

SAVE DHAKA



Trucks unloading rods and other construction materials at Naya Bazar creating road congestion and serious traffic dislocation. This is a common sight in almost all parts of old Dhaka, Motijheel, Elephant Road, Malibagh and Maghbazar. — Star photo

Bosnian troops capture Serb town of Ripac

SARAJEVO, May 18: The UN-designated "safe area" of Bihac town in northwestern Bosnia was shelled today as government troops captured the Serb town of Ripac by punching southeast from the enclave, the United Nations said, reports Reuter.

"The Fifth corps have captured Ripac," colonel Jesper Helsoe, local UN commander, said by telephone from Bihac town.

"I can confirm that (government) Fifth Corps Units, as far as I know, are in Ripac as of this morning."

He could not confirm earlier reports that 2,000 refugees were fleeing the area.

UN spokesman Alexander Ivanko said there had been 22 heavy weapons impacts inside the Bihac safe area this afternoon, including four inside the town itself, probably as a result of the government army push on Ripac.

Helsoe told Reuters three people were killed by artillery fire on the town.

Ripac, about nine-km (six-mile) southeast of Bihac town, has been under Serb control since and abortive offensive by government troops late last year in which they seized the town briefly.

Helsoe could not confirm earlier reports of 2,000 Bosnian Serb civilians fleeing the area.

Helsoe said the government advance would "probably mean that some of the guns and tank positions used to shell the Bihac 'safe area' will be pushed further away from the town."

Government troops inside the Bihac pocket in northwestern Bosnia are surrounded by hostile Serbs from both Bosnia and neighbouring Croatia. They are also opposed by a rebel Muslim militia group led by a local business tycoon.

Cong faces fresh split

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although he has put on a brave face, because another division, the third since the country's independence in 1947, might kill the party.

The opposition feels the Congress will split Friday.

"Nobody can prevent it," said Harkishan Singh Surjeet, a communist leader. "I won't be surprised even if the government falls."

The Congress dissidents oppose the pace of Rao's policy of free-market reforms, and want a new President for the party to prepare it for parliamentary elections early next year.

Today, Rao got a shock when a firebrand Congress MP who had been a loyalist, turned against him.

"Rao's leadership has weakened the Congress and the country," said Mamata

Banerjee, "this state of affairs cannot continue and we want him to be replaced by Sonia Gandhi."

Tewari said the dissidents would accept Sonia as the party leader.

Rao has been facing a rebellion in the party since he led it to a stinging election defeat in a key state in December. The Congress has lost polls in five other major states since then.

Ahamed Patel another MP who met with Sonia, said, "there is a lot of apprehension in the minds of MPs that it will be very difficult to win the general elections." But he added, "We don't want a split (tomorrow)."

The Congress has ruled India virtually uninterrupted since 1947.

Chandrika

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immediately clear how many machine guns were being set up near the presidential palace, but one could be seen on the rooftop of a high-rise building with soldiers scanning the skies with binoculars for aircraft.

Chandrika has accused the guerrillas of planning to assassinate her, and military intelligence has reported that the rebels may have acquired light aircraft or glider planes during a recent truce, and built an airstrip in northern Sri Lanka.

Several countries have assured Sri Lanka government support and help in its war effort against the Tamil rebels, a government minister said today.

Besides condemning the resumption of hostilities, foreign governments have assured help in tangible material ways when the need arises," said Lakshman Peiris, the justice minister.

The minister did not name these countries but said the "support was in regard to the war."

Filipino cops kill 10 robbers

MANILA, May 18: Police killed 10 suspected members of a notorious bank robbery gang in a gun battle in a suburb of the Philippine capital on Thursday, police officials said in Manila, reports AFP.

40 missing

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missing during the storms in Uritchar and Sandwip was still not known. An estimated two lakh people were affected by the tidal waters and accompanying storms in Sandwip, Anwara, Banshkali, Sitakundu, Mirrsharar and Pattiya.

Ctg Urea

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Nurul Islam, while talking to The Daily Star.

The salinity rate in the Karnaphuli waters has increased to 7,000 ppm after the high tide while the acceptable rate is 5 to 10 ppm. The GM of the factory, located on the bank of the Karnaphuli.

The factory needs about 15,000 tons of sweet water daily for normal production, he pointed out.

He hoped that it may require seven more days to resume production in the factory with the fall of salinity rate.

The factory had suffered closure earlier also from March 14 to 20, due to increase of salinity in the Karnaphuli waters.

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Destruction of shrine Pakistan to observe mourning day today

ISLAMABAD, May 18: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto today accused India of "destroying peace in the region" by using its military might to crush a five-year-old secessionist uprising by Kashmiri Muslims, reports AP.

Benazir addressed the nation to condemn last week's destruction of a historic shrine in India's troubled state of Kashmir and to declare Friday a day of mourning in Pakistan.

She called for protests around the country, saying the flag will fly at half-mast and funeral prayers will be said for Muslim militants who died in the fire a week ago that destroyed the 15th century shrine in the pilgrimage town of Char-e-Sharif.

About 30 people were also killed last week and most of Char-e-Sharif destroyed in a three-day battle between Indian soldiers and Muslim militants.

"Threats of war are being hurled at Pakistan with the purpose to dissuade Pakistan from supporting Kashmiris — but we will never abandon them," Benazir said.

However, she reiterated Pakistan's promise to keep supplying moral and diplomatic support to Kashmiri militants, whom she called mujahideen or freedom fighters.

Benazir also accused India of religious intolerance and urged both the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Conference to condemn the destruction of the shrine.

"Religious prejudice and the use of brutal force has destroyed secular India," she said.

The EC finalised delimitation of 15 more JS seats

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday finalised the delimitation of jurisdiction of 15 more parliamentary constituencies in Begerhat, Khulna and Sathkhira districts.

The EC finalised the jurisdiction of the respective constituencies after hearing both the sides concerned coming from the districts and reviewing the documents and reports.

With this, the EC has so far finalised delimitation of jurisdiction of a total of 109 constituencies.

Karachi violence claims 3 more

KARACHI, May 18: A protracted shootout today in the heart of this violent port city killed three people and wounded 15, reports AP.

Another six people were killed in separate shootings, mostly involving random firing by unidentified snipers, police said.

The shootout occurred when dozens of police and paramilitary officers arrived to back up fellow officers ambushed by a dozen masked gunmen, said Jamil Kayani, Deputy Superintendent of Police.

Eyewitnesses said gunmen fired at police and paramilitary Rangers from rooftops and from their hiding places in a maze of narrow lanes.

A Ranger and two by-standers, including a 15-year-old boy, were killed, Kayani said.

No arrests have been made. Nearly 500 people have been killed in Karachi this year in ethnically and religiously motivated violence.

In March, two US government employees were gunned down as they drove to work in the morning.

Murder of Chinese citizen: 6 held

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday arrested six people in connection with the killing of a Chinese citizen in the old part of the city.

The Sutrapur police recovered the body of the Chinese citizen Ling Jiang, 65, from in front of Hotel Mustari at Nawabpur road at about 6 pm Wednesday.

Police said that Jiang was killed in room No 5 on the first floor of the hotel.

The arrested persons were sent to the jail and the body of Jiang was handed over to his relatives after autopsy yesterday.

The investigation was going on to find out the motive of the murder, sources said.

Jiang had been staying at Hotel Mustari for the last four years and worked in a tannery at Hazaribagh, police said. He was living in Bangladesh for more than 30 years.

Credit rating

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Sponsors expect to start functioning of the agency within June.

An official of the Securities and Exchange Commission said the SEC was now preparing a 'credit guideline' which has to be followed by the ensuing rating firm and by all future ones while evaluating a company's credit-worthiness.

SEC will closely monitor the implementation of this guideline by rating agencies, he said.

A number of issuers, contacted by UNB, appreciated the move for a credit rating agency in the country.

"It's of course a welcome step," said Latifur Rahman of Transcom Ltd. Credit rating agency will reduce chances of misinformation by issuers which will contribute to the credible development of stock market in the long run, added Rahman, immediate past President of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

He, however, said rating agencies themselves must have to perform credibly.

Gulf returnees

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Bangladesh was taken up.

There are over one lakh Bangladeshis now working in Kuwait and the number of Bangladeshi workers in Qatar now stands at around 70,000.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, during her official visit to Seoul beginning May 25, is also expected to explore the possibility of exporting more Bangladeshi manpower to South Korea, a source concerned said.

CEC

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delimitation of constituencies and registration of voters, the CEC said he would hold meeting with computer experts on May 21 to discuss the voters' identity card.

After that meeting, he said, he would be able to say whether ID card could be given to each voter before the next election. "If any case, I will not hold back the election."

On voter registration beginning May 25, the CEC said measures has been taken to collect correct information and enrolment of bonafide voters. Some 3.20 lakh enumerators will do the job.

He warned that legal action would be taken against any unfair means either by voters or people involved in the registration process.

Justice Sadeque sought help from the press in dispelling any distrust in the Election Commission and upholding its image as an independent institution. He also sought cooperation in motivating voters for correct registration and educating them about their rights.

Ship movement at Ctg Port suspended

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 18: Movement of ships at the Chittagong Port channel remained suspended till today due to rough sea, port sources said.

Besides, some buoys at different channel points were displaced by high tide, forcing the port authority to suspend the movement of ships from May 16, officials said.

The ship movement at the port channel may be resumed tomorrow, sources said.

No vessel from outer anchorage was allowed to berth at Chittagong Port jetties as it was considered risky.

The cargo handling were also hampered at the port jetties for the past three days due to inclement weather.

Malaria claims 5 in Sherpur

SHERPUR, May 18: Malaria claimed five lives including three children and afflicted more than a thousand people in three thanas of the district in the last 11 days, local people said, reports UNB.

The dead were identified as Ramkha Khatun, 22, Shujan Dalu, 10, and Mahirannesa, 11 of Nakugaon village and Nazma, 40, and Rahima Khatun, 3, of Tantar village.

Hospital sources said 20 people were admitted to the Nalitabari Health Complex and 31 to Baromari Mission Hospital. They were from malaria affected areas of Nalitabari, Jhinaigati and Shribardi thanas.

The district civil surgeon confirmed one death and said 12 medical teams were working in the affected areas.

Maid murder

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Some sources said that police had completed its primary investigation and was now preparing for further probe to ascertain the exact motive of the murder.

Meanwhile, police was looking for the graveyard where the maid was buried for exhuming her body for a fresh autopsy. But the graveyard in Jurain area of the city could not be located until yesterday, one source said.



Sequence of a dance-drama "Shayma" staged at the city's Shilpakala Academy auditorium yesterday, the concluding day of the national programme marking the birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. A handicraft stall at a fair on the occasion in the academy premises (Right). — Star photo

Resist anti-people activities

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the last four years, Begum Zia said her government ensured a balanced development of every nook and cranny of the country.

"Wherever we go in entire Bangladesh, people demand roads, bridges, schools, colleges and electricity," she told the huge gathering and added the autocratic government had done nothing for the people in the nine years, it had only looted people's wealth.

Referring to the popularity of BNP, Begum Zia said the people had voted BNP to power as it realised people's hopes, aspiration, dreams and demands. It has implemented all of its election pledges, she added.

"You (people) will derive the benefit of these development programme further if you again vote us to power," she said, adding "I believe that people would judge the development activities of BNP and destructive works of the opposition in giving future verdict."

She requested the people to give well-judged verdict in the future elections keeping in mind the matters of development and progress.

The Prime Minister observed that the opposition parties had launched election campaign and were making

false and misleading speeches to misguide the people.

"Beware of the lies, hoax, falsehood, false assurances and untrue propaganda of the opposition," she said.

Begum Zia advised the people to ask the opposition what they had done for the people while in power.

The Prime Minister urged the people to renew their mandate to her party for completing the ongoing Jamuna bridge construction, extraction projects of Barapukuria's coal, Madhyapara's hydroreck and construction of Rupsha bridge.

She said massive development works taken up by her government were now going on in full swing and urged the people to continue their support to BNP for carrying forward the programmes and policies to make the country self-reliant.

"If you (people) do not support BNP, all pro-people programmes will be stalled, because the opposition does not want development. They only want to go to power by any means," she said.

Referring to an opposition party, Begum Zia said when the party was in power, it forgot all about their commitments given to the people and betrayed the cause of commonman.

Nirmul's rally in city tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka city unit of the Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee will hold a rally tomorrow at Gulshan Natun Bazar to press its demands for trial of "war criminals" through special tribunal and ban on the politics of communal forces.

It was decided at a joint meeting of the organisation's central executive committee and city unit committee yesterday with its acting convenor Shahriar Kabir in the chair.

The meeting also decided to arrange screening of "War Crimes File", a documentary film on three Bangladeshi war criminals now residing in London on May 24 at the auditorium of the Education and Cultural Centre, Mohammadpur.

Landslides kill 25 in Mizoram

NEW DELHI, May 18: At least 25 people were buried alive in heavy landslides triggered by torrential rains in a northeastern state, a news report said Thursday, reports AP.

Nearly 400 homes collapsed in southern parts of Mizoram state which were hit by the monsoon on Wednesday, Press Trust of India news agency said.

The Midnight File

Anniversary of Palestinian self-rule goes unmarked

GAZA CITY, May 18: The first anniversary of self-rule passed unmarked Thursday in the autonomous Palestinian areas, amid widespread disappointment that peace with Israel has not brought prosperity and security. There were no official rallies or parades, and none of the euphoria that accompanied the withdrawal of the last Israeli troops from cities and towns in the Gaza Strip last May 18, reports AP.

Balladur hands over power to Alain Juppe

PARIS, May 18: Premier Edouard Balladur handed over power to Alain Juppe, foreign minister in the outgoing government, on Thursday, a day after France installed a new president who has promised to move swiftly on promises to cure the nation's ills. Juppe, 49, a top lieutenant of President Jacques Chirac, was named prime minister, as expected, Wednesday night eight hours after the new chief of state was sworn in, reports AP.

Students clash with police in Seoul

KWANGJU, South Korea, May 18: Students clashed with police who used tear gas to break up a sit-in protest Thursday in downtown Seoul to mark the 15th anniversary of a bloody crackdown on a pro-democracy uprising, reports AP.

About 4,000 students who had gathered near a department store suddenly rushed out into a major downtown thoroughfare at 5:00 pm and sat down, blocking all eight lanes at the peak of the evening rush hour.

They chanted slogans calling for the government to punish former Presidents Chun Doo-wan and Roh Tae-woo, who were army generals during the violent clashes on May 18, 1980, in the southern city of Kwangju.

After about an hour, about 3,000 police in full riot gear surrounded them. Some of the protesters began kicking and punching at police, who used meter-long batons and gray shields to jab back and keep the students at bay.

About five special police vehicles, armed with multiple tear-gas launchers, fired about 20 canisters at the crowd. The protesters were forced back and dispersed.

Police wrestled about 40 of them to the ground and arrested them as bystanders yelled, "Release them!"

Earlier, about 30 students were arrested as they tried to march to the presidential Blue House to demand punishment for Chun and Roh. Memorial services also were held at campuses, public parks and churches throughout the country.

In Kwangju, cries filled the air and the national flag drooped at half-staff at a cemetery as thousands of families and friends remembered those killed.

White and yellow long-stemmed chrysanthemums, flowers of death, decorated the graves. Many of the 200 killed were teenage students who rose up in arms to resist the military junta that came to power in 1979 by coup.

19 crew rescued from storm-hit vessel

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 18: All the 19 crew of an Indonesian flag carrying vessel, which was hit by the storm near Kutubdia channel, have been rescued by a navy ship today and escorted to the shore here, official sources said.

The ship fell in trouble on Wednesday during its return voyage to Yangon. Chittagong port officials said the ship 'Watuistiwa', which brought ginger and timber from Yangon, had sailed from the port jetty on May 15 after unloading the cargo.

The rescue ship was sent to Kutubdia last night.

The ship has tilted to one side after being hit by storm, sources said.

When contacted over telephone, the agency official said that the engine of the ship has broken down due to mechanical trouble.

Sit-in at ZIA

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airport. "We were not even informed earlier by Biman officials about the rescheduling," she added.

I purchased the ticket just not to reach Jessore by plane but to reach timely as I have some urgent work in the morning," the AL leader pointed out.

"Why should the VIPs infringe the rights of the tax-paying passengers as they have other modes of transport?" Motia asked.

Later, when contacted over telephone, Biman's airport staff said that the Prime Minister and her entourage were supposed to travel by the BG461 flight.

However, the Prime Minister and her entourage did not travel by plane and the 70-seat turbo-prop ATP aircraft left the airport according to the revised schedule as a normal flight with 55 passengers.

Sources concerned said the Prime Minister later changed her decision and travelled by helicopter.

Clinton greets Biswas

President Bill Clinton of the United States has greeted President Abdur Rahman Biswas on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, reports UNB.

In a message to Biswas received in the city yesterday Clinton said the United States and Bangladesh share with pride the knowledge of their contribution to peace-keeping efforts around the world.

The US President expressed the desire to continue to work with Bangladesh for peace and prosperity throughout the world and wished her people health and happiness.

US vetoes

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olutions and international agreements and that Arafat was disappointed about it.

Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid, who is in Morocco, had said a US veto would be a very dangerous decision.

Egypt's foreign minister, Amr Moussa, told al-Ahram newspaper he feared the Veto made the US appear biased and could hurt its credibility with the Arab nations.

East Jerusalem — with sites holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews — was captured by Israel in the 1967 war. Israel claims the city as its capital. The PLO wants the eastern part as the capital of a future state.

The Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest fundamentalist group, denounced the veto as an attempt to impose "the enemies' aggressive policies on Arabs and Muslims."

The Brotherhood, which opposes peace with Israel, urged Muslims to "wage holy war through weapons, spirit and money to retake all our rights and territories" and demanded Arab states cut their ties with Israel.

Food shortage

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will stand at 3.24 million tonnes.

WFP acting country director Syed Malek, when contacted, said that he was still unaware of such report. Therefore he had no comments.

Sources in the Ministry of Food felt that a persisting drought, fertilizer crisis and inadequate irrigation facilities in the country are responsible for a huge shortfall.

The sources, however, differed on the projection of the WFP and said that the estimate was made on the basis that Bangladesh now had a population of 119.7 million.

"In fact, the total population of the country stands at 111.1 million," said an official of the ministry.

A top official of the ministry, requesting anonymity, said that at the current average international rice price of 250 US dollars per tonne, the amount required to bridge the current gap will run into hundreds of millions of dollars.

"If we take the WFP survey seriously, counting the imported 30 lakh tonnes, we are still faced with a shortfall of more than 20 lakh tonnes," he said. "This will cost the national exchequer more than 500 million dollars."

Some Food Ministry officials told The Daily Star that according to their estimate so far, the actual shortfall may be around four million tonnes.

The officials feared that the international cereal traders might take the advantage of the situation and raise their prices. One of them said this has happened before and this time with the media coverage of the issue, it is likely that the international traders will take the opportunity.

The officials added that the government was under tremendous pressure as the donor countries had expressed their intention to cut down food aid. The Paris Aid Club has already reduced food aid considerably.