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Over 1000 killed in Pak floods

ISLAMABAD, Sept 11: Over a thousand people have been killed in torrential rain floods which have caused large-scale devastation and an estimated billions of rupees loss in northern Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK), reports reaching here said today, reports PTI.

The worst hit was Hazara district. Reports of deaths were reaching from several parts of Punjab, NWFP and Pak-occupied Kashmir.

Reports said that flood waters of Jhelum river had entered the Jhelum city submerging many parts which remained cut off from the rest of the country, while troops were assisting in the relief operations, food was being air-dropped.

As the water level was rising in all the rivers of Punjab

the residents of the districts of Jhang, Gujrat, Sargodha, Nulatan, Sheikhupura, Bawalpur, Lahore, Kasur, Jhelum, Gujranwala and Rahimyar Khan had been put on alert as these areas could also be hit by floods.

AFP adds: At least 500 people died and tens of thousands have been uprooted as torrential rains continued to lash central and northern Pakistan the past three days, reports reaching here said today.

Hundreds of villages have been submerged in the populous Punjab province, bordering India, where official sources said the property and crop losses were 'colossal'.

Officials said the worst-hit areas were Pakistani-administered Kashmir and the north-west Frontier Province, where

the floods reportedly claimed more than 350 lives.

Sources here said the death toll may rise considerably as many areas remained inaccessible in the incessant rains.

The government has already declared a state of emergency in about a dozen districts and the army has been called out to evacuate marooned villagers, officials said.

Helicopters have been air-dropping food and other essential items as people in inundated villages passed the night on rooftops or clinging to tree trunks, they said.

Troops have also set up relief camps, and army engineers were erecting boat bridges to reach affected areas after gushing water swept away railway tracks and communication bridges.

The authorities have declared Kashmir a 'calamity-hit' area as thousands of people were rendered homeless, hundreds of houses collapsed and road and telephone links were severed with Pakistan, which controls part of Kashmir.

PTI from Jammu adds: At least 100 persons have been killed in flash floods, landslides and house collapses in Jammu and Kashmir since Tuesday, while an alert was sounded and army and airforce assistance sought for rescue operations.

Over six lakh people in Rajouri-Poonch district and Akhnor Tehsil remained cut off from Jammu district for the second day today. The Akhnor bridge was washed away in the early hours of the morning yesterday.

AFP adds: Pak officials said about 100 bridges were either damaged or completely destroyed in the region.

In northwestern Hazara District, more than 175 people reportedly died in house collapses and landslides. Officials have confirmed more than 130 deaths in Hazara as relief workers were searching for survivors after a boulder rolled over a village, trapping dozens of people.

Some 16 people were drowned in the ancient Taxila town near Islamabad when their makeshift camp was swept by a swelling seasonal rain, reports said.

A number of Pakistani and foreign tourists were stranded in the Kaghan Valley resort as landslides cut the roads. A number of breaches have

been reported along the banks of the swollen Jhelum and Chenab rivers, inundating vast areas in Gujrat, Wazirabad, Gujranwala and the Jhang and Jhelum districts, officials said.

A record downpour of more than 210 mm (over eight inches) was reported in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad on Wednesday.

The Meteorological department said the 365.5 mm (14.6 inches) of rain recorded in Islamabad in the first 10 days of September was the highest in the past 31 years. The 1961 record was 279.1 mm (11.16 inches), they said.

Newspapers quoting weather pundits said the current spell was caused by a cyclone emanating from the Bay of Bengal and predicted more such cyclones hitting the region in the coming days.

RRAC calls hartal at Cox's Bazar today

By Staff Correspondent

A dawn to noon hartal has been called for today (Saturday) for the Cox's Bazar, Ukhiya and Teknaf regions to press for early repatriation of the nearly 2,65,000 Rohingya refugees camped in Bangladesh, organisers reached by telephone said.

The Rohingya Repatriation Action Committee (RRAC), the sponsors of the 6 am to 12 pm hartal, held a series of rallies in Cox's Bazar, Ukhiya and Teknaf on Friday to drum up support for the programme.

The RRAC is a grouping of local people who are urging the government to accept a 12-point demands which in-

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1 killed, 29 hurt in Adamjee clashes

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Sept 11: One person was killed and 29 others injured in clashes between Awami League-backed Rehan group and BNP-backed Kashem group in the Adamjee Jute Mills premises this evening.

Oulshan Ara Fatema (25) succumbed to her injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 8.35 pm. She was rushed to the DMCH earlier from Narayanganj in critical condition. The deceased, a housewife, received bullet injuries in her head in a

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Polytech teacher to strike work from Sept 21

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Polytechnic Shikha Samity will observe an indefinite work stoppage all over the country from September 21.

According to a press release Friday, the organisation would observe the programmes to press home its 10-point demands.

Through the work stoppage, it will also demand an end to violence at the Polytechnic Institutes of the country.

The press release said that in the past 22 months, the government pledged to implement the 10-point demands of the Samity many times but virtually took no steps.

Another Juba Dal activist dies in Sylhet

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Sept 11: An activist of Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal, Mouli Bazar District unit died at a private clinic in Sylhet Thursday night.

The victim, Molzur Rahman Shahjahan, was injured in a clash between JCD and Bangladesh Chhatra League (pro-JSD) at Mouli Bazar town on September 1.

Another victim of the same incident Mohibul Alam Bachchu earlier succumbed to his injuries at the Sylhet M A G Osmany Medical College on Monday.

The Sylhet unit of JCD brought out a procession in the town on Friday protesting the killings of the two activists.

They held a meeting at the Court-Point area with Badruzzaman Selim, president of the unit, in the chair.

The speakers demanded immediate and exemplary punishment to the killers.

Bangladeshi farmer shot by BSF men

LALMONIRHAT, Sept 11: A Bangladeshi farmer was shot by BSF men at village Borobari in Raoumari thana of Kurigram district, reports UNB.

BDR sources here said Bashirul Huj (35) sustained serious injury in his knee as BSF men of Shahapara camp of Dhupri district in Assam intruded into Bangladesh territory and shot at him while he was working in a paddy field.

Bashirul was rushed to the Raoumari health complex.

Police pick up Ilias Ali



Ilias Ali, captured for questioning.

—Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

Police Thursday picked up Ilias Ali, a top leader of the pro-government Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, and kept him for the last two days in the Detective Branch office of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) at Minto Road for questioning.

A DB official, however, said that the JCD leader had not been arrested. He was picked up and detained in the DB office for interrogation.

Ilias Ali was general secretary of the now-dissolved central committee of the JCD. Family sources said that plain-clothed policemen led by senior officials raided Ali's Shyamoli residence at around 2.30 pm Thursday and took him to custody.

However, another police source said that the JCD leader might be arrested today (Saturday) in connection with the two killings on the Dhaka University campus September 4.

In an intra-party clash, Ashraf Mamun, an Honours final-year student of the university and a JCD activist, was shot dead in the early hours on the day. Hours later, another student, also a JCD activist and a second-year student, was shot dead reportedly as an act

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Applications for 49 more insurance companies

By S Y Bakht

Forty-nine applications for setting up new insurance companies have been submitted with the office of the Controller of Insurance under the Ministry of Commerce.

According to an official source, 40 of the applications are for opening general insurance companies while the remaining 9 are for life insurance companies.

The government is likely to approve a number of the applications for opening new insurance companies before the end of this year.

The applications are currently being scrutinized and copies have also been sent to the scheduled banks to ascertain if any of the applicants fall in the loan defaulter category.

The source added that if any of the applicants are found to be defaulters then their applications will not be considered.

The applications, after the investigations are completed, will be sent for approval by the National Economic Council, chaired by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, sometime in October, the source said. All approved applicants will be

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JP set to remove Shah Moazzem

By Asiuzzaman

The Jatiya Party high command has finally decided to remove Shah Moazzem Hossain from the post of the Secretary General of the party respecting the desire of its jailed chief Hussain Mohammad Ershad. A JP source said Thursday.

The process of selecting a new secretary general is on and it will be completed within this month, the source holding a secretarial post in JP Central Committee told The Daily Star requesting anonymity. 'We are working to

allow him an honourable way out.'

Joint Secretary General A B M Shajahan now tops the list of prospective candidates for the post followed by former state minister Khaledur Rahman Tito, former minister Sheikh Shaheedul Islam, Rajiya Foyez and Monirul Huq Chowdhury MP, the source said.

He said 'the president' earlier proposed for Tito, but later changed his mind doubting Tito's leadership capability and referred the matter to the senior leaders including Acting Chief Minister Rahman Chowdhury, Moudud Ahmed and Kazi Zafar Ahmed.

Moazzem, the longest-serving Secretary General of the party, lost the blessings of Ershad as a large number of leaders and workers brought as many as 11 charges against him, the source said adding that the charges included 'misuse of party funds and political inactivity.'

The source said that his party was looking for a dynamic secretary general from an anti-Indian lobby. With this in mind the JP high command

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Shah Moazzem: Fallen from the grace —Star photo

Ban on re-exports may go shortly

The government, in its bid to increase export earnings, is actively considering withdrawal of restrictions on re-exports, including entrapment, official sources said, reports UNB.

Lifting of restriction on 'entrapment' will allow Bangladeshi exporters to handle export orders of items not produced locally and arrange shipment from any third country.

At present re-export of third country produce by Bangladeshi exporters is restricted. So long the government has been arguing that value addition in this kind of re-export is meagre and there is risk of misusing foreign exchange.

Sources said the government is also contemplating to lift 'value added restriction' on third country trade that allows import of any finished goods from one country for re-export to another country.

At present, local exporters are to add at least 15 per cent on the import value of such

finished goods before their re-export — a condition that has been restricting the trade in the country.

Some exporters argued that 15 per cent value addition without any processing was almost an impossible task.

The government is also planning withdrawal of restriction on 'sale-or-return' export shipments, the sources said. Under this type of trade, the shipper sends goods to a buyer agreeing to take back the unsold portion of its consignment.

The authorities are consulting the private sector on the proposed withdrawal of restrictions on all types of re-exports and on 'sale-or-return' trade.

Talking to UNB, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) president Mahbubur Rahman said there should not be any restriction on re-export as the government has no involvement of fund in such trade.

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AL not out to destabilise Khaleda govt, says Hasina

From M J Zahedi,

Star Special Correspondent

KARACHI, Sept 11: Bangladesh Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina Wajed has categorically refuted the allegation that her party wanted to destabilise the government of Begum Khaleda Zia. On the other hand, she said, her party strengthened Begum Zia's hands by sponsoring the bill which brought back parliamentary system in the country.

'We knew that in a presidential system, the real power did not lie with the prime minister and therefore Khaleda Zia could be thrown out of power,' Hasina said in separate interviews with two Karachi newspapers, Dawn and The News.

'For the sake of democracy we sponsored the bill, maintaining pressure inside and outside parliament for its passage. If we wanted to destabilise the government it was an

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'SAARC opposition leaders' meet has given impetus to cooperation'

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina has said the conference of the SAARC opposition leaders has given a 'new direction' towards consolidating democracy and ensuring economic freedom by ending State terrorism in the region, reports UNB.

'This unique conference will remain as a milestone for giving a fresh impetus to the process of economic and political cooperation in the region,' she told newsmen at the airport on her return from Pakistan Thursday afternoon.

Hasina said the conference called for creating a congenial atmosphere for proper practice of democracy which was obstructed time and again by evil forces and State terrorism in South Asia.

'What we want is to restore peace, democracy and economic development of the people in this region by forgetting jealousy and hatred,' she said.

The Awami League chief left here for Karachi on September 7 to attend the first ever one-day conference of the Leaders

of the Opposition held at Ramada Renaissance Hotel on September 8. Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, MP, and Abul Hassan Chowdhury, MP, accompanied her.

Pakistan opposition leader Benazir Bhutto hosted the conference attended by opposition leaders of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

To a question, Hasina said, 'It's not a parallel organisation

of the SAARC ... our main objective is to supplement the SAARC. Our forum will work as a supplementary force to SAARC.'

The Karachi conference felt the urgency of taking effective steps to put an end to State terrorism responsible for the assassination of popular leaders of this region, including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bandarnaike of Sri Lanka and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan and Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi of India.

Hasina said the conference called for effective steps for ensuring free and fair elections, exercise of the right to franchise, human rights and neutrality of the head of State and against black money and violence.

It also stressed the need for developing human resources to remove poverty, establishing an exploitation free society and joint action against environmental pollution.

The opposition leader said each country in the SAARC region is endowed with vast re-

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Sheikh Hasina on her return from Pakistan Thursday. —Star photo

We should cooperate to strengthen democracy : Nepali MP

The government and opposition in Nepal and Bangladesh should cooperate with each other and work through understanding to establish their new found democracy on a firm footing and develop their countries for the betterment of the people, leader of the visiting four-member Nepali parliamentary delegation said.

'We both have bitter experience under authoritarian rule in which people suffered and economy was ruined,' stated Taranath Rana Bhat, member of ruling Nepali Congress and head of Nepal's first parliamentary delegation to visit Bangladesh.

In an interview with BSS yesterday at his hotel room, Bhat said our (meaning both his country and Bangladesh) one struggle is over — the bringing of democracy, but another has begun — to establish democracy on a solid foundation. We have to work for establishing human rights and social justice and develop the economy so that the people can enjoy the fruits of democracy.

Bhat who suffered 6 years of imprisonment during Panchayat rule said, 'our generations in both countries should make ceaseless efforts so that sovereign rights of the

people were established and people have the right to muster their own future.' The political and economic sufferings of the people of our countries during authoritarian rule must be brought to an end, he added.

The leader of the delegation who became the first Law Minister under democracy said as ideas differ in democracy, we must establish democratic culture in our countries for its proper functioning. There must be 'patience and tolerance and understanding and cooperation among parties whether in power or in opposition,' he underlined, for the

success of democracy.

A lawyer by profession, Bhat also advocated that the people must be educated about rules and norms in democracy and that the feeling of brotherhood be spread. He admitted some disciplinary problem arose in Nepal after the fall of the autocratic rule. He said people after decades of repressive yoke, suddenly became exuberant with joy in a free atmosphere forgetting the responsibilities.

Replying to a question, the leader of the delegation said we all in Nepal including position and opposition have a deep commitment to

strengthen democracy and build it institutionally. 'I hope the same is the situation in Bangladesh which also had a similar predicament during one-man army rule.' For proper functioning of democracy, he suggested that political parties whether in power or in opposition should inform the people only the correct things and should refrain indulging in misleading propaganda activities. Our future generation must find politics on right track, he said adding the future of democracy in Nepal is bright in every sector with full support and cooperation of the people, the

Opposition and the King. Bhat was of the opinion that in SAARC countries, the opposition should help government in practising democracy and in establishing human rights and maintain law and order. In our countries, opposition should be loyal and will not oppose merely for the sake of opposition,' he added.

When his reaction was sought about the recently concluded opposition conclave of SAARC countries in Karachi, Bhat said though he was not fully aware of the programme and its objective, he thinks that 'It is a good beginning.'

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Menon improves further

By Staff Correspondent

Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon, undergoing treatment at a London hospital, is fast recovering. Family sources said last night that Menon was fine with remission of fever and respiration much improved, according to latest reports from London.