

## Search on as toll reaches 85

**FROM PAGE 1** Meanwhile, the met office sources said the weather will stay gloomy today too. The land depression over West Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh remained practically stationary till last night. Drizzle almost all over the country disrupted normal life yesterday also for four consecutive days.

All fishing boats and trawlers in the north bay have been advised to remain close to the coast until further notice.

Different districts including Khulna, Satkhira, Rajshahi, Chandpur, Barisal, Patuakhali, Pirojpur, Noakhali, Bagerhat, Cox's Bazar and some parts of Dhaka have been inundated due to rainfall for four consecutive days.

A baby-girl drowned in floodwater at Jugantar Adarsha village in Nijhumdip under Hatiya Upazila on Friday.

Our Cox's Bazar correspondent reports, around five hundred fishermen still remain missing there. The local administration formed a search and rescue team. This correspondent accompanied the team yesterday but it could not work properly due to rough weather and could not recover any body nor could it rescue any fisherman.

Mojibor Rahman Chairman, president of Trawler Owners' Association said the chance of recovering more floating bodies is

slim. The association apprehends that fishes would have devoured the floating bodies if there were any.

Coast Guard Commander Badrudozza Chowdhury told BBC last evening that they did not find any body as they had started their rescue operation yesterday.

Our Patuakhali correspondent reports, nine more bodies were recovered from the beaches of Kuakata and Golachipa regions yesterday but none of them were identified. A local administration yesterday recovered a body while a dog was gnawing it.

Over 200 fishermen and 50 boats still remain missing there, the report added.

Several hundred relatives of the missing fishermen are still waiting on Kuakata beach.

Trawler Owners' Association could not send any trawler to the bay for search and rescue operations for its missing trawlers and crew due to a very rough sea, said Nimai, general secretary of the association.

### DEBATE OVER RESPONSIBILITY

Meteorologists blamed the unusual character of the violent storm of last Tuesday for the huge damage to life and property.

"The particular storm behaved very unusually by changing its character suddenly, which the meteorologists could not predict. Our record tells us that the wind

speed should not have been more than 60 kilometre but the damage says the wind speed was almost double at different points," said Arzumand Habib, deputy director of the met office.

The meteorologists said they sent out bulletins with cautionary reports, nine more bodies were recovered from the beaches of Kuakata and Golachipa regions yesterday but none of them were identified. A local administration yesterday recovered a body while a dog was gnawing it.

"We have broadcasted the weather forecast several times on that day. So the allegation against us of not broadcasting the weather bulletin is not correct," Abdul Aziz, regional director of Bangladesh Betar, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The violent storm killed so far nearly a hundred fishermen while more than a thousand remain missing. Official and local sources said at least 25 boats, 630 trawlers and the navy ship were overturned in the Bay of Bengal by the storm.

However, the authorities claimed that the fishermen might have violated the cautionary signal and went out to the sea for fishing as they can net more fish during rough weather.

## Political situation

**FROM PAGE 16** The opposition leaders admitted that businesses, especially the garment industry, will face major loss due to political instability, but said they cannot tolerate the injustices done by the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

Tofail Ahmed, also former industries minister, said they want dialogue at the general secretary level to overcome all problems if the government invites them formally.

He alleged that the government is influencing the Election Commission so that it cannot prepare an accurate voter list, which is a pre-condition for a free election.

Tofail also blamed the government for failing to coordinate among stakeholders in the garment industry in fixing a pay scale for the workers in the wake of unprecedented price hike of essentials.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said price hike of some essentials went up to 100-200 per cent because of rampant corruption and syndication in businesses. This should be considered while fixing the workers' pay scale, he noted.

Coordination is a must to calm the workers' unrest over the pay scale issue, he said, adding that the government could solve the crisis in the very beginning by using the law enforcers properly. "But the administration has been politicised," he said.

Jalil, also former commerce minister, assured that if voted to power, the AL will solve all the problems and make every effort for the development of the garment sector in consultation with all stakeholders.

"We shall take the role of the mediator in solving any problem regarding the central bonded warehouse and other issues," he said.

Appreciating the business community's concern over the political instability, Jalil said, "Our movement is not to oust anyone from power but for ensuring a free and fair election."

BGMEA President Fazlul Haque demanded formation of the central bonded warehouse to reduce long lead time, easing the rules of origin of woven garment for expanding its exports, modernising the ports and setting up deep-sea port, solving the ongoing gas and electricity crises, developing backward linkage industry, securing duty-free market in the USA and appointment of ombudsman for the garment industry.

He urged the government and opposition to solve every problem related to national economy through consultation. In a democratic system, the opposition plays the role of a shadow government and has specific responsibilities like the government, he said.

"The opposition should play a pro-active role," he said, appealing the opposition to allow garment workers to go to workplaces by special transport arrangements during hartals.

BGMEA vice-presidents Lutfur Rahman Matin and Sirajul Islam also spoke on the occasion.

The 17th version of Bateexpo, the largest exposition of apparels, fabrics and accessories, was jointly organised by BGMEA and German Technical Cooperation from September 21 at Hotel Sheraton.

## Saber returns home after treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to the Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, returned home yesterday after receiving treatment in Singapore and London.

A top Awami League (AL) leader, Saber was critically wounded when police beat him severely during the opposition combine's Election Commission (EC) siege programme on September 7.

"Doctors in London said that he has been suffering from double vision due to the head injuries in the police attack," said a family source.

Quoting physicians, the source said Saber has been suggested to take at least six weeks rest and after that he will have to go through some medical tests. "The doctors will then decide about installing prism lenses in his eyes to ease the double vision problem," the source added.

## Bol chief

**FROM PAGE 16** of the country by undermining the nation's economic development, the Bol chief pledged to resist the 'anti-development quarter' legally.

On August 9, a Dhaka court issued arrest warrants against Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan, its Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, CPD trustee board members—former adviser to caretaker government Syed Manzur Elahi, former finance minister M Syeduzzaman and former president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) Laila Rahman Kabir following the defamation suit filed by Rahman.

Apart from upholding the coalition government's achievement, his brief speech concentrated on criticising the opposition and a special 'quarter' enjoying the 'media monopoly.' Rahman branded the opposition demand for electoral reforms as an evil attempt to create constitutional crisis, adding that the chronicles started when some people raised the issue of minority repression just after the four-party alliance victory in the last general elections.

He also said that an all-out support will be given to the caretaker government to perform its duties. Those who get frequent media coverage will also be knocked down, he asserted.

BMA President Prof MA Hadi, convenor of the White Panel in Dhaka University (DU) Prof Aminur Rahman Mojumdar, Parishad Secretary General Prof AZM Jahid Hossain, journalist Ruhul Amin Gazi and BFUJ President Mozammel Haque spoke on the occasion. Prof Dr Mahbubullah of Development Studies Department, DU presented the keynote speech.

## French paper

**FROM PAGE 16** Chirac, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and France's interior and defence ministers on the same day.

"According to a usually reliable source, the Saudi services are now convinced that Osama bin Laden is dead," the document said.

"The information gathered by the Saudis indicates that the head of al-Qaeda was a victim while he was in Pakistan on August 23, 2006, of a very serious case of typhoid which led to a partial paralysis of his internal organs."

The report, which was stamped with a "confidential defence" label and the initials of the French secret service, said Saudi Arabia first heard the information on September 4 and that it was waiting for more details before making an official announcement.

Officials contacted by Reuters in Chirac's and Villepin's offices had no immediate comment.

A senior official in Pakistan's Interior Ministry said: "We have no information about Osama's death." Saudi-born Bin Laden was based in Afghanistan until the Taliban government there was overthrown by US-backed forces in late 2001. Since then, US and Pakistani officials have regularly said they believe he is hiding somewhere on the rugged border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The last videotaped message released by bin Laden was in late 2004, but there have been several low quality audio tapes released this year.

## DG shipping

**FROM PAGE 16** only said one vital part of the alarm system was not functioning after sudden disconnection of three important ISD mobile phones.

The DG admits that mobile phones are integrated in the ISPS system; on the other hand, he claims the security system's failure due to disconnection of mobile phones was a 'rumour'.

The emergency alarm system is still not functioning. The DG told The Daily Star yesterday that the alarm system would be restored as soon as possible.

## Nuclear talks

**FROM PAGE 16** negotiating table to discuss a package of incentives offered by six world powers in June in exchange for a suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment program.

The six powers that made the offer to Iran -- the United States, France, Russia, China, Britain and Germany -- said the package was negotiable but conditioned any negotiations on a suspension of enrichment, a process of purifying uranium for use as fuel in nuclear power plants or atomic weapons.

In a preview of an article to appear on Sunday, the magazine said a decision by the "EU3" to begin preliminary talks with Iran would require a positive outcome of discussions between European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana and Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larjani.

The United States would not join in any talks with Iran until a full enrichment suspension was in place, the paper said.

After several delays, Solana and Larjani are expected to meet somewhere in Europe next week, diplomats have said. Der Spiegel said the meeting would probably take place in Brussels.

The six powers have agreed to give Solana until early October to reach a deal with Tehran for starting negotiations.

The new plan was discussed at a meeting of senior officials of the six countries and the EU in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Der Spiegel said.

Earlier major powers sought to

## Caretaker govt

**FROM PAGE 1** that her government fulfilled its commitment by curbing terrorism.

Presided over by local MP Zakaria Taher Sumon, the meeting was also addressed by Health Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury and Rabeya Chowdhury.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated Barura Fire Station, Poura Bhaban and Abu Taher Sarak.

## 2 outlaws killed

**FROM PAGE 16** fire on Rab and Rab returned fire in defence. Haiful and Hazrat died on the spot during the 'shootout', claimed Rab.

Rab recovered a rifle, a shutter gun and a number of sharp weapons from the spot.

Haiful was accused in four murder cases while Hazrat for three, said Rab.

## 32 killed

**FROM PAGE 16** target for Sunni extremists in the Shia-Sunni sectarian conflict in which thousands of people have died since February.

Thousands of young Shias from the district are loyal followers of radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and are members of his Mahdi Army militia, which the US military has accused of killing Iraq's Sunni Arabs.

The Sadr City bombing followed a warning on Friday by the al-Qaeda led group, the Mujahadeen Shura Council, of increased attacks during Ramadan.

"The ... Mujahadeen Shura Council announces that Saturday is the beginning of the blessed month of Ramadan" for Sunnis, it said, adding it hoped this would bring "conquests and victories".

A little-known Jewish al-Fataheen group also called on Muslims to "strike at the fortresses of the infidels and hypocrites" in a statement also saying it wished Ramadan was full of "victories".

The Islamic fasting month of Ramadan has been characterised by a spike of violence in Iraq in the past few years.

US military commanders have warned of increased attacks this year also during Ramadan -- the holiest period of the Muslim calendar.

"We are anticipating an increase of foreign fighters in Ramadan. Ramadan is a period of increased violence," US military spokesman Major General William Caldwell told reporters on Wednesday.

Sunni imams have however called for peace during the month.

In his Friday sermon, Mahmud Mahdi al-Sumaydaie, imam of Sunni Umm al-Qura mosque in Baghdad, urged "promoters of violence to strike a truce at least in Ramadan and let people alone with their prayers."

"Ramadan should be without killings and militias," he said referring to Shia militias who Sunnis accuse of killing members of their community.

In July and August, a total of 6,599 civilians were killed, according to a United Nations report. Most of the dead were in Baghdad despite a massive security crackdown since mid-June and the presence of nearly 60,000 US and Iraqi troops and police patrolling the streets of the capital.

The Shia-Sunni sectarian conflict has gripped Iraq since February when a revered Shia shrine was

narrow differences over sanctions against Iran on Friday as a new deadline ticked away for that country to agree to suspend sensitive nuclear work.

US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns said there were still differences among the major powers on what sanctions would be imposed if Iran failed to halt uranium enrichment as the UN Security Council has demanded.

Senior officials of the United States, France, Russia, China, Britain, Germany and the European Union were meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, US officials said.

No decision was expected on Friday but officials hoped to make progress in narrowing differences, Burns told reporters.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice voiced no direct approval to this strategy but signalled she could tolerate it, the magazine reported.

If this plan does not result in a breakthrough in the West's years-long nuclear standoff with Iran, the six countries will have no choice but to begin debating serious sanctions of the kind Washington wants imposed on the Islamic republic, it said.

## Helicopter

**FROM PAGE 16** the four-member crew.

"The helicopter carrying delegates who had gone to attend the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area handover at Taleju area is missing," said a WWF statement.

"The flight left Ghunsa (village) this afternoon at 12 p.m. (0615 GMT) but did not arrive as per schedule back to Taleju."

The WWF said junior forest minister Gopal Rai, his wife and three senior government officials were among the 20 passengers on board the Russian-made Mi-17 helicopter, owned by local private company, Sri Airlines.

Airport officials coordinating the search and rescue operation said so far there was no trace of the missing aircraft.

"We fear an unfortunate incident may have occurred. We have sent two helicopters for search operations because we have reports that weather is improving," Ambar Bahadur Shakya, told Reuters.

He said two helicopters had earlier been dispatched to conduct an aerial search but bad weather had forced them to turn back. Two ground teams have also been deployed to the area, which is remote and mountainous.

There are more than a dozen private airlines in Nepal, which has a poor road network and some of the world's highest peaks, including Mount Everest. In 2002, a small passenger plane crashed in west Nepal killing 18 people, including 13 German nationals.

## Ex-VC Aftab

**FROM PAGE 1** No sooner had the girl opened the door, the three stormed into the house and shot Prof Aftab who was strolling in his daughter's bedroom. "I heard firings, but the assailants fled before I reached the room and found him in a pool of blood," Noorjahan told journalists at the Samorita Hospital.

DU VC Prof SMA Faiz told The Daily Star that the DU authority has directed the police to find out the culprits immediately.

Meanwhile, Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) President Prof Sharif Ullah Bhuiyan and General Secretary Prof M Akhtaruzzaman in a statement demanded immediate arrest of and punishment to the culprits. They also demanded security for the university teachers.

Mohammad Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh

Police Station, told The Daily Star that they have not yet found any clue to the shooting. "We are investigating the matter," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Aftab's nephew Mohammad Ziaul Haque alleged that nobody came to their help after the shooting.

He claimed Prof Aftab had many enemies for his talk shows on different private television channels. However, he did not receive any threats in recent days, Zia said.

## Agencies under fire for tsunami failures

AP, KAMPUNG JAWA, Indonesia

The tsunami of 2004 triggered the biggest humanitarian response in history, feeding the hungry, heading off epidemics and engendering the hope that out of a calamity that took 216,000 lives, a better Indian Ocean rim would emerge.

But 18 months later recriminations are rife, with aid agencies standing accused of planning poorly, raising unrealistic expectations and simply being incompetent.

Brand-new homes infested with termites are being torn down in Indonesia while families in India were put into shelters deemed of "poor quality" and "uninhabitable" because of the heat. Thousands of boats donated to fishermen in Indonesia and Sri Lanka sit idle because they are uneconomical or too small. Only 23 percent of the \$10.4 billion in disaster aid to the worst hit countries, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, has been spent, according to the United Nations, because so much of it is earmarked for long-term construction projects.

"I think mistakes occur in every disaster, but for the first time we are seeing it on a large scale," Anisya Thomas, managing director of the California-based Fritz Institute, an NGO, or non-governmental organization, that specializes in delivering aid and has surveyed survivors in India and Sri Lanka.

## Waterlogged

**FROM PAGE 1** streets including Mirpur Road, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. Hundreds of taxis and CNG-run three-wheelers were seen stuck on different city streets yesterday.

Water logging was also seen on the Bangladesh Secretariat premises, the VIP Road in front of the Prime Minister's Office and many other major roads including Airport Road, Mirpur Road, Manik Mia Avenue, Bijoy Sarani, Dar-us-Salam Road, Outer Circular Road and Bijoy Nagar Road.

City dwellers have been suffering for the last four days in many areas including a large part of Old Dhaka, Mirpur, Tejgaon, Uttara, Malibagh, Khilgaon, Badda, Madertek, Bashabo, Motijheel, Palltan and Mohammadpur due to water-logging. Vehicular movements in those areas also became very slow.

Traffic was not heavy on the streets since morning and the markets and shopping malls had very few shoppers.

The continuous rainfall also forced the authorities of Zia International Airport to reschedule many domestic and international flights during the last four days.

Intercity bus communication was also disrupted. Hundreds of office-bound people in the morning and home-bound people in the evening had to wait in long queues on different streets for transport. Only a small number of rickshaws and three-wheelers were out on the street charging, in some cases, twice the usual fare.

The downpour also hampered the normal functioning of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue with its floor going under ankle-deep water. They are still doing the autopsies, but with difficulties, sources said.

## AL to propose

**FROM PAGE 16** in this respect," he said while talking to some reporters at his Mercantile Bank in the city yesterday.

Jalil, also the coordinator of the 14-party opposition combine, said Justice KM Hasan has not yet declared his dissociation with the BNP, rather he proved himself to be a "BNP man" through visiting Comilla along with the activists of this party.

In reply to a question, he said, "We will propose the names for the caretaker chief and the chief election commissioner that will be acceptable to all, including the ruling BNP."

Asked about speculations on the possibility of appointing former cabinet secretaries Akbar Ali Khan and Sa'dat Hossain as the caretaker chief and the chief election commissioner, Jalil said the Awami League-led 14-party combine will not accept them.

About Law Minister Moudud Ahmed's remark that the government will not change its stance on the question of KM Hasan and CEC MA Aziz, he said Moudud's remark has "no value".

Asked about their movement for electoral reforms, Jalil said the 14-party lineup will go for tougher agitation, including series of hartals, siege and non-cooperation, if the government doesn't solve the existing political problems through dialogue.

"We will carry out agitation by all democratic means, and even it will be in the month of Ramadan...but we won't go for confrontation with the government," he said.

## Shop owners reject

**FROM PAGE 16** of patience has crossed all limits," he added.

The minister convened the meeting to discuss the power supply situation with the leaders of different chambers and business bodies.

Helal said the failure of the government in managing power sector will come up as "a big question" in the upcoming general elections. "Unabated corruption has crippled the entire power sector and the present government did nothing to increase the power generation in the country."

He, however, accepted the power minister's proposal to avoid illuminating the shopping malls.

FBCCI President Mir Nasir Hossain said frequent power disruption causes serious setback to the export business, as the exporters fail to keep their supply commitment.

President of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) SM

## RMG sector

**FROM PAGE 16** profit compared to their equity share, they show profit margin on the basis of total turnover, he added.

All the economic indicators like per capita income and GDP growth rate went up in Bangladesh in recent years but the garment workers are not getting the share of benefit, he said, adding that not allowing responsible trade union also acted as a factor behind the volatile situation in the garment sector.

Asif Ibrahim, a member of board of directors of BGMEA, said there has not been significant increase of the prices of garment products over the last 20 years in the global market and the benefits they achieved were due to the currency rate fluctuation.

"When we exported RMG products during 80's, we used to get Tk 35 for a dollar but now we get Tk 70," he said.

He, however, added, "In the meantime, our production cost has also gone up significantly due to workers salary and reinvestment in the sector."

"We have to receive high price from the buyers that is needed for sustainable growth of the industry. We have to consider how much wage we can afford to pay the workers and what should be the reasonable wage for the workers," Ibrahim said.

It would not be rational to impose the minimum wage by creating pressure only on the owners, he said, adding that interest of both the garment owners and workers has to be considered.

Urging the owners to treat the workers as human beings, Channel-i Executive Director Israul Haque said a wrong perception has developed among the workers that garment owners earn huge money and deprive the workers and it is one of the major reasons behind the unrest in the garment sector.

An amicable solution can come out only if the owners consider the workers as their partner, he said.

Golam Faruk, chairman of SQ Group, criticised the wage commission's proposal for a seven-grade wage only for the garment

## Rahman, Bangla Bhai

**FROM PAGE 1** are kept at a sub-jail in the city's Mirpur area while Ataur Rahman Sunny and Abdul Awal are at the Dhaka Central Jail.

Inspector General (IG) Prisons Brigadier Gen Zakir Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday that the four militants had said they would not appeal against the verdict. "But according to the law, they will still be given seven days to inform us of their decision in this regard," added the IG prisons.

Of the other two convicts, Iftekhar Mamun is in Kashimpur Jail and Khaled Saifullah in Rangpur Jail, he added. Their death warrants did not reach there as of filing this report yesterday evening.

Meanwhile, Khaled Saifullah, who plans to appeal against the HC verdict, has signed the Vokalonama and mailed it to his family.

A brother of Saifullah told The Daily Star that they received the Vokalonama yesterday evening. They are now trying to appoint a lawyer for filing the appeal with the Supreme Court.

He said Saifullah signed the paper on September 14 and posted it on September 17.

His family has also submitted a

mercy petition to President Dr Iajuddin Ahmed. The prayer for mercy was mailed to the Bangabhaban on September 18, said family sources.

Meanwhile, families of the militant top brass alleged that different intelligence agencies have been threatening them not to file any appeal.

Awal's family had reportedly applied for a certified copy of the HC verdict but they did not yet get one, said sources. "We might petition for a certified copy, as we will need it to file an appeal," said a family member.

Legal experts say if any of convicts appeal against the HC death sentences, his execution will be withheld till the Supreme Court's decision. But those who will not appeal will be executed by that time.

The militant leaders condemned to death did not appoint any lawyer to represent them in the lower court or the HC. Excepting Mamun, none appealed against the trial court's verdict either. Mamun's appeal however was rejected by the HC.