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Bogra village devastated as saboteurs cut dam

5 die; 60 go missing; 800 houses destroyed; act blamed on feud between contractors

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least five people, including four children, drowned and 60 others went missing as suspected saboteurs cut open an embankment along the fierce-flowing Jamuna river that deleted a village of over 800 houses in Bogra yesterday.

The overnight breaching of Brahmaputra flood control embankment pushed the families in Chuniapara village in Dhunat upazila out in the open to live on their own without food and shelter.

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PHOTO: STAR

Raging Jamuna waters wash a tin-roofed house away in Chuniapara village in Bogra as suspected saboteurs cut open a flood control embankment early yesterday.

BGMEA INITIATIVE BNP, AL agree to talk end to hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The garments exporters' move to initiate a dialogue between the ruling and main opposition parties for bringing an end to destructive hartal culture got a momentum as the BNP yesterday agreed to give the unique talks a try.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan assured of his party's participation when Anisul Haque, president of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), along with his colleagues met the LGRD minister at his office in the morning.

"We agreed in principle to take part in the dialogue and try to find a way to end hartal culture," Bhuiyan told reporters after the meeting.

Hartal can not be banned by law but through consensus among the political parties, he observed. BGMEA, desperate to get rid of the hartal fallout in the wake of quota-free regime challenges from next year, earlier obtained confirmation about the main opposition Awami League's participation in the dialogue, which was scheduled for July 14.

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Appoint efficient judges or stop it, Bar asks CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday asked the chief justice to appoint efficient judges to the High Court or stop appointing judges if does not find competent people.

The Bar members across the political divide at a general requisition meeting took a resolution to that end and are likely to submit a memorandum to the chief justice (CJ) tomorrow, asking him to take the necessary step in two weeks' time. They will send a copy of the memo to all Supreme Court (SC) judges.

In an unprecedented move, the lawyers practising in the highest tier of the judiciary also accused some judges of the criminal motion benches of below-par performance.

The case disposal rate of the benches is very low, said Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, president of the Bar Association, elaborating on the poor performance.

He said the benches take one hour to dispose of a case or an application that other benches can do in 15 minutes. "Only the inefficiency of the judges is the reason behind this," he continued.

One hundred and eighty-six lawyers on July 10 raised the demand and expressed grievance against three criminal motion benches. "[We are] alarmed by their poor performance, which has resulted in a backlog of ever-increasing numbers of pending cases."

The lawyers demanded of the chief justice to immediately reconstitute the criminal benches drafting in senior, competent judges for speedy disposal of cases clogging the court.

The demands prompted the Bar to convene yesterday's meeting that unanimously decided to urge Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain to take steps in 15 days. If nothing

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JS COMPLEX Kahn's son appeals not to deform design

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Louis I Kahn's son Nathaniel Kahn in an email to The Daily Star from the United States expressed deep concern over the construction of structures at the parliament complex and said such structures were not in Louis Kahn's original plan.

"I have been informed about the ongoing struggle to protect the area around the parliament complex designed by my father Louis I Kahn."

Nathaniel Kahn, describing the value of the parliament complex, said: "It would be a tragic mistake to build new buildings so close to the complex. It will not only diminish the value and importance of your beautiful capital but also of a world class monument."

"As the filmmaker of this year's academy award nominated film about my father called 'My Architect' which has a long

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Diseases spread fast in flooded districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Waterborne diseases are spreading fast in the 25 districts reeling from monsoon flooding that picked up fierce pace six days ago and has so far killed at least 37 people and stranded close to three million people.

Food forecasters yesterday said flooding in some northern and northeastern districts was set to improve as rains dropped, but more lowlands in central districts including Dhaka were likely to be swamped by floodwaters rolling down from upstream in the next 72

hours. The bodies of an unknown woman, aged about 35, and a child were plucked from the Surma near a breach in the embankment at Gouripur on Tuesday, taking the death toll in Sylhet and Sunamganj districts to 21.

The floods closed hundreds of educational institutions and forced thousands of villagers to move to safety or live on their own without food and shelter.

District administrations in the flooded regions demanded more relief goods, including food, safe

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Philippines pulls out troops, Bulgarian hostage beheaded

Baghdad blast kills 11

AGENCIES, Baghdad

The Philippines government yesterday said it started withdrawing its troops in line with demands by Iraqi militants holding a Filipino hostage after suspected suicide car bombing killed 11 people and wounded 40 yesterday in Baghdad.

It also announced that Angelo de la Cruz is safe and not in danger of

being killed. It was a statement that seemed designed to keep everyone guessing. Foreign Secretary Delia Albert suggested in a statement released by the presidential palace that eight of the Philippines' contingent of 51 soldiers and police had left the country.

"The Foreign Affairs Ministry is

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Saifur's 'no' to traders demand of cutting taxmen's power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday ruled out giving in to businessmen's opposition to vesting tax officials with what they termed discretionary powers, and said, "Hartals or strikes will not bring in any gain. They will have to pay their due VAT."

As per a law enacted in 2001 and made effective from the current fiscal year, tax officials of certain ranks are empowered to take some

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Half the importers dodge VAT, tax

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Nearly half the importers do not pay any VAT and other taxes. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) dug out the fact last fiscal year when it discovered that out of 50,000 registered importers, 23,000 used fake addresses to dodge tax and VAT.

Commodities worth about Tk 60,000 crore was imported the last fiscal year, bringing in Tk 7,083 crore in import duty and Tk 4,397 crore in

import VAT. The fake importers only pay import duty.

Sources said the NBR is taking a number of steps to stop such fraudulent activities.

It has sent a list of 10,000 fake import companies to all the ports so that they can be caught whenever shipping in goods.

The scam was unearthed when the NBR served notices on the importers reminding them to pay

vat and duty. But many importers did not respond to the notice. The NBR then began an investigation and found that about 23,000 of them used fake addresses.

The NBR will now issue notices on the importers asking them to renew their VAT registration every year. At the time of renewal, they will have to clear their dues and file their VAT payment documents, falling

which their imported goods will be

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Biman's rejoinder, our reply

Biman Bangladesh Airlines in a rejoinder has clarified a part of a report headlined "Bought a month ago, Biman now wants to get rid of F28s" The Daily Star ran on Sunday.

Referring to a press conference on Saturday, the Biman rejoinder said its acting managing director (MD) categorically stated that the procurement of the two F28 aircraft was an interim arrangement till new generation planes are procured for their replacement. As such, the content of the report and headline does not truly reflect the statement of the acting MD at the press conference, Biman claimed.

It further claimed that at no stage of the press conference was the acting MD asked about shortage of planes when the ATP aircraft

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15.5pc higher export target set for FY05

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The commerce ministry yesterday set an export target of \$8.57 billion for the current fiscal year, 15.5 per cent up from last fiscal year.

Making up 75 percent of total exports, woven and knit sectors are expected to boom with exports to rise sharply by 32 percent and woven goods to grow by 10 percent. Exports of other industrial products are set to grow by 15.27 percent.

Exports of primary products such as agricultural goods, frozen food, jute and tea are expected to rise by 14.18 percent.

The new export target was tabled at a high-level meeting of the ministry headed by Commerce Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury

yesterday. Meantime, exports in the first 11 months of the last fiscal year clocked \$6.78 billion -- on track to surpass the target of \$7.44 billion by 1.17 percent when the full year's figures are available.

Commenting on the target, Research Director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue Mustafizur Rahman said: "Like last fiscal year, I expect exports to grow by double digits."

"I am not sure about the state of the woven industry, but the knit sector is performing well to grow. On balance, the readymade garment sector will have a positive year," added Mustafiz.

He prescribes a greater emphasis on capacity building and export diversification to prepare for the post-multifibre agreement regime.

BNP leader, 5 others hurt in bomb attacks

UNB, Dhaka

At least six people, including a local BNP leader, were injured in bomb attacks in Khulna and Noakhali last night and the night before.

In Khulna, Sekander Zafarullah Khan Sacchu, vice-president of city BNP, was critically injured as unknown assailants hurled a powerful bomb at him near his house at Gagan Babu Road at about 8:10pm yesterday, according to the UNB.

The bomb blew off the left hand of the BNP leader. He was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital. Police rushed to the spot and were trying to unearth the motive of the attack.

No-one was arrested till 9:00pm.

A bomb attack by unknown assailants on the house of a local

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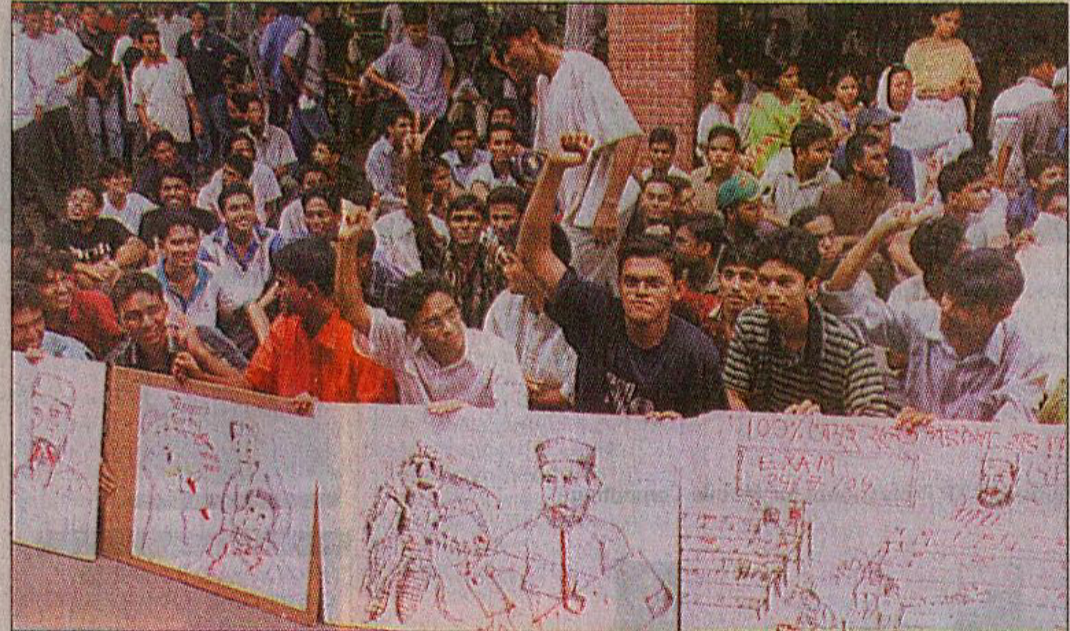


PHOTO: STAR

Students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology carry caricatures during their siege to the chancellor's office in Dhaka yesterday to demand safe water supply to dormitories.

Polluted water at Buet halls make 500 sick in a week

AKBAR HOSSAIN

More than 500 students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) dormitories contracted various water-borne diseases, mostly typhoid and diarrhoea, in the last seven days.

Victims of the four residential halls, which are named after Sher-e-Bangla, Dr MA Rashid, Ahsan Ullah and Nazrul Islam, alleged they fell sick after drinking the polluted water supplied by the Buet administration.

But, the varsity authorities denied the gravity of the situation. They however admitted that if the

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5th Anniversary
15th July 2004

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