

Tornado in Sirajganj kills one, hurts 24

SIRAJGANJ, July 20: A man was killed and 24 others were injured when a tornado lashed the flood affected areas of the district Wednesday night, reports UNB.

Fishing in Bay suspended

From Our Correspondent
COX'S BAZAR, July 20: Fishing in the Bay of Bengal remains suspended for the last two days due to violent winds causing waves in the sea and dust storm in the beach town.

According to the Met office here, the wind is the prelude to a week-long heavy rainfall which is likely to begin on Sunday or Monday next.

Fishing boats and trawlers remain anchored and the people are mostly staying indoors to avoid the stormy weather.

Some 2,500 dwelling houses were damaged and a good number of trees and electric poles were uprooted by the tornado that lasted for about half an hour.

Buddu Sheikh, 56, of the village Phargerish in Kazipur thana was killed in house-collapse during the storm, official sources said.

Local people said the tornado accompanied with heavy downpour hit the flood affected areas of Sadar, Kazipur, Belkuchi, Chowhali, Shahzadpur, Kamarkanda and Ullahpara thanas of the district.

Electricity remained suspended in the areas for 18 hours.

Chinese missile tests 144 flights to change routes to avoid danger

TAIPEI, July 20: Taiwan said today 144 flights will have to change their routes between Taipei and Seoul to avoid potential danger from China's planned missile tests in the sea north of Taiwan, reports Reuter.

"Judging from last week's record of the number of flights taking that route, 144 is about the right number," said Huang Wei-Ho, a senior official in the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA).

The total includes all flights on the Taipei-Seoul route and not just passenger flights, she said.

China plans to conduct a series of surface-to-surface missile tests in the sea about 140kms north of Taiwan starting on Friday, Taiwan

sees the tests as China's show of military strength directed at the island.

"Their military actions have affected international flight routes and flight safety. It is a very unreasonable action," CAA official Je Chih-Chao said on state television.

The detours would last one week after the tests end, officials said.

Cathy Pacific, one of four airlines flying between Taipei and Seoul, said the detours were more of a nuisance than a safety hazard.

Taslima 'fugitive from law,' says prosecution

The prosecution yesterday described feminist writer Taslima Nasreen as 'fugitive from law' in the High Court and challenged the maintainability of the writer's plea for quashing the legal proceedings against her in the lower court, reports BSS.

Assistant Attorney General Syed Abu Kawser told a two-member bench of the High Court division of the Supreme Court that the application of Ms Nasreen, accused of hurting religious sentiments of Muslims, was not 'maintainable' as she is a 'fugitive from law'.

"A fugitive from law has no right to file any application to seek relief as per law," Kawser stated during nearly half-an-hour submission before the bench which comprised of Justice M Mozammel Haq and Justice Nurul Islam.

The second reason for "non-maintainability" of her application seeking quashing of proceedings against her was the second revision on behalf of the defence, Kawser said. He mentioned, the defence's first prayer for revision was earlier rejected at the District and Sessions Judge's court, Dhaka, on June 11, 1995.

Taslima Nasreen is a "fugitive" because she did not surrender before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, the AAG said when asked by Justice Haq "How can you say that the accused is a fugitive when the government allowed her to leave the country?"

CMM, Dhaka issued warrant against her on June 4, 1994 following a case filed by officer-in-charge of Motijheel thana accusing her of hurting the religious sentiments of the Muslims through an interview published in a Calcutta daily in May last year.

The writers was, however, granted bail by the High Court in early August last year allowed her to appear in trial court either in person or through her lawyer. She later went out of the country.

The assistant attorney general described as illegal the High Court order which allowed Taslima to appear at the magistrate court either personally or through a lawyer.

The hearing remained incomplete and will be resumed next Wednesday.

CHT ceasefire extended

The time limit of the ceasefire in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) has been extended till September 30, an official handout said yesterday.

SAARC chamber meet begins in Colombo

COLOMBO, July 20: THE executive committee of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce began its two-day meeting here today to discuss the ways and means to boost regional trade and investment, reports PTI.

The meeting is expected to review the impact of concessions agreed upon SAPTA (South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement) and consider a common stand on SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Area). The meeting will also focus on preparing a work plan for 1996.

Other issues likely to be taken up during the meeting are setting up of arbitration council for promoting intra-regional trade and provide support services for foreign investors by mutual coordination among member bodies.

Strengthening of the Asian clearing union and SAARC development bank, establishment of a data bank of manufacturers and suppliers of goods in the region will also be discussed.

The executive committee, which is meeting third time after the formation of the SAARC chamber will finalise the annual general meeting scheduled to be held in the Maldives later this year.

Rohingya

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some 24,368 babies were born in these camps, according to official version while the NGOs say this figure should exceed 30,000. In contrast, some 6,796 refugees died during this period.

"The Rohingya males tend to be interested in having more than one wife and several children. They are reluctant to adopt family planning methods and avoid family planning workers," an official said requesting anonymity.

The number of refugees in these camps now stands at nearly 58,000. In the last four years, some 1,92,541 refugees returned to Myanmar.

Meanwhile, Myanmar okayed clearance of repatriation of 1,010 more refugees at an official-level talks held at the Cox's Bazar Circuit House on Monday.

Rohingya Refugee Commissioner Khondker Fazlur Rahman led the 16-member Bangladesh team and Director of Myanmar Immigration and Population Department Wee Mee led the 13-member Myanmar team.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the convention of the Institution of Textile Engineers and Technologists in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Development takes place if democracy exists: Khaleda

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday said democracy is the prerequisite of any development as there is people's participation in it, reports UNB.

"Development takes place if democracy exists," she said addressing over 300 leaders and workers of the Awami League, Jatiya Party and members of Hindu community of Bancharampur thana in Brahmanbaria district who joined the BNP.

The freshers presented Begum Zia with bouquet and expressed their allegiance to her leadership at a simple function at 30, Hare Road office of the Prime Minister.

Bancharampur thana Awami League General Secretary Mahbub Hasan and Babu Jagabandhu Devnath led the newcomers who include 13 chairman and 117 members of different union parishes and local elite.

Welcoming the freshers, the Prime Minister said President Ziaur Rahman had first initiated development programmes.

But the autocratic government halted all the development programmes and pushed the country backward, Begum Zia said, adding that the BNP government has for another time begun development endeavours.

PM: Textile sector

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Textile has been identified as a thrust sector, the Prime Minister said while listing government measures for the development of the sector employing some 16 lakh people.

Besides allowing import of reconditioned machinery, the government has taken steps to provide soft loan in this sector, she said.

Begum Zia said the domestic demand for fabrics this year was 146 crore metres while that of export-oriented readymade garment industries 138 crore metres.

She said purchasing power of the country's people has increased due to proper policies pursued in last four and a half years. As a result, she said, the demand for textiles and other consumer goods has shot up.

Referring to the government policies to encourage the handloom industry, the prime minister said Jamdani, Grameen Check and Dhaka Check of the country are becoming popular all over the world.

Various steps have been taken for the welfare of the weavers and marketing of their products, she said, adding that interest and penal interest on loans of the weavers have already been waived.

Referring to the past glory of the country's handloom products, particularly the

'maslin', Begum Zia said technology and engineering has been added to the work done once with personal skill and efficiency. Engineers and technologists should acquire that knowledge and innovate newer ideas for rapid development of the country, she said.

She said the government is trying to rejuvenate the jute industry as the demand for natural fibre like jute has increased against synthetic fibres with rising awareness about environment.

Begum Zia referred to the diversification of jute goods and termed production of rayon and pulp from jute as "a great success".

"Quality of products should be ensured to keep up the increasing demand for jute goods. The role of technologists is important in this field," she said.

Referring to the degree course in textiles introduced by Shahid President Ziaur Rahman, the prime minister said six diploma institutes were set up and a project was undertaken for imparting training to textile-related people.

Chaired by ITET President Dr Aftabuddin Hossain, the inaugural function was also addressed by Jute Minister ASM Hannan Shah, State Minister for Textiles Abdul Mannan and ITET General Secretary Ehsa-nul Karim.



Dressed in traditional Arab dress, Queen Noor of Jordan, wife of King Hussein, lights the torch at Jerash Wednesday, heralding the beginning of the 16-day long Jerash festival in the ruins of Jerash, the former Decapolis of the Greek-era. — AFP photo

SC invites more lawyers

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of continued 90 days of absence of more than 140 opposition MPs and the question of vacation of seats under the Constitutional provision.

On the day *amicus curiae* Khandaker Mahbub Uddin Ahmed concluded his submission while Rafiqul Huq started his deliberation. The hearing resumes Sunday at 9 am.

Since Sunday last Barrister Asrarul Huq, Dr Kamal Hossain, SR Pal, Barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed and Justice TH Khan delivered their submission before the full bench of the Appellate Division chaired by the Chief Justice.

The other judges of the bench are Justice Mostafa Kamal, Justice Latifur Rahman, Justice Abdur Rouf and Justice Ismailuddin Sarker. President Abdur Rahman Biswas using his Constitutional prerogative referred the matter to SC early this month.

The *amicus curiae* are divided over the main issue whether or not the opposition MPs are absent from the Parliament.

Barrister Asrar, the government appointed lawyer, SR Pal and Justice TH Khan gave similar views on the matter that absence from Parliament by a prolonged boycott should not be attracted by the Article 67 (1)

(b) of the Constitution. They termed it special type of absence which is not contemplated in the relevant Article.

Article 67 (1) (b) of the Constitution says: "A member of Parliament shall vacate his seat— if he is absent from Parliament, without leave of Parliament, for ninety consecutive sitting days."

Contradicting this contention Barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed, Khandaker Mahbub Uddin and Rafiqul Huq said that the MPs were absent from Parliament, no matter they walked out or boycotted the session, Barrister Ishtiaq said the Constitution permits an MP to remain absent for less than 90 days without leave of the House.

Dr. Kamal Hossain, however, stressed that the issue is 'entirely a matter of the Speaker and Parliament and the SC should not hear it.' Beginning his submission, Rafiqul Huq said, "It is purely an absence from Parliament from March 2, 1994, no matter it was a walkout or boycott."

"Absent means not present," he said, citing the meaning of 'walkout' and 'boycott' from several dictionaries.

He said since 'walkout' implies that one is out, it is expected that one would walk in. "A person cannot walk out twice," he added.

Huq said the opposition MPs walked out on March 1 but did not return on March 2.

The relevant clause is a punishing clause and an MP must face the consequence for his absence. Otherwise, the Constitutional provisions would be violated, he added.

He also said 'this is the pattern of the Constitution.' On the matter of court's competence to hear the reference, he said it is not a purely political matter, so there is no reason to send back the reference without hearing.

He pointed out that in 1973, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan referred the matter whether Bangladesh would be given recognition.

"It was a highly political issues sent to the court and the court did not refuse to advise," Huq added.

Earlier, in the morning, winding up the submission, Khandaker Mahbub Uddin Ahmed said the opposition members were absent from Parliament since March 2 last year.

If a member remained absent from Parliament this way without leave, his seat fell vacant automatically, he added.

Enrol expatriates in voter list, demands Hasina

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has demanded enrolment of the expatriate Bangladeshi citizens as voters, reports UNB.

"Their non-inclusion in the voter list is tantamount to snatching their fundamental rights," she said addressing the expatriate Bangladeshis at the Miami Airport where they went to welcome the opposition leader to the United States.

Hasina, who is now on a private tour of America, reached the Miami Airport Wednesday afternoon, said a press release received in Dhaka yesterday.

Addressing the gathering at the airport, the Awami League chief said the expatriates are contributing in a great deal to the country's economy by remitting foreign exchange to Bangladesh.

Awami League, since the beginning of the registration of voters, has been demanding enrolment of the expatriate citizens of the country.

Hasina said her party would extend support to them for protecting this fundamental right, enshrined in the nation's Constitution.

US Awami League General Secretary M A Salam, vice-president M Fazlur Rahman, Ayub Khan, Humayun Akhtar Rashid, Shahid Newaz Chowdhury, Aimon Akbar received the party chief at the Miami Airport.

Hasina's daughter, Putul, and Putul's husband Khandaker Mashur Ahmed were also present at the airport.

Workers on strike at 7 CEPZ units

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 20: Production in seven industrial units in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone remains suspended because of labour unrest, official sources said.

Nearly 2200 workers of these units are on strike since July 2 demanding higher wages.

According to the CEPZ authority, a few self-styled labour leaders, defying a ban on trade union activities, had forced these workers to go on strike.

The CEPZ authority blamed what they called the external forces for enforcing the strike to destroy the investment climate.

The authority will take legal action against the striking workers, officials said.

The industrial units are: Global Fabrics, Al-Hamid, Al Salam Fabrics, Bangladesh Towel Industry, International Trade, Institutional Textile and Quality Textiles.

100 houses gutted in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 20: Some one hundred houses including shops were gutted in a fire that broke out this afternoon at Pathantoli in the city.

Fire fighters brought the blaze under control after struggling for about two hours from 3 pm.

The origin of the fire is yet to be ascertained. The loss of property was estimated at Taka ten lakh.

80 shops, houses gutted in Cox's Bazar

COX'S BAZAR, July 20: About 80 shops and a dozen dwelling houses were gutted in a fire that raged through a market in Sadar thana early today, police and witnesses said, reports UNB.

They said at least 30 people were injured as they ran helter-skelter for safety when the fire broke out at about 3:30 am at Muslimbazar in Pookhkhali union, 18 km from here.

The blaze, originating from short circuit, engulfed the whole market and gutted the shops, pucca and semi-pucca houses, including the Union Parishad office, witnesses said.

The local people, who extinguished the flame after fighting for four hours, estimated the loss to the tune of Taka two crore.

Manzur murder

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ferring anonymity, said the case might be shifted to Dhaka due to security problem in producing the accused, including deposed president Ershad, in Chittagong.

"The case can be shifted in two ways — through approval of a transfer petition under CrPC 526 by the High Court or through a government notification by the Ministry of Law under the provision of CrPC 78," said the lawyer.

The Midnight File

OIC contact group on Bosnia meets in Geneva today

The OIC contact group on Bosnia has convened an emergency meeting in Geneva at ministerial level tomorrow in the late afternoon to discuss the deteriorating situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to a message Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman will participate in the meeting, reports BSS.

Hearing of writ against EC 'Qualifying dates with retrospective effect illegal'

Fixation of qualifying date with retrospective effect was illegal and ultra vires of the Constitution, Advocate ABM Nurul Islam told the High Court yesterday, reports UNB.

Placing all laws relating to preparation of voter list, Advocate Islam said, qualifying dates were fixed with prospective effect in those laws, but in the instant case the qualifying date was fixed with retrospective effect.

He was advocating a writ petition challenging certain provision in voter registration form before a High Court bench comprising Justice Habibur Rahman Khan and Justice MM Ruhul Amin. The writ filed by Aminul Islam Tito on May 28.

Advocate Islam said the Election Commission had fixed the qualifying date on January 1, 1995 but voters' registration began after about five months, on May 25.

Retrospective effect of the qualifying date has deprived one and a half crore people of

4 get life-term for Jessore double-murder

JESSORE, July 20: The Additional District and Sessions Judge Mustafa Inamul Hafiz today sentenced four persons to life imprisonment on charges of committing a double murder, reports BSS.

The court also fined the convicted persons Taka 5,000 each and in default to suffer jail term for another six months.

The convicted persons were Sattar, Salam, Mustafa and Mukhles.

City flood situation

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slight fall at Tongi. The river was, however, flowing 33 cm above danger level at Mirpur point.

A boy and a baby reportedly drowned in flood waters at Meradia and Muradpur in the city yesterday.

Our Correspondent from Narayanganj reports: Sixteen people were attacked with diarrhoea in the district during the last two days. Three of them were admitted to the Narayanganj General Hospital yesterday.

The flood situation in the district town remained almost unchanged yesterday. However, the river Shitalakkhya registered a fall by 5 cm and was flowing just one cm above the danger level.

According to the civil surgeon's office sources, there were enough stock of medicine to combat diseases and 82 medical teams were formed. But many affected

Fresh trial of Col Taher's case demanded by DU Correspondent

Speakers at a discussion meeting in the city yesterday demanded fresh trial of the case of Colonel Taher who was hanged on this day 19 years ago.

At the discussion meeting held at the TSC auditorium to mark the 19th death anniversary of Col Taher Bir Uddin, the speakers termed the hanging of the freedom fighter a "political murder."

"The documents and evidence produced before the special tribunal against Col Taher were not sufficient for the death penalty," said Advocate Gazul Hoq, who was a lawyer of Col Taher in that tribunal.

The meeting chaired by Dr Ahmed Sharif was also addressed by Haider Akhter Khan Rano, Sharif Nurul Ambia, Dr Anwar Hossain, Barrister Lutfur Rahman Talukder.

BCL leader

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lice rescued Jahangir from Kalam's house and sent him to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital where Jahangir succumbed to his injuries early today.

He appeared at the MA final examination of Chittagong University.

The district Chhatra League at a protest meeting at the Andarkill crossing in the evening demanded immediate arrest and trial of the killers.

the right of franchise, he said terming the Election Commission's acts as mala fide.

Constitutional right is that a person shall be entitled to voting right on reaching the age of 18 years, he added.

Earlier, Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Khandaker submitted affidavit in opposition on behalf of the Election Commission and said there is a scope for amendment, revision and correction of voter list.

He further said fixation of qualifying date on January 1, 1995 was not ultra vires of the Constitution.

The hearing will be resumed on Sunday.

Ishtiaq

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Abdul Wadud Khandaker came to his room and showed him a set of papers but he (Ishtiaq) did not go through those.

Barrister Ishtiaq said this after Khandaker Mahbub Uddin Ahmed had remarked that it was not fair on the part of Barrister Ishtiaq to raise the question of 'factual gap' in the reference since he himself had seen the draft of it, according to press reports.

Abdul Wadud Khandaker was present at the court room at the time of Ishtiaq's denial when the hearing on the Presidential reference was continuing.

Khandaker Mahbub quoted the interview of the AAG with The Daily Star in this regard.

AAG Khandaker in an interview with The Daily Star had earlier said that he had showed the draft of the reference to Barrister Ishtiaq.

people alleged that there were acute crisis of drinking water and water purifying tablets at 10 flood shelters in the district, where some 10,000 people took refuge.

The control room at the Deputy Commissioner's office said so far 50 tonnes of wheat, 50 tonnes of rice, 100 tons of biscuit, 200 pieces of saree and 200 pieces of lungi have been sanctioned as relief in Narayanganj.

With the recession of waters, the situation in Rajbari, Sherpur and Jamalpur was improving rapidly and the road link between Jamalpur and Sherpur, resumed yesterday.

Meanwhile, bulletin issued by the Flood Information Centre of the Water Development Board said that the flood situation would remain unchanged in Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Kishoreganj, Shariatpur, Madaripur and Faridpur today.

The bulletin said flood situation in Dhaka and Munsiganj would improve further today.

About the overall river position it said the Ganges continued to rise at upstream points, the Brahmaputra recorded fall at all points except at Chilmari and the rivers in the Meghna basin marked both rise and fall while those in the South-Eastern Hill basin except the Muhuri and Parshuram, registered fall, yesterday.

Recycle-paper

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signed an agreement with Phoenix Group of Germany on November 7 last year on the 50:50 equity basis and the joint-venture obtained a licence from the Board of Investment the same month.

The German firm is investing around Tk 16.59 crore, the local entrepreneurs Tk 3.23 crore and the Sonali Bank is providing a loan of Tk 13 crore for the project.

Blast kills 20

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said 10 kilograms of the powerful explosive RDX were packed in the bomb.

Witnesses said the busy street resembled a war zone with mangled bodies, broken furniture and blood-stained clothes strewn all over.

"It is for the first time that I have seen such a blast in Jammu," said AK Sharma, a 45-year-old shopkeeper who has lived all his life in the city.

The explosion sparked a stampede," another witness said.