

Be alert to avert

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highway, reports BSS.

Hasina urged all, including the drivers and pedestrians, to be responsible in using roads to avoid accidents.

She said it would not be wise to hold only the drivers responsible for road accidents. Everyone, including the drivers and road users, should have awareness of driving vehicles and crossing streets, the PM added.

Referring to the law regarding road safety, she said everyone should follow the traffic rules and regulations.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader also addressed the programme, moderated by PM's Principal Secretary Md Nojibur Rahman.

Hasina exchanged views with local lawmakers, administrative officers and distinguished personalities of Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Satkhira, Chattogram and Mymensingh through videoconferencing.

Railway to be made profitable sector'

Meanwhile, speaking at another programme at the Gono Bhaban, Hasina yesterday vowed to make the railway a profitable sector, reports UNB.

"We want to show those who once wanted to shut down non-profitable rail routes that these can be made profitable and modernised," she said.

The premier made the pledge while flagging off the intercity train "Kurigram Express" on the Kurigram-Dhaka-Kurigram route and launching the newly-imported coaches of Rangpur

Express and Lalmoni Express through videoconferencing.

She said the government was working to bring the whole country under railway network.

Hasina said the railway is most popular among the common and middle-class people, but the former BNP government had planned to shut down rail routes following suggestions of international organisations saying that those were not profitable.

"I think it was a suicidal decision for our country because the common people choose rail for their communication. It's essential for a country to have rail, water, air and road transport system."

The PM said her government has been implementing a massive programme to spread railway connectivity to every division, including Barishal.

The government would extend the railway network to Barishal, Mongla in Bagerhat, and Payra Port in Patuakhali, Hasina said.

Later, she exchanged views with locals from Kurigram, Rangpur and Lalmonirhat through videoconferencing.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi and Social Welfare Minister Nuruzzaman Ahmed were present.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan also spoke at the programme from Kurigram through videoconferencing.



Decorated brand-new carriages have been hooked up to the Lalmoni Express. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the carriages and a new train service called Kurigram Express yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Former PNG PM temporarily avoids arrest

AFP, Port Moresby

Papua New Guinea's ex-prime minister Peter O'Neill won a temporary reprieve in a corruption case yesterday when a court agreed to a brief suspension of his arrest warrant.

Acting police commissioner David Manning announced Tuesday that a warrant for O'Neill relating to graft allegations had been issued by a district court, but he refused to give details due to the "sensitivity" of the investigation.

O'Neill has denied the charges, calling them politically motivated, and refused to cooperate with police -- claiming a lack of legal process, including not being officially presented with the warrant.

"If this were a serious matter, not a political power play, a formal process would be in place that would have seen legal representation made to my office," the former leader said in a statement on Tuesday.

Papua New Guinea's national court yesterday granted O'Neill a short suspension of the arrest warrant until Monday, when the court will hear further arguments.

O'Neill's long tenure was marked by a string of corruption allegations, including the purchase of 40 Maseratis for an Asia-Pacific leaders' summit he hosted -- in a country where few homes have reliable electricity.

He was forced to step down in May after allies balked at his decision to sign a multibillion-dollar liquefied natural gas deal with France's Total and US firm ExxonMobil.

Local communities had complained bitterly about not benefiting from similar deals in the past.

After promising to resign and then trying to cling to power via the courts, he was ultimately replaced by his former finance minister James Marape, who vowed to clean up the government.

Administrator

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to run the businesses.

In the meantime, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal last month stepped in as the mediator and announced that he would start a negotiation to settle the issue amicably. In a meeting on October 3, a proposed solution was placed where it was decided that two neutral committees would be formed to revise the audit findings.

After that meeting, the mobile carriers received a separate proposal through e-mails to pay immediately their principal dues (excluding the fines for delaying the payment) which were undisputed. But in response, the operators said the principal amount was not undisputed. The mobile operators said they had not received any reply after that.

The telecom regulator has run a

long auditing process and in 2016, it claimed that Grameenphone owed it Tk 12,579.95 crore and Robi Tk 867.23 crore for dodging revenue sharing, taxes and late fees accumulated since their inception to December 2014.

Of the total, the principal amount for Grameenphone is Tk 2,299.71 crore and Robi is Tk 319 crore.

The telecom minister yesterday also hinted that the commission will complete the appointment of the administrators within this month. The administrators will remain at the carriers until the dues are realised.

Contacted, BTRC Chairman Jahirul also told The Daily Star that they will appoint the officials at mobile carriers where one will act as the chief executive officer, three others will be legal experts, one will be engineer and another will be an expert in finance and marketing.

Death of man in custody

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and tear gas shells, leaving at least 20 protesters injured. The situation was brought under control with police reinforcement, but tension was still prevailing.

Meanwhile, five policemen of the Bhendabari Police Investigation Centre were closed to Rangpur Police Lines for their "negligence in duty". They are Sub-inspector (SI) Aminul Islam, the centre in-charge, and Assistant Sub-inspectors Shah Alam, Hari Kanta Barman, and Tamiz Uddin, and Constable Ariful Islam.

According to locals, a police team from the centre picked up Md Shamsul Islam, 59, of a resident of Shantipur village of Mithapukur upazila, on Tuesday night. He was found dead inside the lockup of the centre yesterday morning.

Santana Begum, daughter of the deceased, alleged that the centre in-charge, SI Aminul Islam, and police informer Md Zia beat her father to death because he refused to pay them Tk 1 lakh as extortion. She said her father was a cattle trader, but police unleashed the torture labelling him as a drug peddler. SI Aminul denied the allegations.

Gopalpur Union Parishad Chairman Aminul Islam said, "To

my knowledge, Shamsul was a cattle trader, not a drug peddler."

Meanwhile, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Pirganj Police Station Soraj Kumar said police arrested Shamsul at neighbouring Borodarga village with 15 litres of local liquor. The detainee committed suicide by hanging himself in the lockup, he claimed.

The OC also said five policemen were injured in the clash, and acknowledged that police charged batons and fired 30 rounds of rubber bullets and tear gas shells.

Shamsul's daughter Santana told

The Daily Star that if her father had committed suicide, why the villagers found his body on the floor of the lockup instead of it hanging? Police are giving misleading information to save the accused, she said.

Shamsul's wife Momena Begum said her husband is innocent and demanded a fair investigation into the incident.

Meanwhile, a three-member probe body was formed with Rangpur Additional Superintendent of Police (SP) Abu Maruf Hossain as head and was asked to submit the report within three days, said Rangpur SP Biplob Kumar Sarkar.

The body was sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Not many urban poor getting help

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said in the report ahead of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty being observed today.

The theme of the Day this year is "acting together to empower children, their families and communities to end poverty".

The report said, "Given the country's rapid urbanisation there are now more people living in extreme poverty in urban Bangladesh than in 2010."

According to the WB, 35.01 percent of Bangladesh's population lives in urban areas.

Even though 8 in 10 poor live in rural areas, at current trends of urbanisation and poverty reduction, more than half of Bangladesh's poor households will live in urban areas by 2030, it said.

The report said Bangladesh recorded 3 percent increase in its urban

population share between 2010 and 2016, and the urban population grew at an average of 3.9 percent per year since 2000.

"Rapid urbanisation in Bangladesh plays a modest role in poverty reduction," it said, adding that safety nets could contribute more to poverty reduction in the country.

The report mentioned that a third of poor households have access to social protection programmes, compared to 15 percent of non-poor households.

"This suggests there is room to increase coverage and improve the quality of targeting. Coverage in urban areas is particularly low and safety nets for families with young children and elderly members could have a strong impact in reducing urban poverty."

"There is a natural life cycle to

poverty, and well-designed safety nets can target support to households when they need it most: when children are young and when elderly household members must be cared for."

Talking about the issue, economist Zahid Hussain said the coverage of safety net schemes should be expanded in slums in the urban areas.

He said quality education, adequate healthcare and sanitation should be extended in the slums.

"A child born in a slum is not responsible for the poverty of the family. It is the responsibility of the state to provide proper education and nutrition to children so that they can break out the vicious circle of poverty," he said.

He added steps were necessary to protect slum dwellers from various types of exploitation.

and we would still love to meet with her, but it has to be on our terms and on UK soil," Charles told reporters after the meeting, which lasted about 15 minutes.

"She needs to come back and face the justice system," she said.

Harry Dunn, aged 19, died on August 27 in a head-on collision between his motorcycle and a car being driven on the wrong side of the road in Northamptonshire in central England.

Sacoolas was interviewed by police but flew back to the United States after claiming diplomatic immunity. She has not been charged with criminal wrongdoing, but her claim of immunity and return to the US have provoked an uproar in Britain.

Extinction Rebellion to fight London protest ban

AFP, London

Activists from the environmental pressure group Extinction Rebellion yesterday vowed to challenge a blanket protest ban imposed by the London police.

The authorities told activists late Monday to leave their designated site in Trafalgar Square after a week of disruptions across the UK capital.

But pop-up actions continued Tuesday outside a few government buildings, resulting in more arrests.

London police reported making 1,457 arrests as of Tuesday morning. An overwhelming majority of those detained were booked and immediately released.

The group said in a statement that its lawyers "will submit an application for judicial review to the High Court for an urgent hearing".

"The ban is a disproportionate and unprecedented curtailment of the right to free speech and free assembly," the Extinction Rebellion statement said.

The group is protesting what it sees as government inaction in the face of climate change.

The British government has adopted guidelines aimed at reducing polluting emissions to a net level of zero by 2050.

But Extinction Rebellion wants all governments to hit that target by 2025.

It concedes that it has no specific proposals for how businesses and governments can radically alter their way of doing business in six years.

The group wants to set up special "citizens' assemblies" in which the mechanisms could be discussed.

Twitter says world leaders 'not above' its rules

AFP, Washington

Twitter said Tuesday world leaders are "not above" the rules of the online platform and could see their messages removed or demoted for egregious conduct violating its terms of service.

In a statement aimed at clarifying its policies, Twitter said it reserves the right to take "enforcement action" on offending tweets, notably those including threats of violence or posting of private information.

The move comes with social media, and Facebook in particular, facing pressure over enabling false and misleading statements from political leaders.

Both Facebook and Twitter have said they would not attempt to remove "newsworthy" comments from political leaders, and Facebook has exempted political ads from fact-checking.

Twitter said its policy does not give free rein to political figures.

"We want to make it clear today that the accounts of world leaders are not above our policies entirely," the company said in a blog post.

Twitter said it would take action against any account for "promotion of terrorism" or "clear and direct threats of violence" as well as the inclusion of private information, such as a home address or phone number.

It would also act on the posting of intimate photos or videos of someone without consent, and any post related to child sexual exploitation or promoting self-harm.

Twitter said it has not changed its policy which gives leeway to political speech.

The policy announced in June exempts most political commentary from its rules.

It previously indicated that if a tweet from a world leader violates Twitter's rules but there is a "clear public interest" in the information it may require users to click on a notice acknowledging they want to see the message.

Parents of UK crash victim meet Trump at White House

AFP, Washington

The parents of a British teen killed in a road crash involving an American diplomat's wife met with President Donald Trump at the White House Tuesday to urge that she be returned to Britain to face justice.

Trump met with Tim Dunn and Charlotte Charles and dropped a "bombshell" that the woman at the wheel, Anne Sacoolas, was in the building and willing to meet them. The couple said they refused. "We made it very clear that, as we've said all along, we will meet with her...