

Left to watery grave

Salvage abandoned due to strong currents with 120 still missing; grieving relatives can't believe the decision

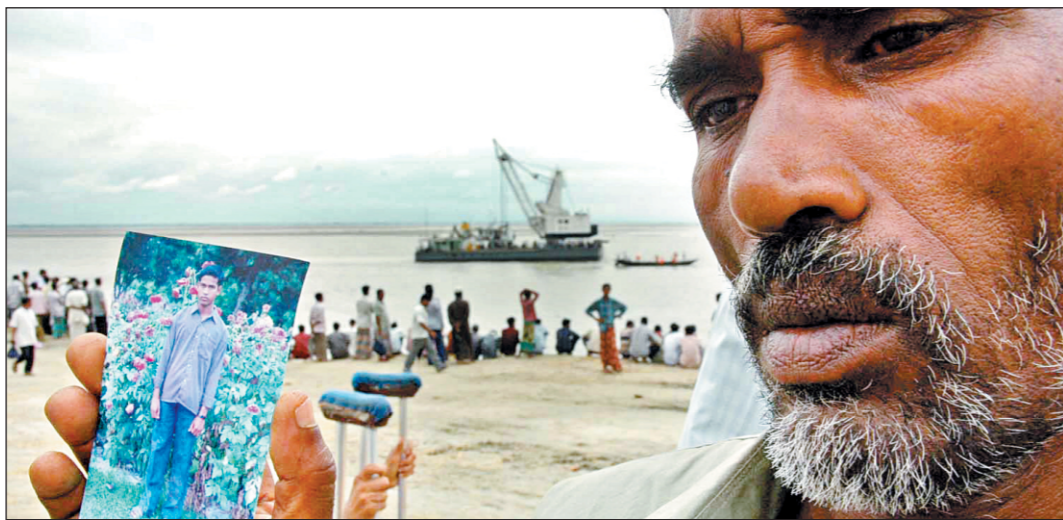
STAR REPORT

The salvage operation of MV Raipura was abandoned yesterday to the utter dismay of hundreds of grief-stricken relatives and friends of some 120 passengers who are still missing.

Howling wind and a turbulent Jamuna forced BIWTA salvage ship MV Rustam to give up attempts to refloat the launch that had gone down near Aricha Ghat six days ago with over 200 passengers on board.

As Rustam's rescue wires continued to snap time and again in the fierce current, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Deputy Director Emdadul Haq ordered the rescue crew to pack up. The authorities also closed the police control room at the spot.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



DASHED HOPES: Rahman Sarder from Monprit village in Natore holds a photo of his son SSC examinee Azadul Islam yesterday, as he waits for his rescue for the five days after the Jamuna launch disaster.

PHOTO: STAR

Storm warning system unfit for safe navigation

Govt's go-slow policy puts lid on overhaul

ASHIKUR RAHMAN

The country's age-old storm warning system has become virtually unfit for safe navigation during the worst periods of weather, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) sources say.

The urgency for updating the storm warning system, introduced in 1962, was strongly voiced at least 20 years ago, particularly for river ports, but the changes are still pending due to the government's go-slow policy, the BIWTA sources add.

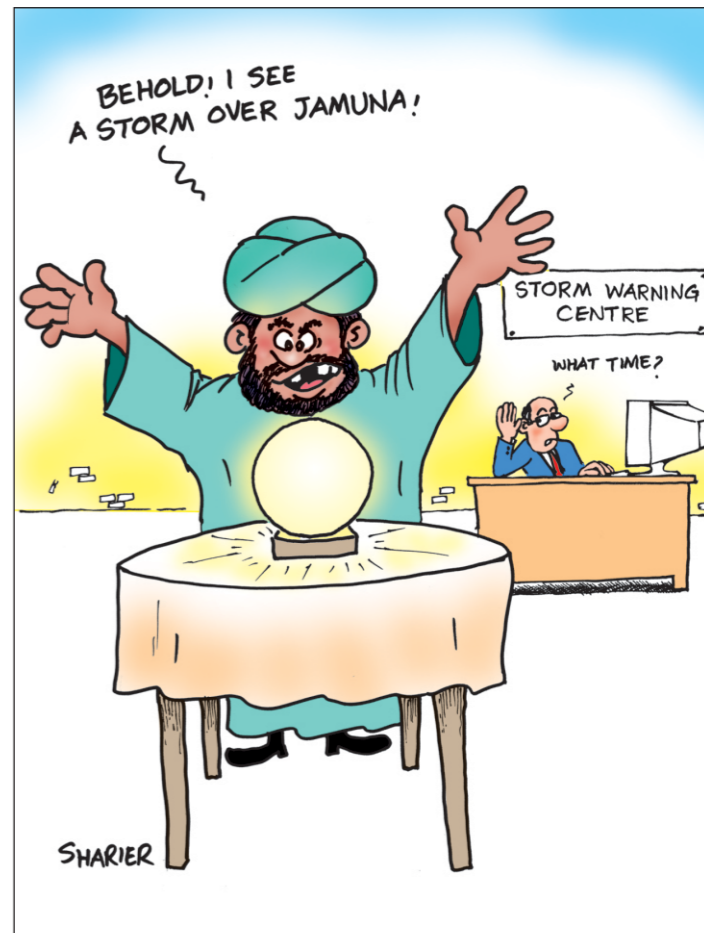
The current signal system does not accurately correspond to the reality of storms and the vulnerability of vessels, failing to consider,

among other things, factors like sound construction, the sources point out.

Presently, signal number one for inland river ports, the lowest warning rating, does not prohibit vessels to ply, suggesting the weather is navigable. But vessels like engine boats and launches frequently have accidents on the rivers nonetheless while the signal is in force, a BIWTA high official says on condition of anonymity.

The official goes on to say that public safety can never be ensured if the provision to permit a vessel to ply during adverse weather only considers its length.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



SHARIER

Domestic help beaten dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An eight-year-old domestic help beaten up mercilessly in a city house for not doing her domestic chores properly succumbed to her injuries early yesterday.

Selina Akhtar Ruma, a resident of South Pikepara in Mirpur, brought the victim Rupali, daughter of Abdul Jalil of Gaibandha, to her house to look after her five-year-old daughter a month ago.

Selina slapped Rupali on Saturday morning when the girl failed to make bread.

As the girl cried, Selina's husband Ataur Rahman scolded Selina and at one point of altercation he slapped his wife, Ataur told reporters in Mirpur Police Station.

When Ataur left for his office, angry Selina severely beat the girl with a rolling pin and kept her at the house untreated.

Returning home in the evening, Ataur saw Rupali lying on the floor, afflicted with fever.

"I called in a doctor, who, seeing

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

RUN-UP TO BUDGET FY06

Inflation set to dog next fiscal year

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

High inflation rates supported by a huge credit expansion to the private sector have marked this fiscal year and economists say the coming year will also be a trying one in view of the new pay scale.

Inflation rate has been increasing steadily and stands at the highest point in the last five years now at 6.72 percent in March on a point-to-point basis. The moving average of inflation is also at its highest level at 6.18 percent.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) figures show high prices of food items fuelled the inflation, which steadily picked up from 6.97 percent in July to 7.54 percent in March on average basis. On a point-to-point basis, the situation is even

worse at 8.22 percent in March from 6.54 percent in July. Despite a good boro harvest, there is little chance

for a let-up in the increasing trend as paddy prices are still high at Tk 290-

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Annual CPI inflation at national level (Base: FY 96 = 100)

Year	On Average Basis		
	Food	Non-food	General
2003-2004	6.93	4.37	5.83
2004-2005			
July	6.97	4.39	5.88
August	7.00	4.43	5.91
September	7.28	4.38	6.06
October	7.57	4.33	6.21
November	7.58	4.24	6.19
December	7.49	4.15	6.10
January	7.41	4.15	6.07
February	7.46	4.16	6.12
March	7.54	4.18	6.18

STAR GRAPHICS

TATA INVESTMENT Govt close to finalising modalities for negotiations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The high-level government negotiation committee is close to finalising the modalities for formal negotiations with Tata Group on its proposed \$2.5 billion investment project.

The committee headed by Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan sat at a meeting Saturday to prepare the modalities, a meeting insider said.

"We have already identified the issues and points of the negotiation and these would be finalised at another meeting of the committee scheduled for tomorrow or the day after," the source said, preferring anonymity.

A Tata team led by Tata Sons Limited Executive Director Alan Rosling is due to fly in Dhaka this

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

China declares bird flu emergency

AFP, Beijing

China has ordered the immediate vaccination of three million birds among other emergency measures to stop the spread of bird flu after discovering the H5N1 virus had killed some migratory birds, state media said yesterday.

The Ministry of Agriculture announced Saturday that the deaths of migratory birds found in the western province of Qinghai were caused by bird flu, marking the first time the virus has been found in China since last year.

Provincial authorities launched the massive vaccination campaign to cover the estimated three million chickens, ducks and other fowl in the province, the Xinhua news agency said.

Poultry in farms around the affected area had been mostly vaccinated by Saturday, Xinhua

said. The dead birds were found on the edges of Lake Qinghai, where the presence of migratory birds is a tourist attraction.

The area has been sealed off for more than 10 days, with police stationed there around the clock to prevent tourists from entering, the Beijing News said.

The reports did not say when the dead birds were found, but said the agriculture ministry received notice from the Qinghai agriculture officials on May 4.

Veterinary institutions across China were also asked to determine the species and territory of migratory birds in their regions and to take precautionary measures.

The agriculture ministry has asked local governments to prohibit people from entering the habitats of migratory birds and to prevent

contact between migratory birds and poultry, Xinhua said.

The ministry urged that any new cases be reported quickly to the authorities.

Officials from the agriculture ministry said some of the migratory birds found dead in Qinghai were believed to have come there from Southeast Asia, Xinhua said.

According to China's national bird flu reference laboratory, the virus that had spread among birds in China is different from the virus detected in Southeast Asia, which is more deadly and possibly contains a gene for human contraction, Xinhua said. Cui Shangjin, an expert from the national laboratory, said people in China need not worry as the country had a "mature" bird flu diagnosis, monitoring and prevention system, according to Xinhua.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Bad weather delays flights at ZIA

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The schedule of 12 international and domestic flights at Zia International Airport (ZIA) was hampered yesterday due to stormy weather, causing sufferings to the passengers.

Airport sources said, the 6:40am flight (GA 456) of Muscat-Dhaka route of Gulf Air had to be diverted to Kolkata and was forced to an emergency landing because of inclement weather. The flight then landed at the ZIA at 10:30am.

Another flight of GMG Airlines of Dhaka-Kolkata route was delayed by 45 minutes. The flight took off for Kolkata at 11:15am instead of 10:30am.

Besides, all domestic flights of Biman Bangladesh Airlines and GMG were delayed due to stormy weather.

FOOD POISONING

62 madrasa students fall sick

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Thirty-four of the 62 madrasa students and teachers, who fell ill with food poisoning in Noapatharia of Baniachang upazila Thursday, were hospitalised yesterday afternoon.

Those who were admitted to hospital aged between 8 and 12 years. The students and teachers of Madrasatul Madina joined a feast in the house of Kodor Ali of the same village on 19 May.

But shortly after having food, they fell sick. Beef, potato, fish, milk, mangoes and jackfruits were among the items that they consumed.

Some of them recovered after being treated locally. But as condition of 34 students worsened yesterday, they were shifted to Habiganj Sadar Modern Hospital.