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Opposition calls hartal on July 8

The BNP-led opposition alliance yesterday called a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on July 8 to protest passage of an 'anti-peoples' budget ignoring their objections, reports UNB.

The allied parties staged demonstrations in the capital yesterday and announced a series of agitation programmes.

As part of agitation programme, BNP will hold a public rally at Paltan Maidan in the city on July 5. Party Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia will address the rally in the afternoon.

Jamaat-e-Islami will hold a public meeting at Paltan Maidan on July 4 while Jatiya Party at Brahmanbaria on July 3.

Islami Oikya Jote did not convene any public meeting before the hartal.

BNP also asked its district and thana units to hold rallies on July 5 and 6 respectively. The party will also bring out a torch procession across the country before the hartal.

During demonstration yesterday, the BNP held a rally at Muktangon in the city protesting "personal attack" on its chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and her family members and "false" remarks against deputy leader of the opposition Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The BNP activists burnt an effigy of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in presence of the party leaders at the meeting venue.

Flood situation deteriorates in three districts

Flood situation in three districts has deteriorated further due to incessant rain and onrush of waters from across the border, reports UNB.

The affected districts are Sunamganj, Lalmonirhat and Kurigram.

In Sunamganj, a vast areas in Bishnophorpur and Sadar thanas of the district inundated following collapse of two embankments.

Official sources said a portion of Jinarpur embankment in Bishnophorpur thana and another portion of Dalana embankment in Sadar thana collapsed yesterday deteriorating the overall flood situation in the district.

Some 40 villages of the two thanas have been inundated due to the breaches in the embankments.

Local Water Development Board sources said the Surma was flowing 43cm above its danger mark at Sunamganj point at 3 pm.

The MET office recorded 160mm rainfall yesterday.

Flood situation in Kurigram district has deteriorated further inundating low-lying areas of 40 unions due to incessant rain and onrush of waters from across the border.

Water levels in the rivers of Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dharla and Dukdumbar are swelling fast.

Erosion by the rivers Brahmaputra and Sonavari devoured 16 villages in three unions of Rajibpur thana.

Some 6,000 people of about 1,200 families have become homeless due to the continuous erosion by the river Brahmaputra, Dharla and Sonavari.

In Lalmonirhat, the low-lying areas of 16 villages of Hatia-

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Punish the poachers

Tigers at risk in the Sundarbans

By Shehab Ahmed

The Royal Bengal Tiger, surviving centuries of hunting, is finding it difficult to escape poachers in their last sanctuary — the Sundarbans — where at least 12 tigers were killed over the last one decade, officials and experts say.

But the actual casualties, most remaining unreported, are said to be more, posing a serious threat to the majestic animal. Some 360 are surviving there, protected by the Wildlife Protection Act.

Tiger skin and bones are sought increasingly by greedy poachers backed by powerful quarters to feed a thriving market in the Far East, where bones fetch more money than skin. Tiger bones are prized as aphrodisiacs and balsams in the Far East.

Bangladesh Rifles personnel

kill a tiger on the fringe of the Sundarbans in 1997, but they returned the skin to the Forest Department when pressed. The bones were never returned.

Forest Department sources said the latest killing was reported early last month when poachers were busy retrieving the skin of a male tiger after shooting it down at Devnagar under Shyamnagar thana of Satkhira district. The poachers failed to hide their misdeed when local people gathered to have a look at the slain tiger.

On information from some of them, Forest Department authorities sought police help that resulted in the filing of a case and seizure of the skin.

The killing involved a powerful local politician who tried to suppress the facts. The case was filed more than a week ago.

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400 more outlaws surrender in Khulna today

From Staff Correspondent KHULNA, July 1: Four hundred outlaws from Khulna, Bagerhat and Satkhira districts will surrender with arms and ammunition to Home Minister Mohammad Nasim at the circuit house maidan here tomorrow.

The sub-jail at the Jorhati has been renovated to accommodate the surrendered outlaws who belong to Biplobi Communist Party and Purbo Bangla Communist Party.

Police Superintendent of Khulna said today a total of 300 outlaws have surrendered from nine thanas of the district till June 30.

They have deposited 200 firearms with police, he added.

Besides, a good number of pirates from the Sundarbans will also surrender to the Home Minister.

The sub-jail where the outlaws will be housed has been kept under armed police guard.



An ailing Royal Bengal Tiger is being taken away from the Sundarbans for treatment.

— NACOM photo

B. Chowdhury denies allegation

Fresh debate, walkout

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday witnessed a renewed debate on the alleged "defamatory" speech of Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof. AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury resulting in a walkout by the BNP, reports UNB.

The opposition staged a walkout when Commerce and Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed got the floor amid opposition protests after Dr. Chowdhury gave a statement to clarify his position on the issue on Rule 274 of the Rules of Procedure.

Prof. Chowdhury denied the allegation that he had made any "disrespectful" remark on the Prophet (SM) by comparing BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia's academic background with his and demanded withdrawal of

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's "false" allegations accusing him of defaming the Prophet (SM).

"I will have no complaint if she withdraws her false allegation. Otherwise, she will be responsible for it on the day of resurrection," he said.

Prof. Chowdhury accused the ruling party of "exploiting" the religious sentiment of the people and using it against him.

The BNP leader said he had never compared Begum Zia's academic background with the Prophet's (SM) saying despite being an "ummat" unlettered, he was the most learned and greatest man of all times.

"I am a practising Muslim and try to follow the Islamic code of conduct," he added.

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Speaker's failure to hold his ground was a sad spectacle of a creeping stranglehold of the ruling party on the independent functioning of our parliament.

First, we think for the Speaker to reverse his decision under insistence of the PM, was wrong. It has severely damaged the image of the Speaker who, not particularly known for his independent position vis-a-vis the ruling party, looked almost to be at the beck and call of the PM, much to the disappointment of the democracy loving people of Bangladesh. The

Commentary

Stop this Dangerous Game

By Mahfuz Anam

Last Wednesday evening Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury promised the deputy leader of the opposition time for a personal explanation after the budget was approved. When that time came, and after Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury was already given the floor, the Speaker changed his decision and denied him the chance to speak on the insistence of the leader of the House, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

We have decided to comment on the incident for two reasons.

First, we think for the Speaker to reverse his decision under insistence of the PM, was wrong. It has severely damaged the image of the Speaker who, not particularly known for his independent position vis-a-vis the ruling party, looked almost to be at the beck and call of the PM, much to the disappointment of the democracy loving people of Bangladesh. The

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