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Brisk business with illegal, risky vehicles

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Due to poor enforcement of the law, the business of illegal vehicles, popularly known as Nasiman, Kariman and Bhotbhoti, have been thriving in northern districts.

The locally made three-wheelers, powered by a small water pump engine, have been growing in number and size. They used to be about six feet long but nowadays they come as big as 20 feet and can take loads of up to five tonnes.

They tootle on mostly regional highways and even national highways, creating moving roadblocks for other vehicles and raising the chances of accidents.

Almost every day people are killed in accidents in which these vehicles are involved.

Yet, use and manufacturing of the vehicles are going on unabated.

The demand for these improvised vehicles has gone up in the last few years as they are affordable, have low operating cost, return high, and are popular among poor people, vehicle builders of Dinajpur and Joypurhat told The Daily Star.

Nasimon builder Azizar Rahman of Biral upazila in Dinajpur said he has been making the vehicles for the last 15 years. He builds them in different sizes but now buyers want larger vehicles.

"We build according to the buyers' demand ... A 20-feet Nasimon will cost you Tk 4 lakh at least," he said.

Masudur Rahman, a builder of Joypurhat, said a large vehicle is capable of carrying up to five tonnes.

Lal Mia, who owns and drives a large Nasimon, said he uses Ambari-Phulbari-Birampur of Dinajpur-Gobindaganj Road to carry people and cattle.

His vehicle was small before but he recently had it supersized.

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It might look like a truck, but it is not. It is an unauthorised vehicle, locally known as Nasiman, parked in a field in Ambari area of Dinajpur's Parbatipur upazila on Monday. Built with water pump engines, such low-cost three-wheelers are illegal. Their numbers have thrived in the last few years largely due to poor enforcement of law.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

No helmet? No fuel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

In a unified, bold move to tackle safety of motorcyclists on the road, filling stations in Rangpur have come to an agreement to not sell fuel to any biker not wearing a safety helmet.

The decision made on Wednesday came into effect from Thursday afternoon.

The refuelling stations in Rangpur have taken up this issue seriously after the police department urged the operators to cooperate with police in creating awareness amongst the bikers.

There are 38 filling stations in Rangpur. During a visit to different stations in Rangpur city, including Shapla intersection, adjacent area of Shapla Bridge, Satmatha intersection and Bangladesh Bank area and Central Bus terminal areas yesterday, this correspondent found the employees of the filling stations were refusing to sell fuel to bikers not wearing helmets.

The decision was hailed across the district.

"It's a good decision to encourage people to take precautions for their own safety. People should

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BULGARIA 3 ministers resign over bus crash

AFP, Sofia

Bulgaria's ministers of public works, transport and interior affairs resigned yesterday after heavy criticism directed at the government over a deadly tourist bus crash.

"The three ministers -- me, Transport Minister Ivaylo Moskovski and Interior Minister Valentin Radev -- tabled our resignations today," regional development and public works Minister Nikolay Nankov told journalists.

Seventeen passengers died when their bus ran off the road in torrential rain and plunged 20 metres into a river gorge in western Bulgaria on Saturday. Four people also remain in a critical condition.

Centre-right Prime Minister Boyko Borisov had earlier yesterday asked the three ministers to step down, days after initial results from a probe into the crash found the road had been recently repaired using a substandard quality of asphalt.

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Eid-time road crashes killed 259 people

Casualties rise compared to last year's, says Jatri Kalyan Samity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite some measures taken by the authorities to ensure road safety following the recent student movement, the number of road accidents and casualties has increased during the Eid rush this year compared to last year's figures, according to a passenger welfare platform.

At least 259 people were killed and 960 injured in 237 road accidents in 13 days (August 16-28) when the transport sector saw a huge rush of passengers during the Eid-ul-Azha festival, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity said yesterday.

Besides, 15 people were killed and seven others wounded in 19 incidents involving railways and four people were killed, 68 injured and eight remained missing in 14 accidents on waterways.

During the same period last year, at least 254 people were killed and 696 injured in 214 road accidents while 43 lost lives under the wheels of trains and 25 people died in 15 accidents on waterways.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of the Samity, yesterday unveiled a report at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity. The

organisation prepared the report based on the reports of "largely circulated and credible" national and regional dailies and news portals, he said.

After Eid-ul-Fitr, the Samity had published a report on road accidents that said the numbers of accidents and deaths during the Eid rush saw a sharp rise this year compared to last year's figures, Mozammel added.

At least 339 people were killed and 1,265 injured in 277 road accidents in 13 days (June 11 to 23) during the Eid journeys this year. However, the government rejected the report claiming it was "not correct".

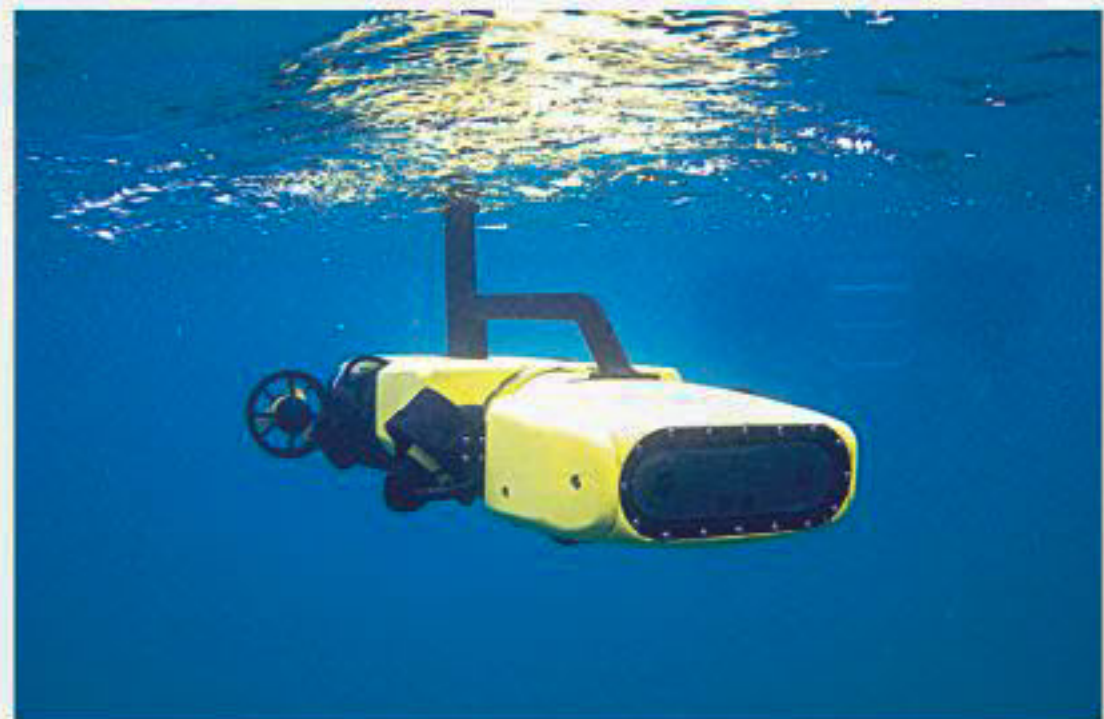
Mozammel said the report sparked a lot of discussion and later, the students' agitation demanding road safety gave a jolt, prompting the government to take numerous steps in this regard.

That is why the number of road accidents during the Eid-ul-Azha rush has decreased compared to the figures of crashes during the rush of this year's Eid-ul-Fitr, he said.

Following the death of two college students in a

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Robot to protect Great Barrier Reef



AFP, Sydney

A robot submarine able to hunt and kill the predatory crown-of-thorns starfish devastating the Great Barrier Reef was unveiled by Australian researchers yesterday.

Scientists at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) said the robot, named the RangerBot and developed with a grant from Google, would serve as a "robo reef protector" for the vast World Heritage site off Australia's northeastern coast.

The RangerBot has an eight-hour battery life and computer vision capabilities allowing it to monitor and map reef areas at scales not previously possible.

"RangerBot is the world's first underwater robotic system designed specifically for coral reef environments,

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29,000 yaba pills seized in Chittagong

Cop detained, trucker, helper held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rab seized 29,000 yaba pills from a small truck heading for Dhaka in Mirsarai upazila yesterday and filed a case against a police officer, the driver and helper of the truck in this connection.

The elite force arrested the driver and helper while Khulshi police detained the cop at Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) police lines.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab-7 personnel set up a check point in Redoan filling station area of Chittagong's Mirsarai and started searching vehicles, said Mimitahinur Rahman, senior assistant superintendent of police of Rab-7.

"We signalled the truck to

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Rohingya man shot dead by criminals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Criminals shot a Rohingya man dead inside a camp at Leda in Teknaf upazila yesterday afternoon.

The victim, Md Yeaser, 25, was working as a Rohingya volunteer in the camp.

Seven to eight criminals went to Block-F in the camp around 3:00pm and asked Yeaser to come out of

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PRAYER TIMING SEPTEMBER 1

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-35 12-45 4-30 6-20 7-45

JAMAAT 5-10 1-15 4-45 6-25 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Locals have recently re-discovered a mosque, believed to be about 500 years old, in the bushes of Chhotosundann village in Chandpur. It is presumed that the mosque, around nine feet long and seven feet wide, was built with lime, sand and powdered bricks. The archaeology department is taking measures to declare the mosque as an architectural heritage and repair and maintain it. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ALAM PALASH

Rab arrests 6 'JMB' men

Seizes firearms, explosives, Jihadi books in raids

STAR REPORT

The Rapid Action Battalion has arrested six suspected militants of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in separate drives in Rajshahi and Barisal in 24 hours since Thursday night.

It also claimed to have seized firearms, explosives and jihadi books during the drives.

In Rajshahi, the Rab arrested five, including two alleged leaders of JMB, in Godagari upazila's Char Boalmari area yesterday.

Among the arrestees are Aminul Islam, 32, and his close associate Mosharraf Hossain Mursalin, 22. Aminul was JMB's regional chief coordinator of Godagari and Chapainawabganj district, says a Rab press release.

The other arrestees are Ismail Hossain, 32, Rafiqul Islam, 40, and Abdul Matin, 40, of Chapainawabganj. The Rab seized a pistol, a magazine loaded with four bullets, 200 grams of gunpowder, and four jihadi books from their possession.

The elite force had been looking for Aminul and his associates since May when four arrested JMB men disclosed their names, the Rab release adds.

Following investigation, the Rab learnt that the JMB members holed up at Boalmari and Kodalkati, neighbouring chars of the Padma river. During overnight raids yesterday, a special operation team of Rab-5 picked up the five.

The Rab said Aminul confessed during interrogation that

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