

AL to join tomorrow's JS session

UNB, Dhaka

The Awami League will join the parliamentary session tomorrow and demand a full-dress discussion on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's comment in the House about "uprooting conspiracy".

The Awami League leader Mohammad Nasim yesterday apprised journalists of the party's plan. The opposition would also press for discussion on other issues of national importance, he said.

Addressing a press conference at the party central office, the former home minister demanded explanations from the prime minister on her statement.

"Khaleda Zia will have to explain the grounds of her remarks on conspiracy and its uprooting," he said. He asked if the removal of Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury from the presidency had any link with the alleged conspiracy.

Party leader and former agriculture minister Motia Chowdhury and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Another tremor rocks Ctg

UNB, Dhaka

A mild earthquake measuring 3.74 in the Richter scale shook the port city of Chittagong yesterday morning.

However, there was no immediate report of any casualties.

Bangladesh Meteorological Department in a press release here said the tremor occurred at 10:49:59 hours and lasted for 19 seconds.

The epicenter of the tremor was 174 km away from the Chittagong City.

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

From Chittagong to Chiang Mai and Dubai

Column: Accord and discord
M Anwarul Haq

Sun Rises Sun Sets

July 6		6-50 pm
July 7	5-16 am	

Prayer Timings

July 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	6-59
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Flood situation takes a serious turn

Hundreds of thousands marooned in seven dists, major rivers on rise



AGENCIES, Dhaka

Torrential rain coupled with the onrush of waters from upstream has pushed the flood situation in the country to the point of danger.

Over the last several days, floods have left hundreds of thousands of people in Rangpur, Bogra, Sirajganj, Mymensingh, Manikganj, Laxmipur and Noakhali marooned.

Most low-lying areas in and around the capital have been flooded with rainwater following incessant downpour.

Meanwhile, a bulletin of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said yesterday the Buriganga registered a rise of five centimetres at Dhaka, the Turag six centimetres at Mirpur, the Tongi Khal a slight rise at Tongi and the Kaiganga 15cm at Taraghat.

In Rangpur, the flood situation continues to deteriorate with the increase of the water level of the Teesta now flowing above the danger mark. Floodwater has inundated Gangachara and Kaunia upazilas in the district, leaving over one lakh people marooned.

The flood situation in Bogra deteriorated, as the Bangali River overflowed submerging the low-lying areas of Sonatala, Sherpur and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

PHOTO: STAR
People cross the makeshift bamboo bridge over a rainwater-flooded low-lying area of Bashabo in the city yesterday.

India to screen travellers along Bangladesh border

AFP, Guwahati

India has made fingerprint and photographic documentation mandatory for travellers along its porous frontier border with Bangladesh to prevent cross-border infiltration, officials said yesterday.

"Everybody entering or leaving the northeastern state of Assam to Bangladesh is being photographed and their fingerprints taken by police officials at the border check posts," Assam's additional police chief (border) Sharada Prasad told the wire service.

"This move is having a deterrent effect on infiltrators trying to re-enter India after being pushed back by our security forces."

India shares a more than 4,000-kilometer border with Bangladesh, including 262-km of unfenced

border in Assam.

The system of photographic documentation at the border posts is not a new concept although this was never practised in "letter and spirit" by the security personnel at the check points.

"We are simply rejuvenating the process and ensuring that all the entry and exit points have cameras and fingerprint experts to carry out the task," Prasad said.

Regional governments in the northeast have long been alleging

that hundreds of Bangladeshi nationals cross over to the Indian territory almost daily, taking advantage of the porous border.

Bangladesh, however, denies infiltration by its nationals into India. "The border is wide open with virtually a free for all," chief minister of neighbouring Tripura state, Manik Sarkar, said.

"Illegal infiltration apart, separatists from the region use the border to sneak into Bangladesh after

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

17000 villages flooded in Assam

AFP, Guwahati

Rescuers battled to move hundreds of thousands of people trapped by floodwaters to safety yesterday as heavy rainfall submerged 17,000 villages in the northeastern Indian state of Assam.

The rapidly rising waters of the Brahmaputra river and its tributary, the Jialhol, trapped up to 500,000 people in Assam's Dhemaji district, 465 kilometres east of the state capital, Guwahati, officials said.

Another 50,000 lost their homes to floods in six other eastern districts of Assam.

Assam Flood Control Minister Nurzamal Sarkar told AFP that emergency workers were racing against time to rescue thousands of families who had lost their homes to the flash floods.

"We have put the army on alert

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Intern doctors at MMCH continue strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The indefinite strike by intern doctors at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) continued yesterday.

They began the strike on Thursday after four intern doctor were allegedly assaulted by attendants of a patient at Ward No 9 in the early hours of July 3.

Hundreds of patients coming to the MMCH everyday are suffering due to the strike.

Doctors said they have formed an 'emergency squad' for treatment of emergency patients.

The intern doctors were allegedly assaulted by attendants of Amin Ullah, vice-principal of Mymensingh College, after he died

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Nine months after general election BNP, AL look reluctant about JS committees

NAZRUL ISLAM

Although nine months have passed since the last general elections, parliamentary standing committees on the ministries are yet to be formed with the ruling BNP and the main opposition Awami League apparently reluctant to settle the issue of their respective shares in the committees.

In the absence of these vital legislative bodies, two main objectives of the parliamentary system of government -- accountability and transparency -- are being thwarted, parliament experts noted.

Many political leaders are also questioning the legality of passage of bills by the eighth parliament as draft bills were not referred to the standing committees con-

cerned for scrutiny before those were passed. A lawmaker from the Jamaat-e-Islami, a component of the BNP-led four-party alliance, raised the question in the parliament and the AL leaders did it outside the House.

Talking to The Daily Star, State Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Shahjahan Omar however gave a different view. The committees examine only those bills which are referred to them by the House. "It is not a mandatory constitutional provision," he said.

Experts pointed out that till the committees are formed, the House can form, as per the rules of procedure, a special committee to perform the functions of those bodies. "It would be considered a good practice,"

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Waiving defaulted bank loans

BB discusses draft policy today

MONJUR MAHMUD

Bangladesh Bank officials will discuss with chief executives of commercial banks today a draft policy prepared by the central bank to write off their defaulted loans.

According to the draft policy, a bank will be allowed to write off loans defaulted for more than five years and to have 100 per cent provision. If a bank does not have the 100 per cent provision, it can write off the default loan after making necessary provision from its current income.

"The amount of defaulted loans in the banking system is Tk 24,343.33 crore now. Of this, Tk 21,049.56 crore is bad loan. Many of the bad loans are defaulted for over decades," said a highly placed source in the central bank.

Besides, many defaulted loans are yet to be identified and those did not have the required collateral, he said. There is little hope for recovery

of these loans.

The move will help commercial banks to clear defaulted loans from their account books. The banks will have to take initiative to write off the "oldest defaulted loans", he noted.

The draft policy says a bank would have to open a separate cell to recover the defaulted loans

written off. An audit committee under the board of directors of a bank would monitor the activities of the cell whether it is trying to recover the written off loans.

If the defaulted loan of an individual or a company is written off,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7