

48 die as twister sinks launch in Buriganga

Many more trapped inside, missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *N'ganj*

At least 48 people, 12 of them children, drowned when a launch caught up in a storm, and capsized in the Buriganga off Pagla Navy Ghat yesterday evening.

The launch, MV Mitali-3, was

bound for Paiserhat in Barisal from Sadarghat with over 300 passengers on board.

Fire Brigade personnel retrieved the 48 bodies and trying to cut open the bottom of the vessel to rescue the passengers strapped inside.

Badal, a survivor, alleged that the master of the launch ignored the pleas of passengers to moor the launch when it was caught up in the storm.

Sharif Shamsul Huq, officer-in-charge of the Fatullah Police

Station, who was on the scene feared that casualty figure might go up.

Rescuers were trawling the river for missing passengers, he added.



A man picks his way past an uprooted tree that fell in a sudden storm damaging a speeding mini-bus on the Captain Monsur Ali Road in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Shazneen's fifth anniversary of death tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fifth death anniversary of Shazneen Tasnim Rahman will be observed tomorrow.

Shazneen, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom, was brutally killed at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998. She was a student of Scholastica School in the city.

The Shazneen case has been included in the government's list of 100 most sensational cases for speedy trial.

Of the 64 prosecution witnesses in the case, cross-examination of 10

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Rejoinder

The Energy Division in a rejoinder to a news headlined "Petrobangla co's autonomy trampled in 10-day span" published on April 17 in The Daily Star said that the formation of the boards of different Petrobangla companies was fully in accordance with the existing rules and regulations and in no way, violated the companies' rights.

It said, "All the companies in the

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Close-fisted budget on the cards

INAM AHMED

The government is taking a cautious approach -- almost clench-fisted and revolutionary in a way -- to formulate the budget for the next fiscal.

The reason behind the guarded going is the reality that external resources have shrunk ominously. It will wilt more with the beginning of the reconstruction of Iraq -- a clear indication for Bangladesh whose typical tendency of pinning its development goals on foreign aid would no more work.

This fiscal's foreign assistance flow has already dropped by Tk 1,200 crore and it is expected to fall further by Tk 1,700 crore next fiscal.

This means trimming the fat off

projects -- shaking away the unnecessary components, rationalising similar projects under same umbrella and more importantly, revisiting the annual development programme (ADP).

The government has been identifying the projects that have duplicity or are of same nature but is being run by different organisations with different sets of staff. They will be brought under one body, or at least the dominant thinking is in that line, according to officials concerned.

Two cases in point may be the Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute; the goat project and the micro-credit programmes carried out by the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) and by the liberation war affairs ministry.

The BLRI can carry out the goat programme and the BRDB the micro-credit, saving manpower, overhead costs and the obviousness of having an overhung of development staff. This will certainly reduce the pressure for incorporating completed development

p r o j e c t

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Tension seems to ease between Syria, US

AGENCIES, *Damascus*

Syria welcomed yesterday an apparent softening of US charges against Damascus, with Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara saying the country always favoured dialogue to confrontation with Washington.

Israel, too, began letting down its guard. The authorities declared that the Iraqi missile threat against their citizens

was over and prepared for the departure of 700 US soldiers manning Patriot missile installations south of Tel Aviv.

"We welcome the recent statement by President (George W) Bush and I would like to add that Syria from the beginning never wanted confrontation but dialogue with the USA," he told reporters during a joint press conference with visiting Spanish counterpart

Ana Palacio.

Shara referred to comments by Bush Sunday that the United States had assurances Syria would not harbour fleeing war criminals from neighbouring Iraq.

"I'm confident the Syrian government has heard us, and I believe it when they say they want to cooperate with us," Bush had said at the

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Lightning kills 7 in Jessore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Seven people were killed and ten others injured by lightning during nor'wester that lashed different places of Monirampur upazila in Jessore district on Sunday.

Of the dead, five were identified as Rahima, 35, of Joipur, Shamim, 30, of Munshi Khanpur, Sanjiv of Jhikardanga, Hossain Ali, 24, of Mathurapur and Abdus Sattar, 22, of Nabrha. Identify of two others of village Hazirhat could not be known.

The storm began at 3:30 pm and

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