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LICENSED TO DRIVE ON

WRONG SIDE?

Lawbreaking by influentials on; people suffer on streets

SHARIFUL ISLAM and JAMIL MAHMUD

It has become a norm. Big sport utility vehicles with government stickers and some flaunting the national flag drive on the wrong side of the streets while "commoners" remain stuck in traffic on the right lane.

Flag-bearing SUVs of ministers, cars of lawmakers, top government officials of different ministries, police, leaders of the ruling party and its front organisations, journalists, staff buses of government offices and student buses of Dhaka University are seen routinely violating traffic rules.

On September 2 last year, The Daily Star published a report with photographs of vehicles of influential people with their cars on the wrong side at several city points.

Apparently, nothing has been done to stop this in the last nine months. "There are some issues that are reality, you know. We know it too," Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque told this paper recently. But he claimed the number of vehicles flouting traffic rules was small.

"We hope everybody will abide by the law," the police boss told a press briefing at the police headquarters recently.

On Thursday afternoon, this correspondent saw several sticker and flag-bearing vehicles, some escorted by police, passing the Ruposhi Bangla intersection using the wrong lane.

Traffic cops were seen busy making way for the vehicles, halting the heavy stream of vehicles on the right lane.

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Police escort apparently a minister's vehicle on the wrong side of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue against the traffic in the capital while law-abiding citizens stand still on the right side of the street waiting for the lights to go green. The photo was taken near the Prime Minister's Office recently. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Wave of terror attacks in three continents

Tunisia shooting kills 37; Islamic State bombing at Kuwaiti Shia mosque leaves 27 dead; one decapitated in France gas factory

AGENCIES

Terrorists attacked sites in France, Tunisia and Kuwait yesterday, leaving a bloody toll on three continents and prompting new concerns about the spreading influence of jihadists.

In France, a suspected Islamist pinned the severed head of his boss to the gates of a US-owned gas factory in France yesterday in what President Francois Hollande called a "terrorist" attack.

The alleged assailant, identified as 35-year-old married father-of-three Yassin Salhi, also smashed his vehicle into the Air Products factory, causing an explosion.

In Tunisia, at least one gunman disguised as a vacationer opened fire at a beach resort, killing at least 37 people before security forces shot him to death, officials said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the Tunisia attack.

Witnesses described scenes of panic after the shooting at the five-star Riu Imperial Marhaba Hotel on the outskirts of Sousse, about 140 kilometres (87 miles) south of Tunis.

"There are 37 dead and 36 wounded."

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Medics and security forces inside the Imam Sadiq Mosque in Kuwait City after an attack there during midday prayers yesterday. More on page 8. PHOTO: NEW YORK TIMES ONLINE

Rain triggers landslides

6 buried under mud; 4 others die in incidents related to flash flood

STAR REPORT

At least 10 people were killed yesterday in incidents triggered by unrelenting monsoon rain that continued to disrupt routine life across the country.

Six of the victims, including four children, were buried in landslides in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban.

Besides, a mother and her minor son were crushed under a tree in St Martin's Island while two women were killed in flash floods in the coastal district of Cox's Bazar.

According to the met office, the country's highest rainfall in 12 hours till 6:00pm yesterday was recorded in Cox's Bazar at 202mm. The second highest was in Teknaf at 85mm.

Rainfall in the capital was recorded at 25mm. The rain turned much of the capital into a swamp, submerging streets, lanes and alleyways. Many shanties went under knee-deep water, forcing residents to seek shelter elsewhere.

Meteorologists said apart from the monsoon, the other reason behind the ceaseless rain that has been plaguing many parts of the country for the better part of the week was a low formed over Bangladesh and adjoining areas.

Though light to moderate rain is likely to occur in most places of the country today, the intensity is likely to come down, the met department forecast.

COX'S BAZAR

The rain caused eight deaths and displaced 65,000 people in Ramu, Chakaria, Pekua and Sadar upazilas, reports our Cox's Bazar

correspondent.

Of the dead, Amir Hossain, 40; Mohammad Riduan, 10; and Mohammad Junu Mia, 60, died in a landslide at Ghona of Ukhia.

Another landslide in Gonapara area killed three-year-old Afsar, son of Nur Mostafa, around 2:00am.

Six others in the beach town and three in Howaikong were injured in landslides.

At St Martin's Island, Anwara Begum, 27, and her three-and-a-half-year-old son Jisan were killed after a coconut tree fell on them, said Harun-Ur Rashid, in-charge of the island's police camp.

Besides, Kadiza Begum, 38, of Titarpara in Kachhapia and Halima Begum of Fatekharkul area were killed in flash floods triggered by rain.

Acting deputy commissioner Anupam Shaha of Cox's Bazar said the district administration has allocated Tk 2.50 lakh, 65 tonnes of rice, 105 sacks of puffed rice and molasses for distribution among those affected by rain-triggered incidents, including floods.

BANDARBAN

Two siblings -- Alif, 11, and his sister Mim, 8, children of Abdur Razzak -- were killed in their sleep after a landslide partially buried their house at Banorupa Para in Sadar upazila in the early hours yesterday, our Bandarban correspondent reports.

Their parents were also injured in the incident, said Intiaz Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Bandarban Sadar Police Station.

A number of other houses were

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WORLD PEACE INDEX Bangladesh more peaceful than India, Pakistan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been ranked the third most peaceful country in South Asia, faring better than India and Pakistan in the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2015.

Published by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), the index puts Bangladesh on the 84th spot globally, up from the 98th in last year's GPI.

Having registered a gain in peaceful atmosphere inside the country, Bangladesh enjoys a "medium state of peace", according to the ninth edition of the report

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Pesticide in litchi kills kids, again

11 die between May 30 and June 20 after consuming toxic litchis

PINAKI ROY and KANGKAN KARMAKAR, Dinajpur

Swapan, a six-year-old kid, woke up restless at midnight and wanted to drink some water. After drinking water, his eyes dilated and he could hardly speak. Then he fainted.

This is how Robichan, a day labourer in Sadulla village under Birganj upazila of Dinajpur, described on Wednesday how his son had fallen fatally sick on June 2.

As any illiterate village man would do, Robichan called in a shaman thinking his son was attacked by some evil spirit. But the shaman, as is predictable, could do nothing as Swapan's disease was caused by pesticides that litchi growers excessively used on the fruits.

Although Robichan immediately rushed Swapan to the district hospital, doctors there declared him dead on June 4.

Swapan was one of 11 children who died between May 30 and June 20 at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital from diseases that were triggered by pesticides.

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A weak and drained Nishi in her grandmother's lap at their home in Kaharol of Dinajpur. She got seriously ill after having litchis, which had been heavily sprayed with pesticides. The photo was taken on Wednesday. PHOTO: KANGKAN KARMAKAR