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The Daily Star

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Inside today

International



Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's motorcade met with an accident that left four officials, including a state police chief, seriously injured in Rajasthan.

Page 5

Article

India goes to polls on May 20, 23 and 26. But no party is yet poised for winning an absolute majority and political analysts rule out any viable coalition either — Reazuddin Ahmed, now on a visit to India, writes from Calcutta.

Page 4

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



Voluntary Service Overseas chief talks about stereotypes, surprises, prejudices, affinities.

Page 3

Business

Frozen food sector, rampaged by the devastating cyclone and tidal surge of April 29 in the coastal belt, needs an effective and innovative programme for recovery and rehabilitation. A firsthand report from Chittagong.

Page 8

NEWS BRIEFS

Earthquake at Gazipur

GAZIPUR, May 11: An earthquake shook Gazipur and Tongi at 8-14 Saturday morning creating panic among the people who rushed outdoor for safety. No casualties or damage to property were reported, states BSS.

Italy to send 4 copters

ROME, May 11: The government of Italy has decided to despatch four helicopters to Bangladesh immediately in response to the appeal of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to assist ongoing relief operation. The government of Italy has also donated eight million dollars as emergency assistance, reports BSS.

Telex system with Ctg restored

Telex system between Dhaka and Chittagong has been fully restored, T&T said Saturday night, reports BSS.

Case against Raushan

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption on Saturday filed a case against Begum Raushan Ershad, wife of former President Ershad, for causing a loss of about Tk one crore to the government exchequer by illegal intervention into public affairs. Raushan, who did not have any legal recognition as the First Lady, passed orders to the Secretary of Land Administration to stop lease of 150 jalmahals.

Death toll crosses 1000 : Nearly one lakh attacked

Diarrhoea in epidemic form

Star Report

While the rescue operations in the coastal belt, ravaged by the century's worst cyclone and tidal bore, has been geared up, the survivors are engaged in erecting makeshift shelters. Almost all the battered areas offered a deserted look as if there was no human habitation there.

The death toll in the cyclone and tidal bore was officially confirmed at one lakh 38 thousand 868. According to an unofficial estimate, the toll of human lives in the catastrophic cyclone may cross two lakh. Thousands of people are still missing.

Meanwhile, diarrhoeal diseases have broken out in an epidemic form in same cyclone-hit areas. An official source told The Daily Star that 263 persons died of diarrhoeal diseases and about 75,000 had been attacked in Chittagong, Barisal, Barguna and Jhalakati districts. District-wise breakdown of deaths due to diarrhoea is: Chittagong-67, Barisal-92, Barguna-52 and Jhalakati-52. The number of persons attacked with diarrhoea in Chittagong is 56,691, Barisal-5325, Barguna-8487 and Jhalakati-3661.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society however put the number of deaths due to diarrhoea at 1003 and persons afflicted at 88,222. On Saturday, 662 cyclone victims were attacked with diarrhoeal diseases, BRCS said.

In Bhola, 67 persons were attacked with diarrhoea during the last 24 hours while in

Barisal, 26 more persons were attacked during the same period. In Chittagong, 16,382 persons were attacked with diarrhoea from May 11 to May 11 and 84 died during the same period.

A Red Crescent source said there had been widespread outbreak of diarrhoeal diseases in Chittagong. All the hospitals were filled with diarrhoea patients. Naval hospital, Fauzdarhat hospital, Bandar hospital and Combined Military Hospital are packed with diarrhoea patients.

Our staff correspondent Astuzaman filed the following eyewitness account after touring the cyclone affected areas of Chittagong:

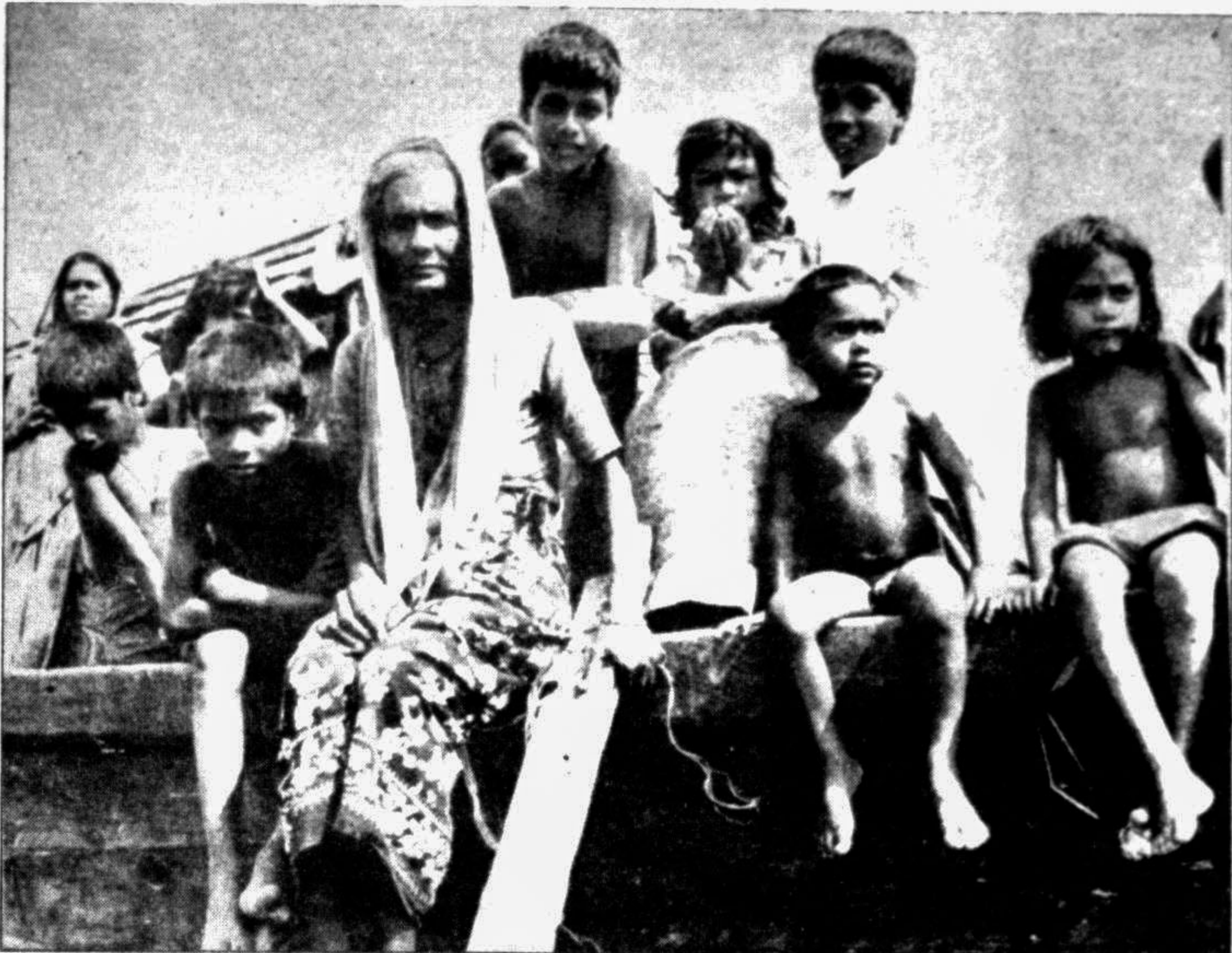
Patenga sea beach, once a haven for holiday makers, has turned into a virtual graveyard. The beach has lost its charms, pocked by numerous ditches after the cataclysm of April 29.

Even ten days after the cyclone bodies of both men and beasts were being washed up on the sandy beach mostly during each high tide.

People were seen waiting along the beach not to watch the glorious sunset but to recover the corpses of near and dear ones if the tides decided to wash them ashore.

Sweepers of the Chittagong City Corporation were seen dumping carcasses into the ditches and there was an omnipresent smell of rot in the air. Without seeing the sight one would either underestimate or overestimate the damage.

See Page 10 Col. 1



They're all in the same boat: The present, past and future generations, deprived of their all but a hope for the future still brightens their eyes. —Star photo

Commentary

A setback for a national approach to relief operation

By S. M. Ali

Hopes for a broad national approach replacing partisan politics in the current relief operation suffered a further setback on Friday when, in two separate meetings with the press, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and the Leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina indicated they were poles apart in their thinking on the crisis.

While Sheikh Hasina, the Awami League Leader, addressed a crowded press conference, Begum Zia had an 80-minute meeting with editors of national dailies and news agencies at her office at Sugandha.

While the two leaders looked at the aftermath of the cyclone from their respective perspectives, there was one common element in their statements: They accused each other of playing politics with the catastrophe.

It was obvious that by the time she met the editors, the Prime Minister already had the details of what the opposition leader had told the press earlier in the evening. Not surprisingly, therefore, the opening statement of Begum Zia dealt with criticisms made against the administration for its alleged mismanagement of the crisis.

See Page 10 Col. 7

Storms disrupt power supply in many areas

By Staff Correspondent

Storms and tornadoes have severely disrupted power supply in many places of the country during the last few days.

Two major distribution lines were badly damaged in Sylhet which affected a large number of power consumers. The Kumargaon-Bateswar 33 KV line was damaged by a storm Saturday morning in Sylhet that razed a number of poles to ground. The damage disrupted power supply mainly to the cantonment area.

The consumers of Zakiganj-Bianbazar of Sylhet had to suffer due to power disruption caused by the damage in Baralekha-Bianbazar 33 KV line.

This line was damaged by Friday's storm that snapped some poles.

Similarly, storms affected power distribution systems in Sunamganj, Stralganj, Gazipur and Tangail where electricity

See Page 10 Col. 3

Govt facing post-cyclone situation with courage, House told

Multi-purpose buildings to be constructed in coastal areas

By Staff Correspondent

Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, Deputy Leader of the House, told Parliament on Saturday that the Government was planning to construct strong multi-purpose buildings for schools in the coastal areas for use as shelters during cyclones.

Taking part in the general discussion on the post-cyclone situation he told the Opposition that the Government, which was only 50 days old was facing the worst cyclone in 185 years with courage. It was backed by a firm leadership and faith in the ideals of late Zia, he said.

The Opposition alleged that the Government had failed to effectively tackle the post-cyclone situation. They were particularly critical of lack of

preparedness which, they said, was evident from the destruction of aircraft at Chittagong Airport.

Opposition bench members also criticised the Government for not constituting an all-party relief committee and accused the Government of involving BNP in its relief operations.

Treasury bench members said, the Government was capable of handling the situation. Whether or not the Government succeeded in its work would be proved in elections after five years, they said.

A total of 20 members took part in the discussion on the day. They included Shipping Minister M K Anwar, State Minister for Food Nazmul Huda, BKSAL member Abdur

See Page 10 Col. 4

Salary advance for affected employees

By Staff Correspondent

The third and fourth class government employees of cyclone-affected areas of the coastal belt will be provided with their two months' basic salary as advance.

Information Secretary Manzur-U-Mowla while briefing the newsmen at Hotel Sheraton in the city Saturday evening disclosed the government decision.

He said the advance salary will be given on application by the intending employees. The amount of salary will be realised in easy instalments over a period of next three months.

Khaleda visits tomado-hit Gazipur

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on Saturday visited tornado-struck areas of Gazipur to see the extent of destruction and relief and rehabilitation activities there, reports BSS.

When the tornado hit Gazipur on May 7, Begum Zia was in Chittagong supervising relief and rehabilitation activities. She returned to the capital on Friday.

She visited Chhaidoma, Hhogra and Degerchala areas of Gazipur Saturday hit by the cyclone.

See Page 10 Col. 1

Chandra Shekhar arrives today

Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar arrives this morning to express his country's solidarity with the people of Bangladesh fighting the trial of devastation left by the severest and unprecedented cyclone and tidal surge, reports UNB.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will receive him at Zia International airport.

Chandra Shekhar, now very busy in electioneering, will fly in two and a half hours' visit, officials of the Foreign Ministry said Saturday.

The Indian Prime Minister will call on Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, and meet Begum Zia at her Cantonment residence.

The Indian leader is likely to discuss with Begum Zia about intensifying his country's relief assistance to cyclone victims of Bangladesh.

Soon after landing, he will fly to Savar to lay wreaths at the National Memorial and pay homage to the martyrs of War of Liberation.

Mostafiz off to Japan to attend Tokyo Forum

By Staff Correspondent

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafiz Rahman left for Japan on Saturday to attend the Tokyo Forum on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

This is Mostafiz Rahman's first official visit abroad as foreign minister. He was invited by Foreign Minister of Japan, Dr Taro Nakayama. The Forum will be held in Tokyo from May 13-15, 1991.

Director General (Economic) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Toshiro Aki accompanied the minister.

The Tokyo Forum is being organised by the government of Japan, in association with United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), as a follow-up to the Second UN Conference on LDCs held in Paris in September, 1990. Ministers from ten LDCs, including Bangladesh, will be participating in this forum.

See Page 10 Col. 6

Prices showing upward trend

By Staff Correspondent

Prices of essentials are under upward pressures in the city markets following the devastating cyclone and tidal surge of April 29 in the coastal belt.

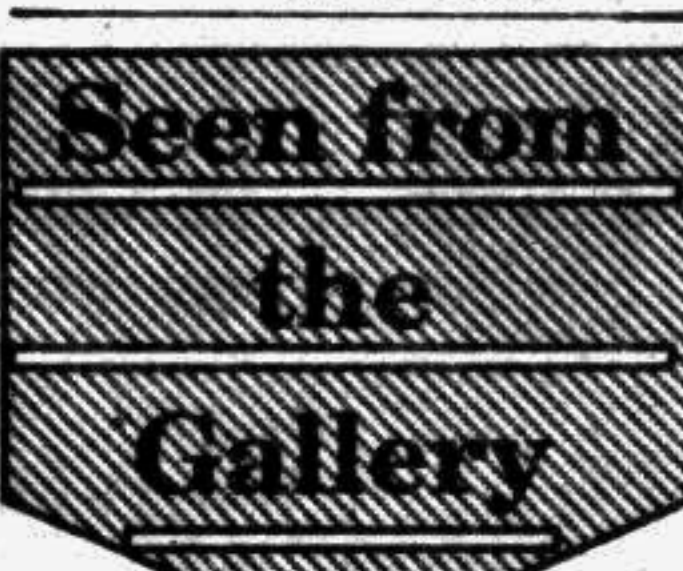
Traders say communication disruptions and supply constraints have caused the upward pressures on prices. There were also tornadoes at some places after the catastrophic cyclone. The mobility of goods has been adversely affected as a result, both wholesalers and retailers point out.

A random survey in some city markets showed that prices of different varieties of rice registered a rise by Taka 1

to Taka 1.50. Rice traders at Badamtali in Dhaka city alleged that their trucks loaded with rice were hijacked and looted at many points on this way to Dhaka. Musclemen are also harassing the rice truck owners and realising toll from them. As such, the wholesale traders said, they had no option but to raise the price. Finer varieties of rice sold on Saturday between Tk 14.50 and Tk 15 compared to Tk 12.50 and Tk 13.00 a few days back, coarse varieties of rice are being sold between Tk 10.75 and Tk 12.

Prices of beaten rice have risen by Taka 1.50. Prices of beaten rice have risen by Taka 1.50.

See Page 10 Col. 4



Seen from the Gallery

by Mahfuz Anam

It is difficult to write much in this column tonight because I didn't see much from the gallery. Not because I was sleeping — the idea did cross my mind on several occasions — but because nothing much happened. Well, that is not being thoroughly honest. In fact a lot happened.

The Opposition made ineffective speeches, to which the government gave inane answers. Thrown in between

See Page 10 Col. 5

Opposition stages walkout to protest M K Anwar's remarks

By Staff Correspondent

All members of the Opposition parties in Parliament staged a walkout yesterday (Saturday) protesting remarks made by the Shipping Minister M K Anwar, who was defending the government's post-cyclone measures in the coastal region.

The Opposition took M K Anwar's remarks seriously and described them as highly unparliamentary and an aspersion on the dignity of the Members of Parliament.

The Opposition staged the walkout at around a quarter past six last evening and remained out of the House till 10 pm.

Immediately after the walk-out the Opposition members

sat in a meeting at the conference room of the Leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina, was then listening the proceedings of Parliament from her office room.

The meeting was attended by all leaders of the opposition parties including the Jatiya Party leader Moudud Ahmed, Jamaat leader Abdus Sobhan, NDP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, Ganatantri Party leader Suranjit Sengupta, Islami Oikya Jote leader Obaidul Haque, Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon, and other members of the CPB and the NAP. The independent members were also present there.

The Meeting with Sheikh

Hasina framed three demands as preconditions to staging a comeback to the House.

The preconditions were: Withdrawal of remarks made by M. K. Anwar and his expressing regret allowing of discussions on the form of government and the continuation of the Parliament session till May 18.

After the meeting Sheikh Hasina in a press briefing said that the people of the country thought that the present Parliament would fulfil their expectations and establish a democratic system in the place of autocratic rule. But the present behaviour of the members of the Treasury Bench in-

See Page 10 Col. 3

danger mark.

In Comilla 10 unions of Muradnagar upazila were inundated when the town protection dam across the Gomti river gave in near Trigram though the river was flowing below the danger level.

Some kutcha houses were damaged by flood.

The Khowai river in Habiganj was flowing only 10 cm below the danger mark.

Water was flowing through several breaches which were being repaired from time to time, according to Control

See Page 10 Col. 3

UK Marines will carry supplies to stranded people

LONDON, May 11: An 18-member British Marines assault team, equipped with a mini-fleet of small raiding craft to ferry supplies, will fly to Bangladesh next week, the Navy said Saturday, reports Reuter.

The Marines will carry food and medical supplies to stranded survivors of last week's disastrous cyclone storms and tidal surge.

Britain earlier this week said it would send four helicopters to Bangladesh. London has so far contributed 6.5 million pounds (11 million dollars) in aid to Bangladesh since a cyclone struck 12 days ago, killing more than 125,000 people.

See Page 10 Col. 6

ADB VP comes today

The Vice President of Asian Development Bank (ADB), William R Thomson, arrives in Dhaka today (Sunday) on a five-day visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He will discuss with the government various aspects of ADB operations in Bangladesh.

Thomson will visit Chittagong to see the damage caused by the recent devastating cyclone.

The ADB Vice President is expected to call on Finance and Planning Minister M Sufur Rahman and some other ministers and concerned secretaries.

See Page 10 Col. 3

80 pc houses of Sylhet dist's worst hit UZs under water

By Staff Correspondent

Flood situation in Sylhet, Sunamganj and Moulvibazar districts deteriorated further as the rivers Surma, Kushiara and Manu — were still flowing above the danger level, official sources said.

Two more people were reported dead Saturday in a boat capsized at Kanaighat upazila in Sylhet district raising the toll to six in three days. Another two — Ratna (12) and Bunarjee (16) were also killed in flood in Moulvibazar district.

Surma was flowing 1.71 metre above the danger mark at Kanaighat and four centime-

ters above the mark in Sunamganj.

Kushiara was at 1.51 above the mark at Sheola point while the Manu at Moulvibazar was flowing 71 centimeters above the danger mark.

The river Khowai at Habiganj and the Gomti at Comilla were about to cross the red mark, sources said.

The Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet told The Daily Star the flood situation in the district was grave. Eighty per cent houses of worst affected three upazilas — Kanaighat, Bianbazar and Golapganj were

submerged in flood water. All the 11 upazilas of the district were affected, he added.

He also said the low-lying areas of the Sylhet town were also under flood water.

All communications with Zakiganj Bianbazar and Kanaighat remained disrupted.

Our Sylhet correspondent adds: Heavy downpour and flash flood from Kachar district of India's Assam state aggravated the flood situation in the district.

About 1500 people in south Surma of Sadar upazila were marooned. Relief and rescue

operations were on.

Our Moulvibazar correspondent writes: Water was rushing in through 18 breaches in town protection dam which worsened the flood situation in the town.

River Dhalai was flowing 30 centimeter above red mark.

Nearly five thousand people were living in makeshift camps on the protection dam.

Over three thousand people have been shifted to 12 flood shelters of the district.

Except Srimangal five others upazilas of the district were affected.

Most of the educational institutions of the affected areas remained closed.

Aus crops in over forty thousand acres of land along with seed beds were under water.

Communication between district headquarter and Kamalganj upazila remained disrupted.

Three lakh and 62 thousand people of Sadar upazila, Rajnagar, Kulaura, Kamalganj and Baralekha upazilas are affected.

In Sunamganj new areas were inundated as Surma was flowing four centimetre above