

Rly suffers Tk 3 cr damage in flood

From Mostafa Kamal Majumder

RAJSHAH, 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 Bhatlapara ghat continued to remain suspended today. Rail communication in Parbatipur-Lalmanirhat and Lalmanirhat-Bhurimari 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-Ruha 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, Iswardi-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.

Many school buildings which are normally used as polling stations have been engulfed by flood water. Some others have been turned into makeshift flood relief camps. The Deputy Commissioner of Rajshahi, Md Saifuzzaman told the Daily Star that the camp will be used as polling station. Some houses which are still above the flood level near the polling stations will be turned into polling stations. The Deputy Commissioner of Chapainawabganj said special allocation has been made to ensure transport of voters to and from polling stations by using country boats by Union Parishad Chairman and Members, Municipal Chairmen and Commissioners.

Hasina: Democracy

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nately enemies of democracy are engaged in conspiracy to foil the functioning and deprive people from reaping the fruits of this system, she said. Hasina said her party initiated the move to amend the Constitution to give democracy an institutional shape and fulfil its election pledge to the people.

But, she alleged, the Constitution Amendment Bill could not be tabled in the first session of the present parliament due to intransigent attitude of the ruling BNP.

However, the government moved a bill in the second session in the face of mounting pressure from the people and the opposition parties in parliament.

The opposition leader said despite annexation of certain undemocratic provisions to the Constitution 12th Amendment Bill, all opposition parties unanimously passed it in the interest of the nation.

"Through the passage of the bill, it has been proved once again that people are the source of all power in changing the state power. Ballot is all powerful, not the bullet."

Hasina said the Awami League had moved the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill for removing the obstacle to the trial of the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The bill will have to be passed to "bury the politics of coup, killing and conspiracy once for all", said the opposi-

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 civil 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 from the Awami League rally at the Pantha 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.



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

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 nuclear 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.

Scrapping 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 Bairagiganj, 12 kilometres of here, along Rangpur-Bogra highway.

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



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

Flood turns worse

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

In Kushtia new areas in Daulatpur, Dheramara, Kumarkhali and Khokhsha upazilas were inundated. Railway bridge on the river Goral was threatened by onrush of flood water.

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

Rajshahi flood information centre 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 indistress. 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, he 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. Reiter materials had Taka 10,000 and five metric tons of

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, Lalmanirhat, Kaliganj, Kishor, eganj, Jaldhaka, Gangachara, Saghatia, Mithapukur, Pirgacha, Fulchhari 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 snapped.

The district administration said that 42 shelters have been opened in eight affected upazilas of the district including seven in Rangpur town.

Our correspondent from Chapainawabganj adds: Relief has not reached the far-flung areas of the district since the flood hit ten days ago.

In Pabna the flood situation worsened. Due to rise of Jamuna Nagarbari ferryghat is threatened by onrush of flood water. In Iswardi, flood caused breaches in the embankment resulting in flooding of at least five villages.

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

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 Makhbul Hossain and from Dhaka-5 Advocate Shahara Khatun read out separate statements at the press conference alleging vote-rigging and terrorism by the BNP and demanded repolling in 46 centres. Other party leaders including Matia Choudhury were also present.

Makhbul Hossain alleged that BNP workers, apprehending defeat of their Dhaka-9 candidate Jamiruddin Siran, 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.

Makhbul 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, Makhbul Hossain said.

The AL candidate 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 Jubo League and two other Chhatra League workers were shot and injured by the BNP activists, Makhbul 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. Makhbul 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 Khatun 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-people 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.

Salaudin 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.

"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.

After the rally, a procession was brought out which paraded different city streets before terminating near Kakrail crossing.

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 caught in the cross-fire ever since it was deployed 13 years ago. The kidnapping Friday of at least 14 peacekeepers by Palestinian guerrillas, and the killing of a Swede in the gun battle that ended the hostage drama, was only the latest in a long series of attacks on the force, reports AP.

Shamir surprised by Bush's threat

TEL AVIV, Sept 13: Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir called Friday for President Bush to explain why he wants to delay a 10 billion US dollars loan guarantee package for Israel. Bush on Thursday announced he will use his veto power to postpone for four months the guarantee Israel is seeking. Bush said the delay was necessary to help a long efforts to get an Arab-Israeli peace conference going, reports AP.

Referendum tomorrow

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home district Rangpur where the party achieved a miraculous victory in the by-election, were opposed to the parliamentary form of government.

The supporters of Ershad in Rangpur gave pressure on the party leaders to decide to vote against the parliamentary system so that the deposed President could contest in the presidential election.

However the party has not yet decided about its stands on this issue.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission is worried about the deteriorating flood situation in 22 districts where the holding of referendum may be difficult.

The Election Commission has no option but to hold the referendum in all these districts on the same date along with other districts.

If 'yes' vote get the majority, the executive authority of the President will automatically go to the Prime Minister.

At this stage, the existing cabinet, which is constitutionally a cabinet of the Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, will have to be changed. This will be done just after gazette notification of the referendum results by the Election Commission.

According to Cabinet Division sources the reformation of the cabinet will be held on September 17 or 18.

The BNP with its absolute majority in the Parliament will form the new government headed by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia under Clause 3 of Article 55 of the constitution.

Meanwhile different political parties and organisations called upon the people to cast 'Yes' vote in the referendum to give democracy an institutional shape.

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Maulana Maitur Rahman Nizami urged all section of people irrespective of party affiliation to cast 'yes' vote in the referendum to establish parliamentary form of government.

Addressing a party rally in the city, he pointed out that the people were the decisive force in political process and referendum was the constitutional means to exercise their power. "The referendum is a safety-valve so that no one can bring about fundamental changes in the constitution by-passing the peoples opinion", the Jamaat General Secretary said.

Maulana Nizami hoped that the people would spontaneously exercise their franchise and fortify the rights realised through the democratic movement against autocracy. The referendum would also establish political identity of the nation, he observed. He also alleged irregularities in the just concluded bye-elections and said that it has made imperative that future elections are held under a neutral care-taker government.

A procession was brought out after the rally.

NAP, CPB, Samyabadi Dal and Gano Azadi League Friday jointly held a rally at Topkhana Road to mobilise public support in favour of 'Yes' vote in the coming referendum. Among others, the rally was addressed by Moulana Ahmadur Rahman Azmi, Moulana Daniel and Muniruzzaman.

Vice-Chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council Dr Kamal Hossain, in a statement, appealed to the people to demonstrate their unity by recording their votes in favour of the amendment.

Dr Kamal also said an accountable government and a sovereign parliament which were the united demand of the people during the historic popular movement has now been established through the adoption of the twelfth amendment to the Constitution. The unanimous action of parliament in giving effect to the national consensus constitutes a laudable chapter

in our constitutional history, he said.

JSD (Siraj) President Shahjahan Siraj MP, in a public meeting at Tangail school premises of Tangail district, urged the people to turn up in larger numbers in the polling centre and cast 'Yes' votes.

Workers Party President Abul Basher and Acting General Secretary Nurul Anwar in a joint statement said the people during the last nine years anti-autocratic struggle, again and again gave verdict in favour of parliamentary democracy. They called upon to participate in the referendum to ensure democratic victory.

The convenor of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan, while urging the people to cast 'yes' vote said it was also the responsibility of all the political parties to make the referendum successful.

But, he observed, the ruling BNP and the main opposition party Awami League have marred the congenial atmosphere for the referendum by their internecine conflict. He urged the parties to be more responsible to make the referendum successful.

President of Gano Azadi League, Alhaj Abdus Samad urged the people to vote in favour of parliamentary form of government in the referendum.

The chief of Jatiya Janata Party, Sheikh Assad said there was no alternative to the parliamentary form of government for peoples welfare and urged the people to cast 'yes' vote in the referendum.

President of Muslim League, Alhaj Kazi Abdul Kader urged the party leaders and workers to mobilise people to cast 'yes' vote to consolidate democracy.

The General Secretary of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Humayun Kabir Hiru at a rally at the Allawala building premises urged the people to vote in favour of parliamentary form of government. He also reiterated his party stand for representation of all professions in the Parliament to make democracy 'meaningful'.

Janadai also held three rallies at Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Tejgaon in support of 'yes' vote in the referendum. Chairman of the party, Khandakar Mahtab said the people could get back their rights through parliamentary form of government.

The Chief of National Republican Party, Dr Zahir Khan at a party meeting said peoples rights are guaranteed in the parliamentary form because the government is responsible to the people in the system. He urged all to cast 'yes' vote in the referendum.

Syed Hossain Ali Memorial Sangsad also held rallies and processions in the city in support of parliamentary form of government.

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BUET student stabbed

By BUET Correspondent

A student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) was stabbed allegedly by Chhatra League workers around midnight last night.

A group of Chhatra League workers numbering about 40 to 50 brought out a procession on the BUET campus in support of the today's half-day hartal called by Awami League throughout the country.

When the procession was passing through the Thumir Hall at around 11 pm, the processionists attacked the inmates of a room and manacled it.

Arif, known to be a worker of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, was stabbed as he protested the acts of the Chhatra League workers.

Arif was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Freedom Party calls for casting 'no' vote

Freedom Party Co-Chairman Col (Rtd) Abdur Rashid Friday called for casting 'no' vote in Sunday's referendum to maintain the constitutional provision to elect the country's President through direct election, reports UNB.

Addressing a press conference at the party's central office at Dhanmondi, the Freedom Party leader said "we are pleading for the 'no' vote in the coming referendum to keep the continuation of the constitution and constitutional rule in the country."

Rashid suggested a system ensuring the check and balance between the President and Parliament, independence of judiciary and direct election to the office of the President and Parliament.

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.

Li discounts impact of Soviet events

BEIJING, Sept 13: The Premier of one of the last bastions of hardline Marxism, putting on what diplomats called a bold face, says China has discounted the effect of the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, reports Reuter.

"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 neighbourliness 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.

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