

Half-day hartal only in Dhaka city today

BNP and its allies have withdrawn today's half-day hartal across the country in view of the flood situation, reports UNB.

The hartal will now be observed in Dhaka city only from 6 am to noon.

This was decided at a meeting of the 7-party alliance yesterday evening.

Sources closed to the meeting said the alliance leaders agreed to withdraw the countrywide hartal except in Dhaka city considering sufferings of the people in the flood affected areas.

BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia has asked her party leaders and workers to move to the affected areas and provide all possible help to the flood-hit people.

Barisal-5 by-polls

Hasnat, Suranjit asked to explain purpose of visit to constituency

By Nurul Kabir

The Election Commission yesterday instructed the district officials of Barisal not to be present in any function attended by any member of the council of ministers before the ensuing by-election in a parliamentary seat of the district.

The by-election in Barisal-5 constituency of the Jatiya Sangsad is scheduled to be held on July 20. But allegations are there that the ministers and persons enjoying their rank and status are violating the election code of conduct.

The Jatiya Sangsad seat fell vacant following the death of an Opposition lawmaker in the second week of March.

According to sources in the Chief Election Commissioner's office, the EC issued identical directives to the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police of Barisal not to be present in any function being attended by any minister, state minister, deputy minister or

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By-polls: Holiday in Barisal-5 July 20

The government has declared July 20 as general holiday for Barisal-5 constituency on the occasion of by-election to the vacant Jatiya Sangsad seat, reports UNB.

An official handout said in Dhaka yesterday that the day had been declared a holiday to facilitate officers and employees of the government, semi-government, autonomous and private offices of the constituency to exercise their right to vote.

Star MAG TOMORROW

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Several lakh marooned in 15 districts: 11 killed

By Staff Correspondent

The flood situation took a serious turn yesterday killing at least 11 people and leaving several lakh marooned in 15 districts.

Our correspondents reported that two persons died in Rangamati, two in Cox's Bazar and one each in Pabna and Mymensingh district. UNB reported two deaths each in Bogra and Sirajganj and one in Mymensingh.

Two persons died in Jamalpur on Tuesday.

The affected districts are Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Khagrachhari, Feni, Pabna, Sirajganj, Mymensingh, Sherpur, Jamalpur, Bogra, Khulna, Rajshahi, Gaibandha and Kushtia.

The flood situation deteriorated as heavy rains continued for the last two days and on-

rush of waters from across the border further swelled most of the major rivers in the Brahmaputra, Meghna and Ganga basins and those in Feni and greater Chittagong district.

The Flood Forecasting and the Warning Centre yesterday said the Ganges-Padma, Brahmaputra, Khowai, Someswari, Gumi, Muhuri, Haldi, Sangu and Matamuhuri rivers continued to flow above their danger levels yesterday and may rise further. The Dharla recorded slight fall but Teesta swelled along with Karorta, Punarbhaba, Mohananda and Goral.

Our staff Correspondent from Chittagong reported that four persons including two women were killed in Rangamati and Chakaria in Cox's Bazar district yesterday.

About four lakhs people See Page 12 Col 4

Administration sources confirmed the deaths of Saleh Ahmed (60) and Nurjan Begum (35) in Borobeda village in Chakaria under Cox's Bazar when their mud house collapsed due to flood water.

In Rangamati hill district, two persons died in landslide. Selina Akhtar (25) died at Baghachhari and Abul Kalam (35) died at Chandragon, administration sources said.

A boy, Nurul Islam (11) died from snake biting at flood affected Tarakanda village under Mirershara thana, in Chittagong, police sources said.

The flood situation in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts deteriorated with increase of water in all the low-lying areas as rainfall continued.

Advising the government and the committees, monitoring and implementing related decisions.

Preparing development ac-

CHT Affairs Ministry formed

The government has set up a new ministry named as Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs in fulfillment of the commitment made in the December 2 CHT peace accord, reports UNB.

This was announced in a gazette notification issued yesterday.

The ministry will deal with the following matters relating to the CHT:

Administrative issues of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Counseling the local government bodies on selective issues.

Coordinating among the related ministries and divisions on concerned issues.

Providing secretarial assistance to all the council committees, special committees and working committees formed for the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Advising the government and the committees, monitoring and implementing related decisions.

Preparing development ac-

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30 BNP MPs deposit resignation letters with party chief

By Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 15: A court here today sentenced two people to life-term imprisonment for raping a woman about two years ago, reports UNB.

The Judge of the Chittagong Special Court on Prevention of Women and Child Repression, M Moinul Islam Chowdhury, gave the verdict against Abul Kalam, son of Mohammad Ziaul Haq, and Abul Kalam, son of Sukkur Ali.

According to the prosecution case, Abul Kalam of Hatia in Noakhali, and Abdul Kalam of Katiadi in Kishoreganj raped Ratna Begum while he was returning home after watching a movie at a cinema hall at Halishahar on October 18, 1996.

A case was filed with Pahartali thana in this connection and police submitted charge-sheet after investigation.

After hearing the witnesses, the court gave the judgement against the two accused.

however, refused to sign the resignation letters, arguing that they were not ready to respond to the arbitrary move.

Talking to The Daily Star, Akhtaruzzaman said: "I am ready to submit my resignation any time, if asked by Begum Zia. Why should I do it at the dictate of those having no authority to ask for it."

Meanwhile, senior BNP leaders like Prof A Q M Badrudza Chowdhury, Saifur Rahman, Khandaker Delwar Hossain and K M Obidur Rahman met the party chief at her Minto Road office to discuss the issue.

According to party sources, they questioned the process of collecting the resignation letters by people like Salauddin

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By Staff Correspondent

Prices of essentials during last financial year (1997-98) have gone up by 9.41 per cent, indicating a high rate of inflation in the economy, according to a market survey by the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

In a statement yesterday, CAB said that the prices of rice increased by 15.13 per cent last fiscal while it had declined by 9.93 per cent in the previous fiscal (1996-97).

The increase in fuel and spice prices was the steepest. Fuel prices rose by 24.67 per cent while prices of spices were up by 23.44 per cent.

Besides, according to the CAB survey, prices of egg increased by 14.65 per cent, vegetables by 13.46 per cent and

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CAB survey

9.4 pc increase in prices of essentials during '97-98

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaking at a mass reception accorded to her by the National Committee for Peace and Friendship at Paltan Maidan in the city yesterday.

—Star photo

PM at mass reception

Cooperation of all needed for development of CHT

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was accorded a mass reception at a grand rally in the capital yesterday for her success in restoring peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The grand rally was organised by the National Committee for Peace and Friendship.

Reciprocating the warm felicitation, the Premier told the huge gathering of rain-soaked people at the Paltan Maidan, "It's not me who deserves this salutation but those who sacrificed for people's causes."

She also acknowledged the cooperation of all sections of people in reaching the agreement with the tribal leaders in CHT.

Conveying her gratitude to those who braved rains to complement her, an emotional Sheikh Hasina recalled, "Today's rain reminds

me of May 17, 1981, when I returned home (after several years) amid heavy downpour."

She said, "Overwhelmed by people's love and affection for me that day, I pledged to dedicate myself to bringing about economic emancipation of the people by establishing their right to vote and food. After restoring their voting right, we're now striving to ensure their right to food."

By signing the peace accord, the PM told the rally, her government met a constitutional obligation of guaranteeing equal rights to all citizens. Besides, she added, peace in the one-tenth area of the country (CHT) was imperative for a balanced development in the country.

Referring to her government's steps for development of the CHT, she said

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\$235m IDA credit to promote pvt sector role in gas, power, telecom

A US dollar 235 million IDA credit to promote greater private sector participation in power, gas, water supply, telecommunications and transportation in Bangladesh has been approved by the World Bank, according to a World Bank press release, reports BSS.

Announcing the World Bank fiscal year 1998 lending results to South Asian region, the press release said that another 250 million US dollar IDA credit for a health and population programme project in the country will support health-care reform, help expand access to essential services for the poor, reduce the number of infant, childhood, and pregnancy-related illness and deaths, alleviate the infectious disease burden, and improve family planning services.

22 hurt as some compartments of 2 trains derail

LALMONIRHAT, July 15: At least 22 people were injured when some compartments of two trains derailed at Mahimaganj and Pircacha this afternoon, reports UNB.

Railway sources said the first accident occurred at 4:15 pm when some compartments of Dhaka-bound mail train from Santahar derailed near Mahimaganj.

A rescue train rushed from Bonharpura to salvage derailed compartments. Details of the incident were not immediately available.

In the second accident, four compartments of the Dinajpur-bound North Bengal Mail from Dhaka derailed at about 5:25 pm near Pircacha railway station.

Passengers of the train said they panicked when the train jolted severely under the impact of derailment. Fear stricken passengers were seen jumping through the windows.

The injured were treated in local clinics. The railway authorities, however, denied any passenger received severe injury.

A rescue train from Lalmonirhat started clearing the line in the evening.

Train communications in the region were disrupted due to the accidents.

Faruk murder: Case shifted to Dhanmondi thana

By Court Correspondent

Dhanmondi police will soon take up the case filed with Keraniganj thana in connection with the killing of former Jatiya Party MP Lutfor Rahman alias Kala Faruk.

Nasrin Akhter Flora, the only arrested accused in the murder case, was sent to Dhaka Central Jail yesterday after a four-day police remand.

Keraniganj police produced Flora, said to be a girl friend of Kala Faruk, before the District Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, praying for a seven-day remand.

A bail prayer was also moved on behalf of Flora.

The court rejected both the prayers and sent the case to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court for transferring it to Dhanmondi thana.

Police investigation so far revealed that Flora and six others strangled the former MP to death at a house on Road-6 at Dhanmondi. The killers dumped the body in the luggage compartment of a car which was found abandoned on Dhaka-Mawa highway at Bhawar Bhati in Keraniganj.

A police official at Keraniganj