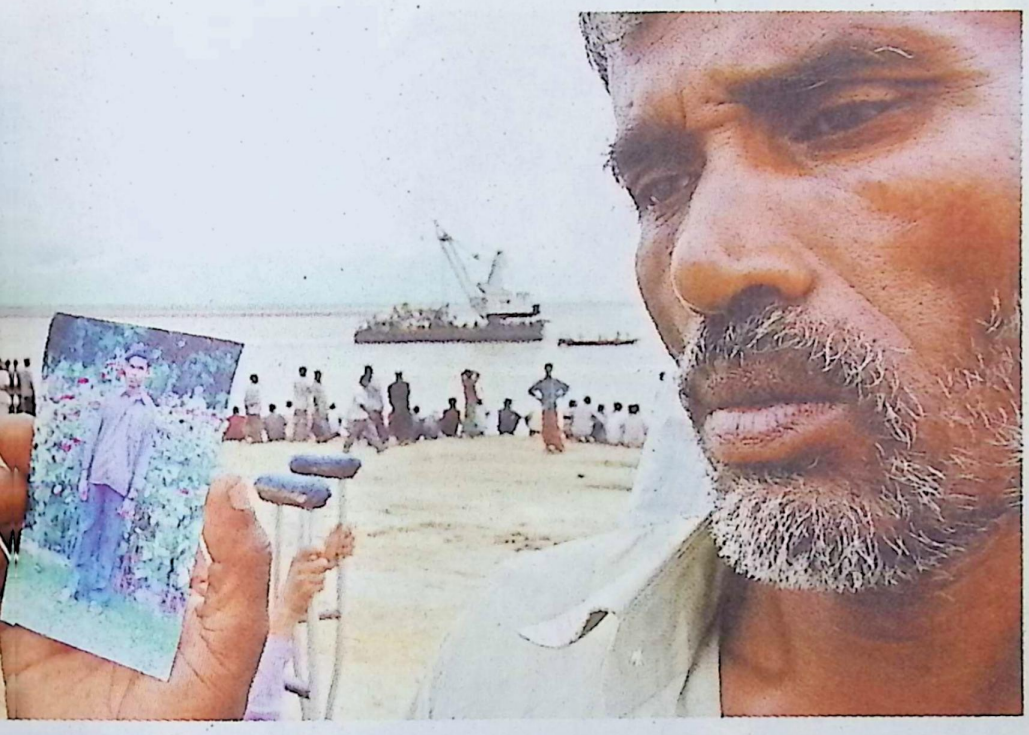
Two salvage vessels, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority's (BIWTA) stationed in two separate places, take nearly two days to reach the accident site and commence the rescue activities. Meanwhile, the dead bodies start to surface and a small number of survivors tell their horrifying tales of survival. They point out that it was in fact, the sheer irresponsible behaviour of the capsized launch operator's end (may it be reckless driving or deliberate overloading of passengers doubling or even tripling the actual carrying capacity just to make a few quick bucks) that caused the accident in the first place. The relatives of the victims all assemble upon the shore and break down in tears when their worst fear sadly turns out to be true, the poor just got poorer. The authorities' show up, sometimes headed by ministers themselves and shower the survivors and victims' families with condolences and promises of bringing culprits under the wrath of justice, inquiry committees are formed. Insincerity prevails and the mishap is forgotten until the next one occurs.



To any sensible mind such disregard towards human lives is unacceptable. Millions of people all over the country use water transport for their voyage and it is their democratic right that their journey is safeguarded by both the vessel owners and concerned authorities. Time after time it has been strongly suggested that the inland vessels ought to be equipped with proper radio and radar instruments, adequate life jackets, life boats and other apt life saving appliances. Also, rare is the incident where the unscrupulous owners of the capsized launch and concerned authorities are brought to justice. In fact, once the public outcry over an accident eventually dies down, these perpetrators resume their misconduct. That's why it is of utmost importance that those vessel owners who are still carrying passengers in unfit vessels are brought to book immediately, along with the individuals from the concerned authorities who assist them in such misdemeanors. The passengers also need to educate themselves about safety measures and ought to stress on making sensible decisions that will guide them to take journeys that are instead of hasty and hassled. Lastly, effective and meticulous inspection and efficient monitoring is essential to ensure that no malpractice takes place and technical flaws like overloading and carrying of commercial cargos on the deck of passenger launches are sternly prohibited. The concerned authorities must do whatever is needed to keep passengers safe and to revive the lost charm of the journey by boat. ■

The following table tells the tale of some of such major Launch capsizes in Bangladesh.

Year	Date	No. of People Dead	Location of the Accident
1986	20th April	200	Sityalakhya River
Same Year	25th May	600	Meghna River
1988	27th December	200	Dhaleswari
1994	20th August	200	Meghna River
1996	1st January	50	Meghna River
Same Year	14th June	50	Dhanu River
Same Year	23rd June	50	Jamuna River
1999	5th August	20	Sityalakhya River
Same Year	11th December	63	Meghna River
Same Year	17th December	15	Buriganga River
2000	1st May	90	Meghna River
Same Year	29th December	158	Meghna River
2001	29th November	100	Tentulia River
2002	3rd May	450	Meghna River
2003	4th April	62	Surma River
Same Year	21st April	200	Buriganga & Meghna River
Same Year	9th July	400	Meghna River
2004	23rd May	200	Meghna River
2005	15th May	60	Tentulia River
2008	12th May	44	Ghorautura River