

Three of a family killed in Thakurgaon road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A man, his wife and their daughter were killed in a head-on collision between a bus and a motorcycle in Thakurgaon.

The incident occurred near Dashpara Bazar on the Thakurgaon-Baliadangi road in Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Masudur Rahman, 55, his wife Hamida Begum, 45, and their daughter Meher Negar Simi, 14.

Witnesses said Masud was dropping their daughter Meher off on his motorcycle at her madrasa for one of her final term exams in the morning. His wife Hamida was also with them.

When they reached Dashpara Bazar around 9:00am, a Thakurgaon-bound bus coming from the opposite direction collided with the motorcycle, killing Hamida on the spot.

Locals rushed critically-injured Masud and Meher to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital where the on-duty doctor declared them dead.

Kamal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Thakurgaon Police Station, said they were trying to seize the bus and arrest its driver, and his assistant.

Abdul Hannan, chairman of the local union, said the deceased couple is survived by three children, including two daughters who moved abroad.

"Their only son, a 13-year-old, broke down after learning of his parents' and sister's tragic deaths," he added.

S African woman arrested after 'racist' rant

AFP, Johannesburg

A woman has been arrested after a Whatsapp voice message circulated on social media seeming to call for black people to be banned in South Africa, police said.

A case has been opened in Boksburg, a suburb 30 kilometres (18 miles) east of Johannesburg, against a woman who allegedly sent the voice message calling for a ban on black people instead of pitbulls.



Women of low-income families standing in line to buy rice and flour from a mobile shop of the Open Market Sale programme of the Directorate General of Food in the capital's Azimpur around midday yesterday. They started queuing up to buy the staples at prices lower than the market from daybreak.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Snowy Kyiv grapples with power outages

Ukrainians race to repair facilities amid fears of Russian attacks

REUTERS, Kyiv

Snow fell in Kyiv and temperatures hovered around freezing yesterday as millions in and around the Ukrainian capital struggled with disruptions to electricity supply and central heating caused by waves of Russian air strikes.

The cold weather is gradually pushing up the energy needs of consumers even as repair workers race to fix wrecked power facilities, grid operator UKrenergo said.

Electricity producers are still unable to resume full power supply after Russia's missile attacks on Wednesday and have no choice but conserve energy by imposing blackouts, it said.

"The consumption restriction regime

is still in place due to a capacity deficit, which currently stands at around 20 percent," UKrenergo said on Telegram.

Moscow has targeted vital infrastructure in recent weeks through waves of air strikes that have sparked widespread power outages and killed civilians. Fresh strikes last Wednesday caused the worst damage so far in the nine-month conflict, leaving millions of people with no light, water or heat even as temperatures fell below 0 Celsius (32 Fahrenheit).

David Arakhamiya, the head of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's party, predicted Russia would carry out new infrastructure attacks this coming week and said the week could be "really difficult".

Zelensky said late on Saturday that there were restrictions on the use of electricity in 14 out of Ukraine's 27 regions. The restrictions affect more than 100,000 customers in each of the regions, he said. Affected regions included the capital Kyiv and the surrounding region.

"If consumption increases in the evening, the number of outages may increase," Zelensky said, reiterating an appeal to citizens to save power. "This once again shows how important it is now to save power and consume it rationally."

Weather forecasters expected continued snowfall in Kyiv, a city that had 2.8 million residents before the war, until midweek while temperatures are forecast to stay below freezing.

SSC results today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The results of this year's Secondary School Certificate and equivalent exams will be published today.

Professor Tapan Kumar Sarker, chief of the Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee, said chairpersons of all boards will hand over the results to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the morning.

Education Minister Dipu Moni will then hold a press conference in this regard.

From 12:00pm, students can get their results on the education board website: educationboardresults.gov.bd, and through SMS.

Some 2,021,868 students sat for the SSC and equivalent exams this year.

Of them, 1,599 lakh were under nine general education boards, 2.68 under madrasa education board, and 1.53 lakh under technical education board.

Bangladeshi 'tortured to death by BSF'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi youth was tortured to death allegedly by Indian Border Security Force members along the Bhumiamangal border of Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha upazila yesterday.

The victim, Shariful Islam Saddam, 30, was a resident of Daikhawa village of the upazila.

Police said locals rescued Shariful in an unconscious state near the border in the morning. He died on the way to Rangpur.

His wife Mousumi Begum said she heard that her husband was caught by BSF members while he was bringing cattle from India. They took him to their camp and tortured him.

As his condition deteriorated, the BSF members left him inside the Bangladesh territory, she said.

Anwarul Islam, in charge of Gendukari Border Guard Bangladesh camp, said Shariful died due to physical torture. However, it was not yet confirmed whether the BSF members tortured him, he added.

A letter was sent to the BSF for a flag meeting in this regard, he added.

Man lands in prison over raping minor girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A local court sent a man to jail on charge of raping a seven-year-old girl in Mymensingh's Phulpur upazila yesterday.

Quoting the case statement, Abdullah Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of Phulpur Police Station, said that on October 19, Sadar Ali, 55, of Poyari village, took the child to his house luring her with fruits and raped her.

Police arrested the accused after the victim's mother filed a case with the station on Friday.

The girl was sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital for medical tests, the OC added.

Spot LNG purchase by pvt sector gets nod

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Gazprom threatened to further reduce gas flows to Europe, reports Reuters.

"Since the factory owners are willing to pay more for gas, let them buy gas as per their requirement from the private sector," Hasina said at the meeting.

The laws of the land allow private sector players to import gas, one of the secretaries told the meeting.

Subsequently, the PM gave the green light to LNG import by the private sector.

"In that way, the government will not have to pay subsidy," Hasina said, while criticising the energy ministry for lack of foresight and forward planning.

At present, Bangladesh is procuring LNG on a government-to-government long-term arrangement with Oman and Qatar. The two countries have denied requests for more gas.

From next year, Bangladesh would be getting LNG from Brunei after a deal was struck last month by the two parties during Brunei's Sultan Hassanall Bolkiah's three-day visit to Dhaka.

"Had we made such arrangements before, we would not have been in this position now. There should have been long-term planning for energy import," Hasina said, while instructing the ministry to seek alternative sources for energy imports with exigency.

But for food imports, the premier ordered restraint.

Due to the Ukraine war, the prices of fertiliser, wheat, rice, edible oil and fuel have increased manifolds alongside the transportation costs, she said.

"We must reduce our dependency on food imports -- production must be scaled up as much as possible."

At the meeting, the PM told the secretaries that the ongoing global economic crisis due to pandemic and Russia-Ukraine war will not go away very soon and the next year might be tougher, said sources.

She went on to order food production on the 3 lakh acres of unused land spanning Chattogram and Sylhet.

"This is not my word. It is said that a famine may emerge before the world. We have to take measures in advance so that the looming famine never strikes our country," Hasina said, reports BSS.

There must be no shortage of food during Ramadan, she said, while

directing the commerce ministry to take measures accordingly.

She called for strong supervision such that food prices do not spiral during the Muslim holy month.

The openings of letters of credit for Ramadan essentials should not face any hold-ups, she said.

"Many non-essential items are being imported but when it comes to opening LCs for food items, there are problems," said a meeting participant.

Hasina then asked the representative of National Board of Revenue why no action was taken on the list of 330 non-essential items sent by the commerce ministry in August.

She then instructed the NBR to take steps to bring down the import of the non-essential items on the list.

The non-essential items include: 1,500cc car, sports utility vehicle, furniture, fruits, mineral water, home decorations, packaged food, jam, jelly, juice, soy sauce, ice cream, tobacco, door, door frame, suitcase, trunk, handbag, leather products, cement, tableware, fridge, compressor, lead battery, oven, tiles, toys, sanitary products.

The supplementary, customs and regulatory duties on the 330 products would be hiked and measures would be taken such that those products are not snuck into the country through illicit ways.

The PM also ordered halting those projects that take long to implement and whose output takes a while. Small projects with fast turnover should be prioritised.

"We are not going to be in danger but we have to take measures in advance so that we are not in trouble in future. We are taking all the measures carefully to this end," she said, reports BSS.

She also instructed the ICT ministry to keep a strong watch on social media such that none can spread misinformation about the country's foreign exchange reserves, sources told this newspaper.

Foreign currency reserves stand at \$34.1 billion as of November 23, as per the central bank's definition.

"There is a lot of talk on the banking sector -- let us find out what the real scenario is," Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam quoted the PM as saying in a press briefing at the secretariat after the meeting, reports UNB.

The PM instructed the financial institutions division to fill her in on

the matter.

The current public discourse on the irregularities at Islami Bank, the country's largest private sector bank, was also discussed at the meeting. "This issue will be looked into as well," Islam said.

The meeting also decided to ensure stability in internal procurement, purchase and food import to keep the food stock above 15 lakh tonnes.

"Right now, we are in a comfortable zone," he said, adding that the government silos have 16 lakh tonnes of rice as of November 22.

The programmes to provide food to one crore families at a subsidised rate -- Open Market Sales, Food Friendly Programme, Vulnerable Group Development -- will continue.

Hasina gave special directives for project implementation and instructed officials to be more careful in case of foreign-funded projects, Islam said.

"We have recently seen that expenditure in foreign-funded projects has slowed. The flow of foreign currency will increase if the expenditure rises. When we spend less, development partners give less," he said, adding that all secretaries were instructed to focus on the issue.

A suggestion was also made to curtail unnecessary expenditure in government offices.

40 Burundi rebels killed in east DR Congo

AFP, Bukavu

Forty Burundian rebels have been killed in a joint offensive by the militias of Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi in eastern DRC, a Congolese army spokesman said yesterday.

The two armies "carried out a high-intensity offensive operation" against Burundian rebels of the National Liberation Forces (FNL), Lieutenant Marc Elongo-Kyondwa said in a statement.

The enemy "suffered a heavy loss of men and equipment: 40 attackers neutralised (killed)," he said.

The two armies "dislodged" the FNL "from all the four hills overlooking the town of Nabombi," considered a command post of the FNL's self-proclaimed general Aloys Nzabampema, he added.

Will big loan defaulters remain untouched?

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After a Dhaka court granted Hasanul bail in October 2017, the ACC filed the petition with the HC challenging the bail order.

In January 2018, the HC issued a rule asking Hasanul to explain as to why his bail should not be scrapped.

On November 8 this year, the same HC bench reprimanded the ACC for the long delays in investigations into BASIC Bank loan scams and asked why the bank's former chairman Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu was not accused in any of the cases.

"Several years have passed, but the Anti-Corruption Commission is yet to submit a charge sheet [to the lower court] in any of the cases filed

over BASIC Bank loan scams. What is the reason for such a long delay? Will the investigation continue for an indefinite period?"

"Those who are responsible for the embezzlement of huge amount of public money from BASIC Bank must be brought to book and their trials will have to be finished quickly," the bench said while hearing three bail petitions filed by Mohammad Ali, former general manager of BASIC Bank's Shantinagar branch, in three corruption cases filed by the ACC.

According to a Bangladesh Bank enquiry, around Tk 4,500 crore was siphoned off BASIC Bank between 2009 and 2013 when Bacchu chaired the board of the bank.

On June 14, this year, the HC bench led by Justice Md Nazrul Islam slammed the ACC and police for failing to arrest all of the 15 accused in a case filed over embezzlement of Tk 176 crore from AB Bank.

"We gave directions to arrest all the accused of the Tk 176 crore embezzlement case more than six months ago. Why have they not been arrested yet? We want to know the reasons," the HC bench said during a hearing.

On November 4 last year, an HC bench led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim (now a judge of the Appellate Division) observed that loan defaulters can't have the legal rights to participate in elections.

Masters of close control not welcome

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For his troubles, the 30-year-old left the pitch with an ankle injury that ruled him out of at least one of Brazil's two remaining group stage matches, which led some to wonder whether Neymar should consider tweaking his style of play. In other words, they wondered if Neymar should stop being Neymar.

But the beauty of Neymar's methodical approach lies in the fact that it is far more than simply an act of defiance. To invite multiple opponents to trap you in a corner before getting away with a flurry of footwork, a drop of the shoulder or, in the best-or-worse-case scenario depending on who you ask, an audacious flick, can be a game-changer.

In the modern game, it is what can transform a player into a one-man wrecking of most forms of pressing football that now dominate the scene by giving their team the numerical advantage in dangerous areas of the pitch. Even against teams that tend to sit back in a low block, one player drawing out multiple defenders, especially those that have committed to a challenge and can no longer recover, is key to unlocking a defence.

It is why Neymar is often busier spinning a web around multiple defenders and getting their full attention before unleashing a pass, and it is also the reason his passes, often into open spaces left behind

by defenders committed to tackling him, are so deadly.

The price for that style of play, as one of the best in the role can attest, is being fouled.

"It's part of the game, if you don't want to get fouled, don't get the ball. That's it," said Eden Hazard, who was fouled three times in the span of eight minutes by Canada in Belgium's opening game.

"I always say if there is a foul on me it means I have the ball, so it's a good sign, it's part of my game. Players who play with the ball like me, like Neymar, like Vinicius Junior, we are fouled. We have to deal with it.

"I just hope opponents can have yellow cards more often than now because then they will stop the fouls."

But the referees' failure to recognise such patterns and book offenders, especially for the truggles on ankles that seem to have become common for such players, paints the impression that these players are unwelcome.

At an event such as the World Cup, where the accumulation of two yellow cards will see a player miss match, a caution is the ideal way to curb potentially injurious tactics. Those yellow cards will persist until the end of the quarterfinals, meaning players should be doubly cautious not to be booked early in the tournament.

Yet, that has not materialised, with referees fluent with the whistle but

often less than eager when it comes to flashing a card. For example, Serbia's nine fouls on Neymar cost them only two yellow cards, which came at the start of either half.

Jack Grealish, another player who courts challenges, was fouled four times after coming on in the 67th minute against the USA. But the USA's roughshod treatment of Grealish across those 23 minutes yielded no yellow cards at all.

The Canadians also made the most of lenient refereeing, getting away without a single yellow for their four nibbles at Hazard, who had ankle surgery in March this year.

With referees failing to punish infractions, such players are basically being asked to change their natural game or leave the field with an injury.

But with the stakes so high, the Neymars and Hazards of the world cannot back down. And with teams having shown in past World Cups that they will not shy away from literally taking a player out of the game if that enhances their chance to win, that puts the onus on the referees.

As Hazard said, these players already know their style demands that they are fouled. But unless such bold players are afforded more protection, especially when they are targeted with multiple tackles in short bursts, the art they represent may cease to exist altogether. And the game would only be less beautiful for it.