four people were killed and 20 others injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Kharijala village under Ashuganj upazila yesterday.

Three of the dead were identified as Md Salek Mia, 25, Md Marfat Ali, 30, and Md Al Amin alias Shahin Mia, 30. Identity of the girl child aged about 3 could not be known immediately.

Witnesses and police said the accident took place when an Ashuganj-bound bus of Diganta Paribahan from Brahmanbaria hit a Brahmanbaria-

bound tempo loaded with eight passengers from Ashuganj near Kharijala turning point. The bus hit the tempo as its driver lost his control over the steering, leaving 24 passengers of both the vehicles injured.

Of them, four tempo passengers succumbed to their injuries on the way to hospital. Twenty others were rushed to Brahmanbaria Modern Hospital.

On information, police from Ashuganj police station rushed to the spot and rescued the injured.

The bodies were sent to Brahmanbaria Modern Hospital for autopsy.

Our Faridpur correspondent reports: Three people, including a woman and her eight-year-old daughter, were killed and 25 others injured as a bus plunged into a roadside ditch in Bhanga upazila here about 12:45am yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Nasima Begum, 35, and her daughter Swapna of Kishoreganj and Masud Miah, 38, of Barguna.

Witnesses said the Dhaka-bound bus fell into the ditch after its driver lost his control over steering near Maligram in Bhanga.

The injured were taken to Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

Our correspondent from Netrakona says: Two people were killed and 30 others injured in separate road accidents at Kendua and Barhatta upazila in Netrakona yesterday.

One person was killed and 30 others injured in a road accident on Netrakona-Kendua road at Gachhola under Kendua upazila about 10:00am.

The dead was identified as Chand Banu, 45, wife of Abdur Rahman of village Rualbari under Kendua upazila. Police and local people said the acci-

dent occurred when a Kendua-bound passenger bus from Netrakona fell into a roadside ditch at Gachhola as its driver lost his control over the steering, killing passenger Chand Banu on the spot and injuring 30 others.

Injured Mokromar Ma, Zahurul Haque, Abdul Motalib and Ruhul Bapari were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital in critical condition. Others were admitted to Kendua Upazila Health Complex.

Police seized the bus but its driver managed to escape.

A nine-year-old child was killed in a road accident on Netrakona-Mohongonj road at Sahata under Barhatta upazila about 8:00am.

The dead was identified as Moni Akhter, daughter of Khokon Mia of village Dimora under Barhatta upazila.

Police and local people said a Mohongonj-bound passenger bus from Netrakona crushed Moni to death while she was crossing the road.

Our correspondent from Jhenidah adds: Two people were killed and another was injured in a road crash on Moheshpur-Bhairaba road at Noanipara under Moheshpur upazila in Jhenidah yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Abul Kalam Azad, 35, son of Based Ali of Jogi Huda of village under Moheshpur upazila, and Jahangir Alam, 32.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a tractor hit their motorbike at Noanipara when they were going to Moheshpur from Narsingdi, leaving Azad and Jahangir dead on the spot. Rabul Islam, tractor driver, was injured.

Rejoinder, our reply

The home ministry has protested a portion of the report published in The Daily Star on May 17 under the headline 'Ban on nighttime movement on border to stop BSF killings'.

In a rejoinder, the home ministry said India has not taken any initiative to erect barbed-wire fence within 150 yards of the border by violating international law as reported in The Daily Star.

Our reply

Our report was based on the press briefing of Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder following an inter-ministerial meeting on May 16. In the briefing, he told reporters that Bangladesh disputed the location of 46 points where the barbed-wire fence was erected beyond 150 yards from zero line. He also said Bangladesh and India had conducted a joint survey which has already identified 12 such points.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amirul Islam Biswas, uncle of Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, special assistant to BNP chairperson, passed away at BSMMU in the city on Tuesday at the age of 84, says a press release.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain expressed deep shock at his death.

He conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

WEATHER TODAY No change in temperature UNB, Dhaka Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at many places over Sylhet, Barisal and Chittagong divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, and Khulna divisions in next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met office said. The sun sets in the capital at 6:40pm today and rises at 5:11am tomorrow. Country's highest temperature 34.8 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sathkira and lowest 21.8 degrees Celsius at Rangamati. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were: City/Town Temperature in Celsius Humidity in percentage Max Min Morning Evening Dhaka 33.0 23.8 60 65 Chittagong 32.0 22.6 85 78 Rajshahi 33.0 23.0 74 68 Khulna 34.0 22.5 77 70 Barisal 33.0 23.4 83 92 Sylhet 31.1 23.2 87 70 Cox's Bazar 32.3 22.5 79 65