



THE KANCHPUR-MEGHNA-GUMTI BRIDGES ARE BEING BUILT WITH HIGHLY DUCTILE GRADE 420 BSRM ULTIMA BARS





ACHIEVED

Superbrands

AWARD



DRIVING LICENCE-SEEKERS

BRTA struggles to handle rush

Lack of training schools, manpower making its job difficult; stronger workforce sought

DRIVING LICENCE-SEEKERS BY MONTH

July 51,906 | August 1,14,299 | September 1,30,894 | October 94,107

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The number of driving licence-seekers has seen a sharp rise following the unprecedented student protest for road safety in July-August, and the authorities are struggling to cope with the pressure due to inadequate training facilities and manpower.

In August, the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) received 114,299 applications, more than double the number of applications it received the month before the movement began. The rise continued in September, reaching an astounding 130,894. There was a slight decline in October, with 94,107 applications filed.

As of July, some 3,536,000 vehicles were registered with the BRTA. Against this, 2,639,000 driving licences were issued, meaning no licences were taken for the rest 8,97,000 vehicles.

Many of these vehicles may be hitting the road every day with unprofessional and improperly-trained drivers behind the wheel.

However, the rush of driving licence-seekers, a contributing effect of the student agitation demanding safer roads following the death of two college students in a road accident in the capital on July 29, has exposed two poorly-managed aspects of country's transport sector.

First, the BRTA is struggling to handle the pressure with its limited workforce and the training facilities. And second, there is a general lack of

SEE PAGE 12 COL 5



As the winter has set in, rolls of blankets are being brought to the capital from Narayanganj. The sheets are cut into pieces and sold for Tk 300-600 depending on size.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Seven killed in two road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least seven people, including three students, were killed in road accidents in Narsingdi and Dhaka yesterday.

Around 11:30am, two buses collided head at Shibpur upazila in Narsingdi, leaving four dead and 22 others injured.

Among the four dead, three died on the spot while another breathed his last at a local hospital, said Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Shibpur Police Station.

The dead are Alauddin Miah, 60, Anwar Hossain, 50, and Rehana Begum, 45. Another deceased is yet to be identified, said police.

Police seized both the buses, the police official said.

In another incident, a bus ran over a motorbike on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Joypura area of Dhaka's Dhamrai around 4:00pm, leaving three students dead on the spot.

The dead are Mridul, Hridoy and Manik, aged between 20 and 22, said police.

Among them, Mridul and Hridoy were

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Tree felling falls

Hope for a big turnaround for Cox's Bazar forests, as aid agencies start distributing cooking fuel for the Rohingyas

MOKAMMEL SHUVO and MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT from Cox's Bazar

Exhausted Rohingyas walking with loads of firewood on their heads used to be a common sight around the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, raising concerns about the long-term impact on the forest.

But the situation is gradually changing since aid agencies started supplying Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) and Compressed Rice Husk to the refugees for cooking late last year.

"Now, I seldom go to the forest as I received 19 kilograms of compressed rice husks this month [November]," said Mohiullah of Balukhali camp in Ukhia.

"In the past, I had to walk for about four hours to go to the forest every alternate day and it was hard labour," said the father of six children.

Currently, some 168,043 Rohingya families live in camps at Ukhia. Of them, some 1,00,000 families received rice husk and another 3,600 families got LPG sets, project officials said.

However, many Rohingyas who are yet to receive the fuel still regularly collect firewood by cutting trees, locals said.

Already, some 6,500 acres of forest between Kutupalong and North Hinla in Teknaf has been razed since the influx begun in August last year, according to the Cox's Bazar South Forest Department.

"But recently, fewer people are felling trees after fuel distribution began. But not all families are receiving them," said Mohammad Humayun Kabir, divisional forest officer at the department.

Mohammad Yunus, community leader in block G-5, Jamtoli camp, said he received a kerosene stove a few days ago.

"I do not go to the forest for firewood anymore, although the stove is not easy to use. It takes too much time to cook food," said Yunus, who has 15

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

MYANMAR CAMPS

Rohingyas in 'acute need of support'

Says UNHCR

AFP, Yangon

Rohingya Muslims who paid hundreds of dollars to flee squalid Myanmar camps by boat are destitute since they were stopped at sea and returned, the UN refugee agency told AFP yesterday.

Images of hungry and thirsty Rohingya huddled on boats have stirred memories of a 2015 crisis, when thousands of fleeing Rohingyas were stuck at sea as a trafficking trail south collapsed.

Some 120,000 of the stateless Muslim minority have languished in camps in central Rakhine for six years since a bloody bout of intercommunal violence with ethnic Rakhine Buddhists.

The end of the monsoon

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

Sleigh eatery rides into Malaysia



AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Jingling amid a Kuala Lumpur skyline, nearly a dozen people sit in a hanging sleigh-like restaurant as it is raised by a crane some 45 metres (147 feet) above the street below.

Strapped into rollercoaster-like seats, the Santa in the Sky patrons dine next to prancing reindeer models and a mannequin of jolly St Nicholas far above the city's busy traffic.

"We have all of our guests having their dinner in the sky (up) 45 metres on Santa's sleigh," restaurant manager Gurjit Singh told AFP.

"We have the whole Christmas mood going on, Christmas carols... and warm food."

The Christmas-themed eatery is a holiday edition of the Belgian-based novelty restaurant, which

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

'GUNFIGHT' WITH COPS 2 drug dealers shot dead in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two accused drug dealers were killed early yesterday in what police said was a gunfight between law enforcers and armed gangs in Chuadanga's Damurhuda upazila.

Moshiur Rahman Dhulo, 45, of the upazila's Charulia village and Jhantu Rahman, 51, of Iswarchandrapur village were accused in multiple cases, including murder and drug peddling, said Sukumar Biswas, officer-in-charge of Damurhuda Model Police Station.

He added that police, acting on a tip-off, rushed to Gobindhuda field where two groups of drug dealers were engaged in an exchange of fire over establishing supremacy in the area around 1:30am.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

1 lakh yaba seized, lorry driver held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Police seized 100,000 pieces of yaba from a lorry and arrested its driver in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The arrestee was identified as Korban Ali, from Noakhali.

Another man on the vehicle managed to flee during the raid, police claimed.

Korban was sent to jail after police placed him before Cox's Bazar sadar senior judicial magistrate court.

Acting on a tip-off, police stopped the vehicle

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A sign for the Metro Rail Press Club Station placed on the central reservation of Topkhana Road in the capital. Another sign, inset, installed there notifies people that the footbridge would be removed to make way for the elevated rail station. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'It has been an honour'

Says emotional Merkel after quitting party leadership

REUTERS, Hamburg

Angela Merkel bowed out as leader of her Christian Democrats yesterday with an emotional speech to her conservative party as it met to pick her successor who will move into pole position to become Germany's next chancellor.

The frontrunners are Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, a Merkel protege seen as the continuity candidate, and Friedrich Merz, a Merkel rival who has questioned the constitutional guarantee of asylum to all "politically persecuted" and believes Europe's biggest economy should contribute more to the European Union.

Merkel said in October she would step down as party chief but remain chancellor, an effort to manage her exit after a series of setbacks since her divisive decision in 2015 to keep German borders open to refugees fleeing war in the Middle East.

Merkel, 64, told the CDU congress in Hamburg of her gratitude for the chance to have served as party chief for 18 years, 13 as chancellor in which she came to dominate European politics as its key crisis manager and consensus-builder.

"It has been a great pleasure for me, it has been an honour," she said to a standing ovation lasting nearly 10 minutes, and fighting to hold back tears.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4





PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 8

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-15 12-45 3-45 5-19 7-00

JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-00 5-22 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION