

Restriction on cars

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streets carrying less than four to five passengers. "You can impose penalties instead of stopping cars," he said. The restriction should be imposed on certain areas, not on all roads, he added.

He cited examples of Bangkok, Singapore and the US. In Singapore, a car with four passengers does not have to pay congestion charge while in the US a car with more than two passengers is allowed to use the carpool lane. Bangkok encourages carpooling.

He suggested that the government introduces luxury air-conditioned bus services, like Bangkok has done, to get the wealthy more interested in using public transport.

Not letting cars on Dhaka streets, unless it is packed with passengers, could be a first. Many cities impose hefty fees on vehicles jamming up city centres but they are never prevented from plying.

In London a stiff congestion charge is levied on private vehicles for using roads in certain parts of the British capital. Almost all major cities in Europe, the US and Asia apply some kind of similar restrictions.

The Delhi High Court in early 2010 made a decisive intervention into regulating movement of vehicles in the

Indian capital. The court suggested imposition of congestion fee on cars entering certain parts of the city to reduce severe traffic congestion.

Meanwhile, Muihith said the cabinet approved a proposal to buy 255 buses to make the public transport system more effective. The buses will be purchased from Korea at Tk 212 crore for the state-run Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation.

He criticised the public transport operators saying that the way they are running now cannot be called public transport. "A few people are creating anarchy in the sector and looting public money," he said.

Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, has got numerous problems. But the most irritating one is the ever-increasing travel-time due to clogging up of roads by vehicles. Quite often, vehicles need to wait for half an hour or more at a single set of lights.

Even though the government assumed power promising to ease traffic congestions, the city dwellers have not seen any significant progress in two years.

Muihith said, "Traffic jam is the biggest allegation against this government and the other allegations raised by the opposition BNP are bogus and baseless."

Fire at DEPZ factory

5 injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A devastating fire at a foam manufacturing factory at Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) in Savar yesterday left at least five persons, including a fire-fighter, injured.

The injured persons, including fire-fighter Ali Hossain of Savar station, who sustained severe burn wounds, were admitted to a local hospital.

Fire brigade sources said the fire originated at around 3:00am in Swan Loon Company Limited's overheated machinery at one-storey tin-shed unit.

The flames soon engulfed the whole unit and burned the synthetic foam and machinery.

On information, 11 fire-fighting units from Dhaka headquarters, DEPZ, Savar, Mirpur, Kaliakoir and Dhamrai rushed to the spot and put out the flame after an effort of four hours.

"It took a long time to extinguish the fire as there were chemical materials," said Sirajul Islam, Officer-in-Charge of Ashulia Police Station.

He also said no work was going on at the factory and only 15-20 workers were there at the time.

Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority chairman Brig Gen Zamil Ahmed Khan visited the scene soon after the incident.

Machinery and foam worth Tk 2 crore were gutted in the fire, claimed the fire brigade sources.

A week earlier, another devastating fire at a garment factory of Ha-Meem Group near Savar DEPZ, killed at least 26 workers and injured over 100 others.

BCL men clash

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The administrative office, however, will remain open to continue the admission procedure.

The clash ensued around 1:30pm between the supporters of BCL JNU unit president Kamrul Hasan Ripon and its general secretary Kazi Abu Sayeed over establishing supremacy on the campus, said Gazi Ataur Rahman, operation officer of Kotwali Police Station.

JNU sources said about 30 to 40 supporters of Ripon were staying inside the campus when another group of BCL activists entered carrying sticks and other weapons. The feuding groups started throwing bricks at each other.

Informed, police came to the spot and fired seven rounds of tear gas canisters.

They also charged baton on the activists and finally took control of the situation around 3:00pm.

Eight policemen received minor injuries during the clash, said Mohammad Salahuddin, officer-in-charge of Kotwali PS.

Police picked up two students from the spot and released them later.

Mohiuddin Ahmed, president of JNU Correspondents' Association, told The Daily Star that five university correspondents were injured in police action and glasses of the window of the association's office room were damaged.

Protesting the clash and police action, the association formed a human chain in front of the Shaheed Minar on the campus around 3:30pm.

Seeking anonymity a police official said when the law enforcers chased the unruly activists, some of them took shelter in the association's office room.

Police were unaware of the fact that correspondents were there and some of them got injured when the law enforcers clubbed the trouble-mongers.

This correspondent failed to reach BCL JNU unit president and secretary over phone as they did not receive the calls.

University sources said the groups fought several times since the Awami League government assumed power in January 2009.

THREE ARRESTED: Meanwhile, police last night said they detained three Shibir members from a mess beside the university campus and seized some "jihad publications" and two computers from them.

The detainees are Mohiuddin, Amzad Hossain and Rifat -- all Jagannath University students.

Gazi Ataur Rahman, sub-inspector of Kotwali Police Station, said they have information that the Shibir men in guise of Bangladesh Chhatra League attack the law-enforcers often leading to violent clashes.

"Suspicion about them heightened as we found a large photograph of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the entrance of their room," he told The Daily Star.

BDR set to turn BGB

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Upon getting the signed copy of the bill, the home ministry would send it to the BG Press for the gazette notification and the law will be effective once the gazette is notified, Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder told The Daily Star.

As part of reforms of the paramilitary force, the new act was passed in parliament on December 8 keeping provisions of capital punishment for mutiny instead of seven-year imprisonment and changing its name BGB with new logo and uniform.

Once the act comes into effect, any border guard committing any crime will face trial under the new law.

BDR Director General Rafiqul Islam told The Daily Star that major changes have been brought into the new act.

"From now on activities of border guards will be decentralised. The entire force will be divided into and operated under four zones," he said.

The government moved to enact the new law after the bloody BDR mutiny at its Pikhana headquarters on February 25-26 last year that killed over 74 people including 57 army officers.

The current Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Order, 1972 and Bangladesh Rifles (Special Provision) Ordinance, 1976 have already been annulled with the passage of the new law. But the trial on charge of last year's mutiny will be conducted under the BDR Order, 1972.

The new law defines mutiny as two or more people disobeying valid orders from the authorities, challenging or obstructing them, expressing their legal or illegal dissatisfactions to the authorities or making any attempts to commit any

of the above.

"If the BDR personnel currently facing trial attempt to launch any mutiny during the trial proceedings, they will be tried under the new law," Lt Col Shamsur Rahman, prosecutor of the Special Court-7, said after trial proceedings of the 24 Rifle Battalion at Pikhana Darbar Hallyesterday.

Earlier, the Special Court-7 headed by the BDR DG resumed the trial proceedings at around 9:00am which continued for about four hours.

Thirty-seven accused of the 24 Rifle Battalion cross-examined two witnesses, while one pleaded himself guilty before the court.

Sepoy Ahasanullah, who pleaded himself guilty, was charged for carrying arms and leaving Darbar Hall defying the order of the then DG.

"I was not aware that leaving the Darbar would count as an act of mutiny. I was compelled to carry the firearms," said Ahasanullah seeking mercy from the court that noted his plea.

Among the 667 accused of 24 Rifle Battalion, 31 have so far pleaded guilty before the court since the trial began on March 31.

The trial proceedings were adjourned till 9:00am today.

'Oil spill'

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respondent he had tried to reach the spot on Monday but failed due to navigational hazard.

"Today [yesterday] I despatched a smaller boat to the area but my men reported that they could not trace the spillage. It must have been drifted away by strong current."

BNP to tell UN

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minister [Khaleda Zia], it does not seem that the country has democracy," he said after visiting Salauddin's family members at their Dhanmondi residence.

Salauddin, a standing committee member, was arrested on December 16 on charges of planning and financing an arson attack on a car in Moghbazar on June 26 that left one person dead.

On December 19, he was shown arrested for his alleged involvement in committing crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain alleged the ruling party wants to win next month's municipal elections by any means, even by using police and civil administration.

"The government wants to take the election result in its favour to prove its popularity, and therefore it will not reflect people's aspiration," he claimed at a press briefing at the party's Naya Paltan office yesterday. He also urged people to resist it.

Check misuse of Islam

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Islamic Foundation at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC).

The present government would show zero tolerance against those who are smearing the name of Islam, the religion of peace, Hasina said.

The government will continue its drive against terrorism and extremism in the country, she added.

Bangladesh is a moderate democratic state and recognised as a model of religious harmony and peaceful coexistence of people of all faiths, the premier said.

She also said, "The genuine Olama-Mashayekh of the country had never been involved in terrorism and extremism, nor engaged now and will never allow such activities on the soil of Bangladesh as Islam does not permit."

Criticising the previous governments for their anti-Islamic activities, Hasina said that they came to power using Islam as a tool, but allowed such notorious activities, which are not permitted in Islam.

She advised the children to build themselves as the worthy citizens of the country acquiring knowledge about thousand years of cultural traditions of Bangladesh, its great leaders and also the true history of the liberation war.

In this regard, she asked the guardians and teachers to keep close watch on the children so that they do not go astray and indulge in drugs and other anti-social and harmful activities.

Janajudhha leader killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A regional leader of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) Janajudhha party was killed in a 'shootout' between his cohorts and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Varara village of Pabna Sadar upazila yesterday.

He was identified as Anisur Rahman alias Anis Master, 45, son of Gafur Amin Biswas of the village.

Captain SM Nadim Arefin Sumon, assistant director of Pabna Rab camp, said acting on a tip off Rab raided Varara Shahi mosque area as two criminal groups were locked in a 'gunfight' over supremacy in the area. Rab opened fire to disperse the criminals.

Criminals then left the place by firing. Later, Rab recovered the body of Anis from the spot.

Rab recovered a rifle, one revolver, an LG, 10 bullets and some sharp weapons from the spot.

Anis' body was sent to Pabna General Hospital morgue for autopsy. He was accused in a number of cases including two for murder.

According to Rab, though villagers called him Master Anis as he joined in a local madrasa, he belonged to PBCP Janajudhha and operated living in Pabna town.

Health policy

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Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed cancelled the policy by dint of his presidential power.

In 1991, BNP came to power and pledged to formulate a health policy afresh. But it failed to come up with any such document. Awami League government started working on a policy in 1998 and had it approved in parliament in 2000.

But the BNP-led four-party alliance, which formed government in 2001, did not implement that policy; it rather prepared another draft, said Prof Rashid E Mahub, former president of BMA and member of the present working committee.

DRAFT POLICY 2010 -- FEATURES AND CRITICISMS

The draft National Health Policy 2010, which was distributed among different stakeholders for their feedback earlier this year, lacks vision, say experts.

The policy should have a time limit for achieving different targets and draw a picture of future health service system, the experts add.

Health Minister Ruhul Haque, however, said the main purpose of the health policy is to increase access to health services for people and shape up a sustainable quality service system.

The government wants to give a complete and perfect health policy to the nation and that is why it is taking some more time, the minister added.

A crime

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Sub-Inspector Mohammed Mizanur Rahman of Motijheel Police Station, also the investigation officer of the case, yesterday prayed for a seven-day remand to interrogate him in this connection.

In the forwarding report, Mizanur Rahman said Rafiqul was directly involved in the arson and he needs to be quizzed to learn the whereabouts of others responsible for the crime.

Meanwhile, defence lawyers submitted a petition asking for bail and cancellation of the remand prayer saying their client was in custody then.

Third Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Ali Hussain rejected the bail petition and the remand prayer.

He had asked for documents that proved Rafiqul was in fact in police custody.

Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu told The Daily Star that a vested quarter was conspiring to tarnish the image of the government. This attempt to show him arrested is a part of that conspiracy. He urged the government to take an initiative for action against the police officials for trying to show Rafiqul arrested in such a way.

Paltan police produced Rafiqul Islam before it on completion of his three-day remand in connection with a case filed for torching vehicles in the city's Bijoy Nagar area on February 13.

Earlier, Rafiqul was shown arrested in eight cases and he was rearrested at jail gate on December 3 after his release on baills in all cases.

BARISAL PLANE CRASH

BAF probe team collects evidence



Ashraf Ibne Ahmed

Mohammad Mahmudul Haque

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A probe team yesterday visited the spot of an aircraft crash near Barisal Airport and collected evidence to ascertain the cause of the accident that killed two pilots of Bangladesh Air Force (BAF). Habibur Rahman, senior warrant officer of BAF, lodged a case of unnatural deaths with Barisal Airport Police Station on Monday night, said Abul Khair, sub-inspector (SI) of the station.

The team, led by BAF Wing Commander Shariful Islam, collected scraps of the plane, added the SI.

Law enforcers cordoned off the spot until the probe team left the area around 3:00pm, he also mentioned.

Local fire brigade sources said there was no trace of fire in the debris.

The two-seater PT-6 training plane circled twice over the airport, apparently to land, before it swooped and crashed on a tree in Manikkathi village outside the Barisal Airport around 2:20pm on Monday, witnesses said.

The two pilots, squadron leaders Ashraf Ibne Ahmed and Mohammad Mahmudul Haque, died on the spot.

Meanwhile, the namaz-e-janaza of the two deceased was held yesterday at BAF Base Bashar at 2:00pm.

Top ranking military officials, including the chiefs of Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force and Bangabhaban officials joined the prayers, an Inter-Service Public Relations press release said.

Mahmudul was buried at his village home in Gazipur, while Ashraf was laid to eternal rest at the Air Force Shaheen Graveyard in the city.

According to press reports, at least 13 planes and two choppers of BAF and the Army Aviation Corps crashed in last 17 years, killing 17 pilots, co-pilots, navigators and passengers and injuring 10 others.

Most of the planes that crashed were of FT-7, PT-6, and F-7MB models and were manufactured in China.

The helicopters were an MI-17, manufactured in Russia, and a Bell-206, built in the United States.

Russia-India

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on defence and nuclear matters.

India has long been a major market for Russian weaponry, and this represents very much the traditional face of Russia-Indian ties. But even here there are important changes.

A possible final deal on the joint production by Russia and India of a so-called fifth generation warplane shows defence ties remain close.

But it also highlights that India now expects not just to buy weaponry off the shelf, but also to share in the technology that it contains.

An agreement on the supply of more Russian nuclear reactors is also expected; the civil nuclear industry is a sector where the US and Russia are both competing for their share of India's business.

In an increasingly multi-polar world, both Russia and India see themselves as voices that should be heard. But the growing Indian tilt towards Washington must cause some unease in Moscow.

The setpiece was a long-awaited deal for the joint production of a fifth-generation fighter. India reportedly plans to take as many as 300 of the aircraft.

On the nuclear front, Medvedev agreed to provide another two civilian nuclear energy reactors in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where Russia is already setting up two reactors.

Energy-hungry India is one

of the world's biggest nuclear power markets, with plans to expand its capacity nearly 15 fold to 63,000 megawatts by 2032.

The Russian president, who was joined by about 100 business leaders, is also meeting ruling Congress party president Sonia Gandhi in Delhi.

Today, he will tour the Taj Mahal in Agra and India's financial capital, Mumbai (Bombay).

In a joint statement, Russia voiced its support for India "as a deserving and strong candidate" for a permanent seat in an expanded UN Security Council.

US President Barack Obama voiced similar backing for India's hopes of a place at the UN's top table during his visit in November.

Hailing what he described as a "special and privileged" strategic partnership, Singh said Russia was a "time-tested friend... that has stood by us in our times of need in the past".

On Monday, Delhi and Moscow agreed to double bilateral trade from the current \$10bn over the next five years.

British Prime Minister David Cameron visited India in July, and President Obama, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao have passed through over the past six weeks.

Each was also accompanied by a large business delegation, and each has gone home boasting of billions of dollars of extra trade with one of the world's fastest growing economies.

Climate change

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Farmers do not get adequate rain in the rainy season while winter is more intense and depression in the Bay of Bengal is frequent, said Mahabub Hossain, also executive director of Brac.

Scientists have already developed some submergence and saline-tolerant rice varieties, which however are not enough, he said emphasising more improvement of the stress-tolerant crop varieties.

As there is a forecast that 17 percent of the coastal area will go under water in 100 years with one meter rise in the sea level, the government should think of high cluster housing in coastal areas and growing fish in the brackish water, he said.

Ainun Nishat, vice chancellor of Brac University, said the global community has agreed to keep the planet's average temperature at 17 degrees Celsius, which is 2 degrees Celsius higher than the pre-industrial era. The agriculture would be seriously affected even with this effort, he noted.

Abrupt rains, frequent floods and cyclones will affect pollina-

tion and thereby life cycle of plants and animals, said Ainun Nishat.

The stress-tolerant crop varieties are reaching the farmers at a limited scale. This process should be sped up, he said, adding a crucial factor for agriculture is management of water through effective embankment and improved irrigation.

He suggested capacity enhancement of relevant ministries to tackle the climate change impacts.

State Minister for Environment and Forest Hasan Mahmud said Bangladesh now produces three times more food than it did in 1972, but the ever-growing population and loss of arable land is alarming.

With the help of agriculturists, farmers and policymakers the country is sure to prosper, said the state minister.

Professor Anisul Islam of a US university, Syngenta Bangladesh's Managing Director Sarwar Ahmed and FIDA General Secretary Khwaza Main Uddin also spoke at the programme chaired by FIDA President Kawser Rahman.