



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Beginning of an end... A bamboo fencing sets the stage for illegal river filling on the Turag river near Kamar Para Bridge at Tongi on the fringe of the capital. A government ban on river encroachment is there, but such offences go almost unchallenged.

POLLS IRREGULARITIES EC to summon Bhola officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has decided to summon top officials of the local administration and election officials concerned of Bhola at its secretariat on October 25 to probe into the alleged irregularities in Daulatkhan municipality polls.

The EC yesterday asked its secretariat to send letters to the deputy commissioner (DC), superintendent of police (SP) of Bhola, returning officer and other election officials asking them to be present before the EC on that day, sources said.

Officials of the secretariat said they would send letters to the officials concerned tomorrow.

"We also asked them to come up with all relevant polls documents. If we find anything wrong in the polls process we will take action," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali yesterday told The Daily Star, adding, "Tampering the election process is a criminal offence; if such irregularities happened in the polls, criminals must be punished."

In the Daulatkhan municipality of Bhola, chairman and ward commissioners, all of whom belong to the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), were elected uncon-

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Prayer Timing		
October 13		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-45	5-50
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Tk 393cr summer vegetables lost to rain, deluge

REAZ AHMAD

Repeated floods, heavy rain and a prolonged monsoon this year played havoc with summer vegetables causing a loss of Tk 393 crore, Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) officials said.

Almost a third of the seasonal vegetables or about 3.27 lakh metric tons were lost in flooding during July to September.

Before the floods came, growers

could reap vegetables from 2.27 lakh hectares, but crops on 1.35 lakh hectares were damaged by the deluge, according to a DAE report sent to the Ministry of Agriculture recently.

Officials and agriculture marketing experts point out that an immediate bailout programme is required for winter vegetable cultivation to bring down prices and help farmers recoup their losses.

Sources said the agriculture

ministry now plans to provide one kilogram of vegetable seeds and 20 kilograms of mixed fertilisers to each of 1.29 lakh small and marginal vegetable farmers who lost their produce to rain and flooding.

The ministry requires at least Tk 67 crore for this assistance package. Besides, it requires Tk 780 crore to

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Plan for mass promotion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is planning to promote a good many officials at top level vacancies to defuse frustration in the civil administration on the basis of reports of intelligence agencies and the prospective officers' political allegiance, said highly placed sources of the government.

Some 100 officials will be given promotion. The posts of secretary and additional secretary will be filled up first and then the promotees will occupy mid-level of the administration, the sources said.

The sources also said that names of the prospective officials to the posts of secretary and additional secretary have been sent to different intelligence agencies and the

Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) to inquire into their track records.

A preliminary scrutiny has already been started to find out "skilled and efficient" officials for promotion, the sources added.

"Political allegiance will get top priority in the process of the scrutiny," said an important official of the civil administration adding "officials having dubious track record will not be promoted."

Though the government tries to find out skilled and efficient officials, ultimately political allegiance becomes the only criterion of promotion, said another official preferring anonymity. Besides, strong lobbying and connection with ruling party are prerequisites for promotion, he added.

He also said that past promotions in the administration clearly proved that a good number of officials at different tiers were not given promotion because of their non-allegiance to the ruling party and having no strong lobby in their favour.

Sources at the Ministry of Establishment said that a list of 83 officials has been prepared for promotion to the post of secretary and additional secretary. Of them, around 60 will be elevated to the post of additional secretary and the remaining officials will be upgraded to the post of full-fledged secretary. Big administrative changes may follow immediately after the promotions.

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3 held Indians remanded, rest sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Three of the 18 Indian nationals arrested from Habiganj Monday for their suspected links with All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) were remanded and the rest sent to jail yesterday.

Police took the alleged insurgents of Indian State of Tripura to a magistrate's court seeking seven-day remand of the three -- Yasaf Barma, Bakar Barma and Pingnai Barma -- who were carrying Indian currency.

Magistrate Shafiqur Reza Biswas granted three-day remand. Paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) arrested them from the house of tribal headman and former UP member Jogesh Barma in

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Dhaka, Delhi discuss joint navy exercise scope

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India and Bangladesh yesterday discussed the possibility of conducting joint exercises between their navies soon.

The issue came up for discussion when Bangladesh Navy chief Rear Admiral Shah Iqbal Mujtaba met his Indian counterpart Admiral Arun Prakash here, a defence ministry spokesperson said.

This is the first visit by a Bangladesh Chief of Naval Staff since 1998.

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Flash flood grips north districts

Thousands marooned, crops damaged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Flash flood caused by onrush of water from upstream inundated fresh areas of Bagmara of Rajshahi, Manda, Niamatpur, Porsha and Mohadevpur upazilas of Naogaon during the last 24 hours.

Water level at Padma marked a sharp rise, causing serious erosion of its bank at Shibganj upazila in Chapainawabganj district and submerging vast areas of crop fields.

In Bagmara, flood-water affected 15 villages of eight unions, marooning several hundred people and damaging five small bridges. The affected unions are Sonadanga, Auchpara, Kachari Koalipara, Govindapara, Basupara, Nardas, Shuvodanga and Borobihanail.

About eighty percent areas of Naogaon town has been inundated and about 50 feet area near the sluice gate of Chhoto Jamuna has been washed away.

Many areas of the town are now under 2 to 3 feet water. The situation at Bangabari, Bihari Colony, Sultanpur, Masterpara, Chawkdevpara, Kalitola, Par Naogaon, Eidgahpara, Ghoshpara, Hat Naogaon, Chawk Mukter,

Hospitalpara and Napitpara is critical.

Even the residence of the deputy commissioner, superintendent of police and government staff quarters have been flooded, sources said.

Trade at different markets remains suspended due to flood. Thousands of low-income group people of the town are passing hard days.

The sanitation situation at the Naogaon town has turned critical due to the flood. More than 1,000 houses of the town have been damaged while around 200 families have been homeless and taken shelter on embankments and in educational institutions.

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) sources said, the Chhoto Jamuna at Naogaon point is flowing 96 centimetre above the danger level.

The Manda-Niamatpur road at Balubazar has been damaged and the unions of Parapur, Manda, Varso, Tentulia and Kusumba of Manda upazila have been inundated by strong current as Shiv river embankment breached at Chawk Keshobpur, Jaleswaritola and

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Criminal killed in 'shootout' with elite force

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged criminal of Demra was killed in a shootout between his operatives and a joint team of crime-busting Cobra and Cheetah in Mirhajirbagh in Demra in the early hours yesterday.

His family claimed his innocence saying it was a cold-blooded murder.

Police said the Cobra arrested Hafizur Rahman Wasim, 30, accused of a murder and robbery, from Pargendaria near Mirhajirbagh at around 11:30pm Monday with a revolver, a pistol and six bullets.

Up to eight of his accomplices at this stage hurled eight home-made bombs and opened fire on the Cobra to free him. The police immediately took position with Wasim in a nearby six-storey building.

Sub-inspector Giasuddin suffered splinter wounds in his ribs, hands and legs. He was admitted to Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital.

On information, a Cheetah team

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India denies dam cut report

UNB, Dhaka

India yesterday denied Bangladesh media reports that the BSF (Border Security Force) along with some Indian nationals had illegally entered Bangladesh territory and had deliberately cut an embankment causing fresh floods in Satkhira.

A press release of the Indian High Commission here said the reports were referred to the authorities concerned in India who have conducted an investigation into the matter. It said the media reports are baseless and untrue.

"Neither the BSF nor any other Indian nationals entered Bangladesh territory. The allegation made in the media reports that the BSF or Indian nationals aided by the BSF entered Bangladesh to deliberately breach an embankment located 250 meters within

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Kamrul Islam's contract cancelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday cancelled the contractual appointment of Executive Director (ED) of the Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB) Kamrul Islam Siddique on charge of alleged violation of service discipline and conflict with superiors.

Mr Siddique, who served as chief engineer of Local Government Engineering Department, chairman of Power Development Board and secretary to the government in various ministries, was appointed as ED of DTCB on contract after his

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US, Iraqi forces raid Ramadi mosques 5 killed in attacks

AGENCIES, Baghdad

Iraqi forces backed by US soldiers and Marines raided mosques Tuesday in the insurgent stronghold of Ramadi and detained a prominent cleric following fierce clashes that hospital officials said killed at

least four people.

US aircraft also rocketed a mosque northwest of Ramadi on Monday after insurgents opened fire from there on US Marines, the command said.

The seven mosques targeted in

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