

3 die after car rams into train

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

Three people were killed as a private car rammed into the wheels of a moving train at a level crossing in Dinajpur's Birampur upazila yesterday morning. Two of the dead were identified as Md Hafisul Islam, 44, and Md Masum Islam, 39, driver of the car, from Rangpur's Badarganj upazila.

Md Saifuzzaman, the gateman of the level crossing, said the car drove into the Kurigram-bound Kurigram Express intercity train around 6:40am. He added there were two barriers at the level crossing but were removed for development work on the road. The barriers were replaced by a rope, which would be raised to stop vehicles from crossing when a train would pass. "However, the rope was not visible due to dense fog yesterday morning."

The car tore through the rope and rammed into the train from the side, he said, adding that the vehicle then flew off around 100 meters away, throwing all the passengers out. They all died on the spot, he added.

Mohidul Islam, in charge of Hili Government Railway Police (GRP) Station, said Birampur police, on information, rushed to the spot, while GRP officials also went to the area and sent the bodies to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Md Mizanur Rahman, the stationmaster of Birampur Railway Station, said the process of installing new barriers at the crossing was underway.

Ashim Kumar Talukdar General Manager of Western Railway Zone in Pakshey said that a 4-member probe body has been formed making head Divisional Manager to investigate the incident.

According to the media reports and officials of the Western Railway Zone of Bangladesh Railway, at least 11 such accidents occurred throughout January in various districts, including Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Chapaiwabganj and Natore. At least 14 people have died.



The wreckage of a car that flew at least a 100 meters away from a level crossing after ramming into a train in Dinajpur's Birampur upazila yesterday morning. Three people died in the accident.

PHOTO: STAR

Filling stations threaten strike from February 17

They demand their commissions raised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A faction of the country's petrol pump owners yesterday threatened to go on strike from February 17 across the country if the government does not increase their commission.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Petroleum Dealers, Distributors, Agents and Petrol Pump Owners Association placed a six-point demand including a rise in their commission to 7.5 percent from 2.92 percent.

The government increased the commission by only Tk 0.20 per litre while they increased the fuel price at Tk 15 per litre, said Mizanur Rahman Ratan, general secretary of the association's faction.

The ministry of power, energy and mineral resources and the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation decided on their own to reduce their losses but the people who conducted the entire process found nothing. "All the businessmen in this sector rejected the decision."

He said that they spoke with the higher-ups of the government several times but failed to get a solution.



"We are in the last stage. If the government does not fulfil our demand by February 16, we will stop taking fuel from the depots from the next day," Ratan added.

Sajjadul Karim Kabul, president of the association, was also present at the press conference held at the Dhaka Reporters Unity.

The petrol pumps sell 2,000 litres of diesel on an average a day, according to the association. If the Tk 0.20 commission is implemented, they will earn Tk 12,000 extra in a month, which is too little for them to survive.

However, Mohammad Nazmul Haque, president of another faction of the association, Kabul and Ratan had been suspended for various reasons including stealing fuel.

"We have the same demands -- we also want a 7.5 percent commission. But we are talking with the government," he told The Daily Star. He, however, said a strike is not on the cards. "It's the irrigation season and we can't take such a headlong decision. Such kind of threats by the suspended persons will not be accepted."

12 migrants 'pushed back' by Greece died at border: Turkey

AFP, Istanbul

Ankara yesterday accused Greece of allowing 12 migrants to die in the winter cold after stripping them of their clothes and then pushing them back across the Turkish border.

The charges from Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu threaten to escalate simmering tensions between the rival members of the Nato defence alliance.

They also highlighted Ankara's concern that the European Union was not doing enough to support Turkey -- which hosts an estimated five million migrants and refugees -- in the face of a potential new flow of people from Afghanistan.

Soylu posted blurred images on Twitter showing bodies lying by the roadside.

Schools to stay closed

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do everything in their power to keep it from further disrupting children's education. Keep schools open," said Unicef Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

An estimated 616 million children are currently affected by full or partial school closures, she said.

Partial classroom teaching resumed in the country on September 12 last year after a 543-day closure caused by the pandemic. This was one of the longest school closures in the world.

As many as 39.63 lakh primary and 39 lakh secondary students are at the risk of learning loss due to the long school closure, according to a joint study by Power and Participation Research Centre and Brac Institute of Governance and Development published on October 19 last year.

The closure left academic calendars in disarray.

The government cancelled Primary

Education Completion Examinations and Junior School Certificate exams for 2020 and 2021 as well as the HSC exams of 2020.

Last year's SSC and HSC exams were held on curtailed syllabuses with fewer subjects.

Following the closure, the government launched TV education programmes through the state-run Sangsad Television channel for secondary and primary students. Later, it asked all schools to introduce online education.

Most of the students in urban areas have access to learning through the internet, but the digital divide has so far proved to be a great disadvantage for the underprivileged learners, mainly for a lack of devices and poor access to the internet.

At the end of last year, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education asked all secondary schools to start giving assignments to students.

7 years on no answer

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Families and locals said all three were aged between 14 and 15, although the police report put their age at 19 and 20.

Talking to the Daily Star recently, family members said no one contacted them to inform them about the submission of the final report or the court's rejection of their case.

"I went to the police station, to the court, and to many other places seeking justice. But I am yet to get any," said Jyotsna Robi Das, mother of Sumon, who filed the case with the court.

Mohammad Humayun Kabir, the family's lawyer, said the probe report was not submitted to the court till November 2017.

He said he did not follow the case after that.

"I want justice. But I don't know where to go to get justice," said Halim Khatun, Robin's grandmother who brought him up.

Noted criminal law expert Khurshid Alam Khan said the victims' families could file an appeal seeking further probe, but the families said they are too poor to pay for the expenses required for the legal battle.

Both Halima and Jyotsna earn their living by working as domestic workers.

PROBE IN QUESTION
In the probe report, the investigation officer mentioned that the three victims fell to the ground in an indiscriminate shooting by their associates targeting the chasing mob. They were later beaten by the mob

before police rescued them and took them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where they later died.

A group of 10 miscreants, including the victims, randomly fired on the local people when they (locals) chased them (miscreants) during their arson attack towards the cars with petrol and



ROBIN

cocktail bombs in a violent hartal called by the BNP-led 20-party alliance, said the probe report.

However, several media outlets, quoting eyewitnesses, had reported at the time that no mob beating took place in Mirpur area that day.

The police report termed them "mischievous bombers" although there were no criminal records against them in the local police station.

At least 10 locals told The Daily Star late last month that the three boys had no criminal records, although they would sometimes join political gatherings.

Families said police were not sincere enough to investigate the case and find the killers.

In the seizure list of

the case, for example, police did not include the bloodstained ropes believed to have been used in tying up the victims' hands, the cartridges or the bullets that were found by The Daily Star correspondents on the spot the morning after the incident.

Contacted, Mia Kutubur Rahman Choudhury,



SUMON

additional SP at the Police Bureau of Investigation, who oversaw the investigation, told The Daily Star on January 20 that he could not comment on the case without looking at the documents.

WHAT HAPPENED
On January 5, 2015, the BNP and its allies launched a movement to dislodge the government, protesting the national election that the party had boycotted.

The violence, mostly arson attacks on public transport in Dhaka and other parts of the country, claimed at least 75 lives.

Around 7:00pm on February 22, locals caught the three victims suspecting them to be arsonists, said witnesses.

Later, around 10:00pm, some 10 to 12 locals took

the boys to an alley of Baishbari area after tying up their hands, they added.

Several locals said they had seen police carrying away the three bullet-riddled bodies from an alleyway there.

A woman, who lives in a building beside the alley, said there was no mob there.

"There was no crowd. I only heard multiple gunshots rock the area with brief pauses in-between," she said.

At least a dozen other locals supported her version of the event.

However, police told the media after the incident that they found the three critically injured boys in a mob beating at Kazipara, and they died at DMCH in the early hours of February 23.

The police case filed on the same day said three "unidentified arsonists" were beaten and shot to death by a mob.

Omicron

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dead were vaccinated and how many were not.

In January, the country reported 322 Covid deaths and 73% of them were of unvaccinated patients, said Nazmul.

Meanwhile, 36 Covid-19 patients died in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday -- the highest since September 22 last year.

During the same period, the DGHS has also reported 12,193 confirmed cases.

The positivity rate was recorded 27.43 percent after testing 44,451 samples countrywide.

Shab-e-Meraj on Feb 28

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Shab-e-Meraj will be observed in the country on the night of February 28.

The National Moon Sighting Committee took the decision at a meeting at the Islamic Foundation office at Baitul Mukarram yesterday evening.

On the night of 26th Rajab every year, Muslims observe Shab-e-Meraj when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) embarked on a special journey to meet Allah.

One killed as bridge collapses in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Bailey bridge collapsed along with a rice-laden truck in Bandarban's Rowangchhari upazila around 2:00pm yesterday, killing the driver on the spot.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Gafur, a 55-year-old man from Chattogram's Satkania upazila, said Abdul Mannan, officer-in-charge of Rowangchhari Police Station.

The vehicle was on its way to the district's Ruma upazila from Bandarban Sadar, he said, adding that communication between the two upazilas remained snapped after the incident.

Charges accepted against 'Shishu Bokta' in DSA case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday accepted charges against two people, including "Shishu Bokta" Rafiqul Islam Madani, in a case filed under the Digital Security Case.

Judge Mohammad Ash Sams Joglul Hossain of Dhaka Cyber Tribunal passed the order rejecting Madani's bail petition, which claimed he did not make any derogatory remarks on the president and the prime minister.

Madani is in jail since April last year. The other accused, Mahmudul Hasan Murtuza, was granted permanent bail by the tribunal.

It relieved accused Mohammad Amzad, HM Lokman Hossain and Tawhid Islam of the charges as the investigation officer did not find their involvement in the case.

On April 8 last year, one Syed Adnan Shanto filed the case with Motijheel Police Station.

Contract signed with Russia for Bangabandhu-2 satellite

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Satellite Company Ltd (BSCL) yesterday signed a cooperation contract with Russian company Glavkosmos for launching Bangabandhu Satellite 2 within December next year.

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), both the parties will work on detail technical and financial issues regarding construction and launch of the satellite, said BSCL Managing Director Md Shafiqul Islam. "This will convert into an agreement after due diligence of financial, technical and legal aspects," he said.

Glavkosmos is a subsidiary of the State Space Corporation Roscosmos of Russia.

BSCL Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Shahjahan Mahmood and Glavkosmos Director General Dmitry Loskutov signed the contract on behalf of their respective sides.

Held hostage

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providing the services at the 69-bed dialysis centre of NIKDU since November 28, 2016, and at the 31-bed dialysis centre at CMCH since February 28, 2017, said Sandor sources.

As per the PPP agreement, Sandor is supposed to provide 21,450 dialysis sessions per year for Tk 5.30cr. The amount would increase by five percent every year as per the deal.

Sandor officials claimed it provided additional 95,696 sessions in 2020 and 2021 after being asked by the DGHS, but they were not paid for the extra sessions.

Half the annual fees for the regular services -- Tk 2.65cr -- were also not paid, they alleged.

"DGHS owes us Tk 23 crore. We had notified them about it six days before suspending the services, but they did not give us any solution," Rajeev Sindhi, managing director of Sandor Dialysis Services Bangladesh (Pvt) Ltd, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said 360 sessions are conducted every day at the two public hospitals.

NIKDU Director Dr

Mizanur Rahman said, "We made all regular payments. But there is a dispute over the fees for the extra sessions. Sandor resumed the services on our request."

"If Sandor stops providing the services, we might have to think about alternatives. But we are trying to find a permanent solution."

Dr Farid Hossain Miah, director (hospitals and clinics) at the DGHS, said, "We make all the payments regularly following the due process."

About the extra sessions, he said Sandor did not properly take permission from DGHS in this regard.

According to an estimate of 2019, around 30,000 patients needed kidney dialysis in the country. For them, there are only 130 private and public dialysis centres, most of which are situated in the capital.

Cost for each dialysis session at a private hospital ranged between Tk 2,800 and Tk 7,000, The Daily Star has learnt after talking to different hospitals across the capital.

The government launched the PPP deal to cut the cost to Tk 400-600 by providing subsidies.

Man dies by suicide

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Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Ramna Division), said the man's wife and son live in Australia.

"He has been suffering from cancer since 2017. He incurred loss in his businesses," added the police official.

"He might have died by suicide for these reasons," said the DC.

Actor Riaz and his wife were at the house when this report was filed around 11:30pm last night.

They were not in a state to speak to the media.