



Fire service officials try to recover the wreckage of a microbus that was run over by a bus on Dhaka-Khulna highway near Gopalganj's Mahespur union. Six people, including five of a family, were killed in the accident yesterday morning.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 15 killed

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the microbus, forcing it to plunge into a roadside ditch.

ABM Mamotul Uddin Ahmed, assistant director of Faridpur fire service and civil defence, said the bus hit the microbus while overtaking another vehicle. He said they recovered the bodies from the microbus at 1:30pm.

Eight of the injured were admitted to Kashiyan Upazila Health Centre. Nine more people, including three members of a family, were killed in road accidents in Sirajganj, Rangpur and Rajshahi.

A similar tragedy struck the family of a Middle Eastern expatriate, Abdur Rashid, who returned to the country yesterday. Three of his family members, who were going to Shahjalil International Airport early yesterday, were killed on the spot as their microbus collided head-on with a bus on Dhaka-Bogra highway in Rajshahi area of Sirajganj's Raiganj upazila.

The deceased are Solaiman Miah, 65, his grandson-Inar Ali Akter, 32, and daughter-Sagar Hossain, all hailing from Kachalu upazila of Bogra. The microbus driver, Monir Hossain, also died in the accident.

OC Abdul Kader Zilani of Hatikamul Highway Police Station, quoting victims' family members, said that Solaiman along with his family members was going to receive his elder son Abdur Rashid at the airport.

The accident took place around 1:00am when a Kurigram-bound bus of Dhanshri Paribahan hit the microbus coming from the opposite direction, leaving the four dead on the spot and two others injured, said the OC.

The bus driver lost control over the steering wheel as he was driving very fast and caused the accident, the OC, adding that the driver managed to escape the scene after the accident. Police later seized the bus from the three people.

In Rangpur, three people were killed and at least 10 injured in a road accident in Tariganj upazila last night, reported UNO.

Abdul Latif Miah, OC of Tariganj Police Station, said a Dhaka-bound bus of Hanif Paribahan hit another bus of Asian Paribahan from behind on Rajshahi-Sylhet road around 11:00pm while trying to overtake it.

The supervisor, helper of the driver and a passenger of the Hanif Paribahan bus died on the spot, he added.

The injured were taken to a local hospital.

In Rajshahi, two motorcyclists were killed as their bike collided with a truck on Dhaka-Rajshahi highway in Pollapukur area of Puthia upazila around 12:30pm, reported our correspondent from Rajshahi Highway Police.

The dead are Tushar, 22, and Shahin, 20, of Ramchandrapur area of Rajshahi city. The two died on the spot, said Sergeant Monirul Islam of Rajshahi Highway Police.

After hitting the motorcycle, the truck fell into a roadside ditch, 500 yards away from the accident spot, said the police official.

Police seized the truck, but its driver and helper managed to flee.

Meanwhile, an elderly man was killed under a train in Phulbari near Rajshahi Medical College Hospital around 7:30pm on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Sukumar Goswami, 60, from Akkelpur upazila of Jorhat.

Habibur Rahman, the station-master of Phulbari Railway Station, said the man was running around the station area. He was killed on the spot when the Rajshahi bound Titumbar Express ran over him.

Phulbari upazila GRP police recovered his body and sent it to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

## Coming back to life

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Some of the children were still having breakfast. Within minutes, they washed their hands and sat in a circle to listen to Smriti Kona Shivas, their teacher whom they fondly call 'didi' (elder sister).

As Smriti began singing rhymes accompanied by gestures, the kids joined her. One rhyme done, they shouted out another rhyme or song to be sung. Younger ones within age two were happily enjoying the show.

Smriti said they accepted children as young as one year old.

Rights organisation Nari Maitree, with financial support from Concern Worldwide, Bangladesh, runs this centre and also the one at Bangabazar.

Thirty children receive informal education at a time until they turn six. Then Smriti communicates with nearby public schools or private schools, in case there is no government school, for their admission.

Even after children are enrolled in primary schools, the staff of the centre remain in constant touch with them, and provide them with necessary assistance as well as make sure they don't drop out.

Anamika is among the 123 children who have continued formal education with support from Nari Maitree.

Now in class eight, she explained how her and her two siblings' lives changed since her mother Mukta Begum got in touch with the NGO in 2008.

Mukta's husband had died by then of drug abuse. She was struggling to meet the expenses working sometimes as a house help, sometimes as a day labourer. The centre then began looking after the needs of her children during the day. At night the mother slept with her children on the verandah of people's homes.

As Mukta's two girls grew up and a relationship of trust built between her and the NGO staff, the organisation gave her Tk 5,000 in cash assistance to do business.

When Mukta, now 35, saw a rise in income from her business of selling betel leaves and cigarettes, she rented a small room on the rooftop of a building. That was how she joined 357 poorest of slum dwellers as target people, said Project Coordinator Shamim Ara Shammi.

The project expired last year. This year it has been replaced by a project named 'Improving the Lives of Urban Extreme Poor (ILUP)' including the poorest of slum dwellers as target people, said Project Coordinator Shamim Ara Shammi.

Israel forces hit Syria army after new stray fire

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel hit a Syrian regime position on Wednesday night after stray mortar fire from the war-torn country struck the occupied Golan Heights, in the third such exchange within a week.

A military spokeswoman said a mortar round had hit open ground in the Israeli-controlled zone of the plateau and "forces responded and targeted the Syrian army position that fired the mortar."

She did not say if the Israeli retaliatory fire had come from ground or air forces.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been visiting the Israeli settlement of Katzin, further south in the Golan, at the time of the exchange of fire.

Dhaka city has nearly 30,000 floating people as estimated by the Centre for Urban Studies. Of them, Nari Maitree is giving support to some 3,000 pavement dwellers in one way or other.

Under the new project, the NGO would continue its work in other areas like ensuring birth registration of homeless people and issuance of national identity cards to them. It was the first to convince the authorities into relaxing rules that require home address for getting NID cards and birth certificates for the street people linked with NGOs. For these people, the NGOs' addresses will be their addresses.

The project design also features vocational training for males and females and establishing a line of communication with employers so that they find jobs.

Above all these, Shammi said, "Building awareness among street people is the most important job to make lasting impacts on their lives - making them realise how to live a healthy life, why they should save and why they should be responsible parents."

As she was speaking, children were heard singing. "We shall overcome, we shall overcome someday..."

Smiles on their faces and light in their eyes spoke of their winning the struggle and a life ahead. But they will need help from the society to grow up as good human beings.

## Key elements grow up

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police claimed.

Family of the victim Dhaniram Roy, 16, who was an SSC student, said he was beaten to death because he protested the assault of Dhaniram's mother Paroma Bala Roy by Shahean and his family members.

"Shahean and his brothers assaulted Paroma on the afternoon of June 2 when she shoed away Shahean's cow from a small piece of land in front of her home where she grew rice seedlings, Dhaniram protested and an altercation ensued," said the victim's aunt Ibtisama Chandra Roy.

In the evening, Shahean and his brother Abdul Bashir, uncle Tajul Islam and cousin Anu Ali came back, picked Dhaniram from school, took him to Tarapur Advaitapara Government Primary School premises and beat him up mercilessly, she added.

Masud Rana, a farmer of the village who was among the first few people who noticed that they lying on the school ground later that evening, told The Daily Star that he took the victim to Dhaka Health Complex where doctors pronounced him dead.

The victim's family members, including his mother, aunt and uncle alleged that they had been intimidating and threatened by Shahean's family since his death.

On June 13, Sarat Chandra Roy, uncle of Dhaniram, lodged a complaint with an magistrate court against six people over the murder.

After an autopsy found that he was killed, the victim's mother lodged a case with Kacharol Police Station on June 27.

The accused were Shahean Ali, 34, his brothers Abdul Karim, 42, 43, Abdul Zabbar, 48, Abdul Bashir, 38, his uncle Tajul Islam 55 and cousin Anu Ali, 35, of Tarapurvillage.

Sub-Inspector Toudul Islam, who is investigating the case, said they were looking for the accused.

Ajit Kumar Mishra, assistant high commissioner of India in Rajshahi, visited the grieving mother in her home in Biroli village yesterday afternoon.

## British govt refers Sky-Fox takeover to formal probe

AFP, London

The British government yesterday said it wants a takeover of pan-European satellite TV giant Sky by Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox entertainment group to undergo an in-depth probe by the competition authorities.

"I confirm that I am minded to refer to a phase two investigation on the grounds of media plurality," culture minister Karen Bradley said in a statement to lawmakers following an assessment from media watchdog Ofcom, despite the tie-up winning the approval of the EU.

The deal "raises public interest concerns" because it may result in "increased influence" of the Murdoch family over the British news agenda and political process, she added.

The government had announced in March that the £11.4-billion (\$14.7-billion, billion by 21st Century Fox) would be probed by Ofcom and the Competition and Markets Authority.

Murdoch's Fox had announced in December last year that it had reached a formal agreement to buy the 61-per cent stake in Sky which it does not already own.

The transaction would expand the footprint of the media-entertainment powerhouse owned by Murdoch.

However, it also raised fears that it could give the Murdoch family too much control over the British media landscape.

The 21st Century Fox is one of the world's largest entertainment companies with a vast portfolio of cable, broadcast, film, pay-TV and satellite assets across six continents.

Sky broadcasts a similar offering, including the 24-hour Sky News channel, and provides also internet and telephone services. In late 2014, Sky changed its name from BSkyB after buying Sky Italia and a majority holding in Sky Deutschland.

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its pollution, it will only get worse over time.

Italian design firm Stefano Boeri Architects believes that building a neighbourhood with plant-covered towers could help the city reduce its pollution levels. On June 26, Liuzhou brood ground on what Boeri calls a "forest city."

Boeri and the company also announced that it will build two skyscrapers, called Nanjing Green Towers that will hold a total of 1,100 trees and 2,500 cascading shrubs on their rooftops and balconies, according to a report published in the Business Insider.

The design team will be similar to that of a two-story complex that Boeri is designing in Milan. Another tower in Lausanne, Switzerland will follow a similar plan and is expected to open by early 2018.

Boeri's ultimate goal is to create an entire "forest city" that will become a reality in Liuzhou by 2020.

On flat land, the plants from each tower would cover over 75,000 square feet, the architects said.

Collectively, the plants on Nanjing's towers will eat 25 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year and produce about 60 kg of oxygen daily.

## War criminals

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Bangladesh delegation to the meeting, a Supreme Court press release said yesterday.

He said it was unfortunate that war criminals had been involved in trying to destroy evidence and history of war crimes since the country's independence in 1971.

Newspaper reporters of that time and some ground-breaking books played an important role in holding the war crimes trial. The newspapers were under the ownership and control of the Pakistanis and their like-minded people, the CI told the meeting.

He said all the males in a village were killed during the Liberation War in 1971 and later it was named as *Bulboba Palli* (village of widows). The widows made statements before the International Crimes Tribunal during trials.

The international crimes tribunals were set up under the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act, 1973 and later, rules were framed with assistance of some international laws, including the Rome Statute, for holding the trials.

After assuming office in 2008, the then government had initiated the process of holding the trials for crimes against humanity and war crimes and constituted the international crimes tribunals, the CI said.

Justice Sinha visited the Netherlands on July 17-24 at the invitation of Maarten Feteris, president of the Netherlands Supreme Court, according to the SC press release.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is the treaty that established four core international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crime of aggression.

## UN agrees on deep cuts

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peacekeeping budget and we're only getting started."

Hardest hit by the cuts will be the UN missions in Sudan's troubled regions of Darfur and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the two costliest operations with budgets that run over \$1 billion.

A Security Council diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity said the UN's current budget of \$5.4 billion, the board in the 13 peacekeeping missions as a result of US pressure.

Washington pays 28.5 percent of the peacekeeping budget and 22 percent of the UN's regular budget, the diplomat said.

French Ambassador Francois Delattre said the deal will allow UN missions to "fully implement their mandate while being more efficient."

"The savings proposed in this budget have been carefully targeted," said Delattre.

The deal falls short of the request from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who had asked for \$7.97 billion for the annual budget, which will run from July 1 to June 30 of next year.

It also is less than what African countries had proposed: they wanted \$7.7 billion for the UN missions.

The deal is expected to be approved by the UN General Assembly on Friday. The Security Council is expected to vote as early as today on significant cuts to the 17,000-strong joint African Union-UN mission in Darfur known as UNAMID.

Britain on Wednesday circulated a draft resolution that provides for a two-stage drawdown over the next 12 months, in line with UN recommendations of joint AU-UN report released last week by AFP.

The measure would cut UNAMID force levels to reach 8,735 troops and 2,500 police by June 2018, a 44 percent cut in military personnel and nearly 30 percent in police, according to the draft resolution.

The drawdown could be reviewed if the Sudanese government fails to ensure protection in those areas from where the peacekeepers will withdraw.

On the proposed spending cuts, Guterres will report to the council after six months on whether "conditions to the ground remain conducive to further reductions."

The draft resolution welcomes a "reduction in military contingents

"It is matter of happiness that although our prosecutors, judges and others concerned with justice and training on war crimes trial, they gained vast knowledge and competence by going through the Rome Statute."

To defend himself maximum opportunity to accused has taken during the trials, he added.

Terming Bangladesh a secular state, Justice Sinha said a non-Muslim, he himself is a good example of secularism as he has been holding the CI's office in a country where 90 percent people are Muslims.

ICC President Silvia expressed satisfaction at the war crimes trial system and Bangladesh's support to the Rome Statute.

He said Bangladesh's experience in holding war crimes trial would play an important role in developing its national judicial system.

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between government forces and rebel groups," but rights groups maintain that the conflict in Darfur is far from over.

Human Rights Watch has criticized the proposed cuts as "misguided," saying civilians in Darfur still need protection.

France last week was not allowed to draft resolution on renewing a UN mission in Mali, known as MINUSMA, but no cuts are planned.

The mission would continue to operate with 13,289 troops and 1,920 police according to the draft resolution seen by AFP.

A vote on renewing the Mali mission could take place today.

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"Usually the workers travel with Qataris - many Qataris employ farmers and travel with their domestic workers and drivers," he told a news conference.

The workers were not allowed to travel into Qatar and now they are living illegally in Saudi Arabia and do not have basic needs.

"They have no shelter and cannot access money."

The four states, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain announced they were suspending all ties with Qatar over accusations the emirate supports extremist groups - a claim Qatar denies.

The four states and scaled off the emirate's only land border with Saudi Arabia, a vital route for its food imports.

They also ordered all Qatars to leave and their own nationals to return home. Qatar uses a sponsorship system which ties workers to their employers.

There was not immediately clear why the workers were left behind and why they did not have the right papers to return.

Some 12,000 camels and sheep are reportedly being forced to trek back to Qatar from Saudi Arabia because of the crisis.

## The brown beauty

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permeability of the way. I stopped for a moment and assessed the situation; my vision was obscured by the grasses taller than me. Only out of my heads I saw out from the greenery that engulfed us. It was hot and humid. Hot on a level where I could literally see the heat haze.

Sweat covered my entire face and my polo shirt, which was glued to my back. I crawled through the grass on an uneven ground, constantly wiping my face and keeping balance, and finally reunited with the crew. I was fortunate to join a team of ornithologists who were looking for a bird that lives in the grasslands and our large reserves.

At the end of the day, I realised that conservation science is not as simple and thrilling as they portray it on social media and the hardship is often overlooked. The true essence and reason why there are so many people around the globe devotedly working in this sector is the liberating sensation of doing some good to a rapidly degrading planet. An accurate example would be the loss of grasslands from our country to the extent that the birds have nowhere else but the riverbank grasslands (chars) to find their last refuge.

Jaber Rei is a student of environmental science at IUB

ticket small bird, around 20cm) with a short bill and a unique display call. The researchers choose the hot and humid month of May to conduct the survey since the birds are most active during the breeding season between March and June.

We did both habitat study and population census using playback method, on specific points along the lower Padma river. Our methods included going to the predetermined points, counting and identifying different grass species, after which we would wait and count the number of grassbirds flying or coming nearby. At some points sightings were as high as 3, while on others they were as low as one.

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