

27 killed as cargo ship

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Shamim. The committee was given three days to submit its report.

Survivors said the large sand-laden vessel MV Sanim ploughed into the stern of the launch, which was heading for Patarhat of Mehendiganj upazila from Barisal, around 6:30 in the morning.

The launch sank within 10 minutes.

"Something hit the launch at the back so hard that I fell into the river... I was standing on the roof of the launch," Humayun Kabir, who managed to swim ashore, told The Daily Star.

"I do not remember much else as I was trying to swim ashore," he said. "My wife and my one-and-a-half-year-old daughter were on the lower deck. I do not know what happened to them," he said sobbing.

Saiful Islam, a local, said hearing cries for help he went to the riverbank and saw the launch tilted to one side and sinking. He said it sank within seven to 10 minutes.

He said many tried to swim ashore but only 35 to 40 succeeded.

Saiful said he chopped down banana trees and threw them into the river but it made little difference.

Police with the help of locals chased down the cargo vessel at Vashanchar area and seized it. They also arrested its eight crew members. The vessel was taken to Barisal around 10:00am.

The crew revealed that at the time of the accident Haider Ali, captain of their vessel, was sleeping in his cabin. Unskilled Sukani Md Yusuf was at the wheels and he failed to control the vessel trying to overtake the launch, police sources said.

Thirteen out of the 27 bodies recovered so far were identified. They are Dipti Dey, 30, her husband Manik Dey, 52, Mintu Dhal, 50, Rashida Begum, 40,

Rumi, 10, Manik, 40, Safura Begum, 50, Mehendiganj Upazila Agriculture Officer Sangkar Kumar Majumder, 40, Rahima, 10, Johra, 11, Syed Farazi, 50, Ratan Majhi, 40, and Kabir, 30.

The local administration was preparing to hand over the 12 bodies to their relatives.

BIWTA officials apprehended that some bodies could have been washed down stream by the current.

Riad Hossain, river traffic inspector of BIWTA, said the capsized launch had the capacity to carry 95 passengers. Fatima Begum of Mawla Navigation Company owns the launch and it had a survey certificate valid till May 31, 2009.

Relatives of deceased Dipti Dey said Dipti was going to Patarhat with her husband Manik Dey, their son Onik Dey (student of class V) and daughter Oyishree Dey (student of class VIII). Their children are missing.

Daliluddin Dhal said his son Mizanur Dhal, 35, daughter-in-law Roshia, 30, grandson Halim, 7, are missing. However, his grandchildren Jakrul, 11, and Rahima, 6, were rescued alive.

Yasmin Begum, 30, said she with her family members were on their way to Vashanchar onboard the launch. When the launch was sinking, her husband told her to get out with their youngest daughter Nilufar, 4. She was able to save her and her daughter's lives but her husband Zafar Ahmed, 35, and son Sagar, 8, are still missing.

Mithu, a businessman of Gazipur, said he along with his newly-wed wife Shathi, 18, sister-in-law Bithi, 15, and brother-in-law Shakil, 8, were going to visit Shathi's grandmother at Mehendiganj. Mithu said all three are missing.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a condolence message yesterday expressed deep shock at the loss of lives in the tragedy.

BNP lawmaker

FROM PAGE 1
the defence lawyer told the court that the charges brought against his client were false, baseless and fabricated and his client was implicated in the case as part of conspiracy to harass him.

Opposing the bail petition, the General Recording Officer (GRO) Sub-Inspector Shahjahan told the court that the charges brought against the accused were primarily proved and the investigation officer (IO) of the case had also a chargesheet against him.

The GRO prayed for rejection of the bail and an order to send Rashid to jail.

After hearing from both sides, the magistrate rejected the bail petition and ordered that the accused be sent to Dhaka Central Jail.

In his first information report (FIR), complainant Hannan said that he had submitted nomination papers to the election commission, to contest the December 29 election from Chandpur-4 constituency.

Along with the nomination applications forms, Hannan had submitted his BA (pass) degree certificate, which the accused Rashid claimed, was forged. Following the complaint, the election commission rejected Hannan a nomination.

The complainant said that the accused had tarnished his image in the society as well as the political arena and had also caused him a monetary loss of Tk 50 crore.

The IO of the case, SI ABM Masud, investigated the case and found that Hannan's BA certificate was genuine and the allegations brought by Rashid were false and fabricated.

Following the submission of the charge sheet, the magistrate issued an arrest warrant against the accused.

Amar Ekushey

FROM PAGE 1
Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar, Safur and other brave sons of the nation sacrificed their lives on this day in 1952 to ascertain that Bangla is established as the state language of the then Pakistan.

The day has since been observed as the Language Martyrs Day. Unesco later declared February 21 as the International Mother Language Day.

The award, carries Tk 40,000 in cash, a gold medal weighing three tolas and a citation, will be given to the distinguished persons in recognition to their outstanding contributions to their respective fields.

Bangladesh Betar will broadcast the award giving ceremony live at 11:00am, said a press release yesterday.

The awardees are: Dr Borhan Uddin Khan Jahangir (education), Prof Dr Syed Anwar Hossain (research), Mahub-Ul Alam Chowdhury (language movement-posthumous), Ashraf uz Zaman Khan (journalism-posthumous), Begum Bilkis Nasir Uddin (music), Manik Chandra Saha (journalism-posthumous), Humayun Kabir Balu (journalism-posthumous), Begum Selina Hossain (literature), Shamsuzzaman Khan (research), Dr Quazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad (poverty alleviation), Mohammad Rafi Khan (M R Khan) (social service), Mansur-Ul Karim (fine arts), and Ramendu Majumdar (theatre).

Strict security measures have meanwhile been taken at the Central Shaheed Minar and its adjoining areas by law enforcement agencies for peaceful observance of the day.

Around 7000 police, over 600 Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel will be deployed at the Shaheed Minar and Azampur graveyard today to maintain law and order.

Bangladesh Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Jatiya Party, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP), National Awami Party (NAP) - Bhashani, Bangladesh National Awami Party - Bangladesh NAP, Shammilita Sangskritik Jote, Dhaka Reporters Unity, Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi

Goshthi, Bangladesh Sangskritik Kormi Shanga, Bangladesh Abritti Shamannay Parishad and Memorial Preservation of Language Movement Forum will hold different programmes to mark the day tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will hand over the Ekushey Padak-2009 to 13 eminent persons at Osmani Memorial Auditorium today, a day ahead of Amar Ekushey February, the International Mother Language Day.

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Mobile courts in Rajshahi division fined shopkeepers Tk 81,600 and lodged 38 cases against the shop owners. Similar drives were conducted in Khulna and Barisal divisions but the Department of Environment could not give any details.

Anti-polybag

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"I know that polybags might be found in most of the shops here. Use paper or gunny bags instead of polybags to save the environment," he said.

He said jute bags will be made available in the market. Mojibur Rahman, director general of the DoE, told The Daily Star that they conducted campaigns at various places to make everyone aware of the laws concerned and the penalties for violating those.

He said since the use of polyethylene bags in the markets is on the rise, the drives will continue to put an end to their production and use.

A polybag user might be fined up to Tk 5,000 or jailed for six months or both.

A producer of polybags might be fined up to Tk 10,00,000 or sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment or both if found guilty of flouting the law twice or more.

Members of police, Rab and Bangladesh Rifles took part in the drive.

Meanwhile, a mobile court seized 800kgs of poly bags from 13 shops and fined the shopkeepers Tk 56,500 for keeping those at Riazuddin Bazar in the port city.

Mobile courts filed a total of 13 cases in Chittagong division.

In Sylhet division, mobile courts seized 210 kgs of poly bags and fined the shopkeepers Tk 31,000. They also filed 11 cases against the shop owners.

Mobile courts in Rajshahi division fined shopkeepers Tk 81,600 and lodged 38 cases against the shop owners.

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CIA using Pak airbase to attack militants

PTI, LONDON

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has secretly been using an airbase in southwestern Pakistan to launch the predator drones to attack the militants within the country, a report said.

Both Pakistan and US governments have repeatedly denied that Washington is conducting military operations, covert or otherwise, on Pakistani territory.

But The Times today report says that it has discovered that the CIA has been using the Shamsi airfield, 30 miles from the Afghan border, in the southwestern province of Baluchistan for at least a year.

The strip allows US forces to launch a drone within minutes of receiving actionable intelligence as well as allowing them to attack targets further afield, the report said.

The report quoted Major General Athar Abbas, chief military spokesman, confirming that US forces were using Shamsi adding that "The airfield is being used only for logistics."

"The Americans were also using another airbase near Jacobabad, 300 miles northeast of Karachi, for logistics and military operations", the report quoted Abbas as saying.

"We can see the planes flying from the base. The area around the base is a high-security zone and no one is allowed there," Safar Khan, a local journalist in Shamsi said.

The key to The Times investigation was an unexplained delivery of 730,000 gallons of F34 aviation fuel to Shamsi airfield, details of which were found on the Pentagon's fuel procurement agency website.

The Defence Energy Support Centre site shows that a civilian company, Nordic Camp Supply (NCS), was contracted to deliver the fuel worth USD 3.2 million from Pakistan Refineries near Karachi.

However, the newspaper also quoted a spokesman for the US embassy in Pakistan denying that US forces were based in Pakistan, but added that he could not comment on CIA operations.

Pakistan reportedly gave America permission to use Shamsi, Jacobabad and two other bases Pasi and Dalbadin for the invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001.

According to The Times investigation, Jacobabad became the main US airbase until Bagram, near Kabul, was repaired, while Pasi was used for helicopters and Dalbadin as a refuelling post for special force's helicopters.

However, it added that in December 2001, Pakistan began sharing Jacobabad and Pasi airfield with US forces.

And in July 2006 the Pakistani government reportedly declared that America was no longer using Shamsi, Pasi and Jacobabad, although they were at its disposal in an emergency.

Speaker mediates

FROM PAGE 1
has offered the main opposition three more seats in the front row.

They made the claim talking to The Daily Star immediately after the meeting at the speaker's office.

Contacted later, the speaker said he did not make any such offer. "I only assured them of a respectable solution to the stalemate," he added.

At a press briefing at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday evening, Joyntal Abedin Faruk said, "Our parliamentary party will meet and decide on the next course of action before the House proceedings resume Sunday. Chairperson Khaleda Zia has called the meeting after we briefed her about the latest proposal from the ruling alliance."

He however did not elaborate on the proposal, and said the ruling party would speak about it.

Asked if the discussions had been fruitful, he said, "I won't say anything before Sunday. Please excuse my inability to respond to your queries."

Chief Whip of Parliament Abdus Shahid would not say anything in this regard. "We'll talk about it after the opposition comes up with a decision Sunday. We sincerely want them to join parliament."

The BNP-led opposition lawmakers have been boycotting parliament since January

Gang kills man

FROM PAGE 16
truck was heading towards Jhenidha.

On information Fatulla police along with staffers of the mill rushed to the Shayampur Balurmath at around 3:30pm and found the looted rods being loaded on two other trucks.

Police arrested four persons at the spot. The arrestees are now being interrogated.

Meanwhile, authorities of Bangladesh Steel Mill Owners Association expressed their grave concern over the incident and demanded punishment to the criminals.

Ex-warlord sees prolonged conflict in Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan troops face another 18 months of fighting even after they have all Tamil Tiger territory under their control, a former rebel has warned.

The man known as "Colonel Karuna," who led an unprecedented split in the movement in 2004, says the Tigers will revert to guerrilla warfare after they lose control of the small enclave they still occupy.

"I think it will take at least another one-to-one-and-a-half years for the army to entirely clear the north of terrorists," Karuna said in an interview with AFP inside a heavily-guarded hideout in Colombo.

28 in protest at the seat plans rearranged by Speaker Abdul Hamid.

In the new layout, the opposition lawmakers were allotted four seats in the front row and four more in the second row.

Hamid's predecessor Jamiruddin Sircar allocated all 10 front-row seats for the opposition lawmakers including Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Oli Ahmed. All 12 seats in the next row too went to them.

Because of the changes made by Hamid, two ministers—GM Quader and Dilip Barua—and three lawmakers—Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu and Majibur Rahman—got seats in the front row.

The others in that line are BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her deputies Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, MK Anwar and Shah Mofazzal Hossain Kaykobad, and Oli Ahmed of LDP.

Hamid on several occasions said he would give the lawmakers from BNP and allies one or two more seats in the current session or the next one. But as the opposition lawmakers called for full restoration of the seating arrangements made by Sircar, he outright rejected the demand.

Irrigation

FROM PAGE 16
He demanded reopening the plant to meet the acute power shortage in the district, particularly for irrigation.

During question-answer session, AL lawmaker Abdul Mannan of Bogra said the main demand of people of each area is now smooth supply of electricity. Another AL lawmaker—Manjur Quader Quarayeshi—said farmers of his constituency are not getting electricity despite depositing money for it.

AL lawmaker Ekabbar Hossain said they had promised to people before the general election that if elected, they would ensure required supply of power.

Many treasury bench lawmakers also demanded extension of electricity line in their areas.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is in charge of the ministry, was present in the House.

In response to the lawmakers' demands for power, the state minister assured them of steps to resolve the crisis.

He however blamed the immediate past BNP-led alliance government for failure to increase power generation even by a single MW during its five-year tenure.

Thousands of crores of taka were misappropriated during that period, Tuku said. "Action will be taken against the corrupt who looted money in the power sector."

In response to a query from independent lawmaker Fazlul Azim on whether the government is considering export of gas to India, the state minister said time is yet to come to consider the matter since generation of power now depends on production of gas.

Mob clashes

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As the BDR men started to take the goods away, the alleged smugglers threw bricks at the BDR jeep. The BDR then charged truncheon on them.

Later, when an alleged female smuggler was rudely manhandled by the BDR, the locals got involved in the scene. BDR then charged truncheon on the locals and passengers.

As journalists took photographs and video footages of the scene, BDR members became cross and charged batons on them too.

BDR reinforcement led by Major Aftab rushed to the spot to pacify the situation. When BDR started to withdraw, the alleged smugglers again threw bricks at BDR and were again charged with batons.

When contacted, Major Aftab claimed they seized around 6,000 eggs in apprehension of bird flu. On Wednesday, they destroyed 11,000 eggs for the same reason.

New writers

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19th day. Booksellers of different stalls at the fair said the sale of these books is not satisfactory.

Eminent writer Zafar Iqbal said, "We have to grow interest among readers about the fresh writers through different activities and take steps to introduce them to readers."

Bangla Academy Deputy Director General Anwar Murshid said, "The academy is going to reintroduce the stalled project titled 'Tarun Lekhak Prokalpo' this year in July to patronise young writers."

"Lack of publicity is one of the major problems for the fresh writers like me," said Syed Tipu Sultan, an emigrant writer whose first poetry collection titled 'Kuashar Ushnata' was published from Annanya publications this year at the fair.

Azam Khan, another new writer, whose first story book titled 'Black' was published from Moushimi Prokashani at the fair said, "Publishers only spend their money on the advertisement of popular and reputed writers not for the fresh one like me."

Meanwhile, Bangla Academy declared Bangla Academy Shahitya Purashkar 2008 yesterday.

This year poet Mahub Sadik received the prestigious award for his poetry, professor Karunamoy Goshawami for prose research and Helena Khan for literature for children.

Rewards will be formally handed over to awardees on 26 February.

Meanwhile, Subarna Publications yesterday published the second edition of the 'Creating a World Without Poverty' by noble laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus. The book contains 30 pages and the price is fixed at Tk 550.00.

A total of 121 new titles arrived at the fair yesterday. The books include Adivashider Megh O Shishir by Selina Hossain, Chitipatra Chittaya Ranjan Shah, by Prof Abdul Mannan Syed, Nivrite Ekaki Ekidin by Nasreen Zahan, Shano Sarkar: Atiti, Baritaman, and Bhabishyat by Dr Badul Alam Majumder.

Anti-terror, RPO

FROM PAGE 16
anyone confined, kidnapping or damages property to create panic among the people or government, or jeopardises the country's security, sovereignty and integrity by using explosives, arms and chemicals, he or she will be charged with terrorism offences.

Such an offender is liable to death penalty or life imprisonment or fine or both, according to the provisions of the new law.

All crimes under the Ordinance will be cognisable and non-bailable offences.

Former President Iajuddin Ahmed promulgated the Anti-Terrorism Ordinance 2008 in June last year.

"According to the ordinance, the government will be able to set up one or more Anti-Terrorist Special Tribunals to deal with such crimes," Abul Kalam Azad, press secretary to the prime minister, told reporters after the meeting at the Cabinet Division with Premier Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The meeting also gave approval to the Finance Bill and the Proposed Padma Multipurpose Bridge (Land Acquisition) Ordinance, the finance bills on management of 2007-08 and 2008-09 fiscal budget and the Finance Bill 2009 (Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinance 2007, the Income Tax (Second Amendment) Ordinance 2007, the Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinance 2008, and The Income Tax (Second Amendment) Ordinance 2008.)

Referring to the proposed Padma Bridge, the premier asked the authorities concerned to remain 'careful so that none suffers due to land acquisition.'

As per the provisions of the new law, a member or supporter of an outlawed organisation can be awarded seven years' imprisonment and fines.

The deadline for disposal of a case filed on charges of terrorism offences has been fixed at six months after the charge framing.

Provisions for punishments for sponsoring terrorist activities and sheltering terrorists have also been laid down in the ordinance.

"If anyone gives money for carrying out terrorist activities, a provision is there to award him or her maximum 20 years and minimum three years' imprisonment."

ACC spends

FROM PAGE 16
Of the 51 lawyers, each public prosecutor drew monthly salary of Tk 75,000 and also received Tk 50,000 for each case after the verdict was delivered while senior lawyers got monthly salary of Tk 2 lakh and each APP Tk 50,000.

"The audit system for the commission is not different from other government institutions. The commission has a legal system for expenditure and the commission itself decided on its expenditure based on law," Hanif added.

Sources said at least five PPs resigned after the commission decided to reduce the number of lawyers in the wake of widespread criticism of its expenditure on hiring lawyers.

Anti-terror, RPO

onment and also pecuniary punishment". It also says, "If anyone becomes a member of an outlawed party, he or she will be awarded maximum six months' imprisonment or fined or both. If any individual conducts campaign or broadcast in support of an outlawed party, the person will be sentenced to maximum seven years and minimum two years' imprisonment with fine."

One or more anti-terrorism special tribunals can be formed for quick trial. The tribunal will be comprised of a sessions judge or additional sessions judge appointed by the government in consultation with the Supreme Court.

The judge of the Special Tribunal will complete the trial within six months. Appeal can be filed with the High Court against the Special Tribunal's verdict within 30 days.

RPO ORDINANCE
The cabinet also approved in principle the Representation of People Order (RPO) Ordinance, 2008. It suggested reconsidering the provision of "no vote" in the ballot paper, which was first introduced in the ninth parliamentary polls.

Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said this while briefing newsmen after the meeting.

Referring to the practice of the "postal voting" in many countries, the prime minister sought necessary measures for introducing such "postal voting" in the country's polls to ensure voting rights of all citizens.

"Living place of a voter can change, especially the government officials can be transferred from one place to another while many voters may stay abroad. If there is no provision of postal voting, they will not be able to cast their votes, which is not acceptable," Hasina was quoted as saying at the meeting.

Mumbai attack

FROM PAGE 16
The US investigating agency charged with protecting the US against terrorist and foreign intelligence threats provided India details of calls made through the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), a satellite phone as also documents relating to the Global Positioning System used by the terrorists while sailing from Karachi.

The forensic examination of the bullets used by the terrorists in Mumbai was also a part of the evidence collected from FBI by Mumbai police.

The evidence from FBI is expected to make the case against the terrorists watertight and nail Islamabad's claims that the conspiracy behind the Nov 26 attacks was not hatched in Pakistan alone.

India had sought the US help in analysing the evidence under their Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) that came into effect in December 2005.

The Mumbai police team came here last week with Letters of Request issued by a Mumbai court to the US Department of Justice.

Joint secretaries

FROM PAGE 16
remained vacant for a long time.

After assuming office on January 6 the government also promoted 10 additional secretaries to the post of secretary.

Many bureaucrats questioned the promotion and transfer process alleging that the government was not following rules and maintaining transparency in this regard.

They alleged that the officials loyal to the government were being given priority in both promotion and transfer process.

8 JMB men

FROM PAGE 16
Islam Bangla Bhai's niece). Both of them were the mastermind behind the murder, say the charges.

The other accused are JMB's regional commanders - Abu Isa Enamul and Golamur Rahman Mostafa, an adherent of Galib's Ahle Hadith Jubo Shanga, militants Abul Kashem Tufan, Abdul Matin, Abdur Rahman Arif and Mojibur Rahman.

The framing of charges had been deferred since July last year as some of the accused were being tried in other cases outside Rajshahi.

Inspector Mohammad Helauddin of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted the charge sheet against the eight September 10, 2007.

In the latest charge sheet, CID police brushed aside previous police findings of Shibir's involvement in the murder though two eyewitnesses in separate judicial statements narrated Shibir cadres' involvement.

Names of some 13 accused including six cadres of Islami Chhtrra Shibir were dropped in the CID charge sheet.

Helaluddin said, the investigation took a new turn following confessional statement of executed JMB chief Abdur Rahman. Later, two prime accused - Shafiqullah Tarek and Shahidullah Mahub made judicial confessions.