



President Abdul Hamid with diplomats and their family members at a Christmas reception in Bangabhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Be vigilant against wrong interpretation of religion

President urges all on Christmas

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid called upon people, irrespective of religion, caste and creed, to remain vigilant against forces that create anarchy by misinterpreting religion.

The president said this at a reception at Bangabhaban yesterday while greeting the Christian community on the occasion of Christmas.

"Religion teaches us [to]... stay away from what is wrong, unjust, and dark," he said.

He urged parents and guardians to play a more positive role to inspire youths, away from misguided path.

Terming Bangladesh a land of peace and progress, President Hamid attributed the achievement to the relentless efforts of the people.

He sought all-out cooperation of Bangladeshis on the occasion of celebrating "Mujib Year", the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 2020 and the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence in 2021.

Calling Jesus Christ an ambassador of emancipation, the president said Jesus

preached through sermons his philosophy of peace.

The aim of this philosophy was to establish a peaceful society full of love, service, forgiveness, compassion, and justice. He urged everyone to work together towards building a happy, prosperous, and non-communal Bangladesh.

The president and first lady Rashida Khanam hosted the reception where a candle-lit Christmas tree was set up. The programme also featured renditions of Christmas carols by a musical group.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Advocate Sheikh Md Abdullah; Cardinal Patrick D'Rozario; Dean of Diplomatic Corp Archbishop George Kocheri; President of Bangladesh Christian Association Nirmol Rozario were present at the event. Ambassadors, representatives from different foreign missions, distinguished members of the Christian community, religious leaders, and professionals also joined the reception.

President Hamid later cut a Christmas cake and joined a photo session with the members and representatives of the Christian community.

Car runs over three-year-old in port city

Six killed, five injured in other road crashes

STAR REPORT

A three-year-old was killed after a car ran her over in port city's Anandabazar area around 9am yesterday.

The deceased is Tasnia Akter, daughter of Fazlul Haque Sagar, said police.

Tasnia was crossing the road with her father when the car ran her over, said Assistant Sub-inspector Alauddin Talukder of Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) police camp.

She was rushed to CMCH where the on-duty physician declared her dead.

The car fled the scene after the accident and a case is under the process of being filed.

Meanwhile, at least six people were killed and five injured in other road accidents across the country in the last two days, report our correspondents and a news agency.

In Joypurhat, Beauty Begum (45) was killed on the spot after a speeding bus hit the motorbike carrying her in Joypurhat Bus Terminal area yesterday.

Police seized the bus, but its driver and helper fled.

In Keraniganj, two people were killed on the spot after a truck hit their bike in Jhilmil Residential Area around noon yesterday,

reports UNB.

The deceased are Russell (22) and Rabbi (25), said Sub-inspector (SI) Sanjoy Kumar Malo of South Keraniganj Police Station.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them to Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital for autopsy, the SI added.

In Netrakona, three people were killed and five injured after a truck collided with the auto-rickshaw carrying them in Dayalbari area of Durgapur upazila around 1pm on Tuesday.

The deceased are Nuru Mia (40), Abdul Quddus (45) and Julema Khatun (40).

The accident initially injured seven passengers and driver of the auto-rickshaw, said Officer-in-Charge Md Mizanur Rahman of Durgapur Police Station.

Locals took them to Durgapur Upazila Health Complex.

Nuru, Abdul and Julema were later referred to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) where they passed away around 5pm the same day, the officer-in-charge said.

On information, police sent the bodies to MMCH morgue for autopsy. They also seized the truck but its driver managed to flee. A case was lodged.

City bus service launched in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Transport company Nagar Express yesterday minibus services on four routes for commuters in Sylhet city.

During the inauguration, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said, "Launching a service like this is a great achievement for the city, as it will make lives of commuters easier."

The bus service was launched to provide commuting service to residents of the city and surrounding areas. One buses has been solely reserved for women.

A total of 41 buses will ply the routes -- Tuberbazar to Hetimganj via Medical Road, Tuberbazar to Bateshwar via Bandarabazar, Surma Market Point to Hetimganj and Sylhet airport to Hajiganj via Kadamtali, according to officials.

Mokhlesur Rahman Kamran, convener of Nagar Express bus owners' group and ward-9 councillor of Sylhet City Corporation, said skilled drivers and supervisors have been appointed for the buses.

He said commuters will be able to avail the services by purchasing tickets.

Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Ariful Haque Choudhury was also present at the inauguration programme, among others.

He said, "Transport owners and workers are not our opponents. We want to work together to establish discipline on the roads to build a model city."

The mayor sought cooperation from all stakeholders in this regard.

Earlier in 2008, a similar service named "Town Bus" was launched with 35 minibuses, but the service was halted a few years ago due to financial losses.

KARNAPHULI RIVER

50pc work of Bangabandhu Tunnel completed

Bss, Cg

At least fifty percent construction work of the much-awaited Bangabandhu Tunnel under the Karnaphuli river has been completed, said an official.

Two tubes, stretching 2,450m each, are being constructed in the tunnel, and construction work of 1,220m of Anowara upazila-bound tube has already been completed, project director Harunur Rashid Chowdhury told the news agency on Tuesday.

He hoped that the installations of rings in these tubes will be finished by next May or June, if favourable weather prevails and no natural calamities take place. The two tubes comprise four lanes and each one is 35 feet wide and 16 feet high.

The project is expected to be completed by 2022. Acquisition of 383 acres of land has already been completed for the tunnel's approach roads.

Bangladesh Bridge Authority is constructing the country's first-ever four-lane 3.5km tunnel under the river, with an approach road of 4.89km alongside 740m of bridge linking the port city with the southern regions of Chattogram.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Chinese President Xi Jinping laid the

foundation stone of the tunnel on October 14, 2017. The PM inaugurated the tunnel's boring work early this year.

While inaugurating the work, Hasina said, "The construction of this tunnel will be completed by 2022 ... after which the socio-economic development of the region will accelerate significantly, which will contribute a lot to the country's economy."

She said this while addressing a civic rally at Patenga Ring Road after inaugurating the boring of the tunnel and construction of a 16.5km elevated expressway on February 24.

The estimated cost of the tunnel is Tk 9,880 crore, out of which Exim Bank of China will provide Tk 5,913 crore. "China Communication Construction Company Ltd" (CCCC) has been appointed the consultant for construction of the tunnel.

The multilane tunnel route will pass through the river close to Navy College on one side and Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) and Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (KAFCO) on the other side.

The tunnel will connect Chattogram Port and Anowara upazila and is expected to make communications between Chattogram and Cox's Bazar easier and reduce gridlocks on two bridges over the river.

'BNP engaged in information terrorism'

Says Hasan Mahmud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is engaged in spreading "information terrorism" among countrymen over Khaleda Zia's health, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud said yesterday.

He was talking to reporters after being accorded a reception at Shah Amanat International Airport by his party men.

At least a thousand supporters thronged the airport to receive him after being elected joint general secretary of Awami League.

The information minister said Khaleda Zia's illness is nothing new. She served as the prime minister and carried out her duties as the chairperson of a party even with this illness, he said, adding that BNP constantly

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Hunt on for financiers of 'Allahr Dal'

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Cg

Police have started their search for financiers and donors of banned militant outfit "Allahr Dal".

According to police sources, an official letter has already been sent to all units of the force to identify them, freeze and confiscate their bank accounts and properties.

The letter was issued by Md Shawkat Hossain, special superintendent (media analysis) of Police Headquarters, on December 12.

The Public Security Division, under the home ministry, banned the militant group on November 5, through issuing a gazette notification. The notification mentioned that the government thinks activities of the militant outfit named "Allahr Dal" are against peace and a threat to public security.

Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) also received a letter from the PHQ on December 14. However, they said there is no visible activity of Allahr Dal in Chattogram yet.

Mentionable, several members of the militant outfit had been arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Dhaka and other districts over the last couple of months.

According to Rab, one Abdul Matin

Mehedi alias Mehedi Hasan of JMB formed the militant group in 1995.

After arrest of several top leaders of Allahr Dal, Rab claimed that Matin, who is behind bars in connection with several militancy cases, is the key organiser of the group.

Asked, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC-Operations) Polash Kanti Nath of Counter Terrorism (CT) unit at CMP said they have received a copy of the letter regarding the group and are working to find out if the organisation is active in Chattogram.

Several CT officials of CMP told The Daily Star that due to their controversial roles and anti-state activities, Allahr Dal was blacklisted in April 2009.

But the operatives had been conducting their campaigns and recruiting members using various means. A CT official said, "Allahr Dal has been using code words and names just like JMB and other militants."

The official said the militant group used to have a strong hold in the southern districts.

Contacted, ADC (Intelligence) Md Moinul Islam said, "We are now gathering field-level information about the organisation."



Dhaka University's Institute of Nutrition and Food Sciences celebrated its golden jubilee yesterday. As part of the programmes, a portrait of its founding director, Prof Kamal Uddin Ahmed, was unveiled at the institute. DU VC Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman attended the ceremony as chief guest, where the institute's current director Dr SK Nazrul Islam, former director Dr Nazma Shaheen, teachers, students and officials were present. The celebrations also included rally, presentation of scientific articles and a cultural event.

PHOTO: BSS



As winter's dry spell continues, birds find it increasingly hard to access water. Seizing the opportunity, a group of sparrows take a quick bath in a puddle on Jatiya Press Club premises.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

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