

What a day!

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When Naimur Rahman opted to bat, eyebrows were raised by the great Michael Holding who had earlier said in his pitch report that the track had its fair share of moisture. Ian Chappell politely called the decision 'brave', but he must have thought it to be suicidal.

But Naimur with a decade's experience of playing on these wickets knew that there was no devil in it.

Bangladesh opens Shahrir Hossain and Mehrib Hossain were surprisingly comfortable against the Indian pace spearhead Jagavall Srinath and fresh tearaway Zahir Khan. The new-ball duo hardly created any impression, though.

Just when it seemed that the debutants were on way to lay a solid foundation, Mehrib played an incomprehensible shot to Zahir. Why he flashed at a delivery which he could easily have left alone is anybody's guess. Besides, there was no attempt to get to the pitch of the ball which raises questions about his technique.

Another gift of a wicket was that of Habibul Bashar. Having played the most eye-catching innings on the opening day, Bashar still can't be excused for his moment of discretion just after the second drinks break. His stroke-filled 71 had every knob to get to a three-figure total, but the impulsive pull off Zahir, for which he was never in the right position, was a shocker.

Bashar's was an innings of a man possessed. After almost missing out on a Test spot due to

the obtuseness of the selectors, Bashar was out to prove a point, and he did it with aplomb. If only he had continued!

Class tells and Aminul Islam's unconquered 71 was a proof of that age-old saying. The former national skipper played the true Test innings without which the Bangladesh total might not have flourished.

Aminul's 213-ball vigil at the crease showed the value of concentration, determination and shot selection. His eyes must, and should, be set on completing a hundred today. It so happens it couldn't be more deserving.

What was so impressive on Day One was the way the Bangladeshis approached the match. They were never overawed, never at sea against bowlers of high credentials and, most hearteningly, looked every bit a Test side.

To bring out the frustration on the faces of the Indians, who appealed for anything and everything, was a triumph of our spirit. To expose the limitations in their bowling was a tribute to our conviction.

Now the effort will be to take all the good work of Day One to the next. If Aminul and the tall can stretch the innings close to Tea today, it will be an ideal scenario, better than anybody had ever hoped.

The onus will be then shifted on the bowlers. Seeing Sunil Joshi being the lone Indian success, can't help feeling that including veteran slow left-armers Enamul Haq would have been a good idea even if it meant sacrificing one specialist batsman. The doubts regarding the availability of Naimur's off-spinners -- due to a bruised thumb -- intensify the belief as we may be left with three genuine bowlers.

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Dream start

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slashed an out-swing from Zaheer Khan into the gloves of Saba Karim. It was the first Test wicket for debutant Zaheer and the first catch for wicketkeeper Karim.

Shahrir Hossain, who faced the first ball of the inaugural Test and also scored the first run, edged a leg break off Joshi to Ganguly in the slips after making a doyle 12.

But, Bangladesh hit back with Bashar and Aminul producing 66 runs for the third wicket. Together, they went for lunch without further damage.

Although Aminul was very subdued at the start, the dapper right hander grew in confidence as the game progressed. He clubbed eight fours in his 289-ball unconquered knock and in the process featured in a vital 65-run fourth wicket partnership with Akram Khan.

Akram earned the distinction of becoming the first Bangladeshi Test batsman to hit a six in an effortless heave over the head of bowler Joshi in the last over before the tea break. The portly right-hander paid the penalty of taking the aerial route quite frequently against Joshi and was eventually caught at mid-wicket by David after making 35.

Al-Shahrir was adjudged leg

before off an in-swing from right-arm pacer Ajit Agarkar on 12. Skipper Naimur was playing confidently along with Aminul before becoming final casualty of the day. With only three overs remaining of the day's play, Naimur played a defensive shot against Joshi straight to Shiv Sundar Das at silly point.

Aminul then carefully encountered the tense final overs to make sure that he and wicketkeeper Khaled Masood (3 not out) could start afresh on the second day.

For Indian captain Ganguly nothing went according to his plan although Joshi had a rewarding experience. His perseverance on the same length earned him a respectable figure of 310 for 69. With the star leg-spinner Anil Kumble missing out due to injury, Ganguly's five-man attack lacked penetration. Ganguly's woes compounded when Srinath, in his comeback match after a long layoff due to injury, struggled to get back his rhythm. There was a moment of inspiration, though, for Agarkar and Zaheer when the ball started swinging in the second hour after the lunch break. But Aminul and Akram survived the torrid session.

The match resumes at the same time tomorrow.

Barisal Medical

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Shibir in the Hostel No 2 of the college last night.

They alleged that Shibir activists are not actively supporting the demand for teachers in the vacant posts.

Shibir activists alleged that some students are preferring not to seat in the next professional examinations in the name of agitation programmes.

The striking students also ransacked the administrative building and some classrooms yesterday.

Meanwhile, a Health Ministry order reached the college with the appointment of 8 professors, associate professors and assistant professors.

Besides, the on-going work stoppage of the interne doctors at the college hampered the treatment of patients.

RMC students' token hunger strike today

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAHI, Nov 10: All-Party Students Action Committee (APSAC) of Rajshahi Medical College will lay a siege to the office of the principal and observe a token hunger strike tomorrow protesting transfer of their two teachers.

Prof Shamim Ahmed, Head of the Department of Nephrology and Prof Gopal Chandra Sarkar, Head of the Department of Physiology were transferred to Barisal Medical College.

APSAC leaders said the college has been facing shortage of teachers for long. Transfer of the two senior teachers would further aggravate the prevailing situation, they said.

They demanded immediate withdrawal of transfer orders.

WTO transparency

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Supachai said many WTO commitments had not yet been implemented, including intellectual property rights.

In the textile sector, liberalisation was only being achieved 'half-heartedly' while measures such as export subsidies by developed nations were affecting the interests of developing countries, he added.

OIC Summit

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Formation of a common market for OIC members is top on the Bangladesh's agenda. Dhaka believes that such a common market would create an enabling environment for boosting trade and investment, and help expand commerce among member countries.

Besides, Sheikh Hasina is also expected to propose setting up of an advanced Islamic medical training and research centre in Dhaka.

Dhaka is also expected to seek greater contribution for the development of the Islamic Institute of Technology (IIT) located at Gazipur.

Hasina will call on Amir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani and is also expected to have tête-à-tête with heads of some other member-states on the sidelines of the OIC Summit.



Defence Secretary and Chairman of the Cadet College Council M Idris Ali presiding over Bangladesh Cadet College Council meeting at the Comilla Cadet College on Thursday. -ISPR photo

Stagnant floodwater threatens Boro, Rabi crops in southwest

By Rafiq Hasan, back from Jessore

Standing Aman crops in the south-western districts have been extensively damaged by the recent flood and cultivation of Boro and Rabi (winter) crops will be hampered because of water stagnation in many areas.

Although floodwater receded from roads, highways and high lands, many areas, particularly cropland in Satkhira, Jessore and Chuadanga districts are still under water. Floodwater in these districts is receding very slowly.

Local people and government officials said that floodwater became stagnant in most of the cropland due to lack of outlets as roads, highways and dams were constructed without proper planning in those districts.

Many farmers in Satkhira, Jessore and Chuadanga districts told the Daily Star that they have lost standing Aman crop and are fearing that at least 50 per cent of Boro and winter crops would be damaged.

"Standing Aman crop on my 80 bigha land was damaged by onslaught of floodwater, and I don't know whether I would be able to cultivate Boro or winter crops because my land is still

under chest-high water," said Sarwar Hossain of Subarnakhal in Jessore.

His neighbour Azizur Rahman said that they need financial help from the government to cultivate next crop and build houses. "My two big houses collapsed during the flood and I do not have any money to build new ones," said Azizur.

As much as 90 per cent of the land in Sharsha thana and almost half of Jhikargacha thana under Jessore districts are still reeling under water. While floodwater receded from Satkhira district town, many areas under Sadar, Debhata, Tala, Ashashuni, Kaliganj and Kalaroa thanas are still submerged.

Locals said this part of the country has not been flooded for quite a long time and so policymakers and local administration never thought of having a mechanism to drain out water from cropland.

Besides, most of the rivers and big canals in these districts are either dead or have been narrowed because of siltation over the years, disrupting normal flow of water.

According to farmers and officials of Department of Agriculture Extension, most of the cropland in the flood-affected districts would take another two months to be fully ready for cultivation for the next crop.

The Department of Agriculture Extension has already started distribution of seeds for Boro crop. They are also ready to provide seeds to the small and marginalised farmers free of cost.

They however said the farmers would face shortage of seeds once floodwater recedes from cropland.

Many flood-affected people have returned home but are staying under open sky as their houses gave in to the deluge. They need immediate financing for constructing houses. District administration sources said the worst-affected people will get only Tk 1000 for repair and rebuilding damaged houses which, in fact, is pitiful.

A large number of people were seen living on temporary platform built alongside roads and highways. They said that they are unemployed, as farming is yet to start.

Airbus

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cleaning a simple item that kept the fuel pump from being defrosted," he added.

It stayed in Budapest for a day where the passengers had to make a halt and some had to stay on board the aircraft.

Another Airbus was stranded in Calcutta for two days after its hydraulic system malfunctioned.

On November 6, an Airbus flight had to make a heavy landing with a fuel load of 133 tonnes and the passengers at Zia International Airport (ZIA) after returning from the sky of Jamshedpur, India on way to Dubai.

This time it was a faulty micro-switch on Kruger system, which helps the aircraft to slow down with flaps on the wings. The fault was not taken care of at ZIA, the sources added.

"At least 300 fitness checks are required on an Airbus A310 which is a mid-tech aircraft. But often we are forced to fly on HIL. We have complained to the authorities during debriefing, but to no avail" said another source.

Engineers, however, denied the charges and said that sometimes an aircraft had to be put on flight to maintain schedules. But aircraft without checks are not released.

A Biman source said that they would look into the allegations and take necessary action accordingly.

Jamaat, Shibir clash

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Ground to be held from November 13 to 17.

The district administration yesterday imposed a ban on holding rallies, processions at Parade Ground and its surrounding areas till November 17 apprehending a violent clash centring tafsir mahfil as Bangladesh Chhatra League also announced a programme at the same venue on the same date protesting the Bahadurhat carnage.

Facing stiff resistance from police, Jamaat-Shibir activists started throwing stones and firing gunshots at the police. Police also returned fire, lobbed tear gas canisters and clubbed the militant activists during the clash that continued for one and a half hours.

Police said Shibir cadres abducted former MP and Satkania upazila Awami League general secretary Dr B M Foyzur Rahman from in front of Andarkilla Jame Mosque while he was returning home after offering Juma prayers.

Police rescued a seriously injured Rahman from an abandoned house adjacent to the mosque at about 5-30 pm. He was severely beaten up reportedly by Shibir cadres.

Police sources said Foyzur Rahman prevented the Shibir men from distributing leaflets among the Musullis inside the mosque protesting ban on holding tafsir mahfil at Parade

Ground. Shopkeepers on Chawkbazar-Andarkilla road kept their shutters down while vehicles went off the streets during the clash.

Police arrested 73 Jamaat-Shibir activists from different parts of the city following the clash.

Police filed a case against the arrested under Public Safety Act (PSA) with Kotwali thana.

Additional police forces were deployed at Parade Ground and its surrounding areas.

BCL Chittagong Unit held a rally at the Shaheed Minar in the afternoon demanding ban on Jamaat-Shibir politics.

On the other hand, Musullil Parishad held police responsible for "desecrating" the sanctity of the mosque.

Meanwhile, Jamaat yesterday called a 96-hour hartal in greater Chittagong from November 13 protesting imposition of ban on tafsir mahfil.

The four-party opposition alliance also extended its support to hartal call.

UNB adds: The liaison committee of the four-party opposition alliance today condemned the government action to prevent a five-day tafsir mahfil in Chittagong by imposing Section 144.

The committee in a statement criticised today's police action on the musullis after Juma prayers.

Poor gets priority

Nat'l Health Policy aims reduction of risk for mother, child

By Staff Correspondent

The just announced National Health Policy (NHP) focuses on prioritising services for the poor especially most vulnerable group in the society, reducing maternal and child mortality and bringing down population growth at 'replacement level' by 2005.

A 26-member committee was formed on December 12, 1996 to formulate the NHP, a copy of which was formally handed over to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday. Five areas in the health sector were selected and sub-committees were formed accordingly to recommend policy strategies and objectives.

Based on the recommendations of the five sub-committees, six workshops were held at the divisional headquarters and later a draft health policy was prepared and submitted to the health ministry.

The following are some of the salient features of the NHP:

The NHP aims at prioritising services for the poor especially most vulnerable group in the society -- women and children -- reducing maternal and child mortality, facilitating emergency obstetric care, ensuring availability of doctors, nurses and technicians round the clock and smooth supply of medical equipment and drugs at all thana health complexes and union sub-centres.

It also aims at bringing all private clinics and private practice of doctors under regulation and formulating guidelines on how private medical colleges should run, gearing up family planning activities and services and bringing down population growth at 'replacement level' by 2005.

It proposes that mentally retarded and disabled persons should have special arrangements for healthcare services. It wants to ensure accountability, cost-effective and quality health services at all levels and specialised healthcare facilities to stop exodus of patients seeking treatment abroad.

The policy has 29 strategies. These include lib-

eralising and upgrading the drug policy in accordance with the NHP and ensuring rational use of drugs at all levels.

Restructuring and strengthening of Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BMDC), Nursing Council (NC), State Medical Faculty (SMF) and Centre for Medical Education (CME) also come under the strategies.

It has been proposed that as a first step, BMDC should be given statutory status by amendment to laws, if necessary. Services reform body should examine relationship among BMDC, NC, SMF and CME.

Besides, it is proposed that training of doctors in medical colleges should be community-oriented, administration of all medical colleges/institutes and their attached hospitals should be managed by governing councils having autonomy.

Nutrition and medical education should be treated as the core of all health and family welfare activities, doctors serving in any government institution opting for private practice should be offered facilities for this at the institution under a clearly laid down policy, it is further proposed.

Accountability of all concerned in the healthcare service delivery system should be ensured, it is stressed.

The policy has 10 principles. Some highlights of these are to make essential healthcare facilities available at all health centres under thana health complexes, to ensure equity distribution and utilisation of available resources with greater focus on less advantaged, poor and distressed people.

These also focus on quality health services at grassroots level, decentralisation of logistic support need-based manpower development, legal support for all those involved in healthcare delivery services as well as recipients of those.

Azam's exit

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freedom lighters-people rallies' in recent months and wanted more such programmes in future.

One influential AL leader believes that the younger leaders in Jamaat started viewing Azam as a liability. To them, he feels, Azam was a leader who had no charisma whatsoever to draw votes and had only earned bad name for the party.

The number of lawmakers belonging to Jamaat came down to only three in 1996, from 18 in 1991.

The ruling party is also observing carefully the developments within the bigger partners of the opposition alliance. It did not attach any importance to a recent report that Khurshid Jahangir, MP, would replace her younger sister Khaleeda Zia as BNP chairperson for an interim period, due to a prolonged sickness of the former prime minister.

Sources added that AL also hopes that the Jatiya Party faction led by HM Ershad would lose strength once the deposed president goes behind the bar to serve his five-year jail-term after being convicted in a corruption case.

The other JP faction, led by Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju, would remain tugged with AL till the next parliamentary polls, the ruling party leadership hopes.

Energy ministry

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foreign funded projects as mentioned in the audit report is that officials concerned did not deposit the money procured through selling tender schedule, income tax and VAT to the national exchequer.

The officials involved in those projects also realised a lesser amount of VAT, income tax and payment for departmental equipment than they should have from contractors. It was also found that project officials drew more salary than they are allowed and spent more money on projects than allowed by budget, the report said.

The projects are rehabilitation of different power stations, area wise electrification, natural gas development and gas line installation.

The project implementation authorities are Water Development Board, Power Development Board, Rural Electrification Board, Petrobangla, Health Directorate and Family Planning Directorate.

Akhi murder: 8 held

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Gulshan areas for long. They were accused of murders, carrying illegal arms and extortion.

Suman, social welfare secretary of a ward unit of city Jubo League (north), joined the organisation about a year ago. Zaheed, president of Jubo League (north), was using him for various personal purposes, the sources mentioned.

There was a bitter rivalry between Akhi and Suman for the last few months over establishing supremacy in Gulshan, Tejgaon and Badda areas. It did not end despite a negotiation move by Zaheed and a ruling party lawmaker recently.

A tense situation was prevailing at Titumir College and in

Badda area following the incident. Sources said accomplices of Akhi are now desperately looking for Suman's accomplices.

Home Minister Mohammad Nasim visited the injured BCL activists at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Thursday night.

The body of Akhi was taken to Awami League office yesterday morning.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina went to see his body. Senior leaders of AL, Jubo League and BCL also went there.

Akhi was buried at his family graveyard at Badda yesterday.

BCL has taken up a seven-day programme beginning today demanding arrest and exemplary punishment of the killers of Akhi.

19 children

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33, Raton Toppa, 21, Kumud Ekka, 26 and Jony Karmoker.

The rescued children were identified as Nepal Tigga, 8, Dulal Lakra, 9, Swapon, 8, Shefal, 8, Krishna Tigga, 7, Mithu Midh, 8, Jewel, 4, Anila Ekka, 7, Kajoli Ekka, 9, Norel Ekka, 5, Miridul, 12, Shibu Teppa, 6, Bishal Teppa, 6, Midulia Tigga, 9, Mini Tigga, 10, Mithun Tigga, 7, Prince Bek, 8, Shamol, 7, and Bishal, 4.

A police team led by Mohammadpur thana OC AKM Mohsinuzaman Khan raided a bus counter at Shyamoli and rescued the children.

The Mohsinuzaman said the case is under investigation and they are trying to know the intention of taking the 19 children to Ranganamati.

"This is too early to comment on the matter, we have informed the parents of the children," he said.

The children were brought to the city from Joyprhat at 11 am yesterday and scheduled to go to Ranganamati, police said quoting the arrested persons.

He, however, said that an NGO working for Bangladesh children came to the police station and said they were taking the children to Ranganamati for their rehabilitation.

The arrested were sent to the Jail after producing in the CMM's court yesterday, police said.

The children were sent to a vagrant home at Mirpur.

A case was lodged with Mohammadpur thana in this connection.

Liver cirrhosis

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early intervention with Lamivudine might offset the need for liver transplantation in the future and ultimately improve chances for survival.

Hepatitis B is one of the most common viruses in the world, causing severe damage of the liver or premature death. Over 350 million hepatitis B carriers live in the Asia Pacific region. Over one million people worldwide die of hepatitis B infection every year, making it the ninth leading cause of death in the world.

Lamivudine, now available in Bangladesh (brand name Zefix), was made by BioChem Pharma of Laval, Quebec, Canada and licensed to Glaxo Wellcome in 1990.

Prof Mubin Khan, President of the association read out the introduction to the keynote paper while Dr A K M Khurshid Alam delivered the welcome speech in the packed ball room of the hotel yesterday.

Prof C L Lai from Hong Kong's Queen Mary Hospital presented the keynote paper.

State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Prof M Amanullah was present as chief guest.

Bush, Gore

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cent. But Gore was not assured of even the uncertain popular vote lead because hundreds of thousands of overseas ballots remained to be counted nationwide.

"This is serious stuff. It's time to cool partisan passions or risk being damaged goods, even if you win the presidency," said Democratic consultant Jim Duffy.

Passions seemed to escalate Thursday as the two sides swapped charges and several lawsuits were filed in Florida.

The two sides clashed over the design of a ballot in Palm Beach County that left some Gore voters expressing concern they had inadvertently cast votes for Reform Party candidate Pat Buchanan.

In addition, the Gore campaign cited more than 19,000 Palm Beach County ballots that had been thrown out because they were marked for more than one presidential candidate.

Vegetable price

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city market, Iman Hossain, said that locally produced tomato is yet to be supplied to markets and for this, high priced imported tomato has occupied the market.

Tomato produced in Kushtia come to city markets by this time every year. But the situation is different this year as the floods hit six thanas in that district.

DAE officials however said production and supply of vegetables are likely to be normal by mid-winter.

But the traders fear that normal supply may be further delayed.

One of them however said, "Unscrupulous traders are also playing a role behind high price of vegetables in the city markets now."

ICC conference calls for equitable fund flow

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people of this region will further aggravate."

Hasina said the international leaders of trade, industry and commerce should come forward in support of the poor helpless people by ensuring steady and increasing flow of direct investment to reverse this trend.

She hoped that the conference would lead to positive development in respect of pinpointing investment opportunities in countries of the region and suggested concrete measures for follow-up actions.

ICC Secretary-General Marla Livanos Cattau said mere announcement of incentive packages does not contribute in attracting foreign investment unless implementations of those are ensured.

She said Bangladesh's investment policies are one of the best in the world. But the announcement of policies and their implementations are two different things.

The ICC was aware of the fact that investors are shy to invest in Bangladesh. "We hope that the ICC will be able to bridge the information and image gap through launching of its ICC-UNCTAD investment guide,"

Cattau said. The ICC secretary-general also spoke on the activities of the ICC and its contribution towards facilitating international trade and commerce. She said global economic scenario is changing fast, and the developing countries are looking for new markets. And in the course of tapping new markets, businesses face complications.

"The ICC tries to respond to the needs of the businesses."

She said the developing countries have a feeling that global economy did not help them much. For this new policy adjustments have to be made by opening up of trade and investment.

The secretary general also said that the ICC called on the developed countries to keep their commitments by opening up their markets to the developing countries.

That Deputy Prime Minister Dr Supachai Panitphakdi, who takes over as WTO Director General in 2002, spoke on trade liberalisation and concerns of the developing countries.

"There is no doubt that the world we live in is more integrated and dependent than the world we lived in couple of decades ago."

Trade liberalisation promotes efficiency in allocation of resources. Free trade not only brings opportunities but also new challenges," Dr Panitphakdi said.

He said after double-digit growths Thai economy suffered setback in 19