

# 10 killed as ferry hits

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about 1,500 passengers, plowed into the enormous wooden pilings on the Staten Island end of its run from Manhattan at 3:20 p.m., ripping a giant hole in the three-level, bright-orange vessel.

"There was a lady without legs, right in the middle of the boat," said ferry passenger Frank Corchado, 29. "She was screaming. You ever see anything like that?"

Corchado said it felt as if the ferry accelerated as it approached land, waking him as he napped on the trip home to Staten Island. He ran away from the front of the boat to safety, but saw others who weren't as lucky six people dead, including one who had been decapitated.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg said at least 10 people were killed and 42 injured, making it New York's worst mass-transit accident in nearly a century. Some bodies were accidentally counted twice, leading to an initial report by city officials that 14 people were dead.

The crash happened on a wind-swept afternoon, with gusts over 40 mph and the water in New York Harbor was very choppy.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known, although Bloomberg suggested the heavy wind as a possibility. The National Transportation Safety Board (news - web sites) convened an accident investigation team, which will look at the weather, among other possible factors.

"It's a terrible tragedy, people who were on the way home, all of a sudden, taken from us," Bloomberg said at a dockside news conference.

He said the ferry's crew will be interviewed and tested for drugs and alcohol.

Firefighters picked their way through the debris aboard the ship, the Andrew J. Barberi, looking for victims, and Coast Guard divers searched the water. At least one body was recovered from the water.

Commuters were trapped in piles of debris aboard the 22-year-old ferry, and victims screamed and dove for cover as metal crunched into wood just before the

# EC to file writ over unpaid salaries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission will shortly file a writ with the High Court to resolve a legal dilemma over the salaries of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and three other election commissioners (EC) which have remained unpaid for the past three months.

The salaries of CEC MA Sayed and ECs Saifur Rahman, M Munsef Ali, and AK Mohammad Ali have been held up for the past three months due to audit objections to their drawing their salaries and simultaneously continuing to receive pensions from their previous jobs.

The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has asked the CEC and the ECs to refund to the exchequer the pensions they drew in apparent violation of the existing rule.

On March 17 last year, the CAG's office, citing a finance ministry decision, told the election commission secretariate that if EC Saifur Rahman wished to receive the total amount of his salary as EC, he had to adjust his gross pension by refunding the amount he had drawn while EC. The instruction was also applicable to the CEC MA Sayed and ECs M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali.

The election officials did not respond to the CAG office's directive and as a result their salaries for July, August and September have been held up.

The election commissioners consulted with lawyers and decided to go to the High Court. The writ may be filed on October 18 on the opening day of court after the autumn vacation. Dr. Kamal Hossain will represent the election commissioners, EC sources said.

# OIC post

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held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere.

Mahathir told Khaleda that his country was thinking about giving a candidate for the OIC secretary general post. He, however, did not mention anybody's name as the candidate.

Khaleda congratulated Mahathir for his speech in the opening session, saying that there were new guidelines for the OIC in his address. She hoped that the OIC would be revitalised under his dynamic and extraordinary leadership.

Mahathir said he would try to implement what he had said in his speech.

Both the leaders expressed their commitment that Bangladesh and Malaysia would work together to strengthen the OIC and the Muslim ummah.

Mahathir said Khaleda's participation in the OIC summit only few months after her visit to Malaysia to attend the NAM summit proved her country's commitment to the OIC.

The Bangladesh prime minister hoped that Mahathir, who will retire as Malaysia's prime minister next month, would remain as eminent an international personality and work for the benefit and development of the Muslim ummah.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, PM's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, PM's Principal Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui, Foreign Secretary Shamsher M Chowdhury and Bangladesh High Commissioner to Malaysia were present during the meeting.

# CJ asked to probe graft charges against all judges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Bar Association of Bangladesh (NBAB) has demanded of the chief justice (CJ) to run a check on all the judges against whom allegations of corruption have been heard.

"As lawyers of the Supreme Court, we are hearing allegations of gross corruption by some permanent and senior judges for quite a while now," said a NBAB memorandum handed over to Chief Justice KM Hasan Wednesday.

A delegation of the NBAB led by its Senior Vice-president Barrister Mainul Hosen met the chief justice at his residence to express concern at the recent allegation of corruption against a High Court Division judge.

The NBAB said he should look into any allegation or even rumours against the judges to uphold the image of the High Court.

"We all know it is very difficult to prove corruption charges against a judge through evidence," it added.

The NBAB suggested the chief justice consult the current and past presidents of the Supreme Court Bar Association and senior lawyers.

The chief justice is preparing the file on the allegation of corruption against High Court Judge Syed Shahidur Rahman to send it to the president. Sources said the file might be sent in a couple of days.

# O, A levels

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Carter the special guest.

The function, to be attended by hundreds of students from different educational institutions of the country, will take place at 9:00am at Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur.

# JU VC

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on any alternative measure to supply water to the halls. If they don't do anything we have to go on a tougher programme," a student said preferring anonymity.

But Dr Enamul Huq said, "We arranged an alternative way of supplying water to the halls and the installation of the main pump is underway."

The latest wave of protest came on the 23rd day of the water crisis that hit the three women's dormitories as a pump went out of order on September 23.

Agitators locked all seven gates of the administrative building, blocking the exit of hundreds of employees and other teachers.

They also snapped power and telephone lines to the administrative building after technicians repaired the connections severed in Wednesday's demonstration, when hundreds of students confined the vice-chancellor, pro-VCs and the treasurer to the same place for three hours.

The agitating students at a press conference in front of the building demanded resignation of the four top officials of the university and blamed the authorities for postponing exams leading to a two-month session backlog.

The protesters also demanded action against Prof Golam Hossain of the government and politics department, ex-proctor of the university, who was accused of verbally abusing the women students and threatening them with dire consequences if they did not back down.

The Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association (Juta) boycotted all classes and examinations of the university as part of their indefinite strike to press their demand for removal of the VC.

# Shell denies

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venture into the forest because of its importance. This position was also stated in its annual reports for 2000 and 2001. Shell's press release announcing the signing of the PSCs for blocks 5 and 10 in July 4, 2001 also mentioned this.

Following a newspaper report in June on Shell's plan to explore in the forest, the oil company issued another press release to dispel the notion.

It said it has plans to conduct seismic surveys outside the reserve forest.

Following Shell's clarification, the energy ministry yesterday decided to hold a press conference next week along with the environment ministry and Shell to announce that there will be no exploration in the Sundarbans.

Besides, Shell will organise a seminar soon with Khulna University to disseminate its plan in the block.

A couple of months ago Shell announced that it would leave Bangladesh by selling its local concerns to its British partner Cairn. It is now preparing legal documents and will apply later this month for permission to quit.

# Small NGOs

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least in 10 upazilas.

"Small NGOs that do not get money from external sources will be given Tk 5 to 10 lakh for running social development programmes," Saifur told reporters after the meeting.

Detailed criteria for the foundation and the targeted NGOs would be finalised soon.

Brac chief Fazle Hossain Abed said they would seek external support to enhance the trust fund to extend more support to small NGOs, which would be between 5,000 and 10,000 in number.

Meanwhile, a high level secretary committee yesterday recommended raising the maximum government micro-credit ceiling from Tk 15,000 to Tk 75,000 at individual level.

At group level, this will be Tk 5 lakh from the present Tk 50,000. In both cases, the rate of interest will be 12 percent.

Presently, interest rate on government-funded small credits is 18 to 20 percent and on NGOs-funded credits, it is 24 to 30 percent.

A secretary level committee on government micro-credit yesterday made the recommendation at a meeting with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman.

Saifur said the interest could not be lowered further as it would irritate the NGOs.

Placing a set of recommendations, the committee said it felt the present micro-credit level is too low for the borrower to utilise it for income generation.

Currently, the government disburses micro-credit through 26 departments of 24 different ministries. The credit balance of micro-credit stood at Tk 4,269 crore till December 2002.

The secretary committee was formed early this year aiming at preparation of a co-ordinated policy as well as to set a uniform rule on the limit of credit, rate of interest and the criteria to get loan.

Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed

# OIC leaders rally

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result. We have in fact worsened our situation."

He said the Muslims' holy book, the Koran, "tells us that when the enemy sues for peace we must react positively. True, the treaty offered is not favourable to us. But we can negotiate."

It was not clear to which treaty he was referring. The Palestinians accepted in June the US-designed international plan known as the "roadmap" for Middle East peace, which provides for a Palestinian state by 2005.

Mahathir called on Muslims to emulate the Jewish response to oppression in Europe. "We cannot fight them through brawn alone, we must use our brains also."

Initial reaction to his speech was positive. "I think it was a very shrewd, very deep assessment of the situation," said Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher. "I hope the Islamic countries will be able to follow this roadmap. This one is a good roadmap by the way."

Arab League chief Amr Mussa also voiced support for Mahathir's comments, adding that the Islamic states have already said they wanted peace.

The draft resolution approved by OIC foreign ministers, obtained by AFP, did not reflect the Malaysian leader's views. Rather it pays tribute to the three-year "heroic uprising" against Israel.

It also condemns Israel for its "continuing crimes, slaughters and its repressive acts against the Palestinian people".

It applauds the "legitimate leadership commanded by president

# Moudud mum

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Party, the four-party alliance leader, Moudud said the government presently had no plan on its mind to scrap or amend the black Special Powers Act, 1974.

"But we have stopped abusing the act," the minister said defending the government at the press conference, "Achievements of the Law Ministry in the Last Two Years".

He sidestepped another question on whether the government was reneging on the vital poll pledge, saying: "Our government still has three years to complete its term. If we don't do it by then, you can raise the question."

Moudud said steps were taken to stop abuse of Section-54 of the Criminal Procedure Code that gives authority to police to arrest anyone on suspicion.

Such a law exists everywhere in the world, he said.

He claimed that the government made significant progress in separation of the judiciary, extending legal aid, establishing an independent anti-corruption commission, human rights commission, the office of the ombudsman and sessions judge's courts in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and in reforming government attorney service and the judiciary.

However, none of the issues, except for the setting up of sessions judges courts in the CHT, has taken complete shape.

Moudud pointed out that the government enacted 78 laws in the last two years, including the Acid Crime Control Act, the Speedy Trial Act,

# PM congratulates Chinese premier for spaceflight

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday congratulated the Chinese premier for their first successful manned space flight into orbit.

In a message to Wen Jiabao, Khaleda said the great success of China clearly speaks of its vast progress in the field of science and technology, particularly in the space research.

She hoped that the success made in the space research would encourage the Chinese scientists to make more efforts in the space research for the benefit of the mankind under the new leadership.

The prime minister wished good health, happiness and long life of Wen Jiabao and continued peace, progress and prosperity of the friendly people of China.

# Pakistan, Morocco to help Bangladesh win top OIC post

BSS, Putrajaya

Pakistan and Morocco yesterday extended their total support to Bangladesh's candidature for the post of secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

The assurances came when Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had bilateral meetings with Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf and Moroccan King Mohammed VI on the sidelines of the two-day OIC summit that opened at Putrajaya Convention Centre yesterday morning.

Musharraf told Khaleda that besides extending support to Bangladesh's candidature, he would discuss with the new OIC Chairman Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammed and other dignitaries so that Bangladesh could get the post uncontested.

During his meeting with Khaleda Zia, Moroccan King Mohammed VI said his country would not only support Bangladesh in its run for the top OIC job, but also do everything possible for the victory.

The king recalled Bangladesh's support to his country's candidature in the last election to the post of OIC secretary general and said he would talk to the present OIC leadership in favour of Bangladesh.

# Iraq resolution

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the United States already had the minimum nine votes needed, Washington agreed to postpone the vote in a final bid to muster maximum support.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder then held last-minute consultations earlier in the day, paving the way for the trio to give their approval to the measure.

"We took note that the resolution is really an important step in the right direction," Schroeder said. "We have an interest that in a difficult international situation the UN stays together as far as possible."

The council was bitterly divided over the Iraq war and diplomats said they wanted a consensus to avoid weakening the United Nations, which UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said last month risked losing its authority if the splits could not be healed.

The resolution authorises a multinational force in Iraq that could provide the international cover needed for wary nations such as Pakistan, a non-permanent member, to provide troops and cash to help stabilise the country.

Washington is not expecting much help with soldiers but does want generous pledges of money for rebuilding Iraq at an international donors' conference scheduled to start next week in Spain.

The resolution gives the US-appointed Iraqi Governing Council until December 15 to set a timetable for carrying out the next steps, rather than giving Iraqis sovereignty first, which the European trio had initially insisted on.

# Annan

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among many faiths," said Annan, who withdrew from the summit after the Iraq issue was taken back to the UN Security Council.

He said Western governments must match their rhetoric of respect for human freedom with action to promote development, including a fair world trading system.

But he told the Muslim leaders -- who represent 1.3 billion people -- they also had to play their part.

Muslims are dismayed by the apparent inability of Islamic states to do much about problems such as weak government systems, a lack of democracy and poor human rights, especially for women, he said.

Extremist dogmas are gaining ground, impeding the progress of the Muslim community and threatening the security of people all over the world, he said.

Only when Muslims enjoy fundamental rights will the Islamic world be able to assert its influence.

"The Muslim peoples are capable of much greater things and they know it," Annan said.

The UN leader said the Palestinian people were suffering under "a harsh and prolonged occupation" and no one should be surprised at their feelings of humiliation, anger and despair."

# 142 criminals netted in new anti-crime drive in S-W region

FROM STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 226 people including 142 wanted criminals and two extremists were arrested from different districts of south-west region in a special anti-crime drive by joint forces launched at midnight last night.

Three illegal arms were also recovered.

According to sources at the office of the deputy inspector general (DIG) of police, Khulna Range, around 3,000 members from Bangladesh Rifles, district police, Khulna Metropolitan Police, Armed Police Battalion and Ansar are conducting the operation.

Moreover, selected officers and personnel of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police and Chittagong Metropolitan Police, specially trained to combat crimes, have joined the drive.

The DIG of Khulna Range Abdul Aziz Sarkar is commanding the operation that will continue till further orders from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Earlier, an operation -- Spider Web -- was conducted in the region from July 18 to August 13.

# War on terrorism

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the end of the month after leading this moderate Muslim country for 22 years.

"1.3 billion Muslims cannot be defeated by a few million Jews."

He urged Muslims to emulate the Jewish response to oppression, however, saying the Jews had "survived 2000 years of pogroms not by hitting back, but by thinking".

"We cannot fight them through brawn alone, we must use our brains also," he said.

The Muslim people had become angry and the Jewish people had become arrogant, "and arrogant people like angry people will make mistakes, will forget to think," he said.

The summit is the biggest gathering of Islamic leaders since the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, drawing more than 30 heads of state and government from throughout the Muslim world.

In an apparent denunciation of terrorism, Mahathir -- who often criticises both sides in a dispute said "we find some of our people acting irrationally," killing themselves and others as they "lash back blindly in anger".

Muslims must seek another way to "counter-attack", he said, calling for them to build stable, economically strong and technologically

# Germany wants

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Gen. Boecker was scheduled to speak at the press conference held at Hotel Sonargang but he could not due to revised programmes, the ambassador regretted.

Andreas said the visit is taking place against the backdrop of a long-standing training cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries and a shared commitment to the peacekeeping operations of the UN. The German defence team has come to Bangladesh to establish direct personal contacts to get a firsthand impression about the nation, he added.

"The Armed Forces of Bangladesh have drawn the attention of the Armed Forces of Germany through its contribution to the peacekeeping operations of the UN in different parts of the world. Bangladesh forces have achieved a very good reputation," the ambassador said.

Asked if there is any specific agenda of this visit, Andreas said it is purely a bilateral visit and that no agreement would be signed during the visit.

In reply to another query, he said there is no link between Bangladesh Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan's scheduled visit to Germany early next month and the current visit of Gen. Boecker.

"There may be questions whether Germany is eager to sell arms to Bangladesh and has for this arranged the visit, but I would like to say there is no such intention of my government. It is completely a bilateral trip aimed to establish closer cooperation between the two armies," the envoy said.

During his visit, Gen. Boecker will call on Commander-in-Chief of Bangladesh Armed Forces President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, Chief of Air Staff Air Vice Marshal Fakhrul Azam, Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Shah Iqbal Mujtaba, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Major Gen AM Mahmuduzzaman and Defence Secretary KM Ehsanul Haque, Andreas said.

Boecker will also give a lecture on "Current Aspects of a European Security Policy" at the Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies (BISS) tomorrow morning.

Deputy Head of Mission Hermann Nicoloi and Press and Political Officer Mujtoba Ahmed Mursheed were present on the occasion.

# 50 nurses hurt

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the sit-in.

Nurses under the banner of Bangladesh Unemployed Diploma Nurses Association (BUDNA) and Bangladesh Student Diploma Nurses Association (BSDNA) were protesting the authorities' move to appoint 177 nurses, who passed from private nursing institutes, to government hospitals.

At 10:30am, the nurses tried to go to the DNS office on the third floor of the building and police stationed there since the morning swooped on them and began clubbing them indiscriminately.

Police forced them out of the building and also dispersed the agitating nurses from the area by firing rubber bullets and teargas shells.

Witnesses said though there were a number of women police there, police men mostly took part in the action. The policemen molested a number of agitating nurses, they alleged.

Locals and colleagues took the nurses with multiple injuries to the DMCH.

Meanwhile, police arrested one male nurse for attacking police-women.

Police claimed some 10 of their women members -- one sub-inspector, seven constables and two women ansars -- were injured during the scuffle. The injured policewomen were treated at Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital. The agitating nurses threw brickbats, damaging the windowpanes of seven vehicles, police