



ROAD CRASH DATA

Give it to us before you publish

BRTA asks road safety campaigners

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government has asked the non-government organisations working on road safety to inform the authorities concerned before releasing data on road crashes and casualties.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) on Tuesday sent a letter to four non-government organisations in this regard. The Daily Star obtained a copy of the letter signed by Mahbub E-Rabbani, director (road safety) of BRTA.

The organisations are Nirapad Sarak Chai, Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity, Road Safety Foundation and Save The Road.

The development came at a time when the authorities have been criticizing non-government organisations for publishing road accident data.

Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri at a programme on January 15 blasted the road safety campaigners for publishing “fabricated” reports on crashes.

He said the reports were creating confusion among the people and tarnishing the country’s image abroad and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Preparation for the Mongol Shobhajatra on Pahela Baishakh is going on in full-swing at the Faculty of Fine Art at Dhaka University. The photo of a student arranging colourful masks on a corridor was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

New Year celebrations begin in CHT

STAR REPORT

People of indigenous communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts yesterday started their three-day celebrations for the New Year.

The festival is known by different names in different communities – Biju, Bihu, Bishu, Baisu, Sangrai, Sanglan, Chakran.

The festivals started yesterday and will continue for the next three days. During this time, they will pray that the new year brings blessings in everyone’s lives by removing all the sorrows and sufferings of the previous year.

They celebrate “Phul Biju” on April 12, the main function or “Mul Biju” on April 13, and Gojyapojya on the occasion of the new year on April 14. People wear traditional clothes and organise various sports and cultural programmes and prepare special food items.

People in Bandarban

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

2,000 judges dealing with 40 lakh cases

Says chief justice about case backlogs

UNB, JHENAIDAH

Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique has drawn a direct relationship between the number of judges, needed to dispense justice in the country, and the high number of cases pending with the judicial system.

He said the number of judges in the country is very low compared to the cases. As a result, the average time a case stays pending is increasing.

The chief justice said the judges are trying their best to reduce the case backlogs. The process of appointing new judges is underway.

He said for the 40 lakh cases (approximately the number of cases pending) with the country’s judicial system, from the lower judiciary all the way up to the Supreme Court, there are only 2,000 judges. But work is underway to appoint 102 judges, he said.

The chief justice made the comments after laying the foundation stone of construction of “Naykunja”, which will be a rest room of the justice-seekers, on the Jhenaidah court premises yesterday morning.

“We are working to alleviate the sufferings of the justice-seekers coming to the court. For this, Naykunja is being built in the district. The government has allocated Tk 35 crore for this purpose. At least Tk 50 lakh will be given to each district for the construction of Naykunja,” said the chief justice.

He said 82,000 cases were filed with the Supreme

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Over half of Rana Plaza survivors unemployed

Finds ActionAid study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 54.5 percent of Rana Plaza survivors are unemployed while 89 percent of them have been without work for the past five to eight years, said a latest survey.

The survey, conducted by the Institute of Social Business on behalf of ActionAid Bangladesh, said 5.5 percent have been unemployed for the last three to four years.

The key reason for those who are currently jobless is their health condition, suggesting that physical health continues to be a significant barrier to employment for many survivors, it said.

Additionally, 21 percent of the respondents reported that they could not find a suitable job.

The study findings were revealed yesterday at a multilogue titled “The Rana Plaza Experience: Tragedy to Transformation” at a city convention hall, marking the 10th year anniversary of the building collapse.

The study was conducted among 200 survivors (69.5 percent women) and families of the deceased

workers affected by the Rana Plaza tragedy.

The findings highlighted several key points related to the current condition of the survivors, including their current physical health status, psychosocial well-being, and financial status.

More than one-third of the respondents said they are suffering from back pain, while a quarter complained about suffering from headaches.

The study also found that the key reason for those who are currently unemployed is their physical health condition although the number has fallen from 67 percent to 47 percent from last year.

It also mentioned that the physical health status of the Rana Plaza incident survivors has not shown any significant improvement – the proportion of survivors claiming to be completely stable has decreased from 17 percent in

2014 to 7.5 percent in 2023, but the percentage of respondents whose health has deteriorated increased from 9 percent to 22.5 percent during the same period.

More than one-third of the respondents said they are suffering from back pain, while a quarter complained about suffering from headaches.

Other health problems include breathing problems, hand, and leg injuries, inability to stand and walk properly, vision and kidney problems.

In terms of psychosocial health, there is still a significant proportion (29 percent) of traumatised survivors whose condition is deteriorating.

Of the traumatised, 57.8 percent of respondents are living in fear because of their experience of the building collapse, while 28.9 percent complained of being worried about their health and safety.

The study also revealed the monthly family income of half of the respondent survivors was found to be between Tk 10,001 and Tk

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Nasa unveils ‘Mars’ habitat on Earth

AFP, Houston



Four small rooms, a gym and a lot of red sand – Nasa unveiled on Tuesday its new Mars-simulation habitat, in which volunteers will live for a year at a time to test what life will be like on future missions to Earth’s neighbour.

The facility, created for three planned experiments called the Crew Health and Performance Exploration Analog (CHAPEA), is located at the US space agency’s massive research base in Houston, Texas.

Four volunteers will begin the first trial this summer, during which Nasa plans to monitor their physical and mental health to better understand humans’ fortitude for such a long isolation.

With that data, Nasa will better understand astronauts’ “resource use” on Mars, said Grace Douglas, lead researcher on the CHAPEA experiments.

“We can really start to understand how we’re supporting them with what we’re providing them, and that’s going to be really important information to making those critical resource decisions,” she said on a press tour of the habitat.

Such a distant mission comes with “very strict mass limitations,” she added.

New Israeli spyware targets journos and politicians

Says anti-tech abuse body

AFP, Washington

New Israeli-made spyware resembling the notorious Pegasus program has been used to target journalists and opposition politicians in several countries, a Canadian watchdog said Tuesday.

The spyware and related exploit or hacking software was created by the little-known firm QuaDream Ltd, which was established by a former Israeli military official and veterans of NSO Group, the creator of Pegasus, according to Citizen Lab.

Citizen Lab, which studies the abuse of digital technologies, said it identified at least five people targeted by QuaDream spyware and exploits in North America, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

“Victims include journalists, political opposition figures, and an NGO worker,” it said, saying it would not identify them at the moment.

Spyware like Pegasus has been widely used by governments and other actors to spy on opponents, media and activists.

The programs can be placed on

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



The scorching heat over the last few days has made it difficult to stay outdoors at day time. The photo of a relatively empty Kalyanpur bus stop was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Deadliest first quarter for Med migrants since 2017

Says UN as 441 people die attempting to reach Europe

AFP, Geneva

January to March 2023 was the deadliest first quarter for migrants crossing the central Mediterranean since 2017, the United Nations said yesterday, with 441 lives lost attempting to reach Europe.

The UN’s International Organization for Migration (IOM) said delays in state-led search and rescue (SAR) operations were a factor in several fatal incidents in the perilous crossing from north Africa.

And the IOM said the 441 known deaths in the first three months of the year was likely an undercount of the true number.

“The persisting humanitarian crisis in the central Mediterranean is intolerable,” said IOM chief Antonio Vitorino.

“With more than 20,000 deaths recorded on this route since 2014, I fear that these deaths have been normalised,” he added.

“States must respond. Delays and gaps in state-led SAR are costing human lives.”

The IOM said delays in such rescues were a factor in at least six incidents so far this year, leading to the deaths of at least 127 people.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1