

## Man arrested over rape of 8-year-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A man was arrested in a case filed over the rape of an eight-year-old girl in Surabari area of Gazipur city on Wednesday.

The arrestee, Bhajendra Sarkar, 55, was sent to jail through a court, said assistant Sub-inspector Khasru, duty officer of Kashimpur Police Station, yesterday.

Police said the incident took place on Wednesday afternoon near a puja mandap in Surabari. Hearing the screams of a child, locals caught Bhajendra red-handed.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought him to the police station.

The victim was rescued in a critical condition and admitted to a local hospital. The child's mother later filed a rape case with the police station, said Kashimpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Moniruzzaman.



Traders make fishing traps to sell to fishermen in Rajshahi's Shrirampur area. These traps are used to catch various kinds of fish in char areas. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## Launch services suspended on 11 Bhola routes



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Launch services on 11 routes between Bhola and coastal areas were suspended yesterday due to rough weather triggered by a low pressure system over the Bay of Bengal.

Barishal has been experiencing rainfall since Wednesday night, which continued through yesterday afternoon. Several city roads went under water. Commuters, including office goers and day labourers, struggled to reach their destinations.

Md Humayun Kabir, a meteorological observer at the Barishal Met Office, said the low pressure, along with seasonal monsoon winds, caused cloudy skies and rain. Barishal recorded 24.2mm of rainfall over 24 hours, including 14.2mm between 6:00am and 12:00pm yesterday.

Bhola River Port official Md Shahidul Alam said passenger-carrying vessels on 11 routes, including to Sandwip, Hatiya, and Lakshimpur, were halted since morning. Speedboat services were also suspended.

Launch services to Barguna and Patuakhali were similarly suspended.

## Shipyard Road left in ruins for over a decade

Businesses count losses, commuters suffer as project stalls

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

For more than a decade, Shipyard Road stretching from Khulna's Rupsha Traffic Intersection to Khan Jahan Ali (Rupsha) Bridge has been a nightmare for commuters, businesses and students. What was once a bustling artery of trade and transport has turned into a pothole-ridden stretch.

Though reconstruction began three years ago, slow progress has only worsened the misery. The uneven surface, littered with giant potholes, turns into muddy pits during monsoon rains. Vehicles frequently break down or overturn, while pedestrians struggle through waterlogged sections.

"It feels like this road has been abandoned by the authorities. One pothole is repaired, but ten more appear," said Amiya Kanti Pal, a teacher at Rupsha High School.

The four kilometre-long road is lined with 10 educational institutions, timber yards and what used to be 27 rice mills. But businesses are now in decline. Enamul Kabir, president

of the Laban Chara Market Traders Association, said, "It is almost impossible to transport goods here. Buyers no longer come. Once, Bandabazar saw sales worth

Tk 50 crore annually. Today, it is not even Tk 1 crore."

The rice milling industry has been hit hardest. Out of 27 mills, 21 have shut down. "Just last week, one of my trucks broke down on this road. Our



production has dropped by 25 percent. Losses cross Tk 100 crore every year," said Kazi Abdus Sobhan, president of the Khulna District Rice Mill Owners Association.

Residents and traders say they have held more than 20 demonstrations in the past decade, but little has changed. A rickshaw-puller near the Rupsha Bridge said, "Every ride costs me. The wheels get stuck, the chain breaks, the passengers shout at me. I can barely survive."

Originally under Khulna City Corporation's jurisdiction, the road was transferred to Khulna Development Authority (KDA) in 2013, when a Tk 98.9 crore project was approved to expand it into four lanes. Work did not begin until January 2022, nine years later. By June 2024, less than half the work was complete.

The project has since been revised, raising costs to Tk 259 crore.

Asked, project director Arman Hossain claimed, "Seventy percent of the work is done, and we are working to finish the rest quickly."

## Road accidents claim 10 lives in five districts

STAR REPORT

Ten people were killed and 26 others injured in road accidents in Pabna, Narayanganj, Jhenaidah, Feni, and Chattogram yesterday.

In Jhenaidah, two people were killed and another was injured after a bus hit a battery-run rickshaw-van on the Jhenaidah-Chuadanga highway in Sadar upazila around 12:30pm.

The deceased, Md Sifat, 12, died on the spot, and Nazrul Islam, 60, succumbed to his injuries on the way to a hospital, said Mrityunjay Biswas, officer-in-charge of Arappur Highway Police Station.

In Pabna, truck driver Sabuj Pramanik, 35, was killed when two trucks collided at Aronkola on the Pabna-Ishwardi highway around 6:00am.

OC Md Abdun Nur of Ishwardi Police Station said a loaded truck coming from Ishwardi collided with an empty one heading towards Pabna. Sabuj died on the spot, while three others were injured and admitted to Ishwardi Upazila Health Complex.



PHOTO: STAR

Two people were killed after a bus hit a battery-run rickshaw-van in Jhenaidah yesterday.

In Narayanganj, two truck drivers were killed after being hit by an "unidentified vehicle" on the Dhaka Chattogram highway early yesterday, said Inspector Julhas Uddin, in-charge of Shimrail highway police camp.

One of the victims was identified as Rakib, 35, of Rangpur. Police said the other, also in his mid-30s and from Mymensingh, could not yet be identified.

In Feni, three people were killed and at least 20 others were injured in a road accident on the Feni-Noakhali regional highway around 10:30am.

The deceased are Md Shraban, 20, Shamim Ara Begum, 50, and another unidentified man aged around 30.

Meanwhile, a 50-year-old woman and her daughter were killed and two others injured when a train hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw at Moulvipara level crossing in Chattogram's Sitakunda upazila yesterday.

The deceased are Masuda Akter and her daughter Sanjida Akter Chumki, 28, of Moulvipara area.

Ashraf Siddique, in-charge of Railway Police, said the accident occurred in the afternoon when the Dhaka-bound 'Mahanagar Express' train hit the CNG-run auto-rickshaw while passing the level crossing, leaving the two killed on the spot and two others injured.

The injured Badiul and his grandson Safwan were taken to Chattogram Medical College and Hospital.

## Early motherhood, lasting

FROM PAGE 3

country director of Pathfinder International, said adolescent pregnancies are a direct result of child marriage, increasing health risks for these girls.

He noted that the practice persists due to poverty, social insecurity

and cultural norms. "Child marriage is particularly prevalent in disaster-prone and flood-affected areas, as well as in urban slums, where financial hardships and difficult living conditions often push families to marry off their daughters at a young age in hopes of easing economic burden," he said.

"The DGFP is working closely with government and several private hospitals to provide regular counselling and health services to these

adolescent mothers and their children," he added.

Emphasising that legal reforms alone are not enough, he said, "Broader community awareness and stronger protection mechanisms are needed, especially involving men and family decision-makers. Since families are often the ones arranging these marriages, it is crucial to engage them in changing attitudes to ensure a safer and brighter future for the girls."

## EC asks NCP

FROM PAGE 3

conch, sewing machine, sofa, suitcase, deer, duck and helicopter.

Contacted regarding the EC letter, NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary said, "The party had requested shapla or red shapla as its electoral symbol, but did not receive a proper response from the EC. Now the commission has sent a letter regarding the choice of symbol, but it doesn't bear a response to our request. We will ask the EC for a specific explanation."

Hasnat Abdullah, chief organiser (south) of NCP, said the party is "strict" about the shapla symbol, as it connects with marginalised people similar to the BNP's "sheaf of paddy" symbol.

Meanwhile, Nagorik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna yesterday said on Facebook, "If the shapla symbol is given to them (NCP), I will not file any case. But I will protest. Since we applied earlier, if shapla is allotted as a symbol, it rightfully belongs to Nagorik Oikya."

## Journalists boycott

FROM PAGE 3

I approached them, they hurled abuse at me and harassed other journalists as well."

In protest, journalists walked out of the press conference that was scheduled to be addressed by NCP member secretary Akhter Hossen and senior joint member secretary Tasnim Jara.

The NCP media wing later issued a statement

describing the incident as "sad and regrettable."

"Akhter Hossen and two other party leaders have already expressed regret to the affected journalists. An internal probe is underway to identify those responsible," the statement read.

Videos of the altercation, now circulating widely on social media, show journalists demanding disciplinary action against the NCP activists involved.

## Illegal depots, withheld info

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He said in many cases, firefighters are not given accurate information, as explosive chemicals are often stored illegally in densely populated areas. Such concealments occur because owners fear legal consequences and mislead firefighters during emergencies, he added.

"But it is the firefighters who bear the brunt of such concealment," Shajahan

said.

He also noted that the number of firefighters trained to handle chemical-related fires is gradually increasing, with several personnel having received specialised training in Malaysia, Singapore and Japan, and now passing on that knowledge to colleagues at home.

Following the Tongi fire, a fire brigade official filed a

case under the Explosives Act at Tongi East Police Station against warehouse owner Solaiman and 23 others, including 20 unnamed individuals.

Waheduzzaman, officer-in-charge of the police station, said, "We have started an investigation. It is being examined whether the warehouse had a licence or not."

He said all the accused are currently absconding.

## Gazipur villages thrive on coriander cultivation

Farmers earn steady income as demand grows

MONJURUL HAQUE

A radical change has transformed the lives of people in Rathura, Sankatpur, Demra, Fetalia and Nasheria villages of Gazipur's Kaliganj upazila.

For the past 15 years, residents have been cultivating coriander leaves, which have become their main source of livelihood and created employment for thousands. The leaves are sold in areas such as Jatrabari and Karwan Bazar in Dhaka, and are also exported abroad.

According to the Kaliganj Upazila Agriculture Office, coriander was cultivated on one hectare of land in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

During a visit to Rathura, mostly women were seen



working in families once struggled with poverty but now earn Tk 400 to Tk 450 daily from the work.

Many were collecting leaves or cleaning them. The leaves are tied with ropes made from banana bark, arranged in bamboo cages, weighed and carried to markets.

Several women said their

cultivation cover his children's education costs.

Haridas, 55, said over a hundred families cultivate coriander leaves, with four to five people working per family, greatly reducing unemployment in the village.

Wholesaler Shah Alam Bashir said he buys the leaves from these villages and sells them at high prices in Jatrabari and Dhaka markets.

Upazila Agriculture Officer Farzana Taslim said, "Coriander leaves are profitable and less prone to diseases. Cultivation, which started in 2007, has become a driving force of the area's economy and is increasing rapidly for commercial sale."

She said in 2025, two exhibitions and training programmes were implemented under the improved varieties and technology extension project. Farmers will receive fertilisers and seeds at no cost under these initiatives.

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