

Rain triggers flash flood in Netrakona, Kurigram

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Flash flood triggered by heavy rains in hills across the border in the last three days inundated seven unions in bordering Kalmakanda and Durgapur upazilas in Netrakona district.

In Kurigram, low lying areas in at least 10 villages in Rourmari and Chilmari upazilas reeled under water as 16 rivers in the district

swelled due to rain and onrush of water from the upstream.

In Netrakona, about 300 thatched houses were washed away and 80 per cent of newly transplanted Aman seedlings went under water that also swamped several thousand acres of vegetables fields, our correspondent reported quoting officials.

Netrakona district fishery officials said fishes worth around Tk 5

crore were washed away as floodwaters overflowed about 500 ponds.

The seven affected unions out of 15 in the two upazilas are Birishiri, Gaokandia, Kakoigora, Bakoijura in Durgapur upazila; and Karnai, Rangchati and Langura unions in Kalmakanda upazila.

Road communication between Netrakona to Durgapur upazila headquarters remained snapped

yesterday as about one kilometre of the road has been damaged by floodwaters in Suknakuri area under Durgapur upazila.

The Netrakona-Kalmakanda road link has also been snapped by floodwaters.

Officials said the Shomeshwari, Mogra, Kongsha and Dhanu rivers in the district marked sharp rise in last two days, inundating areas in adjoining Khalajuri and Madan upazilas also.

Nobody from the district administration visited the flood affected areas, local people told this correspondent during a visit.

When contacted, Netrakona Water Development Board (WDB) Executive Engineer Mohammad Alauddin said the flood situation may deteriorate as waters are rolling down the rivers from hills across the border.

A correspondent reported from Kurigram that all the rivers in the district swelled due to rain in last two days.

Local Water Development Board sources said the Dharla swelled by 50 cms at ferry ghat point, Brahmaputra by 27 cms at Chilmari, Teesta by 37cms in Kaunia point and Dud Kumar by 43 cms at Nunkhawa point in last 24 hours ending Saturday morning.

The rainfall recorded was 164 mm in Dharla river basin and 117 mm in Brahmaputra basin areas, WDB officials said.

The affected villages are Jhaubani, Dublabari, Bakbandha, Khear Char, Algan Char, Bayra, Batashu Kajidanga, Kheruar Char, Ghauriar Char and Gayner Poto Char.



PHOTO: STAR

Flash flood inundated seven unions in Kalmakanda and Durgapur upazilas in Netrakona district.

Twenty Altaf loyalists in Patuakhali on the run

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 20 leaders of BNP and its front organisations loyal to former minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury in Patuakhali are on the run to evade arrest or harassment by law enforcers.

They include a former lawmaker and public representatives of municipality and Union Parishads, according to law enforcers and administration officials.

Houses of some of them were raided since promulgation of emergency, the sources said.

Talking to this correspondent, Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner AGM Mir Moshir Alam said, "We sent a list of hiding public representatives to higher authorities for necessary action".

Former BNP lawmaker from Patuakhali-2 (Baufal) Shahidul Alam Talukder is evading arrest in connection with two cases including an arms case. Joint forces raided his Baufal residence on January 16 and recovered two magazines of a pistol and some relief goods.

A court in Patuakhali asked Shahidul to surrender before it but he is yet to be appear before it. Charges will be framed in the case against Shahidul on June 11, Public Prosecutor (PP) Yunus Ali Mollah told this correspondent.

Joint forces have meanwhile arrested district Jubo Dal president Moshir Rahman; Angaria UP chairman and BNP leader Golam Mortuza Sukkur; Altaf's former PS (personal secretary) and Mirzagonj BNP leader Khandaker Monirul Alam, Sadar BNP organising secretary and Kamapur Union Parishad chairman Monir Rahman and Baufal upazila Jubo Dal secretary Gious Uddin.

Of them, Moshir Rahman and

Monir Rahman are facing two cases each. Sukkur and Monirul Alam are facing one case each. Sukkur, Monir Rahman and Monirul Alam are on bail.

Altaf's younger brothers and BNP leaders Babul Chowdhury and Shahin Chowdhury face two cases each.

Patuakhali municipality chairman and district BNP leader Mostaq Ahmed Pinu faces three cases including two for corruption.

Dumki upazila Jubo Dal president Saiful Alam Mridha, another former PS to Altaf Hossain Khalilur Rahman, district Krishak Dal president ASM Rab, Patuakhali pourasabha commissioners Mostafizur Rahman Rumi and Akhtaruzzaman Nobel and Jubo Dal cadres Maksudur Rahman and Jibon face one case each, police sources said.

Patuakhali district BNP secretary Snehangsu Sarkar Kuti is on law enforcers' list of 'godfathers', they said.

There are allegations of toll collection, tender scam and other irregularities against them, the sources claimed.

Tuhin, a BCL leader of Mirzagonj was killed allegedly by the former minister's cadres, according to a written complaint submitted to the joint forces by Mirzagonj upazila Awami League president Moklesur Rahman.

It is widely alleged that Babul and Shahin distributed all development works among party men.

Some BNP cadres stopped construction work of the World Bank (WB) assisted Patuakhali central bus terminal on February 20, 2004 as the firm did not pay them Tk 25 lakh toll. The cadres also demanded Tk two crore from the contractor of Patuakhali-Kuakata road rehabilitation project involving a cost of Tk 45

crore.

The firm stopped work and left the area on June 30 last year leaving 22 km of the 72 km Kalapara-Kuakata road project unfinished in view of demands for toll, sources claimed.

A four -member ACC (Anti Corruption Commission) team visited Patuakhali on May 30 and 31 to probe alleged corruption and irregularities by Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and his men.

The team led by ACC Deputy Director Fanafillah videored all movable and immovable property of Altaf in Patuakhali town and his Kathaltali village home in Mirzagonj upazila, according to law enforcers.

The team measured Altaf's Patuakhali residence at Circuit House Road and estimated the value of it and other property there.

"We will file case against all who were involved in corruption," an official of ACC said seeking anonymity.

Earlier on the night of May 28, joint forces raided Altaf's houses in Patuakhali town and at Kathaltali and seized two firearms, 99 bullets and some relief goods.

The district council built a guest-house on the compound of Altaf's Kathaltali village home at a cost about Tk 67 lakh in 2003-2004 financial year when he was commerce minister. As per rule such a district council guesthouse has to be built at district or upazila headquarters, sources said.

Air Vice-marshal (Rtd) Altaf Hossain Chowdhury was elected from Patuakhali-1 (Sadar, Mirzagonj and Dumki) constituency in 2001.

Two BNP leaders held in Kulaura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mouvibazar

Joint forces arrested two top BNP leaders from Kulaura upazila.

Badruzzaman Sajal, former general secretary of Kulaura upazila BNP was arrested from Uttar Bazar and Abdul Mannan, former Joint Convenor of Kulaura upazila Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal was arrested from his Kasimnagar residence on Friday night, sources in joint forces said.

They were arrested on charges of creating instability in the locality, extortion and plundering forest resources. Later They were handed over to Kulaura police on Saturday, sources in joint forces said. They were produced before court and sent to jail afterwards.

Land Rights Day today in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Today is historic Land Rights Day.

On this day in1985, landless people established their rights by shedding blood on government khas lands of Ghughudaha Beel (water body) in Shanthia upazila.

Over 20,000 landless people clashed with land grabbers to establish their rights on khas lands. Two landless, Intaz Ali and Lalmohon were killed by land grabbers.

Samata, an NGO, has demanded of the government to officially declare June 10 as Land Rights Day."

BDR, BSF trade gunshots on two Satkhira borders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) traded gunshots on two borders in Kalaroa upazila in the early hours of yesterday.

BSF of Atshikari camp in Swarnnagar Police Station under 24 Parganas in West Bengal, India, opened three gun shots aiming at BDR members at Madra camp in Kalaroa upazila. BDR members promptly retaliated by firing six gunshots.

In another incident, BSF of Tetultula camp in Bongaon Police Station in 24 Parganas fired five gunshots targeting BDR members at Rudrapur camp in Kalaroa upazila. In return, BDR fired three gunshots.

On contact, 41, Rifles Battalion Operation Officer Major Kamrul Hasan confirmed the report.

JCD man, 2 outlaws held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Joint forces, in two separate raids conducted in Banaripara and Uzirpur upazilas, have arrested a notorious Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadre, also chief of 'Nixon Bahini,' his aunt and two cadres of the outlawed Sarbahara Party.

On a tip-off, joint forces raided the house of Banaripara upazila BNP vice president Syed Aftab Hossain Mofakher and a closed aide of former whip Shahidul Huq Jamal in the early hours of Saturday. He could not be traced at the house. But his son Ariful Rahman Nixon, 22, a notorious JCD cadre and chief of so-called Nixon Bahini was arrested from there.

On the basis of his confession, a short (kata) rifle and four rounds of ammunition including gun belt, parts of fire arms and sharp weapons were recovered from the ponds of his grand mother at Labonshara village in Banaripara upazila in the morning. Joint forces also arrested Nixon's aunt Chameli Begum.

Banaripara Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) Abdul Hye Sarkar said Nixon is an accused in many criminal cases including toll collection, terrorism and violence against women.

Earlier, Nixon was arrested with arms during Operation Clean Heart of army, but he was released under political pressure, he said.

In another raid at Datteswar village in Sholok union in Uzirpur on Friday night, joint forces arrested two notorious outlaws Anis and Hemayet of Sarbahara Party.

Police said there are many criminal cases against them.

ALLEGATION OF BRIBERY AGAINST SI IN SATKHIRA

Accused assaults CID men, snatches case documents

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Two Criminal Investigation Department (CID) inspectors were allegedly assaulted and threatened by a sub-inspector (SI) of Kalaroa police station yesterday while probing an allegation against him at the CID office in Satkhira town.

The sub-inspector also snatched away the recorded statements given by the complainants from the office, sources at the CID office said.

Two general dairies (GDs) were filed with Sadar police station accusing SI Sarwar Hossain of Kalaroa police station after the incident. The incident created a sensation in the town.

According to CID sources, local journalist Belal Hossain of Digong village in Kalaroa upazila was murdered by a group of assailants near his village while he was returning home on October 4 last year. SI Sarwar Hossain was made the investigation officer (IO) of the case.

The case was filed with Kalaroa police station accusing former Helatala Union Parishad chairman Abu Taleb, Abdul Kader, Abdul Hamid, Sarwar, Abdul Kadir, Zahurul Islam and some others of Digong village.

The SI allegedly took Tk 1,90,000 from four accused as bribe to drop their names from the charge sheet.

The accused who bribed SI Sarwar are former Helatala UP chairman Abu Taleb, Abdul Kader, Abdul Hamid and Zahurul Islam of Digong village, the sources said.

Journalist Belal murder case was transferred to CI D for investigation in April. The four accused who bribed SI Sarwar then demanded the money back.

As the SI did not return their money, they submitted an allegation to the CID authorities against him.

After getting the allegation against SI Sarwar, CID authorities formed a one-member committee comprising Inspector Lutfor Rahman of CID security cell to probe the matter.

CID Inspector Lutfor Rahman came to Satkhira to probe the matter and asked the complainants to appear before him at CID office with witnesses and documents supporting their allegation at 10 am yesterday, the sources said.

As per directive of the CID probe committee, the complainants came to the CID office and the probe committee recorded separate statements signed by the complainants, the sources said.

While probe was going on, SI Sarwar entered the CID office at about 12: 30 pm, threatened and assaulted probe committee member Inspector Lutfor Rahman and local CID Inspector Hari Pada

Biswas, snatched away written statements from the complainants and tore those into pieces. He left the scene threatening them with dire consequences, CID office sources said.

Two separate general dairies were filed by Inspector Lutfor Rahman of probe committee and local CID Inspector Hari Pada Biswas with Sadar thana against SI Sarwar soon after the incident. The incident was narrated in the GDs, the sources said.

SI Sarwar could not be contacted for comment despite repeated attempts over cell phones.

On contact, CID Inspector Lutfor Rahman local CID inspector Hari Pada Biswas confirmed the incident and said they informed higher authorities and Satkhira Police Superintendent about the incident, seeking action.

"We have nothing more to do", said CID Inspector Lutfor Rahman when contacted.

On contact, Additional Police Superintendent Zakir Hossain Khan confirmed the incident and said action will be taken against him (SI Sarwar) if found guilty.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Rainwater entered into many shops in Mymensingh town following heavy shower yesterday.

ACC keeps watch on wealth of Sylhet's Ragib Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Transactions of at least seven bank accounts of different institutions of businessman Ragib Ali have been stopped.

Besides, investigation into some other accounts of his family members is going on, official sources said.

Allegations of corruption against Ragib Ali and activities of his institutions are also being probed by Anti Corruption Commission (ACC), a Deputy Director of ACC in Sylhet told The Daily Star yesterday.

The ACC official however declined to give details.

Sources in Bangladesh Bank in Sylhet said investigation into bank accounts of Ragib Ali and his family members and their institutions is going on. All his accounts in Sylhet have been marked as Non Resident Transaction Account (NRTA) and all kinds of transaction are stopped, the source added.

Ali and his family members are involved in institutions like Jalalabad Ragib-Rabeya Medical College and Hospital, Leading University, Ragib Offset Printing Press, daily Sylheter Dak, Malnichhera Tea Garden, Tarapur Tea Garden, Malnichhera Rubber Garden, Ragib Ali Foundation etc.

The institutions and business concerns Ragib Ali owns include seven tea gardens and a big shopping mall in Syljhet city. He is also a



Ragib Ali

partner in another private university in Dhaka.

Ali also owns a printing press- Ragib Computers--and chief editor and publisher of Sylheter Dak, a widely circulated daily. Ali and his family members are also involved with the South East Bank.

Last year, a case was lodged protesting unauthorised sale of 200 trees from Malnechhera Rubber Garden on Sylhet city suburbs. The rubber garden was raised on lands leased from government.

As locals complained to the Deputy Commissioner, three persons were arrested. Some local newspapers carried stories on the matter but it was hushed up with the help of some political leaders, sources claimed.

Cases are still pending in connection with illegal sale of about 40 acres of land of Tarapur Tea Estate to about 200 individuals by Ali's family. The tea estate covers over 100 acres.

The lands were sold allegedly by preparing fake documents, land officials said.

The buyers have constructed dwelling houses on those plots but could not show proper documents from settlement and survey department during the recently completed land survey.

An official in the settlement department told the Daily Star that the Tarapur Tea Garden is a property of Krishnakanta Gupta Jeur temple and that land of religious institutions can not be sold. So there is no scope to sell or hand over those lands to any individual, he said.

The buyers had been demanding 'porcha' against the plots they bought from the tea garden owners long ago.

"But, since law does not allow such sale, we can not provide them with those documents (porcha), the settlement official added.

Ali took a long term lease of the garden lands from the temple committee in late 1988.

A parliamentary sub-committee visited Sylhet in 1990s and filed a report to the land ministry, which said the tea garden lands were grabbed through corruption.

The lands were sold through fake

power of attorney in names of Ali's family members and a good number of cases are still pending in this connection, the settlement official said.

However, the garden authorities claimed that the lands were bought from the temple authorities in a proper way.

The Ragib Rabeya Medical College Hospital was set up on Tarapur Tea Garden lands.

Years ago, in the face of students' agitation, Ragib Ali donated some lands from Tarapur Tea Garden to Madan Mohan College in the name of a new campus of the institution. Later it was revealed that he realised Tk 35 lakh from the college, sources claimed.

In 2001, Ragib Ali along with his men took a move to change the name of his native village Talipbur into Ragibnagar. The move died down in the face of protests by villagers.

Allegations have it that the protesters were later implicated in some false cases.

This triggered fresh protests by the villagers. Several thousand people from the village paraded to the city and handed over a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner to take steps to stop harassment of innocent villagers.

The administration quelled the agitation.



PHOTO: STAR

The guesthouse built on the compound of former minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury' house in Kathalia village in Patuakhali.