

Left alone, without sunshine

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Rina dreamt of a rare moment of happiness. There will be friends, relatives and a lot of fun, she thought. "It's long I haven't visited my uncle's house," she muttered.

Rina along with her three-year-old daughter Habsa and 24 relatives boarded the MV Nasrin-1 at Sadarghat in Dhaka, with a spring in her step.

The invitation to attend her uncle MA Matin's wedding at Farashganj in Lalmohon brought sunshine to her 'virtually caged-life' in Dhaka city.

When she came out of her residence near the Chan Mia

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Hoping against hope

61 more bodies retrieved, scores floating, launch still untraced

STAR REPORT

Even over 72 hours after the deadliest ever launch disaster in Bangladesh, scores of bloated bodies are floating down the Meghna, with relatives of the victims hoping against hope.

At least 61 more bodies were retrieved from the offshore regions of Chandpur, Mehendiganj, Bhola, Borhanuddin, Tazuddin, Lalmohon, Char Fashion, Ilisha, Doulatkhan, Tamujuddin and Andharmanik, taking the death count to 79 until last night.

Confirming the recovery, the officials said they were trying to send the bodies in special arrangements to Lalmohon for identification by relatives. Lalmohon was the last stop of MV Nasrin-1 that sank

at about 10:45pm Tuesday in the confluence of three mighty rivers at Chandpur with about 750 passengers aboard, two times in excess of its listed capacity.

With officials and people in the neighbouring villages estimating that over 200 passengers swam to the shore, the rest are feared to have met watery grave.

Quoting the chairman of Andharmanik Union Parishad, Abdul Rahman, our Barisal correspondent reported that scores of bodies were found floating in strong currents in different channels of the Meghna.

Nine bodies were recovered from Hizla in Barisal, five from Borhanuddin in Bhola, seven from Ilisha, seven from Char Fashion, six

from Tajumuddin, two each from Doulatkhan and Lalmohon and the rest from other offshore areas and tributaries.

Among the dead were Abul Bashar, upazila education officer of Lalmohon, Khokon of Char Sakina, Hazera Begum of west Char Umed, Abul Khair of Peshkar Hari and Lal Mia of Char Vuta.

Our staff correspondent adds from Chandpur: The recovery of two more bodies brought to four the number of bodies retrieved from the choppy waters of Meghna at Chandpur.

Rescue operators of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, navy, fire brigade and police recovered the bodies three kilometres off Chandpur town. One bloated body

was recovered from Harisabha area in the morning and the other from Banshbari at Rajrajeswar at noon.

The local administration of Chandpur arranged 100 coffins and shrouds for burial of launch capsized victims.

WELL-EQUIPPED RESCUE SHIP ARRIVES

The rescuers started round-the-clock searches around the meeting point of the Padma, Meghna and Dakatia, where the triple-deck launch went down being sucked into a whirlpool, but driving rains and fierce currents hobbled their attempts.

The sunken launch could not be traced underwater till last night.

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PHOTO: STAR

The Ugandan Airlines cargo plane that skidded off the runway and into the adjacent field during takeoff at the Zia International Airport yesterday.

Ugandan cargo plane skids off ZIA, crew safe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An Ugandan airlines cargo plane skidded off the runway just before take-off at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday morning, causing no casualties but serious damage to the aircraft.

The incident suspended air traffic at the airport for 50 minutes, delaying the landing of two airliners of the Gulf Air and Kuwait Airways.

"Four crew and the pilot of the chartered Boeing 707 escaped unhurt," an airport security officer said.

The plane, which arrived from Dubai five days ago, was leaving for Amman after offloading the cargo at the airport.

Just before take off at 6:38am, the plane experienced trouble in one of the engines.

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Pallabi AL leader gunned down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two unidentified young men gunned down a local Awami League (AL) leader at Pallabi in the city yesterday.

Abdus Samad Khan, 50, a member of Pallabi thana AL, was shot in the head and chest. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Witnesses said Khan was supervising construction of sewerage lines at his house at Section-6 of Pallabi at about 11:00am. The killers appeared there in a rickshaw, carrying a packet of saree. One of them pulled out a pistol from the packet, shot him and ran away.

The victim had a dispute with a neighbour over sewerage lines, locals said.

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Abdus Samad Khan

Pallabi police could not give any reason behind the killing of Khan, also a former central leader of Jubo League. They picked six construction workers from the spot for interrogation.



Rescuers carry the body of a launch disaster victim to Chandpur terminal, left, and a policeman stands guard as villagers wait on the riverbank in Chandpur during the visit of Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR/APP

Outlaws threaten 7 newsmen with death in Pirojpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Unknown outlaws have threatened seven journalists of Pirojpur district with death for hindering 'their activities', police said.

The journalists received similar handwritten letters along with small pieces of white cloth, posted from Pirojpur Head Post Office on July 9.

The letters, received by the journalists the next day, read: "You will have to pay very dearly for causing obstruction to our activities and forcing us to go into hiding."

"You have no right to live for causing damage to the class struggle," the letters proclaimed.

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Flood situation takes alarming turn in N-region

Teesta waters wash away rail track, bridge

STAR REPORT

Flood situation in the northern region took an alarming turn yesterday as gushing waters from the swelling Brahmaputra-Jamuna, Teesta and their tributaries submerged vast areas and damaged roads, rail tracks and bridges.

Three people drowned in swirling floodwaters in Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj yesterday.

The worst affected districts are Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Bogra, Pabna and Sirajganj.

In the capital, more low-lying

areas went under water as the Buriganga, Shitalakhya and Balu rivers continued to rise.

Swirling water from the Teesta washed away a railway bridge near Lalmonirhat station and about 100 feet of rail track near Ruhia station in Thakurgaon, snapping rail communication. The authorities have suspended train service in Santahar and Lalmonirhat section via Gaibandha.

Moreover, several hundred kilometres of roads have been submerged with stretches of the roads and a number of bridges damaged in eight northern districts.

Our correspondents reported that standing crops including aus and aman paddy, jute and vegetables on thousands of acres of land in the districts have been damaged by floodwaters.

The flood-hit people in the region are facing crisis of drinking water and food and many of them are suffering from water-borne diseases.

Our roving correspondent reported that in Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat districts, around one lakh marooned people in Teesta

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Cop run over by truck in Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A traffic constable was run over by a truck on Mazar Road in Mirpur in the early hours yesterday.

Mostafizur Rahman, 38, was on duty near the Weight Bridge at 3:45am when the mud-stacked truck knocked him down from behind, coming from the wrong direction.

An autopsy was carried out on him at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. His namaj-e-janaja was held at the Rajarbagh Police Lines yesterday morning, and the body was sent to his native village in Krishandia, Mokshedpur in Gopalganj.

A case was filed with Mirpur Police Station.



PHOTO: STAR

The flood-hit Bera upazila in Pabna, left, and affected people have gone to safer places, leaving their houses.

AL likely to purge Hazari of guilt

SHAMEEM MAHMUD

The Awami League (AL) is likely to take disciplinary action against Joyntal Hazari, who frequently hogged news headlines for 'criminal activities' in Feni during the AL rule.

In a cleansing drive within, the AL formed a three-member committee last month to probe the activities by its former lawmaker

from Feni who has gone into hiding since the last general elections. Over a dozen and a half criminal cases are pending against him.

The investigation report is expected to be submitted next week after the team winds up its visit to Feni, said a committee member. The investigators set out for Feni in a day or two.

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Foreign troops for Iraq

Powell sees lack of certainty

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of States Colin Powell admitted late Thursday there was no certainty how many foreign troops were going to Iraq to help US and British forces, in an indication that US efforts to enlist international assistance in pacifying the country may have hit a snag.

"I can't give you the exact number of nations or how many troops are going to be committed," Powell

said, appearing on CNN's "Larry King Live" program.

The statement starkly contrasted with recent upbeat assessments by top Defense Department officials, who have insisted that foreign aid to battle-weary American soldiers was well on the way.

Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith told a think tank here Monday that more than 45 nations have made offers of

military support "for security and stability operations" in Iraq.

He said 18 countries currently have military capabilities on the ground in the occupied nation, ranging from full combat divisions to field hospitals.

Britain and Poland have formally agreed to lead multinational divisions that will help the United States

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