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Storms lash Noakhali, Ctg: 12 killed

By Staff Correspondent

The power supply in the town remained suspended from 12 Noon. Some 150 electric poles collapsed. A large number of trees were uprooted and telephone lines went out of order in many parts of the town.

Our Correspondent from Noakhali says that six people died in different areas of Noakhali while five others were killed in Laxmipur district either by lightning or by house collapse.

More than 100 persons were injured and government and private property worth Tk three crore were damaged. Crops and paddy of approximately 2000 acres were also destroyed, according to the estimates of local people.

Rickshaw puller Shahabuddin, 40, died on the spot when two semi-pucca houses at the Noakhali Police Training School collapsed. The storm also destroyed 10 other houses.

Labourer Khaled, 45, died when he came in contact with a torn live electric wire in Ashadia Moulvibazar area, five km away from the town.

Over a thousand of huts and semi-pucca and tin shed houses in the region were totally or partially damaged.

The local Met office recorded a rainfall of 78 mm from 6 am to 6 pm yesterday. Meanwhile, 10 people were injured in clashes between Noakhali jail police and local people. The clash took place when a person was taking away a branch of a tree from near the Noakhali prison.

The jail police made baton charges at random following an altercation with the local people.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong reports: One Towan Ali, 50, died on the spot as lightning struck him while he was on his way home at Charpatharghata of Patiya thana yesterday.

Normal life was paralysed in the port city and its surrounding areas following intermittent rainfall during the last few days.

According to Chittagong Met office, a nor'wester hit the

Rain spell to continue

By Staff Correspondent

Different parts of the country experienced moderate to moderately heavy rain which paralysed normal life yesterday.

The Met Office said the rainy spell would continue for another few days before the weather starts improving after a week.

The Met Office in Dhaka recorded 19 mm of rainfall in the capital from 6 am till 6 pm yesterday.

Rainfall recorded during the same period in other areas were: Chittagong 39mm, Satkhira 84mm, Feni 35mm, Tangail 13mm, Rangpur 20mm, Khulna and Chandpur 11mm each, Ishwardi 13mm, Comilla 7mm, Barisal 4mm, Bhola and Hatya 3mm and Srimangal 2mm.

According to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Division yesterday, the Ganges had risen at all the points and the rivers in the Meghna and south-eastern hill basins rose at most points during the last 24 hours ending at 6 pm yesterday.

The Ganges registered a rise by 3cm at Rajshahi, 4cm each at the Harding Bridge and Goalundo and 13cm at Bhagyakul of Vikrampur. However, the rivers of the Ganges basin were flowing

Pakistanis retain Australasia Cup

Sports Reporter

Sharjah and Pakistan, it seems, are made for each other. The world champions of one-day cricket yesterday reaffirmed their status as the bosses of instant cricket by retaining the Australasia Cup for a third time at Sharjah with a 39-run win over neighbours India.

Powered by strokeful half-centuries from man-of-the-match, as well as man-of-the-series Aamir Sohail and Basit

After having seemingly recovered from the early loss of opener Ajay Jadeja to some hostile fast bowling by Wasim Akram, India quickly lost the important wickets of Tendulkar, Sidhu and skipper Azharuddin.

The much-touted middle-order batsman, left-handed Atul Bedade, underlined his reputation as a big-hitter with a quartet of sixes but India

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Detailed report on Page 10

Alli, Pakistan totalled 250 for six from their allotted 50 overs.

After a rollicking start given by the in-form Sohail and Saeed Anwar, Pakistan suffered a mini collapse as India staged a comeback with off-spinner Rajesh Chauhan snaring three batsmen in quick succession, including captain Salim Malik. But Basit, and later a resourceful Rashid Latif, duly got them in the vicinity of 250 with some scintillating strokeplay.

India, who returned to the desert after a three-year lay-off alleging pro-Pakistan bias among the organisers, got off to shaky start in their quest for the victory target of 251 runs.



Aamir Sohail..... m-o-m

Oil exploration Final accord with 2 foreign cos next month

By Sharier Khan

The final agreement between the government and Holland Sea Search of the Netherlands and Cairn PLC of England to explore oil and gas in the Bay of Bengal is likely to be signed in the first week of next month.

Meanwhile, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and the Ministry of Law have suggested amendments to some of the clauses of the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) of the two companies, sources said.

The proposed amendments are, however, minor in nature and the representatives of the two companies have accepted the changes.

The PSC was sent to the NBR and the Law Ministry in early March for checking if it conflicted with any laws of the land.

The government signed the preliminary accords with these foreign companies on August 5. The PSC was approved by the Cabinet Committee for Finance and Economic Affairs and the Cabinet in early February and early last month respectively.

The final agreement will be signed by Petrobangla and the directors of the two companies.

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Tsutomu Hata (C), the ruling coalition's nominee for the Japanese premiership, shakes hands with outgoing Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa (third from left) and other coalition leaders during a meeting at the Diet building in Tokyo yesterday.

NATO deadline to Bosnian Serbs

BRUSSELS, Apr 22: NATO said today it had set a deadline of 0001 GMT on Sunday for Bosnian Serbs to withdraw from Gorazde, reports Reuters.

It also threatened air strikes against Bosnian Serb forces unless they ceased attacks immediately.

NATO said in a statement that air strikes could be conducted against Bosnian Serb heavy weapons and other military targets within a 20 km radius from the centre of Gorazde if three conditions were not met.

The conditions were that Bosnian Serb attacks immediately cease, that the Bosnian Serbs pull back three km from the centre of the town, and that UN forces and medical evacuations were unimpeded.

Sunday's 0001 GMT deadline applies to the last two conditions, but not to the call for an end to Bosnian Serb attacks which takes effect immediately.

NATO ambassadors met earlier today to decide the measures.

"The absolute priority in my eyes is the deteriorating situation in Gorazde," NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner said as the meeting opened.

"I think half-hearted measures will not do the job. We need a more determined, wider use of air power," he said.

Armed with a new UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate pullback of Bosnian Serb forces from Gorazde, alliance envoys were under strong US-led pressure to pledge new steps to protect it and five other "safe areas."

During a visit to Japan, US Defence Secretary William Perry said the United States wants NATO warplanes to launch "vigorous raids" against Bosnian Serb targets if the

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Hasina urges West to expel Serbians from Gorazde

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has urged the western powers to take immediate action to expel Serbian troops from Gorazde and called for a peaceful, fair and just solution to the problems of the Bosnian Muslims, reports UNB.

"History will judge the western powers very harshly if they fail to deter the aggressors and save a small nation from the genocidal Serbian aggressions," she said in a statement in Dhaka yesterday.

Expressing concern and dismay over the fall of the Bosnian town of Gorazde, Hasina said that the Serbian aggressors launched their "murderous" attack against the town designated as a "safe area" by the UN last month, but the international community failed to deter the aggressors.

She observed that the so-called selective NATO air strikes seemed to have no influence on the course of events. "It is a matter of profound regret that the tragedy

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Saifur tells newsmen on return Paris meet 'very successful'

By Staff Correspondent

Giving out the figures of the aid commitment at the meeting, Saifur said 1680 million US dollars will be given as project aid, 260 million as commodity aid and 160 million as food aid.

Returning home after attending his seventh Paris Club meeting, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman termed the meeting a "fully satisfying and respectable" one because of the success of the government's economic management.

"There was a big difference between the previous meeting and this one where the donors talked with us with great respect," Saifur said Friday at a press briefing at the VIP lounge of the Zia Airport.

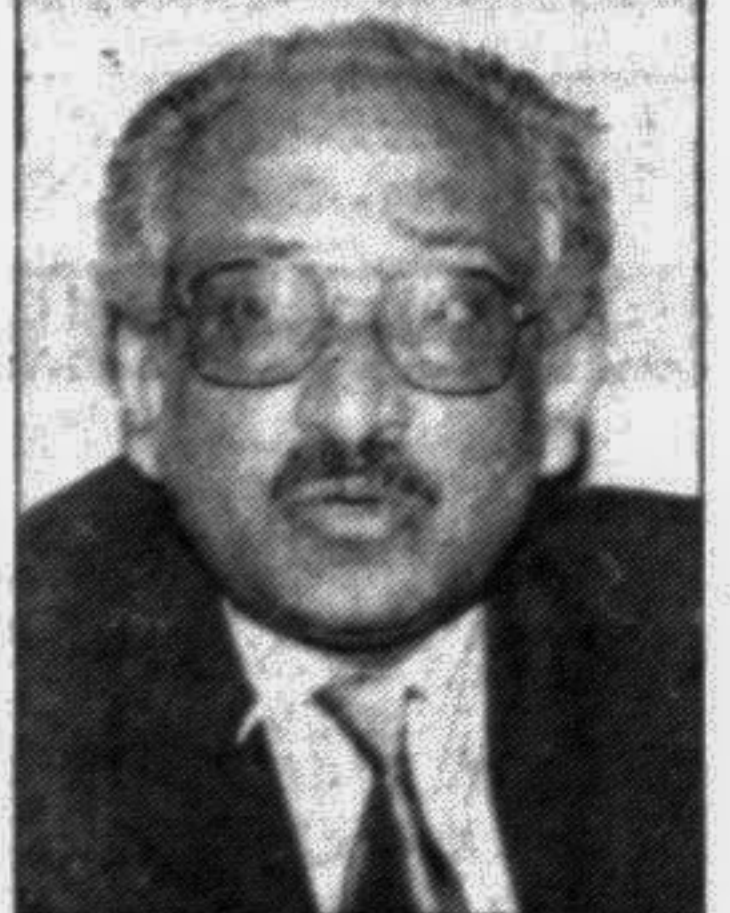
The donors had attached utmost importance to poverty alleviation, administrative reforms, human resources development and women's education to which the government is also totally committed, he said.

Emphasis was also laid on infrastructure development and crop diversification.

The Minister, wearing a dark suit and a red tie, looked happy about the outcome of the meeting that concluded on April 20 and said the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the UNDP had given excellent ratings to Bangladesh's performance in economic management.

The briefing was also attended by the Secretary of the ERD Lutfullah Majid, and Member Planning Commission (now Chairman, BOI), Mokammel Huq.

The Minister, however, said the donors were critical of the



Saifur Rahman

Coalition selects Hata for premiership

TOKYO, Apr 22: Japan's ruling coalition selected Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata as its candidate for prime minister Friday, assuring him of the post after two weeks of factional haggling that almost tore the coalition apart, reports AP.

The selection came after the coalition parties agreed at a post-midnight meeting to paper over disputes on tax reform and North Korea's suspected development of nuclear weapons.

The agreement prevented a split by the Socialists, the largest coalition member, and salvaged the nine-month-old alliance that ended 38 years of rule by the conservative Liberal Democrats last summer.

But the compromise leaves unresolved longstanding differences over ideology and personalities that are likely to surface under Hata just as they did during the term of Morihiro Hosokawa, who announced his resignation April 8 over financial improprieties.

A full session of Parliament's lower house was set for Monday afternoon to choose the new prime minister, and Hata was assured of enough support to win the vote.

Salam says Opposition is creating obstacles

BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abulhasan Talukder yesterday accused the Opposition of creating obstacles one after another in the way of achieving healthy and peaceful atmosphere for institutionalising democracy and ensuring socio-economic development of the people, reports BSS.

In a statement Talukder said a three-year period was not enough to remove the huge accumulated problems like corruption, chaos and indiscipline of the nine-year autocratic rule. He also listed the achievements of the government in various spheres during the last three years.

The BNP Secretary General referred to the government's efforts in containing inflation, reducing the country's dependence on foreign aid, creating new opportunities for investment, making the country self-sufficient in food, reducing the prices of fertiliser and embarking on the gigantic project like the Jamuna Bridge.

He regretted that overlooking these realities some opposition parties were criticising the government. These parties

HC refers Ershad, 2 others' quashment petitions to CJ

By Staff Correspondent

A division bench of the High Court Thursday referred three petitions for quashment of charges against former president HM Ershad and two others to the Chief Justice for necessary instructions after a defence counsel expressed lack of confidence in the High Court bench.

The division bench comprising Justice AKM Sadek and Justice KM Hassan, who Thursday took up the three petitions seeking quashment of charges framed in the Special Judge's court against Ershad and two other accused — Abul Khair Litu, a businessman and Moudud Ahmed, former Vice President — expressed their embarrassment to hear the cases after co-accused Moudud Ahmed himself, appearing as the defence counsel for Ershad, expressed his client's apprehension that he would not get a fair trial before this bench.

In an order, their Lordships were pleased to observe that since all three petitions, though filed individually, related to the same case they ought to be heard together and therefore the same be placed

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WIN

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