



BESIDE THE RIVER, THE TEARS FLOW



THE heart-rending sounds of wailing rising from within the souls of tragedy-struck people pierce the silence of a river bank in Bangladesh once again. Another launch has gone into the river and another spate of the cruelties attendant on life casts its shadow on those who have perished, on those they have left behind. On the Meghna near Gazaria of Munshiganj, as the eerie task of retrieving corpses from the river gets underway, the tears flow in those who only moments earlier had held on to the hope that their loved ones may have survived the disaster. It was in the dark, even as Tuesday commenced, that the vessel went down with around 300 people onboard when a speeding tanker barged into it and then sped away. Bodies were lined up under white sheets, a tragedy Bangladesh has gone through all too often. There were the usual government steps such as a deployment of rescue vessels and divers. The bodies then came up, one unceasing symbol of dark, sudden death, one after the other. Till yesterday, the number of bodies had risen to 147, with scores of others remaining missing. Families on the shore buried themselves in prayer, in expectations of a miracle. Perhaps their loved ones would show up, alive? Perhaps they would rise from the bottom of the river to tell their families they had beaten death? But miracles are not to be. There are those who have acknowledged, finally, the inevitability of the tragedy, of the truth that death is one impregnable wall not to be breached. In patience, the heart cracking inside, they wait for the remains of those who have gone into the river to turn up. They hope for the bodies of their relatives to be spotted in order for them to bury them in dignity.

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