



Even if the days are somewhat warm, the nights of this winter season have started to bear down on the mercury. In this biting cold, a heavy layer of blankets is a must. Unfortunately, this is beyond the reach of the city's homeless people, who spend their nights shrivelling under next to nothing. This photo was taken yesterday from under Khilgaon flyover in Shahjahanpur area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Boost trade, improve service

Momen tells country's missions

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen wants heads of Bangladesh missions abroad to play a bigger role to boost trade and investment, and improve the quality of services that the missions offer to expatriates.

He also alerted the heads about the prime minister's zero tolerance policy towards corruption and advised them to not be a part of any incident that may harm the reputation of the missions, the foreign ministry and Bangladesh.

The minister made the suggestions during his recent virtual interactions with ambassadors and high commissioners of Bangladesh.

Momen said steps must be taken to improve the quality of services, increase investment flow to the country and boost Bangladesh's trade with partner countries. About presence "brokers" around some of the missions in the Middle East, Malaysia and Italy, the minister suggested that Bangladesh envoys act decisively against those brokers.



# Roads even more unsafe

## Reports of two organisations reveal sharp rise in accidents, fatalities last year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country witnessed a sharp rise in road crashes and fatalities last year, indicating that the road safety situation, which came to the fore yet again recently, deteriorated further, said two organisations.

Although the exact number of crashes and casualties differ between the reports of Nirapad Sarak Chai and Road Safety Foundation, they found similar reasons behind the rise.

Through holding separate press conferences yesterday, both organisations revealed their reports, which were prepared using different media reports.

Lack of monitoring and enforcement of traffic laws, reckless driving, unfit vehicles, unhealthy competition between drivers, and the increasing number of motorcycles are major factors behind the rise, they said.

Road Safety Foundation said among the deceased, more than 82 percent were between 18 and 65 years old, those who belonged to the most productive segment of the population. A total of 803 students died in accidents.

The organisation, using tools of International Road Assessment Programme, estimated that the country incurred Tk 9,631 crore in losses, 0.3 percent of the country's GDP, due to road accidents.

Ilias Kanchan, chairperson of Nirapad Sarak Chai, presented the organisation's report at Jatiya Press Club, while Prof AI Mahub Uddin Ahmed, chairperson of the foundation, read out its report at Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

**ROAD SAFETY FOUNDATION'S REPORT**  
A total of 6,284 people were killed in 5,371 road crashes last year.

Of the deceased, 35.23 percent were



killed in crashes involving bikes, 34.23 percent were pedestrians, and 12.69 percent were drivers and helpers.

At least 5,431 people were killed in 4,735 accidents in 2020.

Around 38.50 percent of accidents occurred in national highways, 31 percent in regional highways, and the rest in district and village roads.

Among those killed, 5,192 people were between 18 and 65 years old, Prof Mahub said.

"Most people who were killed or injured were the families' breadwinners. As a result, these families fell into deep trouble financially... But the government does not provide any compensation or have any steps for rehabilitation," he said.

Prof Hadiuzzaman, director of Accident Research Institute at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, at the briefing said it is not possible to bring discipline in the transport sector with technical and technological solutions. Rather, strong political will and proper

planning are required.

**WHAT NIRAPAD SARAK CHAI SAYS**

Ilias Kanchan said operation of public transport was suspended for a long period last year due to Covid-19, and thus, it was expected that the number of accidents would decrease.

"But that was proven wrong in our statistics," said the actor-turned road safety crusader.

He said 4,289 people were killed in 3,793 road crashes last year. In contrast, 3,800 people died in 3,232 crashes in 2020.

He said when the country witnessed a major road safety movement in 2018, students were sent back home after being promised safe roads, but that promise has not materialised.

Both organisations gave similar recommendations to reduce road crashes, including properly implementing Road Transport Act-2018, training drivers, making separate lanes for slow-moving vehicles, and stopping extortion in the transport sector.

## 'It's unethical, unprecedented'

### TIB slams BB decision to allow Padma Bank to 'hide' its losses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh has expressed concern over Bangladesh Bank's decision to allow Padma Bank to "hide" its losses from the balance sheet.

In a statement released yesterday, TIB Executive Director Ittekkharuzzaman termed the step "unethical" and "unprecedented" in the country's banking sector.

The graft watchdog said the central bank allowed this as a condition so that Padma Bank, previously known as Farmers Bank, can attract foreign investment to overcome its accumulated capital crisis. However, there is no sign of its fortunes changing, as it keeps counting losses.

Amidst this, the bank's hiding of losses in the balance sheet is not only unethical but akin to fraudulence, he added.

Bangladesh Bank on January 4 allowed Padma Bank, under two conditions, to list its accumulated loss as "intangible loss" so that it does not show up in its balance sheet.

## KASHIMPUR JAIL

### Cellphone seized from death-row convict Nur Hossain

UNB, Gazipur

Kashimpur Central Jail authorities in Gazipur have seized a cellphone from Nur Hossain, a death-row convict in the Narayanganj 7-murder case. Following this, they have formed a three-member committee to probe the matter.

Nur, former Narayanganj City Corporation councillor, has been in jail since 2017 after he was sentenced to death in the case.

There are three inmates -- including Nur (50) -- in the jail's condemn cell. Tipped off, the jail authorities recovered the phone after searching the cell on January 5, said Superintendent Abdul Jalil.

The probe committee has been asked to submit its report by January 11, he said yesterday.

A Narayanganj court in 2017 sentenced 26 people, including three sacked Rab officials and Nur, to death and nine others to different jail terms in two cases filed over the murder.

## Two shot in Rayerbazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least three people were injured, two by bullets, after gunmen opened fire to takeover a rickshaw garage at Dhaka's Rayerbazar yesterday morning.

Injured Khokon Mia (34), Arif Hossain (35) and Younus Sarder (55) were undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Arif was shot in the leg, while Khokon was shot in the abdomen and was in critical condition as of yesterday evening, said DMCH Police Outpost In-Charge Inspector Bachchu Mia.

Arif said they had rented the garage, which stands on 22 kathas of land at Sadek Khan Road, from one Masud and Nazrul. "We sought some time, when the duo last night [Friday] came to the garage and asked us to evacuate it. Around 11:00am today [yesterday], they along with 20 others came and opened fire," he said.

OC Muktaruzzaman of Hazaribagh Police Station, said they are investigating the incident.

PRAYER TIMING  
JAN 9



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5:30	12:45	4:00	5:30	7:00
Jamaat	6:05	1:15	4:15	5:35	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Talks on EC to go nowhere: Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday said the ongoing dialogue on the reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC) will turn out to be a pointless exercise since it is being done as part of the government's tactics to cling onto power.

"The current government has started resorting to various tactics to hang onto power again. The president is holding the talks... but many political parties have already boycotted it, saying that it won't bear fruit," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Speaking at a human chain, he also said the current dialogue initiated by the president is pointless.

The BNP leader said the government must completely free Khaleda Zia and hand over the power to a neutral government to "restore" people's voting rights and overcome the country's political "crisis".

Once the polls-time government is established, he said it will form an impartial EC to hold a credible national election. "This is our clear message and this is the only way to resolve the crisis."

Nari O Shishu Odhikar Forum, a platform of BNP, arranged the programme in front of Jatiya Press Club, demanding Khaleda Zia's better treatment abroad.



To buy new books for the new year, college and university students have been flocking to Nilkhet's book market over the last week. While this is good for shop owners, neither them nor the customers were seen to be particularly worried about maintaining health guidelines, even as Covid-19 cases keep rising across the country. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## 'Protect rights of minorities'

### Oikya Parishad gets new committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik, Ushatan Talukder and Nirmal Rozario have been declared presidents of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad.

Advocate Rana Dasgupta was made the general secretary of the parishad. The announcement came on the second day of the parishad's two-day 10th triennial council, held in the capital yesterday.

"Our aim is to work for establishing a secular and democratic Bangladesh, as dreamt by Bangabandhu," said Rana Dasgupta.

He demanded that the government take necessary measures to protect the rights of minorities.