



A flock of rock pigeons -- also known as 'Jalali Kobutor' -- fly around searching for food in Sadarghat area of Chattogram. These pigeons, which live in various food storages nearby, usually come out at dawn to forage when the area is quiet. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Road accidents kill dozen in 24hrs

Eight die in Cumilla alone

STAR REPORT

At least 12 people, including two children, were killed in road accidents across the country on Friday and yesterday.

Of them, eight people were killed in road accidents on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Cumilla in one day yesterday.

In Eliotganj, two persons were killed after a bus hit a truck parked beside the road 5am, reports our Cumilla correspondent.

Fahad Al Razi Faisal, a supervisor of a bus of Green Line Paribahan, died at a local health complex, said Monirul Islam, in-charge of Eliotganj Highway Police Outpost.

Anwar Hossain, helper of the bus driver, died on the way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, he said.

In Burichang upazila, two people were killed when a car hit a roadside tree in Korpai area around noon.

The deceased are Humayun Kabir, son of Matiur Rahman; and Rahman, son of Ashek Ali from Tangail.

In Cumilla Cantonment area, a gypsy

woman was killed when a highway police car ran her over around 2pm.

Ansari Mondol, 30, wife Sajib Mondol from Bikrampur in Munshiganj, was hit by the vehicle after she got off a microbus.

In Gouripur, three people were killed and 20 injured when a Cumilla-bound bus hit a pedestrian and fell into a roadside ditch at Gouripur bus stand at about 2:30pm.

Two of the deceased are Nurunessa, 32, from Daudkandi upazila; and Sagar, 28. The identity of the other victim could not be ascertained immediately.

Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Daudkandi Highway Police said the injured were taken to the upazila health complex.

Two people were killed and at least eight others injured in a head-on collision between a bus and a truck on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Shoshoi area of Bijoy Nagar upazila yesterday, our Brahmanbaria correspondent reports.

Highway police said driver of the "London Express" bus and his helper died on the spot.

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Woman hacked to death in N'ganj

Miscreants set body on fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Miscreants hacked a woman to death and set her body on fire yesterday in a flat in Bandar upazila of Narayanganj.

Police recovered the body of housewife Naima Rahman, 37, from her flat at Sonakanda area in the upazila yesterday afternoon. The body was sent to Narayanganj General Hospital for autopsy.

Naima's husband Anisur Rahman is an expatriate in Thailand. She lived with her 15-year-old daughter and eight-year old son on the first floor flat of a five-storied building in Sardar Bari.

Quoting locals, Sub-inspector Sakawat Hossain of Bandar Police Station said unidentified miscreants hacked Naima to death with a sharp weapon, then set the body on fire using kerosene. Locals found smoke billowing through the window and saw the body inside the flat. They doused the fire with water, and informed the police, who came and recovered the body. No one has been arrested yet in connection with the incident.

Bandar Police station Officer-in-charge (OC) Rafiqul Islam said that there were five to six bruises from sharp weapons to her head.

At the time of the murder, the victim's children were at school. She was alone in the house, he added.

The OC said that they are investigating the crime to arrest the miscreants and solve the case.

Dr Kamal flies to Singapore for treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Oikyafront Convener Dr Kamal Hossain left for Singapore last night for treatment.

The 81-year-old eminent jurist, along with his wife Hamida Hossain, left Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on a Singapore Airlines flight at 10:30pm, Gonoforum central committee member Rafiqul Islam Pothik confirmed to The Daily Star.

He said Dr Kamal, also the president of Gonoforum, might go to Thailand from Singapore for medical purposes.

The Oikyafront chief is likely to return home on January 27, said Gonoforum General Secretary Mostafa Mohsin Montu.

Hill cutting on, defying ban

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Disregarding environmental laws, illegal hill cutting continues unabated in different areas of Moulvibazar and its adjoining areas.

According to Bangladesh Environment Preservation Act 1995, as amended in 2000, cutting of hills without approval of the authorities concerned is prohibited.

Punishment for such offence is up to two years imprisonment or fine of Tk 2 lakh or both for a first offence. For subsequent offences, the punishment is up to 10 years imprisonment or fine of Tk 10 lakh or both.

Still, many powerful individuals raze hills in the name of development work, housing and business establishments, ignoring existing environmental laws and defying ban by the Department of Environment (DoE).

As a result, unhindered hill cutting is posing a serious threat to the natural environment and biodiversity of the area, said green activists. These unscrupulous people have made the hills a death trap where landslide claims lives on a regular basis, they added.

Locals also alleged that some influ-



PHOTO: STAR

District administration fined three persons on Thursday for illegal hill cutting in Jalalabad area of Moulvibazar.

ential people in cooperation with a section of dishonest government officials are involved in hill cutting.

Though the district administration is conducting drives, strict measures are needed to stop this menace, said Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Sylhet chapter.

"Many are exposed to hill slides due to construction of houses and com-

mercial establishments through leveling hills in most unplanned way," he said. "A syndicate of influential locals is involved in hill cutting and stone extracting," he claimed.

Muhaimin Milton, general secretary of Moulvibazar Environmental Journalists' Forum, also emphasised the need for a stringent law and its implementation. "Though razing hills

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Old wounds reopen

Fear grips minorities as BNP leader, a 2001 post-polls violence 'initiator', joins AL

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Though it has been over 17 years, people of Charmonai union of Barishal have not forgotten the month of October 2001.

Right after the BNP-Jamaat alliance came to power, there was a systematic backlash against the Hindu community in the area, who are generally thought to be the "vote bank" of Awami League.

Hindu households were rampaged and their property looted, temples were desecrated and set on fire, they were mentally and physically assaulted, and women were raped.

So, when Jubo Dal leader Bajlu Hawladar, one of the alleged initiators of the 2001 post-polls violence in the area under Sadar upazila, joined the ruling Awami League recently, the minority community was shocked.

Bajlu, the then union Jubo Dal president, was also a prime accused in a rape case filed during that time. The case was later dismissed as the complainant withdrew the case allegedly due to intimidation.

On December 23, 2018, Bajlu joined Awami League by presenting a bouquet of flowers to MP candidate and now State Minister for Water Resources Col (retd) Zaheed Farooque at an electioneering rally. It was held on the union's Bukhainagar school ground.

Syed Anis, district vice president of AL; Moazzem Hossain Chunn, its publicity secretary; Saidur Rahman Rintu, city unit vice president; Monirul Islam Chhobi, upazila unit president; and other leaders of AL and its front organisations were present at the meeting.

Meanwhile, locals in Rajarchar, a minority-populated area, are apprehensive about Bajlu's joining the ruling party. Many of them, who were tortured and saw atrocities carried out by the BNP-Jamaat cadres, feared that others like Bajlu might eventually join Awami League.

Litu Dutta, secretary of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad's Barishal chapter, said, "I did not expect this from a party like Awami League. How could they allow a person like Bajlu, who instigated communal violence, join the party!"

For former Pabitra Kumar Mistri of



Bajlu Hawladar (left) presents a bouquet to Zaheed Farooque as he joins Awami League.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Rajarchar, terror unleashed by the BNP-Jamaat cadres during the time, especially on the night of October 13, was almost like that by the Pakistan occupation army and their local collaborators in 1971.

"After winning the 2001 election, BNP-Jamaat cadres, led by the then union Jubo Dal president Bajlu Hawladar, attacked Rajarchar area on the night of October 13," he said.

He said the attackers not only ransacked his house, looted valuables but also violated

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