

Launch strike

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mobile court led by a magistrate fined a number of launches Tk 10,000 to 15,000 although the vessels had the papers," Kalimullah said. He further said cargo vessels would also join the strike from today.

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain told The Daily Star that the launch owners' version of the story was not true. "They had no attested papers," he said, quoting the magistrate of the mobile court.

The minister said if the launch owners thought that the mobile court's action was not proper, they could have appealed to a higher court against it. "Their main problem is that they want to continue with overloading vessels."

The minister said he would arrange some other ferries along with the Rocket steamer service from today for the 2,000 to 3,000 south-bound passengers every day.

Meanwhile, to ensure safety of the passengers, the government is going to make adoption of certain measures mandatory for river

Rumi suicide 2 brothers still at large

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The two brothers, Mohammad Azam and Mohammad Nazim, who had harried Nazirhat college student Umme Habiba Rumi to commit suicide, are still evading arrest twelve days since the incident.

Rumi's father Abul Kalam yesterday alleged that Investigation Officer (IO) Sub-inspector Md Shahjahan of Fatikchhari Police Station was indifferent to and lackadaisical about the case.

"Our sources tell us that the police did not carry out any raid for the last two days. They seem to have informally wined up activities for arresting the two culprits," said one of Rumi's relatives yesterday.

Three witnesses have so far deposited before a first class magistrate till yesterday. The witnesses are local youths Md Ismail and Md Hossain and Roshangir upazila parishad Member Md Idris Miah.

Meantime, students of Nazirhat college continued boycotting classes yesterday protesting the tragic incident and demanding immediate arrest of the accused.

Umme Habiba Rumi had committed suicide on August 1 at her house in Roshangir allegedly because of continued teasing by the two brothers.

Mou rape case

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The court also fined the convicts Tk 25 thousand each, in default, they are to suffer one year more in jail. The court asked the Deputy Commissioner (DC), Dhaka, to realise the money from the convicts and pay the amount to the victim as compensation.

According to the prosecution, on the night of July 6, 2002, the convicts intercepted a rickshaw on Rampura-Malibagh road in which the victim, Mou, and his brother-in-law Delwar Hossain were returning home at Khligaon after shopping at the Malibagh Super Market.

The convicts picked up Mou at gunpoint, took her to the rooftop of an under-construction building at West Rampura and raped her by turns.

The victim filed a rape case with Khligaon Police Station the following day accusing the five.

The investigation officer submitted a charge sheet against the accused on October 4, last year.

The tribunal framed charges against the accused on March 24 this year and the trial began in June.

The judge examined nine out of 11 prosecution witnesses during the trial.

Special Public Prosecutor Nurul Iman Babul conducted the case on behalf of the state while advocates A K H Khan Aslam and Azad Rahman for the accused.

BCS test

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were not leaked out and that the allegation was absolutely baseless.

Branding the handwritten copies as leaked out questions was nothing but a conspiracy by a certain quarter and an effort to be benefited commercially, said the meeting chaired Professor Z N Tahmida Begum, chairman of the PSC.

The meeting said the copies found from Dhanmondi thana were examined by the PSC and those were not the original questions of the PSC.

Meanwhile, the protesting BCS examinees demanded resignation of the PSC chairman and cancellation of the test.

The examinees announced that they would gather at the Central Shaheed Minar on August 15 in support of their demand.

The 24th BCS preliminary test was held on August 8 amid allegations that the question paper was leaked out again.

The preliminary test was earlier held on February 28 this year, but it had to be cancelled on March 3 following confirmation of reports that the question paper was leaked out.

vessels plying at night in the southern region from 2005.

The measures include installation of hydraulic steering, echo sounder and a communication system in every launch.

The government will provide a loan of Tk 10 lakh against each launch if the owners want financial assistance to install the equipment. Steps for tax-free import of hydraulic steering and echo sounder will also be taken.

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) will provide the loan assistance and arrange a fund of Tk 10 crore.

Launch owners will get Tk 1 lakh a month against the loan for installing the facilities.

Our Barisal correspondent reports that launch crew forced the passengers to leave their vessels after the news of the strike call reached them Tuesday afternoon.

Hundreds of passengers of Barisal, who boarded the Dhaka-bound triple-deckers MV KirtanKhol, Suravi-4, Parabat-3 and 8 and Dipraj, were pushed out of the vessels, sources and witnesses said.

The daytime service of the BIWTA vessel MV Sella on the Barisal-Dhaka route has remained suspended for the last two days. The PS Lepcha of the regular Rocket steamer service reached Barisal from Khulna overloaded with passengers on August 12 evening and left the station with an even bigger load.

Police and staff of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation failed to prevent the passengers from boarding the overloaded steamer, sources said.

Janakantha editor

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their way in through the gate, said a press release of Globe Janakantha Publications.

The Janakantha editor rushed to his house and showed the court order to the officers, who did not pay heed.

Shamima bought the land in 1982 from one Rashid Khan, who got it on lease in 1963, the press release said.

Denying violation of the court order, the executive officer of the Cantonment Board alleged the landlord himself violated the court order by erecting the wall. They just demolished the wall on instruction by the authorities concerned.

The High Court served an injunction on July 27 on the government and the Cantonment Board on any sort of intervention in the cantonment house of Shamima.

PM unhappy

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holding of seminars, rallies and broadcasting awareness campaigns on television and radio.

Presided over by State Minister for Fisheries Ukil Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan, the function was also addressed, among others, by members of parliament Mufti Fazul Haq Amini, Harun Al Rashid, Musfiquur Rahman and Kazi M Anwar Hossain.

The prime minister distributed prizes among 36 individuals and organisations for their contribution to development of fish resources in the country. Each of the awardees got a citation and a medal.

She later released 'ru' and 'katla' fry in Akashi Beel from the Dhoronti Ghat. She also released a commemorative stamp of Tk 2 denomination, brought out by the postal department marking the occasion.

Rail link ready

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The RPMC has been demonstrating in Rajshahi town over the last week against the decision to introduce only one train instead of three. It has threatened a greater movement if the two other trains are not introduced by this month.

AKM Rezaul Karim, director general (DG) of Bangladesh Railway (BR), however refuted the allegations. Talking to The Daily Star, he said introduction of two other trains on the route as proposed earlier has been delayed due to lack of 'modern traffic signalling system'.

At least three more trains would be launched on the route after completion of the under-construction 'modern' system in December, he added.

However, a traffic engineer of the Western Railway preferring anonymity said that at least two trains could easily have been launched under the existing system by making an interval crossing of the two trains at Jamboli Station in Sirajganj.

Nurul Haque, owner of Rajshahi-Dhaka coach Mahi Enterprise, said the 'passenger-crisis' bus owners are already facing due to an increase in the number of buses and new routes would intensify after the train service is launched.

Meanwhile, construction of the 281-km railway line between Rajshahi and Joydevpur linking the West Zone of Bangladesh Railway with its East Zone through BJMB has already been completed under the Jamuna Bridge Rail Link Project at a cost of Tk 1,744.43 crore.

The government provided Tk 1,032.55 crore for the project while Asian Development Bank, OPEC, France and Spain gave Tk 711.88 crore.

Toll collection

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But toll collection continued at two of the terminals -- Mahakhali and Sayedabad -- yesterday. No toll was however collected at the Gabtali terminal.

"Toll collectors collected toll from bus owners yesterday and even asked some of them to pay toll for the whole month. They also threatened some bus owners," one of the bus owners said.

Meanwhile, the government is planning to increase the fees for vehicle registration and route permit and fitness charge of buses to ensure smooth running of the terminals. For this, the communications ministry will increase its allocation to the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), ministry sources said.

The DCC would get Tk 5 crore from the ministry as leases of the terminals have been cancelled, one source said.

G M Siraj MP, a member of the committee formed to end the persisting chaos at the bus terminals, said yesterday toll collection reached such a height that the government had to go for stringent measures.

The lessees were supposed to take Tk 25 a day from a bus at Gabatali and Mahakhali terminals and Tk 30 at Sayedabad. But they were realising as much as Tk 130 to 200 a day.

"So we took the decision to stop this practice," he said.

President of the Bangladesh Road Transport Association Abdur Rashid hailed the government decision as a 'revolutionary one'.

He alleged that illegal toll collection at the terminals continued with the backing of some DCC ward commissioners. The situation will improve now, he hoped.

Citizens' body

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administration had an alliance with the criminals and were stalling the rescue.

Forum Convenor Md. Kabir Chowdhury read out a written statement. Kafil Uddin, Delwar Hossain Chowdhury, Sheikh Mohiuddin, Mosharraf Hossain, Fauzul Amin, Shafiq Ahmed, Shahjahan Chowdhury and Mohsin Rana were also present, among others.

Meanwhile, the joint rescue operation by police and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) continues at Fatikchhari and in adjoining areas.

Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury was abducted while returning to his residence from his business firm at Chawk Bazar at around 11:00pm on July 24.

GP plans

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tries are yet to provide it.

He said considering the problem of proper input for the SMS, GP has now launched the voice-based service with a view to giving people access to information even in remote villages.

He said GP is considering a special tariff package for its pre-paid subscribers. The network last month reduced call tariff for its post paid subscribers.

Shykh Seraj, director (news) of Channel I, Intekhab Mahmud, additional general manager (marketing) of GP among others, attended the function.

Meanwhile, the minister called upon the private cell phone operators to reduce initial subscription charges. Citing the example of a neighbouring country, he said there are mobile packages only at Rs 999 and even at Rs 555.

Strangled children

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head of the boy and blood was oozing from their nose and mouth.

Habibur said they would file a murder case accusing Lucky as the main suspect.

But the duty officer of the Gulshan Police Station said at 8:00 last night that no case was filed and none was arrested.

Ctg jolted

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houses.

The subterranean shudder triggered a train of aftershocks, horrifying people and sending some residents of Borkol in Rangamati, the worst-hit area, to shift to supposedly safe areas.

Professor Jahangir Alam, coordinator of the Earthquake Research Centre at Chittagong University of Science and Technology, said most people in Chittagong did not feel the shakes as the epicentre of the moderate tremor was far off.

"The intensity felt low yesterday due to the distance (265km) of the epicentre compared to the tremor of July 27 that sat 186km away," he said.

The meteorology and geophysical centre in Chittagong said Bangladesh had experienced 205 light to moderate earthquakes since 1996.

BSS adds: Japan yesterday expressed its willingness to extend all-out help to Bangladesh in facing the challenges from possible earthquakes of severe nature.

The assurance came when Japanese Ambassador Matsushiro Horiguchi called on Disaster and Relief Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf at his office.

Meeting sources said the Japanese ambassador asked Bangladesh to make an official proposal to his government seeking all necessary support to manage earthquakes, a common phenomenon in Japan.



PHOTO: STAR

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia releases fry into Akashi Beel at Sarail in Brahmanbaria yesterday to mark the launch of the National Fish Fortnight-2003.

S Asian women

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from exploitation as they migrate or "move" due to the compelling insecurities faced by South Asian women.

The UBINIG representative was hopeful that the tales of suffering and the resilience of the testifiers would "inspire and positively inform" other suppressed women in South Asia.

Akhtar spoke of the increasing awareness about trafficking and HIV/AIDS among rural women in Bangladesh as opposed to the popularly held view that the modern urban women are more aware of the issues.

The sessions revealed marginalised aspects of trafficking. In the session titled "Redefining Issues: Different Faces of Trafficking", Sojb, a testifier from Bangladesh, described how he was trafficked via India to the Middle East to become a camel jockey.

The session also identified forced marriage, forced adoption and domestic help as other forms of trafficking that render both women and children vulnerable.

"I don't want this to happen to any woman", said Naila, a Pakistani girl who was raped in police custody, while speaking in the session titled, "Victimising the Victim: Human Rights Abuse". She echoed the sentiments of a number of other testifiers.

Drug peddler

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Badda Police Station accusing the six.

Jewel was a member of an organised phensidil peddlers in Badda area, police said.

They might have killed Jewel following internal conflict, police suspected.

Earlier, police on information recovered the body of an unidentified youth from Bijoy Sarani in Badda Monday.

Kafrul police went to the spot at about 9:00pm and recovered the body in lungi.

However, it did not bear any mark of injury, police said.

An unnatural death case was filed with the Kafrul Police Station.

Introduced by background information from expert witnesses and powerful poetry presented in multimedia formats, these sessions contained testifiers sweeping the South Asian countries.

The other sessions were focused on "Migration and Movement: Globalisation and Human Insecurity", and "Borders and Boundaries: Wars and Inhuman Security."

An expert panel of six juries, comprising such globally prominent activists as Winnie Mandela, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Salma Sobhan, Faryal Ghaur, Gopal Siwakoti, and Pam Rajput, listened to the testimonies. After hearing all the sessions they incorporated the testimonies into their own critical thought to provide a new insight into trafficking and HIV/AIDS.

The court is the first of its kind to be held in Bangladesh and follows 17 others held on different women related issues around the world.

A cultural programme was also performed by eminent Lalan song exponent Farida Parvin, indigenous dancers and Baul instrumentalists.

Landslide kills mother, son in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A mother and her son were killed in landslide at Puran Pallan Para village of Teknaf upazila in the early hours of yesterday.

Teknaf police said a big chunk of rain-swollen mud fell on the house of one Siddiq Ahmed at around 4am, killing his wife Minara Begum, 30, and his son Towfik Uddin Bakku, 7, on the spot.

Police recovered the bodies in the morning and sent them to hospital morgue.

Dhaka may send protest

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The task force is composed of the foreign secretary, water resources secretary, a director general at the foreign ministry and a member of the Joint River Commission (JRC).

When approached, Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmad told The Daily Star last night, "Our taskforce is working now. You'll get to know something concrete tomorrow (Wednesday)."

But the minister and the Bangladeshi members of the JRC said Bangladesh left no stone unturned in persuading India to arrange for the JRC meeting due since late 2001. Having failed to bring India to the table, Dhaka now has no option but to lodge protest with New Delhi, official sources said.

"My predecessor (in water resources ministry) LK Siddiqui sent a letter to India urging early convening of the JRC meeting, but no response came. After assuming office, I too wrote to them asking for an immediate JRC meeting but again to no avail," lamented Ahmad.

JRC Member Dr Tawhidul Anwar Khan informed The Daily Star that the last JRC meeting was held in late 2001. Though JRC was mandated to hold three to four meetings a year, not a single meeting has been convened in 2002

and 2003, Khan said.

Sources at the foreign and water resources ministries said apart from airing concern to India, Bangladesh would also ask international donor agencies not to provide financial assistance to any upper riparian country whose water work threatens life, agriculture, aquaculture and ecology of its lower riparian neighbour.

As the plan envisaged by the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) of India involves building hundreds of reservoirs and digging more than 600 miles of canals, the Indian government is preparing to seek international funds for its giant river-linking project, to be implemented in 10 years' time.

India plans to divert vast quantities of water from major rivers, including the Ganges and Brahmaputra, threatening the livelihood of more than 100 million people downstream in Bangladesh, British daily The Guardian reported on July 24.

Up to one-third of the flow of the Brahmaputra and other rivers could be diverted to southern Indian rivers to provide 173 billion cubic metres of water a year to millions of people in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka states, The Guardian reported.

Officials at water resources

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 Rezaul Rahman alias Zakir -- within a span of 18 days, said a CCCI press release yesterday evening. Zakir was later killed.

The CCCI president said Chittagong has turned into a safe haven for criminals who have resurfaced from hideouts after the withdrawal of joint forces.

He also noted that abductions, killings and other crimes have marked a serious rise.

Humayun blamed inaction of the law enforcers for the slide in law and order.

He said businessmen, industrialists and commoners are reeling under a sense of insecurity, and business activities in the commercial capital have been greatly hampered.

Hazari

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power. Hazari got involved in Bangladesh Chhatra League politics in 1968 and in 1972, after independence, he established a private band named 'Hazari Bahini'. The group virtually disappeared in 1974 after Hazari's arrest in a criminal case. In 1988, Hazari reorganised his group.

He titled his private group as 'steering committee' or 'class committee' in 1994 with about 5,000 members and expanded its units during the past AL rule.

Hazari introduced a 'one man rule' in Feni town and his armed cadres persecuted his political opponents.

BBC reporter

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tary hearing where the scientist denied being the main source of the controversial BBC story.

On Monday, the Hutton inquiry heard evidence that some members of Defence Intelligence Staff, which supplies intelligence to the defence ministry, were so concerned about the September dossier they complained formally to their superiors.

But senior officials strongly denied that the dossier had been "transformed" in the days leading up to publication, or that Blair's office had intervened to order the inclusion of Baghdad's 45-minute deployment capability claim.

Deputy chief of defence intelligence Martin Howard confirmed that two of his officers had complained that the language of the dossier was stronger than was justified by available intelligence.

But he insisted that debate over the precise wording of intelligence briefings was "normal".

James Dingemans, a lawyer helping Hutton run his inquiry, read from an official document noting that some officers had expressed concerns over the "level of certainty" on the 45-minute claim.

Blair, currently on holiday in Barbados, and his Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon are expected to be summoned to give evidence at some stage before the inquiry closes in a few months' time.

11 chargesheeted in labour leader Nazem murder case in Khulna

ministry told The Daily Star that Bangladesh, having 54 rivers common with India, depends on the water flow of the Ganges and Brahmaputra for 85 per cent of its water during dry season. Again, of the two rivers, Bangladesh relies most on the Brahmaputra as it is the source for 65 per cent of the country's dry season water.

Charges have been pressed against 11 people for killing labour leader Nazem Sarder in September 2002.

The chargesheet was submitted to a court house on August 10. Labour leader Nazem Sarder was gunned down at 10:30pm on September 19 last year at Khalishpur.

His wife Hosne Ara Begum filed an FIR on September 20 accusing 20 people.

After investigation, police submitted charge sheet against 11 people.

Of them, six are now in custody and the rest at large.

Experts differ

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history of such tremors because of geological position, said Prof. Woobaidullah, who visited Chittagong after the quake struck. "Energy tension has been gathering all the time along the connecting zone of the Tibetan, Indian and Burmese plates. Movement of these plates eventually results in tremors or quakes. That is why tremor is frequent in the Himalyan belt."

Nearly 60 mild-moderate aftershocks jolted the Chittagong region though the Chittagong Geo-Physical Observatory recorded only a few due to technical glitch.

Our Rangamati Correspondent reported on 11 tremors that rattled Rangamati. A Broadband Seismograph device at Dhaka University recorded 49 aftershocks between July 27 and August 6.

Our Chittagong Bureau added that the Chittagong Seismic Observatory recorded a total of 14 earthquakes in Chittagong between January 1 and August 12. The Earthquake Research Centre of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology recorded 65 small to moderate tremors in the region from January.

Many people in Kalabunia and Borkol, believed to be the epicentre of the quake, are still living outside their homes. Indigenous people have moved to distant places while others are going out to sleep in the open at night.

Meanwhile, Jahangir Alam Khan led a team of geologists to

India to gain

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for India, he mentioned.

Harun, also chairman of the Bangladesh-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the SAARC countries should intensify economic cooperation with ASEAN to counter economic dominance of China in the region.

Deputy High Commissioner of India in Dhaka Dilip Sinha said Bangladesh can emerge as a trade hub in the region utilising its geographically strategic location.

"By providing transit and transshipment facilities to eastern Indian states and landlocked Bhutan and Nepal, Bangladesh would get tremendous economic benefits," he said.

Welcoming possible opening of the Dhaka-Agartala bus service, he said other similar links such as Sealdah-Joydevpur and Agartala-Akhaura train services could be introduced to facilitate trade and investment.

He mentioned that Bangladesh is the sixth largest trading partner of India.

"If the FTA was signed, Bangladesh's trade deficit with India will decrease significantly," he said, adding that the agreement would help attract greater foreign investment to Bangladesh, expand export basket and enable it to improve its competitiveness.

AC Muthiah, president of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and co-chairman of BICCI, said the FTA could trigger a surge in foreign direct investment in Bangladesh similar as it did in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

He said the FTA would also reduce the huge informal trade, especially India's unofficial exports to Bangladesh estimated at around \$350 million to \$500 million a year.

During 2002-2003, India's exports to Bangladesh were \$1,144 million while its imports were only \$56 million.

Nazmul Huda

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Commission (PERC) reportedly opposed the proposed US\$ 500 million magnetic train project on the Dhaka-Chittagong route.

Talking to UNB at his office, the minister questioned the PERC's jurisdiction for drafting a report covering the plan for the magnetic train before it has been formally discussed within the government.

He said that it would be premature for the PERC to raise this matter at this stage when the project is yet to be conceived. Besides, the government has not spent any money on the project which is still at a planning stage.

"The entire cost of the project would be borne by the foreign countries. If anyone can give me an expensive system and provide funds for it, why should not I take it... The project itself will generate its cost. If I can run this with the money generated from the project, why such objection will be raised?" Huda asked.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman earlier on Monday reportedly remarked that the proposal on the magnetic train had not been discussed at any level of the government.

Huda said the finance minister was right as the project was not yet mooted in the cabinet nor did it get any particular approval from either the Planning Commission or the ERD.

"I know very well how I will have to please the finance minister to get his nod for the project," Huda said.

When asked if the matter was turned down by the finance minister, Huda said Saifur Rahman did not disapprove the project, rather he was concerned about the resources for putting the magnetic trains on the track.

investigate the quake-hit areas and held a press conference Saturday to urge the government to relocate the communities from the bank of Karnaphuli river, which is right above the 'fault line', along the line of epicentre.

Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf earlier assured the press saying, "We are aware of the danger and are taking preparations to handle the worst case scenario." He adds, the army and the Red Crescent volunteers are taking preparations for a post-quake situation.