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REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XIX No. 314

DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 3, 2009

AGRAHAYAN 19, 1416 BS • ZILHAJ 15, 1430 HIJRI • 24 PAGES PLUS RISING STARS PRICE: Tk 10.00

Tarique, Koko, Mamun sued for launch capsizes

5 more bodies recovered from their sunken vessel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has filed a case against Tarique Rahman, Arafat Rahman Koko, and their associate Giasuddin Al Mamun of Messrs Rahman Shippers Bangladesh Ltd in connection with the recent launch capsizes in the Tentulia river.

The company's Managing Director Tarique Rahman and its director Arafat Rahman Koko are sons of Opposition Leader and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, while its another Director Mamun is a close associate of Tarique.

The company owns MV Coco-4 that sank in the Tentulia near Nazirpur launch terminal in Lalmojon of Bhola on November 27 with around 2,000 holiday passengers on board.

Our Patuakhali correspondent reported that six more bodies were recovered from the sunken vessel yesterday raising the accident's death toll to 84.

Shipping department inspector for Sadarghat launch terminal, Shafique Aiyub, filed the case with the Marine Court on November 30 implicating 13 others, who are the master of the launch, its driver, sukani, and 10 other unknown staff, said Chief Engineer and Surveyor of the Shipping Department AKM Fakhrul Islam.

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan informed reporters about the filing of the case yesterday in his office.

The minister said the government will also punish its own officials whose culpability in the tragic event will be found.

The case brought allegations of overloading, negligence in duty, boarding of passengers on unauthorised places, and reckless endangerment against the

accused -- which were the reasons for the accident, said Fakhrul Islam.

He said the case mentions that excess passengers were boarded on the launch from different terminals after leaving Sadarghat in the capital on way to its destination. Later an altercation broke out between the passengers and the launch crew at Nazirpur terminal over fares, and the crew locked the exit gate creating panic among the passengers.

The case goes on to mention that the passengers then tried to get off over a side of the launch, but the accused crew members did not moor the vessel at the terminal, nor did they lay the gang plank for the passengers to walk over, rather they tried to veer the vessel away from the terminal, and that is when the launch sank, according to Fakhrul.

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

A traffic police official directs vehicles to follow lane system introduced by Dhaka Metropolitan Police authorities yesterday to check overtaking, congestion and road accidents. The photo was taken at the city's Sonargaon Hotel intersection. Story on page 16.

Ulfa founder held in Dhaka
Report BBC, Indian media; Bangladesh police deny

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arabinda Rajkhowa, chairman and one of the founders of Indian separatist group United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa), was arrested in Dhaka on Monday, reports BBC Bangla Service.

Quoting Indian intelligence agencies, the BBC Kolkata correspondent reports that the Ulfa chief along with three to four other leaders was arrested in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

WHOLESALE BAIL TO LIFERS

Attorney gen's office to challenge HC orders

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The attorney general's office will move appeals with the Supreme Court against a High Court bench's recent orders granting bail to persons convicted and sentenced to even life-term imprisonment in different criminal cases.

Sources said the High Court bench comprising Justice AFM Abdur Rahman and Justice Md Emdadul Haque Azad recently granted bail to many people including 40 convicts sentenced to life term imprisonment by the lower courts in 90 criminal cases.

They got bail as the attorney general's office

could not properly follow the hearings and orders on the bail petitions, the sources added.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam yesterday told The Daily Star that on November 18 and 19, the HC bench passed orders on over 700 bail petitions and granted bail to over 700 persons, mostly convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for different terms.

He said his office has taken initiatives to move appeals against the HC bail orders, and it has already issued letters asking deputy commissioners concerned not to release the convicts who have been granted bail until the

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British MP for int'l probe on Tipaimukh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visiting British parliamentarian George Galloway has demanded an international investigation into India's proposed Tipaimukh dam.

"The environment of Bangladesh will be seriously affected if the dam is constructed and the project should be halted," he said.

He made the remarks during a press conference held at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday afternoon.

He also said that the Tipaimukh Dam is not

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Khaleda to be re-elected BNP chief unopposed

Co-chairperson post mulled for Tarique

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Khaleda Zia is going to be re-elected unopposed chairperson of the BNP as none but she has submitted nomination papers for contesting the election of party chief scheduled for the day the party's national council will be held -- December 8.

Ahead of the council, a number of influential BNP leaders are however trying to mount pressure on the party leadership for creating a post of 'co-chairperson' for Khaleda's son Tarique Rahman, party insiders said.

Khaleda neither accepted nor rejected the proposal as the BNP standing committee is still

discussing proposals for amendments to the party constitution.

The election commission of the party said it cannot hold polls for other posts of the executive committee including secretary general as the party's existing constitution does not provide for this.

But conveners and joint conveners of about one-third organisational units of the party, including 24 district units, will attend the national council as councillors though the party constitution contains no such provision.

Policymakers of the BNP decided that the chairperson's special powers given by the party

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

Rainforest protectors under threat

Hired goons chase, assault whistleblowers in Srimangal

MORSHED ALI KHAN, back from Kalenga, Srimangal

As soon as we arrived in Kalenga from Srimangal, after 10 kilometres of off-roading the day after Eid, a few eyebrows were quickly raised in the small bazaar. Half a dozen people hanging around the forest office of the Kalenga reserve forest turned away and vanished.

"We have been warned [by the foresters] not to talk to any reporter or photographer. If we ignore their warnings they said they would evict us from our homesteads on forest land," said a man in his late 40's refusing to identify himself fearing reprisal.

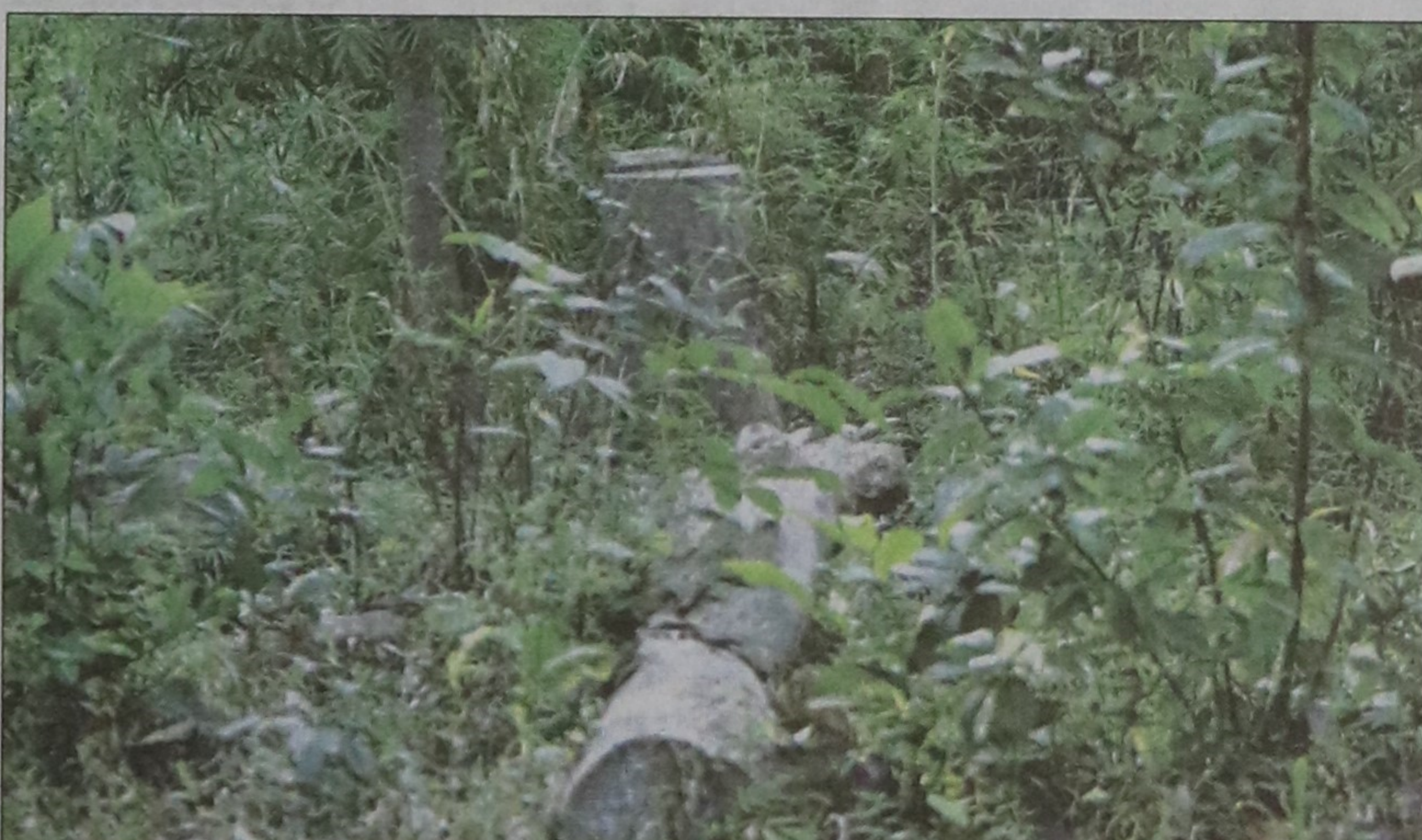
The foresters' sudden rage, according to local people in Kalenga, was a direct outcome of an elaborate report published in The Daily Star on November 25 revealing how some of the forest officials with their local goons were involved in depleting one of the most beautiful rainforests of the country. The Kalenga and the conjoined Rema forests cover an area of 1,795 hectares. It is the largest rainforest in the country and hosts rare mammals, birds and trees and plants.

Kalenga and adjacent forest areas are so remote that official monitoring from outside is virtually non-existent. The forest beat officials stationed there not only enjoy total jurisdiction over the forest but also over the Bangalee and tribal settlers who live in small patches of land that belong to the reserve.

The report published in this paper enraged the foresters so much that they immediately launched a find-and-punish campaign for the whistleblowers, who helped compile the report. Over the last week, several men were chased and roughed up by the goons unleashed by the foresters.

In the dark of the night we visited Abdur Rashid suffering from multiple injuries. Rashid said years ago he survived on

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The photos, top and bottom left, reveal how some forest officials along with local goons are depleting the rainforest at Kalenga in Srimangal. The photo, bottom right, is not clear enough to show wounds Abdur Rashid suffered in beating. It was taken underexposed on purpose -- to avoid any backlash from attackers. Rashid was beaten and detained overnight at the forest office after he challenged a gang of illegal loggers.

PHOTO: FAHIM BASHAR

Implement peace deal fully, or face agitation

Threaten CHT indigenous people

STAR REPORT

Observing the 12th anniversary of CHT peace accord in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari yesterday, PCJSS and its front organisations called upon all pro-peace treaty forces to unite and wage tougher movement for full implementation of the accord.

The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) observed the day holding rallies, public meetings as well as cultural programmes across the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). In Rangamati, a public meeting was held at the premises of Rajbari Gymnasium in the town.

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Cops form probe body on Sitakunda tree plunder

OC transferred for failure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A three-member committee was formed yesterday to probe the incident of plundering of forest on 125 acres of land along the Sonachhari coast of Sitakunda upazila in Chittagong.

The officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station had also been transferred on grounds of unsatisfactory performance.

The committee headed by Additional DIG Maqbul Hossain Bhuiyan was formed following a directive of Deputy Inspector

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