

Plying of vessels suspended in Padma

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

The plying of launches and speedboats were suspended yesterday on the Shimulia-Kathalbari route due to strong currents in the Padma river.

Around 300 vehicles were stranded on both sides of the river, causing hundreds of passengers to suffer, said witnesses.

Meanwhile, only 14 of the usual 18 ferries operated on the route yesterday, carrying less than their capacity, due to poor navigability, said Khandakar Shah Khaled Newaz, assistant general manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), adding that it took about 20-25 minutes longer than normal for the ferries to make a single trip.

He further said that launch and speedboat services have been suspended since 9:00am yesterday to avert any possible accident. "The next course of action will be taken after observing the river's situation today," he added.

As launches and speedboats remained inoperable, the passengers had to cross the river on ferries, which added additional pressure, the BIWTC official said.

BIWTA Traffic Inspector Solaiman Hossain said they have hoisted the cautionary signal 1 at the Shimulia terminal.

The air velocity was high, due to which it was too risky for speedboats and launches to ply on rough waters, he said, adding that movement of launches and speedboats will resume once the air velocity and river waves reduce.

Nothing

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anyone. What type of remark is it? Can any citizen who abides by the constitution and law of the land make such an audacious remark?" she said.

Hasina, also president of the ruling Awami League, said this while presiding over a meeting of the AL Central Working Committee at the Gono Bhaban.

She said if Khaleda felt she was innocent she must appear before the court.

Mentioning that Khaleda did not appear before the court even for a single time in the last six months in connection with the Zia Charitable Trust case, Hasina said she did not do so because she has a "guilty mind".

"She wants to avoid the trial and bypass it as she has a guilty mind... she has an escapist mindset as she's guilty... this is the reality," said the PM.

Hasina said when the caretaker government filed cases, even of murder, against her and issued an arrest warrant, she cut her stay in the USA short and returned home taking the challenge to face the case as she knew that she was innocent.

Refuting BNP leaders' allegation of holding a camera trial in the makeshift court, the PM said the trial was being held in an open court where people have free access.

"How could it be a camera trial when the door of the court remains open? They [BNP leaders] are bringing such an allegation only to confuse people," she said, adding, "I would like to clearly tell the nation that it's not a camera trial."

Mentioning that the BNP chief was allowed to keep her maidservant Fatema inside the jail with her, Hasina questioned whether the constitution or the law permitted a convicted person to take her domestic help with her in the jail. "Is there any such example anywhere in the world? I would like to have an answer from BNP leaders to this question."

She also warned that the government would withdraw the maidservant if the BNP leaders failed to come up with a reasonable answer justifying Fatema's stay in jail with Khaleda. "Because, no one has the right to make an innocent person languish in jail. This is also a crime."

She said BNP leaders and lawyers were making spurious and baseless allegations of holding camera trial as they do not have enough evidence to defend Khaleda.

The PM criticised the media for giving good treatment to Khaleda's remark that she would not appear before the court though the remark was in violation of the law as she was a convicted person.

Referring to possible formation of a new political alliance by Dr Kamal Hossain, president of Gonoforum, and Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, president of Bikolpodhara Bangladesh, she welcomed the move.

"An alliance is in the offing with our so-called big shots. This is very good. It should be formed. There should be an alternative to the Awami League," she said.

Hasina hoped that they would not make Jamaat-Shibir and anti-liberation forces their alliance partners.

KHALEDA'S TRIAL Makeshift court in jail illegal: SCBA chief

Law minister says it's for smooth proceedings and her security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supreme Court Bar Association President Zainul Abedin yesterday demanded cancellation of the law ministry's gazette that made way for holding trial of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at old Dhaka central jail.

"The government has illegally set up a makeshift court inside the jail to hold a camera trial and punish the BNP leader illegally," he said while addressing a press conference at the SCBA auditorium.

Saying that the trial in the makeshift court is contradictory to section 352 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), Zainul, also a BNP vice-chairman, alleged that the government's motive was to keep the proceedings off limits to the public and the media.

According to section 352 CrPC, a court will be set up at such a place where people can enter.

Meanwhile, denying the allegation of camera trial raised by the SCBA president, Law Minister Anisul Huq said the court had been set up to ensure

smooth proceedings and security of Khaleda.

"Khaleda did not appear before the court for the last seven months citing security reasons."

The minister made the comment while talking to reporters after a roundtable programme in the capital's Tejgaon area.

He said as per the definition, camera trial refers to a court where no public or media can enter. In such places, only the judge and the parties are present.

"However, Khaleda had talked to journalists at the court, which means it is open for all and access is not restricted," he said, adding, "The trial does not fall within the definition of camera trial."

The law ministry issued the gazette on September 4 and the makeshift court was set up at old Dhaka central jail the next day to hold trial proceedings against Khaleda in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case.

Earlier in February, the BNP chief was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage graft case.

N Korean broke

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multiple other US businesses, according to the complaint. In 2016 and 2017, Park's targets included defence contractor Lockheed Martin Corp. The complaint said there was no evidence Lockheed was breached.

The US Treasury Department has imposed sanctions against Park and the Chinese-based front company he worked for, Chosun Expo.

The North Korean mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In 2014, US officials said unnamed North Korean hackers were responsible for a major cyber intrusion into Sony, which resulted in leaked internal documents and data being destroyed.

The attacks came after Pyongyang sent a letter to the United Nations, demanding that Sony not move forward with the movie "The Interview" that portrayed the US-backed assassination of a character made to look like North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Park used a series of online personas for social media platforms, including on Facebook and Twitter, to send malicious links to individuals involved in the production of "The Interview," the complaint said. The malicious links carried North Korean-controlled malware.

In November 2014, Park allegedly launched the same style social media-focused attack against employees of AMC Theatres. The movie theatre chain in some cases delayed or canceled screenings of "The Interview" nationwide, Variety at the time reported. The complaint said there was no evidence AMC Theatres was

Parakeets' tale

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popular rose-ringed parakeet.

A common bird, the rose-ringed parakeet, scientifically known as *Psittacula kramera*, can be found across the southern part of the Indian subcontinent and throughout the South Asian countries as well as some African nations.

Atikur Rahman Atik, a local of the Demazani Bazar area, said, "I have been watching the parakeets on this tree since I was young. However, the numbers seem to be decreasing day by day over the last few years."

Locals said that over the past six years, the number of birds in the area has been plummeting at an alarming rate due to many reasons, including trapping and ill-treatment.

SM Iqbal, a local bird expert currently working as associate professor of the zoology department in Tangail's Govt. MM Ali College, said the rose-ringed parakeet is one of the few parrot species that have successfully adapted to living in "disturbed habitats".

They feed on cereal grains, buds, fruits, vegetables, nuts, berries, and seeds, especially of the sunflower, he said, adding that the bird has become a popular house pet due to its unique ability to impersonate the human voice.

"Even though it's a common bird, its numbers have been decreasing rapidly, in the last decade or so, mostly in urban areas. Loss of habitats caused by deforestation, trapping and hunting are the primary causes for this."

Pradip Mahant, another local, said, "More than 100 pairs of the rose-ringed parakeet used to live in this old Mahogany tree alone, but now there is a maximum of 10 pairs left. Both the tree and the parakeets taking shelter in it stand as a memory of the Zamindar regime during the British period. Proper measures should be taken by the government to preserve them."

5 Bangladeshis held by border patrol agents in Texas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US border patrol agents on Tuesday arrested five Bangladeshis in Texas.

Laredo border patrol agents discovered the five individuals walking near the Rio Grande, one of the principal rivers in the southwest US and northern Mexico, the local kgns.tv reported on Wednesday.

Since October 1 last year, 609 Bangladeshis have been detained at the US border.

When agents questioned the five individuals on Tuesday regarding their immigration status, it was revealed that they were from Bangladesh. The individuals were processed accordingly, it added.

"The Laredo Sector Border Patrol continues to have the highest number of Bangladeshi apprehensions."

The report did not mention the names of the detainees or the route they took to reach Laredo.

The Washington Times on April 18 reported that illegal immigrants from Bangladesh paid up to \$27,000 to international trafficking rings to ferry them from Asia to the western hemisphere, where they make their way up through Central America and Mexico to the US border, where they are led across the Rio Grande.

"It's definitely a transnational criminal organisation that's doing that networking," Scott Good, acting deputy chief patrol agent for the Laredo, was quoted as saying by the Washington Times.

The transnational syndicates facilitate the entire trip from start to finish, he said.

Rehiring

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caught during the raids as many don't bring their work permits to work.

"Many of those who are legal do not bring their permits to work because it is not necessary for them to do so.

"But if they are caught, they will still be considered illegal, as they can't produce legitimate working passes," he said.

Earlier, rights groups said a lot of the undocumented workers were victims of abusive employers, cheating by agents and sub-agents and human traffickers, and demanded that the authorities take actions against the offenders.

They also called upon the government to halt the crackdown on migrants and provide them with a fresh chance for legalisation, to be conducted directly by the immigration department.

2 'robbers'

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enforcers, forcing them to retaliate, he said.

During the gunfight, police arrested six robbers, including a bullet-hit Mobarak. Later, Mobarak was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead, said Morshed.

The other robbers are -- Rahmatullah, 25, Babu, 20, Sharif, 28, Rana, 16 and Hridoy, 19.

The arrestees are accused in five to six cases, including robbery, with various police stations, Morshed claimed.

Assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Narayan and Constable Mominur Rahman were injured during the gunfight, he said, adding they have taken treatment at an Upazila health complex.

Police also recovered one gun, two bullets, a machete and two knives from the spot.

OC Morshed further added that the robbers used to drive around on private cars and microbuses on the highway and loot valuable goods.

In a similar story, Apan alias Caesar, 32, was killed in a 'gunfight' with police around 2:30am at Matidali area, reports our Bogra Correspondent.

He was accused in more than 11 cases, including for possession of firearms, with different police stations, said Sonaton Chakroborty, additional superintendent of Police of Bogra sadar circle.

Based on information that a gang was preparing to commit a robbery, a police team raided Matidali area of the town. Sensing presence of the law enforcers, the robbers opened fire, prompting them to retaliate, which triggered the gunfight, said the ASP.

Apan, the leader of the gang, was hit by a bullet during the gunfight. Afterwards, police took him to the Bogra Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital around 3:00am, where the doctor pronounced him dead, he said.

Apan's cohorts, however, managed to flee the scene, he said, adding police recovered a pipe gun, two rounds of bullets and a machete from the spot. A Burmese knife was also recovered from Apan's pocket.

Three policemen were also injured during the gunfight and they were now undergoing treatment at the Bogra Police Lines Hospital, he added.

Strange case of a plaintiff

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, Mozammel's family members and several leaders of his organisation said he was implicated in the "false case" to gag his voice as he has been vocal against anarchy in the transport sector.

They said the Samity often faces wrath of transport owners, workers and even the government, as it speaks against irregularities in the sector and regularly comes up with statistics on road accidents.

In a statement, the Samity said the government wants to muzzle passengers through the arrest and remand of Mozammel in a "false" case only days before the placing of proposed Road Transport Act 2018 in parliament.

It also alleged that there has been an attempt to enact a law to serve the interest of transport owners, workers and the government, ignoring people's interest.

DISCREPANCIES IN CASE STATEMENT

According to the case statement, 48-year-old Md Dulal, son of Nawab Ali, lives in House No 9 on Road 18 at Gudaraghat under Shah Ali Police Station in Mirpur.

This correspondent went to that address yesterday but didn't find any house with holding number 9. However, locals showed a house without any holding number, located next to the house with holding number 8.

A local influential man, Dulal Talukder, son of former ward commissioner Malguni Talukder, owns the tin-roofed house, which has been rented out. Six tenants now live there and none of them goes by the name Dulal.

Jabbar Ahmed, caretaker of the tin-roofed house, said though it doesn't have any holding number, everybody in the area knows it as House No 9 as it is located next to the house with holding number 8.

Contacted, Dulal Talukder said he didn't file any case against anyone.

Replying to a query, he said he is yet to get a holding number for the house.

"I haven't filed any case, and as far as I know, nobody named Dulal lives there," he told this correspondent over the phone.

From noon till last night, this correspondent made numerous calls to the cell phone number mentioned as the plaintiff's contact number in the case statement. The phone rang but no one picked it up.

In the statement, the plaintiff alleged that Mozammel had been demanding money for the last 10-15 days. "He [Mozammel] threatened to have published misleading reports against me and our organisation if we failed to pay him Tk 2 lakh a month."

On September 3, Mozammel chanced upon Dulal in front of Sony Cinema Hall in Mirpur and demanded money from him. Dulal then gave Mozammel Tk 10,000, according to the statement.

"The accused then asked me to give him the remaining amount there around 5:00pm on Wednesday [September 5]," alleged the plaintiff.

Asked whether police registered the case upon verification, Dadan Fakir, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station, said they carried out a primary investigation, and three witnesses gave statements saying the incident took place.

The OC, however, said further probe would make it clear whether there is any other motive behind the filing of the case.

Asked whether the plaintiff's address was verified or not, Bazlur Rahman, investigation officer of the case, declined to comment.

He also didn't reply to the question why Mozammel was picked up from his house at an ungodly hour.



Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury

MOZAMMEL REMANDED

A Dhaka court placed Mozammel on a day's remand after the IO produced him before it with a seven-day remand prayer.

Jyotirmoy Barua, counsel for Mozammel, moved a bail petition along with a prayer for cancelling the remand petition.

He said that according to the first information report, the accused had sought money 10 to 15 days ago, but the accuser didn't immediately file any general diary nor went to police.

"This is a totally false and fabricated case."

Mozammel was implicated in the case for his role against anarchy in the transport sector, Jyotirmoy mentioned.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mazharul Hoque rejected his bail prayer and placed him on a day's remand.

Mozammel's wife Riju Akhter Chowdhury said her husband has been working for upholding passengers' rights for the last 12 years.

"He worked for the interest of the passengers, not for his personal gains. He was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy so that anarchy in the transport sector continues," she told reporters on the court premises.

SAMITY 'UNDER PRESSURE'

Established in 2006, Jatri Kalyan Samity obtained registration from the Department of Social Welfare in July 2014 as a social welfare organisation, said its leaders.

The organisation is run by an 11-member executive committee. Its main source of income is monthly financial contribution of its members and its monthly magazine that carries advertisements, they said.

On several occasions, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader criticised the organisation. Even several lawmakers castigated the Samity's reports on road accidents, terming those "false and motivated". They even raised questions about Mozammel's political affiliation.

At the end of June, the road transport and bridges ministry rejected a Samity report which said the numbers of both road accidents and deaths saw a sharp rise during the Eid-ul-Fitr rush this year.

The ministry also said the Samity is not a registered organisation and that it dished out "confusing information" on several occasions.

Talking to this newspaper, Jatri Kalyan Samity Executive Member Shamsuddin Chowdhury said Mozammel has been vocal against anarchy in the transport sector.

"This arrest was made to silence his voice. When police raided his house, they said they came on the instructions of high-ups... they are now cooking up charges," he claimed.

Mohiuddin Ahmed, organising secretary of the organisation, said it is regrettable that police arrested Mozammel at an ungodly hour and sought his remand.

"The case has been filed to harass him," he added.

Culpable homicide

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Two college students were run over and killed and 12 others injured when one of the two buses ploughed into the crowd.

Culpable homicide is an act which results in a person's death. If proven guilty, one may face sentences of up to life in prison, according to section 304 of the Penal Code.

The deaths of Abdul Karim alias Rajib Uddin, 18, and Dia Khanam Mim, 17, triggered nationwide student protests for safe roads.

"It is a positive move that the owners are charged... We always say that the responsible persons, whoever they are, should be brought to book," noted road safety campaigner Ilias Kanchan told The Daily Star.

The six charged by police are bus drivers Masum Billah and Zobair Hossain Sumon, their assistants Enayet Hossain and Kazi Asad and bus owners Shahadat Hossain and Jahangir Alam.

Of them, only Kazi Asad and Jahangir Alam have not been arrested yet.

The bus owners were charged with culpable homicide for appointing drivers who did not have licence to drive heavy vehicles, the charge sheet said.

The accused are also facing charges of being negligent and voluntarily causing simple and grievous hurt. The charges were primarily proved and they should be brought to trial, the charge sheet said.

The charge sheet will be placed before the court on September 13.

Police also sought arrest warrants for Asad and Alam and attachment of their moveable and immoveable properties.

Of the rest of the accused, Masum, Sumon and Shahadat gave statements before magistrates admitting their guilt.

Talking to reporters at the media centre of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, DB Additional Commissioner Abdul Baten said investigators gathered a lot of evidence and hoped that the accused would be awarded the highest punishment.

Dia's father Jahangir Alam filed the case with Cantonment Police Station.

Following the widespread student protests, the government and transport owners and workers took several measures to improve road safety, but deaths on roads continued.