

RAIL BRIDGE ACCIDENT
2 more bodies
recovered from
river in Akhaura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Bodies of two more people, who jumped off a rail bridge into Titas river in Brahmanbaria's Akhaura to save themselves from an approaching train, were recovered yesterday

With them, the death toll from the incident rose to four. Fire service officials had recovered two bodies last night.

Of the four victims, the identity of two have so far been identified. They are Shukkur Mia, 55, and Mozammel Mia of Narsingdi district.

Jasim Uddin Khandaker, officer-in-charge of Akhaura Railway Police Station, said the accident took place near the Kharampur shrine around 9:45pm on Thursday.

Some devotees were walking on the bridge to cross the river when the Dhaka-bound Intercity Parabat Express from Sylhet approached.

Most managed to cross the bridge but some could not. At least two people jumped off the bridge to save themselves while two others were hit, police and witnesses told our Brahmanbaria correspondent.

All the deceased were devotees of the shrine, the OC said.

Thousands of devotees have gathered in the shrine area as a week-long annual programme (Urs) began there on Thursday.

India hopes polls
in Bangladesh will
be peaceful

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday hoped that the upcoming national polls in Bangladesh will be held peacefully.

However, refusing to comment on the internal affairs of Bangladesh, Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the rising political tension there is not a matter that India should comment on.

"Look, I don't have really any particular comment on internal developments there [in Bangladesh] on the issue of the caretaker government," he said in response to a question by an Indian journalist regarding New Delhi's stand on recent political developments in Bangladesh.

Asked if the confrontational politics has raised the possibility of intervention of a "third party or military" in Bangladesh, Bagchi refused to go into any speculations.

"I don't have anything for you on that specifically. I wouldn't like to get into speculation. ... we would hope the elections are held peacefully and as per schedule," he told the weekly media briefing.



A view shows a site of a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Zaporizhzhia on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Zelensky fires heads of
military enlistment

Russia ups pressure in northeast Ukraine;
drone attack on Moscow 'foiled'

AFP, Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday dismissed officials responsible for military conscription in each region of the country, citing corruption allegations that he said could amount to treason.

"We are dismissing all regional military commissars," Zelensky said in a post on social media, following a meeting with senior military leadership.

"This system should be run by people who know exactly what war is and why cynicism and bribery at a time of war is high treason," he added.

Kyiv has been conscripting Ukrainians for assault battalions for its counteroffensive against Russian forces to recapture territory controlled by Moscow's troops.

The move reflects Ukraine's efforts to clamp down on graft and corruption as part of sweeping reforms requested by Western institutions like the European Union, which Ukraine hopes to join.

"During the inspection of the territorial recruitment centres, law enforcement agencies exposed cases

of corruption," the presidency said in a separate statement.

It said Ukraine's general mobilisation was a key area in which inspectors had uncovered instances of foul play.

These "pose a threat to Ukraine's national security and undermine confidence in state institutions," the statement said.

It added that Ukraine's security council recommended that the head of the army select replacements who have battlefield experience and were vetted by Ukraine's intelligence services.

Meanwhile, Russia yesterday claimed to have improved its fighting positions around the northeast Ukraine town of Kupiansk, where its advance has promoted Ukrainian officials to urge residents to evacuate.

Moscow also launched a volley of hypersonic missiles at western Ukraine, killing an eight-year-old boy in a part of the country that has largely been spared from attacks.

Kupiansk and the surrounding areas of the northeast Kharkiv region were recaptured by Kyiv's forces in September, but Moscow has since pushed back into

the region, forcing Ukraine to order civilian evacuations.

According to Moscow's defence ministry, Russian units had "continued offensive operations on a wide front and improved the tactical situation" in Vilshana and Pershotravneve to the east of Kupiansk.

The situation around the town was "difficult, given the power of the enemy group, but controlled", said Sergiy Cherevaty, spokesman for Ukraine's eastern forces.

Ukrainian officials in Kupiansk on Thursday urged residents in 37 settlements wedged between the town and Russian lines to evacuate.

People could shift to Kharkiv, some 90 kilometres (55 miles) west, where they would have the option to move to safer regions, they said.

Russia's drive in Kupiansk has sought to draw Ukrainian forces away from Kyiv's own counteroffensive.

Ukraine launched its highly anticipated push in June after stockpiling Western weapons but has struggled to make headway in the face of stiff Russian resistance.

Couple killed in
Dinaipur road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A couple were killed and two more people injured in a road crash in Dinaipur bus terminal area yesterday afternoon.

The deceased -- Mongal Murmu, 55, and his wife Malati Mardi, 45, -- were residents of Babu Bazar village in Dinaipur's Parbatipur upazila.

Tanvirul Islam, OC of Dinaipur Sadar Police Station, said the couple along with their grandson Biplob Hasda, 18, was riding an easy bike, a small passenger vehicle, on their way to Dinaipur bus terminal to catch a bus for Parbatipur.

As they reached in front of the terminal around 4:00pm, a speeding bus collided head-on with the easy bike, leaving four people, including easy bike driver Mohsin Ali injured.

Locals rushed them to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital. The couple died at the hospital after about an hour, said the OC.

Injured Biplob and Mohsin, 38, were undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Police seized both the vehicles, but the bus driver and his helper managed to flee.

Youth beaten dead on
suspicion of theft

UNB, Kushtia

A youth was beaten to death by a mob over an allegation of theft in Kushtia's Bheramara upazila on Thursday night.

The deceased, Akram Shah, 21, was from Masjidpara village in the same upazila.

Police and locals said the theft occurred at the house of late freedom fighter Headayet Ali at Khandakerpara on Monday night.

Eight to 10 people picked up Akram from his home around noon on Thursday on suspicion that he committed the theft. They tied the youth to a tree and beat him up indiscriminately. Akram bled from the nose and mouth before falling unconscious, locals added.

Later, the youth was handed over to one of his relatives. He died of his injuries at home around 11:00pm.

Akram's uncle Bisharat Ali Shah said his nephew was not involved in the theft. He demanded justice for Akram.

Police sent the youth's body to Kushtia General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Mother, daughter
murdered in Bagerhat

UNB, Bagerhat

A 38-year-old woman and her daughter were reportedly hacked to death by some miscreants in Bagerhat's Sharankhola upazila yesterday.

Papia Begum was the wife of Abu Zafar Hawladar, a resident of Uttar Rajapur village. Her daughter Sauda Jeni was 6 years old.

The incident took place at around 7:00pm at Uttar Rajapur village under the Rayenda union of the upazila.

According to locals, a gang of miscreants entered the house of the woman and hacked them with sharp weapons, leaving Jeni dead on the spot.

On information, police recovered the bodies, said Md Ekram Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sharankhola police station.

An investigation has been launched to find out the motive behind the murders, he added.

Erosion taking toll on millions

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Yarunnesa Begum, 65, from the Saikka village in Gosairhat area of Shariatpur sits on the bank of the Jayanti river, a tributary of the Meghna. Losing most of her cropland and home to the river, she cannot wear a stolid expression as Munshi does. She looks thoroughly dejected.

"The river already devoured 26 decimals of my cropland last year. The river is eroding again and now all I have left is the yard of my home," said Yarunnesa, a widow and mother of five daughters.

Nasir Uddin Swapan, chairman of the local union parishad in Shariatpur, said his entire union is encircled by rivers, and that the Jayanti has already eroded over 202 hectares of land in his union.

Deputy Minister for Water Resources AKM Enamul Hoque Shameem, who happens to be a lawmaker from Shariatpur 2, along with BWDB officials, visited the erosion-prone areas in his district two years ago. Since then, BWDB has put some geo bags along the river during erosion.

However, Swapan said the geo bags had not been very effective in bringing about desired results.

As the government initiatives are not showing much hope for villagers, people like Yarunnesa do not have any option other than waiting to see their homes devoured by the rivers.

She said she might have to live on the street once her entire home was eroded away.

Shankar Kumar Baidya, a farmer from Shyamnagar upazila of Shatkhira, lost his homestead to the erosion of Kholpetua river a few years back. Now he, along with his wife, lives in a slum in the capital's Mirpur 11 and sells vegetables on a rickshaw van.

"After losing my homestead, I dismantled my house and moved to another village. I tried to settle there and tried my luck by cultivating shrimp on a piece of leased land. But I incurred loss due to a virus infection in my farm. So I had no option but to

move to Dhaka," Shankar said.

Abdul Jalil from Hatia built his house on the newly emerged Caringchar in 2007 in Hatia upazila, around 15 km away from the Meghna river.

"But when the Meghna started eroding, I dismantled my house three times in 2010, 2013 and 2018. Finally I left Caringchar in 2020 and moved to Hatia town," said Jalil.

According to the monitoring cell of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) under the ministry of water resources, river erosion regularly occurs every year in over 50 districts out of 64.

This year, a total of 231 km of river bank have been eroded in 1,053 places along different rivers across the country till August 11. However, the BWDB says it does not monitor all the erosion sites in the country.

"We do not monitor how much land has been eroded along the rivers but we monitor the length of the eroded banks. We make interventions in areas where interventions are necessary to control the erosion," said BWDB engineer Rashidul Kabir.

Currently, the BWDB is making interventions only in 246 places.

Contacted, Dr Enamur Rahman, state minister for Disaster Management and Relief, said it is a common problem in Bangladesh and every year thousands of people become homeless due to this problem.

"The government has a ready stock of corrugated tin sheets and dry food items. Once we find people affected by erosion, we provide them with dry food and corrugated tin sheets so that they can make makeshift houses immediately and live there," he said.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Experts say no other country in the world faces river erosion the way Bangladesh does. The Jamuna is a braided river and often shifts its channel, causing river erosion.

"Rivers of Bangladesh have a unique character as those are coming down from the Himalayas bringing huge sediments with them, creating new

char lands and causing erosions. No other country in the world has rivers with such unique characteristics," said Dr Maminul Haq Sarkar, a CEGIS adviser.

In some areas, we find the Jamuna has many channels and is 11-12 km wide on average, he said. It is not possible to stop river erosion until erosion-prone rivers are trained, he added.

AKM Saiful Islam, professor at the Institute of Water and Flood Management of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), said climate change is causing higher annual rainfall in this region, and as a result, flooding and the velocity of river flow are increasing, leading to more river erosion.

"So far as I know, no government agency is keeping any record of river erosion across the country. We have over 400 rivers and it is really a very big task to keep track of erosions along all the rivers," he said.

Asked about inadequate initiatives to combat erosion in villages, Professor Ainun Nishat, eminent expert on water resource management, said the government conducts cost benefit analysis before making any interventions on riverbank erosion.

"Naturally, the town or city areas where the land is more valuable than cropland in a village get priority in government interventions," he said.

Also, rivers with high sediments are always erosion-prone and they can erode even after construction of embankments, he said.

Talking about a comprehensive national strategy about protecting people from erosion-prone areas, UNDP Programme Specialist Arif Abdullah Khan said, "Bangladesh needs a long-term strategy to manage the displaced population by mainstreaming it through development investments and critical measures for risk reduction."

[Our correspondents from Tangail and Shariatpur contributed to this report]

S Alam serves legal notice on govt

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demands, the secretaries ensure that the journalists are stopped from publishing any statements or reports about Alam and his businesses.

It also demands that the two secretaries ensure that the journalists give an undertaking that they will not repeat such actions in the future.

In addition, the notice demands that all such content preserved in any public domain be removed.

The notice was served on The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, Executive Editor Syed Ashfaqul Haque and journalists Partha Pratim Bhattachajee and Zyna Islam for publishing two reports -- one titled "Probe S Alam Group Assets" published on December 6, 2022, and the other titled "S Alam's Aladdin's lamp" published on August 4, 2023.

The notice was served on Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiur Rahman and its journalist Sanaullah Sakib for publishing a report on November 24, 2022 under the headline "Islami Bank a Bhayangkar

November".

The Business Standard Chief Editor and Publisher Inam Ahmed and its reporters Jebun Nesa Alo and Sakhawat Prince were also served the notice for publishing a report headlined "How a 24-year-old greenhorn is blessed with a Tk 900cr loan" on November 27, 2022.

New Age Editor Nurul Kabir and journalist Mostafizur Rahman were served the notice, for the report published on November 30, 2022, under the headline "S Alam Group lifts Tk 30,000cr loans from IBBL alone".

"It is important for both the home secretary and information secretary performing functions in connection with the affairs of the Republic to take immediate necessary actions and fulfil their respective duties to maintain peace, protect citizens' rights, and prevent the spread of defamatory statements [...]" the notice reads.

Unless the government complies with these demands before 10:00am of August 13, 2023, the Group will file a writ petition seeking punitive

damages.

The High Court had on two instances issued suo moto directives based on the reports the notice sought to remove.

On August 6, 2023, the High Court bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Khizir Hayat issued a suo moto rule ordering a probe into Alam's assets abroad. The rule came after The Daily Star published the report titled "S Alam's Aladdin's Lamp".

Earlier on December 4, 2022, the same High Court bench asked the government agencies to hold inquiries into alleged irregularities in obtaining loans from Islami Bank Limited, First Security Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, and Social Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited by S Alam Group.

This rule was passed after taking cognisance of four newspaper reports including the two by Prothom Alo and New Age.

Both the probes are being done at the moment.

Shakib returns as ODI skipper

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captain for Shakib, having previously led Bangladesh in 50 ODIs between 2009 and 2017. The all-rounder also currently leads Bangladesh in Tests and T20Is.

A press release from BCB confirmed the appointment, where president Nazmul Hassan is quoted as saying, "Shakib was the obvious choice to captain Bangladesh when the position fell vacant. I am very confident that his exemplary performance, experience, and leadership qualities will galvanise the team as we head into two massive events like the Asia Cup and the World Cup."

The BCB boss, however, made the disclosure to selected media personnel two hours prior to the issuing of the press release at his residence.

The BCB boss said Shakib was the obvious choice for the position

in consideration of the importance of the two upcoming assignments. Hassan, who was given the responsibility to make the final call regarding the captaincy issue after an emergency board meeting on Tuesday failed to come to a decision, said Shakib was more serious now than any other cricketer in the team.

Hassan also spoke elaborately about the possible structure of the 17-member squad for the Asia Cup which will be declared today.

He gave away a few names as certainties while remaining vague about the chances of some other players, including Mahmudullah Riyad and Afif Hossain. Hassan, however, said the team management would try out at least a couple of openers in the Asia Cup, given the uncertainty over the return of injured opener and former captain Tamim Iqbal, ahead of the World Cup.

Saviour fails
to survive

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since Thursday.

She was admitted to the hospital with fever and some other health complications.

"I borrowed Tk 20,000 from my relatives. I have already spent Tk 10,000 for my daughter's treatment," said Nazira.

Mohammad Sagar brought her six-month-old son Md Abdullah to the hospital as he was suffering from fever. He spent Tk 1,650 to get some tests done and the reports will be available at 8:00pm today.

"Doctors will decide on his admission tomorrow [today] after seeing those test reports," said Sagar.

According to the DGHS data, 66 dengue patients were undergoing treatment at the hospital yesterday morning.