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Capital's rail links with Ctg, Sylhet suspended

Direct train communication of the capital with Chittagong, Sylhet, Noakhali via Tongi and Bhairab Bazar was suspended from 11 am yesterday, reports UNB.

The railway authorities suspended the direct train links due to rise in water levels by six to eight inches at different points on Tongi-Jinardi section of the routes in last 24 hours.

But the train services continued to operate via Tongi-Mymensingh-Bhairab Bazar, Railway sources said.

Dhaka Divisional Manager of Bangladesh Railway is staying with engineers at Tongi-Jinardi section to take all possible measures for restoring direct communication through the section.

Train communication between Laksam and Chandpur was also suspended yesterday morning as flood water washed away the soil from under a rail bridge in between Hajiganj and

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9 children drown in flood water in Jamalpur

JAMALPUR, Sept 10: Nine children drowned in flood water in Sarishabari thana of the district on Wednesday, reports UNB.

With this, the death toll rose to 14, official sources said.

Rani Akter, 7 and Nargis Khatun, 2, of Char Jamira, Moriam Khatun, 2, of Char Rouha, Paban Mia, 10, of Char Chhataria, Altaf Hossain, 3 and Asma Khatun 5 of Char Adra villages of Satpoa union drowned in flood water.

Sufia Khatun, 3, of Pingna village in Pingna union Rahimuddin, 8, of Sengua village and Anisur Rahman, 3, of Uchchagram village in Mahadun union were also drowned in flood water.

Govt to import another 4 lakh MT foodgrains

Government has decided to import an additional four lakh tonnes of foodgrains to conduct emergency relief and raise reserve of foodgrains in view of the prolonged flooding. Of the total, three lakh tonnes will be rice and the rest wheat, a PID handout said yesterday, reports BSS.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Food Planning and Monitoring Committee in the conference room of the Ministry of Food yesterday.

Berths for food vessels at Ctg port increased

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 10: Chittagong Port authorities decided to increase berths facilities for foodgrain carrying vessels from today in a bid to expedite their unloading despite congestion at the port, official sources said.

The decision was taken at a review meeting of the port authorities held today considering the country's flood situation.

As per the decision, three more berths have been reserved from today raising the number of reserved jetties including silos to seven for foodgrain loaded vessels which will be allowed to enter the jetties on priority basis, said a senior official of Chittagong Port.

Officials expected the arrival of a good number of foodgrain carrying ships in the next few weeks.

"We have set the stage in advance to keep the foodgrain loaded ships free from any congestion or other hazards," said the official.



STILL HOLDING THEIR GROUND: Kabir Miah and his family continue the battle against all-devouring flood water, barely a few inches below the roof of his thatched house at Rasulbagh, Kamrangirchar. Panic gripped the family and the neighbours after six adjacent houses had been washed away by the deluge yesterday afternoon.

—Star photo by A K M Mohsin

Landslide at Chashara point of DND dam Buriganga, Shitalakhya may rise 18 cm today

By Staff Correspondent

The flood situation worsened further in the central part of the country including Dhaka disrupting the capital's direct railway links with Chittagong, Sylhet and Noakhali yesterday.

In the capital, the situation became alarming with the inundation of more residential and commercial areas while the DND embankment and the city protection embankment were under continuous threat with the swelling of waters in the Buriganga, Shitalakhya and the Turag rivers.

The Flood Warning Centre forecast that the rivers around the DND project, Buriganga and

Shitalakhya, may rise 18 cm by today.

In Narayanganj, an early afternoon landslide yesterday at Chashara, so far the most vulnerable point of the DND embankment, led rumours to spread like wildfire that the dam had collapsed.

However, as the day progressed, both civil and military engineers put in their best efforts to level the displaced mud on a 30-metre stretch where a vertical crack developed. Local people interpreted the incident as a prelude to collapse of the 32-km dam.

Hundreds of day labourers

gave them a hand in placing wooden planks backed by hundreds of sandbags to stop flood water from overflowing.

Besides, a number of leaks were also seen near Rani Mahal Cinema on Demra-Siddhirganj road. Flood water overflowed the Jatrabari Crossing and rolled down to Demra Police Station compound, where sandbags were placed for protection. Flood water also inundated the Sayedabad-Jatrabari road near the Sayedabad Bus Terminal yesterday morning.

In another development, the offices of the Deputy Commissioner of Narayanganj have

been shifted temporarily to the Dak Bungalow at Chashara after flood waters had reached the first floor of the offices at Court Road.

"Stagnant water soaked through the land near the rail track making it weaker. It is now falling apart with the rise of flood water across the 225-cm vulnerable stretch along the track," said DC Md Abdur Rahman, talking to The Daily Star last night.

At this stretch water was flowing over by 30 to 40 cm above the dam level but arrested by a protection wall built with

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Onion sells at Tk 60 a kg, fine rice Tk 24

By Staff Correspondent

Prices of essentials, rice and onion in particular, continued to rise, traders at main city markets said.

Short supply of grains and fresh vegetables from outside the capital coupled with apprehensions of a long-term road link disruption led to a sudden price hike of certain essentials, they said.

Onion, both local and imported varieties, was selling at between Tk 36 and 39 per kilogram but jumped to between Tk 60 and Tk 50 per kg within hours yesterday. Prices of greens rose by at least Tk 4 per kg over the past two days.

Prices of rice of different varieties rose at least by Tk 2 per kg over the last couple of days, the traders said.

"Prices of fine quality *najirshahi* rice is selling at Tk 24 per kg, *Pajam* at Tk 17 and the lowest quality of rice at Tk 16," said Mohammad Azad at a Hatirpool grocery.

Only three days ago, he said, *najirshahi*, *pajam* and the cheapest variety of rice were selling at Tk 16, Tk 15 and Tk 13 respectively.

Azad's neighbouring traders agreed and said that short supply of the grains were the causes of price hike.

"We could not predict such a price hike, even day before yesterday. But now that the road links with the capital are disconnected, we are in great anxiety about grains supply," Md Selim, a rice store owner at New Market, said yesterday.

Vegetable traders, who mostly depend on fresh supply from neighbouring Manikganj district, now submerged, are also feeling the crisis.

"Greens supply for the past

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Alternate barge, coaster services between Dhaka, Daudkandi

The government has taken steps to arrange alternate barge and coaster services between Dhaka and Daudkandi to maintain the flow of export trade as well as to transport emergency relief materials like food, reports BSS.

At the same time, steps have been taken for expansion of the existing barge and coaster services between Dhaka and Chit-

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BATTLE LOST? What else can they do? At Jurain in the city, they are heading for a safer place.

—Star photo

Planes to carry exportables to Ctg 3-month moratorium on classification of industrial loans

The government has decided to impose a three-month moratorium on classification of industrial loans from this month in view of losses sustained by industries due to flood, reports UNB.

The decision was announced at a high-level meeting presided over by Finance Minister S A M S Kibria in the city yesterday.

The government has also decided to charter cargo planes from abroad to transport exportables from Dhaka to Chittagong and bring imported raw materials of the garments sector to Dhaka.

All local charges, including those for landing and handling of the cargo planes and services, have been waived for 15 days. It will come into effect immediately after the leased planes arrive in the country.

The government is considering to ensure availability of fuel for those cargo planes at a rate similar to that of Biman, the meeting was informed.

If necessary, the government will also ensure airlifting of exportable goods to Chittagong port.

The government had already decided to provide coaster and ferry services in the riverine routes to expedite transportation of exportables to Chittagong and Mongla ports.

Kibria announced several financial incentives, including special loans for the damaged industries.

Export-oriented industries will get preference in receiving special loans. Small and cottage industries with capital less than Tk 50 lakh will get priority for loans.

Industries with 100 per cent capital of their own will also get preference for the credits.

Industrial units which have been repaying their loans regularly and industrialists who are paying their taxes regularly will be eligible for the special credit programme.

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32 countries pledged aid: FM No plan to declare disaster emergency

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday said the government has no plan right now to declare nation-wide disaster emergency to deal with current flooding and its aftermath, reports UNB.

"This question involves a lot of thinking. Since the relief operation is going on smoothly, we don't have such plan at this moment," he said at a weekly press briefing at the Foreign Office.

Azad said donor countries and international organisations have so far committed about 142 million US dollar in cash and kind for flood victims. The food assistance pledged so far stands at 728,000 MT.

"The international aid response is quite satisfactory," he said, adding that 32 countries have so far responded to Bangladesh's appeal for help.

Azad said two US ships carrying foodgrains will reach Bangladesh in December and January. The US government has committed 200,000 metric tons of foodgrains.

The foreign minister said US Air Force personnel will conduct a six-day military exercise with Bangladesh Air Force from tomorrow.

During the exercise, about 50 US Air Force personnel will be engaged in rescue and relief operation in the flood-affected areas till September 17.

Detailing the international response, Azad said the United Nations has issued a flash appeal for 223 million US dollar for emergency relief work.

The 52nd session of the UNGA made an appeal to the international community to show solidarity with Bangladesh.

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EU asks WFP, other bodies Release food from reserve stocks immediately

From Anwarul Huq

BRUSSELS, Sept 10: The European Union has asked the World Food Programme and other organisations to release foodgrain for their reserve stocks in Bangladesh on an emergency basis as flood relief.

This was disclosed by Ruth Albuquerque, director general of external relations of the European Commission and head of the unit overseeing EU activities in Bangladesh.

The quantity of foodgrains held under different programmes could not be known immediately. The EU has already contributed one million ECUs as urgent flood relief assistance to Bangladesh.

Albuquerque was briefing a journalists' delegation from Bangladesh here. The delegation is on a familiarisation visit of the EU institutions in Maastricht, Brussels and Strasbourg.

She said the EU also expects to give greater thrust towards building a food security system in Bangladesh. It also plans to

concentrate on agricultural and rural development by providing seeds and equipment to boost agricultural production.

"We are trying to move from the concept of food aid to food security," she added.

Albuquerque said Bangladesh could considerably increase its foreign exchange earnings by exporting computer software and cut flower of the 15-nation EU countries.

"There is tremendous income generation potential from export of software to the EU countries. There is enormous brain capacity and sufficient know-how for Bangladesh to engage in development and export of software," Albuquerque said.

She also said that cut flowers were an item of great demand in Europe and Bangladesh could cash in on the potential if it could export it maintaining quality and speed of delivery.

Albuquerque said.

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Some foreign missions plan evacuation

By Special Correspondent

Some foreign missions are considering evacuation of children and spouses of staff as living conditions in the diplomatic districts of Gulshan and Baridhara deteriorated with rising flood waters, diplomatic sources said.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday offered hospitality to the flood-affected diplomats at three state guest houses, Sugandha, Padma and Meghna.

Fears of a further deterioration of the situation, already bad with overflowing sewage and possible disruption of power, were mounting for obvious reasons.

"As a precautionary measure, we are advising that the children plus one parent leave Dhaka for the time being. High Commission children, mothers (and any other spouse who wish to go) will be evacuated to England or Delhi," an internal memo of the British High Commission said.

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Tk 70 lakh worth of 500-taka forged notes found at lake near ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Forged 500 Taka notes worth over Tk 70 lakh were recovered by some fishermen from the Civil Aviation Lake near Zia International Airport yesterday morning, according to police.

Police said Tofazzal, Akhter and Noor, the fishermen, found a sack in their fishing net that contained the forged notes amounting to Tk 70,73,500 at around 10 am yesterday.

The forged bills were bundled inside the sack in 1,758 broad sheets, each containing eight notes. Besides, there were 83 loose ones inside the sack, police added.

The fishermen immediately informed the on-duty policemen at a nearby police box.

Police were yet to find out who had produced these forged notes and why they sunk those in that lake. None, however, was arrested in this connection till filing of this report.

A general diary was lodged yesterday with Cantonment thana in this regard.

Condition of Asma 'critical'

By Staff Correspondent

Asma Begum, whose only functioning kidney was 'mistakenly' removed by doctors at the DMCH about a month ago, is in a 'critical condition' as she is now suffering from 'acute renal failure' along with other complications including anaemia and breathing difficulties.

When this correspondent entered the dialysis unit at the Bangabandhu Medical University Hospital at about 4 pm yesterday, doctors were checking Asma's heart condition. She was receiving her second blood transfusion while she was on oxygen.

Asma's acute renal failure

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Rubel murder Mukuli placed on 2-day remand

By Staff Correspondent

Mukuli Begum, an accused in the Rubel murder case, was placed on a two-day remand yesterday.

The CID was recording her statement in connection with the case last night, sources close to the investigators said. The CID investigators started interrogating her from about 7:00 pm.

Mukuli Begum was produced before the court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Habibur Rahman yesterday.

Hearing of the two cases against them, however, could not be held as the prosecution witness could not appear before the court.

During the day's proceedings yesterday, Chetia submitted a petition in the court for withdrawal of state

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Chetia's appeal to withdraw state defence lawyers

Our Court Correspondent

Anup Chetia and two of his associates were produced in the Court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Habibur Rahman yesterday.

Hearing of the two cases against them, however, could not be held as the prosecution witness could not appear before the court.

During the day's proceedings yesterday, Chetia submitted a petition in the court for withdrawal of state

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Starr's report on Clinton's affair with Lewinsky sent to Congress

WASHINGTON, Sept 10: Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, sent Congress 36 sealed boxes filled with substantial and credible evidence of wrongdoing by President Clinton on Wednesday, triggering the first formal impeachment review in the United States since Watergate a quarter-century ago, reports AP.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Democratic leader Dick Gephardt pledged before Starr acted that they would make a bipartisan effort to review the politically explosive report, delivered in the shadow of the mid-term elections. The two men then met into the evening to thrash out plans to make several hundred pages public within a few days — including posting it on the Inter-

net — and to govern Congress' subsequent review.

Clinton, facing the gravest in a career of political crises, asked the nation for forgiveness in a pair of speeches in Florida. "I let you down. I let my family down. I let this country down. But I'm trying to make it right," said the president. He did not utter the name of Monica Lewinsky, the former White House intern with whom he had — and hid — a sexual relationship.

He also did not directly address Congress' imminent work on Starr's report. But he told sympathetic Democratic supporters at a fund-raiser Wednesday night in Coral Gables, Florida. "These next eight weeks ought to be devoted to you and ... and the future of

this country."

Altogether, Clinton apologised on three different occasions during the day, the first coming in a private, emotional meeting with House Democrats before he left Washington for Florida. Aides said they expected him to keep it up until his apology is drummed into the national consciousness.

Congressional leaders said

they were preparing a resolution to make a portion of the report available to the public as early as tomorrow.

Without advance warning, Starr sent the House and supporting evidence gathered in almost eight months of investigation.

"The office of independent counsel submitted a referral to the House of Representatives containing substantial and credible information that may constitute grounds for impeachment of the president of the United States," Starr spokesman Charles Bakaly told reporters.

Packed in 36 boxes and loaded into white vans, the report and evidence on Clinton's

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Pvt power plant in Khulna starts operation tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

The country's first private sector power plant will start operation in Khulna from tomorrow, the Power Development Board (PDB) chairman said yesterday.

Nuruddin M Kamal said the 108 mw barge-mounted plant near Gopalpara Power Plant site in Khulna city was set up by Khulna Power Company Ltd (KPC), a joint venture between Hong Kong-based US company Wartsila and local companies. The plant cost 120 million US dollars.

The plant, built on two barges, will primarily supply power generated with imported oil. The PDB will purchase KPC power at Tk 2.24 (or 5.1 US cents) a unit. After a few years, this plant will generate power from natural gas and sell power

at Tk 1.86 (or 4.3 cents).

The PDB's own power generation cost is Tk 2.1 per unit while its bulk sales rate is Tk 1.72 per unit. However, the power generation cost in the western part of the country — from Khulna to Bogra — ranges between Tk 5.5 per unit and Tk 12.5 per unit as the power plants there use imported fuel as raw material. About 86 per cent power of the country is generated by cheaper natural gas.

The PDB initiated the barge-mounted power schemes in late 1996 in a bid to overcome the acute power crisis. Barge-mounted plants are usually built in 10 or 11 months' time," Kamal told at a press conference in the city. All the

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