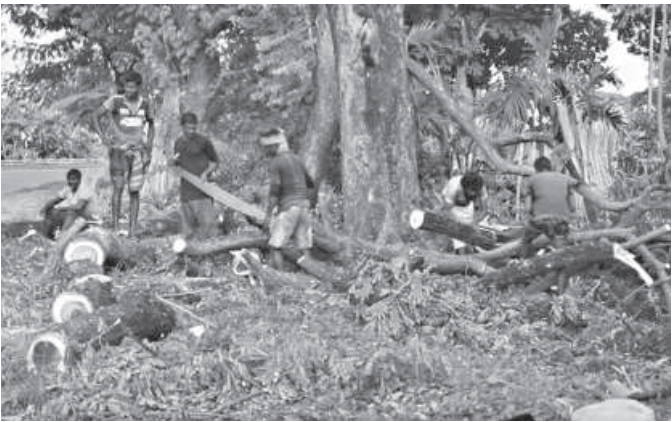




Workers with axes in their hands, relentlessly felling towering trees, as part of a Roads and Highway Department project to ‘ensure highway safety’. The fallen giants, now lifeless logs, are then being transported away with trucks, an act that sparked widespread criticism from environmentalists and locals.

PHOTO: STAR



## Narsingdi road accidents kill 6

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

At least six people were killed and five others injured in separate road incidents in Narsingdi’s Shibpur and Raipura on Friday night and early yesterday.

In Shibpur, three people died on the spot and two others sustained injuries when a truck rammed a microbus on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Shripulia area around 2:00am, said Abdul Mannan Ansari, senior station master of Fire Service and Civil Defence office in Narsingdi.

The deceased are Eladul Haque, 50, and Md Mostakim, 17, of Chandpur and microbus driver Sagar Chandra, 32, of Narayanganj.

We recovered three bodies and rescued two injured people from the spot after receiving a phone call from the national emergency number about 2:00am, said Abdul Mannan.

The injured -- Hasina Begum, 39, and her daughter Sanjida Akter, 19-- were taken to Narsingdi 100-Bed Hospital for treatment and the bodies were sent to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital for autopsy, the fire service official added.

Abul Khayer, sub-inspector of Itkhola Highway Police Camp, said the accident happened when the victims on a microbus were returning to Dhaka last night after visiting different places in Sylhet.

In Raipura, three people were killed and another three were injured after a bus of ‘Labiba Paribahan’ hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw from behind at Bhitmorjal round

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## 5 Rohingyas arrested

UNB, Magura

Police arrested five Rohingya youths from a bus of ‘New Green Express’ of Wapada area in Magura’s Shreepur upazila on Friday night.

The arrestees, aged between 22 and 25 years, used to live in Cox’s Bazar Kutupalong’s refugee camp, said Kanchon Kumar Ray, Officer-in-Charge of Shreepur Police Station.

Tipped off, they were arrested from the bus, he said, adding that after completing all legal procedures they will be sent back to the Cox’s Bazar camp.

Bangladesh is home to around a million members of the stateless minority, most of whom fled the 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar, which is now subject to a genocide probe at the International Criminal Court.

They have been crammed into the camps in Cox’s Bazar, the world’s largest refugee settlement. Most fled the crackdown by Myanmar’s military almost six years ago, although some have been there for longer.

Frustration is widespread over rampant lawlessness in the refugee settlements, along with cuts to international humanitarian aid and the lack of progress in a much-hyped repatriation deal.

PRAYER  
TIMING

SEPTEMBER 17

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-35	12-45	4-30	6-09	7-45
JAMAAT 5-10	1-15	4-45	6-12	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## PABNA-RAJSHAHI HIGHWAY A ‘festival’ of tree felling

RHD say they are axing only dead and risky ones, locals claim otherwise

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Logs from felled trees lined up on both sides of Pabna-Rajshahi highway, this is what this correspondent observed during a recent visit to the place. Workers, armed with axes, were striking down the trees in the name of ensuring ‘highway safety,’ while their trucks were ferrying the fallen giants away.

The RHD has begun rampant tree felling on both sides of the highway, stretching from Pabna’s Gaspara till Ishwardi’s Muladuli, sparking criticism.

While RHD Rajshahi divisional office claimed ‘a total 71 trees that are either dead or risky are being felled for ensuring safety on the highway’, locals alleged that some healthy trees are also being cut down unnecessarily.

As per rules, the relevant authorities should take prior permission from the Department of Environment for felling any trees.

Contacted, Inspector of Pabna DoE GM Nazrul Islam said, “We were not officially informed about the highway tree felling.”

“We do not permit unnecessary tree felling. If there is a need to cut down trees for any reason, a committee comprised of various government organisations makes the decision after assessing the needs,” he explained.

The RHD Rajshahi divisional office recently held a tender for cutting down dead and risky trees beside highways in the division through six packages, of which Pabna belongs in the fifth package. The work to cut down 71 trees from Gaspara to Muladuli was awarded to ‘Sagor Traders’, a Bogura based company at cost of Tk 2.23 lakh in FY 2022-23, according to RHD

Pabna office.

“RHD had earlier identified the dead and risky trees on the highway and marked those with red colour. The men of contractors are cutting down trees according to the identification mark. This is a regular work of the RHD for safety measures,” said Abul Monsur Ahmed, executive engineer of RHD in Pabna.

Visiting Gaspara to Muladuli recently, this correspondent, however, found dozens of healthy



trees being felled alongside dead ones at several points on the highway.

At Aitmail area of the highway, he found a large and healthy ‘Koroi’ tree was being cut down.

Similarly, dozens of healthy trees were seen being felled at Gaspara, Maligasa and few other points on the highway.

Md Abu Bakar, a wood trader and also representative of the contractor, said they were felling trees following the identification mark.

“These include a few dead trees as well as a few that are marked as risky,” he said.

However, Arif Ahmed, a college teacher from Monohorpur area said, “Dozens of healthy trees have been marked as risky and are being cut down.”

Echoing the same, Abdul Hamid Khan, a leading environment activist of Pabna, said, “In the name of cutting down dead trees, rampant felling of healthy trees is an old practice that must be stopped,” said Abdul Hamid Khan, a leading environment activist of Pabna.

## USDA PROGRAM 42,000 students benefiting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been a steadfast partner in Bangladesh’s national school feeding programmes for over 20 years, reads a press release of the organisation issued on Friday.

USDA’s financial support and technical assistance have played a pivotal role in reshaping the educational and nutritional landscape for Bangladeshi students, it added.

Alongside the World Food Programme (WFP), USDA’s financial support and technical assistance have played a pivotal role in reshaping the educational and nutritional landscape for Bangladeshi students, said in a press release dated on Friday.

Since the programme was initiated in 2010 through the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme, the country has witnessed a significant rise in school enrollment and attendance. Currently, USDA’s support reaches approximately 42,000 students across 140 government primary schools in Cox’s Bazar.

They receive nourishing fortified biscuits as morning snacks and other nutrition support.

A delegation of USDA experts, comprising Richard Higgins and Stephanie Gaffney, visited Bangladesh this week to observe the effects

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK BR conducts test run of goods train

UNB, Faridpur

A freight train of Bangladesh Railway successfully completed a test run between Bhanga and Mawa station via the Padma bridge yesterday.

The goods train left Faridpur’s Bhanga station at 7:40am and reached Mawa, then again returned to Bhanga station, said Project Director of Faridpur Rail Project Brig General Syed Ahmed.

“Five bogies carried 350 tonnes of stone during the trial run and the speed limit was 80 kilometers per hour,” he said.



President of Faridpur Chamber of Commerce Nazrul Islam said people would be able to transport their goods using the train service at a low cost.

Earlier, the test run of a passenger train from Dhaka’s Kamalapur Railway Station to Faridpur’s Bhanga Station was successfully completed on September 7. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the rail link on October 10.

## Quader off to Singapore for health check-up

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader left Dhaka for Singapore yesterday to undergo his routine health check-up.

A Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight (BG 0584), carrying the minister, departed from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) at 8:30am, said an official release.

During his stay, Quader will undergo necessary medical examinations at the Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore, the release added.

## ATTACK ON FEMALE FOOTBALLERS

# Defiance is their reply

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Over a hundred children and teens eagerly waiting to learn self-defence tricks at the Tatultala Government Primary School grounds -- this is what this correspondent saw when he visited the place yesterday afternoon.

Leaving behind the horrors of a recent attack, the teenage players of Tatultala Super Queen Football Academy in Khulna’s Batiaghata upazila have begun self-defence training as they no longer wish to experience such unpleasant ordeals.

Players Sadia Nasreen, Mongoli Bagchi, Hajera Khatun and Jui Mandal, who were victims of the attack, were among those who joined the training under the guidance of Sanjeeda Akhtar Moumi, a black belt holder in martial arts.

Alongside the players, girls and boys from nearby villages were also seen participating in the initiative, facilitated by Unicef since Wednesday afternoon.

The attack left the players in a fix. Through this initiative, not just the players but interested girls and a few minor boys from nearby villages were also able to train, said Ritu Bairagi, captain of the academy’s team.

“From now on, if anyone harasses us, we will prevent it. This training will boost our confidence both physically and mentally,”

she added.

The locals and people from all around the country supported the victims, but that only happened after the attack, not before, said Mongoli, a player who was severely beaten during the attack.

“I want to be prepared and also teach other village girls so that they can protect themselves from such incidents. After I complete this training, I look to teach others to save themselves from harassment,” she added.



The recent attack has compelled many parents to worry over their children who are interested in joining sports, including Ranjit Bagchi, Mongoli’s father.

“My daughter has been into sports since she was a kid, and we have always encouraged her. However, after the attack,

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An array of parked motorbikes on a footpath in front of Gazi Medical College and Hospital leads to pedestrians’ woes, especially for patients. The photo was taken yesterday on Majid Sarani in Khulna city’s Shonadanga area.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN