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REGD. NO. DA 781 • VOL. XX No. 133 • DHAKA SATURDAY MAY 29, 2010 • JAISHTHA 15, 1417 BS • JAMADIUS SANI 14, 1431 HIBRI • 28 PAGES PRICE: Tk 10.00

COMMITTED TO
People's Right to Know

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Indian train crash kills 80

Sabotage by Maoists suspected; blast caused derailment, says railway minister

STAR REPORT

At least 80 passengers were killed and 200 injured as a train derailed early yesterday in Midnapore district of West Bengal, India allegedly due to an action of sabotage by Maoists.

The incident took place around 1:30am when the Mumbai-bound train was running between Khemasoli and Sardiya stations, railway officials said.

The fishplates were found removed at the site, said West Bengal Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Surojit Karpurokayastha.

Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee said the derailment of the coaches took place after a blast, reports Pallab Bhattacharya from Kolkata.

The blast led to derailment of 13 coaches of the train, five of which were rammed in by a freight train coming from the opposite direction, the railway officials said.

The bodies of the passengers were removed

from the mangled remains of the coaches of Howrah-Kurla Lokmanya Tilak Gyaneshwari Super Deluxe Express. The injured were rescued with the help of gas cutters, a South Eastern Railway spokesman said.

"So far 71 bodies have been recovered. The toll may go up," said West Bengal Home Secretary Samar Ghosh.

West Bengal Chief Secretary Ardhendu Sen said, "Sabotage by Maoists is very much suspected. The spot where the accident took place is their stronghold."

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8
MORE STORIES ON PAGE 7



Indian rescue workers and volunteers survey the site of a train wreck at Sardiya some 135km west of Kolkata yesterday. Maoist rebels are suspected of derailing the train, packed with sleeping passengers, into the path of a freight train. PHOTO: AFP

Public-pvt partnership mulled for coal mining

Govt to decide within Dec on Barapukuria open pit mining

SHARIEF KHAN

The government will take a decision within this year on floating tender for developing an open pit mine in one part of the existing underground coalmine in Barapukuria, says the prime minister's energy adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury.

Under this plan, private companies will be asked to make offers in a competi-

tive bidding to become the government's partner in developing the open pit mine. The government will hold majority share in such a joint venture.

Open pit mining will allow enough coal production for larger power projects. The existing underground mine's coal production is limited due to methodical disadvantages, and it can only cater to the needs of smaller power plants of up to 250 megawatt capacity.

"We aim to generate 30 percent of the country's future power using coal," said Chowdhury, explaining why open pit mine has become necessary. Presently coal plays a negligible role in power generation.

He added that the northern part of the existing mine is ideal for developing an open pit mine as the coal deposit there is closer to the surface (120 metres to 200

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Attack on Aleya Accomplices of Khokon still untraced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police are yet to identify the accomplices of Khokon even after three days of his grisly attack on Aleya on her refusal to marry him.

Khokon on a two-day remand from Thursday is confusing the Pallabi police by mentioning different names of his associates, police sources said.

They said Khokon and locals earlier mentioned two persons who accompanied

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Attack on Pak Ahmadi mosques kills 80

AFP, Lahore

Gunmen wearing suicide vests stormed two Pakistani mosques belonging to a minority sect in Lahore, bringing carnage yesterday prayers and killing around 80 people, officials said.

Squads of militants burst into prayer halls firing guns, throwing grenades and taking hostages in the deadliest attack on the city of eight million, which has been increasingly hit by Taliban and Al-Qaeda-linked violence.

Both mosques belonged to the Ahmadi community, which Pakistan has declared non-Muslim. Although the estimated minority of two million has been attacked by Sunni extremists before, the magnitude of yesterday's

assault was unprecedented.

Pakistan's leading rights group said the community had received threats for more than a year and officials blamed the attack on Islamist militants, who have killed more than 3,370 people in bombings over the last three years.

"Terrorists have attacked mosques. They are firing and using grenades. They have taken people inside the mosque hostage," district civil defence official Muzhar Ahmed told AFP from the scene in the bustling neighbourhood Garhi Shahu.

The attacks sparked more than two hours of gun battles with police and commandos, as

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

ROAD DEATH

No move to catch the killer driver

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Neither police nor the owning company of the killer bus, that took the life of Buet freshman Samrat on Thursday, seem to have any care for putting the reckless driver and his helper behind bars, and for compensating the victim's family.

No move was made by police to contact the management of Winner Paribahan, owning company of the bus, till last evening. The bus company also did not contact the victim's family, let alone offering any compensation.

Meanwhile, the driver and his helper remain absconding.

Sub-inspector of Lalbagh Police Station Bashir Ahmed, who is also the investigation officer (IO) in the case, told The Daily Star last evening that he did not even have the names and addresses of the driver and his helper.

"It is not difficult to manage the details of the fugitives, if we contact the bus

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Workers install vehicle height restrictor at Palashi in the capital yesterday. Buet authorities decided to install the restrictor after a recklessly driven bus fatally ran over a student the day before. PHOTO: STAR

DEATHS IN ROAD ACCIDENTS Culprits hardly get punished

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

Inadequate and lack of comprehensive laws allow most drivers responsible for traffic accidents, and the owners of automobiles who employ them get away unpunished.

As much as 80 percent bus drivers use fake driving licences and these inexperienced and illegal drivers are largely responsible for killing more than one person a day in the capital.

As per the law, the police can at best send the drivers to court for trial but there is no legal provision to keep the seized vehicle in police custody until the case is disposed of; even though the vehicle in question should be kept in custody as evidence.

As bus owners take back seized vehicles and send them back on the streets, the evidence of accidents is lost and police often fail to prove whether the accident occurred due to some mechanical fault or error on the part of the driver.

There is no law to punish bus owners who employ drivers with fake driving licences. Taking this advantage, the bus owners continue to employ inexperienced drivers.

Despite this, the High Court on May 11 set an example by ordering a company to pay damages to a person's family under Tort Act. The company car had caused death to that person.

On an average, 45 people are killed in road accidents every month in the capital. Inexperienced drivers cause almost all these accidents, according to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque told The Daily Star that almost all the bus drivers in the city have fake driving licences. He said they conduct drives against drivers with fake driving licences on a limited scale but if they go tough against

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Musa's reception in Kathmandu today

Day coincides with anniversary of the feat of Tenzing, Hillary

PINAKI ROY from Kathmandu

On the International Everest Day, Bangladesh Embassy in Nepal today will host a rapturous reception for Musa Ibrahim who conquered Mount Everest as the first Bangladeshi.

May 29 is internationally observed as the Everest day since Tenzing Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary set a maiden record by climbing Mt Everest this day in 1953.

To mark the day, Nepal's Mountaineering Association will honour more than 100 Everest

summiters of the world.

Bangladesh Embassy is trying to get Musa Ibrahim enrolled in the group to be honoured.

"Their programme and lists of climbers were scheduled long before. It is difficult to add a new person to the list. But we are trying," said Nasrin Zahan, second secretary of the Embassy of Bangladesh.

But Musa will attend a rally of the Everest climbers in the morning to celebrate the day, she said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Everest hero to return home June 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family members and a sponsor have arranged the heroic return of Musa Ibrahim, the first ever Everest Conqueror from Bangladesh, by a special flight on June 1 to his homeland where people are eagerly waiting for him, the pride of the country.

Musa's wife Soraban Tahura Rimi and their one-and-a-half-year old son Wasi Ibrahim, his brother-in-law Rashidul Hasan, a pilot, and sister Noor Ayesha Moni or

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Hardliners take over JMB

Detained chief tells interrogators

KAILASH SARKAR

JMB chief Saidur Rahman himself is worried that hardliners who have taken control of banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh will be more destructive in his absence as chief.

In the last two days of his six-day remand, Saidur told interrogators that Sohel Mahfuz became JMB's acting chief and Nazmul alias Bhagina Shahid is now the military wing commander, sources said.

Earlier, the JMB chief disclosed that they still have around 400 fulltime members and 50,000 supporters across the country with a strong military wing capable of launching devastating attacks.

One of the interrogators wishing ano-

nymity said, "Saidur claimed that before his arrest, the hardliners had been pressing him repeatedly for carrying out attacks alongside their dawa (recruiting) activities but Saidur did not allow them."

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Shahidul Hoque yesterday said Saidur has disclosed many names of JMB leaders who took over charges of those arrested, including the JMB chief and chiefs of different JMB units.

The DMP commissioner said Saidur claimed that he wanted to gradually weaken and eventually dismantle the military wing and give more emphasis on dawa (recruiting) activities.

The commissioner also said during

interrogation Saidur disclosed that one of their financial sources is a number of expatriates.

"The expatriates send money for JMB through their family members in the country," he said, adding, "We have also collected many names."

Sources said apart from fake currency trade, JMB gets funds from several sources at home and abroad.

They said Saidur disclosed that acting JMB chief Sohel, now in India, is also the chief of JMB's Dhaka zone. Rajshahi zone chief Nazmul alias Bhagina Shahid is also a charge-sheeted accused in the case filed in connection with the attack on Prof Humayun Azad.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4