

Launch masters rely only on wisdom

Demand emergency warning system

RAFIQ HASAN

The masters of passenger launches on various river routes say that the lack of a national emergency warning or weather forecasting system forces them to depend on their wisdom alone during storms or tornadoes.

While the government places danger signals at the terminals during inclement weather, there is otherwise no weather forecasting system to guide launches once they are on their way. "It wholly depends on our wisdom to tackle the situation," said Amir Hossain, master of MV Sundarban, a Patuakhali-bound

passenger vessel.

He said passenger vessels normally anchor at the safe side of a river whenever the operators hear news of dangerous weather over the radio. Otherwise, they have to navigate treacherous tornadoes or stormy weather using bare manual strategy.

According to him the recent launch disaster occurred because of poor performance by the operators and faulty design of the ships. Ashrafuzzmaan, another master of a Perojpur-bound vessel, said launches with one engine are more vulnerable to disaster because they can hardly withstand the wind

pressures during storms or sudden tornadoes.

The M V Moharaj, which sank in the river Buriganga on Saturday night killing 149 passengers, had only one engine. Normally such big vessels have two engines to help them maintain balance during bad weather, the masters said.

Government officials at the Sadarghat Launch Terminal also acknowledged the lack of a weather forecasting or warning system for vessels on river routes. "They become aware by listening to weather forecasts on the radio," said an official requesting not to be named.

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GAS PIPELINE

Team goes to Myanmar for talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-member team has left for Myanmar to take part in a two-day technical meeting begins today on a transnational gas pipeline from Myanmar to India through Bangladesh.

Petrobangla Chairman SR Osmani and Director of Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL) Salek Sufi will discuss international laws relevant to such pipeline scheme, wheeling charge and other technical aspects with Indian and Myanmarese officials.

Osmani and Salek are the mem-

bers of a six-member committee that includes two members from each country and is headed by the director general of Myanmar energy ministry.

The committee will also hold meetings in Bangladesh and India on completion of a report by March.

Today's meeting is a follow-up of a ministerial meeting held in January that ended amid the understanding that a transnational agreement will be signed by April for the gas pipeline. Bangladesh wants its part to be done by a private sector consortium.

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PHOTO: STAR

The untreated liquid waste from the dyeing industries in Konabari, Gazipur, poses a grave threat to the environment of a vast area.

PREMIER BANK IPO SCAM

HC stays probe for 2 weeks

BB, SEC asked to explain their actions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for two weeks Bangladesh Bank's investigation into the fake bank accounts opened with Premier Bank Ltd and asked the central bank

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Correction

A story run by The Daily Star yesterday under the headline 'BB nod to Premier Bank MD under question' mistakenly said 'Mazid was then working as the MD of NBL', which should read 'The Bangladesh Bank warned him in 1997, when he had been working with the Prime Bank Ltd as its MD.'

The story also mentioned that

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Clarification

The Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) Corporation, in clarification of a news item published in The Daily Star on February 19 under the headline "Biggest EPZ in Limbo," said it had never been approached for a "fee" of three million dollars by the son of any minister as stated in the report.

Our reply: We used multiple sources outside of KEPZ to confirm this information.

Prayer Timing		
February 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Action too little, too late

Says Saber on ban-ning of 2 militant outfits

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury yesterday said the government's step to ban two extremist outfits is 'too little and too late to bring about any meaningful change in arresting the frightening escalation in extremism and fanaticism'.

"Had the government been really sincere and not complacent about the rise of fanaticism and extremism, it would have acted long before

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Inefficient committees, quorum crisis cripple JS

Reports TIB on last year's parliament

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Quorum crisis and poor performance of parliamentary standing committees are the two major factors that hamstrung the Jatiya Sangsad last year, observed a Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) report.

According to it, "Of a total expenditure of Tk 22.11 crore to run the

four sessions of the House last year, more than Tk 5 crore has been wasted due to frequent quorum crises alone."

On performance of the JS bodies the report titled ParliamentWatch said, "Most of the parliamentary standing committees could not play an effective role in investigating corruption and irregularities at different organisations under the

ministries concerned."

Inadequate participation of the main opposition lawmakers and the government's reluctance to accept opposition lawmakers' amendment proposals to bills also contributed a lot to the inefficacy of the House, added the report analysing the four sessions of the eighth parliament last year.

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Terrorist Islamic organisations country's enemies: Shariah Council

BSS, Dhaka

Eleven Islamic thinkers and leaders of the Jatiya Shariah Council Bangladesh (JSCB) in a joint statement yesterday expressed their deep concern over the prevailing situation in the country, including killing, terrorism and bomb attacks.

They said there is an elected government and an independent judiciary in the country for ensuring justice through the application of law.

"Nobody, either any organisation

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11 Iraqis, 2 GIs killed in attacks

AFP, REUTERS, KIRKUK/ Baghdad

Violence in Iraq killed two US soldiers and 11 Iraqis in a spate of insurgent attacks in the troubled north yesterday, police and the US army said.

A US soldier was killed in a roadside bomb blast north of Baghdad yesterday, the military said in a statement.

The incident occurred near the town of Tuz Khurmatu, 112 miles north of Baghdad. No other soldiers were involved in the attack. Tuz

Khurmatu, not far from the frontier with Iraqi Kurdistan, has rarely been the site of insurgent attacks.

Another US marine died in a road accident Tuesday in the western Sunni Province of Al-Anbar, the US military announced yesterday.

"One marine assigned to I Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in a non-hostile motor vehicle accident yesterday, while conducting security and stability operations in the Al Anbar Province," a statement said.

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