

31 bodies recovered from Baleshwar

MORSHED ALI KHAN, In Mathbaria and QUAAZI AMANULLAH, In Khulna

Thirty-one bodies have so far been recovered from the Baleshwar river where the Khulna-bound launch, MV Subha, capsized Thursday night with at least 120 passengers on board. Two of the bodies were found about 50 kms downstream near the Bay of Bengal.

The overloaded double-decker, coming from Chardoani in Patharghata upazila of Barguna district, capsized after a nor'wester hit it.

The sunken launch could not be spotted till 5:00pm yesterday even after frantic search by divers. Salvage ship MV Hamza is now on the spot trying to locate the launch. Sources at the Barisal divisional headquarters quoting a wireless message by police yesterday evening however said the sunken passenger launch was reportedly located under 150 feet of water in the river Baleshwar. The information however could not be confirmed.

The launch capsized in mid-stream, Moulana Zakir Amin, a

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



PHOTO: KAMRULAHSEN

Salvage ship MV Hamza gets ready for rescue operation on the Baleshwar river while hundreds of villagers gather on the river bank, waiting anxiously.

BNP formally invites AL to talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling BNP yesterday formally invited the main opposition Awami League (AL) to a dialogue aimed at ending the ongoing political stand-off.

Opposition sources said BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan phoned AL presidium member Abdus Samad Azad and made the formal offer.

AL President Sheikh Hasina said late last week that the government was only making informal dialogue offers. Talking to newsmen on her return from a month-long private trip to the US and the UK, she also questioned the government's sincerity about holding a dialogue.

Bhuiyan asked Azad to let him know when and where the opposition party would like sit for the proposed dialogue. Azad replied that he would let Bhuiyan know about the AL position after consulting Hasina.

New navy chief shortly

DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

The government will appoint a new navy chief shortly, sources said.

The aspirants for the post include Commodore Shah Iqbal Mujtaba, Commodore M G Rabbani and Commodore M K Azad.

Senior most naval officer Commodore Mujtaba was superseded and appointed Director General of the Coast Guard during the tenure of the previous government, the sources pointed out.

The next senior most is Commodore Rabbani, now posted as Chairman of the Chittagong Port Authority. He is an electronics engineer.

However, it has become a convention to appoint a navy chief from the 'executive branch.'

Commodore Azad is now Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Personnel) at the naval headquarters.

The sources said he might be preferred as the next navy chief because he belongs to the executive branch. He is considered a very competent officer and has completed several local and foreign training courses.

Commodore Azad is just 'one course junior' to the present navy chief Rear Admiral MA Taher, who is due to retire on June 3 on completion of a three-year term.

Miladunnabi today

UNB, Dhaka

Muslims across the country will observe Eid-e-Miladunnabi today with religious festivity and due solemnity.

On this day, 12th Rabiul Awal, Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (SM) came to this universe with divine blessings and message of peace for the mankind. He also passed away on this day.

Today is a public holiday.

President AQM Badrudoza Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion.

Different religious, socio-cultural and political organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day.

Islamic Foundation began a fortnight programme at Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday marking the day.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Attack on Nasim's motorcade Sirajganj AL leader killed, many hurt

UNB, Sirajganj

An Awami League leader was killed and several others were injured when armed elements, allegedly belonging to the ruling BNP, attacked the motorcade of former home minister Mohammad Nasim, MP, at Mukundagati Bazar in the district yesterday.

The attack was launched when Nasim was returning to the district town after addressing a meeting of party workers at Daulatpur High School ground in Belkuchi thana.

Nasim escaped unhurt, but local AL leader and freedom fighter Abdul Quddus was chopped to death.

Some 15 party workers accompanying Nasim were injured. Of the injured, Jubo League leaders Anwar Hossain and Asaduzzaman



PHOTO: AFP

A grieving relative of passengers from flight CI611 of China Airlines Boeing 747, that crashed off Penghu island, about 50 km west of Taiwan, collapses at the Chiang Kai Shek airport yesterday.

225 feared killed in Taiwanese air crash

AGENCIES, Makung, Taiwan

More than 100 bodies have been sighted by rescue workers after a China Airlines flight to Hong Kong crashed into the Taiwan Strait with 225 people on board yesterday, officials said.

Ten of the bodies had been retrieved as of 9:00 pm local time, according to Vice Transport Minister Yu Fang-lai who is in charge of the rescue mission based in Makung -- the biggest city on the Penghu Island.

"According to rescue workers, they saw over 100 bodies floating at

sea off Makung's Chikang dock," Yu said.

The Boeing 747-200 took off in clear weather from Taipei's international airport and was reported missing about 3:30 pm local time, about 50 minutes after takeoff. The plane went down near the Penghu island group, about 50 kilometers off Taiwan's western coast.

Chang-Liang-shih, vice president of China Airlines, told reporters that one body from Flight CI611 was recovered and five others were spotted floating in the water.

There were suspicions that the plane might have exploded because

farmers in the west coast county of Changhua -- near the plane's flight path -- were finding scraps of airline magazines and other papers with China Airlines stickers or labels on them. TVBS cable news showed officials wading into rice fields with flashlights collecting the bits of paper and putting them in plastic bags.

The 22-year-old jetliner was carrying 206 passengers and 19 crew, said Wang Cheng-yu, an official with China Airlines, Taiwan's biggest carrier. Most of the passengers were Taiwanese, but the pas

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Political preference in appointment of judges alleged

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The non-confirmation of the appointments of three High Court Division judges by the chief executive of the government ignoring the chief justice's recommendation has sparked fresh allegation of giving political preference in the appointment of judges.

A recent verdict by a High Court division bench has recommended that the appointment of the judges be kept free from politics. Such a controversy had come up a few times in the past.

This time, the chief justice had recommended confirmation of the services of three judges who were appointed by the previous Awami

League government. But the government broke the convention by putting aside the chief justice's suggestions.

"Whoever may be in power, it is the government that appoints judges. But any government should not prejudice the previous appointments," a senior lawyer of the Supreme Court told The Daily Star.

"A judge's confirmation should depend on his performance and the chief justice's recommendation. When the recommendation is ignored it means that there are political reasons behind it," he added.

Senior lawyers yesterday met Chief Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury over the issue. The

Chief Justice told them that he had sent his recommendation to the president and that he now could do nothing about it.

The lawyers have also sought an appointment with the president, and if the president agrees to see them they would request him to confirm the services of these three judges.

Before the meeting with chief justice, the lawyers held a meeting chaired by President of Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association Mohammad Ozaer Faruk. It resolved that the lawyers would not accept the government decision on non-confirmation of the three judges. They said the decision is

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Pakistan testfires missiles amid war fears with India

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan conducted the first in a series of missile tests yesterday amid growing fears of a war with neighbour India.

"We don't want war, but we are ready for war," Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said after the test.

The medium-range Ghauri missile, fired at 9:30 am local time at an undisclosed site, flew 1,500 kilometers far enough to reach deep into India. It can carry both a conventional and nuclear warhead.

The missile "showed total accuracy. It hit the target," Musharraf said at a religious gathering to mark the birthday of Prophet Mohammed.

The launch was Pakistan's first major missile test since April 1999 and comes as both India and Pakistan are on a war footing. They have massed about one million troops at their border, and tensions in the disputed Himalayan state of Kashmir are at a peak.

The test "demonstrates Pakistan's determination to defend itself," the Pakistani army said in a statement. However, it said the tests were routine and that they were "concerning technical matters."

Both India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests in 1998, and both say they have added nuclear weapons to their arsenal. It's not known with certainty how many each country has, but both countries possess missile capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads.

Pakistan said Friday it would conduct several missile tests from Saturday to Tuesday. India said it was unfazed.

"The government of India is not

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan test fired its new medium range surface-to-surface ballistic missile Hatf-V (Ghauri) at an undisclosed location in northwestern part of the country yesterday.

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP
KOREA JAPAN

GLOBAL
ESCAPADE

Friday cut-out point for Beck

AFP, London

England captain David Beckham must prove his fitness by next Friday or be ruled out of their World Cup opener with Sweden two days later, according to reports here Saturday.

Despite making process the Manchester United midfielder can still not kick properly with his left foot which he fractured six weeks ago and faces a second scan.

England coach Sven Goran Eriksson said that Beckham requires proof that the fracture has completely healed before medical s t a f f

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

INSIDE TODAY

Article

4

The vanishing grey
Column: Between the Lines
Kuldeep Nayar

Law and our rights

5&6

E-commerce: Challenges to the regulators; Death of Jamaluddin Fakir in Gazipur; and Japan's minorities yet to find their place in the sun.

Holiday

The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today (Sunday) on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladunnabi.

Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow (Monday).

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WORLD CUP QUIZ 2002

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WORLD CUP QUIZ
Round 4 on Page 16