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## Wails of grief drown out festivities

At least 24 die as pilgrim boat  
flips over in the Karatoa

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, *Panchagarh*

At least 24 people died as a boat carrying passengers far beyond its capacity capsized in the Karatoa river in Panchagarh yesterday afternoon.

Twelve women and eight children were among the victims, most of whom were Hindu pilgrims.

The death toll is likely to rise further as at least 65 passengers were reported missing. Firefighters were conducting rescue operations till the filing of this report at 1:00am today.

According to police, there were only 20 survivors.

Witnesses and survivors said there were more than 100 passengers on the boat that had a capacity of 50.

Deep into the night, the bank of the river in Awalia Ghat area of the district's Boda upazila was full of relatives of missing passengers, desperate to get news that would dispel their worst fears.

Videos of the incident, which went viral on social media, showed the boat moving slowly before suddenly tilting to one side and overturning.

Some passengers were seen trying to swim ashore as panicked locals screamed.

The victims are: Piyanta, 2; Bishnu, 3; Dipankar, 3; Ushoshi, 8; Tanushree, 5; Shreyoshi; Priyonti, 8; Shyamoli Rani, 14; Lakhsni Rani, 25; Shova Rani, 27; Amal Chandra, 35; Tara Rani, 25; Rupali alias Khuki Rani, 35; Promila Rani, 55; Banobala, 60; Sunita Rani, 60; Falguni, 45; Promila Debi, 70; Jyotish Chandra, 55; Soneka Rani, 60; Safolota Rani, 60; Hashem Ali, 70; Bilash Chandra, 45; and Shyamoli Rani alias Shimuli, 35.

The names of the victims were confirmed by the five-member committee, led by Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Dipankar Roy, formed to investigate the incident.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed condolences for the victims and their families.

The pilgrims were travelling to the centuries-old Bodeshwari Temple to attend a gathering on the occasion of Mahalaya, which is observed six days before the Hindu festival Durga Puja.

"After the boat travelled a small distance from Awalia ghat, it started swaying. Sensing danger, the boatman tried to turn the boat back to the ghat but it tilted to one side and overturned," said Mukul Chandra Roy, who managed to swim ashore along with his wife Joyonti Rani.

The boat capsized around 100 feet from the bank, witnesses said.

One of the passengers who survived was Prafulla Roy, but his wife Suchitra Rani and two-year-old son were among those missing. After the boat capsized, Prafulla took his son and started swimming towards the river bank, but lost his grip at one point.

Around 10:00pm, this correspondent found the grief-stricken man still waiting by the river, while Suchitra's mother Sumitra Rani kept staring at the water.

Abdul Khalek, a labourer of the area, rowed a boat into the river to help in the rescue.

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There are signs that Bangladesh's stellar growth, which catapulted it among the 10 fastest growing economies over the past decade, may be losing steam soon unless critical reforms are undertaken to counter the decline, said a recent World Bank study.

"There was a period from the late 1980s to the mid-2000s when Bangladesh harvested the low-hanging fruits, but it has yet to move to the next phase of economic transformation," said the report styled 'Bangladesh Country Economic Memorandum: Change of Fabric'.

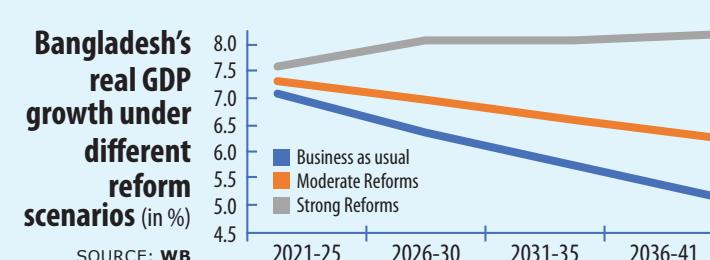
Without a new round of structural improvements, growth will likely decline to below 4 percent on average between 2035 and 2039, less than half the growth envisioned by the government.

Subsequently, the Washington-based multilateral lender called for reforms to address the three main growth constraints: declining trade competitiveness, the weak

and vulnerable financial sector and unbalanced and inefficient urbanisation.

"Successful urbanisation will be crucial for Bangladesh to reach

of Bangladesh's urban hierarchy with an outsized influence on the economy, is highly congested and polluted and ranks far below cities



the next level of development," it said, adding that experiences of economic development around the world show that the level of urbanisation and the economic status of a country go hand in hand.

But Bangladesh's urbanisation during the past decades has been unstructured and unbalanced. Dhaka, which is at the centre

in the peer countries on the Mercer Quality of Living Index.

Secondary cities are underdeveloped and do not yet provide a conducive environment for more spatially balanced development.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) predicts that

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## ALL EXPENSES PAID MP, aide going abroad to inspect road equipment

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bizarrely, a lawmaker with her personal assistant and Roads and Highways Department chief engineer and an additional chief engineer are going to the US and Canada to inspect equipment like pothole repair machines before they are shipped to Bangladesh.

JP lawmaker of a reserved seat for women Rowshan Ara Mannan, also the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on road transport and bridges ministry, apparently has no technical knowledge to inspect the items purchased. According to her biography on the parliament website, she has a master's degree in arts.

Iqbal bin Matin, her personal secretary, will accompany her.

The others going on the trip are: RHD Chief Engineer AKM Manir Hossain Pathan and its Additional Chief Engineer (Mechanical Wing) Rafiqul Islam, according to an official order issued on September 15.

Both are pretty high up the pecking order in the department to be inspecting equipment like pothole repair machines and crack sealing machines.

"This is a clear example of an almost institutionalisation of the project implementation culture in the country by which foreign visits are treated as

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An earthen path through the DND canal in Dhaka's Demra blocking whatever water flow there was. This is one of the many such encroachments on the canal that could have played a major role in reducing waterlogging in vast areas of Narayanganj and Dhaka. But now it's a swollen drain full of smelly garbage. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## GK Shamim gets life term in arms case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal sentenced expelled JBL League leader SM Golam Kibria Shamim, known as GK Shamim, and seven of his bodyguards to life imprisonment in an arms case yesterday.

The bodyguards are Delwar Hossain, Murad Hossain, Jahidul Islam, Shahidul Islam, Kamal Hossain, Samsad Hossain and Aminul Islam.

Judge Sheikh Samidul Islam of the Metropolitan Special Tribunal 4 of Dhaka handed down the sentence in presence of all eight accused in a packed courtroom, said Salahuddin Howlader, assistant public prosecutor.

The accused were also fined Tk 10,000 each, in default of which they would have to serve three months more in jail, said the verdict.

The judge also said the prosecution was able to prove the charges brought against all of them beyond doubt, and so they were given the highest punishment for their offences.

The time the accused have already spent in jail custody will be deducted from their sentence.

According to the judgement, accused Aminul was sentenced under sections

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