

2 to die, 2 get 40-year prison for murdering Jubo Dal leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Rajshahi yesterday handed down death sentences to two and 40 years of rigorous imprisonment to two others in the Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal leader Saiful Islam murder case.

The death convicts are Raju Roy, son of Chhoton Roy and Sohel, son of Afsar Ali of the city.

Raihan Maruf and Hossain Mahmud were jailed for 40 years under two separate sections. They have also been fined Tk 6,000 and are subject to serve six more months in prison if they fail to pay the fine.

Saiful was knifed to death at Moni Square in the city on October 5, 2003. The criminals also stabbed his friend Shiplu.

Shiplu's father filed a case with

Boalia Police Station against the four and Sub-inspector Arsad Ali pressed charges with the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on November 18.

Tribunal Judge AFM Aminul Islam pronounced the verdict in 20 workdays after the case was shifted to his court on August 1.

BRII exams postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The viva voce for the posts of senior scientific officer and principal scientific officer at the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRII), which was scheduled for October 9 and 11 respectively, has been postponed.

Regional efforts a must to set up early weather warning system

Experts tell SMRC meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Concerted regional efforts are a must to set up early weather warning system to minimise damage by natural calamities, experts said at a regional meeting on meteorology in the city.

"Ours is a region which is more vulnerable to the severest of these meteorological phenomena than any other part of the world," said State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon at the 10th Governing Board Meeting of the Saarc Meteorological Research Centre (SMRC).

"The Bay of Bengal is known to spew out the highest storm surges in the world," he added.

Citing the extent of devastation caused by natural disasters in Bangladesh, Milon said five lakh people died in 1970 cyclone and

1.40 lakh died in 1991 cyclone.

Referring to the increased frequency and severity of floods and droughts in recent times in the south Asia region, he said that adverse impacts of global climatic changes have already started to indicate the consequences.

This year's floods in Bangladesh has caused a loss of several thousand crores of taka, exceeding all the previous records, said Defence Secretary Mesbah Uddin Ahmed.

"A focused research study on the changing weather pattern is required to address the issue regionally," he added.

The Saarc region is very much prone to meteorological and hydrological natural hazards like cyclones and storm surges, said Chairman of the SMRC Governing Board Mohammad Rafique of Pakistan.

Responding to what advancement the SMRC has brought in the weather warning system in the region, Director of the Saarc Secretariat Kesang Wangdi said the member countries through the SMRC have been "sharing each other's expertise among themselves, gathering information and producing studies thereby influencing their respective policymaking on weather forecast."

Representatives from all seven Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries and weather experts are taking part in the three-day meeting.

The SMRC has now been functioning at Bangladesh Meteorological Department and the centre is expected to move to its own office in Dhaka, now under construction, by January next, said its officials.



Abul Quasem Haider, chairman of Youth Group and vice-president of FBCCI, hands over a cheque for Tk 5 lakh, raised through a humanitarian programme to help the flood victims, to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office recently.

Chehlum

Chehlum of Rafiqul Islam Khandaker Nasim, director of Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB), will be held today, says a press release.

A milad and doa mahfil will be held at his residence at 283/3 Tali Office Road, Rayer Bazar after Asr prayers.

Rafiqul Islam died on September 2.

Qulkhwani

Qulkhwani of Alhaj Pirzada Iftakhar Ahmed of Bajra in Begumganj, Noakhali will be held today, says a press release.

A milad mahfil will be held at the residence of divisional commissioner at 32 Minto Road in Dhaka after Asr prayers.

Shraddha

Shraddha of Bina Rani Sarker, wife of Dr Sudhir Chandra Sarker, will be held today, says a press release.

She died on September 22 at the age of 59.

She is survived by her husband, one son and one daughter.

'Resist fanatics trying to disrupt women's football'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different organisations yesterday called for resisting the religious fanatics who are trying to disrupt the women's football tournament in the city.

They also condemned the threats to the National Sports Council by the Islamic Constitution Movement (ICM) to lay siege to the council in a bid to stop the ongoing tournament.

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of the main opposition Awami League (AL), yesterday vowed to resist the siege

programme. Sammiito Nari Samaj, a women's organisation, has urged the Football Federation not to compromise with the religious fanatics.

Amir of ICM and Charmonai Pir Fazlul Karim threatened to besiege the National Sports Council tomorrow if the government does not stop the ongoing women's football tournament.

Islami Shasantantro Chhatra Andolon, student wing of ICM, yesterday held a rally demanding a ban on women's sports especially football and swimming.



Students of East West University who received scholarships pose with Education Minister Dr M Osman Farruk, Chairman of University Grants Commission Prof M Asaduzzaman and Vice Chancellor Dr Mohammed Farashuddin at the scholarship award ceremony in the city on Wednesday. Twenty-eight students received full tuition merit scholarships and 16 got Medha Lalon Fund Scholarships.

Tornadoes batter Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1 and Faridpur.

Of the Tongi tornado victims, bodies of two were recovered from the river Turag three hours into the storm. The bodies of Mujibur Rahman, 90, of Rangpur and Ayub Ali, 90, of Barisal were brought to Kakrail mosque in Dhaka.

Locals were searching for more bodies from the river when The Daily Star correspondent visited the tornado spot at about 5:00pm. Red Crescent, firefighters, local police, civil surgeons and volunteers also joined the rescue operation.

The bodies of three other victims - Azizur Rahman, 40, of Kurigram who died in tornado in Tongi, Rahima Begum, 22, who died in Uttara house collapse and Sohel, 35, who was electrocuted - were kept at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Sohel, a rickshaw-puller, died when he came into contact with a torn electric wire at around 3.30pm.

The body of another unidentified victim of tornado was brought to Tongi 50-bed Hospital while another kept at Moulana Bhasani Medical College Hospital in Uttara.

Of the injured, over 70 people were admitted at the DMCH, six at Combined Military Hospital (CMH), 12 at Tongi Hospital and the rest at other hospitals and clinics in Uttara, Tongi and Gazipur. The condition of 50 injured was stated to be critical.

Moulana Bhasani Medical College Hospital, which is very close to the Ijtima ground, treated about 150 injured, most of them were referred to DMCH and other hospitals.

Doctors at the DMCH told The Daily Star that the condition of 12 injured was critical.

Most of the injured in Tongi tornado were devotees at Ijtima ground who were participating in 10-day preparatory conference for upcoming Biswa Ijtima. Around 30,000 devotees from home and abroad are taking part in the conference since October 1.

Witnesses said the tornado hit the Ijtima ground and adjacent five square kilometers area.

"Suddenly heavy winds started blowing from the east and I saw hundreds of tins, pipes and iron were flying as the makeshift houses for the devotees were blown away with the storm," said Golam Azam, 35, a devotee.

"It was like that small pieces of papers were flying in the sky," he said. "All these happened within two or three minutes."

Abdur Rab of Noakhali, another devotee, said he heard hues and cries of hundreds of wounded people during the devastation. He said the tornado destroyed most of the temporary structures in the entire Ijtima ground.

Many houses in Tongi, Gazipur and Uttara were also razed to the ground. A large number of trees were uprooted in nearby Kamarpara and both sides of the Ashulia road.

A report from Gopalganj says a devastating storm hit Tungipara in Gopalganj yesterday morning killing one person and injuring 50 others. Ten of the injured were hospitalised.

The dead was identified as Ekber Sheikh, 12, of village Pathghati in Tungipara upazila.

Our correspondent in Barisal says Ashura Begum, 42, was killed in Otra village in Uzirpur upazila as a tree fell on her during a tornado that hit four villages in Uzirpur and four other villages in Agoiljhara and Gouranadi upazilas.

Besides, a storm hit several villages in Kawkhali upazila in Pirojpur district while the coastal belts experienced two to three feet high tidal surge yesterday.

Our Bogra correspondent says Saju, a 10-year-old boy, was killed in collapse of a mud wall at Khatahali Dakkinpara village of Dupchanchia upazila while at least 150 houses in Sadar upazila were damaged in a tornado that hit at about 11.30am yesterday.

According to a UNB report, a severe tornado swept Sadar and Boalmari upazilas of Faridpur yesterday leaving a young man dead and 40 others injured. The deceased was identified as Alfu of Karimpur village.

Some 400 houses were damaged when the tornado hit Karimpur, Mollikpur and Bahadurpur villages of Sadar upazila at about 9:00am.

A report from our Jessore correspondent says at least 60 people including six of a family were injured and several hundred houses were destroyed as a tornado lashed 10 villages in Lohagara upazila in Narail district.

Besides, some 35 people including women and children were injured and over 50 houses were damaged in a storm that hit Singra upazila in Natore on Wednesday night.

In Rangpur, several hundred mud and thatched houses were damaged as storm and heavy downpour hit the district yesterday, reports our Rangpur correspondent.

Meanwhile, a report from our staff correspondent in Sylhet says rains for the last 3 days coupled with onrush of waters from the hilly region in the Indian territory have caused inundation of low-lying areas in different upazilas of Sylhet and Sunamganj.

Besides, the road link between Sylhet and Jafflong had been cut off after a bridge collapsed Wednesday evening, locals said.

UNB report from Rajbari says that tornadoes lashed 11 villages in Sadar and Goalando upazilas yesterday injuring at least 25 people and damaging about 1,000 houses. The tornado lasted for one minute at 9:00 in the morning.

Another report from Laxmipur adds: At least 20-25 people were injured and 300 houses damaged when a tornado hit four villages in Sadar, Ramgati and Raipur upazilas Wednesday night.

In separate messages yesterday Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and opposition leader Sheikh Hasina expressed their deep shock at the loss of lives in storms and tornadoes. The opposition leader also demanded necessary aids for the tornado victims.