



Owners of nearby motor workshops have left two scrapped vehicles beside Beribadh Road in the capital's Lalbagh. Locals have turned it into a waste dumping spot, polluting the environment. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## CRASH ON AIRPORT ROAD Charge sheet likely to be placed Monday

BSS, Dhaka

The Detective Branch of police is going to submit a charge sheet on Monday accusing six people for the death of two college students in a road accident in the capital's Airport Road, said a DB official.

The accident triggered a nationwide protest by students, demanding justice of their fellows and safe roads.

Moshirul Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (north), said they had already completed investigation into the case.

The charge sheet will be submitted against six people -- two drivers, two helpers and two owners of two Jabal-e-Noor Paribahan buses -- before the court on Monday, he told BSS yesterday.

Owners of the buses will be included in the charge sheet as they did not properly scrutinise the bus drivers' driving licences during their appointments, Moshirul added.

Of the six, two drivers, a helper and a bus owner are now in jail, while another bus owner and a helper are on the run, he said, adding that they were trying to arrest them.

Bus driver Masum Billah, his helper Enayet Hossain, owner Shahadat Hossain and driver of another bus allegedly taking part in a race for passengers, Zobair Sumon, his helper Kazi Asad and bus owner Jahangir Alam, will be charged in the case.

On July 29, two students of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment College -- Abdul Karim alias Rajib Uddin, 18, and Dia Khanam Mim, 17 -- were run over and killed by a bus during the alleged mad race between two buses on Airport Road.

Of the arrestees, bus driver Masum and its owner Shahadat gave confessional statements under section 164 before the court.

Dia's father filed the case with Cantonment Police Station in connection with the accident.

## Robot to protect

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using only robot-vision for real-time navigation, obstacle avoidance and complex science missions," said Matthew Dunbabin, the QUT professor who unveiled the submarine.

"This multi-function ocean drone can monitor a wide range of issues facing coral reefs including coral bleaching, water quality, pest species, pollution and siltation."

Software will also enable the bot to detect crown-of-thorns starfish, which eat coral, and "instigate an injection which is fatal" to the predators, he said, adding that the injection is harmless for other reef creatures.

The starfish have proliferated in recent times due to pollution and agricultural runoff.

The Great Barrier Reef, about the size of Japan or Italy, is reeling from two straight years of bleaching as sea temperatures rise because of climate change.

Experts have warned that the 2,300-kilometre (1,400-mile) long area could have suffered irreparable damage due to the combined effects of bleaching, damage from agricultural runoff and the impact of the crown-of-thorns starfish.

## Toughest time for BNP

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government's tough stance has rendered the BNP unable to fight back and the grassroots are frustrated about this, said a number of leaders.

Many BNP leaders and workers are behind bars or are hiding to avoid arrest in dozens of cases filed over the past 10 years.

Meanwhile, a fresh fear has gripped the party after police filed several cases against BNP men in recent months, including over their alleged role in the road safety protest.

Just about four months before the next general election, party grassroots are frustrated in the absence of clear-cut directions.

"The BNP is passing through the hardest time in its history and is facing a great many challenges," BNP Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

The BNP never faced such a situation before, he added.

But despite the challenges, the party is hopeful about a turnaround, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

"We will overcome this all.... We are trying to go to people through different activities and programmes and will take necessary actions to free our chairperson before the election," he said.

The BNP was founded on September 1, 1978, by late president Ziaur Rahman with a 19-point programme to build a "self-reliant" Bangladesh.

Ever since, the party came to power four times and was in opposition bench twice. For the first time in its history, it is neither in the government nor in the opposition as it boycotted the January 5, 2014, election.

It has been out of power for over 11 years since the 1/11 political change-over in 2007. When it formed government last time in 2001, it did so by bagging 40.97 percent of the total vote and securing 193 out of the 300 parliamentary seats.

But with the December election nearing, the party is hoping for a turnaround.

In the coming days, the BNP will launch a "peaceful protest" against the government while also preparing for the next election, sources said.

The BNP has faced several existential crises in the past resulting in splits. One such crisis was the assassination of Ziaur Rahman in 1981 in Chittagong by some army personnel.

Khaleda, who had no experience in politics, was made vice-chairperson of the party in March 1983 and was elected chairperson in May 1984. She has been leading the BNP since, forming government in 1991, 2000 and 2001.

For the party's present condition, some senior BNP leaders blame only themselves in private.

For example, they now admit, boycotting the 2014 election was a mistake. Khaleda Zia's last-minute refusal to meet visiting Indian President Pranab Mukherjee the year before was another "big political blunder".

Before that controversial election, Khaleda also turned down Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's invitation for talks, worsening the political stand-off.

The violent agitation it launched,

## AL leader

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supposed to leave the city for Rajnagar last night, they added.

Mosharraf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said the motive behind the murder could not be known immediately.

first to thwart the 2014 election, and then to unseat the AL government earned it a bad name at home and abroad. During its countrywide blockades and strikes, scores of innocent people were killed in arson attacks on public transports. The attacks were allegedly carried out by activists of the BNP and its ally Jamaat.

Talking to The Daily Star, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, another BNP standing committee member, admitted that his party was indeed going through a tough time, but said it would not last long.

"The BNP will be able to materialise all its demands over holding of a free and fair election and the release of our chairperson," he added.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed and central leader Moazzem Hossain Alal said they would focus on reorganising the party to overcome the current crisis.

Asked about their future plan, including for the election, Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman said, "We will not boycott the election. We are not a party of negative politics. We will make preparation for the election alongside our movement to free our party chief."

The BNP will hold a rally in front of its Nayapaltan office in the capital at 2:00pm today, marking the party's 40th founding anniversary. The party will hold various programmes in other districts as well.

## 3 ministers

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The interior ministry has meanwhile been accused of failing to respond to a number of complaints in recent months by drivers from the nearby town of Svoge who had raised worries over an increasing number of accidents on the section of road concerned.

The ageing bus had also not undergone one of two obligatory technical checks by the transport ministry authorities.

The bus driver is the only person who has been charged over the crash so far.

But the results of the early probe has revived a recurrent debate about the poor state of Bulgaria's roads and its corruption-ridden public tender system.

"The tragedy near Svoge highlighted the vicious system in public procurement and construction works -- impunity everywhere. It is obvious but because of it people die," Bulgarian President Rumen Radev commented Thursday.

Allegations have been rife that a large share of the funds for road repair projects -- often coming from EU aid -- are pocketed by firms close to power, leaving just a fraction for the actual repairs.

A famous former dissident from the communist era, Nikolay Kolev -- also known as 'Bosia' -- told AFP yesterday he had ended the hunger strike he began on June 13.

He had been demanding Moskovski's resignation after revelations about corruption in the agency that awards drivers' licences.

Eleven years after joining the European Union in 2007, Bulgaria remains the bloc's poorest country with just one fully completed border-to-border highway and much of its road network in a bad state.

In 2017, Bulgaria recorded 96 deaths per million inhabitants on its roads, according to Eurostat. That is the second highest rate in the EU after Romania and more than double the European average.

## NEWS

## Leaders agree

FROM PAGE 1

The summit ended with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on establishing a Bimstec Grid Interconnection to enhance energy cooperation among the seven member states -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The foreign ministers of the countries signed the deal, which is expected to pave the way for buying and selling electricity among Bimstec members once the cross-country energy grids will be put in place.

Diplomatic sources said the MoU would open the door for energy cooperation among the member states of South Asia and South East Asia and would also facilitate the promotion of efficient, economic, and secure operation of power system through the development of regional electricity networks.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bhutan Interim Government Chief Adviser Lyonpo Tshering Wangchuk, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Myanmar President Win Myint, Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha attended the summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec).

At the closing session, KP Sharma Oli presented an 18-point draft of the Kathmandu Declaration, which was adopted unanimously.

It included cooperation in areas such as agricultural technology exchange, gradual reduction of climate change impact, boosting trade and investment, blue economy, mountain economy, tourism, cultural cooperation and people-to-people contact.

The Nepalese PM also handed over the chairmanship of the grouping to the Sri Lankan president.

Acknowledging that enhanced inter-linkages and inter-dependence within the economies and societies of the Bimstec member states provide greater opportunity to advance regional cooperation, the summit underlined the importance of multidimensional connectivity for economic integration and shared prosperity.

The declaration acknowledged the importance of trade and investment as one of the major contributing factors for fostering economic and social development in the region.

The Kathmandu Declaration deplored terrorist attacks in all parts of the world, including in Bimstec countries, and strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms.

"Affirm that the fight against terror-

ism should target not only terrorists, terror organisations and networks but also identify and hold accountable States and non-State entities that encourage, support or finance terrorism, provide sanctuaries to terrorists and terror groups and falsely extol their virtues," the Declaration said.

The Bimstec member states reiterated their strong commitment to combat terrorism and called upon all countries to devise a comprehensive approach in this regard which should include preventing financing of terrorists and terrorist actions from territories under their control, blocking recruitment and cross-border movement of terrorists, countering radicalisation, tackling misuse of internet for purposes of terrorism and dismantling terrorist safe havens.

The summit agreed to expedite the conclusion of Bimstec Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and called upon the member states for its early ratification. It also expressed satisfaction that many member states have ratified the Bimstec Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking.

Besides, the summit agreed to establish seamless multi-modal transportation linkages and smooth, synchronised and simplified transit facilities through the development, expansion and modernisation of highways, railways, waterways, sea routes and airways in the region.

It was also decided to speed up the efforts to conclude the Bimstec Coastal Shipping Agreement and the Bimstec Motor Vehicle Agreement as early as possible taking into account the special circumstances and needs of the member states.

Additionally, the grouping decided for an early conclusion of Bimstec Free Trade Area (FTA) negotiations, and directed the Bimstec Trade and Economic Ministerial Meeting and its subsidiary bodies, including the Trade Negotiating Committee, to expedite finalisation of all related agreements of the Bimstec FTA as early as possible.

The summit also called for exploring the possibility of establishing a Bimstec development fund with voluntary contributions from the member states. The fund would be utilised for research and planning of Bimstec and financing of projects, and other activities of the regional organisation, according to the Kathmandu Declaration.

## Evil force

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BCL President Rezwonul Haque Chowdhury and General Secretary Golam Rabbani also spoke on the occasion.

The PM urged the Chhatra League leaders not to hanker for party posts.

"Despite being the children of Bangabandhu, I and my brother Kamal worked as activists of the party and discharged our duties the party had given us," Hasina said.

She said the killers of Bangabandhu not only killed him, but also tried to erase the country's history. But they failed as Bangabandhu and the history of Bangladesh were very much connected to the common people.

Urging the BCL leaders to learn from the life of Bangabandhu and Bangamata, Hasina said she was not afraid of death threats as several attempts had been made on her life in the past.

Amidst all the dangers, she has been making relentless efforts to materialise the dream of Bangabandhu and safeguard the basic rights of the people, she said.

## Brisk business

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Before, he could carry three cattle and now he can carry 10 and five people, charging Tk 200 for each cattle and Tk 30 per person.

"I can earn more this way," he said.

When asked about the vehicle being illegal and risky, Lal Mia's response was "no problem at all". "We send money every month to places to manage people," he said, adding that they have an organisation for dealing with these matters.

He requested his details not be printed. The Daily Star could not reach the organisation he mentioned.

Sadakul Bari, a traffic inspector of Dinajpur, said police officials taking money to allow illegal vehicles run on roads was nothing but rumours. He said they seize such vehicles whenever they find them.

Devdas Bhattacharya, deputy inspector general of police of Rangpur range, admitted that the number of the illegal vehicles has gone up in recent times.

"We are going to take action against the illegal vehicles," he said.

M Rafiq, president of Transport Workers Union in Dinajpur, said the vehicles are made with steel angles and spares of manufacturing factories.

"Controlling system of these illegal vehicles are so bad," he said, adding that the brakes, steering and headlights were seriously inadequate.

He demanded immediate action against these vehicles.

## Rohingya

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the house. When he came out, they opened fire on him, leaving him dead on the spot, said locals.

They said Yeaser, son of Md Ismail, helped the camp management committee prepare lists of refugees and distribute relief among them.

They claimed that Yeaser handed over some locals to the camp management committee for running illegal activities in the camp a couple of days ago. Being angered, they killed him.

Quoting Yeaser's wife, who is pregnant, some Rohingyas at the camp said her husband was killed in front of her and she could identify two to three of the killers.

"We have identified the killers following a primary investigation. Now we are trying to arrest them," said Ranjil Kumar Barua, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Model Police Station.