

Anarchy in river transport sector Dual role of shipping dept, BIWTA blamed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday criticised two government agencies in the river transport sector for failing to ensure safety and security of the passengers.

The dual role of the Department of Shipping and the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) is a major obstacle to ensuring safety of the passengers, they said.

They observed that such policies are responsible for anarchy in the river transport sector.

The speakers also condemned the Indian move to divert the flow of major rivers in the upstream which would severely damage the environment and lead to a ecological disaster in Bangladesh.

They demanded special allocation for development of river routes through extensive dredging.

"We are fed up with the contradictory policies of the Department of Shipping and BIWTA while providing services and regulating river vessels," said Ahsan Kalimullah, chairman of Bangladesh Launch Owners' Association.

"They always blame us for causing accident but never admit

their failure in performing duties," he said.

"The dual role of these two organisations is creating anarchy and various loopholes in the river transport sector," said M Shahidul Islam, former chairman of BIWTA.

Director General of shipping department A K M Ahsanul Azim, however, spoke in favour of the existing policy, saying that there should be separate bodies for providing services and regulating a particular sector.

He suggested introducing a unit for assisting the shipping department.

At the seminar, Kalimullah pledged that the launch owners would never call 'unnecessary' strike causing tremendous suffering to the passengers.

He said the private sector people have developed the river transport sector, but they never got any assistance from the government.

Only the launch owners were blamed for any launch accident, but those who issue fitness certificates were never identified and punished, Kalimullah observed.

The participants urged the government to bring all activities

in the sector under one umbrella.

They observed that the river routes should get more attention from the government as the launches ferry one third of passengers and goods.

Inaugurating the daylong seminar at BIAM auditorium, Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain observed that the river transport sector could provide better and cheaper services to the people if the government gives proper attention.

He regretted that the planners have attached priority to developing road communication, ignoring the river routes.

Chairman of parliamentary standing committee on shipping Golam Mohammad Seraj MP, Shipping secretary Zulfikar Haidar Chaudhury, BIWTA chairman Abul Hossain Chowdhury and president of Bangladesh Naval Architects Association Dr Abdullah Bari also spoke.

Syed Monwar Hossain, director of BIWTA, and Abdur Rahim, associate professor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, presented two keynote papers at the working sessions.



Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a seminar marking the Education Day at the Engineers' Institute auditorium yesterday. The BCL organised the event.

Govt destroying education system: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday criticised the BNP-Jamaat government for granting permission to private universities that did not fulfil the criteria set by the government.

She said the previous AL government had worked with an objective to eliminate illiteracy by 2005. But the present government was destroying the education system, she alleged.

"Most of the 50 private universities have been set up without maintaining rules and regulations," Hasina said while addressing a seminar in the city.

"Even some universities are operating in a single building," she said and questioned how quality education can be expected from such institutions.

"Although the previous government of Awami League had approved a small number of private universities, the permissions were granted according to rules and regulations," she said.

The Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) organised the seminar on the occasion of Education Day at the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh.

Hasina alleged that the wrong policies of the present government led to a decrease in literacy rate.

She also criticised the government plan to close non-formal education programmes for the

adults.

Hasina listed the measures taken by her government for improvement of the education system.

The previous AL government showed great interest in education sector identifying it as a key to eradicating poverty, she added.

She also urged all to get united to resist distortion of history in the school textbooks. Today's students were not being taught the real history of the country, she added.

Professor Abul Barakat presented a paper titled 'Public and private university: Higher education at Stake' while Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique presented another paper on 'Distortion of history in the textbooks'.

Former education minister and member of the AL advisory committee ASHK Sadek and party leaders Obaidul Kader and Nurul Islam Nahid also spoke.

BCL President Liaquat Sikder presided over the seminar.

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Hills students slate settler rehabilitaton in CHT

DU CORRESPONDENT

Greater Chittagong Hill Tracts Hill Students' Council popularly known as Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) and the Hill Women's Federation yesterday protested the government's decision to rehabilitate permanently 26,000 settlers in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

In a press release, PCP President Mithun Chakma and General Secretary of Hill Women's Federation Elira Dewan termed the decision a conspiracy for the annihilation of the indigenous people, who have been living there for ages.

They criticised the decision, as it will raise ethnic conflict in the region and said the indigenous people will resist it. There is not even sufficient land for the settlers, they added.

They also demanded the rehabilitation of the settlers in plain land with assurance of their livelihood.

The government has already stopped providing the settlers of some of the cluster villages with rations and decided to rehabilitate them permanently in the CHT. The Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs has formed a committee to this end.

Injured alleged criminal dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged criminal, beaten up by a mob on Saturday at Shahid Nagar in Lalbagh, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Jamal Babul, 35, who was passing through Shahid Nagar area by rickshaw, came under attack by the mob. He was admitted to the DMCH with multiple wounds.

"Babul used to lead a gang in Shahid Nagar area and was accused in at least 10 counts of crime including murder," an officer of Lalbagh Police Station said. "He killed his accomplice Sabuj and injured a rickshaw puller Majid Bepari on Thursday," the officer alleged.

Police believe the gang killed Babul to avenge Sabuj's death.

ISPs observe token strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Internet service providers (ISPs) yesterday observed a half-an-hour token strike to press for immediate legalisation of internet telephony.

Most of the ISPs suspended services of dial-up subscribers from noon, but broadband clients were allowed to access the internet.

"Why this discrimination, don't we pay for the service?" asked one dial-up subscriber. "Are the ISPs afraid of big corporate clients using broadband?" he asked angrily.

The Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB) gave the call to stop all internet operations during the strike.

The ISPAB, however, exempted banking, medical transcriptions and online data entry services from the strike.

The association appealed to the internet users to express solidarity with the strike aimed to press the demand for VoIP (voice over internet protocol), which is

expected to reduce overseas call charges substantially.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has been hammering on the issue since last year and made recommendations to legalise the VoIP.

Sources in the industry allege some influential people are putting pressure to hold back the legalisation, as they will lose earnings from illegal call termination through VoIP.

When asked about the discrimination between dial-up and broadband users, ISPAB President Akhtaruzzaman Manju gave an evasive reply. "We did not provide service to broadband users during the strike but online data entry, banking and medical transcription services were out of the purview of the strike."

On future programme of the ISPs, he said, "We will launch hectic lobbying with lawmakers to press the issue."



Teachers and employees of different educational institutions stage a demonstration in the city yesterday to press for their various demands.

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A battle of brains, not brawn

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The programme will be on air 19th Sept. onwards