

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 deposed before a first class magistrate till yesterday. The witnesses are local youths Md Ismail and Md Hossain and Roshangir upazila president 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 from Khilgaon 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 Khilgaon 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 Tahmid Begum, chairman of the PSC.

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

Meanwhile, the protesting BCS preliminary test was held on August 8 amid allegations that the question paper was leaked out.

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.

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.

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Toll collection

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But toll collection continued at two of the terminals -- Mahakhal 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 Gabtali and Mahakhal 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.

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.

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.

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", Sojib, 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.

Shykh Seraj, director (news) of Channel 1, Intekhab Mahmud, additional general manager (marketing) of GP, among others, attended the function.

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.

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 safer 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 fell 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.



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 Amit 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 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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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.

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, Farayal 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.

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 15 years.

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

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

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 Dingeman, 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.

Landslide kills mother, son in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A mother and her son were killed in landslides at Puran Pallah 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 Towfiq Uddin Bakku, 7, on the spot.

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

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.

"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.