

BGMEA thanks Prime Minister

Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) expressed its thanks to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her personal intervention in introducing the ferry service between Kanchpur and Daudkandi, saying the emergency measure has facilitated uninterrupted export trade of the country, reports BSS.

The ferry service began on Saturday following directives of the Prime Minister after the BGMEA leaders approached her as the huge stock piles of the readymade garments could not be transported due to disruption of road communication between Dhaka and Chittagong following the devastating floods.

BGMEA said the garments sector had incurred a loss of Taka 30 crore daily following disruption of road communication between Dhaka and Chittagong for 27 days. The sector has also been saved from cancellation of orders from foreign buyers by introducing the ferry service. The association has also thanked the Bangladesh Navy, Army and concerned authorities who are supervising the ferry service.

The ferry service was inaugurated by Shipping Minister A S M Abdur Rob and Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru on Saturday evening. BGMEA Vice President K M Zaman and other leaders were present.

In all, eight ferries have begun operating in the route besides four private vessels.

BGMEA said that a 300 tons capacity vessel has been pressed into service with a view to clearing the huge stocks at the earliest possible time.

Relevant authorities also began cargo airlifting from yesterday.

Report on JU rape incidents delayed again

By JU Correspondent

The Fact Finding Committee formed to investigate the incidents of rape at Jahangirnagar University (JU) has again failed to submit its report.

The report was scheduled to be submitted yesterday.

The report will now be submitted to the authorities on September 21 and the authorities will place the findings before the Syndicate for necessary actions the following day, the committee sources said.

With this date for submission of the report has been rescheduled for the fifth time.

The Fact Finding Committee was formed on August 20 with the dean of Science faculty Prof. Anwarul Haq Sharif as its chief following massive demonstrations by female students demanding action against persons responsible for raping three students between June and August.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Prof. Sharif said the committee had interviewed all the reported victims and alleged offenders to unveil the truth.

"Various documents, letters and information regarding the rapes have also been scrutinised," he added.

"Ninety five per cent of the report has already been finalised and we are trying hard to complete the crucial report shortly," he added without elaborating further.

Hartal call

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Local journalists at a meeting at the press club here have condemned the attack and decided to boycott the ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) for an indefinite period.

They also demanded arrest of the BCL activists responsible for the incident. Rahman was rushed to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital with severe injuries and later was shifted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

The attack was launched after a report on a land dispute involving some top BCL leaders was published in The Daily Saitkat on Thursday.

Food shortage

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food in stock and we are ready to face any eventualities."

At the press briefing on the food and agriculture scenario in the wake of floods, Anisuzzaman said relief supplies for the affected people are satisfactory.

"We have preparation for the worst," he said, adding "We have administrative mobilisation, political mobilisation and now we need social mobilisation."

The Agriculture Ministry officials said the government was also prepared to meet the demand of seeds for the rabi crop cultivation. The government will import 5,000 tonnes of wheat seed from West Bengal.

"We are also negotiating with the Indian government for import of some 17,000 tonnes of seed for rabi crops," said Agriculture Secretary Dr A M M Shawkat Ali, adding, "We have given permission to private sector for importing 500 tonnes of hybrid seeds to meet the demand."

Principal Secretary Dr S A Samad said the total damage in agriculture sector was yet to be ascertained. "But we hope we would be able to make an assessment within a month."

Regarding price-spiral, Anisuzzaman said the price hike was confined to Dhaka city and it happened due to panic buying and rumours about collapse of the DND embankment. "But it is temporary."



A flooded flood shelter in the city. This picture was taken at Mugda Para Community Centre yesterday. — Star photo

Ministers continue relief operation

Ministers yesterday visited flood affected areas in different districts and distributed relief goods, reports BSS.

They assured the flood victims that the government would mitigate their suffering through implementing a massive rehabilitation programme soon after recession of the flood waters.

Environment Minister Sayeda Sajeda Chowdhury visited several areas of Alamnagar, Bhanga and Alifadanga thanas of Faridpur district, where flood waters started receding but the situation is still grim.

She distributed relief goods including dry food, water purifying tablets and oral saline among the flood victims.

Addressing a spontaneous gathering, Sajeda Chowdhury called upon the people to take steps urgently for the production of various seasonal crops soon after the recession of flood waters. The government would provide all necessary help and assistance in this regard, she added.

Minister for Post and Telecommunications Mohammad Nasim visited Faridpur, Chatmohar, Atgharia and Bhanga thanas under Pabna district and distributed relief goods.

Mohammad Nasim addressed two big public rallies in Chatmohar and Bhanga. He warned that government would not tolerate any misappropriation in distribution of relief goods.

"The government is always ready to help the distressed people so that none die of hunger," he said, adding that the relief operation will continue until the situation improves.

Wazuddin Khan MP, Janatull Ferdous MP, District Awami League leaders and the deputy commissioner accompanied the minister during his visit to the flood affected areas.

State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed visited the Harirampur-Mohanganj embankment and saw for himself

the flood control measures as well as the condition of the flood victims who have taken shelter there.

The state minister distributed relief goods among the flood victims at Penchakula Bazar. Later, he discussed the flood situation with the WDB officials and the thana administration and asked them to continue the relief operation along the flood victims.

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Mofazzal Hussain Chowdhury Maya along with leaders and workers of Dhaka City Unit Awami League distributed relief goods among the flood-hit people in different shelters in the city.

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader visited Sadar, Chatkhil, Begumganj, Sudharam, Senbag and Company-ganj thanas of Noakhali district and distributed relief goods among the flood affected people there.

Sakurai tells PM I have come to survey extent of flood damage

Visiting Japanese member of parliament Shin Sakurai called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday, reports UNB.

Sakurai, the vice president of Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentary League, expressed his deep concern over the extensive damage caused by the devastating flood.

"I am deeply disturbed, and we have full sympathy for the government and the people of Bangladesh," he said.

Recalling his earlier visit to the country during the flood in 1988, he said this year's flood is more severe.

The Japanese lawmaker said his current visit is to survey the extent of damage wrought by the deluge and assess the requirement of the country.

Japan is a great friend of Bangladesh, he said, and "we will undertake the survey" in cooperation with the relevant authorities here.

Sakurai praised the Bangladesh prime minister for her achievement in restoring peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and signing the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty with India.

The prime minister said the extent of this year's damage by the flood is very severe.

She said Japan is a very good friend of Bangladesh and hoped it will come forward in mitigating the sufferings of the flood-hit people.

Besides food assistance, she also stressed the need for building multi-purpose shelters.



BDR personnel distributed cooked food among the flood-affected people of Kamrangir Char yesterday. — BDR photo

Taliban capture key stronghold of Afghan opposition

KABUL, Sept 13: The ruling Taliban army today said that it has seized a key stronghold in central Afghanistan from a northern alliance of opposition forces. The claim could not be immediately confirmed, reports AP.

Taliban spokesman Wakil Ahmed Muttuqi said Bamian, a city in the central Afghanistan province of the same name, fell to the religious army early Sunday.

Satellite telephone calls to the northern alliance's Bamian headquarters were not answered, so no verification was immediately possible.

The Taliban and its northern-based enemies are fighting on several fronts. The Taliban army, which has vowed to restore peace in the war-ravaged country and transform Afghanistan into a purist Islamic state, has made significant progress in recent weeks.

Taliban fighter jets pounded Bamian on Saturday as part of an offensive that began Friday. The Taliban also claimed on Saturday that it seized an airport near Bamian, 125 kilometers (80 miles) west of the capital of Kabul. The northern alliance denied the claim.

Both sides routinely make contradictory claims in their battle over the roughly 10 per cent of Afghanistan still held by the northern alliance, which is composed of minority ethnic

groups. Bamian was one of four provinces held by the alliance, and was controlled by the Shi'ite Muslim group Hezb-e-Wahadat. The province also is the site of key air bases, where Iran, which supports the alliance is believed to have flown in military supplies.

Iran's state radio on Sunday claimed that warplanes from neighbouring Pakistan, believed to support Taliban, had

been spotted bombing of Bamian, causing heavy casualties. The report, monitored by the BBC in London, cited an anonymous northern alliance spokesman as saying Bamian was still being bombed.

Duty officers at the Pakistani defence, information, and foreign ministries in Islamabad said they had no information about alleged Pakistani involvement in the attacks, and could not comment.

The loss of Bamian to the Taliban would be a major blow to the northern-based alliance which has suffered several serious setbacks in recent months. The Taliban movement is dominated by Sunni Muslims, who are in the majority in Afghanistan.

On Sunday, Taliban-controlled Kabul radio also claimed that four northern alliance commanders and their troops switched sides in the conflict to join the Taliban in their offensive on Bamian.

There also were reports over the weekend that hundreds of Shi'ite Muslims were fleeing the areas because they were afraid invading Taliban troops would kill them.

In an attempt to prevent retaliatory attacks on Shi'ite Muslims, the Taliban-run radio has been issuing almost nightly warnings to its troops to "protect" their Shi'ite captives and newly conquered areas.

KCCI appeal to businessmen

KHULNA, Sept 13: President of Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industries (KCCI) S M Nazrul Islam and members of the executive committee in a joint statement today urged the business community to take appropriate measures so that the prices of essential commodities and emergency medicines including saline do not increase in view of the unprecedented flood in the country, reports BSS.

Hearing of Ctg mass killing case resumes today

CHITTAGONG, Sept 13: The hearing of the 1988 mass killing case resumes in the District Judge's court here tomorrow, reports UNB.

Police commissioner Rakibul Huda and 48 others were accused in the killing of 30 people in police firing on an Awami League procession near Lalghighi Maidan on January 24, 1988. Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina held a public meeting there on that day.

OIC appeals for prompt assistance for flood victims

The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) has appealed to world conscience and to the international community, specially members of OIC states, to promptly extend all forms of aid and assistance to the flood victims of Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Dr Azeedine Laraki, secretary general of the Jeddah-based OIC, urged all to extend such assistance to "enhance the efforts of the government of Bangladesh to alleviate the sufferings" of the people, according to a delayed message received in the city yesterday.

An earlier message from Saudi Arabia said OIC Secretary General has taken steps for a donation of 150,000 US dollars from the Islamic Solidarity Fund for the flood victims of Bangladesh. The fund will probably be channelled through Red Crescent Society of Saudi Arabia, the message said.

Fresh BDRCS appeal for Tk 31.23 cr

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) has made a fresh appeal to its headquarters in Geneva for nearly Tk 31.23 crore (over 10 million Swiss franc) for helping the country's flood victims, reports UNB.

The appeal, launched on September 10, said 3.2 million people comprising 6.40,000 families need urgent food and medicine.

Speaking at a press conference, BDRCS chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Abdus Salam said the first appeal was made on August 30 to the international community asking 2,743,000 Swiss franc to provide food to 100,000 families or 500,000 flood victims in the vulnerable group.

He said when the appeal was launched 37 out of 64 districts were inundated affecting 15 million people. But now the deluge has affected over 30 million people in 51 districts.

6 senior police officers promoted

Six senior police officers were promoted yesterday to the post of DIG and additional DIG, reports UNB.

Additional DIGs Anwarul Iqbal, Abul Kashem Howlader, Khandoker Saheb Ali and Dhananjay Sarkar were promoted as DIG.

On promotion Iqbal was posted to Khulna as Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Howlader to the Special Branch in Dhaka, Saheb Ali and Sarkar to the Police Headquarters.

SPs Farooq Ahmed and Ali Imam Chowdhury were promoted as additional DIG. Farooq was posted as Commandant, CID Training School in Dhaka and Chowdhury to the Chittagong range.

Incumbent KMP Commissioner Kazi Nazrul Islam was transferred to CID headquarters in Dhaka.

Noorul Kader Khan dead

By Staff Correspondent

Mohammad Noorul Kader Khan, a former member of CSP and a valiant freedom fighter, died of a heart attack yesterday in Brighton, UK yesterday, according to a message received in the city last night. He was 63.

His body is expected to arrive in the city on Tuesday, his family said.

Khan was the first establishment secretary of the Mujibnagar government during the War of Liberation.

Chairman of Desh group of companies, he pioneered the garments industry in Bangladesh in late seventies, setting up the first joint-venture garments industry with Koreans.

The bereaved family requested friends and admirers to pray for the departed soul.

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of eminent writer and retired official of Mass Communication Department Anzuman-Ara Begum will be held at her daughter's residence at House 42/H, Road 7/B, Banani after, Asr prayers tomorrow, says a press release.



Vice chairman of Arab Bangladesh Bank Ltd Ramzul Siraj handed over a cheque for Tk 10 lakh to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the PM's Relief Fund for flood victims recently.



The Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry has donated Tk 6.6 lakh to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for flood victims. FICCI president A K M Shamsuddin handed over a cheque for the amount to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently.



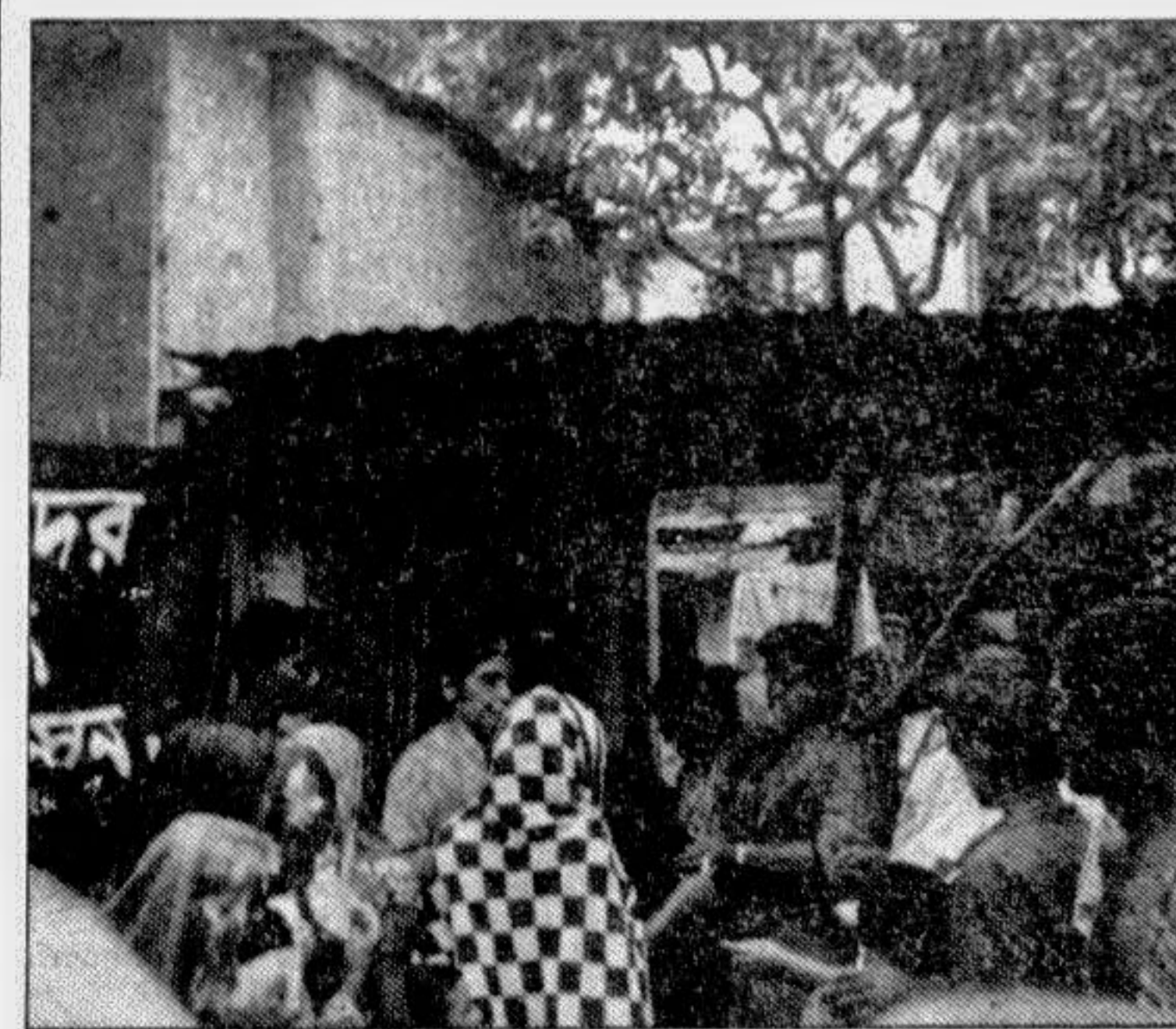
Eastland Insurance Company Ltd distributed relief goods among flood-affected people of Dhaka and Munshiganj districts recently.



Savar Thana Bangabandhu Parishad distributed relief goods in different flood-hit areas of Savar on Friday.



UNICEF Representative in Dhaka Shahida Akbar visited a flood-affected village in Paraganj, Mymensingh recently. — UNICEF photo



Members of Women's Voluntary Association (WVA) distributed relief goods at different flood shelters in Old Dhaka on Thursday.

Unocal

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Chairman Nuruddin Kamal Thursday.

"We have not agreed on any power tariff with Unocal. What it (Unocal) tried to impose was contentious and we cannot agree on a tariff imposed by it," he said.

Unocal is seeking to complete the negotiations for the power plants by keeping the tariff issue unresolved for now... and negotiate the tariff issue later," he said.

"But we will do things in our way," the PDB chairman asserted.

Unocal's proposals for the western region power plants looks lucrative as the electricity-starved part of Bangladesh relies on oil-fired plants. Natural gas is not available there, and imported oil is much costlier than gas.

The cost of power production in the region ranges between Tk 4.5 and Tk 12.5 per unit. In contrast, Unocal's offer of 4.5 cents (around Tk 2.25) per unit looks cheaper.

However, compared to other such offers, Unocal is much more expensive. US company AES has proposed 2.72 cents and 2.79 cents for Haripur and Meghnaghat power projects respectively.

The Unocal offer has other defects, points out Petrobangla officials.

For Haripur and Meghnaghat projects, gas will be supplied at a government-dictated price. But Unocal wants gas at the local bulk rate for its proposed plants," a Petrobangla official explained. The former rate is nearly double the local rate.

Apart from the plants, Unocal's western project also proposes development of the Shahbazpur Gas Field and construction of a regional gas pipeline up to the border in Kushtia. The company is also thinking of a gas-fired fertiliser plant.

Unocal and some top civil servants are very much enthusiastic about the whole scheme. But Petrobangla experts and officials have been very critical. They say the proposed project terms go grossly against "our national interests".

Even officials of World Bank and other donor agencies have gone on record rejecting the Unocal proposal calling it "impractical" and questioning its viability.

There has not been enough study on the viability of the whole scheme, which projects an amazing budget of US\$ 750 million," one Petrobangla source said.

The gas reserve of Shahbazpur field, around which the entire project is ostensibly conceived, is not worth only between US\$ 200 and 400 million, the source said.

Petrobangla officials estimate a cumulative loss of three to four billion dollars for the state if Bangladesh agrees with Unocal plans with its proposed terms.

They also allege that Unocal, in its proposed terms, sought to pass the buck entirely on to the government. "Practically, the company will not bear any project completion risks," another source said.

"Unocal is only arranging finance and not taking the risks that go with a private sector initiative," said the source.

"Even the power and gas market risk will be borne by the Petrobangla and other government agencies according to its proposals."

PDB forecasts that the existing private and state-run projects will add about 1800 megawatts of electricity to the system in 2001. The estimate excludes Unocal's unsolicited power projects.

In all, by 2001, Bangladesh should have at its disposal 3600-3700 megawatts against a peak demand of 3200.

Unocal representatives here however argue that the power-hungry western region would be greatly benefited by the Unocal schemes which will help it tap its economic potentials.

PDB officials have another major point. The chairman said that the country should be careful about allowing new private power plants so that it remains within its means to pay for the electricity generated by them.

"Over-enthusiasm to build new power units without ensuring the sale of it can be disastrous. All private power companies, as per agreements, need to be paid in dollars. We must keep that in mind."

Office of HR organisation ransacked

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of extortionists ransacked the office of a human rights organisation and its medical centre for drug addicts at Gulshan Circle II in the city and looted Tk 20,000 on Saturday, police said yesterday.

Five persons were injured in the attack.

Police said about two dozen extortionists swooped on the office of the Child Woman Relief and You and the Mukti Clinic, housed in the same compound. They also damaged medical equipment and computers.

One woman to die for killing another

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Sept 13: District and Sessions Judge Abdul Gafur today sentenced one Krishna Rani Pal to death for killing another woman, Laila Begum of Kalatal village under Sadar thana on September 11 last year.