

BIWTC vessel Ostrich rented for pleasure trip ignoring Eid rush

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), ignoring the Eid rush of passengers, has withdrawn its big vessel PS Ostrich from regular service and rented it for a pleasure trip, BIWTC sources here claimed.

Ostrich plies the Dhaka-Khulna-Dhaka route.

The largest and oldest BIWTC vessel was scheduled to resume its trip from Dhaka yesterday evening. But it was kept idle at Sadarghat terminal in Dhaka for three days before renting it for the pleasure trip on Friday, the sources claimed.

The Ostrich has been replaced by a smaller vessel—PS Turn.

When contacted, BIWTC chairman ASM Ali Kabir said he is not aware that Ostrich was withdrawn from regular passenger service and rented for a reserve trip.

He however said he will take steps so that such things do not happen in future.

Transport union leader held for 'extortion' in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A transport union leader has been arrested on charge of toll collection and ransacking a bus at Gaibandha Bus Terminal, police said.

The arrested is Jamilur Rahman Jamil, secretary of Gaibandha District Motor Sramik Union.

Police arrested him yesterday morning following an untoward incident at Gaibandha bus terminal over extortion.

Police said a Dhaka-bound bus started journey from the bus terminal at about 10 am when a gang of bus labourers led Jamilur Rahman Jamil stopped, resisted it at the terminal point demanding a good amount of money as illegal toll from the bus conductor. On refusal to pay the toll, an untoward incident was created when the labourers attacked and ransacked the bus.

Raihan Ali, on behalf of the affected bus filed a case with Gaibandha police station accusing 10 union leaders and workers including Jamilur Rahman Jamil under Speedy Trial Act. Police arrested Jamil from the bus terminal while other accused fled the scene.

Housewife burnt to death in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A housewife, also mother of a child, has been burnt to death by her husband at Telikandi village in Sarail upazila.

The victim is Noorjahan, 22, daughter of Saju Mia of Teghar village in the same upazila, family sources said.

This was confirmed following an autopsy done at the Sadar Hospital here yesterday.

Earlier, Sarail police recovered the body of Noorjahan from her in-law's house Thursday evening. They were informed that she was beaten and killed by her in-laws.

Family sources said Noorjahan was being tortured for dowry since marriage with Yasin, son of Hayder Ali of Telikandi village under Sarail upazila two years ago.

Police arrested Noorjahan's husband Yasmin, 37, father-in-law Hayder Ali, 58, and mother-in-law Sabera Khatun, 45.

While contacted, Sarail police station officer-in-charge (OC) Akhla Hossain, confirmed the incident.

Rice truck missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A truck loaded with 17 tonnes of rice worth Tk 4,18,800 bound for Tongi in Gazipur district has been missing since its departure from Syedpur here 10 days ago.

Md Amin, a merchant of Syedpur rice market said on receipt of a delivery order (purchase order) from Farid Patwari, another rice merchant at Tongi, the hired truck was loaded with rice on December 15. The same night, the truck started journey for Tongi Pura Bazaar.

Sources said the actual owner of the truck is Md Hafiz, also a commissioner of Khulna City Corporation (KCC) while Pannu Hawlader was driving the truck the same night.

However, the truck did not reach the destination even at noon on December 16.

Farid Patwari talked to Md Amin over cell phone to inquire about the fate of the truck. Both of them tried to contact its driver over cell phone, but in vain.

A case was registered with Syedpur police station in this connection yesterday.

KCC mayor forced to sign prepared statement

He claims in prayer to CMM court to retract statement in extortion cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna City Corporation (KCC) mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman, detained in Khulna district jail, has filed a petition with the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate to retract statements he made on November 8 under Section 164 of CrPc in five extortion cases filed against him.

The detained Mayor in his petition to CMM has stated that he was physically and mentally tortured while on five-day police remand in Khulna Sadar police station from November 4.

He also stated in his petition that he was coerced by interrogators to put his signature in the confessional statement made by police in accordance with FIRs of extortion cases.

The detained mayor said in his



KCC mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman petition that police officials who interrogated him threatened to kill him, his son and wife for refusing to put his signature in the confessional statement.

The said confessional statement prepared by police officials in not my statement. "It is a concocted story to implicate me in

false cases", he stated.

"It is a big and preplanned conspiracy against me cooked up by my political rivals and a group of vested interests in KCC to keep me aloof from politics and defame me socially", the detained mayor said.

He demanded a fair and impartial investigation into all allegations brought against him in the extortion cases.

Senior advocate SM Babar Ali said that the CMM had received the petition early this month. The petition is important as the mayor's fate depends on how prosecution witnesses depose during trial in the court, he said.

The mayor's appeal to the CMM court was submitted on December 9, it was known from court sources.

One stop crisis centre, DNA lab open at BSBMC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The long awaited one stop crisis centre, divisional DNA test and screening laboratory at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital were formally inaugurated yesterday by industries adviser Geeti Ara Safia Chowdhury.

The inaugural ceremony was presided over by SBMCH director Dr. Maniruzzaman. Divisional Commissioner Harun Chowdhury, SBMCH principal Dr. Aziz Rahim, among others attended the function as special guests.

The advisor said six OCCs in six divisional medical college hospitals and five DNA screening labs under National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory of DMCH have started functioning.

These will improve health services and meet emergencies in prevention of crime against women and children and detection of sexual culprits.

Dr. Md. Mustafa, coordinator of SBMCH OCC, said the eight bed OCC informally started function-



Women and Children Affairs Advisor Geetara Safiya opening the One Stop Crisis Centre and DNA lab at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital yesterday.

ing in SBMCH on July 2, 2006 and gave service to 197 victims since December 23 last year. Forty-two cases were lodged on the basis of OCC reports, he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Moniruzzaman said steps have

been taken to open the reception and information counter of SBMCH after 37 years of establishment of the hospital, the largest public hospital in southern region. It will start full function from next month.

Fulchari people brace for flood this year also

Breached Brahmaputra dam not renovated in 4 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

People of Fulchari are bracing for serious flooding again in the coming wet season as no initiative was taken in four years to renovate the breached Brahmaputra flood control embankment at three points.

The Brahmaputra breached its embankment at Singria, Ratanpur and Katlamari points in Fulchari upazila in 2004.

Last year, Gaibandha Water Development Board (WDB) floated tender for reconstruction of the three breached points but the work could not be started as funds were not allocated, WDB sources said.

The WDB undertook a plan for

construction of an 'alternative' four-kilometer embankment alongside the damaged portions. Accordingly, the WDB prepared a project involving Tk 3 crore and floated tender of alternative dam. Approval of higher authorities was taken for this, WDB sources here said. But there was no progress.

To protect three unions in Fulchari from flooding, local WDB in August this sent an alternative proposal to higher authorities for riverbank protection work under FDR-7 project along the two kilometre flood control embankment from Singria to Katlamari. The project involved Tk 30 crore. The riverbank protection project is being studied by higher authorities, they said.

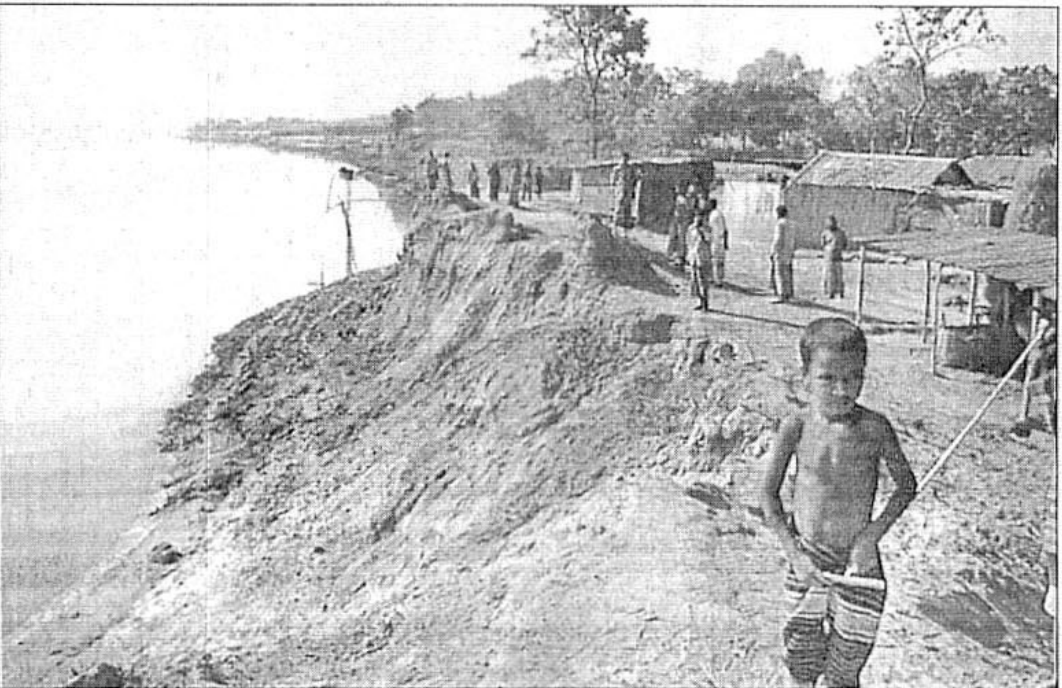
Meanwhile, local people led by chairmen of the worst affected three unions—Uria, Udakhali and Fulchari—launched a signature campaign and submitted memorandum to the water resource ministry WDB authorities in Dhaka for construction of a 'closer dam' on a Jamuna tributary near Kabilpur in Uria. Water entering through this channel floods three unions every year.

When contacted, Gaibandha WDB Executive Engineer Abu Md. Shafiqul Alam said construction of 'closer dam' is very expensive. Moreover such dam is not feasible there due to high level of sandy layer and other technical reasons.

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Unprotected Singria village in Fulchari in Gaibandha as the Brahmaputra flood control embankment is yet to be repaired.

Patuakhali FFs to prepare list of Razakars

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The district unit of Mukti Joddha Sangsad has decided to publish a list of Razakars of the district on the Independence Day on March 26 next year.

The decision has been taken at a general meeting held here on December 22. Unit commander Motiur Rahman was in the chair. The unit has also undertaken a month-long programme to observe the Independence Day in a befitting manner.

The programmes included art competition, essay writing, poetry recital and quiz competition for school and college students and reunion of freedom fighters.

Among others, Advocate Habibur Rahman Sawkat, deputy commander of the then Patuakhali sub-sector was also present at the

Relief goods distributed among Sidr victims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Amra Satkhira Basi, an organisation of the inhabitants of the district, yesterday distributed cash and relief materials among the family members of 49 Sidr victims of the district at a simple function held at Satkhira Press Club.

They distributed Tk 8,500 in cash besides blanket, sari, lungi and utensil to the distressed families.

At that time, Amra Satkhira Basi convenor and superintendent of police (SP) of Satkhira Mirza Abdullah Baki, member secretary Dr. Abul Kalam Babla, businessman Abdul Khaleque, Sadar police station officer-in-charge (OC) Abdul Kader Beg and journalists Prof. Abu Ahmed, Subhas Chowdhury, Manirul Islam Mini, Altaf Hossain, Kazi Dulal and Ramkrishna Chakraborty were present at the distribution ceremony.

The organisation already distributed 2,000 blankets and other relief materials among the Sidr-affected people in the district within a period from December 7 to 12.

Earlier, Amra Satkhira Basi distributed Tk 6,000 and Corrugated Iron (CI) sheets for reconstruction of houses, 2,200 blankets, sarees, lungis and other materials among each of 400 Sidr victim families of Majherchar and Rajapur in Pirojpur and Sharnkhola in Bagerhat district on December 1.

Ensure safety at work

Barisal construction workers demand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Construction workers here yesterday demanded adequate safety measures during work and compensation for victims as per ILO convention in case of any accident.

Tragic accidents like the one at Rangas Bhawan on December 8 and the other at a CNG filling station at Kanchpur in Dhaka take place and on in different areas of the country but the government seems unconcerned, said their leaders at a press conference Barisal BNDN auditorium.

M A Jall, president of Barisal district unit of Imarat Nirman Sramik Union (construction workers' union) read out a written statement at the press conference. Other leaders—Abdur Razzak Sikder and Rustam Ali Howlader—also spoke.

Alongside strict enforcement of law, the disaster management ministry should have a well equipped rescue unit to face such a situation, the construction workers said.

Media role stressed to protect human rights

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Speakers at a seminar held here yesterday stressed on united efforts by police and journalists for protection of human rights across the country.

Tangail Press Club organised the seminar, 'Role of Journalists and Police in Protection of Human Rights' at its auditorium with Press Club president Ataur Rahman Azad in the chair. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Noor Mohammad was present as chief guest while it was attended by director general (DG) of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) Hassan Mahmud Khandakar, deputy inspector general (DIG) of Dhaka Range Mohammad Amir Uddin PPM, Tangail DC Akhter Ali Sarkar, SP Abdul Mannan and district judge attended the seminar as special guests.

The speakers urged the journalists to highlight the good deeds of the law enforcers as well as to point out their wrongdoings which will help protect human rights.

A gift from Indonesia now a blessing for farmers

HYV aromatic rice varieties yield around 90 maunds per acre in Mymensingh

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Two kilogram seeds of high yielding aromatic rice varieties received as a gift from a research center in Indonesia is now a blessing for farmers in Mymensingh.

Agriculture scientists say the rice varieties could be an export item after meeting the growing home demand.

The gift was received during a visit by a 10-member team of agriculture scientists led by the Director General of Agriculture Extension Department (AED) in 2006.

Back to Bangladesh, the team handed over the seeds to award winning AED official Md. Abul Mansur, Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer in Gouripur to see whether they can be grown in Bangladesh climate. Abul Mansur got the President's Award in agriculture in 1999 for his contribution to agriculture and mobilising farmers.

Mansur grew the two fine but coarse varieties of paddy on 20 decimal land at Satuti village in Gouripur in Amon season last year. The experiment was somehow successful. The yield was estimated at around 45 maunds per acre, officials said.

In this year's Amon season, he grew the paddy on three acres in Gouripur and Sadar upazilas of Mymensingh and in Netrokona Sadar. The yield surprised him and the farmers to grow the paddy under his supervision.

It was 90 to 100 maunds per acre, Md. Abul Mansur told this correspondent recently.

Normally, Bangladeshi variety



A farmer in Satuti village in Gouripur upazila harvesting the Indonesian variety of aromatic rice.

ies of aromatic rice give any yield of 25-30 maunds per acre.

The Indonesian coarse aromatic rice is like Biri-28 but the yield is nearly double, Mansur said.

Sixteen maunds of the Indonesian varieties of rice have been sold among 150 farmers coming from Dinajpur, Bogra, Pirojpur, Sylhet, Netrokona, Sherpur, Gazipur, Chittagong and different upazilas of Mymensingh, Mansur said.

Some research institutions including Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI) and BRAC have contacted him for seeds, he said. The two varieties will be cultivated on some 130

acres in next Boro season and it will be expanded in next Amon season.

Mansur said field study showed that the rice varieties can be grown in all seasons in Bangladesh and farmers can preserve seeds from their produce. Preservation of seeds at farmers level will not affect the yield, he said.

The seed is being sold at Tk 50 per kg for Gouripur farmers and at Tk 100 for farmers outside the upazila. Seeds of local aromatic varieties are sold at around Tk 200 per kilogram.

In fields, the Indonesian varieties mature earlier than local aromatic rice varieties and are less susceptible to pest attack, Mansur said.

GRENADATE ATTACK ON BRITISH HC

Trial delayed as some PWs do not appear before court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Recording of deposition of prosecution witnesses in the case for grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury could not be held yesterday as none of the PWs appeared before the tribunal.

Today (December 27) is also fixed for recording deposition.

Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge Diproman Sarker issued summons on nine prosecution witnesses, including a deputy secretary for recording depositions in the case on December 18 as the PWs failed to appear before the court on recent dates, court sources said.

The summons were issued on deputy secretary of the ministry of expatriates' welfare Shafique Anwar (former metropolitan magistrate of Dhaka); Baniachang Upazila Uirbahi Officer Nurey Alam Siddique (former Class I magistrate of Sylhet); police sub

inspectors Abdul Awal Chowdhury; Sabir Rahman and Shah Alam; Dr. Matir Rahman and Dr. Mahbub Haider Chowdhury; CID's former ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman (now on LPR) and Abul Kalam Azad of Dhaka.

Two PWs submitted deposit9on on that day. They are Assistant Registrar of Osmani Medical College Hospital Dr. Qamrul Alam and the then officer-in-charge of Sylhet Kotwali police station Inspector SA Newaji (now OC Munshiganj Sadar thana).

With them, deposition of 46 PWs out of 57 were recorded in the case.

Special Public Prosecutor of Speedy Trial Tribunal Fokhoruddin Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday that the trial is being delayed for reasons.

Even on repeated summons from court, a number of prosecution witnesses did not turn up. The court was compelled to issue warrant of arrest against the 9 PWs, he

said.

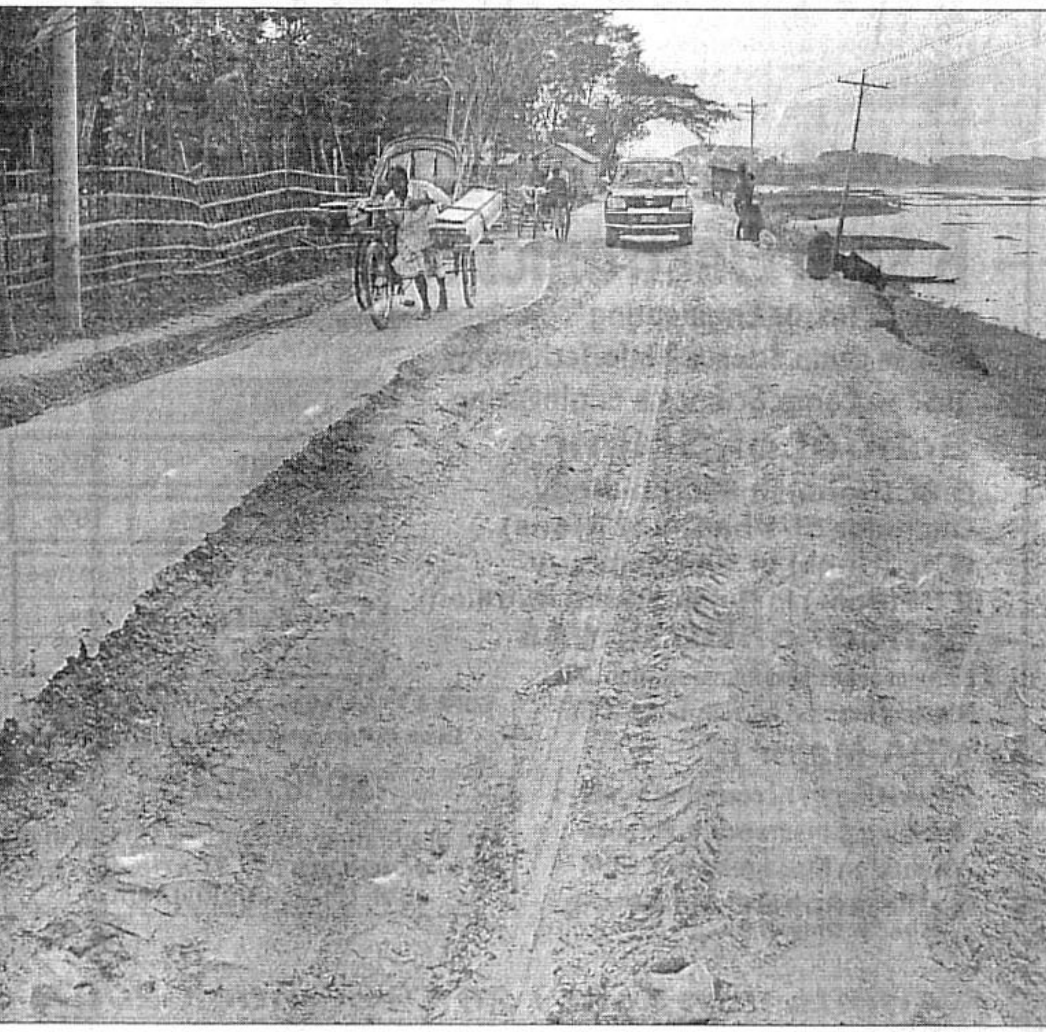
On November 22 also, the judge issued summons on 13 PWs, he added.

On the other hand, the summons sent to PW Abul Kalam Azad was returned to the court by postal department due to fictitious address, he added.

Besides, the charge sheet given by CID also contains a number of flaws, including incomplete and incorrect addresses of the witnesses and others.

The Bangladesh-born British High Commissioner and 70 others were hurt in the grenade attack that killed three persons after the Juma prayers on May 21, 2004 on the premises of the shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) in Sylhet.

Meanwhile, trial of the other case (explosives case), is going on in the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge Ferdous Ahmed.



The 5-KM flood-ravaged Dorkhar-Akhaura road in Brahmanbaria is yet to be renovated, leaving it difficult for vehicles to negotiate.