



Twelve-year-old Jonny is unlike most other children of his age. Son of a rickshaw-puller, he took up the mantle of contributing to his family's survival by selling pink clouds of cotton candy, carrying about 40-50 of them every day. He sells each for Tk 10, earning around Tk 100-150 per day. Jonny's caricatured tiger mask surely resembles the spirit he carries with him, as he sets off for work. This photo was taken yesterday from Matuail area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Foreign trips for sake of rail development Says minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan has either visited or talked with officials of over a dozen companies producing rail-related materials during his two foreign trips late last year.

During his tours in four European countries and Russia in November and December last year, he sought investment and technical cooperation from those companies, who expressed interest to work with Bangladesh Railway.

The minister yesterday revealed the information at a press conference arranged to divulge outcomes of his foreign trips at Rail Bhaban in the capital.

An eight-member team led by Sujan visited the UK, Germany, Spain and France while another eight-member team visited Russia.

All of these countries belong to developed and modern rail networks and the railway has scope to develop theirs by taking technical knowledge from these countries, Sujan added.

"The purpose of our Europe and Russia tours was to use the experience to change our rail management and create a developed and modern railway system," the minister further said.

ILLEGAL, UNETHICAL

Probe committee on MV Abhijan fire recommends abolishment of 'rotation system'

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The "rotation system", the practice of operating fewer launches than what is permitted and overcrowding them with passengers, all to maximise profits, should be abolished, said the committee that investigated the MV Abhijan-10 fire incident.

The committee said to prevent overcrowding, passengers without tickets should not be allowed to board launches.

Firefighters must inspect vessels every three months. Fire drills must be conducted twice a year, and crew members have to receive safety training.

These are among the 25 recommendations the seven-member probe body has given in their report.

Led by Tofayel Islam, joint secretary of the shipping ministry, the committee



RECOMMENDATIONS

Measures for dousing fire in engine room

No flammable substance can be used as launch interior, or kept beside engine

Ansar, security personnel for launches

CCTV cameras at important points

Insurance for accidents, trust fund for passenger launches

submitted the report to the ministry on Monday night.

The committee held three officials of the shipping department and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), and four owners and four crew members of MV Abhijan-10 accountable for the fire that killed 49 people and injured many on December 24 last year.

ROTATION SYSTEM

BIWTA provides a particular number of launches for a route, but launch owners

operate fewer launches than what is permitted.

For example, six launches were permitted to ply on Dhaka-Bhola route, but only four are reportedly operated.

"Launch owners introduced this illegal and unethical system to maximise profits. And BIWTA is also allowing them to continue," said Ashis Kumar Dey, general secretary of National Committee to Protect Shipping, Roads and Railways.

A water-transport leader echoed him, adding that powerful launch owners even prevent introduction of new launches to keep their profits unaffected.

A probe committee member, wishing anonymity, said although there is no direct link between launch accidents and rotation system, launches get overcrowded due to this practice, which often increases casualties when such accidents occur.

The committee found that MV Abhijan-10 was overcrowded, he said.

Badiuzzaman Badal, senior vice-chairperson of Bangladesh Inland Waterways (Passenger Carriers) Association, claimed that there is no

rotation system in the sector.

"The number of launches corresponds to the number of passengers. When there are not many passengers, fewer launches are operated and vice versa," he told this correspondent.

Asked about the ticketing system, he said currently passengers have to buy tickets for cabins. But passengers who board decks enter vessels from different sides, and it is not possible for authorities to ensure that they have tickets, he said, adding that BIWTA can work on this issue.

The committee also said the workforce of BIWTA and the shipping department should be increased at Sadarghat for better inspection and monitoring, as the number of launches has increased.

Ashis Kumar said the shipping department only has seven surveyors against 22 posts, and it is not possible to inspect everything with these few workers.

Currently, there are some 14,000 registered passenger and cargo vessels in the country.

The BIWTA chairman could not be contacted for comments.

Three of a family die after fire breaks out at Uttara home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two siblings and their cousin died after a fire broke out at a tin-shed house in Dhaka's Uttara area early yesterday.

The deceased are Jahangir Hossain (19), his sister Ruma Akter (17) and their cousin Afrin (14).

They were asleep when the fire originated at their three-room house at Chandabuk Manik Bosti area around 4:15am.

Three firefighting units doused the blaze around 6:45am, said Khaleda Akter, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence Control Room.

Fire officials suspect electric short circuit caused the blaze.

Alamgir Hossain, brother of Jahangir, said he and the victims went to bed around 10:00pm. His parents along with another sister went to their village residence in Sherpur three weeks ago to build a house there, he said.

"Afrin came to stay with Ruma yesterday afternoon... I woke up at night hearing screams of my brother and sisters. An electrocution occurred when I tried to open the tin door between two rooms," he said. "Suddenly, fire engulfed the house... I could not save them," said Alamgir, who was rescued by neighbour from another room.

Alamgir said the blaze not only took three lives but also ravaged their house on the government land and all belongings -- including Tk 2 lakh that they saved over the years to marry off Ruma.

MV ABHIJAN TRAGEDY

Civic committee to investigate launch fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen civic organisations have announced the formation of a civic committee to investigate the MV Abhijan-10 inferno that left 49 dead, around 100 injured and many more missing.

The 17-member committee was announced yesterday from a press conference held at Poba's office in the capital's Kalabagan.

Abu Naser Khan, chairperson of Poba, will act as its convener while Aminur Rasul Babul, member secretary of Nirapad Noupath Bastobayan Andolon, was made member secretary.

Apart from this, Ashis Kumar Dey, writer and river-route researcher was announced as chief coordinator, while Mir Tarek Ali, professor of Marine Architecture and Marine Engineering from Buet, will serve the committee as an expert member.

Abu Naser said the committee will prepare its investigation report within three weeks and submit it to relevant authorities and ministries.

"We have already started our work. We will talk to the victims and their families, visit the launch and exchange views with locals. The committee will collect data and information, find out causes behind the inferno and ascertain liabilities of those who were supposed to oversee the technical issues related to its safety," he said.

He also said the structural weakness of regulatory bodies and political connections enable launch owners to bypass punitive measures after incidents like this. He mentioned that around 25,000 to 30,000 passengers died in fire hazards in the river route in the last 50 years.

Aminur Rasul Babul, Ashis Kumar Dey and Abdus Sobhan, general secretary of Poba, also spoke at the press conference.

PRAYER TIMING JAN 5



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5:30	12:45	4:00	5:30	7:00
Jamaat	6:05	1:15	4:15	5:35	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Three held with fake notes worth Tk 1.2cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab has busted a fake currency-making gang in Dhaka's Pallabi area and arrested three people along with fake notes of around Tk 1.2 crore.

The arrestees are the alleged ring leader Sagir Hossain (47), Selina Akter Pakhi (20) and Ruhul Amin (33).

They were targeting the ongoing Dhaka International Trade Fair and village fairs during winter to circulate the fake notes, Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's Legal and Media wing director, told a press conference yesterday.

Sagir has produced fake notes of around Tk 10 crore since 2017, Moin said, adding he used to collect equipment and material from old Dhaka. A gang of 5 to 20 members have long been circulating the fake notes mostly in Dhaka and Barishal, he added.

According to Rab, Sagir arrived in Dhaka from Barguna in 1987 and started working at a restaurant. He joined the fake note-making gang through one Idris in 2010. Sagir, arrested for the same offence earlier, told Rab that it costs Tk 4,000 to produce Tk 1 lakh of fake notes while he used to sell those at Tk 10,000-15,000.

Pakhi, an employee of a beauty parlour in Kamrangirchar, used to circulate the fake notes in the local market. Her husband is in jail for the same offence.



Illegally built tin-shed houses under flyovers, which are rented out to low-earning families, have turned into a lucrative business in some parts of the capital. According to recent media reports, some unscrupulous staffers of a city corporation are pulling the strings behind this. This photo was taken from Gulistan area yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



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Poba Chairperson
ABU NASER KHAN