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Rain reigns

There was little respite for the residents as rain continued yesterday in the city as elsewhere in the country.

The capital's taxed drainage system miserably failed to cope with the late onslaught of a rejuvenated monsoon. To make matters worse, the main pump house at Narinda, which flushes out rainwater in the old city, had a break-down due to a power cable fault. The problem was detected at 7 am and repair job was completed at 3 pm on Wednesday. M A Kader, chief engineer of Storm Sewer Division of WASA told The Daily Star yesterday.

Many localities turned into a veritable Venice sans the gondolas. Many automobiles were stranded here and there while pedestrians worked their way through slinky water and floating garbage.

So far, the city experienced 55 mm of rain yesterday ending at 6 pm while on Wednesday it was 125 mm, the highest this season.

The pictures, taken from different areas yesterday and the day before, tells the whole story.

Business wants more from government

Business leaders have expressed the hope that the government would take the opportunity of ensuring a hartal-free and healthy political atmosphere by responding positively to two basic demands of the main opposition, reports UNB.

According to them, the two basic demands are replacing the Chief Election Commissioner by a new one and restructuring the Election Commission.

Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia had hinted that realisation of these two demands will enable them to shun hartal in future.

In a joint statement yesterday, chamber and trade associations said the former Prime Minister gave the assurance during a meeting with a delegation of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)

on September 17.

As part of their anti-hartal campaign, leaders of DCCI, FICCI, BCI, MCCI and BGMEA met on September 19 in the wake of the Opposition Leader's assurance.

The statement said they welcome Begum Zia's observation, which reflects the spirit of all peace-loving individuals as well as local and foreign establishments engaged in trade and industry to get rid of a confrontational political situation.

The business leaders in the meeting hoped that the government will consider the proposal of Opposition Leader with a positive attitude to ensure peace, discipline and social stability in the interest of economy, industrial infrastructure and export.

Recalling the announcement of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that her party wouldn't call hartal in future, the business leaders said: We hope the government will consider the two demands as acceptable to persuade the opposition to make a similar announcement of giving up hartal.

Those who attended the meeting and issued the statement are HM Rahman, President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, AKM Shamsuddin, President of Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry, AK Azad, Acting President of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, Mahbub Jamil, President of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Anisur Rahman Sinha, President of the BGMEA.

Apology for MIGs

Best bargain, says Russian envoy to Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

Outgoing Russian Ambassador Evgeny P Ivanov has said Russia did not sell its MIG-29 aircraft to any country at a price lower than that charged from Bangladesh.

The government of Russia agreed to a cheaper rate for Bangladesh as it wants to further develop relations with it.

The envoy said this when he made a farewell call on Khaleda Zia at her official residence yesterday.

Khaleda said, "May be the price is low, but the amount spent for purchasing the MIG-29 aircraft is high, considering the country's necessity."

Briefing newsmen the BNP Chairperson's Advisor MM Rezaul Karim quoted the ambassador as saying that purchase of Russian MIG-29 was first discussed during the rule of Khaleda Zia.

The former prime minister said there was some preliminary discussion on the issue during her rule, but it was not finalised.

The people feel that purchase of such aircraft by spending a huge amount of foreign currency is not required for Bangladesh, she added.

Khaleda Zia wanted to know from the outgoing envoy about his government's decision regarding a pre-feasibility study on construction of metro or underground subway in Dhaka to remove traffic jam.

Her government had made a request for this through the then Russian Ambassador, she said.

The envoy said construction of metro subway is highly expensive and suggested formation of an international consortium for funding such project.

Bid to heal CDS wounds

By M Shamsur Rahman

President AKM Shamsuddin is likely to become the new chairman of the company.

The central depository was formed on May 11, 1999 with the participation of banks, insurance and listed companies and the two bourses.

The 11 depository sponsors in their first meeting named the proposed CDS as Bangladesh National Securities Depository Ltd (BNSDL) to discuss the ways of reviving the CDS.

Knowledgeable sources said that the government's wish is to see a non-political person to head the company.

However, the promoters said that since the CDS was a private company there was a process of electing its president and the government should not interfere in the matter.

They also decided to hold a meeting early next week to discuss the issue and select a chairman.

According to sources, FICCI

Taka 25 lakh each.

But in a surprise move on June 10, some sponsors of the newly-born CDS removed its chairman, Amir Khashru Mahmud Chowdhury and put the Managing Director of Sonali Bank Mahbubur Rahman Khan in the chair. The move came barely within 2 months after the formation of the CDS.

It was in the currency for some time which the government did not like. Chowdhury, a BNP MP, who is to head the institution, is considered vital for revamping the country's share market. An influential minister lobbied for his removal and even talked to some private sector sponsors of the CDS regarding the matter.

Since the removal of Chowdhury, the activities of CDS virtually died down until the finance ministry finally felt the need for reviving it.

Tangail-8 dancing to by-poll tune

Kader Siddiqui, rival are campaigning even before announcement of schedule

By Nazmul Ashraf

joined the pre-election battle only recently.

In such gatherings, Kader Siddiqui had asked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina not to take part in the by-election campaign.

The prime minister will be greeted with black flags if she visits the constituency on official purpose," he told one gathering. In another meeting he threatened: "I'll block the Bangabandhu Bridge if the prime minister canvasses in the by-election."

Despite repeated attempts in the past few days, Kader Siddiqui could not be reached over phone in Tangail where he was reportedly busy with public programmes most of the time.

Al publicity secretary Abdul Mannan, along with some top leaders of the party's student chapter -- Bangladesh Chhatri League -- also attended a public rally organised for Shahjahan at Bashall early this week.

According to press reports, both of them are regularly holding public meetings in the constituency that comprises Sakhipur and Bashall thanas and are unofficially campaigning for the coming election.

Former MP Kader Siddiqui virtually launched his unofficial election campaign soon after he submitted his resignation letter to the Speaker on August 29 while his likely rival Shahjahan, also a former MP,

Talking to The Daily Star, Mannan admitted his visit was aimed at publicising Shahjahan's candidature and added that such visits by other party leaders would follow.

"People voted for AL and its 'boat' (election symbol), not for Kader Siddiqui (in the 1996 election). They will again vote for the AL nominee."

The AL leader blamed Siddiqui for lack of development in the Sakhipur-Bashall constituency over the last three years during his incumbency.

"It is he and not the government who is to be blamed for lack of development in the area. As the MP, he should have raised the local problems in the parliament and had those solved by the government. But unfortunately, he failed to carry out his sacred duty."

Mannan ridiculed Siddiqui for calling his AL nomination in the 1996 polls illegal. "If he See Page 11 Col 6"

Heroin haul Interrogation of arrested Pakistanis continues

By Staff Correspondent

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) continued interrogating the three Pakistanis on the second day of their five-day police remand.

Ibrahim and Alefzam from Peshawar and Rais Khan from Karachi were arrested with 24.1 kg of heroin from Hotel Razmam Isa Kha in the city on Monday.

"We are on the right track and will be able to unearth the racket soon," DNC DG Modabbar Hossain Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday night.

The investigators said some local influential may be involved in the matter.

Meanwhile, DNC were checking the telephone numbers the smugglers have been in contact with and places they have visited. Two of the three smugglers -- Ibrahim and Alefzam -- came to Bangladesh by air a week ago while Rais came on August 16.

More controversy at UCBL

By Staff Correspondent

Confusion has arisen after the High Court on Tuesday last directed "all parities to maintain status quo in respect of functioning as chairman and director of United Commercial Bank Ltd (UCBL)".

Following the order of the High Court, both Aktheruzzaman Chowdhury Babu and Zaffar Ahmed Chowdhury in separate press conferences yesterday claimed to have been the legal chairman of the bank.

Babu had called a press conference at the head office of UCBL at 11:00 but later shifted it to a local hotel at 12:30 pm. Zaffar Ahmed Chowdhury called the press conference at the same hotel at 6:00 pm.

Babu told his press conference that by staying the judgement of the District court the High Court had in fact upheld the order passed by the Fourth Assistant Judge -- on Thursday last.

The Fourth Assistant Judge had passed the order after Babu and four others sought an injunction to restrain Zaffar Chowdhury and four others from continuing the office of chairman and directors.

Two days later, a higher court stayed the ad-interim injunction following a prayer from Zaffar Ahmed Chowdhury and others.

Babu then went to the High Court seeking revision of the District Court's order. The High Court after hearing both sides fixed October 3, 1999 as the next date for hearing and stayed the order passed by the District Court. The court also directed the parties to maintain status quo.

At the press conference Babu filed a revision petition with the High Court against an order of the District and Sessions Judge which had stayed an ad-interim injunction passed by a sub-ordinate court -- The Fourth Assistant Judge -- on Thursday last.

The Fourth Assistant Judge had passed the order after Babu and four others sought an injunction to restrain Zaffar Chowdhury and four others from continuing the office of chairman and directors.

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Ctg BCL dogged by intra-party feud

From Nurul Alam

Two prospective candidates have already begun engineering even before the announcement of schedule of by-elections to the Tangail-8 Jatiya Sangsad constituency.

The Election Commission is likely to hold election in late October.

Rebel Awami League leader Kader Siddiqui who had vacated the Tangail seat and local leader of the ruling party Shoukat Momen Shahjahan are now busy seeking votes for the by-polls.

The Tangail by-election is considered very crucial both for the ruling party and its rebel leader Siddiqui. His close aides say Siddiqui has taken up the by-polls as the first step to free Awami League from "illegal leadership".

On the other hand -- the expulsion of Siddiqui from the party now only a matter of time -- AL is also planning to teach its dissident a good lesson in

Police inspector charged with abduction attempt

By Staff Correspondent

The wife of Jalal Ahmed Shafi whose decomposed body was recovered from the rooftop water tank at DB office in the city has filed a general diary (GD) with Mohammadpur thana against the main accused in the Shafi murder case for "attempt to abduct" their son and daughter and looting of valuables and documents by his hired goons".

She alleged that goons hired by suspended DB Inspector Ziaul Ahsan attempted to abduct their daughter Poppy 14, son Arif, 10, and looted papers relating to the murder case and some valuables.

A gang of four entered their house at Lalmatia B- block at about 4 am on Tuesday, opened the almirah, took Shafi's passport and documents of the case. Then they tried to abduct Poppy and Arif, she said in the GD.

As the cried for help, some local people chased the gang members but they managed to escape.

When contacted, the OC of Mohammadpur thana said that a GD was lodged in this connec-

tion. The motive behind the "attack" could not be known as none of the accused was arrested as yet.

Four people -- Inspector Ziaul Ahsan, Havinder Billal, constable Nuruzzaman and manager of the DB office can be arrested for their involvement in the murder.

The main accused was released from Dhaka central jail after he was granted 14 weeks' ad-interim bail on September 12.

Today's operation started with the smashing of Madina Trading Private Limited owned by Haji Selim MP of Dhaka without any hindrance.

Police sources said about 100 illegal houses and shops were levelled today, including "Barofkal" that is branded as Ershad Shikder's torture camp.

The operation will continue until the removal of all establishments from the railway lands from which Shikder had collected huge money," said an official.

The Election Commission urged all concerned to extend all-out cooperation in holding the bypoll in a "free, fair and impartial manner."

By-election in Faridpur-4 seat October 27

By Special Correspondent

By-election in the Faridpur-4 seat of Jatiya Sangsad will be held on October 27, the Election Commission announced yesterday.

The seat fell vacant following the death of ruling Awami League MP Advocate M Mosharraf Hossain.

According to the EC gazette notification, the last date for submitting nomination papers to the Returning Officer or Assistant Returning Officer is October 3 and scrutiny will take place on October 4. The last date for withdrawing candidature is October 10.

The Deputy Commissioner of Faridpur has been appointed Returning Officer while TNOs of Char Bhadrason and Sadarpur will be Assistant Returning Officers for their respective areas.

They said the pilot sensed something was wrong in one of his front wheels after taking off from Dhaka with full load of passengers on board, including State Minister for Shipping Mdazzil Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

He sought emergency landing permission but managed a regulation landing with the damaged tyre, manoeuvring the aircraft to a halt in the middle of the runway and unloaded the passengers there. The aircraft later left for Cox's Bazar after replacing the tyre. No one was hurt, the sources said.

Biman ATP averts disaster in Chittagong November 1

By Court Correspondent

A Bangladesh Biman Advanced Turboprop (ATP) had trouble landing at Chittagong yesterday with a damaged tyre on its front landing gear. Sheer skill of its commander Captain Zakir averted a major accident.

Biman sources said last night, they said the pilot sensed something was wrong in one of his front wheels after taking off from Dhaka with full load of passengers on board, including State Minister for Shipping Mdazzil Hossain Chowdhury Maya.