



Since the start of the pandemic, Najma Begum has been selling masks sitting at the intersection of Dhaka's Minto road. Back then, the mother would hold her daughter Tabiya in her lap while she struggled on for survival. When this photojournalist stumbled across the mother and daughter duo yesterday, he saw that Tabiya, now four, was learning how to write in Bangla from her mother. Najma said the Covid positivity rate is declining, and so is the demand for masks, which is affecting her earnings. Still a persistent Najma intends on sending Tabiya to school this year.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Momen to hold talks with Blinken on April 4
Leaves for US, to seek withdrawal of sanction on Rab



UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will seek wider and diversified cooperation from the United States and demand again the withdrawal of sanctions imposed on the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) as a minister-level bilateral meeting is set to take place in Washington on April 4.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen left for the US yesterday night to hold a bilateral meeting with his US counterpart Antony J Blinken at the US Department of State.

"We'll raise the issue (reconsidering sanctions on Rab)," said Momen ahead of his visit.

Terming Bangladesh a peaceful country, he said Bangladesh is less interested in defence procurement from the US

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Still no new action plan for road safety

Though previous plan expired in 2020, authorities yet to approve draft, amid rising number of crashes, fatalities

- Since 1997, govt preparing action plans to improve road safety
- 8 plans approved so far, with last one in Nov 2017
- 8th plan's goal was halving accidents, fatalities, injuries by 2020
- Target couldn't be achieved, revised deadline 2030
- BRTA placed draft of new plan at NRSC meeting on Feb 18, 2021
- Plan couldn't be approved, as no NRSC meeting was held since then



TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government has failed to formulate a new action plan for road safety, even though tenure of the previous one expired in 2020.

Although a draft for National Road Safety Strategic Action Plan 2021-2024 was prepared over a year ago, it did not get authorities' approval yet.

This dilly-dallying over formulation is going on when the country is witnessing a sharp rise of road crashes, leaving dozens of people dead and injured on a regular basis.

"This [delay in formulating the plan] actually exposes that the authorities concerned are not giving due importance to road-safety issues," said Prof Hadiuzzaman, director of Accident Research Institute at Bangladesh University of Engineering

and Technology.

He said road crashes have become a national problem, and if authorities had realised that, they would not take so long to formulate the plan.

"Although previous plans remained largely confined in paper, there should be a plan, and authorities should take steps to implement it," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Fifteen to 20 people are getting killed every day. So, I think, the stakeholders have lost their sensitivity over the issue, which is reflected in their action," he added.

A total of 5,088 people were killed in 5,472 road crashes in 2021, 30 percent higher than the previous year, according to a police report.

Other road safety organisations put the figure much higher.

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Teacher 'harassed by cop for wearing bindi'
Police yet to identify him

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teacher of Tejgaon College has complained that a policeman harassed and hurled abuse at her after seeing a bindi on her forehead while she was going to the campus yesterday morning.

When she protested, he threatened her and tried to run her over with his motorbike, she alleged.

In a written complaint filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station, Lata Samaddar, a lecturer of the college's theatre and media studies department, said the incident took place in front of Shezan Point shopping mall around 8:30am.

The teacher, who is the wife of Dhaka University professor Malay Bala, said she came to Farmgate area by rickshaw from her residence and then started walking towards Tejgaon College.

"A policeman in uniform was sitting there on a parked motorbike. When I was passing by, he started harassing me, seeing a bindi on my

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'Maa, where did you go? Please, come back'

Parents in despair after losing daughter in road crash; NSU students demand justice for peer

STAR REPORT

Meem's parents dreamed of seeing their daughter achieve so much: finish her bachelor's, go abroad for further studies, all the best things. And she was right on track to make her parents proud.

But they never imagined that she would leave the world so early, that too in such a tragic way.

After losing their adored daughter, parents of North South University (NSU) student Maisha Momotaz Meem, are now full of anguish.

Meem's demise has cast a shadow of grief over Mouchak of Gazipur's Kailakoir, her village home. Her relatives and neighbours were trying their best to comfort her father Nur Mohammad Mamun and mother Asima Begum.

"Maa, I dreamed of seeing you become successful. We never imagined you'd leave us like this. I want that dream to come true. Please, come back," said Nur Mohammad, with agony in his voice.

"You bring my Meem back. Maa, where did you go?" he kept asking.

Maisha Momotaz Meem (22) was killed in a hit-and-run by a covered van on the capital's Kuril Flyover on Friday morning, when she was going to NSU on her scooter.

The parents said they never want anyone else to die in a road crash, like Meem did.

Meem was the eldest among two siblings. She passed SSC and HSC from Mouchak Ideal Public School and College in Kaliakoir, founded by her father. She then joined NSU's English department.

On hearing the news, her teachers, classmates and neighbours rushed to her village home. Relatives broke down in tears after her body was taken to Mouchak.

Meanwhile, a video of the accident has spread on social media.

In the video, Meem was driving a scooter on one side of the flyover. At that moment, a large covered van hit the scooter from behind and then ran her over. The driver or helper peeked out of the van to see the scene and then just left.

Hours after the incident, police detained two persons, including van driver Saiful Islam and one Moshir Rahman, from Chattogram's EPZ area on Friday night.

"Driver Saiful had a licence to drive light

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Family members of Meem are beyond consolable at their irreparable loss.

PHOTO: STAR

**PRAYER
TIMING
APRIL 3**



| | Fazr | Zohr | Asr | Maghrib | Esha |
|--------|------|-------|------|---------|------|
| Azan | 4:32 | 12:45 | 4:45 | 6:19 | 7:45 |
| Jamaat | 4:37 | 1:15 | 5:00 | 6:29 | 8:15 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



With a demand to restore five percent quota allocation for indigenous people in government jobs, a group of students brought out a procession at Dhaka University area yesterday afternoon. They also held a rally in front of National Museum in Shahbagh. The event was organised by Adivasi Quota Sangrakkhan Parishad.

PHOTO: STAR

Won't let them off the hook

Says chief justice about dishonest judges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique yesterday said there are few dishonest lower court judges in the judiciary, and his office will not compromise with them in any manner.

The chief justice was speaking at a programme organised by Female Judges Association to felicitate him at Judicial Administration Training Institute (JATI) in Dhaka.

He said judicial officers who will perform well will be given "Chief Justice" award

every year, and a guideline has already been formulated to this effect.

Siddique said transfer and posting of (lower court) judges will depend on seniority, honesty and competence.

There will be no compromise in this regard.

Speaking as chief guest, Law Minister Anisul Huq told the programme that there are 544 women judges in the judicial service, 28 percent of total judges. This number is very encouraging and inspiring.

In a milestone initiative in 1974, Father of

the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had removed all barriers for women to participate in the judiciary and then allowed them to take part in the judiciary in a competitive manner, the minister said.

Woman Judges Association President Hosne Ara Begum presided over the meeting, where its founding president and JATI Director General Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana, Appellate Division's Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice M Enayetur Rahim, and Law and Justice Division Secretary Md Golam Sarwar also spoke.

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