



P5 Another one bites the dust

Juri river turns into a dumpyard



P6 Don't sabotage Iran deal

West warns Russia as talks reach final stage



P9 Many routes closed in Teesta

Boatmen in livelihood crisis



B1 Aluminium price skyrocketing

Goes up by Tk1.35 lakh per tonne in 8 days

Cruelly cut before they could bloom

Hit by train, 3 little schoolgirls killed in Cumilla



TASFIA



MIM



RIMA

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Two schoolbags on the ground by rail tracks. The body of a schoolgirl in her uniform. Broken tiffin boxes, food strewn over the stones, and a textbook right next to them.

These were the scenes as panicked locals rushed to help after a train hit three schoolchildren on the tracks near Bijoypur market in Cumilla Sadar Dakshin upazila around 11:40am yesterday.

The three little ones -- class-5 students of Bijoypur Primary School -- were killed on the spot. One of them was dragged nearly 300 metres by the Chattogram-bound train.

The accident happened around 150 metres off a level crossing along the Dhaka-Chattogram double-line tracks in Bijoypur.

Deceased Mim Akhtar, Rima Akhtar, and Tasfia Akhtar Ayesa -- aged around 12 -- lived in Durgapur Manikka Pukurpar area near the Bijoypur market.

They had left home only a few minutes before the incident. Like every other day, they were on their way to school, which is a 10-minute walk from their homes, through a narrow alley by the market.

Shopkeeper Hazi Selim, a witness, said after the girls saw an oncoming train on one of the tracks, they moved to the other, oblivious to another train approaching fast on it. "It seemed they were puzzled and became frozen in place after noticing the train at the very last moment," he told The Daily Star.

The Chattogram-bound train, Mohanagar Provati, hit and dragged Tasfia, who was standing between the two others when the train hit them. Mim and Rima were thrown clear of the tracks upon impact, said witnesses.

After the incident, angry locals set fire to the tracks in protest. They also blocked the Cumilla-Noakhali highway, demanding an overpass in the level crossing area.

They left around half an hour later after officials from the district administration and police talked to them.

Deputy Commissioner Kamrul Hasan handed Tk 25,000 to the families of each of the victims. A committee was also formed to investigate the matter.

Asked, Jahangir Hossain, general manager (east) of Bangladesh Railway, said, "It's a very tragic incident. Perhaps they [the girls] did not realise the looming danger."

He also said the accident spot was quite far away from the level crossing gates.

After the bodies were taken to Manikka Pukurpar area, a pall of gloom descended on it. The air became heavy with cries and wails.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Abdur Razzak Hawlader holds a picture of his son Hadisur Rahman while his younger son, Golam Mowla, and wife Rashida Begum weep inconsolably at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday. Hadisur was killed in an attack on a Bangladeshi ship in Ukraine on March 2. The family had gone to the airport hoping that Hadisur's body would be on the plane that brought the 28 surviving sailors home.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

On train to Lviv

Nine Bangladeshis evacuated from Ukraine war zone thru' joint efforts of India, Red Cross

GOLAM MORTOZA

Now that he was alive and heading towards Lviv, the Ukrainian city near the border with Poland, it was some sort of a miracle for Rubaiyat Habib.

"When we were moving out of Sumy of Ukraine, Russian tanks and convoys were entering the town. It is not possible to explain how terrifying the situation was. As we have survived, it is no less than a miracle," said Rubaiyat.

He is one of nine Bangladeshis rescued through joint efforts of the Indian Embassy and the Red Cross in Ukraine where the ongoing war has unleashed horror, forcing civilians to flee or hide in the bunkers.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday thanked Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for helping rescue the nine Bangladeshis. Citizens of Nepal and Tunisia were also



Three of the Bangladeshis on the train heading for the western Ukrainian city.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

evacuated under Indian rescue operation, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Talking to this newspaper from the train to Lviv, Rubaiyat described the horrifying days after the Russian invasion began on February 24. Nearly 1,000 Bangladeshis have crossed over to the neighbouring countries,

some are still stranded.

Rubaiyat, an IT consultant living in Ukraine for the last 12 years, said he along with his wife and two children came out of the north-eastern town of Sumy around 9:00am on Tuesday (local time).

They joined five other

SEE PAGE 2 COL 7

Ousting Ukraine govt not the aim

Says Moscow after Russia, Ukraine agree more humanitarian corridors

AGENCIES

Moscow yesterday said it does not intend to occupy Ukraine or overthrow its government as Russia and Ukraine agreed to open more humanitarian corridors to evacuate terrified civilians from bombarded cities.

As fighting raged on the 14th day of the invasion, safe routes were opening out of five Ukrainian areas including suburbs of the capital Kyiv that have been devastated by Russian shelling and air strikes.

Russian troops were seen by AFP pushing closer to the capital Kyiv, while Moscow yesterday accused the United States of waging "economic war" through a barrage of sanctions.

With Ukrainian cities still being pummelled, President Volodymyr Zelensky urged Western powers to decide on a Polish offer to supply his country with fighter jets, after Washington rejected an initial plan.

He renewed the call after he accused Russia of carrying out an air strike that severely damaged a children's hospital in the southern port city of Mariupol.

Children were among people "under the wreckage," he said, without giving details of casualties.

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4

BCB gives in to Shakib's plea

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Shakib Al Hasan issue seems to have come to an end, at least for the time being, as the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday granted him a break from cricket till April 30.

Despite the star cricketer initially agreeing to tour South Africa, ahead of departure for Dubai on Sunday Shakib said that he was not in a mental state to play cricket and asked for a rest during the upcoming South Africa tour.

Following a meeting with BCB president Nazmul Hassan, BCB CEO and other top officials at Hassan's Beximco office in Dhanmondi, the chairman of the BCB's cricket operations committee, Jalal Yunus, said that it won't be right to force Shakib since he is not enjoying the game at the moment.

"As you know before leaving for Dubai he said that he is mentally and physically fatigued and stressed. He called me and said that he is not enjoying any form of cricket. So I thought that since he has just finished the Afghanistan series and it can happen, I told him to take two days' time

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Rima Begum squeezing oil out of a foam attached to the end of a stick. Every day she uses the foam to soak up 3-4 litres of oil from the bottom of drums to collect in her bucket, and sells it for Tk 100 per litre. The photo was taken from Kalibari Ghat area of Khulna town on Tuesday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Refugee influx sparks rare EU unity

AFP, Brussels

The flood of refugees escaping war in Ukraine for the European Union has sparked a rare show of unity from the bloc's 27 nations after years of disputes over the sensitive issue of migration.

In the space of just a week the EU rushed through a unanimous decision to trigger its protection mechanism granting those fleeing Ukraine the right to stay and work in the bloc for an initial two years.

It was the first time the EU had activated the measure, drawn up in 2001 after the conflicts in former Yugoslavia.

"It's a unique and historic moment and I think we should take pride in this moment," EU home affairs commissioner Ylva Johansson told the European Parliament Tuesday.

"The decision was a unanimous decision, all member states agreed."

The EU's response to the unprecedented influx of over two million refugees in 12 days is a major shift from how it has handled previous crises.

When the same number of refugees arrived throughout the whole of 2015 and 2016 fleeing conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan the bloc was deeply split over how to share the burden.

SEE PAGE 12 COL 4