

## Call to ensure road safety

BSS, Dhaka

Several hundred people carrying placards and photographs of road crash victims yesterday staged a several kilometer long street march in the city as part of road safety campaign amid reports of growing road accidents.

Family members and friends of a number of road crash victims joined the procession organised by cultural personality and parliamentarian Tarana Halim, whose nephew was recently killed in an accident.

"The existing law should be amended to ensure adequate punishment of 'killer drivers'," Tarana told a brief rally ahead of the start of the march from in front of National Press Club to Aminbazar area at the city outskirts.

She alleged that weakness in laws and their weak enforcements largely contributed to the rise in road accidents.

Tarana Halim, Ekram Ahmed, Member of editorial board of the daily Samakal Ajoy Das Gupta and Prof Nazrul Islam of Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University and Sufiya Begum, mother of Farjana Hossain Silvia who was killed

in a road accident, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Nearly 500 deaths on a stretch of 12,000 kilometre highways in only six months until August this year ranked Bangladesh high in the list of countries with high road crash fatalities caused by all possible factors.

"All the reasons which can cause road crashes are there in Bangladesh," director of the Accident Research Institute of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) Mohammad Shamsul Haque told the news agency recently as the police headquarters released the report three months ago. He said in terms of number of vehicles compared to population, Bangladesh ranked in the bottom of the list while

in terms of accident frequency, the country position was second after Nepal.

According to the statistics of the police headquarters, 2,958 people were killed in 3,381 road accidents across the country in 2009, 3,765 in 2008 and 3,749 in 2007 while 500 deaths were recorded in highways alone in between February and August 2010.



PHOTO: STAR

Families of road accident victims stage a several kilometer long street march in the city yesterday as part of a road safety awareness campaign.

## No driver punished for accidents in 17 yrs

Says Ilias Kanchan

TAWFIQUE ALI

No killer driver has ever been brought to justice in nearly two decades with every successive government taking benefit of massive extortion from the transport sector, said a pioneer campaigner for road safety.

"I have not seen a single killer driver being punished in seventeen years," said Ilias Kanchan, a popular film star, who has been carrying a vigorous campaign for road safety following the tragic demise of his beloved wife in a road crash in 1993.

He launched a countrywide campaign fashioned Nirapad Sharak Chai (We Demand Safe Roads) to create awareness about road safety.

He said 47 accidents are caused by every 1,000 motor vehicles in Bangladesh, while the rate is two or three in the developed countries.

As long as the law enforcers and politicians take financial benefits from the transport sector, unauthorised and incompetent drivers will continue thriving at the cost of public life and safety, he observed.

Private owners of such public vehicles operating across the capital employ drivers either on daily or trip basis. This makes the drivers reckless.

More than 90 percent of those drivers lack any education and proper training.

Traffic police are hardly seen checking the rundown buses and likes and the fake drivers, said Kanchan.

Demands of the movement, said Kanchan, include government initiative to create a pool of drivers with proper training and education, proper law and enforcement, making the vehicle owners responsible for accidents, incorporating lessons on accidents in the textbooks and building awareness.



Ilias Kanchan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must take effective measures to improve the country's river transport system and ensure passengers' safety, speakers at a discussion have demanded.

Waterway transport is the cheapest and most viable means for carrying passengers and goods, but its condition is worsening by the day due to the negligence and mismanagement of the authorities, they observed.

The remarks came at a discussion on the prevailing waterway transport system jointly organised by Green Club of Bangladesh (GCB) and Safe Waterway Implementation Movement at the city's Moni Singh-Farhad Trust Bhaban yesterday.

The programme marked the first anniversary of the Coco-4 capsized at Lalmohon in Bhola that killed of over 100 people.

Following the accident on November 27 last year, a case was filed against officials of the Rahman Navigations, the owning company of the launch. Later they got bail from the court.

Speakers alleged that there is no further development of the case. Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman is the owner of the shipping company.

Enamul Haque, former director general of Water Development Board, stressed the need for restoration of navigability of the waterways for smooth movement of watercrafts.

Ruhin Hossain Prince, a central committee member of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), urged the authorities concerned to ensure strict measures against unfit launches.

Presenting the keynote paper, GCB General Secretary Asish Kumar Dey placed a set of recommendations to improve the sector including exemplary punishment of the government officials who gave fitness certificate to the MV Coco 4, strengthening the shipping department and appointing prosecution officer in Marine Court.

GCB President Nurur Rahman Selim, Safe Waterway Implementation Movement Member Secretary Aminur Rashid, among others, were present at the discussion.

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## BNP's hartal demonstration against judiciary: Suranjit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling Awami League lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta yesterday said main opposition BNP's call for countrywide hartal next Tuesday is nothing but a demonstration against the judiciary and state.

"The country has never experienced a hartal declared against the judiciary or state. BNP is trying to lead the country into a crisis through this," he said.

The people will not support the hartal and protest and resist it if necessary, said Suranjit, also an AL advisory council member, while addressing as the chief guest at a discussion held at Dhaka Reporters' Unity organised by Jonotar Prottyasha, a newly formed AL organisation.

The veteran AL leader said BNP chose the day after the hearing on Khaleda's petition with the SC about the cantonment residence for the hartal. This implies they do not have respect for the judiciary.

He censured the BNP leaders who made "controversial" remarks about role played by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) in vacating the cantonment house where BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia used to live.

"The judiciary and the armed forces should be kept above all controversy and politics... it is the constitutional obligation," he added.

## One gunned down in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A rickshaw-van garage owner died yesterday as unidentified criminals shot him in the city's Muradpur area.

The victim Mohammad Titu, 45, was admitted to a private clinic at Moghbazar in critical condition and died at 10:00pm.

Police said Titu came under attack around 2:00pm while he was taking tea at a shop in front of his house.

A gang of four gunmen came and one of them shot him on the head. They then ran away leaving him wounded, said witnesses.

Kazi Aiyubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Kadamtali Police Station said they were yet to ascertain the cause behind the murder and the attackers are yet to be identified.

The OC added that seven years ago Titu came under another gun attack that resulted in one of his legs being disabled by local criminals' gang - Sanaulah group.

Titu's nephew Kabir said Titu is a member of an anti-criminal committee in the locality.

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