

Prayer for rain in 3 districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Special munajat (prayer) was offered at hundreds of mosques in Rangpur, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts after Juma prayers yesterday seeking Almighty Allah's favour for rainfall in the region.

Thousands of people took part in the munajat and sought divine blessings to get rid of the unusual drought that has caused serious setback for cultivation of Aman paddy and other crops.

Farmers in these northern districts have become worried as they failed to plant the Aman sapling due to the prolonged drought for about one and a half months leaving thousands of hectares of land in the region dry.

Meanwhile, Aman saplings planted early on high fields also dry out due to the heavy drought, forcing a few farmers to try irrigation through shallow and deep tube wells. But crisis of diesel at most of the filling stations in the districts has made a serious concern for them.

Departments concerned
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DAP being prepared only to gather dust

Say Rajuk officials

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Rajuk has nearly completed compilation of the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) of 1,528 square kilometre area of the capital amid fears that the expensive document would not deter unplanned urbanisation due to lack of will of the implementing authorities.

The Tk 23.22 crore DAP is part of the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) or master plan that should have been completed in 1997 along with its two other components - Structural Plan and Urban Area Plan-of the city. The DMDP was gazetted in 1997 without the DAP component as the foreign consultants concerned expressed their inability to take up the DAP work that involved intensive fieldwork.

Rajuk sources said the DAP would be available to its planning

wing and all other organisations involved in development of the city and its periphery. The DAP is documenting every plot, structure, open space, road and wetland within the 1,528 km area with four local consultants working at field level since August 2004. It would enable Rajuk to approve building construction plans within its jurisdiction ensuring a healthy environment, desired population density and proper civic amenities.

"We have completed over 70 per cent work on the DAP and hope to finish the job by December this year," said a top official of Rajuk, requesting anonymity.

But other sources said ever since the DMDP legally came in force in 1997, Rajuk officials have overtly ignored it. Rajuk has not grown any mechanism to consult the DMDP before approving any plan. It has approved construction

plans of thousands of buildings of all sizes violating the law of the land. It has done so despite 'clear guidelines' prepared and incorporated in the DMDP at a cost of over Tk 200 million provided by the UNDP.

"What is the use of DMDP when nobody cares about it? It is a waste of money if these expensive documents only gather dust at the offices of Rajuk's Authorised Officers," said an official.

Sources however said there is no dearth of government organisations involved in the process of implementing the DMDP with its three components. It is mandatory to abide by the DMDP. The last meeting on the DAP held at Rajuk on August 8 was attended by top officials of 31 different organisations and 11 others, they mentioned.

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MIGRATION Bangladeshis among 108 held in Greece

AFP, Komotini

Greek police on Friday arrested three Turkish suspected people-smugglers and detained 108 would-be migrants hidden on board their truck, police said.

The authorities said the would-be immigrants, all of whom are male, came from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

They had each paid 1,000 euros (1,300 dollars) to secure passage
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'Outlaw' lynched in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Locals lynched an alleged outlaw at Badai Bazar in Shuzanagar upazila in the district on Thursday night.

Police sent the body of the victim, Md Islam, 32, of village Shaguta of Raninagar union under Shuzanagar upazila to Pabna General Hospital morgue where autopsies of 11 other outlaws killed in police operation on Thursday morning were being conducted.

Meanwhile, angry villagers damaged the houses of the dead outlaws and most of the members of the victims' families left homes.

Locals at a meeting in Char Vatpara village yesterday morning said that they were greatly relieved that the criminals who had caused much suffering to them were no more.

Pabna Police Superintendent Md Abdullah Hel Baki said their operation will continue for a week.

Prayer Timing August 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-38	6-41
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

This Maya Horeen (Barking deer), rescued from poachers at remote Laxmichhari upazila, was released at Dulahazara Safari Park on Thursday.

Deer rescued from poachers released at Dulahazara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The authorities of Dulahazara Safari Park in Chakoria of Cox's Bazar on Thursday released two 'Barking deer' (Cervus asix), widely known as 'Maya Horeen', in the sanctuary of the park.

Locals at remote hilly area of Laxmichhari upazila of Khagrachhari district held the two deer of rare species last week while they were being smuggled through the area, sources at the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department (WMNCD) in Chittagong said yesterday.

The two deer were handed over
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TWO PADMA FERRY CHANNELS Dredging starts but water level now falling fast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Dredging of the silted up Paturia-Daulatdia and Paturia-Nagarbari (Kazirhat) channels in the Padma - vital links to the capital with south and southwestern parts of the country - has been started but it is still uncertain when the two channels will be fully navigable for ferries.

The main channel turned unsafe to navigate soon after it was dredged last year due to heavy deposition of silt in the channel.

About Tk 120 crore were spent for dredging the channels in the last 14 years, but corruption in survey and unplanned dredging did not help in smooth operation of vessels in these channels, sources said.

Meanwhile, the BIWTA (Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority) sources said the main channel was declared off-limits to vessels on August 6 this year for difficulty in navigation and an alternative channel was opened the same day to facilitate ferry operation.

Earlier last week, six ferries stuck in the channel near Paturia ferry terminal were towed by the BIWTA (Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation) tugboat, BIWTC sources said.

However, a BIWTA official said Thursday that the main channel is being dredged at a rapid pace and resumption of normal ferry operation in the Paturia channel is possible within the next three days.

About 35,000 cubic meters of silt has been removed since the operation began on August 7, he added.

The authority also started dredging in the new channel to keep it navigable since the water level is falling fast.

The water level has fallen 32 cm in the last four days at Goalunda and Paturia points, the official said.

The depth of channels went down to a little over six feet at places as opposed to eight feet minimum depth needed for a ferry to move safely, added the official.

Three dredgers are in operation in the channel now and one more is on the way from Narayanganj.

As a precautionary measure,
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PHOTO: STAR

Bhabadaha (Jessore) Jalabaddhata Nirasam Sangram Committee brings out a procession in the capital demanding solution to the problem of waterlogging in Jessore, Khulna and Satkhira regions yesterday.

Human chain demanding end to Bhabadaha waterlogging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred people formed a human chain in front of the High Court (HC) yesterday demanding permanent solution to the waterlogging problem caused by Bhabadaha sluice gate.

The people mainly teachers, students and professionals from Keshabpur, Monirampur and Abhoyanagar upazilas of Jessore, now living in Dhaka, formed the hour-long human chain at 10:00am under the banner of Bhabadaha (Jessore) Jalabaddhata Nirasam Sangram Committee [Action Committee for Resolving Waterlogging at Bhabadaha].

A little boy Shoumik, who came
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Lebanese troops patrol town on Israeli border

AP, Kfar Kila

The Lebanese army reached the country's southern border with Israel for the first time Friday, sending a sole jeep on patrol through this village, where Israeli forces pulled out of in 2000, ending an 18-year occupation.

The army jeep, flying a large Lebanese flag and carrying just two soldiers clad in green camouflage uniforms, passed by the Fatima Gate a few yards from the border in Kfar Kila but did not stop.

Villagers throwing rice and Hezbollah supporters holding banners have welcomed the country's army to the south after a nearly 40-year absence. About 15,000 troops are eventually supposed to

deploy in the region under a peace plan aimed at securing an end to more than a month of fighting between Hezbollah guerrillas and Israel, but so far the troops have deployed mostly to predominantly Christian towns including Qleia and Marjayoun.

Overnight, Lebanese forces arrived in the largely Shiite Muslim village of Khiam in the same area, said Lebanese Brig. Gen. Charles Sheikhani.

Sheikhani said he would not deploy troops permanently to Kfar Kila until a border fence destroyed by invading Israeli troops last month was repaired and all Israeli troops there withdrew.

An Associated Press reporter visited the town Thursday and early

Friday, however, and saw no Israeli troops. Residents in Kfar Kila said Israeli forces had already pulled out.

"Maybe today we'll patrol Kfar Kila, but if we deploy forces there, it doesn't mean we'll put soldiers in the village" to stay, Sheikhani said earlier Friday.

The army's 10th brigade has set up camps within a mile of the Israeli border - a key step toward taking control of the whole country for the first time since 1968 and a major demand of the UN resolution that so far has halted the fighting.

The deployment marks the first time the Lebanese army has moved in force to a region that was held by

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3 commit suicide in capital in last two days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people committed suicide in the city's Bashabo, Mirpur and Tejgaon areas in the last two days.

The dead are Masud Karim, 24, Aklima alias Akli, 20, and Fatema Begum, 18.

Masud, a physically challenged beggar who stayed at a house in East Bashabo, was found hanging from the support beam of the ceiling around 4:30am yesterday. Police suspect he might have killed himself due to unbearable poverty.

Police recovered the body of Aklima hanging from a ceiling fan at her home in Diyabari Baur Math slum in Mirpur around 10:00am yesterday.

The victim's husband claimed Aklima was a heroin addict and committed suicide as he refused to give her money for drugs.

Police on Thursday recovered the body of Fatema, a house help, after she committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling fan of AKM Shahidul Alam's home in South Rajabazar area in Tejgaon around 4:30pm.

Police sources said the family members of Shahidul Alam returned home on that day and found the door locked. They discovered the body after breaking into the house.



Garment workers demonstrate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Readymade garment workers staged demonstrations in the Elephant Road and Muktangan areas in the capital urging factory owners to fulfil their demands.

Workers from Burlingtons Ltd and Purple Apparels Ltd yesterday staged a rally under the banner of Jaago Bangladesh Garments Sromik Federation in front of their factories on Elephant Road to press their demands.

Their demands include weekly holiday, fixing the minimum wage at Tk 3,000, increased overtime allowance, issuance of appointment letters, maternity leave and right to form trade unions.

Meanwhile, National Garments Workers Federation formed a human chain at Muktangan demanding implementation of all bi-lateral contracts among various garment workers' organisations and the factory owners.

The factory owners are procrastinating to implement the bi-lateral contracts signed on June 22 and most factory authorities are yet to hand over appointment letters and identity cards to the workers. Besides, the workers are being deprived of weekly holidays,
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PHOTO: STAR

Islami Oikya Jote holds a rally on the road adjacent to Muktangan in the capital yesterday, much to the trouble of the passengers.

Fresh anti-crime drive in 10 districts from tonight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Joint forces comprising police, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), Armed Police Battalion and Ansars are likely to launch a fresh crackdown on extremists and militants from tonight in 10 districts of Khulna division.

All camps of law enforcement agencies in the division have been asked to remain on standby and respond to call of duty in the special operations as per directives of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The deputy inspector general (DIG) of Khulna range told The Daily Star on Thursday that the law and order situation is taking a bad turn as militancy and extremism in the south-western region is on the rise.

"We have taken the matter seriously in the wake of a number of incidents of extortion and murder.

Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) Janajuddha faction's murder of Abhaynagar Upazila Health Officer Akram Ali Mollah indicated the rise of the outlaws,"

he said.

Information from intelligence agencies say Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) cadres and cadres of two underground organisations are regrouping in the south-western zone with a view to carrying out subversive attacks at any opportunity, sources said.

They said JMB cadres held two secret meetings last week in the Sundarbans and Taluigacha border area of Satkhira to raise funds to
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