

Rain paralyses life

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because of torrential rains in the south, southeast and central regions.

Thousands of acres of rice and other crops, hurriedly planted by farmers in the wake of the monsoon flooding, were damaged again. The rain also destroyed Aman paddies and seed fields, killing farmers' hope of rebuilding life in the wake of the devastating floods.

Weathermen said the situation would improve tomorrow evening when the rain-laden clouds in the heart of the depression will drop to the ground, weakening the low.

"The intensity will come down tomorrow. The land depression has already turned into a well marked low and remained stationary half-way between Faridpur and Dhaka. The more rain will occur, the weaker the low will be," said Arzumand Habib, deputy director of the meteorological office.

Children in most areas in Dhaka could not attend school, most people remained indoors, office-goers faced serious difficulty and many went to office totally soaked.

The gusty winds uprooted trees in many places, blocking roads and causing traffic congestion.

A Biman flight from Kathmandu failed to land at ZIA at 5:30pm and landed in Chittagong, another Biman airliner scheduled to leave for Singapore at 9:00am yesterday was rescheduled for 7:30pm, a Malaysia Airlines flight scheduled for zero hours was rescheduled for 8:00am today.

The Bangladesh Secretariat compound was inundated. Power supply to the buildings, housing top government offices, remained snapped since 11:00am as rainwater swamped the power substation there.

Secretariat building No. 4 and several tin-roofed offices were also submerged. "I have seen water on the secretariat premises many times in my 25 years of job, but it is beyond imagination," said an elderly assistant with the Power Division.

Attendance to government and private offices was very thin. "I entered my office wading through knee-deep water and found it reach my waist when I came out in the afternoon," said a bank official at Nayapaltan.

Waist-deep water submerged the VIP Road in front of the Prime Minister's Office and one to three feet swamped most city roads including Manik Mia Avenue, Bijoy Sharani, Darus Salam Road, Airport Road, Mirpur-1, Mirpur Road, Outer Circular Road, Bijnayagar and Abdul Ghani Road, giving them a river-like look.

The plight of passengers who got stranded on different roads, at bus

stands and in passenger buses, CNG-run three-wheelers, taxicabs knew no bounds.

A few rickshaws and three-wheelers that braved the water charged many-time higher fares.

The submerged manholes or potholes on roads added to people's sufferings as wheels of rickshaws got caught in hidden traps and passengers fell into water.

Malibagh, Shantinagar, Motijheel, Khilgaon, Badda, Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi, Mirpur, Shukrabad and old Dhaka were the worst-hit areas in the capital.

Water entered the ground floors of many houses in the city and put slum-dwellers onto the streets, sending their shanties under three feet water in many places.

The overnight downpour forced trade suspension at the country's prime bourse Dhaka Stock Exchange. The incessant rain dampened banking activities, especially in Motijheel commercial heart where many ground floor bank branches went under water.

Shopping malls and other businesses were virtually deserted of shoppers.

About two feet water entered most residential halls of Dhaka University and only a few students, teachers and staff could be seen on the campus.

Prof Abul Khair, provost of Shahidullah hall, told The Daily Star that he had to evacuate his family from the submerged Provost's Bungalow.

The morgue of Dhaka Medical College Hospital also went under water.

An official of the Flood Forecasting Centre said the central and southern regions would experience localised floods. He, however, turned down the probability of flashflood as major rivers flowed below danger marks.

Our correspondents from Barisal, Satkhira, Pabna, Sylhet, Chittagong, Khulna, Bandarban, Manikganj and Noakhali reported the same story.

They said many thatched and mud houses collapsed and flimsy houses blown away. Blackout gripped many towns and villages because of knocked out power lines.

The rains also hobbled the search for about 20 people missing after a ferry sank on Sunday in the Jamuna river near Sirajganj in which at least seven people died.

A landslide also killed five members of a family in the southern port city of Chittagong, also on Sunday.

Power shortfall now 200MW

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Power Iqbal Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that at present the power generation capacity in the country is nearly 3,400 megawatt (MW) against the demand for 3,600 MW.

The total power generation shortfall is 150 to 200 MW and the government has undertaken various measures toward raising power generation capacity, he said responding to BNP lawmaker Khodeja Amin's question.

He listed the government steps as 210 MW thermal power generation plant at Shidirdganj, expected to go into operation this month, 105 MW thermal power plant at Tongi by December this year, the first unit of the 2x125 MW thermal power plant at Barapukuria by October next year and second unit by January 2006.

Bangladesh saw 87 hours blackout at peak hour during July 2004 to shed 80 MW to 100 MW electricity, Iqbal said while replying to another question of Muhammad Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury from Jamaat-e-Islami.

The Rural Electrification Board (REB) has around 53.95 lakh consumers in 41,125 villages across the country till June 2004 and the REB operating income was Tk 2074.13 crore during 2003-04 fiscal against the year's operating expenditure of Tk 2081.61 crore, he mentioned answering another question from Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Mia Golam Parwar.

3 dies

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soaked the cottage and the wire was also torn in the storm.

His cousin cum colleague rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead after an hour.

A teenager Mohid Hossain of 3/9 Naya Paltan was touched by an electrified wire on the road in Ramna at 11:00am. Locals rushed him to DMCH and learned about his death.

While, an electric wire fell due to rain on an unidentified male, aged around 40 at Sowarighat in Kotwali at 11:00am.

A pedestrian Manir rushed him to DMCH where doctors declared him dead.

Interpol expert

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judicial enquiry commission. The commission formed soon after the August 21 grenade attacks was initially given three weeks to submit its report that expired on September 11.

Interpol experts Robert Thompson, fire tool-mark examiner, and Frev Bredford, explosives enforcement officer, flew back to Lyon after a four-day stay in the capital, sources said.

They will submit a summary report on the findings of the Interpol experts. Since August 29, six Interpol experts have so far arrived here and four of them left already.

Sources said more Interpol experts including animation specialist and psychoanalyst may visit Dhaka to assist the probe.

Marash Vucilaj and Jeffery Eyles, Interpol experts still running the probe, yesterday could not move due to heavy rains caused by a depression in the Bay.

JUDICIAL COMMISSION

The one-member judicial commission comprising Justice Md Joydul Abedin has started recording statements of some intelligence agency officials deployed at the spot on August 21.

The commission has so far recorded statements of about 90 witnesses.

Dhaka, Delhi

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optimistic about finding an acceptable formula of sharing the Teesta waters at the Dhaka meet. "Tomorrow's meeting is part of continuous consultations. We've difference of opinion on the sharing formula. Let's see what progress we can make," a senior official of the JRC told UNB.

The JCE was established in pursuance of the commitment of Bangladesh and India under the 1996 renewed Indo-Bangladesh Treaty on sharing of the Ganges waters. Both sides agreed to conclude water-sharing treaties/agreements on other common rivers.

The JCE headed by the water resources secretaries of the two countries has been working since its inception to work out a permanent and mutually acceptable formula for bilateral water-sharing of seven important rivers. But it could not reach at any such modality due to disagreement of the Indian side, JRC officials noted.

The last JRC meeting took place in August, 2003 in New Delhi. The 1972 Ganges water-sharing treaty lays down that four JRC meetings should be held every year.

The water flow in the Teesta in the lean season (November to May) has declined to around 400 cusecs in recent years from 5,000 cusecs. So, Bangladesh wants an immediate agreement to get its due share of the Teesta waters to save itself from an ecological disaster.

The Indian delegation will fly home on September 16.

EPW special issue

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Ahiuwalia and Prof Mohammad Yunus. Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud of Bangladesh and Isher Ahiuwalia, an Indian economist, currently a visiting professor at University of Maryland, edited the pieces.

It covered key issues like economic transformation, achievements and challenges, trade, food aid and food security, rice economy of Bangladesh, impact of trade liberalisation, Indo-Bangladesh economic relations, microcredit, health and population, primary education and NGO sector in Bangladesh.

"The roots of the governance problem in Bangladesh lie in the existing politics of confrontation, weaknesses in the practice of parliamentary democracy and the rent-seeking collusion among the political parties, state machinery and vested commercial interests," observed the EPW, of which Nobel laureate Amartya Sen is a patron and contributor.

The prevailing confrontational politics is not only hindering democratic consolidation, it also carries the risk of causing serious economic disruption, it said.

About the proposed free trade agreement between India and Bangladesh, the weekly said mutually beneficial agreements are facilitated if various aspects of

economic cooperation are seen in a comprehensive framework and if there is willingness in both countries to take a long view.

Microcredit is Bangladesh's home-grown innovation for poverty alleviation providing a widening range of services to meet the economic and social needs of its members, mostly poor women, the EPW said.

It praised Bangladesh's GDP growth, per capita income and population growth. GDP accelerated to 4.4 percent in the first half of the 1990s, and to 5.2 percent in the second half, which was 3.7 percent in the 1980s.

"The acceleration in per capita income was more marked because of the slowdown in population growth from an average of 2.4 percent per annum to 1.5 percent between the two decades," the weekly said.

Bangladesh has achieved success in many areas of economic and social development despite the presence of the allegedly poor and deteriorating quality of governance, such as manifest in widespread corruption and inefficient administration, the EPW said.

It also appreciated self-sufficiency in food production in Bangladesh.

BNPPP blames AL

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A lawmaker urged the government high-ups to give a serious thought to foreign policy as 'a well-planned conspiracy is going on against the country'.

Khaleda in her speech accused the main opposition of conspiring to tarnish the country's image and said it wants to prove to the foreigners the presence of Islamic extremists like al-Qaeda in the country.

"We have to prove that we do not patronise Islamic extremists and that no such groups exist in the country," Khaleda told the lawmakers, according to a meeting source. In her 40-minute speech, Khaleda said, "No conspiracy of the opposition will succeed if we are wary of it."

The meeting also discussed strategies for general discussion on grenade attacks and the prime minister observed that the treasury bench would benefit from such a dialogue.

She also directed strengthening of the party to eliminate what she said confusion created by the AL after the grenade attacks.

After the meeting, BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters that the latest political situation and the strategy to run parliament smoothly were discussed.

BNP Whip Ashraf Hossain told newsmen that the prime minister said conspiracies might be going on at home and abroad and the party has to be more wary about it.

She said the government has already passed three years in office and during the remaining two years, it has to work more for development.

Wallich

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she attended office from 2:00pm yesterday and worked on important files.

She could not be reached as telephone calls to her office were diverted to public relations officials.

Sources said Wallich might be staying at Sonargaon Hotel where she booked in on arrival from Bangkok.

Wallich received a bomb threat in a letter on September 7 from a fake address of Gulshan, which was later found to be Wallich's official residence here.

Police, security officials and top officials of the Rapid Action Battalion rushed to the World Bank office and reassured Wallich about her security.

They informed her of the government's stand to provide top security for her at office, residence and on road.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman also assured her of the special security coverage and advised her not to move out of the country. The World Bank Vice President for South Asia Praful C Patel also advised her not to leave Dhaka.

But Wallich left Dhaka silently for Singapore that night by a Singapore Airlines flight.

She reportedly told her security officials during her departure that she was leaving the country on personal grounds and would be back soon.

Saifur expressed surprise over her departure saying bomb threats were being used here as political gimmick and even he himself received such threats on phone from unidentified sources.

After her departure from Dhaka, Saifur talked to top World Bank officials in Washington including Praful C Patel who in turn asked Wallich to return to her workplace immediately.

Ten of the 153 lawmakers present at the meeting spoke.

Some lawmakers expressed dissatisfaction over the poor performances of some ministers.

Prime Minister asked the ministers to work for equal development across the country instead of just concentrating on their own constituencies.

State minister vs the minister: Meeting sources said State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Haq Milon levelled allegations of corruption against Education Minister Osman Faruk and said the minister has been interfering with his work.

"The education minister prevents me from work and he does everything alone," Milon was quoted to have said. "The education minister has incorporated 336 schools for MPO (monthly payment order) where as I could incorporate only a few schools of my own district."

"I have launched a campaign to halt cheating in public examinations and when the newspapers falsely wrote against me about my using helicopters, the ministry did not protect me even by issuing a press release against the report," he said.

Tornadoes

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villages of Bashkhali upazila at 9:30pm and 10:00pm Sunday with rain and thundershower kept lashing the entire country for the third day.

More than 350 houses were razed to the ground in the two villages, leaving at least 20 people injured.

"Two anchored vessels - an engine boat and a trawler - were blown up from Katharia khal and dropped about 250 metres away by the violent storms that lasted 15 minutes," says a spot report.

Of the injured, 13 people were admitted to local health complex. Another tornado hit Lalangan of Sidakunda upazila at about 3:00am and battered down over 300 houses to the ground, leaving more than 30 people injured. Seven of the injured were admitted to local health complex.

Meanwhile, torrents of incessant rain and onrush of water from upper-catchment sent rivers into a spate. Low-lying areas in Banskhali, Anwara and Sitakunda upazilas were flooded yesterday with waters overflowing embankments.

Different areas in the port city also were submerged, paralysing normal life.

Due to inclement weather, operations at the seaport were carried out on a limited scale. "Restrictions have been put on ships sailing from the port till 6pm today," one official said.

Meanwhile, Sitakunda Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Muhibul Haq told The Daily Star Staff Correspondent in Chittagong that the tornado also blew away electric polls, and damaged towers of the Grameen Phone and City Cell, crippling the power supply and mobile phone networks in the area.

The power supply and cell phone networks were yet to be restored till filing of this report at 8:00pm.

The cyclonic storm raged through about 20 feet wide area, blowing away roofs of some schools, local post office and madarasas.

Met office sources, which recorded 146mm of rainfall yesterday, forecast more rains for today.

Cabinet directs jail uplift

BSS, Dhaka

The cabinet yesterday at its regular meeting instructed the authorities concerned to take necessary measures for further improvement of jail administration.

The meeting chaired by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the Prime Minister's Office was apprised of the programmes on jail reforms of the cabinet committee.

The meeting was also informed the jail authorities have acted on the recommendations of the cabinet committee to improve facilities for the prisoners in various jails across the country including expansion of infrastructure.

The internal conditions of different prisons were also bettered, jail authorities claimed.

The cabinet in the meeting also went-ahead a proposal for corroboration of bilateral agreement between Bangladesh and Singapore on investment, development and protection.

The meeting approved a proposal for amending Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, 2003.

Cabinet members and state ministers in-charge of different ministries took part in the meeting while cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the prime minister and secretaries concerned were also present.

Decapitated man identified as fax shop employee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A father yesterday identified the beheaded body retrieved in 5 pieces as his son, a phone-fax shop employee in Dhamondii.

Abu Taher of Ranichara, Chandina of Comilla district yesterday described his son at Midford Hospital as Mohammad Sadek, 20, who worked in a phone-fax shop at Dhamondii's Khan Plaza.

The body chopped into 5 pieces was found Saturday in a jute-sack lying near Aliah Madrassa on Urdu Road.

Taher, however, could not say anything about the reason of the killing. Police also was clueless until last night about the incident.

Australia complete

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Antipodean rivals is washed out.

Matthew Hayden edged a wild swipe behind for 23 to give Howard Johnson a prize wicket while Charles Reid dropped a caught-and-bowled chance off Gilchrist.

Kasporovic earlier grabbed four for 14 and Gillespie four for 15 to limit the United States to 65, the lowest total in Champions Trophy history, in just 24 overs.

Only Steve Massiah (23) managed to make double figures although the US showed some fight against the world's most potent attack.

They were not helped by 42-year-old former West Indies batsman Clayton Lambert being ruled out with injury.

Brett Lee started the demolition by bowling opener Mark Johnson for a duck second ball before Michael Clarke dropped a chance in the slips off Leon Romero's net delivery.

Romero was run out by Damien Martyn next over, however, unintentionally blocked by bowler Glenn McGrath going for a dubious run.

McGrath, 34, returned to the Australia attack for their first game in the 12-team tournament but failed to take a wicket.

Torkel

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that the government in Bangladesh does not protect the opposition party.

He also lamented the lack of progress in the investigation into the deadly attacks that left 20 people dead and hundreds wounded.

The US official offered deep sympathy for members of the bereaved families and conveyed sympathy to those injured in the attacks on the AL rally on the Bangabandhu Avenue.

Talking to the news agency, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to the AL chief, said that during the meeting they made a point that "one biggest hurdle is that the government is in its characteristic denial mood in terms of presence of extremists and militant groups who use violence as a tool for furthering their objectives."

Saber said they also discussed the recent arms hauls in Chittagong, Bogra and at Kuril in the capital as they suspect that there is a link between the August 21 grenade carnage and the existence of illegal arms.

They also told Patterson that all the attacks so far were targeted at democratic and secular forces.

Awami League leaders expressed concern at the killing of criminals in Rab custody. "Critical information about their real godfathers could be gathered from the criminals had they been alive," the AL leaders said during the meeting, demanding probe into the deaths after Rab nabbing.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, MP and International Affairs Secretary Syed Abul Hossain, MP were also present.

US planes pound

FROM PAGE 12
"In proud Fallujah, thanks be to God, a spying American plane was shot down," said a statement signed by the Tawhid and Jihad group and posted on the Internet yesterday. The message's authenticity could not be confirmed, but it appeared on a Website known for carrying statements by Islamic militant groups.

Tawhid and Jihad is linked to the al-Qaeda terror network and led by the Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. It claimed responsibility for the series of attacks on US and Iraqi government targets on Sunday, one of the heaviest days of fighting in Iraq since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein last year.

Columns of black smoke rose into the sky and hundreds of Iraqis could be seen leaving the city. US forces used loudspeakers to call on the people of Falluja to cooperate with them and "expel terrorists from the center of the city."

The city is a cauldron of anti-US anger. American marines pulled out of Falluja in May after weeks of fighting with guerrillas which killed hundreds of Iraqis and sparked widespread outrage in the country. Security was handed over to an Iraqi force which has since disintegrated.

The US military has conceded it is not in control of some parts of Iraq, including Falluja and the nearby city of Ramadi. US and Iraqi officials say they are launching a drive to pacify these areas in time for elections due in January 2005.

Fighting also erupted in Haifa Street in central Baghdad on Sunday, and there were at least seven car bomb attacks.

US troops yesterday patrolled Baghdad's Haifa Street, where at least 13 people were killed and 55 wounded in clashes between insurgents and US soldiers the day before, heralding a strict night-time curfew.

Shouting in Arabic through loudspeakers mounted on military vehicles, soldiers said the curfew would come into effect from 8:00 pm (1600 GMT) to 4:00 am along

Savar rape victim

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in the wake of acid burns in the last two weeks. Doctors treating her at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) are now dressing the affected areas.

"The doctors cleaned the rotten tissues and dressed her yesterday," said her sister Nasima, adding that gangrene has affected mostly her right thigh.

The criminals had poured acid on her legs, stomach, back and head three days after they abandoned her in the spot taking her dead.

"She can now utter words precisely but is yet to gain control over her body," her sister added. The doctors fear her becoming partially paralysed.

Following her statement, police arrested accused Fazar Ali Foza alias Akash from his house in Savar. The IO (investigation officer) took Akash to the victim at the DMCH where she identified him.

Federer lifts

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He used his punishing forehand and his superb serve and volley game to smother Hewitt and winning 31 of 35 net points in the one hour, 51 minute match.

Federer fired 11 aces, hammered 40 winners and converted seven of 13 break-point opportunities.

Federer broke Hewitt's serve four times before the match was barely 20 minutes old but Hewitt rebounded to break Federer to level the second set 5-5.

Fourth-seeded Hewitt's first break point opportunity came in the sixth game of the second set. But Federer served three consecutive aces to get out of the jam and take a 4-2 lead.

Bill for women's

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the women members by the directly elected members of parliament.

The women members would be elected within 90 days of publication of official results of a general election. But in case of the present parliament, the election will be held within 45 days from the passage of the bill.

The reserved seats would be allocated to the parties and alliances on the basis of their representation in parliament. After the allocation of seats, a party or an alliance will also be able to form a separate alliance with other parties, alliances and independent members for election of women members to the allocated seats.

A provision of the bill says, "Independent members can form alliance of their own if they do not join any party or alliance and women seats would be allocated in favour of that alliance according to its strength."

According to a rough estimate, the ruling BNP may get 30 seats and the main opposition Awami League nine seats as per their present strength in the House.

The bill was sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on law ministry for vetting and returning it to the House within a month.

most of the busy commercial street, said shopkeeper Alaa Mohammed. The US military said it was investigating an incident in Baghdad Sunday in which US helicopters opened fire on people milling around an abandoned American armored vehicle.

At least five people were killed, including a producer for Al Arabiya television. A Reuters cameraman was among the wounded.

A US military statement said the helicopters were fired on from the vicinity of the armored vehicle before they attacked.

But Reuters television footage of the incident showed no evidence any of the Iraqis around the Bradley vehicle were armed or had opened fire.

The US military is also fighting in the northern town of Tal Afar, which it says has become a haven for foreign fighters crossing into Iraq from Syria. The town has been largely sealed off for several days. The Health Ministry said 51 people were killed there Sunday. (REUTERS/AP)

Countrywide student strike called for today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Six opposition student organisations today enforce a countrywide strike at educational institutions protesting the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) attack on their rally on Dhaka University campus that left over 50 hurt Saturday.

Different educational institutions including DU and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) have suspended all classes and examinations scheduled for today showing unavoidable reasons.

The six organisations in a joint statement have rejected the DU authority's restriction on outsiders' activity on the campus.

The Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of the Awami League, at a rally at the Dus demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the JCD activists responsible for the attack.

BCL leader Balarom Podder told The Daily Star that the six organisations will call tougher agitation today as the authorities have not taken any step to punish the JCD activists. Protagisthil Chhatra Jote (PCJ) held a press conference at the Madhu's Canteen yesterday. The PCJ leaders said they will bring out regular processions and hold rallies on the campus to protest restriction on assembly of students on the campus.

The PCJ also announced its programmes including a rally on September 17 demanding cancellation of Maniruzzaman Miah education commission and a siege on the VC office on September 18.

The Jatiya Chhatra Samaj in a statement demanded punishment of the culprits responsible for the attack on the student rally.

AL walks out

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attacks if the ruling coalition does not agree to hold the discussion adjourning the House's regular business." Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid told reporters at a briefing yesterday after the walkout.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said, "We've never seen such a spineless speaker, not even during the Pakistan period." The speaker does not have the guts to run parliament without following dictates of the treasury bench, Jalil added.

AL leaders said usually less important topics are discussed under the provision 147 of the rules of procedure of the Jatiya Sangsad. But very important issues like the August 21 grenade blasts should be discussed under the provision 62 adjourning the day's other business.

Earlier, raising a point of order in the House, AL lawmaker