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Risky trips thru' rivers

Frequent accidents on Dhaka-Barishal route

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL and MD FOISAL AHMED

Frequent movement of unauthorised vessels, hidden islands and narrow channel have made around 50 kilometres of Dhaka-Barishal naval route extremely risky. Between January and August this year, at least eight accidents happened in the 50-kilometre stretch that killed two people and injured 50 more, said an official of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) seeking anonymity.

BIWTA banned movement of trawlers, cargo ships, bulkheads, dredgers and tankers at night but the vessels continued to ply violating the ban, alleged the official, adding that the authorities failed to prevent the illegal vessel movement.

According to BIWTA, the 168-kilometre naval route from Dhaka to Barishal carries over 40,000 passengers every day. Of the route, a 50-kilometre stretch from Charbaria to Barishal port in the Kirtankhola is highly accident prone.

On top of that, a three-kilometre route from Miar Char channel in Barishal's Mehendiganj upazila is even riskier due to its narrowness, BIWTA said.

MV Surovi-7 Captain Muhammad Abdullah said he had to move his vessel very slowly through the Miar Char channel because of its narrow path and movement of banned vessels.

The channel needs dredging too as many hidden islands have risen there, he added.

Muhammad Ruhul Amin, operator of MV Adventure-9, SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Ruins of a structure of "Laurer Garh", a lost kingdom, at an archaeological site in Sunamganj's Tahirpur upazila. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Laurer Garh Open-air museum planned at ruins

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

A year after starting excavation at the Laurer Garh ruins in Sunamganj, the Department of Archaeology is planning to set up an open-air museum there.

Laurer Garh, also known as Halhalia Haoli or Rajbari, sprawling over 30 acres of land in Halhalia and Brahmangaon village under Tahirpur upazila, is considered by historians an important landmark of several long-lost kingdoms of greater Sylhet region. Ruins of a fort, palace and other structures have been visible in the area for a long time.

Starting on November 14 last year, the archaeology department continued the excavation for three months.

On September 25 this year, the cultural affairs ministry declared the area a protected archaeological site under the Antiquity Act 1968 (Amendment Ordinance 1976), said Dr Ataur Rahman, regional director of the archaeology department.

The department now plans to set up an open-air museum there.

Ataur said no edifice will be built at the site, but there will be signboards with information for tourists about the history of the relics until a full-fledged museum is established.

"Our vision is to promote archaeotourism in the area for tourists, who come to visit the nearby Tangar Haor at the base of the Meghalaya hills," he said.

Regarding the age of the ruins, Ataur, himself an archaeologist, said, "There are debates about the history of the heritage and it requires proper research, which we will start soon."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Loan defaulter gets remittance award of BB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank has handed over the remittance award to loan defaulter and money launderer Shahjahan Bablu without scrutinising his background.

Amid criticism from different corners for this act, the central bank now thinks of withdrawing the award given to Shahjahan.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal on Monday gave the remittance awards to 36 awardees, who sent the highest amount of remittance to the country, at the Institute of Diploma Engineers Bangladesh in the capital.

A representative of Shahjahan received the award on his behalf as he could not take part in the programme.

Shahjahan, who is a top defaulter of Bangladesh Commerce Bank Ltd (BCBL), laundered Tk 200 crore abroad through the bank in the name of export, according to the latest investigation carried out by Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU).

He had exported clay-made terracotta through one of his companies -- SB Exim -- to launder the money, the report said.

Having Tk 200 crore laundered, Shahjahan bought export bills worth Tk SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

WITHDRAWAL OF FENI RIVER WATER

Experts see little impact here

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India is going to draw around 51.54 litres of water per second from the Feni river once the deal between Bangladesh and India is implemented, but doubts remain as to how much impact it would have on Bangladesh.

The Feni water-sharing agreement was signed in the presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Saturday.

Some experts say the drawing of water will have little impact on the downstream of the Feni river.

Yet, the deal regarding withdrawal of 1.82 cusec of water by India, to be used as drinking water for the people of Sabroom town in Tripura, triggered sharp criticism in Bangladesh.

The condemnation comes due to India dillydallying on signing the Teesta deal for last eight years even after finalisation of the deal and suspicions regarding the nature of the deal.

"I think withdrawal of 1.82 cusecs of water will have very little impact in the downstream. After a series of discussions, we have agreed to provide them the water for drinking purpose. There is no shortage of water during the monsoon and during the lean period, the river has a minimum flow of the water around 110 cusecs," said KM Anwar Hossain, member, Joint Rivers Commission (JRC), Bangladesh.

He explained the quantity of water in one cusec water was equivalent to 28.32 litres of water flow per second. So, 1.82 cusec will be equivalent to 51.54 litres water per second.

When asked when the water-sharing would start, Anwar said it would start soon as the MoU was already signed.

While there is optimism on a government level, questions remain regarding how much water is to be withdrawn and how it would be SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

RMG worker gang-raped in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A garment worker has allegedly been gang-raped in Narayanganj's Sonargaon upazila.

Police yesterday arrested five of the seven accused in a rape case filed with Sonargaon Police Station.

The arrestees are Abu Sayeed, 24, Imran Uddin, 25, Roni Hossain, 22, Abul Hossain, 30, and Masud Mia, 26, of the upazila.

The victim, 25, a worker of a garment factory in Rugganj, was returning home in Gauchia area after her office around 6:00pm Monday. She was sharing a CNG-run auto rickshaw ride, said Inspector Ahsan Ullah of the police station, citing the case statement.

When the vehicle reached near her stop, one Jahangir, who was travelling in the same vehicle, obstructed her from getting down, he said.

With the three-wheeler SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

20 new moons of Saturn discovered



CNN ONLINE

The discovery of 20 previously unknown moons around Saturn has helped the ring planet surpass all others in our solar system, according to the International Astronomical Union's Minor Planet Center. It now has 82 known moons; Jupiter has 79.

The moons are all similar in size, spanning about three miles across. But 17 of the 20 have a retrograde orbit of Saturn, meaning they essentially orbit backwards from the planet and other moons.

Carnegie Institute of Science astronomer Scott Sheppard and his team used the Subaru telescope in Hawaii to find the moons. Last year, Sheppard and his team located 12 new moons around Jupiter, including one with a retrograde orbit.

"Using some of the largest telescopes in the world, we are now completing the inventory of SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

ABUSES IN XINJIANG US adds 28 China firms to blacklist

AFP, Washington

The US has blacklisted 28 Chinese entities that it says are implicated in rights violations and abuses targeting Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang region.

The United States "cannot and will not tolerate the brutal suppression of ethnic minorities within China," Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross said, announcing the move, which bars the named entities from purchasing US products.

The blacklisted firms included video surveillance company Hikvision, as well as artificial intelligence companies Megvii Technology and SenseTime, according to an update to the US Federal Register set to be published today.

China hit back at the US over the blacklisting of its 28 entities, saying the claims are "groundless". "There is no such thing as these so-called 'human SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



A huge crater along a footpath on Topkhana Road near the Secretariat in the capital. The road has been in this state for around two months, posing risks to both commuters and pedestrians.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



James Peebles Michel Mayor Didier Queloz

DISCOVERIES IN ASTRONOMY Trio wins Nobel Physics Prize

AFP, Stockholm

Canadian-American cosmologist James Peebles and Swiss astronomers Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz yesterday won the Nobel Physics Prize for research that increases the understanding of our place in the universe.

Peebles won one-half of the prize "for theoretical discoveries that have contributed to our understanding of how the universe evolved after the Big Bang," professor Goran Hansson, secretary general of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, told a press conference.

Mayor and Queloz shared the other half for the first discovery, in October 1995, of a planet outside our solar system -- an exoplanet -- orbiting a solar-type star in the Milky Way.

"Their discoveries have forever changed our conceptions of the world," the jury said.

Developed over two decades since the mid-1960s, Peebles' theoretical framework is "the basis of our contemporary ideas about the Universe."

Peebles built upon Albert Einstein's work on the origins of the Universe by looking back to the millennia immediately after the Big Bang, when light rays started to SEE PAGE 10 COL 2