

200 faulty launches fined since Aug 8

RAFIQ HASAN

More than 200 faulty passenger launches and cargo vessels have been fined for irregularities and malpractices during the ongoing special drive.

Some of the penalised launches belong to influential political high-ups including the prime minister's son, a state minister and leaders of Bangladesh Launch Owners Association, according to sources in the Department of Shipping that launched the drive on August 8.

The launches and cargo vessels were fined mainly for lacking trained pilots, drivers, registration and survey certificate, overloading of passengers and goods, risky loading and unloading and not keeping adequate safety equipment handy.

The amount of fine is more than Tk 12 lakh and around Tk 10 lakh has already been realised.

Besides, around 500 passengers were made to disembark from 20 launches and goods were also

unloaded during the drive.

The sources pointed out many launches and cargo vessels owned by political stalwarts are operating for years without registration or survey certificate. No action was taken against those for unknown reasons.

Three of the penalised launches - MV Coco-1, MV Coco-3 and MV Coco-5 - belong to the prime minister's son and Joint Secretary General of the BNP Tareque Rahman. These were fined for lacking up-to-date survey certificate and for overloading.

Two other launches - MV Shampad - owned by State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan and MV Mayuri belonging to chairman of the launch owners association Kalimullah were fined for overloading.

Moreover, MV Suravi-4 and MV Suravi-5 belonging to vice-chairman of the launch owners association Golam Moula were fined for irregularities.

The special drive is not making

much headway because a strong crime syndicate based at Sadarghat launch terminal is out to foil it, threatening officials involved in it and giving prior information to the faulty vessels. The syndicate includes a section of officials and employees of the Department of Shipping and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), sources alleged.

Many launches now avoid coming to Sadarghat and take passengers and goods from Fatullah, Pagla and Munshiganj terminals, they mentioned.

The drive started following the capsizing of MV Nasreen-1 in the Meghna, killing more than 500 people. It will continue till the situation improves further, an official said.

At present, the drive covers Sadarghat, Munshiganj and Naryanganj launch terminals. Similar drives will be conducted at other terminals including those in Barisal and Khulna soon, he added.



Muktangan, one of Dhaka's few public-meeting grounds, is now under occupation of rent-a-car owners using the ground as an unauthorised parking lot.

Muktangan made a parking lot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The place supposed to host people's gatherings for their social and political opinions is now being used as a parking space with the support of some Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) employees.

The DCC declared Muktangan a free space for holding political and social programmes under the past Awami League government.

Scores of commercial microbuses fill large parts of the space every day giving money to the employees and force activists to huddle together or spill over to nearby footpath or busy road.

An official of the Estate Department of DCC, however, denied money making by employees.

"In the last six months, we evicted them several times. But they entered the place soon after removal every time as Muktangan does not have boundary walls."

And Zakir Hossain, general secretary of Muktangan Microbus Owners Association admitted evictions by the DCC, but dismissed the charges.

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Pak veteran politician Nasrullah Khan dead

AFP, Islamabad

Veteran Pakistani opposition leader Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, a strong opponent of President General Pervez Musharraf, passed away in the early hours of Saturday aged 85, hospital officials and family members said.

Khan, head of the Alliance for Restoration of Democracy (ARD) had suffered a heart attack early this week.

He had been due to attend a meeting of the alliance in its ongoing campaign against military-led democracy. ARD spokesman Izhar Amrohi said.

In his long career Khan was known for cobbling together political alliances against Pakistan's various civilian and military governments.

He played a key role in bringing together the parties of former prime

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Cops fail to act 24 days after abduction

Kidnappers threaten wife of ex-principal of homeopathy college

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police are yet to act even 24 days after the alleged abduction of former principal of Khulna Homeopathy Medical College.

"The abductors are threatening us with death for filing case. But police have not even bothered to talk with any of our family members yet, let alone rescuing him," said Farhana Reza Jui, wife of kidnapped Dr S Azizur Rahman, on September 25.

Officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station Saidur Rahman said on September 25 that they could not contact the family as the complainant provided them with wrong address. But this correspondent

visited the house and talked with the family at the same address on the same day.

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Dr S Azizur Rahman

Man gets life for killing wife 11 years ago

STAR REPORT

A Dhaka court yesterday jailed one for life for killing his wife in 1992.

Hussain Shaheed Ahmad, judge of the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, gave the verdict in a crowded courtroom at 12:34pm in presence of the convict Kazi Mahub Uddin Ahmad.

The court also fined him Tk 50,000. He will have to serve another two-year rigorous imprisonment if he fails to pay the sum.

The court sentenced his domestic help Mohammad Belal to five years imprisonment for his involvement in destroying the evidence of the crime. But the court ordered to release Belal as he has been in custody for more than five years.

"I think the punishment of imprisonment for life given to Mahub is sufficient to meet the demand of justice in this case," the judge said.

"Mahub had a strained relation with his wife Nilufer Rashid and he

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Vajpayee rules out talks with Pakistan during Saarc summit

PTI, New York

India's Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee ruled out bilateral talks with Pakistan during his visit to Islamabad early next year for the South Asian Association of regional Cooperation (Saarc) summit but said his peace initiative was still in force.

"Till Pakistan stops cross-border terrorism and dismantles the terrorist infrastructure, there is no prospect for talks. It would not be useful," he told a press conference on Friday wrapping up his week-long visit here to attend the UN General Assembly.

"If Pakistan believes in the peace process, it has to give solid proof about its sincerity by taking action to end cross-border terrorism, dismantles the terrorist infrastruc

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6 killed as bus rams tree at Bogra highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least six were killed and 50 injured in a road accident on Bogra-Dhaka highway at Sajapur under Majhira upazila early morning yesterday.

Police and witnesses said an overloaded Rangpur bound coach of Saikat Paribahan from Dhaka rammmed against a roadside tree at 4:00am, killing four on the spot.

The injured were rushed to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital, but two of them expired on the way. Two of the deceased identified are driver Zahangir Alam, 35, of Ponghatdighi in Akkelpur upazila of Joypurhat and Nuruzzaman, 24, of Laxmichapa in sadar upazila of Nilphamari. The helper of the bus was also killed.

Passengers travelling on the roof of the coach mostly got killed, witnesses observed.

A case was filed with Majhira Police Station.

US to send 10,000 more troops to Iraq

5,000 on alert for call-up

REUTERS, Washington

The United States on Friday activated 10,000 National Guard troops for service in Iraq and put another 5,000 on alert for likely call-up after its appeal for foreign military help met no immediate response.

The 30th Infantry Brigade from North Carolina and the 39th Infantry Brigade from Arkansas, each with 5,000 soldiers, were ordered to join the active duty force on Oct. 1 and Oct. 12 respectively. They will undergo about three months of training before going to Iraq early next year for a full year.

The Army also put the 5,000-strong 81st National Guard Brigade from Washington State on notice for a likely call to active duty in Iraq.

The call-up of the part-time

soldiers from North Carolina and Arkansas for duty in Iraq - where the United States already has 130,000 troops -- was expected because they had earlier been alerted for probable duty.

The new alert order for the Washington State brigade followed statements by top US officers this week that more National Guard and Reserve troops would likely be needed because of reluctance on the part of other countries to answer President Bush's call for help in stabilizing the country.

Marine Corps Gen. Peter Pace, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the nation's second-ranking officer, said on Wednesday that additional call-ups would depend on whether other nations responded to Bush's appeal for

troops and on the speed with which Iraqi forces could be trained to help shoulder the burden.

"I would think that by around the end of October, the beginning of November, we should be alerting those (US) forces that may need to be called up ... to relieve or be prepared to relieve if we don't have specificity by then on a third coalition division," the general said.

There are currently two other multinational divisions in Iraq headed by Britain and Poland. The United States is pressing for volunteers to form a third multinational division, but so far they have not come forward.

Reserve and Guard troops are supporting regular US forces in deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan

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Hasina turns 57 today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition and the Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina turns 57 today.

Hasina, eldest daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib, was born at Tungipara in Gopalganj on this day in 1947.

An AL council session elected Hasina president of the party on February 1981 while she was in exile. She returned to Dhaka in May 1981.

She led the AL to power and became prime minister of Bangladesh in June 1996, two decades after Bangabandhu was assassinated in August 1975. In 1968, Hasina was married to eminent scientist M Wazed Miah and they are now parents of a son

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Hizbut chief a minister's relative

STAR REPORT

Chief of the Islamic militant outfit Hizbut Touhid Bayezid Khan Panni told police yesterday his organisation is operating since 1995 and he is a close relative of a ruling BNP minister, police sources claimed.

Panni and three Hizbut operatives, arrested in connection with the bludgeoning to death of a man named Abdul Malek and injuring 10 others at Pagla in Narayanganj on Friday, were placed on a seven-day remand yesterday.

Police and members of intelligence agencies interrogated the arrestees -- Panni, his employee Alamgir, driver Rashid and Rakib -- at Fatullah Police Station.

Meanwhile, hundreds of locals brought out a procession at Pagla and held a rally in front of Pagla Bazar Mosque yesterday afternoon, demanding exemplary punishment of the killers of Malek.

A sedition case was first filed with Fatullah Police Station accusing Panni and 14 others. Later, it was

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Sept 28	4-45	5-50 pm
Sept 29	4-49 am	

Prayer Timings		
September 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-57	6-02
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

A park near the Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge in Postogola has become an overgrown jungle from neglect of the authorities.

PHOTO: STAR

