

## Cyclone hits Tamil Nadu

MADRAS, Nov 29: Officials shut down schools and evacuated people from low-lying areas as a cyclone with a wind speed of 120 kph (75 mph) hit India's southern coast on Wednesday, reports AP.

First reports said the storm didn't cause much damage to human life or property as it weakened before crossing Cuddalore, a port town 150 kilometres (95 miles) south of Madras, the Tamil Nadu state capital, according to Sandeep Saxena, a top local administrator.

Heavy rains lashed parts of coastal Tamil Nadu state. Madras, the state capital, and two towns, Cuddalore and Pondicherry, in the path of the storm experienced overcast skies and strong winds.

The cyclone was earlier expected to hit the coast with a wind speed of over 150 kph (95 mph).

Hundreds of people living in mud and thatched huts in the coastal area of Tamil Nadu state and neighbouring districts of Pondicherry were evacuated to school buildings of higher ground.

The machinery is fully geared to meet the cyclone. District officials have been monitoring the situation round the clock since Tuesday. A.P. Muthuswamy, Tamil Nadu state's top bureaucrat, told The Associated Press.

Schools and colleges have been closed in Pondicherry in anticipation of the cyclone.

In Madras, the city corporation began evacuating people from low-lying areas to nearly 150 schools which are considered safe, said J. Radhakrishnan, the corporation commissioner.

"We are also arranging 500,000 packets of food to be distributed to people who are likely to be affected," Radhakrishnan said.

All ships in the Madras and Cuddalore ports have been moved out of the harbour. Fishermen have been asked to return to the coast.

The Tamil Nadu coast was last hit by a severe cyclone more than two decades ago, meteorological officials said. In 1977, a cyclone had killed 100 people in Nagapatnam town.

## Top opposition leader

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Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) organised the talk for making an anatomy of corruption in different tiers of society and statecraft.

Executive director of TIB Manzoor Hasan presided over the meeting where Prof. Muzaffer Ahmed of Dhaka University presented a paper on "Governance, Structural Adjustment and the State of Corruption in Bangladesh".

The studies should be more specific to identify the source of corruption... the main source of corruption lies in the high levels of politics," Anwar told the functionaries participated by academics experts, economists and members of the civil society.

The former bureaucrat-turned-politician said the studies and seminars would lose ground if the extent of corruption within the political circles can not be determined. "There will be no outcome of trying to make bureaucrats honest without ensuring honesty of the politicians."

Nobody would be able to stop corruption so long as the high level of the state allows it. "We have to wait for a revolution," said the BNP leader.

The TIB survey revealed that misuse of position and power was

perceived as corruption by the highest proportion of respondents (76.0 per cent), followed by negligence of duty (75.7 per cent), activity outside normal procedure (67.7 per cent) and taking money for personal gain while on duty (57.8 per cent).

Misuse of power and fund for personal gain (56.4 per cent) and misuse of fund (50.6 per cent) were also perceived as corruption.

Thana Police Service was pointed at for corruption by the highest number (97 per cent) of household (HH) respondents and the Judiciary by the second highest (89 per cent) number of HHs.

The other public offices in order of choice of the respondents were sub-registrar's office, Land Record office, Tahsil office and Scheduled Banks, etc.

Thana Police Service was also identified as the most corrupt public office by 58 per cent of the HHs, followed by the Judiciary chosen by 19 per cent of the HHs.

The respondents were almost unanimous (97 per cent) in their views that considering the functions and responsibilities assigned, the thana police station is either important or highly important public service organisation, which is ironically viewed as the most corrupt office.

## Ctg Customs officials stage demonstration

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 29: Customs officials staged a demonstration at Chittagong Customs House today protesting the order issued by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) on about 30 customs officials for joining a month-long training programme. Customs House sources said.

The agitating customs officials refused to under go training during the month of Ramadan. They also staged a sit-in in front of the office room of the commissioner of Chittagong Customs House, sources added.

The order was issued two days ago, asking the customs officials to undergo a training at Customs Academy.

However, the agitation hampered normal functioning at Chittagong Customs House.

## Snatching: Magura JCD leader jailed for 10 years

From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Nov 29: A court here today awarded 10 years rigorous imprisonment to Ashrafuzzaman Shamim, General Secretary of Magura district unit of JCD in a snatching case and fined Tk 50 thousand in default to suffer one year more RI.

Assistant District and Sessions Judge Md Zahiruddin also convicted four others in the same case and sentenced them to rigorous imprisonment on different terms.

According to prosecution, the accused snatched money from the employees of a Chinese construction firm in 1994.

After examining all records and witnesses the judge pronounced the judgement.

## Lawyers to seek Ershad's release on bond

Ershad's lawyers are planning to file a motion with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court today seeking his release on bond so that the fine could be paid on reports.

Talking to UNB, advocate Khandoker Mahub Hossain, counsel for Ershad, said he would also move a petition seeking review of the Supreme Court verdict against Ershad in the Janata Tower corruption case after the certified copy of the judgement is available.

The High Court had sentenced Ershad to five years in prison and fined him Tk 5.5 crore. The Supreme Court said that he has already served a jail term for nearly 3 years and eight months since the trial began in 1993 and may be released on payment of the fine.

Khandoker Mahub said he would file the appeal on December 3 seeking to divulge contents of the tape that reportedly recorded conversation between Justice M Latifur Rahman and Ershad.

Justice Rahman, one of the

## Torture

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Al Press Officer Maya Catsanis said the report is based on interviews with victims during a visit of an AI mission in May this year and information gathered by it over the years.

At the press conference, three people including a minor boy described the brutal torture on them by police in custody.

## Asadul

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Police raided Sakthira house of Asadul where arms and ammunition were concealed. They failed to recover arms and ammunition as they were shifted from there soon after his arrest. His house in Sakthira town has been kept under watch by intelligence personnel, police said.

## Pak errant envoy

From Page 1

"Wait and see," was the stock reply.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, never at a loss for words, was also over cautious while talking to a group of newsmen.

"We are waiting for a reply from them (Islamabad). There is a limit to our patience."

When told of mounting public pressure to take action against the diplomat for belittling the sacrifice of martyrs of the Independence War, Samad Azad said, "Do not count me out. I am as much concerned as any other citizen."

His attention was also drawn to the reported comments by Pakistani military ruler Pervez Musharraf on Tuesday "to move away from the tragic past". The foreign minister said, "The statement is not at all relevant to the present situation. We totally reject his (Pervez's) contention."

It was evident that Dhaka did not see any conciliatory gesture in the Pakistani ruler's comments a day after the Dhaka incident, analysts said.

Whether good sense will prevail in the power corridors of Islamabad and some favourable reply will be communicated to

Dhaka shortly is keeping every one guessing. Diplomatic circles in Dhaka, particularly from the neighbouring countries, are also closely watching the situation.

An observer noted, "Islamabad has now the choice and opportunity of reprimanding an errant diplomat in the interest of maintaining good bilateral relations and thereby showing respect to our martyrs. Or else, it will be responsible for triggering an unforeseeable and unpleasant future, reminding our people of a tragic past. With the 'month of victory' beginning tomorrow, the people of Bangladesh are determined to win. Again."

## Arrested pirates placed on remand

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Nov 29: Five alleged pirates of Cox's Bazar have been taken on a four-day police remand today for questioning regarding fate of six others who were thrown into the deep sea.

The alleged pirates were arrested from Skid Ghat on November 27 while they were trying to sell the wooden-bodied fishing trawler 'Alahar Daan'.

## 30,000 illegal drug stores in country, says Health Minister

Some 30 thousand drug-shops are being run in the country illegally without inspection, reports UNB.

Health Minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim disclosed the figure while talking to newsmen on various aspects of adulteration before addressing a press conference on the outcome of parliamentarians' regional conference on TB and Malaria that concluded here yesterday.

The minister lamented that personnel of drug administration were assaulted by drug traders when they went for inspection in the Mirford area, a city hub of medicine.

"The past government made a provision that Bangladesh Drug-gists and Chemists Association could give licence which resulted in such a situation," he said.

About quality of goods in the market and food service places, the minister said it is difficult for him to check adulteration and control hygienic environment in hotels and restaurants for short-age of manpower in the institutions concerned.

## 'Raise health sector allocation to 4 pc of GDP'

### 3-day Regional Conference of Parliamentarians ends

By Staff Correspondent

Parliamentarians from the Southeast Asian countries have called for an increase in allocation to the health sector to at least 4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to combat diseases like tuberculosis and malaria in the region.

The three-day Regional Conference of Parliamentarians on Impact of Tuberculosis and Malaria on Poverty, that ended in the city yesterday, adopted a 'Call for Action (CFA)' to safeguard the poor from infectious diseases.

The speakers said that health budgets of most of the countries in the region are grossly inadequate for effectively combating the diseases of the poor.

They also called for amending laws and policies of health and allied sectors to minimise any adverse effect on the health of the poor.

Fifty parliamentarians from ten countries took part in the regional conference which was jointly organised by the ministry of health and WHO.

They said that partnership must be forged among the departments of health education, social welfare, local government and NGOs for better coordination.

The CFA calls on the parliamentarians to lend their support to empower the poor so that they themselves can ensure health care systems are pro-poor and provide quality services to them.

It also called for massive social mobilisation and

campaign against health risks caused by tobacco, alcohol and narcotics consumption.

The participants sought greater cooperation among the countries and stronger partnership at national and international level for raising awareness. Media should be involved in this process, they added.

The conference observed that the absolute number of poor is increasing and the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The poor need to be involved in planning and implementation of health programmes, the speakers pointed out.

At the closing ceremony, Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria said that limited resources are available for the health sector. So, it needs to be utilised in a more efficient manner. Parliamentarians could identify their potential resources and use these for the benefit of the people, he added.

He called upon the parliamentarians to ensure that the respective government takes the necessary actions through the mechanism of national commissions of health or parliamentary committees.

The conference, held at Hotel Sonargaon, was the sixth in the series which enabled closer interaction between parliamentarians, WHO and health ministries.

## EC didn't approve appointments

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namely Abidur Rahman, Moshatq Ahmed Chowdhury and Salur Rahman strongly objected to the appointments made bypassing the existing rules and regulations.

During the CEC's stay in the United States of America between October 22 and November 12, the three Commissioners decided to reverse some decisions, including the appointments that he had taken unilaterally.

On his return from the US, the CEC challenged the meetings held under the chairmanship of Abidur Rahman in his absence and served a letter on November 27 Monday nullifying the decisions.

Sources at the EC Secretariat said the consultant and the system analyst are interfering into the Commission's activities in the name of modernisation since their appointment. "Though they are temporarily working in the project, they seem to be most powerful after the CEC," said one official preferring anonymity.

Syed spoke highly of his two recruits Wollner and Mainul and said that a vested quarters in the Commission is harassing them. "I am working to bring dynamism into the Election Commission, but there is a vested quarters trying to hamper our works," said the CEC.

About the meetings held during his absence, the CEC said there is no provision for holding such meeting without the Chief Election Commissioner in the chair. No meeting shall be considered as the Commission's meeting when the CEC is absent.

Asked if the bickering in the Commission could in any way affect the ensuing general election, Syed said the situation would not affect the time and that it would not affect the next general election. "Regular tasks of the Commission is going well. There is no file pending and we are proceeding nightly," he said.

When asked whether he would undo the decisions taken during his absence, the CEC said, "My

point is to make the Commissioners understand that such a meeting cannot be considered as the Commission's meeting. But I would not like to cancel the decisions taken. It was also a lesson for me."

Differing on opinions held by the Election Commissioners about appointment of the consultant, he said the Commission had taken up a project at a cost of 10 million US dollar some three years ago. "But we could not spend 3 million dollars in last three years. We recruited the consultant to make the Commission dynamic through automation by utilising the UNDP funds."

Earlier at the noon, The CEC came down from his chamber to Election Commissioner Abidur Rahman's office where the commissioners were having a party on the recent developments.

The CEC talked to his three deputies for more than one and a half hours, but it apparently brought no result, said one source.

## Treatment of Obaid Khaleda urges govt to form medical board

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has asked the government to shift BNP leader KM Obaidur Rahman MP to PG Hospital and form a medical board for his treatment.

In a statement yesterday, she said KM Obaid, who is now in the Dhaka Central Jail, is seriously ill and he needs proper treatment for survival.

The Leader of the Opposition in parliament said the government kept the BNP Standing Committee member in jail under a case for over two years. Obaid has been suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure and hearing ailment for long.

She said the government yet to shift KM Obaid to hospital despite the High Court order and physicians' advice. The government is not only depriving Obaid of treatment but also perilously pushing him towards death.

"Such cruel treatment meted out to a political prisoner has surpassed the record of Nazi barbarism," Khaleda said adding that the government should have to bear entire responsibility if the physical condition of Obaid deteriorates further due to lack of treatment.

Khaleda Zia also expressed deep concern over the deterioration of physical condition of party leader Nurul Islam Manjur, who is also in jail. She demanded of the government to ensure proper treatment of Manjur.

## DMCH

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istry ten days to clear file.

On November 17, the health ministry ordered Brigadier General Munir to hand over charge to his deputy Dr Syed Babar Hossain. At around the same time Brigadier General Huda, a colonel then, was chosen to take over from Munir, triggering controversy.

Following press reports the health ministry postponed the decision to replace Brigadier Munir. On October 2, the ministry in a letter said that Dr Syed Babar Hossain, a controversial figure who retired recently, would be made DMCH director and would take charge when Brig Munir went back to army.

## NCTBB

From Page 1

Beximco Group, which have allegedly failed to print textbooks of primary and secondary level within the stipulated time, sources said.

The three concerns of Beximco Group have so far printed a little over 40 lakh books although they were supposed to complete printing all 8.12 crore textbooks by November 30, sources said.

The Board is also likely to fine the companies for their failure, another source in the board added.

The delay in printing means students of class one to ten would not get new books by the beginning of the year.

Meanwhile, the Education Ministry has expressed concern over the delay in printing of textbooks, a source in the Ministry said. Earlier, the ministry had asked the Board to take legal action against the three companies for the failure.

The Beximco concerns, which reportedly have no experience in printing books, were awarded the job on October 26 ignoring experienced companies, industry sources said.

The printers did not even draw the security paper for printing the textbooks, which has been made mandatory in printing textbooks to prevent piracy and ensure standard printing.

## SEMP

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with proper supervision by the MOEF.

The meeting was attended by Forest and Environment Minister Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, Habibur Rahman Mollah, Wahiduzzaman Badsha, Anjanman Ara and MOEF Secretary Mamunur Rashid.

Meanwhile, the External Resources Division (ERD) of the Finance Ministry has convened a meeting on December 3 to discuss the issue. Representatives from the MOEF and UNDP will also attend the meeting.

## Karwan Bazar

From Page 1

paying regular taxes to the DCC but it has miserably failed to provide them with any civic amenities.

"There is no electricity, no road, water or gas for us and whatever is left has been taken over by illegal occupants. We have written to the Mayor for help so many times but nothing has happened," he said.

Other plot owners, who have fallen victims to the prevailing anarchy in the area, said that the scenario started changing as soon as the then President General Hussain Mohammad Ershad ordered the Rajuk chairman to hand over Karwan Bazar to DCC in 1982.

A top Rajuk engineer said that the DCC has violated the Dhaka Master Plan and built markets one after another without seeking approval from Rajuk. He said that as per the Master Plan there are parks and enough car parking space in Karwan Bazar; but the DCC and its officials have gobble it up to make quick money.

The moment DCC took over

the area, they started building markets on spaces for children's parks and parking lots indiscriminately. For the last two years the Estate Department officials of the DCC started to show interest and encouraged terrorists to take over public parks, roads, pavements and parking areas," said Ahmed Kabir, a plot owner.

Several leaders of the market associations are now considering legal action against the DCC. They said that they were unable to do business although they were paying rents and taxes to the DCC. They said the illegal occupants of the area are threatening them with eviction.

The road in front of the WASA Bhaban has been taken over by transport workers and traders making it impossible for anyone to pass. The official said thousands of people who come to the area for businesses suffer most and during office hours people cannot even move.

"This area, it seems, is not within the purview of any authority," said a Dhaka WASA official on condition of anonymity.

## BNP agitation

From Page 12

and demonstrations across the country to mobilise public support for the movement.

"People are ready to come down on the streets because they are fed up with the misdeeds, misuse and repression by this government," the leader said. "BNP has chosen the first three months of next year for the final movement."

The opposition lawmakers might also resign from parliament in December or January to mount pressure on the government to step down. The government is unlikely go for by-elections after January, some BNP leaders said.

They said majority of BNP leaders and activists want to proceed in a well-planned way and launch a movement with the participation of the commonman

but the hardliners are still insisting the party leadership to intensify movement by taking the 'path of violence'. "We are worried about" some recent developments within the party," one leader said.

Senior party leaders said the activities of two close aides to party Chairperson Khaleda Zia are seriously damaging the image of the party and its chief. They felt that the two aides who amassed huge wealth by using the image of the party chief should be removed immediately.

It has become very difficult for party leaders and activists to give any reply when political opponents and other people ask how the two persons, Mosaddek Ali Faltu and Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan made such huge assets, a top leader said.

## Families of fire victims

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However, Sohrab Hossain of BLAST said, "Even local people are providing medicine to the workers as far as they can afford. But there has been no help from the management as yet. We also talked to families of four deceased workers who could not even communicate with the management, let alone the getting compensation."

Although the general manager of the factory was arrested on Tuesday, 17 other accused, including the gatekeeper and security guards are still at large.

According to a Narsinghdi Sadar Hospital report, some 30-40 of the 100 workers injured have sustained serious wounds and four to five of them are prone to disability while others were released after first aid.

But the BLAST investigation team found only three workers at the hospital the day after the incident. They found another six workers under treatment at the Shibpur Thana Health Complex. Six or seven workers have been transferred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and two workers to the Orthopaedic Hospital at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital.

The BLAST findings further reveal that the District Commissioner's office of Narsinghdi has paid Tk 500 to each of the families of the dead workers and directed the management of the Chowdhury Knitwear Ltd. to pay Tk 5000, but of no effect till now.

"Our existing labour laws, particularly Workmen's Compensation Act 1923 stipulates for payment of compensation both to the dead as well as injured workers. Workers who become disabled are entitled to get more compensation than the dead workers as per law. Injured workers are also entitled to treatment costs," said Sohrab Hossain.

BLAST said it plans to provide legal aid to families of the dead and to severely injured workers under the Workmen's Compensation Act.

Meanwhile, Karmajibi Nari, an

organisation for working women, staged a sit-in demonstration in front of the Labour Directorate and handed over a memorandum to the Chief Inspector of Factories on Tuesday.

Executive Director of Karmajibi Nari Shirin Akhter said the memorandum included demands for exemplary punishment to the persons responsible for the tragedy, publication of a list of factories that lack safety measures and compulsory health and life insurance for workers.

Meanwhile, Chief Inspector of Factories Salamati Ullah has said he will file case against the management of the Chowdhury Knitwear Ltd. as the collapsible gate of the factory was locked, alarm bell was not rung and workers were not provided with training for such emergencies.

## Flute concert held in Paris

Renowned flutist of the country Abdul Bari Siddique enthralled a select audience at the French Foreign Trade Centre Auditorium in Paris Tuesday night, a message received here from Paris said, reports BSS.

The concert was arranged by the French cultural body ACOMARTIST under the framework of cultural cooperation programme and interdisciplinary artists exchange programme.

High officials of the French government, distinguished personalities in the fields of music and culture and members of the Bangladeshi community in Paris were present at the programme.

Sabrindranath Paul accompanied Bari in tabla and Sharifa Munni in tanpura.

Bangladesh Ambassador to France and Permanent Representative to UNESCO Syed Muazzem Ali attended the programme.

The visiting Bangladesh group will also present their concert programme in other cities including Lyon, Metz and Lille.

## JS body will inspect factories

From Page 1

Sinha, who was present at the meeting, differed on the view and claimed that the association is doing its best to contain the fire menace in garment factories.

The five-member sub-committee headed by ruling Awami League lawmaker Shahjahan Khan would hold its first meeting on December 7 and then start inspecting garment factories. It would submit its report to the standing committee on December 20.

The other members of the sub-committee are Ahsanullah Master and Fazlur Rahman Khan of Awami League, Alamgir Haider Khan of BNP and Noor Mohammad Mondal of Jatiya

Party.

Meanwhile, BGMEA would provide the sub-committee all information regarding the steps it has taken in resolving the safety problems of the garment workers.

When the meeting stressed on compensation to all the victims of the incident of fire at Chowdhury Knitwear Limited, the BGMEA president told the committee that it was not a member of the BGMEA.

Sinha, however, told The Daily Star later that the owner of Chowdhury Knitwear Ltd. had already expressed his willingness to compensate the victims.

He also said the BGMEA was making efforts to improve work-

ing conditions in the garment factories.

Shahjahan Khan MP told The Daily Star last night that there were only 13 factory inspectors for entire Dhaka Division. "This number is too small to inspect all the garment factories, not to speak of various other factories. The Labour and Employment Ministry has agreed to take up the issue seriously," said Khan.

Labour and Employment Minister MA Mannan also attended the meeting chaired by the Parliamentary Standing Committee Chairman Mirza Abdul Latif.

The minister could not be contacted last night for comments.