

Driverless cars

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By 2030, the technology is expected to reach a level of safety and sophistication to allow all drivers to effectively become passengers as cars take over, being able to work, talk to friends or entertain themselves on the internet as they are driven around.

Ministers were in Greenwich, London, to see Gateway's self-driving passenger shuttles in action yesterday, while autonomous Lutz "pods" will be going around public areas in Milton Keynes and Coventry.

Claire Perry, the transport minister, said: "Driverless cars are the future. I want Britain to be at the forefront of this exciting new development, to embrace a technology that could transform our roads and open up a brand new route for global investment."

The government is pushing for the UK to become a world leader in the technology, which is being spearheaded by Google and some of the biggest vehicle manufacturers in the world.

Greenwich is running the Gateway scheme, led by the Transport Research Laboratory consultancy with General Motors, the AA and RAC. It plans to carry out tests of automated passenger shuttle vehicles as well as autonomous valet parking for adapted cars.

People will be invited to use a self-drive car simulator that uses a realistic 3D model of the area to study how passengers in a driverless vehicle react to the experience.

The wave of tests was enabled by a government review that revealed there is no legal barrier to the testing of automated vehicles on public roads.

But it could be some years before driverless cars are a common feature. First, the government will publish a code of practice this spring for those wishing to test driverless vehicles on UK roads.

Vince Cable, the business secretary, predicted driverless cars could be a £900 billion industry by 2025.

Probe body

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The hospital authorities themselves termed the number of deaths "abnormal" but the causes "normal". The hospital is separately investigating the deaths.

The probe body, led by its Joint Secretary Mosharaf Hossain, visited the paediatric wards and cardiology departments, among other sections. They also examined the prescriptions and the medicines given to the patients.

On a normal day, 14-15 patients die in the 500-bed hospital.

Relatives of a number of babies said their kids died because of negligence in treatment.

Meanwhile, the hospital authorities have increased treatment facilities at the children's wards, engaging six more child specialists in addition to the eight already working there.

Yesterday, 17 people died in the hospital, including six kids.

The probe team asked the families of the dead to submit their complaints to its members.

In case the families do not approach the committee, its members will go to their houses and speak to them.

Abir Hossain Rabbi, a member, said they would look into why so many people died on that day and whether doctors and nurses showed negligence in their duty.

The committee is to submit its report to the ministry in seven days.

Five JMB men

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judgement in presence of three accused, while Belal and Sagir were tried in absentia, Kamal added.

Haider as a public prosecutor conducted a case filed against seven JMB members for killing two judges in Jhalakathi on November 14, 2005.

Judges Shaheed Sohel Ahmed and Jagannath Pandey were killed in a suicide bomb attack on their way to the court. Seven activists of the outlawed JMB were given capital punishment on May 29, 2006 and the verdict was executed on March 21, 2007.

The JMB in retaliation killed Haider when he was returning home from Jhalakathi Jail Mosque after offering Esha prayers on April 11, 2007.

Tarik Bin Haider, son of the slain advocate, filed a case against the convicts after the murder.

BSF kills

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nationals went to India for bringing cattle on Wednesday night.

When they were returning to Bangladesh along with cattle, BSF men of Jitpur camp opened fire on them at Kashipur village in North 24 Parganas district around 4:30am.

Aminur, Khoyjul and Kashem were hit by bullets. Of them, Aminur and Khoyjul died on the spot. The others fled, according to police.

Jahangir Hossain, commanding officer of 26 Border Guard Bangladesh Battalion, told this correspondent that the BSF was yet to return the bodies.

A flag meeting between the two forces would be held tomorrow (today) in this regard, he added.

Crude, petrol bombs

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fixed, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said at a press briefing at the secretariat yesterday.

"Lives and security of the students are our first priority. We can't push them to risk. That's why we are compelled to postpone the exams [on Thursday]," Nahid said.

Tests on Religious studies under eight general education boards as well as on Fikha and Usulul Fikha under Madrasa Board and Physics Second Paper under Vocational Board were scheduled to be held today.

Police yesterday arrested Gazipur City Corporation Mayor MA Mannan in the capital in connection with torching a bus in Gazipur.

Mannan, also an adviser to the BNP chairperson, was picked up from his Baridhara DOHS house around 6:00pm by a police team of Gazipur.

Speaking to journalists at his office around 7:00pm, SP Harunur Rashid said the mayor stood accused in three cases filed with Joydevpur Police Station for subversive activities, vandalism and arson attacks on vehicles during the ongoing blockade enforced by the BNP-led alliance.

The police officer said the BNP leader was also facing charges of instigating violence.

On February 4, criminals hurled petrol bombs at a bus in Gazipur, leaving five people burnt. The next day, police lodged a case against Mannan and others in this connection.

Criminals torched four vehicles, including two buses, in Mirpur 10 and Ashulia while alleged blockaders set alight a truck in Kishoreganj, said police and fire service officials.

In the capital, police detained four people and recovered five petrol bombs from their possession in Bangshal in the wee hours of yesterday.

The detainees are Faruk, Mamun, Dulal and Kawsar, police said.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees confessed to their involvement in carrying out petrol bomb attacks on vehicles in the capital during the blockade. They received Tk 1,000 to 5,000 for this purpose, a sub-inspector of Bangshal Police Station said, wishing anonymity.

They used to sell each petrol bomb at Tk 700, the SI added. He, however, declined to give away further details for the sake of investigation.

Members of Rab recovered 10 abandoned firebombs and detained two people from the capital's Gulshan 1 area.

Maj Maksudul Alam, assistant director of Rab's legal and media wing, told The Daily Star that the elite force members recovered the firebombs from an abandoned bag near Gulshan 1 intersection around 5:00pm. Two persons were also held on suspicion.

Five people were burnt as miscreants hurled a crude bomb at a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in Shah Mirpur area of Chittagong last night.

Kamaruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Karnaphuli Police Station, said the vehicle instantly caught fire after the attack. The injured were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, police recovered 11 petrol bombs from Barguna, four from Chuadanga and five crude bombs from Bhola.

In Natore, Jubo Dal activist Arif Hossain and his cousin Jewel, joint convener of the Sadar upazila unit of Swachhchasebak Dal, received minor injuries when a homemade bomb they were making went off at Arif's house in Nischintapur village around 4:00pm, locals and police said.

A foreign pistol, four bullets, one magazine, 20 empty bottles and bomb making materials were recovered from the spot, said Jamal Al Naser, company commander of Rab-5.

The duo are on the run. The Rab launched a hunt for them.

In Mymensingh, two policemen were injured in a crude bomb explosion during a drive at Mamudnagar area to arrest criminals who set alight a sand-laden truck on the Mymensingh-Kishoreganj road early yesterday.

One Sohagh was injured in the incident. Police arrested three people, including Sohagh, during the drive, said Mohammad Ali Sheikh, officer-in-charge of Gouripur Police Station.

In Khulna, miscreants blasted cocktails in front of the gate of a book fair in Khalishpur, leaving two cops injured.

Meanwhile, police held at least 12 BNP-Jamaat activists in the last 24 hours from different parts of the capital for their alleged involvement in subversive activities.

Besides, police arrested Jamaat leader Sheikh Rafiqul Islam from Kachua in Bagerhat and 28 BNP-Jamaat men from Satkhira yesterday.

In Feni, criminals set fire to a truck carrying around 10,000 newly-hatched chicks at Kajirbagh area around 7:30pm. The rear side of the vehicle was burnt and some 400-500 chicks died, said Mahbob Morshed, officer-in-charge of Feni Sadar Police Station.

Tigers' Irish test today

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today. Both the teams lost their previous practice matches.

While Bangladesh went down to Pakistan in a closely-fought contest at the same venue, Ireland were shockingly thumped at the hands of Scotland by a 179 runs. The two teams have met seven times in the past with Bangladesh winning five of those ODIs.

In terms of matches in the World Cups though, both sides have won one apiece. The Irish shocked Bangladesh in 2007, when the Tigers had a topsy-turvy tournament. They beat India and South Africa in that competition, but failed against Ireland in the Super Eights.

They later got their revenge though when the Shakib Al Hasan-led Bangladesh team beat Ireland in the 2011 World Cup.

The match today will be more than just a warm-up game. Bangladesh lost

their first three warm-ups and will desperately be looking for a win ahead of the start of the mega event. They will also want to finalise on their playing eleven, an aspect which, by the looks of the squads in the warm-ups is yet to be fixed.

The main quandary revolves around four players: Arafat Sunny, Sabbir Rahman, Nasir Hossain and Soumya Sarkar.

While the Tigers traditionally go in with one specialist spinner apart from Shakib Al Hasan, this time around, they might just decide to depend on a host of part-timers. Arafat hasn't performed that well in the warm-ups and the management might just think about including pace-bowling all-rounder Soumya in the side.

In a similar vein, both Sabbir and Nasir have been in good form, however, there seems to be room for just one of them.

IGP again talks politics

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No government can bow down to terrorism, Shahidul said, adding that if the government bowed down to terrorism, the situation in the country would be terrific.

"If you [BNP and its allies] observe political programmes systematically, the police will help you.... Police did not arrest a single man of your party in the last one year but we are taking action now as you are killing people."

He also spoke of rumours being spread through social media that the morale and the chain of command of the police broke down.

"The police force is not something fragile that its morale would break down...you can spread whatever rumours you like but we are loyal to

the government and will carry out the government orders for the sake of people."

Earlier in Rangpur on January 16, the police boss said, "Those who are burning people to death and destroying properties in the name of hartal and blockade will not be spared. All pro-liberation forces will have to work together with the police to get rid of them."

At yesterday's programme, ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, president of Chittagong city unit AL, Brig Gen Habibur Karim, area commander of Border Guard Bangladesh, Chittagong region, and Mahbulul Alam, president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, among others, were present.

Maid abuse case highlights plight of migrant workers

AFP, Hong Kong

Foreign maids in Hong Kong are guaranteed wages and benefits rare elsewhere in Asia and the Middle East, but the recent ordeal of an Indonesian domestic helper has highlighted the abuses that still go on behind closed doors.

A six-week trial that saw a Hong Kong woman convicted of beating and starving Erwiana Sulistyaniingsih has shone a spotlight on the financial hub's

300,000 maids, with campaigners hoping the ruling will convince more to speak out about abuse.

Police bar

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Gulshan Police Station.

However, Sabbir Rahman, a sub-inspector of the Gulshan Police Station who was on duty at the time, told reporters that he was not aware of it.

UK envoy

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stability, development and prosperity of Bangladesh in which they were and would remain close partners.

"The extent of current violence and disruption to the lives of all people in Bangladesh is distressing and deplorable," the UK envoy said, adding that he has consistently called on all parties to fully consider the effects of their actions and resist from causing further damage to the country's national interest.

"In the long term, I hope that further confidence building measures can be taken that will ultimately break the habitual cycle of violence and disruption that appears to characterise elections in Bangladesh and which would allow all legitimate activity to take place peacefully," he said.

In the meeting with Khaleda, Gibson said he offered his personal sympathies to the BNP chief over the loss of her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko.

Khaleda Zia's adviser Sabihuddin Ahmed and a senior official of the British High Commission were present at the meeting.

EU deplors

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yesterday morning.

A press release issued by the EU mission in Dhaka said the ambassador "reiterated the EU's rejection of any form of violence and constant call for dialogue."

Pierre Mayaudon also underlined that peace and stability would be critical for economic development.

According to the statement, the ambassador engaged with the PM on a number of issues related to the EU-Bangladesh relations, including on trade and development where the EU is the number one partner of Bangladesh.

Blue Economy and Digital Bangladesh are, he said, among the areas where the EU can share its experience and expertise. This would bring the partnership into a new era of modernity, added the release.

'BCL man'

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Government Azizul Haque College, is "active in BCL politics" there.

After the incident on Tuesday afternoon, he was treated at local Thengamara Rafatullah Community Hospital, but his name was not registered there apparently in a bid to hide his identity, said hospital sources.

When newsmen went there, relatives shifted him to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital with the help of police.

Locals alleged that all bomb-making materials were removed from the house of the "BCL activist" immediately after the explosion. According to them, Sohag was making and selling bombs for long.

However, his family has denied the allegation and said Sohag lost his fingers while making crackers for blasting those in a picnic.

BCL, pro-Awami League student organisation, has denied its link with him.

Aslam Hossain, general secretary of the BCL unit of Government Azizul Haque College, said he did not even know Sohag.

district unit Jubo League's Joint Secretary Aminul Islam Dablu, who also hails from Dhaoyakola Namapara, said, "Although Sohag's family is an Awami League supporter, Sohag was actually a BNP activist."

Police were yet to file any case against the alleged bomb-maker.

Sub-Inspector Anwar Hossain of Bogra Sadar Police Station, one of the police personnel who took Sohag to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College from the local hospital, could not say why any legal action was yet to be taken against the alleged BCL man.

Contacted, Saifuzzaman Faruki, additional superintendent of police in Bogra, could not provide any clear answer in this regard. He, however, said the "victim" was undergoing treatment under police surveillance.

Six inmates take prison staff hostage in Taiwan

AFP, Taipei

Six prison inmates in Taiwan, who are believed to be armed, have taken three staff hostage at a jail in the southern city of Kaohsiung, officials said yesterday.

The inmates, who broke into a prison weapons room, had obtained four rifles and six handguns and taken the prison chief and two other staff members captive, deputy justice minister Chen Ming-tai said.

The six, who are in jail for a variety of crimes including manslaughter, robbery and drugs, are demanding their release from prison.

"Negotiations with the kidnappers are underway. They demanded they leave the prison from a side door," he said.

Hunger strike Saturday

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extraordinary general meeting called by the BGMEA, Bangladesh Textile Mills Association and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Transport vehicles owners, insurers and bankers also attended the meeting, and they too will participate in the hunger strike, according to BGMEA President Atiqul Islam.

Expressing solidarity to the hunger strike, BTMA President Tapan Chowdhury said: "The businessmen should be united under one banner at this moment, hiding their political identities."

The BGMEA president said the businessmen are also considering going to the high court for a writ petition to stop the blockades and shutdowns permanently.

The blockades and shutdowns, which have been ongoing since January 6, have already cost the garment sector Tk 6,710 crore, he said. Of the amount, vandalism alone accounts for Tk 4,395 crore, as goods-laden trucks were subjected to arson on the highways.

Not only that, the sector has missed out on at least 30 percent orders, as fearful international buyers called off their business trips to Dhaka and diverted the orders to Vietnam, India and Pakistan, Islam said.

A fraction of the buyers are calling the garment makers to a third country for negotiations, and even then, they are not placing the full order volumes, as they doubt if the Bangladeshi garments would be able to execute such large volumes on time amid the political turmoil.

More than 5 crore people are involved with the garment business,

Chowdhury said, adding that if the unrest drags on any longer, the factory owners will not be able to pay monthly salaries to their workers and service their bank loans.

"If the garment sector is in trouble, the whole economy will follow suit," the BTMA president added.

Rustom Ali Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Truck and Covered Van Owners Association, said the transport sector has been developed for the garment industry.

If the garment sector is destroyed, the transport sector will also be destroyed, he added.

Abdus Salam Murshedy, a former BGMEA president, suggested the garment makers to seek a grace period for their loan servicing obligations from the Bangladesh Bank and finance ministry.

He also recommended forming a dedicated committee to lobby with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to break the political deadlock.

Calling the planned hunger strike a homeopathic treatment to the problem, Mustafa Ghulam Quddus, another former BGMEA President, insisted on stronger programmes by the businessmen. "We need allopathic treatment," he added.

Meanwhile, a high-powered committee, consisting of representatives from a host of sectors, will be formed today to decide on the activities that the business community would undertake to broker a solution to the turmoil.

BGMEA, which has been leading the hunger strike, will also meet with factory owners in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Ashulia, Savar and Gazipur to see if it would be possible to get the workers involved in future programmes.

Touts cash in on confusion

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"We made it clear that no deadline has been set for online registration.

It's a continuous process and jobseekers can register at the manpower offices in their respective districts," he told The Daily Star.

The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) published the advertisement in five Bangla dailies on Friday and Saturday, drawing the attention of jobseekers to register their names online at a stall at Digital World 2015, the country's largest technology fair.

The circular said the four-day fair would begin on February 9 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. Besides, people can register at the BMET office housed at Probashi Kalyan Bhaban.

However, the BMET stall at the

Digital World 2015 was shut yesterday to avoid heavy rush of jobseekers.

Siddiqui Rahman from Munshiganj said, "I don't know how to read and write. So I paid a man Tk 50 to help me fill in my form."

Such "helps" were aplenty in the area between the Police Convention Hall and Bangladesh Institute of Strategic Studies at Eskaton Garden.

But none of them would disclose their identities. They would rather introduce themselves as application form sellers. "Please don't take my photograph. I'm only selling application forms," said a youth.

Under a deal signed on Tuesday, the Saudi government is likely to hire 10,000 skilled Bangladeshi workers from next month under 12 categories of domestic workers such as maids, drivers, housekeepers, security guards and gardeners.

Three BCL men awarded

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Of the three BCL leaders, Joy had actively taken part in an attack on BNP men in Bakshibazar in the city on December 25 last year.

The Daily Star withholds the rickshaw puller's name for his safety.

Earlier on January 26, Rab rewarded five people who caught and beat three arson attackers in Narayanganj.

The Rab announcement for cash reward came on January 24.

A day after suspected blockaders torched a bus at Jatrabari on January 23, the police headquarters announced Tk 5 lakh cash bounty for information about the attackers.

In a separate move, the police

announced cash reward of Tk 1 lakh for giving information about those who attacked a bus in Comilla on the night of February 3.

No one came forward with any information, but two suspected attackers were subsequently killed in police "shootouts".

At the reward giving ceremony at the DMP media centre, DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia claimed they handed money to 11 more people, but gave no details.

He said 186 people have been arrested over arson attacks so far -- 102 BNP men and the rest Jamaat men -- from the capital.

300 fortune seekers

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In the last year alone, several thousand people have died trying to cross from north Africa to Europe across the Mediterranean, on what the United Nations has described as the most dangerous route in the world.

The IOM said the surviving migrants from the latest disaster spoke French, so probably came from west Africa.

"Because of the bad weather conditions, the two dinghies collapsed and the people fell at sea. Many drowned," said the IOM spokesman in Italy, Flavio Di Giacomo.

The organisation's spokesman in Geneva Joel Millman told AFP that information was coming in about another stricken boat and warned that the overall toll may reach as many as 350.

Di Giacomo said the latest victims had left from a beach near Tripoli along with another dinghy also carrying more than 100 migrants plucked from their distressed boat by the Italian coastguard early Monday.

The 29 who were found Saturday had died of exposure in horrific conditions in international waters, in what humanitarian organisations said was an avoidable tragedy.

Their small boat was hopelessly ill-equipped to cope with waves up to eight metres (25-feet) high, gale-force winds and torrential rain.

But doctors involved in the rescue operation believe more would have survived if they had been rescued by a