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Five Bangladeshis killed, 2 hurt in South Africa crash

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

At least five Bangladeshis, including a minor, were killed and two others seriously injured in a road accident in South Africa yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Abul Hossain, 45, his son Nadim Hossain, 10, Razu Ahmed, 34, Ismail Hossain, 38, and Mostafa Kamal, 40, said Tarikul Islam, director general of the foreign ministry's Africa wing.

All of them were from Feni Sadar and Daganbhuiyan upazilas, he said based on his communication with the Bangladesh Embassy in South Africa.

The injured are Anisul Haque Milon, 38, of Daganbhuiyan, and Nahid Ahmed, 35 of Gopalganj.

They were travelling from Johannesburg to Cape Town. Tarikul Islam told The Daily Star that the car carrying the Bangladeshis collided with a lorry in Beaufort West, 1,000 kilometres off from the capital city of Pretoria.

The five were killed on the spot. "The condition of the two injured is critical. They are undergoing treatment at a local hospital," Tarikul said.

Asked when the deceased will be brought back home, he said Bangladesh Embassy in Pretoria was trying to gather the details of the Bangladeshis as legal issues were involved with the process.

"We need to check if they were doing businesses, or jobs and what were the contracts. Looking at all these issues, we will proceed to bring them back. Also, the families' consent is needed."



CNG-run three-wheelers wait in a long queue outside a filling station on Sylhet-Tamabil road in Sylhet city's Tilagarh area yesterday. Drivers said they have to wait 3-4 hours for refilling as the supply of gas has been low for months. Also, filling stations don't supply gas from 5:00pm to 11:00pm every day in line with a directive of the authorities. This ultimately leads to rise in trip fares, causing suffering to passengers.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

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BCL men beat head teacher for not paying 'donation'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Chhatra League men have beaten up the head teacher of a school in Manikganj's Harirampur upazila for refusing to pay "donation" money.

Altaf Hossain, 54, head teacher of Ibrahimpur Iswar Chandra High School, filed a case against six BCL men with Harirampur Police Station yesterday.

Among the accused is Tanjid Mahmud Islam, 25, general secretary of Dhulshura Union Chhatra League, and also a former student of the school.

According to the case statement, Tanjid on several occasions had demanded the head teacher pay donation money for various programmes. The BCL leader got angry with the head teacher as he refused to pay the money.

PILKHANA CARNAGE 139 appeals over death penalty still pending with SC

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The death sentences of the 139 convicts in the BDR carnage case could not be executed even in 14 years since the mutiny, as their appeals are yet to be disposed of by the apex court.

Seventy-four people, including 57 army officials, were killed in the mutiny in the capital's Pilkhana headquarters of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on February 25 and 26 in 2009.

This incident had left the nation numb, as people stood aghast at the extent of the barbarity at the paramilitary force's headquarters, later renamed Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

The appeals challenging the High Court verdict that confirmed the death sentences of the 139 in November 2017 are still pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

The long delay is due to the apex court being burdened with a large number of pending cases, which was worsened by the Covid pandemic.

The Appellate Division is yet to start hearing the appeals.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told The Daily Star on February 17 that the Appellate Division will start hearing the appeals when the chief justice will constitute a bench for their hearing and disposal.

"The bench will have to be constituted

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Address out-of-pocket spending on healthcare

WB urges Bangladesh in its latest report

REJAUL KARIMBYRON

Bangladesh could explore health financing reforms that increase public financing for the health sector to reduce out-of-pocket spending, which is threatening to undermine national poverty reduction efforts, said the World Bank in a recent study.

Out-of-pocket spending (OOPS) on healthcare is a major concern, said the Washington-based multilateral lender in its report on the primary healthcare system of Bangladesh based on data up to 2019.

In 2017, OOPS accounted for 73.9 percent of health expenditure, the highest among South Asian countries.

Comparatively, OOPS accounted for 58 percent in Nepal, 55 percent in India, 54 percent in Pakistan, 46 percent in Sri Lanka, and 18 percent in Bhutan of health expenditure in 2017.

From 2000 to 2017 in Bangladesh, OOPS on health more than quadrupled, increasing from \$17 to \$70, adjusted for purchasing power parity.

"The available information on health financing points to increasing levels of OOPS on health, placing individuals and facilities at a greater risk of experiencing catastrophic health expenditure and impoverishment," said the report, which was released on Thursday.

While such expenditure may partly reflect growing incomes and an increased ability to pay for health services, it is noteworthy that OOPS has grown at a much faster rate than domestic government health expenditure, it said.

"Ultimately, increasing reliance on OOPS is problematic because, in addition to generating an increased risk of impoverishing and catastrophic health expenditures, it can also present barriers to accessing primary healthcare services."

In fact, according to household survey data, catastrophic health expenditure has increased significantly in recent years.

From 2000 to 2016, the proportion of the population spending 10 percent or more of their disposable income on health increased from 4.1 percent to 9.3 percent, and the proportion of the population spending 25 percent or more on health increased from 0.4 percent to 1.3 percent.

Over the same time, however, impoverishing OOPS has remained relatively stable, decreasing from 2.4 to 2 percent.

The increase in facilities charging user fees from 2014 to 2018 and the high proportion of women ages 15 to 49 years old reporting financial barriers to accessing health care

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"Rising out-of-pocket spending on healthcare threatens to undermine national poverty reduction efforts. It is a major concern."

According to a WB report

Masked men pick up two near jail gate

Claim families; the duo acquitted in militancy case



Jamal Mehedi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Two men, recently acquitted of militant involvement, were abducted by masked men soon after they were released from Lalmonirhat jail on Tuesday, claimed family members.

Mehedi Hasan, 27, and Jamal Uddin, 32, are residents of the district's Hatibandha and Kaliganj.

In November 2017, the two along with four others were sued for their alleged involvement with the banned Islamist militant organisation Jama'atul Mujahedeen, Bangladesh (JMB).

Five men, including Mehedi and Jamal, were arrested in the case while the six accused remained absconding.

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Sixth sense more prevalent in animals than earlier thought

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The ability of some animals to sense the magnetic field around them may be more widespread than previously thought, according to a new study.

Magnetoreception, as this sixth sense is called, is more difficult to detect in animals than the familiar five senses of vision, smell, hearing, touch and taste, said researchers, including those from the University of Manchester in the UK.

In the new study, published on Wednesday in the journal Nature, scientists assessed how fruit flies sense and respond to magnetic fields in their environment by altering their gene activity.

Researchers found for the first time that a molecule present in all living cells, called flavin adenine dinucleotide (FAD), can impart magnetic sensitivity when present in high amounts.

While species such as the monarch butterfly, pigeon and turtle are already known to use the Earth's magnetic field to navigate long distances, scientists said the new discovery suggested molecules enabling animals to sense magnetic fields are likely present in more living organisms.

"How we sense the external world, from vision, hearing, through to touch, taste and smell, are well understood. But by contrast, which animals can sense and how they respond to a magnetic

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RESOLUTION ON UKRAINE Bangladesh abstains from voting at UNGA

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh on Thursday abstained from voting on a UNGA resolution calling for an end to the war in Ukraine, just hours before the conflict entered its second year yesterday.

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) at its eleventh emergency special session demanded Russia's immediate withdrawal from Ukraine, in line with the UN Charter.

The resolution was adopted as 141 member states voted in favour and seven against - Belarus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Mali, Nicaragua, Russia and Syria.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh, China, India, Iran, and Pakistan were among the 32 countries that abstained from voting.

So far, Bangladesh voted in favour of one UN resolution supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine and defending the principles of the UN Charter and abstained from voting on three resolutions against Russia.

About Bangladesh's position in the UN resolution, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Sehel Sabrin told reporters on Thursday that Bangladesh usually abstains from voting when it goes against any specific country.

"We don't vote on any UN resolution on any specific country unless there are violations of international humanitarian law," she explained.

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Fuel being sold from boats in the Buriganga in Tel Ghat area of South Keraniganj. Launches and boats buy diesel and engine oil from the floating shops. Many traders dump old burnt engine oil in the river, polluting the water body. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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'No rule of law in the country' Says GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader has said that the people are still not free from misrule as there is no rule of law in the country.

He made the remarks while speaking at his 75th birthday programme, held at his office in the capital's Banani yesterday.

"The ruling party's upazila-level leaders now own thousands of crores of taka. They have nowhere to keep that money in their country, so they are smuggling it abroad," said Quader, also the deputy leader of the opposition in parliament.

The JP chief lashed out at the government, saying that the ruling party's men oppressed ordinary people and even beggars were not spared from extortion.

"The people now think that the law cannot run at its own course. Common people do not consider their country safe.

"We are doing politics for the freedom of the people. We want to free the people of the country.