

Wedding celebration turns into tragedy

Girl drowns; 23 including bride missing as two boats sink in the Padma

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A five-year-old girl drowned and 23 other people went missing when two engine boats carrying a bridal party sank in the Padma in Rajshahi city's Sreerampur area yesterday evening. Bride was among the missing. Divers of Rajshahi Fire Service and Civil Defence and Border Guard Bangladesh were jointly conducting the search for the missing till filing of this report at 12:30am today. A specialised rescue team of BIWTA was due to reach Rajshahi by 3:00am and it would join the search at dawn, said Abdur Rashid, additional director of Rajshahi fire service. The victim, Morium, daughter of Ratan Ali of Basua area, was declared dead after being taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, said Inspector Mehedi Hassan, in-charge of river police outpost of Rajshahi. The girl was among the 14

persons who were rescued by locals immediately after the accident took place, he said. Five of the rescued, including groom Asaduzzaman Rumon, were hospitalised. The two boats, carrying around 38 passengers, sank around 7:00pm shortly after three engine boats carrying the relatives of the couple started for Sreerampur ghat from Char Khanpur in Paba upazila, said police. The boat carrying the bride and groom started to sink due to sudden strong wind in the river, sources said quoting survivors. When the other boat went close to the sinking boat, passengers of the sinking boat jumped on that boat and it became overloaded and sank, they said. Asaduzzaman was going to his in-law's house with his wife Sweety Khatun Nupur after a wedding reception at his home in Char Khanpur.

WHO urges

FROM PAGE 1 in a tourist who arrived from neighbouring India. India's total number of confirmed cases rose to 31, after a person from New Delhi with a history of travel from Thailand and Malaysia tested positive, its health ministry said. Vatican, Cameroon, Serbia, Bethlehem confirm their first cases yesterday. The Netherlands has recorded its first death in the outbreak, health officials said. Iran yesterday announced 17 more deaths, raising the total number of people killed to 124, as the overall number of cases soared. An adviser to Iran's foreign minister who took part in the 1979 US embassy hostage crisis has died from coronavirus, the official IRNA news agency reported. China -- where the virus emerged late last year -- still accounts for the majority of cases and deaths, but infections are now rising faster abroad, with South Korea, Iran and Italy all major hotspots. The World Health Organization warned Thursday that a "long list" of countries were not showing the political commitment needed to "match the level of the threat we all face". "This is not a drill," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters, calling for "aggressive preparedness". "This is not a time to give up. This is not a time for excuses," he said. "This is a time for pulling out all the stops."

In the United States, the largest nursing union said a survey of thousands of nurses at hospitals showed "truly disturbing" results, reports AFP. "They show that a large percentage of our nation's hospitals are unprepared to safely handle COVID-19," said Jane Thomason, a hygiene specialist with the union. Nurses are working without necessary personal protective equipment and lack education and training for handling the disease, said National Nurses United director Bonnie Castillo. **EMERGENCY SPENDING** The US Congress passed an emergency \$8.3 billion spending bill to combat the coronavirus Thursday as cases surged in the country's northwest and

When thunder roars

FROM PAGE 1 The war began 18 days after the speech, when the Pakistan Army launched "Operation Searchlight" against unarmed Bangalee civilians, intellectuals, students, politicians, and armed personnel. On October 30 in 2017, the UNESCO recognised the historic speech as part of the world's documentary heritage. It has been included in the Memory of the World International Register, a list of world's important documentary heritage maintained by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). On March 7, Bangabandhu in his historic speech at a mammoth rally in the then Race Course Maidan, now Suhrawardy Udyan, in the capital directed the freedom-loving Bangalees for waging a decisive struggle against the Pakistan occupation forces. In the 19-minute speech from 4.23 pm before millions of people of former East Pakistan, Bangabandhu in unequivocal term said, "We spilled our blood...we are ready to shed more blood, the people of the country shall be freed, Inshallah!" "The struggle this time is for our emancipation, the struggle this time is for our independence." During his deliberations amid thunderous slogans and applause, he also made a fervent appeal to the roaring people from all walks of life to take preparations for armed struggle against the tyranny, exploitation, subjugation and deprivation by Pakistani military junta with whatever they possessed and transforming every house into a fortress. The whole nation responded

deaths reached 12. More than 180 people are infected in the US. But President Donald Trump has downplayed the risk, saying the WHO's report of a 3.4 percent mortality rate was "false". Admiral Brett Giroir, the assistant secretary of health, estimated the death rate at "somewhere between 0.1 percent and one percent" -- closer to the seasonal flu -- due to a high number of unreported cases. A helicopter dropped test kits on the deck of the Grand Princess cruise ship off the coast of San Francisco to determine if any of the nearly 3,500 guests and crew had contracted the new coronavirus. Health officials sounded the alarm after two passengers who had been on board during a previous voyage later fell ill, and one of them died. The ship belongs to Princess Cruises, the company that operated a coronavirus-stricken vessel held off Japan last month from which more than 700 people tested positive and six died. **CHINA IMPORTS CASES** Cases in China have gradually fallen as tens of millions of people remain under strict quarantine to contain the virus, which first emerged in the central city of Wuhan in December. But fresh infections increased for a second consecutive day yesterday, with 143 new patients, and the number of imported cases from abroad to 36. China's death toll rose to 3,042, with over 80,500 infections. Other countries are facing a growing epidemic. South Korea has the biggest number of cases outside China, with over 6,500 infections and 42 deaths, prompting the country to extend school breaks by three weeks. Japan imposed a quarantine on arrivals from South Korea and China, angering Seoul which summoned the Japanese ambassador to protest the "irrational" move. Italy, which has the biggest outbreak in Europe, has ordered schools and universities shut until March 15, and on Thursday reported a sharp rise in deaths, bringing the total to 148. But the UN rights chief said yesterday that governments using lockdowns and quarantines must ensure people's rights are respected and avoid unintended consequences for their livelihoods.

spontaneously to Bangabandhu's call. The vigorous speech inspired people of all walks of life to prepare for the war, which eventually began after the Pakistani regime on March 25 launched on the unarmed Bangalees the genocide. After the March 7 speech, people became united under his capable and farsighted leadership to bravely fight for liberating their motherland. As soon as the Pakistani occupation forces started the genocide on the night of March 25, Bangabandhu declared independence of the motherland and instructed the people to put up strong resistance and fight. At the instruction of Bangabandhu, the brave nation fought successfully the nine-month war and liberated Bangladesh on December 16. To mark day, different socio-cultural and political organisations, student and professional bodies have drawn up elaborate programmes, including laying wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu and holding discussions and rallies. The ruling Awami League has also drawn up different programmes to observe the day. The party will hoist national and party flags atop the Bangabandhu Bhaban and party offices and place wreaths at Bangabandhu's portrait on the Bangabandhu Bhaban premises at Dhanmondi in the morning. A discussion will be arranged at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) at 3.30pm. Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will chair the discussion while party leaders and distinguished personalities will address it.



This Dhaka-bound bus of Limon Paribahan veered off Dhaka-Sylhet highway and fell into the roadside ditch after it collided head-on with a microbus, heading for Sylhet, in Bhati-Kalisheema area of Brahmanbaria's Bijoynagar upazila early yesterday. The accident left six people dead and five others injured.

PHOTO: STAR

23 lives lost in a single day

FROM PAGE 1 The injured were rushed to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital. The youngest victim was six-year-old Khadiza Begum. She died at the hospital around 3:30pm, hours after her mother died. Those undergoing treatment at the hospital were Rafiqul, Abul Hossain, and driver Nadim Mahmud. Of them, Abul was critically injured, officials said. Imon's neighbour Jibon Amir of Narayanganj's Fatulla said Imon's family was from Barishal but they lived in Fatulla. In the capital's Banani last night, Faisal Ahmed, 28, student of evening MBA at Dhaka University, was killed after a bus hit his motorcycle around 7:45pm. The crash occurred near Setu Bhaban. Faisal was taken to Kurmitola General Hospital where he was pronounced dead, said Sub-inspector Abdul Kaiyum of Banani Police Station. He was a resident of Pirebagh area in Mirpur and his village home was in Pirojpur's Kaukhali upazila. In Brahmanbaria, six people were killed after a microbus caught fire following a collision with a bus in Bijoynagar upazila of Brahmanbaria on Dhaka-Sylhet highway. Microbus driver Shohan, 20, and

microbus passengers Rifat Mia, 19, Emon Mia, 19, Harun Mia, 40, Shakil Mia, 25, and Sagar, 22, died and Shahin, 30, Bijoy, 22, Abir, 35, and Jisan, 25, were seriously injured. They were residents of Deulibari village in Bandar upazila of Narayanganj. The injured were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Premdhan Majumdar, sub-inspector of Khatihata Highway Police outpost, said a Dhaka-bound bus of Limon Paribahan collided with the microbus at Bhati Kalishima area around 2:30am. Five of the victims were burnt to death on the spot and one died while being taken to a hospital. A gas cylinder of the microbus caught fire, he said. The victims were going to Sylhet to visit Hazrat Shahjalal's shrine, he said. The bus fell into a road-side ditch following the crash. No serious injuries among the bus passengers were reported. Injured Jisan said he survived because he fell out of the window during the crash. A six-kilometre tailback was created on either side of the highway. Traffic started moving after the microbus was removed from the road around 8:00am. In Savar, constable Akash Ahammed, 22, of Narayanganj Industrial Police,

died when a truck hit his motorcycle from behind on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Ulail area around 7:00am. Abullahel Baki, OC of Savar Highway Police Outpost, said Akash was going to his workplace in Narayanganj. Police seized the truck but its driver managed to flee. On Thursday night, Kazi Nazmul Haque Pintu, 41, of Tangail's Nagarpur upazila, got killed when a bus ran him over on Abdullahpur-Baipail road around 10:30pm. Al Mamun Kabir, sub-inspector of Ashulia Police Station, said Nazmul died on the spot. In Mymensingh, truck helper Abdul Azim, 22, and pick-up driver Rajon Robidas, 28, were killed when a fish-laden pickup hit a parked truck at Mehrabari around 5:30am. Two others were injured in the crash, Bhaluka Highway Police Outpost In-charge Al Mahmud Adnan said. In Feni, Azizul Haque, 28, and Zia Uddin Bablu, 22, of Chattogram's Mirsarai, were killed after their motorbike fell from a bridge in Satbaria area, said Moin Uddin Ahmed, OC of Sonagazi Police Station. In Cumilla, an unidentified motorcyclist died after a vehicle hit the bike from behind on Dhaka-Chattogram highway around 8:30am.

Defining moment for our freedom

FROM PAGE 1 the event. Nirmalendu, then a trainee sub-editor of the Daily People, took a seat reserved for journalists just next to the podium with the help of Anwar Zahid, the then executive editor of The Weekly Gonobangla, a sister concern of the People. Like the restless masses, 26-year-old Nirmalendu too was eager to hear the speech which would go on to become one of the greatest works of oration in history. And then Bangabandhu took the stage. Clad in a white panjabi and pyjama, with the iconic sleeveless black coat, he approached the podium around 3:15pm. "Joy Bangla!" The confluence of people greeted him with the same slogan. Bangabandhu started: "Today, I appear before you with a heavy heart. You know and understand everything. We tried with our lives. But the painful matter is that today, in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur, the streets are dyed red

with the blood of our brethren. Today, the people of Bangla want freedom, the people of Bangla want to live, the people of Bangla want their rights..." "It was an electrifying speech," Nirmalendu, now 75, recalled in conversation with The Daily Star. Nirmalendu recalled his memories of March 7 in his autobiography on the Liberation War titled "Atmakhata 1971". "I had not ever listened to such a spellbinding address. I will never get the scope to hear such an address in my lifetime. It was touching, it was wonderful..." he wrote in the biography. The speech served as a muse for Nirmalendu, who went on to write one of his greatest poems "Swadhinata Ei Shobdoti Kivabe Amader Holo [How the word independence became ours]." In his poem, he termed Bangabandhu a "poet" and his speech an "epic poem", giving descriptions of the ground, the crowd and Bangabandhu's arrival. "And like a waterfall, his words of oration were coming out of his mouth," he wrote in his book. An Ekushey Padak and Swadhinata

Padak winner, Nirmalendu thinks it would be unjustified if the creator of the speech with 103 verses is not recognised as a poet. "So, I describe Bangabandhu as a poet," he wrote. "The sea of rebellious people eagerly waiting at the Maidan since morning for him... he is a poet. When will the poet appear?" he continued. Nirmalendu's father, Sukhendu Prokash Goon Chowdhury, an artist who was at his Mymensingh residence bedridden, was his first audience. "After hearing my poem, my father said he can recall the speech of Bangabandhu. I realised that my intention was fulfilled," he said. The poem was first published in weekly Sachitra Sandhani in 1980 and was incorporated in his poetry collection "Chasabhusar Kabbyo", published in February, 1981. Nirmalendu, in his epic poem 'Swadhinata Ei Shobdoti Kivabe Amader Holo', also described the situation in place for the historic speech. In his poem, he termed Bangabandhu's speech an immortal poem.

Saluting unsung women heroes

FROM PAGE 1 Similarly, Bibha Rani was separated from her family while they were trying to escape from their home in Barishal. She was captured by Razakars and tortured. She has never been officially recognised as a Birangana even though she applied a few times. "I am not capable of saying anything. The war was in 1971. It is now 2020. It has been so many years. I am tired of fighting. But I am happy today, because of our sacrifice, so many are now free," said Bibha, while receiving her award. She dedicated a song she crafted in the mournful, wistful Bhatiali style, to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, describing him as the oarsman to her boat. "Please forgive us, mother," said the programme's moderator Sharmin Nahar Lucky, "but good news is that IPDC Finance has taken the financial responsibility of these two women". Chief guest Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen handed crests while IPDC CEO and Managing Director Mominul Islam gave the two awardees cheques of Tk 2 lakh each. The momentous event was graciously hosted by Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden, which was also a hospitality partner. The evening began with a heart-rending poetry recital by Panchakanya, a repertoire consisting of Sharmin Lucky, Tamanna Tithi, Kazi Bushra, Naznin Naz, Habiba Sultana and Sharmin Mrittika. "Man is not a standard of any sort, why would we want to be their equal? I have become a successful 'human' instead," they recited, powerful lines written by poets Rita Nahar, Shashwati Biplob, Dil Afroza, and Jinat Islam. In his address, IPDC's Mominul Islam said, "Fifty women were nominated and nine selected for the honour. "Their contribution is not an isolated event -- the change that has come to Bangladesh is a story crafted by its women. It is the story of the 35 lakh women workers of our ready-made

garment industry, the story of every household in our villages which are production powerhouses," he said. The jury included Anisul Hoque, associate editor of Prothom Alo; Rokia Afzal Rahman, chairperson of Mediaworld Ltd; Dr Maleka Banu, general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad; and Anna Minj, director, Community Empowerment, Gender Justice Diversity and Integrated Development Programmes at Brac. The jurors who made the extremely difficult decision of choosing who to honour, handed crests to the awardees, except Tepri and Bibha. Rasheda K Chowdhury, executive director, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), handed a crest and a cheque of Tk 2 lakh to Laily Begum. Laily is the first licensed hilsa fisherwoman of the country. A primary schoolteacher, Kamrunnahar Munni was awarded next for forming a football team of girls in her hometown of Tangail. She was awarded by Maleka Banu. Sonu Rani Das was awarded by Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation. Sonu is the first female graduate from the Dalit community. Kohinur Begum was awarded by Anisul Hoque. Kohinur had created a successful foodbank for women at risk of climate change induced calamities, in her community in a remote village of Sirajganj. Mamtaz Mahal Baby was awarded by Rokia Afzal Rahman. Baby established a successful library in her home at a former enclave of Kurigram. The next awardee was Jaya Chakma, the first female FIFA referee of Bangladesh. She was awarded by Farah Kabir, executive director, ActionAid. Joya Chakma put her feelings aptly, "When I was a child, I used to think that I will do something one day that will make people recognise me. I thought I will have to stay with courageous people for that. Today I am with courageous women." Unfortunately, the next awardee

could not receive the award last night -- Marzia Rabbani Shashi, the country's first blind female lawyer is going through life-threatening conditions. Her mother Afroza Rabbani accepted the award on her behalf from Parveen Mahmud, chairperson of UCEP, Bangladesh. Afroza Rabbani brought everyone back from the throes of euphoria by stating her current reality -- her daughter, the awardee, is fighting for her life because neither of her kidneys was functioning. They have a donor, but are not being able to carry out the organ transplant because law forbids kidney donation from other than immediate family members, she said. "The light of the eyes is nothing; the light of the mind is everything. But now the light of her life is going out. Save my little girl, my beautiful girl." In December last year, the High Court ruled that voluntary donors beyond near relatives could donate kidneys to patients with renal failure. At present, the law allows only parents, children, brothers and sisters, spouse, grandparents, grandchildren, cousins, maternal and paternal uncles and aunts to donate their kidneys to patients. The HC also ordered the government to amend the act within six months. In his address, the foreign minister, AK Abdul Momen, said, "I am grateful to witness these stars. I also feel small seeing them. Their contribution, their will to impact change is an inspiration for us. What we are doing is not enough, there is more to do. "Confidence and sheer will—that is why nothing could stop them," he said. Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said, "When I see these women, I feel very small. What is my patriotism? My humanity? Compared to theirs, my contribution is nothing. "It may appear that we are trying to honour these extraordinary women, but what we are trying to do is to show those who are far better off than us what real social change is all about, what real courage is all about."

Dutch MH17 trial to start without Russian, Ukrainian suspects

REUTERS, Amsterdam

Four fugitive suspects go on trial in the Netherlands on Monday charged with the murder of 298 passengers and crew aboard Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 which was shot down with a Russian-made missile over eastern Ukraine in July 2014. Wreckage of the Boeing 777 fell to the ground in fields surrounding the Ukrainian village of Hrabove in territory held by pro-Russian separatists fighting Ukrainian government forces. The jet was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it was hit by a surface-to-air missile. There were no survivors.

Tamim, Liton

FROM PAGE 1 It was the first time that Bangladesh managed to post over 300 in three consecutive games and that eventually ended a successful ODI series. Liton registered his third ODI hundred and his second in the three-match series. The right-hander was eventually dismissed after a magnificent 143-ball 176, which featured eight sixes and 16 fours. Tamim at the other end registered his second ton in as many matches -- his 13th in the format -- and remained unbeaten on 128 off 109 balls with six sixes and seven fours. In reply, Zimbabwe needed a rather humongous 343 runs in 43 after the total was readjusted according to the Duckworth-Lewis method, but they kept losing wickets at regular intervals and were eventually all out for 218 with Sikandar Raza top-scoring with 61. Mohammad Saifuddin was instrumental once again on his return to the side, picking up four wickets while skipper Mashrafe also bagged a wicket in his last game as captain. Earlier, Bangladesh were asked to bat first after skipper Mashrafe lost his last ever toss as captain as Zimbabwe skipper Sean Williams had to pay a heavy price for the decision on a flat Sylhet pitch. Interestingly, it was Tamim who started off with positive intent while Liton remained relatively calm until he smashed two boundaries off pacer Charlton Tshuma to get going. Since then it was a Liton show as the stylish right-hander reached his fifty off 54 balls as runs started to come thick and fast for the hosts. Liton eventually reached his hundred off 114 balls and registered his third ODI ton and his second in the series. Rain then halted the game after 33.2 overs, and after a two-hour-38-minute delay, Bangladesh were on 182 and Tamim 21 away from his hundred, and batsmen's aggression only increased upon resumption. Liton however was lucky as he was dropped thrice, courtesy of some poor catching by the Zimbabwean fielders, while Tamim registered his 13th ODI ton off 98 balls. Since then it was total carnage from Liton as he reached 150 in no time and eventually broke the record for the highest individual score by a Bangladeshi when he struck a boundary to surpass Tamim's 158 run knock in the second ODI. The way Liton was striking the ball and it was raining sixes all over the ground, at one point it seemed the right-hander would become the first Bangladesh batsman to score a double-hundred in ODIs. But amidst all the individual heroics it was Mashrafe's day. At the end of it all, he walked off victorious and millions of fans could only say, 'Thank you Captain.'

Govt to form

FROM PAGE 1 were killed after rape and 10 others died by suicide, says a study report of Ain o Salish Kendra, a leading rights organisation. The number of rape victims was 732 in 2018 and 818 in 2017, said the report published on December 31. The HC, following a writ petition, on January 19 directed the government to form a commission under the law ministry to stop rape and violence against women. It ordered the law secretary to form the commission, to be led by an additional secretary of the ministry, within 30 days from receiving its copy. The commission comprises representatives from lawyers, judges, rights activists, media persons, physicians, and victims if they agree. The HC also asked the commission, to be formed, to make recommendations within the next six months on how to stop rape incidents. The bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain why rapists should not be awarded capital punishment if the rape victim is under 16. Contacted, Deputy Attorney General Abdullah-Al-Mahmud Bashar told this correspondent yesterday that the bench recently modified the order for formation of the commission as there is no additional secretary in the law ministry. In the modified order, the HC asked the law secretary to form a commission to be led by a joint secretary of the ministry, he added.