

25 killed as storm

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and 39 Navy staff at Mongla.

The disaster occurred as a sudden storm under the influence of a depression lashed at the coastal belt from 7:30pm till 9:00pm at a speed of 100 to 130 kilometres per hour and generated waves as high as 40 feet.

Meanwhile, the normal life in the capital was also hampered due to the continuous drizzle. A few number of people were seen in the streets while commuters suffered as the rickshaw-pullers and drivers of CNG three-wheelers and cabs hiked up the fares.

A special met office bulletin said the well marked low in the Bay is likely to intensify further and move in a north-westerly direction. All fishing boats and trawlers over the North Bay have been advised to remain close to the coast and proceed with caution till further notice.

Our Cox's Bazar correspondent reports: About 600 fishermen with 50 fishing boats from Cox's Bazar remained missing for two days as the sea turned rough due to a depression in the Bay.

Mojibur Rahman, president of Fishing Boats Owners' Association of Cox's Bazar, told The Daily Star that the missing boats went out to the sea on Tuesday. "We are anxious for their safe return," he added.

Abdul Hamid, owner of one of the lost trawlers, said only four of the 11 men on his boat had made it back home yesterday.

A rescue official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he was hopeful that many of the missing were rescued by other boats or managed to survive by swimming to the small islands that dot the coast.

Mizanur Rahman managed to swim ashore at Cox's Bazar beach yesterday after his boat sank. "Our boat was being tossed by high waves and it suddenly went down," Mizan told the Associated Press from his hospital bed. "Only four of us managed to swim ashore."

Meanwhile, Water Development Board sources said about two kilometres of flood control embankment in Maheshkhali Island was washed away by unusual high tides in the last two days.

NAVAL COMMANDER KILLED

Our Khulna correspondent reports: A naval officer was killed when a patrol boat of the Bangladesh Navy ran aground at Akram Point in the Bay of Bengal due to Tuesday's violent storm in the southern bay.

The body of Lt Commander Feroz Kabir, one of the captains of the BN Shahid Farid, was recovered yesterday noon from the spot by the naval

rescue forces. Thirty-nine other crews of the ship were also rescued during the operation aided by a Bangladesh Army helicopter.

According to Bagerhat district administration sources, the vessel was carried away by strong gales and fierce currents when the sudden storm hit the coastal belts of the Sundarbans.

Over 500 fishermen still remained missing as the storm left at least 200 fishing trawlers capsized in the Bay of Bengal along the Sundarbans. Search is on to rescue the ill-fated.

Hundreds of people of the coastal belt, left homeless due to the storm, have taken refuge at the Dublarchar cyclone shelter.

Our Chittagong office reports: Twenty-five fishermen narrowly escaped death in the deep sea on Tuesday evening when a private fishing vessel rescued them after their boat sank due to the storm, some 200 kilometres off Chittagong city.

The rescued feared death of many fishermen as nearly 36 engine boats were in the rough sea at that time.

Captain AbuTaher of HartFord-2, which rescued the survivors, however said they did not get any warning from the met office although the waves rough.

According to the boat owners' association of the district, the boat carrying the fishermen from Chakora and Banshkhali capsized in the Bay during the violent storm.

Our Patuakhali correspondent reports: Bodies of five fishermen were recovered in Kukata coast areas yesterday while at least 1,000 fishermen aboard over 100 fishing trawlers remained missing in the Bay in the last two days. Abdus Salam, president of trawler owners association of Mohipur, confirmed the news.

The Patuakhali district administration, however, in a fax message sent to the higher authorities mentioned that 470 fishermen with 37 trawlers were missing in the Bay.

Citizens' body

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Ferdous spoke during the programme.

The speakers said power outages in Narayanganj worsened recently. Household water supplies, production in the industries and students' studies - everything dependent on electricity is immensely affected due to the outage.

DESA authorities assured the committee of resolving the situation soon.

'Unhappy' AL

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of speakers at the rally. They also hinted that they might not take to the streets in today's countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal.

"Though we always work so hard for our party, we are being deprived compared to those who do not at all work for the party," a senior AL leader said, preferring not to be named.

In reply to a question, he said why they would take to the streets in blockade programme and hartal as they have been neglected by the party repeatedly. They had to work hard to organise the grand rally but they could not address it, he regretted.

The opposition combine enforces a countrywide 6:00am to 6:00pm hartal today following its six-hour road-rail-waterway blockade programme from 6:00am yesterday to press home its demand for reforms in the caretaker government and Election Commission (EC).

Many of the senior AL leaders including presidium members Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak and Tofail Ahmed could not address Monday's grand rally.

AL sources said influential party leaders Amu, Razzak, Tofail and Jalil worked hard for several days for organising the massive rally.

But many of the junior and mid-level leaders of the AL and a number of leaders of AL allies including Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), 11-Party and National Awami Party delivered speeches at the rally.

Outlaw

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Following his confessional statement, a CID team took Sahabul along to Bhogalbagan in Almora upazila to arrest his accomplices and recover hidden firearms.

When the team reached Sabenagar at around 4:00am, the PCP men started firing on the police, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate.

Sahabul was caught in a crossfire and died on the spot while trying to escape police custody, claimed police.

Police recovered a firearm and 3 bullets from the spot.

Chuadanga police said Sahabul was accused in ten cases filed with different police stations of the district including six murder cases.

Jamaat sits Oct 8

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exploratory mission will also be on the agenda.

For over a month, BNP and its key ally Jamaat have been haggling over quite a few issues, sources said.

The chronicle started with BNP's invitation to the deposed military ruler Ershad to the ruling alliance, and on August 23 key leaders of Jamaat met Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to express their dissatisfaction regarding the possible entry of Ershad into the alliance.

Jamaat leaders stressed that they have the strength to win the election if a few loopholes existing in the alliance could be amended, and decided to announce their official stand after the majlis-e-shura meeting.

In the mean time, JP Chairman Ershad said he had no discussion about joining the ruling alliance with Jamaat Secretary also Social Welfare Minister Ali Ahsan Muhammed Mujahid during their stay in Saudi Arabia. Rumours were rife that they talked about seat sharing in the parliament. The JP chairman came back home on September 9 and the Jamaat secretary came back on September 10.

Recently, the proposal of PM for a secret level dialogue between AL and BNP irked Jamaat leaders and they observed that other components of the ruling alliance must be invited to the table.

Asked whether the authorities provide travel allowance, he said, "In my 30 years of service I did not get any travel allowance for the last 27 years."

An official in charge of a forest station said sometimes he cannot go out on patrols as two or three of his colleagues are either in Bagerhat or Khulna to attend court hearings of cases which were filed when they were posted there. "If someone goes on a leave the situation is usually aggravated," he said adding that sometimes he only remains at the station to guard the firearms and other valuables.

He said they have engine boats for patrolling, but the authorities never provide them with the fuel cost. "The system itself makes the officials indulge in corruption," he lamented.

Forest officials said their colleagues in deep forest usually have to cut deals with organised gangs of bandits in order to protect their old firearms and to save their jobs.

"We request the bandits not to loot our firearms and in return we allow them to extort money from fishermen and to loot valuable woods and sometimes even tiger hides," said a forest department official wishing anonymity.

It is not possible to challenge the bandits with age-old firearms and a small number of manpower. "Sometimes the bandits come to the forest in the stations and our colleagues remain on guard while the bandits sleep inside the stations," said a forest guard who during his 30 years of service faced such situations several times.

"We must be supplied with modern arms and ammunition to curb crimes in the Sundarbans," said an official of the forest department.

But officials at Oriental Bank expressed doubts over the dissolved board's new plan and said the situation will worsen if they get back the bank. "The board members who had earlier misappropriated huge money from the bank cannot save it," said one official.

In June this year, the BB dissolved the board for its inefficiency in operating the bank, and in the interest of depositors.

The dissolved board also sought Tk 200 crore refinery facility from the BB for another three years.

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The forest officials said sometimes the forest department staff do not even fire their weapons due to legal complexities.

Dhaka blockaded

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near Tongi for about two hours from 8:00am.

They also vandalised a bus and two CNG autorickshaws near the Tongirail gate.

AL and its allies brought out processions and held rallies at different parts in the capital during the blockade. Two crackers went off inside an AL rally near the Khilgaon flyover. Demonstrators damaged a taxicab at Malibagh and a double decker bus at Gabtoli.

At least 32 people, including a few policemen and journalists, were injured in clashes between the activists of AL and ruling BNP at Koddarmorh on the Dhaka-Bogra highway at Sonargaon in Narayanganj. They also damaged five vehicles, our Narayanganj correspondent reports.

Several hundred trucks and other motorised vehicles got stuck on both sides of the road due to the road blockade at Bhuiyangat Bazar in Raiganj upazila of the district.

The 14-party opposition combine observed blockade programmes for only two hours from 10:00am to 12:00pm in the port city, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

Five trucks, a three-wheeler and two shops were also damaged during the clashes.

Of the injured, 17 were admitted to different clinics in the town. The condition of Jubo League Secretary Abdul Hakim, Abu Bakkar, Yusuf Ali, Shipon, BNP activist Firoj and Rafik is stated to be critical.

The clash erupted at 9:00am, when activists of both the AL and BNP tried to bring out separate processions, defying police obstruction at Koddarmorh.

Police charged batons and lobbed teargas shells to bring the situation under control.

At least 10 AL activists were injured, one of them critically, when police charged baton and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the opposition workers as they were marching streets near Rupshi bus stand under Rupganj upazila in Narayanganj.

The opposition workers blocked the Dhaka-Sylhet Highway with burning tires. Police obstructed a procession of the opposition workers when it was

marching towards Kanchpur Bridge at around 11:00am.

Angry picketers ransacked a car of Channel 1.

Later police conducted a massive hunt in the adjacent areas and arrested 10 AL workers.

The opposition workers brought out a procession and held rally on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Sonargaon in Narayanganj. They also damaged five vehicles, our Narayanganj correspondent reports.

"The devil came here yesterday," Chavez said, referring to Bush's address Tuesday. "He came here talking as if he were the owner of the world."

The leftist leader, who has joined from in opposing U.S. influence, accused Washington of "domination, exploitation and pillage of peoples of the world."

"We appeal to the people of the United States and the world to halt this threat, which is like a sword hanging over our head," he said.

He also said the UN "doesn't work" in its current system and is "antidemocratic." He called for reform, saying the U.S. government's "immoral veto" had allowed recent Israeli bombings of Lebanon to continue unabated for more than a month.

The opposition workers put blockade at 18 points in Khulna city and halted a Benapole-bound train from 8:00am to 12:00noon. They also blockaded the Rupsa ferry ghat, reports our staff correspondent.

Chavez lambasted Washington for trying to block Venezuela's campaign for a rotating seat on the UN Security Council. He said if chosen over U.S. favorite Guatemala in a secret ballot UN vote next month, Venezuela would be "the voice of the Third World."

The US government warns that Chavez, a close ally of Iran, Syria and Cuba, would be a disruptive force on the council.

EU mission visits

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Anirul Islam and Md Dulal Talukder were present at the meeting.

Terming the meeting a "private" one, EU team member Robert told reporters after the meeting, "We have gathered various information about different issues related to the upcoming election in Chittagong in the private meeting which was quite satisfactory."

She, however, refrained from making any comment on the 30.51 per cent rise of voters in the division in the recently displayed voter list.

District Election Officer Syed Anirul said the meeting will help increase the Election Commission's credibility in working as a neutral organisation.

Earlier, the EU team visited CCC Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury, also president of the Chittagong city unit Awami League.

Leaders of Nagarik Committee and several other political organisations were also present at the meeting and exchanged views on election related issues as well as the pre- and post-election situations.

The parliament will convene in a special session on Tuesday to name Abe as prime minister to replace Koizumi, Japan's longest-serving premier in three decades, who chose to step down despite wide popularity.

Abe has vowed repeatedly to rewrite the US-imposed 1947 constitution which forced Japan to renounce its right to maintain a military.

IMF may release

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After the fifth round IMF review for the release of the instalment early this month, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman had told reporters in Dhaka that the instalment was unlikely to be released as Bangladesh could not meet some of the IMF conditions.

Police later allowed a six-member delegation to the Bangabhaban for submitting the memorandum.

Previously, the teachers submitted memorandums to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Sunday and also to Speaker Fazlur Rehman on Monday.

Case against Ershad

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assistant arms and explosives expert of Dhaka deputy commissioner's office told the court that they knew nothing about the case.

The investigation officer (IO) of Criminal Investigation Department included witnesses who knew nothing about the case; Additional Public Prosecutor Golam Mostafa Khan told The Daily Star, adding that he did not find any reason why such persons were made witnesses of the case.

During the investigation, the IO found evidence of Ershad's involvement in the smuggling and his name was included in the charge sheet.

The trial court on August 27 issued non-bailable arrest warrants against the rest six witnesses of the case. Following the order, three witnesses out of six appeared before the court yesterday to give their statements.

The last date of recording deposition of the PW-3 Azimuddin Ahmed, the then secretary of energy and mineral resources ministry, was on February 14, 2000 and since then no witness appeared before the court, although all steps had been taken for producing witnesses for their statements on May 14, 1992.

The trial against Ershad did not start due to a stay order from the higher court.

CASE AGAINST MANJU

Another Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against former energy and mineral resources minister Anwar Hossain Manju in connection with a graft case, although Ershad was discharged from the case due to insufficient evidence on August 24.

Manju pleaded not guilty and demanded justice before the court after Judge Md. Abdul Alamin of the Special Court for Dhaka Division framed charge against him.

Manju and then president Ershad awarded a contract to Scimitar Oils for drilling and exploring 1,650 square kilometres of area in Haripur oil field in 1987, causing a huge loss of \$79,000 to the public exchequer, according to the case filed with Tejgaon Police Station.

Later, an official of the defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed case against Ershad and Manju and the IO pressed charges against them saying that the charges brought against the two were prima facie.

Earlier, within a period of one month, Ershad was acquitted of four graft cases. Hearings of three more cases will be held on September 20 and 27.

A smuggling case was filed against the four - Bernard Rudiger of Germany, David

Chavez calls Bush 'the devil'

AP, United Nations

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez took his verbal battle with the United States to the floor of the UN General Assembly on Wednesday, calling President Bush "the devil."

The devil came here yesterday," Chavez said, referring to Bush's address Tuesday. "He came here talking as if he were the owner of the world."

The leftist leader, who has joined from in opposing U.S. influence, accused Washington of "domination, exploitation and pillage of peoples of the world."

"We appeal to the people of the United States and the world to halt this threat, which is like a sword hanging over our head," he said.

He also said the