

2 brothers die in Oman car crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Bangladeshi brothers died in a road accident in Oman's Sinaw city, around 200km from Muscat, early Tuesday.

Two other teenagers, also Bangladeshi, were injured in the accident. One of them is in critical condition.

The dead were identified as Jara, 14, and Adib, 12, originally from Mymensingh. Their mother is a doctor at Sinaw Hospital.

Injured Jihad, 14, son of Sheikh expatriate businessman Jasim, took his father's car out around 3:00am, according to the Bangladesh embassy and community organisers.

He picked up Jara, Adib and Atiq, son of expatriate businessman Md Karim, from their homes.

As the roads were empty, Jihad drove at high speed. He lost control of the steering and crashed the car on Adam Road, leaving Jara and Adib dead on the spot.

Jihad was taken to Muscat's Khouda Hospital last afternoon in critical condition. Atiq was admitted to a local hospital in Sinaw. The bodies of the two brothers were kept in a local morgue.

They are all students of Bangladesh School in Sinaw. None of the four had driver's licenses.

Pollution causing more deaths than Covid: UN

REUTERS, Geneva

Pollution by states and companies is contributing to more deaths globally than Covid-19, a UN environmental report said, calling for "immediate and ambitious action" to ban some toxic chemicals.

The report said pollution from pesticides, plastics and electronic waste is causing widespread human rights violations and at least 9 million premature deaths a year, and that the issue is largely being overlooked.



Ukrainian troops take part in a military drill outside the city of Rivne yesterday. Ukraine staged military drills and defiant displays of flag-waving patriotism yesterday as Nato warned Russia is continuing to mass forces for a possible invasion.

PHOTO: AFP

318 illegal brick kilns still polluting Dhaka air

DoE DG tells HC; experts say it's being under reported

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 318 illegal brick kilns are still running and polluting the environment in Dhaka and four other surrounding districts - Gazipur, Manikganj, Narayanganj and Munshiganj.

Mobile courts also shut down 95 others since November last year to January this year, Abdul Hamid, director general of Department of Environment, told the High Court yesterday.

Around 800 brick kilns, which were polluting the environment in Dhaka and its surrounding districts, have been closed since 2019 to December 2021, he told the court during the virtual hearing of a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh in 2019 seeking necessary directives to curb air pollution.

The DG submitted a compliance report to the HC saying that the DoE is conducting mobile court drives against the illegal brick kilns and collecting compensation from their owners for damaging the environment.

The DoE has been running ads on national dailies to make people aware of effectively control, reduction and prevention of the air pollution and about their responsibilities in this regard.

A draft of Air Pollution Control Rules-2022 has been prepared for effectively controlling and reducing the air pollution and the draft has been sent to the public administration ministry on January 30 for taking the next course of action, he said in the report.

According to the compliance report, there are 112 illegal brick kilns in Dhaka, 11 in Manikganj, 26 in Munshiganj and 123 in Narayanganj.

However, the deputy commissioner of Dhaka told the HC that 128 illegal brick kilns are running in Dhaka after 27 were shut down.

The DC of Gazipur informed the HC that the district has 46 such brick kilns.

The bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Md Iqbal Kabir Lytton asked the DCs to submit the lists of illegal brick kilns

through swearing affidavits and fixed February 23 for further hearing on the petition.

Deputy Attorney General Kazi Mynul Hasan told The Daily Star that his office would submit the affidavits to the HC next week.

Manjil Morshed, petitioner of the writ, told The Daily Star that they knew about the brick kilns being operated illegally. "All we wanted to have is the exact number of the kilns and break the hibernation of DoE officials. Now we want the DoE to shut down the kilns."

Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, told The Daily Star that the actual number of the brick kilns was far higher than the number submitted to the court.

Many of the kilns have been built encroaching on Dhaka's river. The coal used at the kilns have high level of toxic sulfur dioxide. They are also destroying the topsoil, which is crucial for rice production, he said.

Schools can open

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circular yesterday.

Earlier in the day, Education Minister Dipu Moni said the government is going to resume in-person academic activities in all educational institutions this month.

Speaking at a programme in Chandpur, she said they were yet to fix the date for reopening of educational institutions.

She said they would talk with the prime minister about the matter. "But all students will have to maintain Covid health protocol."

The minister's comments came two days after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said educational institutions would reopen at the end of this month if the Covid-19 situation improved.

Following a sharp rise in the Covid infection rate in the country, the government shut down all schools and colleges for two weeks from January 21. The closure was later extended to February 21.

However, Unicef on January 28 urged governments across the world to keep schools open to avert a learning catastrophe and put children back on the learning track.

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 in the country were 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.

Long wait for relocation

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The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) approved the project, spanning 50 acres and worth Tk 201.81cr, on October 30, 2010.

In the face of protests from locals over land acquisition and following the Churihatta tragedy, BSCIC changed the project site to Sirajdikhan of Munshiganj.

In April 2020, Ecne approved a revised project worth Tk 1,615 crore as the number of plots increased to 2,154 from 946. The area of land to be acquired also rose to 310 acres.

CritiCare Hospital.

It was left to two Bengalis -- actor Mithun Chakrabarty and singer-composer Lahiri -- to introduce and popularise disco dance and songs in Bollywood in the 1970s and 80s. Any list of chart-busting and foot-tapping song and dancing track in Bollywood will be incomplete without Mithun and Bappi.

Lahiri was under treatment for a month and was discharged just last Monday. But his health deteriorated on Tuesday and he was brought back to the hospital.

"He had multiple health issues. He died due to OSA (obstructive sleep apnea) shortly before midnight," Dr Deepak Namjoshi, director of the hospital, said yesterday.

Bappi is survived by

Project Director Hafizur Rahman said the land filling suffered delays due to disruptions in supply of earth, collected from Chandpur, over the last few months.

Nurul Mostofa Khokha, president of Bangladesh Chemical and Perfumery Merchant Association, said they submitted all necessary papers to the project authorities for 1,500 plots two years ago.

"We were promised 200 acres of land there. All we need is land. Once everything is ready, we will relocate our businesses there," he said.

He said they were facing

difficulties in running their businesses as the government stopped renewing their licences after the Churihatta incident.

Shamim Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Plastic Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association, told The Daily Star that they would relocate their businesses to the site once the land development work was over.

"We are interested in relocating our structures there. We expect the land price will be reasonable. Otherwise, it will worsen our woes," he said.

The court, in response

to a writ petition, also ordered the authorities to submit a report, stating the progress in setting up permanent and temporary chemical storage sites, by April 17.

Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association, said the government's decision to set up two temporary sites for the relocation was nothing but a mockery with the lives of people".

"They should have accelerated the work in Sirajdikhan where all chemical factories and industries would move. Delays in the relocation

process means negligence for the lives of Old Dhaka people who have faced one tragedy after another," she told The Daily Star.

Essentials'

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increase in the prices of goods at the wholesale markets, Islam said.

In Bangladesh, Ramadan is scheduled to begin on April 2.

However, his import cost for commodities has also gone up of late.

For instance, it cost Islam Tk 40,326 per tonne to import dried peas in January, an increase of 37.6 percent from a year earlier.

Similarly, the import cost of chickpea was Tk 46,000 per tonne last year; this year, it was Tk 54,126 per tonne, he said.

As a result, the prices of all essential commodities have started creeping up.

The wholesale price of soybean oil has increased by Tk 350 per maund (about 37.3 kilograms) in a month to about Tk 6,100.

Similarly, palm oil now costs about Tk 5,600 to Tk 5,650 per maund, an increase of about Tk 400-Tk 420 in a month.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "Shocked to hear about the untimely demise of legendary singer and composer Bappi Lahiri. A boy from our North Bengal, he rose to the heights of fame and success by the strength of his talent and hard work, and made us proud with his contribution in the field of music."

The wholesale price of chickpea has increased by Tk 150 per maund to about Tk 2,150. Similarly, dried peas are selling at Tk 20.30 per maund higher at about Tk 1,700 per maund.

Khairuzzaman released 6 days after arrest in KL

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Former Bangladeshi high commissioner Mohamed Khairuzzaman, who was arrested six days ago from his residence in Kuala Lumpur, was released yesterday.

Khairuzzaman's lawyer Ngeow Chow Ying said no conditions were tied to his release.

Following his arrest, Kuala Lumpur said there was a request from Bangladesh for his arrest but Dhaka said he was arrested for violating immigration laws.

5 kidnappers arrested, 4 fishermen rescued in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chatogram

Rapid Action Battalion-7 said they arrested five kidnappers and rescued four abducted fishermen from a fishing trawler on Tuesday night.

Rab claimed the gang was active in the Bay of Bengal's Chatogram Hatiya channel where they kidnapped deep sea fishermen for ransom.

The arrestees are ringleader Kamal, 35, Nur Nabi, 26, Shameem, 24, Anni, 31 and Ferdous Majhi, 35.

While addressing a press conference yesterday Lieutenant Colonel M Yousuf of Rab-7 said upon information from the arrestees, they rescued the fishermen from a trawler moored in the Karnaphuli river. A case was lodged in this connection.

Bangladesh-US joint air force exercise from Feb 20

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Air forces from the US and Bangladesh will participate in a joint exercise in Dhaka and Sylhet next week to bolster regional stability.

According to a statement of Pacific Air Forces on February 11, US airmen from 374th Airlift Wing, Yokota Air Base in Japan, and Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) will participate in exercise "Cope South 22" from February 20-25 at BAF Kurmitola Cantonment, Dhaka and operating location-Alpha in Sylhet for a Pacific Air Forces-sponsored bilateral tactical airlift exercise.

Approximately 77 US airmen along with two US Air Force C-130J Super Hercules from 36th Airlift Squadron will join 300 Bangladesh armed forces members and two Bangladeshi C-130Js for the exercise.

10th grader abducted in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Police in Patuakhali are trying to rescue a female class 10 student and arrest a 22-year-old man accused of kidnapping her on February 2.

The victim's mother filed a kidnapping case with Rangabali Police Station on February 3, accusing one Russell Mridha and two others unnamed. She also said the accused had demanded Tk 50,000 as ransom.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Rangabali Police Station Md Jaglul Hasan yesterday said a case was filed in this regard and efforts are on to arrest the accused and rescue the victim. He however did not know about the ransom.

The victim's mother, came to Patuakhali Press Club on Tuesday to seek journalists' help.

Full versions of these stories are available at www.thedailystar.net

Alvida, disco king

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his wife Chitrani, whom he considered his muse, and daughter Reema, also a singer, and son, composer Bappa Lahiri. His funeral will be held on Thursday at Juhu's Pawan Hans crematorium on his musician-son Bappa Lahiri's arrival from Los Angeles, US, said Lahiri's son-in-law Govind Bansal.

"It's a deeply sad moment for us. Our beloved Bappa Da has left for heavenly abode last midnight... We are seeking love and blessings for his soul," the family said in a statement.

Born Alokes Lahiri in Jalpaiguri, West Bengal in 1952 in a family of musicians, Bappa Lahiri's penchant for music came to the fore when he was just three years.

Bappa shifted base to Mumbai when he was 19 and began creating music

in an industry where big names like RD Burman, Laxmikant-Pyarelal and Kalyanji-Anandji were ruling the roost.

Bappa's range of music extended to ghazals, a genre that rose to popularity in the 1980s in India. His composition "Kisi nazar ko" (Aitbaar) is considered one of the finest ghazals in film. By contrast is the fun-filled "Bambai se aaya mera dost/dost ko salaam karo".

Not just Hindi films, Bappa Lahiri was a popular name in Bengali cinema where he began his career with 1972 film "Daadu". Among the Bengali movies for which he worked as a composer is "Protidan" starring Naseeruddin Shah, Victor Banerjee and Sharmila Tagore.

Bappa's death was condoled by many in the music industry who remembered the artiste for introducing a new style of

Intear Aaj Bhi Hai" and "Aawaz Di Hai" from the 1985 film "Aitbaar".