



Pranab chosen for India's top civilian award

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's first Bangalee president Pranab Mukherjee was yesterday chosen for the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour, by President Ram Nath Kovind.

Music maestro Bhupen Hazarika, revered as the "Bard of Brahmaputra", and social activist Nanaji Deshmukh, a former senior leader of Bharatiya Janata Party, have been declared winners of Bharat Ratna posthumously.

The announcement of the award came on the eve of India's Republic Day today.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Pranab describing him as an "outstanding statesman of our times".

"He [Pranab] has served the nation selflessly and tirelessly for decades, leaving a strong imprint on the nation's growth trajectory. His

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Roussow

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It was the first time in the history of the BPL and the third in all T20 cricket that two hundreds were scored in the same innings, and the tons were the bedrock of the total that surpassed the previous highest of Dhaka Gladiators' 217 for four against Rangpur back in 2013.

On arguably the best batting wickets in the country, the day's first game produced a sizeable total as well, but it also contained Rajshahi Kings' limp surrender to 104 all out in chase of Sylhet Sixers' 180 for six.

In the night match, Hales scored 100 off 48 balls which included eleven fours and five sixes while Rossouw remained unbeaten on 100 off 51 balls with six sixes and eight fours.

Sent in to bat first, Rangpur lost West Indian hitter Gayle for just two and since then it was the Hales and Rossouw show. The duo started to punish the Chittagong bowlers and added 174 runs for the second wicket, which is also the third highest partnership in the BPL for any wicket.

Another Rangpur sensation in de Villiers also missed out yesterday, dismissed after scoring just one.

In the afternoon game, Sylhet rode on Jason Roy's 28-ball 42 to set up the challenging total as well as an all-round contribution from Sohail Tanvir.

After the defeat, Rajshahi remained in fifth position with four wins from nine games while Sylhet have registered their third win in nine games to stay at number six in the seven-team table.

Trump wishes

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and reciprocal trade and investment -- and on renewing your commitment to protecting human rights, individual freedom of expression, and democratic institutions."

He also said the commitment was "particularly important in light of international calls for an independent investigation into the December 30, 2018 national election. Ongoing reports of attacks on the political opposition and their supporters and repression of journalists are tainting the national election and Bangladesh's international reputation."

"If peaceful expression of dissent is suppressed, there is a risk some will turn into violence, which undermines the stability and economic prosperity that your government has worked so hard to create."

Trump also said the United States values its partnership with Bangladesh.

"We are deeply invested in the future of your country and its people, and we remain grateful to the government of Bangladesh for its generous hosting of the Rohingya refugees expelled from Burma [Myanmar]," the letter read.

Both the United States and Bangladesh were founded on democratic principles. There is a strong link between Bangladesh's democratic development and its continued economic growth and prosperity," the letter added.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam said the US president congratulated Hasina on becoming prime minister for the third straight term.

"We have received a congratulatory letter from the president of the United States and it will be formally handed over to the prime minister," he said.



Sachi Rani, wife of Ranjit Roy of Kurarpur village in Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari, seems to have lost her strength to cry further. The family was mourning the death of Ranjit, one of the 13 workers killed in an accident in Cumilla yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Truck kills 13 workers in their sleep

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The truck fell on the shed with a huge bang, said Hossain, who is from Mirganj of Jaldhaka.

He was sleeping in a corner and managed to come out of the shed.

Police and firefighters reached the spot about 30 minute later, he added.

The shed was tin-roofed and built with five-inch brick walls. It was about 30 feet long, 10 feet wide and seven to eight feet high. Workers would sleep inside the shed spreading dried grain stalks on the concrete floor, brick kiln

sources said.

The injured workers -- Bishnu and Ripon, both 18 years old -- took primary treatment at Cumilla Medical College Hospital.

Of the dead, nine were from Nijpara village.

They are Ranjit Chandra Roy, 30, son of Suresh Chandra Roy; Torun Chandra Roy, 25, son of Manik Chandra Roy; Biplob, 19, son of Ram Prashad; Sankar Chandra Roy, 22, son of Kishor Chandra Roy; Dipu Chandra Roy, 19, son of Amal Chandra Roy;

Amit Chandra Roy, 20, son of Kamakkha Chandra Roy; Morsalin, 18, son of Nur Alam; Md Masum, 18, son of Fazlul Karim; and Mohammed Selim, 28, son of Jahangir Alam.

The four other victims are from Shimulbari village under the same upazila.

They are Monronjon Roy, 19; Mrinal Chandra Roy, 21; Bikash Chandra Roy, 28; and Kanak Chandra Roy, 34.

PROBE COMMITTEES FORMED

Additional Deputy Inspector General (Chittagong range) of Police

Abul Fazay and Deputy Commissioner of Cumilla Abul Fazal Mir visited the spot in the afternoon.

The DC announced a compensation of Tk 20,000 for each family.

The district administration formed a four-member committee and asked it to submit a report within seven working days.

Separately, Cumilla police set up a three-member committee to probe the incident and report its findings in three working days, said Cumilla Superintendent of Police Nurul Islam.

7,221 killed last year

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among road users are the main reasons behind the crashes, it said.

"Killing continues in Bangladesh in the name of road accidents," Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, said as he revealed the Annual Road Accident Report-2018 at the Jatiya Press Club in the morning.

Hours before he revealed the report, a truck in Cumilla killed at least 13 and injured two others after it crashed into a workers' shed at a brick kiln.

Compared to 2017, the number of crashes increased last year, but the casualties were fewer.

The country witnessed an unprecedented students' protest for safer roads last year.

At least 7,397 people were killed and 16,193 others injured in 4,979 crashes in 2017, the organisation said.

It came up with the data by monitoring national, regional and online media reports.

The actual number of crashes and casualties might have been higher because many incidents go unreported.

However, the official number of casualties is a lot lower than the one mentioned in the report. According to police report, 2,265 were killed and 1,659 others injured in 2,237 crashes during the first 10 months of last year.

OTHER FINDINGS

According to yesterday's report, a total

VICTIMS (DEATH/INJURY) OF ACCIDENT

IDENTITY	NUMBER
Teachers	106
Journalists	34
Physicians	33
Engineers	9
Lawyers	2
Political activists	192

of 394 people died and 248 others injured in 370 incidents on railway tracks. On waterways, at least 126 died, 234 injured and 387 went missing in 159 incidents.

In five plane crashes, 55 people died and 32 others injured. The numbers include the US-Bangla plane crash in Kathmandu that killed 49 people, including 26 Bangladeshis.

On roads, 41.53 percent of the incidents involved vehicles running over people, 16.18 percent of vehicles falling into ditches and 29.72 percent of collisions.

The organisation recommended widespread awareness campaign about traffic laws, training drivers, quick enforcement of the new Road Transport Act and increasing public transport to prevent crashes.

OBSERVATIONS

Mozammel said different initiatives by the government and other organisations, including the Jatri Kalyan Samity, had not been able to stop road

VEHICLES (7,350) INVOLVED IN ACCIDENTS

Name	Percentage
Bus	18.9
Truck and covered van	38.68
Motorcycles	25.30
Cars, jeeps & microbuses	7.93
Auto-rickshaws	9.61
Other vehicles	9.63

TYPES OF ACCIDENTS

Type	Percentage
Run over	41.53
Head on collision	29.72
Fall into ditch	16.18
Other	1.44

SOURCE: BANGLADESH JATRI KALYAN SAMITY

crashes.

"There is no coordination between the government and non-government organisations working in the sector."

The "silent killing" has lost importance among passengers, transport owners and workers, media personnel, civil society and government bodies concerned, he said.

"The country is incurring an irreparable loss due to the deaths of meritorious... people," he said.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, former chairman to a caretaker government, said causalities in road crashes in 2017 and

2018 remained almost similar. It means that the problems persist.

"There is no lack of initiatives but the pathetic reality is that we can't ensure accountability," he said.

Zillur, also convener of Safe Road and Transport Alliance (SROTA), said accountability could not be ensured due to desperate transport workers and owners, pressure on transport workers to make more trips, extortion and callous road users.

"Taking initiatives is not enough. Focus should be on whether the initiatives are bearing any fruit," he added.

Senior Journalist Syed Ishtiaque Reza said there was an "evil cycle" in the transport sector, in which the contractors, engineers, police, transport owners and workers and politicians, who don't want to bring discipline on roads, were involved.

Supreme Court lawyer and road safety campaigner Jyotirmoy Barua said discipline on the roads would not be brought through enforcing laws alone. "Emphasis should be given on other related issues too."

Ekram Ahmed, president of Families United Against Road Accident, stressed the need for strengthening rail and waterways to cut pressure on roads.

Ayubur Rahman Khan, former chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, urged the government to put the Road Transport Act 2018 in force.

For them, past is not past at all

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wash their father's clothes so they can get the smell of his body.

"Sometimes, they go to sleep wearing their father's clothes. Every day, they write or draw something about their father on their diaries," Ayesha, fighting back tears, told The Daily Star at her house in Teknaf.

In some pages, Nahiyan vented her anger by writing lines like: "There is no justice in Bangladesh ... I hate my country ... Life is full of pain..."

They used to have fun with their father as he took them on outing and buy them food, but everything is gone now. After the death of Akram, the family has to meet their daily expenses taking help from relatives.

Nahiyan did not want to talk to this paper as she is still traumatised. She has been talking less since the tragedy struck, according to her mother and Nazrul Islam.

While the family is still reeling from the shock, a group of people often warn them not to open their mouth or share feelings to anyone, especially the media people.

"We're not being able to file a case; no lawyer is ready to fight for us," said

Nazrul, the elder brother of Akram.

"Even if we manage to convince a lawyer, he refuses to take our case just after we came out of his chamber," he added.

"We are yet to get justice. Moreover, the local political leader who previously stood for us is now asking us to keep our mouth shut."

However, Nurul Bashir, general secretary of Teknaf Awami League, says otherwise. "We do not have any information that any local political leader is threatening Akram's family member, and we think this is not true."

He added, "We are not even handling Akram's case as the central leaders are taking care of it."

On May 27 last year, Akram was killed in a "gunfight" with Rapid Action Battalion amid the nationwide anti-narcotics drive. After his death, Rab claimed that Akram was a top-listed drug dealer.

But family members, relatives and locals who had known him for years vehemently rejected the Rab version.

They said Akram, who was the Teknaf Jubo League president for 13 years, was a prominent voice against narcotics trade in the area.

In one of the clips, a female voice is heard continuously screaming over the phone hearing gunshots during the call. Ayesha claimed that the female voice was hers and the gunshots were

fired at her husband and that she was trying to talk to her husband on his mobile phone on the fateful night.

Talking to this paper yesterday, Ayesha said Akram had three cell phones but police showed only one in the seizure list. "We do not even know where his two other cell phones are."

The "people who