



Absence of drainage facilities leaves water stagnant at the base of the Central Shaheed Minar in the city after Wednesday's rain. As per the Wednesday's High Court directives, the sanctity and honour of Shaheed Minar must be protected. The photo was taken yesterday.

## Banning unfit vessels in waterways demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday urged the government to take strict measures to stop plying unfit vessels in the country's inland waterways ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr for ensuring passengers' safety.

Plying of unfit launches is the key reason for major accidents in the waterways. These unfit launches are plying due to absence of proper monitoring. So, the government should take strict measure to stop plying of these unfit launches to avoid further accidents, they said.

They placed the demand at a press conference titled 'Safe Waterways: How prepared the government is to prevent riverine accidents' organised by the Nirapod Noupath Bastobayan Jote, an

alliance for implementation of safe waterways, at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

During the Eid festival thousands of people leave Dhaka through vessels. To deal with the excessive passengers, the vessels become overloaded which is another major cause of riverine accidents. So, the authorities concerned should keep sharp vigil to check plying of overloaded vessels.

They placed some short-term and long-term recommendations to ensure safe waterways.

The short-term recommendations include ensuring strong monitoring on the launch terminals, keeping sufficient number of life jackets, deploying sufficient law-enforcers, keeping coast guard forces ready to address disasters, enlisting identities of all passengers before

riding on vessels.

The long-term recommendations include amendment to the Inland Shipping Ordinance (ISO), 1976, formation of marine court at Chandpur, Barisal, Patukhali and Khulna, increasing ship surveyors and inspectors and identification of risky routes.

Jote Coordinator Atiqul Islam Chowdhury, its member Mostafa Kamal Akand, Cost Trust assistant director Dr Sohel Iqbal, among others, spoke at the press conference.

Meanwhile, another organisation Safe Waterways Implementation Movement yesterday placed a memorandum to the shipping minister demanding government's effective steps for taking safety measures for passengers in waterways.

## Govt to import 1.30 lakh tonnes of rice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday approved a proposal for importing 1.3 lakh tonnes of rice for Tk 374 crore to increase food stock.

The cabinet committee on Economic Purchase in a meeting, chaired by finance minister AMA Muhith, approved the rice import proposal.

One lakh tonnes of the rice will be bought from Vietnam on the basis of a state-to-state deal for Tk 226.61 crore. Private importers will provide the rest of the amount.

The finance minister said, "We have decided to import rice from Vietnam as it is easily available there."

The food ministry officials said the stock of food grains has plummeted to almost a half compared with corresponding period last year. The government has, therefore, decided to import rice, they added.

The committee approved an Education Ministry proposal for importing 9,122 tonnes of cartridge paper to print books for the secondary schools, as well.

## Road crash kills 2, injures 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Two people were killed and 25 others injured as a bus plunged into a roadside pond at Duari in Poba upazila yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Nur Hossain, 42, of Khamargaon village and helper of the bus driver Mohammad Sumon, 23, of Kadirganj area of the district.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Nazrul Islam of Poba Police Station said the bus fell into a pond as its driver lost control over the steering on Tanore-Nawhata road around 10:00am. The two victims were unable to come out of the bus and drowned.

Divers from Rajshahi Fire Service searched the pond and found no other bodies.

The injured was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. SI Nazrul said they are yet to identify the driver.

## Night guard wounded in bomb attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A night guard was injured in bomb attacks at the city's Polashnagar early yesterday.

A group of suspected robbers numbering 10-12 were challenged while they were trying to break down iron-grills of the single-storey house at about 3:00am, said Al-Amin, night guard of the house.

At one stage, the robbers hurled two bombs at the guard and fled the scene before the locals came to the spot, the guard added.

Seriously injured Al-Amin was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with splinters on his head and hands.

## Govt plans to destroy Zia family

Alleges BNP at a rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP leaders alleged yesterday that government is conspiring against Zia family to divert people's attention from its failure to run the country properly.

They said the government is trying to implicate Tarique Rahman in August 21 grenade attack case to suppress BNP and the prime minister wants to influence the investigation by delivering different speeches about the case.

Party standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, former lawmaker Fazlul Haque Milon and Moazzem Hossain Alal, among others, spoke at a rally at capital's Muktangan.

BNP had announced the rally in protest "conducting propaganda against Tarique Rahman" and government moves to cancel Arafat Rahman Koko's parole.

Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said government cancelled Koko's parole only to divert people's attention from the failure to reduce the price of essentials and to resolve the crises of gas, water and electricity.

"Government has taken the policy to repress the opposition instead of resolving sufferings to public life," he said urging the government to refrain from this policy.

Criticising the government for imposing the ban on rally and procession, he said they have proved that they don't believe in democracy and fundamental rights of the people.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir alleged that the government has taken a plan to destroy Zia family as number one agenda and that is why they are now trying to implicate Tarique Rahman in August 21 grenade attack case.

## Legalise Bangladeshi workers

PM urges Iran

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the Iranian government to take proper steps to legalise undocumented Bangladeshi workers living there.

She made the call when the newly appointed Iranian Ambassador to Dhaka Hossein Aminian Tousi met her at her office in the city.

Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad told the reporters after the meeting.

Pointing out the foreign policy of Bangladesh that 'friendship with all, malice towards none,' the prime minister said the government gave importance to the relationships with Iran.

Sheikh Hasina and the Iranian envoy discussed issues of bilateral interests, trade and climate change.

Hossein Aminian Tousi conveyed invitation to the prime minister on behalf of his president to visit Iran at a convenient time.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina receives a cheque for Tk 2 crore from former Awami League lawmaker and Premier Bank Chairman HBM Iqbal for Bangabandhu Memorial Trust at her office in the city yesterday. The government yesterday withdrew charges against HBM Iqbal and 13 others in 2001 Malibagh killing case.



Vehicles waiting in a long line to refuel at a filling station on Kuril Bishwa Road at Uttara in the city around 12:00noon on Wednesday as the government has ordered to keep the filling stations closed from 3:00pm to 9:00pm every day.

## 'Enact privacy act to protect personal information'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable discussion yesterday called upon the government to enact a privacy act to protect privacy, personal information, correspondence and means of communication of people.

They pointed out that individual privacy is a constitutional right of every citizen and yet it is being violated at every step of everyone's life and no one can take legal actions against such violation.

The discussion titled "Privacy rights and citizen's concerns" was organised by VOICE in association with Privacy International at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

"Article 43 of the constitution says every citizen shall have the right to privacy of his correspondence and other means of communication," said Ahmed Swapan Mahmud, executive director of VOICE, a rights-based organisation.

right to the citizens, he said.

"We get phone calls from superstores, marketing firms, and other organisations who are not supposed to have our contact information," said Mahmud, "and yet they have our names, phone numbers and family information-- all without our consent."

Journalist Selim Samad said phones are tapped in the name of security, emails are scrutinised and correspondences are monitored by security agencies.

"We even had to give our fingerprints to the state for the national identity card. These are nothing but criminalising the society," he said.

"Only convicted criminals in the US are required to give their fingerprints to the state," said journalist Shahidul Shuvra. "But here in Bangladesh, every citizen is required to give their fingerprints for the national identity card. This is blatant violation of individual privacy," he said.

information, the citizens are not receiving any kind of benefits as well, the discussants said.

"For example, if someone threatens you over telephones and you post a complaint to the law enforcers, they would not be able to take any action because they would not be able to track the callers," he said.

The real problem lies in the society's mindset where no one is aware of rights to individual privacy, said journalist Selim Samad.

Our children are brought up in an environment where they are not given any privacy or individual freedom. So, they do not understand the value of privacy, said the discussants.

They said information is an asset and it needs to be protected.

In a country where the state is unable to protect its information from other countries, it is difficult to ensure protection of individual privacy and personal information, the discussants added.

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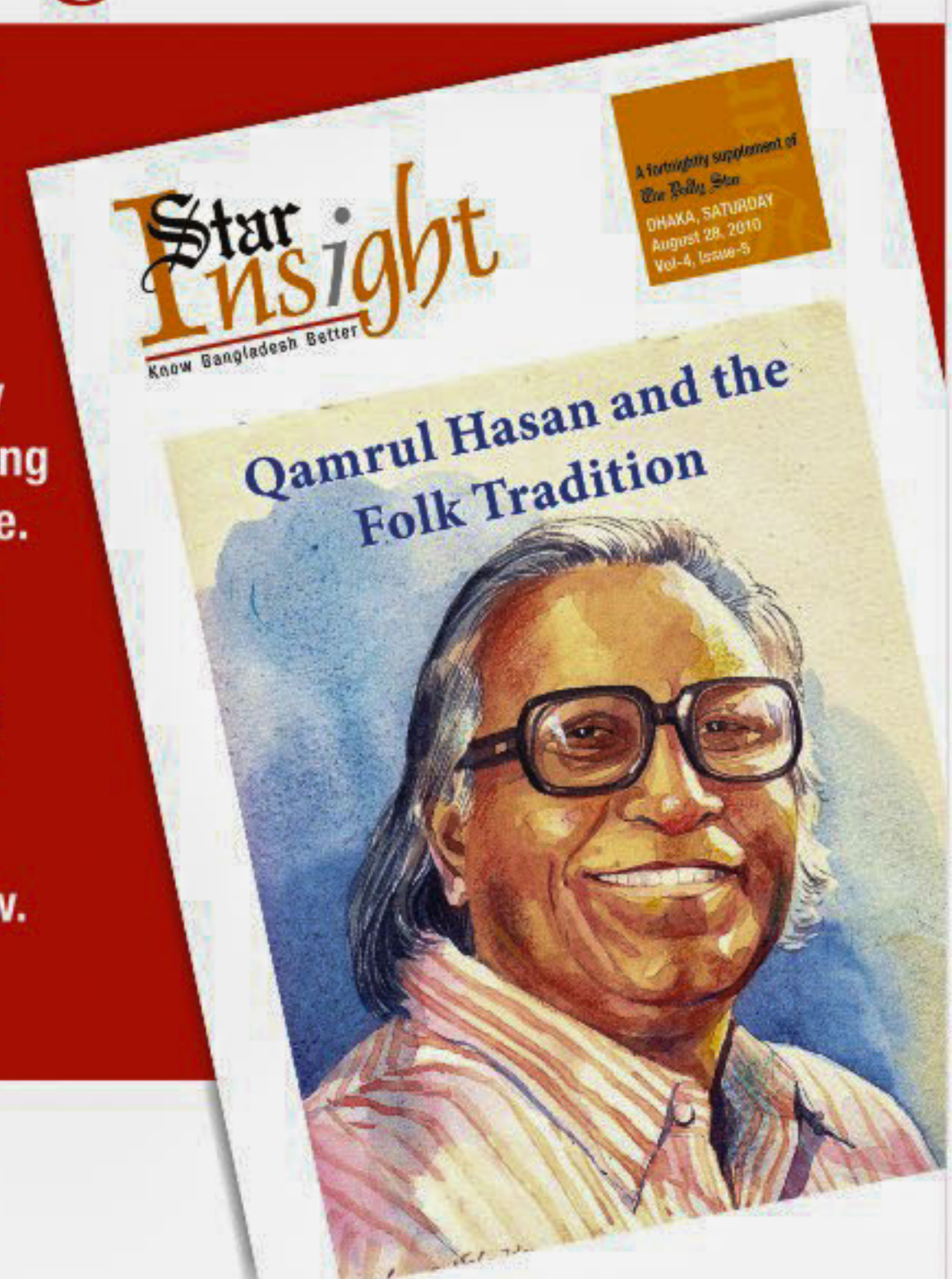
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