

One killed as train hits bus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man was killed and at least five others were injured as a train hit a bus at a level crossing in Chittagong city yesterday morning.

But whether the dead, aged around 50, was a bus passenger or pedestrian could not be confirmed immediately.

All the injured were travelling by the bus. They are being treated at Chittagong medical college and private hospitals.

The Chittagong-bound Meghna Express, coming from Chandpur, crashed into the bus at Ispahani rail gate around 11:10am, killing the man on the spot, said Himangshu Das Rana, officer-in-charge of Chittagong Government Railway Police Station.

Sabuj Das, an injured passenger, said alleged that the bus driver fled when he saw the train coming, leaving the vehicle right on the rail tracks.

Kamrul Hasan, a gatekeeper at the level crossing, said they had kept the signal bars down.

The bars were lifted after the train crossed the area. The accident happened as Meghna Express suddenly approached the gate from nowhere, he added.



The wreckage of the bus that was hit by a train in Ispahani Railgate area yesterday.

10 HC judges sworn in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten newly-appointed additional judges of the High Court were sworn in yesterday morning.

Chief Justice SK Sinha administered the oath-taking ceremony at the Supreme Court auditorium. Judges of both the SC divisions were present there.

The new judges are Justice SM Mojibur Rahman, Justice Md Farid Ahmed Shibli, Justice Amir Hossain, Justice Rajik Al Jalil, Justice Bhismadeb Chakraborti, Justice Md Selim, Justice Md Sohrabwadi, Justice Khijir Ahmed Chowdhury, Justice Jyotirmoy Narayan Deb Chowdhury and Justice Md Iqbal Kabir Lyton.

President Abdul Hamid on February 9 made the appointments for two years as per article 98 of the constitution, raising the number of HC judges to 97.

NEXT WEEK'S VISIT

Delhi assured of adequate security for Mamata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Bangladesh government will ensure adequate security during the upcoming Dhaka tour of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Indian diplomatic sources said.

Mamata is likely to fly to Dhaka next week. Earlier, there had been some concern both in Delhi and Kolkata that the current situation in Bangladesh is not in favour of the tour.

In a recent meeting with India's top envoy across the world, Indian High Commissioner to Dhaka Pankaj Saran said the prolonged and increasing resort to violence by the opposition in Bangladesh has led to rising public anger against such tactics.

Even the top BNP leadership is coming under pressure to change its strategy as some Western countries are calling for an end to violence, said sources.

Saran's assessment is that the Hasina government has made up its mind to curb violence with an iron hand.

No compromise with terrorists

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Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP) at Ansar-VDP Academy in Shafipur.

Hasina said the evil force had started killing people again the way they did before the January 5, 2014 election. In the name of politics, they were torching buses and trucks and burning people alive.

As many as 100 people fell victims to their cruelty. The air of Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital filled with the wail of people injured in petrol bomb attacks.

She said all the victims of petrol bomb attacks were innocent people. They were bus and truck drivers and marginal people. There is no value of the lives of toiling masses to Khaleda Zia.

The PM also said the BNP-Jamaat

clique started their vandalism when Bangladesh was on the road of vibrant economic growth and the living condition of people was improving.

New opportunities are opening up abroad for Bangladesh's manpower market. After seven years, Saudi Arabia has started recruiting workers from Bangladesh at a very low cost. Bangladeshi workers are also going to Malaysia, she told her audience.

The BNP-Jamaat talks about religion, but they called hartal even on the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (SM) and on the days of Biswa Ijtema, she said, adding that they pushed the lives of about 1.5 million SSC students towards danger.

Hasina also said it was the sacred responsibility of the government to protect the lives and properties of people and that is why it had deployed mem-

bers of Ansar alongside police, Rab and BGB personnel to curb subversive activities on highways and railways.

She praised the role of Ansar in protecting the properties of Bangladesh Railway before the January 5, 2014 election when the country was reeling from unprecedented sabotage of BNP and Jamaat cohorts.

The scale of destruction of property declined remarkably after the deployment of Ansar, Hasina said.

Some 8,328 Ansar members have so far been deployed in 1,041 points of Bangladesh Railway. Twelve Ansar members are also being deployed in each of the 993 points on highways, she told her audience.

Earlier, the PM handed over medals and cheques to 97 members of Ansar and VDP for their bravery and excellence in the service.

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smuggled into the country.

The smuggled substances include powergel, gunpowder, TNT (Trinitrotoluene), sulfur dioxide, phosphorus, ammonium nitrate, DDT, mercury, lead nitrate, lead oxide, lead acid, potassium sulphate and carbide.

Crude bombs, used in attacks on political programmes and acts of violence, are made using these types of substances, says the report.

On condition of anonymity, an explosives expert of the Detective Branch of police said most of these materials are used in mills and factories but can be used to make crude bombs and even powerful IEDs (improvised explosive device).

The chemicals and explosive substances are mostly smuggled into

the country from India, as the amount of these materials brought through legal channels is much less than the demand.

Any individual or organisation has to take prior permission from the commerce ministry to import these, said.

The intelligence report noted that explosive substances are smuggled into the country through bordering districts, including Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Jessor, Kushtia, Satkhira, Meherpur, Habiganj, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Chuadanga and Mymensingh.

A section of people with political links uses smugglers in the bordering areas to bring in chemicals and explosive substances, said sources in several bordering districts.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gives medals to Ansar and VDP members for their bravery and excellence in service during a ceremony at Ansar-VDP Academy in Gazipur yesterday.

Big step in Saarc travel

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official at the foreign ministry told The Daily Star.

Transport secretaries along with senior officials of the four countries met in Kolkata on February 2-3 to finalise the draft MVA. A transport ministers' meeting in May or June is expected to approve the deal.

This would help transform transport corridors linking the four countries into economic corridors and increase people-to-people contact, diplomatic sources said.

The four-nation initiative came clearly to pursue an agenda of economic development and connectivity against the backdrop of inability of Saarc to take pro-active measures, foreign ministry officials said.

"The draft agreement is smarter than the proposed Saarc transport agreement," said a ministry official, who was a member of the committee to draft the plan.

The agreement would allow the member countries to bilaterally fix the rate of fees, administrative costs and service charges etc.

They will also decide on traffic volume through mutual negotiations and all sorts of fees and charges will be

levied at the entry points. Only authorised operators will be allowed to carry passengers and cargo.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is providing financial, technical and administrative support to implement the MVA, officials said.

A national committee in each country will coordinate and monitor the agreement and a sub-regional joint committee is going to look after the process to make land transport easier and coordinate and monitor the agreement implementation.

This agreement would not hamper the proposed Saarc MVA, sources say. The Saarc effort is moving slowly because of delays on the part of some member countries.

Meanwhile, the four countries have also agreed to begin power trade and inter-grid connectivity among them soon.

The four countries have also formed a group named BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal), which at a meeting in New Delhi last month agreed to make joint efforts to explore harnessing of water resources, including generation of hydroelectricity, and power from other sources.

Kids made to stand

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pleading with their teachers to let them go. Some of the exhausted students took shelter in roadside shops or in the shade of trees. Some teachers were also seen resting in the shade.

Though students were made to stand in the sun, the stage was set for the speakers in the shade of a tree.

A mother was taking care of her daughter who had fallen ill. She said she was accompanying her two daughters for their safety. She said she was not sending her daughters to their schools on weekdays due to the blockade and hartals.

A number of students from Motijheel Colony High School, Shaheed Faruq Iqbal High School and Post Office High School said their teachers at their coaching centres had asked them to join the human chain.

Despite the parents' disinclination, the students joined the two and a half hours long programme that started at 10:00am on the road between Motijheel Ideal School and College and Motijheel Post Office School.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon arrived there as chief guest at 10:30am, half an hour behind schedule, and

Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya arrived as the special guest at 11:15am.

Activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League, student wing of the ruling Awami League, from Motijheel Thana and other units also joined the programme.

An activist of Abujar Gifari College unit BCL said they had attended the event under the instruction of their unit secretary.

Speaking at the programme, Maya said, "What do you [Khaleda Zia] think? You can go to power or realise your demand of election by stopping the examination? No negotiations with you. No negotiations are possible with a killer."

There would be no election even one hour before the scheduled time in 2019 and that would be held under Sheikh Hasina's government, he added.

Speaking as the chief guest, Menon said, "Students of the entire country would take to the streets and besiege you [Khaleda]. The barbwire fence cannot protect you."

Awolad Hossain, joint secretary of Dhaka city Awami League and president of Motijheel Ideal School and College's managing committee, chaired the event.

Disturbing directive

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administrative officer is outrageous, divisive, ill-motivated and against the very tenets of civilised attitude, not to speak of our constitution.

Strangely, this same mentality we find in medieval times in Christian Europe when Muslims and Jews were forced to wear distinctive clothes and badges. In 1227, Pope Gregory IX had decreed that Muslims and Jews must wear distinctive clothing and must not appear on streets during Christian festivals. And we know how the Nazis later on had segregated the Jews.

It is so appalling that Bangladesh after so many centuries and decades is walking backward on that same track. Suddenly we want to systematically turn the indigenous people into second-class citizens. With one single order we downgrade them to a level where they should feel ashamed to stand in front of a Bangalee.

With the stroke of a pen, those who devised this have erected a solid wall between my countless Pahari friends

and me. We are asked to regard each other with sheer mistrust and as villains. I, as a Bangalee, am a conspirator too since I cannot be trusted to talk to a Pahari.

My friends from Rangamati -- Suporno, Suprio, Kong and so many others -- are suddenly not to be relied upon any more. Strangely, these are the people who have given me all kinds of protection, love and guidance whenever I have gone into deep interiors of the hill tracts in search of the amazing beauty of the land. I remember going to this last patch of forest in a remote place called Lakkhichhara that took me 19 hours on a rickety boat. On the way, every family I met had greeted me with hearty love and served me the best food they could afford. And when coming back from Lakkhichhara after staying there for four nights, I tried to pay some money to the poor family, they had vehemently refused to accept it although their children were wearing tattered rags.

Today I stand disgraced in front of them all because my government has

asked me not to trust them.

And what are the crimes of these gentle people?

They were ousted from their prime land back in the 1960s when their houses and most fertile croplands were inundated with the creation of the Kaptai dam. So vast is the swath that got flooded that it once took me 40 minutes by a helicopter to fly from one end of it to the other. Then they did not get proper compensation.

In the face of repeated discriminations and in the absence of any political sympathy, they opted for an armed struggle that was replied with full-force military operation by President General Ziaur Rahman. Bangalees were brought in from far-flung places and settled on the land of the Paharis. The mission was to outnumber the indigenous people -- a mission which is almost successfully completed today.

But then the conflict went on and on with casualties on both sides.

Finally, it was Sheikh Hasina who, when she came to power in 1996, took

the bold step of settling the issue politically. As a result, the peace treaty was signed between the Paharis and the government.

We all thought peace would prevail and the distrust between the Paharis and the Bangalees would go away. Sadly, what we see now is just a reversal. A larger part of the peace accord remains unimplemented (we will write about it in a separate piece). The state has repeatedly denied the indigenous people their identity by labelling them as Upajati (tribal) or small anthropological group. This is also an attempt to denigrate them socially and anthropologically and thereby to weaken them politically. In recent months, Paharis and Bangalees are frequently clashing with each other. Pahari women are raped often. An atmosphere of intimidation is prevailing there.

Today, whoever is thinking up these policies to repress the Paharis is once again treading a dangerous path. They are leading us to uncertainty and disgracing us as a nation.