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Tornado toll hits 40

Some 1,000 wounded, thousands homeless in Gaibandha, Rangpur

STAR REPORT

Some 8,000 people are living out in the open in four upazilas of Gaibandha and Rangpur districts with the death counts in Sunday night's devastating tornado climbing to 40 yesterday.

About 1,000 were injured in the twister that ravaged more than 30 villages of the two northern districts.

The tornado lashed three unions in Sadullapur and Sundarganj upazilas killing 36 people and injuring over 600, our Gaibandha correspondent reports.

House collapse caused most of the deaths while several others died when big trees fell on them.

The 16-minute storm left a trail of devastation across 15 square kilometre area in the two upazilas. It flattened almost all thatched houses in the areas.

The worst affected areas are Dakkhin Dashedia in Sadullapur where 18 people were killed.

Eight labourers were buried alive under bricks when the chimney of a brick kiln in Dashedia village

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PHOTO: AFP

A young girl walks in the debris of her tornado-hit home in Gaibandha district yesterday. The twister killed at least 40 people and injured more than 1,000, ravaging about 30 villages in Gaibandha and Rangpur districts on Sunday night.

FBI agent in Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) special agent, who is now in the city to review the investigation into the killing of Shah ASMS Kibria, yesterday met some officials concerned of the home ministry and law-enforcement officials.

The FBI agent, Trung Vu, discussed with them the latest development regarding the case of January 27 grenade attack on political rally in Habiganj in which Kibria was killed.

Home ministry sources said Vu was given assurance of all cooperation from the government side to review the latest development of the case.

The FBI agent came to Dhaka on Sunday to discuss the terms of reference with Bangladesh law enforcement officials and start the investigation into the killing of Kibria.

A spokesman for the US embassy yesterday said the special agent of the FBI is available to review new evidence associated with the investigation, particularly regarding the arrest of eight suspects.

"Of course, the Bangladesh government continues to have full charge of the investigation," the spokesman said.

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Singapore talks focus on trade, terrorism

Two PMs agree to sign MoUs on maritime, transport

UNB, Singapore

Singapore will assist Bangladesh in marketing its diversified products across the globe and work together to fight international terrorism.

Its readiness in this regard was expressed during official talks between Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at Istana yesterday.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan briefed newsmen about the outcome of the official talks, saying that the meeting was "fruitful and its reflection would be visible shortly through the opening up of new avenues to business and cooperation."

Replying to a question, Morshed said the two prime ministers agreed to sign memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on maritime and transport, which are at the final stages of devising.

The meeting highlighted the initiative on the formation of a sub-regional forum styled Asia Middle

East Dialogue-8 (Amed8) grouping Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain.

The objective of the Amed is to fight international terrorism as well as to help each other in development.

Two high-level meetings of the emerging forum have already been held and the next one is scheduled for June in Singapore. Saudi Arabia and Indonesia have also applied for Amed membership.

Before the official talks, which began at 10:30am, the two leaders had a tete-a-tete lasting about 15 minutes at the same venue.

Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo and State Minister for Finance and Transport Lim Hwee Hua were, among others, present at the talks from Singapore side while Bangladesh side included Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Siddiqui and Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin.

Bilateral and international issues

came up for discussion at the official 30-minute talks.

Both the leaders agreed to work together to fight international terrorism, observing that international cooperation is necessary to curb the growing menace.

Prime Minister Lee said Singapore gives importance to its relationship with Bangladesh and will help its development in various sectors, including IT, shipping and transport.

Bangladesh is Singapore's seventh-largest investment destination where about 78 Singaporean companies are going to invest an estimated amount of \$ 840 million. Nearly half of the ventures are already in operation and the rest are in the process.

Bangladesh is the second-largest country of Singaporean investment in South Asia after India. The meeting was told that Singapore is extending its investment from European countries to Asian, Asean

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Kibria family terms it a bid to save mastermind

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Family of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and leaders of different political parties yesterday rejected the chargesheet in the killing of the Awami League (AL) lawmaker, and described it as incomplete.

They said the chargesheet, which was submitted on Sunday, is a testament to government's will to save the mastermind behind the slaying and to scapegoat some low profile BNP leaders of Habiganj for the gruesome murder.

"We don't believe that Abdul Qaiyum, a low profile local leader of BNP is the mastermind. He has carried out the orders of his seniors only," Asma Kibria, wife of the slain

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JUDGE'S CERTIFICATE CASE

HC convicts editors, publishers, reporters of contempt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday convicted and fined the editors, publishers and three reporters of the Prothom Alo and Bhorer Kagoj for contempt of court for running a report that an additional judge 'tampered' with his law exams results.

Prothom Alo Editor Matiu Rahman and Publisher Mahfuz Anam and its two reporters Enamul Haq Bulbul and Masud Milad were fined Tk 1,000 each, failing which

they are to serve out one month in prison.

The court also handed down similar punishment to Bhorer Kagoj's former editor Abed Khan and Publisher Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

The court sentenced Bhorer Kagoj reporter Samareh Baidya to two months of rigorous imprisonment and slapped a fine of Tk 2,000 on him for not only printing the news, but also the photograph of the additional judge in question. He will

have to spend another month in jail should he not pay the fine.

Counsels of the defendants said they will contest the verdict in the Supreme Court.

The two dailies carried reports on October 30 last year that Additional Judge of the High Court Faisal Mahmud Faizee had tampered with his LLB results that he obtained from the Chittagong University (CU) in 1989.

Faizee's father Advocate

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PM's programme book abounds with errors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry has again made gross factual errors in its programme book on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's ongoing official visit to Singapore.

Published by the Protocol Wing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the book has been distributed among high officials at the Bangabhaban, Prime Minister's Office, foreign and information ministries, Cabinet Division, Press Information Department, official media houses, members of the PM's entourage, intelligence agencies and some other offices.

Senior officials of the foreign ministry checked and rechecked the programme book but some major factual errors and spelling mistakes remained in it.

Officials who got the book said

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CORRUPTION

Sub-sea cable link plan rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Purchase Committee yesterday rejected a proposal to award a contract to install an optical fibre link between Cox's Bazar and Chittagong that will hook Bangladesh to the global information superhighway on the grounds of corruption and price manipulation.

An unhappy purchase committee at a meeting also asked the telecoms ministry to re-tender the project.

The committee also asked authorities to punish officials who advocated the contract that could be

sealed for Tk 17 crore less.

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) last year wanted to award the contract to German company Siemens, the highest bidder in the project outlining a cost of Tk 47 crore. Canadian bidder Nortel offered the lowest bid at Tk 30 crore.

This means although an international consortium will finish the installation of the \$0.5 billion South East Asia-Middle East-Western Europe-4 (SEA-ME-WE-4) submarine line by October -- delivering the connection at Cox's Bazar point -- Bangladesh will have to wait for six more months to reap the benefits.

"The committee was apparently angry at the ministry for wasting valuable time," said an official at Cabinet Division, seeking anonymity. The Cabinet Division on several occasions noted gross irregularities in the deal and sought the ministry's clarification on the way the deal was structured.

The committee yesterday observed that although the project's technical sub-committee announced the lowest bidder Nortel as 'responsive', the tender evaluation and re-evaluation committee pushed the highest bidder Siemens as 'responsive'. This was done

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OPENS TODAY

Inauguration at 10.30 am by Air Vice Marshal (Retd)

Altat Hossain Choudhury

Hon'ble Minister of Commerce, Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

ATTN: Garment Exporters / Manufacturers
Buying Houses, Indenting Agents, etc...

Apparel & Knitting Technology Fair

Zak Garmentech 2005 is the largest Apparel & Knitting Technology Trade show of Bangladesh being held for the fourth time in Dhaka and is a great opportunity for the garment industry

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120 Countries | 200 Companies | 2000 Products | 20000 sq.mts

ZAK GARMENTECH
Bangladesh 2005

22-25 March

Bangladesh China Friendship Conference Centre, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka

Timings: 10am to 7pm. Entry by Registration only



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KIBRIA KILLING CASE

Plaintiff wants to see documents before accepting chargesheet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The plaintiff in Habiganj grenade attack case yesterday sought court's permission to see the case documents before accepting the chargesheet that was submitted on Saturday by Criminal Investigation

Department (CID).

The Court of First Class Magistrate (Cognizance-1) of Habiganj fixed April 16 for hearing as advocate Abdul Majid Khan, the plaintiff, filed an application to the court for a hearing to explain his

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Cop jailed for stealing from courthouse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A Kushtia court yesterday sentenced a sub-inspector (SI) to five years rigorous imprisonment and threw two thieves into jail for three months for stealing goods from the court storehouse.

Special judge Abdur Rashid Miah delivered the verdict in absence of SI of Kushtia Court Police Station, while the thieves were present in the dock.

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JANATAR MANCHA

Secretariat made 'off-limits' to 28

REZAUL KARIM

The government has virtually declared 28 ex-joint and deputy secretaries persona non grata inside the Bangladesh Secretariat for their alleged anti-government campaigns among the government officials.

The 28 officials, 23 joint secretar-

ies and five deputy secretaries, were earlier given compulsory retirement for joining the 1996 "Janatar Mancha," an Awami League sponsored anti-BNP government platform.

Security Section-2 of the Ministry of Home Affairs Sunday issued an office order asking the law

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DCC to rename 5 roads after Liberation War heroes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has taken an initiative to rename five city roads after five sector commanders of the Liberation War to introduce the great freedom fighters to the new generation.

The DCC as part of the initiative yesterday renamed the road from

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BORDER FENCES BDR issues red alert

UNB, Moulvibazar

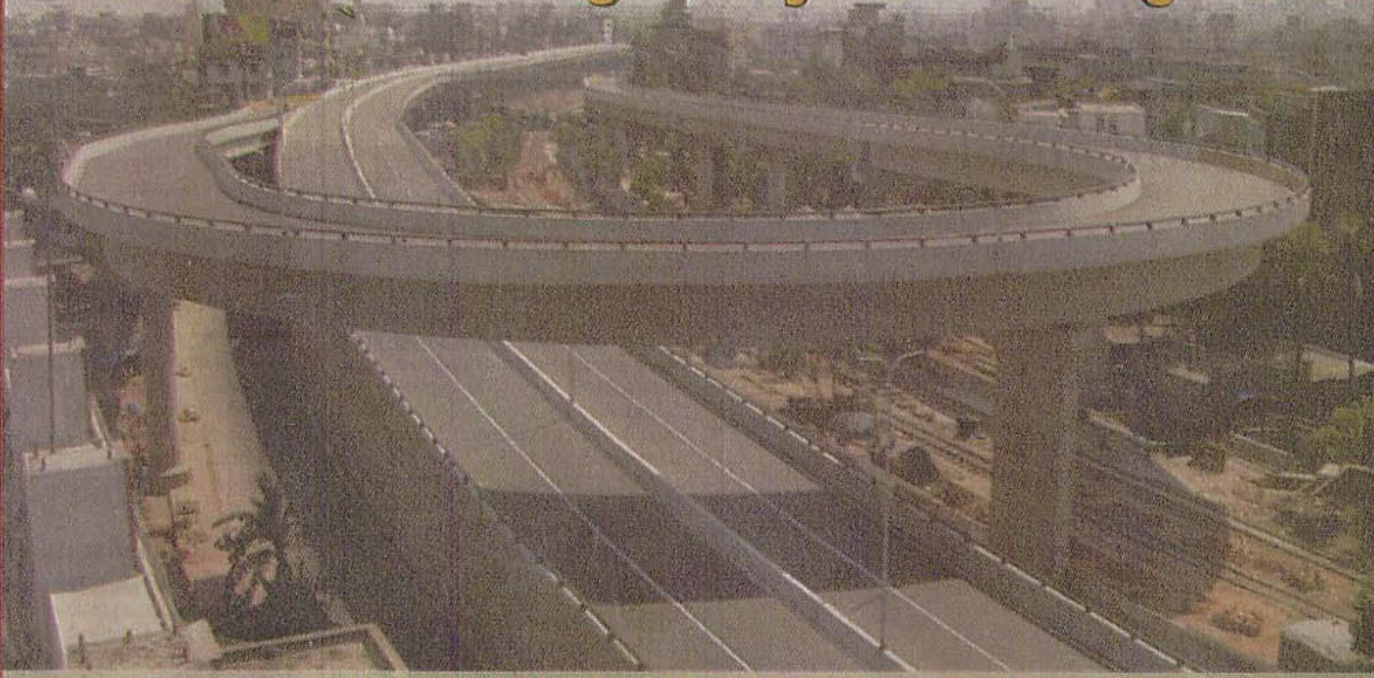
Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday issued a red alert as Border Security Force (BSF) resumed construction of barbed wire fences on Sharifpur border in Kulaura upazila.

The BDR issued the alert by hoisting a red flag at about 11:00am as the BSF again started the construction the previous night.

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Hon'ble Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the Khilgaon Flyover tomorrow

Welcome to the longest Flyover in Bangladesh



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