

## Rain-induced flood wrecks havoc

**Dhaka collapses in heaviest rain in 50 years; 17 killed in four days; over 500 fishermen missing in Bay**

### STAR DESK

Four days of record downpour petered out into a drizzle yesterday evening, but Bangladesh reeled from floods that killed at least 17 people, adjourned parliament, forced the closure of schools, offices and businesses and played havoc with transport.

Dumped with 341 mm of rain in 24 hours until yesterday morning in

the heaviest continued rains in 50 years, Dhaka was still sloshing with floodwaters that sent many places, including Motijheel commercial heart, under chest-deep water.

Arjumand Habib, deputy director of the Meteorological Department, said the well marked low sat near Jessore at 8:00pm yesterday and was slowly moving towards India's West Bengal state.

The situation is likely to improve

tomorrow, she said.

The government asked the chiefs of utility services to take immediate steps to fix depression-induced damage to their services.

It also clumsily closed government, semi-government and autonomous bodies in Dhaka and lowered bus fares to tackle the situation.

Scenes of only a few vehicles negotiating the swamped roads close by stranded vehicles and

people wading to the main roads through knee- to waist-deep water raising their hemline dominated the cityscape.

Dhaka's previous record of 274 mm of rain on September 16, 1966 paled beside the current spell triggered by a low that transformed into land a depression and ravaged southern and central Bangladesh with rains and gusty winds from

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## India to focus on jt border operations

**Home secys of two countries begin talks in Dhaka today**

AFP, New Delhi

New Delhi yesterday demanded joint security operations with Dhaka to dismantle alleged anti-Indian insurgent camps in Bangladesh.

The demand comes ahead of the first talks in four years between the home secretaries of the two South Asian nations on subjects including illegal immigration by 'Bangladeshis' and New Delhi's assertions over the existence of rebel camps in the adjoining country.

"New Delhi will emphasise joint operations by the Border Security Force and Bangladesh

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## Democracy faces derailment

**Torkel asks govt, opposition to work together to solve crisis**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh risks derailing from the democratic path unless both the government and the opposition parties work together to solve the present crisis, said US Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asia Torkel L. Patterson.

It is difficult to earn democracy but maintaining it is an even more difficult task, Patterson said. "Democracy is not free. Political parties should not take it for granted. It needs to be worked on. It needs sacrifice. If you are not careful you



Torkel L. Patterson

may lose it," he added.

Addressing a press conference in Dhaka yesterday, Patterson said top leadership of the two major political parties should sit together in the interest of democracy. As head of the government, the prime minister should arrange it, he felt.

"The prime minister is the prime minister of the whole country, she is prime minister of the government just as she is prime minister of the opposition also. She is responsible for all affairs of the country including arranging dialogue with the

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## Dhaka, Delhi hopeful of Teesta formula

**Common river water sharing meet begins**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As a two-day Bangladesh-India Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) meeting began in Dhaka yesterday, both sides expressed hope to reach a consensus on the water sharing of the Teesta and six other common rivers.

On the first day, the experts discussed the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) report on the proposed scientific study of Teesta

water flow and agreed on some issues related to the study but they could not yet work out a water sharing formula.

Bangladesh again sought for a bilateral treaty for a five-year interim period when a joint team would carry out the study on the Teesta, one of the 54 common rivers between India and Bangladesh. But India did not agree on the proposal.

"We are discussing item by item from the recommendations of JTC.

We have differences of perception but we are discussing how to move forward," Vinod K Duggal, the chief of the Indian delegation, told reporters after the meeting.

Duggal, also water resources secretary of India, is hopeful about reaching an agreement on the last day of the talks today.

If the experts fail to reach consensus and fix the modality of Teesta water sharing in this 7th meeting of

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## GOSWAMI MURDER JCD man to die, six get life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal, Chittagong yesterday awarded death penalty to one and rigorous imprisonment (RI) for life to six others in the sensational Khagrachhari Hindu priest Madan Gopal Goswami murder case.

Srimat Swami Madan Gopal Goswami, founder of Radha Madan Gopal Sebasram (a temple-cum-orphanage), was slain on the orphanage premises in Manikchhari upazila of Khagrachhari on April 29, 2002.

Judge M Hasan Imam of the tribunal handed down the death penalty to Md Shafiqul Islam alias Shafi, 27. He hails from Gochhabil under Manikchhari upazila.

The six who got life term are Kurnendu Chakma alias Fumendu,

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## JS set for stand-off

**Govt, AL lock horns on mode of discussion on Aug 21 attack**

SHAKHAWAT LITON And SHAMEEM MAHMUD

An ongoing wrangle between the treasury bench and the main opposition over the mode of discussion on the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally is likely to culminate in yet another parliamentary stand-off.

AL has already rejected a general discussion on the party attack, which was scheduled for yesterday along with other businesses. But inclement weather forced to adjourn the sitting until 5:00pm today.

The discussion will be held today, says Jatiya Sangsad (JS) Secretariat in the day's order, adding Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar will fix its duration.

But the AL today will protest the

mode of discussion, which, it said, was unilaterally decided by the ruling alliance treating the attack too casually.

On Monday, AL lawmakers asked the speaker for a discussion on the attack adjourning all scheduled businesses of the House in accordance with their notices submitted under Provision 62 of the Rules of Procedure. But the treasury bench refused.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan then told the House the speaker would fix the mode of the discussion. But the speaker that day did not announce his decision prompting AL members to walk out.

In today's JS session, AL deputies

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## GP reaches 2 million subscribers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leading cellular company GrameenPhone Limited (GP) has crossed 2 million subscribers and aims to double the number in a year.

"With pride, I would like to announce that GrameenPhone has just reached 2 million subscribers," Frank Fodstad, deputy managing director of the GP, told reporters at a briefing at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday.

GrameenPhone roped in 1 million subscribers in just a year, he said.

"On any standards, this is a statement of outstanding growth and dedication. We attribute this growth to efficient service at affordable prices," Fodstad added.

"In one of the least developed countries with one of the lowest tele-densities in the region, this is more than a story of growth. It is also a story about empowerment, it is also a story about development," he said.

"We took big steps in taking ourselves to the doorsteps of customers keeping our network uninterrupted and providing state-of-the-art solutions at affordable prices for different segments," he said.

He said although tax on handset has been reduced, duties on network equipment remain one of the

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## Move to put WB above the law

**Bill seeking immunity for the multilateral organisation may be placed in parliament today**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amidst stiff opposition from the civil society, left politicians and human rights groups, a bill proposing unprecedented blanket immunity to the World Bank in its operations in Bangladesh is likely to be placed in parliament today.

Once the bill is passed, it will put the Breton Woods institution

beyond any legal action, a privilege that the organisation enjoys probably in no other country of operations.

This move has already put the World Bank and the government before many questions including that of why the Bank opted for such immunity in Bangladesh alone instead of going for similar facilities

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PHOTO: STAR

For once, a boat outdoes rickshaws, top, on the waterlogged road at Shapla Square in Motijheel commercial hub, while to make the best of the deluge people go fishing, bottom, on a road beside Ramna Park in the city yesterday.

## Lanka scrape through

**Bangladesh-WI tie today**

REUTERS, London

Tillakaratne Dilshan steered Sri Lanka to a scratchy four-wicket win over Zimbabwe in their Champions Trophy match at the Oval on Tuesday but the Africans go home with pride restored after a spirited performance.

Sri Lanka passed their target of 192 but failed to better England's net run rate in Group D meaning they will go out if their decisive match against the hosts on Friday and possibly Saturday's washed out.

All rounder Elton Chigumbura took three wickets but Sri Lanka

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## Car bomb carnage kills 47 in Baghdad

**12 others, GI die in Mosul attack**

AGENCIES, Baghdad

A car bomb exploded near a police station in Baghdad early yesterday as dozens of Iraqis were applying to join the force, killing at least 47 people and wounding 114, officials said.

In Baqouba, gunmen opened fire on a van carrying policemen home from work, killing 11 officers and a civilian.

Gunmen killed one US soldier

and wounded five others in the northern city of Mosul yesterday, the US military said.

Their patrol came under small arms fire as it was travelling on the western side of Mosul, the military said in a statement.

The attacks were the latest attempts by insurgents to disrupt US-backed efforts to build a strong Iraqi police force capable of taking over security in many towns and cities ahead of nationwide elections

slated for January.

In Baghdad, the blast left a gaping 10-foot crater outside the station at the end of Haifa street, a main Baghdad thoroughfare that has been the scene recently of fierce clashes. Dozens of cars parked nearby were destroyed and shops and buildings were badly damaged.

Paramedics and residents picked up body parts scattered across the street and put them into boxes.

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## Tension mounts as Ahmadiyyas replace bigots' signboard

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Tension mounted in Khulna city yesterday as Ahmadiyyas pulled down signboard from Niralah Ahmadiyya Mosque Complex triggering fierce demonstrations by the Islamic bigots.

International Khatme Nabuwat Movement Bangladesh (IKNMB), an anti-Ahmadiyya outfit, on August 13 posted the signboard to caution the Muslims not to be 'fooled' into taking the Ahmadiyya Mosque complex as a mosque and offering prayers there. It read 'Niralastha Kadianya Upashanayala'.

IKNMB had long been campaigning for the government move declaring the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims.

Police said members of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat replaced the signboard at around midnight on Monday with their own signboard.

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## Indefinite strike at DU until demands met

DU CORRESPONDENT

Six opposition student organisations yesterday called an indefinite strike at the Dhaka University (DU) to press the authorities to meet their seven-point demand that includes expulsion of the 'September 11 rally attackers' from DU.

Combine leaders at a press conference at the DU Journalists' Association office at the Teacher Student Centre (TSC) yesterday announced the programme.

The six organisations' demands also include resignation of the DU proctor and punishment of the Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists for 'attacking journalists and ransacking the office of the DU Teachers' Association (Duta) president'.

The combine leaders also asked for removal of the officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station and

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## Policing rain-struck

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police activities in the capital almost came to a standstill for the last two days due to unbroken spell of gusty wind and cloudburst sweeping across Bangladesh.

The inclement weather compelled the police authorities to postpone the Traffic Week scheduled to start from today.

Police in different police stations of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) area mostly remained confined to their offices as no vehicles could run in the waterlogged city roads.

"We have slowed down a bit as our vehicles stopped in the waterlogged roads," DMP Commissioner Ashraf Huda told the Daily Star yesterday.

Vehicles could not also come out of Rajarbagh Police Line when surrounding areas were inundated by knee-deep water, sources said.

No traffic police was found on duty in most of the city intersections yesterday. Rickshaws and pushcarts were seen moving on the VIP roads.

On Monday a team of Tejgaon Police Station had to return halfway from Tejgunipara where a CD-vendor was knifed to death by the

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