

Launch capsized death toll hits 42



A Correspondent

Munshiganj: Salvage ship 'Kandari-2' has detected a metal object, presumably a wreckage of the sunken launch Pinak-6, in the Padma riverbed on Monday, six days after the launch capsized with 250 passengers on board.

"A metal object was found near the accident spot but it's still uncertain whether it's of Pinak-6," in-charge of Kandari-2 Navy captain Manjurul Karim Chowdhury said.

Divers are trying to identify the object, he said.

Meanwhile, the death toll from Monday' launch capsized in the Padma River rose to 42 with the recovery of another body from the Meghna River in Hatiya upazila, Noakhali on Saturday morning.

Being informed by locals, the divers recovered the body of a man from Islampur Chapla ghat area, said sub-inspector of Chairman Ghat police camp in Hatiya upazila Md Yusuf.

The deceased was identified as Ahamed Khan, 42, hailing from Bhanga upazila of Faridpur district.

Munshiganj Deputy Commissioner Md Saiful Hasan Badal said 123 passengers of the ill-fated launch remained missing till Saturday.

Among the deceased, the identities of two people were confirmed on Saturday. They are Moyeen, 3, of Goalkanda village of Shibchar upazila of Madaripur district and his mother Rokhsana Begum, 30. The bodies were handed over to their families.

The rescuers, however, could not yet locate the sunken launch, Pinak-6, despite their unyielding efforts since the vessel plunged in the Padma River near Mawa Ghat in Lauhajang upazila with over 250 passengers on board.

Two salvage ships--Jarip-10 and Kandari-2-- having modern equipment, have been carrying out the search for the sunken launch.

Four other salvage ships --Tista, Sandhan, IT-97 and B-Dwip -- started their operation this (Saturday) morning using new tactics to locate it, said Deputy Director of Navy Headquarters Commander Habibul Alam.

Earlier, two salvage vessels -- Nirbhik and Rustam-- swung into rescue work but they failed to locate the launch due to strong currents in the river.

Relatives of the missing passengers vented their anger as the authorities failed to trace the ill-fated launch even after six days of the incident.

Of the total bodies, 26 were handed over to the victims' family members for burial, sources at the district administration said.

Besides, 12 unidentified bodies were laid to rest on Friday while the rest were kept on Pachhar Primary School premises in Shibchar upazila of Madaripur district for identification.

The accident took place when the overloaded launch with over 250 passengers on board from Kawrakandi capsized in the river, 800 yards off Mawaghat (jetty) around 11:15 am Monday due to strong currents while it was heading towards the jetty.