

# 12 lives lost on roads

**STAR REPORT**

As many as 12 people were killed and 33 injured in road accidents across the country in the last two days, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Habiganj, four people were killed and 30 injured, as two buses and a truck collided in Shaistaganj upazila on Friday night.

The accident took place on Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Ulukandi around 10:30pm, said police.

Shaistaganj Highway Police Station Officer in Charge Moinul Islam said, a bus of Ashif Paribahan initially collided head-on with a stone-laden truck. At that time, a bus of Shyamoli Paribahan, while trying to overtake, hit the other bus, he said.

On information, police and firefighters recovered the bodies and sent the injured to Habiganj Sadar Modern Hospital.

Locals blocked Dhaka-Sylhet highway for around half an hour. Later, they cleared the road, following the request of former Ubahata Union Parishad chairperson Rajab Ali and police.

In Netrakona, two people were killed, as a pickup hit a truck from behind on Mymensingh-Netrakona road in Sakua Bazar area yesterday morning, said police.

The deceased -- Tariqul Islam (35) from the district's Kalmakanda upazila, and Md Nuruzzaman (30) from Sunamganj's Darampasha -- were egg traders.

Police seized the vehicles but the drivers managed to flee.

In Mymensingh, a man died after a motorbike ran him over on Mymensingh-Kishoreganj road at Rangopalpur in Gouripur upazila on Friday night. The motorcyclist was also injured in the incident, said police.



What's being carried on the shoulders of these men, known as "bawalis", is golpata. They get it from the Sundarbans, with clearance from the forest department during a three-month period. Then they bring the leaves all the way to Khulna using large boats. These leaves are then sold at Tk 250-300 a bunch (80 pieces) in different Khulna bazaars, and are later used for constructing roofs of rural houses. This photo was taken from Khulna's Chalna Bazar recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## GANGAMATI RESERVE FOREST IN KUAKATA

# Akashmani trees UNDER ATTACK

**SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali**

In the reserve forest in Kuakata's Gangamati area, around 10,000 Akashmani trees were planted in the 2008-09 fiscal year. It has since come to be known as the natural wall of the sea.

But despite its importance to the area, the trees are now in danger of being wiped out, as a local group is out to cut and sell them, as well as destroy them with fire. Meanwhile, some of the trees have also died during the recent tidal wave, when their roots became covered in sand.

Coastal dwellers are apprehensive about this deforestation. They're seeking the authorities' intervention, including legal steps against the syndicate. They demanded that the authorities plant more trees, as they play an effective role in protecting the lives and property of the area's people.

When this correspondent visited the area recently, he saw felled trees scattered across the beach, while seven to eight workers could be seen taking down the trees and carrying them away.

When asked about their activities, the workers refused to provide details, although they later said they were from Gangamati. They claimed they're only cutting those trees that have been



These Akashmani trees in Kuakata's Gangamati reserve forest play a vital role in protecting locals from natural disasters such as tidal waves. But after a local group set their sights on them, the trees are disappearing at a worrying rate.

PHOTO: STAR

uprooted by the tidal water, and cutting them wouldn't cause much harm to the forest.

One of them said, "We're cutting the trees after informing forest department officials. In fact, they've asked us to cut the trees." However, a local named Ferdous Hawlader said the incident is not just a one-day affair, but a longstanding issue. He alleged that the workers do this in co-ordination with the forest department's local staffers.

Wishing anonymity, many locals alleged that over a thousand trees have been either felled or burned over the

last one year. They said the miscreants set fire to the trees, so that they can tell people the trees have lost their "wood value" and take them away.

Lincon Bayen, Barishal divisional coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), told The Daily Star, "The coastal areas are already at risk of natural disasters. When there's a need to plant more trees to maintain environmental balance, cutting down trees this way is not desirable at all."

Contacted, Abul Kalam Azad, Mahipur range officer of the forest department, said, "I didn't know that

the trees were being cut like this. Those involved will be identified and legal action will be taken against them. About 20 cases over tree-felling have already been filed, whose proceedings are still ongoing."

Meanwhile, Patuakhali Divisional Forest Officer Abdullah Al Mamun said strict action will be taken against those involved. "If anyone from the forest department is involved with this, they will also be punished."

Apart from Akashmani, the garden at Gangamati also has other species of trees, including Hartaki, Bahera, Raintree and Gamari.

## 1ST DEATH ANNIV OF MOUDUD

# Wife alleges he was killed

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Former BNP leader and ex-minister Moudud Ahmed's wife Hasna Moudud yesterday alleged that her husband did not die of Covid-19 but was killed.

"He did not die of coronavirus. His disease could not be diagnosed. I heard that he was killed. Maybe someone will kill me too," she said at a discussion.

The event was organised to mark the first death anniversary of Moudud Ahmed at Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Speaking at the programme, eminent lawyer Barrister Amir-ul Islam said, "I told him [Moudud] that the books he has written, he will be remembered for those. Now, I noticed that he is alive through his writing."

Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said whatever the party politics Moudud Ahmed did in his life, he had a liberal, democratic consciousness.

Nagorik Oikya convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna said, people said Moudud Ahmed changed his party again and again but this is not an issue.

"The main issue is whether he changed parties for his benefits or to stand by people," he added.



Surrounded by hundreds of boxes -- all folded and ready to contain mouth-watering treats, this family in Barishal's Rongsri village has been earning a living by making them for years. Based on their size, these boxes are sold for Tk 3-8 a piece. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

# AL's promises still unfulfilled

## Speakers tell CPD-Shujan dialogue on polls pledges

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi**

Many important election promises, which the ruling Awami League made before the 2018 elections, remain unfulfilled, at a time when the party is nearing the end of its tenure, speakers said in a dialogue in Rajshahi yesterday.

They said some of the promises regarding education, employment and gender equality are yet to be implemented, while work for some others is ongoing.

The pandemic became an obstacle to fulfil the promises, they mentioned.

They were speaking at the event "Rajshahi Sanglap" on "Commitment to national development of education, decent employment and gender equality" at a city hotel.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) jointly organised the dialogue, with assistance of United Nations Democracy Fund. More than 50 dignitaries joined the programme.

Shujan secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said AL announced its electoral manifesto in 2008 and named it "Din Bodoler Sonod".

"It was truly a document of change. I myself was greatly encouraged, as many ground-breaking changes were promised. I thought I would no longer need to continue Shujan's activities," he said.

But people know how much of the manifesto came into reality, he added.

Presenting the keynote speech, CPD Joint Director Avra Bhattacharjee said the 2018 manifesto promised to bring unemployment rate down to 1.2 percent.

But the rate climbed to 5.3 percent in 2020, from 4.22 percent in 2019, he added.

Avra Bhattacharjee said the manifesto promised hundred percent gender equality in higher education, but male students dominated both public and private universities by 56 and 70 percent in 2020.

Prof Ilias Hossain of Rajshahi University said the 2018 manifesto promised quality education by employing teachers on the basis of merit, qualification and experience, but political consideration remained high.

Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed of RU and Rajshahi Shujan president Mohammad Piar Bux also spoke.

Dr Khondoker Golam Moazzem, research director at CPD, chaired the event.

# Hadisur's body to arrive today

**DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT**

The body of Hadisur Rahman, the third engineer of Bangladeshi ship "Banglar Samridhhi" who was killed in a rocket attack at a Ukraine port on March 3, is expected to reach Dhaka today.

"Hadisur's body is scheduled to be flown in by a Turkish Air cargo. It is scheduled to take off midnight Saturday and arrive to Dhaka by Monday afternoon," an official of Bangladesh Embassy in Romania told this correspondent yesterday.

Hadisur is one of 29 Bangladeshis who had been stranded in the ship owned by Bangladesh Shipping Corporation.

On March 3, it came under rocket attack, but it could not be confirmed as of now who were behind the attack.

On March 4, all the crew and the body of Hadisur were rescued from the ship, which was abandoned later. The 28 surviving members arrived in Dhaka on March 9.

