

ROAD CRASHES

418 children killed in six months: report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 418 children were killed in road crashes in first six months of this year as road safety situation still remain alarming, Road Safety Foundation said yesterday.

Of the children, aged between two and 15 years, 211 were killed while traveling on vehicles while 207 others killed as pedestrians, it said.

Among the victims, 341 were students, 58 were child labourers and 19 were destitute.

The organisation released the data to mark the 10th anniversary of fatal Mirsarai road crash, which killed 45 people -- mostly children -- in 2011.

The foundation demanded the government observe the day nationally and provide necessary compensation to the victim families as the court directives.

On that day, a truck carrying 60 students skidded off the road and fell into a roadside ditch at Abu Torab in the upazila, killing 44 students and a local guardian. The students were returning home after enjoying a school football match held in Mirsarai stadium.

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Stuck at home for the better part of the last year-and-a-half, this child just had to get out. So, his father took her on his journey to the kitchen market. It might seem trivial, but spending too much time in enclosed settings can have debilitating effects on children's mental health, as outlined by recent studies. This photo was taken from Motijheel last week.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

BARISHAL COVID-19 CRISIS

More beds, ICU a crying need

Patients being turned back from SBMCH, oxygen shortage hits city hard

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

As the Covid-19 situation worsens in Barishal city, its residents as well as those from neighbouring districts are facing an acute crisis of ICUs, Covid beds, and oxygen cylinders.

Visiting Covid-dedicated Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital yesterday, this correspondent saw patients from the city, greater Barishal district, Pirojpur, and other areas being turned back by the hospital authorities, as they have run out of capacity.

"We are asking those who are not in a critical condition to stay back home in isolation, as all 300 of our beds are occupied," hospital director Dr HM Saiful Islam told The Daily Star.

After visiting the Corona Isolation Unit in the afternoon, this correspondent came to know that at least a dozen patients seeking admission were turned back from the hospital in the previous 24 hours. Some came in with symptoms, while others were in more severe conditions.

On condition of anonymity, a ward staffer working at the isolation unit said all of the hospital's beds are filled up at the moment. In fact, many patients are camping on the hospital's floors and taking treatment from there. He also cited shortage of oxygen cylinders and oxygen supply.

"We have 22 ICUs, all of which are occupied. There are 54 people lined up for a bed," said Dr Moniruzzaman Shahin, assistant director of the hospital.

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Publish list of injured in Rupganj blaze: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing grave concern and shock at the death and injury of people in the deadly fire at a food processing factory in Narayanganj's Rupganj on Thursday, the High Court yesterday ordered authorities concerned to publish a list of the injured victims in public and to ensure their proper treatment.

The court asked the attorney general to talk to the health and labour secretaries to take necessary steps to this effect.

The HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim passed the order during hearing a writ petition filed by four rights organisations, seeking directives for compensation for the victims and for conducting an enquiry into the incident.

The HC bench, however, refused to pass any order over the compensation, as bodies of the deceased victims could not be identified so far.

The court said government authorities have reportedly assured that they will compensate the

victims' families.

"We are also shocked at the incident of fire that caused deaths and injuries to a number of people. The whole nation is shocked at the incident. We don't hope such occurrence happens," Justice Enayetur Rahim said when petitioners' lawyer Sara Hossain placed the writ petition.

The lawyer mentioned issues of negligence and failure of authorities concerned to prevent occurrences of fire, deaths and injuries, compensation for victims and child labour in the factory and prayed to the HC to issue a rule questioning the negligence and failure and to direct the authorities to give compensation to victims.

The HC judge said a criminal case has been filed in connection with the incident and all owners of the factory have been arrested.

"Investigation will be conducted into the incident and it seems that the owners of factory

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NARAYANGANJ FACTORY FIRE

It was a murder incident: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

Terming the horrific fire at the Hashem Food and Beverage factory in Narayanganj an incident of murder, BNP yesterday questioned the role of the Fire Service and Civil Defense, as it took huge time to put out the blaze.

"Our standing committee meeting thinks that this (factory fire) incident falls into the category of murder," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Speaking at a virtual press conference, he said, "The meeting also raised a question about the role of the fire brigade in dealing with the incident. It can't be acceptable that they could not douse the fire in 27 hours."

The press conference was arranged to unveil the decisions of the BNP standing committee's virtual meeting held on Saturday evening.

Fakhrul said their party thinks the fire incident happened due to administrative weakness and lack of regular inspection and monitoring of the factory's construction quality, working atmosphere and fire extinguishing system by the agencies concerned under the industries ministry.

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Quader snubs BNP remarks on factory fire culpability

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the prompt action taken by the government after Rupganj factory fire should serve as a warning to all others who do business putting employees' lives at risk.

Quader said this while virtually addressing a programme on the occasion of distributing Covid-19 safety materials, organised by the party's relief and social welfare sub-committee at Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

He trashed BNP leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's comments that the Awami League was responsible for Thursday's fire at Hashem Foods factory in Rupganj.

He made light of Fakhrul's allegation saying the BNP secretary general may "One day blame the Awami League if any one dies in a lightning strike."

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said that there will be no problem with Covid vaccine.

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'No convocation for us' EWU to hold event virtually today; students disgruntled as only award winners, Dhaka residents got graduation gowns

ASIFUR RAHMAN

When students of East West University found that their convocation will be held virtually, they were disappointed.

Though they will miss the opportunity to receive their certificates from teachers, stand beside their peers joyously and most importantly see the proud smile of their parents -- all wearing gowns and caps, they understood that it was perhaps for the best, given the situation.

At least they will have their convocation attires with them as a memory, they thought.

It seems even that dream will remain unfulfilled as the university authorities have decided to distribute gowns only to

award winning students and those who reside in the capital, said the graduating students.

They said the university authorities, however, took Tk 5,000 as registration fee from all students.

Amid such a situation, the university is all set to hold its 20th convocation virtually today, raising discontent among students.

According to the university website, the authorities took the money as registration fee and 1,551 graduating students signed up for the convocation.

Students have been protesting the move ever since the announcement of virtual convocation on July 8.

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Star journo awarded for sanitation report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star journalist Nilima Jahan was named a winner of the "Media Award 2021", arranged by the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) yesterday for the second year in a row.

The reporter was selected for the award for her report "Deplorable Sanitation Conditions in Dhaka Slums: Women bear the brunt of it".

A total of 11 journalists were announced winners at the virtual "World Population Day 2021" celebration programme, organised by the Information, Education and Motivation (IEM) unit of the DGFP yesterday.

This year's theme for the day was "Rights and choices are the answer: Whether baby boom or bust, the solution to shifting fertility rates lies in prioritising the reproductive health and rights of all people."

Consistent with the theme, journalists were awarded for their excellence in reporting on family planning, maternal and child health, and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) issues.

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11TH DAY OF LOCKDOWN

Traffic rises again in capital

STAR REPORT

At the end of the weekends, the movement of people and vehicles saw an increase on the 11th day of the lockdown yesterday.

Private cars, motorbikes, and rickshaws dominated the streets, with their numbers even lighting up traffic signals in the capital. Alongside, many office-goers were seen rushing through the capital's streets.

"On my way to the office around 10am, I was stuck at Panthapath signal due to pressure of vehicles," said Md Hasan, who works at a private television channel.

"I'm on my way to Mirpur for an emergency. I'm fuelling up my bike," said Monir Hossain from Old Dhaka, who was queued up at a refuelling pump at Poribagh.

Law enforcers were also seen patrolling down the city streets to enforce the lockdown. Check posts were set up at different points. At Hare Road, 10-15 police personnel put

up a barricade and intercepted vehicles to check commuters' reasons for coming out.

Following the weekend, kitchen markets witnessed a crowd yesterday.

"I avoided the market on Friday and Saturday for the big crowd. I didn't expect so many to be here today," said an office goer who spoke to the correspondent at the Hatirpool kitchen market yesterday noon.

Beyond major streets, a good number of vegetable and fruit vendors were seen trading in nearby alleys.

"Patrol police doesn't let us sit on the major streets, which is why we've set up shop inside the alleys," said Kamrul Islam, who was selling mangoes at an alley in Central Road area. With yesterday, there are three days to go of the government imposed "strict lockdown", first imposed for seven days on July 1 and later extended till July 14.

Russian team visits Rooppur plant to see Covid-19 situation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Russian worker of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant died from Covid-19 on Friday while over 200 coronavirus infected Russian workers of the plant are undergoing treatment.

Amid this situation, high officials from the Russian government's Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation visited the plant in Pabna's Ishwardi on Saturday to observe the situation.

The delegation, headed by the deputy director of Rosatom, also consists of their medical experts, said Dr Shawkat Akbar, project director of Rooppur plant.

The delegation discussed with the project officials and the Ministry of Science and Technology about taking necessary steps for smooth progress of the development project amid the alarming Covid-19 situation, said project authorities.

"Russian workers at the plant will get the Russian vaccine Sputnik V. It has already reached the project area. Around 700 Bangladeshi officials of the project are likely to get this vaccine too," he said.

Meanwhile, Ivan Karpovan (38), a worker of Russian construction firm Nikmith-Atmostroy, died from Covid-19 at a private hospital in the capital's Shyamoli on Friday.

Md Ruhul Kuddus, in charge of the plant's site office said Ivan was infected with Covid-19 last month and was admitted to the hospital in Dhaka on June 19. Later, he was shifted to the ICU as his condition became critical.

Talking to The Daily Star, Dr Fakhrul Islam, a doctor at Rooppur plant, said a total of 231 Russian workers were found Covid positive last month. Of them, 144 have been hospitalised in four hospitals.

"A total of 1,300 Russian workers will get the Sputnik V in first two phases. Over 3,600 Russian workers are working in the Rooppur plant," Dr Fakhrul said.

Dr Shawkat said they are monitoring the health condition of all local and foreign workers on a regular basis from the very beginning of the pandemic.

"Still some workers got infected..., so we have to be more cautious," he said.

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