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Cyclone likely to make landfall this afternoon

By Special Correspondent
The cyclonic storm over the west central Bay, heading towards the coast of Andhra Pradesh in India, is likely to make a landfall this afternoon. Meteorological Department said here yesterday.

Heavy rainfall in Bangladesh is likely if the storm takes a north-easterly turn after making the landfall. Met office sources said.

After remaining stationary for sometime, the storm continued its west-northwesterly movement, gaining strength.

The sea will remain rough. The ports of Chittagong, Mongla and Cox's Bazar have been advised to keep hoisted warning signal No. three.

Meanwhile, there was light rain almost all over the country yesterday. Srimangal had heavy showers, totaling 61 mm.

TUs call 8-hour strike at Ctg port today

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Oct 17: The alliance of 22 trade union bodies called an eight-hour strike in the Chittagong port from 8 am tomorrow to realise their demands including withdrawal of decision to allow installation of the proposed container terminal by American company SSA at Patenga.

Other demands include installation of New Mooring container terminal by the port authority with its own fund, procurement of container handling equipment and cancellation of recently opened 'green channel' at Chittagong port, union sources said.

Meanwhile, Chittagong Port Authority held a meeting with alliance leaders this afternoon and urged them to call off tomorrow's strike. The alliance leaders however did not agree to call off their strike, sources added.

Sramik Dal leader held; Ctg BNP calls hartal

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Oct 17: The Chittagong unit of BNP today called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the port city on October 22 to protest arrest of AM Nazimuddin, president of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal's Chittagong divisional unit.

Besides, demonstration and rallies will be organised here on October 19 demanding release of the labour leader arrested today at Agrabad.

The programmes were announced at a protest meeting of BNP and Sramik Dal leaders held at the party office here this evening, party sources said.

The meeting was presided by general secretary of city BNP Dostagir Chowdhury.

Nazimuddin was arrested by police at around 1-30 pm near the labour office at Agrabad in connection with a case under Public Safety Act (PSA).

Police said the case was filed for his alleged involvement in an attack on foreign investors at CEPZ gate on August 24.

More than 20 people were injured in the attack led by Nazimuddin following which a case was filed against 40 people, police said.

Nazimuddin was later taken to court from where he was sent to jail custody.

Arafat, Barak agree to halt violence

Silver lining in the cloud ... (from left to right) Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, US President Bill Clinton, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordanian King Abdullah the Second on completion of the emergency Middle East summit at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt yesterday. Israeli and Palestinian leaders agreed to stop the violence that has rocked the region. --AFP photo

Flood-hit farmers in dire need of loans

By Reaz Ahmad

Delay at the finance ministry's end to release funds could very well diminish the prospect of recouping crop losses caused by a late monsoon deluge in the country's south-west, fear officials at the ministry of agriculture.

So far, the finance ministry has sanctioned Tk 11 crore taka for post-flood agricultural rehabilitation, less than a fourth of Tk 45 crore the agriculture ministry asked for.

The fund already made available to the ministry would be spent on seed import from India, said officials at the ministry.

If subsidiary agricultural loans and grants were not made available to flood-hit farmers immediately, fear officials, loss in paddy as well as vegetables and other cash crops would never be recouped.

"We'll import paddy seeds to make sure that the farmers in the affected areas can buy them from the local market immediately after the floodwater recedes for early boro cultivation this year," said a source yesterday.

Besides, the ministry also plans to procure maize seeds locally to distribute among the farmers who, in turn, can go for extensive cultivation of maize in addition to boro and wheat this year, said officials.

Quoting its independent study, Novartis, a multinational in seed and pesticides business, said, "Farmers are now desperately looking for money and hybrid vegetable seeds. They want to recoup the loss with winter vegetables."

"As the boro plantation starts soon, it is expected that farmers will sell their cattle to arrange the fund. The need of the hour is rehabilitation -- easy credit availability for the hapless farmers, especially of Jessore region."

According to the ministry of the agriculture ministry, cereal crops including aman and vegetables on 228,000 and 400,000 acres of land respectively are largely damaged in the south-western districts.

Total crop loss could be as high as half a million tonnes, according to government and private business sources.

However, the government would not have to

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Bridge over turbulent water ... Army engineers take a break on Tuesday while constructing a Bailey bridge in Benapole to restore the Asian Highway linking Bangladesh and India. Post-monsoon deluge in the frontier districts snapped the road links between the two countries. Army engineers have already restored the rail link. --AFP photo

Road accidents kill 12 in 3 districts

By Staff Correspondent

At least 12 people were killed and 16 injured in separate road accidents in Narayanganj, Chapainawabganj and Chittagong yesterday.

Our correspondent from Narayanganj reports, six people were killed and six others critically injured when a Dhaka-bound truck collided with a tempo near Kanchpur bridge on Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

Zakir, 25, an eyewitness of the accident said the jam-packed tempo hit his bicycle, throwing him into a roadside ditch. This caused the tempo to lose control and it collided with a truck in front of Omar All High School. The tempo was totally crushed, leaving four of its 14 passengers dead on the spot and six critically injured. The truck driver fled with the truck immediately after the accident.

Police said the tempo was going to Langalbandh. Most of the passengers were day labourers.

Those who died on the spot were identified as Sohul, 20, of Brahmanbaria, Shahid, 40, of Bhairab, Anwar, 45, and Shahjahan, 60, of Bhola. Of the critically injured two people identified as Inan Ali, 40, and Faruk, 24, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Autopsies of the bodies were done in Narayanganj General Hospital morgue.

A case was lodged with Sonargaon thana in this connection.

UNB from Chapainawabganj adds, four people including a minor boy died on the spot in two separate road accidents here yesterday.

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Flood situation in Satkhira town unchanged

From Our Correspondent
SATKHIRA, Oct 17: Flood situation in Satkhira town and two upazilas Debhata and Assassuni remained static while it improved in Kalaroa Upazila today.

In Satkhira town, flood water remained stagnant even after cutting an embankment at Bakal in Sadar Upazila yesterday.

Flood water in the affected areas were remain stagnant as river in the southwest region cannot discharge it quickly with a network of roads and embankments and polders obstructing the natural flow.

The government's decision to cut roads and embankments for quick release of waters is not being followed due to lack of cooperation of the authorities concerned.

Suffering of the flood victims have been increased as most of

See page 11 Col 5

BCL activist killed while making bomb

BARISAL, Oct 17: A Chhatra League activist was killed and at least three others were injured in a bomb explosion at Kasha in Gouranadi upazila today, reports UNB.

The dead was identified as Nasir Fakir, who reportedly fell victim to vengeance of his rivals.

Police and witnesses said the blast occurred when a group of BCL activists, the student front of ruling Awami League, was making bombs in a bamboo garden at the village leaving Nasir dead on the spot.

The sources said the cohorts of Mojibur were making bombs for taking revenge on their rival activists following a clash between two BCL factions that left at least four people injured on both sides on Monday night.

The clash between the supporters of Mojibur Rahman, thana BCL vice-president, and Bakhtiar, convenor of pourasava, See page 11 Col 2

Contradictory statements over death of foreigner

By Staff Correspondent

Mystery still shrouds the death of the 'foreigner', identified as Rozario Francis William, a citizen of Singapore.

According to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) register, the body of an unidentified man was brought to the emergency section of the hospital by some unidentified persons on Monday. Some people hanging around the emergency section had said that the body was brought in a police van.

But at around 11-30 pm, one Mohammad Alam of Hajl Ashrafuddin Road lodged a General Diary with Dhanmondi thana in connection with the death.

In the GD, Alam mentioned that Rozario had been staying with him and that he fell ill in the early morning on Monday. Alam mentioned that he took Rozario to DMCH at 8-45 am where doctors See page 11 Col 6

FBCCI polls now Oct 21

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Board of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) has rescheduled its polling on October 21 after the High Court yesterday vacated a stay order on the elections of the businessmen's apex body.

The HC also summarily rejected a writ petition upon which the stay order was passed on October 10. The FBCCI election was earlier scheduled on October 12.

A High Court vacation bench imposed the stay order till October 22 following a writ petition filed by Gaibandha Chamber President Abul Khair Murselim.

The petitioner in his application complained that the FBCCI authorities conspiratorially blocked him and his five colleagues to become voters in the FBCCI elections. He also alleged that the president and 15 executive committee (EC) members were elected without following the election procedures.



Light side of energy talks ... Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina shares a light moment with US Energy Secretary Bill Richardson during a meeting at the Blair House shortly after her arrival in Washington DC on Monday. --AFP photo

Allow duty & quota-free access of RMG, PM urges US

WASHINGTON, Oct 17: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged the United States to grant Bangladesh ready-made garments and textiles duty- and quota-free access to its market like 33 least developed countries, reports UNB.

She also called for free access of Bangladesh and other developing nations to markets of the developed world as well as increased official development assistance (ODA) for the LDCs.

The Prime Minister made the appeal in her lecture at the Lewis Preston Auditorium of the World Bank Headquarters, sponsored by the Association for Economic and Development Studies on Bangladesh.

"It's a long-running demand of developing countries like Bangladesh for duty- and quota-free access to the market of developed world," Hasina said, mentioning that recently the US has provided this preferential treatment to garments and textiles from 33 LDCs. "We hope Bangladesh would also be given the facilities."

Under a new trade bill passed this year, the US government accorded free market access to apparel from poor Sub-Saharan and Caribbean countries.

Bangladesh fears the new law affect its export to the US market. The United States is the single largest consumer of Bangladesh's annual apparel export worth around four billion US dollars.

The Prime Minister said that Bangladesh and other developing nations are facing various tariff and non-tariff barriers in accessing the world export market.

Also, the domestic markets of developing countries are facing uneven competition following a gap of manpower and technical know-how between the developed and developing nations, she added.

On the impact of globalisation on the LDCs, Hasina said, "We feel mere globalisation and world sans frontier are not capable of solving all our social and economic problems."

She observed that globalisation while helping to flourish the rich countries could spell disaster for poor and economically weakened countries.

"We must bear in mind that new economic order should not breed new imbalances and injustices."

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Hasina, Richardson talk energy issue

WASHINGTON, Oct 17: US Energy Secretary Bill Richardson called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Blair House on Monday and discussed bilateral issues with particular emphasis on US investment in Bangladesh's energy sector, reports BSS.

Richardson, the powerful Congressman, met Sheikh Hasina an hour after she arrived in Washington to begin her four-day official visit to USA.

While addressing the Association for Economic and Development Studies for Bangladesh in See page 11 Col 7

Nov 7 rally: A joint or solo show at Paltan?

By Staff Correspondent

It is yet to be decided whether the 'grand' public meeting at Paltan Maidan in the city on November 7, announced by BNP chief Khaleda Zia, would be a joint programme of the four-party opposition alliance or of BNP.

Khaleda Zia at a joint public meeting of the alliance at Dinajpur on October 14 announced the November 7 programme to mark the "National Revolution and Solidarity Day". But she did not say whether it would be a programme of the alliance or of her party.

Sources said component parties of the alliance are eager to hold the public meeting jointly. But many BNP leaders want it to be a BNP programme.

They said BNP hardliners and a section of leaders of Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote are also persuading Khaleda Zia to turn it into a 'Dhaka siege' programme on that day to intensify the current anti-government movement.

They have long been persuading the alliance's policy makers to call a 'march-towards-Dhaka' programme on November 7 and involve opposition leaders and activists from all over the country in it.

But majority of BNP leaders and activists and moderate elements in three other parties do not want a 'Dhaka siege' programme before the Ramadan. Such an event on November 7 will have to be followed by tougher programmes, which will not be possible because of the Ramadan. They prefer a massive movement after the Eid-ul-Fitr.

Source in BNP said the party has already started preparation for the November 7 public meeting. It has launched campaign at thana and ward levels.

BNP sought authority's permission for the public meeting last month. A reply is likely today, the sources said.

They said senior BNP leaders will meet within a couple of days to discuss whether the November 7 programme would be organised jointly or by the party alone.

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Ershad allowed 2 more weeks for surrender

By Staff Correspondent

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has allowed former President H M Ershad two more weeks to surrender before the trial court for his conviction in the Janata Tower corruption case.

Ershad will now have to surrender by November 4 before the trial court, which sentenced him to five years imprisonment in the Janata Tower corruption case.

Chamber Judge of the Supreme Court Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury gave the extension upon a petition filed by Ershad's lawyers seeking a 15-day time to prepare a 'leave to appeal petition' against his conviction.

"We will try to file the leave to appeal petition to the appellate division against the High Court verdict," said one of the counsels of the former president yesterday.

Earlier, the vacation bench of the High Court allowed the former President one week to surrender after the vacation of the High Court was over. The time limit is supposed to expire on See page 11 Col 3

JS move to trim overstaffed industries ministry stalled

Star Report

A move by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Industries to recommend downsizing the ministry has been stalled due to alleged non-cooperation from the ministry.

The ministry did not respond to queries by a parliamentary sub-committee about its strength, structure, terms of reference and distribution of works. Rather, it referred to suggestions made by the Public Administration Reforms Committee on restructuring all the ministries and reducing the number of ministries.

The ministry advised the sub-committee, formed by the standing committee, to wait for the government decision on the matter.

According to official sources, the Industries Ministry has some 60 officers including one Secretary, two Additional Secretaries, five Joint Secretaries, one Joint-Chief, 12 Deputy Secretaries, one Deputy Chief and nearly 170 employees.

The standing committee, in its meeting on May 16, suggested downsizing the overstaffed Industries Ministry for the sake of its effective and efficient functioning. It also constituted a three-member sub-committee to recommend a revised and thinner structure of the ministry.

The sub-committee observed that the huge manpower in the ministry is creating complications as there are overlapping and duplication of duties.

The committee sent a letter to the ministry on July 5 asking for documents relating to the strength, structure and distribution of works in the ministry.

In their reply, officials from the ministry said the government formed the PARC in 1997, which examined organogram, volume of activities and jurisdictions of all the ministries in the present context. The PARC submitted its report to the prime minister in June last.

The sub-committee headed by BNP lawmaker, A K M Mosharraf Hussain who served the industries ministry as its secretary for three years, referring to similar reports said it may take more time to implement the PARC suggestions.

Chairing the first meeting of the sub-committee on July 5. See page 11 Col 6

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 18		5:30 pm
Oct 19	5:58 am	

Prayer Timings October 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:45	5:20
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:10	4:25
Maghrib	5:40	5:45
Esha	7:30	8:00

Source: Islamic Foundation