

# Meghna tragedy

FROM PAGE 1  
Hannan, a local resident helping in the recovery operation.

Sacks full of turmeric, fruits, mostly banana, and current fishing net were seen entangled with the propeller and windows. The body of the master of the vessel was found inside the wheel bridge.

Meanwhile, two teams investigating the incident at the site yesterday started gathering information. One team is to recommend to the government on future measures to avert such incident, and the other to ascertain the cause of the capsizs and to help file case with the marine court.

"We are here to recommend future safety measures. What we are looking into right now is were there any flaws in the design of the vessel, was it carrying enough life buoy and things like that," said B D Mitra, deputy secretary, the Ministry of Shipping, heading one of the committees.

"There could be vital clues that may help us to suggest the

government to go for changes in policies of plying of passenger vessels and the safety measures," he added.

Meanwhile, the Red Crescent provided some 500 metres of cloths for burial. Initially, the government had planned to bury all the bodies in Chandpur and preparations were underway. But, the decision was changed later.

There was no effort by the administration to avert spread of disease from the decomposed bodies, however. "We have asked for bleaching power to spray on the bodies but the district administration says it does not have funds to buy it," said a source.

## Road accident sparks protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of Begum Badrunnessa Government Women's College in the city damaged a maxi and barricaded the road in front of the college for about eight hours yesterday in protest against a road accident in which one of their teachers was seriously injured.

Chandana, a teacher of Bangla department, was injured when the maxi hit her rikshaw near the college at about 9 am.

Agitated students then damaged the vehicle and barricaded the road till about 5 pm.

The injured teacher was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later shifted to Suhrawadi Hospital. Her condition was stated to be critical.

The duty officer at Labagh thana said driver of the vehicle fled the spot after the accident. A case was filed in this regard.

## Bizzare!

FROM PAGE 1  
whose brother-in-law, an ansar commander, was found dead inside the security room on the top deck of the sunken vessel.

One of the youngest victims was a one-year-old Nazmul found clenching his mother's lap on the lower deck of the vessel. Nazmul's mother Nazma, aunt Sajeda and uncle Zakir Hossain were also found dead in the same compartment.

All of them were found tangled in a fishing net inside the compartment.

"They probably tried to escape but got entrapped in the net," a weeping Shafiq said.

An old lady was waiting for news of her son. At noon, the news came - he was found dead in the middle deck of the ferry -- and the lady fainted on the bank.

## US envoy

FROM PAGE 12  
Institutional Development of Human Rights in Bangladesh (IDHRB) Project KM Hoque and Director of Imam Training Academy of the foundation Abdus Salam Khan Pathan also addressed the occasion.

The US Ambassador said women play an important role in Bangladesh and in the development of the nation economically, politically and socially. Women should be in a position to fully contribute within societies in ways which benefit society as a whole, she added.

Mary Ann Peters called upon the imams to remember the important role that their wives, sisters and daughters play in building and supporting a strong nation, strong in religious faith as well as strong economically.

She said imams are the leaders of their communities at the grass-root level. "You are in the best position to show by your words, your deeds, your example the citizens of this country that its future is best assured when tolerance and respect for each other prevail."

"The message you spread of integrity in private and public, of peace and of justice -- is an important one for Bangladesh, for South Asia and for the world," the US ambassador said.

She called upon the imams to disseminate ideas, learned from this training programme, throughout the country and work towards further development in Bangladesh.

The state minister for religious affairs said 300 imams of six divisions were trained on human rights under the programme, sponsored by UNDP and another 50 imams from eight districts of northern region are taking part in the seventh week-long programme.

Terming imams as basic community leaders of society he said a conference of at least 2,000 imams would be held early next month to improve interaction among themselves and exchange views with government officials.

## Nor'wester

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houses were completely damaged in the storm that lashed three unions of Sadar and Ramgati upazilas on Sunday.

The victim was identified as Suman, 10, of village Char Jagabandhu under Ramgati upazila.

The badly affected unions are Mandari, Digoli and Hajirpara of Sadar upazila and Char Jagabandhu of Ramgati upazila.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society distributed clothes and other relief materials among the victims.

UNB adds: In Patuakhali, a youth was killed and his father injured as nor'wester hit the district yesterday.

Locals said Aslam, 22, died on the spot and his father Ful Mia, 55, wounded when lightning struck their boat in the Laukathi river here at about 12:30 pm.

Ful Mia was admitted to Sadar hospital.

Some 500 thatched houses were damaged in the storm that also uprooted electric poles suspending electricity supply.

## AL action

FROM PAGE 1  
Mohammad Selim is spearheading a campaign for floating a new political party.

Earlier, just a month after the poll debacle the AL expelled 24 rebels on charge of running in the October polls defying the AL high command. Those expelled include AL Presidium member Dr Mohammad Selim and other district leaders.

In late last November, a joint meeting of the AL Presidium, Central Working Committee, and Advisory Council and the party lawmakers resolved to revamp the party and go tough against the 'betrayers'.

By the first week of December, the AL sent letters to its grassroots leadership seeking lists of party men who worked against party interest. Accordingly, lists were sent to the party and show-cause notices served on them.

A close aide to the AL chief told The Daily Star recently that Hasina was dead against further delay in arriving at a decision about the show-cause party men.

The issue of dissidents apart, today's ALCWC meeting would also assess the overall political and economic situation. Against the backdrop of alleged government repression on its political opponents and the rise in acts of rape and murder, the AL meeting is seen crucial.

However, it is unlikely that the meeting would discuss the issue of joining the parliament, which the 58 AL legislators have been boycotting since day one.

In an interview with a Bengali weekly in New York, Sheikh Hasina has dismissed talks with the government on the issue of her party's joining the parliament. "There is no question of holding talks with a government whose cadres have raped my daughters," Hasina was quoted as saying.

She also called for a stop to 'repression' and filing of 'false cases' against her party men.



Jalal and Nurul Islam, two alleged criminals, arrested with firearms yesterday at Mogoltuli in Chittagong.

# France's far-right fear over

FROM PAGE 12  
Jospin's defeat.

Without a victory in the legislative election, Chirac will find his second term reduced to the same degree of powerlessness that he suffered during the last five years of 'cohabitation' with Jospin's Socialists.

The choice of Raffarin was interpreted as a signal that the president acknowledges the massive turnout by normally hostile left-wing voters to ensure his re-election.

A Chirac loyalist and vice-president of the free-market party Liberal Democracy (DL), Raffarin is a consensual figure with a less ideological profile than his main rival for the job, former budget minister Nicolas Sarkozy.

Earlier on Sunday, flag-waving crowds braved cold rain to take to the streets of Paris to celebrate Chirac's triumph -- and the humiliation of the National Front (FN) leader, who said Friday he would regard a vote of less than 30 per cent a defeat for himself and for France.

"Tonight we are celebrating the Republic," Chirac said at a brief appearance at the Place de la Republique, accompanied by his wife Bernadette. "France has refused to give in to the temptation of intolerance and demagoguery."

Earlier on national television, he promised to use his victory to bring France together after the trauma of Le Pen's breakthrough. "I have heard and I understand your call for the republic to live, for the nation to rally together."

The victory followed two weeks in which a nation, shocked out of inertia by Le Pen's surprise first-round triumph, staged a series of public demonstrations not seen since May 1968 to condemn his isolationist and xenophobic policies.

The scale of Chirac's triumph was larger than expected and a record for French presidential elections.

Immediately hailed as a massive endorsement by the president's supporters, it also allowed the French left, which had urged supporters to vote for Chirac after the first-round defeat of Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, to claim victory as its own.

"France has rediscovered its colours, and the world has rediscovered France," said Socialist Party leader Francois Hollande.

For the FN leader, who garnered 17.92 per cent votes, only slightly above the first-round score, the result was a severe disappointment, signalling a failure to break out of the core vote he achieved on April 21 but he blamed it on "Soviet-style methods". The 73-year-old promised to lead his party to success in parliamentary elections in June.

"All the television, radio, press -- all methods of exerting influence -- were at the service of the same cause -- this great honest man who everyone was calling 'super liar' a short time ago," he said.

Chirac's re-election represents a remarkable victory for a man who has been the butt of criticism and ridicule after being named in a series of corruption scandals during his time as mayor of Paris.

After successfully claiming presidential immunity in 2001 to resist the approaches of investigating magistrates, it means he can defer for another five years the moment when he has to testify before the courts.

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## 3 abducted in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Khagrachhari

A group of tribal gunmen abducted three people from Perachara Giriful area in the town Saturday night.

The kidnap victims were identified as Binoy Shankar Chakma, 35, Polang Chakma, 32, and Bakul Bikash Chakma, 45, according to police sources.

Police and armed forces raided some houses in the area following the abduction.

Condemning the abduction in a press release, the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) accused the Parbatitya Chatlagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) of the abduction and demanded immediate arrest of the abductors.

Meanwhile, police are yet to know the cause behind the killing of the Hindu priest at Manikchhari. Six persons arrested so far in this connection are still in jail.

A group of criminals who are involved in extortion, murder and various other criminal activities in the hill tract area are still at large.

On the other hand, the Manikchhari chapter of Jatilyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) in a statement has protested press reports that have indicated JCD's involvement in the murder of the Hindu priest.

# 3 Raozan 'criminals'

FROM PAGE 1  
police (SP) Matiur Rahman yesterday sent a report to Additional IGP Anwarul Islam about political identity, present status and criminal record of some notorious elements of Raozan. They were among those who accompanied the home minister during the visit.

Meanwhile, a faction of Raozan thana BNP, known to be loyal to Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and Giasuddin Quader Chowdhury, organised a press conference at the Press Club here yesterday to protest some reports and photographs published in different dailies. They termed those 'baseless', 'false' and 'vindictive.'

Some alleged criminals, several cases against whom are now under investigation and whose names were included in the SP's report, were also seen present at the press conference.

Raozan police called Billal to the thana saying that the Officer-in-charge (OC) would talk with him on Sunday night. As Billal arrived there, the OC on some plea took him to the SP, where he was shown arrested.

Omar Faruk was arrested by Raozan police from the upazila headquarters

on the same night while Taiyab was nabbed from Jallinnagar area in Raozan yesterday morning.

The three were produced before court here yesterday and the court sent them to jail, sources said.

## Ganges water

FROM PAGE 12  
recorded flow as per the accord.

The joint committee was set up invoking a clause of the Indo-Bangladesh water treaty.

Bangladesh faced an acute shortage in 1997 and some shortage last year.

Although Dhaka has called for a review of the provisions of the water accord signed on December 12 1996, experts in the field are yet to identify what aspects to review. The treaty provides for a review after every five-year period.

## Ctg BIT closed

FROM PAGE 12  
been deployed on the campus.

Shaymol Kanti Biswas, director of the institute, was not available for comment.

A tense situation is prevailing in areas adjoining the campus as activists of ICS and JCD took position there after vacating the dormitories, campus sources said.

# New cabinet secretary

FROM PAGE 1  
November 23 next year.

Sources said there has been strong lobbying both in favour of and against Dr Sadat since former cabinet secretary Dr Akbar Ali Khan went on retirement on April 1.

After the retirement, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui was given the additional charge of cabinet secretary.

The sources said some senior secretaries had strongly opposed the appointment of Dr Sadat, but senior ministers in the cabinet favoured it.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Bangladesh Secretariat sources said senior ministers advised the prime minister to immediately appoint a cabinet secretary, as the administration has been stagnant in last one month.

PMO sources said the social welfare secretary was asked to take over, but he declined and suggested some fresh names, including a new home secretary.

Official sources said the PMO then pressed a newly promoted secretary, who has been performing better than the senior secretaries, to take over the charge, but he declined.

# Suu Kyi released

FROM PAGE 1  
said, referring to the country by its former name.

The military government announced her release in Washington overnight, promising a "new page" in the history of the nation which has been mired in a 12-year political deadlock between the junta and Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Myanmar's founder father, General Aung San.

It was her second long stretch under detention, after she endured six years of house arrest beginning in 1989, the year after she returned from Britain and took up the dissident cause.

Over the next decade she became an icon of democracy in a country considered a pariah regime by Western governments who imposed sanctions to protest its human rights abuses and tolerance of the narcotics trade.

The government said in a statement that it would now take a series of steps to "celebrate this day of national unity".

"We have released nearly 600 detainees in recent months and shall continue to release those who will cause no harm to the community, nor threaten the existing peace, stability and unity of the nation," it said.

The statement said Myanmar would work together with the inter-

According to the SP's report, thana BNP convenor Hasan Chowdhury has three criminal cases against him. Jubo Dal leader Rezaur Rahim Azam alias Kura Azam has four cases, Billal has three cases and Taiyab and Abbas have one each against them. Abu Hanif alias Champaiya has been chargesheeted in a case.

Most of the cases against them were related with post-election violence and repression in Raozan.

Hasan Chowdhury, Kura Azam and Champaiya, who were also snatched among others with the home minister, were seen at yesterday's press conference.

Kura Azam and Billal are still members of Raozan Upazila Law and Order Committee, sources pointed out.

## PSC chairman

FROM PAGE 1  
students in frustration.

Recruitment through the PSC, which remained suspended since October last, was expected to start after the appointment of the chairman. But the long delay in appointment delayed the civil service recruitment process.

On October 30 last, the government suspended the recruitment through the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations.

The situation worsened with the expiry of the tenure of Prof. Mostafa Chowdhury. The government failed to appoint any person to the post despite its heady search for a suitable person, sources said.

A number of names came to the limelight and discussed before Prof. Tahmid Begum was made chairman yesterday. The government considered Abdullah Harun Pasha, former secretary to the Election Commission (EC), and Anisul Haq Chowdhury, secretary to the Economic Relations Department (ERD), for the post. However, they were later dropped from the list.

Sources said suspension of recruitment and long absence of a chairman caused serious backlog in the PSC. Recruitment through the PSC will resume after completion of the BCS examinations of 21st, 22nd and 23rd batches, they added.

Announcement of the 24th BCS examinations scheduled for January would also be announced soon, they said.

But due to the suspension on recruitment, hundreds of job seekers have lost their eligibility for government jobs.

# Nasreen: Case filed

FROM PAGE 12  
Bablu Sheikh, son of retired army officer Habi Sheikh of Jhutihsuari village, is an armed cadre of BNP, local people said.

After the incident, some BNP leaders in Mollahat and father of the alleged rapist had threatened Nasrin not to lodge any case with police, Zakir claimed.

Later, on February 17, Nasrin and Zakir filed a petition with Bagerhat court. On an order from the court, the OC of Mollahat thana recorded the rape case on February 24, accusing four persons.

Zakir alleged that the case was withdrawn following death threats by relatives of the alleged rapists and non-cooperation of the OC of Mollahat. Relatives of the rapists belong to BNP, he claimed.

"BNP leaders Wahab Kazi and Monsur Molla are among several others who forced me and my sister to withdraw the case through an affidavit in the Notary Public", he said.

"My sister was slapped and abused even after the case was withdrawn following the threats and non-cooperation of the OC", Zakir said explaining the reasons for Nasrin's suicide.

When asked, Bagerhat police

superintendent said legal action will be taken against those who forced the raped school girl to withdraw the case for which she committed suicide. Departmental action will be taken against the OC if he is found guilty in any way, the SP said.

## PM leaves

FROM PAGE 1  
Minister Prof. Jahanara Begum, Mayor of Rajshahi Mizanur Rahman Minu, Cabinet Secretary Dr Kamal Siddiqui and other senior officials accompanied the prime minister. Foreign Secretary Shamsheer M Chowdhury has already left for New York.

The session will enable the world leaders to evaluate how poverty, uneven growth in the world economy, and new types of violence as well as crimes, perpetrated against children, posed a major challenge to the international community.

They are expected to finalise a new multi-pronged plan of action to improve irreversibly the children's condition through implementation of 'child specific strategies'.

Two kids from Bangladesh will take part in a side event to be organised to mark the special session.

The prime minister is likely to stay back in New York for some days.

# AL: Parliament

FROM PAGE 1  
The AL Parliamentary Party will nevertheless meet before the session begins to decide what to do, he said.

The main opposition, which has won only 58 seats in the October 1 general elections, has been boycotting the Sangsad since its maiden session.

It claims that the atmosphere is not conducive to join the parliament because of continued government repression on opposition activists, torture on religious and ethnic minorities, harassment of senior AL leaders in the form of sedition charges.

The government has so far not taken any effective step to break the deadlock. Instead members of the treasury bench have hurled blistering remarks at top AL leaders in the last two sessions of the parliament. In doing so, the ruling party lawmakers, including some ministers, have often violated parliament rules and conventions.

Publication of white papers on alleged grafts and irregularities by ministers and AL leaders during the tenure of the previous government has only toughened the main opposition's stand on parliament boycott, said an influential AL leader.

He claimed that the ruling BNP was branding the AL's development activities as corruption only to discredit the opposition and divert public attention from its own misdeeds.

Political analysts believe that the

AL lawmakers will make a token participation in parliament at least for a day to protect their membership as, according to constitutional provisions, abstention from parliament for 90 sitting days straight renders a seat vacant.

The 90-day timeframe would expire during the budget session for the AL lawmakers.

Meanwhile, the main opposition has decided to resign en masse from the parliament in protest at, what they term, the government-sponsored repression.

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina, now on a private visit to the United States of America, has raised a series of issues for the government to solve before her party goes back to the parliament.

SQ Chowdhury, meanwhile, did not rule out the possibility of a meeting between Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, scheduled to leave for the US last night, and the opposition leader in New York.

Chowdhury said the government would actively consider the opposition proposal for proportionate representation in parliamentary standing committees on ministries and chairmanship of some vital committees.

"If necessary, the government will have to go some extra miles" in sustaining parliamentary democracy for which both the leading parties struggled a lot, he said.