

Launch owners go on strike for Akbar's quit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Launch owners yesterday enforced a countrywide indefinite strike demanding resignation of Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain.

The strike was declared after eight launches were fined by a mobile court Monday for being overloaded and for not carrying the

necessary papers.

Several hundred passengers were affected on the first day of the strike at Sadarghat launch terminal.

The striking launches remained anchored mid-river, leaving the passengers stranded at the terminal. The launch operators also staged demonstrations yesterday when the mobile court again went to check

whether the launches had valid papers.

Highly placed sources said an influential circle within the government, having a stake in the launch business, might have instigated the strike as it wants relaxation of the rules enforced by the government recently on operation of launches.

Earlier, M Kalimullah, president of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport (passenger) Organisation, an association of launch owners, told The Daily Star that the strike was called because the shipping minister did not act according to his promise.

"The minister had said that attested papers would do, but the

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The busy Sadarghat launch terminal lies derelict after launch owners yesterday enforced an indefinite strike demanding resignation of the shipping minister.

PHOTO: STAR

CCCI demands army deployment to check abductions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Against the backdrop of the recent spate of abductions and killings of businessmen, the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) yesterday demanded immediate deployment of army in the port city.

CCCI President Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury expressed deep concern and resentment at the abductions of two businessmen -- Jamal Uddin and Rezaur Rahman alias Zakir -- within a span of 18 days, said a CCCI press release yesterday evening. Zakir was later

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Agitation called for rescue of abducted Jamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Demanding immediate rescue of businessman Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, the Chattagram Nagorik Forum announced a four-day agitation programme yesterday.

Nineteen days into the abduction on July 24, Jamal Uddin remains untraced.

The agitation programme includes a hunger strike at the Chittagong Press Club premises from 10:00am tomorrow, a human chain and siege to the Chittagong

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Another Ctg magnate abducted, shot dead

Two BNP leaders, five others arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Another millionaire businessman was abducted and later killed Monday, sparking deep resentment and protest by the Chittagong business community.

The bullet-riddled body of Rezaur Rahman alias Zakir, 42, was found at Millatiripole area in Boalkhali upazila of the district yesterday morning.

Two BNP leaders and five others have been arrested following the killing.

The arrested BNP leaders are Shahabuddin and Shah Alam. The other arrestees are the Omar Gani MES College Student Union President, Wasim Uddin, Nazir Hossain Bhuiyan, Monir Hossain Bhuiyan, Abdul Halim and Maqsurur Rahman. Police were interrogating them.

A pistol loaded with five bullets, a

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Brother of slain Chittagong businessman Rezaur Rahman Zakir breaks down in tears at the sight of the body yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Warning against toll collection announced over loudspeakers at bus terminals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government decision cancelling lease and halting toll collection was announced over loudspeakers at the three inter-district bus terminals in the city yesterday in a move to strictly enforce the decision.

The decision taken at a high-level meeting at the communications ministry on Monday came into effect in the evening of the same day.

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At Richter 5.31, Ctg jolted again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two tremors, one of them moderate, rattled the Chittagong region one and a half minutes apart early yesterday, striking panic into the people reeling under frequent jolts since July 27.

The casualties of the quakes could not be known immediately.

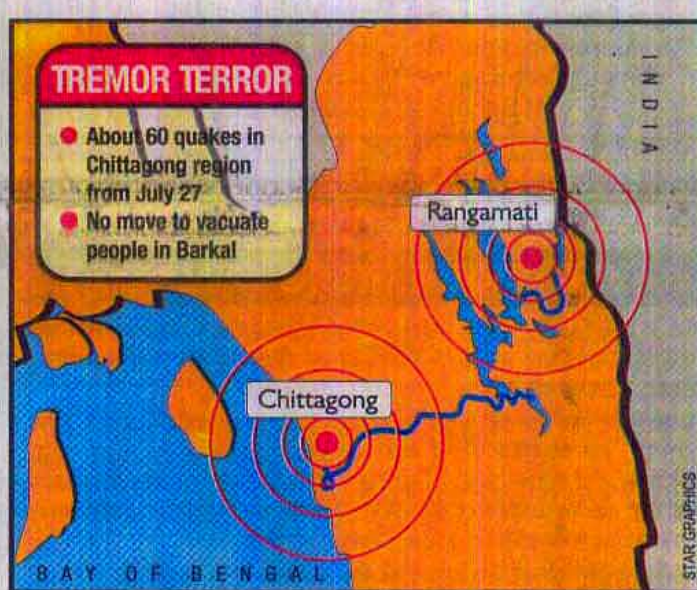
The minor jolt hit at 3.25.16am and lasted seven seconds before the moderate one, stronger than the July 27 tremor, shook Chittagong and the Chittagong Hill Tracts at 3.26.41am

for 28 seconds.

Officials said the moderate tremor measured 5.31 on the Richter scale, with its epicentre 265km off the Seismic Observatory Centre at Ambagan in Chittagong and the minor jolt was recorded at 2.02 on the Richter scale, with its epicentre 45km off the port city.

The July 27 tremor jolted Chittagong city and Rangamati with a magnitude of 5.09 on the Richter scale, killing two people, injuring 25 others and flattening about 500

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Experts differ on big quake signs

STAR REPORT

The latest of aftershocks yesterday frayed further the nerves of Chittagong region residents who had been living in a state of panic since a powerful earthquake struck on July 27.

Different opinions by quake experts over the result of the train of moderate but persistent tremors for the last 17 days even increased the panic of the hills people, who are fearing a massive earthquake any day.

"These types of small tremors signal an impending major disaster. There are instances of major quakes following small ones," Convenor of the Earthquake Research Centre Dr Jahangir Alam told The Daily Star

recently.

Geologists also did not totally rule out the theory but most of them termed the series of short tremors a good omen as these lessen chances of any powerful quakes.

"I would have been worried had not these aftershocks followed the main shock on July 27," said ASM Woobaidullah, chairman of the Department of Geology, Dhaka University, yesterday.

"Tremor series always releases the energy tension accumulated because of tectonic plate movement. We should not get panicked with it. Rather, it's good as tension down below is waning with every aftershocks," he said.

The Chittagong hill region has a

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Indian water diversion plan Dhaka may send protest letter to Delhi today

REAZ AHMAD

Dhaka has drafted an official protest letter to be handed over to New Delhi expressing deep concern at India's \$200 billion mega river-linking project, official sources told The Daily Star yesterday.

The sources hinted that Bangladesh might send the letter to India today. But the UNB in a late night despatch reported that Indian Deputy High Commissioner Dilip Sinha will be called to the foreign office to hand him a 'note of protest'

today.

Dhaka might request New Delhi to abandon such a project, as diversion of flows of the common rivers for irrigation in the upper riparian would spell serious economic and ecological disaster on the lower-riparian Bangladesh, especially in its eastern region, the UNB added. Sources, however, said Bangladesh may not send an official protest letter valuing its friendly relations with the next-door neighbour and instead, could ventilate its griev

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India to gain more from FTA: Khosru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As Bangladesh and India are going to start negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA) in October, Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said India stands to gain more from such a deal.

"It is India that would gain more than Bangladesh once the proposed free trade agreement comes into effect," he said while addressing the inaugural ceremony of a seminar on 'Free Trade Agreement' in Dhaka.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and Bangladesh-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BICCI) jointly organised the programme at a city hotel.

Explaining his observations on the FTA, the commerce minister said as India has a huge export basket, it would definitely be one step ahead of Bangladesh if the agreement was signed.

He said it is the obligation of a big nation to help its small neighbours reap benefits from mutual trade. "Reciprocity in trade and investment benefits both countries," he said.

Referring to such an agreement between the US and Mexico, Khosru said though the US was initially cautious about the outcome of the pact, the world's largest economy gained more than its underdeveloped neighbour at the end of the day.

India would be benefited by an

FTA with Bangladesh as the US did over Mexico, he said.

Khosru was critical about tariff barriers imposed by India, which, he said, hinder Bangladesh's exports to India and increase trade gap. "India must remove all forms of para-tariff and non-tariff barriers before signing the FTA."

Though many fear that an FTA with India would harm Bangladesh industry, the minister said it would bring economic benefits to people.

FBCCI President Yussuf Abdullah Harun said India, with an equivalent of 80 per cent of the South Asian combined GDP, should be more magnanimous to its smaller neighbours. Prosperous neighbours mean bigger and sustainable market

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