

People suffer as only 2 ferries run

Poor navigability disrupts ferry service between Shimulia and Kawrakandi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Around 500 vehicles got stranded on both side of the Padma as navigability crisis disrupted ferry service between Shimulia and Kawrakandi since Friday afternoon.

Several hundred passengers suffered as only two ferries with shallow draught could run all day yesterday. Operation of around a dozen other ferries had to be suspended.

Many passengers had to cross the river on launches and speedboats.

Officials and transport operators said the situation has disrupted communication between the capital and 21 southern districts.

SM Ashiquzzaman, assistant gen-

Taposh

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and mobile phones.

"Rab was formed during the rule of BNP-Jamaat coalition government and so law enforcement of Sheikh Hasina-led administration can't be done by this Rab," Taposh said yesterday, demanding a reshuffle in the crime-busting force.

Recalling AL men's killings by Rab during the BNP-led government's tenure, Taposh said the force was then formed as the "killing squad of the BNP-Jamaat alliance".

"If anyone gets injured or killed while in the custody of any law enforcement agency, then that agency will have to take the responsibility," he said, adding that the Rab could not avoid the responsibility for Arzu's killing.

He described the incident as a "totally inhuman act" and said it could not be tolerated.

Taposh alleged that a conspiracy was being hatched to put the AL and the government face to face.

Speaking at the programme, leaders and activists of local AL and front organisations demanded justice for the murder.

Taposh assured the crowd of filing a case against two Rab officials, one cop and an informer over the killing.

In the first six months of this year, 72 people have died at the hands of law enforcers in shootouts. Of them, 40 were killed by police and 22 by Rab, according to rights body Ain o Salish Kendra.

According to The Daily Star reports, at least 20 more people died in alleged crossfire between July and August 18.

eral manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), said ferry services had been facing such difficulties for over two weeks.

Talking to The Daily Star, several officials of BIWTC said navigability of the route could not be maintained due to shortage of dredgers.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan on Friday visited Shimulia and pledged to take necessary measures to end the crisis immediately.

Boy tortured

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Paharpur village in Doarabazar upazila of Sunamganj.

Ekhlas has filed a case with Jalalabad Police Station against Wahab Ali, Abdur Rahman and other five to six unidentified people, accusing them of killing the boy on Thursday.

According to the case statement, Akmal had been working at "Food Mark Bread and Biscuit Factory" at Ghopal for the last two years.

A few days ago, Akmal's father went to the factory and demanded the payment of arrears of his son's salary from factory owner Wahab Ali.

However, Wahab Ali and a worker of the factory Abdur Rahman locked into an altercation with Akmal's father instead of the paying up.

Following the incident, Wahab and Rahman started torturing the boy regularly, the FIR said.

On Thursday, the duo took Akmal to a bathroom and allegedly tortured him brutally.

At one stage, they hit the boy in the head with a brick chunk, leaving him critically injured.

He was taken to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

On August 21, police handed over the body to Akmal's family after an autopsy.

However, police could not yet arrest anybody in connection with the incident.

Jalalabad Police Station Sub-Inspector Benu Chandra Deb, also the investigation officer of the case, confirmed the incident.

The barbaric killing took place barley one and a half months after the gruesome killings of teenage boy Samiul Islam Rajon, also a resident of Sylhet and 12-year-old boy Rakib in Khulna.

Truly an all-party leader!

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Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's Kamlapur ward. Then in 2014, he became a joint convener of Kushtia town Jubo League, the youth front of the ruling Awami League, even though he held the post in JCD.

Using these identities, he has allegedly been committing extortion and other crimes in Kushtia town for long, said locals and a police official, wishing not to be named.

But recently, the matter came to the notice of the Jubo League unit and it suspended Samrat right away.

Abdul Alim, convener of the unit, told The Daily Star that he sent a press release to different local newspaper offices on Friday night, informing them about the suspension.

According to the release, the action against Samrat was taken for simultaneously holding two posts in two different organisations and his alleged criminal activities.

But no one from Jubo League could say why it took so much time to notice Samrat's deeds.

Abdur Razzak Bachchu, office and publicity secretary of BNP in Kushtia, confirmed that Samrat was the JCD president of Kamlapur Ward unit. He, however, declined to say anything

else.

Sohel Reza, additional superintendent of police in the district, said they raided Samrat's office in Thanapara area of the town on Thursday night.

The raid was carried out following the man's alleged involvement in a clash between Swachhchasebak League and Jubo League activists in Kushtia on August 15 that left one dead, he said.

Police claimed to have recovered three magazines and a bullet from the office. But Samrat was not there.

Police sources said Samrat, a listed criminal, was close to Sazzad Hossain Sabuj, general secretary of Kushtia Swachhchasebak League, who was allegedly picked up by plain-clothes men in Gazipur early Friday.

Sabuj fled the district after the clash.

ASP Sohel said police were looking for Samrat.

OIC secretary general

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agenda undertaken by OIC. He is also expected to exchange views on situation and issues relating to the Islamic Ummah, the sources added.



Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad forms a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding protection of rights and interests of the religious and ethnic minorities in the country. PHOTO: STAR

Insecurity mirrors Pakistan days

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daily Prothom Alo he accused LGRD Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain of grabbing lands of Hindus in Faridpur.

Minorities are still passing days in insecurity as they did under Pakistan regimes, said Dasgupta, a prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal, while addressing the crowd.

Vested quarters, including some bureaucrats and people's representatives, are violating the rights of minorities, he added.

"Together we shed blood to liberate the nation in 1971. But it's unfortunate that we haven't yet tasted freedom."

Businesses, homes, temples of the minorities are being burnt down, their lands grabbed and women exploited, Dasgupta said, but when some people protested such injustice and repression, they were harassed, even put in jail.

People of the minority communities are getting frustrated at the situation, he said.

Earlier on August 6 at a press conference in Dhaka, the Oikya Parishad drew public attention to land grab-

bing of the minorities across the country, including that by the minister.

After Dasgupta reiterated the allegation against the minister in the interview published on August 16, the Faridpur district administration formed the probe committee headed by its additional deputy commissioner.

Two days later the probe body issued the notice to Dasgupta, asking him to appear before the ADC's office at 10:00am today to give his statement over the matter.

Parishad Presidium Member Subrata Chowdhury yesterday demanded formation of a judicial commission to investigate allegations of grabbing lands of minorities by ruling party men, lawmakers and ministers in different districts, including Thakurgaon, Nilphamari, Pirojpur and Faridpur.

The government tortured journalist Probir Sikdar to a level that surpassed the repression of minorities by the BNP-Jamaat government, just because he raised his voice against those repressing minorities in Faridpur now, Subrata said.

A senior journalist, Probir is facing legal suit under the Information and Communication Technology Act for "tarnishing the image of the LGRD minister".

Speaking at the demonstration, Probir yesterday alleged that a one-man rule was prevailing in Faridpur and that an influential minister controlled everything there, including the district administration and the police.

Even, ruling Awami League men are harassed for talking against the minister, he said.

Claiming that the district administration and the police do not have power to do anything against the minister's will, Probir demanded removal of the top-level officials of the administration.

The probe body was formed following directives from an influential minister, he added.

Cultural personality Kamal Lohani, Oikya Parishad presidium member Nim Chandra Bhowmik, academician Durgadas Bhattacharya, indigenous community's leader Sanjeeb Drong, among others, spoke at the programme.

Road given to AL men

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showing the place as "open and abandoned".

Late local AL lawmaker Mizanur Rahman Khan Dipu (Dhaka-6) had recommended the allocation.

Estate Department officials of the DSCC were supposed to survey and see whether the "space" could be allocated for a market but they did not do so, as they themselves were part of the plot, alleged some DSCC officials.

The estate department then moved a file recommending that the "space" be temporarily allocated to the applicants with a monthly rent of Tk 15 per sqft.

In the file, there was no mention of the space actually being a road.

An assistant estate officer sent the file to the then DSCC administrator Khalilur Rahman for approval. The then chief estate officer and chief executive officer (CEO) Sultanul Islam Chowdhury had signed the file.

Upon approval from the administrator, the chief estate officer issued the allotment.

The AL men later set up the 44 shops there. Local AL leaders kept some shops for themselves while the rest were sold for Tk 6-10 lakh each.

As per space allotment rules, a 10-member committee led by the CEO is supposed to see whether any space under the city corporation's jurisdiction could be allotted.

An advertisement then has to be put on the city corporation notice board, its website, and on two well-circulated newspapers to inform people about the allotment and to get competitive prices for the lease.

The DSCC deliberately avoided the entire process in this case.

Khalilur, who approved the application on May 21, 2012, two weeks before his tenure as administrator ended, said he had approved it in the light of the documents submitted before him.

Asked on what grounds he had leased out a road, he said he was not ready to answer the question.

Ex-DSCC chief executive Sultanul claimed that some city corporation officials had forged his signature after he had left the office, completing his tenure.

However, records show that he was still the CEO when the allotment was done.

Incumbent CEO Ansar Ali Khan said no street could be leased out. He, however, did not say if the allotment would be cancelled and the road would be reopened for people.

During a recent visit to the place, now named Wari City Super Market, these correspondents saw garbage littered everywhere. Quite a few concrete shops had been built there, leaving no sign of the road.

Jamilur Rahman, a resident of the area, said he used to go to work using the lane as it was close to his residence.

"Now, I have to go to office through an alternative road that increases the distance to a great extent.

"Then again, the lane was used for diverting traffic during jams. But it's of no use now," he added.

Iqbal, general secretary of Ward-41 of pro-AL Swachhchasebak League, has a shop in the market. He said he was looking for a buyer to sell his shop.

"All papers are okay," he claimed before The Daily Star correspondents, adding that the monthly rent for each of the shops was Tk 4,500.

As allegations over the illegal allotment surfaced, the Anti-Corruption Commission has recently started an inquiry.

ACC Deputy Director Abdus Sobhan, who is conducting the investigation, said he was going through the documents now. "Soon I will visit the place."

Six fishermen beaten up by 'coast guard members'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least six fishermen were injured as Bangladesh Coast Guard members allegedly charged truncheons on them in the Agunmukha river under Rangabali upazila in the district yesterday.

The injured fishermen are Reaz, 25, Shahajada, 40, Monir Hossain, 35, Yusuf, 30, Jasim Uddin, 35, and Alamgir Hossain, 35.

They claimed that some coast guard members beat them around 6:30pm as they refused to pay "toll".

Mohammad Kawsar, Bhola zone commander of the coast guard, however, refuted the allegation.

He said most fishermen catch fish in the river with banned current nets.

Yesterday, a patrol team went there to seize illegal current nets. The fishermen then tried to attack the team members. The coast guard members fired two shots in the air to bring the situation under control, he added.

Two held with 32 gold bars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested two people along with 32 gold bars at Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday.

They are Rahul and Noton. The bars weigh around five kilograms worth Tk 2.30 crore, said police.

Rahul and Noton arrived in Kamalapur by train from Chittagong around 8:30am, said Abdul Majid, officer-in-charge of Dhaka Railway Police Station.

Acting on a tip-off, police searched the two after they got down from the train and recovered the gold bars from their possession, he said.

During primary interrogation, the two claimed that they were "just gold carriers". They received the bars in Chittagong, and their job was to take those to Benapole in Jessore, said the police official.

They had already carried gold bars three to four times on the route, added the OC.

The police official said they produced the duo before a Dhaka court, seeking a seven-day remand. The court granted a five-day remand for each of them.

He also said they arrested one Yusuf, who also came from Chittagong, along with about 1,500 yaba tablets from the railway station in the morning. A Dhaka court placed Yusuf on a three-day remand.

ISIS 'deputy' killed

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"He supported ISIL operations in both countries and was in charge of ISIL operations in Iraq, where he was instrumental in planning operations over the past two years, including the ISIL offensive in Mosul in June 2014," it said, using another name for Islamic State.

Like many senior Iraqi jihadists, before joining the ISIS group, Hayali had been a member of al-Qaeda's Iraqi faction.

He was reportedly a former Iraqi officer from the era of Saddam Hussein.

ISIS militants launched a devastating offensive in Iraq in June 2014.

Beginning in Mosul, the country's second city and capital of Nineveh province, they swept security forces aside and eventually overran around a third of the country.

A parliamentary inquiry said this week that Iraqi officials had disastrously mismanaged the Mosul crisis, ignoring ample warnings of an impending attack.

Officials said earlier this month that more than 2,000 people had been executed in and around the city since the jihadists took it over, accused by the militants of "promoting ideas that distort Islam."

Their names were posted on a list compiled by IS along with an order for health ministry staff to deliver death certificates. The names included policemen, former army officers, local officials, journalists, doctors and rights activists.

The group also holds significant territory inside Syria, and has drawn in thousands of foreign recruits, including from Europe and the United States.

Section 57

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city's Badda area.

Presided over by Beraid Union Parishad chairman M Jahangir Alam, the programme was attended, among others, by former state minister for liberation war affairs Captain (ret'd) ABM Tajul Islam, MP from Dhaka-11 AKM Rahmat Ullah and Director General of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) Benazir Ahmed.

'Robber' killed

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special operation at Laksam area last night, reports a correspondent in Comilla.

When they reached near a brickfield in Fayezezanj area on Comilla-Noakhali highway around 4:25am, suddenly they heard some passengers of a Noakhali-bound bus screaming for help, he claimed.

According to the SI, they then saw a group of 12 to 15 criminals who were preparing to rob the bus passengers.

Seeing the DB police personnel, the "robbers" opened fire on them. The law enforcers retaliated with gunshots, triggering the "gunfight".

Quader died on the spot. Three of his cohorts -- Sourav Chowdhury, Neyamat Ullah and Jahangir Gazi -- were also shot.

Apart from the trio, five more -- Shahidul Islam, Jamal Uddin, Mohammad Jewel, Mohammad Bablu and Noman Mia -- were detained there.

Three DB police men, including SI Kamal Akand, sustained minor injuries in the incident, claimed the SI.

A shutter gun, three LG, five bullets, three knives, five masks and a microbus used for the attempted robbery were recovered.

The body of Quader was sent to Comilla Medical College morgue for an autopsy. The injured "robbers" were being treated at the Comilla Medical College Hospital, added SI Kamal.

Dolphin spied for Israel!

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has a fleet of Dolphin class submarines, Hamas was specifically referring to capturing the mammal.

Hamas said the dolphin was picked up by its military wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassan Brigades. The animal's fate is not known.

Palestinian newspaper Al Quds reported that the commandos became wary when they spotted the dolphin making "suspicious movements" just outside the port of Gaza.

It claimed that Hamas suspects the dolphin was used to film the training of naval commandos, and said the dolphin was fitted with a type of dart gun.

Claims that Israel is using animals for espionage purposes are not new. In 2012, an eagle with an Israeli tag was captured in Sudan with locals claiming it was a Mossad spy.

In 2010, Egypt said several Israel-controlled sharks may have been involved in attacks on tourists in the Red Sea.

And twice in recent years, Turkish media have highlighted birds tagged with Israeli university tracking devices as being on potential espionage missions.

It is the first time that dolphins, known as one of the world's most intelligent animals, have been accused of being in the employ of Mossad.

Sweet-sour & money-spinner

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ramiflora or Burmese grape, has already changed the fortunes of a number of farmers in the district, with the fruit so much in demand that buyers are often willing to pick the fruit directly from the trees, making the sales prospect for growers very convenient.

About 14.3 hectares of land in the district has been brought under lotkon cultivation, with five to eight tonnes of fruit being produced per hectare, according to sources at the Panchagarh office of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

The current year has seen a good yield with lotkon growers further

blessed by traders buying large quantities for between Tk 50-70 per kilogram. Panchagarh's lotkons are then sent across the county, including to Dhaka.

Saiful Islam, 40, a lotkon farmer of Haribhasha union in Panchagarh Sadar upazila, has 15 lotkon trees, planted around a decade ago in his areca plantation. This season he has sold Tk 30,000 worth of fruit to local traders.

"Lotkon farming is comparatively easy and returns a handsome profit," he says.

According to Saiful, the application of some fertilisers and loose soil at the base of the trees in late February is the only maintenance required.

Forty-eight-year-old Md Hasan Ali of Panimaspukuri village has been working as a lotkon trader for several years.

"This area is famous for lotkons," he says. "This year I bought fruit from around 100 trees for Tk 1.8 lakh. And I sold them for around Tk 2.6 lakh. It was quite a big profit."

Lotkon cultivation on a larger scale in the district began between 1995 and 2000, with many now growing the fruit due to the possibility for sizeable profits, says DAE Deputy Director SM Asraf Ali in Panchagarh. The fruit is an especially popular crop in Panimaspukuri, Haribhasha and Jagdal villages, he adds.