

# Lightning strikes kill 7 in Dinajpur

4 teens among dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least seven people, including four teenaged boys, were killed and two others injured as lightnings struck in Dinajpur town and Chirirbandar upazila yesterday afternoon.

Mozaffar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Dinajpur Sadar Police Station, said some boys took shelter in a tin-roofed house in the town's Newtown area when rain began. The boys were playing games on their mobile phones.

Around 3:00pm, the thunderbolt hit, killing two boys on the spot.

The injured were rushed to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital while two others died on the way to the hospital, said the OC.

Conditions of two others were critical, said Kazi Shamim Hossain,

director of the hospital.

In Chirirbandar upazila, several people were catching fish in a pond in Dhakkin Sukdebpur village when the lightning struck around 4:00pm, leaving two people dead, said Moinuddin Shah, chairman of Abdulpur Union Parishad.

Locals took the injured to Chirirbandar Upazila Health Complex where another breathed his last.

The deceased were Sazzad Hossain, 13, son of Aynul Islam, Apon Islam, 14, son of Babul Hossain, Hasan Ali, 12, son of late Siddique Hossain, and Mim, 13, son of Sazu Mondal, who were from Newtown area under Dinajpur municipality, while Nur Islam, 24, son of Mokshed Ali, Abdur Razzak, 23, son of Samu Mia, and Abbas Ali, 25, son of Altaf Ali, who were from Dhakkin Sukdebpur village.



People hold signs as they protest outside the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office to urge the international community to help Afghan refugees, in New Delhi, India yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## 3rd Covid wave imminent

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been vaccinated has been discussed, with most experts of the view they are not prone to severe infections though it can pass the virus to others. Other estimates have said the third wave, seen to be the result of renewed mobility, may prove to be less severe than the second.

The study: "Third Wave Preparedness: Children Vulnerability and Recovery," has looked into the possibility of Covid-affecting children and the required strategies to deal with the pandemic.

The recommendations made by the committee has suggested "a holistic home care model, immediate increase in paediatric medical capacities and prioritising mental health issues among children".

It has mooted structuring of Covid wards in a way that allows children's attendants or parents to safely stay with them through their recovery, reports TNN.

Experts have expressed concern about 82% shortage of paediatricians in primary health centres and 63% vacancies in community health centres (the data cited from a parliamentary standing committee).

"The situation is already dire, and might worsen due to lack of adherence to Covid Appropriate Behaviour (CAB), insufficient medical facilities and lagging vaccination," the report said.

It pointed out how during the second wave, about 60%-70% children hospitalised due to Covid had comorbidities and their low immunity was the primary cause behind many developing MIS-C (Multi-system Inflammatory Syndrome), a "rare but serious condition" developed post-Covid recovery.

"Preparedness is the key, learning from the past two waves. We need to take proactive actions now in anticipation of the third wave. States may start enhancing paediatric Covid care facilities for treatment, ICU, paediatric ambulance, medicine, including paediatricians," said Santosh Kumar, coordinator of the committee of experts and professor head of governance and public policy at NIDM.

The coronavirus has killed at least 4,430,846 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP yesterday.

The Philippines health ministry

## Breathing exercises

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rate can be deemed beneficial. Cycling can be useful, as it requires your whole body to be in motion. It will lead you to breath faster, causing your diaphragm to do double the work.

But if you are not going outdoors, or don't have a cycle, home breathing exercises are a good start. There are many tutorials on YouTube that can help you out. The breathe-store-exhale three times a day is a good idea.

The drill is to breathe in through the nose, and let the air sit inside your lungs for 5-10 seconds. Then exhale

with ease. Repeating this exercise a few times a day can help clear your nasal pathways. To take this exercise a bit further, you might consider lying face down on your bed, with a pillow pressed against your diaphragm. This way, your lungs can accommodate the most amount of oxygen and that strengthens the capacity to pump in, store, and pump out the air.

Breathing exercises will not prevent Covid-19 transmission, but these can provide the body a fighting chance. And in these trying times, any fighting chance is worth considering.

## Ukraine blocks access to popular Russian news sites

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine yesterday blocked the websites of several prominent Russian media outlets in its latest round of sanctions against neighbouring Russia which it has accused of spreading propaganda.

Ties between the ex-Soviet countries have deteriorated sharply since Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula in 2014 and threw its weight behind armed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine and its Western allies have accused the Kremlin of sending troops and weapons to reinforce the separatists and also say Russia is leveraging media as a propaganda tool to stoke the conflict.

A decree from President Volodymyr Zelensky published Sunday ordered

the websites of 12 Russian media organisations to be blocked in Ukraine.

They include the Vedomosti business daily, which was recently taken over by Kremlin-friendly editors, and the Moskovsky Komsomol newspaper, among others.

The decree also ordered the organisations' local bank accounts to be frozen.

The Kremlin criticised the move, describing Ukraine as being on a path towards "strangling freedom of speech" and limiting "unwanted and uncomfortable" information.

Vladimir Soloviev, the head of the Russian Union of Journalists, described the move as the "final cleansing" of Russian media in Ukraine.

## Woman claims SI stole Tk 2.5 lakh

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woman, also a ruling party activist, filed separate complaints against the SI and five others with the complaint cell of the Inspector General of Police.

According to the complaints, the SI and his team went to the woman's home in the Rupnagar area around 11:30 pm on Thursday. They claimed she was a member of a mobile phone stealing gang and that they had information that there are 30-35 stolen devices at the property.

In the name of searching, they ransacked the rooms and took Tk 2.5 lakh, she alleged.

"The SI threatened to implicate me in a drugs case by showing recovery of 50 pieces of yaba if I disclosed the incident to anyone," the woman told The Daily Star, adding that police showed her arrested under DMP Ordinance.

She claimed the two women arrested with her were her tenants.

Contacted, SI Rahman said the allegation of taking money is baseless

and said they carried out the raid based on a specific allegation of prostitution at the address.

However, the woman said she is not involved in any "anti-social activities" and claimed she earned Tk 2.02 lakh by selling three cattle on August 13 and the rest of the money from renting out her rooms and autorickshaws and from the sale of clothes.

"On August 14, a police source named Apu wanted Tk 10,000 after I sold the cattle. As I did not pay the money, he, with the help of police, framed us," the woman said and demanded her money back.

The woman said she was taken in a motorcycle and was kept in front of a shop before the police station.

"There, the police source Apu came and demanded another Tk 2 lakh to settle the matter. I said that I have no more money. After one hour, they took me to the police station," she said.

During a visit to her house yesterday, the two women who were arrested along with the house owner said they

were not involved in any "anti-social activities".

One of them came from her village home in Faridpur on August 17 with her husband and rented the house. Her husband is a vendor who sells crockeries. She said that she would join a garment factory next month.

The other woman, aged 17, is a printing-press worker from Barisal. She said she has been living at the property with her parents and siblings for the last four months. Because of illness, her parents could not come to Dhaka from their village home after Eid.

"They came to the house and asked why we were living alone. They made an indecent proposal and searched our bodies indecently," she alleged.

They said the team had six men -- including two in uniform -- and no woman cop was present during the search, they said.

The allegation against the SI is not true, said Arifur Rahman, the officer-in-charge of Rupnagar Police Station.

## Victims still stranded in India

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Bangladesh police then began an investigation and found a transnational racket, involving some Bangladeshis, trafficking young female TikTok users and forcing them into sex work in India.

Tejgaon police have so far interrogated at least four victims, who managed to return to Bangladesh.

Till date, Indian police have arrested 12 members of the racket, including 11 Bangladeshis, in a case filed with Bengaluru's Ramamurthy Nagar Police Station.

In Bangladesh, law enforcers arrested 20 members of the gang.

Of them, 11 have given confessional statements before magistrates.

Meanwhile, six cases were filed with Hatirjheel Police Station under the human trafficking and the pornography control acts.

Tejgaon police found that one of the arrestees in India -- Sabuj, 30, -- is the kingpin of this racket. Its network stretches to Dubai, UAE and some other Middle Eastern countries.

Hafiz Al Faruq, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon police, said Sabuj and others kept the trafficked women in five or six houses in Bengaluru's Anandapur area and used to send them to different hotels, massage parlours and spa centres in Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kerala and Tamil Nadu for sex work.

Nodi Akter Eri, is the coordinator of this racket. In her Indian Aadhar card, however, her name is Zoya Akter Jannat, while in Dubai, she is known as Laila. She has travelled to Malaysia, Dubai and India, legally and illegally, according to police.

Police said the gang members targeted female TikTok users and trafficked them in the name of providing well-paid jobs there at shopping malls and beauty parlours.

They carried out the trafficking to India through Satkhira and Jashore borders. The racket also has several houses along the border on both sides.

"The trafficked women were given new names once they crossed the

border and were given Aadhar cards. Then, they were sent to different states," added the police official.

About Ridoy, the investigator said he had been using TikTok to traffic women. Police identified at least 500 TikTok groups and IDs, Whatsapp groups and IDs, and Facebook accounts which were linked to Ridoy.

Law enforcers further said Indian police sent the identities of 12 arrestees to Tejgaon police for verification. The four victims, who were lucky enough to escape the clutches of the traffickers, were able to identify them.

Besides, Tejgaon police sent details of seven absconding members of the racket to Bengaluru city police.

In the case filed with Hatirjheel Police Station, the father of a victim said that he was yet to get any trace of his 15-year-old daughter, who was trafficked to India by Ridoy's racket in March this year.

Police said they are trying to find the whereabouts of the untraced victims in India.

## Accused asks for death by firing squad

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wanted his execution by the firing squad.

Ahamedul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of police, who investigated Ansar al Islam for a long time, said the members believe that execution of death by the firing squad is a glorious.

The accused must have asked for such an execution for this reason, he added.

Assistant Public Prosecutor Golam Sharuar Khan told The Daily Star that 24 prosecution witnesses gave their depositions during the trial of the case.

During yesterday's closing arguments, the prosecutors told the court that the charges against the

accused had been proven and sought capital punishment for them.

Lawyers representing the accused sought acquittal for their clients.

Besides Sium, Mozammel Hossain Saimon, Sheikh Abdullah alias Jubair, and Asadullah alias Foyjul were at the court yesterday.

The other accused, (sacked) Major Zia who goes by the alias of Syed Mohammad Ziaul Haque, Akram Hossain, and Sabbirul Haque Chowdhury, and Junaid Ahmed are still on the run.

On April 25, 2016, former USAID official Xulhaz Mannan and his friend Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy were hacked to death at Xulhaz's Kalabagan flat.

Minhaz Mannan Emon, elder brother of Xulhaz, filed a case accusing

unidentified assailants with Kalabagan Police Station that day.

Inspector Muhammad Monirul Islam of CTC on July 23, 2019, pressed charges against the eight accused at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court of Dhaka.

On November 19 last year, the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal framed charges against them.

On February 10 this year, the same tribunal sentenced Zia, Akram, Mozammel and Abdullah to death for murdering Jagriti Prokashoni publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan.

On February 16, Zia, Akram, Mozammel and Sium were sentenced to death for killing writer-blogger Avijit Roy near the TSC of Dhaka University.

## Shut down Savar tannery estate

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does not have the facility to treat solid waste, which includes heavy metals and chromium.

This solid waste is being dumped into the river without any treatment, causing pollution and severe harm to the environment, he said.

The committee chief added that the Ministry of Environment will immediately send a letter to the Ministry of Industry asking the latter to close the tannery industrial estate in Hemayetpur.

Saber said due to the harm the estate was causing the environment, the Department of Environment (DOE) last year did not renew environmental clearance licences for operation of the estate.

"The committee today [Monday] in its meeting also recommended that the Department of Environment not renew environment clearance to the estate unless it complies with all the indicators and achieves the capacity to treat all the waste generated in the industrial estate," he added.

The committee chief said the enforcement team of DoE visited the

estate and witnessed the sorry state of waste treatment.

Members of the JS committee had also visited the area and witnessed a similar picture.

Briefing reporters, Saber said the DoE could have fined the estate for polluting the environment.

"But the parliamentary committee opined that imposing fines is not working. The department concerned fined the estate several times for polluting the environment, but they used to appeal against the fine," added Saber.

The committee chief also said according to the law, Tk 50 can be fined for dumping of each cubic metre of waste.

"In the last three years, the estate has dumped around 1.60 lakh cubic metres of waste into the river," Saber said.

"What was the point in relocating the tannery industry from Hazaribagh to Savar if this industry pollutes the environment," added the committee chief.

Mustaq Hossain, chairman of

BSCIC, said they will take the next course of action after going through the recommendations of the parliamentary body.

There are around 160 tanneries at present in the leather industrial park, sources at the meeting said.

Tanneries and backward and forward linkage industries related to leather goods were accommodated in the new industrial park after it was moved from Hazaribagh in 2003.

5,000 ACRES OF FOREST LAND RECOVERED IN 9 MONTHS

Officials of the forest department yesterday informed the parliamentary committee that they have recovered around 5,000 acres of forest land from grabbers in nine months between October last year and June this year.

Grabbers have taken around 2.57 lakh acres of forest in different parts of the country.

The committee has asked the forest department to set a target of recovering around 50,000 acres of forest land from grabbers in the next two years, Saber said.

## Bodies of 398

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seven lakh Bangladeshis live in different cities in the Jeddah region. The consulate general covers seven of the 13 provinces in the Kingdom.

According to the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh, around 22.8 lakh Bangladeshis are currently employed in Saudi Arabia.

In a report published last month, the consulate general mentioned that at least 3,437 Bangladeshis died in Saudi Arabia between July 2019 and June 2021.

Of them, 2,448 were buried in the Gulf country with the consent of their families back home.

## New Delhi opens

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"Today is a big day for Delhi in its fight for clean air against pollution," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said after the inauguration near the busy shopping area of Connaught Place.

The installation "is being looked at in an experimental way. We will analyse the data and if it's effective, more towers will be built across Delhi," Kejriwal added.

The tower cost \$2 million and critics say erecting a sufficient number to clean the air substantially across the city would cost huge amounts of public money, and that efforts would be better directed at the sources of the smog.

These include vehicle exhaust, heavy and small-scale industry, construction activity, the combustion of waste and fuel, and in winter the burning of crops in neighbouring regions.

"Let's just be clear that this is futile, an absolute waste," Karthik Ganesan from the Council on Energy, Environment and Water told AFP.

"Now that taxpayers' money has been spent, let Delhi be the test case for all other Indian cities... to ensure no other city spends on such ideas which we can't afford," he added.

India has 14 of the world's 15 most polluted cities, according to the World Health Organization.

A 2020 study in the Lancet found there were 1.67 million deaths in the country attributable to air pollution in 2019 including almost 17,500 in Delhi.

In 2018 China built a much larger 60-metre smog tower in the polluted city of Xian, but the experiment has not spread to other cities so far.

## Indira writes

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Bahini spokesman said the Mukti Bahini was fully prepared to meet any fresh offensive by the Pakistani forces after the monsoon. The spokesman estimated the Pakistani toll of dead and injured in all sectors of Bangladesh at about 30,000.

He pointed out that the Martial Law regime had no civil administration anywhere in Bangladesh except a puppet show in Dhaka.

BANGLADESH YOUTH CAMP INAUGURATED

A Bangladeshi youth camp jointly sponsored by Gandhi Peace Foundation and Bangladesh Volunteer Service Corps was inaugurated in Calcutta.

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

## They'll to be

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M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman passed the order during the hearing of the mother's writ petition and an application submitted by the father Imran Sharif, seeking its directive to hand over the children to their custody.

The court ordered the authorities of the Victim Support Centre in Tejgaon to produce the children -- Nakano Jasmine Malika, 11, and Nakano Laila Lina, 10, before it on August 31, as per an earlier directive.

It also directed the authorities to allow the mother to visit them from 8:00am to 1:00pm and the father from 3:00pm to 8:00pm every day until further orders.

The Criminal Investigation Department of Police took the children into their custody yesterday (Sunday). Eriko's lawyer Shishir Manir told The Daily Star.

The HC also asked Shishir and Imran's lawyer Fawzia Karim Firoze to play effective roles in resolving the matter.

On August 19, the bench directed Imran to produce his daughters before it on August 31 after Eriko filed the writ petition for the custody of their children.

Eriko, 46, a doctor based in Tokyo, came to Bangladesh on July 18 this year and filed the writ with the HC, seeking a directive on Imran, 58, to hand over the children to her.

She said she and Imran got married on July 11, 2008. Imran submitted a divorce notice to a Japanese court on January 18 this year. However, he did not appear before the court on scheduled dates for the hearings.

On January 21, Imran picked up the children from their school in Tokyo and came to Bangladesh on February 21.

She added that Imran also harassed her by preventing her from seeing or contacting the children.