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Eid rush casualties highest in 7 years

Finds study of passenger welfare body; bike accidents claim 131 lives despite ban on highways

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country has witnessed the highest number of road crashes and deaths during the Eid-ul-Azha rush this year since 2016, exposing the poor state of road safety.

At least 398 people were killed in 319 road crashes in 15 days before and after the Eid. The figures are 46 percent and 33 percent higher respectively compared to the same period last year, according to Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity data, prepared based on media reports.

Although motorbikes were banned on highways for seven days during Eid time, they were involved in accidents that resulted in 131 deaths.

"If we compare accident data of the last seven years, the number of both the accidents and the deaths during this Eid rush is the highest," Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of the Samity, said while sharing the report at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday.

Prominent economist Hossain Zillur Rahman, also chairman of Safe Road and Transport Alliance, which promotes road safety, said the numbers of accidents and

casualties are rising despite various steps by the authorities to reduce them.

"A lack of road safety has turned out to be a human catastrophe for Bangladesh and its severity is increasing, instead of decreasing, over the years," he told the press conference.

With the number of accidents rising, deaths on highways have become a major concern.

Different steps by different authorities have failed to improve road safety and cut death tolls, as police reports show road crashes and deaths rose by 30 percent last year from a year before.

Roads turn highly unsafe during Eid rush as a greater number of vehicles hit the streets to cater to the huge pressure of home-goers, as evidenced in the Jatri Kalyan Samity report.

The actual number of the accidents and deaths may be higher, as the Samity prepares its report based on accidents reported in the media, where many accidents go unreported.

27 PEOPLE KILLED DAILY
 Mozammel said around 1.20 crore people left Dhaka ahead of the Eid while around 4

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Three people were killed and 15 others injured in a four-vehicle pile-up on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Brahmanbaria's Bijoy Nagar upazila yesterday. The CNG-run three-wheeler was crushed in the road accident.

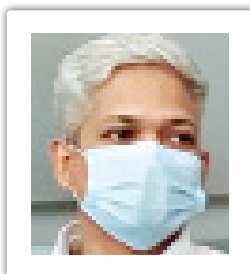
PHOTO: STAR

FAKE COVID CERTIFICATES

JKG's Sabrina, 7 others given 11 years in jail



Sabrina Sharmin



Ariful Chowdhury

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced Sabrina Sharmin Hossain, chairperson of JKG Health Care, and seven others to 11 years of rigorous imprisonment in a case filed over issuing fake Covid-19 certificates.

The seven others are Ariful Chowdhury, Sabrina's husband and JKG's chief executive officer, Shafiqul Islam Romeo, its executive officer, Humayun Kabir Himu, its graphic designer, and staffers Tanzina Patwary, Jebunnesa Rima, ASM Sayeed Chowdhury and Biplob Das.

Tofazzal Hossain, additional chief metropolitan magistrate in Dhaka, handed down the sentences to the convicts in a packed courtroom.

The accused were also fined Tk 11,000 each, in default of which they will have to serve 11 more months in jail.

The sentences were handed to the accused on three

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SAHAPARA AFTERMATH

Not sure when they can return

DIPANKAR ROY

Even after four days, the Hindus who fled a communal mayhem of Sahapara village in Narail are still terrified to return home as many of them keep receiving threats mostly from known persons.

At least 11 homes, five temples and dozens of shops were vandalised or burnt down in Sahapara on July 15. The attacks were carried out by mobs who said their religious feelings were hurt by a Facebook post allegedly made by a Hindu youth from the neighbourhood.

Almost all the members of 108 Hindu families of Sahapara in Lohagara upazila have deserted the village, where only some elders from the community can be found now.

"A day after the attack, I got a phone call from a person who warned me not to talk to law enforcers or journalists. Even he asked me not to return to my home," said a victim, who took shelter in another upazila, seeking anonymity.

"Later, I received three similar phone calls and four text messages on my mobile phone in the last three days. I could identify one of them who is a resident of our village," added the man.

"All my family members are intimidated. We are not sure whether we will return home or not in such a situation."

The Daily Star yesterday talked to at least five persons who have received threats. One of them said he was threatened after uploading a Facebook post sharing the incident of attack on his residence.

"A few people from our village and neighbouring villages commented on my post and threatened me that there will be attacks again if I return home. I know all of them," he said.

Another victim said, "I work in another district. But my family members live in my village home at Sahapara. I was not at my home when it came under attack. But I don't dare visit my ravaged house as I received a threat over the phone."

A local school teacher said he could identify some of the attackers. A few of them work as day labourers and one was an electricity mechanic. "I have a rivalry with some people in my school. They are now intimidating me into not returning home."

A college girl, who along with his brother and mother could hide in a neighbour's house during the attack,

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Cop held after gold ornament snatching

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of Rupnagar Police Station was arrested over snatching 38 tolas of gold ornaments, worth Tk 26 lakh, from a jewellery shop worker.

ASI Zahidul Islam along with at least four others, all in plainclothes, intercepted Titu Pradhaniya at Gabtoli in the capital on Monday, identifying himself as a detective.

The team then took the ornaments, Titu mentioned in the statement of a case he filed with Darussalam Police Station.

Inspector (investigation) Jamal Hossain of Darussalam Police Station said that through CCTV footage, they first traced a motorcycle, which belongs to Zahidul and was used at the time of the incident. They arrested him from Rupnagar Police Station on Monday night.

He further said the complainant also identified

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European bison reintroduced to the UK

AFP, Herne Bay



As the sun rose on Monday over southeast England, three bison emerged from a corral into a new woodland home as part of an ambitious project to transform the natural environment.

The trio immediately began munching birch tree leaves in the ancient woods near Canterbury, to restore and manage the area with their behaviour -- and minimal human interference.

It marks the first time in millennia that European bison -- the continent's largest land mammal and the closest living relative to ancient steppe bison that once roamed Britain -- will live in wild conditions once again.

"(It's a) really momentous occasion today," Mark Habben, of the Wildwood Trust which is leading the five-year conservation project, told AFP.

"It couldn't have gone any better... they took a glance back, looked at us and then disappeared into the woodlands," he added, moments after the release.

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A man receiving a booster dose for coronavirus inoculation yesterday as the DGHS organised a day-long special campaign across the country. The photo was taken at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Three-way fight for Lanka presidency

Wickremesinghe to face Alahapperuma, Dissanayake in today's vote

AFP, Colombo

Three candidates were nominated yesterday to replace former Sri Lankan president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled the country and resigned last week after protesters overran his residence.

The winner will take charge of a bankrupt nation that is in talks with the IMF for a bailout, with its 22 million people enduring severe shortages of food, fuel and medicines.

Sri Lanka ran out of foreign exchange to finance even the most vital imports in a crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic but exacerbated by mismanagement, critics say. Months of protests culminated in Rajapaksa fleeing his palace before flying to the Maldives and then Singapore, from where he submitted his resignation.

The parliament announced yesterday that acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe would face former education minister Dullas Alahapperuma -- who has the backing of the main opposition -- and leftist leader Anura Dissanayake in a secret ballot today.

The three were formally nominated by legislators in a session that lasted less than 10 minutes at the tightly guarded parliament building.

Moments earlier, opposition SJB party leader Sajith Premadasa had announced on Twitter that he was withdrawing from the race in favour of the 63-year-old Alahapperuma, a dissident member of Rajapaksa's divided SLPP party.

"For the greater good of my country that I love and the people I cherish, I hereby withdraw my candidacy for the position of President," Premadasa said.

He went on to nominate Alahapperuma, a former journalist and rights campaigner in the late 1980s, when Premadasa's late father Ranasinghe ruled the country with an iron fist.

An SJB legislator told AFP that the two men struck a deal overnight for Premadasa to be chosen as the new prime minister should Alahapperuma be elected president today.

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