

Rivers around Dhaka

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Navabganj, Narsingdi, Madaripur and Shariatpur may go under water soon, the flood-forecasting centre said.

Our Manikganj correspondent reports: Authorities closed two ferry-anchorage points at Paturia as the river is swelling by the hour, disrupting ferry services on Paturia-Daulatdia route.

A traffic line stretched three kilometres at Paturia terminal and two kilometres at Daulatdia as only one ferry-anchorage point was in operation yesterday morning. Floodwaters inundated the low-lying areas in Shibbaya, Daulatpur and Harirampur upazilas.

The Brahmaputra-Jamuna and the Ganges-Padma rivers continued to swell, while most rivers in the Meghna and the South Eastern Hill basins recorded a fall.

Our Gaibandha correspondent said thousands of people stranded on different shoals along the Teesta and Brahmaputra basin are waiting for rescue, while many others shifted to safer places as the floods in Gaibandha worsened Tuesday.

This year, the floods surging by one and a half feet more than last year

closed over 200 educational institutions in the northern district.

About 1km railroad in Balashi went under waist-deep water suspending train service with the capital. Railway personnel built a 60-foot sandbagged dam across the rail tracks to protect Balashi upper station.

Our Sherpur correspondent reports: Three people drowned in floodwaters in the last four days: they were named as Anwar Ali, 10, Gafur Ali, 65, and Zainal Abedin (age unknown) in Nalitabari upazila.

Our Bogra correspondent said the flood situation in Bogra worsened because of heavy rains and rising waters in the Jamuna and Bangali rivers.

Reports of Sylhet correspondent say: The floods in badly-affected Sylhet remained unchanged with inundation of new areas in Jakiganj, Beanibazar and Fenchuganj upazilas and rivers flowing above the danger mark.

Abdul Momin drowned in a remote rain-fed water-body in Dharmapasha upazila in Sunamganj on Monday and a young man died in Chhatra upazila and two others, including a minor boy, in Jaintapur the same day.

Subsidy makes

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states of India, farmers get electricity free of cost and seed prices are much lower than in Bangladesh, he mentioned.

Anwar stressed more investment in agriculture sector to avert a crisis of farm products in near future. Rice production has trebled over the last 30 years, and all credit for this goes to farmers, he said.

The ceremony was addressed by, among others, State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, head of social science wing of International Rice Research Institute

(IRRI) Dr Mahbub Hossain, Director General of Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) Dr Mahul Haque, Petra Project Director Noel Magor, Editor of The Daily Star, Mahfuz Anam, Prof Golam Rahman of Dhaka University and Prof Abdul Bayes of Jahangirnagar University.

Fakhrul Islam mentioned the government has allocated Tk 600 crore as subsidy this fiscal year for the development of agriculture and also decided to give 15 percent rebate on electricity bill for irrigation.

Mahbub Hossain said with the recent growth in farm sector in Bangladesh, non-farm activities also expanded in the rural areas.

He underscored narrowing down technology gap between experts and farmers. He suggested channelling farm credit through women for better use of the money.

Describing the experiences gained through the Petra project, Mahbub said farmers want high-yielding short-duration rice varieties that give them more benefit. Farm labourers were increasingly moving to non-farming sectors, he added.

Mahfuz Anam said the recent success in agriculture sector was not truly reflected in the country's media. "The media missed out on the biggest success story of the country in the recent past," he observed referring to three consecutive bumper farm harvests.

The poor farmers deserve praise for producing food for the whole nation and saving the country from food crisis, he said.

The Daily Star editor stressed a comprehensive policy for the development of agriculture. Journalists should have a critical view of it for its success, he thought.

Mahfuz Anam emphasised changing the mind-set of journalists about agriculture to give more focus on issues related to this sector.

Golam Rahman said communication gap between agriculture scientists and recipients of the benefit of their research has to be narrowed for the benefit of the nation.

The five-year Petra project was funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). The BRRI and Department of Agriculture Extension implemented it.

20 picked up

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others, police said.

"We've engaged our intelligence to trace the whereabouts of 'Galakata' Mujib and his operatives," said Mazharul Hoque, deputy commissioner of the DMP (west zone), adding, "We are expecting to arrest Mujib soon."

Meanwhile, police filed two cases with Mohammadpur Police Station - one for murdering the policeman and another under the arms act, sources said.

Sergeant Manzurul lodged the murder case accusing Mujib, his son Liton, Mohammad Ali, Mehedi Hasan Liton and 'Nakkata' Mostafa and unnamed others, they added.

Of them, Mehedi, whom police shot and wounded after searching him out of deed writer Ali's house, is arrested.

Filing the other case, Sub-Inspector Tariquzzaman accused only Mehedi and Ali of possessing illegal firearms.

On Monday, police gunned down Ali for his alleged ties to a criminal outfit after they searched out Mehedi from the deed writer's Rayerbazar house.

However, Ali's family members claimed that police killed the 65-year-old deed writer ignoring his repeated assertions of innocence. They also added that they did not know when the 'criminal' Mehedi entered Ali's house.

According to police, Mujib, who earned his nickname 'Galakata' (cut-throat) after kidnapping a businessman from Gazipur and hacking him to death in 1997, is an accused in eight criminal cases including four for murders.

Locals said Mujib's followers shot and wounded trader Shawkat Akbar on July 6 and murdered one Awlad last year after failing to extract toll from them.

The gang killed an aged local businessman on Sunday after he refused to pay Tk 3 lakh in extortion money, they added.

Limited TU

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Janata League (KSJL) and Shajahan Khan of Awami League (AL) were incorporated in the bill.

Before the trade union right is ensured, the workers in the first phase will be able to form 'labour representative and welfare committees', empowered to negotiate and sign agreements with the owners to protect the workers' interest.

According to the bill, which is now an Act, the committees would run till October 31, 2006 and may continue beyond the deadline if the owners intend so, but would cease to continue if the workers formed an association in the enterprises.

The Trade Association and Industrial Relations Act 2004 emerged after a package deal the government struck with investors in the EPZs, American Federation of Labour & Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO), US ambassador in Dhaka and World Bank country director.

Trade union will be allowed in an industrial unit in the EPZs if 30 percent workers want it. After that, union can be formed if more than 50 percent workers take part in a vote and over 50 percent of them favour it.

Trade union bodies will run in line with a constitution elaborated in the Act and the executive body will be elected by secret ballot. The body will be able to work as collective bargaining agent (CBA).

The workers' unions in an area can form a federation, but in no way can they be involved with a body or federation outside the area or a political party or its labour front. The unions are not entitled to take part in any political activity.

Opposition lawmakers termed the proposed law incomplete and demanded elicitation of public opinion on the bill.

AL lawmakers Rahmat Ali, Shamsur Rahman Sharif, Abdus Shahid, Panchanan Biswas, Shahjahan Khan, Atiqur Rahman Atiq, Md Mahabubur Rahman and Mohammad Nasim, and Kader Siddiqui of KSJL took part in the discussion.

They said the government does not protect the interest of workers and has closed down 4,000 mills and factories, including Adamjee Jute Mills and Chhatak Paper Mills. But it enacted the latest law under pressure from the US government.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said the enactment of the new law would not upset production in the EPZs. In the US, there are certain laws to protect labour interests and the new law would help protect our garment market in the US, he said.

Trade union right remained curtailed in the EPZs where one-fifth of the country's total export earnings comes from. The six EPZs employ some 1.36 lakh workers.

3 convicts

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Assistant Sub-Inspector Moinul Haq, Constables Amrita Lal Barman and Abdus Sattar are being confined in Rangpur Central Jail since 1997.

The Court of District Session Judge, Rangpur awarded death penalty to the policemen in August 1997.

The convicts challenged the verdict in the Supreme Court (SC). However, the SC rejected their appeal and upheld the lower court's judgement.

In April 2004, they lodged mercy petition with the president, which was rejected.

According to the prosecution, the policemen violated and then killed Yasmeen in the small hours of August 24, 1995 at Dosh Mile in Dinajpur when she was returning to her native village from Dhaka.

PM asks

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Development SM Walur Rahman also spoke.

Zahida Akhtar Mita of 'Mehantani Manusher Sanghati Unnayan Sangstha' from Mirpur, Dhaka and Taimul Islam of 'Surobhi Sangha Unnayan Sangstha' of Dinajpur spoke on behalf of the country's youth organisations.

The prime minister handed over cheques to the representatives of 12 youth organisations as part of the distribution Tk 70 lakh in grants among 676 youth organisations across the country.

She said that she would consider the proposal of the state minister for youth to raise the fund from Tk 7 crore to Tk 10 crore.

The prime minister said frustration both at individual and social levels and different kinds of lust were pushing a section of youths towards terrorism and drug addiction.

She called for creating awareness among the youths to build a strong resistance against these social ills.

Quoting from a poem of Helal Hafiz that 'youth is the prime time to join war', Khaleda called upon the youths to fight illiteracy, poverty and unemployment.

The prime minister said about 22 lakh youths were imparted training in different trades. Such training had resulted in self-employment for about 12.36 lakh youths, she said.

She also mentioned that some 6.10 lakh youth workers have been provided credit of Tk 534 crore for self-employment.

The prime minister said the government was setting up residential youth training centres in each district to train the youth community into skilled human resource.

Besides, the Department of Youth Development had taken up a technical training project on information technology to groom the educated unemployed youths, she said.

Civil servants

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official business.

Dr Kamal Hossain, lawyer for the petitioner, said it would amount to contempt of court if the four, however important public officers they may hold, do not appear.

The chamber judge, Amirul Kabir Chowdhury, however, referred the stay petition to the full bench after hearing both sides.

The full bench of the Supreme Court will hear the petition on Saturday.

The High Court (HC) on Monday also asked the four why they should not be charged with contempt of court after Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) candidate Abdul Mannan filed a contempt petition for violation of the HC directives to deploy army in each polling centre on the election day of July 1.

The four -- Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, Home Secretary Omar Farooque, Defence Secretary KM Ehsanul Haq and Acting Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division at the Prime Minister's Office Brigadier General Illias Iftikhar Rasul -- yesterday filed an appeal petition to the chamber judge of the Supreme Court (SC) seeking a stay order on the HC directives.

The four are to appear before court to clarify their role during next hearing on July 24.

Senior lawyer and ruling coalition lawmaker Advocate Mahbubur Rahman filed the appeal petition on behalf of the four saying the four officials need to be in their offices as they deal with important public matters. He told court public interest would suffer if the officials appeared before it leaving behind their official task.

He argued that it needs to be looked into whether the four officials violated the HC directives and if so, then whether they did it deliberately or whether it was done to degrade the judges.

Advocate Rahman also submitted that court had better summon them after scrutinising the report of the Election Commission and replies of the four to its show-cause notice. He observed that the HC order to summon the four appears premature.

The lawyers for the BDB opposed the appeal petition when it was filed. Dr Kamal Hossain, one of the BDB lawyers, said if the four do not show up before court just because they are high officials, it will only go to show their disregard for court.

In the sub-continent countries prime ministers and ministers, not to speak of their secretaries, appear in court in person setting aside their important business. "There's no VIP in the eyes of the

law...", Dr Kamal observed.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, another BDB lawyer, told journalists the four officials have violated court orders by not deploying army as directed and now they are again going to do the same by trying to obtain a stay on the HC rule. "It is a shameful precedent," he observed.

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam and Advocate MK Rahman were also present in court for the petitioner.

Saifur slams

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"I am sorry to say that some ministries do not even know the process of receiving money from the finance ministry and for this reason they fail to spend money for the projects," Saifur Rahman said while responding to a supplementary question by BNP lawmaker Moshir Rahman in the Jatiya Sangsad.

He said, "Some do not make payment to contractors and others in time. If payment is not made to the contractors in time, it deprives me of VAT (value added tax) and other taxes."

The finance minister told the Jatiya Sangsad it was unfortunate that some of his cabinet colleagues replied in the question-answer hour that implementation of projects depended on the availability of funds.

"Such comments are unfortunate as funds are allocated for the approved projects of the ministries concerned," he commented. He said there was no question of availability of funds in the case of an approved project. Saifur Rahman told the House that at present only a few out of 1,300 projects are yet to be approved.

Amidst the desks thumping of the treasury bench lawmakers, Saifur Rahman urged the ministers to be more effective in implementing of the development programmes.

BNP lawmaker Moshir Rahman wanted to know whether the government has plans to remove bureaucratic tangles for implementing development projects on time. Finance minister narrated his ministry steps on implementing the projects on time and further added "We will sit with all the secretaries of the ministries concerned in every month and hear from them about the projects implementation progress."

The minister told the house that he had already held such a meeting last week and added "Punitive actions will be taken against the ministries which fail to expedite implementation of the projects."

He said PCP (Project Concept Paper) has been simplified along with speedy processing of projects and release of funds.

finance minister said.

According to meeting sources, Saifur told them the new pay structure will not change the existing 20 grades. He directed them to take inflation, living cost, calorie requirements etc into consideration in increasing the wage level. In this connection, the commission sought some technical staffs from the minister.

The commission will also examine what differences it would make in the pay structure if the government employees pay their own taxes and if the government pays that. Saifur is of the opinion that there are around one lakh government officials who earn enough to pay tax.

Commission Chairman Mujibul Haq said, "The minister has asked us to work impartially and objectively."

"We will review the pay structures of India and Pakistan, and will try to come up with a balanced report that would be acceptable to both the employees and the government," he added.

Banglabandha land port

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full-fledged land port by a private company on build, operate and transfer (BOT) basis on 10 acres of land.

On the other hand, India has done nothing but setting up a single L/C station on their side. A 2-km frontier road in the Indian side is in a very bad shape.

Only five trucks came from Nepal since the opening of the land port and the goods were unloaded from truck to truck without using the warehouse at Banglabandha, a shipping ministry source said explaining the situation.

The government staff deployed at the port remain idle as the port is yet to start full operation. There are seven staff in customs, five in immigration, seven in administration and two in the quarantine who spend time without work.

Besides, a 12-member police team aided by seven security personnel deployed by the land port department is engaged in maintaining security at the port.

Banglabandha is the only export-oriented land port in Bangladesh while all other land ports are used mainly for importing goods from

2 robbers killed

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of bullet during the bloody shoot-out that rocked the locality.

Sources said some 40 to 50 heavily armed robbers in a truck and a microbus stormed into the Bazar known as Dubai Market at around 2.15am. They first tied up three security guards, two rickshaw pullers and two traders of the market and broke into four jewellery shops.

They took away 100 tolas of gold ornaments from Al Hossain Jewellers, Nazu Meah Jewellers, Al Fashion Jewellers and Fayed Jewellers. Soon locals and police crowded around the scene as the Mujajin of the market mosque using the mosque's mike cried out for help, locals said.

After an hour-long exchange of gunfire with the police the gang retreated. Except the four, the robbers managed to flee the scene.

In a separate incident, another gang numbered between 7 to 8 looted two phone-fax shops named EEL Tel and Discovery, at around 3.30pm yesterday at Shulok Bohar under Panchlaish Police Station. They took away 25 and 165 mobile sets from those two shops.

Separate cases were filed.

Two more

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Earlier, in the morning, an unknown caller phoned Prof Nasreen Khandaker of Economics Department and asked her not to go to her campus office in the next seven days.

The caller was quoted as saying they would 'kill' MM Akash, another teacher of the same department, within the next week.

Nasreen's chamber is next to that of Akash.

Dhaka University Teachers Association President Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and General Secretary Prof M Akhteruzzaman condemned the threats and expressed grave concern over the evolving extremist situation.

JB chair quits

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personal reasons, sources said.

Despite repeated attempts, The Daily Star could not contact Rahman last night.

It was also yesterday that Sonali Bank Deputy Managing Director M Tahmilur Rahman temporarily took over as that bank's MD. The post had been lying vacant since July 7, when the tenure of the previous chief executive, Rabiul Hossain, expired.

Colleges

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and Tk 40 as admission processing fees, board officials said.

Colleges would prepare a waiting list on the basis of the GPA and allow students' admission afterwards if seats remain vacant. No student would be allowed to enrol without the original transcript of their respective boards and testimonial from where they passed, they added.

Candidates of SSC or equivalent certificate examinations of the year 2002, 2003 and 2004 scoring lowest D grade in all subjects and GPA 1.0 will be eligible to enrol in class XI. Students who passed SSC examinations from the Open University will also qualify to get admitted.

Classes for academic year 2004-05 at different colleges under Dhaka Education Board (Deb) are scheduled to begin on August 30. The Deb asked the authorities of different colleges to enrol not more than 150 students in each section.

The last date of admission without late fee is August 25 while students will be allowed to be enrolled with late fees till September 29.

Humanities group students will be allowed to seek admission either in the humanities or commerce group if they desire, but students of both groups are

barred to enrol in the science group. However, science group students are allowed to enrol in any group they prefer.

Red tape

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d'Afaires of the Danish Embassy in Dhaka Henrik Larsen said, "It is unfortunate that the DNA lab facilities and equipment are not being used due to slow decision-making process in Bangladesh."

Larsen also said, "We would also like to see the lab is managed by people who have professional background since it is essentially a highly technical matter."

Meanwhile, sources in the Department of Women's Affairs said 70,121 cases of violence against women across the country -- about one third of them rape incidents -- were recorded from 1994 to March 2002.

Forensic experts at the DMC said 300 to 400 rape victims on an average a month turn up for forensic test for legal proceedings but in most cases the victims do not come within 24 hours, as required.

But an expert said, "In case of DNA test, twenty-four hour will no longer be a factor. An accused can be identified even 10 years after the date of offence provided biological samples arrive in time."

Lawyers said about 3,000 cases, mostly rape, are pending with the special courts under Women and Children Repression Act

Rohingya repatriation

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of 2,976 families are staying in two camps in Nayapara of Teknaf upazila and Kutupalong of Ukhiya upazila. There are an estimated two lakh 'unofficial' refugees living in Cox's Bazar district.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is currently discussing with the government a programme that will allow the refugees to work in Bangladesh instead of just living on rations provided by the authorities.

"When we talk to the refugees in the camps, they tell us that they want to go back to their country," said Ishaque Ali, acting commissioner of the government's Rohingya Refugee Repatriation Commissioner's (RRRC) office in Cox's Bazar.

"But they are not submitting their forms on Declaration of Voluntary Repatriation (DVR). We cannot but send them back when they volunteer to go," Ali pointed out.

The UNHCR stipulates no refugee will be forcibly repatriated; if one wants to go back, they would take a DVR form from the UNHCR, fill it out and submit it to the RRRC office.

The Cox's Bazar UNHCR office refused to talk to The Daily Star on the repatriation issue. But UNHCR Deputy Representative in Dhaka Mamo Mulsew said, "Repatriation is a hundred percent voluntary process."

"We can't say when this repatriation process will end as none can be forced or no family can be broken in the process," said Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Saifuddin Ahmed about the future of repatriation.

A high official of Cox's Bazar administration, requesting anonymity, said, "The reality is that it will not be possible to send back any more refugees."

"The refugees in the camps feel

Aids fight

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elsewhere, "the fund could have" assured and sustained support through the next five years or so," Annan said.

He said he believed Bush was concerned about the impact of Aids, but said it was now time to step forward and commit resources to that fight.

"We really do need leadership. America has a natural leadership capacity because of its resources, because of its size," he said.

And he appealed to governments around the world to show "international solidarity" by pooling their efforts.

But Dr Anthony Fauci, President Bush's senior adviser on Aids, said the US decision to distribute money through its own Aids prevention programmes reflected initial concern on how the global fund would be managed.

"At the time the global fund was starting to get rolling, there was a concern on the part of the United States that if they put in this massive amount of money, \$15bn, they wanted to have much more of a direct say in how it was spent," Dr Fauci said.

As the conference continued yesterday, protesters demanding more access to cheaper anti-Aids drugs interrupted several speakers including a French government minister and a representative of a major drugs company, Pfizer.

Israel

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schools and hospitals, markets and West Bank cities, the source said.

"These are the new guidelines the Defence Ministry intends to operate with. We are obeying our own High Court, not The Hague (World Court)," he told Reuters.

"But it's also a way of deflecting future international pressure on us (to tear down the barrier). It's an important step after The Hague."

(Reuters/ AFP)

2 IU teachers get death threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two teachers of Islamic University yesterday received death threats purportedly from Islamist militants.

The recipients are Prof Abul Ahasan Choudhury and Harunur Rasid Askari. The former is an eminent folk literature and president of progressive teachers' association called Shapla Forum while the latter is an associate professor and chairman of the English department.

The letters that were distributed by Islamic University Post Office described the recipients as infidels and supporters of Awami League and also the enemy of Islam. The 'militants' gave the teachers 'some time' to purify themselves.

Otherwise, the letters warned, soon they will have to face death or suffer dire consequences, as did Dr Humayun Azad.

Bangabandhu Parishad and Shapla Forum in a joint meeting yesterday condemned the death threats and demanded punishment of those responsible for issuing the threats.

Teachers of the university will hold a rally today and submit a memorandum to the vice chancellor seeking security of the teachers.

comfortable after living here for over a decade. They don't need to work. Their accommodation, food, health and other basic needs have been taken care of. They are so much used to this life that they don't want to go back to the days of uncertainty in Myanmar," he pointed out.