



PHOTO: STAR
NO, IT'S NOT A TSUNAMI: This launch, MV Dwipraj, ploughed into a paddy field on the bank of the Kirtankhola River along with around 1000 passengers on board on Friday night due to dense fog. Although there was no casualty, the fuel oil of the vessel continued to spill into the river from the engine room.

Launch with 1000 on board hits riverbank due to fog

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
 Barisal

A launch carrying around one thousand passengers from the river port partly sank after hitting the bank of the Kirtankhola River at Char Abdani at about 9:30pm on Friday, an hour after leaving Barisal.

However, all the passengers from the Dhaka-bound

triple-decker MV Dwipraj safely reached the bank with the help of locals and they returned to Barisal by trawlers and boats on Saturday morning.

Abul Bashar Majumdar, deputy director (river safety and traffic management) of BIWTA in Barisal, said BIWTA vessel Agrani was sent to the

spot early Saturday to help rescue the stranded passengers and keep the launch at place as tugboat Nirvik that has been sent for salvage operation will take two days to reach the spot.

Visiting the spot yesterday, this correspondent found that the stilted launch with its badly damaged

engine room continued sinking under the impact of consecutive high and low tides.

Some locals were collecting diesel spilled from the vessel.

Launch owner Kamrul Islam could not be contacted for his comments as his mobile remained switched off.

Three held on charge of killing youth in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
 Thakurgaon

Police have rounded up three people on charge of killing a youth on Wednesday night at Molani village in Haripur upazila.

The detainees are Afil Uddin, 40, son of late Abdul Jalil of Molani village, Abdul Rahim, 35, son of Abdul Mannan and Kamrul Islam, 36, son of Sukur Uddin of Moradhar village under the upazila.

Earlier, the father of the deceased collapsed and died after seeing the decomposed body of his young son, Ismail Hossain Bhulu, 28, at Molani village on Thursday afternoon.

Officer in-charge of Haripur police station Akhtaruzzaman said, Hannan Ali, 60, died of cardiac arrest when he saw the body of Bhulu, who went missing since Wednesday night.

Police recovered the youth's body, bearing several injury marks, from a mustard field in the area at 4:00 pm.

The OC told this correspondent over cell phone that in a day-long drive police arrested the three alleged killers from Maradhar and Geedura villages on Thursday.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case, also Sub-Inspector of the police station, Rajendra Mohon Chaki told this correspondent that in a primary investigation the arrestees confessed to killing the youth around 9:30pm on Wednesday.

IO Rajendra said, Afil Uddin had taken money from Bhulu in the name of handing over a piece of land about two months ago. But when Afil was dilly-dallying and Ismail giving repeated pressure to hand over the land, Afil planned to kill the youth.

Police also recovered a spade and a scissors which were allegedly used to kill Bhulu.

Yesterday police produced the trio to judicial magistrate court to record their confessional statements under Section 164, the IO said.

Wild elephants in Jamalpur damage houses, crops

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
 Jamalpur

A herd of wild elephants damaged at least 20 houses, crops and seedbeds of nearly 100 farmlands at Pathorerchar and Makhonerchar villages in Dewanganj upazila yesterday and the day before.

Locals said about 100 wild elephants from India's Meghalaya State stormed into Pathorerchar village around 6:00pm on Friday and damaged at least 20

houses belonging to eight families.

The elephants also damaged mustard, wheat, sugarcane and seedbeds of 60/70 farmers during their stay at the village till midnight, said Lutfar Rahman, a member of Dangdhora Union Parishad.

At midnight, the herd went to adjacent Makhonerchar village and stayed there till yesterday noon.

They again damaged

several croplands, including a number of seedbeds belonging to 30/40 farmers, said Altaf Uddin, one of the affected farmers.

After frantic efforts for hours villagers finally managed to drove away the animals around 2.00pm.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) ABM Aminul Islam said to solve such long-standing problem all the villages in the area need to bring the under electrification coverage.



PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court demolished four illegal structures on Shibbaria riverside in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali district yesterday.

Fresh drive to free Shibbaria River from encroachers

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
 Patuakhali

Patuakhali district administration removed four more illegal structures from Shibbaria riverside in Kalapara upazila in the district yesterday.

A mobile court led by Abdul Wadud, an executive magistrate, carried out the eviction drive at 10am.

Earlier, 43 illegal structures were demolished on the same spot in a drive on November 29 this year.

In yesterday drive, four illegal structures owned by Abul Kalam Musulli, Abul Hasem, Sonjoy Da and Afzal Hossain, all business establishments, were demolished, mobile court sources said.

"We will remove all illegal structures from both sides of the river where over 100 such structures had been built said, Suren Chandra, assistant land officer at Mohipur land office.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) filed a writ petition with the High Court (HC) on October 12 this year seeking steps against the grabbers who built illegal structures on both sides of the river.

The district administration issued 10 notices to the occupiers asking to remove their structures within 7 days and 10 more notices were under process.

Meanwhile, The Daily Star published a report on

grabbing of the river on January 22 following which the administration started the drive against the offenders.

The report said, Shibbaria, the river adjacent to the Bay near Kuakata, is being used as a safe shelter by fishing trawlers during disasters like flood, cyclone and tidal surge.

Local influential people built over 150 establishments on the both sides of the river at Mohipur and Alipur, both are fish landing stations, about 3 km north off Kuakata. Besides, there are over 500 other such illegal set-ups. As a result, the 28-km long river has been becoming narrow and losing its navigability.

48-hour transport strike in 10 dists from Wednesday

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
 Kushtia

A 48-hour transport strike has been called in 10 southwestern districts under Khulna division from Wednesday morning.

The regional committee of Bangladesh Road Transport Workers' Federation (Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samik Federation) announced the programme on Friday afternoon.

The federation put forward a number of demands including lifting the provision of action against the transport workers under Section 302 for road accidents, stopping police harassment in the name of vehicle check or test, easing of steps for issuance of driving license, demolition of illegal structures on roads and highways, ban on plying of Nasimon, Karimon, Alamsadhu and other locally made illegal vehicles on highways and stopping extortion at ferry ghats.

General Secretary of the organisation Abdur Rahim Bux Dudu, said the decision to go on strike was taken at a meeting of the committee

on December 17.

"Our demands were sent to the ministries of law, roads and highways, shipping and home. But none paid any heed to our demands, leaving us with no alternative to calling the strike," Rahim Bux told a gathering in Kushtia held as part of their campaign to make the strike a success.

The announcement of the strike will also be discussed at a press conference on December 29 in Jessore, he said.

Leaders of the organisation from different districts addressed the Kushtia meeting.

Azizul Alam Mintu, president of the organisation said, all-out move to make the transport strike a success in 10 districts will be taken.

Similar programmes will also be enforced in the other parts of the country to realise the demands, Azizul said.

Contacted, Sihab Uddin, president of Bus Owner's Association (BOA) in Kushtia told this correspondent that they were yet to take any decision to join the strike.

'Abducted' schoolgirl, boy found killed

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Police recovered the body of a nine-year-old girl at Garabari village in Singra upazila of Natore on Friday, three days into her 'missing'.

Deceased Mim Khatun, daughter of Nurajit of the village, was a Class IV student at Sharishabari Primary School, reports our correspondent.

Police arrested her two neighbours, Akbar Ali and Ayesha Begum on murder charge.

Mahbub Hossain, sub-inspector of Singra Police Station, quoting the girl's family members said, Mim remained missing since she went out of her residence on Wednesday. Locals spotted her body floating in a local ditch on Friday evening.

Nurajit, father of the victim, filed a murder case with the police station, accusing seven people in this connection, said Shafiqul Islam, officer in-charge of the police station.

Our Moulvibazar correspondent adds: police on Friday recovered the beheaded body of a two-year-old kid from a pond at Mirzapur village in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj district, after five days into his abduction.

Police said, criminals abducted Mahinur Ahmed Mahi, son of Shamim Ahmed of the village, from in front of his residence on December 22.

Abdul Based, officer in-charge of Madhabpur Police Station, said there had been a longstanding rivalry between Shamim and his neighbour Bilal Miah, over the ownership of a piece of land.

Police on Wednesday night arrested his three neighbours, Alamgir Hosain, 45, Bilal Mia, 41, and his wife Samrat Banu, 34, following a case filed by Shamim on Tuesday night.

The boy might have been killed and dumped in the pond over previous enmity, the OC added.

PROTEST RALLY IN PHULBARI

'Accept demands, give up move for open-pit mining'

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
 Dinajpur

The leaders of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports at a rally at Nimtola in Phulbari upazila under the district yesterday warned of tough programmes if their demands were not met within January 31 next year.

The demands include arrest of Gary Lye, chief executive of Asia Energy Corporation of Bangladesh, the government's assurance to avoid open pit mining in Phulbari and implementation of the six-point agreement signed in August 2006.

The local chapter of the committee organised the rally yesterday afternoon protesting Gary Lye's visit to Phulbari from November 24 to 26.

Addressing the rally as the key speaker, Anu Mohammad, member secretary of the central committee, highlighted the bad impact of open pit mining in Phulbari, if implemented.

The speakers urged the government to meet their demands or face blockade

programme in northern districts from February 7 next year.

Protesters from different areas of Dinajpur district joined the rally with processions.

Earlier at noon, a local professional body led by Golam Murtoza Sarker Manik, mayor of Phulbari municipality, held a demonstration with similar demands.

They urged the Asia Energy authorities to withdraw the case filed on December 9 against anti-open pit mine activists including 10 local leaders of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports.

If the demands are not met, there will be a situation similar to the one on August 26 in 2006, warned the demonstrators.

On that day, law enforcers shot dead at least three protesters when they were marching towards Asia Energy office in Phulbari.

To calm the situation, the then BNP government signed a six-point agreement with the stakeholders on August 30, but it is yet to be implemented.

SNIPPETS



PHOTO: STAR

DB police in Tangail town yesterday arrested notorious criminal Rezwan Khan Poonom and seized a number of arms from his house.

Top Tangail 'criminal' held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The district Detective Branch (DB) of Police yesterday arrested Rezwan Khan Poonom, a notorious criminal in the town, with huge arms, ammunition and drugs. Poonom, 30, son of Kutubuddin Khan of Akur-Takurpara, former general secretary of the city unit of Swachhchasebak Dal, is a listed criminal in the town. Golam Mahfuzul Haque, officer in-charge of Tangail DB Police, said acting on a tip-off, a team of the law enforcers raided Poonom's house around 12:00noon and arrested him while he was asleep keeping his two aides on guard outside the residence. His two associates, however, managed to flee the scene sensing the presence of the police. During the raid, police recovered three foreign made pistols, a revolver, 17 bullets, sharp weapons, Yaba tablets and marijuana from his bed room.

Outlaw arrested with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police in a drive arrested an alleged leader of an outlawed party along with firearms from Boro Pangasi area in Ullapara upazila of Sirajganj early yesterday. The arrestee, Ayzul Sheikh, 30, son of Hasan Sheikh of Shukulhat village in the upazila, is the 'regional leader' of Sharbahara Party and accused in a number of cases. Tazul Huda, officer in-charge of Ullapara Police Station, said being tipped-off, a team of the law enforcers raided a house in the area and arrest him along with a shooter gun and bullet.

Nine detained on border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) members yesterday detained nine Bangladeshis youths from Putkhali bordering area in Sharsa upazila, while they were crossing into Indian territory illegally. Lt Col Abdul Rahim, commanding officer (CO) of BGB 23 Battalion, said, being tipped-off, a BGB team raided the area around 6:00am and arrested nine Bangladeshis nationals while they were being trafficked to India. Later, the youths were handed over to Benapole Port Police Station.

Youth killed by relatives

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A youth was killed allegedly by his relatives over previous enmity in Kaharol upazila on Friday evening. The deceased, Shariful Islam Bakul, 32, son of Tahij Uddin, was a resident of Dhipikura village in the upazila. Police quoting family members said, Bakul's cousin Jalil Uddin phoned him and asked him to meet the latter at Kaharol Bazar on Friday evening. When Bakul went there, Jalil and his son Md Russell took him to a nearby potato field and stabbed him indiscriminately, leaving him critically injured. Bakul died on his way to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

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