

4 cops closed for brawl with BCL men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Four police officials were closed to the police lines in Dinajpur yesterday following an alleged scuffle with a local leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League, the student wing of ruling Awami League.

The officials are Sub-Inspector Nazrul Islam and constables, Sagar Chowdhury, Mizanur Rahman, and Babul Islam of Biral Police station.

According to police sources, Sarwarul Islam Rasel, president of BCL Biral upazila unit, was passing by the station riding his motorcycle on Saturday afternoon when SI Nazrul and the constables stopped him to check the documents of the vehicle.

He failed to show the documents and got involved in an altercation with the police official when the latter tried to seize the motorcycle, said police and witnesses.

As the news spread, some 50 to 60 BCL and Jubo League (youth wing of ruling Awami League) men gathered in front of the police station and demanded punishment of the policemen for "assaulting their leader."

Sushanta Sarkar, assistant
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Momtazuddin

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capital yesterday.

He was 85 years old. Both the prime minister and president expressed grief on his passing.

Born on January 18, 1935, in Malda of West Bengal, Momtazuddin Ahmed made remarkable contributions in many different fields of our culture -- the most prominent being theatre. His theatre troupe, which he led for decades, Topkhana, was one of the most popular ones in its time.

Renowned actor Ahsanul Haq Minu, who was also in the troupe, said, "We have spent many years together...I will never forget him." Munira Yusuf Memy, a member of the troupe, said, "His contributions in the theatre arena are incomparable. He will be dearly missed."

The legendary playwright had written 25 stage plays in total, all of which were revered highly amongst critics and the general public. Some of his notable works are *Shatghater Kana Kori*, *Jomidar Dorpon*, *Hridoy Ghotito Bepar Shepar*, *Nattotroyi*, *Rakkhushi* and *Bokulparer Shadhinota*.

Besides writing scripts, he also directed and acted in many plays.

"After independence, a very select number of people with a passion for theatre worked together," said Mamunur Rashid, one of the living legends of Bangladeshi theatre, adding, "Professor Momtazuddin Ahmed was one of the most talented of the bunch, and I am proud to have worked with him. Theatre will never forget him."

Momtazuddin also acted and wrote scripts for many popular television dramas. Among those, *Bondhu Amar* and *Shohochor* are the most popular.

As a teacher, he was a respected figure in multiple renowned institutions in the country for over 32 years. He was a part-time lecturer in the Department of Drama and Music in Jaggannath University and Dhaka University.

From 1976 to 1978, he was in charge of formulating the national curriculum and text books. From 1977 to 1980, he was the director for Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy's Research and Publications division. He also served the Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the United Nations as cultural minister.

He was also known for his talent as a writer. Among his notable works, *Ami and Lulu Shalu Ebong Syed Waliullah* stand out. *Ki Chaho Shankhachil* and *Raja Anushwarer Pala* are included in the curriculum of Kolkata's Rabindra Bharati University.

An avid activist during the 1952 Language Movement, he was jailed many times while he fought for the Bangla language.

In 1976, he was honoured with the Bangla Academy award for his contributions as a playwright. In 1997, he won the prestigious Ekushey Padak, one of the highest civilian honours in Bangladesh. He also won the Alaol Literary Award, as well as a special recognition from Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

The legendary artist was battling old-age complications for long. He was taken to Apollo Hospital on June 1. He lost his battle for life after two days.

Momtazuddin's first namaz-e-janaza was held in Azad Mosque in Gulshan yesterday. His second janaza will be held at the DU Central Mosque at 9:00am today. He will be buried in his paternal home town in Chapainawabganj today.

He left behind his wife, two sons, and two daughters.



The overturned human haulier that collided head-on with a bus in Sunamganj, killing seven people. Inset, the mangled human haulier after it collided head-on with a bus in Sirajganj. The accident left nine people dead.

PHOTO: STAR

19 die on roads

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agencies.

NCPSRR General Secretary Ashis Kumar Dey in the release said they had identified 10 major reasons behind the rampant accidents.

The reasons include unhealthy competition among drivers, reckless driving, drivers and helpers running buses on contract, employing drivers without proper or no licence, lack of pedestrians' awareness, and overloading and illegally overtaking.

Besides, driving for a long time without breaks, poor law enforcement regarding unfit vehicles, violation of traffic rules, increase in motorcycles and three-wheelers numbers on roads and highways, and carrying of passengers and goods in locally made motorised vehicles were also mentioned.

In Sirajganj yesterday, nine people were killed and three others injured as a bus heading for Pabna carrying homegoers collided head-on with a human haulier, locally known as laguna, in Boalia Bridge area under

Ullapara upazila around 1:00pm.

The human haulier was on the wrong side of the road when the bus hit it at speed, said Dewan Kawshik Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Ullapara Police Station.

The human haulier fell into a roadside ditch. Eight of its passengers died on the spot and another one on the way to Sirajganj General Hospital, said the police official.

Eight of the dead were identified as Nur Islam, 45, Md Akhter, 42, Rezaul Karim, 35, Abdul Mannan, 45, Md Ali, 25, Sabuj, aged around 35, Joynuddin, 42, and Ahmadul, 22, of Ullapara upazila. The identity of the other could not be known immediately.

The injured were undergoing treatment at different hospitals, the OC added.

In Sunamganj, seven people were killed and five others wounded as a bus heading for Dhaka crashed into a laguna in Ganiganj area of Dakshin Sunamganj upazila early yesterday.

All the dead were laguna

passengers. Six died on the scene while another died on the way to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, said Harunur Rashid Chowdhury, OC of Dakshin Sunamganj Police Station.

The dead were human haulier driver Noman Miah, 24, Sagar Ahmed, 15, Milon Miah, 16, Afzal Miah, 17, Rimendra Chandra Das, 22, Fazlul Karim, 30, and Shipon Kumar Saha, 33.

After the head-on collision, both the vehicles plunged into a roadside ditch, said the OC.

Newton Das Talukder, a local fire service official, said, "We think both the vehicles were running at high speed and drivers were probably feeling drowsy. These two factors might cause the accident."

In Gazipur, two siblings died when their motorcycle hit a roadside tree in Tetulia Bypass area under Kapasia upazila. The rider was trying to let a bus overtake them.

The victims were Sobhan, 45, and Khorsed Alam, 30, of Phulbaria

village in the upazila.

Quoting witnesses, victims' father Abdul Rashid said the two went for Eid shopping at Kapasia Bazar. When they were returning home, their motorbike hit a roadside tree.

Both were critically wounded and they were rushed to Kapasia Upazila Health Complex where on-duty doctors declared them dead, he added.

In Natore, eight-year-old girl Mariya Tasnim, daughter of Abdul Jalil, died on the spot and four members of her family sustained injuries when a microbus carrying them hit a roadside tree at Mohisbhanga in Baraigram upazila around 11:00am yesterday.

Jalil, along with his family members, was going to his ancestral home at Bilbharat in Singra upazila to celebrate Eid, said Delwar Hossain, OC of Banpara Highway Police Station.

Our correspondents in Pabna, Sylhet, Gazipur and Natore contributed to this report.

Cruise ship loses control, slams Venice wharf and tourist boat

AFP, Venice

A massive cruise ship lost control as it docked in Venice yesterday, crashing into the wharf and hitting a tourist boat after suffering an engine failure.

Tourists on land could be seen running away as the 13-deck MSC Opera scraped along the dockside, its engine blaring, before knocking into a tourist boat, amateur video footage posted on Twitter showed.

Four people were slightly injured in the accident at San Basilio-Zattere in the Venice's Giudecca Canal, police authorities said.

The four, who were taken to hospital for check-ups, were on board the River Countess tourist boat that was rammed.

The Opera, which suffered mechanical trouble before in 2011 during a Baltic cruise, can carry over 2,500 passengers and boasts a theatre, ballroom and waterpark for children.

"The MSC ship had an engine failure, which was immediately reported by the captain," Davide Calderan, head of a tugboat company involved in accompanying the ship into its berth, told Italian media.

"The engine was blocked, but with its thrust on, because the speed was increasing," he said.

The two tug boats that were being guiding the ship into the Giudecca tried to slow it, but one of the chains linking them to the giant snapped under the pressure, he added.

The accident reignited a heated row in the Serenissima over the damage caused to the city and its fragile ecosystem by cruise ships that sail exceptionally close to the shore.

While gondoliers in striped T-shirts and woven straw hats row tourists around the narrow canals, the smoking chimneys of mammoth ships loom into sight behind the city's picturesque bell towers and bridges.

Critics say the waves the ships create are eroding the foundations of the lagoon city, which regularly floods, leaving iconic sites such as Saint Mark's Square underwater.

"What happened in the port of Venice is confirmation of what we have been saying for some time," Italy's environment minister Sergio Costa wrote on Twitter.

"Cruise ships must not sail down the Giudecca. We have been working on moving them for months now... and are nearing a solution," he said.

Farmers lose out due to moisture

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maximum recommended level of 14 percent.

Visiting different upazilas in Rajshahi, Naogaon and Bogura, The Daily Star correspondents found that most of the marginal farmers could not sell their paddy to the government buying centres, known as local supply depots. Even if they had the opportunity, high moisture levels of the paddy dashed their hopes.

In addition to imposing limits on moisture, the government's Food Procurement Policy 2017 set some other requirements -- the produce must not contain any external materials above 0.5 percent, any other rice variety above eight percent, immature grain more than two percent, and sterile rice beyond 0.5 percent.

Though the primary goal of the procurement policy is to "give encouraging price to the farmers" and keep the rice price stable in the open market, the reality was different.

The marginal farmers hardly get the benefit of the procurement policy because, food officials say, they can meet other criteria but not the moisture limit.

When farmers harvest paddy, the grains have a moisture level of 18 percent. After that, even if they dry the paddy on the clay yard several times, the moisture level would not



A food ministry official is checking moisture of paddy at a Local Supply Depot in Bogura last week.

PHOTO: STAR

come down to below 16 percent, said a food ministry official.

"It is not possible to reduce the moisture level down to 14 percent without drying it on the concrete surface. So, most of the marginal farmers get rejected when they take their produce to the local supply depot. Taking advantage of the situation, rice mill owners and traders are selling paddy to the government," said a food directorate

official.

Asked why there has to be a moisture limit, the official said if the moisture level crosses 14 percent, the grains will dry up after storage and its weight will drop.

"The paddy weight will fall by at least 1kg per maund (40kg) after one month. Then the official in charge of the local supply depot will be in trouble," he said, seeking anonymity.

The farmers in West Bengal, India face a similar problem, but still their government buys paddy with higher moisture levels and dries it after storing, he said.

"If we want to help our farmers, we need to have a similar system by changing the procurement policy."

Many of the farmers in the three districts reported that they were denied sales because of low dryness levels.

Abul Kashem, a farmer of Mohonpur in Rajshahi, has his agriculture card and a surplus of paddy but he could not sell it to the open market because the price was below the production cost. And then he was rejected at the government depot.

Asked for the reason, he said whenever he went to the depot, the officials said the paddy was not dry enough. "They do not buy from us," Kashem said.

During a visit to his home, piles of paddy were seen kept on the veranda.

Another farmer, Mainul Mia of Mahadevpur, Naogaon, expressed helplessness because he could neither sell his paddy at the government procurement centre nor in the open market.

Food officials said they had nothing to do but follow the procurement policy.

Md Kudrot-E-Azom Sumon, assistant sub-inspector (food) at

local supply depot of Bogura Sadar upazila, said, "Since the food minister opened the procurement activity on May 15, they have been able to buy only 24 tonnes until May 29, and rejected around 50 listed farmers as their paddy had dryness below the required level."

In the meantime, the middlemen are capitalising on farmers' plight by collecting paddy from them, getting the grains dried on a concrete surface, and eventually selling it to the government depot using the names of the listed farmers.

At the sadar upazila depot, our Bogura correspondent met a broker who claimed himself to be a listed farmer and came with three samples of paddy.

When asked his full name and address in front of the officer in charge of depot, Ashrafur Arifin, the broker used the name of a farmer of Chandpur village in the sadar upazila.

But in the face of repeated questioning about other information, he gave his true identity -- Anamul Hossain, 38, of Khidraddama village in the sadar upazila -- and the details did not match with the list.

Anamul admitted that he was not a farmer, and he came with the paddy samples from his neighbours. He bought rice from farmers in his area and had it dried at a drying facility, and tried to make sales using their agriculture cards.

Dream start

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Mashrafe's face in his next over by getting JP Duminy, South Africa's last line of resistance, bowled when the left-hander inside-edged a pull shot and was bowled, leaving South Africa on 287 for eight. Kagiso Rabada and Tahir then took the score to 309 for eight, but the match had been decided when Mustafizur took his third wicket.

All-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin was expensive at first, but he got it together in time to perform his role as a death-over bowler, with a wicket maiden that claimed Rassie van der Dussen taking the wind out of the sails of South Africa in the 40th over. Saifuddin then added the wicket of Andile Phehlukwayo for good measure.

Mashrafe sacrificed the use of the new ball and came on after the 10th over and bore the brunt of South Africa's best batting period -- when the first three wickets added 147 runs in 27 overs.

While Bangladesh dropped David Miller twice, once off Shakib and once off Mustafizur, the batting was without

pace in his opening spell and, while off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz proved a touch expensive in his opening spell, he always managed to pull it back and finished with the most economical figures of 44 runs from 10 overs for the all-important wicket of South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis, who threatened an alternate finish with a 53-ball 62.

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flaw. After losing the toss, Soumya Sarkar kept proving that he may turn out to be Bangladesh's X-factor in this World Cup by hitting a 30-ball 42. Tamim Iqbal only scored 16 but he played his part in ensuring that Bangladesh did not lose early wickets by putting on 60 runs for the first wicket before being caught behind off Phehlukwayo.

Soumya had given an early message, by easily pulling pacer Lungi Ngidi for three boundaries in the third and fifth overs, that the bouncer ploy they used to much success in South Africa in October 2017 would not hold much sway here. After his dismissal, caught off the gloves after going through with a pull too early off Chris Morris, Shakib and Mushfiqur built a 142-run stand -- also Bangladesh's highest for the wicket in 21 matches against South Africa -- carried on where Soumya had left off. Shakib hit his 43rd half-century and Mushfiqur his 34th, both punishing short deliveries at will on both sides of the wicket. After Shakib's dismissal

for 75, bowled going for a sweep off leg-spinner Imran Tahir in the 36th over, Mohammad Mithun came in and ensured that the momentum did not suffer by hitting a six and a four in a run-a-ball 21.

Even after Mithun and Mushfiqur fell, the latter for the innings-highest 78, within eight runs of each other to leave the score on 250 for five in the 43rd over, experienced campaigner Mahmudullah Riyad and rookie Mosaddek Hossain ensured that there would be sharp sting in the tail with a 66-run stand for the sixth wicket in just 6.5 overs. Mosaddek, for a batsman not known for his proficiency against pace bowling and bouncers, unleashed a couple of pulls in a 20-ball 26 and Mahmudullah accelerated as only he can towards the end with an unbeaten 33-ball 46 as Bangladesh plundered 59 runs in the last five overs.

It was the first half of a consummately Bangladeshi performance, which may be why Mashrafe was smiling at the end.

Iraq condemns eighth French IS member to death

AFP, Baghdad

An Iraqi court yesterday sentenced to death an eighth Frenchman for joining the Islamic State group, rejecting his claims he was tortured into confessing.

Fodil Tahar Aouidate, 32, first appeared in court on May 27 but a judge delayed his trial to allow for a medical examination.

"The medical report shows that there are no signs of torture on his body," the judge told the court.

Aouidate showed no reaction when the judge handed down his death sentence, according to an AFP journalist at the trial.

He was one of 11 French citizens and a Tunisian handed over to Iraqi authorities early this year by a US-backed force in Syria which expelled the jihadist group from its last bastion