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PM to visit 3 countries in next 3 weeks

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to visit three foreign countries Kuwait, Qatar and Germany in the next three weeks.

Hasina's three-day official tour of Kuwait at the invitation of its Amir begins October 30.

In Kuwait, the prime minister's official talks with the Amir is likely to focus on taking an increased number of Bangladeshi workers to that country. Nearly two lakh Bangladeshis are working in the Gulf state. A MOU on manpower export is likely to be signed during the visit. Issues related to trade and investment, setting up of agro-based industry, frozen food and tourism will also be discussed.

The Prime Minister is likely to address the Bangladeshi soldiers engaged in the UN Peace Keeping Operations in Kuwait.

Sheikh Hasina will go to Qatar on November 11 and stay there for three days to attend the Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). The OIC conference likely to be attended by a large number of heads of state or government of the 55-member organisation and is expected to deliberate on the plight of the Palestinians following the recent outbreak of violence there.

The OIC conference will also consider the resolutions passed by the ICFM foreign ministers in Kuala Lumpur recently.

The Prime Minister is also

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New voter list faulty: BNP

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan has expressed surprise at the huge increase in the number of voters and said the new voter list is faulty.

In a statement yesterday, he said increase of voters by 1,88,31,471 in the last five years, as shown in the new voter list, is 'completely unrealistic and undoubtedly faulty'.

Giving statistics, Bhuiyan said, in 1995, the number of voters in the country was 5,59,92,304, which was 47 per cent of the total population.

He said in June 1996, the number was 5,57,16,935. In the updated voter list announced on October 20, 1998, the number was 5,99,02,250. This showed that the number increased by 39,09,866 in three years with an average increase of about 13,300 per year.

In 1998 the country's population was estimated at 12.60 crore

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Shab-e-Barat on Nov 12

The holy Shab-e-Barat will be observed across the country on November 12, reports UNB.

The National Moon Sighting Committee at a meeting yesterday unanimously decided that the month of Shaban begins on Monday and Shab-e-Barat will be observed on November 12, as the Shaban moon has not been sighted anywhere in the country.

Presided by Committee Vice President Religious Affairs Secretary KM Ehsanul Haq, the meeting was attended by Director General of Islamic Foundation Maulana Abdul Awal.

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Violence against women makes Asia sit up
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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 29		5:22 pm
Oct 30	6:03 am	

Prayer Timings		
October 29		
Fajr	5:00	5:35
Zohr	12:45	1:25
Asr	4:00	4:15
Maghrib	5:27	5:32
Esha	7:15	7:45

Source: Islamic Foundation

The Daily Star

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12 killed: Tidal surge in coasts



It is not a river although it looks like that... Sheets of stagnant water on the premises of the Supreme Court after yesterday's downpour. Major thoroughfares of the city remained waterlogged for the better part of the day due to poor drainage system. --Star photo

By Special Correspondent

At least 12 people were killed, several thousand injured and thousands of thatched houses were blown away in the storm that swept the country yesterday, inundating low-lying areas along the coastal belt.

Two fishermen were believed to have been drowned after they fell from their fishing trawler in choppy waters of the Bay of Bengal off the Cox's Bazar coast.

Over 100 fishermen are reported missing along with 20 fishing trawlers as they failed to return to their shelters in Barisal coast, according to reports from our correspondents.

Brewing off a deep depression in the Bay of Bengal, the storm, packing winds up to 100 km per hour, dumped heavy rains across the country including the capital, Meteorological Department said.

Three persons were killed in the city. One of them died in a roof collapse, one under an uprooted tree and the other from electrocution.

Shumi, 14, died when the roof of a dilapidated house collapsed at Lalbagh, Abul Bashar, 12, was crushed under a fallen tree in central Dhaka and Helal, 20 was electrocuted when he came in contact with a snapped electric wire in Mirpur.

Life was paralysed in the city which had been experiencing gusty winds accompanied by heavy rains since Friday night.

Khushi Ghose, 55, was killed in Shariatpur in southern Bangladesh. Five people were killed in Patuakhali district. Of them, Shafiq, 10, was killed when a tree fell on him and four others, identified as Sagor, 3, Jainal, 65, Hazara Begum, 55 and Sabuj, 10, were killed in roof collapse.

A mother, Sipra Rani, 38, her son Sukanta, 10, and daughter Shukla, 4, were killed when a date tree fell on their straw hut at village Chandrarah in Gournadi in southern Barisal district.

The southwestern Sundarbans, world's biggest surviving mangrove forest, now World Heritage Site declared by UNESCO, bore the brunt of the storm packing winds up to 100 km per hour.

Our Satkhira correspondent reports: The flood hit southwestern Satkhira district where thousands are still living in makeshift camps and shelters suffered another blow as tidal surge up to 2-3 feet above the normal astronomical tide added to the water logging problem.

Chunks of embankments in southwestern Khulna also collapsed, flooding nine villages.

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Flood Fishes worth Tk 2406cr washed away in Jessore

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 28: Floods have washed away fishes of almost all the ponds, tanks, reservoirs, shrimp farms and hatcheries, canals and creeks of the district, causing financial loss of Tk 2,406 crore, according to sources in the district administration and the fisheries department.

The worst hit areas are Jessore Sadar, Sharsha, Jhikergacha, Chowgacha, Monirampur, Keshabpur, Abhoyanagar and Baghabara upazilas.

The sources said that about 2,898 lakh tonnes of fishes of privately owned 11,753 ponds and dighis in eight upazilas of Jessore district were washed away by gushing flood water, causing an estimated loss of Tk 964.42 crore.

Fishes worth Tk 398 crore in the state-owned 1,270 ponds and dighis have also been washed away by flood water, the sources added.

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Police drive 10 BNP activists hurt, 8 arrested in Feni

Feni, Oct 28: Ten BNP activists were injured and eight arrested in a clash with police and Awami League workers during a day-long special drive at Sonagazi today, reports UNB.

BNP claimed its activist Ismail Hossain was killed in the clash. Senior police officials said they heard of the killing but could not confirm it.

Police and witnesses said over 200 policemen led by Additional Police Super Mosharraf Hossain raided the BNP-dominated Charchandia union of the coastal upazila this morning.

They said a clash between police and BNP workers ensued at Ulema Bazar at noon. Police fired several rounds of gunshots to bring the situation under control and arrested eight Jubo Dal and BNP workers.

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Correction

Yesterday's front page item headlined 'Zia brought back to city, being interrogated' inadvertently mentioned Ziaur Rahman Zia as Ammar Shamsi's step-brother. In fact, Ammar Shamsi has no step-brother. Zia is step-brother of Salahuddin, an accused. We regret the error.

Waterlogging, power failure paralyse life in city

Three killed, girl hurt during storm

By Staff Correspondent

Almost all the major thoroughfares of the capital city yesterday went under water due to clogged or poor drainage system and remained waterlogged for the better part of the day paralysing civic activities.

During the storm, frequent and lengthy power disruption added to the miseries of the people.

Three people died in separate incidents while a six-year-old girl was left critically wounded. Hospital and police sources identified the dead as Sumi, 14, daughter of Mohammad Habib, Hezal, 20, son of Bachchu Mia and Abul Bashar, son of Abbas Ali.

Sumi's six-year-old sister was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with critical injuries in her head.

According to sources the tragic incident occurred when Habib along with his family members was sleeping inside a room of his makeshift brick-house at about 5 am yesterday. During heavy shower and strong wind one of the brick walls of Habib's house collapsed on his two girls. Sumi died on the spot.

Helal was electrocuted when he came in contact with a snapped electric wire at his Lalkuthi residence in the city's Mirpur area at about 10:15 am. Abul Bashar received critical

injuries in his head when a branch of a tree fell on him at Meghdubi in Fulbaria area. He was rushed to DMCH where he succumbed to his injuries at about 3 pm.

Meanwhile, the rainstorm kept most of the city residents indoors. Number of people and vehicles on the road was far less than normal, even in weekend standard.

Strong wind uprooted a large number of trees while leaving broken branches scattered all over. The maximum speed of wind was 56-kilometre metre per hour in the city at 9 am.

Most parts of the city

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Resist conspiracy to turn country into Pak province

Hasina tells FFs-people rally at Dinajpur

By Staff Correspondent

DINAJPUR, Oct 28: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today called upon freedom fighters to resist 'conspiracy of the defeated forces to turn the country into a province of Pakistan'.

'BNP, Jatiya Party and fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami are conspiring to make Bangladesh a province of Pakistan in the name of their so-called anti-government movement', she said while addressing a freedom fighter-people grand rally here. 'They want to jeopardise the independence of the country.'

A huge number of freedom fighters and people from 11 northern districts attended the mammoth rally, held at the Gora Shaheed Maidan in the town.

This was the sixth such grand rally organised by the Shammilita Muktiyoddha Front (Combined Freedom Fighter's Forum) to press its demand for trial of Razakars, Albadars and other anti-liberation forces in a special tribunal.

The Front organised such rallies in Dhaka, Khulna, Chittagong, Rajshahi and My-mensingh in

the last couple of months.

As preparation for the rally was completed yesterday, people from all walks of life started gathering at the Gora Shaheed Maidan, popularly known as Bara Maidan, from the daybreak. The district town remained crowded throughout the day.

Freedom fighters carrying national flags assembled at the meeting venue wearing white T-shirts with the slogan 'Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu' written on those. The Udichi Shilpa Gosthi rendered patriotic songs.

People also thronged treetops and rooftops adjacent to the meeting venue to listen to the Prime Minister. A train was stranded beside the meeting venue for more than three hours as people blocked all the ways.

The Prime Minister came to Dinajpur by road as her scheduled trip by chopper was cancelled due to inclement weather.

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10 Pak soldiers killed in Kashmir border clash

JAMMU, India, Oct 28: At least ten Pakistani soldiers died today along the disputed Kashmir frontier after Indian troops repulsed a Pakistani raid in the southern district of Rajouri, an army official told AFP.

Major Sanjay Kapoor said between ten and 12 Pakistani soldiers died in the frontier outpost of Nowshera, in Rumlidhara village, some 150 kilometres north-west of Jammu, in the early Saturday firing.

'Pakistani troops opened indiscriminate fire in the morning,' he said. 'We fired back and repulsed them but we think between 10 to 12 of their men have died.'

'There are no casualties on our side but one soldier is seriously injured,' he said.

Major General PPS Bindra told AFP the Pakistani army had collected the bodies of the dead soldiers. 'We have seen Pakistani troops collecting the dead bodies of their men. We have collected the machine guns and semiautomatic weapons used by the Pakistani soldiers during the early morning raid,' said Bindra.

More security troops have been deployed in the Nowshera area to make sure there are no further

infiltration bids,' he added.

The army said there was heavy cross-border firing in some forward posts in the Jammu region following the incident.

'There are reports trickling in of heavy artillery firing in the border districts of Palamwalla and Poonch,' said Bindra, adding that civilian townspeople in these border districts were coming under fire.

Meanwhile, an AP report filed from Muzaffarabad, said: Indian soldiers fired artillery shells from across the disputed border into Pakistani Kashmir, killing at least five villagers and wounding four others, police said today.

About 500 artillery and mortar shells hit border villages in the Pandu sector, roughly 50 kilometres east of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, destroying several mud and brick houses late Friday evening.

Pakistan and India are locked in a bitter dispute along their border in the Himalayan state of Kashmir, which is divided between the two countries and claimed by both.

The rival armies, sitting eyeball to eyeball at some

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Shamsu says he used to bribe SP Badsha

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 27: Alleged smuggler Shamsul Alam alias Shamsu has named former police superintendent of Khulna Ataul Gani Badsha as one his beneficiaries.

He said the retired police super used to receive Tk 50,000 from him every month as bribe for giving him (Shamsu) 'scope to carry on all sorts of underworld activities in all places of Khulna district'.

While giving statement under Section 161, Shamsu admitted that he was one of the accomplices of Ershad Shikdar.

The smuggling Syndicate run by Ershad Shikdar was also patronised by some leaders of the ruling party and the opposition. All of them were beneficiaries of

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Piracy & ship movement threaten Shell's operation, gas pipeline

Star Report

Careless anchoring and movement of ships as well as rising armed piracy are threatening the off-shore Sangu gas pipeline and operation of Shell Oil in the area, sources said.

The 45-km Sangu pipeline that supplies over 130 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcfcd) to the Chittagong gas station for processing has been threatened five times so far by careless movement and anchoring of ships.

Shell operates the Sangu gasfield and is exploring gas in off-shore areas under Block 16.

Its employees also came under attack by pirates at least four times since 1998, the sources said. The most recent attack was on October 10 in which one crew of a ship was bullet-hit.

Shell lodged complaints to different government authorities several times regarding lack of security and also requested the Chittagong

Port Authority to mark the Sangu pipeline path with red flags, but to no effect, the sources said.

The company recently deployed armed Ansars in two of its tugboats to boost the morale of its staffs.

Sources in Shell said that the Sangu pipeline was recently hit by the anchor of a ship that was being towed as its engine was malfunctioning. Gas supply through the pipeline was stopped immediately to avoid risk.

'We asked the port authorities to hoist red flags in the path, maintaining a distance of half a kilometre from the pipeline. But so far there has been no action,' said a high official of Shell.

Few weeks ago, Shell's drilling crew at Sandvip gas well came across a drifting ship carrying 9 mutilated bodies. 'It appeared that pirates killed them and took away everything including the engine of the ship,' said the official. 'The incident demoralised our staff.'

On October 10, some 30 pirates, most of them naked, raided a tugboat of Shell and started looting heavy-duty ropes and other equipment. When the Second Mate of the ship tried to stop them, a pirate fired a shot from a shotgun. Over 50 pallets were recovered from the body of the injured Second Mate. The pirates took away ropes worth Tk 8 lakh.

'The Naval force was informed. But it took them two hours to reach us,' the Shell official noted.

Increasing number of foreign ships are now coming under attack by pirates, the sources told The Daily Star.

The Chittagong Port has been identified by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) as the second most dangerous port due to piracy. According to IMO, the most dangerous port in the world is the Philippines. Shell had faced serious security problems in Bangladesh in late 80s when two of its executives were kidnapped from Chittagong Hill Tracts.

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