

Two more bodies found

Launch capsizes death toll now 80

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more bodies were recovered from the river Padma at Dohar in Dhaka on Wednesday night and yesterday morning, raising the death toll in the Padma launch accident to 80.

The body of the seven-year-old girl Maria was recovered around 11:00pm on Wednesday and that of Mehruz, 35, around 11:00am yesterday from Joypara area, Mahfuzul Haque, officer-in-charge of Dohar Police Station, said.

Maria was a resident of Rajbari and Mehruz of Bogra. Both bodies were handed over to their relatives, the OC added.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry yesterday recommended that the Department of Shipping prepare a set of proposals for prevention of accidents in waterways.

The proposals are to be placed at the committee's next meeting, a press release said.

The committee's recommendations came at its 11th meeting at the parliament yesterday, five days after the Padma launch disaster that caused the death of at least 80 people.

The committee also suggested the ministry keep two oil-tankers reserved to continue river communication during times of emergencies.

The committee Chairman Rafiqul Islam (Bir Uttam) chaired the meeting attended by Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, among others.

The single-decker vessel MV Mostafa sank with around 200 passengers in Padma river in Manikganj after being hit by cargo vessel Nargis-1 on Sunday morning.

Officials of Manikganj district administration said at least five people still remain missing as of last night.

Australia warns women ISIS no 'romantic adventure'

AFP, Sydney

A worrying number of Australian women are heading to Iraq and Syria to become so-called Islamic State group "jihadi brides", Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said yesterday, warning against notions of a "romantic adventure".

At least 110 Australians have left to fight alongside militants in the Middle East and security officials said between 30 and 40 women were among them or were actively supporting the group in Australia.

"Sadly we are seeing a younger cohort seeking to join the conflict in Syria and Iraq and an increasing number of young females," Bishop said, responding to the high-profile case this week of three British teenage girls heading to Syria.

"This defies logic. Family and friends need to reach out to young people at risk before it's too late."

At risk

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water just 10 years from now.

"Global warming has caused us so much problems," Joseph Swan, a Kivalina elder, told the Washington Post. "The ice does not freeze like it used to. It used to be like ten to eight feet thick, way out in the ocean."

The issue has taken on the shape of an existential proportions, not just for the 400 or so residents Kivalina but for other similar communities in Alaska. And in the years ahead more and more coastal locations are likely to face the threat.

The cost of relocating the village, located 80 miles from the Arctic Circle, could be as high as \$100m.

Over the last 20 years or so, Alaska has emerged as one of the places where the effects of climate change have been the most obvious and clearly on display.

These include a reduction in sea ice, permafrost melting, roads buckling and forests being destroyed infestations of beetles because of a rise in temperatures.

Ten years ago, Hilary Clinton and John McCain went on a joint fact-finding tour of the region to look at the evidence of climate change and were shocked by what they saw.

"The question is how much damage will be done before we start taking concrete action," McCain said at a press conference in Anchorage. "Go up to places like we just came from. It's a little scary."

The report in the Washington Post said the plight of Kivalina had reached the ears of the US government.

No trace of Jubo Dal

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home at Gazipur in the early hours of February 13.

"They did not hurt anyone (in the house). They did not take any valuables. Just picked him [Noor] up inside a microbus. They were, of course, the members of law enforcement agencies," she said.

Noor, also a joint secretary of Dhaka City unit Jubo Dal, had been staying there to avert arrest, family members said, adding that he had been made accused in six to seven "political cases" filed in the ongoing blockade.

Rina said, "Around 1:00am on that day, we were woken up hearing sounds of repeated banging on the door. As we asked who were knocking the door, they introduced themselves as members of the administration."

"They also asked us to open the door. When we opened the door, a group of 8 to 10 people wielding firearms entered the room."

It's genocide

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men. "What kind of cruelty is this? What kind of politics is this? This is not politics... these are entirely terrorist and militant activities," Hasina said.

The PM alleged that a particular quarter was providing necessary finance, training and other support to the BNP-Jamaat miscreants for committing such heinous acts.

"If we have failed to run the country, then they could wage a movement against the government. But, there is no sign of government failure in Bangladesh," she told her audience.

Without mentioning the BNP chairperson's name, she said, why people would have to pay for someone's wrong political decision.

In the name of hartal and blockade, attempts were made to create a terrific situation across the country, Hasina, also chief of the ruling Awami League, said.

When the BNP-Jamaat found that people are not responding to their so-called hartal and blockade, they started hurling petrol bombs on buses, trucks,

"They seized our cell phones first and checked the cell phone number of my husband. Then, two of them stepped forward and told my husband, 'Yes, he is the man whom we are looking for,'" she said, adding that they later took him with them.

"When we asked them where are you taking him [Noor]? A man of the group asked us to contact the local police station," Rina said.

Since then, the family members contacted several police stations and DB offices in Dhaka and Gazipur but failed to trace Noor's whereabouts.

They even visited several hospitals and morgues in the capital and Gazipur but did not find him. Noor's brother Nurul Islam filed a case with Joydevpur Police Station on February 17 in this connection.

Contacted, Khandaker Rezaul Hasan, officer-in-charge of the police station, said, "We did not find any information of his [Noor] arrest or detention in our preliminary investigation."

trains, and private vehicles killing innocent people, including children and women, she said.

Over 100 people have so far been killed and hundreds more are groaning in the burn units of different hospitals due to arson attacks, the PM said, adding that they had also put the lives of some 15 lakh SSC examinees in danger by announcing agitation programmes.

She, on behalf of the nation, expressed her deep gratitude to the doctors of burn units in hospitals across the country for their tireless efforts to save lives of victims.

Hasina mentioned that 84 burn patients were given family savings certificates worth Tk 10 lakh each, while four were sent abroad for better treatment.

The PM also said data was being collected about those who were killed during the ongoing violence, and their family members would be provided with assistance considering their socio-economic condition.

SC upholds HC order on Salam's bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court order that had granted bail to Ekushey TV Chairman Abdus Salam in a case filed under the Pornography Control Act last year.

A four-member SC bench, headed by Chief Justice SK Sinha, dismissed an appeal filed by the government against the HC order.

The ETV boss, however, cannot get out of jail as he is shown arrested in other cases, his lawyer Rafique-Ul Huq and Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star.

Salam was arrested in front of ETV's Karwan Bazar office in connection with the case on January 6, hours after cable operators, mostly loyal to the ruling Awami League, allegedly stopped transmission of the ETV that had broadcast live BNP leader Tarique Rahman's speech from London on January 5.

In the speech telecast several times on the private TV channel, the BNP senior vice-chairman called upon his supporters not to return home until they toppled the present government.

On November 17 last year, a woman (name withheld) filed the case with a Dhaka court against four persons -- her ex-husband Mohammad Shahjalal and his brother-in-law Zakir Hossain, her "god brother" Zahirul Haque Imran and ETV Senior Reporter Elias Hossain.

The plaintiff alleged Imran, Shahjalal and Zakir secretly took her photos and footages, and made obscene clips by doctoring those.

Salam's name was not on the list of the accused. He was challenging the HC order.

Bahrain court sentences 3 to death

AFP, Dubai

A Bahraini court sentenced three Shias to death yesterday and jailed seven others for life after convicting them of killing three policemen in the Sunni-ruled Gulf state last year, prosecutors said.

The supreme criminal court also stripped eight of the defendants of their Bahraini citizenship over the March 3 bombing in a Shiite village, the deadliest attack since security forces crushed Shiite-led protests in March 2011.

Among the three policemen killed in Diah village was one officer from the United Arab Emirates.

Blogger Avijit

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"His writing drew the ire of religious fanatics," Baki Billah, a blogger, told The Daily Star.

Shibli Noman, assistant commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said the attack bore the hallmarks of those usually carried out by Jamaat-Shibir men and militants.

"It also looks similar to the attacks on Professor Humayun Azad and blogger Rajib Haider. But whoever they are, we'll trace them," he told this newspaper.

Early today, a twitter account named Ansar Bangla 7 posted a bloodied photo of Avijit and Banna, saying: "May be its Avijit Roy's bloody wife Husband's Head. #Beheaded He was a top Target 4 last 3/4 years."

Avijit is well known for his books "Biswaser Virus" (Virus of Faith) and "Sunyo theke Mahabiswa" (From Vacuum to the Universe).

He had come to the country on February 16 to attend the book fair where three of his books have been published this year. He was to fly back to the US on March 4, said his younger brother Anujit Roy.

Last year, Rakamari.com, an online bookstore, was forced to remove Avijit's books from its list following threats by Shafiur Rahman Farabi, a fundamentalist blogger.

Farabi was arrested for posting provocative comments on his Facebook page supporting the killing of blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider in Mirpur on February 16, 2013. He was later released on bail.

Police found involvement of Ansarul Bahla Team, a militant outfit, in the killing of Rajib.

The attack on Avijit resembles the one on noted writer Prof Humayun Azad and bloggers Rajib Haider and Asif Mohiuddin, said Koushik Ahmed, another blogger.

According to him, fundamentalists were behind all these attacks.

Prof Humayun Azad was hacked by assailants on February 27, 2004, when he was coming out of the Ekushey book fair.

He later died in Germany while undergoing treatment.

Parties unwilling

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is going to be changed within the next few weeks and it may turn into a civil war if such a situation continues.

The EP members expressed concern over the indiscriminate violence and targeted violence. They also said they have common security concerns as Bangladesh is their important partner.

A Bangladesh representative who was there described the Bangladesh government's position over the current situation.

The official, whose name could not be known, said the BNP-Jamaat men in the name of politics are killing innocent people.

The official said the people have rejected hartals and blockade and normalcy in people's life is returning.

Earlier, one of the participants in the debate said there are some concerns regarding the freedom of media and expression though media is very vibrant in Bangladesh. He said this is an area they need to keep their eyes on in the coming days.

The EP members appreciated Bangladesh's efforts in empowering women and mentioned that the Prime Minister, the opposition leader and the BNP chief are women.

They, however, said Bangladesh

needs to withdraw all types of reservation and should implement fully the international convention on empowering women at all levels.

They also talked about Foreign Donation Act and Jamaat funding through NGOs.

They mentioned about the arrest warrant that has been issued against Khaleida Zia, which has not been implemented yet.

They fear that it might lead to dramatic escalation of the tensions and the arrest might be very problematic.

Concluding the discussion, the chair of the session, said they will remain connected with Bangladesh over the next few months.

Seeking an immediate end to the growing violence in Bangladesh, the European Parliament delegation during their Dhaka visit echoed the international community and Bangladesh civil society's call for solving the political crisis.

The EP delegation said peace and stability should not be restored at the expense of civil and political rights. It also said freedom of expression was a matter of concern as it is a fundamental pillar of a pluralistic and vibrant democracy.

Land office in Feni

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BNP-led 20-party alliance. It was also the fifth day of hartal that ends this morning.

Police detained Radhanagar Union Parishad Chairman Rabiul Haque Chowdhury, also the union BNP's general secretary, in connection with an arson attack.

Besides, police yesterday filed a murder case against a BNP leader and over 50 others in Chittagong and arrested nine others in connection with arson attacks and subversive activities in Dhaka, Chapainawabganj and Noakhali.

Detectives detained two central leaders of pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal -- Zakirul Islam Zakir and Mrinal Kanti -- in possession of 20 petrol bombs at Kalyanpur in the city around 8:00pm on Wednesday.

DB Joint Commissioner Monirul Islam claimed that most of the arson attacks on Dhaka-Aricha highway were carried out on the directives of Zakir. Pedestrian Milu sustained splinter injuries after two crude bombs exploded near the Jatiya Press Club around 3:45pm yesterday. He received treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police arrested Monirul Islam, president of Nachole Upazila Islami Chhatra Shibir, near Asian School in Chapainawabganj in connection with torching a truck.

Meanwhile, Rab-11 yesterday detained four people with five petrol bombs, 17 homemade bombs, and 200 pieces of Yaba pills at Chaumohani of Begumganj upazila in

Noakhali early yesterday.

After preliminary interrogation, they were handed over to Begumganj Model Police Station.

In Munshiganj, police arrested BNP activists -- Babu Bepari, 18, and Suman Mia, 20, -- at Sirajdikhan in connection with vandalising some buses on Dhaka-Mawa highway recently.

Apart from the blockade, the BNP-led alliance has been enforcing hartals since February 1, except for Fridays and Saturdays.

The 120-hour hartal since 6:00am Sunday ends at 6:00am today.

BNP Joint Secretary General Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said the blockade would continue and threatened tougher programmes, including hartal, from next Sunday unless their demands were met.

The demands include fresh election under a neutral administration and unconditional release of the 20-party alliance leaders and activists.

Since January 6 when the blockade began, violence, carried out especially with petrol and crude bomb attacks, has already claimed 76 lives and left nearly 400 injured.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry estimates financial loss of more than Tk 100,000 crore so far with the every day loss of Tk 2,000-2,500 crore.

The Secondary School Certificate and equivalent examinations had to be rescheduled repeatedly due to hartals.

Our correspondents in Feni, Chittagong, Chapainawabganj, Noakhali, Munshiganj contributed to this report.

ISIS abducts 220

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monitoring group said.

Many of the abductees are said to be women, children or elderly.

They were taken as ISIS stormed several Assyrian villages under the control of Kurdish and Christian forces.

The Observatory said 14 Kurdish fighters and three members of an Assyrian defence organisation had been killed in three days of fighting for the villages.

The United States and United Nations denounced the mass abduction of Christians -- the first of its kind in the war-torn country -- and demanded their release.

"ISIL's latest targeting of a religious minority is only further testament to its brutal and inhumane treatment of all those who disagree with its divisive goals and toxic beliefs," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said, using another acronym for ISIS.

The UN Security Council also condemned the abductions, demanding the hostages be immediately and unconditionally freed.

Osama Edward, director of the Assyrian Human Rights Network, told AFP on Wednesday he believed the abductions were linked to the jihadists' recent loss of ground in the face of US-led air raids.

"They took the hostages to use them as human shields," he said.

The jihadists, who are battling Kurdish fighters on the ground, may try to exchange the Assyrians for ISIS prisoners, he said.

The kidnappings and assault by ISIS on several Assyrian villages in Hasakeh prompted thousands of members of the community to flee.

Many sought refuge in Qamishli, a large city in the province that is controlled by Kurdish and regime forces.

"We've received around 200 families who are being hosted in local homes," Jean Tolo of Qamishli's Assyrian Organisation for Relief and Development, told AFP.

"The people arriving are desperate.