

Floods in a fury

FROM PAGE 1
upazilas of the district. Thakurgaon town is experiencing a severe waterlogging.

The Nagar river burst its banks rendering at least 10,000 people homeless in Amjankhor and Bara Palashbari unions of Baliadangi upazila.

The Atrai had flooded 10,000 hectares of standing crops and rendered 5,000 people homeless in Haripur upazila, official sources said.

Around 3,000 people were affected by the flood in Pirganj upazila as the Tangon river flooded Pirganj, Khushna, Raniganj, Doulatpur and Bairchuna unions.

In Dinajpur, seven upazilas were badly affected by the flash flood due to the downpour.

The homeless people have taken shelter on high lands and in educational institutes.

Panchagarh met office recorded 431mm rainfall in four days till Thursday.

The worst affected upazilas in Panchagarh district are Boda, Debiganj, Sadar and Tentulia as the rain-fed Mahanada and Karotoa rivers swelled.

Our correspondent from Gaibandha adds: Flash floods caused by onrush of waters from the upstream and incessant rainfall engulfed 41 villages in four unions of Palashbari and Gobindaganj upazilas of the district yesterday.

Over 15,700 families have been marooned in the two upazilas with vast areas going under water due to breaches at three points in the flood control embankment along the Karotoa river. Standing crops on 900 hectares of land have been damaged.

Most parts of Gobindaganj pourashava have gone under knee to waist deep water, forcing people of low-lying areas to move to safer places. They are facing crisis of drinking water and

shortage of food.

A nearly three-kilometre stretch of Gobindaganj-Dinajpur road at Kaiyaganj has gone under two feet water, threatening movement of vehicular traffic now and snapping of communication at anytime.

The Water Development Board said the river Ghagot at Gaibandha is flowing 13cm above the danger mark and the Karotoa 46cm above the red mark at Gobindaganj. The Brahmaputra is about to reach the red mark.

The Karotoa embankment breached at Bujruk Tengra and Chringa Jumarbari, leading to inundation of standing crops on about 700 hectares of land in Palashbari, the UNO said.

About three-kilometre stretch of the road between Gobindaganj and Ghoraghat is now under two to three feet water due to a breach in the Karotoa embankment at Taraf Manu, disrupting road communication.

Moreover, the Teesta and Brahmaputra are overflowing their banks at many points submerging vast tracts of land in Gaibandha Sadar, Sunderganj, Shaghata and Fulchhari upazilas.

Howard

FROM PAGE 20
seemingly losing ground.

Howard was elected unopposed as the Conservatives' leader in 2003. He was thought to be the only person with the authority to unite them after bitter infighting, which eventually ousted the floundering Iain Duncan Smith from the job.

Davis, veteran heavyweight Kenneth Clarke, young moderniser David Cameron, right-winger Liam Fox and party grandee Malcolm Rifkind pitched their leadership bids during the four-day seaside conference.

State minister Goutam

FROM PAGE 1
ruling four-party alliance's decision to withdraw all false and politically motivated cases filed during the last Awami League rule'.

Of the four cases, one was filed for sedition while two were filed under Explosive Substances Act and the other one under Arms Act.

"The issue is much-debated," the state minister wrote in his recommendation on November 20, 2002. "[Cases] may have been filed on political grounds. So, they can be withdrawn on scrutiny," he added.

Saifur Rahman Nantu in his recommendation on November 18, 2002, said, "The issue is politically motivated, [cases are] conspiratorial and harassing. I strongly suggest for withdrawal of the cases."

Moniruzzaman Pinu recommended the same on the same date. The application reads:

Dear Sir,
With due respect, I would like to state that the then Awami League government had fitted me up as part of their plot to gain unfair political advantage, increase the party's popularity in the face of looming electoral defeat, harass the political opponents, and create pretext to frame new laws for Sheikh Hasina's security. It was the Awami League men who had stage-managed the drama of recovering 76-kg bomb near the stage of the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Kotlipara and falsely implicated me along with my family, and leaders and activists of Islami Oikya Jote in the incident.

Following the Kotlipara incident, the Awami League government had filed back to back four cases [mentioned above] against me, my relatives, and in general followers of Islam. Besides, they [Awami League] tortured my family and relatives and looted my property, business establishments, and madrasa. They had detained a large number of people including my brothers and sisters and subjected them to unwarranted brutalities in the cases filed to

make political gains.

Since the alliance government has decided in principle to withdraw the false and politically motivated cases filed during Awami League regime, I urge you with humble submission to take necessary steps to withdraw the cases filed in Gopalganj for political harassment.

Goutam Chakraborty told The Daily Star last night that he cannot exactly remember whether he had recommended for the withdrawal of cases against Mufti Hannan.

"I cannot remember now. It might have happened when I was the district minister for Gopalganj," he observed.

He said he usually recommends the applications on the recommendation of district unit president and general secretary of BNP and local lawmakers. Chakraborty said, "It's for sure that Mufti Hannan did not come to me in person for the recommendation. Probably, a local BNP leader had come for him and on seeing their [district BNP leaders'] recommendations I had given my opinion on the application as Hannan was not that known at that time."

Despite repeated attempts, The Daily Star could reach Sheikh Saifur Rahman and Moniruzzaman Pinu for their comments.

JMB issues

FROM PAGE 1
Jugantar, Mahtab Chowdhury of Sonali Sangbad and Rajshahi correspondent Anwar Ali Himu of The Daily Star.

The letter published yesterday on Sonali Sangbad said action will be taken against these journalists who always write against JMB and the people concerned have been given directions to take necessary steps against these journalists.

However, local journalists suspect Ahle Hadith of Rajshahi to be behind the death threats.

14-party

FROM PAGE 1
League (AL), 11-Party alliance, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and National Awami Party (NAP), at the residence of AL leader Abdur Razzak.

The opposition will set November 15 as deadline for expelling the militant-linked parties from the coalition, meeting sources said.

"We will ask the BNP to oust Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and other elements whose involvement in militant activities is now crystal clear," said an AL leader after the meeting.

The meeting also agreed to form a liaison committee to co-ordinate the ongoing antigovernment movement. The committee will be formed at the next meeting of the opposition on October 9 at the residence of AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil.

The meeting discussed the opposition plan to hold a grand rally at the Paltan Maidan on November 15 where AL chief Sheikh Hasina and other top opposition leaders will address for the first time from a common podium.

From the rally the opposition will also announce common national programmes which will be implemented if they are voted to power in the next election, said an opposition leader.

Jamaat rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1
while her other sons are activists."

In the rejoinder, Publicity Secretary of Jamaat Tasneem Alam said there is no link between Masum and his family and Jamaat. The local Jamaat leaders of Narayanganj do not know his father Mofazzal Hossain, let alone his being rokon of Jamaat, headed.

Ourreply
The Daily Star carried the report quoting police sources to whom Masum's mother admitted that Masum's grandfather is a Jamaat rokon and acknowledged involvement with Jamaat politics.

When contacted the police sources reconfirmed that Masum's mother confessed to them about the family's Jamaat link.

Meanwhile, the local correspondent of The Daily Star visited Masum's house in Alinagar village under Bandar upazila in Narayanganj yesterday, but Masum's mother was not available in her house.

Many locals said Masum's grandfather is a Jamaat rokon and all of his maternal uncles are involved with Jamaat politics. Masum's father Mofazzel Hossain is also a believer of the ideology of Jamaat.

It is to be mentioned that most of the leading national dailies, including Prothom Alo, Janakantha, Bhoer Kagoj, Samakal and others, carried the same information.

Internet facilities

FROM PAGE 20
required to seek permission to lay cables under the limited rights of way (ROW) facilities.

The policy was finalised as the government has recently allowed private telecom operators to provide country-wide basic telephone services in addition to mobile services.

The meeting was told that the private telecom operators had been establishing their own infrastructure. Some of them have applied for ROW from Bangladesh Railway (BR), Roads and Highways and Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority for optical fibre lines.

The guidelines also include the renting system of optical fibre lines installed by the railway and the private operators.

At present BR is getting Tk 4.19 lakh rent per kilometre optical fibre line annually from GrameenPhone, the lessee. BR gets the same rent where GP laid the cable at its own cost.

In the absence of policy guidelines the private telecom operators are using optical fibre lines indiscriminately depriving the government of huge revenue, Hudat told the meeting.

The guidelines will bring discipline in the telecom sector and the government will earn huge revenue from the private operators, he hoped.

Communications Secretary Shafiqul Islam, BR Director General SM Mostafizur Rahman and high officials of Roads and Highways Department were present at the meeting.

Biman

FROM PAGE 20
national airlines.

State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin, who is also the chairman of the Biman board, said the Investment Corporation of Bangladesh (ICB) will take the decision as to when the share will be offloaded.

He also informed that the board meeting approved the pay hike of officials and employees of the national flag carrier.

Sources concerned said the salary hike for the Biman officials will be 50 percent.

The minister signed a memorandum of understanding with the agitating Biman officials and employees who had gone for a wildcat indefinite strike on September 27.

The officials and employees, after nine hours, called off the strike as the minister agreed to accept their key demands, including salary hike.

Meanwhile, the Biman board also decided that the non-ballottee Haj pilgrims will be able to fly by any Middle-Eastern flight for the pilgrimage.

The decision came as the national flag carrier failed to hire any Airbus as none responded to a tender.

5 Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 1
and came to India after the incident.

But the Indian Express newspaper revealed that the five Bangladeshis were going to Dubai with valid visas and were entering Kolkata with Indian single entry visas.

Although the arrests were made at the airport, police surprisingly told the court that they were arrested on the basis of secret information from a city area.

The newspaper in its report said the police told the Metropolitan Magistrate Court that the five were moving suspiciously on Free School Street and on information they were arrested.

The police further told the court that they did not come for a tour. The passports they were carrying were allegedly handed over to them by the agent of one Babu Bhui, who engaged them for some secret assignments in India, and, in exchange, promised them jobs in Dubai.

Since August 18, the five men have been in judicial custody.

In the meantime, two lawyers--Ashok Das and Abdur Rashid--came to Kolkata from Dhaka as their defence counsels.

Rashid said the arrested persons were innocent and were going to Dubai with valid visas, but he could not say why they were arrested by the immigration authorities.

Durga Puja from Sunday

FROM PAGE 1
the capital.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar at a meeting said special security has been arranged for around 19,000 Puja Mandaps across the country so that the October 9-13 festival can be celebrated peacefully. The government has formed a monitoring cell and opened a control room to ensure security following press reports and allegations of insufficient security at Puja Mandaps, he added.

"We have formed a social co-ordination committee with local legislators, chairmen, members, commissioners and devotees of both Hindu and Muslim communities at every Puja Mandap to ensure peaceful celebrations of the greatest religious festival of Hindus," said Mosharef Hossain Shajahan, state minister of religious affairs, at a press briefing yesterday.

The minister, who is also the chairman of the Hindu Religious Welfare Trust, urged all to maintain communal harmony during the festival.

Goutam Chakraborty, state minister of water resources and the vice-president of Hindu Religious Welfare Trust, said, "We have already directed Puja committees not to use musical

instruments and loudspeakers during Iftar, Tarabi prayers and Sehari."

The government has allocated Tk 30 lakh and 42,000 metric tons of rice as grants for 22,000 Puja Mandaps across the country, he added.

At the press briefing, Hindu Religious Welfare Trust Secretary Mangal Chandra Chanda said 19799 Puja Mandaps were put up last year, 17834 in 2003, 17,282 in 2002 and 16,181 in 2001.

Official sources said, Shashti Puja will be held on Sunday, Mahasap-tami on Monday, Mahastami on Tuesday, Mahanabami on Wednesday and Bijoya Dashami on Thursday.

The main Puja Mandap in the capital will be at Dhakeshwari National Temple. Large Puja Mandaps have also been put up at Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University, Ramkrishna Mission, Ramna Kali Mandir, Siddheswari Kali Mandir, Tanti Bazar, Shankhari Bazar, Bangla Bazar and at Mohakhali and Farm Gate areas.

Meanwhile, several political, social and cultural organisations felicitated the Hindus yesterday on the eve of the festival. They also condemned the attacks on the Puja Mandaps and damage to the Durga idols across the country.

the forces are facing difficulties.

Earlier in 1996-97, Bangladesh ranked first as troops contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions, former army chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star.

Since Bangladesh started participating in the UN's peacekeeping missions in 1988, it has contributed a total of over 42,000 soldiers, nearly half the total troops of Bangladesh Army, to 31 missions and earned over Tk 4,600 crore.

The Bangladesh Army has lost over 61 soldiers in these UN missions.

Many say although a variety of domestic issues such as weak political structures and economic pressures continue to pose challenges to Bangladesh, they have not deterred the nation from fulfilling its global responsibilities.

The strength of Bangladesh's commitment to peacekeeping can be seen in its readiness to contribute large, varied and sizeable troops.

Eateries fined

FROM PAGE 20
and edible oil to make beguni and other popular iftar items.

Earlier the same court also fined a petrol pump a total of Tk 10,000 for cheating people with misleading measurement machines.

The court fined the patrol pump, named A Hai Fuel Station at Hathkola, under the Weights and Measures Ordinance after finding faulty one of its four dispensing units, which showed measurements that were not accurate.

The court found the dispensing units showed about 50 millilitres less petrol octane in every 10-litre measurement. It also sealed off the faulty dispensing unit of the station.

Meanwhile, 30 mobile courts led by magistrates fined about Tk 8.5 lakh, filing as many as 200 cases for sub-standard and unsafe foods in restaurants and shops, as well as irregularities in transport services in different areas of the city yesterday.

A mobile court of Kotwali police station sentenced a person to one year of imprisonment for producing adulterated vermicelli.

Another court of the Airport Police Station fined the Zia International Airport canteen Tk 70,000 for selling adulterated foods.

The Ramna Police Station mobile court sentenced a driver to seven days imprisonment for driving a faulty vehicle and having no driving licence.

The mobile court of Sabujbagh Police Station fined Arab bakery Tk 30,000 for mixing toxic colour with foods.

In the last three days, the 30 mobile courts have so far collected Tk 28,54,650 in fine money, sentenced eight people for different terms and filed 952 cases.

Meanwhile, our Chittagong University correspondent said a mobile court on Wednesday sent seven persons to jail after penalizing them with ten days rigorous imprisonment each for driving buses and trucks with fake licences or no licence.

The court also fined 23 vehicles Tk 72,000 and detained four trucks on different charges during a four-hour drive at the city's Dewanhat intersection.

Besides, the mobile court during the drive arrested a driver of a city special service bus as he tried to flee after hitting a motorbike at Ispahani intersection. The

19 more down

FROM PAGE 20
special spraying and fogging drives around 1,000 yards of their houses to kill larvae and adult mosquitoes.

The DCC suggests the people should keep flowerpots, unused cans and containers, including those of freeze and refrigerators and air-conditioners, clean and empty.

PREACHING JIHAD

8 injured as JCD clashes with Shibir

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least eight students were injured in sporadic clashes between the activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) at the Dinajpur Medical College hostel on Wednesday night.

The clash erupted after the JCD activists protested preaching of 'Jihadi' beliefs among the students by the Shibir men on the eve of the Ramadan, students said.

The JCD workers asked the Shibir men stop such activities and engaged in scuffles with them as the Shibir activists continued preaching in the college hostel.

At about 10:00pm, the Shibir men attacked the JCD activists injuring five of them. JCD made a counter attack, leaving three Shibir men injured.

The injured JCD men were admitted to the Dinajpur Medical College Hospital. Three of them were in a critical condition, doctors said.

The injured Shibir men, Naheed, Mahmud and Imran, were admitted to a private clinic.

The principal of the college tried to resolve the dispute but failed, sources said.

Police forces have been deployed on the campus to avert any untoward incident.

Natwar

FROM PAGE 20
putting aside the long prevalent Indo-Pak tension, which he considers to be "a thing of the past".

The 13th Saarc summit will take place in Dhaka on November 12-13 this year.

"Saarc will turn 20 this year and not a single project has taken off yet," he noted while addressing the Pakistani business leaders in Karachi, PTI reports from the commercial capital of Pakistan.

"I believe the India-Pakistan tension, which has influenced Saarc for a long time, is now a thing of the past," said Singh, who held extensive talks with his Pakistani counterpart Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri in Islamabad on Wednesday.

"I realistically look forward to the Dhaka meet, where I believe, something concrete and worthwhile will emerge except the communiqué," he added.

At the interactive session organised by the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), he pointed out that India and Pakistan are working together towards taking the dialogue process forward.

"We are encouraged by the progress that has been made," he added.

Referring to the joint statement issued yesterday, the external affairs minister said quite a few issues have been substantially addressed.

Singh also said that he favours elimination of visa barriers among Saarc member countries. The issue is likely to come up for discussion during the upcoming summit in Dhaka, he added.

The 13th Saarc summit has been postponed twice-- first owing to the tsunami disaster and second following India's last-minute backtracking on grounds of political developments in Nepal and security concerns in Dhaka.

Criminal case

FROM PAGE 1
recorded statement of the complainant and issued summons upon the accused to appear before the court on November 16.

Other accused are Premier Bank Limited (PBL), Kazi Abdul Majid, sacked managing director, Syed Nawsher Ali, vice-president and director of Banani branch, Nurul Alam Chowdhury, deputy director, Mokhesur Rahman Mukul, first executive officer, Equity Partners Securities Limited (EPSL), Syedur Rahman, sacked EPSL executive director, and EPSL Managing Director Saiful Islam.

The complainant said the SEC on December 26 last year gave approval to the PBL for collecting about Tk 55.75 crore capital to issue 55,749 general shares under Public Issue Rules, 1998.

Every depository participant (DP) must have a beneficial owners (BO) account at any bank to get shares as per the Depository Act, 1999.

The SEC gave a registration to the PBL for conducting their proceedings as DPs on May 25 last year.

The bank however did not open any BO account after getting the registration certificate until January 26. But it opened 2,600 such accounts using the bank account numbers until February 12, the complainant said.

The SEC learnt from news items published in The Financial Express and the Sangbad on January 27 and February 9 that the accounts opened by the PBL and EPSL were fake.

The commission had formed a four-member probe committee to look into the matters. The committee found that the accused in connivance with others opened a huge number of bank accounts through its branches using fictitious names, photographs and addresses.

They did it only to grab the shares worth Tk 55,75,49,700 illegally, the complainant added.

Gunmen for judges

FROM PAGE 1
On security measures for other judges and magistrates, he said, "Since manpower of the police administration is limited, the government has primarily decided to provide gunmen only to district judges. But the minister has assured of special security measures at other courts at the same time."

Opposing the existing judicial system and saying it contradicts the rule of Islam, a group of criminals has targeted courts and distributed leaflets saying judges and lawyers should be killed, Chunnu, also a judge of the Special Court Dhaka Division, said.

"Since we're very much panicked over the prevailing situation, security to all judges has become a must. It must be ensured that they are safe at their houses too," he said, adding that judges across the country are suffering from a deep sense of insecurity.

The state minister told the delegation that the government had already stepped up security at all courts across the country, which has helped improve the situation.

After Monday's attack, the government deployed law enforcers at courthouses to check people, including lawyers and other court-goers, before allowing them in.

A letter seeking security has also been sent to Law Minister Moudud Ahmed.

"The government has already taken necessary security measures," Moudud told BBC Bangla Service yesterday. "Work at all courts went well today. There is no negative information from anywhere today," he added.

However, reports from Chandpur and Laxmipur said the situation there is yet to be normal.

"The situation here has not normalised yet. People are still panicked and only old clients are attending the courts," a lawyer of Chandpur court said.

A Laxmipur lawyer said all except the two main gates are kept closed and panic still remains.

Meantime, Sammilito Ainjibi Samannoy Parishad (SASP) yesterday said communal forces are blasting bombs and grenades to destroy the judiciary of the country as the alliance government failed to establish law and order.

"Some quarters in the government are also supporting such heinous activities, which are pushing the

country towards destruction," said a SASP press release.

At an emergency meeting chaired by Barrister M Ameer-Ul-Islam at the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) auditorium yesterday, leaders of the legal practitioners' body strongly condemned the bomb attacks on the court premises and judges.

Expressing deep concern over threats on the judges and lawyers over telephone and by letters, the SASP leaders called upon the government to ensure their security.

The meeting was attended among others by SCBA Vice-Chairman Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud, General Secretary Enayetur Rahim, Executive Committee Chairman Yusuf Hossain Humayun, Joint Convenor Sahara Khatun, Member Secretary Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Abdul Baset Majumder and former law minister Advocate Abdul Matin Khasru.

Our correspondent from Satkhira reports: Police, intelligence and security agencies deployed at the judges' and magistrates' courts have for the last three days forbidden anyone without official purposes to enter the court premises.

The law enforcers deployed at the entrances of the court premises searched all people with metal detectors. The search delayed activities of the court and the once packed court-rooms were virtually empty after 1:00pm.

Meanwhile, our correspondent from Khulna reported that security measures at the judge's court and the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate were not sufficient enough yesterday as a few policemen conducted their duty in a relaxed mood, even though a sense of insecurity has gripped judges and lawyers of Khulna following Monday's bomb attacks in three districts.

Senior lawyers and officers of Khulna Metropolitan Police met at the chamber of District and Sessions Judge AKM Ishtiaque Hossain on Wednesday to discuss security measures in the courts and took a decision to ensure security in the courts of judges and magistrates.

Mohorars (clerks to lawyers) have been asked to show their identity cards before entering the courts. Besides, police officers have been asked to demolish all unauthorised structures in and outside court compounds.

Prices spiral

FROM PAGE 1
properly, consumers pointed out.

Kitchen markets in the capital yesterday saw a marked increase in the prices of essentials and Iftar items, including soybean oil, vegetables, fish, meat, eggs, baby food, milk and spices as well as gram, aubergine, molasses, puffed rice, cucumber, date, apple and orange.

Ten mobile teams of the TCB who are to sell four essentials -- pulses, onion, sugar and gram -- at 33 places in the capital are allegedly failing to do their job properly. People who came to buy these essentials from the TCB trucks made the allegation yesterday when this correspondent asked them about the TCB drive.

The teams are not selling the goods with accurate measurement and the quantities of the goods are inadequate to meet the need, they said.

"I stood for one and a half hours in a queue and paid for one kg onion but later I found they gave me only 850 grams," said Miran Hossain at Newmarket point.

"They refused to listen to me when I went back to the team to complain about it," he regretted.

Asked about such allegations, a TCB official, seeking anonymity, said, "It is difficult to sell the goods properly due to the heavy rush of people. More teams should be engaged to sell goods

and the quantities of goods should also be increased."

The OMS operation will not be a success in containing the price spiral of rice in the country unless the rice is sold at union level. Officials concerned pointed out that OMS rice is needed more in rural areas than in district towns as most of the day labourers live in the villages, where they have no worknow.

The government selected around 18,000 food dealers to sell OMS rice at Tk 14.50 per kg in the cities and 64 district towns.

People reportedly show less interest in the OMS rice as it is of very bad quality but its price is close to that of rice available in the market.

In the capital's kitchen markets, the price of aubergine used in preparing beguni, a very popular Iftar item, yesterday jumped to Tk 50 --52 a kg from Tk 34 on the previous day.

Prices of other Iftar items, such as various categories of dates, ranged between Tk 80 and Tk 250 per kg yesterday against Tk 45 to Tk 200 just on the previous day. Orange and pineapple yesterday sold at Tk