

Durga Puja starts tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Preparations at the puja mandaps across the country have completed as the five-day long Durga Puja, the greatest religious festival of the Hindus, begins tomorrow.

The Hindu worship 'Shakti' or divine power embodied in devi (goddess) Durga.

The puja will begin with Bodhon ritual and Mahashashthi puja on Thursday morning and the 'adhish' of Durga will be held in puja mandaps in the evening on the same day.

The Mahasaptami will be held on Friday, Maha Astami on Saturday, Mahanabami on Sunday and Bijoya Dashami on Monday.

At a meeting with the representatives of the Hindus at the Dhaka City Corporation office yesterday, Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said special measures have been taken for ensuring smooth power and water supply while additional

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Rain wreaks havoc on vegetable fields

PINAKI ROY

Five days of torrential rain coupled with tidal surges inundated 30 percent of vegetable fields ruining their crops completely in 16 districts, among which the coastal ones saw the most severe damage.

Prices of vegetables on the market already shot up at the beginning of Ramadan and vegetable traders are blaming the incessant rainfall for the geometric hike.

The recent rainfall brought by the low formed over the Bay of Bengal also inundated 2.5 lakh hectares of Aman fields out of 14 lakh hectares in coastal districts. Most of the paddies on those fields will perish if the water level does not recede in a day or two.

However, after a drought like situation this year, the rainfall was a

blessing for Aman paddies in the rest of the regions of the country, sources in the field survey wing of Agricultural Extension Department (AED) said.

"We are afraid that all vegetables on 13,000 hectares of land will be totally ruined. Only some green chilis and okras might not be destroyed," said Abdul Bari, director of the field survey wing of AED.

Inundation of vegetable fields might affect the vegetable market in other regions also.

The low over the bay brought a deadly storm in the coastal districts capsizing around five hundred trawlers and boats, and rendering over 1000 fishermen missing.

The inundated Aman fields are situated in Khulna, Cox's Bazar, Patuakhali, Barisal, Satkhira, Barguna, Pirojpur, Jhalakathi,

Chittagong, Bhola, Noakhali, Feni, Bagerhat, Chandpur and Rajshahi.

"Aman paddies can survive seven days of inundation. As the water level on the fields is receding, we hope that most of the paddies will remain unharmed," said Abdul Bari.

Amid a shortfall of rain a drought like situation was prevailing in the country preceding the storm, forcing the farmers, mostly of the northern region, to spend a lot of money for irrigation. The recent rainfall was a blessing for the farmers of the northern region, agriculture experts said.

However, our correspondents from different coastal districts report that a major portion of Aman paddies in their districts was ruined due to inundation.

Mobile court seizes 750kg of rotten dates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday dumped nearly 750 kg of rotten dates in the river seized from the Badamtali wholesale fruits market, while hundreds of sacks filled with the date-expired fruits could not be destroyed due to lack of adequate manpower.

The wholesalers association of the market, however, assured the mobile court that they would destroy all the date-expired and low quality dates from the market within one week, after the court warned them.

"We gave up our operation as most of the dates in the market were rotten and of low quality. How much can we throw away," said Sarder Keramat Ali, the magistrate who led the mobile court.

At first the mobile court found more than hundreds of sacks of low quality dates at the Desh

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PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court seizes rotten dates from a warehouse at Badamtali in the capital yesterday. The court later dumped the dates in the Buriganga river, a perennial victim of pollution and encroachment.

Dhaka seeks increased aid for LDCs

Morshed speaks at UN UNB, New York

Bangladesh has urged the international community to enhance development assistance for the least developed countries (LDCs) to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Delivering statement at the UN General Assembly on Monday, Foreign Minister M. Moshed Khan emphasised that all exports from LDCs must be given duty-free and quota-free market access to ensure the economic growth necessary to

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Standing bodies to be formed within third session of JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament yesterday passed some amendments to its rules of procedure meaning that the standing committees should be formed within the third session of each new parliament.

Passed by voice vote, the changes will take effect from the next parliament.

Earlier, the parliamentary standing committee on the rules of procedure headed by Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar finalised the amendments while committee

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Sehri, Iftar timing			
Ramadan	Sept	Sehri	Iftar
3	27		5-53
4	28	4-30	5-53
5	29	4-30	5-51

Prayer Timing		
September 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-29	5-42
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	5-53	6-10
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

A woman cooks sitting on a makeshift platform as her kitchen was flooded with rainwater. The photo was taken from Shahidnagar in Lalbagh, Dhaka, yesterday.

Outlaw killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

A regional leader of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) Janajuddha faction was killed in 'crossfire' yesterday during an encounter between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and his accomplices at Shubharara in Abhaynagar upazila in Jessore.

Rab arrested Mishli Islam Moshi, 35, on Monday at Daulatpur.

Following his confessional statement, a Rab team along with Moshi went to Shubharara around 3:30am to recover hidden firearms and arrest his accomplices, Rab claimed in a press release.

Moshi's accomplices opened fire on the team in a bid to snatch him from Rab custody. Rab retaliated and Moshi was bullet-hit during the shootout. He died on the spot.

Rab recovered one shutter gun and a bullet from the spot. Moshi's cohorts, however, managed to escape.

Rab sources said Moshi had six cases including two murder cases filed against him with different police stations.

6 more bodies of storm victims found

UNB, Dhaka

Six more unidentified bodies were recovered from canals and rivers alongside the Sundarbans yesterday, raising the death toll in the Bay tragedy to 103.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Coastguard and Forest Department rescued seven fishermen alive from Kachikhali yesterday.

Local sources said many decomposed bodies are still floating in the deep sea and rivers in Dublar Char and Narkelbaria.

Navy, Coastguard and Forest Department have strengthened the rescue operation to find out anyone alive.

Sharankhola upazila unit of Sramik League yesterday took out a procession demanding compensation for the victims' families.

Abe takes office as youngest Japan PM

Vows to repair ties with China, advance alliance with US

AFP, Tokyo

Outspoken conservative Shinzo Abe took office yesterday as Japan's youngest prime minister, pledging to repair strained ties with China and advance the alliance with the United States.

With a reputation as a foreign

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Shinzo Abe

Afghan suicide blast kills 18

REUTERS, Lashkar gah, Afghanistan

A suicide bomber killed 18 people outside the governor's office in a southern Afghan town yesterday while an Italian soldier died in a blast near Kabul, officials said.

The Taliban's intensified campaign against the government and foreign troops supporting it this year has spawned the worst violence since the hardline Islamists were ousted after the September 11 attacks in 2001.

The suicide blast went off as foreign troops were passing through Lashkar Gah, capital of Helmand province, an official said.

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EU okays Bulgaria, Romania as members

BBC ONLINE

The European Commission has announced that Romania and Bulgaria will be admitted to the EU in January 2007, but under strict conditions.

Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said both countries had made enough progress to join the union.

But they will be checked for progress in curbing organised crime and corruption, and ensuring food safety and the proper use of EU funds.

Bulgaria's PM said the move was the fall of the Berlin Wall for his nation.

Romanian Prime Minister Calin Tariceanu said his people should be proud of themselves, but should

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Thai junta to retain grip on power

Ex-WTO boss tipped as civilian premier

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's ruling junta will remain in place after a civilian prime minister takes office to keep a tight check on the new government, the general who led last week's coup told the news agency yesterday.

General Sonthi Boonyaratglin said the military leadership would transform itself into a National Security Council to work alongside the new premier, who is expected to be named later this week. Newspapers meanwhile reported that former World Trade Organisation head Supachai Panitchpakdi has agreed to be Thailand's new prime minister.

"It's necessary to keep the council so that there is no loophole for the executive branch," he said in a telephone interview.

"Both the interim prime minister and the interim constitution will be ready in a day or two. Everything will proceed according to the original schedule," he added.

However, promises from army chief Sonthi Boonyaratglin to restore democracy within a year of last week's bloodless coup against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra sounded like a re-run of a military putsch in 1991, analysts said.

After ousting prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra in a bloodless, late-night coup last Tuesday, Sonthi

pledged the military would name a new premier within two weeks and draft a new constitution.

He also promised to hold elections in October 2007.

Speaking later to reporters, Sonthi said the military could have places in the new cabinet but that the generals would not interfere.

"The military will act as advisers to the interim government because there are still concerns about security issues, since we don't know yet what will happen," he said.

"We will not control the cabinet, we will just give them our expertise. I reaffirm that the junta will not be

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