

Shiv Sena's brand of politics does not draw support from India's other political leaders; therefore, its chief's arrest should not spark off a countrywide unrest, writes Sakyasen Mitra from Calcutta

Navine Murshid's
Now What? Another Political Chic?
Mansoor Mamoon's
Law Minister Axed

The ongoing intellectual discourse on post-colonial political literature is trying to set right the distortion of the perception of the colonisers about the colonised. It would be a fitting finale to undertake the same exercise to the realm of politics, writes Hasnat Abdul Hye

Our trusty homage to Shamsur Rahman will be to pick up from where he left and, carry out his incomplete task. If that happens, his death will more than vindicate his life, writes Mohammad Badrul Ahsan

Reckless race ends in tragedy

Several passengers still missing after launch capsizes in the Buriganga

By Staff Correspondent

A launch carrying over 100 passengers was badly damaged and sank in the Buriganga near Fatullah launch terminal yesterday morning when two big launches hit it one after another.

The two big launches were in a reckless race. Local boatmen and people, who witnessed the incident, feared that at least 20 people might be missing.

But BIWTA authorities said they found no body after the Munshiganj-bound launch -- MV Ashique -- was salvaged from about fifty feet under the water 12 hours after the incident.

They said MV Ashique, with a capacity of 110 passengers, left Sadarghat terminal for Dohar in Munshiganj at about 6 am yesterday.

Quoting some of the passengers of the ill-fated launch, local people and boatmen at Fat-

ullah told this correspondent that the launch was carrying more than 100 passengers.

According to witnesses, MV Ashique arrived at Fatullah terminal at around 6:30 am. Soon after leaving the terminal, when it was taking a turn to the South, two launches -- MV Sagar-5 and MV Pintu-2 were coming towards it.

The two big launches were in a desperate race, they said.

At one stage, two storied MV Pintu, which came from Barguna, hit MV Ashique at its roof and rammed into it.

MV Ashique was then hanging from the stern of MV Pintu.

A local journalist -- S K Babul -- who also witnessed the incident, said, "A number of passengers of the affected launch were tossed into water and some others were seen diving as it was hit by MV Pintu."

Within a few minutes, MV Sagar, a three storied launch

which came from Patuakhali, hit the hanging small launch. MV Sagar slowly sank at about 6:45 pm.

Local boatman Satfar said around 50 passengers of the affected launch were instantly rescued by engine boats and country boats.

A woman was crying for her missing child while a young man was searching for his old father," he said.

Police of Keraniganj and Fatullah thanas said last night that they did not receive any complaint of missing of any person.

BIWTA's salvage vessel MV Rustam arrived at the spot at about 1:30 pm and started salvage operation after fire brigade divers located the launch about 50 feet under the water.

The launch was salvaged at about 7 pm. The roof and upper portion of the 70 feet long launch were smashed.

BIWTA officials said trips of both MV Pintu and MV Sagar have been suspended and a probe into the incident has been ordered. They said the Department of Shipping has cancelled survey certificates of both the launches.

When asked BIWTA Joint Director Sayeduzzaman, who was present during the rescue operation, told this correspondent that reckless race of launches can be stopped if the masters responsible for such incidents are punished and action is taken against the vessels.

But they are escaping punishment due to absence of witnesses, he added.

Meanwhile, BIWTA sources said, soon after evacuating passengers, MV Pintu and MV Sagar left the terminal and went to their own docks at the other side of Sadarghat terminal.



MV Ashique, the hapless Munshiganj-bound launch that capsized in the Buriganga yesterday morning, is being salvaged. Several passengers went missing after the rivercraft was hit and sunk by two racing launches. Star photo: AKM Mohsin

Air crash kills 25 in Nepal

KATHMANDU, July 27: Twenty-five people were killed when a passenger airplane crashed in remote mountainous jungle shortly before it was due to land in western Nepal today, officials said, reports AFP.

Bodies of the ill-fated passengers and crew were "strewn all over the place," after the plane crashed in hilly jungle in Daduldhura district, 415 kilometres west of Kathmandu, an airport official said.

A Twin Otter can seat 18 people, officials said. The Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RNAC) plane had been missing since 10:31 am. It was scheduled to land at Dhangadhi, 375 kilometres southwest of Kathmandu, just two minutes later. RNAC is Nepal's national flag carrier.

The spokesman, from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, said crew members on board the Twin Otter included Captain W Lama, First Officer D P Shrestha and Flight Attendant TB Shrestha.

The passengers included three children. The flight had departed Bajhang, 385 kilometres west of the capital, but according to radio station Kantipur FM the plane crashed after skimming across the jungle canopy near Jogbudha village.

"There is a very slim chance anyone is alive after the fatal crash," State-owned Radio Nepal reported. "It is feared all the people on board have died." Officials said it was not known what caused the crash or if there were any foreigners on board. Police and military personnel had arrived at the scene while investigators had been despatched from the capital. However, local reports speculated the mid-year monsoon rains combined with the mountainous terrain could have contributed to the RNAC crash.

Political appointment for Zila Parishad shelved

Ruling party leaders find the idea "not so prospective or rewarding"

By Nazmul Ashraf

Confronted with legal and political challenges, the Awami League government has deferred for an indefinite period its plan for political appointments to head the Zila Parishads (district councils) before the next general election, ruling party sources said.

The AL plan to gain political dividends in the coming parliamentary polls by appointing its men as administrators of the highest local government bodies has apparently fallen flat. The party now finds the strategy "not so prospective or rewarding" because the opposition parties may compel the caretaker government to cancel such appointments before they

go for the election, the sources pointed out.

The Zila Parishad Act (ZPA) empowers the government to appoint administrators to run the affairs of the parishads till those are elected indirectly. But the law is silent on what type of administrators will be there till the elected chairmen take over.

The authorities published a gazette notification on Wednesday giving effect to the controversial ZPA which provides for election of the councils at the earliest.

But the latest developments indicate that the government move to make the councils functional before the parliamentary election has hit snag

for legal and political reasons.

The ZPA has drawn bitter criticism from the opposition and has been challenged in court. Two writs were filed with the High Court on July 18 challenging its provisions of indirect election and appointment of administrators.

The court next day served show cause notices on the government, the Parliament and the Election Commission asking them to explain why the two provisions shall not be declared ultra vires the Constitution. The notices are returnable within three weeks.

In the process, President Shahabuddin Ahmed also came

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Dengue spate not unusual, says WHO

By Staff Correspondent

The current spate of dengue fever in the city is not unusual, according to the WHO office in Dhaka. Rather, its mission chief said yesterday that it is a seasonal phenomenon.

Talking to newsmen at the Dhaka office of WHO, Dr Ham-jotango said, "There is no doubt that dengue exists in Bangladesh. Statistics show that out of the 191 countries, 102 have already experienced the problem of dengue infection and some were very endemic."

"So, Bangladesh is not the only country where problem of dengue infections exists."

"However, if the patients with dengue infection are properly managed, nobody should die. So it is very important to give early treatment. In this case, the question is whether the hospitals, where most of the fatal cases are seeking treatment, have trained staff."

Dr Hardjotango said during the recent floods in Bangladesh very few people died from diarrhoea. Now it does not mean that there was no prevalence of diarrhoea but the fact is that the cases were well managed (oral saline was administered on time) and people were sensitised.

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News reports on dengue incorrect, irresponsible Health minister claims

By Staff Correspondent

Most news reports on prevalence of dengue fever are incorrect due to misconception and lack of proper investigations, the health minister said yesterday.

Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, the Health and Family Welfare Minister asked journalists to be more cautious about such reporting.

"It is easy to make accusations but hard to prove," he told newsmen at a press conference at the Health Ministry conference room.

The minister said, "We've noticed that a number of private clinics in the city are reporting to have admitted patients with dengue fever without doing any conclusive tests. On the other hand, except in a few cases, journalists are not checking out whether the information are authentic."

According to Health Ministry statistics, 239 people have been admitted to different public hospitals in the city till July 26. Of them, 101 have been released, 127 are still undergoing treatment while 11 people have died from dengue fever.

"The nation at a time like this expects responsible reporting and so I urge you to please check before you write," the minister appealed.

Selim also said that there is no reason to panic. Although there is no specific drug or vaccine to cure dengue infection

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PM's security to be recast

By Special Correspondent

Security for the Prime Minister is expected to be revamped with the Army given the main responsibility, sources concerned said.

Restructuring of the PM's security has come up for consideration and discussion at the highest echelons of the government and various authorities concerned and security specialists are closely examining the issue.

The rethinking about it has been prompted by the planting of two explosives at Kotlipara in Gopalganj recently, crossing all conventional security barriers.

The elite Special Security Force (SSF) entrusted with the

responsibility of protecting the lives of the President and the Prime Minister is likely to be restructured in the revamping process, the sources said.

The SSF is learnt not to engage itself in intelligence work related to security of the VVIPs, which is left to other agencies. It is likely to be given an additional intelligence gathering role of "comprehensive and structured" nature, one source said on condition of anonymity.

The role of the police regarding Prime Minister's protection has come up for serious criticism by different agencies, particularly from the army quarters. The activities of police

staffed intelligence agencies like CID and SB are being examined, the source added.

"The police-based intelligence agencies failed to gather information related to potential terrorists or persons harmful to the Prime Minister," said an official.

"They failed to make a list of potentially harmful persons and places."

It is learnt that major transfers and punishment of police personnel in Gopalganj district and Dhaka Division have been suggested following detection of the two explosives.

The Sub-Committee of the Parliamentary Standing on De-

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Daylight robbery at Karwan Bazar

By Staff Correspondent

Four snatchers riding two motorbikes snatched Tk 11.5 lakh from employees of a construction firm at gun point in front of its office at Karwan Bazar in the city at about noon yesterday, police and witnesses said.

Two officials of Pubali Construction Ltd drew the money from National Bank at Dhikhusha for payments to labour contractors, officials of the company said.

As they reached the office premises in a microbus with the money contained in two bags, two red-coloured motorbikes without number plate stopped just behind it.

Two young men, one from each motorbike, burst forth and ordered the officials -- MS Kibria and Shipu -- to hand over the money.

They gave them one of the bags, which contained Tk 2.5 lakh. The muggers shouted at them and in moments, snatched the other bag containing Tk 9 lakh from under the seat on gun point.

The four snatchers sped towards Banglamotor through a by-lane.

Witnesses said the incident took only about thirty seconds. The company officials later said the gang was carrying mobile phones and might have followed them from the bank.

The incident was immediately informed to Tejgaon police.

They said police told them that a red coloured motorbike without number plate was seized and its rider arrested at

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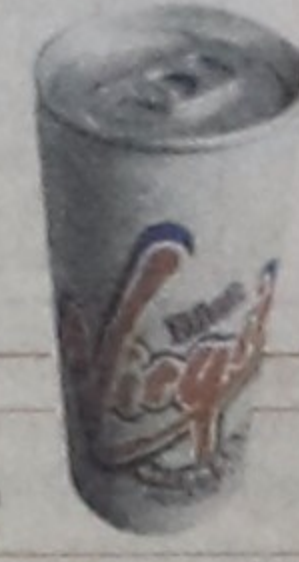
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