

A Correspondent

Munshiganj: Relatives of missing passengers, who were feared dead in the Padma launch capsized, blocked the Dhaka-Mawa Highway near Mawa Ghat in Lauhajang upazila on Tuesday morning, demanding salvage of the sunken vessel.

Witnesses said some 140-150 agitating people staged a demonstration in front of Padma Rest House as the authorities could not yet retrieve the plunged launch, 'Pinak-6'.

They also blocked the highway in the area from the morning, disrupting vehicular movement for several hours.

Later, traffic on the highway returned to normalcy at about 8:45am following intervention of the local administration.

The bodies of two women were recovered while many people remained missing after the launch sank in the river near Mawa Ghat on Monday.

Police and witnesses said the accident took place when the overloaded launch, Pinak-6, from Kawrakandi capsized in the river 800 yards off Mawa Ghat (jetty) around 11:15 am due to strong current while it was heading towards the jetty.

About 100 passengers were rescued alive while 118 others remained missing, said Munshiganj deputy commissioner M Saiful Islam Badal.

The divers and rescue teams could not yet locate the launch even one day after its capsizing.

BIWTA sources said 13 divers of Navy, fire brigade and BIWTA were working relentlessly to salvage the launch.

Besides, a high technology machine 'Side-scan Sonar' recently imported from Australia is being used in searching the launch.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked the army, Navy, Coast Guard, fire brigade, BIWTA and others concerned to work sincerely in this regard.

The Ministry of Shipping formed a seven-member probe committee while Mercantile Marine Department a four-member committee to probe the incident.