

## Univ teacher, friend drown in Sangu river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Two people, including a private university teacher, drowned in the Sangu river in Bandarban's Ruma upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Shantanu Sarkar, 27, a teacher of computer science department at United International University (UIU) in the capital, and his friend Junayed Ehsan.

Mohammad Mamun, who was accompanying the deceased in the tour, said they went to the country's highest peak Keokradong on March 22.

From there they returned to Ruma upazila in Bandarban yesterday and went to take a bath in the Sangu river around 2:00pm, he said, adding that the two drowned while bathing in the river.

Hearing screams, local people rushed there and recovered their bodies, Ruma Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shamsul Alam said.



Devotees take a holy bath during Ashoka Ashtami Snan, an annual religious festival of the local Hindu community, in Durga Sagar Dighi in Babuganj upazila of Barisal yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## MUSIC TEACHER MURDER Intern sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

An intern of M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital here was sent to jail through a court on Friday in connection with the murder of music teacher Nahidul Islam Nahid.

Dr Hasan Rashed Hussain was arrested from Dinajpur Institute complex on Thursday night after the victim's wife Waresa Shiuli filed a murder case with Dinajpur Sadar Police Station on Friday, 28 days after the killing. The name of Dr Hasan was mentioned in the case while other accused are unnamed.

Nahid, 33, a music teacher of Dinajpur Collectorate School and College, also a cultural activist and scout leader, was found in a critical condition on February 26 night at Dinajpur Institute complex. Later, he was taken to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries.

According to Nahid's family members, he went to a party in a local restaurant on February 26. Later, he came out of the restaurant after getting a phone call. His mobile phone has been missing after the incident.

Police suspect that the criminals picked up him from the complex on a microbus and took him elsewhere, where they tortured him mercilessly and dropped him at the complex.

Nahid was a brother of Dr Nurul Islam, a dentist at M Abdur Rahim Medical College.

Cultural activists and scouts continued agitations in the district after the death of Nahid, claiming that the music teacher was murdered.

Superintendent of Police Hamidul Alam said Dr Hasan was arrested on specific allegation. Police took everything into consideration after getting the autopsy report, which made it clear that Nahid was tortured to death.

Police are investigating the case and trying to arrest the other accused, he added.

### PHOTO EXHIBITION

## To create love for birds

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Once it was quite usual for people when they used to wake up every dawn with the chirping of birds, which gave the nature a fascinating phenomenon.

But the dawns are not the same now as a number of birds of various species have become extinct and many are on the verge of extinction due to loss of their abode and safe breeding grounds caused by mindless tree felling.

The adverse situation has a big impact on younger generations as they do not get chance to learn about the varieties of the birds, their

beauty, as well as their sweet and melodious tunes.

With the aim to create love and affection for the birds, 'Setubandhan,' a voluntary organisation working for birds' protection in Saidpur upazila, arranged a three-day photo exhibition at railway ground in Saidpur municipality yesterday.

Photos of more than a hundred birds are displayed at the exhibition stall.

Pubali Scouts, a free scout group comprising people of different ages, invited 'Setubandhan' to arrange the exhibition during their three-day yearly congregation that kicked

off at the railway ground yesterday.

While visiting the venue yesterday this correspondent saw people, especially school kids, gathering at the exhibition stalls. Besides, a number of guardians with their children were seen visiting the stalls.

Many school children like Shamin, 8, Aman, 9, and Dil Newaz, 8, said, "We never saw so many beautiful birds in our life. Witnessing their photos gave us much pleasure."

Alamgir Hossain, president of Setubandhan, said, "We want to create awareness among people on birds protection by developing love for them."



'Setubandhan,' a voluntary organisation working for birds' protection, arrange a three-day photo exhibition at the railway ground in Nilphamari's Saidpur upazila, starting yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## No joining

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Before landing in jail on February 8, Khaleda Zia, chief of the BNP and the 20-party combine, repeatedly asked the alliance leaders to keep the unity at any cost amid apprehension that the government might attempt to split it.

Although the alliance has declined in principal to participate in the city corporation elections it will be finalised after meeting Khaleda, said insiders.

Yesterday's meeting discussed holding of action programmes like rallies in divisional and district headquarters, human chains, leaflet distribution, and issue-based discussions.

The alliance leaders decided to publicise more the German think-tank Bertelsmann Stiftung's report that said Bangladesh is among five countries which no longer meet minimum standards for democracy and are now under autocratic rule.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance had boycotted the 2014 parliamentary polls demanding elections under a non-partisan neutral administration.

The polls saw 153 lawmakers elected uncontested.

The ruling party leaders maintain that the next general election will be held under the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

## Saudi Arabia

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Arabia and Iran.

Saudi Arabia and Israel have no official diplomatic relations, like much of the Arab world. Egypt and Jordan are the only two Arab countries with peace treaties with Israel.

The flight approval comes after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described relations with the Arab world as the "best ever", with common concerns over Iran drawing them closer together.

Leaders of Arab countries have not publicly made similar comments, though that does not necessarily mean they dispute Netanyahu's claim.

They face sensitivities within their own countries, where the Jewish state is often viewed with intense hostility.

Israeli analyst Jonathan Spyer said that the Saudi concession showed that positive signals were being sent despite the lack of an Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty, long seen as a prerequisite for relations between the Jewish state and the Arab world.

"I think that what this shows is even in the absence of that you can have small gestures that are of real meaning," Spyer, director of Israel's Rubin Centre for Research in International Affairs, told AFP.

"That's what I think that this Saudi decision to allow the overflights consists of. It's small but significant," he said.

During a May 2017 Middle East tour, US President Donald Trump flew from Riyadh to Tel Aviv on Air Force One in what is believed to have been among the few direct flights from Saudi Arabia to Israel.

Trump says he is working on a plan for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Spyer said that his administration appears to see Riyadh as "crucial for much of what they want to do on the Israeli-Palestinian track".

Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia and Israel have a common enemy in Shia-dominated Iran, with both seeking to limit what they view as the Islamic republic's expanding influence in the Middle East.

Trump's first presidential foreign trip took in Riyadh and Israel, while his son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner has reportedly formed a bond with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Prince Mohammed, the kingdom's de facto political leader, is pursuing economic and social reforms long sought by the West.

## Stop working

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down at 8:00 pm on Friday nights. Then in April, the government will begin shutting down computers at 7:30 on two Fridays of the month. In the final phase in May, all computers will shut down at 7:00 pm every Friday.

The initiative will affect all government employees, though some people may be able to get exemptions.

Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development shows that South Koreans on average work more than workers in any other country. South Korea government employees work an average of 2,739 hours a year, according to South Korean outlet Yonhap News Agency. That's about 1,000 hours more than government workers in most developed countries.

This new initiative is the latest move in a larger effort to improve the work-life balance in the country. Earlier this month, South Korea passed a law that cut down the maximum weekly work hours from 68 hours to 52 hours. At the time, Chung Hyun Back, South Korean family minister, told AFP that the work culture was one of the major factors leading to lower birth rates: "For years we have overlooked the real culprit of the problem—our country's vast gender disparity and inhumanely long working hours."

## Better English skill, better jobs

Jamalpur Zila Parishad initiates free course

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A good number of educated people in the district have got an opportunity to develop their skill in English language, thanks to the initiative of Jamalpur Zila Parishad.

Anwar Hossain, chief executive officer of the Zila Parishad, opened the three-month-long course in December 2016, after appointing a moderator cum spoken English teacher.

"A batch comprising 35 participants, who must be at least graduates, attend a three-month-long free course. A two-hour-long learning session is conducted for them on workdays in the parishad's auditorium," said Anwar, who monitors the course.

Seventy graduates of two batches earlier completed the course while the third batch is running since February 2, said Radoan Khaled Razib, the teacher.

Most of the participants show confidence to write English well and speak it fluently, he said.

"The participants are given instructions on the basic grammar rules and then apply those in making sentences. They are engaged in conversations on different topics of everyday life and encouraged to make presentations in English," Razib said.

Razuau Ahmed, an honours and masters degree holder in management, attended the course with the second batch, which ended on November 2 last year.

"After two weeks, I got appointment as an assistant manager at NGO 'Society for Social Service' as I was able to prove my language skill. Employers often seek good English knowing people," he said.

Some participants of the running batch, including Kawsar, Selina Aktar, Nazrul Islam and Nasir Hossain, said their writing and speaking skills in English are developing gradually.

## Tale of a bad road

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The 52-km stretch of the road between Bheramara and Kushtia Islamic University on Kushtia-Khulna Highway has been in awful condition for the last one-and-a-half years, causing immense suffering to the commuters.

Kushtia-Khulna Highway is the main link between the south-western and northern regions of the country, and around 15,000 vehicles move on it every day.

The road is full of potholes and ditches that are two feet to three feet deep, causing serious accidents almost every day.

"It does not look like a road and is unsafe for travel, but people have to use it at the risk of their lives due to necessity," said Chandan Kumar Das, an official of Kushtia Islamic University.

He travels 25 km to and from Kushtia town to his office on the university campus every day, he said, adding that around 3,000 to 4,000 students and officials of the university make the journey every day.

"I have no words to describe it. We cannot call it a highway when there is no paving," said Akhi Khondokar, a student of the university.

"The ditches on the highway are so deep that many vehicles break down every day," said Harunur Rashid Latif, a bus driver on Khulna-Kushtia route.

The road is a death trap as many accidents have taken place there due to the deep ditches and boulders on it.

According to local sources and newspaper reports, at least 111 people have been killed on this 52 km stretch in the last 15 months.

Construction work of the highway by foreign contractors started in 1995 and ended in 2000. Although it was necessary, no further comprehensive work was done on the highway since then, said Kushtia Division Roads and Highways Executive Engineer Rafiqul Islam.

"We have been doing repair work on the surface only for the last 17 years," he added.

He said they could not do proper repairing due to the increasing number of vehicles and heavy rainfall in the last few years.

"The heavily loaded trucks break the tarmac on the road and create deep ruts," he said.

"Now the process of starting sealcoat repair of the road is underway and tender was opened yesterday," the engineer said, adding that work on the road will be taken up once the process is complete.

*The 52km stretch of the road between Bheramara and Kushtia Islamic University on Kushtia-Khulna Highway has been in awful condition for the last one-and-a-half years.*

## Six rooms for 1,300 students!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Academic and administrative activities of a high school in Taltali upazila of Barguna are greatly hampered due to accommodation crisis.

A section of local youth set up the Lawpara Sagor Saikat High school on two acres of land in 1991 with very few students. Now, there are 1,248 students from Class VI to Class X in the institution, and the number is increasing as it provides quality education.

"We have two tin-sheds and a two-storied building in which there are only seven small rooms. One room is used as office room and another as multimedia classroom, while only five

rooms are used as regular classrooms for the large number of students," said Headmaster Golam Hayder.

All the classrooms are overcrowded and six to eight students have to sit on each bench, while some students have to stand during class, due to shortage of benches, chairs and tables, he said.

All 218 students passed SSC examinations last year from the school and all 224 in JSC examinations the same year, the headmaster said.

"Our institution was selected as the best institution in Taltali upazila in 2012 considering its academic result, but no infrastructural development has taken place to increase the accommodation capacity," he said.

Mahfuza Munni, a student of Class IX, said they cannot write down any task in the class as eight students have to sit on each bench.

Upazila Secondary Education Officer Lutful Kabir Md Kamrul Hasan said the school has the highest number of students among schools in the upazila, so it is facing accommodation crisis.

"I visited the school many times and informed the higher authorities about the matter several times," he added.

"I learnt that the process for construction of two new buildings to solve the accommodation problem has started. We also have a plan to set up a digital lab there," Lutful added.



Some students are attending class standing up due to shortage of chairs, tables and benches at Lawpara Sagor Saikat High School in Taltali upazila of Barguna. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR