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Rift in Pak ruling coalition widens

Musharraf successor to be elected on Sept 6, Sharif pushes back deadline to restore judges, PPP lawmakers nominate Zardari for president

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's ruling coalition was riven by divisions despite crunch talks yesterday, raising fears for the government's ability to tackle Taliban bloodshed after a massive bombing killed 64 people.

Former premier Nawaz Sharif pushed back his deadline for the coalition to restore judges sacked by former president Pervez Musharraf, prolonging the squabbles that have prevented it from focusing on the rising militant threat.

Pak Election Commission announced on Friday that the presidential poll would be held on September 6, seen as important

step towards creating the political stability needed to take on the militants.

Lawmakers from party of slain former Pakistan premier Benazir Bhutto on Friday unanimously nominated her widower, Asif Ali Zardari, to run for president, a government minister said.

"Zardari thanked Pakistan People's Party of which he is the co-chairman and said he will announce his decision within the next 24 hours," information minister Sherry Rehman told reporters in Islamabad.

Thursday's bombing at a huge arms factory was the second suicide attack since Musharraf stood down on Monday, intensifying the

pressure on his opponents to show they can govern the world's only Islamic nuclear power.

Troops killed 21 militants, including two more suicide bombers, in clashes near the Afghan border in defiance of threats by the Taliban to launch more attacks if military operations against the rebels are not halted.

The two main parties -- linked to Sharif and the assassinated ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto -- failed to find common ground during talks on Friday on how to replace Musharraf and how to reinstate dozens of judges he sacked.

Sharif said a parliamentary

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Mother, daughter die as they jump under running train

UNB, Kishoreganj

A mother and her two-year-old daughter died while another daughter sustained severe injuries as they jumped under a train at Konamati near Kishoreganj station yesterday.

Witnesses said the unidentified woman, aged around 30, with her two daughters, aged about two and four, jumped under the Kishoreganj-bound inter-city "Egaro Sindhur" from Dhaka at about 1:00pm.

The woman died on the spot while her two-year-old daughter on way to hospital. Another daughter was admitted to Kishoreganj Hospital in a critical condition.

Angura Khatun, one of the witnesses to the incident, said the woman along with her daughters jumped on the track when the train was crossing the area.

The officer in-charge of Kishoreganj GRP Thana said the reason behind the suicide could not be known.

Fresh reshuffle in administration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government in a fresh reshuffle in the administration yesterday appointed a new commissioner in Barisal division and transferred two deputy commissioners and 27 new upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs).

According to the notification, Mejbab Ul Alam, joint secretary at the civil aviation and tourism ministry, replaced Harun Ahmed, the Barisal divisional chief.

Harun Ahmed has been posted at the establishment ministry.

Mafizul Islam, who was appointed deputy commissioner

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Prayer Timing		
August 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-33	6-36
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Back to a mother's lap from clutches of kidnappers



PHOTO: STAR

Three-year-old Ashima and her newly found mother Nita Afroz Khan are all smiles at the prospect of a happy future.

SHAMIM ASHRAF

As if it was the way things ought to be. The eight-month-old baby girl fell from the clutch of her kidnappers and lost her right leg under the wheels of a running freight train, only to be saved later by a warm-hearted couple.

The couple, residents of Atlanta, USA, will be leaving the country next week with their adopted daughter whom they call Ashima.

This is how Ashima's amazing life story goes. On May 11 of 2006, two heroin addicts -- Billal and Rahima -- kidnapped her from Mymensingh and hopped on a Chittagong-bound freight train.

With the baby in one of their cradles, the two addicts positioned themselves in between compartments of the train.

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Fertiliser shortage threatens Aman target in 16 dists

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

The government is failing to supply the adequate amount of fertilisers to 16 northern districts for Aman cultivation.

Price hike of fertilisers is also not helping farmers of the region in getting out of this situation which threatens the achievement of Aman production target.

According to Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) officials in a number of northern districts, the Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) recommended that 109kg of urea fertiliser, 89kg triple super phosphate

(TSP), and 33kg muriate of potash (MoP) be used per hectare of land. The government failed to supply the required quantity of fertilisers, they said.

The officials said inadequate use of fertilisers may hamper Aman production with a recurring effect on subsequent crops like Boro. The DAE planned to cultivate Aman on 17,18,312 hectare of land in 16 northern districts to achieve 43,30,446 tonnes of rice production this season.

DAE officials in Bogra said at least 1,69,10,000kg of TSP is needed to cultivate Aman on 1,90,000

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SIRAJGANJ FLOOD Over 5,000 marooned, road links snapped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Onrush of water from upstream and heavy rainfall in the last few days have flooded many areas in six upazilas of Sirajganj, marooning over 5,000 people in the low lying areas and the chars in Jamuna, Karotoa, Ichhamoti, Hurasagar and Phuljhor rivers.

The worst affected upazilas are Sirajganj sadar, Kazipur, Belkuchi, Shahzadpur, Kamarkhanda and Chowhali where many roads have gone under water, disrupting road communications.

Many people of these areas have already shifted their homesteads to highlands and different

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Bolt races to his third world mark

AFP, Beijing



won the exhausting decathlon title.

Clay mastered the two-day test of speed, strength and endurance to win the decathlon by a decisive 240 points from Andrey Krauchanka of Belarus.

Bolt, who has announced himself as the unrivalled speed king, added to his world-record breaking 100m and 200m titles running the third leg for the Jamaican 4x100m

relay team.

They clocked 37.10secs, breaking the United States' 15-year-old record by 0.30sec as Asafa Powell hurtled over the final 100m.

"It's a great feeling," said Powell.

"I was really excited to go out there and give Usain his third world record."

But having already won the men's and women's 100m and 200m titles, Jamaica's craving for every sprint crown came unstuck

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Overall Medal			
	Gold	Silver	Bronze
CHN	47	17	25
USA	31	36	35
GBR	18	13	13
RUS	17	18	22

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Nepal forms post-royal govt under Maoist PM

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal swore in its first post-royal government Friday with Maoist leader Prachanda as prime minister, ending weeks of political deadlock.

The Maoists -- who waged a decade-long insurgency until a 2006 peace deal -- emerged as Nepal's most potent political force after convincingly winning landmark polls in April.

Prachanda led the oath-taking where new ministers pledged "to remain faithful to the nation and my countrymen."

The ultra-leftist Maoists, centre-left Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and another political group formed an alliance and agreed on distribution of ministerial posts.

Politicians from the UML did not swear in after an 11th hour disagreement over who would be deputy prime minister, a Maoist official said.

"We will extend the ministerial cabinet after the prime minister returns from his Beijing visit. Members from the UML will get sworn in then," Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara told AFP.

Prachanda was due to fly to Beijing on Saturday and make his first foray on the international stage to attend the Olympics closing ceremony and meet Chinese President Hu Jintao.

The formation of the government follows the Himalayan country's abolition of its unpopular 240-year-old monarchy two months ago after the Maoists won just over

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PHOTO: STAR

Artists perform dance, above, at The Daily Star-Standard Chartered 'Celebrating Life' Awards 2008 ceremony at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre yesterday; below, winners of the competition with the chief adviser and other guests.

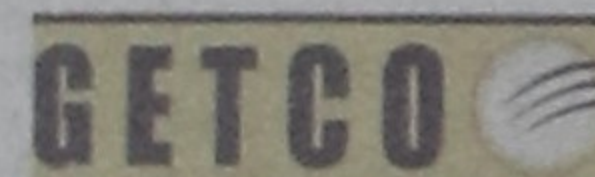


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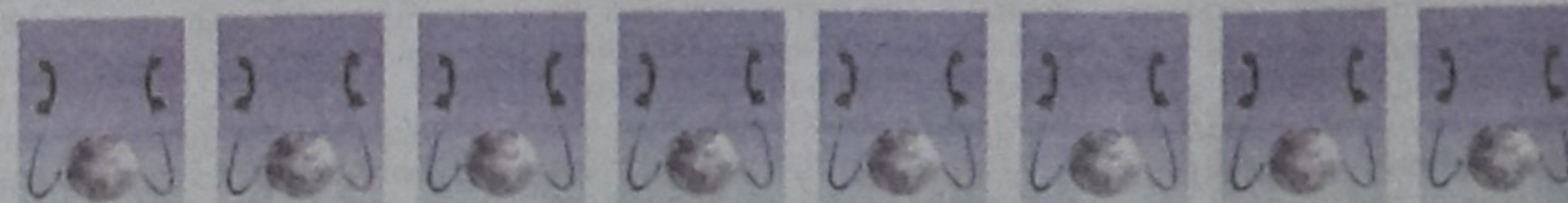


PHOTO: STAR

Houses in Ranigram of Sirajganj sadar upazila have almost entirely gone under water following heavy rainfall in the last few days.