

Flood tightens grip

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Kamal Ibne Yusuf yesterday visited Fulchari, Gaibandha Sadar and Sunderganj areas and distributed relief goods among the distressed people.

Our Barisal correspondent adds: Flooding and river erosion gathered pace in the northern and western regions of the district.

According to local leaders, the situation in at least 80 villages in Hizla, Muladi and Uzirpur upazilas deteriorated further, swamping scores of villages.

According to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC), the situation in Manikganj, Munshiganj, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Narsingdi, Narayanganj and Kishoreganj are likely to remain unchanged, but improve in Pabna, Tangail, Rajbari, Faridpur, Gaibandha, Bogra, Sirajganj, Jamalpur, Kurigram and Naogaon.

Flooding in the Meghna basin is also likely to improve further, it added.

"The overall flood situation in the country is improving as water levels in major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, Jamuna, Meghna and Padma are dwindling although some of them are still flowing above danger level," a weather forecaster said.

The Brahmaputra-Jamuna marked further fall at all points and is likely to continue to fall, while the Padma observed fall at all points except at Rajshahi.

The rivers around Dhaka city are flowing close to danger levels and

Canberra

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paid a courtesy call on him yesterday.

Khan described Australia as a land of cultural diversities, where migrants have had a marked influence on all aspects of its society.

Mentioning the impressive performance of Bangladeshi students studying in Australian universities, the foreign minister hoped the Australian government would consider further liberalisation of visa procedure for Bangladeshi students.

He thanked the Australian government for granting duty- and quota-free access of Bangladeshi products to Australian market.

Foreign Secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury was present at the meeting.

Earlier, the visiting Australian minister also called on State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman at his office.

Reaz Rahman urged Australian investors to avail of the existing facilities for investment in Bangladesh.

Spy report

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declassified material.

The administration released the documents - a sanitized version of the top-secret National Intelligence Estimate prepared for the president - on Friday as it sought to shield Bush from rising criticism that he misled the public in making his case for war with Iraq.

Administration aides suggested that the eight pages of excerpts, out of 90 in the document, demonstrate the notion that Saddam was trying to reconstitute a nuclear weapons program permeated the U.S. intelligence community - and was not just based on a suspect British report that relied in part on forged documents.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said the documents show "the clear and compelling case we had for confronting the threat that Saddam Hussein posed."

Nasrin

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According to a local administration source, around 110 dead bodies have so far been recovered from the offshore areas of Chandpur, Barisal, Laxmipur and Bhola.

About 230 passengers have been rescued and 199 are still missing, says a government statistic.

The government is yet to declare any compensation for the victims of the MV Nasrin-1 tragedy.

Journalist Mizan passes away

BSS, Dhaka

Mizanur Rahman, former commercial manager of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), died of prolonged illness at BIRDEM Hospital yesterday at the age of 70.

Mizan is survived by two sons and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

Mizan also worked as editor and administrator of now defunct Bangladesh Press International (BPI) and chief reporter of the Daily Ittefaq.

He also worked as a stringer for Pakistan Times in 1967-68.

His namaj-e-janazas were held at Wari, on BSS premises and at the Jatiya Press Club.

Journalists, politicians and people from all walks of life attended the janazas.

He will be buried at his village Gazupura in Tongi.

Qulqhwani will be held at his 28-Bonogram Lane residence at Wari on July 22.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina expressed shock at the death of Mizanur Rahman.

Fiki Hasan Hilmi



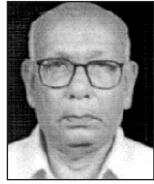
Fiki Hasan Hilmi, general manager (Administration) of Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation, died of heart attack at his

Dhansiri Apartment at Indira Road in the city on Friday night at the age of 51, says a press release.

He is survived by his wife and two daughters to mourn his death. He was buried at Shaheed Intellectual graveyard at Mirpur.

His qulqhwani will be held at his residence after Maghrib prayers on July 22.

Shucharu Ranjan Barua



Shucharu Ranjan Barua, a retired police officer, died of cancer in Chittagong on Friday, says a press release.

He is survived by his wife, two daughters, and three sons to mourn his death.

His funeral was held at his birth place at Raozan the same day.

Baghdad bank

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ASGAR had issued a rule asking the government to explain within four weeks why the tender on toll collection, operation, management and maintenance of Jamuna

Bridge should not be declared unlawful.

It had also issued rule upon the government to show cause why a direction should not be given to call for a fresh tender to award the contract.

Appearing for the petitioner, Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud, submitted that the tender documents suffered from a glaring omission that the authority did not state the insurance value of the assets to be insured.

This represents bad and undesirable practice on the part of the JMBA by leaving the insurance value of the assets to be determined on the basis of the subjective valuation of each bidder, Rakan contended.

He further submitted that the entire integrity of the bid process insofar as the financial offer was concerned was compromised and lacked transparency creating an opportunity for corruption.

The court in its order said it is imperative to have a transparent contract for Jamuna Bridge, which is a valuable asset and a key point installation of strategic significance.

Rakanuddin Mahmud with Barrister Mostafizur Rahman appeared for the petitioner. Additional Attorney General A J Mohammad Ali stood for the state.

Local BDR commander Lt Col Mahabubur Rahman said they had taken adequate measures so that the criminals could not cross the border.

Officials said the joint force stationed here was drawn from six districts including Dhaka and Khulna.

Waugh

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batted positively to be 70 for one off 15 overs with Hannan Sarkar not out 29 and Habibul Basharon 26.

Waugh joined Indian batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar on 31 Test centuries, second only to another Indian great Sunil Gavaskar on 34, and became only the second cricketer to score centuries against all the nine Test-playing nations.

Waugh emulated the achievement of South African opener Gary Kirsten in scoring against all comers.

Records appear to continually keep tumbling for Waugh, who is playing his 50th Test as Australian captain and needs just one more victory to better West Indian Clive Lloyd's 36 wins as the most successful Test skipper.

The Australians dismissed Bangladesh for 97 in their first innings on Friday in just under three hours and off 42.2 overs but the plucky tourists confidently kept out the formidable pace attack of Glenn McGrath, Jason Gillespie in the 15 overs to stump on the second day.

Opener Javed Omar fell in the third over, lbw to McGrath for five leaving Bangladesh at eight for one, but Sarkar and Bashir batted brightly to the close. Their 50-partnership came up in 43 minutes.



PHOTO: STAR

Speakers at the opening session of the two-day seminar on Integrated Rural Development in Dhaka yesterday. The Local Government Engineering Department and Japan International Cooperation Agency organised it.

Political culture

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nance".

"I call upon all political parties to uphold the interest of the people and consolidate the democratic system together through political farsightedness and acumen," the prime minister said.

Terming politics as the driving force behind all efforts to secure a place in the present world order, she hoped political scientists would be able to provide necessary guidelines to bring about quality in leadership and state governing system.

Khaleda Zia referred to her recent address in parliament where she termed the present changing and unstable global situation a "transitory period".

"We have lost our familiar world order forever and a new world will emerge soon where we have to secure a good place," she asserted.

She reminded her audience that Bangladeshis have opted for a democratic system of governance and said, "For this, political leadership must be able, efficient, honest, talented and dedicated."

"Political principles, ideals and programmes must be modern, positive, constructive and far-sighted," she said expressing her belief that political scientists of the country would be able to guide its political leadership towards a

positive change.

Khaleda Zia said the present BNP-led four-party alliance government has taken strong measures to reduce undesirable political influence, curb corruption, ensure human rights and build awareness about public security.

"We are pledge-bound to ensure the rule of law through strict application of laws irrespective of party or group," she said. Khaleda Zia added that there was no alternative to building up a welfare-oriented politics and patriotic politicians to rescue the nation from backwardness and the curse of poverty.

In his address, Prof Emajuddin Ahmed said today's Bangladesh is stronger than it was 15 years ago. "That's not for its population or natural resources, but for its geopolitical situation."

Speaking on the occasion, Dr M Ataur Rahman said the main challenge for the current political leadership is managing the country's parliamentary system of government.

He said the success of parliamentary system hinges on the skill, character and far-sightedness of the prime minister, the leader of the opposition and MPs.

The BPSA leaders later presented the prime minister a crest of their organisation.

Vegetables, rice

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have lost aman seeds.

Sources at the Department of Agriculture Extension, which has staff at the upazila-level and below, said it was too early for the department to give any correct assessment of the crop-loss scenario.

Identifying the one-month period between mid-July and mid-August as the most crucial, the sources said a clear picture of crop damage would emerge at the end of the next month.

They, however, gave an estimate of five to seven per cent loss of seasonal vegetables mainly leafy ones and papaya and banana adding that most of those vegetables were rotten in stagnant floodwaters in the northern and some of the central districts at the harvest-ing stage.

"High prices of vegetables indicate that the supply has declined. Damage to vegetables caused by floods and disruption of communication owing to the roads being submerged are responsible for the decline", an agriculture official told The Daily Star.

An expert said as the rainy season is known as a lean period for most of the vegetables, the damage to the late-sown summer vegetables would definitely have a market impact.

More microfilms

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should be within 18 to 22 degrees Celsius as the humidity in Bangladesh is high. "To protect the microfilms and hand-written puthis (manuscripts) properly, it is necessary to regularly clean the mildew that forms on them. Also needed are experts and trained officials to handle them."

The conditions of the microfilms and the microfilm reader are deteriorating as the section officials do not clean them properly, she said, adding that the microfilm and manuscript sections need proper maintenance.

"Do not disturb us often. You have to come here at the appropriate time. Why do you disturb us during lunch time?" the librarian asked this correspondent.

Sources said the librarian does not regularly come to office and does not look after the manuscripts and microfilms though he is the convener of the manuscript committee. This correspondent also found the librarian to be absent most of the time in office.

"We informed the former and present librarians about the microfilms being damaged, but they did not take any steps to protect the microfilms," an official source said. "We need at least two trained persons to look after the microfilms properly," he added.

Officials alleged that the librarian has been harassing them and has asked them not to give any information to the press.

Khadiza Amin alliance candidate for Netrakona by-election

UNB, Dhaka

Four-party alliance leader and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has nominated Khadiza Amin, wife of late Nurul Amin Talukder, as the alliance candidate for the by-election to Netrakona-3 seat of the Jatiya Sangsad.

She also urged the voters as well as the leaders and workers of the four-party alliance in Kendua-Atpara constituency to elect Khadiza Amin in the upcoming by-election, said a BNP press release yesterday.

The seat fell vacant following the death of Nurul Amin Talukder

ENT and Head-neck Cancer Foundation formed

UNB, Dhaka

The National ENT and Head-neck Cancer Foundation has been formed to provide specialised medical services to the commonman.

A non-profitable entity, the foundation will run by voluntary services, sponsors told a meeting on Thursday.

Former health secretary Syed Shamim Ahsan and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) prof M Alaaddin have been made president and secretary-general of the 15-member executive committee.

Member of the executive committee are Prof MA Majed, Mahubur Rahman, Dr Farashuddin, Fazle Hasan Abed, Latifur Rahman, Samson H Chowdhury, Kaiser Rahman, Dr Shamsul Huda, Tofayel Karim, Syed Mukhtar, Matiar Rahman Chowdhury, Dr A Mobin and Dr Shawkat Ali.

AL plans tie

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relationship on a common platform," he said.

"Forging alliance with the leftists is nothing new to the AL," he said. "Together we launched movement to oust autocrat regimes in the past. We have similar thinking on many issues."

The alliance might be formed on three understandings - the oust-government movement, participation in polls as an alliance and sharing of power, if elected, said Sengupta, adding that AL would sit with the friendly left parties very soon.

However, leaders of the left-leaning parties ruled out any possibility for forging alliance, as differences on economical and social philosophies stand in their way.

"We may launch movement on common issues but that does not mean we're on way to make a coalition. Our party decision is that we will not go for any alliance with the AL," said Rashed Khan Menon, president of the Workers' Party of Bangladesh.

Terming the 11-party alliance the only coalition of the leftists, he said the top priority of the left-inclined parties is to make a greater communist unity happen.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), said they are yet to get any concrete proposal from the AL.

"Like others, we're also fighting against the government's repression on opponents. But forming any political alliance with the AL is not on our agenda unless it changes its economical and social policies," he said.

The left parties would continue to pursue an 'independent line' and emerge as an alternate political force other than the AL and BNP, he said emphatically.

CityCell

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calls," the statement added.

"Since the mobile phone users have now outnumbered the land phone users, we thought it was the right time to launch a product which can enable people to communicate with all mobile phone users at a very reasonable cost," PBTL Managing Director Faisal Moshed Khan said at a meeting of dealers and distributors of CityCell.

Khan said the users of other packages of CityCell would also find something very attractive very soon.

PBTL, the first company to introduce mobile telephony in the sub-continent, currently has some 2 lakh subscribers coverage in 50 districts.

"Amar Phone" is a post-paid mobile-to-mobile package. The per minute call charge is Tk 3 at peak hours, Tk 1.50 at off-peak hours and Tk 0.75 during super off-peak hours from 11:00pm to 8:00am.

Subscribers can select one number under the existing "One2One" scheme without any additional charges and make call to that particular number at 50 per cent of the actual rate. One2One call charges will be Tk 1.5 during the peak hours and Tk 0.75 at off-peak hours.

"Amar Phone gives people the comfort of enjoying one rate irrespective of the zone or operator they are calling to," the statement added.

CityCell covers Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal and Rajshahi.

CityCell introduced prepaid service with BTBT connectivity last year, which has created great enthusiasm among cell phone users.

'58 pc city street girls engaged in prostitution'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifty-eight per cent of street girls in the city, who are aged between 12-18, are engaged in prostitution which leads them to drug addiction, says a survey report.

The survey was conducted by Misplaced Children (MC), a non-government organisation working with the street children.

The MC revealed it at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday on the basis of its survey conducted on the street children in the city.

The survey shows that involvement in prostitution and drug addiction has created psychological disaster among the street children.

Drug addiction is not only confined to street children, it is also

pervasive among the children of other classes, the survey said.

But the street children are more vulnerable than children of any other group as they pass their life outside the periphery of social security, the survey added.

The MC officials said street children are also becoming vulnerable to AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) due to repeated use of syringe for taking drugs.

They urged the government to bring the treatment cost of drug addicts within the ability of the street children so that they can get rid of it. They also called for stern action against drug traders.

MC Project Director AKM Masud Ali, Aminul Islam and Selim Chowdhury also spoke at the press conference.

Wedding party

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But as the assailants were running away, some of the guests gave them a chase for almost half a kilometre defying retreating shots from the killers and caught two -- Babu and Shahed Ali inside a house at Sheorapara where they took shelter.

They were severely beaten up before being rescued by police. Shahed was sent to the hospital, while the other has been confined by the Kafrul police.

Labu was engaged to Afroza of Srinagar, Munshiganj on Friday and the wedding reception was scheduled at the community centre yesterday.

Both Labu and Afroza escaped the assault unhurt. The bridegroom however fainted at the gory scene.

Afroza's elder brother Labu received four bullets. The two wounded children -- 10-year-old Shiblu and 12-year-old Shuvo -- were hit in the leg and waist.

Rafiq, who was sitting close to the bridegroom, received three bullets in his thighs and his cousin Zahir one in his knee.

Five of the wounded were admitted to DMCH, one to National Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases Hospital while

the rest to Orthopaedic Hospital and local clinics.

AL acting President Abdus Samad Azad and acting General Secretary Obaidul Kader blamed the government for the incident.

"Identified criminals, let loose by the coalition government, have killed the sister of the bride," said an AL press release yesterday.

Fake-free exam

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job could not be awarded as only one bidder qualified in the tender and it quoted higher price.

"Now, we are examining possibilities of printing the certificates and mark sheets at the government's security printing press," he added.

"If we can, we'll be able to produce anticounterfeit certificates within a short time."

Sources alleged that the specification of 'retro-reflective lamination' in the bid document had created opportunity for a certain company to qualify for the offer.

"The bid matched only with the product of an American company," an industry source said, alleging that some board officials in connivance with officials of that company prepared the bid materials to award them the job.

Kelly's death

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over his possible role as a "mole" who had given the BBC a hotly-disputed story that Blair's communications chief Alastair Campbell "sexed up" a dossier on Saddam Hussein's arms.

The allegation that Campbell played up intelligence suggesting indicating Saddam could mobilize weapons of mass destruction in 45 minutes is at the center of claims Blair misled the British public and parliament over the case for war.

But in a grim twist to the political saga, a body matching Kelly's description was found on Friday in a wood.

His relatives were formally identifying the body on Saturday as police scoured the area for clues. The widespread assumption was that Kelly committed suicide under the pressure of being in the lime-light.

"I guess he couldn't cope with the firestorm," said journalist Tom Mangold, a close friend of Kelly.

A post-mortem could take another 24 hours and Blair urged people to wait for a judicial inquiry before jumping to conclusions over what lay behind Kelly's death.

Opposition Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith called on Blair to cut short his trip to Asia to handle what is shaping into one of the biggest crises of his six-year rule.

And an ex-minister from the ruling Labour Party, Glenda Jackson, called for the prime minister's resignation: "Bullets should be bitten."

Critics of the government say Kelly was "sacrificed" to clear Blair and Campbell's reputation by pressuring him to come forward in an effort to discredit the BBC report.

Media ripped into the govern-

ment, accusing it of being so obsessed with public relations gloss that a man lost his life.

"Spun to Death," said the Daily Mirror newspaper. "Casualty of War," was the Independent's verdict.

"Yesterday a decent, shy civil servant who had been savagely chewed up and spat out by a malign, amoral Downing Street machine met a tormented and tragic end," the Daily Mail wrote.

Day trips

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launch operating during the day," said Chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Abul Hossain Chowdhury.

He said the government has also decided to operate some state-owned steamers.

Following the decision, a steamer of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation, MV Shila, is to start plying between Dhaka and Hulharhat via Barisal from today.

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain is scheduled to inaugurate the new route at the Sadarghat Launch Terminal this morning.

According to BIWTA sources, the number of passengers in river routes have fallen by 25 per cent following the recent MV Nasrin-1 disaster on July-8.

The launch sank in the confluence of the rivers Padma, Meghna and Dakatia with around 750 passengers.

BNP MP's brother

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Sentu, 30, a lessee of a cattle market at Zinjira Bazar, was shot dead on February 16, last year.

Amir Hamza, brother of the victim Shahil, filed a murder case with Keraniganj Police Station accusing Monir and nine others on the same day.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted a charge sheet against Monir and 22 others on November 20, last year.