



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visiting the cyclone affected areas of Teknaf in Cox's Bazar yesterday. — PID photo

JS goes into session

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the government could no longer ignore it.

Those who have already decided to abstain from the session told newsmen that they would continue boycotting Parliament proceedings until the Treasury Bench moved a bill seeking national elections under a care-taker government. The Jamaat and the Forum, although still undecided about their next courses of action, observed they would not make any concessions on the demand for a care-taker government.

Meanwhile, the Business Advisory Committee of Parliament met yesterday afternoon to decide the duration of the session and the probable issues to be taken up for discussion in the House. The opposition members of the advisory body did not attend the meeting.

According to sources at the meeting, the session would be short and is likely to be prolonged between May 12 and 14. The session, after its opening today, would be adjourned until Sunday.

The opposition leaders briefing newsmen on the political situation, said they had wanted to make Parliament effective since the formation of the present Sangsad in 1991. "But it is the Treasury Bench which has made the JS an ineffective forum by ignoring the Opposition demands," Abdus Samad Azad of the AL said.

Moudud Ahmed, Bar-at-Law of the Jatiya Party told reporters that the main responsibility of making parliament effective lay with the ruling party.

"But in the case of the present Jatiya Sangsad, it is the Leader of the House and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia who had made Parliament ineffective by remaining absent from the House most of the time."

Reiterating the demand for a care-taker government, Moudud said strengthening of the Election Commission was not enough guarantee for free and fair elections. "The Election Commission is powerful enough to conduct a good election," the JP leader said and added that the problem was in the fact that the EC could not function independently under a partisan government.

The JP leader also announced that his party would continue boycotting Parliament until the Treasury Bench agreed to table bills seeking general elections under a care-taker government, autonomy for the state-run electronic media and repeal of black laws including the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Moudud also announced the JP would no longer attend the parliamentary standing committee meetings.

The leaders of the Bangladesh Government College Professors Association and Lecturers Association had a meeting with the Education Minister in Dhaka yesterday.



The Kutu Palang Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar was devastated by Monday's cyclonic storm. — Star photo

127 killed in Monday's cyclone

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all five unions were battered.

The jhana-wise break up of the death toll is as follows: Ukhiya — 38 refugees, 14 villagers; Teknaf — 36 refugees, 20 villagers; Ramu — 10 refugees, six villagers; and Sadar — five villagers.

The worst affected refugee camps were: Deswapalong 1 and 2, Morichcha 1, Jummipara-transit-camp and Shailer Daba.

There was heavy rainfall in the areas from 8 am to 10 am with the rainfall recorded at 84 mm. The main road of Cox's Bazar town was inundated due to flash floods from the hills. The power supply, snapped last night, was partly restored this evening.

The SSC examinations at eight centres in the district were suspended yesterday.

According to an official press briefing in the capital last night, 100 per cent of kutcha houses, 95 per cent of tin-sheds and 95 per cent of trees in Teknaf were completely damaged in Monday's cyclone.

Preliminary report of damage given at the briefing by Information Secretary Nuruddin Al-Masud at 7:30 pm revealed that 100 per cent of JIRRI paddy fields, betel leaf plantations and 95 per cent of salt grounds were destroyed in Teknaf thana.

Teknaf is the worst affected out of the seven thanas of Cox's Bazar district, Nuruddin Al-Masud said.

The entire population of 1.28 lakh in Ukhiya thana have been affected with 3,000 of them injured.

Out of 1.61 lakh people in Ramu thana, 61,550 were affected with 256 injured.

In Maheshkhali 150 persons were hurt and 67,000 people were affected. Thirty five per cent kutcha houses were totally damaged, 55 per cent partially and 25 per cent fishing boats were reported missing.

In the Cox's Bazar municipal area, out of 44,429 people, some 11,735 were affected and 511 persons were injured. Twenty five per cent kutcha houses were completely damaged, about 50 per cent of the standing IRRI crop and 15 per cent of trees were also completely damaged.

About 50 per cent crops in Kutubdia was totally damaged while in Chokoria some 16,725 persons were affected and 33 injured.

Joint Secretary of Health Md Abdur Rauf, who was present at the briefing, said that there was a total of 54 medical teams to serve the cyclone-affected people of Cox's Bazar district.

Some 50,000 water purification tablets, and 60,000 saline bags had already reached the cyclone-hit areas yesterday while the World Health Organisation (WHO) supplied five million water purifying tablets and 2,000 tonnes of bleaching powder to the government.

For a total population of 12 lakh in Cox's Bazar district, there are 625 cyclone shelters which can provide safety to 5 lakh people at best.

Our Senior Photographer A K M Mohsin, while on his way to Teknaf from Cox's Bazar yesterday, found the road blocked at Neela, some 18 km off Teknaf, by concrete electric poles damaged in the cyclone.

Emergency teams were busy removing the damaged poles and bulldozers were shovelling the uprooted trees.

Almost all the houses along the road and some rice mills were also damaged.

Our Staff Correspondent in Chittagong reports: The death toll in the cyclone-affected areas may rise further, administrative sources said.

Communication with Teknaf, Ukhiya and St Martin's island remained disrupted.

Rao shocked

NEW DELHI, May 3: The Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao on Tuesday expressed deep shock over the cyclone which ravaged Southeastern Bangladesh, reports AFP.

The 73-year-old leader in a message to his Bangladeshi counterpart Begum Khaleda Zia said India was ready to extend all necessary assistance to the stricken country of 120 million people.

Open sky

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immediate needs of the people.

In Teknaf town, not a single straw-and-bamboo structure survived the fury of the cyclone. The tin-shed and semi-pucca houses also suffered extensive damage.

There was no electricity in the town and telephone links between Teknaf and Cox's Bazar had been snapped.

Md Habibullah, 35, was pushing hard to remain in a zigzagged queue that had formed instantly after a helicopter-load of relief goods arrived from Dhaka Tuesday afternoon.

A fisherman by profession, Habibullah's thatched hut on St Martin's Island had been blown away by the cyclone.

His eight-member family had taken refuge in the house of his relative, surviving on a little amount of rice they had managed to save from the wrath of the cyclone.

"We don't want relief. Give us some food so that we may survive for a few days to resume fishing," he said.

Near the confluence of the river Naaf, three fishing trawlers lay aground on the muddy beach of the bay. Several others could be seen half-sunk in the channels while their crew swam ashore.

Even the hilly forests were not spared. Ancient teak woods, known for their sturdiness, looked naked, shorn of their leaves and bark.

The 18 Rohingya refugee camps dotting the Cox's Bazar hills also suffered heavy damage.

Eighty-six Rohingya men, women and children lost their lives either by flying tin-sheets or being crushed under the debris of the damaged huts.

Squalls and dark ominous clouds above formed crests on the now peaceful waves of the Bay of Bengal. However, the Met Office still prescribed a riverine danger signal number three for the Cox's Bazar port.

Calcutta trade wing

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decided to take some immediate measures to gear up their activities.

The meeting also decided to improve the system for monitoring the trade wings' activities. For this, all such wings will be asked to send regular monthly reports to the government according to a new format prepared by the Commerce Ministry.

The virtual non-functioning of the trade wing in Calcutta was discussed in the meeting at length. In the backdrop of increasing trade gap between Bangladesh and India, the meeting concluded that the First Secretary (Trade) at the concerned mission had failed to do the job and should be called back.

Earlier, in the first week of April, Ashraf Hasan, the Commercial Counsellor of Bangladesh in Tokyo was called back because his performance was deemed unsatisfactory.

Meanwhile, the Commerce Ministry has decided to request the missions to send confidential reports regarding the actual outcome of Bangladesh trade fairs abroad to facilitate proper evaluation and necessary follow-up actions.

Presently, Dhaka has trade wings in its missions in the USA, the UK, China, India, Malaysia, Kenya, Canada, Russia, Australia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Belgium, Japan and Kuwait.

The government plans to set up three or four more trade wings in the commercially more important countries. The opening of a trade office in South Africa is already under process.

Sources said ten officials were selected two years ago

for posting as Commercial Counsellors and First Secretary (Trade) abroad. The selection was made by a four-member committee headed by the then Commerce Minister MK Anwar. The other members of the committee were the Secretaries of the Foreign, Establishment and Commerce Ministries. The Committee interviewed 33 candidates.

However, this selection was not approved totally by the higher authorities who replaced four of the selected candidates by others. It is alleged that among the four newly selected, there is one who did not even formally apply for the post.

Student succumbs to bullet injuries

By DMCH Correspondent

A college student, Habibullah Khan, who was shot in his abdomen on Monday succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

A group of armed men shot Habibullah and his friend Ismail Hossain at Noorjahan Road of Mohammadpur in the city.

Habibullah was an HSC student of Ideal College. Ismail is still under treatment at Pangu Hospital.

Acid thrown at SSC examinee

NETRAKONA, May 3: Unidentified miscreants threw acid at an SSC examinee here last night causing serious burn injuries on her body, reports BSS.

Aleya Ferdaws, the SSC examinee from the Netrakona Model Girls' High School, was splashed with acid last night at her father's Magra residence.

PM visits

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Prime Minister that the cyclone had left most of the straw-and-bamboo houses damaged and one person missing.

She distributed sarees and lungis among the victims.

During her visit to the coastal region, Minister for Post and Telecommunications Tariqul Islam, State Minister for Relief Harun-al-Rashid, members of Parliament, high civil and military officials accompanied the Prime Minister.

Begum Zia returned to Dhaka Tuesday night.

Press Note

Allegation by a section of teachers false

An Education Ministry Press Note issued yesterday termed the statement of a particular Teachers' organisation regarding the SSC examination as misleading and not based on facts, reports BSS.

The Press Note said the attention of the government had been drawn to a news item published in a section of the press referring to a statement of a particular teachers' organisation.

In fact, the SSC examination of Monday and yesterday was held smoothly all over the country.

Therefore, the question of making the SSC examination a farce does not arise.

The teachers themselves were conducting the examination in 644 centres and they were the secondary school teachers. They were conducting it in maximum centres, the Press Note added.

As for example, out of the 94 centres of greater Dhaka city, the original centre secretaries and invigilators were conducting the examination in 91 centres. The examination in the rest three centres was also conducted by the teachers through alternative arrangement.

So the allegation of conducting the examination by the menial staff is a total lie. At the same time the allegation of creating division among the teachers centering the SSC examination is also baseless.

The government hopes that after the publication of the Press Note the misgivings regarding the issue will be removed. In view of the beginning of the SSC examination in a proper atmosphere throughout the country, the government expects that all the teachers concerned will take part in conducting the examination.

PM: Dialogue

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was still hopeful the opposition parties would join the 14th session of Parliament which begins today.

An informal discussion with the Opposition has begun and it will continue," Salam Talukder said during a press briefing after the BNP's parliamentary party meeting.

When asked with whom he had had talks about resolving the impasse, Salam Talukder replied, "The Opposition leaders have requested anonymity."

He said, the party's Standing Committee has been empowered to initiate a formal dialogue. About the Opposition demand for a caretaker government, the BNP Secretary General said his party MPs had endorsed the Prime Minister's statement made public through the BSS news agency April 30.

Just a few minutes after his briefing, major opposition parties, including the Awami League and the Jatiya Party, announced their decision to continue boycotting the JS.

The BNP's meeting was presided over by Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury as the Prime Minister was on a visit to the cyclone-ravaged areas.

Some 130 MPs were present at the meeting.

Abdus Salam Talukder, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Rafiqul Islam Miah, Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman, A T M Alamgir, Mashur Rahman, Farida Rahman, Ziaul Huq Zia, Abdul Majid Talukder and Mir Sawkat Ali were among those who spoke at the meeting.

According to meeting sources, some of the members were very critical of the Secretary General's handling of the Opposition.

Israel

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"The Palestinian authority will have the power within its jurisdiction to promulgate legislation including basic laws, regulations and other legislative acts," the agreement says. But Israel will have the power to black laws through a joint review committee made up of three Israeli and Palestinian judges.

Sticking points

Meanwhile, an AP report from Cairo said: A series of last-minute disputes arose Tuesday as Israeli and PLO negotiators worked to complete an agreement on limited Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

Palestinian delegates would not give specifics of the problems, but one source said Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin raised a long list of objections to details in the draft agreement the two sides had worked out.

One PLO delegate, Jamil Tarifi, said the atmosphere in Tuesday's talks was "uncomfortable."

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat departed Tunis, Tunisia for the meeting Tuesday, telling reporters that Israel is "manoeuvring to prevent reaching a final agreement."

The Midnight File

Clinton accuses Haiti of killing innocent people

WASHINGTON, May 3: President Clinton today accused Haiti's military leaders of killing innocent civilians and declare it's time for them to go. Talking to reporters as he prepared to leave for Atlanta, Clinton refused to rule out any options in dealing with Haiti if stronger UN sanctions do not force Haitian rulers out, reports Reuter.

Rabin arrives in Cairo

CAIRO, May 3: Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin arrived here today to finalise the Palestinian self-rule accord with PLO leader Yasser Arafat as officials said a last minute crisis threatening tomorrow's signing had been resolved. Israel Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said as he arrived with Rabin: "We are going to sign tomorrow, I feel great," reports AFP.

Rwandan troops surround UN convoy in Kigali

NAIROBI, May 3: Rwandan troops and pro-government militiamen surrounded a UN convoy in the Rwandan capital of Kigali today, preventing it evacuating 300 civilians, UN officials said. The situation is very tense, an official told Reuters by telephone from Kigali.

Mandela, de Klerk talk transfer of power

PRETORIA, May 3: President-elect Nelson Mandela and the man he will replace, Frederik de Klerk, met today to discuss the transfer of political power in South Africa to the African National Congress (ANC), a government source said, reports AFP.

There were no other details of the talks at de Klerk's office in the Union buildings that house the government offices here.

had been counted by then.

Hundreds of thousands of jubilant people streamed onto the streets after witnessing Mandela's victory claim on national television.

"We're celebrating our victory — apartheid is dead," an ecstatic youth in Kwamashu, outside Durban, said as ANC supporters fired tracer rounds, from AK-47 assault rifles.

"Free at last!" Mandela said Monday night as he realised his lifelong dream of creating a non-racial democracy in South Africa. Mandela is sure to be chosen the country's first black president when the new parliament meets Friday, and will be sworn in May 10.

With almost 11.7 million votes counted — 52 per cent of the estimated total — the ANC had 62.2 per cent to 22.4 per cent for de Klerk's National Party. The Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party was a distant third with 8.3 per cent, followed by the pro-apartheid Freedom Front with 2.8 per cent.

The ANC claimed victory in the first all-race election late Monday after de Klerk conceded that his National Party (NP) would come second in the landmark poll.

The government source said Mandela and de Klerk would discuss aspects of the transition, including the creation of a new cabinet.

Black South Africans threw huge street parties in townships as the ANC announced its victory, even though less than half of the expected votes

Ministers given extra charge

Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan will discharge all parliamentary responsibilities of the Information Minister Nazmul Huda, who is now on a visit to the USA, tomorrow.

In another decision, Housing and Public Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia will discharge all responsibilities of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications today as the concerned Minister Tariqul Islam is out of Dhaka to supervise post-cyclone relief work, reports BSS.

College closed

From Page 1 Col 8

the Chhatra Sangsad office room, VP Shah Zakir Rahman was mercilessly beaten-up by his rivals.

The Chhatra Dal supporters reportedly ransacked the office of the Sangsad after the Chhatra League activists ransacked the office of the Principal.

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