

Opposition shifts oust-govt programme for rain

UNB, Dhaka

The "mass no-confidence wall" programme announced earlier by main opposition Awami League (AL), 11-Party, JSD (Inu) and NAP (Mozaffar) has been shifted to September 22 from September 18 due to inclement weather.

It will be formed from Gazipur intersection to Narayanganj launch terminal protesting the grenade attacks on the Awami League rally on August 21 that killed 20 people, including AL Women Affairs Secretary Ivy Rahman, and aimed at ousting the BNP-Jamaat alliance government and eliminating the "religious extremists."

Rahima's date

FROM PAGE 12 others wounded, 20 of them critically, early yesterday.

Rahima, the only child of rickshaw-garage mechanic Tazir Ahmed and housewife Sufia Khatun, got married to Iqbal on July 18, 2003 and was on the way to her father-in-law's house. Two other buses carrying some 160 guests and relatives who accompanied the bridegroom to the wedding party were ahead of the private car.

Both buses started off at around 12:00 midnight from the bride's residence and the first bus reached Anwara unscathed. But the other one collided head-on with a log-laden truck on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road at Moizzyertek of Charpatharghata on the bank of the river Karnaphuli.

"You can't imagine what sort of pain we are going through now," said Sufia, Rahima's mother. "Financial hardship compelled us to arrange the function fourteen months after the formal marriage," she added.

Rahima, a class X dropout of Postarpar High School, was barely in the talking mood. "All my dreams are shattered following the accident," was all she could say.

Australia

FROM PAGE 1 Symonds came in with Australia 99-3 and immediately took the game away from the underdogs bringing up his half-century from 40 balls whilst Martyn was slightly more circumspect reaching his fifty from 63 balls with eight boundaries.

But the foundations of the victory were laid by the Australian bowlers with Glenn McGrath and Michael Kasproicz picking up 3-39 and 3-32 respectively.

The Australian game got off to a rocky start when Adam Gilchrist played no shot to Jacob Oram in the first over and saw his off-stump pegged back but captain Ricky Ponting and Matthew Hayden steadied the ship with a stand of 45 for the second wicket before Scott Styris got one through the skipper's defences.

New Zealand did well to reach 198 having been 89-7 at one stage and although the Australians bowled well the New Zealanders contributed to their own downfall particularly in the farcical run-out of Craig McMillan.

However Chris Harris, Daniel Vettori and Brendon McCullum dug them out of a hole and gave them a total that although below par at least prevented this ninth match of the tournament from following the trend of the previous eight and being a total mis-match.

Iraq war

FROM PAGE 12 over weapons inspections.

And it should have been up to the Security Council to approve or determine the consequences, he added.

When pressed on whether he viewed the invasion of Iraq as illegal, he said: "Yes, if you wish. I have indicated it was not in conformity with the UN charter from our point of view, from the charter point of view, it was illegal."

In response, a UK foreign office spokeswoman said: "The Attorney-General made the government's position on the legal basis for the use of military force in Iraq clear at the time".

Australian Prime Minister John Howard also rejected Annan's remarks, saying the legal advice he was given was "entirely valid".

The BBC's Susannah Price at UN headquarters in New York says Annan has made similar comments before.

He has said from the beginning the invasion did not conform with the UN charter - phrasing that was seen as a diplomatic way of saying the war was illegal.

Our correspondent says Annan's relationship with the US might be made a little uncomfortable for a while following his comments, but both sides are likely to want to play it down.

US President George W Bush is due to speak at the UN General Assembly next week.

Annan also said in the interview the UN would give advice and assistance in the run-up to the elections, but it was up to the Iraqi interim government to decide whether such a vote should go ahead.

He warned there could not be "credible elections if the security conditions continue as they are now".

Comilla dam burst

FROM PAGE 1

who lived near the dam-cut point, told The Daily Star yesterday noon.

Locals said the strong current stormed through a crack on Gumti embankment in Bara Alampur area developed three weeks ago. The water submerged five unions in Devidwar upazila Wednesday night and engulfed more villages in neighbouring Burichang upazila until yesterday noon.

The most affected areas are Fatehabad, Bara Alampur, Elahabad and Gonaighar unions, Devidwar municipality and Varella, Mokam and Peerjatrapur unions of Burichang upazila.

The affected people took shelter on the embankment and educational institutions.

While Devidwar officials estimated crops on 10,000 hectares of land worth about Tk 30 crore were washed away by the dam burst, officials in Burichang said standing crops on 567 hectares were damaged and fish of 600 ponds washed away.

As water passes over Comilla-Brahmanbaria-Sylhet road, the Department of Roads and Highways (R&H) yesterday stopped movement of vehicles on the road. "The R&H will put barricades as some vehicles are still plying on the road," said Abdul Awal of Comilla Police Control Room.

Army personnel have been deployed to stop further burst of the riverbank but the repair work was yet to begin. "Breach is wide and current is strong. Now it is beyond repair," said Major Habibe Khuda who leads the troops from the Engineering Corps.

Tariqul Islam, a senior district official, said the dam on the river had burst because of heavy rainfall in the region and across the border in the neighbouring Indian State of Tripura.

Blaming officials of the Water Development Board (WDB) for failure to contain the breach timely, locals said engineers were sent to the spot when the dam was beyond repair. "Sheer irresponsibility of the engineers has caused the destruction," said ProfAbul Hashem, a local

elder.

WDB executive engineer of the Gumti section Khorshed Alam has no convincing answer. "We could not yet ascertain the reason for the wide breach," he said.

DHAKA SITUATION

Dhaka residents' plight continues as drizzling continued for the sixth consecutive day yesterday.

The rain eased on Tuesday evening but there were intermittent showers.

Although Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority pumped out water from most parts of the city, there was stagnant water in Mohakhali DOHS area, old part of the city, Mohammadpur embankment area and on the road in front of Kakrail mosque.

This week's deluge also forced thousands of families to leave their homes in a Dhaka suburb known as DND (Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra) embankment area where over one million people live. About 17,000 people took shelter on the embankment and in buildings.

The city roads took quite a normal look yesterday as most passenger vehicles that kept off the road started plying. More people came out to the roads yesterday.

Our Pabna correspondent reports: Most places of nine upazilas of the district were inundated by the rain-fed flooding that so far damaged crops on 4,000 hectares of land. Potato worth Tk 68 lakh kept in cold storage was damaged due to power outages caused by the deluge.

The sun did not appear at any place in the country, the met office yesterday said forecasting further light to moderate rain in most places of Dhaka, Barisal and Khulna divisions and many places of Rajshahi, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions today.

The second bout of flooding this season caused by the heaviest downpour in more than 50 years so far killed at least 19 people. The July-August flooding had left 700 people dead and 10 million homeless, causing colossal loss to agriculture, industry and infrastructure.

of the UNGA.

Morshed is scheduled to address the plenary session of the UNGA on September 23, which coincides with the 30th anniversary of Bangladesh's membership of the UN.

Morshed is also expected to hold ministerial-level meetings of the Non-aligned movement, the Organisation of Islamic Conferences, the Commonwealth, Group of 77 countries, D8 and the Saarc-Asean dialogue.

He also referred to the ongoing discussions on probable deployment of greater peacekeeping troops under the aegis of the UN and also mentioned that Bangladesh for the first time would have a force commander in a peacekeeping mission as General Fazle Elahi Akbar took charge in Georgia.

Morshed outlined Bangladesh's substantial contribution to the UN system and illustrated its support for a package of membership reforms of the UN Security Council and its working methods to enhance democratisation of the decision-making process.

The foreign minister kicks off his 12-day UNGA trip today.

Injured JCD activist fights for life

DU CORRESPONDENT

Mahbub Islam Khokon, critically hurt in an attack by a rival Jatlyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) faction of Jahurul Haque Hall, is struggling for life at Combined Military Hospital's (CMH) intensive care unit (ICU).

Khokon, a fourth-year student of the philosophy and resident of the hall, was severely injured, as the rival JCD activists swooped on him early Wednesday.

Doctors Wednesday night told The Daily Star that Khokon was kept alive by an artificial respiratory system.

"He's suffering from brain haemorrhage. We can't specify his condition before 72 hours," said a duty doctor.

Rashidul Islam Sagar, a fourth-year student of Bangla and the other critically hurt student, suffered multiple wounds all over his body in the attack. He is now receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Dhaka University (DU) authorities have formed a five-member probe body headed by DU Treasurer Prof Syed Rashidul Hasan and asked it to submit a report within a week.

Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz Wednesday night told The Daily Star at the CMH that the attackers will be given exemplary punishment.

JCD President Sahabuddin Laitu and General Secretary Azizul Bari Helal have meanwhile expelled 10 JCD men in this connection. Sources said Laitu and Helal have asked the expelled activists to leave the hall. Otherwise, they will be handed over to police.

The sources said the expelled still remain on the campus under cover of a top JCD leader.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

kill U at Shudha Sadan or any of your meeting places. Very soon we will do our operation. After your death all of your group members will be killed (sic)."

The letter also read, 'Don't blame the government for this'. The letter seemed to have been typed in a manual typewriter, the AL sources said.

The AL leaders yesterday expressed grave concern over the repeated death threats to the former prime minister.

"We can't take anything lightly in this situation. We'll lodge a general diary and officially hand over a copy of the threat letter to the government on Saturday," Saber told The Daily Star.

This is the third time the opposition leader received a death threat.

The first death threat was issued on July 5 this year while she was visiting Istanbul. Then after August 21 attempt on her life, another death threat had been sent by an e-mail to Bangla daily Prothom Alo.

Jt watch

FROM PAGE 1 possession, with 6.5km out of the 4,156km border remains undemarcated.

Emerging from the meeting at the Home Ministry in the Secretariat, both the heads of delegations refused to share any details with reporters, but said all issues were discussed in a congenial atmosphere.

"We have discussed all issues, including those of border and security, and the discussions were very fruitful," Farooq told the newsmen.

Yesterday the Indian home secretary also made courtesy calls to both Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar.

After the meeting with the foreign minister, Dhirendra said, "Surely, we're coming closer to resolving all issues."

The secretary-level talks are scheduled to end today, after which the two sides would hold a joint press briefing at the home ministry.

Communications

FROM PAGE 1

and thanked him for the construction of a road in his constituency.

Huda assured all legislators of sufficient allocations for their constituencies to construct transport facilities.

Shamsuddin Ahmed said there were absolutely no uplift activities of the ministry in his constituency.

Shahidul Islam said: "Not a single Taka has been allocated for the building roads and bridges in my constituency under the present government."

"I am frustrated and I don't know when a bridge in my constituency will be built," said Abdul Motalab Akhond.

Dr Rustom Ali Farayeji said only 10 km of a 45 km road was constructed in his constituency and the rest left uncared-for.

"Nobody knows when the rest will be constructed. People of the constituency call my names. Only Allah knows the immense sufferings of people," he added.

"This government did not allocate a single money for uplift activities in my constituency," said Kazi Golam Morshed.

Ilias Ali wanted to know when the roadworks of Dhaka-Sylhet Highway, initiated in last December, would be completed.

Abdul Momin Talukdar also complained that the ministry did not allocate fund for two roads under the Roads and Highway Department in his constituency in the last two years.

Jamaat deputy Shahjahan Chowdhury was the lone lawmaker who thanked the communications minister for allocation of funds to construct a road in his constituency.

WB keen to fund

FROM PAGE 12

mission team of the DFID, led by terry J Lawrence, with Communications Minister Nazmul Huda at his ministry yesterday.

The team members informed the minister when he sought financial cooperation from the DFID in post-flood road rehabilitation.

The minister told the team that the government had decided to expand and modernise road communication with all the districts of the country to strengthen national economic activities and alleviate rural poverty.

The delegation assured the minister of helping to implement the government's post-flood rehabilitation.

60 opposition

FROM PAGE 12

Doel Chatter. The combine held a rally there and demanded of the government to immediately cancel the national education commission's report and release the arrestees.

Baloram Podder and Saifuzzaman Shekhar of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of main opposition Awami League (AL), later submitted a memorandum to the education ministry.

The combine leaders at a press conference at the office of Dhaka University Journalists Association at TSC threatened to go for country-wide indefinite student strike if their demands are not met by September 19. BCL President Liaqat Sikder read out the statement.

Wedding party ends in tragedy

FROM PAGE 1

plate is suspected to have been smuggling logs.

The locals also blamed another truck parked on the road, which was unloading earth for filling up a nearby plot, blocking the view of the drivers.

Eleven people, including the drivers and helpers of both vehicles, died instantly and six died on their way to hospital. The rest bled to death before or after their names could be registered with Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), triggering fears of more casualties.

The wedding guests were returning home from an evening marriage ceremony of Mohammad Iqbal, a mason, in Dhaniaalapara in Double Mooring.

Ali Bhanderi, another driver, who was close to the scene, said the earth-filled truck occupied part of the road and narrowed the turning point, leading to the accident.

"We helped retrieve 11 bodies, including three from the log-laden truck," Bhanderi told The Daily Star on the scene yesterday morning.

Azizul Haq, the only survivor from the truck, alleged the police chased them all the way from Patiya College Road until they met the tragic accident.

A helper of the truck, Azizul said the truck coming from Cox's Bazar was to unload logs at a timber shop in the Ek Kilometer area near the Bahodderhat intersection.

As they reached Patiya College Road, some police personnel stopped the truck and the log owner, Kamal Pasha, who was following them on a motor cycle, handed over 'something' to the policemen before signalling them to go ahead, Azizul added.

"As the truck started moving again with Kamal Pasha following, the policemen suddenly began chasing it. For some reason they all looked angry," Azizul continued.

Meanwhile, a witness, preferring anonymity, alleged that some policemen appeared on the scene right after the accident and removed the number plate from the truck.

However, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Karnaphuli Police Station Md. Harun told The Daily Star they arrived there less than half an hour after the accident but did not find any number plate on the truck.

Cries of shocked relatives filled the air as members and chairmen of different unions and other local people visited the scene, he said. Karnaphuli police and firemen recovered the bodies and sent the injured to the hospital with the help of local people.

A shocked silence reigned when some of the injured at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) narrated the harrowing experience yesterday.

Noorjahan, 40, grimacing in pain on the floor of the neuro-surgery ward, was in no condition to speak. Four of her five sons injured in the accident were undergoing treatment at the same ward. But she was yet to know that her husband and son had died.

"I was sitting in the back seat and jumped out of the bus through an window moments after the collision," said Shahidul Islam, the eight-year-old son of Noorjahan, to The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

Dilwara Begum, 35, wife of Liakat Hossain, a Bangladeshi expatriate in Dubai, narrowly survived the crash but lost teenage sister-in-law (Liakat's sister) Sahila Akhtar and her two children were critically injured.

She was wailing as son Mohammad Nizamuddin, 10, and daughter Nipa Akhtar, 9, lay unconscious at ward No.28 at around 2.30pm yesterday.

"I was sitting in a rear seat with my daughter and son on the lap. As

the bus started, Sahila took both of them to the front to have a better view of the passing objects of nature. But at the end, all she had was a painful death," Dilwara said lamenting the fate of her minor sister-in-law.

Describing the nightmare, she added, "I was virtually buried under 30 to 40 injured or dead passengers. I could hardly breathe. After a few minutes, I pushed through the bodies."

Another elderly woman, Hosne Ara Begum, was looking for help from anybody she saw at Ward No-28 as her 10-year-old niece Yasmin had lapsed into unconsciousness. Yasmin's eight-year-old brother Jahidul had died in the accident while her mother Rabeya Khatun was fatally injured.

Dr Ajoy Dev and Dr Salahuddin, on-duty CMCH physicians, said they received around 65 injured people, nine of whom died later.

CMCH Director Taufiqul Alam visited the injured and called in another two physicians in Dr Habibur Rahman and Dr Halim to tackle the situation and ensure proper treatment of the patients.

The CMCH director told The Daily Star that there was a sufficient stock of blood and medicines and all physicians and other hospital staff were putting in all efforts to treat the injured.

CMCH Resident Surgeon Dr Motiar Rahman Khan feared the death toll might go up as many suffered serious head injuries in the crash. He however said treatment would be quick and adequate.

"We upgraded our treatment facility as part of a disaster management plan after the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka. We are capable of treating about 200 patients at a time," Dr Khan said.

34pc crop

FROM PAGE 1

But, agriculturists apprehend all the submerged vegetables will be ruined leading possibly to a price hike.

The DAE is yet to assess the total damage from this latest flooding as the torrential rain is still on.

Until Wednesday, crops in 395,056 hectares out of total 1,176,606 hectares were inundated in the districts, DAE sources said. Of that aman fields account for 370,375 hectares and vegetables 7,982 hectares.

According to DAE sources, most of the crop fields in Dhaka, Chittagong, Laxmipur, Cox's Bazar, Rajbari, Madaripur, Faridpur, Gazipur, Feni, Noakhali, Jamalpur and Brahmanbaria are under water.

According to government assessment, the month-long devastating flash floods earlier this year ruined crops worth over Tk 2,000 crore affecting nearly 46 lakh farmers. Of them 26 lakh farmers have received transplanted aman saplings and vegetable seeds under a government relief programme.

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank will provide further support to the flood-hit farmers. A 40-member joint team of the banks is currently conducting a need assessment towards that end.

Email sender

FROM PAGE 12

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on Wednesday, investigation officer claimed he collected important information about their involvement in the grenade attack, which killed 20 people and injured over 200 with AL President Sheikh Hasina surviving barely. But more interrogation is required to find out the motive behind the attack and whereabouts of their accomplices, he stated.

Advocate Gyanendra Chandra Biswas, the defence lawyer for Partha, submitted a petition seeking bail and cancellation of the remand prayer.

Moving the petition, the lawyer said Partha, who was arrested initially on August 26 allegedly for sending email to the daily Prothom Alo with a threat to kill Hasina within seven days, was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy.

Partha was remanded for seven days twice, but police failed to come up with any concrete evidence of his involvement.

He was physically and mentally tortured when police quizzed him in previous remands, the defence lawyer argued. But the general recording officer opposed the move and prayed for a seven-day remand.

Upon hearing, the court rejected the bail petition and placed all the four on a five-day remand.

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested Abdur Rahman from his house at Sector 10 in the Suburban Uttara on September 4 and recovered a foreign revolver with 13 bullets. He was also taken on a 10-day remand for interrogation.

The other two-- Hannan and Badsha -- were arrested on September 8 from Mogbazar on charges of bomb explosion during an AL-enforced hartal. They were sent to Dhaka Central Jail the next day, as investigation officers did not seek for remand.