

SHIMULIA-KAWRAKANDI Ferry service disrupted for poor navigability

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Ferry service on the Shimulia-Kawrakandi route has been severely disrupted for last three days due to poor navigability, leaving more than 700 vehicles stranded on both sides of the Padma.

Only one out of 18 ferries is irregularly plying, multiplying the woes of thousands of passengers of 21 southern districts. The single ferry could only do four trips yesterday.

"We have come here around 7:00 in the morning. It's evening now, but we could not make it to the ferry... I cannot even board a speed boat since my mother and sister are with me," said Shamim, who started from Uttara for his home in Shibchar.

Muktar Biswas, a trucker, said he has been struck at Shimulia Ghat for the last six days. "I do not know when we will get our turn for the ferry," said Muktar, who came from Gazipur with poultry feeds.

Goods-laden trucks are the worst sufferers as the authorities are allowing light vehicles to the ferry first.

"The ferry service has virtually come to a halt," said Shekhar Chandra Roy, assistant manager of BIWTA.

Sultan Uddin Khan, executive engineer of BIWTA, said dredging work in Louhajang turning point was going on but facing obstacles due to strong current.

Four Ro-Ro ferries could not operate for the last two weeks due to the navigability problem on this route, referred to as the gateway to the south of the country. Thirteen medium and small ferries were operating since then, but their operation was suspended on Thursday night.

'Robber' killed in 'gunfight'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged robber was killed in a "gunfight" between police and his cohorts in South Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital early yesterday.

The dead, Mohammad Yusuf, 35, was an inhabitant of Hazaribigha village in Dohar upazila of Dhaka district.

Police claimed that Yusuf was a member of an inter-district robber gang. He stood accused in at least eight cases, including robbery and murder, with different police stations, said police.

With this, at least 25 people were killed in such "gunfights" or "shootouts" between July 1 and August 23, according to reports published in this newspaper.

On information that a gang of robbers was gathering at Muslim Nagar for committing a robbery there, a police team raided the area around 1:45pm, Monirul Islam, officer-in-charge of South Keraniganj Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Sensing their presence, the criminals opened fire on them, the police official said, adding that the law enforcers then retaliated with fire, triggering the "gunfight".

During the gun battle, Yusuf was shot and rushed to Mitford Hospital where on-duty doctors declared him dead, according to the police official.

Police claimed to have detained two people, Sohrab Hossain alias Sohrab "Dakat" and Ismail Sarker, and recovered a pistol, two bullets and sharp weapons from the spot.

The OC also claimed that five policemen sustained minor injuries in the incident. They took first aid.

Scrap section 57

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Editor Golam Sarwar.

The editors also strongly condemned the arrest and harassment of journalist Probir Sikdar and expressed deep concern over the incident.

The misuse of section 57 of the ICT act is contrary to a free press, said the proposal.

The meeting, held at The Daily Star Centre, discussed in detail the National Online Media Policy 2015, overall situation of the mass media and the issue of contempt of court.

It was also attended by Editors' Council General Secretary and The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam, Treasurer and Manabzamin Chief Editor Matur Rahman Chowdhury, Prothom Alo Editor Matur Rahman, News Today Editor Rezauddin Ahmed, Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamal Dutta, Kaler Kantha Editor Imdadul Haq Milon, Bangladesh Pratidin Editor Nayeem Nizam, The Independent Editor M Shamsur Rahman, Nayadiganta Editor Alamgir Mohiuddin, Ittefaq Editor (acting) Tasmima Hossain, Jugantor Editor (acting) Saiful Alam, Banik Barta Editor Dewan Hanif Mahmud and Dhaka Tribune Editor Zafar Sobhan.



Vehicles stranded on Shimulia ghat yesterday as ferry services on the Padma have come almost to a halt due to navigability crisis in the river. The ferries made only four trips on the Shimulia-Kawrakandi route yesterday while the number is usually over 70 a day. PHOTO: STAR

Mass graves found again in Malaysia

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human remains in early May leading to a crackdown on human traffickers in the Southern part of the country.

The human traffickers then abandoned thousands of migrants on rickety boats in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, triggering a regional humanitarian crisis that saw them land in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar.

Some 2,000 Bangladeshis have been repatriated since then while the Rohingya Muslims, who are a persecuted minority in Myanmar, were being processed for resettlement.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, 88,000 people from Myanmar and Bangladesh coasts took the dangerous sea journey on rickety boats between January 2014 and June 2015.

At least 300 of them died in the sea, but there is no estimate of the deaths in the camps on Thai-Malaysian border.

CARAM Asia, a regional NGO based in Malaysia, found that more than 500 families in Bangladesh had their relatives missing.

Meanwhile, 91 Thais, nine

Myanmar nationals and four Bangladeshis are facing charges of human trafficking, partaking in a transnational crime network and assisting or bringing in aliens into Thailand illegally.

Malaysian authorities held 12 police officials on suspicion of having links to human trafficking following the discovery of mass graves in May. A probe is on but details of their involvement could not be learnt yet.

Mirza Abdullahil Baqui, special superintendent (organised crime) of the Criminal Investigation Department of Bangladesh, said they had contacted the authorities in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Philippines regarding the investigation into the trafficking cases.

"We have seen that Bangladesh is used as a source country for human trafficking from Cox's Bazar route. Now, we are trying to find out trafficking gangs active regionally," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The CID is now investigating more than 200 human trafficking cases filed across the country, he added.

IGP defends police

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in many cases, gunfight takes place when police face life-threatening risks while taking legal actions," AKM Shahidul Hoque told reporters after a training session at Police Staff College in the city.

"When anyone is killed in a gunfight, it too falls within the purview of a legal process," he said.

The police boss claimed that they also have to face executive inquiry for deaths in such incidents.

He, however, on behalf of law enforcement agencies and the government, vowed to continue all sorts of efforts to improve law and order, and ensure people's safety.

Bangladesh Police in association with Interpol arranged the training session titled "Intelligence Analysis for Tiger Range Countries" which was participated by 20 representatives from 10 countries, including India, Bhutan and Indonesia.

On Saturday, at a prayer for Arzu, who was killed in a "gunbattle" with Rab on August 18, AL lawmaker Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, said, "We will not tolerate killings of our leaders and

SHAWKAT MAHMUD

Police seek 80 days' remand!

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday showed BNP chairperson's Adviser Shawkat Mahmud arrested in eight more cases and sought an eighty-day remand for him.

The Dhaka court fixed today for hearing the prayers, asking the jail authorities to produce Shawkat, also president of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, before it.

The cases were filed for assaulting policemen, preventing them from discharging their duties, damaging and torching vehicles, and throwing crude and petrol bombs at passengers' buses in the city's Paltan and Motijheel areas in January and February this year during the BNP-led 20-party alliance blockade programme.

The cases were lodged with Paltan and Motijheel police stations.

On Saturday, Shawkat was sent to jail on completion of his three-day remand in a case filed for the death of a private car driver in an arson attack in January.

On August 18, law enforcers detained him from the city's Panthapath area when he went to a convention centre to attend a press briefing of Adarsha Dhaka Andolan, a pro-BNP professionals' platform.

Cost up 5 times in 5yrs

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project, being financed by China on a state-to-state cooperation basis, has been raising eyebrows.

Back in 2010, following an initial study for the project, its cost was estimated at just \$129 million. But later studies revised both the project's design and cost a couple of times and the project cost jumped up to \$543 million.

"Right now the approved project cost is Tk 4,243 crore or \$543 million," said a source of Economic Relations Division (ERD). "Of this, China will provide \$423 million loan at 2 percent interest with 15 years repayment and five years grace period. The government will arrange the remaining cost," the source added.

This is, however, not the end of the project cost escalation as the energy ministry has recently asked the planning ministry to approve further cost escalation up to \$686 million. This escalation is based on the latest revision by the project's German consultant ILF.

According to industry experts, this project should not cost more than \$350 million to complete.

SPM PROJECT

The Single Point Mooring installation will be built in the Sonadia deep sea area where large oil tankers would anchor. As per the latest project design, two large 36-inch pipelines will be built there to transmit the oil to a storage facility 16km away on the Matarbari island of Maheshkhali. One pipeline will transmit crude oil and the other diesel.

From Matarbari, two 18-inch pipelines will be built up to ERL storage in Chittagong over 90km away. There will also be two pumping stations to transmit the oil.

The ERL says the initial project cost estimate and design were both wrong. As a result it may appear that the project cost had gone up questionably.

One official noted that Pakistani firm Enar Petrotech Services in 2009 conducted a feasibility study and proposed setting up a direct pumping SPM in the deep sea by installing a 77km-long 36-inch-diameter pipeline offshore and onshore combined. With the vessel pumps, crude/diesel oil was supposed to be pumped directly to the refinery via SPM without any intermediate pump station and with a flow rate of 2,900 cubic metre per hour.

Enar Petrotech assessed that the construction part would cost \$129 million.

On the basis of this study, the government sought fund from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), which agreed to provide the fund.

Later, the government appointed ILF Consulting Engineers of Germany as the project's consultant to prepare the details for the project.

The ILF in a follow up survey found several flaws with the Enar Petrotech's study stating that direct pumping of the oil was not practical as the ship manufacturers and the vessel data show that their pumping pressure was limited. Besides, Enar Petrotech's suggested oil delivery point was also wrong as the

depth of water was not sufficient to moor large oil carrying vessels. The pipeline route also overlooked other issues.

The ILF opined that the direct pumping option had to change alongside the location of the SPM. Instead, there would be a pump station and an oil tank farm in Maheshkhali that includes a three crude oil tanks and three high speed diesel tanks with net capacity of 2,40,000 tonnes, pump station with booster pumps, transfer pumps and drain pumps, generators, metering stations, block valve stations and housing facilities and other human resources infrastructures including control room. It accordingly revised the project design.

The Eastern Refinery is the only source of local supply of petroleum products that annually processes 1.5 million tonnes of crude oil. The ERL is currently pursuing an annual production capacity of 4.5 million tonnes. "This pipeline will also help the ERL to process more crude oil than it can now," said an official.

The existing infrastructure at Chittagong port is incapable of handling large crude oil tankers due to the shallow draft of the Karnaphuli river channel. Due to this, the crude vessels are anchored at deeper waters and smaller vessels unload the supply through multiple trips between these ships and the ERL.

Original date of commencement of project was March 2010 to be completed by December 2012. Now it has the target

Bribery rampant

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officials regarding fighting graft. "Hopefully the ministry would take some action," Iftekaruzzaman said.

Presenting the TIB findings, Wahid Alam, senior programme manager (policy and research) TIB said people have to pay bribe to get any service from land offices. The amount of bribe depends on the type of services and quantity and locations of the land.

"A surveyor even threatens a land owner that if he is not paid bribe, he would willingly make a mistake in the land record," said Wahid.

In the presentation, Wahid Alam presented a chart of the bribe people have to pay to get different types of services: Tk 100 to Tk 10,000 for land development taxes, Tk 5,000 to Tk 2 lakhs for mutation, Tk 1,000 to Tk 50,000 for land registration and Tk 10,000 to Tk 20 lakh for lease of a haat or bazaar.

Weaknesses of existing law, manual record management and lack of accountability in land administration, proper budgetary allocation, skilled manpower, effective trainings, office logistics and proper equipment are the key reasons behind graft in this sector, he said.

In the presentation, TIB recommended, the government should form a single institution to provide all the land related services. There should be a long-term plan regarding digitalisation of the land management and coordinated system of digitalised land management and land registration.

activists in the name of so-called gunfights and those responsible for the killings will be brought to book."

He said Rab could not avoid the responsibility for the murder of Arzu.

Taposh had also come down heavily on Rab soon after Arzu's killing. He alleged that the elite force killed the BCL leader without any trial.

In the last few days, at least four leaders and activists of the AL and its associate bodies died in "shootouts" with police and Rab.

Although panic has reportedly gripped many ruling party men following such killings, Taposh, also nephew of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is the first to speak out over extra judicial killings incidents and to point fingers at law enforcement agencies.

Replying to a query about the killing of the BCL leader in "crossfire", the IGP yesterday said, "The criminals do not belong to any party. They go for their personal interests taking political shelters, and also under the protection of influential quarters."

"If they [criminals] pose threat to public safety, we have zero tolerance towards them," he warned.

BRIBERY IN LAND RELATED SERVICES AND CASES

TYPE OF SERVICE	AMOUNT OF BRIBE
Land development tax-	Tk 100- Tk 10,000
Mutation	Tk 3000 - Tk 200,000
Registration	Tk 1000 - Tk 50,000
Khatian and copy of land map-	Tk 200 -Tk 1000
Khatian and verified copy of land map-	Tk 500- Tk 3000
Copy of Land documents -	Tk 800 - Tk 2000
Land survey in village (per bigha) -	Tk 500 - Tk 1000
Land survey in city (per decimal) -	Tk 3000 - Tk 5000
Correction of land survey record -	Tk 4000 - Tk 5000
Leasing of haat and bazaar -	Tk 10,000 -Tk 20,00,000
Any sort of investigation regarding land -	Tk 10,000- Tk 200,000
Any step of land related cases -	Tk 300 -Tk 1000

The TIB report said the government in recent years has seriously been considering digitalisation of land sector. For the work, huge amount money would be required in coming years. According to senior officials of land ministry, around Tk 1,000 billion would be required for the next 10 years for digitalisation of entire land administration and management.

Woman brutally murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A leader of Mohila Awami League was murdered allegedly by a woman in Chandpur Sadar upazila Saturday night.

The dead, Kohinur Begum, 45, was a member of the district Mohila AL, said Masuda Noor Khan, member secretary of the unit. The victim used to stay at Rahamatpur Residential Colony.

Kohinur's husband Abdul Mannan alleged that Nayan Begum, 35, of the same area, slit his wife's throat in her (Nayan) home and fled.

Later, Police recovered the body. The motive behind the murder was unknown.

He said his wife had received a phone call from Nayan around 8:00pm Saturday. The woman had requested Kohinur to meet her.

Nayan immediately came to their house as Kohinur refused to meet her. Later, the two went outside together.

Since then, the victim had been missing, said the husband.

AH Enayat Uddin, officer-in-charge of Chandpur Model Police Station, told The Daily Star that they were interrogating Nayan's two daughters.

During primary interrogation, the girls said around 8:30pm that night they heard someone screaming for help from their mother's room.

When they tried to enter the room, their mother told them that nothing had happened and asked them to study instead, said the OC.

He said the daughters went inside the room around 9:00pm. This time, they saw the body in a pool of blood but their mother was missing.

On information, police went to the scene and sent the body to Chandpur Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

A case against Nayan was filed.

Greek leaders clash over snap polls

AFP, Athens

An unprecedented war of words has broken out between Greece's outgoing government, the parliament chief and the president over early elections likely to be held on September 20.

The government of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has accused parliamentary speaker Zoe Constantopoulou of "behaving like a dictator" after she branded the early election procedure

"undemocratic and unconstitutional."

Tsipras resigned on Thursday, going on the offensive to defend the tough terms he accepted in the 86-billion-euro (\$96 billion) rescue package which had triggered a rebellion in his radical-left Syriza party.

The mutiny suppered his parliamentary majority and last week 25 of the rebels broke away to form a rival anti-bailout group called Popular Unity.