

# 11 launch terminals damaged by Sidr, Aila still not repaired

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Eleven of the 30 launch terminals that got damaged during the onslaught of super cyclones Sidr and Aila in 2007 and 2009 at different places in the district have remained unusable for long, much to the sufferings of thousands of passengers in the coastal region.

In the district crisscrossed by a number of rivers, people mostly depend on launch communication. Besides, cost for water transportation is still much lower than that on road.

The government is getting revenue from yearly lease of the launch terminals but no step has been taken for their repair or renovation.

"The pontoon of Hazirhat launch terminal has remained under water since it sank in the river on September 11 last year. We have to face a lot of trouble while getting into and down from launches," said Jahangir Howlader, a local businessman.

Another pontoon at Uttar Dharandi launch terminal in Patuakhali Sadar upazila sank one

year ago as its damaged bottom cracked.

The pontoon was lifted after a few days but it is yet to be made usable.

"I received lease of the terminal for Tk 61,000 (including Vat) from the authorities but I cannot realise money by selling terminal tickets as there is no pontoon," said terminal lessee SM Faruq.

The pontoons at Pashchim Kachipara and Karkhana launch terminals in Baufal upazila get stuck to the ground during the low tide while water enters through the cracks in the

bottom during the high tide.

Damaged pontoons of Rangabali, Badnatali and Char Gorobdi launch terminals are also lying useless.

Pontoons at New Market in Patuakhali town and Vikhakhali and Kakrabunia in Mirzaganj upazila need immediate renovation.

The pontoon of Galachipa terminal has also remained virtually unusable for launches.

"We have to get on launches with the help of small wooden boats or wading through mud. The

situation causes serious sufferings for passengers, especially women and children," said Abul Hossain, a local.

"Launches can anchor at the pontoon for 5/6 days a month, that too only during the high tide, when water level in the river increases under the influence of full moon and new moon. Rest of the month launches have to anchor in the mid river," said Ibrahim Dafadar, lessee of the terminal.

"We received lease of the launch terminal for Tk 14.60 lakh for the running

year from BIWTA (Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority) but we are facing losses as number of passengers is decreasing day by day in absence of a usable pontoon," he added.

When contacted, Md Mostafizur Rahman, deputy director of BIWTA, said, "We sent several letters to the higher authorities to take steps for repair of the pontoons. The sunken pontoon at Hazirhat launch terminal will be replaced by a new one very soon."



In absence of pontoon, passengers wait for launch at the makeshift jetty at Hajirhat launch terminal in Dashmina upazila under Patuakhali district, right, Uttar Dharandi launch terminal has been lying unused since it was lifted onto the ground during a cyclone a couple of years ago.



PHOTO: STAR



PHOTO: STAR

Visually impaired Rafiqul Bari encourages physically challenged Touhid Islam, 10, to write with his toes at Rafiqul 's school for the challenged children in Ghatail upazila under Tangail district.

## Rafiq's school for challenged kids assured of more help

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangai

The deputy commissioner (DC) of Tangail has assured extending all kinds of help for smooth running of Welfare Centre for the Challenged Ones, an institution meant for free schooling and vocational training for children with different disabilities, in Ghatail upazila under the district.

Himself a visually impaired, former cotton mill worker Rafiqul Bari Khan founded the centre in 2003.

"Rafiqul Bari has proved that the disabled children are not burden for the society and they can lead normal life if they get a little care and some training," said DC M Bazlul Karim Chowdhury as he visited the school along with officials of local administration and Shaheed Salahuddin Cantonment in Ghatail yesterday.

The disabled children will have to be brought to the main stream of the society, he said, adding that the guardians should not ignore their disabled children and take them to school regularly.

"The district administration will provide necessary help to build a hostel for the students and arrange necessary training for their teachers. The district administration will do everything for the school with the

coordination of local lawmaker," he said.

He directed upazila nirbahi officer, upazila social welfare officer and upazila education officer to find out all problems and requirements of the school and submit a report to him shortly so that he can take early action to solve those.

Meanwhile, school founder Rafiqul Bari Khan is now under treatment of Neurologist Dr Imrul Hasan Robi, an associate professor of Mymensingh Medical College, as right portion of his body got paralysed after he suffered a mild brain stroke a few months ago.

"I have established the school with the help of others to do something for the children with challenges in the area. I hope some of the well wishers will take responsibility of the school after my death," Rafiqul said.

Authorities of Shaheed Salahuddin Cantonment in Ghatail earlier provided a vehicle and monetary help to the school and continue their support for the institution in future, said Majedur Rahman Khan, executive officer of the cantonment.

All students of the school got textbooks on January 1, said Ghatail upazila education officer Masud Rana.

Earlier, the DC distributed warm cloths to the students of the school and talked to their guardians.

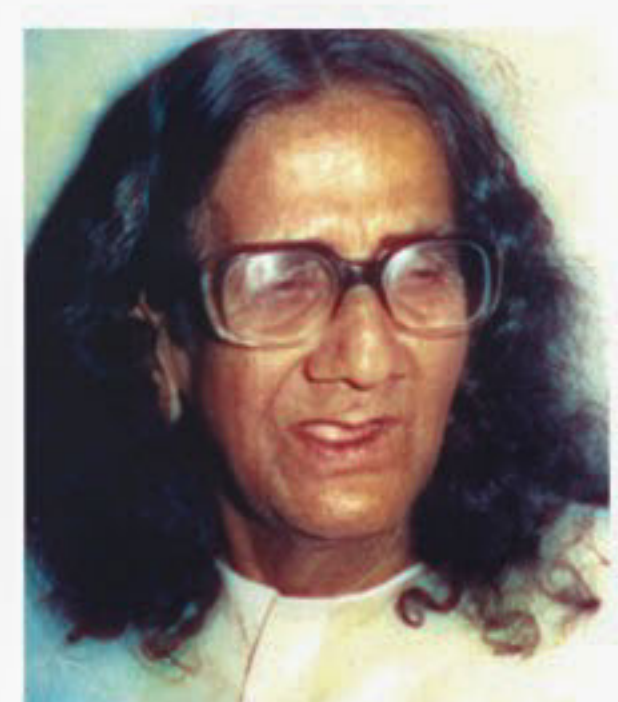
## Sultan Mela begins at Narail

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A seven-day Sultan Mela (fair) began at Government Victoria College in Narail yesterday marking the 87th birth anniversary of renowned artist SM Sultan.

Grameenphone in collaboration with Narail district administration and local SM Sultan Foundation have jointly organised the fair with support from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, says a press release.

Khulna Divisional Commissioner Moshir Rahman inaugurated the fair, an annual event that has been taking place for almost two decades, not only to celebrate the birth anniversary of the celebrated artist but also to patronise the indigenous art and culture. Senior officials of the district



administration and Grameenphone were present at the inaugural session.

A number of activities such as art exhibition, art competition, bull fight, horse-cart race, ha-do do, wrestling, volleyball and women's kabadi are the main features of the fair.

During the week-long fair, cultural and musical programmes and discussion on the life and work of

the artist will also be held. The fair will conclude on January 15.

While inaugurating the programme, Khulna Divisional Commissioner Moshir Rahman said, 'SM Sultan is our pride. His paintings have always inspired us to patronise the rich art and culture of Bangladesh.'

SM Sultan, also known as Lal Mia, was born at Masumdia village under Sadar upazila in Narail on August 10, 1923.

Narail district administration usually celebrates the birth anniversary of the pioneer artist of the country in December every year. But his birth anniversary is being celebrated in January this year due to unavoidable circumstances.

## LOKMAN KILLING CASE

### Two more accused surrender to court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A Narsingdi court remanded two more accused in Narsingdi municipality mayor Lokman Hossain murder case after they surrendered to the court yesterday.

The accused are Abdul Matin Sarker, vice-president, of Awami League Narsingdi district unit, and Miah Mohammad Manju, convener of the town Swachshabek League and also former vice-president of Narsingdi Government College students' union.

Matin was placed on a three-day remand while Manju on a one-day remand.

Earlier, they surrendered to the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate Nitai Chandra Saha in the morning.

The court passed the order after Mamunur Rashid Mandal, investigation officer of the case, produced the duo before it, seeking a 10-day remand for each.

On Sunday, Masudur Rahman Murad, an assistant personal secretary of the telecommunications minister who is also an accused in the murder case, was placed on a two-day remand on his surrender.

Lokman was shot by masked gunmen in district Awami League office on November 1 last year.

## Robbers loot bus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

Robbers looted cash and other valuables worth about Tk 2 lakh from passengers of a bus on Dhaka-Kishoreganj highway in Bottola area of Pakundia upazila on Sunday night.

Driver Abul Kashem said a gang of bandits numbering 8/9 boarded the Kishoreganj-bound bus of Ujanbhati Paribahan from Dhaka in the guise of passengers.

As the bus reached the area at around 10:00pm, the robbers took the passengers hostage at gunpoint and looted the valuables, including a laptop, eight mobile sets and Tk60,000.

## DILAPIDATED SCHOOL BUILDING

### Students attend classes under open sky

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Students of Gausul Huq Government Primary School in Morrelganj upazila of Bagerhat district have been attending their classes under open sky for the last two years as the dilapidated school building has become risky for them.

Acting headmistress

Dilara Afroze said there are 142 students reading in the school established in 1924 in Saralia Union.

"We cannot use the classrooms as the building seems to be too risky," she said, adding that Hamid Sheikh, a class two student, was severely injured when a chunk of plaster of a wall suddenly fell on him on

November 29 in 2009.

The boy had to discontinue his education as he sustained fatal injuries in the head and shoulder, the headmistress said.

Contacted, acting upazila education officer Afroza Khanam said they wrote to the authorities concerned several times, seeking fund for repairing works, but to no effect.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Uttar Saralia Gausul Huq Government Primary School in Morrelganj upazila under Bagerhat district attend classes under the open sky as the school-house has turned too risky.

## NGO official found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Police recovered the body of an official of Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) from Jonail village in Baraigram upazila yesterday morning.

The victim, Sohrab Hossain, 53, son of Laim Uddin of the village, was a director of Janoseba Samobay Somity.

Anwar Ali, officer in-charge of Baraigram Police Station, said locals found Sohrab's body hanging from a mango tree and informed the police at about 07:00am. Later, police recovered the body and sent it to Natore Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Quoting locals, the OC said Sohrab took about Tk 3 crore from 300 villagers as deposit on condition of return the money doubled after a year. Later, he went into hiding.

The NGO director might have committed suicide as the depositors pressed him to pay back their money, the OC added.

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- Balaka Building, Dhaka

## We Mourn

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May his beloved ones recover from this immense loss

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