

VOL. X NO. 243 REGD. NO. DA 781

www.dailystarnews.com

DHAKA FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2000

Wishing the
BEST
for the
3rd Millennium

INSIDE TODAY

COMMENT

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In view of the heightened awareness about human rights in recent years and revulsion against violation of the same, and also on the precedence of the ongoing war crimes' trials in The Hague and Arusha, Bangladesh Government should now formally approach the UN for convening a similar tribunal to try the war criminals of 1971, writes **Hasnat Abdul Hye** in *Never Too Late*

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Ferry sinks
in Padma
All 35 passengers
rescued

By Staff Correspondent
A ferry carrying eight trucks and two private vehicles (Dhaka KA 11-5034 and Dhaka CHA-1845) sank in the river Padma near Hardinge Bridge late Wednesday night.

All 35 passengers on board were, however, rescued, our correspondent from Kushtia reports.

The 30 year-old ferry number 13 that left the Bheramara ferry ghat in Kushtia at about 11pm for Pakshy in Pabna drifted two kilometres downstream due to strong current in the middle of the river Padma and sank as a massive crack developed in its bottom, Pabna district officials quoted survivors as saying.

Some country boats nearby helped rescue passengers until an empty ferry came for rescue after about half an hour of the incident," said one official of Pabna district.

The Deputy Commissioner of Pabna Md Malibubur Rahman, when contacted over telephone last night said: "I sent officials to the spot and heard that the salvage ship 'Hamza' is on its way from Khulna to the accident spot."

"It is not sure how long Hamza will take to arrive at the site," said one official of Roads and Highways Department that manages the Bheramara-Paksey ferry service.

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EC proposes free access to 919 LDC products

By Rafiq Hasan

The European Commission (EC) has placed before the EU Council of Ministers a proposal for granting duty free and quota free access of all products, except arms, from 48 least developed countries including Bangladesh.

According to a message received in Dhaka from the Trade Directorate-General of the EC, the proposal seeks to allow export of 919 items as duty free and quota free to the 15 European countries.

The EC however proposed exclusion of 25 items in the arms and ammunition category from the benefit.

But access of three agricultural products -- rice, sugar and banana -- would be implemented in stages, it proposed.

As the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) facilities are going to be withdrawn in 2005, the least developed countries (LDCs) have been asking for some sort of facilities from the developed countries. EU sources noted.

Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan

and the Maldives are the LDCs in South Asia.

A senior official at the EU Dhaka Office confirmed the EC move and said it was taken in view of the EU commitment at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) regarding opening of its markets to the least developed nations.

If the proposal is implemented, it would eliminate all remaining obstacles to access of products originating from the least developed nations to the EU markets, said J B Ketelsen, first councillor in charge of trade and economic cooperation.

The proposal would now go to the EU Parliament. If endorsed by the parliament, it would become a law, he said.

In reply to a question, Ketelsen said if everything goes smoothly, it may take a couple of months to become a law."

Export from Bangladesh to EU countries would get a tremendous boost if duty free and quota free access is allowed, said Monjurul Hoq, President

The message received in Dhaka said EU trade commissioner Pascal Lamy welcomed See page 11 col 6

of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Apparel export to EU countries would almost double if the facilities are provided, he said.

Bangladesh exports apparels worth around 2.5 billion dollars to the EU market annually. Of this, the share of knitwear items is around one billion dollars, Hoq said.

Ketelsen pointed out that the EC proposal would have to be accepted by all member states of the EU. "There are certain member states who are yet to prepare for accepting goods from other countries, particularly agricultural items."

"After the EU takes such a move, it would be difficult for other developed countries like USA, Canada and Japan to refuse duty free and quota free access of goods from least developed countries," Ketelsen said.

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The army men who got the appointment are Brigadier in Sonali Bank, Brigadier Ismail Ahmed Chowdhury in Kirshi Bank, Brigadier Md Manjur Alam in House Building Finance Corporation, Brigadier Ahmed Mukhtadir Arif in Rupali Bank and Brigadier Md Abul Hashem Khan in Investment Corporation Bangladesh.

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