

Rly suffers Tk 3 cr damage in flood

From Mostafa Kamal Majumder

RAJSHAHI, Sept 13 : Bangladesh Railway, Western Zone, has suffered damage to the tune of Taka three crore due to the current flood, according to preliminary estimate made on Friday.

The railway track between Parbatipur and Dinajpur continued to be under water, flowing above the rail level between Manmathpur and Dinajpur.

The current flood which deteriorated yesterday has made the holding of referendum difficult. As most people are marooned and all rural roads are under water in the affected districts, local administration is wondering how to hold the referendum.

With the water level of Ganges at Rajshahi rising by another 6 cm and the Mahananda at Chapainawabganj by 2 cm, the flood situation further worsened in the two districts. The Ganges remained steady between the morning and evening on Friday.

The Rajshahi town protection embankment developed a breach at the Bolanpur point. Local Water Development Board officials repaired the bridge before any major damage could take place.

Rail communication between Parbatipur and Dinajpur, Kalukhali and Bhatiapara ghat continued to remain suspended today. Rail communication in Parbatipur-Lalmirhat and Lalmirhat-Bhuram section has been restored. Approaches of almost all bridges in Parbatipur-Dinajpur section had been affected and bridge No 28 is threatened. Water is flowing over the railway track at various places between Kanchan

and Setabganj.

Bridges and railway embankment have been damaged in Kanchan-Setabganj and Kanchan-Ruhea sections.

The people have cut railway embankment at different places in Mangalpur-Setabganj section to drain out water. A 150 feet section of railway track has been washed away in Teesta-Kurigram section.

Water level is rising in Shaestaganj and is apprehended to rise in the Natore-Santahar, Iwardi-Shaestaganj and Santahar-Bonarpara sections.

The north colony of Parbatipur is under knee deep water. The staff quarters at railway colonies and station buildings at different stations have been affected by flood water. Thousands of people have taken shelter on railway embankment. The district administrations of Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj have taken special measures to ensure casting of votes in the referendum.

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Awami League brought out a torch procession Friday evening to mobilise support in favour of today's hartal.

—Star photo

NATO may remove short range weapons from Europe

BONN, Sept 13 : The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation may unilaterally withdraw all its short-range land-based nuclear weapons from Europe. NATO Secretary-general Manfred Woerner said in an interview Thursday, reports AFP.

"I have no doubt that nuclear artillery shells and short-range ground-based nuclear weapons, Soviet and American, will disappear from Europe," he told Deutschlandfunk, the German national radio network.

NATO representatives are discussing whether this should come about unilaterally, whether a sort of agreement should be agreed, or whether negotiations (with the Soviet Union) ought to be carried out, Woerner said.

Defence Ministers in NATO's nuclear planning group — all 16 nations minus France — will debate the issue at Taormina, Sicily, on October 17 and 18, he said.

NATO says it has about 2,000 artillery shells and 700 surface-to-surface lance missiles, most of which are based with US forces in Germany.

The Soviet Union, according to specialists, has about 1,000 launchers for firing short-range missiles. Its num-

ber of warheads is unknown.

Scraping the lance would finally bury the quarrel that erupted in NATO in early 1989, before the pro-democracy revolutions that swept Eastern Europe that year. Germany bitterly resisted US and British pressure to commit to a follow-on to the ageing missile to offset the perceived Soviet threat from the mid-1990s.

Bodies trapped inside bus not yet recovered

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Sept 13 : No measures were taken yet to recover the deadbodies from the ill-fated bus that dipped into deep flood waters Thursday at Bafragiganj, 12 kilometres of here, along Rangpur-Bogra highway.

Thirty-five people, mostly women and children, were feared trapped in the submerged bus when it fell into the swirling flood waters. About twenty-five people managed to come out and swim to safety.

AL hartal

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Secretary Mohammad Nasim and city unit leader Mofazzal Hossain Choudhury Maya and others addressed the processionists in front of the AL office before they started the procession.

The speakers demanded repolling in those polling centres where votes were allegedly 'rigged'. They also demanded immediate arrest of the armed activists who shot at Sheikh Hasina and unleashed terrorism at the polling centres.

They also called upon the people to make the hartal a success.

Lankan FM

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Rahman.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister said his country would include proposals in the document to make the SAARC more "effective" and added that discussions here would cover this matter.

Herat, who is currently on a swing of the SAARC countries, flew in Dhaka from Kathmandu.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister is accompanied by his Foreign Secretary Bernard Tilakretne.



Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman receiving Sri Lankan Foreign Minister James Edward Herald Herat at Zia International Airport Friday.

—PID photo

Flood turns worse

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tion leader. "We hope this bill will be adopted unanimously in the next session of parliament".

Tracing the history of Awami League's struggle against the post-75 anti-military rule, Hasina said the evil politics of coup, killing and takeover of state power through backdoor in the darkness of night began in the country through the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib on August 15, 1975.

With the return to the country in 1981, Hasina said, "I considered restoration of democracy against autocratic rule my prime responsibility as the daughter of the Father of the Nation".

She said when Martial Law was promulgated for the second time on March 24, 1982, "it was I who for the first time voiced protest from Savar Smriti Soudha on December 26, 1982, and called on the people to rise against military rule". And later started the movement by forming the 15-party alliance, she added.

Hasina said it was again by the Awami League rally at the Panthi Path in the capital on November 6, 1990, that she for the first time spelt out the constitutional provisions for the resignation of Ershad and formation of a neutral caretaker government.

Ershad was forced to step down following the unprecedented mass upsurge based on the constitutional modality prescribed by her, the Awami League chief added.

Freedom Party calls for casting 'no' vote

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tion in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Bogra, Sirajganj and Manikganj will remain unchanged.

In Kushtia new areas in Daulatpur, Bheramara, Kumerkhati and Khoksha upazilas were inundated. Railway bridge on the river Gorai was threatened by onrush of flood water.

In Kurigram district, 1,000 sq km of nine upazilas were flooded affecting over three lakh people. The main communications between Rangpur and Kurigram still remained snared.

While there might be some impact, it will not be great," Premier Li Peng told an Italian magazine in an interview quoted on Friday by the New China News Agency.

"China is pursuing socialism with Chinese characteristics, and there are major differences in many aspects between the two countries," he said.

"Whatever the changes in the Soviet Union, China will continue to pursue a policy of good neighbourhood and friendship with it."

His words were a brave effort to show Beijing's socialist leadership remains confident it can weather the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, Western diplomats said.

He criticised the government for not giving equal opportunity of using state-owned electronic media to those who are campaigning for "no" in the referendum.

rice were distributed so far, the centre said.

Our Rangpur Correspondent reports: Flood situation in twenty-five of the 35 upazilas in the greater Rangpur district remained unchanged. The badly affected areas are — Chilmari, Raumari, Rajibpur, Lalmirhat, Kaliganj, Kishoreganj, Jaldhaka, Gangachara, Seghata, Mithapukur, Pargacha, Fulchhara, Mithapukur and Sunderganj where lakhs of people were marooned. Half of the Rangpur town was still under water. Road communication from Rangpur to Nilphamari, Kurigram and to Dhaka remained snared.

The district administration said that 18 shelter centres had already been opened in the district including seven centres in the city areas. Nine out of the total 30 wards of the city are under flood waters and more areas are being threatened as the flood was swelling around the city, the centre said at least 15,000 people of the affected wards are in distress. About 2.20 lakh people were affected.

Doulatpur is the worst affected upazila under Kushtia district where the whole land area has gone under about 2 metres (6 feet) of flood water, the district flood information centre said adding that the ferry ghat at Hardinge Bridge was increasingly threatened by the fast erosion of the river Padma. Nearly 50,000 people are affected. Relief materials had Taka 10,000 and five metric tons of

BSS adds: Five upazilas, including the Sadar upazila of Manikganj district are being threatened by the flood as the downflows from the northern districts.

Deputy Commissioner of Madaripur told BSS over telephone that the flood waters were fast rising and had already submerged half of the town area. Related story page 9

The call of half-day hartal by Awami League once again proved it does not truly want parliamentary democracy in the country," said Amanullah Aman MP.

During his stay in Nepal, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman met with Nepalese King Birendra Bir Bikram, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and ministers for Agriculture and Irrigation.

Road link

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ties that Bangladesh would be very keen to buy onion, pulses and boulders in large volume from Nepal only when the existing traffic problem is solved," Saifur Rahman said.

Dhaka enjoys a favourable balance in trade with Kathmandu. Cumulative trade surplus in favour of Bangladesh stood at about 35 million US dollars during 1979-80 to 1989-90 period.

Detailing the outcome of the meet, he said both sides agreed to expedite implementation of some joint ventures proposed earlier, including a cement clinker factory in Bangladesh, a pharmaceutical unit in Nepal and renovation of jute mill in Nepal with technical assistance from Bangladesh.

Joint ventures in garments sector have also been agreed in the meeting which discussed long term sale of Bangladeshi urea to Nepal.

Bangladesh accepted a proposal to grant more scholarships to Nepalese students in leather and textile technology. Another plan for issuing multiple entry visas to Nepali students was also accepted by Dhaka.

Follow up of recommendations of the Bangladesh-Nepal joint study report on flood control was also agreed.

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AL candidates

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at the National Press Club Friday afternoon, AL General Secretary Begum Sajeda Choudhury claimed that her party candidates in the two constituencies would win the two city seats if repolling was held free and fair. She alleged that false votes were cast in favour of the BNP candidates in the constituencies by abusing administrative power and letting loose terrorism. AL candidates from Dhaka-9 Alhaj Makbul Hossain and from Dhaka-5 Advocate Shahara Khatoon read out separate statements at the press conference alleging vote-rigging and terrorism by the BNP and demanded repolling in 45 centres. Other party leaders including Matia Choudhury were also present.

Makbul Hossain alleged that BNP workers, apprehending defeat of their Dhaka-9 candidate Jamiruddin Sirar, occupied at least 20 out of 84 voting centres driving out the AL agents at gun-point. They also created a reign of terror at the centres by firing gunshots and exploding bombs to intimidate the AL voters, he alleged.

Makbul Hossain further alleged that the Prime Minister accompanied by an armed group of youths in two cars and four microbuses started visiting the centres from 10 am. The BNP workers then snatched away ballot papers from the presiding and polling officers and cast those in favour of the 'sheaf of paddy'. The AL polling agents and workers were beaten when they protested the incidents, Makbul Hossain said.

The AL leader also accused BNP leader Mir Shawkat Ali, MP of leading a terrorist group which, he alleged, guarded the polling centres with arms so that rigging of votes could not be resisted.

Kohinur and Badar of Juba League and two other Chhatri League workers were shot and injured by the BNP activists.

Makbul Hossain complained and regretted that no action was taken even after he informed the Chief Election Commissioner of the incidents during his visit to the centres.

Makbul Hossain also blamed those in power for violating the election code of conduct by using administrative influence on the voters in favour of the BNP candidates.

He alleged although the administrative banned visit to the election areas by the ministers from September 7, the Prime Minister continued election campaign in various parts of Dhaka-9 constituency till September 9.

Shahara Khatoon also alleged massive rigging and terrorism by the BNP at least 25 out of 104 centres of her constituency of Dhaka-5 in the by-election and demanded repolling in those centres.

She alleged that vote-rigging and terrorism were resorted to under the direct patronisation of the Prime Minister Begum Zia.

BNP

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the party, which killed democracy in the past, had once again resorted to terrorism to destabilise the democratic government. They urged the people to resist any attempt to create anarchy in the country.

The BNP leaders said the peace-loving people of the country would not allow any quarters to resort to anti-peoples activities, including damage to vehicles and other public property.

The Awami League started acts of terrorism after its humiliating defeat in the February 27 parliamentary polls, they alleged.

Addressing the rally, BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder MP said the referendum will prove again it is the people who will decide how the country will be run.

There is no (individual) candidate in this election (referendum), democracy is the candidate", Talukder said urging the people to cast "yes" vote in the referendum for consolidating democracy in the country.

Referring to the allegation of attack on Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, the BNP leader said the people will not accept such "baseless" allegation.

He said the Awami League, which only recently resorted to intimidation by showing shoe in parliament, is now trying to jeopardise democracy.

Salauddin Ahmed, MP urged the people not to heed the hartal call and asked the BNP workers to resist it at any cost. He said the hartal was designed to discourage people's participation in the referendum.

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The Midnight File

US lowers discount lending rate

WASHINGTON, Sept 13 : The US federal reserve board said today it was lowering its benchmark discount lending rate to 5.0 per cent from 5.5 per cent. The move by the Central Bank is designed to help the sluggish American economy move more strongly out of recession, reports Reuter.

UN peacekeepers caught in cross-fire

NICOSIA, Sept 13 : The 5,800-member UN force in south Lebanon has been