



Anxious relatives wait on the bank of the Padma while salvage ships conduct rescue yesterday. Red Crescent members prepare a list of the missing passengers of Pinak-6 that sank on Monday.



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ



An elderly man tries to console his grandson, Apu, who was on board the doomed launch with his parents and two sisters. Apu and his father could make it to the shore but his mother and sisters were left behind. In the next two photos, the wife of Julhas and relatives of Rejaul break down in tears at Mawa Ghat as both of them are yet to be rescued, dead or alive.



## Launch of dead not traced yet

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police, coast guard, fire service and district administration.  
Accusing the rescuers of neglect, they even blocked a road in front of Padma Rest House near Mawa Ghat for an hour in the morning.  
The rescuers, however, said they found it difficult to carry out rescue operation due to strong currents and high winds in the choppy waters where the depth of the river is at least 90 feet.  
No body was recovered from the scene yesterday.  
However, police said the body of a woman was found floating in the Meghna river near Haimchar upazila of Chandpur in the morning. She could be one of the passengers of the ill-fated vessel.  
The woman was aged about 25, said Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Haimchar Police Station in Chandpur.  
Meanwhile, police confirmed the identity of one of the two female passengers whose name couldn't be known on Monday.  
The body of Hasi Begum, 50, a resident of Shibchar of Madaripur, was

handed over to her brother Hannan around 12:00noon.  
The two female passengers, who were rescued around 11:30am on Monday, died about 20 minutes later.  
Pinak-6 that was on its way to Mawa from Kewrakandi was carrying more than 200 passengers against a capacity of 85. It sank in the face of strong waves and high winds in the mighty river near Louhajang around 11:00am on Monday.  
Briefing reporters on the salvage operation in the evening, BIWTA Chairman Shamsuddoha Khandakar said they would launch a joint intensive search in a few hours.  
"Three ships equipped with side-scan SONAR system will conduct the search simultaneously," he said.  
The ships from the navy, BIWTA and BIWTC will cover at least 600 metres on the Kewrakandi-Mawa route, he said.  
The vessels will also search up to one kilometre in the upstream and three kilometres in the downstream, the chairman said.  
He also said restrictions would soon be imposed on small vessels plying big rivers like the Padma.

In reply to a query, he said Pinak-6 that left Kewrakandi with around 150 passengers took on board an additional 100 passengers at a terminal halfway to Mawa.  
The launch took aboard the extra passengers at Kathalbarhi launch terminal where it was not supposed to stop. "The number of passengers in the vessel finally stood around 250," he said.  
Capt Nazrul Islam of Bangladesh Navy told this newspaper that they conducted a pattern search on the route with SONAR machines till 12:00noon, and then started a random search in the afternoon.  
"The sunken launch might have been washed away or covered in silt. We are trying to locate it with the machines," he said.  
Meanwhile, a murder case was filed against the launch owner, its master and four others. BIWTA Inspector Jahangir Bhuiyan filed the case with Louhajang Police Station.  
Rescue vessel Rustom reached the spot around 9:30pm on Monday. But it sat idle as the sunken vessel couldn't yet be found.

Survey vessel Kandari left Chittagong for the spot around 12:00noon and is expected to reach Mawa Ghat by this morning. The vessel can locate a sunken launch even if it is covered in silt, said officials.  
The failure to locate the launch irked family members and relatives of the missing people, as they kept waiting on the riverbank for news of their loved ones.  
"We cannot understand what they [the rescuers] are doing. More than 30 hours have elapsed, but they could not even locate the launch, let alone giving any news of the survivors," said Mizan, relative of a missing person.  
Some of them were upset with journalists for what they said was broadcast-wrong information.  
"We want news of our missing family members. Please don't mislead us with wrong information," said a family member of a missing person.  
Even after the launch disaster, many launches were seen overloaded with passengers at Mawa Ghat. In the evening, vessel ML Prince was seen carrying at least 250 passengers against a capacity of 140.

## Khaleda issues

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between the new convener of BNP's Dhaka city unit Mirza Abbas and its Member-Secretary Habib-un-nabi Sohel.  
The BNP chief said all party leaders and activists are keeping their eyes on this committee. And the success of anti-government agitation would greatly depend on the Dhaka city unit.  
"You all have to work unitedly forgetting all differences," the BNP leader quoted the party chief as saying.  
It was Khaleda's first meeting with the leaders of the new committee formed on July 18.  
No press briefing was held after the two-hour meeting that started at 9:00pm. Abbas, Sohel and other party leaders refused to talk about the meeting.  
However, several leaders, who were present at the meeting, talked to The Daily Star on condition of

anonymity.  
They said Khaleda asked the committee leaders to form all ward and thana units in the capital as soon as possible.  
The new committee couldn't start work even 19 days into its formation following a feud between Abbas and Sohel.  
Abbas and some party leaders strongly opposed making Sohel member-secretary. Over the last four days, they held a series of meetings with Khaleda and pressed her to either remove Sohel or curtail his power.  
Party insiders said Khaleda on Monday night agreed to reduce Sohel's power but later retracted her position under pressure from her elder son Tarique Rahman.  
At yesterday's meeting, she said nobody's power in the committee would be increased or reduced.  
"You all have to work with this committee," a BNP leader quoted her as saying.

## On the bank of Padma, they wait in tears

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When Shahnaz and her younger daughter learned about the capsizing of a launch in the Padma, they turned on the television for news. They called her over the phone, but found it switched off. They had an ominous feeling that something terrible had happened to Rokhsana.  
Sparing no time, the family rushed to the Mawa ghat at Louhajang in Munshiganj. And since then they have been waiting there anxiously.  
"More than 27 hours have passed, but they could not locate the launch yet, let alone give us any news of the missing," said Sumi, younger sister of Rokhsana.  
Among the three children of her sister, Mili was a Class-III student of Shuvadda High School. Her brother Moin was only two-years-and-one-month old.  
The other child Mim, who had stayed with her grandparents in Dhaka

during Eid, does not yet know about this incident.  
"She [Mim] asks me why her mother is not coming yet. What will I say in reply to the six-year-old kid?" said Shahnaz.  
MV Pinak-6, said to be carrying more than 200 passengers against a capacity of 85, sank within minutes in the mighty Padma river after being sucked into the strong currents at Louhajang turning point. Three bodies have been recovered while at least 129 more are missing and feared dead.  
The air on the banks of the Padma is heavy with the wailing of people desperately waiting for news of the fate of their loved ones. But with hardly any news yet, their wait becomes longer and their grief turns into anger.  
Kamrunnahr Kanan was sitting at a tea stall staring blankly at the Padma river. She would hardly speak and would collapse in tears frequently. Her husband Zakir Hossain, a stock market

investor, was on the ill-fated launch on his way to Dhaka after celebrating Eid with his family at Bakerganj in Barisal.  
"Pray for me so that I can reach safely -- this is what he told me while leaving home," murmured Kanan, who had come to Mawa on Monday night after hearing the news.  
Three brothers of Zakir were there too, awash in tears.  
Mohammad Mostofa was frantically looking for his missing sister Mitu, 27, and nephew Miraz. He was going to the information centre one moment and to the divers the other. But every time, he had to return without any information.  
Mitu along with her husband and child had gone to Jhalakathi to celebrate Eid. Her husband, a businessman, returned to Dhaka two days after Eid.  
"Bhai [brother], we have boarded the launch," he said, quoting his sister. "I could not imagine she would never get off the launch." He said he was

supposed to take Miraz for a day out once the six-year-old returned to Dhaka.  
Mitu's husband hired a trawler and was scouring the river in search of his wife and son, Mostafa said.  
There were many like Mitu's husband who, instead of waiting on the banks, were searching for their near ones in the river on trawlers and boats.  
Nothing could console middle-aged Rekha, who was wailing and waiting as seven relatives of her remained missing. Her brother, sister-in-law and their son, sister, brother-in-law and their two children were returning on the launch from Faridpur.  
While their wait gets longer and the pain more excruciating, relatives were gathering at the information centre to put the names of the missing ones on the list. After more than 30 hours of frantic search, they were yet to know whether they would ever get to see their loved ones again.

## It's black law to control

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much-talked about broadcast policy. The cabinet on Monday endorsed the policy, keeping enormous scope for the government to misuse the policy in the name of maintaining standard of news and other programmes in the electronic media.  
Media professionals and experts have opposed any policy that might compromise the independence of the mass media.  
Mayeen blasted the government for framing the policy and demanded an immediate scrapping of it.  
Pointing to the formation of a search committee by the information ministry which would set up the broadcast commission as per a provision of the policy, the BNP leader said this meant that the commission would be totally as subservient to the government and also as per its wish.  
"The more dreadful fact is that the information ministry will exercise the

power of the commission until it is formed. It implies that all the private television channels are going to be under the full control of the government," he added.  
The policy draft initially had a provision of banning live telecast of any political programme or press conference, but the provision has been dropped in the final draft, mentioned Mayeen.  
The Awami League in 1973 had curbed journalists' freedom by enacting the press and publications act. The party has also harassed many newsmen under the Special Powers Act, 1974, complained the former information minister.  
Responding to a query by journalists, Mayeen said the BNP would abolish the policy if voted to power.  
Senior party leaders MK Anwar, Abdullah Al Noman and the BNP chief's press secretary Maruf Kamal Khan were present, among others.

## Rabindranath in the soul

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*bajao apon shur*. It is a song that takes you closer to Creation, indeed imbues you with thoughts of the ties that bind you to your Creator. In his puja songs, there emerges all the brilliance of the universe as it goes through a dawning somewhere deep within time and space. And so you hear the gentle tones of *tumi daak diyechho kon shokale / keu ta jaane na*. In Rabindranath, it is the gentle and the tranquil which flows through the leaves of the trees. The poetry is the breeze.  
And the poetry caresses, all the way through the verses given over to a celebration of love. Imagine the beauty and

the poise of the one you adore, you worship. Imagine the silk softness of her being as you hum *aha tomar shonge praaner khela*. The soul is all in Rabindranath, be it in the links between man and woman or between you and the gods. Praan, the soul, takes on a sadder dimension when the loved one moves away, which is when you lose yourself in the pale light of the moon and sing *dekhate parine keno praan*. No pain can be more intense than that which the beloved does not see. Close your eyes and hear the pain of the one who sings *amar praaner pore chole gelo ke / boshonter bataash tukur moto* . . .  
And yet there is sometimes pleasure

in Rabindranath's evocation of pain. You call it the agony of reaching for the heights and at the same time know that you cannot quite scale the peaks of desire. The soul wriggles through a delicate dilemma in the song, *shunil-o shagorer shyamal-o kinare*. The pain begins at the beginning and then rises clear of you, of the earth your feet are firmly planted on, until it reaches its crescendo in *imoni kedaraye behaage bahare*. There is ecstasy in that song, as there is in the sadder, quieter *jokhon eshe chhile ondhokare chand utheni / shindhu pare chand utheni*.  
There is forever the primordial in Rabindranath. It is life he celebrates

and death he glorifies. The universe is a pattern of ever widening ripples and experience is the insistent falling of the rain on monsoon nights. When the melody of *tomaye gaan shonabo / tai to amay jagiye rakho seeps* into you and goes into an intensification of your sensibilities, you realise that this canvas of aesthetic beauty will pass into a wider cosmos one day, in the way the river finds itself anew in the bosom of the sea. Somewhere deep in the night, the wind brings to you the strains of *ogo nodi apon bege pagol para*. The beating in your heart is a sign of the expansiveness of melody. You know then that the earth is now poised to meet the

sky, that the river prepares to consummate its romance with the heavens. The climatic comes through the whispered *megh boleche jaabo jaabo / raat boleche jai / shagor bole kul mileche / ami to ar nai*. You are at peace. You lie back, until the pounding at the gateway of the heart tells you that newer songs have arrived.  
Images of the one lost to time flash before you. The sense of loss reveals the vacuum that the passing of a soulmate has left behind, crater-like. Your loneliness comes encompassed in *noyono shommukhe tumi nai / noyoner majh khane niyechho je thain*. And then, swiftly and surely, you are pulled back

to thoughts of your own mortality . . . *amar din phuralo / byakul badolo shanjhe*. The universe is what God has made of it. We are but atoms, infinitesimal beings in the consistently expanding frontiers of the universe. But we are the universe too, for the Creator redefines Himself within us, humbling us with His munificence. And so we cheerfully sing *amare tumi oshesh korechho / emoni leela tobo*.  
You are thus part of the miracle. God's beauty comes conjoined with your song. At the edge of twilight is a new beginning. . . *amar bela je jaaye shanjh bela te / tomar shure shure mela te*.  
Poetry has triumphed.