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## 25 killed as storm lashes coastal belt

### 500 trawlers sink in Bay; 2,000 fishermen missing; the dead include naval officer

STAR REPORT

At least 25 people, including a naval officer, were killed while some 2,000 fishermen went missing as around 500 trawlers, boats and a navy patrol ship capsized in the Bay when a violent storm hit the country's coastal belt Tuesday evening.

According to the officials, the fishing trawlers sank in Dublar

Char, Kachikhali, Narkelbaria and Baleswar of the coastal districts of Bagerhat, Pirojpur, Barisal, Patuakhali, Barguna, Bhola as they were caught in the sudden storm.

Of the dead, the body of a youth was found at Bishkhali of Laldia area in Patharghata, bodies of four fishermen were recovered at the Kuakata beach in Patuakhali, five in Khulna and 15 in Bagerhat.

Our correspondents from dif-

ferent districts and news agency UNB report that hundreds of people thronged the beach and coastal zones yesterday in search of their relatives after the storm ravaged the coastal area. Some 1,500 fishermen were rescued in the southern shores by the coast guards and the navy yesterday.

Some 25 fishermen were also rescued in the Chittagong coast

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## ORIENTAL BANK Board members admit taking Tk 175cr fake loans

STAR REPORT

Some members of the dissolved board of directors of Oriental Bank have admitted to the charge of obtaining Tk 175 crore from the bank using fake accounts.

The dissolved board appealed to Bangladesh Bank (BB) early this month to return the bank to them and pledged to pay back the money in next five years.

Some members of the board, enjoying support of the Oriental Bank's top management, misappropriated huge money and admit-

ted this in their prayer for returning the bank to them," said a source in the bank.

But another source said the amount misappropriated is much higher than what the board members admitted to the central bank. "Over Tk 500 crore has been misappropriated by some board members that put the bank in such a bad shape," the source added.

Meanwhile, primary investigations into the charge also found that some members of the Oriental Bank board used false accounts

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## KM Hasan was involved in BNP politics in 1979

### Moudud tells parliament, says there was no question of his integrity as judge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said in the parliament yesterday that former chief justice KM Hasan was involved with the politics of BNP in 1979.

He however vouched for the former chief justice's professional integrity, who is most likely to be the chief of the next caretaker government.

The law minister said, "KM Hasan is very competent and was

one of the best judges of the Supreme Court."

Lawmakers of the ruling BNP and main opposition Awami League once again locked horns in the parliament yesterday over Justice KM Hasan's political affiliation.

At one point of the debate Awami League (AL) lawmakers walked out of the House protesting against the law minister's 'free style' speech.

During almost an hour-long

unscheduled debate, AL lawmakers alleged that KM Hasan has been a controversial figure since he joined BNP and he failed to carry out his duty as a judge because he felt too embarrassed to preside over the hearing of Bangabandhu murder case.

Subjects of the debate that followed ranged from the price hike of essentials, to the ongoing crisis of power supply and also Sheikh Hasina's recent speech

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## Thai coup leader pledges new PM in 2 weeks

### Gets king's endorsement; Thaksin flies to UK; world leaders shocked

AGENCIES, Bangkok

Thailand's new military ruler pledged yesterday to resign from power in two weeks and restore democracy in a year, after sweeping aside Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in a bloodless coup.

General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, who orchestrated Tuesday night's coup while the billionaire premier was out of the country, said Thaksin had been pushed out in line with the wishes of the people

after months of political turmoil.

"I will resign as interim prime minister within two weeks, and now we are looking for the person who will become the new prime minister," said Sonthi, who added that he hoped to hold new elections in October 2007.

Gen Sonthi in a televised statement said King Bhumibol Adulyadej had endorsed him as the head of the interim governing council.

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## OUTAGE Citizens' body besieges N'ganj power office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Civil society members under the banner of Narayanganj Nagarik Committee yesterday besieged a Narayanganj electricity office and demanded relief from the severe power outages before the Ramadan and Durga Puja.

The committee besieged the superintendent engineer's office of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) on Bangabandhu street of the city and submitted a memorandum regarding their demand.

A B Siddiqui, convenor to Nagarik Committee, Abdur Rahman, Rafiqur Rabbi, Advocate Abul Kalam Azad, Haji M Hasnatullah, Abdus Sattar, Mohor Ali Chowdhury and Jannatul

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Activists of 14-party opposition combine led by local MP Zahid Ahsan Russell hold a rally blocking the Tongi Railway Station yesterday.

## Dhaka blockaded for reforms

### Opposition enforces hartal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transport was disrupted for some time at many places during the opposition's six-hour countrywide road-rail-waterways blockade programme yesterday while demonstrators' clashes with the law enforcers and ruling BNP activists left 32 people in Sirajganj and 10 people in Narayanganj district injured.

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine also enforces a countrywide 6:00am to 6:00pm hartal today to press home its demand for reforms in the caretaker government system and the Election Commission.

The blockade badly affected rail

communication as the demonstrators took position at different stations including Tongi, Khulna, Brahmanbaria, Chittagong, Chandpur, Sayedpur, Goalanda, Natore, Dinajpur and Lalmonirhat.

Inter-district bus communication also came to a halt for two hours from 10:00am as a few buses left from Sayedabad, Gabtoli and Mohakhali bus terminals. River communication was, however, almost normal.

The demonstrators halted Chittagong-bound Karnaphuli Express and Mymensingh-bound Ekota Express at Tongi, Mohanagar Express in cantonment and a Sylhet-bound local train at Pubail

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