

Two killed as trains hit them in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were killed as trains hit them in Gopibagh and Uttara areas of the capital yesterday. One of the victims was identified as Gourango Babu, 60, while the identity of another man could not be known immediately. In Gopibag, Gourango, a sweetmeat shop worker, was enjoying a concert which was held just nearby the rail line of the area, said Anwar Hossain, sub-inspector of Kamalapur Railway Police Station. At one stage, a Dhaka-bound train from Narayanganj came to the spot and hit him while he was standing on the railway tracks at around 9:00pm. Later, he was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the attending doctor declared him dead. Meanwhile, an unidentified man, aged around 55, died when a Dhaka-bound train hit him in Uttara Kotbari area at around 9:30am. Sub-inspector Nazrul Islam of the police station said the man was mentally sick and was walking along the rail line.

Cold spell to continue

STAR REPORT

The cold spell in the north and north-western regions of the country is likely to continue for the next couple of days and the temperature might dip further in some parts, said Dhaka Met office. Thick fog will shroud the river basins and disrupt the operations of river ports till midday today. The cold wave is sweeping through Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions and Madaripur district. The overall temperature is likely to increase by the day after tomorrow. The lowest temperature yesterday was recorded at 6.8 degrees Celsius in Chuadanga, while it was nearly 12 degrees Celsius in Dhaka. Our Benapole correspondent reports: Four elderly women died from cold-related diseases in different areas of the port thana over the last three days until yesterday. The deceased are Rahila Begum, 81, Horidasi, 85, Ayanamoti Turi, 75, and Asia Khatun, 78. Atal Das of Star Medical Diagnostic Centre said cold-related diseases have spread alarmingly in recent days, with the mercury dipping to nine degrees Celsius in Benapole. The number of patients in hospitals has increased every day over the last week, he added. Our Munshiganj correspondent adds: Ferry services on Mawa-Kawrakandi route were halted between 5:00 am and 7:30am yesterday due to thick fog. Four ferries got stranded in the middle of the Padma, causing immense sufferings to thousands of passengers. Nearly 200 vehicles including cargo trucks had to wait for hours on both sides of the river to cross it. The ferry services on this route have so far suffered a total of 117 hours of halt since December 9 due to poor visibility. Sekhor Chandra Roy, assistant manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), said ferry services on the Mawa-Sharishabari route were also stalled due to poor navigability. Though the dredging of the river started on December 23 to keep the ferry services in operation, it was later postponed in the face of protests by local people against dumping of excavated sand in a nearby parking yard.

Locals set fire on bus as it hurts three in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitating locals set a bus ablaze and blockaded the road for half an hour after the bus rammed a rickshaw leaving its three people injured in the capital's Dhanmondi area yesterday. On information, police went to the spot and brought the situation under control. They also arrested the bus's driver Mokhlesur Rahman. Two units of fire fighters from Mohammadpur Fire Station also went to the spot and doused the fire. Ashok Chauhan, an inspector of Dhanmondi Police Station, said a bus of Malancha Paribahan hit the rickshaw near Bangladesh Eye Hospital on Road Number 27 in Dhanmondi area around 10:30am. The bus also hit a parked private car, he said. Nobody was in the car, he added. Among the injured, rickshaw puller Abdul Kayum was admitted to Pangu Hospital, an unidentified female passenger was rushed to the nearby Bangladesh Medical College Hospital and another passenger Rezaul Karim took primary treatment at the hospital, according to the police.



The ramshackle Bangladesh Railway Museum at Pahartali in Chittagong, which has been left uncared for since its inception in 2003.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Country's sole railway museum in a shambles

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN, City

Bangladesh Railway (BR) Museum, the country's sole railway museum located in Pahartali of Chittagong city, has become dilapidated due to a lack of proper maintenance since its inception in 2003. The museum's location is a sight to behold, a 12-acre land atop a hillock just opposite Bangladesh Railway Carriage and Wagon Workshop and surrounded by scenic greenery. But visitors become disappointed once they enter the 4,394 square feet two-storey tin and wooden structure as most of the wood is rotting away while cracks can be seen developing in its uneven floor and tin roof. "There are around 150 visitors every day but more come during the holidays," said the museum's caretaker Md Jamal. It remains open every day from 3:00pm to 5:00pm in the winter season and an hour more in summer and there are three temporary watchmen to look after the place, he said.

During visits, this correspondent found that the museum's shabby condition tended to turn enthusiasm of the many visitors, irrespective of age and gender, into disappointment and often drove many away. Expressing resentment over the lack of maintenance, most visitors opined that the authority concerned should pay attention to the threats the museum's precarious structure was posing. "The museum could be an attractive tourist spot if properly refurbished and if adequate security measures are provided in the area," said Mozammel Hossain, a Chittagong City College student who came on a visit recently. Another visitor, Sajia Rahman, a jobholder, mirrored his comment. The museum, once a bungalow, came about and was opened on November 15, 2003 through the initiative of the then BR director general (DG) Rezaul Karim, said BR sources. It showcases a rich collection of relics, objects used in Bangladesh

Railway's past eras: Bengal-Assam Railway (1942), Eastern Bengal Railway (1947) and Pakistan Railway (1961). The preserved artifacts mainly belong to mechanical, electrical, telecommunication, signal, traffic and engineering departments of the railway. Those include different types of lamps, lights, fans and bells, uniforms and accessories of station masters, signalling equipment, transmitters, analog telephone, monograms, track switches and railway sleepers. Senior Sub-assistant Engineer Golam Mostafa Khondaker, the museum's in-charge, said the museum will soon be renovated and a boundary wall and benches alongside it will be constructed. The estimated renovation cost is Tk 17.50 lakh while Tk 22 lakh is the estimated cost for the wall's construction, he said. BR (east zone) Chief Engineer AKM Mahbub-ul-Alam said the renovation could start within two or three months.



Buyers trying to choose from a host of ornamental goods at a stall at Muktiyuddho Bijoy Mela in Chittagong city. The month long fair is underway at Chittagong Outer Stadium. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

7 illegal passport brokers jailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A mobile court jailed seven people in different terms for illegally brokering passports in the office of deputy director of passport and immigration in Sylhet yesterday. Earlier, Rab arrested the people from the office, and produced them before the mobile court. Executive Magistrate Salah Uddin gave five of them 15 days simple imprisonment and two others seven days simple imprisonment in addition to fines of Tk 500 each. Dhaka Ahsania Mission gets ISESCO prize STAFF CORRESPONDENT Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid handed over the ISESCO Prize for Literacy-2012 to Dhaka Ahsania Mission Wednesday. Morocco-based ISESCO (Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation) handed over the prize to the minister earlier in Saudi Arabia, said a release.

RAILWAY OVERPASS AT BANANI OPENS BNP closed many rail routes on WB prescription: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that the previous BNP government had shut down many important railway routes as prescribed by the World Bank. "BNP, during its tenure, had an agreement with the World Bank to close down many important rail routes, and neglected the popular means of communication in the country," she said. The premier made the remarks while inaugurating an 804-metre railway overpass in the capital's Banani for traffic. Addressing a function at the Army Stadium, Hasina said "We made a separate ministry for the railway and focused our attention to develop this cheaper, easy communication route." A master plan was being implemented for the railway sector, she added. Hasina said as part of the election pledges, her government was implementing massive infrastructure development programmes including construction of bridges, roads and flyovers to free the capital from traffic congestion. Terming the Banani overpass as a milestone in time-saving communication, she hoped that there would be no traffic congestion up to Biswa Road and Mohakhali as no vehicle now needs to stop at the rail crossing. The overpass would help reduce congestion significantly on the airport road as

more than 70 trains pass everyday through the crossing. She said various initiatives including construction of flyover, elevated expressway, commuter train, underground tunnels, ring road and waterways surrounding Dhaka city had already been taken. Works on the construction of Kuril, Jatrabari and Mirpur-Airport Road flyovers was nearing completion and they would be opened to traffic soon. She also mentioned of the Hatirjheel Project, approval of the Metro Rail Project and the completion of tender bidding process for Moghbazar-Malibagh flyover. Terming the waterways as the cheapest mode of transport, Hasina said her government had already taken effective steps to free the river route from illegal occupation and increase their navigability through dredging. As a result of continuous dredging, water storage capacity of the rivers was increased, and damage from flood was less in the last season, she told her audience. The premier thanked the Bangladesh Army for completing the construction work of the Banani overpass six months ahead of schedule. Communications Minister Obaidul Quader, Communications Secretary M A N Siddiqui and Chief of Army Staff General Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan also spoke on the occasion.

Family planning cuts maternal, child mortality rates

Says health minister STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Maternal and child mortality rates can be reduced by one-fourth through the use of family planning measures, said Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque at a press briefing yesterday. While inaugurating the Family Planning, Mother-Child Health Care and Awareness Week 2012 on the Channel i premises, the minister also said attention needs to be directed to the remote areas of the country where access to information and facilities is scarce. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is organising the event from December 29 - January 3 with support from Channel i and UNFPA. A mobile caravan carrying experts, doctors and reporters will travel all around Bangladesh, providing health care services and free medicines for mothers and children and raising awareness on family planning through street acts, concerts, workshops and discussions. The programme will raise awareness on crucial issues such as child marriage, safe birth and correct nutrition plans for pregnant mothers, said AKM Amir Hossain, director general of Family Planning Department.

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