

Flash floods in 6 districts

Rail communication with Chittagong snapped

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Heavy rains during the 48 hours till yesterday evening triggered flash floods in six districts in the country and gushing waters washed away a railway bridge in Brahmanbaria yesterday, snapping train communication between Chittagong and Dhaka.

Besides, a road bridge in Kulaura upazila in Maulvibazar was damaged due to onrush of waters, cutting off road links with Sylhet city.

The six affected districts are Sylhet, Habiganj, Sunamganj and Maulvibazar in the northeastern region, Nilphamari in the northwest and Brahmanbaria in the east.

The downpour and onrush of water from the hills in northeastern India sent the Surma in Sylhet and Sunamganj, Monu in Maulvibazar, Kushiara in Sylhet and Khowai in Habiganj in spate. Heavy rains and opening of all the gates of Gajal

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A small bunch of children on a joyride at Badda yesterday. Three days of downpour have left Badda and other low-lying areas in the city in knee-deep water.

Historic June 7 today

BSS, UNB, Dhaka

The historic June 7 will be observed today.

On this day in 1966, eleven people including Monu Mia, Shafiq and Shamsul Huq were shot dead by police and EPR men in Dhaka and Narayanganj during a hartal called for the release of Bangabandhu and other leaders detained for launching the six-point demand.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in

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Khaleda seeks vote, promises 'much better life' for Hindus

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the Hindus to extend all-out support to the BNP in the coming elections.

The BNP chairperson said when Awami League came to power, they carried out attacks on mosques and temples. She alleged that the activists of Awami League grabbed land of temples, attacked Hindu girls and their property.

Khaleda Zia asked the Hindu community to exercise their rights freely without fear, as they are the citizens of the country.

The opposition leader urged them to change their attitude once in favour of BNP. In return they would get much better life, she said.

Discussion over, Khaleda distributed foods among mandir disciples and poor people.

Addressing the meeting, Goutom Chakravarty MP said Khaleda Zia's visit to the Dhakeshwari Mandir not only built a bridge between the temple and the BNP but with the 2.5 crore Hindus in the country.

The only Hindu BNP MP said the community is "not personal property of anybody. As BNP believes in individual identity of the Hindu community, from today Hindu community will remain beside BNP."

Kartik Thakur said the relation that was established during Ziaur Rahman was weakened in course of time, "but it has been again strengthened after your arrival".

Presiding over the meeting, Ronbi Roy Chowdhury said they would arrange a big rally at Paltan Maidan

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Bombs put heart in the mouth
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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
June 7		6.43 pm
June 8	5-10 am	

Prayer Timings

June 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-20
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-46	6-50
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia speaks at a daylong prayer at Dhakeshwari National Temple in the capital yesterday, organised to observe the 20th death anniversary of president Ziaur Rahman.

31st budget since independence

NAZMUL ASHRAF

The budget Finance Minister Shah A. M. S. Kibria is going to place in the Jatiya Sangsad today is the 31st since the country's independence. Kibria is due to announce the budget for 2001-02 fiscal this afternoon.

It was the parliamentary form of governments led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina that presented the highest number of 14 budgets, followed by eight by the military governments of Ziaur Rahman and H. M. Ershad. Presidential form of governments headed by Bangabandhu, Zia, Justice Abdus Sattar and Ershad presented seven budgets while the caretaker government of 1996 announced an interim budget.

Twenty of the 30 budgets were announced at the present parliament building while five at the old

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Two bills placed Both factions of JP join JS session

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The final session of the seventh Jatiya Sangsad began yesterday with Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury calling the near-completion of the parliament's full term a 'matter of great pride'.

"In the last five years, we worked and spoke for you in the parliament," he said when the session began with him in the chair. In his introductory speech, the speaker also pledged to leave a democratic, modern and prosperous Bangladesh for the next generation.

Besides, passing the national budget for the next fiscal and some

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Budget to be placed in JS today

Serenading on thin ice

INAM AHMED

When Finance Minister Shah A M S Kibria walks into the Sangsad Bhaban today to place his sixth and the incumbent government's last budget in the parliament, he will have a lot of figures to serenade with. Low inflation now less than two per cent will surely top the list. Export boom, industrial recovery, revenue upturn and crop-sector growth will follow.

But in the shadows of such successes lurk some unpleasant facts. The state of the economy, underpinned by a fragile macro balance both on internal and external sides, in fact, provides him thin ice to walk on.

The ice will look more slippery if one travels five years back and checks what the finance minister said in his first budget speech in 1996. "We will determine our strategies for development taking into

account our supreme goal of poverty alleviation. The present government is determined to transform the poor and unemployed into dignified and self-reliant manpower," he had said.

The goals remain illusive five years down the line. With 4.5 million new faces queuing up for and only about a million of them getting job every year, the finance minister's maiden budget sounds more like a satire.

More on Business page

The present government's fundamental budget commitment of poverty alleviation is also buried in the quagmire of figures and statistics. With an annual poverty-alleviation rate of one per cent and an official population growth of 1.8 per cent, innumerable faces are sinking into poverty, prompting fear that the Bihar syndrome may be at work here.

There are also many other tasks that the government promised to carry out in 1996. But these have also lost way in the wilderness. The SoE loss, which stood at Tk 2,300 crore in 1996, has gone up as high as Tk 10,000 crore and reforms remain anything but done.

Against this backdrop, M Syeduzzaman, a former finance minister, and Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), feel that the new budget must leave ample room for the next government to independently take programmes and policies.

"I look at it as the first budget of the next government, not so much the last one of this government," said Dr Bhattacharya, "because the responsibility of this budget

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'Pakistan now paying price for creating Taliban'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pakistan created the Talibans for political gains but is now facing 'Talibanisation' of its own people, renowned Pakistani scholar Prof Hamza Alvi has said.

"There is a growing concern in Pakistan over its Talibanisation," Alvi said at a dialogue on "Power Structure in Pakistan and its Rural Base" in the city on Tuesday.

Organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Chaired by Professor of Political Science at Dhaka University B K Jahangir, the dialogue was participated by eminent academics and intellectuals. They include Khan Sarwar Murshid, CPD

Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya, DU professors Muntasir Mamun, Rangal Sen and S K S Arefin, Chairperson of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) Hamida Hossain, Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam and economists Anu Muhammad and M M Akash.

Prof Alvi said the Sharia Court in Pakistan is gradually enforcing Islamic laws in all spheres of life. As a result, other laws of the land are becoming ineffective. Side by side, blasphemy law is being used in such a way that even innocent people are being punished or executed.

"A person can use this law to victimise someone he does not like. And since this is a sensitive law, even

judges are afraid of acquitting one of the charges of blasphemy," he said. A fundamentalist killed a judge when he acquitted an accused under this law. "We are living in a terrorist society," he observed.

However, in recent times the government has taken steps to minimise victimisation under this law.

Prof Alvi said the Sharia Court, which is the only one of its kind in the world, is being used by big bank loan defaulters to evade paying back the loans.

He noted that a bank loan defaulter suddenly came to the Sharia Court saying that the bank's

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No headway in probe into bomb blasts in last 2 yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law-enforcing agencies have failed to unveil the cause of a series of bomb explosions in the country in last two years that left 48 people killed and more than 200 others injured.

The bomb blast at a cultural programme of Udichi Shilpa Gosthi on Jessore Town Hall premises, the first of its kind in the country, left 10

people killed and more than 100 others injured on March 6, 1999. Police submitted the charge sheet nine months after the incident.

Seven people were killed and ten others injured when a "grenade" went off inside Ahmadiya (Kadiani) Mosque in Khulna on October 8, 1999. In the following year, four people were killed in a bomb blast at a Darbar Sharif at Alalpak in Faridpur.

Seven more people were slain and over 50 others were injured in twin bomb explosions at Paltan Maidan and Bangabandhu Avenue in the city on January 20, 2001.

And on April 14, 2001, a powerful explosion during the Chhayanaut's traditional Bengali New Year function at Ramna Batamul left 10 people killed and more than 20 others injured.

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Hedayet Ahmed passes away

BSS, Dhaka

Former secretary Hedayet Ahmed died of cancer at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) here early yesterday morning, family sources said. He was 68.

He left behind his wife, two sons and a daughter.

He was buried at Banani graveyard in the afternoon.

Earlier his first namaz-e-janaza was held at Circuit House Jame Mosque after Johr prayers which was attended by his relatives, friends and colleagues.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad attended the second janaza on the Asia-Pacific University campus.

His body was kept at the university, of which he was the vice-chancellor. Students and teachers of the university paid their last respect to him.

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