

Cave-in scare

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I have sought help from the government to dig canals in the dam so that the water on either side of the dam can be controlled," he said.

The embankment already runs the risk of developing cracks as the surging floodwaters have already reached as high as just two feet below the surface.

RIVERS RAGE

The Buriganga may cross the red mark in a couple of days as rains pelted down and river waters rose 6 centimetres today (yesterday)," Sub-Divisional Engineer Harunur Rashid with the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre told The Daily Star.

He warned that the flooding of lowlands in and around Dhaka would continue another four to five days.

Floods also worsened in the northeastern and central regions of Bangladesh.

The Turag river that recorded a 16cm rise at Mirpur flows 11cm above the danger level, while the Shitalakha with a further 6cm rise at Narayanganj swelled 55cm above the danger point. The Tongkhil recorded a 6cm rise at Tongi, 35 kilometres north of the capital.

Two children yesterday drowned in Sylhet, a flood-hit southeastern district, spiking the death count in floods to more than 50 in 10 days.

Much of Bangladesh went under water since the monsoon began in late June, stranding more than 5 million people in their houses in remote villages or on embankments or in boats.

Bangladesh apart, India and Nepal in South Asia are reeling under floodwaters that have killed more than 350 people and left millions homeless, according to wire reports.

Most rivers of the Meghna and the Southeastern Hill basins recorded a rise and the Ganges-Padma continued to swell at upstream points. But the Brahmaputra-Jamuna continues to fall at all points except for Aricha.

Our Sylhet correspondent reports: The flooding took a serious turn with continued rains and fast-rising rivers fed by ceaseless water onrush from Meghalaya and Assam in the last 60 hours.

At least four people died of diarrhoea in Sylhet on Saturday and more than 200 fell ill with the waterborne disease that is spreading fast in all upazilas.

The dead were named as Abdul Bari, 55, of Dolkiri village, Teraban Bibi, 48, and Fozai Miah, 18, of Latu village in Gowainghat upazila and 7-year-old Liza of Gowainghat village in Beanabazar.

Clarification

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If gas supply to power stations remains steady and uninterrupted, PDB hopes, there will be no major dearth of power as apprehended in the story," the clarification said.

It said there are four new power projects -- Barupukuria 250 MW, Siddhirganj 210 MW, Tongi 100 MW and Baghabari Westmont 130 MW -- in the pipeline and at least 600 megawatt power is expected to be added by next year.

Poor NBR record

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36 percent higher than the collected income tax last fiscal year.

The minister instructed tax commissioners, joint commissioners, deputy commissioners and other key officials to fix monthly targets and regularly report what they have achieved.

The last fiscal year saw a deficit of Tk 755 crore in income tax collection as the NBR collected Tk 4,610 crore against a target of Tk 5,365 crore.

Referring to the collection figure, Saifur told the officials: "It looks like the per head tax payment in our country a year is only Tk 330. A few people actually pay tax."

It came out at the meeting that there are now 15,37,534 Tax Identification Numbers (TIN), while the number of taxpayers was 5,76,000 of the 14 crore people.

To encourage people to pay tax, Saifur asked tax officials to shore up the confidence of people in the tax collection system and authorities through proper assessment and efficient discharge of duties.

"Apply your wisdom and avoid whimsical assessment to help reach the target of tax collection and contribute to the development of the country," he added.

State Minister for Finance Shah Mohammad Abul Hossain Chowdhury and NBR Chairman Khairuzaman Chowdhury were also present at the meeting.

Wife beating

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since his father-in-law Sirajul Islam filed a case under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with Ramna Police Station on July 7.

In the FIR (first information report), Sirajul alleged Saiful demanded dowries several times during his 15-year marriage.

Refused a second marriage two months back, Saiful and two of his accomplices -- Kader Muazzin and Aman Ullah, assistant imam -- beat up her daughter Sabina Islam on the mosque premises, he added.

"Saiful was suspended as he is abstaining from office without any notice since July 8," said Mohammad Abdul Gafur, registrar of the university.

"We've come to know several allegations against him and we're probing those," said the VC.

district headquarters snapped and Chhatak and Tahripur upazila headquarters went 4 feet under water swamping government offices and commercial establishments deep in rolling waters.

The district is reeling from an acute crisis of water purifying tablets.

A tornado hit 15 villages in Chhatak, Doarabazar and Biswambharpur upazilas at about 3:00pm yesterday, injuring about 100 people, razing over 1,500 houses to the ground and uprooting thousands of trees.

Our Pabna correspondent adds: Flooding has marooned thousands of people in Bera, Sujanagar, Faridpur, Bhangura, Chatmohor and Sadar upazilas.

Over 8,000 people took shelter on the flood control embankment, but the local administration distributed no relief until yesterday. Robbers went looting houses as people abandoned their homes to move to safety.

College student Bappi Roy drowned in the floodwaters yesterday as new areas in Lakia, Sreebordi and Sadar upazila were inundated, reports from our Sherpur correspondents said.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: Fresh areas in Gaibandha were flooded and Dinajpur-Gaibandha Road went 2 feet under water with the Karatoa swelling further.

Over 200 villages in Barisal, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna and Jhalakathi district towns were flooded in the last 48 hours as the water onrush to the downstream continues in the southwest, our Barisal correspondent reports.

Saarc summit

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Referring to Kathmandu summit, Morshed said it was decided there that the summit would be held in January every year for the convenience of all member-states.

The 12th summit was held in Islamabad last January accordingly, he added.

Interim Pakistani Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain is expected to open the foreign minister's meetings slated for July 20-21.

Morshed said Dhaka would not restrict itself to any particular issue during bilateral discussions with Delhi, represented by India's External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh.

The foreign minister is also expected to meet his Pakistani and Nepali counterparts on the sidelines of the meeting.

Leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) agreed in January to launch a free trade area from 2006 to boost regional commerce, which accounts for less than five percent of member states' global trade.

AFP adds: Security has been tightened for the ministerial meeting in Islamabad where police commandos equipped with sophisticated weapons have been deployed.

Yesterday's secretary-level meeting, chaired by Pakistani Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokhar, was to finalise a 16-item agenda which includes the South Asia Free Trade Area (Safat) pact, promotion of investment, standards of quality control and cooperation in poverty alleviation, environment, communications and energy, the foreign office in Islamabad said.

Saarc, established in 1985, groups Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

India's Foreign Minister Natwar, due on Monday for the meeting, is also expected to meet his Pakistan counterpart Mian Khusheed Mehmood Kasuri, officials said.

Tragic!

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the eldest son who ran the bakery, hanging from the ceiling while his ailing father, mother, younger brother, wife and two sons were strewn across the beds," said Banerjee.

The police said Sankar's family members appeared to have consumed poison.

The Saha family suicide finds an echo in a spate of farmer's suicides in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

According to police, some 900 suicides have been reported in Andhra Pradesh since 1997 by farmers and their families burdened by debts and failing crops.

Drop unapproved

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pressure from lawmakers, committee Chairman M Akbar Ali told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We asked the ministry not to include such projects that have no viability and create problems in implementing the ADP," he added.

A total of 330 unapproved projects were incorporated into the current ADP with a block allocation of Tk 983.57 crore.

"The ministry has yet to decide on allocation of money on unapproved projects," the chairman said.

In the last FY-2003-04, 174 unapproved projects were included in the ADP with the allocation of Tk 2,417 crore. Every project had individual allocation," he added.

On implementation of current year's ADP, Saifur asked the parliamentary body to monitor the progress. Akbar presided over the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Khaleda, Manmohan may meet in Bangkok

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is likely to meet new Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Bangkok on the sidelines of the upcoming Bimstec summit.

"There's a possibility of a meeting between the two prime ministers in Bangkok," Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told reporters at Zia International Airport in reply to a query about it.

Khaleda will lead Bangladesh at the Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) summit scheduled for July 30-31 in the Thai capital.

The prime minister will also seize the opportunity of meeting the heads of the state or government of other members of the sub-regional body, which has recently included Nepal and Bhutan as member countries.

The foreign minister said the Bimstec summit talks will focus on economic issues in the context of latest world order.

HC set aside graft case against Nasim

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday set aside a graft case pending with a lower court against former home minister Mohammad Nasim and others including his then secretary and now acting Chief Election Commissioner Saifur Rahman.

Hearing both sides, a division bench comprising Justice Syed Mohammad Dastagir Husain and Justice AKM Fazlur Rahman delivered the verdict making "absolute" the rule issued earlier.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption filed the case with Ramna Police Station in December 2001 accusing them of misappropriating Tk 81.40 lakh through tender bungling in awarding work for preparing a million passport books.

JS body meets without quorum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary standing committee on power and mineral resources ministry held a meeting yesterday with only two members present, meaning without a quorum, violating the rule of procedure (RO) of the Jatiya Sangsad (JS).

The chairman of the 10-member committee, Shahidul Islam, however denied the violation. "We did nothing against the rules of procedure. We examined the rules and made sure that holding the meeting with two members present would not violate them," Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

The other member present was State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud.

According to the RO, the quorum to constitute a sitting of a JS committee shall be, as near as may be, one third of the total number of members of it. And, if at any time fixed for any sitting of the committee or if at any time during any such sitting, there is no quorum, the chairman of the committee shall either suspend the sitting until there is a quorum or adjourn the sitting to some future day.

Islam however said a third member was supposed to join the meeting, for whom they had been waiting and who finally he did not arrive.

The meeting was held for over an hour and discussed the power sector situation.

Govt to recruit

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will prepare a list of eligible teachers after taking necessary tests. It is a tested and conventional system for recruiting teachers in UK and US, he said. He, however said non-government schools will not be forced to recruit teachers put on the list.

To revitalise the School Management Committee (SMC), the ministry has taken steps to amend the SMC Regulation 1977, he said.

The ministry also plans to distribute 20,000 computers among schools and madrasas to promote computer education. The ministry so far has 10,000 computers and 5,000 printers for distribution.

An academic calendar has been introduced in selected areas to maintain an integrated schedule at schools.

The minister said the ministry has brought out school textbooks in time for the third consecutive year and it has decided to outsource textbooks to private parties to improve the content of textbooks.

Education Secretary Faruq Ahmed Siddiqui and Director General of the Directorate of Higher Secondary Education Mohammad Junaid were, among others, present.

Germany threatens

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irregularities. It then recommended commissioning the audit before proceeding any further with the funding.

The proposed audit would look into the contract awarding procedure, pricing and appropriateness of various contracts involving the project. About the contracts, The Daily Star on January 10 reported serious tender manipulations to favour a certain company.

The first phase of the project targets to generate 280-MW power at a cost of 150 million euros. The Daily Star reported that the KIW was providing 40 million euros as 'untied grant' while some 15 Palli Bidyut Samities (PBS) or rural electricity co-operatives would raise the rest.

The Star report said, "First preliminary findings indicate that the draft PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) and draft O&M (operation and maintenance) contract for DNPP will have to be modified to comply with internationally accepted standards."

In late 2003 the RPCL floated the tender for the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contract for the first phase of the 450-MW DNPP, but the contract terms barred participation by any EPC contractors, the report said.

A German company named Lahmeyer, engaged without any tender, had formulated the contract terms. Consequently, only two companies -- Siemens of Germany and Alsthom of Switzerland -- initially participated in the bidding.

Following The Daily Star report, Siemens however quit the race. Only Alsthom and a third company, Kawasaki of Japan, submitted final bids.

A host of conditions imposed by Lahmeyer with support from the KIW has made the project too expensive, meaning the rural consumers of the project will be the ultimate losers, as they will have to pay more than was required.

Investigating the allegation that the RPC is strongly influenced by the

O&M contractor for the Mymensingh Plant -- Lahmeyer International Palli Power Services Ltd (LIPPS) -- the KIW found that a LIPPS representative attends RPC board meetings, against all corporate norms.

The LIPPS is also accused of draining out millions of dollars a year by charging consultancy fees at a rate much higher than that of any other consultant to the country's power plants.

In the last few months, the KIW and Bangladesh officials met several times to resolve the issue, while the RPCL, panicked by the possibility of an audit, persistently refused access to its files.

The RPCL initially responded to the allegations of corruption by firing its managing director, Abdus Sabur, who actually had no role in the DNPP. Abdus Sabur challenged the legality of his termination at the High Court and the court is scheduled to give its verdict on July 26.

The RPCL has all through been playing a protective role for about the LIPPS, which calls the shots in the RPCL, and rejected KIW's request for the audit in a letter in April. The letter said, "The [RPCL] Board failed to understand how and why KIW can have different views all of a sudden. The Board therefore have legitimate suspicions that there might be some corners conspiring to create difference between RPC and KIW and thus impair the progress... of the project."

"The RPC have identified some wholly alienable and heinous efforts of Abdus Sabur, Managing Director, RPC and Habibur Rahman, KIW's local expert, to foil the implementation of the project," the letter alleged.

"Since the so called allegations as raised by the vested quarters with nefarious interests can not be considered as genuine allegations, the matter of commissioning an audit is neither necessary nor advisable," the RPCL letter declared.

The RPCL also maintained that filtering out EPC contractors by the bid criteria set by LIPPS could not be considered an irregularity.

Professionals' tax

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The list also brought forward information on public figures such as Khandakar Mahubb Uddin Ahmed (who paid Tk 2,50,000 in tax in 2003-04), M Saifur Rahman (Tk 2,12,359), Barrister Moudud Ahmed (Tk 2 lakh), Barrister Nazmul Huda (Tk 62,975) and Barrister Jamir Uddin Sircar (Tk 26,700).

It also sheds light on eminent persons such as Barrister Rafiqul Haq, the highest taxpayer among lawyers, (who paid Tk 12 lakh), Barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud (Tk 2,81,733) and Dr Kamal Hossain (Tk 2 lakh).

This year, Barrister Rabeya Bhuiyan, former minister, has been penalised among lawyers. Some other lawyers have also been penalised or have left their tax process incomplete.

Among the architects and engineers, Shahidullah and Associates paid the highest tax of Tk 48.62 lakh in 2003-04, followed by the Engineering and Architects Limited (Tk 18.19 lakh), Architecture 21 Limited (Tk 10.62 lakh), Prokolpo Upadesta Limited (Tk 9.34 lakh) and Shapati Sangsad (Tk 7.89 lakh). A few others paid below Tk 5 lakh in tax and 20 others on the list of 41 did not pay tax or paid less than Tk 1 lakh.

Only over a dozen chartered accountants paid taxes more than Tk 1 lakh. The top taxpayers of the group are Kazi Aminul Haq (Tk 5,06,531), Abdul Hafiz Chowdhury (Tk 4,77,717) and ANAH Siddiqui (Tk 4,77,717).

Doctors command a public impression of the high-income group, but only a third of the top 100 doctors pay more than Tk 1 lakh in tax. Dr Pran Gopal Dutta leads the group with a tax of Tk 4.18 lakh, followed by Dr Mobin Khan (Tk 4.14 lakh) and Dr Akram Ullah (Tk 3.51 lakh).

Health sector sources say many leading doctors did not figure on the list of top 100 taxpaying physicians.

WMD probe

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Iraq's weapons which reached conclusions at, the inquiry team said, "the outer limits" of what the intelligence allowed.

Blair's parliamentary address "may have reinforced this impression", the Butler report concluded in its final version.

However, according to the Sunday Telegraph, the original draft gave the opinion that Blair had personally masterminded this misleading impression, calling into question his good faith.

Despite being cleared of deliberate deception, Blair -- who argued the case for backing the US-led war almost exclusively on the basis of the threat posed by Iraq's WMDs -- was criticised in the report.

He was by no means in the clear, a member of the inquiry team was quoted as telling the Sunday Telegraph.

"The whole thing points straight to the man in charge... absolutely to where responsibility belongs, which is the prime minister, which is what we could not say."

A series of reports have said that Butler, who headed Britain's civil service for a decade before his retirement in 2001, had felt it was not his place to produce a report so damning it could make Blair's position untenable.

Golakata

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prompting police to retaliate, turning the whole area into a battlefield for 10 minutes.

After the gunfight, Mujibar, Shahabuddin and Selim Sajjad were found lying on the ground in pools of blood. Police recovered a pistol and some live bullets from the spot.

Bullets thrashed Mujibar's right knee and left elbow. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at 1:00am only to be declared dead on arrival.

On July 12 Monday, police Constable Wahiduzzaman and two alleged criminals Nakkata Mostafa and Moti died in shootouts at Rayerbazar in Mohammadpur. Police also had gunned down a 65-year-old man with alleged ties to Mujibar's criminal outfit the same day after they searched out a criminal from his house.

LALBAGH LYNCING
At around zero hour today, a mob beat three alleged robbers dead and injured three others, one of them critically, at Amigola in Lalbagh in Old Dhaka.

One of the three lynched was identified as Kala Jamal. The injured are Rafiq, Mujibur and Bipul. Rafiq, whose condition was reported to be critical, is undergoing treatment at the DMCH, while the other two were taken into police custody.

Lalbagh Police Station Officer-in-Charge Golam Mustafa said locals caught the gang, including the six, while it was apparently preparing with bombs and firearms for a robbery.

When the gang exploded bombs to make an escape, the crowd of locals turned into an angry mob, he added.

The bodies of the dead were sent to the DMCH for autopsy.

15 hurt as JCD, BCL clash

CU CORRESPONDENT

Over 15 students were hurt as activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) clashed on Government Commerce College campus in the city yesterday.

Sources said activists of the JCD, students wing of ruling BNP, under protection of Double Mooring police arrived on the campus at around 10:00am allegedly to establish their supremacy.

Police yesterday meanwhile denied claims by their Indian counterparts that 25 Indian separatists were gunned down by unknown assailants in a hotel in Dhaka.

"There is no truth to these claims," Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Ashraful Huda told the AFP.

"We have had no knowledge of such an incident. If such a thing had happened, it would be very big news -- everyone would know about it. I have no knowledge about it."

The police chief of India's north-eastern state of Tripura, GM Srivastava, claimed from the state capital Agartala that 25 militants, most of them members of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), were killed in an attack on the hotel in Dhaka's Segun Bagicha on Saturday night.

India has long accused Dhaka of allowing northeastern rebels to operate from bases inside Bangladesh from where they say they carry out hit-and-run guerrilla strikes on federal soldiers in the region.

Bangladesh denies New Delhi's claims, saying there are no Indian militant camps inside their country.

39 structures

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team knocked down a slum.

With yesterday's drive, the authorities have demolished about 1,800 illegally set up structures and recovered 112 acres of land on and along the Buriganga since 2001.

The drive continues today.

US airstrike

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Sunday morning rocked the city. Scores of people ran to the scene and dug through the wreckage, looking for survivors. One witness, who declined to give his name, said the house belonged to a "very poor family." Angry crowds gathered at the scene, chanting "God is great."

"We heard the sound of jetfighters and then we heard four explosions in the house occupied by civilian residents," Lt. Saad Khalaf of the Fallujah Brigade, the local defence force.

Body parts were scattered around the scene; some remains were stacked and covered by a grey blanket.

The attack killed 14 people and injured three, according to Saad al-Amili, a Health Ministry official.

U.S. Marines besieged Fallujah, a hotbed of resistance, for several weeks last spring and then handed over security to the new Fallujah Brigade, made up of local residents and commanded by officers from Saddam Hussein's former army. Many of those who fought the Marines joined the brigade.

Sumon's family

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yesterday and Saturday. They asked me to be careful in filing a case," said Sumon's father Monir Hossain. "They did not identify themselves but threatened with dire consequences if we implicate them in Sumon's death," he added.

The family of Sumon, a key witness to the murder of Awami League (AL) lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, did not lodge any case until 8:00pm yesterday. "We are waiting for the party men's decision, as he [Sumon] was closely involved with the party," Hossain said.

Azmat Ullah, municipality chairman and secretary of Gazipur district AL, yesterday told The Daily Star that Sumon's family members would surely lodge a case. Gazipur district AL held a rally yesterday evening with central leaders attending on Station Road in Tongi protesting the 'killing'.

Hossain once again accused the law enforcing agencies for his son's death. "If he had committed any crime, they could put him on trial," he said. "But, they can not just arrest someone and beat him to death."

Meanwhile, inconsistencies have surfaced between the first information report (FIR) filed by Tajul Islam Akand with Tongi Police Station Thursday night accusing Sumon and two others of extortion and the state-

ment of Rab headquarter.

The FIR said the three were injured in a scuffling with Rab men during their arrest in front of Jan Khabar Hotel at 4:00pm Thursday. But a Rab press release said Rab had rescued and held them during a mob beating at 4:15pm.

The unnatural death (UD) case filed by Tongi Police Station duty officer Rafiqul Islam and the Rab statement also give two different times of Sumon's death. The Rab release said Islam informed Rab-1 office that Sumon had died at the hospital at 1:05am Friday while Islam in the FIR in the UD case said the hospital authorities phoned him at 1:30am to inform about Sumon's death at 1:20am.

Flood pushes

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from Tk 16/kg to Tk 20/kg, Chichinga from Tk 12/kg to Tk 16/kg, Jhinga from Tk 12/kg to Tk 18/kg, Lau from Tk 15/kg to Tk 20/kg, Papaya from Tk 8/kg to Tk 11/kg and potato from Tk 9/kg to Tk 11/kg.

Abdul Aziza a trader of New Market said, "price of vegetables has increased due to low supply rather than the flood." The price of onion, ginger, garlic, and dry chilli remained unchanged. Price of Dal (pulses) increased from Tk 44/kg to Tk 46/kg and soybean oil from Tk 52 to Tk 54 per litre, proper reason could not be found for this increase. Price of farm chickens has gone up significantly from Tk 68/kg to Tk 74/kg. Md Jamal, a Karwan Bazar chicken trader, said "Chicken farms in low lying areas around Dhaka are hit by flood causing the sudden price hike." Sugar price also jumped from Tk 28/kg to Tk 32/kg. Fish