

## 3 of a family among 5 killed in Cumilla road crashes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Five people, including three of a family, were killed and four others were injured in two road crashes on Dhaka-Chattogram highway yesterday.

In Chandina upazila, four people died when a bus rammed a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in the Katherpole area around 11:30am.

The deceased were identified as Tanni Akter, 20, her two-year-old daughter Muntaha Jannat, her aunt Rezia Begum, 45, and the auto-rickshaw driver Habibur Rahman, 22.

Among them, two died on the spot and two died at a local hospital.

The injured are Tanni's mother Rajia, 38, brother Siam, 16, and cousin Jahid, 18.

The injured were undergoing treatment at the Cumilla Medical College Hospital, said Akul Chandra Biswas, officer-in-charge (OC) of Mainamati Highway Crossing Police Station.

Police were trying to identify the

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## 50 hurt as Natore BCL men 'beat up' BNP activists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

At least 50 BNP leaders and activists were injured in an attack by Bangladesh Chhatra League men in Natore yesterday, local BNP leaders alleged.

The BCL men beat them up with sticks when they were going to join a rally held in the district town.

Shahidul Islam Bachchu, convener of Natore BNP, claimed that the party men were wounded in the attack in front of Alaipur Muslim Institute around 10:00am.

Shariful Islam Shaheen, general secretary of Natore district BCL, pro-Awami League student front, said they were on the streets to stop possible anarchy by BNP-Jamaat, but they did not beat up anyone.

Shariful Islam, additional superintendent of police of Natore Sadar circle, said he was not aware of any such incident.

He said police intercepted the BCL men when they were going towards the BNP office.

Addressing the rally as chief guest, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of BNP, said the AL got afraid seeing the crowds at the

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A woman in pain as people jostle for rice and flour being sold from an OMS truck of the food department in the capital's Mohammadpur yesterday. Consumers from low-income families waited for hours since morning before the truck reached there around 10:30am. They could buy five kg rice each at Tk 30 per kg and 2kg packs of flour at Tk 43 each.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Grain ships sail despite Russia's pullout from deal

Missiles hit Kyiv, other cities, knocking out power, water

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ships brought grain from Ukrainian ports yesterday, suggesting Moscow had stopped short of reimposing a blockade that might have caused world hunger, despite suspending its participation in a UN programme to safely export grain from the war zone.

Air raid sirens blared across Ukraine and explosions rang out in Kyiv, sending black smoke into the sky as Russia rained missiles down in renewed air attacks. Ukrainian officials said energy infrastructure was hit including at hydroelectric dams, knocking out power, heat and water supplies.

Ukraine's military said it had shot down 44 of 50 Russian missiles. But strikes left 80 percent of Kyiv without running water, authorities said, adding they hoped to restore it quickly. Two people were reported injured in the Kyiv region.

Still, the resumption of food exports from Ukrainian ports suggested that at least one dire scenario had been averted for now. International officials had feared that Moscow would reimpose a blockade on Ukrainian grain, after Russia announced on Saturday that it was suspending its role

in the UN-backed programme that escorts cargo ships through the Black Sea.

"Civilian cargo ships can never be a military target or held hostage. The food must flow," tweeted Amir Abdullah, the UN official who coordinates the programme.

Shortly afterwards, Ukraine confirmed that 12 ships had set sail. The 354,500 tonnes of grain they carried was the most

**"Civilian cargo ships can never be a military target or held hostage. The food must flow."**

UN Coordinator for Black Sea Grain initiative **Amir Abdullah**

in a day since the programme began, suggesting a backlog was being cleared after exports were interrupted on Sunday.

But shipments could be interrupted again, not least if insurers stop underwriting them. Chris McGill, head of cargo at Lloyd's of London insurer Ascot, which has underwritten many of the shipments so far, told Reuters his company was writing new cover for shipments from

yesterday "until we better understand the situation".

Insurance previously issued "still stands," he said. Most policies must be renewed on a seven-day basis.

Russia's missile strikes during morning rush hour repeated a tactic it has pursued this month of targeting Ukrainian civilian infrastructure, especially power stations.

"Instead of fighting on the battlefield, Russia fights civilians," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said. "Don't justify these attacks by calling them a 'response'. Russia does this because it still has the missiles and the will to kill Ukrainians."

The US ambassador to Kyiv, Bridget Brink, tweeted: "Like millions of Ukrainians, our @USEmbassyKyiv team is once again taking shelter as Russia continues its callous and barbaric missile strikes on the people of Ukraine in an effort to leave the country cold and dark as we approach winter."

For the past three weeks, Russia has been conducting a campaign of attacks on Ukrainian civil infrastructure using expensive long range missiles and cheap Iranian-made "suicide drones" that fly at a target and detonate.

## Draft tugs at right to go on strike

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In addition to strikes, the draft law criminalises unlawful lay-offs and lockouts in organisations and industries deemed essential.

"There are 14 sections in the act. If the government thinks a lay-off, strike or lockout is not justified, it can declare these activities illegal," Islam said.

He maintained that the law would not contradict the Labour Act.

"There are certain provisions in the Labour Act that specify under what circumstances layoff can be declared," Islam added.

Currently, the labour law allows workers to go on strike if their employers fail to settle a dispute within a prescribed time.

The labour law states that strikes can be declared illegal if adequate notice is not provided to owners or employers or if there is an ongoing

dispute resolution process.

However, the constitution guarantees the freedom of assembly and states that every citizen has the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of public order or public health.

The cabinet also approved the proposal to continue the ban on cutting trees in the country's reserved and natural forests until 2030 in a bid to protect biodiversity.

The current ban – which does not include trees in social forests – ends this year.

The cabinet also endorsed the draft of the National Adaptation Plan (2023-2030) to cope with the adversities of climate change and the draft of the Balumohal (sand quarry) and Soil Management (Amendment)

Act 2022 to stop indiscriminate sand-lifting.

As per the draft, a sand quarry cannot be leased out for more than one year, Isla said, adding that the maximum punishment for a grievous offence is two years imprisonment, a fine of Tk 10 lakh or both.

At the cabinet meeting, the prime minister called upon the country's people to keep their houses and adjacent areas clean to prevent dengue.

The number of dengue patients in the country has reached nearly 36,000 this year so far.

Also at the meeting, it was decided that from November 15 all government and autonomous offices will remain open from 9 am to 4 pm.

On August 22, the cabinet rescheduled the office hours from 8 am to 3 pm to save electricity and reduce traffic congestion.

## Reform fuel subsidies, slap carbon tax

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plants, it said. Costly and highly polluting oil-fired rental plants contribute around 8 percent to the electricity mix on energy basis at tariffs which are four to six times higher than domestic gas-based plants that use new technology.

Transmission bottlenecks prevent lower-cost electricity generated by less carbon-intensive plants from reaching the final consumer and could prevent the integration of the needed high volume of renewable energy generation, the report said.

While installed generation capacity has increased four times since 2009, transmission capacity has grown by only 40 percent, and more efficient high-voltage lines account for a significantly small share.

Private participation in transmission sector activities can support the improvement of operational and financial performance in distribution.

Short-term, cost-effective measures can be taken to improve

energy efficiency, reduce the energy sector's carbon intensity and improve carbon competitiveness.

Most of the country's CO2 emissions stem from oil and gas production and use, which generated close to 84 percent of the country's total emissions in 2020. CH4 emissions for oil and gas operations accounted for approximately 70 percent of total energy sector CH4 emissions.

"Gas use in Bangladesh has never been metered for residential consumption. As a result, there is little incentive for efficient use of this resource and potential over-billing of the most vulnerable groups," the report said.

In 2020, Bangladesh adopted a programme to begin this process at the residential level.

"Progress has been positive but needs to be accelerated, with at least 2-3 million meters needed over the next

For industrial consumers who benefit from preferential rates, unauthorised connections leading

from the meter add to pilferage at advantageous rates for other purposes, the report said.

While the government recently increased gas tariffs, additional work is necessary to align incentives and monitoring capabilities to ensure more efficient use of the resource.

Accelerating the rollout of gas meters for residential consumers, piloting smart meters for industrial consumers and integrating better monitoring systems on the gas distribution network will help while direct cash transfers for lower-income deciles will help address affordability.

"Until all gas consumption in the country is properly metered, it will be difficult to determine, much less control, how and where gas losses and leakages occur in the system."

A carbon tax should be levied instead, it suggested.

As Bangladesh already has an existing fuel tax system, introducing an additional carbon tax on energy would require only limited administrative capacity with little scope for non-compliance, it said.

## Two add'l DIGs

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ideology", keeping in mind the next general election, said sources in the government.

The government has already made a list of such bureaucrats and police officials, and many of them might be forced into retirement in phases, the sources added.

Contacted, Mahub yesterday said, "The government has the power [to send officials into retirement] and it exercised the power. I have nothing to say on this."

Several of Mahub and Alamgir's batchmates are additional inspector generals of police, the second top position in the police department. The incumbent director general of Rapid Action Battalion, the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and the additional IGP (admin and ops) are officers from 12th BCS (police) batch.

Mahub was expected to retire on May 30, 2024, while Alamgir on January 6, 2025.

The home ministry yesterday issued two circulars, signed by Md Aminul Islam Khan, senior secretary at the Public Security Division, in this regard. The circulars cited section 45 of Bangladesh Service Rules, 2018.

According to the section, the government upon the president's approval can send an employee, who has completed 25 years in service, into retirement in public interest, without showing any specific reason.

On October 18, three SPs – Delwar Hossain Mia and Mirza Abdullah Baqui of CID and Shahidullah Chowdhury of the Police Headquarters – were sent into retirement, just two days after the information and broadcasting ministry secretary Md Mokbul Hossain was sent into retirement.

Shahidullah and Delwar were from 12th BCS batch while Baqui was from 15th BCS batch.

## Reform fuel subsidies

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need of modernisation."

Of the 10 largest fertiliser plants, only one is privately owned, assessed as operating at the international standard benchmark of 24,000 cubic feet of gas/ton of urea, whereas the average of the public sector factories under the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation is 45,000 cubic feet/ton of urea.

Transmission bottlenecks contribute to low utilisation of new generation capacity, the WB said, adding that transmission capacity has grown by only 40 percent and more efficient high-voltage lines account for a significantly small share.

For example, 400,000-volt lines account for only 20 percent of total additional capacity (less than 6 percent of total installed capacity), it said.

"The main issue in the energy value chain holding back investments and innovation is the lack of cost recovery and energy inefficiency," the report added.

Transmission bottlenecks prevent lower-cost electricity, generated by less carbon-intensive plants, from reaching the final consumer, it said.

## IMF calls for fuel pricing

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lender called for a timebound plan on the pricing mechanism and pushed for its implementation by the next fiscal year.

In response, the ministry officials said they are working on it but it is unlikely that the government would agree to introduce the formula before 2026.

"This is a transition period and hence not the right time for such moves," said an official familiar with the discussions.

The global coronavirus pandemic and the Ukraine war have disrupted the government's plans and there is

## Rab gets 93rd time extension to probe Sagar-Runi murder

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked Rab to submit the probe report in the Sagar-Runi murder case by December 1.

The date for submitting the report has already been extended 93 times.

Another Dhaka court on September 26 had ordered Rab to deliver the investigation report by yesterday after two courts expressed dissatisfaction with the case's delayed progress.

According to court sources, Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Rashidul Alam passed the order yesterday after Rab Additional Superintendent of Police Khondoker Md Shafiqul Alam, the IO of the case, again failed to submit the report.

Journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi were murdered on February 11, 2012, in their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar.

## Witnesses of Mohibullah murder case start testifying

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Witnesses in the Mohibullah murder case started testifying before a Cox's Bazar court yesterday.

Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court Judge Abdullah Al Mamun recorded the victim's brother and plaintiff Habibullah's statement yesterday, said Faridul Alam, public prosecutor.

"Habibullah, in his deposition, said a group of criminals killed his brother Mohibullah for his strong role for the repatriation of the displaced Rohingyas living in Bangladesh to Myanmar", the PP added.

Three more witnesses are expected to testify today, he further added.

Witness deposition was scheduled to begin on October 11. However, the witnesses did not appear before the court on that day.

The trial began yesterday after 14 accused in the case were brought to the court from Cox's Bazar District Jail.

Mohibullah was murdered by armed assailants on September 29, 2021, in his office at Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhiya.

## UP member hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A member of Shialkathi union parishad in Pirojpur's Kawkhali upazila was hacked to death yesterday morning.

Mamun Howlader, 45, was ambushed and killed near Uttar Bhitabaria Ajharia Dakhil Madrasha in Bhandaria upazila.

"The attackers blocked Mamun's motorbike and hacked him to death while he was on his way to Shialkathi," said Md Saidur Rahman, Pirojpur superintendent of police.

Police are trying to find the murderers, he added.

the impending graduation from the least developing country bracket to consider.

The mission also called for bringing down subsidy expenditure, whose allocation ballooned to a record Tk 82,745 crore this fiscal year.

Instead of extending subsidies, the IMF called for increased spending on social safety net, health and education. The team also sought the government's current plan for the three sectors.

It also called for a budget financing strategy for fiscal 2023-24 through to fiscal 2025-26 as well as a fiscal risk analysis.