

# Lunch owners continue 'rotation', threaten strike

## BIWTA order ignored on Dhaka-Barisal route

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Launch owners are continuing to ply their launches on the Barisal-Dhaka-Barisal route by rotation ignoring an order of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and threatened to stop services if the order is enforced by the authorities. BIWTA issued the order on Sunday asking the launch owners to cancel their 'illegally imposed' system by violating a court order and the terms and conditions of route permit. On receipt of the order yesterday, the launch owners expressed their resentment over contents of the letter and plied their vessels according to their will. Only three launches of Parabat company plied from Barisal end and three other launches, MV Suravi-7, Sundarban-7 and Tipu plied from Dhaka end yesterday evening.

The official order was sent to Barisal BIWTA and port authorities, Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police, launch owners association and other concerned organisations. BIWTA asked all concerned to ensure cancellation of rotation system of plying launches by following the time table and rules and regulations as well as the terms and conditions of route permit. On contact, Barisal port officer-in-charge Saiful Islam acknowledged the fact saying the letter was already handed over to launch owners and others yesterday. However, the launch owners did not pay heed to the official order and plied their vessels by rotation violating a court order against the launch owners. BIWTA director Motahar Hossain who issued the order told this correspondent that legal action would be taken against the launch

owners for violating the order. As a state of emergency is imposed in the country and a previous court order is valid, so there is no need to hold any reconciliation meeting with them in this regard, he said. When contacted with BIWTA deputy director (passenger transport) Rafiqul Islam, he said the authorities are still trying their best to settle the issue. However, Shahidul Huq Bhuiyan, owner of Parabat launches, refused to follow the BIWTA instructions saying we are not prepared to incur losses in business. If needed, BIWTA can operate our launches in exchange of money. Manzurul Hassan Ferdous, owner of 'Kirtonkhola' also expressed a similar view saying we have no objection if BIWTA operates our launches and pay our bank loan. Golam Mawla, owner of 'Suravi' said he is yet to receive the letter of BIWTA.

Launch owners imposed the rotation system of plying launches showing the excuse of losses since February 14, 2005. This results in untold sufferings to launch passengers. They said because of improvement of road communications, decrease in passengers, they imposed the system. Barisal Bivag Unnoyon O Swartha Sangrakkhon Parishad (BBUSP) started agitation programmes against the system. They held meetings, brought out processions, staged token hunger strikes and sit-in programmes, handed over memorandums and organised tri-partite meetings with launch owners association and BIWTA, but to no effect. This is because the launch owners association was backed by BNP leader Tareque Rahman and his brother Arafat Rahman and their close associate Giasuddin Mamun.

## Mercury dips to 6.5 Celsius in Rangpur

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

The mercury dipped to 6.5 degree Celsius in Rangpur yesterday, recording country's lowest temperature in the northern district. The temperature was 7.4 degree Celcius on the previous day, meteorological department sources said. The lowest temperature so far in Rangpur was recorded at 6.3 Celcius in 2004, officials there said. The cold wave now sweeping the country has paralysed life in northern districts, particularly of the poor and the farmers in rural areas. It has also triggered a spree of pneumonia, cold diarrhea and other cold related diseases in northern districts. Rangpur Civil Surgeon Tamsil Uddin told The Daily Star that children and the elderly people were the worst sufferers in the cold spell. Most of the pneumonia patients treated at different upazila health complexes were children while the elderly were suffering from asthma problem, he said. The sun is not seen due to dense fog till about mid-day, people said. This affects day labourers and farmers who can not go to fields for work. Sources at the Deputy Commissioner's office said the administration so far distributed 6000 blankets among the poor in the district. Deputy Commissioner Khondker Atiar Rahman said he distributed warm cloths among Shantals in Khalashpir in Pirganj upazila yesterday and will continue the programme. Several NGOs and private organisations are also distributing warm cloths among the poor.



PHOTO: STAR

Two indigenous girls in Kotbari hills in Comilla enjoying their traditional cake festival yesterday.

# CASES FILED BY BNP LEADERS 270 'grand alliance' men granted bail in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A court here on Sunday granted bail to 270 leaders and activists of grand alliance who were accused in eight cases filed by BNP leaders following a clash over a bridge at Patkelghata in Tala upazila on January 7, court sources said. At least 50 leaders and activists of both the grand alliance and BNP were injured in the clash. Magistrate Saidur Rahman granted bail to the grand alliance

men, court sources said. Local BNP leaders, Badruzzaman, Selim, Ismail, Mahmuda and others filed the cases with Patkelghata Police Station against the district and Tala upazila unit leaders and activists of grand alliance on January 7 and 8, court sources said. The grand alliance leaders included JSD general secretary Obaidus Sultan Bablu, Krishak League president and AL committee member Biswajit Sadhu, Tala

upazila AL president and district AL committee member Sheikh Nurul Islam, Biswas Jahangir Hossain, Sarulia Union Parishad (UP) chairman and AL leader Matlur Rahman, party leaders Tabibur Rahman, Khaled and Sirajul Islam and front organisation leaders Zakir Hossain, Hillol, Bishu, Ganesh, Aminur and others. Meanwhile, the grand alliance leaders filed three cases with the same police station accusing 50 BNP leaders and activists.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers barricaded the Dhaka-Bogra highway at Shehebganj in Sirajganj yesterday demanding smooth supply of urea fertiliser at fair price, creating a long traffic jam for over three hours.

## 770 urea bags seized in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police raided two 'illegal' godowns at Madarganj upazila in Jamalpur district and seized 770 bags (about 40 tonnes) of urea on Sunday. Police also filed cases against the godown owners under the Special Powers Act for hoarding fertiliser, police sources said. Ordered by Jamalpur Deputy Commissioner (DC), a team of Madarganj police led by Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Farukuzzaman, Magistrate Shofiqul Islam, and Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Madarganj police station Abdul Hakim raided the godowns, houses and other establishments of alleged hoarders Kartik Kumar Shaha and Golam Faruque Mizan at Balljuri Bazar and recovered the urea bags, the sources said. Kartik Kumar and Golam Faruque however managed to escape arrest. They were selling a 50kg bag of urea at between Tk 400 and Tk 450. They bought the fertilisers from two traders near Jamuna Fertiliser Factory (JFF) gate at Tarakandi in Sarishabari upazila in Jamalpur, the sources said. Two cases were filed against the hoarders. The government-fixed price of urea is Tk 285 per 50kg bag.

## JOURNO MANIK SHAH MURDER No headway in fresh probe in 10 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Press Club and Khulna Union of Journalists (KUJ) separately observed the third death anniversary of journalist Manik Saha. Manik Saha, Khulna Correspondent of the New Age and a stringer of BBC Bangla Service was killed in a bomb attack near Khulna Press Club on January 15 in 2004. Khulna Press Club held a rally at its compound with its president Makbul Hossain Mintu in the chair. It was addressed by, among others, its former president Shaikh Abu Hasan, KUJ president Mamun Reza, S M Zahid Hossain and Md Rakibuddin Pannu. General secretary of Khulna City Awami League Mizanur Rahman Mizan, leader of local Puja Udjapan Parishad Dr Purnendu Gayeen and CPB leader Mizanur Rahman also addressed the rally. The speakers demanded fair trial of all murders of journalists. Khulna Union of Journalists (KUJ) also held on the press club compound with its Mamun Reza in the chair. Earlier on the day, members of Khulna Press Club and KUJ placed wreaths at the Manik Saha



Manik Saha

Memorial Pillar at Choto Mizapur, where he was killed. Besides, Manik Saha Smirity Parishad and Khulna City and district units of Chatra Union also observed the day through different programmes. Six journalists were killed in last four years in Khulna district including the city. According to court sources, chargesheeted accused in three out of the six murder cases were acquitted due to 'flawed and weak investigation'. Reinvestigation was ordered in two other cases, while charge sheet in another case has been framed. The sources said all

chargesheeted accused in the cases for murder of journalists Harun-ar-Rashid, Nahor Ali and Shukur Hossain were acquitted. Court ordered reinvestigation into Manik Saha and Humayun Kabir murder cases. Charge sheet of Belal murder case was framed on June 29 last year. Charge sheet was submitted against 12 extremists on June 20 in 2004 in Manik Saha murder case. The case was transferred to Speedy Trial Tribunal on December 22 in the same year. Trial of the case began on January 4 last year. Statements of 14 prosecution witnesses were recorded till January 6 last year. But Judge Abdus Samad of Speedy Trial Tribunal ordered reinvestigation of the case on April 11 last year as the 'godfather and financiers' who were behind the murder were left out of the charge sheet. Manik Saha murder case was later handed over to Detective Branch of KMP for reinvestigation, as ordered by the STT judge. Inspector Fazle Rahim of DB received the case docket on November 11 last year as Investigating Officer (IO). But he is yet to submit report on reinvestigation.

## Outlaws threaten to blow up press club in Dumuria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A newly floated underground party--Purbo Banglar Mission Juddho (PBMJ)--has threatened to bomb and blow up Dumuria upazila press club and kill five correspondents of local and national dailies. "The actions will be taken any time from January 15", said a letter sent to MA Ershad, convenor of the press club and correspondent of Dainik Samakal, on Sunday. The letter signed by one Abir Hasan on behalf of PBMJ was mailed from Terokhada upazila. The letter said, "Murder of journalists so far in south-western region of the country were not enough to teach them a good lesson. Murders will continue because journalists did never protest killings in crossfire. "We are determined to carry out our mission in eight upazilas of the district on orders from our operations commander Faruque Rashid", the letter said. The press club convenor filed a general diary with police and sought security of journalists.

## Arms trader held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

An alleged arms trader was arrested from a Dhaka bound bus here yesterday afternoon. Mohammad Ali, 25, son of Ershad Ali of Naodara village in Charchat upazila, Rajshahi, was arrested with a bullet loaded Japanese pistol from the bus in Rabna bypass area on the Dhaka-Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Extension Road, police sources said. Acting on a tip-off, Abdur Rob, a traffic inspector of Tangail stopped the bus and arrested him from the bus coming from Rajshahi at around 12:30pm. Mohammad Ali is a arms trader who was going to Nabinagar in Savar from Rajshahi for delivery of firearms, a police official told this correspondent after quizzing him.

