

Flood situation looks ominous

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Late monsoon floods have hit a number of districts and the situation may worsen further in the low-lying areas of at least 11 districts.

Experts said the low-lying areas have been inundated due to opening of the Farakka barrage for controlling floods in the Indian states of West Bengal and Bihar.

They said the districts of Rajshahi, Chapainwabganj, Rajbari, Manikganj, Kushtia, Faridpur, Shariatpur, Madaripur, Munshiganj, Narayanganj and Dhaka are likely to be further inundated.

Over one thousand families have become homeless in the affected areas due to river erosion.

According to the latest report of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), the Ganges-Padma will rise further while the Brahma-putra-Jamuna is likely to recede.

The Padma at Rajshahi and the Mahananda at Chapainwabganj may cross the danger level.

The FFWC reported that out of its 85 monitoring stations, 35 points recorded rise, 34 recorded fall and seven remained steady.

All the rivers in the Brahmaputra basin are flowing below the danger level, except the Jamuna at Aricha and the Balu at Demra.

In the Ganges basin, the Padma registered further rise at Pankha, Rajshahi. The river is flowing above the danger level at Pankha by 115cm.

The Meghna at Bhairab Bazar recorded a slight rise. Excepting Khowai at Ballak, all the rivers in the Meghna basin are flowing below their respective danger levels.

In the South-Eastern Hill basin, the rivers Muhuri, Halda, Sangu, Matamuhuri and Feni recorded further fall and all the rivers in this basin are flowing below their respective danger levels.

Hearing date on Panni murder case on Sept 22

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday fixed September 22 for hearing on charge-framing against the accused in the Sultana Khan Panni murder case.

Judge Motiur Rahman issued the order after the case was placed before him.

Sultana Khan Panni, 70, wife of former deputy speaker Humayun Khan Panni, was strangled at her Dhanmondi residence on May 19, this year.

The victim's daughter Sonia Khan Panni filed a murder case with Dhanmondi Police Station the same day.

The Detective Branch (DB) of police pressed charges against four accused -- cook of Panni's house Alauddin Munshi, caretaker Mehedi Mamun Rana, and their friends Nasir Uddin and Emdadul Haq -- on July 14.

In the charge sheet 26 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

The four accused, all in custody, were produced before the court.

Sayedee

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Shudhangshu Shekhor Halder that challenged the legality of his four-party alliance rival's election.

The HC directed the authorities concerned to send its order to the EC for necessary action by a special messenger.

On receipt of the order, the EC will have to announce the constituency vacant and hold fresh polls within 90 days.

Sayedee, who was declared winner of the October 1, 2001 ballot, told reporters that he would appeal against the order.

Halder filed the petition with the HC on November 14 -- 44 days after the polls -- against the chief election commissioner (CEC), Sayedee and nine others with a plea to declare him elected cancelling the poll result for his rival.

The court, however, turned down Halder's appeal for declaring him elected on grounds that he bagged the second highest votes, which are 33,377 fewer than Sayedee.

Earlier, all election disputes were settled by the election tribunals that could hardly dispose of any case during the whole tenure of parliament.

Halder, a veteran lawyer and a former lawmaker, appeared before the court on his behalf, while Barrister Abdur Razzak defended Sayedee.

Mirpur fire

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only served to intensify the flames.

The PGCB officials who got their marching orders are project manager Serajul Islam, deputy managers Rabbayatul Islam and Mustafizur Rahman, and assistant manager Debashish Das.

The minister disclosed the probe findings and subsequent action at the press conference at the Power Cell office after submitting the report to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

"The prime minister said there is no scope for compromise as regards safety of the public and their property."

"Power is a very crucial sector, not a playing in any way. We must be very strict in dealing with operation of electricity. All officials, employees and workers will have to exercise utmost care," Mahmood quoted the prime minister as saying.

Headed by a joint secretary, the six-member inquiry committee in its report submitted ahead of the stipulated 48-hour timeframe underlined the need for further inquiries into the role of the contractor.

It also recommended issuing a warning to the board of the PGCB regarding the fire incident that caused the government a financial loss of Tk 2.55 crore as the transformer burnt to ashes, apart from damages in lost production in the private sector.

Couple in a sticky stew

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A couple, who went into hiding after marriage, and the husband's relatives were arrested from a city hotel in Moulvibazar yesterday.

Motijheel police arrested Amena Begum and her husband Mohammad Ali from hotel Al-Farooq. Ali's father Syed Mahmudun Ali and Tanjeen Ali, uncle of Ali, were also arrested from the hotel room, police said.

The couple married in presence of notary public on August 28 and went into hiding. They stayed together at their relatives' houses since then. Some relatives informed the police of them when they came to the hotel, police added.

Amena, hailed from Dakkhin Surma in Shylet, was living in London. She came to Bangladesh during her brother's wedding in 1998 and developed a relation with her cousin, Ali. Aware of the relationship, her parents agreed to arrange their marriage, family members said.

She went back to London in 1998 and returned to Dhaka on August 13 this year. But Amena's parents refused to arrange her marriage with Ali. They ran away on August 18. On August 21, her sister filed a case accusing 10 persons under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with Kotwali Police Station in Sylhet.

Motijheel police handed over the couple to Sylhet police.

BJMC gives Tk 2 cr to 3 jute mills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Law enforcers will launch another anti-crime drive in the south-western zone.

A fresh list of criminals is being prepared as part of the drive.

According to sources at the DIG office (Khulna Range), the list of criminals needs to be updated because many new faces have surfaced in the underworld under cover of different outlawed organisations. "As a result, we have no alternative to making another list of criminals against whom an operation will be launched shortly," said a senior officer of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP).

The previous list had the names of 352 criminals, mostly political extremists, having illegal arms in their possession in nine upazila of Khulna district. Of them, 149 have been branded as 'top criminals'.

Though 152 listed criminals were arrested during the 'Operation Clean Heart' and the 'Operation Spider Web', most managed to get bail.

The Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) has allocated Tk 2 crore for three state-owned jute mills as running capital.

Of this, the Peoples Jute Mills has received Tk 1 crore, while the Star Jute Mills and the Eastern Jute Mills have got Tk 50 lakh each.

BJMC zonal office sources said none of these mills is able to go into full production due to various reasons including severe crisis of raw materials and requisite funds.

It will take at least two months to go into full production by operating all the units of the mills reopened on Saturday, sources added.

The three mills were laid off on August 8 rendering thousands of workers and employees jobless.

Meanwhile, the SKOP and the Greater Khulna Development Action Coordination Committee (GKDACC) held separate meetings yesterday in front of all jute mills at Khalis hpur and Atra-Mirerdanga Industrial belt urging the people to support the daylong hartal on Tuesday.

US envoy

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companies in case the government decides to go for gas export.

Replying to another question, he claimed that the number of successful visa applicants from Bangladesh has gone up during the recent months.

Refuting the allegation of decline in issuance of visa, he said 82 per cent of student visa applications at the US embassy last year were successful.

However, he said almost all countries had to strengthen their security arrangements after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Describing Bangladesh as a good friend of the US, he said Bangladesh is one of those countries which expressed solidarity with the US immediately after the 9/11 attacks.

2 teenagers

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and asked for a ransom of Tk 50,000 for his son's release. Didar threatened to kill Ripon when the poor peasant expressed his inability to pay such a large sum of money.

Ripon's body was found the following day.

The UNB from Feni reports: A teenage boy was allegedly killed after abduction at Motiganj in Sadar Upazila Friday evening.

Locals said Farooq, 17, son of Abu Taher of Char Sonapur of Sonagazi Upazila was abducted by a gang of criminals from Lalpur area of Sadar Upazila.

They took him to Reazuddin Munshi Bazar, beat him mercilessly and strangled him. Later, they hanged the body at a cement shop.

Police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Residential Medical Officer of Sadar Hospital Dr Sarwar Zahan said the victim might have committed suicide, as the body bore no marks of injury.

A case was filed with the local police station.

BSF shots dead 1

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along with three others were walking along the Bangladesh border with India at Aiatuli zero line in Chapainwabganj with an intention to enter into India, the sources said.

A source, however, said the four were smugglers and carrying smuggled palm oil with them.

Rajshahi Sector BDR Staff Officer Major Mustaq Khaled confirmed the report and said the BDR sent letter to the BSF asking for return of the body and the three kidnapped persons.



PHOTO: STAR

Star-crossed couple Amena Begum and her husband Mohammad Ali leave Motijheel Police Station after arrest in Motijheel. Amena's family, unwilling to accept their marriage, filed a case in Sylhet.

Khulna awaits another drive against crime

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Law enforcers will launch another anti-crime drive in the south-western zone.

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Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

"When we are thinking of taking a positive decision on return to the Jatiya Sangsad, such deliberate remarks passed by none less than the prime minister and speaker deepen the crisis," a frustrated Hasina said.

On joining the current session, she said: "Earlier we had a three-point demand, which has today risen to a five-point one with the inclusion of the fresh points of withdrawal of the remarks of both the premier and the speaker and their unreserved apologies."

Three earlier demands of the AL include apology of a state minister for making derogatory remarks against the opposition leader, expunction of the remarks and the running of parliament as per the constitution and the rules of procedure.

The AL legislators walked out halfway through the eighth session of parliament on July 25 and continued boycott of the current session that opened on Thursday.

AL's apparent tough-line came on the heel of its planned mass procession scheduled for today and 10 days ahead of a nationwide general strike on September 25.

Hasina said her party was not planning resignation from the Jatiya Sangsad, but quickened to add that the government was pushing the party to the street.

AL stance

FROM PAGE 1

Mohammad Abu Jafar's joining the BNP, the BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia introduced Jafar to the people of the constituency as their 'undecleared lawmaker', which Hasina dubbed as "a complete negation of the people's elected representative Kazi Sirajul Islam". Islam is the AL lawmaker from Faridpur-1 constituency.

The same day, during a meeting with Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shaid, the speaker noted that despite the absence of the opposition lawmakers, parliament was functioning effectively.

Tigers aim to bounce

FROM PAGE 1

then suffered a dramatic middle-order collapse in their pursuit of a gettable target (244) at Faisalabad.

The two consecutive defeats only added to the visitors' miserable run in the limited version of the game, which now stands at 39 from 41 matches.

Coach Dav Whatmore has come up with a new plan in a bid to end the frustrating losing sequence after his boys choked in the second match. He is also trying to find the right opening combination by bringing in Hannan Sarker to partner Habibul Bashar after seeing talented Mohammad Ashrafud find it difficult to see off the white new ball.

The young right-hander will be pushed down to number four in place of one-day specialist Tushar Imran who has scored just one run in two matches.

Hannan, who was sitting on the reserve bench after featuring in the Test series, is the only change from the team that lost the second ODI at Faisalabad by 74 runs.

The hosts, on the other hand, are expected to stick with the same team even though fast bowler Mohammad Sami has recovered from an ankle injury.

A source close to Pakistan team revealed that Sami is likely to play from the fourth match in Rawalpindi to be held on September 18.

However, if there is a change then Shabbir Ahmed would be dropped.

Both teams had their final practice under lights at the 35000-capacity stadium, which staged the 1996 World Cup final.

With the pitch showing a tinge of green, both sides are expected to bank on their pacers.

TEAMS

BANGLADESH (From): Khaled Mahmud (captain), Hannan Sarker, Habibul Bashar, Rajin Saleh, Mushfiqur Rahman, Alok Kapali, Mohammad Ashrafur, Khaled Mashud, Mohammad Rafique, Hasibul Hossain, Mashrafe-bin-Mortuza, Tushar Imran, Sanwar Hossain, Tapas Baisya and Alamgir Kabir.

PAKISTAN (From): Inzamamul Haq, Mohammad Hafeez, Yasir Hameed, Yousef Youhana, Younis Khan, Abdur Razzak, Shoaib Malik, Kamran Akmal, Junaid Zia, Umar Gul, Shabbir Ahmed, Danish Kaneria, Imran Nazir, Mohammad Sami and Salman Butt.

Umpires: Nadeem Ghouri (Pakistan) and Russell Tiffin (Zimbabwe).

Match Referee: Mike Procter (South Africa).

Fire at Sonali Paper godown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Fire gutted about 10,000 bales of paper pulp and properties reportedly worth Tk 2 crore of Sonali Paper and Board Mill at Jalamura in Rugganj Saturday night.

Iqbal Khan, owner of the mill, its office staff and the Ansars alleged the incident was an act of sabotage, as there was no gas or electric connection in the mill to cause such an accident.

The fire originated in a godown at 11:00pm. The workers and on-duty Ansars tried to extinguish the blaze. The fire fighting units from Demra, Hajiganj, Postogola, Narayanganj and Dhaka Headquarters rushed to the spot and started their operation around 1:00am.

A case was filed with Rugganj Police Station.

Top outlaw held at Rajshai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police arrested a leader of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) from a city hotel in the early hours yesterday.

Abdul Wahab Ali Mondal alias Rana Mondal of Sailokupa Upazila, Jhenidah is the second in command of the Haque faction of the PBCP active in the western region. He told police that he boarded the Prince Hotel at Shaheb Bazar on his way to India.

Police said Mondal was sentenced to a 15-year prison term in arms and robbery cases in Jhenidah. He was also an accused in several murder, abduction and robbery cases filed with different police stations.

AL stance

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Jamal

FROM PAGE 12

said investigation in Jamal abduction case is going on.

'KIDNAPPER' REMAND

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court (CMM) of Chittagong yesterday placed one on a five-day remand for abducting four college students.

The CMM placed Irfan Qaderi on remand after Kotwali police produced him before the court in the afternoon, police said.

A gang including Irfan abducted college students -- Shahanur Hossain alias Apollo, Tanvir Rahman, Shafiqul Alam Ripon and Shareq Chowdhury -- from city's KC Dey Road Friday midnight, sources said.

The gang freed Ripon and Shareq later that night and told them to bring Tk 1 lakh in ransom to get their fellows released. Raiding an abandoned house at Hazari Lane on information from the released, police rescued the other two and arrested Irfan, sources added.

Meanwhile, police failed to arrest other members of the gang despite several raids Saturday night.

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Deep sea port

FROM PAGE 12

ships at the port greatly affects it.

The port authorities have submitted a project proposal. It also sought Tk 12 crore for a golden handshake programme to slash the number of dock workers to 1,200 from around 4,000. Frequent hartal and strikes by dock workers harmed port activities, sources pointed out.

Shamsur Rahman

FROM PAGE 12

in Jessore including the family of Shamsur Rahman will believe in the charge as I had a very good relation with him," Farazi told the BBC news last night.

"This is nothing but a conspiracy against me and a vested quarter have done it out anger," he also added.

"We have no allegation against Farazi and we did not demand further investigation into the case as we had no objection to the first charge sheet," the BBC quoted Selina Akhter, wife of Shamsur Rahman, as saying.

The family of Shamsur Rahman also questioned the need for a second charge sheet.

Nurul murder

FROM PAGE 12

-- are to be quizzed today, sources said.

Unidentified assailants abducted Nurul Islam, also an advocate, from his residential chamber in Laxmipur on September 18, 2000. His mutilated body was recovered from the Meghna three weeks after the abduction.

Tarekuddin filed a case with Laxmipur Police Station the following day.

Officer-in-charge Kamrul Hasan pressed charges on July 30, 2002 against 31 persons including Taher, his wife Nazma Akhter, and son Salahuddin Tipu.

Police arrested 13 persons including Taher, Babar and Mehedi, two aides of Taher, gave their statements under section 164, sources said.

The charges against the accused were formed on November 5, 2002.

Sources said Laxmipur District Public Prosecutor (PP) Monirul Islam, Chittagong District PP Kafiuddin Chowdhury and Divisional Speedy Tribunal PP Quamrul Islam Sajjad appear on behalf of the plaintiff, while senior lawyer Ahsanul Haq Hena, Shamshu Prakash Biswas and others defend the accused.

AL procession

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AL Chief Sheikh Hasina will also address a rally in front of the AL central office at 4:00pm.

Hasina announced the programme at a rally in Paltan Maidan on August 31 urging countrymen to show non-confidence in present regime through mass procession and countryside dawn to dusk hartal on September 25.

Abdul Jalil MP, general secretary of the AL, urged all to join today's mass procession and make it success.

Failure looms

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rich-poor split on issues ranging from developed nations' massive farm subsidies to many developing countries' refusal to negotiate new foreign investment.

The mood was sombre as delegates of the 146 nations met for a final round of hard bargaining.

The WTO meeting's chairman tried to break the deadlock on Saturday with a draft proposal aimed at giving all sides something to go home happy with when the five days of formal talks end on Sunday night.

Instead, the proposal was widely criticised, although no-one was ready to write off the talks just yet.

Poor and developing nations said it was far too soft in pushing the United States, the European Union and other rich countries to slash the \$300 billion in subsidies they hand out every year to their farmers.

Indian Commerce Minister Arun Jaitley led condemnation of the plan, saying it "arbitrarily disregarded views and concerns expressed by us" and "does not lend itself to any meaningful dialogue."

The European Union also found much to complain about, saying a call for an elimination of farm subsidies at some point in the future was unacceptable.

"Positions seemed to be more firmly entrenched," WTO spokesman Keith Rockwell said early Sunday. "This text as it currently stands is not acceptable to anyone."

Developing countries led by Brazil, China, India and South Africa say the US and EU subsidies cut their own farmers out of world markets and expose them to a flood of heavily subsidised imports.

The North-South divide also extends to proposals that the WTO should set rules for investment and competition policies, the award of government contracts and cutting red tape and corruption that shackles trade.

These "Singapore issues," so named because they were first raised at a WTO meeting in the Asian city state in 1996, are being pushed by Europe and Japan but are fiercely resisted by a large group of poor countries, led by India and Malaysia.

"It looks like Singapore issues will be the deal maker or the deal breaker," a EU official said on Sunday, adding that there may be a enough movement during the day to make a deal possible on agriculture.

Ministers need to find enough common ground in Cancun to keep negotiations alive on new trade liberalization pact by the end of next year. The World Bank says a good deal would add more than \$500 billion a year to global incomes by 2015 and lift 144 million people out of poverty.

There has been criticism virtually from all sides on the compromise declaration drawn up in an attempt to bring the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting to a successful conclusion on Sunday.

But if no compromise is achieved, the prospects for negotiating a new global trade deal by the end of next year will be even more uncertain.

About 2,000 demonstrators armed with stones and shields and chanting "WTO murders" marched through Cancun on Saturday to denounce the talks - but were kept away from the conference centre.

At the close of a prolonged meeting on Saturday, chairperson Derbez said he was very concerned as to whether members are willing to work together to reach a consensus, given the time left before the end of the meeting less than 24 hours.

Derbez said he understood that ministers wanted to put their positions on the record and this did not worry him. But he was concerned if the ministers were willing to let the process fail. Agreement is needed in order to give the world economy a boost, he said, and if the meeting fails the only winners will be the enemies of the trading system.

Describing this as a once-in-a-generation opportunity, he warned that if Cancun fails, the negotiations may take a long time to recover.

Young man chopped to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Misceants yesterday chopped a young man to death at Dayaganj in Sutrapur.

On information, Railway Police recovered the body of the youth from railway track at Dayaganj at 9:40am.

The criminals hacked thrice in the neck and there were also marks of beating injuries in different parts of the body, police said.

Police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

A case was filed with Government Railway Police Station. None was arrested till 8:30pm.

Meanwhile, Khilgaon police recovered the decomposed body of a youth, aged about 25, from a lake at Nandipara at around 8:30pm Saturday.

Police could not say whether the youth drowned or was killed and dumped in the lake water.

The body was sent to the DMCH for autopsy and a case was filed with Khilgaon Police Station.

Hizbut

FROM PAGE 12

Tuesday, they hammered on madrassah students at Poradah railway station.

Police could not arrest any Hizbut men in this connection. However, 25 injured activists of the organisation are at Kushtia General Hospital under police guard and another was sent to Dhaka for treatment.

Refreshing ray

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh Diploma Engineering Student-Teacher Professional Co-ordination Council at a meeting yesterday said the government has to consider their demands to avoid hartal or strike programmes.

They also said demonstration would be intensified if the government failed to meet their demands immediately. The government would be responsible for any untoward incidents, they warned.

Presiding over by the Council Convenor Khondaker Nur-E-Alam, the meeting was also addressed by Ali Azam, Prodip Kumar Ghoshal, Anwar Hossain and Shamsul Alam Mridha.

Israel: Killing Arafat

FROM PAGE 12

Palestinian chief peace negotiator Saeb Erekat said in response: "This is the thinking and action of the mafia not a government."

Erekat told Reuters that Israel was "determined to kill President Arafat and throw the Palestinians into chaos and anarchy."

AFF from Jerusalem adds: Israel indicated yesterday it was likely to further isolate rather than immediately expel Arafat after a backlash from the Palestinians and the international community over its decision to approve the "removal" of the 74-year-old leader.

"His expulsion is perhaps one of the ways of getting rid of him, but it is also possible to isolate him totally in the Muqataa," said Industry Minister Ehud Olmert, referring to Arafat's battered headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah.

"Arafat cannot continue to be a factor in the Middle East scene. His expulsion is an option, his liquidation is another option. It is also possible to confine him to prison-like conditions," Olmert, who is also deputy prime minister, told Israeli radio.

"In this scenario, he would be cut off from the world. He would be unable to receive anyone and would not be able to communicate by phone."

The Israeli security cabinet's decision on Thursday to agree in principle to "remove" the veteran leader has provoked widespread international condemnation and anger among Palestinians.

Israel, however, criticised reaction to the decision -- which was taken in the light of two deadly suicide attacks last Tuesday -- as hypocrisy.

Israel's decision has prompted near universal condemnation, with even its traditional ally the United States warning against the impact of any expulsion.

An editorial in the leading Israeli daily Haaretz yesterday called the move "stupid".

"As could be expected, the decision instantly led to the strengthening of Arafat's status among Palestinians, as well as in the international arena."