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Under threat from underage drivers

HELEMUL ALAM

With no institutional driving lessons or knowledge about traffic rules, underage drivers of public transport, mostly human haulers, are exposing city commuters to accident risks due to reckless driving habits.

Some young drivers would manage fake driving licences with the help of unscrupulous brokers at Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), while the others won't even bother about having any official document as the cops are indifferent.

Many vehicle owners and drivers said traffic police often take bribes from them in exchange for allowing the underage drivers at the wheel. Police even use the youths as drivers whey they requisition the human haulers.

"I only have to give Tk 200 to a traffic sergeant when I do anything wrong [violate traffic rules]," said driver Mobarak, who claimed to be 18. He has been driving human haulers on the Farmgate-New Market route for three years.

Some 50 human haulers are plying the route and about 25 drivers are under 18 years of age, added Mobarak.

Mohammad Shahin, 17, drives one on the Gulistan-Chandnighat route. He takes the wheel whenever police requisition his vehicle and so the cops do not harass him.

Human hauler owner Mohammad Hamza said when police requisition his vehicle, he sends his 12-year-old nephew Apu Chan to drive it.

Most of the young boys learnt driving from their ustads (senior drivers) while helping them operating the vehicles.

A 17-year-old driver on the Gulistan-Gendaria route, Mohammad Jahirul Islam said he learnt driving from another driver with whom he has been working for six years.

"I've managed a driving licence through my truck driver father," mentioned Jahirul who makes around Tk 500-700 everyday from the trade.

Tanween Hasan, director at Accident Research Institute (ARI) of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, said learning to drive from seniors is a common practice in the country which leaves many unskilled drivers on the streets.

An underage driver is more likely to cause an accident than an adult, he pointed out. The Buet expert suggested strict enforcement of existing laws to reduce violation of traffic rules.

Mily Biswas, additional police commissioner (traffic) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said driving before the age of 18 is illegal in the country.

The DMP files 2,200 to 2,500 cases daily against different kinds of vehicles for violating traffic rules. But at times, the cops cannot watch the traffic closely due to huge pressure of vehicles on the streets, she mentioned.

A total of 200 sergeant posts are now falling vacant against 700 posts in the DMP.

According to the ARI, there are at least 3,000 fatalities and as many grievous and simple injuries from around 3,500 police reported accidents on

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Drivers apparently in their teen operating human haulers and battery-run trikes in the capital. Some have fake driving licenses while some do not even bother with getting a fake one and bribe traffic police when they are stopped. Rules do not allow anyone to get a professional driver's licence before the age of 20. The photos were taken at Farmgate and Bashabo.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



Annee faces arrest order

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against BNP leader Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annee and three other activists after cancelling their bail in three vandalism cases.

Metropolitan Magistrate Tareq Mainul Islam Bhuiyan passed the order as they failed to appear before the court yesterday, the scheduled date for

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Thousands escape Iraq mountain death trap

Buoyed by US air strikes, Kurds gain ground against IS; calls for inclusive govt grow louder

AFP, ARBIL

Thousands of displaced Iraqis who had been besieged on a mountain by jihadists escaped to safety yesterday while Western powers ramped up efforts to save those still stranded with air drops.

Meanwhile, Iraq's Kurdish peshmerga,

buoyed by US air strikes, reclaimed two towns from Islamic State (IS) jihadist fighters yesterday.

The third straight day of strikes by US jets and drones brought the first sign that US President Barack Obama's decision to return to Iraq could turn the tide on two

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Yazidi women, kids 'buried alive'

IS militants killed 500 of the minority group so far

AGENCIES

Islamic State (IS) militants have killed at least 500 members of Iraq's Yazidi minority in northern Iraq, burying some of their victims alive and kidnapping hundreds of women, a Baghdad government minister said yesterday.

The bodies were reportedly found in a mass grave in the wake of IS's push towards the Sinjar mountain range, where tens of thousands of

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Plane crashes in Iran shortly after takeoff

39 killed among 48 on board

AFP, Tehran

An Iranian passenger plane crashed yesterday moments after takeoff from Tehran, killing 39 people on board and narrowly avoiding many more deaths when it plummeted near a busy market.

The plane was headed to the eastern city of Tabas, the IRNA and Fars news agencies said, when it crashed at 9:18am, after leaving Mehrabad airport.

It triggered a fireball when it smashed into the capital's Azadi neighbourhood, close to where hundreds of military families live, and only a few hundred metres from a row of shops.

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Workers of a garment factory of Tuba Group in queue to collect their pay for the month of July at the BGMEA Bhawan in the capital yesterday. They have not got their Eid bonuses yet.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BROADCAST POLICY, GAZA ATTACK

BNP demo next week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP standing committee last night chalked out a two-day demonstration programme for next week in protest against the National Broadcast Policy and the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

The party will bring out silent processions carrying black flags across the country on August 16, protesting the "aggression and brutality" of the Israeli military in Gaza, sources told The Daily Star after the meeting at the BNP chief's Gulshan office.

Protest rallies against the broadcast policy will be held in the capital on August 19.

Chaired by Khaleda Zia, the meeting also passed a resolution on the government's failure to properly handle the rescue operation in the Padma.

"The meeting also criticised the government and the law enforcement agencies for oppressing Tuba Group garment

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TOXIC SYRUP CASE Drug official gets bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abul Khair Chowdhury, the incarcerated government official of the country's drug regulatory body, was released on bail yesterday after his superior gave an assurance to the Dhaka Drug Court that Khair

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

New Gaza truce agreed

Eight more killed in Israeli bombardments; death toll hits 1,939

AFP, Gaza City

Israel and the Palestinians agreed to a fresh 72-hour ceasefire in Gaza yesterday, accepting an Egyptian invitation to resume talks to end fighting that has killed more than 2,000 people.

The ceasefire deal, which was to come into effect at one minute past

midnight, was clinched after days of frantic mediation to stem a firestorm of violence that resumed after an earlier truce collapsed on Friday. Since then, 19 people have been killed in Israeli bombardments.

The Egyptian foreign ministry called for the ceasefire to begin at 00:01 local time (21:01 GMT Sunday) "given the

necessity to protect innocent blood".

It called on both sides to use the lull to "reach a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire."

Israel had bolted truce talks in Cairo on Friday when Hamas refused to extend an earlier ceasefire and begun firing rockets over the border.

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CONDEMNING ISRAEL Cruz, Bardem face Hollywood 'fury'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem are reportedly facing a serious backlash from top Hollywood executives following their support for Gaza, which saw the couple sign an open letter condemning the actions of

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The Daily Star



Integral Energy Limited

ONLINE POLL

Do you think the government's call for not using the word 'Adivasi' is justified?

Yes

45%

No

55%

TOTAL VOTES: 186

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think indigenous people should be given constitutional recognition and scope to get primary education in their respective mother tongue?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT

www.thedailystar.net

PRAYER TIMING

August 11

	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-41	6-44
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation