

No end to horror

Road crashes claim five more lives

STAR REPORT

As deaths on the roads continue despite measures taken by the authorities to improve road safety, another five people were killed and three others injured in two separate road accidents in Netrakona and Dinajpur yesterday.

In Netrakona, four people were killed and three others injured when a Kalmakanda-bound bus coming from Dhaka collided head on with a CNG-run auto-rickshaw at Mashka Kathalbari area on Kendua-Atharabari road at around 3:00pm.

Mohammad Fakruzzaman Jewel, additional superintendent of police (ASP) in Netrakona, quoting locals, said the accident occurred when two CNG-run auto-rickshaws, coming from the opposite direction, were over taking one another before one of them collided head on with the bus.

All of the victims were passengers of the CNG-run auto-rickshaw. Four of them died on the spot, while the three injured were taken to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), said Imarat Hossain Gazi, officer-in-charge (OC) of Kendua Police Station.

The dead were identified as Md Jamal Uddin, 35, the driver of CNG-run-rickshaw; and passengers Nazir Uddin, 25, Sharif Hossain, 19, both from Kendua, and Murad Hossain, 17,

from Mohanganj upazila of Netrakona.

The injured were Golam Robbani, 22, Jasim Uddin, 40, and Shakir, 20 -- all day labourers from Kendua in Netrakona.

"All three of the injured patients were in critical condition. They are being given emergency treatment, and the next course of action will be taken after necessary examinations," said Moniruzzaman Sani, the on-duty doctor at MMCH.

Police and Fire Brigade and Civil Defense personnel, on information, rushed to the spot and recovered the dead bodies, OC Imarat added.

Police also seized the bus. Its driver, however, managed to flee the scene, ASP Jewel said.

Meanwhile a mentally challenged woman was killed in an accident at Hakimpur upazila of Dinajpur, after a speeding truck hit her while she was crossing the port road in front of Hiramoti Cinema Hall, at around 12:00pm yesterday, police said.

The dead was identified as Firoza Begum, 35.

A report unveiled by Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, a passenger welfare platform, at a press conference on Friday, said that despite measures taken by the authorities to ensure road

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6



Rohingya refugees at Balukhali camp of Ukha in Cox's Bazar walk with plants distributed by NGOs. Officials said the plants were given as part of an effort to restore some of the vegetation lost due to Rohingya settlement. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Body of drug trader recovered in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police recovered the bullet-hit body of a known drug trader from a village in Jibonnagar upazila of Chuadanga bordering India yesterday at noon.

The deceased was identified as Shahin Ali, 43, son of Munnaf Ali of Ashtolapur of the upazila.

Mahmudur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Jibonnagar police station said locals discovered Shahin's dead body in a mango orchard in Benipur village at about 12:00pm.

On information police recovered the body, the OC said. Police sent the body found to be hit by three bullets, to Chuadanga sadar hospital for autopsy.

According to Rahman, Shahin has been involved in drug trade for over 20 years. He smuggled drugs from India and traded inside Bangladesh territory. He is an accused in at least 10 drug-related cases filed with Jibonnagar police station.

Earlier, Shahin was engaged in several clashes with his rivals in the area, Rahman said citing police records. He expressed suspicion that this murder may have something to do with his rivalry with opponents. Police is investigating the murder, the OC said.

Meanwhile, Shahin's younger sister

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Scourged by quacks

FROM PAGE 16

"treatment" where he would dress his legs with a liquid which he claimed was concocted from herbs.

"Aminul charged me Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,500 every time I visited him. I spent almost Tk 40,000 to Tk 50,000 in total on these treatments," Mohafez told The Daily Star during an interview a few months ago.

When the "treatment" failed to improve his condition, one of Mohafez's brothers finally stepped in. He refused to let him go see the kabiraj again, although Mohafez insisted that the herbs were working.

He took him back to Rangpur Medical. Unfortunately, by then the dead tissues had risen up to his knees and spread to his other leg as well, prompting the hospital to form a committee that eventually decided to amputate both his legs to save his life.

Hriday Ranjan Roy, an associate professor at the hospital, said, "When I saw him Mohafez [in March], he had developed septicaemia [blood poisoning]. The infection began spreading upwards."

THE AFTERMATH
These days, Mohafez is bedridden. He wishes he had listened to the doctors. If he had, he would have retained the use of one of his legs and perhaps even had a job. Nowadays, his wife takes care of him while his brothers bear his expenses.

Contacted, Aminul, the kabiraj who treated Mohafez, claimed that he had turned down requests to treat him

upon learning that the doctor had suggested amputation.

"I can provide treatment if the problem lies in the muscle. But his bones had decayed when he first came to me," he said at his Kurarpura village home in Rajarhat upazila.

He, however, admitted that he had no academic qualification to provide treatment.

Having studied up to grade eight, he worked at a brick kiln before entering this profession, he said. He learnt the tricks of the trade from another "kabiraj" who treated paralysis, arthritis and diseases related to female reproduction.

Aminul's story is not uncommon. People around the country continue seeing "kabiraj". But there are no records of such visits.

Doctors working at public hospitals across the country have numerous stories to share about people who have been to these "quacks" before coming to them.

Stories of patients being given pain injections at upazila and union drug stores during heart attack, ultrasounds carried out by non-medical persons on pregnant women, operations by Kabiraj and death of babies during deliveries, are all rampant.

However, there is no infrastructure in place to prevent such incidents.

Hriday, who specialises in surgery, said he came across four cases of mal-treatment by quacks in the last six months.

He communicated the matter to the Kurigram civil surgeon through one of

his colleagues.

Civil Surgeon SM Aminul Islam on April 8 said he was unaware of Mohafez's case and he would contact Rangpur Medical to learn the details and take action.

If victims came to him with written complaints, he would bring the accused to justice after investigation, he assured.

Public health also suffers at the hands of salesmen cum village-doctors present at union and upazila bazaars.

Forty-five-year-old Nurjahan went to Sudhir Ranjan Shil, a village doctor at Adompura Bazar, Dasmina of Patuakhali, with complaints of lower back pain. Sudhir gave her an intravascular injection, from which Nurjahan got an infection.

Sudhir, had completed a course to become a rural medical practitioner, learning about selling medicines in three-six months' courses. His training was on selling medicine and not on advising treatment. He also completed a short training on pharmacy, he told our Patuakhali correspondent.

He did not charge his patients anything for treatment, but they had to buy medicine from his store, he said.

Later, when Nurjahan could no longer bear the pain, she went to the 250-bed hospital in Patuakhali in January.

Rezaul Kabir, a physician at the hospital, operated on her to remove pus from an infected boil on her lower back. She was previously given steroid injections which might have been

unnecessary, he said.

She could have been given some medicine, physiotherapy and advice to change her lifestyle, Rezaul added.

WHO TO ACT AGAINST ILLEGAL PRACTITIONERS

Mass awareness campaigns by NGOs working in the health sector and the media would discourage people from going to quacks, said Kurigram Civil Surgeon Aminul.

From the government side, mobile courts are held from time to time to fine and jail people for impersonating physicians.

However, according to Rab Magistrate Sarwoer Alam, who has led many such drives, public awareness is important in fighting such social crimes.

Registered doctors also can play a role here, he added.

"If they all mention their (Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council) registration numbers on their prescriptions, people would become cautious."

The registration numbers can be verified on the BMDC website.

BMDC Registrar Zahedul Haque Basunia said his office cannot act against unauthorised health practitioners.

He said the health ministry and the home ministry should act together to devise deterrents for illegal medical practitioners.

Until such measures are taken, quacks may continue to operate their illegal business, putting many lives at risk.

Mentally

FROM PAGE 1

Bridge, all the passengers, except the woman, got down.

Around 11:45pm, the driver, Alam Khandaker, 45, stopped the bus in the area and raped the woman inside the vehicle, the OC said, adding that the driver's helper Nazmul, 22, stood guard outside.

A night guard of a local market heard the woman's screams and informed a patrol team from Bangabandhu Bridge East Police Station about the matter. The law enforcers rescued the woman and arrested the helper from near the scene.

The driver, however, managed to flee, Mosharraf said.

On Friday, police admitted the woman to Tangail General Hospital where she underwent medical tests. The reports were not available till last night.

The same day, Sub-Inspector Nure Alam filed a case under the Women and Children Repression Act with the police station. According to the case statement, Alam raped the woman while Nazmul abetted him.

Nazmul was produced before a Tangail court where he gave a confessional statement. After recording the statement under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Ashikuzzaman sent him to jail, the OC said.

Police seized the bus and were trying to arrest the driver, he added.

Yesterday, the woman was moved to a government shelter home in Gazipur as per a directive from a Tangail court.

Kabirul Haque, sub-inspector of the police station, said the court came up with the directive after they filed a prayer in this regard.

Quoting accused Nazmul, the SI said the woman was roaming in Tangail Bus Stand area on Thursday night and she got onto the bus being asked by the driver and the helper. Both the accused are from Bhuapur upazila of Tangail.

Talking to this correspondent last night, Kabirul also said they came to know from Kushtia police that the woman's family lives in the district's Mirpur upazila. The family members were on their way to Gazipur to meet her, he added.

On August 25 last year, Rupa, 27, was raped and killed on a bus heading for Mymensingh by three assistants of the driver. Her body was thrown out of the vehicle in an empty forest area on Tangail-Mymensingh road.

A Tangail court sentenced the trio -- Mohammad Shamim, 26, Akram, 35, and Jahangir, 20 -- to death over the incident that caused an outcry. The driver, Habib Miah, 45, was given the same punishment for abetting the three.

In April, 2016, transport workers had raped a female garment worker, aged around 23, on another moving bus on the Tangail-Mymensingh Road in Madhupur upazila of Tangail.

Many Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 1

stayed indoors yesterday while many others went into hiding.

Advocacy groups have criticised the Malaysian government for the crack-down and called for a halt to it.

Rights activist Adrian Pereira yesterday said a lot of the undocumented migrants became victims of human trafficking and abuses by their employers.

"The authorities should punish the exploiters, not the victims," he said.

No election with Khaleda behind bars

FROM PAGE 1

"false" cases filed against them, formation of a polls-time non-partisan government, deployment of armed forces during the polls and reconstitution of the Election Commission.

In front of the BNP's Naya Paltan office where leaders and activists of the party and its associate bodies gathered for the rally, the BNP's top leaders said people would not let any election be held if the demands were not met.

They said the government was trying to use Electronic Voting Machines so that they could manipulate the polls and stay in power.

They urged all, including political parties and institutions, to forge a greater unity to ensure "restoration of democracy" by removing the "autocratic and undemocratic government".

Although the rally was scheduled for 2:00pm, leaders and activists were seen thronging the venue much ahead of time. They chanted slogans and

carried placards, festoons, and banners criticising the government. Many banners and placards were about Khaleda's release from jail and withdrawal of "false" cases against BNP acting chairperson Tarique Rahman.

Braving the summer heat, they filled the street between Fakirerpool and Nightingale intersections. At both ends, the police had parked riot trucks equipped with water cannons, prison vans and armoured vehicles.

"There will be no election in the country keeping Khaleda Zia in jail," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, who presided over the programme.

The government must take steps for releasing Khaleda and ensure her better treatment. If something bad happened to her, the government would be held responsible, he said.

"We will have to turn around, have courage and strength in our hearts. We don't want to see our chairperson in jail anymore.

"There should be no division among us. Let's all come forward and forge a greater unity to save the country and restore democracy. Let's all defeat the autocratic government and establish the rule of the people," he said.

Fakhrul welcomed the recent initiative of Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and Dr Kamal Hossain for a united movement for a free and fair election.

The youths liberated the country and the youths have risen again and if necessary, they would shed blood again to free Khaleda, he said.

He alleged that the government, lacking in public support, was hatching plots to hang on to power. "Now, they're trying to use Electronic Voting Machines in the polls to keep their grip on power as they know people won't protect them. People have abandoned the Awami League and it has now become politically bankrupt."

After Khaleda had been sent to jail on February 8, the government began

hatching a new plot against BNP Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman, he claimed.

"As if they are the judge, ruling party leaders are saying that Tarique will be convicted in the August 21 case [filed in connection with the grenade attack on an AL rally in 2004]."

He alleged that the government was trying to influence the case proceedings.

"We would like to clearly say that people won't accept any verdict of conspiracy. They'll rather give a befitting reply to it."

Chief guest at the rally, BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said people would not allow the ruling party to implement "its plot to have another January-5-like election."

"The BNP, with people behind it, will foil such plots."

He said the government was unfairly keeping Khaleda in jail to keep her and the BNP away from the polls.

Neutral govt a must for credible polls

FROM PAGE 16

and justice organised by the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) at the Jatiya Press Club.

At the programme, Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain, Nagorik Oikya Convenor Mahmudur Rahman Manna and JSD President ASM Abdur Rob expressed solidarity with the demands.

They urged all political parties in the country to get united to realise the demands.

"Along with the people of the country, we will compel the current government to hold a fair election under a neutral government," said Badruddoza,

who is a former president.

"No dictator survived for a long time. We will not allow another dictator to grab power after the ousting of one. We are with them who are with democracy, but not with the anti-liberation forces," he said while speaking as the chief guest.

Dr Kamal, also an eminent jurist and constitution expert, said the expected good governance would be ensured if people could vote properly.

Expressing confusion over holding of the general polls, he said, "Now our duty is ensure voting ...

"All autocrats claim to be democrats We don't want it. We want a real,

people-friendly democracy where people will have control over the state and can elect eligible candidates," he said.

"As per the constitution, citizens are the owners of the state. No individual, inheritably, owns the state and nobody will do that in future," he added.

He also said that people's political identities and ideologies may differ, but they should remain united for basic issues, including restoration of democracy.

Citing a recent survey of the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), Mahmudur Rahman Manna termed law enforcement agencies, especially police and Rab, the

most corrupt institutions of the country.

"It is now a fact that police are the most corrupt [in the country]. The government is now trying to control everything with this police," he said.

Manna then raised questions about the EC's recent decision to introduce Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in the upcoming polls, asking why the commission suddenly wanted to introduce EVM in 100 constituencies.

"They are all looters. They have looted crores of taka and it is another project for looting. Through this, they will loot money and vote at the same time," he said. "We want fair voting

under a neutral government and dissolution of the current parliament."

He also said four to five members of a law enforcement agency went to his house on Friday night and wanted to talk to him, which made him panicked.

ASM Abdur Rob threatened that the government would have to face "worse consequences" if any activist or leader of Jatiya Oikya Prokriya, a citizen's platform, was harassed by law enforcers or the government.

"We will come to the streets if they are harassed. You may arrest us, but we don't care," said Rob, addressing the government. "We will continue our protest to topple the autocrat."