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Rain-fed calamities cause havoc

9 killed in tornadoes, mudslide; many missing as boats, trawler sink

STAR REPORT

Tornado, mudslide and boat and trawler capsizes killed at least nine persons and injured over 100 across the country while 32 others have remained missing as heavy rainfall caused by well-marked low in the Bay inundated Chittagong region.

The Met office yesterday said the low pressure developed in northern Bay of Bengal and started moving towards the shore in the evening. It may turn into a land depression and may cause heavy rainfall in Chittagong, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions until today afternoon.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been

advised to hoist cautionary signal number three. All fishing boats have been advised to stay in shelter until further notice. Movement of vehicles smaller than 65 feet in length on 108 river routes was also suspended until further orders.

Our Chittagong office reported that torrential rainfall completely paralysed normal life and spoiled the festivity of Eid-ul-Fitr yesterday.

But, as the downpour abated a little in the city outskirts and coastal areas yesterday, activities at the Chittagong port and flight operation at the Shah Amanat International Airport became almost normal.

Meanwhile, logged water has made movement of city dwellers

completely impossible in most areas. Rickshaws and vans became the only modes of transport for the people stuck at different places during Eid holidays.

All important thoroughfares at Chawk Bazar, Kathalganj, Kaphalgola, Baduratala, Bahadurhat, Muradpur, Sholoshahar Gate-2, Prabartak intersection went under waist-deep water. The access roads in low-lying areas like Halishahar, Agrabad and Shantibagh were the worst sufferers of waterlogging.

The rain also caused immense suffering to day labourers and low-income people. The city kitchen markets faced a serious dearth of supply of essentials.

Three people including two

children were killed and two others were injured in a landslide caused by the onrush of heavy shower in Kaukhali upazila of Rangamati yesterday morning.

The five were from a family living at the foot of a hill, witnesses said. The victims were identified as Ayesha Khatoon, 26, her sons Enam, 7, and Hossain, 5. Ayesha's husband Jamal Hossain and mother-in-law Rina Begum were injured.

Sources said a large chunk of earth fell straight on the thatched house around 8.30am yesterday.

Our Bandarban correspondent reports: Road connection with other districts was snapped due to heavy rainfall and mudslide from hills.

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People trying to salvage a vehicle inundated in rainwater as downpour caused by a low over the Bay of Bengal flood many areas of Chittagong city yesterday.

Durga Puja begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Durga Puja, five days of the largest festivities of Hindus in the country, begins today.

Puja mandaps have already been built and preparations for all rituals made. Devotees will assemble at the mandaps and make offerings of treats to Goddess Durga. The offerings will later be distributed among all.

The Mahashashthi puja will begin at 9:58am today following Bodhon rituals.

The goddess descends on earth today—the Mahashashthi, accompanied by her children Ganesh, Kartik, Lakshmi and Saraswati, at the invocation and supplication of the devotees and stays for the next four days. The days are Mahasaptami on Thursday, Mahanabami on Friday and Mahanabami on Saturday and

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FDI flow drops 6pc last year

Global figure ups 38pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh received \$792 million foreign direct investment (FDI) last year, down by 6 percent against previous year's, though the global FDI grew 38 percent during the year.

The Board of Investment (BoI) said this yesterday while releasing the World Investment Report 2007 of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which however showed Bangladesh registered \$625 million in FDI in 2006, a fall by 9.6 percent from the previous year.

"The UNCTAD collected the FDI

information from Bangladesh Bank during last year's April-May period which does not represent the actual picture at the end of the year," BoI Executive Chairman Mohammad Mohsin said clarifying the differences in investment figures.

He said, "The country failed to attract adequate FDI due to political unrest during the 2nd half of the last year, indecisions about big investment proposals and investors' lack of confidence."

According to the report, Bangladesh's position in performance index also dropped by two steps. In 2006, Bangladesh ranked

121st which was 119th in the previous year.

The BoI chief said the rate of investment registration has decreased by 30 percent in the first nine months of this year as a result of the last year's political chaos.

Mohsin said around \$12.8 billion investment proposals including those of Tata and Asia Energy are pending for government decision.

He said the government has initiated several steps to improve the situation which included formation of Better Business Forum led by the chief adviser.

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Aman, wife indicted for extortion

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against detained former state minister for labour and employment Amanullah Aman and 11 others in a Tk 10 lakh extortion case.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will interrogate detained Jamuna Group Chairman Nurul Islam Babul at the jail gate in connection with a graft case.

Arrest warrants were issued against wife, brother, son, daughters, brother-in-law and son-in-law of detained Dhaka City Corporation Ward Commissioner Chowdhury Alam in a graft case.

Earlier, the government purchased rice at Tk 26 per Kg.

The committee, however, did

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Purchase body okays import of 50,000 tonnes of rice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The advisory committee on purchase yesterday approved buying of 50,000 tonnes of rice at Tk 22.31 per kilogram.

The committee made the decision at a meeting presided over by Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam.

The finance adviser said rice would be bought from a Singapore-based firm Indo-Sino Trade Pvt. Ltd. at a lower price than what was offered earlier.

Earlier, the government purchased rice at Tk 26 per Kg.

Aman and two of his accomplices pleaded not guilty and

35 GRAFT SUSPECTS ACC to launch probe next week

Bank records seized in Gato case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) next week would start primary enquiries about the 35 graft suspects, whose names were published on the fourth list of graft suspects on October 4.

Meanwhile, the ACC yesterday seized bank records, documents and cheques at Prime Bank Banani branch following a case filed in connection with the Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Co Ltd (Gato) illegally getting the container-holding jobs at Dhaka and Chittagong.

ACC Secretary Mukles Ur Rahman yesterday told journalists,

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Eid-ul-Fitr celebrated

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated across the country on Sunday with enthusiasm and religious fervour.

Main feature of the festival was Eid congregations, where the rich and the poor irrespective of their social status embraced each other demonstrating the fraternity among the Muslims.

They prayed for the nation's peace and progress and unity of the Muslim ummah and pledged to establish a corruption-free democratic society.

Friends and relatives visited each other's house, exchanged greetings and shared improved diet after month-long fasting.

In the capital, the main Eid congregation was held at National Eidgah at 8:30am. President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser

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A different Eid for Hasina, Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two detained former premiers, Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, both observed Eid-ul-Fitr in solitude in special prisons set up at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex.

With the exception of only a few close relatives allowed to meet Khaleda and Hasina inside the prisons, this was the first time the two leading ladies of Bangladesh politics had to spend the largest religious festival without being surrounded by their near and dear ones.

On the day of Eid, the two political icons of the country are used to receiving Eid greetings from hundreds of people from all walks of life including activists and leaders of their parties.

Tarique Rahman and Arafat

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Army chief on tour of US, UK, China

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed went on a tour of the United States, the UK and China Monday.

Gen Moeen would meet several high-level officials of the UN during his stay in New York, like current President of the UN General Assembly Sriyan Kerim and officials of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, according to news reports from the US.

There was no official announcement of his tour.

He would also attend two dinners hosted at the Bangladesh consulate in New York. He would meet journalists on October 18 and Bangladeshi-Americans on the 19th at the consulate.

Gen Moeen will also meet US Congressman and Co-chair of

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Gen Moeen says he has no desire to become president

UNB, London

Army chief General Moeen U Ahmed yesterday dismissed speculations about his becoming president, saying that he has no such intentions.

"Many questions are lurking in many people's minds, but time will give answers to all those questions... I have no desire to become president," he told reporters at Bangladesh High Commission.

General Moeen, who arrived in London on Monday en route to the USA, said there is no scope for considering army as a separate entity. The army is part of government. Like general people, the army also wants clean democracy in Bangladesh.

He said appointment of consultants is being considered to make the caretaker government more dynamic. Constitutional provisions are being examined in this regard.

Narrating the background of declaration of the state of emergency and installation of a new



Gen Moeen U Ahmed

caretaker government, the chief of army staff said the country was heading for a civil war in the wake of violent political activities, absence of law and order and distrust about voter list.

General Moeen said priority of the incumbent government is to restore democracy through free and fair elections and transfer of power.

He observed that law and order is under full control of the caretaker

government that enjoys full public support.

He mentioned that the problem-ridden Chittagong seaport is now running in a disciplined way. The Anti-Corruption Commission has been made effective and already 36 people have been jailed on charges of corruption.

In reply to a question, the army chief said those arrested and jailed were "corrupt". Throwing a challenge, he posed a question: "Can anyone find any honest person among those arrested and jailed?"

General Moeen said the much-awaited separation of the judiciary from the executive will come into effect from November 1, which will be a milestone in the nation's forward march.

About smuggled-out money, he informed the London press that the caretaker government has repatriated \$129 million siphoned off the country in the past. He said another \$72 million is being brought back. He expressed the hope that it would be possible to

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Eyes set 19pc higher for export this year

Target \$14.5b

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has fixed an ambitious export target of \$14.5 billion for the fiscal year 2007-08 against a backdrop of falling exports in readymade garment (RMG) sector, leader in the country's export initiatives, this July.

The target fixed at a meeting of the commerce ministry yesterday is 19.07 percent higher than the previous fiscal year's export earning of \$12.17 billion with 15.69 percent growth. The export target was \$12.5 billion in the last fiscal year.

Finance and Commerce Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam presided over the meeting.

The Export Promotion Bureau is yet to release the country's July export statistics officially. However, according to bureau sources, the country's overall exports drastically declined by around 20 percent while the RMG exports went down by around 24 percent.

After the meeting Mirza Aziz explained to reporters that the fall in the export earning was "seasonal".

"We talked to the leaders of

BGMEA and BKMEA and they assured me that this year's target will be achieved as the exporters are receiving export orders," he said.

Commenting on the new export target, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury Parvez said although the target is difficult to attain, it is not impossible to attain.

"We are getting export orders again after overcoming a bad time due mainly to reduction in export orders for warm winter season in the western and European countries," he said.

"If there is stability and no political disturbance and workers unrest in the country and if the bank interest rate is reduced, we can achieve the export target, especially in the RMG sector," he said.

Zaid Bakht, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said the export growth in the first nine months of the last fiscal year was 22 percent while the growth came

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Veteran journalist Obaidul Haque passes away

BSS, Dhaka

Eminent Journalist And Former editor of the Bangladesh Observer Obaidul Haque passed away at his Banani residence on Saturday. He was 96.

He left behind his wife, four sons, three daughters, and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.